

1997

08 Interview with Thomas "Pat" Morley

James Jones

West Chester University of Pennsylvania, JJONES@wcupa.edu

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Recommended Citation

Jones, J. (1997). 08 Interview with Thomas "Pat" Morley. Retrieved from http://digitalcommons.wcupa.edu/hist_wchest/11

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Interview with Thomas "Pat" Morley

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Reference: Thomas J. Morley, interview by James A. Jones (West Chester, PA, February 8, 1997).

Pat Morley's real name is Thomas J. Morley. He was born on February 7, 1920 to Irish immigrant parents at 504 East Niels Street, and later grew up at 220 East Niels Street. He worked for PECO from March 1941 to March 1982, interrupted only by four years of military service from 1942-1946. During his first seventeen years at PECO, he worked as a lineman, troubleman and in other outdoor jobs in the Western division of the electrical side. Afterwards, he entered customer service and worked at the main Western Division headquarters in Coatesville until his retirement. His wife Catherine (maiden name Ippolito) was born in Downingtown but worked in West Chester during her early years. This interview took place in Pat's home in West Chester. Pat (P), his wife Catherine (C) and the interviewer (J) were the only people present. Pat also shared some of his photos and memorabilia of West Chester's "South End."

[The interview began with P talking about people who lived in the neighborhood when he was growing up.]

J: You mentioned Johnny Shields who was across the street from you.

P: Johnny Shields was a blind man who lived directly across the street from me when I lived at 220 East Niels Street. I remember him because he used to walk back and forth to the Tag Company. He had a sort of rope that went up across his shoulder and he had it set up so he could carry several boxes of tags. And then he would sit on his front porch and string tags, and walk back and forth to the factory to get more tags.

J: That's what he did for a job then?

P: It was the only thing that he could do, but he was able to find his way back and forth to the tag factory by himself and carry the tags to his home.

J: Were there any other Shields' living in the house [with him]?

P: I remember one other woman, but whether she was his wife or what, I don't remember.

[J mentioned Ed and George Shields who lived at same the address in 1900-1910. Speculation as to the relationship between them and Johnny Shields--maybe a son?]

J: Who else do you have?

P: There was Frank Giunta who had the little grocery store [where Jake's Bar is presently located on South Matlack Street] and the dry goods store was next to him. On the other corner was a man named Leb Brown and his daughter Eva might have been a schoolteacher at some time.

J: I know of Eva because before she died, she gave all her old photos to a guy named Maurice Linnett ...

P: He lived down the street. He's still down there--he had a business in the back of his place.

J: Truck parts, I believe. [P's reaction showed that he knew about the truck parts business]

P: That's right. Leb Brown had an old fashioned store where the cash drawer was hollowed out wood where you put change in. He had a sliding door where he used to sell kerosene. We used to go up there and buy kerosene.

J: What did you do, take a bucket up?

P: We used to take a gallon can with a cap. At that particular time, we had no central heating. In fact, we had no sewer [hookup]. I remember them putting the sewer line down the middle of Niels Street when I lived at 220 [East Niels Street].

J: Take a guess how old you were when that happened. I'm trying to get an idea about the date.

P: I would say that was about ... I was born in '20... that was about 1928. I remember when they put the sewer in, because we had an outhouse in the back, no electricity ...

J: No electricity!

P: No electricity. The house was wired when I was in school. A man by the name of [sounds like] Spot Ford wired the house for us-- put the electric in. There was electricity in the area, but we didn't have any in the house. In back of that house, there was nothing until a man by the name of Josh Benner built a garage and a little house next door, and he serviced automobiles down there. Later on, he had a little barn down there because he started fox hunting, and he kept a horse back there.

J: He must have done all right with the automobile business if he got into fox hunting.

P: Yes, he did. Later, on Niels Street, I remember that back of Giuntas, there were people called the Ewings.

J: Dr. W. W. Ewing? [from my list of people]

P: No, I remember Dr. Ewing. He was on the corner of Walnut and Magnolia Street. He was a dentist; I had a tooth pulled there. There's a funny story about that. My mother, at that time ... not too many people went to the dentist. She had a toothache and I took her to the dentist. I was only a young boy. The dentist looked at her and he came out to me--I guess I was only twelve or thirteen at the time--and he said 'I have to remove some of your mother's teeth. They are in terrible bad shape.' I asked how many he had to remove and he said that he should take them all out. I told him that he'd better take them all because if he didn't, she'd never come back again. So he did, and you know, she thanked me for that for years afterward, because her teeth bothered her. She just had a plate made and then they were fine.

J: I didn't know who Dr. Ewing was, and I'll tell you why. This was the petition to get the city to fill in the swamp and make the ball field at Green Field. The Carey family got the petition together and Dotty [Parker] gave me a copy.

P: Next door to the Ewings were the Vesers.

J: Recently, I was in contact with the granddaughter of Fred Veser.

P: Fred just died a few years ago. He lived out near Chatwood I think. His wife is still living. I can remember the Youngs who lived next door to the Vesers. Next to them were the Singers, next to the alley, and Johnny Shields lived in a single house right across from the alley [221 East Niels Street].

[We looked at a map and established the following addresses: Morleys in 220 East Niels Street. The "Gunice" family was at 222 East Niels Street. The Daileys were at 224 East Niels Street. Moultons (Moltons?) were at 226 East Niels Street.]

