

Oral History Project
Historical Commission of Schuylkill Township

Joanne C. Brown



Summary. In this interview, Mrs. Brown shares information about two important Schuylkill Township landmarks. Her family owns and runs the Meadow Brook Golf Club, 1416 State Road, Phoenixville, and she shares lively tales about growing up in the large home on the property. Mrs. Brown now lives in what was the former Schuylkill School on Valley Forge Road.

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Interviewed at her home,
403 Valley Forge Road, Phoenixville, PA 19460
Interviewed by Nancy Loane
Transcribed by Nancy Loane

NL: Today we will be talking about the history of the Meadow Brook Golf Club. Joanne, how did you get to know that property?

JB: Well, it was bought by my great-grandmother in 1896. Before that, it had only been in a couple of different hands from the time of the grant by William Penn. David Lloyd was one of the people; I guess he owned most of the property in the Phoenixville area. I don't know how much of a parcel he had.

Probably he was a Welshman, because anybody who has a first name for a last name is usually Welsh. So it is David and Lloyd – obviously Welsh.

NL: I never knew that about Welshmen.

JB: But there were only a few owners between times. One of the early owners was the Coates family, who originally settled here and then went on to Coatesville.

NL: And that is C-o-a-t-e-s.

JB: Yes. And then after the Coates family, I think that the people that my great-grandmother bought it from, I think their name was Dyer.

At any rate, she bought it in 1896 and it was hers. A Quaker lady – most of my family on that side were Quakers. And it was her money and she owned the property.

Her name was Hettie Hallowell. I am not exactly sure where her money came from, but I know it was inherited. She was quite a go-getter. She marched in Washington for voting rights for women – not in my time, but in some time. She was a mover and a shaker.

At any rate, she bought the farm. And one of the reasons that they came to Phoenixville was because it was closer to Lancaster where the horses and the cattle came from. They were farmers. They came from Plymouth Meeting. Over there in Plymouth Meeting there is a street named Hallowell Avenue. They had a large farm there near where Plymouth Meeting Mall is. They came to Phoenixville in 1896.

My mother came with them; they all went to live together on the farm. She was four years old at the time.

My grandfather was Eugene Hallowell. He and his father farmed that land at Meadow Brook. They had a dairy farm.

I have pictures of some of the farming things that went on there.

My grandfather had a milk route in Phoenixville. He delivered milk to the people in Phoenixville. The one story that I have been told that is so cute is that he walked on the street and the horse and wagon that had the milk in it was in the middle of the street. He was along the side of the street. The horse knew where to stop. The horse knew where the clients were who got the milk, and the horse just automatically stopped at the places where he was supposed to stop. That was told to me by a woman who, as a child, remembered him.

NL: Did he have a milk company? Or was this milk from the farm?

JB: He had a milk route, with milk from the farm. They also raised horses.

The house that they bought had been built by the Coates family. It is hard to establish when it was built, but the oldest part was built somewhere in the 1730's – we don't know exactly what date it was. Of course it was added to. It started out as two rooms on each of four floors, so there were eight rooms.

It was built like a bank barn. The bottom floor opened on the ground in the back, and the first floor opened on the ground in the front. It was just like a bank barn. And then in the 1800's four more rooms were added to it. When they moved there – my great-grandmother moved there – she had four more rooms added in an L shape in the back. I have the receipt for that work. They added four rooms to the house, and all the accoutrements that went with it, and it was in the neighborhood of \$700.00. Can you believe it?

NL: Four rooms and the accoutrements! \$700.00!

JB: At any rate, they had the milk business and my grandmother - Josephine was her name - she raised turkeys. I have pictures of her with the turkeys. They were free-roaming, as were all the animals on the farm in that day. She would call the turkeys and they would come in, because they knew it was time to eat. I don't remember any of that, it was all told to me.

At any rate, the Hallowell family farmed that land until 1928, when both of the men in the family had died. And there was no man to farm any more. So my great-grandmother decided to go back from where she came and she moved back to Norristown, to a house that was directly across from Friends Meeting in Norristown.

At that time, my mother had married into the Campbell family, and the Campbell's decided to buy the farm.

It is the same today, as it was then. You buy the farm, and you break it up into lots.

Of course, this was 1928. They laid it all out – I have the plans – and they built some speculation houses and showed what could be done to interest people in buying lots.

