

THE HOBOKEN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEWEE: JOAN CUNNING
with Dan Cunning

INTERVIEWERS: BOB FOSTER & HOLLY METZ

LOCATION: 5 CHURCH TOWERS, HOBOKEN, NJ

Session #1

HM: We're starting from the beginning. When were you born, and where were you born?

JC: I was born in St. Mary's Hospital, 05/20/36. I was brought home to 256 Sixth Street, and I think I was eleven months old when we went to the Terrace (Willow Terrace). We went to seventeen first. We lived in seventeen for about eight years; then we moved next door, to fifteen. [Laughs]

HM: And why did you move?

JC: Well, we moved because my mother loved the bathroom the lady had next door. She had a tile

bathroom, and off-switches. Everybody else had pull-strings.
And, I guess, the price was right.

HM: And how many -- well, in the birth order,
where were you with your siblings?

JC: I'm the sixth.

HM: You're the sixth. And how many more were
there after you? Were you the last born?

JC: No. There was my sister, Marietta. Seven.
My mother had seven children.

HM: Can you name, for me, the siblings before
you?

JC: James; John (they're all deceased); Gerry
(it's really Gerald); Eileen was first. I should have put
Ilene first.

HM: Eileen before James.

JC: Yes.

HM: That's four. One more. Ilene; James;
John; Gerald (Gerry).

JC: Virginia.

HM: Virginia's last.

JC: No. Marietta's last.

HM: Ah. Okay. Virginia, and then you, and the
last one is --

JC: Marietta.

HM: That's an interesting name. Where did
Marietta come from? The name.

JC: I don't know.

HM: It's sort of exotic.

Okay. So did your parents both work?

JC: My father was a fireman. He went on in 1930, and continued.

HM: And your mother was a homemaker?

JC: Yes.

HM: Were your parents born in Hoboken?

JC: Yes. Both of them.

HM: And what about their parents? I'm just trying to see how far your Hoboken roots are.

JC: In 1888, my grandmother, my mother's mother. She always said the year of the big storm, the big blizzard.

HM: So 1888 was the year that what happened?

JC: Bridget came from Ireland.

HM: Bridget came from Ireland. And that's your mother's mother. Your grandmother. What was her last name?

JC: Her maiden name?

HM: Yes. Was she married when she came?

JC: No. Connolly. It's spelled different.

HM: And where was she from, in Ireland.

JC: Mayo. County Mayo.

HM: So she came to Hoboken. Did she come to Hoboken first?

JC: Yes.

HM: And do you know why she came to Hoboken?

JC: She and her sister came together. Mary. Her sister, Mary. And they worked, really, as domestics. My grandmother was what they called "the upstairs girl." She

happened to marry the boss of the house -- a big joke when we're all together, the family.

RF: Upstairs/Downstairs.

HM: And she married the boss.

JC: She married the "man of the house," I guess you'd call it.

HM: Okay. So Bridget came, and where did she work?

JC: I think it was 732 Park Avenue. There was one family then. The family. His wife died.

HM: And the name of the man she married?

JC: James L. Roarty.

HM: Why did he need an upstairs girl?

JC: It was a private house. They were very wealthy, I think.

HM: So he wasn't the head of the household,
he was --

JC: Yes, he was.

HM: Oh, he was.

JC: I can't think of what they call them now.

HM: Did he have children?

JC: He had children. He had other children.

HM: So he was a widower. He had children, and
that's why he needed her to help. How many children did he
have?

JC: That I know of, that lived -- Mary, John,
Steve. I think he had five children, and I think three
lived. Then my mother -- he was like sixty-five when my
mother was born. Sixty-three or sixty-five. Yes. Because he
had children with her, then. She was supposed to have been a
beautiful redhead, my grandmother.

HM: Okay. So she came during the blizzard.
Did you hear stories, her impressions of Hoboken?

JC: Living in Hoboken. She lived across the street, there, between Park and Willow, and she didn't let a dog pass her house. That was her domain.

HM: So she was a very conscientious
homemaker.

JC: And she took care of everything. When her husband died, she had boarders and stuff like that.

HM: And he died when? [Interruption] I would like to have a calligrapher do a family chart for you. If we do it, it will be a big foldout. That's part of the reason we wanted to interview you -- because your family goes so far back.

JC: I have a friend who has a tree as big as these [unclear].

HM: I like the idea of a river.

JC: The river would be nice -- the Hudson River.

HM: Exactly. Good. All right.

DC: This is early. That's 1898.

HM: Oh, Kroger. Okay. At some point I'm going to ask -- is this something I can take, or is this your only copy.

DC: You can probably take it for a couple of weeks.

JC: If you need to borrow --

HM: Of course. Just so I can get the names--

DC: Let me show you where you're at. You're at [Unclear] and Grand Street, you're talking about, right? No?

JC: No.

DC: Here's my mom.

JC: The house is there. [cross talk.]

But she was very old when he came. He was a student from [unclear].

HM: Okay. So that's your grandmother. Now we should talk about your mother and father.

JC: Not about my other grandmother?

HM: Well, we should do the other side.

JC: That's okay. They're not around.

[Laughter]

HM: No, go ahead. If you have a story to tell me about them, you should tell me. Let's do the other side. Do you have stories to tell me about the other side?

JC: Well, I think she was a housewife, too. They lived here in Hoboken.

HM: Where did she live? Do you know?

JC: She was from downtown. St. Joseph's parish. That's how they talked.

HM: Because Hoboken used to be divided uptown/downtown, east and west, as opposed to how they say it now, as north and south.

Her name was - ?

JC: Her maiden name was Olinda Tostain. It's spelled here correctly, someplace.

HM: And she came from where?

JC: Hoboken.

HM: So she was born in Hoboken.

JC: I think so. Yes. She told me she was christened in Hoboken.

HM: And her family -- what a wonderful name, Olinda. So her parents -- she's an earlier generation. And her parents came from Ireland?

JC: We're not telling. We only found out.

DC: France.

JC: I said that's why my mother never talked about it.

HM: Well, that's interesting.

JC: And she married John Smith.

HM: She married John Smith. And where was he from?

JC: Hoboken. He was born at 632 Willow.

HM: And where were his people from -- John Smith.

DC: Ireland. Right?

JC: That's right.

DC: There may have been a generation here. My wife explained all this stuff to me, and I forget everything. John Henry Smith.

HM: Right.

DC: Yes. I think she might have [unclear-eloped?] with him.

JC: Wait. My grandfather came -- they left from Liverpool, England, and they said he was a farmer, and she was a spinster. It said so right on the papers. But we had that fire in Hoboken, in the Terrace that time --

HM: -- and lost a lot.

JC: That's how they left it; that she was a spinster.

HM: So it said that she was a spinster on what papers?

JC: On the papers that they came into, in this country. Yes.

HM: But they didn't come in together.

JC: Yes, they did. He was a farmer. Yes. I got to tell you, my kids have a lot of jokes about that. My brothers -- not these kids. [Laughs]

HM: But it's so strange. Why would they --?
Hmm. That's interesting.

JC: Well, a lot of people came from Ireland through Liverpool.

HM: Oh, that part doesn't surprise me.

JC: Maybe we all met there.

HM: Well, I liked the French part. It makes it a little bit more complicated. Also, I think, just in terms of crossing ethnic lines -- there was more of it than people want to admit.

JC: It's unbelievable.

DC: They have better records, too, the
French.

HM: Well, a name like John Smith is a little
hard to track. [Cross talk] You couldn't you get a more
common name than John Smith.

DC: You have eighty John Smiths born a day.

HM: Exactly. So let's go back to Willow
Terrace. You were born, you said, in 1936.

JC: Right.

HM: It was the Great Depression.

JC: We didn't know. My father was a fireman.
We thought we were rich.

HM: Well, probably, comparatively speaking,
because he had a job.

JC: Exactly. Yes.

HM: And do you have memories of what it was like for your neighbors. You felt you were rich, so you must have noticed that other people didn't have work.

JC: In the Terrace, I don't know anybody who didn't work. We had a lot of policemen on the piers and the railroad. A lot of them worked on the railroad. Like [unclear] a lot of people working at City Hall -- secretaries and stuff like that.

RF: Can you remember some of the other family names on the block?

JC: Oh, sure. Sure. My best friend is Mary Pendrick. We were raised together. Her maiden name was Duff.

HM: And where did she live?

JC: Across the street. She lived at 25.

HM: We live in a little Terrace house. At one point you had nine people living in a Terrace house?

JC: Yes.

DC: Ten after the fire.

JC: No, no. We're talking about my family -- my brothers and sisters.

HM: So you had nine living in there?

JC: We had nine living in the house, and sometimes we had two grandmothers with us.

HM: And how did this work?

JC: You know, it's funny. I guess when we were little, we didn't notice it at all. But as teenagers -- I had a brother in the army. He was in the Philippines. The other one was in Germany. They'd come and go. But the girls always had the top floor. That was another reason my mother bought the house; they had built out the back. I think it

was the first one that went straight up. But honest to god, there was never anyone laying on a couch or anything.

HM: But did you share a bed?

JC: Oh, yeah. Oh, sure.

HM: So how many in a bed?

JC: Well, there were four girls. We each had a bed. The boys -- the back bedroom had a big bed. Like I say, once -- I can't remember.

HM: Probably, as you got older -- people started to leave by the time they were teenagers, or --

JC: They lived in that house until they got married. Nobody left the house until they got married. That's the way it was. That's why I didn't show my house when I sold it. I didn't want them saying, "You had seven kids in here?!" No way. That would annoy me.

HM: So when you had dinner, did you all eat dinner together?

JC: Positively. Dinner was a big thing. If my father was coming home at 6:00, then that was dinner. But the shifts, then, they were doing seventy-two hours.

HM: He must have just come home and gone to sleep.

DC: Back then you worked twenty-four. At 8:00 in the morning, you were either leaving work or coming to work. That was it.

JC: They did a twenty-four cycle.

DC: One on, one off, one off, and then an extra "Kelly" day, they would call it, built in once a week or so.

