

The Way We Were

Oral Histories from Our Community

On Sunday, May 5, 2007, the Society's meeting featured a program of personal retrospectives. Our four panelists were invited to share their recollections of life in Tredyffrin, Easttown, and neighboring communities in the 1920's, 1930's, and 1940's. Society President, Roger Thorne, opened the meeting. Denny Leeper moderated the forum and introduced the panelists:



Albert Cappelli, 1946

Albert Cappelli. Albert is a lifelong member of Our Lady of Assumption Roman Catholic Church in Strafford, which is celebrating its 100th anniversary in 2008. Albert's home in Devon was destroyed by the fireworks explosion of 1930 and, even more tragically, his sister was killed in that explosion.

Estelle King Burton.

Estelle is a lifelong member of Mt. Zion A.M.E. (African Methodist Episcopal) Church in Devon, founded in 1849. It was a two-mile walk from her house and as they had no car, she walked it many times. The school segregation fight of 1932-

Estelle King, 1941



1934 delayed her high school graduation by two years.



George Ford, post-war

George Ford, Jr.

George grew up near the Great Valley Presbyterian Church. His father was the station master of the Chester Valley Railroad at Cedar Hollow station, near the current Vanguard complex on Cedar Hollow Rd., Malvern.

Mary Robertson

Ives. Mary grew up on a farm, which is now the site of the Penn State Great Valley campus. They had 25 Guernsey cows. Mary served as an American Red Cross employee in Iceland in 1943 and 1944.



Mary Robertson Ives, 1943

All photographs this page are courtesy of the respective families.

Denny: All four have lived all their lives in this area; between them, they have at least 350 years of history to share with us. Albert, will you please start?

Albert Capelli: My earliest recollection of my childhood was in April, 1930. I was five years old. I can remember that chilly day very clearly. My mother took me to visit her cousin down the street. We heard a loud boom. My mother took me by the arm and started for home. She dropped me off at the house with my sisters and kept heading for the fireworks plant. Then a much louder boom went off, and something crashed through our house. It did a lot of damage. No one could live in the house for about four months. My family was split up to live with cousins. I was sent to Quakertown to live.

My oldest sister worked at the fireworks plant. She was going to be engaged the next June. She worked in a wooden building. There were seventeen wooden buildings. Her girlfriend worked in a masonry building. My sister was not hurt too badly and made her way across the street to the store. But she was concerned about her girlfriend who was a secretary for the plant. She went back to save her friend. She got trapped in the building for a time and was burnt very badly. She died the next day.



Damage from the fireworks explosion. *Courtesy of Judy Di-Filippo.*

Other than that, my childhood was like anybody else's. I went to Strafford school; it was exactly two and a half miles from Grove Avenue. When we missed the bus in the wintertime (we always had three feet of snow), we always had to walk uphill to the school. That's an old adage. That's what I remember of my earliest childhood.

Estelle King Burton. I'm living in the same place where I was born, back off of West Valley Road. My childhood days were pleasant. I enjoyed it. I was out of school for two years because they had the school



The Strafford School. *Photo by Lucy Sampson, TEHS Archives.*

fight at Strafford School. The old school was there then. Later on, they built the new school. Everybody says "What'd you do with those years that you were out?" Well, there was nothing to do but play. I was six or seven years old. I had dolls. I played with dolls.

My father was a laborer. He helped to build the Pennsylvania Turnpike. He had to walk all the way to the Turnpike (where you pay your toll) and walk home.

We didn't have electricity or running water. We did not have bathrooms. We had Saturday night baths. I know you heard about those. We got drinking water from a man by the name of John Dannaker. He had the big house right around the corner. There were about five homes in that little strip off of West Valley. He had gotten water. We'd go up there and get buckets of water to drink. As far as washing, we got water that drained off of the roof down into a cistern. We called them cisterns then. You call them wells now. We had a pump in the kitchen. We had to prime it by pouring a little water in to get the water to come out. We didn't have electricity. We had wood stoves and flatirons. We'd put the flatirons on the stove to heat them up. My mother ironed at least thirty shirts every week because there were five boys. I was the only girl. I was the baby. We were happy back then. We made ourselves content.

They started building homes, starting with two or three on West Valley. That brought the electricity. I stayed out of school for two years. I walked to Mt. Zion A.M.E. Church in Devon. We went down over the hill, across Colket and then to the Cathcart Home (now New Seasons at Devon) - it's a nursing home -



The Cathcart Home. Photo by Dorothy Reed, TEHS Archives.

up to Fairfield, to Spencer, to Berwyn Baptist, to our church. I went every Sunday.

At the Cathcart Home, they had all kinds of cherry trees. It was Easter. I had my white dress on, I thought I was looking cute, we started eating black cherries and you know what happened to my dress. You know what happened when I got home, too.

The joy in my life was going to church. I walked every Sunday. Kids nowadays don't walk anywhere. They want you to drive to the drugstore. Eventually, sooner or later, my brothers got cars. That was our transportation. There was only one taxicab. The driver's name was Chris McCann. He lived right next to the doctor's office on Upper Gulph Road. He'd come and get us and take us to where we had to go.

My mother did day's work, washing, ironing, cleaning people's houses. She made about five dollars a day then, less than that sometimes. My father was a laborer. He finally got a job down in Chester in the shipyard. He had one young man to drive him to work. He'd call my mother – her name was Jean – and say "Tell Dave Mills to pick me up at Strafford School." They'd ride to Chester together. I did day's work. Lat-

er, I worked at Gimbels when they first opened in King of Prussia, but when I started, I did day's work.

I remember three teachers: Mrs. Smith, Miss Farrell, and Mrs. Staats. Mrs. Smith was hard on you, would crack your fingers in a minute. My life was happy. It's not the way it is now. I miss a lot of my friends – most of those I went to school with are gone. It was a joyful life. I'm still living in the same spot but I have a different house.