P: As we cross Franklin Street [into Riggtown proper], on the north side of the street, Dougherty's lived in the first house [385 East Niels Street]. Now Jack Dougherty is my brother-in-law. He married my sister Josephine. She's deceased, and he lives now at 845 Rosary Lane. [some discussion about the location of the Dougherty house on Rosary Lane, across from Finnigans] Next to Doughertys were the Woodwards [in 387 East Niels Street]. Then there was a little alley and in the next house, there were people by the name of Winans [431 East Niels Street. Note that "Wes" Winan worked at Schramms, Inc.] I don't know how long they lived there, but they had two or three children that were about my age.

J: They must have been renters.

P: Going up the street, there were McIntyres (433 East Niels Street) and Wallaces [435 East Niels Street], and Roy Ferrier lived in the end house [437 East Niels Street]. They have a son, the oldest boy, who lives right down the street here--Roy Ferrier [Jr]. On the south side, people by the name of Richardson lived in the first house [386 East Niels Street]. Then Thompsons lived in the next house [388 East Niels Street]. Then Gincleys [390 East Niels Street] and then the Pooles lived in the next house [392 East Niels Street]. That must be right around where you live.

J: Do you mean Robert and Millie Poole [who lived at 396 East Niels Street; Millie is still there.]

P: I don't know, I just remember Pooles.

J: There were a lot of people in and out of that house. Then the next one ...

P: The next one was Davis [394 East Niels Street], and the one after that was Townsend--Mom-mom Townsend [396 East Niels Street]. Next to her was her son "Wacky" Townsend [400 East Niels Street], and then the Careys [500 East Niels Street], then the Smileys [Morley missed two houses, because the Smileys lived at 506 East Niels Street], then the garage, and then the last house was the Guthries [where Willows II Apartments are located today].

J: They were the people where you didn't want to lose a ball in their yard because you'd never get it back?

P: Right. [laughter] And then on Franklin Street, was Pop-pop Harvey ...

J: Alonzo Harvey, the harness maker [in 539 South Franklin Street]?

P: The harness maker. Was his name Alonzo? I believe he was Jack [Harvey]'s grandfather.

J: Yes, he was.

P: And then next to Harvey [537 South Franklin] were people by the name of McDevitt. "Butch" McDevitt was a writer for the Daily Local News. They have a sports thing every year that is named after him. He lived next to ... in the end house were Gallaghers [535 South Franklin]. And then across the street where the school teachers live now [P meant 526 South Franklin, but the school teachers are no longer live there]. When I lived there, people by the name of Bray lived in that house.

J: [checked my records and found William Bray]

P: And I think next door were the Hamiltons [In fact, two doors down the street at 520 South Franklin]. They were related, the Hamiltons. And on up the street, there was a black family by the name of Grant. And there was the Shur family there.

J: I know all about that, because I work with Irene Shur. She married one of the boys ...

P: Exactly, she married Willie Shur.

J: And Jake was the other brother?

P: Jake had the army-navy store up on Gay Street. And then the other boy, his proper name was Joe, but we called him "Yosky."

J: Why?

P: [It was] just a nickname that he had, I don't know if it was a Jewish name ...

J: [Started to say something about European background]

P: Irene Shur married Willie. I knew Willie real well. He used to make hoagies and stuff like that.

J: Up on Walnut Street?

P: Yes. When they were married, they used to live out there on Maple Avenue. You know where the Henderson School is? Right in that block.

J: [suddenly remembering] Oh yes, I heard about that [from Irene Shur]. The apartments are over there now.

P: [change of subject] The Snyders lived on Lacey Street. And of course, right across the street from the Snyders was the borough stables. It's still owned by the borough. And then right on the corner of that alley--at Lacey and the alley--you're talking about Jo-Boy [the Leary's horse]. Right on the corner, there was a barn where the Leary's kept Jo-Boy. They had trotting horses.

J: Is that where the parking lot is now? Between the creek and the alley.

P: No. You're talking about the north side of Lacey Street and I'm talking about the south side of the street. The houses was in the 500 block of South Matlack Street ...

J: It used to be a corner store called ...

P: Quillen's. And in the back of them was where this barn was. It would be on the southwest corner of the alley and Lacey Street.

J: [change of subject] Somebody mentioned something [in that area] they called "the arena." A concrete slab where people used to play basketball over there around the corner of Franklin and Lacey. Do you know anything about it?

P: [very hesitant and unsure] It could have been over at that parking lot you were talking about. [he did not really remember it] Down at the corner was ESCO Cabinet Company, and the "mechanical cow" was in there--Sharpless Separator Works ...

J: ... and the United Dairy Equipment Company ...

P: Right. I think Smiley's garage used to be over there before it moved to Niels Street.

J: Smiley's garage is still there, isn't it? It's Smitty's body shop. And they built those apartments where the Guthries' house used to be.

P: We used to have a Boy Scout troop in [ESCO Cabinet Company] when I was a boy. Troop 68, I think it was. [showed P a picture of ESCO employees including Cie Gincley. Discussion of Anne Gincley and Siddy Stanley] Cie was the oldest in the family.

J: Well, everyone must have known the Gincleys.

P: Oh yes, the Gincleys were famous in Riggstown. The Gincleys and the Careys ...

J: ... and the Smileys, Townsends and Hamiltons. [showed P the Gincley family picture. He recognized everyone and provided some new details] Flossie's husband had a garage down there on the corner of Market and Wayne Streets, and they moved to Florida. She married a Sylvester. "Billy" and my sister Marie were about the same age. "Billy" and Honey Hamilton and my sister all ran around together. They were about the same age--my older sister was four years older than I was, and my younger sister--they're both deceased--was four years younger [than I was].