Then, of course, the bottom dropped out of everything and no one had any money. Some of the lots had been sold, some of them had been built on.

I don't know exactly what the time frame was, but my father decided to build a miniature golf course, which was very popular at that time. The remains are still on State Road there, on the road, there is a little stone house that they built. That was where they collected money and sold ice cream and had the clubs and everything. They had this miniature golf course, and they also had an archery range. It was extremely popular. Extremely. Then they built a chip and putt course, and that was also very popular.

Then they decided the main part of this development was never going to be used for houses because no one had any money, so they decided they would build a golf course. And, like I say, no one had any money. A lot of the people who worked there, worked there for the promise to pay golf there for nothing. Some of them were paid, but some of them, because they didn't have anything else to do, they pitched in and helped.

I forgot to tell you that when they bought the house there was also a tenant house on the property. A black family lived in it. They had worked on the farm for the people who lived there before. They stayed on; we inherited the tenants. I look back at the conditions that they lived under and it just blows my mind. They had a huge, great big family. Some of them turned out to be fine, upstanding citizens, and some of them turned out to be jailbirds. Bert Lear was the name of the man who lived there with his wife and kids, and I won't go into that....

So that, anyway, they started working on the golf course. My grandfather Toby Campbell had been one of the original members of the Phoenixville Country Club, which had been located where the Methodist Church is now on Main Street. It originally started there and went down to Valley Forge later.

It was very difficult going, building this golf course. They did have a real professional – I can't remember his name – install the greens. The greens, I think, are some of the best greens of any golf course I have ever played. They are still in very, very good condition. It is only a 9 hole course. It is not upscale at all. It is pay as you play. You don't have to have a membership in order to go there to play.

I moved there when I was 3 years old. I don't remember any other home. Of course when we went, it was another situation where two families lived in the same house. But it was a 16 room house, so there was plenty of room for everybody. But my grandmother and grandfather Campbell lived in the one side; my mother and father and brother and I lived in the other side.

NL: How big was the property?

JB: The property was 75 acres. There are still about 50 acres left. At the present time the School District has been considering taking it by eminent domain. They made an offer to buy it. At the present time my nephew, Bruce Campbell, is renting the golf course from the corporation and he is renting it from us and running it as a business for himself. He is not old enough to retire yet and does not want to give it up. This is what he knows how to do and he wants to keep doing it. The School District would like to have it, and I can sympathize with them, but we don't want to sell it to them. It is presently owned by my brother's family and my family as a corporation and we all own stock in it. They made us an offer which was ridiculous, and we turned it down. They have threatened us with eminent domain. I thought it was over, but they are rejuvenating their enthusiasm for it again. I don't know what is going to happen.

I was hoping that during my lifetime it would not leave the family. I do not want to see it go. It is near and dear to my heart. It would be very, very difficult.

NL: Tell me about the house itself. Is it still there?

BJ: Yes. The oldest part of the house has a walk-in fireplace. It has a cover over it, but it is still there. That was down on the ground floor, in the original section.

Jane Davidson has looked at it. It is on the National Register. When we did the survey in 1981 for Schuylkill Township, I helped with the survey. It was pointed out to me at that time – you know, when you are young, these things don't mean so much to you, but as you get older you appreciate things more – it was pointed out to me that the house was old and of course, during the time, I lived there, there was a man who did a book called *Washington's Officers Slept Here*. It was brought to my knowledge that Benedict Arnold stayed there – not for a very long period of time.

When we did the survey Estelle Cremers said that I should work on the house and get it on the National Register, which I knew nothing about. And at that time I did talk to Jane Davidson about it, and she was willing to do it for a price, which I didn't have the money to spend at that time. I was raising a family, and sending kids all over. At any rate, I couldn't see spending the money, so I said that I would do myself. With the help of all my family, including my son-in-law, who does drafting – they drew the plans of the house – and we took pictures, and did research. Luckily - I don't know how or why, but I have a lot of the deeds – original deeds.

At any rate, we all worked on this project. It was presented through the French and Pickering Creek Trust at that time. It was done with their blessing, under their name. We essentially - the family, and Estelle - did all the work on it.

It was accepted, first of all as a historic Pennsylvania place, and then, of course as a national – I don't know how long it took, but it finally got on the National Register. It does not happen over night. It takes a while. It was quite an enterprise. It took a lot of work. It was very interesting.