JC: But that was after they worked seventy-two. Then they got the sixty-two. Somebody was probably always in my mother's bed. There was always a crib in the room. They always had a crib. When I got married, there was a crib in the pictures, for god's sake.

HM: Frequently, people say, if you have a lot of children, the oldest girl acts as the mom.

JC: We were very close.

HM: So she looked after the younger ones?

JC: Well, my mother never left the house. In the Terrace, you put the baby outside the door, in the carriage or playpen, and you went about your business. If anything happened, somebody knocked on the door and said, "Helen, the baby's crying." Even my children were raised like that. Nobody came through there that didn't belong there. They just wouldn't do that.

HM: So, in a sense, the Terrace itself -- the front, we're talking about the front of the house --

JC: Yes.

HM: -- was like everyone's living room. And everybody looked out for everybody else.

JC: Nobody locked the door. We had screen doors in the summer. No air-conditioning. The door would be open.

HM: And what kind of games? You played on the street, I assume.

JC: I did.

HM: What kinds of games did you play?

JC: The girls were with dolls and doll carriages. [adds later: hopscotch, jump-rope] The boys, they could wander a little bit. They played ball.

RF: Did people have cars?

JC: They parked their car where it belonged, and you wouldn't dare -- dare -- even if they went away for a month, you would not take that spot. It got troublesome with us, because my children had cars. I tried to keep it -- I'd say, "Don't put your car in here, and don't --" But other people did it. They'd have three cars in a row.

RF: The cars are bigger now, and they're renters.

JC: Oh, yeah. But we didn't let you in. We had that barricade up. You did not get in. I mean, in the street, everybody was out. On a nice day, everybody was out. You ran back and forth, and if a car came in, every mother got up, opened the gate, and got your own children in place. It was a wonderful place.

My neighbor across the street was a man. He was sick -- Mr. Hitzler -- and I opened the door for Danny (this one), and he'd say, "I got it, Joan," and he'd take that baby in the sun -- because they were on the sunny side. When he'd come back, he'd say, "I think he needs a bottle." That's how people were. You could get a babysitter in a minute.

HM: And you needed one. I can't imagine how your mother --

JC: My mother was great.

HM: How did she shop for food?

JC: She sent us. I can remember going to the store. Like now, with Hannah -- they let her go to the avenue. They live on Bloomfield, so she goes around the corner. I say, "Oh, don't let her up there alone." And they go, "What?!" [Laughter] But we went to the A&P on Sixth and Washington, and we had no wagon. We carried back the packages, me and my sister. We did that four times a week. That's the way it was.

HM: And laundry?

JC: I had a washer and dryer. The first one, the dryer went in the bedroom. It had to be electric, and the plugs covered up the wall and all. We used to hang out on the big house, 314. My mother was 315, so the line went down to the end of the thing. New people came in and dropped the lines. Well -- it was like a war! But, like I said, my mother -- on the lines all the time. We all knew how to hang up the clothes, and bring them in.

But when I moved in, I got a dryer.

HM: Well, if you think about it, that's a lot of diapers. They didn't have Pampers, so she's always hanging stuff up.

JC: Yes. All the time.

RF: And were you the largest family on the block?

DC: Oh, yes.

JC: Yes. Yes. Yes, we were. I think "Clancy" had three, next to me -- next to my mother. Well, the Earls, next door to me -- they had seven children. They were raised there. Mr. Earl, I was next, then his niece lived next -- Sissy -- and then Grace Earl, and across the street was Mary Duff, my girlfriend. That was a whole little community. Everybody was related.

HM: I had heard that, before we moved in -- that a lot of times families would grow, then they would move down the line of the Terrace.

DC: My Aunt Marietta -- her sister -- and my uncle, Steve Earl, got married --

JC: That was convenient.

DC: -- so the whole neighborhood --

HM: -- related. Once removed.

JC: My sister, Virginia, had her house there. She was there a good five years before they moved out. So it was her, me, and my mother.

RF: Do you remember when -- like you had a back yard. But we'd often hear that there was actually an alley that ran right down the middle of the back yards, which, because --

JC: Wood sheds.

RF: -- like for ash; for people to put the ash out, from the stoves. No? You didn't.

JC: Because we had a coal stove, and those ashes you pulled out yourself. Even when they came, they came with big bags on them, and dumped them in the last room. It was a shed, really. It was a pretty decent shed, though. My father was very handy. But we would go down, we'd

jump in there, and get a bucket up for my mother to take in the kitchen. Like I say, my father worked all the time. They were always in the firehouse. When he wasn't -- he could paint. We always had a nice, nice home. We always did.

HM: So the coal -- the coal delivery would come, they would dump just a big pile of coal, and then you would take it, with buckets --

JC: No, they came --

HM: The coal guys.

JC: -- with buckets on their backs, and dumped it in the hole, in the bin. Then when we needed it -- but there was never an alley back there. We had a lot that everybody played in, but I built right out to the end, when I got there.

DC: Right. There was a short yard, then a shed, and then there were maybe five or six deep, and then over the years, you would just have --

HM: -- filling it in.

RF: So people could not walk through the backs, continuously.

JC: No. You could pass the bottles of beer over the fence. We'd have parties, and you'd be filling the pitchers down the [yard.]

HM: Where did the beer come from? Where did the barrels of beer come from?

JC: You'd put them in the yard, and ice them.

HM: But from a neighborhood tavern?

JC: Probably Mike D's.

HM: Now where was that?

JC: On Sixth and Willow. Mike D's. Around the corner.

DC: It's [Peter's Hair Salon] now.

HM: Maybe this is hard to say, but the people who lived in the Terrace -- they owned their houses. Right?

JC: Yes.

HM: So were they considered better off than people who lived downtown, [most] of whom were renters?

JC: We didn't go downtown! [Laughs]

HM: Because you didn't mix with -- ?

JC: The first Terrace was all Irish. The second was Irish and Italian. The third, we never even -- I'm not kidding. Not that we didn't talk to you, but that's how it was.

HM: So the Irish and Italian mix, that Terrace -- you're saying that the all-Irish Terrace, maybe they would mix with the Irish-Italian mix?

JC: Everybody got along.

HM: You're saying, then, that there was another --

JC: Seventh Street. It wasn't the same. I shouldn't say that. I've got friends there. They're Irish there -- god, yes. The Gills, the Englishes, the Cannings. I can't think of any --

HM: Well, it might not be because of background; it might just be because they weren't your immediate neighbors.

JC: Yes. Oh, it had nothing to do with background. Nothing at all.

HM: So it's really, really local. It's sort of like you have enough friends. The Terrace -- they're tight, there are a lot of people. So why go --

JC: I can remember a man falling down the stairs and being killed on the stairs. My father went over there, and they called everybody. Everything was taken care of. They brought her over to the house and we had tea. It

was that way. Everybody got into everybody's business. If you had a party, you invited everybody. There was no such thing as you wouldn't invite your neighbor.

HM: But what I was getting at before, in terms of downtown -- I'm not saying that it's a bad thing -- but I would assume that the people who owned their houses [lived differently because they had more money.] Is that true, or not true?

JC: I don't know.

HM: Like you went to school with kids from downtown.

JC: I'm sure the kids that went to school from downtown -- they probably owned their houses.

HM: So you think they were [mostly] homeowners, too?

JC: Oh, I think there were a lot of homeowners, yes.

RF: And when you say Terrace #1, #2, and #3,
where do you start from? Seventh Street?

JC: No.

RF: No. From your Terrace.

JC: Number one "there." [Laughter]

RF: Okay. I just wanted to be sure.

DC: [Unclear] is the third Terrace.

HM: And what school did you go to?

JC: Our Lady of Grace.

HM: And that's your church, too.

JC: Yes.

HM: And your girlfriends, your best friend
from across the street, also went to --

JC: -- Our Lady of Grace. I went to Demarest for high school, she went to St. Michael's, in the city. She probably was the rich one. I didn't really think that [laughs], but --

HM: To pay for high school.

JC: You pay whether you're rich or not, if you want your kids in a good school.

HM: It's true.

DC: There was no tuition was there?

JC: Where?

DC: In the high schools and stuff.

JC: Oh, sure there was.

HM: Not Demarest. At a public high school there was no tuition.

JC: No. Later on. Later on.

RF: At Catholic school, there is now tuition.

HM: Yes. And before you got to high school, when you were in middle school, there was no tuition.

DC: Right. Kindergarten through eighth grade -- or first grade to eighth grade, at OLG, there was no tuition. Then like maybe sixth or seventh grade, you had to start with \$10 a month or something like that. That's how it started. The church supported everything.

HM: Which is incredible.

DC: Yes. When you think about three grades of first grade, three kindergartens, three eighth grades --

HM: And taught by priests or nuns?

JC: Both. Charity nuns. The Sisters of Charity.

HM: Who lived in town, right?

JC: Yes. They lived in the convent.

HM: That really is amazing -- it's just such a different world, when you think about it. And they wore habits. Before Vatican II --

DC: Yes.

JC: You just respected them, and it was expected that you did. There was no such --

HM: Also, for women, in terms of advancement, being a teacher -- they were very good at what they did. That was a high accomplishment.

RF: And the penmanship.

JC: I still do Palmer.

RF: Do you remember some of the prominent people involved with Our Lady of Grace? Like some of the early priests, or some of the sister, in particular, or the people who ran the school?

JC: Oh, yes. We had Monsignor Masterson (I don't know what his first name was), and we had Father Coyle, Father Hessian, Father Brennan. [Masterson]--that's the only monsignor I remember.

DC: Was Father Meehan a monsignor?

JC: I don't think so.

DC: He retired a monsignor.

JC: Then they didn't make them so quick.

DC: He was like a real [retired Navy] military-type guy. He was something.

JC: I'm trying to think of where they were in the confessionals. [Laughter] Father Brennan. He was one of the older ones.

HM: But in your day-to-day, like at the school, you were involved more with the nuns, right? Because they were your teachers.

JC: Oh, yes.

HM: Do you remember any of them?

JC: Of course. Sister Catherine Baptista --

DC: Who I had.

JC: Yes, she was there for my brothers, too.
Sister Monica.

HM: So you had Sister Monica, and you also
had --

DC: -- Sister Immaculata, Sister Maria
Francis [and] Sister Catherine Baptista. Yes.

