



Orleans County Historical Association

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Orleans County Historical Association

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT INTERVIEW

Mrs. Jane Nagel Stillinger
Lakewood Village
Medina, New York

Mrs. Jane N. Stillinger was born October 2, 1912.
Interviewed by Helen M. McAllister of Medina, N.Y.

S Stillinger

Mc McAllister



Jane Nagel Stillinger



Orleans County Historical Association

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

The purpose of this project is to collect information about the historical development of Orleans County by means of tape-recorded conversations with people whose experiences reflect the county's growth.

These tapes and transcriptions will be preserved as educational resources and possible publication (all or in part).

I hereby release this tape and transcription to the Orleans County Historical Association.

Jane N. Stillinger
Signed

Nov. 1, 1982
Date

Understood and agreed to:

Helen M. McAllister
INTERVIEWER

Nov. 1, 1982
Date

For the ORLEANS COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT, Helen McAllister of Medina, New York, is interviewing MRS. JANE NAGEL STILLINGER, of Lakewood Village, Medina, New York, November 1, 1982.

Mc Jane, will you please tell us when and where you were born?

J I was born October 2, 1912. I was born on a farm just East of Medina. Dr. Maynard from Medina came down to deliver and the next morning he called my parents and said, "Was that a nightmare or did I deliver a little girl?" (Laughter) We had a maid that came just before I was born and she stayed with us for thirteen years and she was like our Nanny -- if we got hurt or anything, we always ran to her. She was a marvelous person.

Mc What was her name, Jane?

J Matie -- Matie Baeher. She came from the Baeher family that lived in Shelby Center.

Mc Okay.

J Okay. My father was Mortimer Livingston Nagel. He married Olive Cook. My father's father was John and his wife was Helen Jane. I was named -- I took her second name. My mother was Olive Inez Cook. She was the daughter of Seelye A. Cook and Adelaide Thorpe. They had two children, Pearl and Olive. Pearl married Milford Childs. My grandfather Cook started a wholesale business in 1873 selling tobacco

H Us-

FORMER MEDINANS TODAY NOTING THE GOLDEN WEDDING DATE

MILLIONS VISIT SHRINE
LOURDES, France (UPI)— Nearly five million Catholic pilgrims, including 25 cardinals (one of whom later became Pope John XXIII) traveled to this shrine city this year by train, plane bus and auto for the ceremonies marking the 100th anniversary of the visions of St. Bernadette.

rs. Donald P. Hill of Mr. and Mrs. Hill n at dinner on Thanks- and guests will include rs. Albert Kathke and Lockport and Mr. and Hill of Ridge Road.

ley E. Swiatek Jr., a dent of Medina, was to Eighth Army Hdq. East on Nov. 17. Pre- J. Swiatek was staff l training officer for ve units in the Fort us, area. Before leav- Far East he was honor- aining Center and was with a certificate of from the commander th Corps. Resolutions hamber of Commerce y Council also praised frs. Swiatek and their l remain in Fort Worth ajor is overseas. Maj. he brother of Mrs. Jo- k of Meade Ave.

Mrs. S. C. Bentley of will leave Wednesday he winter months in

ld Yaxley of West Cen- today for San Diego, she will spend Thanks- with her parents, Mr. Walter Riebold in f. She will also visit es on the West Coast.

Kutner, Medina ssman Dies

services were held in femorial Chapel, New oday for Lester Kutner Albion and Medina bus- who died suddenly on r. Kutner's death fol- month the passing of a, with whom he was n business. Mrs. Kut- New York City on Oct.

er's body was discov- dining room floor of 5 East Bank Street, Al- daughter, Mrs. Sylvia New York City, who sitting in the Kutner d been undergoing a heart ailment.

ers had operated a in Albion for about 30 also conducted a store or many years but dis-



Mr. and Mrs. Mortimer Nagel

Mr. and Mrs. Mortimer Nagel of Childs, former residents of Medina, are observing their 50th wedding anniversary today. They will be honored at a dinner party by their family and friends Saturday evening at the Village Inn. Childs.

Mr. Nagel, then a resident of Buffalo, and the former Olive I. Cook of Medina were married Nov. 24, 1908, at the home of the bride's father, S. A. Cook. They resided in Buffalo for a short time before moving to a farm between Medina and Albion which Mr. Nagel operated.

They later resided in Medina, at 228 Park Ave., now the Cornell Hotel, and on South Academy and Ann Sts. They resided in Lockport during World War II. They have lived at Childs for 10 years.

Mr. Nagel attended Massachu- setts Institute of Technology. Now

retired, he formerly was employed by the Bell Telephone System and later was a gasoline and oil distributor.

Mr. and Mrs. Nagel have three sons, Seelye C. Nagel of Bethel, Conn.; Mortimer L. Nagel Jr. of Lockport and Robert H. Nagel of Batavia, assistant publisher of the Batavia Daily News; two daughters, Mrs. Clair (Jane) Stillinger of Medina and Miss Nancy Nagel of Childs; nine grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

LEAVES FOR ANTARCTIC

MOSCOW, (UPI) — The Soviet ship Ob left Kaliningrad Sunday for the antarctic with a team of Soviet scientists, the official Soviet news agency Tass reported today.

BOYS'
Warm Waterproof
MITTENS
 all sizes - \$1.50
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 Reg. \$29.95
Now Only \$19.95
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MOST OF YOUR
CHRISTMAS
SHOPPING
RIGHT IN
LeVAN'S
HUGE BASEMENT
GIFT AND TOY
DEPARTMENT

SWIFT PREMIUM BUTTERBALL

Turkeys

THE

and confectionery items like gumdrops and lozengers, licorice, peppermints -- that type of thing. He had a peddler's wagon with a four-horse team which was most unusual in those days and he sold to retailers between Rochester and Buffalo, delivering to stores. In 1890, he had two partners, the Tinkham brothers.

Mc What kind of brothers?

S T-i-n-k-h-a-m. (Laughter)

Mc Okay.

S In 1895, he founded the furniture business. The furniture was first used as a premium for the cigars and the candy, and this grew so large that he finally developed his own furniture factory. Don Bigelow and George Bowen went in with him.

Mc This furniture factory is still going under the name of S. A. Cook?

S This is still going under the name of S. A. Cook after all those years -- ever since 1895. That's quite a record to have that continue like that. And it was always -- well, Medina used to be called the "Davenport City" several years ago. Then my Grandfather Cook was Mayor in 1895.

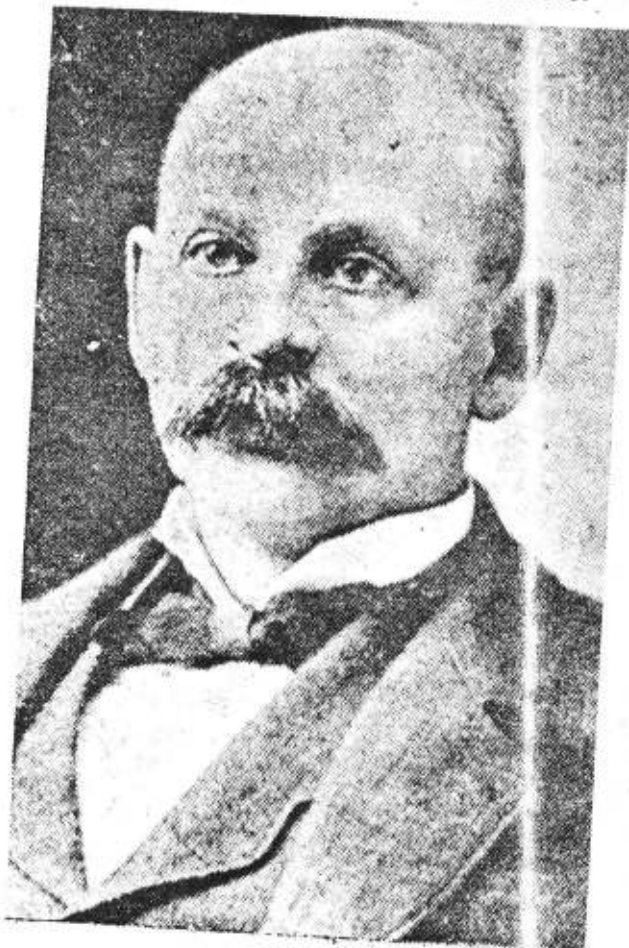
Mc The Mayor of Medina?

S Yeah, Medina. And in 1906 and 1907. He was Mayor during Homecoming Week in 1906 and he put his morning coat on and and his top hat and went to the station and greeted these people as they came to visit Medina. He was the first citizen at that time. Now, he lived where the Post Office is now on

2 A.

Orleans Memories

By County Historian Arden McAllister



How many of us expect to find our names in the phone book years after we have departed this life? S.A. Cook is still listed in the Medina phone book 66 years after his death in 1912. And not just once but four times. There are good reasons. Few names are more intimately associated with Medina's history than that of S.A. Cook. His name still sticks with the wholesale business he started in 1873, now owned by Ovid Punch on Orient Street. Seeley A. Cook sold tobacco and confectionary items such as creams, lozenges, gumdrops, licorce sticks, peppermints and coughdrops. Delivered to him by freight he in turn loaded his wares into a peddler's wagon and distributed to stores from Rochester to Buffalo. The business grew so much that in the late 1890s he took in two partners, the Tinkham Brothers.

Mr. Cook's granddaughter, Jane Stillinger of Medina, tells that however successful her grandfather was as a businessman he did have one serious weakness...he couldn't resist handing out free candies to delight children he met on his routes.

The S.A. Cook name remains with the furniture business he helped found in 1895. He had adopted the practice of awarding premiums of furniture with the purchase of his cigars. It seemed profitable to make his own chairs, couches etc. So, with Don Bigelow and George A. Bowen, he became a furniture manufacturer.

The S.A. Cook name remains to identify one of the most prominent business blocks in Medina, located on the northwest corner of Main and Park Avenue. In 1910 trees and old edifices were removed and the present building erected on that spot.

Mr. Cook's name is found also on the list of village Mayors, having served in that capacity in 1895-6-7 and again in 1906-7. He was the First Citizen in 1906 when Medina celebrated a Home-coming and he often went to the Railroad depot to personally welcome the guests.

Lastly, the name, S.A. Cook is prominently engraved on a large monument in Boxwood cemetery over the gentleman's final resting place with his wife, Adelaide and some of the family. Who knows, perhaps on "the other side" a peddler's wagon yet rumbles along a dusty road and a kindly hand reaches out to offer peppermint sticks to children along the way. After all, its the generous deeds and kindnesses that have the eternal dimensions.