George Ford, Jr. I came to Cedar Hollow station when I was two years old. My father was the station agent there, and was a postmaster of the Tredyffrin post office. We lived in a house with no plumbing, no running water; we had a cistern with a hand pump in the kitchen. When we wanted drinking water, we'd walk to a springhouse two blocks away and carry it back. My mother raised seven kids. I have two brothers. Each of us was in the service. I was in the Navy in the invasion of Okinawa. My middle brother was in the Army in Italy, in the 5th Army. My younger brother, Dick, was in Korea, after World War II. My son, Ken, was in the Army in Vietnam. I saw a lot of things in my life.

I remember having an icebox. After electricity, we had refrigerators. All the modern stuff coming in – televisions, telephones. My father was also a tele-



Cedar Hollow Station. Photo by Ned Goode, August 1958, *Historic American Buildings Survey, Prints & Photographic Division, Library of Congress*.

graph operator on the Reading Railroad and we did get information that others didn't get. There was no radio, no TV. We had kerosene lamps. It was quite a different way of living. I went to the one room schoolhouse called Great Valley, a Presbyterian school, opposite the Great Valley Presbyterian Church where Dr. Spooner was the pastor. Sunday was our biggest day. I was at the Presbyterian School for six years and then went to the Paoli School in 1928 when they built the Stratford and Paoli grammar schools. In 1930, the year of the (fireworks) explosion, I was a freshman at Tredyffrin Easttown High School in Berwyn. We heard the explosion and wondered what all the noise was. I remember the first airplanes, dirigibles.

I grew up raised in a family of four sisters and two brothers. We made our own recreation.

Denny: Mary Robertson Ives and George worshipped together at the Great Valley Presbyterian Church on Swedesford Road in Malvern.

Mary Robertson Ives. In 1922, my father left a job managing a big farm in Maryland. He wanted to have a farm of his own. He bought the farm on Swedesford Road, just east of Valley Store (the intersection of Swedesford Road and Rt. 29). It's now Penn State Great Valley Campus. There's nothing of the farm left. He had already purchased a herd of cattle, pure-bred Guernseys, 25 to 30 head, I think, and two horses whose names were Harry and Prince. We sold our milk to Dave Weaver who had a dairy on Morehall Road and also to Brackbill Farm Markets, which was on Route 30 just west of Route 401. In the end, we sold our milk to Abbotts



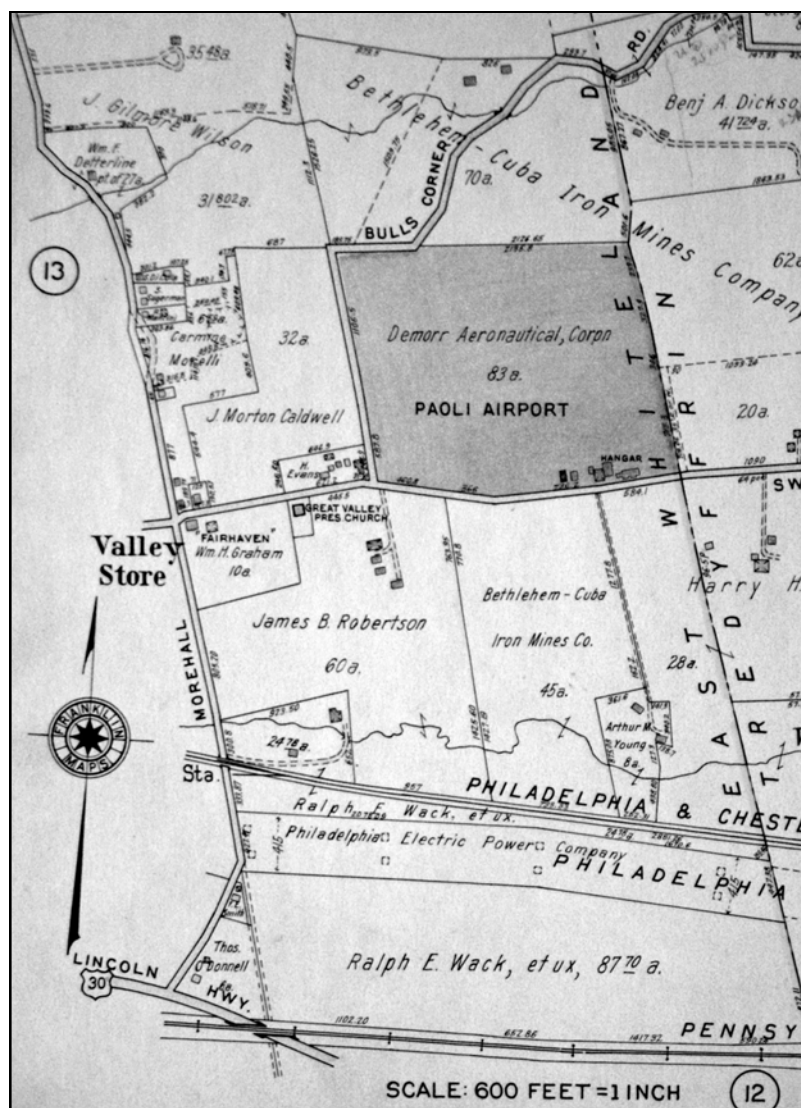
The Paoli School. *TEHS Archives.*



Tredyffrin Easttown High School. *TEHS Archives.*

Dairies, because Dave, I think, went out of business.

George spoke of Dr. Spooner from Great Valley Presbyterian Church. When we moved to Swedesford Road, we were right next to the manse of Great Valley Presbyterian Church. Dr. Spooner was the pastor. It didn't take him very long to come across the pasture and ask my family to join his church. We did. My parents were active in the church all of their lives.