HM: And what was she like?

DC: She was tough.

JC: They were all tough.

HM: Were you scared of her?

DC: She was old by the time I got there.

[Laughter]

HM: She'd had enough of little children.

JC: Who was the one we had the big wake for?

Sister -- ?

DC: Sister Therese?

JC: No. But she was there, Sister Therese. Sister Agnes James. She went out like a queen. We had a 4ldinner for her. We had everything. All the nuns came. We had Sister Therese Joseph, and Sister Therese Anne. They were wonderful.

DC: Sister Joan Anne.

JC: Sister Joan Anne. Yes.

HM: And were they women who came from Hoboken? Or they came from someplace, and they --

JC: A lot of them came from Boston. Yes. And they let you know it. [Laughs]

HM: Explain that to me. Did they think they were coming to Hoboken to educate -- ?

JC: They must have went out to "convensation," for all their training.

HM: But what was their attitude? They're from Boston, they come to Hoboken -- did they have a certain perception of what --

JC: No.

DC: They just got sent here, and that was it.

HM: They didn't have any choice.

JC: But Hoboken wasn't a bad town to come to, you know what I mean? I think they got a lot of respect, the nuns and the priests.

HM: As they should.

RF: Was the orphanage operating?

JC: It was part-time. They didn't keep them overnight then. They'd keep them from afternoon to supper, so we'd pick them up. I didn't know too much about that. I did know a couple girls who were at it, but I wouldn't even know their last names anymore. It was over in my time. But anybody who went to it said they were really nice, very good to them. I'm sure my mother [wanted to send us?] there a few times.

HM: She'd have to have you at night.

[Laughter, crosstalk]

And the pencil factory was still here?

JC: Oh, yes. Yes.

HM: Was that loud?

JC: Loud at school, and on a hot day, when you'd have to open a window -- [vocalizes]. Because it ran this way. So right next to the school, you heard it all the time.

HM: Did a lot of your neighbors work there?

JC: Everybody worked at the pencil factory.

HM: Men and women?

JC: My brother worked there as a kid, part-time. But a lot of women. A lot of women worked there. My girlfriend just emptied her aunt's house, and we were laughing. She said, "You need a pencil." [Laughter] They had every color!

HM: Well, that's one of the perks of working in a pencil factory. So the men in the Terrace -- they were firemen?

JC: Firemen. All the Clancys were policemen.

HM: And they worked on the docks.

JC: And Mr. King and Mr. Watt -- they were all on the docks. The Murphys were all, I think, on the railroad. I know they worked for the railroad. I used to go

to parties with them. We had no professionals. We had no doctors that I can think of. But everybody worked. Everybody had a job. [Mr. Earl worked for Con Edison.]

RF: Would people try to leave for the summer? People still had to work, but was there the shore retreat? That kind of thing?

JC: Oh, yes. Yes. We went to Rockaway for three weeks in the summer. And Mary, my friend Mary Duff Pendrick -- she went all summer. The Earls -- most of them had a room. You'd get a room down there in Rockaway, and have one big kitchen that everybody went in.

HM: So more than one family would go down there together, and they would share a kitchen?

JC: Well, anybody that you rented from, you shared. You'd get a room or two. Mary always had two rooms.

RF: So the men would work, and come on weekends, sometimes?

JC: Well, my father would be off. He'd be with us all the time.

RF: Oh. That's when he took his vacation.

JC: But the people who had them for the whole summer -- naturally, their husbands worked. But Rockaway was great. You could walk there at night, dance -- go from one dance hall to the other. We were fifteen-sixteen years old. When the band stopped, you'd go across the street and dance. That's how we knew all the Irish dances. That's where we picked them up.

HM: Did you have to be chaperoned?

JC: In Rockaway? No.

HM: No chaperone. So that's a good thing.

JC: We didn't stay out -- you had to be home, probably, by 11:00, which would be a lot earlier in Hoboken.

HM: And why would that be? That you would be in earlier in Hoboken?

JC: This was fun. The summers were fun. Other than that, you had to be in to do your homework and stuff.

RF: School.

HM: Did you make party dresses? Or buy party dresses for your outings?

JC: We bought them. We didn't make anything. No. We're not handy. None of us was handy. But in Rockaway, you were in a bathing suit all day, and you did wear skirts at night. People weren't walking around in shorts, like they do now.

HM: You know the world you're describing doesn't exist anymore, so I just really want to get a feel of what that was like. So a typical day -- if it was a school day, and you were living in the Terrace, what would that day be like?

JC: You'd come home and see if you had to go to the store. There was always something to do.

HM: But when you got up in the morning, your father and mother were there. Who was making you breakfast, and what kind of breakfast did you have?

JC: My mother. We had breakfast every morning -- maybe fried eggs one morning, or oatmeal. My mother was big on oatmeal.

HM: And everyone ate together.

JC: Oh, yeah. And when my father was coming in at 8:00, we'd hurry up to eat, just to be seeing him.

HM: Then you wore a uniform to go to school?

JC: Oh, yeah. Well, we wore Navy blue skirts and white middie blouses.

HM: Were you allowed to wear jewelry?

JC: Nobody had jewelry. [Laughter]

HM: I just remember friends (this is years later), when they went, and wore a ring or something, the

nuns would take -- because they didn't want you to look better or richer than someone else. The uniform was to make everyone the same.

JC: My grandchildren can't go to school with anything on.

HM: That's the theory.

JC: That's the academy -- no nail polish. They're in school like I was in school.

HM: That's the rationale behind it -- to have everybody be the same. [Interruption]

Did the boys have to wear ties?

JC: Oh, yes.

HM: Now were you separated, boys and girls?

JC: No.

HM: So it was co-educational.

JC: I think we had sixty in a class,
sometimes. A ton.

HM: How many?

RF: Sixty.

HM: That's huge.

JC: I'm not sure it was sixty.

DC: [Unclear]

HM: I was just going to say --

JC: I can remember when I received
confirmation, I was 107, and that was the girls. That was a
big parish. Our Lady of Grace was the biggest parish in the
whole diocese.

RF: And was the school full? It's a huge
building.

JC: Packed. And then they had commercial.
Ninth and 10th grade were commercial.

RF: With industrial type classes, right.
Trade.

JC: It was typing, and shorthand, and
English. That's what it was. Anybody who came out of there
was smart.

HM: That was so you could get a job when you
left.

JC: Yes.

HM: Did you use those skills?

JC: No. I went to high school. I played hooky
one day, and got a job at the telephone company.

HM: Oh, really.

JC: I don't think I wanted anybody to know,
but I was only seventeen when I got the job.

HM: I don't think anybody's going to mind
now.

JC: Five girls went over.

HM: And where did you go? You said you went
over to --

JC: To 140 West Street [NYC].

HM: Wow. That was bold.

JC: [Unclear]. She thought that was
wonderful. [Laughter]

HM: Well, you probably did very well. That's
a good job.

JC: I did it for about six years.

RF: Did they hire all your friends, too?

JC: Yes. We all went over. This is funny.
You're not putting this down.

RF: [Unclear]

JC: My mother worked in New York before she
was married, so she took us all over. Because over there,
you had to be a certain age to get working papers, more than
Jersey. She took the five of us, and we had to go for
[tests?]. My mother did all that, and we all got the jobs.

RF: So how come we can't tell that story?

HM: That's breaking the rules.

JC: You know, I was thinking of it. I know
three girls, I can't remember the other two. It's just a
blank.

HM: You know what will happen -- later, it'll
float in when you're not thinking so hard.

RF: Did you have a telephone in the house
when you were growing up?

JC: Yes, and when I got the job they had free service. So the phone was always in Joan Smith. We switched it over.

RF: Most people -- do you remember, in the other Terrace houses -- would they have a phone? Would that be a big amenity?

JC: We had party lines, and it was horrible, because you knew who was on. I had a boyfriend at camp, and Mary English had a boyfriend at camp, and she'd pick up the phone and say, "Get off the phone!" Or I'd be on there.

But we had three families. It was us, English, and -- I'm trying to think of their name. They were adults. They didn't use the phone like us.

HM: The friends from Rockaway?

JC: No. Service.

RF: I remember the phone lines in the Terrace were just like spider webs. You couldn't figure out what happened here.

JC: And you had to wait to get your own phone. I think I got it because I worked there, that we finally got a private number.

HM: Oh. Free service. Very good.

JC: Nothing like it would be now. But anybody retiring from them has free service.

HM: Really?

JC: Well -- when it was New York Telephone they did. I don't know, with the switches -- I bet they gave it to them.

HM: That's a nice parting gift.

RF: So you had to go through a training period for the phones?

JC: Oh, yes. We had to go one day a week to school over there, because we weren't eighteen. I can't

remember this, either. Who was the president who ran --
Smith? Was it Arthur?

RF: Smith College?

JC: No. For the president of the United
States.

RF: Oh. Alfred. Al Smith.

JC: It was his school. One of the schools
named for him. When we got over there, they said, "Don't
ever come in unless you're together. Make sure you're
together," the girls. Don't come in. And the boys up there,
oh, they were so cute. They were in photography. I don't
know what the hell we were in. We didn't do much, I know.
They would be taking our pictures all the time.

But I was the last one. I was in May. So I
kept losing a girl every month. In the end, I was the only
one. But they had a sign -- and you got paid by the
telephone company. They didn't dock you, until you were
eighteen.

HM: And you took the tube?

JC: The ferry. Oh, my goodness. Twenty-five cents. I think that was both ways.

HM: For a return -- round trip. Wow.

JC: Now 140 West Street is back like six blocks. You used to come out, and run into the building. Then they extended it, you know. I loved it. I loved the telephone.

HM: So you worked there six years. Then you got married?

JC: Yes.

HM: So tell me -- how did you meet your husband?

JC: At a dance in Jersey City, at St. Michael's.

HM: Tell me about him.

JC: He was just out of the service.

HM: Army? Navy?

JC: Army.

HM: Was he wearing a uniform when you met him?

JC: No. [Laughs] I don't think he'd like that [unclear]. He worked at the A&P warehouse.