Photo Feature Updates A Look at S. A. Cook Furniture

How many hundreds of Medinans know little or nothing of the fascinating history of S. A. Cook & Co.? A business started in the late 1800s by a tobacco "peddler" because he saw the possibilities of making his own premium items for redeeming cigar coupons.

A photo feature on Page 12 today takes you inside the big 3-story factory on East Ave. and shows the creation of upholstered furniture from raw wood to finished product.

Equally interesting is the history of this "hometown" business, which survived the Great Depression and in recent years has been acquired by New generating some healthy expansion.

Let's take a trip back in time. In the 1880s, with a team of horses and a delivery wagon, Seelye A. Cook, a local man, traveled from country store to country store taking orders for cigars, tobacco, confectionery items, etc.

The "cigar coupon", like the green stamp of today, was then popular, and by saving long enough the smoker could redeem his coupons for household items—often pieces of furniture.

By the 1890s, Seelye Cook had seen enough of this practice to realize that he could probably make a pretty good thing out of manufacturing his own premium

items. Gathering with him two partners, Don Bigelow and George Bowen, there was established on Rock Street (now Glenwood), a modest factory called S. A. Cook & Co., making small chairs and tables. The year was 1895.

By turn of the century business had grown to the point where a sizeable factory was built in the "gully" area alongside Oak Orchard Creek just north of the E. Center St. bridge. Electric power was eventually generated by the factory's own water-driven turbines.

Other men who joined the growing Cook organization early in its history were Claude Milford Childs,

The furniture business proved to be a "boomer" for Cook and his partners and around 1910 Cook erected the business block on Main St. which still bears his name. He died in April 1912 as work was beginning on the big East Avenue factory which opened the following year. George Bowen continued for many years as company president.

Medina in the next decade and a half grew to be one of the furniture centers of the East, with over 1,200 people employed



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in such plants as the two Cook facilities, Empire Couch Co. on Orient St. and Mahar Bros. Co., also on Orient.

The Depression wrote "finish" to much of this booming industry, but the Cook plant on East Avenue survived, although not without a dwindling market. By the early 1960s only 30 to 40 people were still employed.

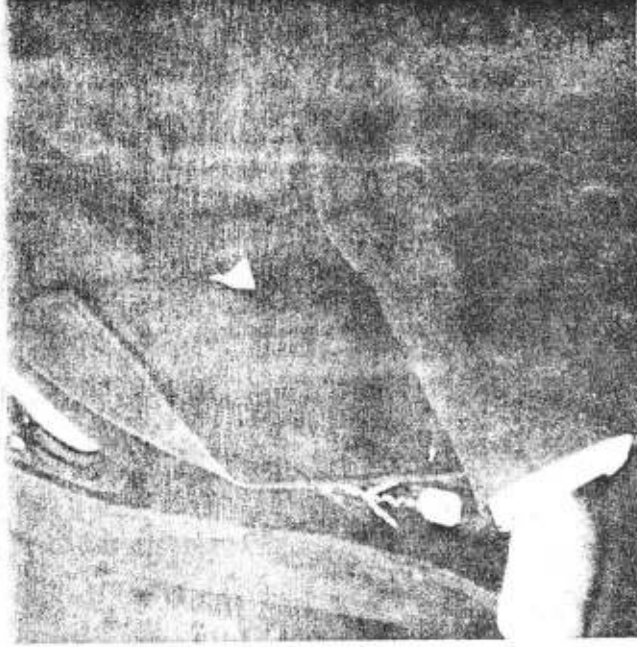
In 1965 a stroke of fate intervened and J. Michaels Inc. of New York City purchased control of S. A. Cook & Co. to make furniture for its own stores (it now owns four in New York and five in Buffalo).

Upon the death of Jules Michaels in 1970, Robert production at the Medina plant remains in the hands of Roland C. Howell, a vice president, who reports that employment has now exceeded the 100 mark and sales are being made to over 400 accounts in the East.

The latest chapter in the story is the announcement by J. Michaels Inc. that a \$1.7 million facility will be constructed adjacent to the East Avenue factory to act as a warehouse and also a retail outlet for furniture. Construction is planned for next year and will increase employment in the factory as well as the sales facility, drawing customers from Buffalo and Rochester areas.

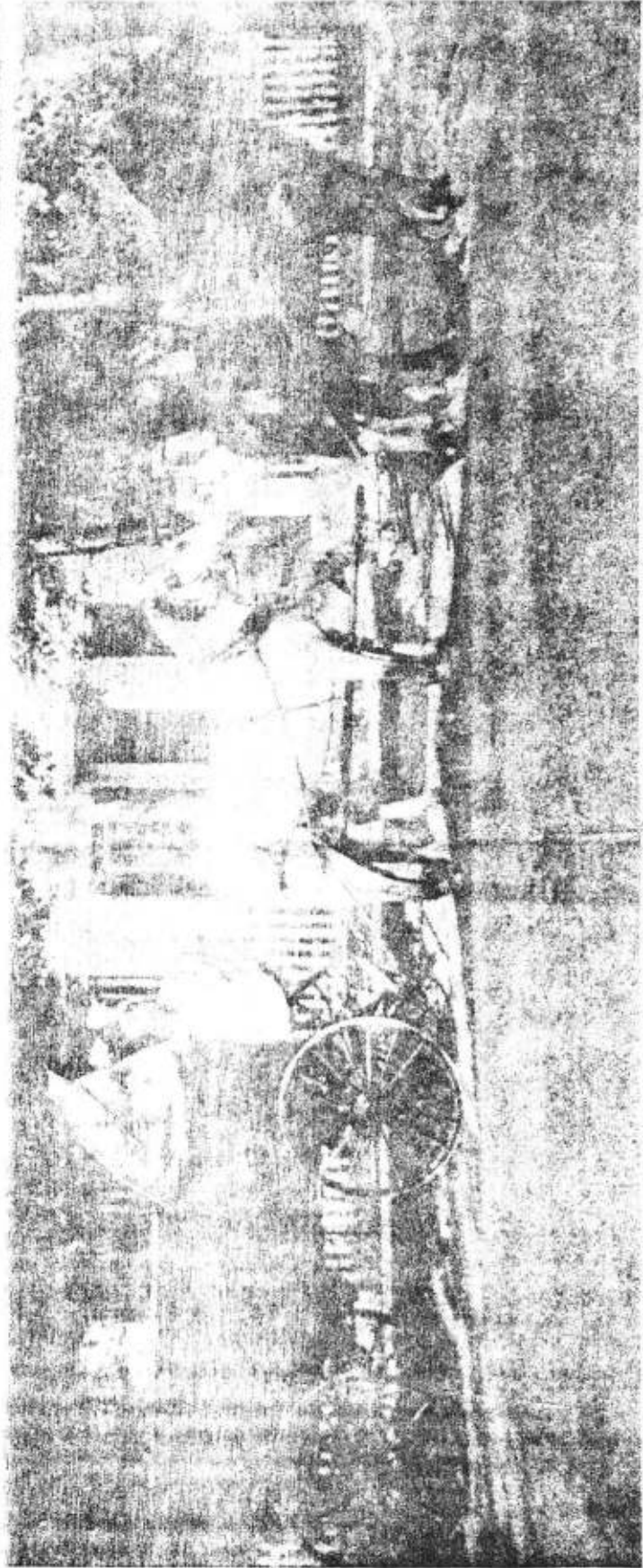
This takes advantage of the new trend in "mass selling" from a factory outlet which has proven successful in other areas.

Another local business still bearing the Cook name is Cook Wholesale Co., Orient St., serving stores with a variety of tobacco, confectionery and other items, much the same as S. A. Cook did with horses and wagon in 1890.



Seelye A. Cook

'Peddler' Became Father of Medina Industry



S. A. Cook delivering tobacco and confectionery products in the late 1800s.

the corner of West Center and West Avenue, and then he moved to West Center and Prospect on the southwest corner where the Home for the Mentally Retarded are presently located.

Mc Oh, yeah.

S Okay. They loved music and held a lot of concerts in their home and loved to entertain people. If anybody came to the Bent's Opera House, which they really backed one hundred percent, they stayed there. Or the circus used to come to town and they'd stay there with them. And he was active in the Masonic Lodge and the Alert Fire Company, which was a volunteer fire company, and then later expanded into quite a social group.

Mc Uh-huh.

S By the turn of the century my Grandfather, S. A. Cook, built a building -- or had a building built -- on Main Street and it was for business purposes. This was a brick building and it is still in use today. There ^{are} still stores on the main floor and offices on the second floor.

Mc So the name of S. A. Cook is still very much with us.

S Yes, yes -- between the furniture and this block -- yes, very much with us. Yes, this is very true.

Mc Jane, what about your other Grandparents? Were they living in Buffalo at the time?

S Yes, my Grandfather Nagel died before I was born but I remember my Grandmother Nagel quite well. She had quite a sense of humor and my Grandfather, at that time, worked at

Hengerer's. He was one of their partners. He was in the business end of it. They also had a cottage down at the lake and did a lot of sailing and that type of thing. My Father just had the one Sister, too. She lived to be one hundred and three years old. (Laughter)

Mc When you were born, did you have Brothers that were ahead of you?

S Yes, I had two older Brothers and one younger. The four of us were a year and a half apart. When I think of my Mother trying to raise the four of us, it is really something.

Mc What were your older Brothers' names?