The Robertson Farm, southwest of the Paoli Airport. *Property Atlas of the Main Line, Volume 2, Franklin Survey Company, Philadelphia, 1950.*

I've been going there for 85 years. When we first came here – I have a sister named Janet, just the two of us – we went to a school in Paoli, but after a couple of years, the school was closed. My family had to decide where to send us. We ended up by going to the Friends School in West Chester. In those days, it was up to the parents to get their children to school. There was a spur of the Pennsylvania Railroad that ran from Malvern to West Chester. My mother would take us in the car to Frazer, where we picked up the train. We went from there to West Chester, making a lot of stops at Immaculata College, Green Hill, Fern Hill, and got off the train at Biddle Street. We walked three blocks down Biddle Street to the Friends school, at the corner of Biddle and Walnut Streets. On the way back, we'd walk back to the station, get

the train and my mother would meet us in the afternoon.

When the time came for me to go to high school, there was no ruling at the time that you went where the school board told you to go. I had a choice of going to Radnor, Tredyffrin-Easttown, or West Chester. Since my sister was still in grammar school, it was easier for the family to have us both go in the same direction, so I went to West Chester High School.

How did the depression affect us? When I got out of high school in 1932, there was no money for four years of college for me, so I went to Drexel and took their two-year secretarial course. I don't think they teach that anymore, and of course now it's Drexel University. When I was there it was Drexel Institute of Art, Science, and Industry.

After I finished my schooling, I worked first in a real estate office, then at the Provident Trust Company in Philadelphia. Then in 1943, I was riding on the train with a friend and she told me she had been accepted with Red Cross as an employee, and she was going overseas. I thought it was something that would interest me, and it was something I could do for my country. I applied for a job and was hired by the American Red

Cross. They sent me to Iceland. Why Iceland? One of the charter obligations of the American Red Cross is to provide communications between the servicemen and their families. Red Cross also provided recreation facilities. In the earlier days of the war, we were sending a lot of men to Iceland. They were waiting to go first to England and then across to Normandy. I did secretarial work. It wasn't glamorous. I was there for about a year. I got to know some of the Icelandic people although we were not permitted to travel around the island. I went back for a couple of reunions and saw a whole lot more of the island on those trips than I did in 1943.

Denny: Thank you, Mary; we'll come back to you. There was to have been a fifth panelist. I'd like to

introduce him in absentia. Edward Hayes grew up in Berwyn. His father was the late blacksmith. Ed had surgery on Friday, which turned out to be more extensive than anticipated so he's not able to be with us today.

I'll share one recollection of Ed's. He joined the Trinity Church here in Berwyn when he was ten years old because he loved baseball, and the Trinity Presbyterian Church had a baseball team. In fact, they had three baseball teams: junior, intermediate, and senior. As time went by, Ed played catcher for all three of them. His wife, Helen, is here. Perhaps she'll want to share something later.

I'm going back to the panelists now, with a focus on their parents. For example, Albert can tell us about his parents; for instance, his mother was well educated for the time, both of them were born in Italy, his father came to the United States. Albert, tell us about your parents.

Albert. My parents were born in Italy in the same county, Abruzzi. They lived about 80 miles apart. They met here. My mother came here with her family, from a big city called Chieti, where she was educated.

My father made his way over as a laborer. He worked in the stone quarry in Wayne. He was what they call a padrone, meaning boss, or someone who signed responsible papers for the workers. He had five brothers who came to this country, all in order. He was the fourth brother of the family, so he had to wait his turn. He was 17 when he came to this country. He was a foreman because of his friendship with the superintendent.

They both ended up in Wayne. My mother's family lived above the quarry. When my Dad saw my mother, he told his workers, "Stay away from her." He was going to marry her. He used to scale the wall just to pass by her house to see her, on his way to the store to buy tobacco.

They had a short courtship and married in 1911. They had 17 children. I have 14 sisters and two brothers. I did not know four of my sisters or my older brother because they had died before I was born. My parents moved to

Devon in 1915 or 1916. I was born in the house on Grove Avenue in 1925, before they started having children in the hospitals. I lived on Grove Avenue for some thirty-odd years in two different houses. I quit school in 1941 to help raise the family, as my father was very ill. I was 15 years old and worked at the greenhouses in Strafford. After he died, I joined the service. I spent four years in the Army - two years during the war and two years afterwards. I was fortunate enough to be in the 101st Airborne Division. My first mission was Holland, then Bastogne, Belgium, then southern Germany. I was the second Allied soldier in Hitler's home. My staff sergeant went in before I did.

Denny: Why don't you tell us about your mother being the secretary for the neighborhood?

Albert: My mother was educated in Chieti. My father never went to school. He couldn't even write his name. But he was a mathematician, did it all in his head. He loved figures, could do anything with figures. He worked as a gardener, as a blast man; he handled dynamite. He had given it up before nitro came out. He did work with C4 during the war. He worked at the Non-Gran Bronze. They were going to draft him unless he had a defense job, as a matter of fact. He was 54 years old in 1943. That's the year he died.

Denny: Mention your mother's secretarial role for the community.

Albert: My mother was a great cook and a secretary for most of the women in Devon. She was about the



The Non-Granulated Bronze Factory. Photo by Lucy Sampson, courtesy of Herb Fry.

only person who could read and write Italian. The other women didn't know how to read and write. They spoke Italian, a dialect; it wasn't the Italian language of today. I speak a dialect myself. The women would receive a letter from family in Italy and bring it to my mother. She would read the letter to them and answer it for them.

My mother used to write to her sister and to my father's sister every four to six weeks. She used to put a dollar bill into her sister's letter. My father found out about it and he would give her an extra dollar to put into his sister's envelope. They all had the same idea of putting a dollar bill in the letter to send back to Italy. That was a lot of money in those days. I had a lot of aunts and uncles. Everybody who was my mother's first cousin was my aunt or uncle. Rather than calling them by their name, we'd call them "cie," meaning aunt and uncle – it's a masculine and feminine word.