[P has detailed knowledge of the family relationships in Riggtown. He confirmed what I had already learned about the Gincley-Harvey- Ferrier connection, and the death of Earl "Jumbo" Gincley]

P: His [Jumbo's] daughter works up at the court house. She's the one who told me about the picnic over at Green Field. [some questions to establish that this was the person I know as Betty Ellen Gincley] Her mother remarried [after Jumbo's death] ... Joe, and they still live down on Oakbourne Road. [several Gincley families moved to there after World War II]. I know the whole family, I played ball with them, and everything else.

[change of subject]

P: When we played ball there, home plate was right at Franklin Street. First base was down along Franklin and third base was out towards the railroad.

J: [And I heard] if you hit a long enough home run, it would end up in the swamp [where Goose Creek ran up against the railroad embankment].

P: Maybe you can help me. What do you know about the house where Sarge Clark lives? [220 East Linden Street].

J: [long-winded answer. In brief, it was built by John Carey (Sr.) (1829-1904/03/04), who married Eliza Shields (1828-1913/11/22) on 1850/04/23. By 1901, they lived in the house on East Linden St. Some of their descendants lived in 500-502 East Nields Street.]

P: Sarge Clark was a hell of an athlete.

J: He's pretty modest about that, but I pumped him a bit [when I interviewed him] and he told me about his 106-yard touchdown.

P: He was raised on Nields Street, and his father worked for Highland Dairy, I believe.

J: He married Laura Lessig, who was from Matlack Street, I think.

P: Originally they lived on Matlack Street, but then they moved up to the alley where the tag factory is [Mechanics Alley between Niels and Lacey]. They lived in the corner house. Laura, Buddy, and another son, I think he's in Florida now. There was another Lessig family who lived in the 500 block of Matlack Street.

J: [prods P to continue]

P: What was interesting to me back in those days, I think about next to the dry goods store, there was [sounds like] Grows in the first house, and then in the next house there was ... I forget their name, but she married a Henderson. Their grandfather had a horse-and-carriage and a Dalmatian dog that used to run under the carriage all the time. [laughter] Rodgers, Grandpop Rodgers.

J: [prods P to continue]

P: Did anybody ever tell you about Mrs. Alexander?

J: No. Go for it.

P: Mrs. Alexander lived on South Bolmar Street, down near the old Springwood School. They grew a lot of vegetables. She and her young son would come around in a horse and wagon and sell vegetables.

J: Other people told me that a lot of people in Riggtown had their own vegetable gardens, so how could this lady come around Riggtown and sell vegetables?

P: Some of them didn't have gardens. She would come around and sell potatoes and stuff like that.

J: I heard about a black man who used to come around and buy junk.

P: Harmon, the rag man. He had a horse and wagon, and used to come around. And there was another older lady that we called Sarah Jane. She was a black lady and she wore a turban and long robes. We were always afraid of her. She lived over in the Georgetown area and we used to hide when we saw her.

J: Betty Ellen [Gincley] told me about someone who used to come around with a pony and take pictures of children on the pony. [P remembered that, but wasn't sure if he had his picture taken on the pony.]

J: There aren't too many pictures. How come?

P: Nobody could ever afford a camera. As I said, when we were young, we didn't have electricity. My father told me that before he started on the railroad, he worked out at the nursery, Hoopes Brothers and Thomas, for nine dollars a month. And then he started with the railroad and he worked at the roundhouse [on Wyeth Lab property at South Adams Street]. Then he was transferred out to Oxford. He used to have to catch a train [West Chester] and go so far down on the Media line, and then get another train ... he was on the road fourteen hours to make eight for the railroad. It was starvation wages, but then after that he was lucky enough to get a job with the Philadelphia Electric Company.

J: What was your father's full name?

P: Patrick Morley, no middle initial. He and my mother were both from Ireland. [read from a PECO newsletter, "Current News"] Mr. Morley came to the USA in 1908, and he came to work for PECO in 1929 as a street mechanic.

J: He was born in 1889, and he was riding horse by the time he was five in 1894. He came to the US in 1908 and worked at PECO in 1929 as a street mechanic in Gas T&D (transmission and distribution) in Western Division.

P: He worked right there at Miner and Matlack Street in the old gas works.

J: [continue reading] ... for thirty years until he retired in 1959. Today [1967], he and his wife Celia live in a pleasant home on Bradford Avenue and his son Thomas, assistant customer service supervisor in Coatesville, lives next door. About two miles away is the farm where he still rides (on Sconnelltown Road) and he stills saddles and brushes his own horse. [laughter]

J: Did he have an accent this whole time?

P: Oh yes, and [he] swore like a trooper! [laughter]

[change of subject]

P: After Gunices moved out, there's a man by the name of Jip Kelly moved into the house next to us. Jip had that barn I told you about--he was a horse trader--and he used to let us ride up and down the alley from Rosedale.

J: What was the name of the horse down on Lacey Street that all of the kids liked to visit?

P: Jo-Boy. I think there used to be a fire engine named after Jo-Boy.

J: It seems like a lot of people had horses around here--more than you would think.

P: A lot of people had horses around here. You know Chock Carey; he's retired from PE too. He was big for beagles too, after he moved out to Poorhouse Road. There were a lot of Cavanaughs there too. Do you recognize the name Popeye? Popeye McIntyre. McIntyres were related to the Wallaces. Davis married a Guthrie girl.