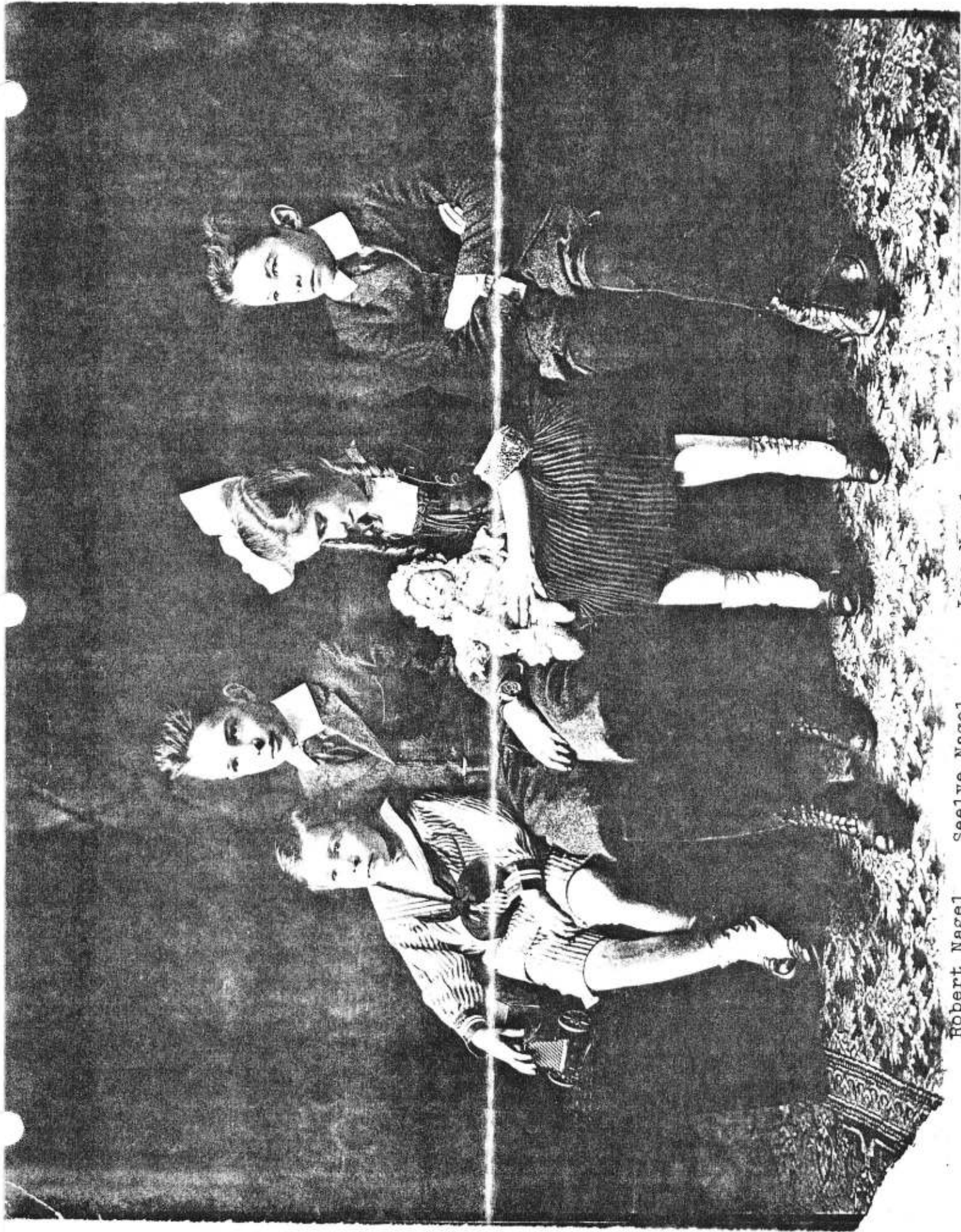
S Seelye Cook Nagel was my oldest Brother and then Mortimer Livingston Nagel and my younger Brother was Robert Hoffman Nagel.

Mc Uh-huh, so there were four of you. And I think that you told me that the woman who stayed with your family and lived there with you to help, helped you to have curley hair. How did she do that?

S Oh, yes, that was really something. Yes, she'd take a clothespin, wind my hair around that and then pull the clothespin down. Of course, I had to sit in a high stool while she went all around my head that way. It was kind of a slow process.

Mc What kind of work did your Father do at that time?

S My Father was born in Buffalo. He attended the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He was employed by Bell Telephone System at the time. After a burst appendix, which he almost



Mortimer Nagel

Jane Nagel

Seelye Nagel

Robert Nagel

died, he moved to the farm where I was born. After recovering his strength by working on the farm he became a gasoline and oil distributor. He was in partnership with Charlie Foster.

Mc So you really were a little farm girl for a while.

S Yes, we had a great time down on the farm. We enjoyed -- we had a lot of things in our playroom. We had circuses and all sorts of things to play with. And that playroom was where we ate until we had proper manners -- we were not allowed to come to the dining room until we were properly trained. Ah, I had thirteen dolls and I never could decide which one to take to bed so I slept with all thirteen of them. (Laughter) Most of the clothes that I had were made at home. We used to have these dressmakers; Mrs. Quinn and Miss Shields, would come for a week at a time and they would stay for board and room and some wages. We sure got tired of standing - trying on those dresses. I must tell you about a fire we had when we lived on the farm. Here were the four little children, and I told you about this Matie that lived with us and she had the "patience of Job", and always was composed. I never saw her excited in all those years. Well, my Mother was laying down and Matie came to her bedroom and said, "Mrs. Nagel, the house is on fire but I have all four children out." So, my Mother, of course, got pretty excited and she got on the phone right away because my Father was working on a neighborhood farm. She went to dial the phone and, of course, in those days there were about thirteen on a party line and it took quite a while before you could get

the line. Two women were gossiping so my Mother said, "Please, I've got to have the line -- our house is on fire." So they immediately dropped off, and before you could say "Jack Robinson" there were about fifty men there with their buckets with a bucket brigade, to put out this fire. The fire didn't burn the whole place down or anything. It was just a big fire from the cellar doorway into the kitchen -- that area -- but my Mother decided she should pay back all these people that helped so much so she decided to have a tea so she invited all the women from the Knowlesville area to come to this tea. But what did they do? They went to Burdette--Emmens Hat Shop and each woman bought herself a new hat to come to this tea party. (Laughter)

We attended the Culvert School which is a one-room school on the corner of the Culvert Road and what was then called the Million Dollar Highway. Our teacher was Mrs. O'Grady and she had all eight grades. This was a little over a mile from our home. We would walk most of the time but if it were bad weather, we would get a ride in the cutter or a wagon or what have you. When we got older we would ride our bikes. There were recitation benches in the front of the room where the classes would meet. There was only one boy in my grade with me and that was Beryl Thackster. He had long curls and I must tell you about an exciting adventure. He was run over by a car right in front of the school but was not hurt. You see, he was between the wheels, At that time the cars were much higher.

Mc You mean the car really didn't injure him?

- S No. He was very fortunate. There was the pot-belly stove right in the middle of the school and we used to -- Mrs. O'Grady used to cook stews. Different ones used to bring vegetables or meat or what have you. Or she would make hot cocoa during the winter months. Of course, we brought our lunch. There were two out-houses out in back; one for the girls and one for the boys, of course. But they were all eight grades and we just learned to help each other, and the way they handled that in those days, they'd have, for instance, the third and fourth grade Social Studies together and the fifth and sixth grade. One year you'd have the fifth and the next year you'd have the sixth. That was how that was handled. So there probably weren't any more classes than if you had just one grade, really.
- Mc About how many children would there have been in the schoolroom at that time?
- S Oh, couple dozen. Yeah, there were quite a few. She had quite a large class. They were all different sizes and so forth.
- Mc Was discipline ever a problem?
- S The way she disciplined us -- she would draw a white chalk on the floor -- a circle -- and we had to stay in that circle if we were naughty and if we said something wrong, we had to write it one hundred times on the blackboard so we remembered it then so that was really something at that time. What else? Oh, we used to go to Tanners Cemetery which was right next -- near the school itself and put flags and flowers on it and then there were

several beautiful woods nearby we used to go for a day's tramp in the woods and on picnics and always had lots of ceremonies and lots of entertainment for the parents and this type of thing. It was really a cooperative venture.

Mc You probably celebrated Arbor Day?

S Yes, we did. We planted trees in the school yard. I think they're still there. Of course, that building is still there today. It is used as a residence. But I'll have to tell you about my first haircut. My long curls were cut so that day I wrote on all my papers "Bob Nagel", which was my Brother's name, but I had my hair bobbed and I was pretty proud of that but my Brother got all my papers back. (Laughter)

Mc Jane, what did you do for Sunday School activities when you were a small child living on the farm?

S Well, Mother used to dress the four of us and bring us into the Methodist Church and at that time it was very difficult for teachers. They didn't have too many teachers and they couldn't handle the children. She figured it was a waste of time, getting us dressed up to bring us into town for us to horse-around, so to speak, so she decided she would teach us at home. So we had our own Sunday School Class in our own backyard and that's how we were brought up when we were little. We learned the Bible from my Mother.

Mc It's a good way to do it. You were telling me at one time that you had a pony. That had -- you had a pony cart. Tell me about

S Yes, we did. We had a pony and a pony cart and this entertained a lot of friends of ours from Medina that used to come down and ride the pony and the pony cart and play on the farm. Matie (I told you about her before).. she was wonderful with children that were difficult to handle. She could always manage them. She was a very composed person and we had a lot of fun. There were a lot of things we could play with in groups. We had a complete circus set in the attic and we had a playroom which was equipped with everything from a rocking horse to a record player. Of course, it was a phonograph in those days. (Laughter)

Mc Your Mother had friends and neighbors in for little parties once in a while, didn't she?

S Yes she did and she would hire Madie Cook and Jenny Remede for these special parties. They made the best parker-house rolls you ever did taste! They would come, spend the whole day; they would work in the kitchen -- nobody else was allowed in the kitchen and they would prepare the food and they would serve it in their little white aprons and white caps and Mother belonged to a -- she called it "Octo Club", which means eight. And there were two tables of Bridge that they used to ...

Mc And that's how you learned to play Bridge?

S ... No, I was just a little kid then. (Laughter) It wasn't until after we moved to Medina that -- eleven years old when I learned to play Bridge.

Mc That's pretty young. Ah, what about dancing class?

S Every week we came up to Medina, my Brothers and I, dressed --

I was dressed in my party dress, had long gloves covering my elbows, and a little fan and we learned the waltz and the fox-trot. Miss Sills was our teacher and it was at the Alert Club, which was in the S. A. Cook building -- that the Alert was at one time a volunteer fire company and later turned into a social organization. Our music was by a pianist and usually it was Natalie Newell Callahan.

Mc What about your memories of the circus?

S Oh yes, well, when we lived on the farm, my Mother loved the circus and she used to pack us into the old Jordan, drive up to Medina, and watch them come in on the train. It was most exciting. They had this ramp and would unload these animals from the train and it was fun to watch them come in. Once our car got stuck in the mud and an elephant came and pushed us out of the mud -- so that was pretty exciting for us. My Mother and Father really enjoyed the circus and loved to take us kids to see it whenever possible. This goes back -- my Mother loved people and loved to entertain and she came by this rightly because my Grandmother and Grandfather Cook loved to entertain -- not only circus people but entertainers that came to Medina to the Bent's Opera House and places like that. And they would have musicals in their --Musicales, I guess they called it -- in their home because they had a big music room.

Mc This is in that beautiful house ...