Denny: Estelle has something to tell us about her parents. They were both born in Delaware. Will you tell us about your mother's ancestry?

Estelle: My father was born in Kirkwood, Delaware. My mother was born in Millsboro, Delaware. Have you heard of the Indian powwows? My mother's mother was an Indian. They met when one of my mother's brothers came up to Philadelphia to live, Uncle John; as the years went by, everyone would come up. I don't remember when my mother met my father. But they met and they married. I have five brothers. I was the only girl. I go to Delaware every year in September to the Indian powwow. It might sound small but you'd be surprised how many countries and cities come. It's a crowd. Bill Norwood, my cousin, has a great big pond and barn. That's where they serve the Indian food. They come from all states and bring their own trailers. They lodge there for one week from Saturday to Sunday. They have services.

My mother earned about two dollars a day in day's work. That was a lot of money then. When I did day's work, it was about five dollars, and I thought I was rich. She did that for a long time. When my father came home from work, he'd chop wood, cut down trees so we could have firewood. We'd get coal for the old furnaces they had. He worked for Sun Ship in Chester. They made out all right. I'm 85 and I'm still here.

Denny: I'll ask George to say more about his family. For those of you interested in railroading, as the son of the station master at Cedar Hollow, can you tell us about that? There's about five things your father did.

George: In addition to being the station master, he raised seven kids. He was born in Orwigsburg, then moved to Hamburg. That's where he started with the Reading Railroad. He was the messenger for Western Union through the Reading station. That's where he learned the telegraph. From there, he came to Chester Springs, as an agent. We moved from Chester Springs to Cedar Hollow station in a boxcar by rail. There weren't many stops on the road at that time. I remember the milk train would come down around 6:00 a.m. In the wintertime, the farmers around there would bring the milk cans in, you could hear them rattling on the platform before 6:00 in the morning. It woke us up. I remember the first truck. Josie Matthews's son, Robert Matthews, had the first. He built it from scratch. It was a Maxwell. Where it originated from, I can't tell you, but he assembled it. It was the first truck that ever came into Cedar Hollow station.

My father along with being the postmaster, telegraph operator, station agent, raised a lot of chickens. We had big gardens; we had two small mushroom houses, which always helped to bring money in.

Roger: Talk about the spur over to the quarry.

George: The cut-off into Cedar Hollow plant, the Warner Company - it used to be the Charles Warner Company. They had as many as thirty cars coming out of there. If it was bagged lime in the box cars, we'd have to put tags on there to seal the boxcars. I often did that when I was hardly tall enough to reach up to fasten the doors.

Denny: Mary, tell us about when your parents sold the farm and about your sister, the interesting experiences she's had in her lifetime.



A Maxwell Truck. Photo from www.nixonauctioneers.com

Mary: My mother was born in Wisconsin and my father was born in Scotland. I think it was in the late 1800's that my father and his family came to the United States. My grandfather was sent here by the Royal Doulton China Company to represent them. They settled in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, which is a suburb of Milwaukee. My mother and father met at the University of Wisconsin.

My father had a job at a farm in Wisconsin after he graduated from college. My mother became a teacher and she taught in a lot of places in Wisconsin, and she frequently spoke about how cold it was in the wintertime. Tons of snow everywhere. I think it was about 1910. There was a gentleman who owned a huge farm north of Baltimore and he needed a manager for the farm. He knew of my father and he wrote and asked him if he would take the job. My father did, and moved to Maryland. My parents married in 1913. Mother was a housewife after that; she didn't do any teaching. My father milked a lot of cows.

My sister Janet is almost three years younger than I am. She went to Friends School and West Chester High School. Then she went to a Christian college in South Carolina called Columbia Bible College. It has a different name now but I can't remember it. She met her husband there. After they both finished college, Janet went to Jefferson Hospital to get her degree in nursing. That took another three years.

My brother-in-law's name was Charles Deming Gerow. We always called him Jerry. Jerry taught at a boy's school for a couple of years till Janet finished with her nursing training. Then they got married. They both found while they were at Columbia Bible College that they'd like to be missionaries. So after they were married, Jerry had to get three years of training, became a Baptist minister, and then they went to Argentina. They were there for 34 years as missionaries. They have five children. Now Janet has several grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren. All but one of her children are married and they're spread across the country, except for Elizabeth, the youngest daughter. She and Janet both live in Delaware County.

Denny: Will each of the panelists recall life in the Depression?

Albert: I remember we were very poor. We had no toys of any kind. But we were very happy being a large family. We were happy and healthy and never hungry. We played games after doing our chores. My dad did quite a bit of different kinds of work, as a laborer. He relied on the stone masonry to get us through the Depression. My mother was a great cook; she could make something out of nothing. We didn't like it at the time but before we went to bed, we ate it.

We had over an acre of ground that belonged to the county sheriff, who allowed my father to farm it. His name was George Morris. He was a nice, good man, lived by himself on Conestoga Road, backing up to the Pennsylvania railroad in Devon. We grew all our own vegetables. We used to have to walk up there and do all types of gardening work. My mother would can over 600 jars each year to keep us through the winter. My mother was old-fashioned. She believed that women should do women's work and men do their own. She taught my sisters by making them do all the housework. My brother and I took care of all the things outside the house. She wouldn't let me do any kind of housework whatsoever. There was only me and my brother. We had to do what Dad said. We had to have it done by the time he came home from work. We weren't allowed to wash the dishes or set the table or clear the table. We did the men's work – outside.