The house essentially is four rooms in the basement, four rooms on the first floor, four rooms on the second floor, and four rooms in the attic. The remnants are still there of the two out houses that were in the back yard. I know where they are. At one time there was a trumpet vine that grew over both of those out houses – made it look a little better. Conceal it a little bit.

NL: So the house has not changed?

JB: No, not a whole lot. Of course, like I say, they had out houses in those days. They put in the plumbing and that kind of thing. The old wood work is still there around the fireplaces. In the oldest part of the house there is a fireplace at either end in the two rooms that were the originals. I guess there were fireplaces in all those rooms, but they have mostly been removed.

NL: What is the house used for now?

JB: It is not lived in at the present time. The basement is used for the golf course; there are lockers and things down there. My nephew uses part of it for his office. But mainly it has been left the way it was when my mother passed away. It is still pretty much the same.

I have the furniture here – that chair there and that one there were both my great-grandmother's. The rocking chair – I think it is a Shaker Rocker. It is made like a Shaker Rocker. I am not sure if it was done by the Shakers or not, but I think it might be. She had a bunch of those chairs down at her home in Norristown. They had beautiful furniture.

My dining room table is the table that she had in the kitchen. I think it was handmade. I treasure it.

Let me see what else I can tell you about Meadow Brook.

NL: I just want to review the history a bit...

Your great-grandmother purchased the property. She is living there with her husband and one child, your grandfather.

JB: My grandmother and grandfather had a family, two children – Rachel and Alan. There are three generations living there.

NL: Your great-grandmother and her husband. Your grandmother and her husband, and your mother and her brother.

JB: Then my great-grandmother sold it to my mother's husband's family – the Campbell family. It went from the Hallowell family to the Campbell family. When we were living there, my grandmother and grandfather Campbell were living there. And my mother and father, and my brother and I. It's sort of the same kind of situation.

NL: Instead now your mother is living with her in-laws, rather than with her family. It went from one side of the family to the other side of the family.

JB: It is complicated.

NL: It is complicated, but very interesting.

Any special memories you have of the place?

JB: Well, I have been playing golf since I was 8 years old. When they opened the golf course they had a pro. The pro lived with us. In the attic! In that time they were just starting out, and he didn't have enough to keep him busy. So my father told him that he should teach my brother and me to play golf. So I have been playing golf since I was about 8 years old. My brother became – he was a lot better than I was – he became a golfing professional. He belonged to PGA. He did not teach people to play, however. But he was a member of the association. The land is still being used as a golf course today, and hopefully it will stay that way.

I have a lot of wonderful memories growing up there.

Of course some of the lots were turned into houses. Some of the people that I grew up with are still living there. Mary Jane Riley who teaches piano down on the corner of Pothouse Road and Route 29 was born and raised there. She is still there. My uncle who grew up there built a house at the end of the lane. My grandmother and he – they were Hallowell's – they moved to a house that was very close by.

As I said before, no one had any money. This is another part of the story. My mother decided to open a tea room. I guess it was in the 30s. She had a tea room in the main dining room in the house. She employed a cook to help her. I remember her – we had a coal stove in the kitchen when I was tiny – and they baked in that coal stove.

She also decided to bake pies. Just like Mrs. Smith in Pottstown. She made wonderful pies! She was an excellent pie baker! And I can still see her standing at the kitchen table, as every evening before she went to bed she would mix pie crust so that it would be ready when she got up in the morning to roll out and bake her pies. She made pies for some of the – well, she didn't peddle them on the street like Mrs. Smith did – but she would take orders on the phone for people who wanted pies. She also supplied two restaurants down town. They were both Greeks. One was Candyland and the other was Busters. And she would supply them with pies.

And one of the things you never forget is where you were when certain things take place. And when they declared war, when they bombed Pearl Harbor, I still remember where I was. We were down on Bridge Street, sitting in front of the Colonial Theater, helping my mother deliver pies to Candyland. I was in the car, listening in the radio, while she was over talking to them delivering the pies. And I heard the news on the radio. It was one of those things that you never forget where you were and what the conditions were.

Mrs. Smith went on to have a huge complex in Pottstown where they made the pies, but my mother didn't do anything like that.