[J showed P the list of names on the Green Field petition. He knew many of them and added the following detail.] Wilbur Devine was in the mushroom spawn business. He sold to Brandywine Mushrooms down on Matlack Street. ... I don't know this Wayne Dorsey, but there was a Dorsey who was a colored cop.

J: Jack Harvey's mentioned him. He was the first black cop in town.

P: Oh yes. He was a nice guy, but he kept us in line.

J: I understand he was pretty big.

P: Oh, he was big ... and if you did not move, he would hit you across your legs with that damn club, you respected the police then. [back to petition names] Howard Dougherty was the father of my brother-in-law, and Mrs. Howard--her name was Agnes--they lived on the corner [of East Niels and South Franklin]. John Ford was a doctor, and he also had a brother who worked on the railway. They lived about the 500-block of South Walnut Street. The Furlongs lived on the corner of Matlack and Linden Streets. Next door to them were the Gibsons--Charlie and "Guinea" Gibson. Their daughter is married to Bob Ayers.

J: Their daughter is Karen--I know her.

P: Green--I think she lived on the corner opposite from the Furlongs at Matlack and Linden Streets. I think her house faced Linden Street, in the 100-block. Across the street from her was John Doran who owned the block plant [on East Niels Street at the railroad tracks]. He was an engineer and a graduate of Villanova University. I remember when I was in the service, I was in Union Station in Chicago, and I bumped into John Doran. ... It seems to me that the Fimples lived over on Franklin Street. Sam Fimple--he worked for the state highway, I believe. Mamie Hamilton lived over there on Franklin Street. Morris Holman was a real estate man--he had a limp in his leg. Bill Carney [pronounced Carney] lived on Magnolia Street. Thomas Keating had that store after Lev Brown [at 601 South Matlack on the corner with Niels]. Keating's main job was at the tag factory, but he also worked for Joe Eppes, who had an army-navy store on Church Street. We lineman [for PECO] used to go in there to buy overalls and stuff.

P: [continuing] The McGrogans that I know still live on Rosedale Avenue. In twin houses there, not too far from where your president lives [Dr. Adler of WCU]. Percy Meredith, I knew him very well, he lived in the 500-block of South Walnut Street. He's dead now, and I think his son is dead too. ... The Millers lived over on Adams Street.

[P's wife returned]

P: Robert Mood was a politician in the Fifth Ward at that time. He worked for the Daily Local News, and he lived across from [Maurice] Linnett [Mood was in 618 South Matlack (SM); Linnett in 619 SM].

C: [interruption leads to change in subject] I met him in 1946.

J: How did you meet him?

C: I used to work at the Mansion House Hotel. I started in 1945 or 1946, I forget. I worked [there] with a lot of good friends of mine, and we got through working on a Sunday evening, and we went over to the "Eagle" for some drinks.

P: Fraternal Order of Eagles, it was a club.

C: I lived in Downingtown, so I had to take the bus home. The last bus was at midnight. In those days I could walk home after I got off the bus. Any way, we were sitting and drinking, and I noticed this man in the other room, leaning back against the wall, and I paid him no attention. Then I decided to go into the back to telephone my mother to tell her that I would be home on the last bus. This guy wouldn't let me through until I told him what I wanted [teasing her]. Later on when we left to go get the bus, this guy and another guy who I didn't know at the time, but was later the best man at our wedding, Newt McCool.

J: I've met some of the McCools in West Chester [They are a large family. Millie Poole at 396 East Niels Street has a McCool for a son-in-law.]

C: Any way, he followed me and kept asking to take me home, but I said no, so he made me promise to go out on a date with him. I took the bus home. Our first date was a Wednesday evening, May 21, 1946. I waited for him and he didn't show up. I got on the bus and the bus went around Church Street and then right onto Market and on to Downingtown. I was on the bus and there was this car trying to pass the bus, and it was him trying to get me off the bus. When the bus stopped up on 322, he was standing there and got me off the bus. We've known each other ever since then.

P: I see you got Slater [Zell] here. He married Christine Vesper. Old man Vesper was the baker over at the university. They used to make sauerkraut in their front yard. They used to have a big barrel there ... Slater was a professional horseman too. John Yannick came down from New York and worked in Giuntas cutting meat. Then he opened up his own store, I think it was at the corner of Darlington and Union Street. I think the last place he was down on Route 202 on the right side. ... Bruce Wood bought our house at 220 East Niels Street. As I said, I was born at 504 East Niels Street, and I was only three, four, maybe five at the most when we moved up to 220 East Niels Street. Then we moved to 136 East Lacey around 1945.

[change of subject]

P: My mother was deathly afraid of colored people--she was from the old country [born in Ireland]. She thought that she was set for life on Lacey Street, but then the neighborhood changed. The house next door to me came open, and she and dad moved out here [Bradford Avenue]. So I've only lived in 3-4 houses all my life. I bought this house in April 1950, about two months before we got married. We've been here since 1950.

J: When was your wedding day?

P: June 24, 1950. We had four children. The oldest is Patrick (May 31, 1951), then the next was Linda (1954). Thomas Steven is forty (1956) and my youngest, Joanne, is thirty-four (1962).

J: How many grandchildren do you have?

P: Eleven grandchildren. They're all local--my daughter, who is married to an attorney, R. Kerry Kalmbach, he has an office in Kennett Square, but they live on Street Road. The mailing address is West Grove, but it is actually in Unionville. My son Patrick, you go out Miner Street to Blue Rock Estates, he lives out there. Thomas, my next son, lives over in Caln, over next to Coatesville. And Linda lives in Downingtown, she's married to a state trooper.