Estelle: My father was a laborer, as I said. He would do anything that needed to be done – chop wood, sell wood. At that time, we had rationing of coupons. We'd go to the store to buy butter with them, sometimes meat. At the Wayne Dollar market, my mother had a way with the man, he was very nice to her. He'd say, "I'll give you more butter today, since you came down for it." We made out all right, went pot-luck on meals. I didn't have to do too much, since I was the only girl. My mother could really cook.

We had a garden. We didn't starve. We raised chickens. One time, we had a crazy rooster – they were dangerous; one time, he made me mad. When I went out in the yard, he ran me into the house. I went in the house, got a broom and beat him to death. I took him over to the lady next door and asked her if she'd cook it for me because I knew I'd get a beating when my mother got home. The rationing was hard on us but my mother knew how to stretch a meal.

Denny: Can you tell us about watching hogs being slaughtered?

Estelle: At the Cathcart home, every weekend, they'd kill a hog. That was interesting. They'd slice the throat. They'd let them bleed to death.

Denny: George, what can you tell us about the end of the railroad era and the automotive industry? George has a rich history in the automotive industry. Bridge the gap between the two.

George: The Great Depression didn't affect us much. My father was the agent there and had a decent salary coming in. I was in high school at the time and I drove the family car to school many days. I graduated from Tredyffrin Easttown in 1933. I went to work for Mosely Ballard, the Ford dealer in Wayne at the time. In 1935, I came to Walter T. Matthews Sales, in Paoli, the Ford dealer. Started out with the Fordson tractors. I worked on those. I was in the parts department. I came all the way up and during my time, I finally became a member of the Matthews sales company, which I did until I retired after working for seventy years.

Denny: How many mechanics did you supervise at one time?

George: At one time, as a service manager there, I had 18 mechanics, plus the lubrication man, the tire man, etc. I've been through it all the way. When I

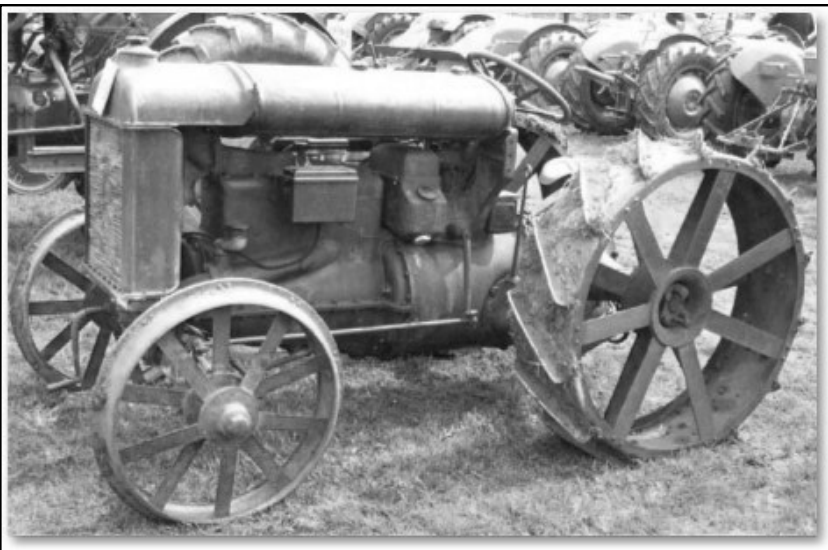
was in the Navy during the war, I was in charge of all the gas equipment that we had in our battalion. I was a Navy Seabee. We were attached to the Marines. We built the marine air station in Ewa at Pearl Harbor. We went onto Saipan and then to the invasion of Okinawa, April 1, 1945. Easter Sunday morning, we hit the beach. We built the two main airstrips on Okinawa. I saw the Japanese flying in. I was on the airfield at Yantan when they came in to sign the Treaty. In fact, I think I have a picture of it.

Denny: George's wife Dotty is sitting by Helen Hayes, who also has a rich background in the automotive industry, and perhaps a little later we'll give her a chance to speak about her family's involvement with automobiles. Mary, can you tell us about the sale of the farm and your parents' unique opportunity to continue to live on the farm after it was sold?

Mary: The Depression didn't affect us too much. Everybody has to drink milk. What my father was producing, he was always able to sell. I don't remember not having anything we needed. In 1950, we lived across the road from the Paoli, or Main Line, airport. I believe it was in 1950 that Bethlehem Steel wanted to buy that land, because they wanted to use the limestone and silica in the land to line their steel furnaces. They offered to buy our farm and the airport. They did it with the stipulation that if they would sell the farm to Bethlehem Steel, my parents could stay there for the rest of their lives. It sounded like a great deal to my father so he sold the farm. My father died in

1956. He was 71. My mother and I continued to live on the farm for several more years. Along came Route 202. It went through the farm. So my mother and I decided we had to move. We bought a house in Paoli. I lived there for 31 years. She died during that time. When it became too much lawn and too much care, I sold my house and moved to Tel Hai Retirement Community, in Honey Brook. It's a wonderful place to live, run by Mennonites, and I'm very happy there.

Denny: Now let's give the folks in the audience a chance to ask some questions. J.B. Post has asked Albert to share about the Italian community



A Fordson Tractor. Image from <http://www.toflyagain.org/images/Fordson.jpg>

in Strafford. Were they all from the same area of the old country? How about the role of Assumption Church in the community?

Albert: Most of the Main Line was made of people from the same county in Italy, Abruzzi. It was all Abruzzi, by word of mouth. Our church, Our Lady of the Assumption, was founded in 1908, mostly because of one very strong lady, who spoke to Cardinal O'Hara in Philadelphia. She got permission from him to start a church in Devon, but no help. There was St. Katherine's, in Wayne, and St. Monica's, in Berwyn. The Italians in Devon came from Teramo, the capital of Abruzzi. They wanted to build a church that resembled the one from the homeland. The Cardinal told them that he had no extra priests and they'd have to find a priest on their own. The Teramo church had a seminary there. I spent four nights there, as a matter of fact, in the seminary sleeping and eating when I was a soldier. They wrote to the seminary, offering to pay transportation and everything responsible to get a priest. One priest, Antonio Scialabba, volunteered. He was very much loved by the parish. He built the present day church, which is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year. He died in 1947.