But she did have the tea room, which did pretty well. She had a woman who waitressed for her, and she lived with us.

We had – at that time there was a lot of manufacturing in Phoenixville. And one of the places was Ajax Hosiery. They made nylon stockings. Every day the people from the office at Ajax came out to eat at our place. We had wedding receptions in the summer time out on the lawn. One of the wedding receptions was – do you remember Nelson Eddy's name? He came from Norristown – I think that is right. At any rate, the man who accompanied him got married in the Presbyterian Church in Phoenixville and the wedding reception was at Meadow Brook. I was told that he was so tall that his head bumped the chandelier in the dining room. I don't remember seeing him, but he was there. I think that was probably the biggest and the best reception there. Out on the lawn!

NL: Did she have a name for the place? Or was it the Meadow Brook Tea Room?

JB: That's it, I guess! To me it was just the tea room.

NL: She sounds like a very entrepreneurial woman.

JB: She came from the Quakers. She was a do-er, too. She didn't sit around and vegetate. Everybody worked. My mother and father got up in the morning, and they didn't quit working until they went to bed. That's all there was to it.

Aside from Meadow Brook, my family got involved in other types of recreation. My grandfather Campbell - he came here because of the steel mill - he was involved in all kinds of things. At one time he was involved in a skating rink on Bridge Street, and a cigar store. I do not know what all.

At one time the bank in Phoenixville had a building that the people were not able to pay the mortgage on. Somehow or other my grandfather and father were asked to take over the building. They did take over the building. There were bowling alleys in the building. They had bowling alleys, a pool room, and in the basement of this building they started a skating rink. I grew up going there every night. My mother would go there to help with the skating rink and help behind the soda fountain. Everybody pitched in and helped. That's what you had to do in those days. If you wanted to survive you had to work. And it wasn't easy. You scratched out a living, that's all there was to it. So they had bowling alleys, the skating rink, the pool room, and the golf course, all at the same time.

NL: Now where was the bowling alley?

JB: Morgan and Quick Street, in Phoenixville. It is now turned into an artist's studio. They had an open house several months ago and I was not able to go there, because I was recuperating from my hip surgery. One of these days when they have another open house I want to go in and see it. It turned into the Slovak Club after the Campbells were finished with it.

I know what I wanted to tell you.....All the time that they owned it, and I don't know what the years were, they only paid the interest on the loan. They didn't pay any principal, but the people who were in there before didn't pay anything at all. So the whole time they were there they only paid the interest, and then when they sold it, they paid off the loan. That was the way it was in those days. You eked out a living.

NL: What was the name of this place?

JB: Campbell Recreation!

NL: I should have figured that one out!

JB: I forgot to tell you about my grandfather, Eugene Hallowell, and his racehorses. Where Washington Field is now, the High School football field, right next to the golf course, there was a racetrack. They had sulky races there. He raced. I never saw him race, but I can still see in my grandmother's bedroom a board with many, many, many blue ribbons. I never got any of them. They are all gone. But that was how Washington Field started out. It was a racetrack. Also I think they raced motorcycles there at one time.

It was a sulky racing track. One of the reasons they wanted to be closer to Lancaster was because of buying and selling horses. I think they did buy and sell horses and race horses.

NL: What is sulky racing?

JB: It's a buggy. One horse and one rider.

NL: Did he own that track?

JB: No, he just raced there. I don't know who owned it. When the school took it over there was a grandstand – wooden, with sides and a roof – I can still see it. I think we have pictures of it down at the Historical Society. When the high school was re-doing, several years ago, Washington Field, and they were working on it, one of the big tractors, or whatever, fell into a hole in the middle of the racetrack – Washington Field. I told Mark Cassady, who was Building and Grounds of the School Board at that time, I said, "Mark. Do you know what that hole was in the middle of Washington Field?" I told him that was where they dumped their manure. That's where the hole was. There weren't any trucks to come around and pick up your garbage. You buried it. And that's where they buried the manure. The manure pit.

NL: That's a great story.

JB: I got to talking to Mark about having sulky races there, and believe it or not, he has done the same thing. It's a small world. I don't care who you talk to, you can make a connection.