S ... This was on the corner of West Center and Prospect. Yes,

and this was hard wood floors and this house had all the wide planks in it instead of the narrow planks of hard wood floors. The music room had a large piano in it and an old phonograph with the cylinder records, of course, and there was a special oriental corner and then there were other rooms downstairs. They would -- when Adelaide was growing up ...

Mc ... Adelaide Holt?

S Adelaide Holt who was my Aunt Pearl's daughter -- she is quite a bit older than I am -- and she tells of having parties there and how they would play "Post Office" and use this little telephone room, they used to call it, which was probably like a closet. It was under the stairs and they used to use that for this game of "Post Office." That made it a little more special.

Mc "Post Office", for those who don't know, is a game of boys and girls finding a way of mailing a letter which would mean giving a kiss to a certain person.

S That's the idea. (Laughter)

Mc But that is a beautiful home that your Grandparents had and I'm not surprised that your Mother was a beautiful hostess. Mother, Grandmother and Grandfather, and then your own Mother and Husband, and so you grew up knowing what it meant to really entertain and have a lot of people in.

S Yes, they always got out their nicest dishes. They had beautiful dishes and silver and they always had plenty of help to do all the dirty work. That makes a big difference! (Laughter)

Mc What about -- we live so near to Lake Ontario, Jane, did you have any memories or connections with the Lake?

S In 1922, we built a cottage at - down to Sunny Crest -- that was just East of Shadigee. At that time, we were the third cottage to be built there. Uncle Milford and Aunt Pearl Childs had a cottage and Mr. and Mrs. Harmon Rowley and their two daughters, from Lyndonville, had a cottage down there. We -- just while it was being built, on the farm, my oldest Brother, Seelye, was chasing me and I probably started that -- something -- and I tripped on the rug and broke my toe. Well, the only person -- only place there was an X-ray machine was Dr. Tanner's. He was the only one in Medina that had an X-ray machine, and so had to go to the Dentist's office to have my toe X-rayed and found out it was broken so I remember hobbling around on crutches -- ah, around the frame work of the house -- the cottage -- as it was being built down to the Lake. Of course, there was no running water. We had the pump and that type of thing. We had grown to quite a community down there. There were twelve cottages in all and we grew to be quite close down there. Fourth of July, each family would put in Five Dollars for the fireworks. At that time, it was legal to do that and they were always stored in our cottage, off the maid's room and that was - it always made my Mother very nervous until we got them out of the house. They -- it was a great celebration and they had three cement piers and on the cement piers they would have this great display of fire works and we would watch it from the bank.

We had fun as a group because all the adults would meet at one of the cottages, and the children would go to another cottage and we would play card games and have fun that way. So we had a great time while we were living down to the Lake and we were very close. Whenever anybody moved in -- I remember when Marcia Munson and her two Brothers moved in and to this day I can see the two boys -- the two Munson boys -- being pushed right into the Lake. I don't think they knew how to swim but I think they learned very quickly. (Laughter) You were speaking of games that we played. One of them was water-tag and you had to touch them underwater. If you -- unless you wanted to be "it" for a long time.

About this time, I went to Camp Nundawaga which was a "Y" Camp over where the light house is on Lake Ontario. This was two weeks for the girls and then another two weeks for the boys. They'd charge the whole sum of Seven Dollars a week -- the fee at this camp. We had swimming and arts and crafts, and all the things they usually do; the campfires and the hikes and the nature studies and dancing and this type of thing that you usually have at a camp. But I went two years to this camp.

Mc Jane, you were telling me that you were born with difficulty with your vision. Will you tell me about that?

S Well, my Mother said that when I was a baby I held blocks right up to my nose to see and as I look back on it now, I was born with cataracts and it wasn't discovered until I was a Senior in

High School that that's what it was. They didn't have those tests in those days. Of course, Mother used to take me up to Buffalo and I went to an eye specialist and had horn-rimmed glasses which I didn't wear too much. I couldn't see much better with them anyways. And also braces on my teeth, so I was really a nice looking girl, you know. (Laughter)

Mc How did you get up to Buffalo?

S We went by trolley and we went to Medina and took the trolley to Buffalo. It was an all-day trip and, of course, we enjoyed going out to luncheon and we'd go see Operettas and stage shows and -- at the Shea's Buffalo -- that was always a big thrill to do that. I remember getting my hair cut or buying a new party dress or Mother going shopping for some special thing that she wanted. I remember she had a Magellican lamp that was her pride and joy. This was about 1923. My folks sold the farm and we moved to Medina at 228 Park Avenue. We bought the house from Harvey Robbins. It is now the Houseman's Funeral Home.

Mc This meant that you had to change schools, didn't it?

S Yes, I went to Central School to Sixth Grade and I had Mr. Wise, Clifford Wise, for my teacher in the Sixth Grade. Took piano lessons from two different teachers at different times, but at this time, 1924, I had a Sister born, Nancy. She was born with "spina-bifida", which is a growth at the end of the spine -- a separation. She went through several operations to straighten her legs and straighten her feet and all sorts of things. They

were expensive and very painful.

Mc Jane, you said that Nancy is about twelve years younger than you are?

S Yes.

Mc But the doctors said that this was not the reason because she was . . .

S Change-of-life baby.

Mc Yeah, but this was not the reason she was born . . .

S No, no, no, this is just the peculiar birth defect that happens. There's apparently no "rhyme-nor-reason". To this day they can't do much more for Spina-Bifida than they did then.

Mc You said that she didn't have any feeling at all in her legs or feet?

S That's right. You could stick a pin right through her legs and she would never feel it.

Mc It must have been very difficult for your parents to cope with this and the costs must have been exorbitant.

S The costs were exorbitant. We didn't have hospitalization like they do now-a-days, and not only that, it -- nurses and everything else -- because having surgery on a ten week old - or less - baby, you know, had to keep her dry in that area and everything, that meant nurses around the clock all the time, because that dressing had to stay dry. So it really . . .

Mc . . . And yet, jumping way ahead to the present day, Nancy now is an adult living in her own apartment and really quite self-sufficient.

S Oh, yes.

Mc . . . Has lots of outside interests and activities.

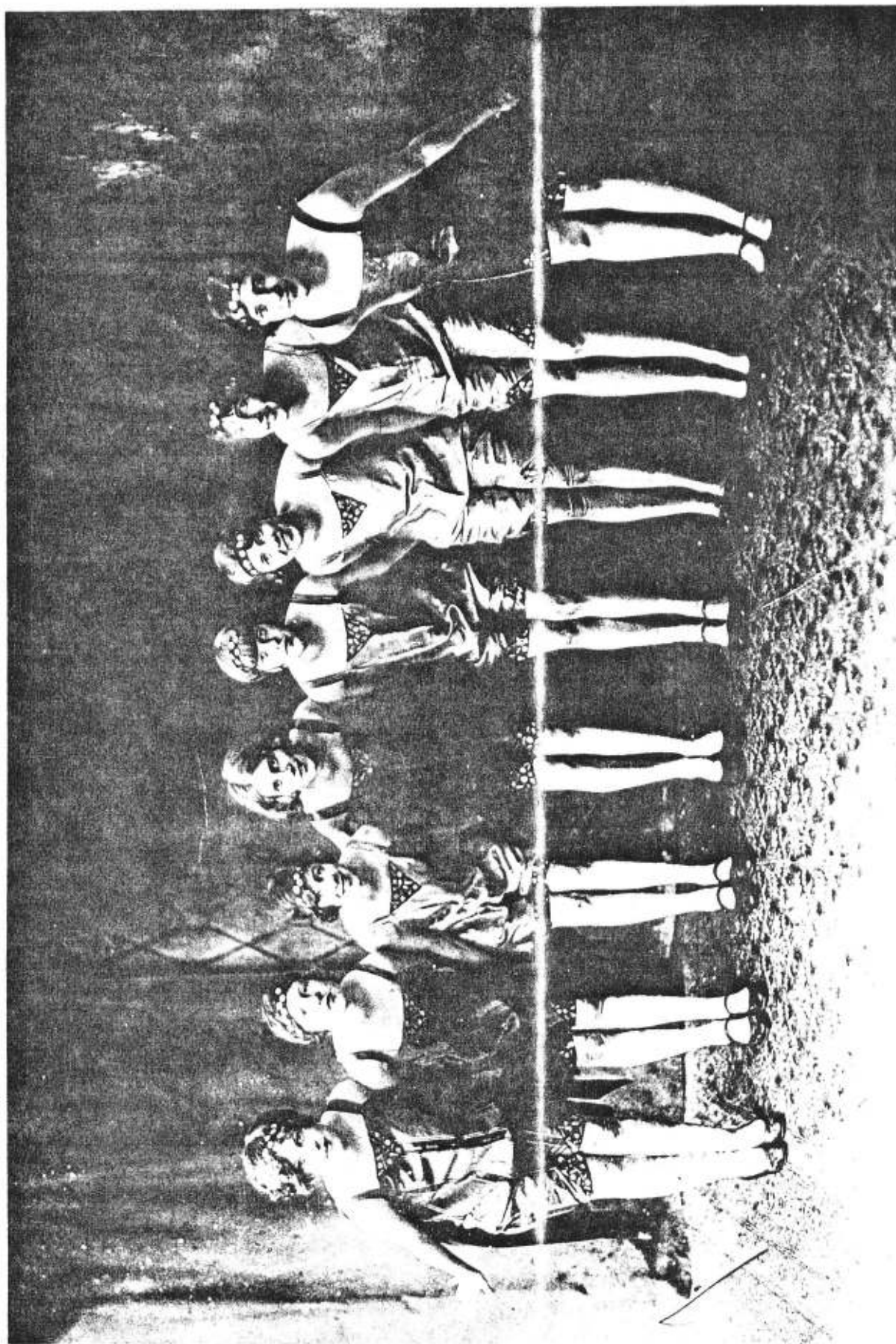
S Yes, she does. She really does and she takes very good care of herself and the fact that she can live alone is really quite surprising; and she has friends and outside activities that take her interest. When you think that the doctor had told my Mother that she wouldn't live to be a teenager, it's just surprising that she has lived this long and she has suffered a lot, of course, but she forced herself to learn to do a lot. She passed the beginner's test in swimming, she got her Driver's License, even. So she really had a lot of gumption to go ahead and do these things.

Mc Lots of courage.

S Yes, she had a lot of courage and if ever you feel sorry for yourself, why you just think of her and what she has had to cope with all her life. It has been really rough for her, I am sure.