HM: And he was a Jersey City guy or a Hoboken guy?

JC: Jersey. He came with the girls from New York to meet the guys -- one of the guys worked in New York, and he brought us all over to the dance. He called me every day after that. My mother loved him. She was always on the phone with him.

HM: That's always good.

JC: [Laughs] Oh, god!

HM: Did she like him better than you did? Or did he win you over?

JC: I think she liked him better than me!
[Laughter] No, he was very easy-going, very nice. He worked nights, so he'd meet me at 5:00 and drive me home. We'd talk in the car for hours, then he had to go to work.

HM: And he went to work --

JC: -- at the A&P in Jersey City.

HM: In Jersey City. Not the one in Hoboken.

JC: The giant one [the warehouse], yes.

DC: The one close to the turnpike.

JC: He was in the butter and cheese. Right as you come down the turnpike. Right there.

HM: And how long was your courtship?

JC: I met him in '53, and in '55 we were married.

HM: Was that considered a long time to be dating, or not?

JC: Well, he was seven years older than me, so he -- yes. And everybody liked him. Everybody.

HM: Including you. [Laughter]

JC: No, I mean, my brothers and sisters.

HM: That helps.

JC: He fell right into the family; his family fell right into ours.

HM: And he came from a family -- was he also from a big [family]?

JC: Eight. Eight redheads. All redheads.

RF: So he left the A&P --

JC: They closed the A&P. They shut down the butter warehouse. He was there a long time. He was there twenty-something years, when it shut down.

DC: Just shy of twenty-five.

JC: Yes. Then he went into the Board of Ed, the Hoboken Board of Ed, when the A&P closed. Then he went to the post office, part-time, and he wound up with the two jobs, full-time.

RF: So around how old was he when he gets involved with the fire department.

JC: No fire department.

RF: Oh, I'm sorry. That was your father.

JC: Yes. My father and my brothers. He'd say, when they'd say [unclear], "I work for a living."

HM: And they still liked him. [Laughter]

JC: It was a joke. [Cross talk] Because everybody [unclear]. "I work for a living."

HM: So the butter and egg thing -- why did they close it? Was it because things were shipped -- ?

JC: I don't know what they did at that time. It was terrible. My brother-in-law was there twenty-eight years. It was a big mix-up. That was downtown. Everybody worked there. Everybody. Johnny Kenny put everybody in there. That's how it went. They were all political. But they just closed down all the operations here.

HM: Was that a union job?

JC: Oh, yes. And they guaranteed that if you got a job within so many miles, you'd get the same pay. That never happened. Because they got the jobs in Secaucus, and they worked regular hours for much less money. The A&P was very nice money. When they close a place, what do they give you? Compensation? Severance.

RF: Sometimes severance.

JC: Everybody [unclear] came out and bought houses -- a down payment, and stuff like that.

RF: And I guess the mayor you would remember most would be Mayor Grogan?

JC: Oh, yes. Johnny Grogan. Yes. My girls took dancing lessons from his wife. Where we used to go in Rockaway, his wife was in the band with her mother and a brother. They played every weekend down there.

HM: She was in a band, meaning -- ?

JC: Mrs. Grogan. She sang, and her brother sang, and they danced. They taught Irish dancing. The McNultys. There are a lot of records around. I've just seen that somebody said they've got them on tape now.

RF: Her sisters were also singers, the McNulty Sisters, maybe going back to Ireland.

JC: Maybe. I don't know. He was from Fourth Street, the Mayor. Then when they married, they lived on Hudson Street. That's where the girls took their lessons.

They'd go every Friday night, and every Friday night she'd call me up and she'd say, "Mrs. Cunning, Helen's never going to dance." [Laughter] She'd say, "Why don't you come up?" I went up, everybody got up to dance, and she stood tall, right next to her. As soon as Eileen left, she would flop.

RF: But it was an Irish theme that they were known for.

JC: Yes. Jigs. They did the jigs. [Irish step dancing.]

RF: Can you remember many things about Mayor Grogan?

JC: Oh, we were always Grogan people. Remember, my father and my brothers were firemen, so you stayed with that group, more or less. My father was a Committeeman, and he gave it up. My sister was a Committeeman. We moved to Hoboken, and Johnny Kinney wanted Eddie to be the Committeeman, and they made him. Everybody cooperated, you know what I mean? You did your job. You did your thing.

RF: What type of politics were going on in the Terrace? Would people get involved?

JC: I think we had one Republican -- the Askews. I'm pretty sure that's what they were. Everybody else was -- you know. And like the Hollanders -- we had some Hollanders. I think they did whatever you asked them. Even Norm Wilson's family lived in the Terrace.

RF: I didn't know that.

JC: Yes. One of his aunts, I guess. As a matter of fact, they had houses in the second Terrace, in the front. I'm trying to think -- Kane. One was Kane.

HM: He has good stories to tell.

JC: You said what did we do? We went to dances. When I was a teenager, we were at St. Michael's on Sunday; Demarest on Friday; Wednesday was CYO at Our Lady of Grace; and now and then we went to St. Joe's. We went there at least three nights a week.

HM: And you always went with your girlfriends.

JC: Oh, yes.

HM: But then you would probably meet boys who wanted --

JC: Well, we really met boys when my brother came home on leave, and brought home five soldiers.
[Laughter]

HM: You were like bait.

JC: Everybody loved me. I got more friends that year. And they were here a while, like a month. He was there three years, they sent them back here, and they were in a New York camp, an army camp in Brooklyn, not far away.

RF: The Navy yard?

JC: Not the Navy Yard. There was something over there. Because they came back every night.

HM: And they stayed at your house?

JC: They stayed at my sister's house; they stayed at a cousin's house; and my father said, "Tell them to get the hell home." One of them lived in Kentucky. He said, "Why don't you all go visit, and stay there?" They were nice guys, but, you know -- and they all had money.

HM: They were still getting their pay.

JC: We were running around Times Square. You'd go over -- which I would never have been allowed to do, only my brother was there.

HM: So when was that? You were a teenager then?

JC: Yes. Sixteen, seventeen.

HM: And running around in Times Square. Were you going to movies?

JC: We were going to movies, yes, and, you know -- see a show. Go and have -- what was the spaghetti,

like a dollar. You'd go in those places, and for a dollar you'd get a big meal, with the macaroni. We went to places we would never have gone, because they wanted to see them -- all the sights. They were home a couple of months. My father was so happy when they left.

HM: So three times a week, going to different dances. Were you unusual, or was that a common thing? Everybody did that.

JC: Oh, everybody did that--dances. Yes.

HM: That was the entertainment.

JC: Yes.

HM: That's before TV.

JC: Yes.

HM: But there were movie theatres in Hoboken, too.

JC: Oh, sure. We went to the Fabian, the U.S. There were other ones, but we never went -- like the boys went to -- I can't think of the name. They called it the "scratch house," so the girls never went there. But it was regular movies. [adds later: U.S. Theater, 6th and Washington Street.] The Fabian was the big -- come down and have a Coke and French fries. I wish I could remember the name.

HM: A luncheonette?

JC: Yes. On that side of -- there were three places you went to, one on First and Washington, then Umlands, on Fifth and Washington. Then the one between Seventh and Eighth. What the hell's the name? [adds later: Janette's.]

HM: Not Schnackenberg's.

JC: No. No, no. That's too far. We didn't go uptown. [Laughter] Eighth Street was far --

HM: Yes -- to walk.

JC: I can't think of it. It was a nice place, we used to go. But, you know, you went there, you got a Coke and French fries for fifty cents, probably. That would be the most you'd ever have.

HM: Did you get an allowance? How did you have pocket change?

JC: I guess we got money for doing something. I'd been babysitting ever since I could remember. I was always taking care of someone someplace.

HM: And what about that guy, Frank Sinatra? Was he singing then? Or was he not really well known?

JC: I can remember him then. Somebody would have a thing saying, "Who are you for?" and seeing how much came out -- if it was Bing Crosby or Sinatra. It was a big thing over here. I just read his book. We didn't see him or anything. I have a cousin who used to say, "Oh, I saw him walking down the street last week." He didn't come back here, I don't think, often. I remember him -- we had a parade, in which the Mayor -- I have to tell: We did have parades. It was the March of Progress, and he brought all

these models with him. They were up on the fire engine, and my brother, Jim, was just on. He was the tiller man. We all went up to see it come down the avenue. It was at night. It was kind of late. And Frank Sinatra was the --

HM: The grand marshal --

JC: -- or whatever.

RF: There's a picture of him riding on the truck. His father was a fireman -- Marty.

JC: My father's captain.

RF: Right. So he operated out of what, #5, on Grand Street?

JC: No, Hudson Street. It's gone.

DC: Where Bank of America is. My mother's father and Marty worked together.

HM: Any stories about that?

JC: No, not really.

DC: There's a story about the cars, and "Roy Rogers."

JC: A gang of kids stole my father's car. They got it back, but my father always said, "That punk, Sinatra, was with them." But his father was the captain, so nobody could do anything about it.

HM: That sounds about right.

RF: Because Marty worked out of #5 -- I mean, out of the one on Grand Street. The firehouse.

DC: Eventually. But when they were together, they were up on Hudson Street.

RF: Do you remember Dolly?

JC: I met her a couple of times. The last time I met her, my girlfriend said to her, "Do you think Frank's going to marry Mia?" And she said (not nice words), "Do you think my son would even look at that --" We were in

a church. Everybody sat there -- ! She let her opinion out very, very vocal. And he married her, I think, the next weekend.

HM: Right. Well, she was very possessive of her son.

JC: Oh, she was a character.

RF: Salty language.

JC: She and her brother were very good friends. My sister used to go with one of the nieces, and most people thought that her brother was her husband. He went to all the affairs and everything. I don't think Marty did any of that stuff. I read the book, and I don't think he was ever that vocal. I can remember them saying she was with her brother. My sister, Marietta, was up in the house in Castle Point, and she was in the house up in Weehawken. And she said ever pillow was a picture of Frank; every dish, and everything. She was a nice person, really, but after she answered that question that night...

HM: And in church, to boot.

JC: A school -- a church affair -- at St. Joe's. I remember it very well.