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 JB: Lewis Walker, the original settler in Tredyffrin Township, his house is gone – that really makes me upset, that they torn that down - he married one of the Hallowell family. They were from Plymouth Meeting and Lewis Walker was from Tredyffrin. They got married at a place between, and that was the meeting house here in Schuylkill Township. I don't know the dates. All the Quakers were associated with one another. My grandfather Eugene, when he married my grandmother, Josephine, she was not a Quaker, so he was ostracized. They were supposed to marry Quakers. I don't know that they put him out of meeting, but I don't think he went after that. He was not closely associated. That's why my immediate family are not Quakers. But all of the Hallowell side - they were all Quakers.

The Campbell side came from Scotland – Scotch-Irish. I don't know, I think they were Methodists. My grandmother Josephine Hallowell, she was quite good at music. She played the piano for the church service. My mother was a very good vocalist. She sang. Up at Wilmer, they started a chapel, from the beginnings that were in the old Oak Grove School that was on Pothouse Road. I have clippings from the newspaper where they were performing for this or that. My uncle who grew up at Meadow Brook, he was quite a

good bass vocalist – basso, I guess you called it. But anyway, at one time they put on a production – down at the Colonial Theater, I can still remember going down to see it – it was the Mikado. They did that kind of thing in those days. They put on real stage productions.

NK: Tell me a little bit about you growing up here in the area. Where did you go to school?

JB: I went to Schuylkill School. My class was the first class to go from first grade through eighth grade at Schuylkill School. The house I live in now was the original Schuylkill School. The schools were consolidated in 1930. I started school in 1930. I guess I must have started in 1931 – September of 1930 – anyway, my class was the first class to go through Schuylkill School.

NL: Did you go to kindergarten?

JB: No kindergarten. You didn't have kindergarten in those days. No kindergarten. No preschool.

Then we went through the eight grades. If you lived – well, quite a distance away from school – you went on a bus, otherwise you had to walk. I was lucky enough that I could go on the bus. We went there for eight grades. It was wonderful. There was one room for each class. That school we are still trying to save. I hope it will stay there. It is saved for the present time. Whether it will continue or not, I am not sure.

There was a junior high school in Phoenixville, which had the seventh, eighth, and ninth grades in it. We went to the ninth grade at the junior high school. And then we went to the senior high school, which is where the hospital is now. It was so overcrowded that they couldn't have all of the students there at the same time. So if you were a sophomore, you went in the afternoon. We had like six classes and they were maybe 45 minutes each. You went in the afternoon. If you were a junior or a senior you went in the morning. You were done at 12:30. Nobody had to stay for lunch.

The high school building was built in 1911, the year that my mother and father graduated from high school. They didn't get to go there, they went to the Gay Street School in Phoenixville. It was different! It was quite different than it is today.

I never had a study hall. I figured that if you were going to school. You might as well learn something while you were there. I never, ever had a study hall. A lot of other people did. But I filled up all my classes. I took the academic program. There were a number of different programs. Most of the girls took the commercial program. I did learn to type, but that's the only thing I took in the commercial line. You didn't have to, but most people did learn to type.

NL: You must have had some recreational time after school...so then, you were what, helping out?

JB: I was playing golf! I taught all my girlfriends how to play golf, and I taught them all how to drive a car. When I was 16, you had to get a driver's permit and you had to have the permit at least 3 days before you could take the driver's test. At the end of 3 days I had my driver's license. I had been practicing, of course. On the golf course.

My father didn't have money to buy tractors, so he bought old cars and took the back portion of the car off and turned them into trucks. Whenever there was a Franklin that was available, he bought it.

NL: What is a Franklin?

JB: It's an old car that is no longer available. At any rate, he had – I don't know how many of them – but he had bought a, I think it was, 1930 Franklin. It was like a hearse! It was gigantic! There was a back seat and a front seat and I bet there was 4 feet between the two.

I was given the car. It was my car to drive to school, so they didn't have to take me. After your eight grades were up, they didn't bus you any more; you had to find your own way. Like I said, my mother and father were always working, so they said, "Here's your car, you take yourself to school." I was the only person of my age who had the use of a car. I was probably a little older than most of my friends were, a few months anyway.

So I taught them all to drive the car on the golf course, which very few people were using at the time. We still joke about the one girl who ran into some of the bushes. Didn't hurt anything!