(Pause)

S Medina was trying to raise money to build a new hospital. It was a great need for that and each year we would have an outside director come in, choose people for the leads in these great shows and musicals and we girls would be chosen to be dancers in this group. And Mrs. Erhardt used to come and be our choreographer for these dances, and I was just in between those heights so I was always with the shorter girls and the taller girls -- I was always in four dances and I thought I was big "hot-stuff." (Laughter)



"THE LETTERS" (c. 1925)

Pearl Altman, Florence Boyle, Flora Posson, Pauline Hise, Margaret Posson, Virginia Posson, Elizabeth Acer, and Jane Nagel (Stillinger).

THE HOSPITAL BENEFIT SHOW

Mc Jane, did you do a high kick at that time?

S Oh, yes. I could do the clock-split and cart wheels and that type of thing. Yes, I just loved dancing. I really did. I used to -- when I was a little girl, I used to turn the phonograph on and dance up and down the room to my heart's content, so you see I was crazy. In an Orleans County Fair, I danced a solo and that's when it used to be at the old fair-grounds and that was pretty exciting, too. Then when I was about thirteen years old, I went to my first formal dances because I had two older brothers that had been away to school and quite often they would need a date for their friends. And the three dances were at the Armory where it is now, and the Alert, which was over in the Cook Building, which was at one time the Alert Hose Company, and the Ergonian, which was the High School, and there we wore the long full gowns. I had a velvet evening coat, elbow length gloves with the little buttons on them, and we always had a corsage. We really had a lot of festive parties. We used to give dinner-dances in our home and have an orchestra - the whole works. We would dance in the hall and in the dining room would be set with the best dishes and we'd really have a marvelous time. When I was about eleven years old and my older brothers were sent to Nichols School, which was a prep school for boys in Buffalo, they wanted to learn how to play Bridge so I learned how to play Bridge when I was eleven years old. It was pretty young

but I . . .

Mc You're still playing Bridge now.

S . . . I'm still playing Contract Bridge. That was Contract Bridge -- not Auction. Oh, I'll have to tell you something funny about that, too. When I was learning, my Brother, Mort, said, "You have three more trump in your hand." I said, "You're looking in my hand", and, of course, he was counting what was left. (Laughter)

When we used to go to Olcott about that time or a little later when we were in our early teens and -- from the Lake -- and we used to take a drive in our Jordan, our car, and this Jordan had folding chairs that were in back of the front seat so that when you sat you were facing the back, and we used to pile eleven to thirteen of us in this car. Yes, it had running boards but we got them all inside the car. That's the size of the car.

Mc In those days when you went to Olcott, which was a building, is that right?

S It was a Park. A big Park . . .

Mc . . . A Park? Ah, when you went you didn't go necessarily as couples, is that right?

S No, that didn't make any difference. You danced with everybody and you went with a group. It didn't make any difference if you were paired off or not. It really didn't and there were three places to dance. One was the hotel, and the other two were

dance halls. One was right on the Lake. They always had the best name bands at Olcott. It was really a big thrill to go there and you'd pay so much for a dance. I think it was -- some of these places were three dances for a quarter or something like that. We always had a good time and enjoyed -- you know -- as a group. We did a lot of things as a group. Down to the Lake we were as a group and a variety of ages and, you know, the older ones would always look out for the younger ones.

Mc And especially if you had brothers like you did. They'd look out for you.

S Then I graduated from High School in . . .

Mc You graduated in 1930.

S . . . Uh-huh, 1930.

Mc Medina High School.

S Yes, and there were fifty in our graduating class. We started out with one hundred fifty in our class but, of course, they didn't all graduate. Then . . .

Mc . . . In those days, Jane, and I can remember, too -- I was back there -- If you went through the eighth grade, that was quite an accomplishment.

S Yeah.

Mc . . . But to continue and then graduate all the way through High School was really something. What did you wear? Did you have caps and gowns?

S No, we didn't have caps and gowns. This was 1930 and that was a pretty bad year and ah -- no, we wore dresses. I remember I had a beautiful party dress. My Aunt Edith had sent me money and my Mother bought me a special dress and I remember brocade shoes and the whole works.

Mc Did your High School Class have a trip of any sort?

S Yes, we went to Washington, D. C. We earned money by making fudge and selling it, and magazines, of course, and that type of thing and we had a great time.

Mc How did you go?

S We went by train and that was exciting.

Mc Well, the Stock Market had crashed the year before, in 1929.

S Yes.

Mc And you graduated in 1930, and then I understand that you did Post Graduate or P.G.

S Yes, my Mother said I was too young to go away to college and I think the real reason was that I had two Brothers in college -- that's why. (Laughter) They wanted to wait until they got out.

Mc Right, but in 1932 you did go away to school.

S Yes, went to a school in New York: Harriet Melissa Mills Kindergarten Training School for Girls -- yet. And that was on Fifth Avenue in New York City, and I stayed at the Parnasus Club which was near Columbia University. I had a marvelous time because through the Parnasus Club we had passes to the

musicals and the great Broadway shows and this type of thing. That was a marvelous experience.

Mc Who were some of the people you saw -- some of the famous actors -- do you remember? (Pause) Maybe George Arliss and Fred Astaire . . .

S Yes, yes.

Mc . . . and his sister, Adele.

S Adele, yes, they were darling . . .

Mc . . . and Helen Hayes.

S Oh, Helen Hayes. She's still marvelous. I think she's marvelous -- a very outstanding actress, yes.

Mc You were telling me, Jane, that you came home for Christmas that year, 1932, would you want to tell us about that?

S Well, I came home for Christmas in 1932, after being to New York school for a half year and was informed that the banks had crashed in Medina; so I had to get in touch with my roommate and have her send my trunk full of clothes and things home because no longer could I go to a private school. So then my Father took me to Buffalo and they took in no new entrants in the middle of the year. Of course, they do now but they didn't at that time, and then he took me to Brockport and talked with Dr. Thompson. At that time he was the head of the school and he said, "Yes, you get credit for any courses you take." So I entered Brockport then and -- Brockport Normal, it was then -- that was a three-year course. Then I went to Buffalo State

Teachers College in the Summer until I had my Degree.

Mc That must have been a very hard period for you.

S Oh, it was because it was quite a change because I was entertained by parents of my Brothers' friends that had been to Princeton with him and also had an Aunt and Uncle who lived near New York and they took me to see these shows. And I went to some beautiful parties and really had a great time. I knew a boy at Columbia University and was really on the go quite a bit. **I**t was quite a drop-off to go to Brockport because there were probably about twenty girls to one boy down there and at that time Brockport -- the grade school, the high school and the Normal school were all one building. It was a very, very small -- and they didn't pay the highest prices to the teachers that taught there, and to have me take their exam when I hadn't been in their classes, wasn't accepted too well.

Mc How about your family during this black time -- black period. I believe you said they had to sell their home or leave it and go . . .

S . . . Yes, yes, we did, but before that we just coped the best way we could. I borrowed money to finish school and ah -- which turned out to be an asset because when I was out teaching, I didn't buy the encyclopedias and the new cars and the World Book and what have you because I had to save my money to pay back the debt that I had borrowed -- so that was to an advantage that way.

Mc Where did your family go from Park Avenue?

S We lived over on Ann Street and we moved from there. I remember how upset my Mother was because we had the original - the first National Geographic Magazines and they were lost in the moving. There were a lot of things that were lost in the way, you know, but we just made the most of things and had fun anyways and we always had people over and there was always enough food to go around. We just put another potato in the pot and made it go. That's all.

Mc And your Brothers, your two Brothers or three Brothers, were in college during this period.

S Well, my two Brothers had graduated. Bob never - my youngest Brother never went to college.

Mc Oh, I see.

S Yeah. So he -- I was probably more fortunate in that case. No, he worked at the bank after he got out of High School, and then he got in . . .

Mc . . . What bank was this?

S Medina - Citizens Bank, or whatever.

Mc I see.

S I guess that was the name of it then - whatever - anyways.

Mc Ah, but you said that your Father - your parents - had money in the bank and when the bank closed that took care of any money they had.

S That's right. That's right. That really flattened them right out.

Mc It flattened a lot of people.

S It flattened a lot of people but it was a very tragic time and some took it really very hard. It was really a rough time, I am sure.

Mc I think your attitude though -- your bouyancy showed through. Like another person I was interviewing some time ago, evidently there was an earthquake in China and horrible things happened, many people died, and this woman remembered the banks closing, but how thankful she was that at least we didn't have an earthquake and I think you are like that -- you remember the good things.(NOTE: See transcript of Sophia B. Cotriss...).

S Well, we had a good time. There were the four of us and we were pretty compatible and Brothers and Sisters are, I guess. We really had had the best of everything while we were growing up. There was no question about it. We just did and so we were older and so we were probably more flexible than if we were younger or that much older. But we just did the best we could, I guess.

Mc Jane, you graduated from Brockport and eventually you got your first teaching job at Shelby Center. Would you tell me about that?

S This was a two-room school at Shelby Center. Mrs. Butts taught in the big room. She had the Grades Five through Eight, and I went there substituting for Mrs. Smith who passed away. So I was cleaning out her drawers one day and came across a rubber hose and held it in front of the children. I said, "How many have felt the gentle touch of this?", and oh, about sixty percent

Shelby Center School
(c.1936)

Jane Nagel (Stillinger)
girl: Shirley Maxon
(Nellist)
Mrs. Anna Butts



Mr. and Mrs. Mortimer Nagel (1955)



of them raised their hands. So I dumped it in the basket right in front of their eyes. And I had parents coming to tell me that I wouldn't be able to have any control of their children if I didn't have that rubber hose there. Well, I felt differently about that. The first year I was there, it was a really cold winter with lots of snow and I had snow pants, part of a snowsuit, when I was in high school so I brought that to school and wore it to go out and play recess with the children. Well, I'm telling you the parents came and told me about that! That was very undignified and unladylike for a teacher to wear pants. That was a terrible thing to do.

Mc That was before we all wore slacks?

S That was before we all wore slacks.

Mc Now, you taught the first grades, one through four, is that right?

S Yes, yes. Charlie Hawk was the Trustee there for a few years and he says, "Well, Jane, I run a business and whatever you need." He was a wonderful Trustee in that respect. Luella P. Hoyer was our District Supervisor and she came around and would check up on us, and so forth.

Mc Did you have music teachers?