J: So you've got a real Chester County family ...

P: Actually, the only time I was away from West Chester was the four years I was in the service.

J: Which branch were you in?

P: I was with the aviation engineers.

J: That probably helped you out when you went to work for PECO.

P: I was already a lineman with PECO. Then I went into the service afterwards. I was in the South Pacific on Okinawa. We built up the airstrips. And then I came back and went to the Philadelphia Electric Company because I'd worked there before, and I stayed there until I retired. Now I work part time for the county. I'm Judge Shenkin's tipstaff. [P showed me a business card printed with the definition of "tipstaff" and the line that he says at the beginning of court, "Oi-yay. Oi-yay"]

J: How many hours a month do you do that?

P: It's part time. We get paid per diem. I work maybe ten or twelve days a month, whenever he has court trials. It's interesting, it gets me dressed and out of the house, up town ...

[end of side one of tape. Side two opened with discussion of eyesight. P just got his first glasses a few years ago.]

P: Riggtown was a very, very pleasant place to live in. You could leave anything you owned laying right out there on the street, and it would be there the next morning when you came back. People would give you the shirt off your back, especially if you lived there. But don't come in as a stranger.

J: That's the other side of it. People from outside say Riggtown was a dangerous place. How come?

P: I guess it was protecting the area, just like they have the gangs now, only we didn't call it gangs. You protected the area that you lived in.

J: What were they protecting it against?

P: I guess we wanted to keep our people there ... but later in years, people from Phoenixville came in and married people from Riggtown. But before, it was interknit, and we stayed together. There was a north end, a south end. We weren't allowed in the north end, and the north end wasn't allowed in the south end.

J: So if you tried to go up to the north end, they'd do the same thing ...

P: That's right. They'd do the same thing to you.

J: A lot of people think of Riggtown as being all Irish, but that is not true.

P: No it's not. There were some Irish, the Cavanaughs, my mother and father were born in Ireland. I don't think Carey's had any Irish ...

J: How about the Doughertys?

P: And the McDevitts.

J: But then you had some black and Jewish families ...

P: Most of them were Catholic families, the Hamiltons and so on.

J: Did people go to church very much?

P: Oh yes. The Brays and the Hamiltons ... we all had to walk all the way up to St. Agnes.

J: I guess they walked.

P: We didn't have anything else [so we walked].

J: Was the trolley on High Street operating?

P: The High Street Dinky, we used to call it. [laughter] It ran from Rosedale Avenue all the way up to Marshall Street.

J: Did people ever take that?

P: Oh yes. It was running when I was still in school. In fact, we had a trolley that went all the way out to Lenape Park. You could get the train at Lenape.

J: Do you remember what it cost?

P: I have no idea. I had no idea what a dime was back in those days. I do remember that we used to go to the Daily Local News and buy the paper for a penny, and then go out in the street and sell it for two cents. We might have three or four cents, so we'd buy a couple of papers and go out and sell them. We'd keep going until we had eleven cents, and then we'd go to the movies, [laughter] The Rialto Theater and the Garden Theater used to be on Gay Street. ... There was [a theater in] the old opera house [next to the court house on Gay Street], the Warner, the Rialto, and the Garden Theater.

J: [change of subject] How about political parties? Did people vote much or care about that?

P: Well, we already talked about Bob Mood. He was a sort of a politician who used to come around and get everyone to vote over at the borough stables.

J: That's where I vote nowadays.

P: There was another who worked at the tag factory who lived down on Rosedale Avenue. He was some kind of a politician, but I can't remember his name.

J: Here's the real question. You know that the Republicans have always controlled West Chester politics. I wonder whether Riggstown was any different, more likely to vote Democrat?

P: I don't think, when we were that age, that we knew much about the Republicans or the Democrats. Our parents probably knew more about that than we did when we were growing up. Of course, there was quite a politician down there on Walnut Street in later years, Crane.

J: Mitch Crane? Oh, I remember him when he was borough whatever- he-was [borough councilman]. He got something done for me.

P: I think he was a graduate of West Chester [University].

J: He was a Democrat.

P: Yes, he was. Now the Boone's were Republican.

J: Would it be fair for me to say that working class people were more likely to be Democrat than Republican in this town?

P: I don't think so. They were all working class people down in that area [south east]. They were honest, hardworking, drinking people.

J: I've heard that a few places. Apparently Levi Gincley, "Reds" Gincley" could hold most of his liquor ...

P: Maybe I shouldn't put this on tape, but I can remember that Pop- pop [Alonzo] Harvey would be after Reds with a whip when Reds got drunk. [Reds was married to Pop-pop Harvey's daughter Helen].

J: This is my guess--nobody has said this in so many words--but Alonzo made sure that his daughters lived in houses that he owned right in the neighborhood [Helen in 390 East Nields Street and Gertrude in 437 East Nields Street].

P: He ruled the roost. The Ferriers and the Gincleys--he owned their houses.

P: [discussion of whether Alonzo Harvey had any sons. P only remembered the daughters.] There was a Jumbo Harvey and he married Mabel Thompson. They lived in the 500-block of South Matlack Street. Jumbo was a painter.

J: It sounds like Pop-pop Harvey was a pretty hard man. Would you care to comment [on that]?