At the time, I was over in England getting married, after my second tour of Army duty. In 1945, after the war was over, my division was sent to England to get the Queen Mary to come home. My buddies and I went to the service club to a dance. It was the American Red Cross Service Club at Tidworth, the largest army base in England. It was run by the Americans at the time. About four or five of us fellows went to the dance together and as I walked into the hall, I looked across the room and saw a beautiful girl and my heart jumped out of my chest. I told my buddies that she was my girl and that I was going to marry her. I asked her to dance, and we've been dancing together ever since, 61 years. We took time out to have five children.

Celeste Hardester: My mother Ida is here. She grew up on a farm near your father's farm. I've a question for Mary: How much land was the farm? Was the farm being run as a farm when he bought it or did he create it?

Mary: I don't know whether it was being run as a farm. There were two ladies who lived in the house by the name of Holland. There were Hollands who

lived across the street from us and also farther down Swedesford Road. I'm sure they were all related. The farm was about 60 acres. It was T-shaped. It ran from Swedesford Road to the Chester Valley Railroad tracks, north and south. It went west to Morehall Road.

Celeste: Did he have to clear the land or was it already cleared for farming?

Mary: Yes, it was already cleared for farming. I'm sure some of you remember a gentleman named Lowell Gable. Before he went to work with Brognard Okie, he had a Guernsey farm and because my father and he had Guernseys, they knew each other even though they didn't live in the same state. I have a feeling that Mr. Gable helped find the farm for my father. I don't think it was being farmed much until we moved in with his cows.

Bill Andrews: We live on what was the old Detwiler Farm. The Cedar Hollow branch of the Chester Valley Railroad goes right through it. Down near the stream there was a trestle. I understand at one time there was a train wreck there. Does George know anything about that? The trestle is no longer there. There's a big embankment instead.

George: Where was this? I can't place it.

Bill: Off of Yellow Springs Road, east of the Warner Company. The spur went down to Swedesford Road. Where Valley Creek is, there is now a steep bank 40-50 feet high. Clarence Staats told me that the trestle fell down, or something that caused quite a wreck.

George: I don't remember. I'm sorry.

Q: I'd like to get a sense of where everyone lived. Earlier and today. I don't know West Valley Road.

Albert: I lived 45 years in Strafford, 30 years in Devon and 2 years on Sugartown Road in Berwyn.

Estelle: I live off of West Valley. It's up from Weadley Road. It's across from Saunders. For 85 years. That's my lifetime. Strafford.

George: I lived at Cedar Hollow station until 1936.

Q: Where was that?

George: It's on Cedar Hollow Road a little more than a mile north of the juncture of Cedar Hollow and Central Avenue.

Denny: The Vanguard campus is near where the Cedar Hollow station was, on the opposite side of Cedar Hollow Road.

Mary: From 1922 till 1965, I lived on the farm. When Rt. 202 came through, and my mother and I had to leave, we bought a little house on Cedar Hollow Road, on the south side of the highway. I lived there for 31 years and then I moved to Honey Brook.

Joyce Post: What did you do as children? Did you have time to play? Did you play "tag?" What are some of the things you did to entertain yourselves?

Albert: We played all sorts of games, hide and seek, kick the wicket, football, baseball, soccer, and all kinds of races. We'd play with the old condensed milk cans, with no seals on the ends like they have now. You could mash it down with your heel. You could clop down the road with one can on each heel. You can't do that with today's cans. The condensed milk was from Carnation's contented cows. Remember that?

We played in the fields alongside the cows and we played in the streets, for there were no cars in those days. There was one truck on Grove Avenue and the man across the street owned the only telephone on Grove Avenue. It was only for emergencies. My family had one car in 1930, a 1930 Chevrolet of my Dad's that I learned to drive when I was 11 years old.

We didn't play organized sports as we had no fields large enough. We used to play a game called "ins and outs," with a catcher, pitcher, and a man on first base. Everybody else was out in what we called the guts. Two guys at bat, usually the one who owned the bat and the one who owned the ball. They would be up first. If you caught a fly, you'd trade places with the fellow or girl that hit the fly. We played with the girls, too. They were tomboys. If you hit a grounder and they threw you out at first base, you'd move up a notch: the catcher became the batter, the pitcher the catcher, the first baseman so on. At night, after homework, we learned a couple of card games. My mother taught a lot of kids how to play scobie, a game of numbers. It was a simple game, all about learning arithmetic.

Q: Where did you sled when it snowed?

Albert: The best place was Valley Forge Road, going down to the Baptist church. It was hilly with a lot of curves. The cars could not climb the hill. We would start at the top and go as far as Jenkins. No one ever made it to the rail bridge. We also used Dorset Road at the horse show. It had a short hill and most of the girls went there. I had a Chow dog who would pull my sled or wagon. He was the guys' dog. He would wait for the school bus and carry my books home.

Estelle: We'd sled down West Valley, starting at the top of the hill, over the bridge and all the way down to where the post office is now. There were no cars coming, it was a long walk back. I had a doll. I was the only girl. I was by myself. My five brothers did their own things. I had an old house in the back and I made it my dollhouse. Our recreation was dominoes and checkers. I went to church all the time.

Denny: Can you tell us about the plaque that you received in 1991 from Mt. Zion AME church and why you received that?

Estelle: I did a lot of work in church. We sold dinners. Like now, we're getting ready for a big barbeque. I sang in the choir. There was Sunday school. It's an honorary plaque. I was the President of the missionary society there. That's the only plaque I got. I went to church. I was a good girl.