S We didn't at that time. We were working real hard to have a music teacher and we put on several plays and musicals. We put on Hansel and Gretle and Christmas at the Circus, and so forth, trying to encourage -- the District gave money and the other Districts had music teachers but we didn't. Well, finally we

did get one, after all this work, and Bernard Lynch was our music teacher. He'd come in once a week and it was great for the children to have a man teacher and to have somebody else to handle the children. They really learned a lot from him and he was very likeable with the children.

Mc How long did you teach at the Shelby Center school?

S Taught there for six years, and then went to Attica and taught Sixth Grade in Attica and was there during the week and would come home weekends. I was the only new teacher there. Oh, I should tell you this: I was the only new teacher there and Dr. Harrington was the Superintendent, and he would always ask me how my family was and this type of thing. And once the Secretary came to my room and said, "I'll take your class for you. You have a telegram." So I went down and thought, "what the heck is this telegram." That was unusual to get a telegram in those days, unless somebody died, or something. So she took my class and I went down and Harrington was in the outer office with a special meeting so I went into his office to accept the telegram and it was Charlie, whom I was engaged to then, saying he was coming for my Birthday, so as I was leaving and I thought, well, I don't want him to think it was something from home for me to worry about, so I said, "It was just a Birthday Telegram", and on I went back up to the room. Well, the next thing I knew, up came Mr. Harrington and he said, "I want that boy and that boy and that girl and that girl", and out they went. So I scooted over to the Fifth Grade Teacher and said, "Do you

know what's going on here?", and she said, "Well, I don't know. Maybe it's the Student Government thing." I says, "Well, he picked the two smart girls but the boys aren't the smartest. How come he didn't ask me?" and I didn't think anything more about it. Then it was at the last period of the day and I was giving a special test. This was a reading test and I was writing the questions on the board and having their concentration and all of a sudden the door flew open and in came a great big Birthday cake with a note, "Can we have a piece, too?" Mr. Harrington had called his wife and had her make a Birthday cake for me so that was pretty special!

Mc That was great. They really liked you. Well, so you're mentioning a young man by the name -- what's his name -- Charlie?

S His real name was Clare Greydon but they called him "Charlie" and we were married on August 2nd, 1941 in the Methodist Church and Webb Ayres was the Minister, and, yes, Miss Chase was the Organist. She was also the Organist for my Cousin, my Aunt and my Mother, so she was really old by then. We had the Reception at the Elks Club. That was at the S. A. Cook Building.

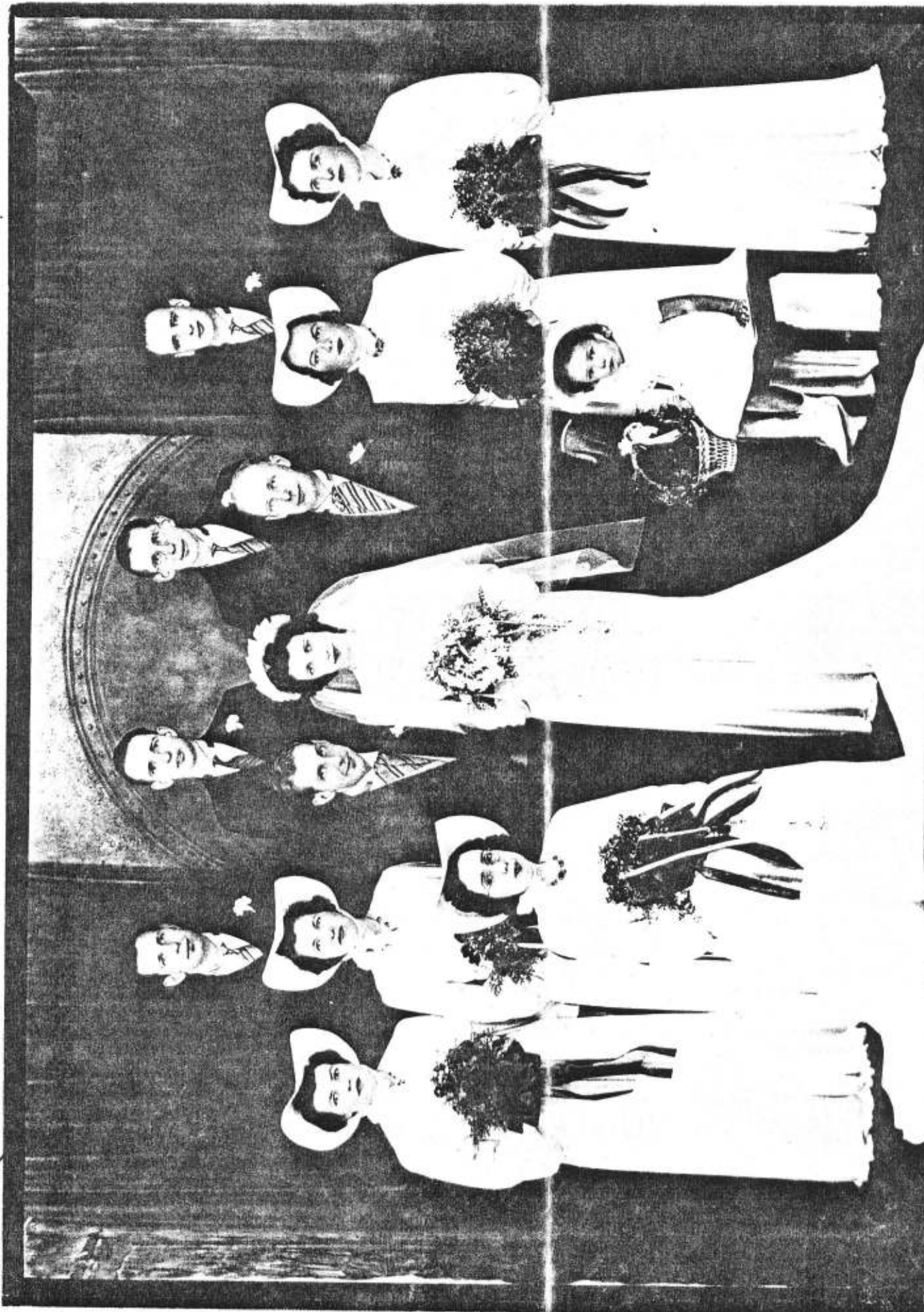
Mc You said that your Mother was married in the same Methodist Church in Medina that you had been married?

S Yes. They had the same Organist. All of us . . .

Mc . . . Yeah. Was your Grandmother married there, too?

S I really don't know.

Mc Uh-huh, but your daughter, Donna, was.



Louise Mackey Betty Nagel Robert Nagel Seelye Nagel Mortimer Nagel Douglas Stewart
 Nancy Nagel Clare & Jane Alan Stillinger Jane Stedman Marietta Jordan
 Little Suzanne Nagel

- S My Daughter was married there, my Cousin and my Aunt and my Mother. Yeah, isn't that amazing?
- Mc Oh.
- S Yes, yes, and I think in memory of Grandpa Cook, they put a new organ in which they -- a few years ago, they had to replace but it lasted a good many years, so that . . .
- Mc . . . Well, let's hear a little bit more about Charlie.
- S Well, we -- about our wedding, you mean?
- Mc Well, yeah. I'd like to hear more about your wedding and your honeymoon. (Laughter)
- S Well, to begin with I guess it was unusual in that I was twenty minutes late to my own wedding and not only that but we never did have a "first night." We were with a wedding party until 5:30 in the morning. We went to Clarence Automobile Club and we danced all -- all the way along there and then we started out for the Statler from there . . .
- Mc . . . The Statler is a hotel?
- S A hotel in Buffalo and we got in a one-way street, going the wrong way. Well, along came the cop and stopped us. Well, it was very evident because Charlie's corsage was all brown and droopy and mine was droopy. We were covered with confetti. It was quite obvious what had happened so he said, "Where are you headed?" He said, "Oh, you're going the wrong way." Well, my husband said, "Well, if we turn the other way, we'll be all right." He says, "Where are you headed?" He says, "To the Statler Hotel in Buffalo." "Well, follow me." So we had a

police escort to the Statler. (Laughter)

Our honeymoon was in Maine. We went to Maine and dug clams. We drove there and just had a delightful time. When we got back -- my husband worked at Buffalo Arms and he was a Machinist and worked there for several years. He was in a horrible automobile accident but . . .

Mc . . . Now this was soon after you were married that he was in the accident?

S Yes, yes, that was the first year that we were married that that happened, as a matter of fact.

Mc He was not driving but was a passenger?

S He was a passenger in the car and went right through the windshield. They hit a tractor-trailer Truck and it was a foggy day. And I had made him a venison sandwich. I never made a venison sandwich after that, believe me. In May, Donna Jane was born. She was the mascot of our Bethany Class, which was a couples class in the United Methodist Church. Before she was half a day old, they had collected money and she had a bank account before she was half a day old. This came out of a Minstrel Show that my husband was in while she was being born. We had a Minstrel Show and three weeks before she was born, I was in the chorus and directed the eight and nine year old boys in a drill, so I guess I felt pretty well. But that was very exciting to have these shows and the show had to go on.

.....
(NOTE: This interview is continued: Stillinger #2).
.....

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Benefit Church Building Fund
Directed and Staged by **W. C. Thibault**
Pianist, Mrs. Beverly Smith

PROGRAM PART I

Opening Chorus—"Love's Old Sweet Song" and "Old Black Joe"
Old Black Joe in Person - - - - - Charles Stillinger
Interlocutor - - - - - W. "Bill" Thibault
End Men - Norman Pole, Alvin Eskelson, Charles Kopp,
George Root, Allen Hoffman, Charles Stillinger.

SONGS

"Why Don't We" - - - - - Norman Pole
"On the Back Porch" - - - - - George Root
Selected - - - - - Mrs. Benj. Leonard
"Little New York" - - - - - Alvin Eskelson
"Carry Me Back to Old Virginia" - - - - - Jeanette Hoyt
Lots of Harmony - - - - - Charles Stillinger
"Perfect Day" - - - - - W. C. Thibault
Barnyard Quintet - Stillinger, Root, Pole, Hoffman, Eskelson

Specialties in Part I and II

Reading - - - - - "Al" Hoffman
That "Silent Lad" - - - - - Beverly Smith
Quartette - - - - - Eskelson, Rae, Sharman, Kingsley
Tap Dancing - - - - - Carol Gregg, Margaret Paul
Song "Moonlight" - - - - - Donald Leonard
Patriotic Drill—"Uncle Sam", Donald Pole, Allan Rae, Jackie
Matson, Dudley Johnson, Teddy Vickory, Robert Cor-
nell, Roy Plummer.
"Full of Nonsense" - - - - - Stillinger, Smith
Accordian Solo - - - - - Joyce Obourn
Solovax - - - - - Harold Suzanne

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Mc Jane, tell us a little more about where your husband worked during the period of the World War II years.