This car was gigantic. I will never forget the first time driving it in town. I wasn't sure if it was going to fit. You know, I hadn't been driving on the streets. I had been driving out in the middle of the pasture. Of course at that time the gasoline was rationed. But I got enough gas to run around with my girlfriends. I went to school – we graduated in 1943 – I was in school during the war, including college at Penn State.

At that time you didn't have to go to school after 16. It was not required. And a lot of the boys quit or they went into the service. I think they had to be 18 to go into the service – I don't know if they did or not. Anyway, people didn't hang in there all the way through like they do today. Today you need a college education to get anywhere. In those days you needed a high school education to get anywhere.

I know what I wanted to tell you. If you were in the band or the glee club or anything like that, that was after school hours. That was not part of the day time school schedule. Most of that they did afterwards. Mr. Sample, who was a wonderful, wonderful, wonderful man who will never be forgotten in this town - he had the band. He had the original marching band. He also did the glee club. I was in the glee club the whole time I was in high school. That was one of my extra-curricular activities. But there were other things that they did, too.

NL: Did the glee club perform?

JB: Every Christmas we did a cantata. It was wonderful. They were good.

NL: Was that at the high school?

JB: At the junior high school because that was where the best stage was. It is still there and it has been all redone. Schuylkill School they just want to tear down and start fresh. But they did redo the junior high school, and it is now the Barkley School. It is still a very good school. They did a wonderful job of rehabbing.

NL: In the winter, did you ice skate on the pond on Valley Park Road?

JB: Of course. The pond was there, and, yes, everybody went skating on the pond, and hopefully it will be restored. They also used to ice skate on Pickering Creek. But it was a little dicey because it was a flowing stream, instead of just a pond. It was kind of dangerous. I went down there a few times but not often. People were apt to fall through. It was dangerous.

NL: You mentioned the Colonial Theater. What kinds of things happened at the Colonial?

JB: Oh, my goodness. I used to always go on Saturday afternoons with my grandmother Hallowell. She used to always go on Saturday afternoons and I would go along. I don't know what it cost, but it was next to nothing.

They would have live performances at times, too.

The movies in those days, they would stay 3 or 4 days and then it would change to another one. You could go a couple of times a week and not see the same thing. Today it is completely different.

NL: Does the Colonial look like you remember it?

JB: Yes, yes it does. Except for the ticket booth. I wish they would bring the ticket booth back. It sat right in the entrance way, outside. That ticket booth for a long time was on Bridge Street. I think it is still around. I think it is put away somewhere. I wish they would bring it back.

NL: Let's go back to your schooling. The courses that you took were...

JB: Well, I took everything that I could get. I took the academic program. I took three different languages – two years of three different languages. I took Latin and Spanish and French I think they offered another year of Latin, but I didn't get into that. Two years was enough for me.

NL: And then math?

JB: Of course. All kinds of math. And English and history. We had a chemistry lab. All that I learned in chemistry covered about one week when I went to college. I thought I knew a lot. When I first went to chemistry class it blew my mind! I thought that I was so smart!

NL: You went to Penn State. Why did you choose Penn State?

JB: Because it was cheap. There was no tuition. I had been accepted at the University of Pennsylvania. At that time tuition was \$500.00. Well, I was not going to ask my family to pay that kind of money at that time. That was a fortune! I forget the name of the other college that offered to take me, but that was too expensive, too. At Penn State there was no tuition. You had to pay a \$50.00 fee for odds and ends – for a locker and key and that kind of thing. Most of the money went for room and board. I was never sorry that I went to Penn State. I loved Penn State! I would like to go up there, especially in the fall.

Where did you go to school?

NL: I went to Drew, which is in Madison, New Jersey.

JB: I heard the name, I have never been there.

I graduated at the top of my class at Phoenixville. I was the valedictorian. I felt guilty because in those days you were chosen to be valedictorian by the number of points that you accumulated. And you got certain points for your grades. For every grade you got so many points. As I told you, I didn't take any study halls. I filled it all up. I did get good grades.

NL: You were very industrious.

JB: I didn't have any study halls. I don't know how they choose people today, but then you got so many points for each grade on your report.

NL: Did you have to give an address?

JB: Oh, yes! Just about all the fun that we had in school and moving on to bigger and better things. I have it somewhere. A couple of years ago I read it for one of our class reunions. I think it was the 50th class reunion. I found it and I read it for them.