Denny: You're a deacon?

Estelle: I'm a trustee. I sing in the Gospel choir. In the senior choir. I'm in the missionary society. And that's enough!

George: I was in a one-room grammar school. Every Friday, the whole school, 28 people, I think, would go over to the church and have Christian Endeavor at 3:00 every Friday afternoon. We did a lot with the church; swimming, we knew where all the deep spots were in Valley Creek. There was one in back of Paoli that they called the Sheep Hole. We swam any place we could find water. We did a lot of sledding. My mother used to make crullers. We'd all come in to the house from sledding parties. She would feed us all. Bless her soul.

Roger: George, did you do a lot of work on the Hughes farm?

George: Yes, during the summer months when not going to school, I used to drive an old Fordson tractor, pulling hay wagons. I worked on three different farms, the Hughes farm, the Patterson's, both Jesse and William. I had three old Model T cars that I used to run all over the countryside in before I was 16.

Denny: Some of the things George told Roger and me that he liked to do were sledding, ice skating, playing croquet, quoits, horseshoes and baseball. Tell us about quoits.

George: I think regulation quoits calls for 21 feet between the pins. We'd either play with horseshoes or quoits. The ones who got closer to the pin or made a ringer, it was best score.

Joyce: A quoit is not a horseshoe?

A: No, it's round.

George: It's a round disc with a hole in the middle.

Denny: Albert, did you play some bocce?

Albert: Yes.

Denny: On a court in Strafford?

Albert: There was a bocce court in every town from Philadelphia to Paoli. There was a league. The game was played every Sunday. One team would host and they'd play five games. The host team would feed the visiting players. I played for five seasons. One year the Devon team was League Champions.

Denny: Leighton Haney lives at Bellingham Retirement Village and is saying that it's popular at Bellingham. Mary?

Mary: I don't remember much. We had a sand box and swings in the back yard. We used to play in what we called the back lane. We had two springs there. We'd go swimming in the Little Valley Creek, which ran through our meadow. One thing I remember about the valley was how nice and quiet it was at night. No rolling trucks going by all the time. In the evening, without air conditioning, of course, we'd sit

in the back yard just to cool off and to watch the moon come up; take turns guessing over which tree the moon was going to rise. In the field behind the house, my father rotated the crops, sometimes corn, sometimes timothy hay, sometimes alfalfa. When the evenings were quiet with not too much wind, when there was alfalfa in the field, almost dark, I can remember the fireflies - hundreds and hundreds of them. It was a beautiful sight.

Denny: One last question.

Q: The name cards up front indicate that these ladies are married or have been married. Mrs. Ives, you talked about living on the farm for a long time. Did your husband live with you there? Did he become involved in the dairy business? And Mrs. Burton, did your husband live in Strafford?

Estelle: My husband lived in Delaware. I have one son, of whom I'm very proud and I'll tell you about him. He worked with General Motors for years and then he got a job with EDS. Ross Perot ran for President one year. It was his company and General Motors bought it. Courtland (Corty) is in Africa right now, he's been there for four years. He's a CEO and thank god, I'll get to see him, he'll be home sometime next month for good. He loves it there. I went there last year myself. If I could afford to live like he's living, to take all my friends and my family, and build a house there, I'd stay there. South Africa is a beautiful place. He lives in Johannesburg.

Denny: Mary, tell us how you met your husband.

Mary: I met my husband in Iceland. He was a naval officer, and a doctor. He came home before I did and was stationed at the National Naval Medical Center in Silver Spring, Maryland. From there he was assigned to a new ship, a battle cruiser, the USS Guam. His ship was sent to the Pacific and was involved with all of the fighting with the Japanese. My marriage did not last very long and I went back to work for the Red Cross.

Denny: That was the last formal question and this concludes the formal part of the program. We've been privileged to hear about the lives that Albert, Estelle, George, and Mary have lived. Please take some time to talk and reminisce with them. Thank you for coming.



Mary Robertson in Iceland. *Photo courtesy of Mary Robertson Ives.*

Roger: I see hands going up. One last chance to ask questions of the panelists or to recollect here in this public forum.

Celeste Hardester: I'm here with my mother, probably one of the few in the room who has memories that go back into the teens.

Ida Matthews Hardester: 1918 was the flu epidemic. Thousands of people died. I remember Jim Matthews, who wound up with Matthews Ford; he's my first cousin. His father came down to our farm. The farm was up the railroad from Cedar Hollow station. He came to our back door. He wanted to come in and my mother said "No." He was indignant to be turned away. She explained that she was not letting anyone come into the house. We wanted to escape the flu. We did but thousands of people did lose their lives.

Before that, approximately 1918, when I was six years old, my sister and I - I have a twin sister - went with my father to take milk from the farm down to a dairy in Strafford. We would stop at our grandfather's house on Paoli Pike, opposite the western end of the Good Samaritan campus. Whistles started blowing and sirens started, guns going off and the honk or the horn of an occasional truck or a car. The armistice ending World War I had been signed. There was bedlam and rejoicing. Two or three days later, we went up to Paoli, the police and the firemen had made an effigy of the Kaiser. We went for the cele-

bration of burning the Kaiser...a lot of other things. I could write a book.

Roger: Not too far from your dad's farm was a Marine Corps signal battalion training center. Do you have any recollections of the marines who were a stone's throw away?

Ida Matthews Hardester: That was the Henry Davis place. We were very young, around six years old. We could go over there and talk to them. They were nice to us. They asked us a lot of questions and we asked them a lot of questions. It was wonderful having the Marines there. But then the war came and that was the end of the Marine encampment there.

Roger: When the armistice was declared, I read that they just left - abandoned it - and there were still training trenches long after the war and that at least the boys, maybe the girls, too, played in the trenches.