HM: So who are you going to introduce me to, with the pictures?

JC: Oh. I didn't know what you wanted.

HM: We will need them.

JC: I have one with all the seven. Wait a minute. I wanted to ask you about this [unclear]. Where did I get this picture? My grandmother. My father's mother.

DC: A \$20 tuition bill.

HM: From 1896. The best thing you could do would be just get a scan of it.

RF: Are there more pieces?

JC: No. Are there three pieces here?

RF: There are two. There might be one more piece.

HM: Like the corner of that?

DC: There are only two pieces.

JC: Are you sure?

HM: If they all go together. This may not go with this.

RF: It doesn't seem like they match up. That's why I was curious.

JC: I think I can find the other one.

HM: It's a bigger sheet of paper.

RF: And the lines don't match.

HM: The best thing to do, though, is to have these scanned, because at least you have it in the form that it is now.

JC: And where do you do that?

RF: We can do it for you, actually.

HM: They have a really good scanner.

DC: Her mother's brother, Luke -- he was a county cop, a Hudson County policeman, and he rode a motorcycle most of his life, and then went back to work. He stayed on the job. This guy on the end. And this is the entire Hudson County police department, at the time. He's the [unclear].

RF: That's "Hudson" Boulevard?

DC: I believe so, because it says something about it here. [Cross talk]

HM: So this is what -- '20s? [Unclear] This is around the '20s? [Cross talk]

RF: I would think. Is there anything on the back?

HM: They're framed. [Unclear] If you knew how old he was when he had his accident, maybe you could --

RF: It looks like the '20s.

HM: Yes, I think so, too.

DC: [Unclear]

HM: So the Hudson County police department --

JC: Now it's Hudson County. This was Hudson Boulevard police.

DC: He was born in 1896. Here is the 1920s.

HM: I just guessed by the hats, because that's when they wore those boaters.

RF: I'm going back to the Terrace. So do you remember outhouses? Would you remember outdoor plumbing, in a sense?

JC: The house that I bought -- well, my mother bought it first -- at 27 -- they had the outhouse outside. They just took it out, and put a bathroom in. But I don't know if the woman ever used it. I thought it was the worst looking -- I can remember seeing it, and saying, "Oh, my god, people used this?"

RF: The outhouse -- if it wasn't built back, was it back by the shed?

JC: Well, they all had the shed. It was like in the shed that they had it. Yes. It was actually in the shed.

RF: The outhouse. That makes sense.

JC: And that was 25.

RF: So you lived at 15, 17, and you and your husband bought 27, and you lived there. So you were raised in 15.

JC: Oh, yes.

DC: How much was that house -- \$1,200?

JC: Six thousand.

RF: That's what the taxes are.

HM: Yes. Really. [Laughter]

DC: What number were you?

RF: Sixty-three -- the old Griffin house.

HM: With the key on the outside.

Okay. So you're showing me -- these have
already been scanned.

JC: That's my husband. That's a bad picture.

HM: That's a good picture. Who's making him
laugh?

DC: He was always smiling.

HM: Is he? He's really laughing.

JC: We were just married a couple months then.

HM: That's a great picture.

RF: I'm trying to remember -- your dad died in the '80s?

DC: Yes -- '89 or '88. It was a couple days before his sixtieth birthday. [notes later '89]

JC: You're saying, "Dad." I was thinking my dad. Six days before he was sixty. So we lost two pensions.

HM: Oh, dear. That's heartless.

DC: He worked 7:00 to 3:00 at the post office, then came home and ate, and 4:00 to 12:00 [went to work again]. He was amazing.

HM: That's the contract you make. You give your labor, and then they take care of everyone after that.

JC: You know what I should have said --
everybody in my family worked for the city at one time. Me
and my brothers. My sister Ilene was a clerk in the school.
Who else?

DC: There was your father, your three
brothers and your sister.

JC: My father, my three brothers, my sister,
Ilene. Virginia didn't work in the schools. Just them. We
were all kind of city people.

RF: Right. So the St. Patrick's Day parade
started in '86, so he would have participated in the first -
-

JC: Oh, the first three.

DC: In '85 him and Helen and a small group
planned the whole thing, right there.

JC: And it started at "Helen and Friends."
That's what we called it.

DC: The Jersey City parade was kind of dwindling at the time.

JC: Don't say that. They get mad. [Laughter] No, we've been taking our kids to the parade since they were babies. We used to go to the Newark parade. The when the Jersey City parade came up -- and my mother never really went out. But I brought her out. I brought her to all the luncheons at school, the parties and all. We made all the parades with the kids and all, and we loved it. I didn't know -- I feel very bad that all this attention came to this parade when all charges are dropped, and nobody knows anything. That doesn't make it sound good. It made us sound terrible, and they come along -- these people didn't care.

RF: So would you say that going to all those parades was kind of the inspiration for the one in Hoboken?

JC: Yes. They've been going to parades forever, these kids. And even Hoboken -- we always had parades. When I was a little girl, we had parades. We always had the big Memorial Day parade; then, later on, they got the Halloween parade. All these kids were in those parades. Their father went with them. Because I always had another

baby at home. Not home, but in the carriage. We sat there, we talked about it. We ran the dance, and the dance came up wonderful. People came. This year we had over 300 people. I think it's a nice thing, and I think it's a shame that -- I don't know. My kids never got in trouble on St. Patrick's Day. My friends' kids never got in trouble. They blame everything on the parade. But how did you let your kid go out? Did you give them \$100? A girl said to me, in the Quays -- we'd come back there with Danny [Unclear] to the Quays, after the parade, about 9:00, and she's crying in the bathroom. So I said, "What happened?" I thought, "What did I get into this year?" She said, "I lost my money." She said, "My father just gave me the money before I left the house. My father gave me \$100." I said, "*A hundred dollars?*"

The thing was wet, I dried it off, and I said, "Empty your pocketbook." We emptied her pocketbook, and, like mine, it had every piece of junk in it, and there was a \$100 bill. I thought, "Why would anybody give this young girl a \$100 bill to go out?"

RF: Drinking.

HM: No one's watching out.

So let's look at these kids.

RF: Here's some, in front of the Terrace.

HM: Oh, this is great -- in front of the Terrace. So who are we looking at here?

JC: This here -- this is nieces and nephews. This is my family. There's one missing. One, two, three, four, five. There are two missing; Jane and Joan are missing there. And here, they're here.

HM: And this is inside the house. They had a lot of redheads.

JC: Yes.

HM: Oh, what a great picture.

JC: And [unclear] had none. [Laughs] It'd drive them crazy.

HM: Isn't that so great. They're perfectly lined up -- except one's crying.

JC: Oh, he was terrible. They called me up, and they wanted him -- they said, "You know, he's got red hair," and he was just really a blonde, and they wanted him to model. I said, "Were you there when they took the picture?" Dear god. They were terrible. This is all my grandchildren.

RF: So how many grandchildren?

JC: Twelve. I'm going to be a great-grandmother in August.

RF: I was wondering. In August.

HM: That's great.

JC: These are the Terrace. [Unclear]'s communion.

HM: Oh, these are great. It looks the same. It's amazing. It really does.

JC: And this is all of them grown up.

RF: A lot more parking spots.

HM: Oh, that's a nice shot.

RF: From the '60s.

HM: So when you moved out of the Terrace --

JC: -- I moved here.

HM: And this is very spacious and everything. But how did that feel? You had moved around, and that had been your neighborhood for so long.

JC: It was very odd. We came in, and we were crying. I was just saying to Danny -- the people that had it did it in black and gray. The floors were black and gray, and she had elephants or something all over. [Laughs] She was a very nice person, but it was a very dark and dingy place. When my husband died, my friend, John, put my name in here. He said, "I put your name in the Church Towers." I thought I could keep the house. I could have kept it, and not lived nice. So when I sold the house, I didn't bring a thing out of that house. I bought everything brand new. I

had everything done here -- the floors, the bathroom, and all. And I love it. I really love it.

HM: Well, it's a good idea to do that, because then you're not bringing in the other stuff, and it's a new thing.

RF: A fresh start.

JC: Not only that, I'm in my same neighborhood. I can see my mother's house out the bedroom window.

RF: So you have spent your entire life --

JC: -- right here. And my mother, too. She came from 256 Sixth Street.

RF: A few blocks in Hoboken. I know how important the church is to you, and these three blocks, right? It's amazing.

JC: It was always the house -- my mother's granddaughter got married out of the house. I had friends

from Ireland who got married out of my house. Then the whole block was out. Everybody came out. There was no trouble. If somebody got their load on, nobody cared. They didn't bother anybody. And the men sat out, and the women, too, sat out in the summer and drank beer, outside your door. And like I said, you didn't walk through there. We had a dog -- if a nun came down the street, that dog would bark, he was so awful. They would pass, and he would go [vocalizes howling]. I was out there apologizing all the time.

HM: Well, it's like the community room, in a way, the street. And the people who lived there, that's their shared communal space.

DC: Then there was the football field.

JC: And the lots behind us, everybody used that for anything you wanted to do. If you wanted to come in the house -- we got furniture -- they came in that lot, and came over the roof with everything.

RF: So what's the lot behind you?

JC: No, it's a building.

DC: There's an apartment building there.

RF: The apartment building which has where they park in the back.

JC: No, but the next house. Right behind the Terrace they built a house.

RF: Okay. That's new.

JC: That was part of that lot. Everybody was having trouble with their sewers, and we did the house over. We were supposed to go into the sewer line there. Well, the house was done and ready, and they just hadn't connected it up the regular way. I don't think the contractors knew what the hell they were doing. The city. That would have been great, because we used to have a lot of trouble with that, with the sewers over there. And on this side, I think they still have trouble. That's horrible.

RF: We're on the end, so --

JC: You're all right.

HM: Everybody talks about that. That's the problem.

JC: When they did it, they came and they said, "Oh, we found diapers in there." I said, "Diapers! My kids are in school for God's sake. Don't be looking at me with diapers."

RF: And what about sounds from next door? Could you hear people going up the steps?

JC: We lived with it. We lived with it.

DC: One wall was brick, a common wall.