S He worked at Buffalo Arms for several years and . . .

Mc . . . Did he work on the Manhattan Project?

S Then he -- yes, he did. The Buffalo Arms sent him out to Illinois to work on the Manhattan Project. It was a pretty frightening thing. Our letters were opened and censored and the badge that he had to wear to work was left at work. It was one of the best kept secrets of the war. The only reason he knew what it was was because he was a trouble shooter and machinist -- and that type of thing. So he went from machine to machine and would pick up the information and put it all together and realized that he was working on the atomic bomb but he never told me or anybody else. I never knew it - that that's what he was working on. I knew that he was working on something that was frightening but I never knew until it came out in the papers that that's what he was working on -- so no wonder he was frightened. It's a pretty horrible thing to think of.

Charlie came home one day and he was in great pain. One of his lungs had collapsed. We were lucky to live near Dr. Lipson who was a specialist in that line. As a matter of fact, Donna and his daughter were good little friends and he -- which they didn't even do, even then -- he came over and took care of him . . .

Mc Take care of Charlie?

S . . . What they do is the opposite of what they do for T.B. They inflate instead of deflating the lung, and this meant he had to have bed rest and that meant he could not go back to

work where he was. Then, in Medina, he opened up his own shop for repairs - ah, machine shop - that type of thing.

Mc At that time, you and Charlie and Donna were living on West Center Street. Is that right?

S Yes, that's where we were living and . . .

Mc . . . Where was his machine shop?

S . . . Park Avenue, towards downtown there, yeah, but that didn't last very long because he wasn't a business man and it wasn't a money making deal. So then he branched out with whatever he could get a-hold of and he laid floors and did all sorts of things to earn money to keep going.

Mc He laid floors for Hutchinson?

S Yeah, he laid floors for Hutchinson and Doc Jordan, from Albion, and he had some great tales to tell about that. When Donna was just a little guy -- and of course, Charlie had these coveralls that he wore when he did this job and they were sent to the cleaners. So nothing do but he took Donna's -- he got Donna a pair. Now she was only -- she wasn't three years old yet -- and got her a pair and took her with him and she had her own linoleum knife and would cut linoleum and these old ladies^{would} see this little girl with this knife and be frightened to death -- she's going to cut herself. Says, "Well, I hope it isn't sharp!", "Well, of course, it's sharp!", says Charlie. "How could she cut if it weren't sharp?" (Laughter) But the cleaners would get the biggest kick out of seeing these small overalls come through the

cleaners. Well, then in 1953, or thereabouts, he went to Harrison's and got a job in the Tool Room and worked there.

Mc This is over in Lockport?

S This was in Harrison's in Lockport - General Motors. He didn't get in the Tool Room at first -- he had to work up gradually to it but he finally got in there and with a fine bunch of fellows and seemed to enjoy that and it was steady work. He had a lot of overtime work. At first it was shift work so I never knew if I was cooking breakfast or dinner because it was really three different shifts that he was on. I remember that they had an Open House and when our daughter was a lot older than -- sixth, seventh grade, maybe -- he took us through and he showed Donna all these hard-working people up there working on the same thing over and over again and Charlie said, "Now, Donna, this is what you'll do if you don't go to college", so he pressed that point to her that it was very important for her to learn -- to go away to school -- to learn something special so she would have a trade or a . . .

Mc . . . ~~So~~ Charlie worked at Harrison's almost until the month before he died, didn't he?

S Yes, he did. He worked right up until a month before his surgery. His surgery was the last of November -- first part of December. Yes he did. He worked until 1970 then he had lung surgery and . . .

Mc . . . This turned out to be cancer?

S This turned out to be cancer. There was not much they could

do. When they opened him up, they found it had spread to his bones. They tried everything -- all types of medication and radiation and all this sort of stuff but there really was not much they could do so that was - - but he still had high spirits and was still planning ahead and having projects in the back of his mind of all the things he was going to do and this type of thing, so . . .

Mc . . . When did Charlie die?

S Ah, this is May 25th, 1971.

Mc And how old was he?

S He was fifty-five, fifty-six, Yeah.

Mc I remember lots of things about Charlie but one of the . . . well, many happy memories . . . and one of them was that Charlie was a great story teller. He had quite a knack of being a Master of Ceremonies, didn't he?

S Yes, he put on several programs and was often asked to be the Master of Ceremonies because he just loved to tell stories and he could keep you going for quite a while. He loved to do that, and then he loved music. He played the violin and he played the bass violin, he played the fiddle, he called for square dances, he arranged music, he played in bands, he . . .

Mc . . . He played the guitar.

S He played the guitar, he could -- he had a very deep bass voice and he could also sing tenor. But he loved music.

Mc I remember.

S Yes.

Mc I remember a time when we were camping and here was this Charlie Stillinger who always sang the deepest bass in the church choir -- anybody could ever imagine a deeper bass, well it was Charlie, and then when we were camping one time here was Charlie with a guitar and singing this high falsetto . . . (Laughter) It was beautiful.

S Well, he loved music and it's too bad that he couldn't have done more with it but he enjoyed music.

Mc Well, Jane, even after Charlie became seriously ill and he knew how ill he was, he did continue to work, or try to work, at Harrison's?

S Yes he did and in a way that was unfortunate because after he passed away, I didn't get the - - you see, General Motors not only pays for your Blue Shield and Blue Cross and your prescription drugs but also would give you a monthly increment,

I lost out on all of those because if he had worked

five less days - I would have had it. I just needed the five more days and I would have the money from that. **B**ut as it turned out - and I talked it over with my lawyer and he said, "Do you want me to fight for you on this, Jane?", and I said, "No, you can't fight Tammany Hall. There's nothing you can do with a big company like that." And the girls in the office there at Harrison's said they knew people that it was a matter of hours that people missed out on receiving this money from General Motors. So that was very unfortunate. I know Charlie would turn over in his grave if he knew these things happened and it was very difficult to face at the time until I

woke up to the fact that they don't put you in prison for debts and so all of a sudden you just realize that you've got to face up to this and do the best you can, that's all. I don't know. A lot of people helped me in this situation and I don't know what I'd have done without my friends that helped me over this hump. So things finally worked out after a while and I had an auction and received money from that and finally sold the house that we lived in for twenty-five years.

Mc I remember that Charlie did the kitchen all over and did a beautiful job.

S Oh.

Mc And the nursery. . . Oh, lots of memories, Jane. Well, we'll go to the next tape for that.

(END OF TAPE #1)

Mc Jane, you were a very active leader with the Girl Scouts. Will you tell us about your Girl Scout Troop that you followed all the way through?

S I had one Scout Troop that started in Brownies in 1945 and carried them through to Senior Scouts. I had the same group. They were very active, very brilliant bunch of girls and I learned a lot from them because I had never been a Scout myself.

Mc Did someone work with you on that, Jane?

S I had different ones helping me on that. Each year it was somebody different so -- some of the Mothers, you know, would help on it.

Mc Where did you meet?

S We met at the church and had -- you know, from there. We mostly -- they were interested in badges and that type of thing so it worked out that way.

Mc Cooking and camping?

S Yes, that type of thing. Then in 1951, I happened to go to a meeting in Buffalo -- I think it was at the Park School -- and this marvelous leader was talking about starting a camp and this type of thing. Lucille Brinsmaid and I happened to be at that meeting and we were so inspired that we talked to this person after the meeting and she asked us about our background and she said, "Well look at here. You (meaning me) was a teacher. You've had First Aid training and you've had swimming, and all this background. You would make a wonderful Director." Then she turned to Lucille and said, "You've had this business experience -- why you've got the world by the tail." "But," we said, "We don't have any money." Well, she said, "You can start without any money." So we went home all filled with enthusiasm and started working on it. We had it at Camp Archibald. They were -- Jean was very nice to let us have part of their property which was on the Lake front.

Mc Who was this "Jean"?

S Jean Archibald.

Mc I see. What Lake is this?

S This is Lake Ontario and the first thing I saw was on a bluff. I said, "No way. This Camp is not going to open until we have a snow fence across here to keep the girls from falling into

the Lake because this was the first year of the Girl Scout Camp that we started and if something happened to any of the girls that would put the kibosh on any future things. So here we were full of nerve and verve and got our husbands working on this and finally we went to -- yes, we went to the Sunday Schools and borrowed their crayons; Craig Ross to borrow a big tent; we used the Boy Scout tents and we also got Sarah Brinsmaid, who was called "Rocky" then. She was teaching Physical Ed at Buffalo State Teachers, and she was excellent. We were very fortunate to have her for the swimming program so we were set up that way. And Reverend Richard Billingsley from Lyndonville gave us a big boost. He really worked hard and helped us a great deal. And here we were working at this and this was Girl Scouts from Medina, Albion and Lyndonville that would be included in this group. We were inspired because we had attended, when we were young girls, a "Y" Camp at the Lake for only \$7.00. There was not this opportunity for these young girls at this time unless they went to a much more expensive camp and we felt that this was important Girl Scout or whatever. So we went about this -- we couldn't get enough leaders so we had different Mothers come. Maybe they'd volunteer to come for one day, down to the Lake. And it was really perfectly killing because they wouldn't know what they were going to get into. So they'd come down with raincoats, boots, hats, the whole works . . . Oh, they were just prepared for a very stormy season down to the Lake but they learned

differently and it worked out pretty well.

Mc This was a day camp for the girls?

S This was a day camp, and the last week we had -- the last couple of nights -- there were leaders down there that would stay overnight with the Senior Scouts but we had to be altogether at one time. We used the school buses and we charged the whole sum of a dollar a day. It's unbelievable, isn't it?

Mc What kind of work went on down there? Did you have -- of course, you had dancing and crafts.

S Yes and - yes, we did craft work and also wood lore and nature studies and that type of thing but what we had to do -- and of course, swimming -- that was so popular and they really learned a lot. We used the buddy system in every case. We were overly cautious for fear something would happen but we feel ever so grateful that we had started this Girl Scout thing because it went on from there and they eventually had their own property and -- but when I look back on it, I'm just amazed at the nerve we had to start this without a cent of money. (Laughter) Just a lot of enthusiasm.

Mc Did you have to do the cooking?

S Oh, yes. Oh, yes. We - or they - brought sandwiches but we didn't have a lot of cooking because that wasn't the main purpose of it. And, of course, they were just there for the day

Mc Well, Jane, your having trained as a teacher has always stood you in good stead and you had a private nursery school for quite sometime. Would you tell us about that?