P: Pop-pop was. He was a rich man. He had the money and he had control. A lot of those people in Riggtown were related to him, and he controlled them. We respected him. We always called him Mr. Harvey when he spoke. Other than that, I can't say ... he was a good man; he worked hard, he had that harness company.

J: It's interesting that although he was a rich man, he stayed in Riggtown.

P: Yes, it is. Well, he had to because he had those houses, and nobody else would have bought them. Most people in Riggtown rented their houses.

J: I get the sense that he enjoyed being in charge.

P: That's right; he ruled the roost. His daughters lived there, and he ruled them.

J: I saw newspaper stories about him in the 1950s which said he was the last harness-maker in West Chester.

P: That's right. Then there was an Englishman who came over ...

J: Reggie McF ...

P: Took his business over. One of Jack's sons worked for him.

[change of subject]

J: During the 1930s, you had unions, you had strikes, and lots of labor unrest. Did any of that ever happen around here?

P: No, I don't. I think I kind of remember them trying to get the union in ESCO [cabinet company, at Lacey and South Franklin] one time. There may have even been some people who got laid off afterwards because they tried to get the union in there.

J: That fits in with what everyone else says. Nobody remembers much of anything about unions around here.

P: No, there wasn't much of a union around here. Now, my mother worked at the cannery--Grocery Store Products--and over there where Wyeth is now, that used to be the dump. My uncle, who was a Halpin, lived there at the corner of Niels and Matlack, he sort of ran the dump.

J: Do you mean up there where Kodich, the scrap metal dealer is now?

P: I think that was part of it. That was part of the dump.

J: Have you ever heard of the "pest house"? I have been told that there was a house up there near where the dump was, and whenever there was an epidemic, the borough would quarantine people there and bring food to them once a day.

P: I don't remember that, because when we were kids, every house was quarantined. If you had the measles or the mumps, they put a yellow sign on your house.

J: Did that happen at your house?

P: Yes, when we were sick with the measles or the mumps. When they quarantined your house, you weren't allowed out until the doctor said you were okay. If you saw that sign, you wouldn't go near the house.

J: I'll tell you where I heard about the pest house. Do you know Ernie Bayless?

P: Sure I do. He was the borough engineer and head of the water authority when I used to be on the water authority when he was head of it. He still lives over there off of New Street. You know where Lawrence Hall is, and the street that goes off across the street by the creek. He lives in the second or third house back there.

J: [repeats Bayless' story about the pest house and the borough public works. I mentioned one of the employees, Jim Meara.]

P: In fact, I went to school with his daughter, Catherine, I think it was. I knew Jim Meara. Now, Ernie Bayless was not from around here.

J: He told me that he came from New York state. [other details omitted]

P: The man who had the job at the borough ahead of him was named Regan. He lived there at the corner of Matlack and Lacey Street. Was it Lawrence ... ? His brother had a cigar store up on Market Street, and he was the one who was famous for shooting Pratt Dutton.

J: Tell me the story. Who was Pratt Dutton?

P: You know where Ernie Bayless lives now? In that area, there was a little barn, and a man by the name of Pratt Dutton had cows and used to milk them and sell it. Now this happened way, way back when I was just a little kid, so I don't remember everything, but they stopped him from selling milk. I don't know if it was because the milk wasn't good or there was something in his property, but he wouldn't leave, and he was in the back of his barn with a gun.

J: It was like a stand-off.

P: Spider Regan, I think was the man who had the cigar store at that time, and I think he was the man who shot him. That was over in the area right across from Lawrence Hall.

J: There were a bunch of dairies around West Chester back in those days.

P: Eachus, Highland, and then there was another man, we used to call him "chalk and water" because his milk was watered down.

[tape stops while I made copies of photographs]

J: After Green Field was built, did it change baseball at all? Did it change the way that Riggowners played baseball.

P: I don't think so. There were a lot of very good ballplayers who played ball later on Green Field. There was Fred Vesper and the Davis boys--they were good home run hitters. There was a boy who lived on Linden Street--Larry Evans, he works for West Chester Electric--he was a hell of a ball player. Any time we wanted to play ball, we just went and played ball, but after the borough took it over, it got harder to get access to the field.

J: Did people start to have to have uniforms ...

P: That's right. You couldn't just go there after school and get up a game. After they got organized, it was harder to get the use of the field, because they put the fence up around it.

J: I guess by that point, Reilly's farm wasn't a farm anymore, so you couldn't go over there to play.

P: That's right. Sartomers [chemical company in 600-block Bolmar St.] got that.

J: Did you ever go over there [to Reilly's farm] to go target- shooting? [This was suggested by other interviews.]

P: No. The only target shooting I ever did was in back of the house, everybody had a place where they dumped their ashes and their trash. There was a little dump behind our house, and I used to go down there and shoot the rats. [laughter]

J: People talk about trapping the rats too.

P: Jack Harvey was a trapper. Muskrats. I did a little trapping, and there used to be a man up on Washington Street named Dempsey Jackson [who'd buy the hides]. There was another man out in Milltown who used to buy hides, but I can't think what his name was. ... Everybody used to steal everybody else's traps. [laughter] Even though you could lay anything around [in the neighborhood without fear of theft], your traps would be stolen.

[change of subject]

J: About Keystone Tag [Company], one of my students is writing about that and I want to ask a couple of questions to help her out. Did more men or women work there?

P: I think earlier there were more men, but later on it was pretty evenly divided. My sister worked there, and in fact, she married Harold Weinert, who was some kind of an officer in the company before it got bought out. Denny bought it out.

J: What about Denny-Reyburn.