I went on to Penn State. At that time they had three semesters a year. They went summer and winter. They went three semesters a year. And then in two years and eight months I was graduated from Penn State. Before we left, of course, the war was over. I graduated in 1946.

You think that you are pretty smart when you are valedictorian. But when you go away to college you find out how tough it really is.

NL: So what happened after Penn State?

JB: I studied to be a Medical Technologist. After I was finished at Penn State we had to spend a year in training. I went to Philadelphia General Hospital, where some other girls that I had been in class with had gone, and we were trained down there for one year.

And then I finished there and I went to work at the U of P, doing work for a man who was a gastroenterologist. I helped with some research on...-- well, I can't remember well enough to tell you all about it. I was part of the nutritional service. There were some wonderful people who worked there, and they were all very good at what they were doing. Most of them were doing research. The doctor I worked for was Dr. Maloney. I was down at the U of P not too long ago, and one of the buildings is named for him. I did get my name on one research paper. And then, of course, I started having a family and that was that.

NL: How did you meet your husband?

JB: Chemistry lab! I tell the story to everybody. He was good at doing unknowns and I was good at washing dishes. We combined forces. He helped me with my unknowns and I helped him with his dishes.

NL: Was he a physician?

JB: He was going to Penn State the same time I was. We met up there. He went to Jefferson Medical School. We were married before he started his junior year. We lived down in Philly for a little while. I was still working. I worked up until right before I delivered my first child. I never went back to that kind of work again. I did lots of other things but I never worked in the lab again. But I was well trained. All that area down in Philadelphia is all so changed.

I said I went to the U of P, but the training I got was at the Old Philadelphia General Hospital, adjacent to the U of P Hospital. It was gigantic. I think it was a free hospital. They took care of the people who didn't have any other way of being taken care of. Part of it was for the insane. They had all kinds of patients there. It was quite a place to study, because it had everything.

What else can you ask me?

NL: So, you and your husband were married, and then what? You decided to come to Phoenixville...?

JB: Well, no. He went to Western Pennsylvania to intern. He was out there for a year, and I stayed home. Then he decided to stay there as a resident physician at the hospital. He

was at Uniontown, south of Pittsburgh. So when he decided to do that, we found an apartment and I took the kids and we went out there to live. We stayed there for eight years. He was a resident physician for awhile and then he set up a practice. He practiced for three years, and he was going great guns. Then he decided he wanted to specialize in pediatrics. He got a pediatric residency in Pittsburgh. He did that for three years. He commuted back and forth. We stayed in Uniontown and he commuted back and forth. He stayed there sometimes and when he wasn't working he came home.

The people out there were wonderful. Completely different from here! You were either rich or you were poor. It was the coal mining. I can remember the first time we went out there, all you could see were the coke ovens. There were these reflections from the coke they were making. A lot of the people were dirt poor. The people who were running the place were richer than you can imagine. It was a wonderful place to be. Everybody was very nice.

But when he finished his residency, he was offered to be taken into a practice in a very fine section of suburban Pittsburgh. I wanted to come back to Phoenixville. So I twisted his arm.

And we came back here. We looked and looked and looked around. The more he looked, the more he realized that Phoenixville Hospital was as good as any that he could see. There was a husband and wife up at Pottstown who offered him an associate in their practice. He looked at Pottstown Hospital and decided that he didn't want anything to do with that. At that time it wasn't good and he knew that Phoenixville was better. So, we stayed here. Bought this house and here we are. Since 1959 we have been here.

NL: He was a pediatrician?

JB: Yes. Dr Reed was also. Dr. Reed was here. She is still living. She would be a good one to interview. I don't know where she came from originally. She has been here a long time. She knows a lot about the McAvoy family, because that is where she lives, on the McAvoy property.

Of course everything changes. Phoenixville Hospital isn't anything like it was when he first came. They don't even have a pediatric bed in Phoenixville Hospital any more. Nope. He came and he was a mover and a shaker, and wanted everything to be the best. He worked hard at it. They had a very good pediatric department. Now they don't have any. I don't understand it. Community hospitals should have it all. How would you like it if you had a kid and you had to put him somewhere else.

NL: Where would they go?