JC: But when we did the house over, the panels were all soundproof. Like I said -- it's funny. People complain here about hearing things. I'm on the top floor. I probably would have hated it if I was underneath.

HM: But also, if you think about it, it's different kinds of sounds, too. Like if my next-door neighbor has his stereo on, that's bass, and that's not like

a human voice. So it's a different kind of noise level. And cars that go by on Willow now -- they're huge. They're so heavy that they shake the house.

DC: You know the St. Mary's route.

HM: Everything.

RF: Now you're hearing our problems.

HM: No, but it's a different kind of sound.

JC: You can't believe. You hear every sound, and you live with it.

HM: You block it out. But I do think there are levels of what you can take. And if you're out in front of your house, talking to your neighbors -- that's conversation; that's okay. But if they were next door to you, and they were using an electric sander --

JC: Oh, no. We have that here, though, a lot, because people are all doing their apartments over. They let you do it, you know? And now I hear they're helping you out

with it. When I came, I did everything. I don't regret it, though. I'm glad I did it.

HM: And you did it the way you wanted it.

RF: Well, tell us about the fire in Willow Terrace -- when that was --

JC: My mother's fire.

RF: Yes.

HM: When was that?

JC: The girls were in high school. [adds
later: 1975]

DC: I was like in the sixth grade. I was home that day.

JC: You couldn't have been in sixth grade. The girls were in high school, at the fire.

DC: [Unclear]

JC: [Unclear]

HM: So if you were in sixth grade --

JC: I was born in '62, so '72-'73?

HM: And you were in the house?

DC: I was in the [unclear] in 27, and Grandma came running in saying, "There's fire. Give me the phone." So I walked down to the "thing," and one of the [unclear] firemen was [unclear]. He was running in. I went to the doorway with him, like the back kitchen door, he opened the kitchen, and tons of flames came out. So he was yelling, "Get out, get out." So I ran back down to tell Grandma -- just to make sure she was okay -- I turned around, and the flame was out the door and up the pole, in the middle of the block. It was a gas leak.

HM: I was just going to say -- it had to be fueled by something.

JC: We had the gas company in --

DC: -- for like three days.

JC: Three days. They came in and they shut everything off. Then we had S&B come in, and he says --

RF: S&B Plumbing.

JC: Yes. He said, "You need a new furnace. This is an old furnace, blah, blah, blah." Now the Public Service comes back to see what you did, and my mother said, "You don't need a new furnace. That's ridiculous." Only if you had this in writing, it would have been wonderful. The third day, the door blew out. And my mother -- she was smart enough not to touch it -- but she went into the closet and got this big bag that she had all sorts of stuff in (I'm as bad as her), and out the door she went. And we got nothing out of that house. Nothing. It was only insured for a little bit of money, I think \$8,000 or something ridiculous.

But Public Service, they told us, "Forget about it." We had a fire inspector who was a jackass. He went right along with Public Service. And my mother was too old to do that. My mother took it wonderful. When she walked out of that house, she was fine. When she got to my sister's

for three days, she called me up and said, "Can I stay in your house?" I said, "Sure," so she came down. We rebuilt that, and we were with the guys every day, getting the thing done. My uncle had died and left her some money, which my mother never had in her life. That's how she rebuilt the house. She rebuilt her own house.

RF: At that time, who's living on the block? You had three houses, in a sense, or two?

JC: No, two. But my two girls were living with my mother, because my father had died. So they were staying over. Even when I was sick, they went down there. When they were teenagers, yes. They stayed there a lot. All the meals were at my house. Everybody came to my house. But the girls were there.

RF: So it's 27 and 15. Did the fire affect the house next door?

JC: Oh, yeah. Five houses. [Cross talk] It was Guzzi [#17], Clancy [#19], Eileen Clancy [#13], and Frieda #11], and then the woman on the other side.

DC: When she was on the phone, too, she said, "Mrs. Smith, there's a fire." They said there was a fire, and who it was. They knew who she was. So all of a sudden my cousin, Bill Thiel, who was working on Eighth Street, came flying around the corner --

JC: He was the first one there, running.

DC: -- running, ran out of the firehouse. He had his motorcycle out front, and that thing was blazing. So they got there and everything. It was unbelievable. [Cross talk]

HM: And no loss of life. Think about how close those all those houses are, and gas!

DC: It was built to burn. It was all wood.

JC: It was like 12:00 in the afternoon. Thank god it wasn't at night.

RF: So did the fire truck come down to the Terrace?

JC: Oh, they were lined up. Yes.

DC: Against traffic, from Eighth Street. They came [unclear].

RF: And all those phone lines.

JC: My neighbor next door, Mr. Earl -- he called his wife in. He was a character. He wound up as my sister's father-in-law. He said, "Are you cooking something?" [Laughter] Can you hear him? "Are you cooking something?" [Laughter] So everybody was out in the street, watching. Oh, it was horrible.

RF: But no one got hurt.

JC: And as I said, my mother took it like a champ. Everybody was so worried. My mother just -- nobody got hurt. We were all out. She had all her policies in a plastic bag. That was a riot. [Laughs] A whole big old thing, and she took that with her.

RF: And any particular real characters on the block that you want to talk about?

JC: Oh, I couldn't. [Laughter]

RF: [tell us about your neighbors.]

JC: The Clancys were all cops and firemen. And their mother was sick. She used to be in a chair all the time. My mother did everything for them. Those boys thought she was their mother. They went into the service, they came back, and my mother would have their white hats all done for them and all. My mother's house was very open like that. Any kid in trouble came to my mother. And my brother's ages.

RF: She lived across the street from you.

JC: No. Same side. Five doors away. We had a path in the snow, anything to get down there.

RF: And there was Edna --

JC: Edna -- she had part of the fire, too. She was there, to the left of the house.

DC: Eleven Willow Terrace.

JC: The right.

DC: Facing it, to the left.

JC: Yes. She had. But her son had a lot of film stuff in the attic, and that's what got ruined. She's lucky it didn't get worse.

HM: Well, you don't think about it until [it's too late.] Smart of your mother to have all her policies and stuff in one place, in a bag she could take with her.

JC: But, you know, they didn't have fire insurance like that. If it cost \$3.00, you couldn't do it. They had all those little petty ten-cent policies and all. If she had bought that later on -- when I bought it, and mortgaged the house, you had to have it.

RF: Right. The [unclear]

JC: But like I said, she came out of it, she had money that she never thought she'd have.

HM: So she felt fortunate. She was alive, and no one got hurt.

DC: It was a beautiful house.

JC: It was. It was really very nice. Very, very nice. Yes.

HM: That helps.

RF: I remember your having more pictures around in that house than you have here. [Cross talk] I just remember going into the Terrace house, and -- Oh, here we go. Okay. Now we're going. [looking at pictures]

JC: We just came back from Rome, so I have two popes that I did see. The girls and I just came back. It was nice.

This is my baby. She isn't on that wall, because I don't like the frame. I've got to get it framed.

This is my grandson, and they're having a baby. That's Eddie's oldest boy.

RF: Right. I remember him, growing him.

JC: And this is the "bridal" wall. That's Danny. They all have short hair, because they were all in that school, being firemen. That's when he was a cop, right? Danny? When he got married? And that's Jane. She has the three little redheads. They have four. He has three kids in [unclear]. There's Patty and John. They have a boy in college, and a girl graduating eighth grade. And this is when I used to be skinny.

RF: It's very charming.

HM: You could see how he could charm people. He has that friendly smile.

JC: And that's Bernadette.

HM: This was the genealogical thing. Then you'd have the children --

JC: This is the year Eddie died. They gave it to us as a birthday present. Then we have some more babies. I don't have nice pictures of the two little ones, and they tell me all the time, [unclear].

HM: More babies?

JC: That's the five of them. I must have had pictures of Jane and Joan's. I can't find it though.

HM: I like that.

JC: Isn't that nice?

HM: Yes. Belting out a tune. [Laughter]

JC: That's John.

RF: You've got a great view.

JC: Yes. Oh, we do have a nice view. Well, as I said, I look into the Terrace.

Did you see this house they just built up here?

HM: The fancy one? You mean that one? Which one?

JC: They just built a house up over what looked like a garage. [Cross talk]

HM: Oh, that used to be the little teeny one.

JC: Yes. My mother was right behind that.

HM: Because you were talking about the lot that was behind -- because that was low for a long time.

Yes. I know. I've been watching them build that.

JC: But I look up and I see Clinton.

HM: And you have the church, which they haven't yet turned into a parking lot.

RF: So you know every crack in the sidewalk, right?

JC: Oh, god. [Laughter] But it's nice.

This is their graduation from school. Then we have the other room.

HM: You see, you challenged, so she had to show you that the pictures were dispersed.

RF: The pictures -- yes, yes. There's sort of more room to show them. They're spread out.

JC: I did that bathroom when I moved in. We had it all tiled and all.

HM: It's nice. It's big.

RF: I wonder who did the tiling.

JC: You know, Vinnie Wassmann.

RF: Oh, Vinnie. Okay. I thought you did it.
[Cross talk] Vinnie went through hell with his house, huh?

DC: Oh, that was terrible.

RF: Unbelievable. Unbelievable.

So, are we there>

HM: Yes. There may be other questions after we do the transcript. We may even do a second -- and you'll remember stuff. There will be things that --

RF: We'll follow up, maybe.

HM: What do you want to do about -- because I should bring the little stickers, so I can identify people. Shall we do that? Why don't I bring the transcript? What do you think?

RF: I think so.

JC: Okay. All right.

HM: That way, we'll just do a separate thing, and you'll tell me who everybody is. I'll do left-to-right. And I think we should have some pictures of the parade.

JC: I do have pictures from the parade, yes.

RF: It won't be a problem.

HM: Well, just in general. And then maybe we'll talk a little bit more about that. We'll go into the pictures more. But this is a good foundation. And think about -- a lot of times what happens is you start to -- there are new stories, there are things you want to say. So if there are, we'll cover the new stories. But I think we're good.

JC: I should say that the kids were born in St. Mary's. They were all born in St. Mary's.

HM: Everybody.

JC: Yes.