P: I think Denny bought them out, and then I think Reyburn got in it. The headquarters were up there on Barnard Street.

J: That big empty factory [at Barnard and Church Streets]?

P: Right. I think they were supposed to make some kind of senior citizens home out of it.

J: Well, when I talked to Sidy [Margaret Gincley Stanley] and Anne [Gincley], they said that when Denny bought out Keystone, the work changed. They had to work a lot faster and she [Anne] hated it, so she went to work at the university.

P: Percy Meredith worked there--you have him on your list [of signers of the petition to create Green Field. Note that P pronounced "Meredith" as Mer-rid'-dith.]

J: Did people in the neighborhood see Keystone as a good place, and also as a place where they could get a job if everything else failed?

P: There were a lot of people who made money off of Keystone who didn't actually work at Keystone by taking the tags home and stringing them. Everybody in the whole block did that.

J: Do you remember what kind of money you got for stringing tags.

P: I remember that there was a box, and I'm not sure how many tags there were in that box, but you got something like a nickel a box for stringing those tags. [P used his hands to show the size of the box.]

J: Two feet long ... you're talking about a couple hundred tags.

P: Yes. A penny was a penny back in those days. I can remember going to the Acme store at the corner of Market and Matlack Street and getting six loaves of bread for a quarter, unwrapped and unsliced. A nickel or a dime was big money.

J: Well, you said that eleven cents got you into the movies.

P: A haircut was a quarter, or less than that even.

J: So you couldn't get rich from stringing tags, but you could support yourself.

P: That's right, and you could do it during idle time, after school, before school, kids did it, families did it. Mothers and fathers would do it. They'd sit on the front porch and talk and string tags. There were some that had strings that you looped, and there were some that were wire.

J: OH, so not all of them were strung the same way.

P: No, some had string and others had wire.

[interruption when Catherine Morley returned]

J: Did Keystone Tag have a junk pile, and if they did, did they ever throw away anything that was worth scavenging? [In my other research,] I've found that people who lived along railroad lines used to scavenge stuff.

P: We used to walk along the railroad picking up coal to burn, but I don't remember anything that the tag company discarded. They seemed to use most everything. I don't think there was any waste that I remember. On the other end of Keystone, there was

named Whitcraft who used to have antiques and sold stuff in there. Because our backyard, when we lived at 136 Lacey Street, backed up to his place. Gordon Whitcraft, I think his name was.

J: Talk about the railroad for a bit. I've heard that sometimes, the engineers would let the kids ride [while they were moving engines around the yard].

P: Yes. When they'd turn the engines around, [the kids] would get on them and go for a little ride. I guess you heard that there were several people who got killed. At least two people were hit by that train.

J: I know that around 1961 there was a real bad accident with an entire family and the car was dragged about three hundred yards.

P: What was their name? Scott? I think the people who were killed were at Union Street. It was an Italian name, Syracuse or something like that, they got killed at that corner.

J: I saw a story from the 1870s about a butcher with his horse- drawn wagon who got hit by a train. Nobody was killed, but there was so much meat all over the place that people thought there was a terrible accident.

P: Of course, the biggest accident of all [was the one] you talked about at the Historical Society, the Goose Creek fire [of September 1931]. I was standing down on that bridge when the fire started. Luckily, it burned up [upstream, away from the bridge].

J: If you were standing there on the bridge when it got started, then you can tell me who else was standing here when the fire got started. In fact, I probably know who else was standing there.

P: I know there was Jack Gibson, and two or three of the Davises. As a matter of fact, I think one of the Davises was down in the water under the bridge when the fire went up. Jumbo Gincley, I'm sure was there, and I was there, and I think Jack Harvey might have been there.

J: He [Jack Harvey] didn't say that, but he knew a lot about [the fire].

P: There must have been eight or ten of us.

J: Smoking cigarettes, I heard.

P: That's right. Someone threw a match down there and the fire went up. Nobody expected it to go up, because we'd done it before.

J: One of the newspaper stories told about a black guy who lived on Franklin Street-- I'm sure it's not there anymore--up near where ESCO had their building [500 block]. He said that he saw the fire go up the creek faster than a human could run.

P: It might have been one of those Grant boys who lived on Franklin Street. There was a boy down there--I think his name was Grant-- and he was a real black boy [dark-skinned], and we called him "Snowball." Everybody had their nicknames.

J: Who was "Turkey Legs?"

P: Turkey Legs was a colored lady who lived over in Georgetown. She was really bow-legged. She was always all dressed up. Nowadays, if you saw somebody walking, you'd say she was a prostitute, but whether she was in those days, I can't say. I think she may have been a bootlegger at one time.

J: She's one of the people that lots of people remember, just like everyone remembers the fire.

P: There was a fellow named Hank something-or-other who was a kind of a hero because he opened up the tank to keep it from exploding [during the Goose Creek fire].

J: What about race relations?

P: We didn't have any race relations. Black and white played together ...

J: You mean you had good race relations.

P: Oh yes.

C: Everybody got along.

P: You know the black section was called Georgetown, and it was close to our roundhouse. We played together with them--the Liberty Boys had a ballfield.

J: I've certainly seen, that at the high school, there were black and white kids on the same team. Sarge [Clark] talked about that [in his interview].

P: Scats Melton and all those played ball with Sarge. They were a lot of good athletes, and we went to school with them, and socialized with them, and everything else.

C: You didn't go to school with them.

P: Charles Thomas was at St. Agnes.

J: He was the only one.