S Yes, I had it for eleven years. Well, they used to have two years of Kindergarten in Medina and then they ran out of teachers, space, money, and what-all. And they said, "Hey, Jane," and so I jumped into it with all four feet. The first year I had Nursery School for four year olds with Grace George. She was a marvelous musician and pianist and we had it in her home and we were pretty "green" at it but we just made things work. We didn't have any money to start with, that's for sure, but our husbands -- we put them to work on anything. We had homemade things, and so forth, and we had a lot of things given to us that we could use. And we used old wall paper books and such as that for our crafts and that type of thing.

Mc This was half-days school?

S This was morning school. This was from 9:30 to 11:30.

Mc How many children would have attended?

S There were about twelve that would attend, give or take. That first year was sort of experimental but we did work on a Hansel and Gretel and put that on for the grade school and that was a big thrill for these little four year olds to put on a musical like that.

Mc Eventually Charlie -- I should say that you and Charlie -- "did over" the garage that was in back of your home on Oak Orchard Street. Would you tell about that?

S Oh, yes. We -- well, that built from scratch. It was torn down. At one time that was for horses so it was like a barn. It was such a huge garage. Well, Charlie tore down all the

back end of that and built that up into a great big room -- had a stone fireplace and these stones were collected from different States we visited on our many camping trips. And it had picture windows that overlooked the gardens and then his shop was overhead. Now in this little Nursey School, it was gauged to children. We had heat and water and a little toilet and so forth, and so then I started having Nursery School by myself and I kept it to just the twelve children. And we would have circle activities which would mean activities to improve their muscular coordination and learning songs and learning to work in groups as much as anything. And they always would have some little thing to take home with them. And Charlie, when he would work nights, would come out in the middle of the morning and bring me a cup of coffee just to see the children. And the children would always show him what pictures they'd colored and that type of thing. And one morning, he said -- he had a bleeding heart bush that he was very fond of, that was his very special -- oh yes, a little flowering shrub. He was very proud of that so he told the children he was going to bring each one a bleeding heart. Well, they all -- each one went to the window, pressed their noses against the window, but they couldn't see because the bush was just beyond them. Well, in came Charlie and gave each child a little bleeding heart blossom. Silence! You could have heard a pin drop and finally one little boy piped up, "Where's the blobs of blood?" (Laughter) But they were

- S darling children and we did have a lot of fun. We took the children on several trips every year and would always go by the "Buddy" system (two by two). We had a small park across the street which was fun sometimes, and we took the children to Christmas Park, near Albion, where Charlie Howard was the Santa Claus...
- Mc As your Nursery School was going on, your daughter was growing up and going through the Medina school system. I remember when Donna became a teenager she used to have pajama parties for her girl friends and these were usually held out in the Nursery room, in back of your house on West Oak Orchard Street.
- S ... The young people would have great times out there! They had boy-girl parties out there too. The boys would bring sodapop and the girls would bring potato chips or what-have-you. They had their record player and had a great time! ...
- Mc Jane, you and Charlie were always great campers. Arden and I camped with you several times, remember? Tell us about some of your camping experiences, your gear, and so on.
- S We started out camping with my brother and his family and some of their friends from Batavia. The first year we had our own sleeping bags and air mattresses, and each year we kept adding to our equipment. We had several small tents, about four feet high. You had to go outside the tent to change your mind!! We took Donna's friend, Carol Caldwell, with us on long trips and the girls had their own tent. We went to the east coast, and the west coast, and across Canada. We went in and then out of Mexico because the girls wanted to buy Mexican purses. We'd go for two or three weeks at a time and our car would be packed. Once we went to Maine and stayed with Louise Brownell in her little guest house. ... Later, Charlie and I went to Vancouver, and then to Newfoundland. ... When we went to Alaska, we planned a seven week trip, so Charlie built a plywood "penthouse" for the top of our station wagon. ... We were pretty well self-contained. ... While returning from Alaska, we were involved in an accident - from which we escaped unharmed. Our car was badly damaged and eventually we thought the truck camper was a good idea. ... We bought the truck-camper for our

- S 25th Wedding Anniversary present and that's how we traveled to Vancouver and Newfoundland. It had everything: instant hot water, a stove, a refrigerator, and there was an inter-com between the cab and the camper. ...
- Mc You and Charlie belonged to the National Campers and Hikers Association didn't you?
- S ... Yes, but we never did travel very far with that group. They thought we were unusual to take such long trips, but we had delightful times. ... Charlie was the President one time. ...
- After graduating from Medina High School, Donna went to Geneseo College where she took degrees in Special Education and Primary Education. ... While she was teaching in Perry, New York, she met Dan Chrisman and they fell in love and were married in 1963. ... Eventually Donna and Dan had a family: Danny, Terri Lynn, and then Wendy Marie. ... Dan is now the Athletic Director and Head Football Coach in Norwich where they live. ... Donna is teaching Kindergarten in Sherbourne and she just loves
- Mc Jane, as long as we are going over old time memories, how about telling about TOPA, the Theater of Performing Arts?
- S Oh yes! Didn't we have a marvelous time!? ... It was 1966 when TOPA started. The Rotary Club and others encouraged our theater group in Medina. Remember, we put on "Finian's Rainbow", "Me and Juliet", "Anything Goes", "Damn Yankees", "Guys and Dolls", and "Mame", and "Hello Dolly". ... The TOPA performances seemed to draw the whole community. ... They even had the fellows from the Job Corps come in to town and be a part of the chorus for several of these performances. ...
- Mc The whole community loved the musicals and looked forward to the plays as well. We "packed the house" three nights in a row!
- S ... We made our own sets, and our own costumes. We branched out and put on children's productions in Lyndonville and Medina. We also presented puppet shows. Charlie made a little Puppet Theater. It was all great fun. Lots of talent too! ...
- Mc Jane, the United Methodist Church has always played a big part in your life. Would you tell us more about that?

- S Yes. Charlie, Donna and I were always in the choir. ... Robert Connor was a marvelous choir Director, with Margaret Craft Johnson as the organist for many years. We really got into the right spirit of it! ... I still can remember those beautiful Christmas eve services. ...
- Mc Remember when Amanda Bronson was Sunday School teacher for the Bethany Class?
- S Oh yes! ... Bethany Class used to be just for girls and eventually became a Couple's Class. Amanda was a marvelous teacher. She really knew her Bible and got us truly interested in it. We did a lot of things for the Church and for the Sunday School. We put on Minstrel Shows, and worked real hard painting the church rooms, and that type of thing. ...
- Mc I remember that Amanda tied the Bible to our daily life. You always had the feeling that she cared about you even if it wasn't Sunday and you weren't in church! ... Amanda's husband, George, had the Bronson's Dry Goods Store (now Crowleys) on Main Street. ... I can still see George and Amanda sitting in church in their own church pew. In those days you had your own pew, remember? ... Every Sunday evening the Methodist Youth Fellowship (MYF) would meet at the church with about 40 attending. Marian and Bill Kaegebine, and Jean and Bob Gates were the leaders and the kids loved MYF !! They wouldn't miss it, ever!
- S Yes, and then Betty Childs had the young people in Sunday School when they were older. It was through that group that they started the Living Nativity, just before Christmas time. That is still being presented, every year. ...
- Mc The Living Nativity, for those who don't know about it, was held on the front lawn of the Methodist Church with the youth dressed as the shepards, Mary and Joseph, etc. and making a "picture" with live people acting it out... not moving. It is wonderful to see, and inspirational.
- Mc Jane, you have always lived in Orleans County. How about mentioning some of the groups to which you belong?
- S You've got to be kidding!! (laughter). The Cotillion Club,

S The University Women, the Medina Historical Society, several Bridge groups (Contract and Duplicate Bridge), the Euchre group, the 500 group, and at the Armory (now the YMCA) there is an exercise group for Senior Citizens. I belong to the Methodist Church choir and I did belong to the Community Choir but I couldn't work it in this year because I am an officer - a Vice-President - of the Senior Citizens and that meets on the same night. Also, Helen, you and I belonged to the Batavia District "Singing Belles" (Methodist Church) in '76, '78, and '79. There were about fifty women from western New York and we traveled throughout this area to sing for the churches and eventually the School of Missions at Houghton College.

Mc In no way would anybody ever guess that you are now 70 Jane; you continue to be so active. ... Now you are living in your beautiful mobile home in Lakewood Village (just outside of Medina). How many mobile homes are here now?

S There are 80 here now. It is a nice community to live in with good community spirit. ...

Mc Well Jane, thank you very much for this interesting interview.

S Helen, I feel really complimented to be asked to do this because you have a wonderful project going here. We do need to put these things down for future generations because what we think is common, is most uncommon. ... We are living in a very special age when people have cared and trusted each other. Times are changing and it's a challenging time in which to live. ...

Helen, do you remember when we went to the Creative Writer's Course at the Niagara Community College? ... It was stressed there that we should write down things that happened in our lives - for posterity. We might not think they are important now but maybe future generations will learn how we lived.

Mc You've kept your promise, Jane. Again, many thanks for all this!

S Well, thank you for asking me. ...

.....
(end of taped interview, conducted by Helen McAllister)
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This interview was transcribed, in full, by Betty Miles of Albion. Pages 41- 44 were closely edited and retyped by Helen McAllister to conserve the bulk of the transcript more manageably.

M.H.S. CLASS OF 193050th Reunion

by Jane Stillinger

How oft we've thought of High School days
 Our high ideals on hopes we lay.
 We think of sports and homework too
 Art, Shop, and Music ensue.
 Our work to speak and write and play
 Our trials to meet or come what may
 The posted boards of Regents marks
 The dances, parties and other larks.
 How feverish we sometimes tried
 To keep our nervousness inside
 But then those years were happy, yet
 The ones we never can forget.
 We thank our teachers so sincere
 For lessons taught to reach our ear.
 We thank our parents who guided us here
 And hope we made the world less drear.
 So, smile, dear friends, we meet tonight
 To welcome our 50th with all our might.

WOMEN OF THE YEAR

by Jane Stillinger

Your special talents, acts and deeds
 Your help to others who have real needs
 Your patience, love and listening ear
 Are there to those whose need is near.

Your willingness above all else
 To do a favor and forget yourself
 Your bold attack with winning smile
 Leave personal wants for a little while.

Obedience to God your prime concern
 As to neighbors you do a good turn.
 Our praise and thanks we give to you
 Women of the year, we're proud of you.