Ida Matthews Hardester: Yes, that's right. I don't recall that there was farming done there before. Do you, George?

George: Jesse Patterson's farm was just a little east of there. With the old Fordson tractor, we would pull the threshing machine through that field into his place, because his father's farm was up on Morehall Road. They would help each other with the threshing.

Elsie (from audience): I was born in Devon. Albert mentioned Grove Avenue. There was an Italian store on Grove Avenue where we would go to buy some of our supplies. There were three other stores in Devon. My parents always sent us to the one in the center part of Grove Avenue.

Albert: It was the top part of Grove Avenue. We lived right next door to that store. That wasn't a store until after World War I.

Elsie: Maybe I'm older than you. There was a store in the center of Grove Avenue.

Albert: Do you mean on Berkley Road? That was a blacksmith's shop.

Elsie: No.

Albert: At the top of Grove Avenue at Lancaster was a bar called Jogans. They sold ice cream, too.

At the corner of Grove & Lehigh was a private home that was built in 1933, belonging to the Silveri family. They came from Italy and built that house after the fireworks explosion. My house was demolished on account of the fact that that house was not there at the time of the explosion. Had that house been built, our house would've been spared, on account of the way the 55 gallon drum of powder came through our house.

In the late '30s, it was a post office. What started out to be their living room was used as a Red Cross aid station during the war. Then it was used as a school-room. My mother used to get all of her friends to go to school there two evenings a week to learn how to speak English so that they could become American citizens. That was in 1942 and 1943. A fellow by the name of Mr. Smith, who used to be a teacher, was paid extra to teach the Italians how to speak English. My mother and all her friends attended that school.

It was a bus stop, too. The people would always invite us in, even though I lived next door. Once you're out the door of the house, you don't come back in again until after school was over and the bus dropped you off. So to get warm, we'd go inside that building. As a matter of fact, I liked dancing so much, I taught every guy in Devon how to dance in that one room. We had a Victrola player and two records. One was "On Blueberry Hill" and the other one was a waltz. The guys didn't like waltzing so they danced to "Blueberry Hill."

I left in January 1944 so I don't know what it was until I came back in 1948. Except, in 1947, their front room became a store. It was called Mangilia & Conti, then sold to Conrade. We had one store on Lancaster Avenue, Martini's, and one on Poplar Avenue in the middle of the block called Piombino's. And an A&P grocery store.

Elsie: I beg your pardon. I'm quite a bit older than you.

Albert: I'm only 82.

Elsie: My parents came to Devon in 1902. We lived in Devon all our lives, on Waterloo and Berkeley Roads. A big estate. My father got a job as the care-

taker on that estate, and gardener. We had a large house that we lived in. It's still standing, the Presbyterian Church bought our old home, I think. We lived elegantly because I've heard people say so many things that were not available to them but we never knew what want was. We had everything – toys, my father taught me to drive when I was 16 years old. Another thing, I think he about owned the first car in Devon. He hid it from his employer. His employer was a woman. He hid the car in a Devon garage, which still stands on Old Lancaster Road. The word got out that he owned the car so she said, "Bring that car home." He was afraid he would get fired. He tried to convince her for months to buy a car herself – a millionaire woman. So finally he convinced her – "let me take you out one day, just for one ride." She finally said, "Okay, I'll try it." He took her for one ride and she ended up owning her cars.

My life was interesting. There were tough times. My parents got through the Depression but they shielded us from it.

Q: Albert, can you point out your wife?

Albert: My wife was not able to be here today, but, believe, me she's still very beautiful. This is my daughter, Gail. I'm very proud of her. When she graduated from high school, she said she wanted to be a school teacher. She was so right. She taught school for 32 years in the Norristown area. She was always the team captain. She's a history buff and a family genealogist. She has traveled all over England and extensively in this country to different civil war places.

Roger: Thanks to Rosanne and Chad Morris for their work in digitally preserving all that we have seen and heard today. After some editing, you'll be able to see it on Channel 2.

The video of this presentation was shown in two parts on Tredyffrin Public Access Television, Comcast Channel 2.

Additional Memories



Al Cappelli had served during WWII as a US Army paratrooper and combat infantryman in Europe, and here had just returned home to Devon after having been discharged in January 1946. His mother insisted that a professional photograph be taken of her son before he shed his uniform. After years overseas, he had not yet had the opportunity to buy civilian clothes.

Taken the following month, February 1946, Al Cappelli stands before the 1937 Packard for which he paid \$300 just a few weeks before. The rear of his mother's home at 40 Grove Avenue in Devon is seen in the background.

After returning home to Devon, Al soon longed to return to England to marry the young English woman whom he had met while waiting to sail home to America. So, he re-enlisted in the US Army later in 1946, and returned briefly to England to marry Joan on Nov. 30, 1946 while he served in Vienna, Austria with the 202nd MP Company as part of the personal body guard for General Mark Clark.



By the summer of 1943, America had been at war for well over a year. George Ford Jr. was the service manager at Matthews Ford in Paoli when he announced that he was enlisting in the U.S. Navy. He left home in August, 1943, and after boot camp in Virginia, he trained as a member of the Navy's Construction Battalions, the famed "Seabees", in Rhode Island. In this photo, taken on January 9, 1944, George has briefly returned home to Pennsylvania and is visiting his parents and siblings at their home at the Chester Valley Railroad's Cedar Hollow Station in the Great Valley. After a short leave, George shipped out to the Pacific "for the duration."



The father of Estelle King Burton, Mr. Thomas Upsure King, holds his grandchild, Mrs. Burton's new son Courtland, in 1943. This image was taken in the backyard of her family's home on what is now Dannaker Lane in Strafford.

Estelle Burton's mother, Mrs. Eugenia King, taken in 1938 in the front yard of her family's home in Strafford.

All photographs on this page are courtesy of the respective families.