P: There were two families ... the Hannum kids ...

J: How about Mayor DeBaptiste? How far back does his family go in this town?

P: I'd say that Mayor DeBaptiste came to West Chester ... would I be wrong if I said 25 years? [P was guessing]

FEEDBACK interferes with audibility

J: In other words, not a real long time.

P: The story that I heard--I don't know if it is true--when he came here, he encouraged a lot of colored people to take out insurance for death benefits. And since he was in that business [undertaker], he became a millionaire. He has five or six different funeral homes as far out as Pittsburgh, I understand. There's only one who's richer than he is in West Chester.

J: Who is that?

P: Dellavecchia. They have a million funerals a week.

J: There's Boyd's [funeral home at Church and Union Streets], they've got a pretty impressive building. And what's the one on High Street across from Seven-Eleven?

P: Founds. That used to be Casper Hicks'. Eagle Reilly was there with Casper Hicks, and then he spun off on his own and opened up the Reilly Funeral Home, which Dellavechia bought out. And then Dellavecchia merged with Smith.

[change of subject]

P: You know a guy I'd like you to interview? My brother-in-law, Jack Dougherty. He was born and raised right there in Riggtown.

J: He was Mrs. Dougherty's son [at 385 East Nields Street]?

P: His address is 845 Rosary Lane. His telephone number is 696- 4671. Jack has an excellent memory.

J: What is he, about your age?

P: Jack is ... seventy-two.

[discussion of Riggstown reunion scheduled for June 21, 1997]

[change of subject]

P: [Addressing his wife] Show him that picture of your mother that you donated to the historical society. She had a big garden over in Downingtown and it shows her with one of those wheeled hand plows. She donated the plow to the historical society.

C: It was a hard-working plow [meaning it was hard to work with such a plow].

J: Yes, I have some Amish relatives who use things like that, and [I know] it's a hard way to tear up some soil.

C: This [picture] is [taken] in 1945 or 1946.

[discussion followed as I offer to scan and alter the picture]

P: My wife is one of nine girls and one boy. Their father died in 1942 ...

C: 1941.

P: ... and you were how old when your father died?

C: Sixteen.

P: And your mother kept the whole family together.

C: My mother and my father worked like horses to keep food on the table, and we did--we had lots of good things. We used to can them--put them up--in jars, and I washed many a jar. ... Anyway, my dad died in 1941, and left my mother to do all the work.

J: Take care of the farm and feed the family?

C: Well, we lived on Jackson Avenue [near the railroad tracks in Downingtown, East Ward]. My father was [unintelligible] at the time. [discussion to establish that Jackson Avenue is north of and parallel to the railroad tracks, and west of the Pepperidge Farm factory.] Just recently, in the last three or four years, they put those houses up on [the south side of] Jackson Avenue towards the railroad tracks [on the land where C's

parents used to garden across the street from their house]. I lived in the second house with the white wrought iron railing on the front porch.

[discussion about C's father's illness and how hard her mother worked, followed by discussion about my in-laws, who are also farmers, how to start celery in cold frames]

J: What was your maiden name?

C: Ippolito.

J: Where are your people from?

C: Italy ... Abruzzi [due east of Rome on the Adriatic Sea. Discussion of Italian regional differences.] My dad and mom were both from Italy, but they didn't get married until they came here. My dad came over first. They didn't know each other. My mother's dad was already over here and his wife [mother's mother] sent my [mother] over by herself to see what her father was up to.

J: [discussion of my ancestors' immigration]

C: Then my grandmother came over after that, but my mother met my father in New York at the train station. She went along with a cousin to meet him at the station.

P: While I'm thinking of it, this Rudolph Weiler, you don't have anything next to his name [on the Green Field petition]. He lived up at the corner of Lacey and Walnut, and he was some kind of an engineer. He had a son Rudy as well.

J: I figure that if they lived on Walnut Street, they must have had a little money.

P: Yes, he was an engineer. And the Linton family, when Shields vacated the property at 221 East Nields Street, Lintons moved in there. He worked for the mushroom company, not Grocery Store Products, but the one down on South Matlack Street.

J: Brandywine Mushrooms?

P: Yes, that's it.

J: Levi Gincley used to work there at least part of his life-- hauling ice, I think.

P: Yes, and "Wacky" Townsend used to work down there as the "spawn man."

J: Wacky Senior or Wacky Junior?

P: Wacky Senior, Mom-mom's son. [Mom-mom Townsend was a well-known member of Riggtown.] Young Wacky, who lives there now--he used to work for Pepperidge, I think. [discussion of Harry Junior and his sister Cassie, who live at 400 East Nields Street] They had another boy who we used to call "Jukebox."

J: He's dead, isn't he?

P: He went up to New York. I don't know if he's dead or not.

J: Okay, but he hasn't been around here for a long time. I haven't heard about him before.

P: The other boy is dead, I forget what his name was. He worked for Berardi's [bakery].

C: Those names ... [refers to nicknames] Wacky, Turkey Legs ...

J: There was "Hitler" ...

P: Right, Fred Vesper.

J: There was "Big Jum" and "Little Jum."

P: Gincley's.

J: What was your nickname?

P: Pat.

J: Oh, right. "Pat the Irishman."

C: Most of your aunts and cousins called you "Sonny." They still call you Sonny Morley.

[change of subject back to Green Field petition]

P: Tommy Morgan, he lived Charlie Gibson. He was related to the Gibsons in some way. I think he was in the navy.

[end of side two of tape]