RF: This is their world.

HM: It really is amazing -- even the A&P connection. It is amazing. You don't have to go far, to have all your needs met.

RF: I'm actually not sure. What was on the site of the A&P? I don't know.

JC: The silk mill. Oh, we hung out there all the time.

RF: Tell me about the silk mill.

JC: Oh, the silk mill had a loading dock there, so that's where everybody sat at night. Everybody would be over there. It was the whole width of that parking lot near [unclear]. Everybody worked in there, too -- a lot of Italians. [Unclear] tailoring and things like that. But it was actually the big bales of stuff.

HM: So they manufactured fabric.

RF: They had big bolts of fabrics, and the trucks would be picking it up, bringing stuff in, and bringing stuff out. And they had this loading dock. I don't think I've ever seen a picture of it before.

JC: I wonder if I have any pictures of it. Because we all hung out there.

HM: That would be great. I don't think I've ever heard anyone talk about that, have you?

JC: It wasn't a big dock, it was just that you had to boost up to --

DC: Did they have a bad fire? Or was that [Unclear] Storage?

JC: I don't think so. I think they just went out.

RF: We'd like some pictures of you -- as a young girl -- if you have them from the dances, because you talked about them so clearly.

JC: Oh, for god's sake. We didn't have cameras when we were going to dances.

HM: Well, even a friend, maybe, took a picture. [Cross talk]

JC: You know, through moving, we lost a lot of my mother's stuff. What we did -- we put it up -- Jane had the house, so it went up there. So I have to go and really look.

RF: Because there's a lot of your kids growing up, but I think we'd like to see some of you earlier, too.

JC: I have a picture -- I don't know what happened to it. I just had it -- of my two sisters and I on the roof. We used to take pictures on the roof. Don't ask me why.

RF: Just to get away. [Unclear] Tar beach.

JC: I will look. I will look.

HM: And anything with the mill -- that would be great.

RF: Or just anything. Sure. Let's see. What are the earliest pictures we have here. Obviously these go

way back. But we don't have anything '30s and '40s, I don't think. Fifties, '60s --

HM: This is early-ish.

RF: But you, as a kid.

JC: I know what you mean. I have to have pictures of my brothers and sisters.

DC: Someone just put those on the Internet, and we have them -- of that party at Romano's.

JC: Yes. Eileen did that.

DC: I have them on my computer.

HM: So when you're ready, you can send us a j-peg.

JC: My brother's daughter put a picture of me -- I'm in a yellow dress. His daughter came and said, "I saw the picture Mimi, and I look just like you." I said, "Oh, god help you." She said, "I look like you," and she's a very

beautiful girl, and she doesn't look like me. [Laughs] But if you see this picture of me in the yellow dress. Everybody tells me --

DC: It's funny. We sit at this table, and there's more liquor bottles on this table, and I'm like, "What's going on here?"

JC: Where?

HM: It's after a party. And at some point, I guess -- I won't take this genealogical stuff --

JC: You probably can, because she can just make copies.

HM: Ask her first, because I'm coming back.

DC: If you're bringing it back. And this all came out of her computer. These things she might want, but I mean --

RF: Do you want to take them now, and we'll just make a copy?

HM: Yes, because this is good -- we always talk to people about doing family genealogy.

RF: -- and no one ever does it.

DC: She's like hooked on this now. At first she said it was driving her crazy, but now, when you look at it, and when you do this stuff, this lead comes up, and it's unbelievable. I'm going to hang out at the firehouse.

[Laughter] [Cross talk]

That's a great blackmail photo.

He just called. They think they're getting "made" next week; get promoted. I just retired as battalion chief, and he's going to move up to my spot.

RF: So you're retired-retired? [Cross talk]

DC: I'll just do that for now.

HM: [looking over the family tree] Oh, I see what she has. Oh. So she did this separate one on Olinda.

DC: Yes. Well, Olinda -- there was a lot of information for Olinda. That's why she was --

JC: I swear, my mother never, ever told us about her, and she lived with us.

DC: And she found my father's uncle. My father's mother was "Miss Hannah Grant." Her brother said, in the census, "Hoboken fireman." She looks him up, I look up his records at work, and he was a chief officer [unclear]. On the other side of the family, my father's side --

HM: -- you can go look up all the church records, too, of when they were christened. All that stuff is in there. The paper trail is so good.

JC: It's unbelievable, isn't it, really?

HM: And you're so close to the church, so it's not really a hassle.

JC: My grandfather's sister was the first one to be christened at our Lady of Grace church. And when they

did the 150, Father called me up and he goes, "How do you spell that name?" Because they spelled it differently. It said, "It's got to be your aunt." I said, "Well, how old do you think I am?" [Laughs] I thought it was funny, after that. But it was.

RF: They have all the baptismal records.

HM: That's what I'm saying. Everything is in there.

JC: You know, the only one left in the Terrace is Eileen Clancy. We say the new family, the Italian people -- I still say "the new family." [Cross talk]

RF: Well, we've lost Mr. McCourt. I don't even know. Is Mrs. "Fiorenza" still there?

JC: Yes. She's there. Stinson's there.

RF: You're calling that side of [unclear] "Clancy," you're saying, right?

JC: No. Mary Ann. You know Mary Ann Stinson.

RF: Yes. I do.

JC: She's still there. Eileen's still there.
[Unclear] I have no idea [unclear]. He works for the city.

RF: Eileen O'Leary is still there.

DC: Her husband was a fireman.

JC: Oh, yes. "Honey." And next door to her --

HM: But they're not there anymore. Lorenzo?

JC: No.

HM: On the other side?

DC: Julie "Sweeton's" gone, right?

JC: Who did Dennis? Yannone. Her mother's
[adds later: Laura Storman] still --

DC: She just died.

JC: No. He married the daughter.

DC: Oh, yes. Yes.

JC: You know them. "Stormin." They're in your block. She lives alone.

RF: Terrace No. 2? Let's see --

HM: You're talking on the other side of the street, not next to "Honey."

DC: Then another guy, down the block, whom I met -- I have him a price on the paint job -- he grew up in the Terrace, and just moved back.

HM: Who's that?

DC: It's on your side of the street, down the block, like five from the corner, maybe.

RF: Right. Brown stucco house?

DC: Yes, just renovated. I can't think of his name.

RF: It's an Irish name.

DC: But he knew me, and I was like --

RF: He sort of inherited the house from --

HM: Oh, I know who you're talking about. Is this the guy who had the still on his side? [Cross talk]

RF: I'm looking out on my curb, and there's like a still [cross talk].

We might be talking about two different families, but the still was being thrown out from one of the Terrace houses, and he had just inherited it.

JC: On your side, or the other side?

RF: On the other side, in about the middle of the block. I'd look out the window, I'm running out -- I've put it in my car, and then I see where it's coming from, so

I follow him in. He said, "Oh, yes, my uncle had a still up in the attic." The attic was unfinished. It was a pretty elaborate still. It wasn't super big, but it had a lot of [unclear] to it. By the end of the afternoon I had the entire still [unclear].

JC: I think that's Jackie O'SullivanJ's house. They're in the middle, on the -- and his sister had a big family.

RF: It was the wildest thing. This was like maybe four or five years ago.

JC: Do you remember Jack [Unclear]?

RF: I don't think I do.

JC: His brother was a fireman who worked there. Three brothers lived in the house. You had to know them. No?

RF: You mentioned the name English -- Jim English.

JC: Jimmy, yes.

RF: I don't know too much about him. He inherited it from his family? That's his family's house?
[Cross talk] On the end?

JC: Jimmy's father came here from Ireland, and was a boarder with my grandmother. They were married out of my grandmother's house -- 250 Sixth Street. And my mother got them the house in the Terrace, which they were looking for. I think my mother "stood" for more people to be citizens. Jimmy -- I can't get over the size of him. What is wrong with him?

RF: Oh, yes. Well, I think he's got a lot of health problems. He goes around in a mobile [unclear].

JC: I went to school with him, too. We went to St. Clare's.

RF: Yes, but --

JC: But Jackie O -- in the middle of the [unclear], Jackie O'Sullivan -- he was crossing Washington

Street, fell in a hole, they took him up to the medical center, and he was out, in a coma, for I don't know how long. Joaneileen was working for -- what the hell?

DC: She's a social worker.

JC: He had nothing on him, and Joan called me and said, "Mom, I think Jackie O's up here in the medical center." So I called Kenny Murphy up. Kenny Murphy goes up, and it's Jackie O.

HM: Oh. So they didn't know who he was.

JC: No. And we called his sister, who's been looking for him, and looking for him. It's funny. She wouldn't be in his circle of friends -- just a neighbor -- and they found him. It was really something.

But I could see them with a still! [Laughter]

[Cross talk]

JC: My father, Jack, he had his beer and all, but he never played a number. We were at a party, and Mrs. O'Sullivan was taking numbers. She was taking numbers. Oh,

yes. She's done that for years. But that wouldn't be allowed to be said in my house.

RF: Then we'd always hear stories about the Terrace, like when a house is for sale, very often it would just go to someone else on the block. Is that true?

JC: My sister went to a bidding war on the house, and they didn't know each other, and it was Eddie "Dunfy" that died. He was blind. He had a whole family. My sister outbid the person. It wound up [being] Irene Lavin. They were all friends of the family. Virginia got the house for like \$100 more, or something. But they had no idea they were bidding against -- but as long as you knew someone was selling the house, you'd --

RF: Would you go through a real estate agent to do that? Or would it just kind of be -- ?

JC: My house -- a woman [Miss Cooper] came with her mother from New York City. Her father was a barber, and he dropped dead and never saw the house. Never lived in it. She lived there, and lived there, until there was no money left. Her mother died. So my mother bought the house

off her, and let her stay until she had no money, and made all the arrangements with the alms house in Secaucus -- which was run very nice at the time. That's how my mother got the house that I bought off my mother.

We'd go up once a week and get a whole list of what she wanted, and we'd bring it up. My father would drive us up. I didn't drive until I was twenty-five years old. Girls didn't drive then. But that's how you got a house in the Terrace. Gracie Earl's grandmother got the first one, then her aunt got the next one, and Margie Duff moved across the street. They all -- everybody --

RF: You had a little network.