JB: Children's Hospital in Philadelphia – that's where they send a lot of them. I think that Paoli Hospital still has pediatrics. Phoenixville doesn't. I can't understand it. But they can't make money on pediatrics. They only do what they can to make money today.

When he first was in practice you wouldn't think of putting an ad in the paper. And it was not easy to get started, believe me. Today, you can't listen to the radio or the television without them advertising some hospital or some physician. It just blows my mind. And I think to myself that all of that money they are spending on advertising could be helping someone who doesn't have any insurance. A lot of it is wasted.

Now what else?

NL: Let's think about this house. Did your husband have his office here?

JB: That was one of the things that brought us here. When I was a child, this house had been bought by a family of the name of Raubfogel. They had an all-purpose hardware store in Phoenixville. They converted the house to what it is today. On the front they added a sun porch. I remember as a child we used to come next door where we paid our taxes. We visited there with a family, the Williams. Occasionally, we would come over to this house to see the parrot on the sun porch. The Raubfogels had a parrot. That was quite something. There aren't too many people who have parrots. I remember they had a baby grand piano in the corner of this room (living room).

We bought it because there was enough room to have a small office here. He had a waiting room and an office and in the back is another room he used for a laboratory. In those days lots of times you did small tests in the office. He could do that. In those days you answered the phone day and night. He went out in the middle of the night to see people. Lots of time they brought them in here. He did have an answering service later on. Most of time you had to be available. That's the way it was.

We had people here with their metal detectors looking for things in the back yard. They had two outhouses here. When they were finished with them, they closed them up and dropped things down. When we came there was still a chicken coop in the back yard, my kids played in until we finally torn it down.

NL: Has anything been found here of significance?

JB: Not that I know of. But not too long ago a little pot full of coins was given by the hospital, all kinds of coins that had been dug up in the area. At one time the British were camped along Nutt Road, and another time the Americans were here. I am sure that all kinds of things can be found.

NL: So your husband made house calls?

JB: Yes. Absolutely. That's the way it was. Those days are gone forever. And they wonder why the ER is so filled with patients. It's because you can't find a doctor to take care of you.

NL: Did he have a nurse here?

JB: He had a girl who was an assistant. Not a nurse, but an assistant. She would make appointments and greet patients and help with whatever needed to be done. And of course you also had to have someone in there, because you didn't want to be accused of doing anything improper.

NL: Someone told me that you played bridge?

JB: Absolutely! When we first came to Phoenixville – no, we started playing bridge in college – when we came to Phoenixville the Grovers were involved with bridge. There were several different places – there was duplicate bridge. We played bridge here, too. But once we got involved in duplicate bridge, there wasn't any more party bridge. He was rabid about bridge. He became a life master. I never did that. It was too much for me. But I helped to run duplicate bridge. We used to have it at the Y when the Y was in Phoenixville. Bill Grover ran it and sometimes he had other things to do, so I ran the duplicate bridge. I think he still has it down at the Senior Center. I haven't played bridge for a long time. But that was part of my make-up.

NL: Golf and bridge...and tennis?.

JB: You know, we had tennis courts out there at Meadow Brook, too. I forgot about that. There were two courts. Of course they were clay courts; in those days that is what they had. The area is full of clay. I never did learn to play tennis. But there were a lot of tennis players who did play out there. My gym teacher in high school, Catz Rankin, she would come and play tennis. She said she had trouble finding people who had time to play tennis with her so she decided that she had better learn to play golf. For years and years and years there were four of us who played golf together, every Sunday morning. Two of them were phys ed teachers.

NL: How about riding? Did you ride?

JB: Never did that. I don't know anything about that.

What else – oh yes, I know. Swimming in the summer time. I love to tell the story about going down to Showalter's meadow. Showalter's had a dairy close to us. Pickering Creek went along side the dairy. They had cows and the pasture was by the creek. We would go down and go swimming in the creek. I was afraid of the cows. What I thought they would do to me I do not know. I didn't like to walk through the pasture to get to the creek. There were several places along the Pickering Creek where we would go. There was a place called the overhanging bridge – I don't know if that metal bridge is still there or not. At Ajax Hosiery there was a pool. The people who worked there were allowed to use the pool. After they closed up it was turned into a neighborhood recreation center.

NL: Where was that again?

JB: Out in the west end of Phoenixville.

NL: I can see that we are running out of tape, and of time. Thank you so much for the interview.