JC: Well, it keeps the place nice.

RF: Also, your neighbors are your friends.

[cross talk].

HM: Exactly. I was just going to say -- it means that you're around people that you get along with.

DC: We never had a key to the house, growing up.

JC: Never.

RF: How long did you operate that way?

JC: When Eddie died, we locked the doors at night. But other than that --

RF: So into the 1980s?

DC: Yes, until 1989. Absolutely.

JC: My mother -- I don't think they ever had it until she was selling the house. Maybe when she did the house over, they had the key.

HM: Then people were watching, too. Right?

JC: You'd open the door, and you'd say, "Helen?" Or they'd come to my house, looking for me.

RF: The houses were originally brick. Then they all seem to have gotten stucco-ed. What was that about?

JC: There is a thing that we were granted -- historic -- but only from the county, or the city, or something. They broke a lot of rules. Even us. We put the vestibule in. But we did have -- before we had sheds that came down.

RF: Like an awning, a wooden awning.

DC: Over two doors, and then there was a stoop.

RF: For supports.

JC: That corner on Clinton Street is ridiculous. That is ridiculous. Who approved that?

RF: Well, this gets into what's historic, and so on. It's actually, technically not within the historic district, so anyone can do what they want to the outside of their house.

DC: That part that leans out is awful. You look up, and you think you get dizzy for a second. It's awful.

RF: Like Anthony and Sasha, who live in that one house -- he's an architect, so that's his vision. He really needed one small variance, because he was expanding his deck or something. But other than that, it's not protected. He can do a modern house. He can do stainless, he can do anything.

JC: When I built out, the woman next door fought me and fought me, because she had a little window.

RF: I keep thinking of more things. What stores would have been in that little area, right around Willow Terrace?

JC: Tony's candy store. I worked after school. That was 611.

RF: On Willow or Clinton.

JC: Where Peggy "Tangermin" lived. Willow.

DC: The one that was the bar, 606?

JC: Opposite, but over a little bit. I think 611 was the candy store.

DC: And the other corner was Ralph's, across from Bill's corner.

JC: But then we had one right here on Sixth Street, where the lawyer's are, or what are they? Travel agents? Right here? That was Morley's candy store.

HM: A lot of candy stores. Because three were a lot of kids. [cross talk]

JC: [And] Rocco's liquor store, [Clinton Street]. They came from Carlstadt, and to us they were like farmers. They wore jeans and boots, that we didn't use, and my sister married one of them. [Laughs] I can remember my mother saying, "What the hell's wrong with that guy? Tell him to come here dressed." And he did. [Laughter]

HM: Jeans were the workmen's uniform.

JC: They were farmers, out there.

RF: But on Willow Avenue -- some other stores? The east side of the street?

DC: Ralph's candy store.

JC: Yes. And we had the shoemaker on the corner of our Terrace.

DC: And "Mr. L", too. The barber.

RF: On Seventh.

HM: No. On Willow, 613.

RF: On Willow. Excuse me. [Cross talk] Do you remember things about the Griffin family? They were apparently kind of characters -- where we live. [Cross talk, unclear]

JC: She had an alligator or something in the tub. Yeah. They had to come out and get it. It was a big thing.

RF: What's the story of that. I never heard of that.

HM: Antoinette. She was this little thing, and she was the second wife.

RF: Let her tell the alligator story.

JC: They actually had to come in and take the alligator out.

HM: After he had already died?

JC: He was dead.

DC: But she had him in a fish tank, and then, eventually, the bathtub.

JC: And into the tub, she had it, in the end, and they had to come and get it.

HM: It got too big.

RF: Someone complained?

JC: Yes. They had to come in, and get people to pick up an alligator.

DC: I think she couldn't feed it anymore or something.

HM: She was small. It probably was threatening her.

RF: She was a character, right?

JC: He never came out. What did he do in that store? Was it keys?

HM: And also guns. Originally guns.

RF: Apparently, he wanted to be a policeman, and he used to collect guns.

HM: But also, he was a jazz musician. He played, had all these cards from different bands -- as a young man.

RF: He was a locksmith.

JC: We didn't need him in the terrace.

[Laughter] That's why I don't know him.

RF: But she was a crossing guard here. [Cross talk] We have a picture in our '70s book of her.

DC: I remember her cursing in German or something.

RF: French.

DC: Right. When she would get excited, she would be cursing in --

RF: She was a traffic crossing guard -- which reminds me of another traffic crossing guard.

JC: Oh, my god. We got one that takes her dog with her. She ties up the dog while she does traffic.

DC: We have one on Second and Monroe. We come down there with the lights and sirens, and she looks at us

like -- "Move the cones. Move the traffic. Move the cones."
[Laughter] So now I just say, "Take out the cones. Take out
the cones." You run over the cones [laughter]. Some of them
are great. They see you coming, they'll stop traffic and
wave, and tell everybody to wait, like a normal person. The
rest will just stare. [Cross talk, laughter] I want no part
of this.

RF: But yes, Mrs. Griffin, every time we'd
hear something --

JC: When you say "Griffin," I think of the
Griffins on our Terrace, who were wonderful people. [Cross
talk]

DC: They were like well-dressed gentlemen.
Nice people.

JC: [The other Griffins] They were strange. I
have to ask Mary Pendrick about that.

HM: About the alligator. I love that story. I
never heard that one.

JC: I know when Reynolds lived there -- she was on my Terrace, but she rented the one by Jimmy English. And, god, I put that in for her. And you had to slide out the door, and slide in. There was about this much room. Mrs. Reynolds. It's funny. Her son retired, and Cathy Daniels signed them out. She said, "It's at Willow Terrace." She said, "You know the Cunnings?" He said, "Yes, I know the Cunnings."

She came in, she was a teacher from Hunter College. Her boys were all raised, all nice, wonderful jobs. She came to the Terrace. But she was losing it. I would go over, when I would see the door open, and call her. I called the son a few times. She would always say, "Take my car, Joan." He said, "Take her car every day, so she don't drive it." [Laughs]

DC: Nice lady.

JC: Kathy Canning is still there. You have to know her. She lives alone. She's about the third or fourth house off Clinton, on Seventh. Her sister is Veronica, who lives across the street, on Willow Avenue, and babysits all the time? You don't know her?

RF: No. See, I just go out of my house, and I'm gone. [Cross talk]

JC: Well, they were raised in the first Terrace. But she has got to be in her late eighties.

RF: La Russo had a place [cross talk] on Seventh. I don't know too many people on Seventh Street.

HM: Well, we did, but they moved. [Cross talk]

JC: I think they're all from Mayo -- the McLaughlins who were in the second Terrace, and the Gills. Irene -- you know who I mean. The jerky kid that was hanging around. It wasn't his house, though. One was Irishman of the year. Gill. Marty Gill. And next door is --

DC: English.

JC: But English is the next one.

HM: I think they're all new people, except
for English.

JC: No. The first five houses up -- they're
there forever. English, Keegan, and Gill.

HM: From Willow, or from the Clinton side?

JC: From the Clinton side. Right up the road
here. And Kathy Cannon," I think, is the fourth or fifth
house. They're there forever.

HM: I'm sure. You don't see any changes
there. I don't know them, though.

RF: It just recently dawned on me -- I
wouldn't know Mr. McCourt, senior, but his son lives in the
apartment building on the 600 -- I don't even know his first
name, but I see him all the time. I didn't connect the dots.
[Cross talk]

JC: His son just played the lead in that
play, "Shampoo," and he was fantastic. [adds later: Kevin]

RF: Oh, really. I met his son.

JC: But, like, to me -- they were new in the Terrace. [Laughter, cross talk]

DC: There was a "band" in their house when we were growing up.

JC: Yes. The "Hollanders."

DC: The two houses next door were abandoned, and towards the end of the Terrace, there were two abandoned, for years.

RF: Oh, Cameron.

JC: They had son, and he left them and the house. They were the cleanest people. The Hollanders came out and did their sidewalks. We had quite a few there, maybe four or five. They took the father out, and it was a disgrace. I was pregnant with somebody, and I called the Board of Health. I said, "This is it. They can't even feed themselves." Mrs. Duff would bring in stuff.

They took him out. He was in [unclear] first open, it was. We went into the wake. He said, "Well, Mom will be here tomorrow." I said, "Oh. She's going to be able to come?" She died. Then he just let the house go, and it was full of roaches and [unclear]. Mrs. Duff was going crazy with it. And the "Swift's" house -- that was never dirty. That was the next house. And the "cop" bought it.

DC: Duke McCourt.

JC: No.

DC: Oh. Jimmy Mancuso.

JC: No.

DC: When Duke McCourt got the house, it was abandoned. They got it at [unclear] like a brand-new house.

JC: Right. But next door was the "cop" -- he died on a motorcycle.

DC: Oh. Buddy Skelley.

JC: Buddy Skelley. He did that house over beautiful. And they have cellars in those houses. You can go down. It's all slate down there. [Cross talk] Seventeen had that.

RF: Of course, they take water on, too.
[Cross talk]

JC: She dug deep. We had an argument out in the street. She said, "I'm making that a play room." I said, "You're making it a swimming pool." But the cobblestones there are still from the water coming -- three pumps they had, constantly, out the back, out the front. I mean, come on!

HM: It's right at the water line.

JC: We did the house over. The first time we did it, we put the heat down in the cellar, and my husband tormented me. He called me every time it rained: "Open the trap doors." I'd say, "Okay, Eddie." I didn't open that trap door. What was I going to do, if there was water there?

RF: Like, what's down there. [Cross talk]

JC: When we "raised" the house, my father wouldn't let us take the gutters out. They were just doing that, you know. "Well, the house will fall down." So we lost that much space. They're doing my house over, though. Did you see?

RF: I know. I was just going to say I thought that was the case.

JC: Well, my nephew bought my house. Of course, he was sure I would want to come back. So we just recently -- about three years ago he sold the house. He called me up and he said, "I'm selling the house, Aunt Joanie, okay?" I said, "Yeah, but I want half of anything you don't want. You pay me." [Laughter] So she called me back and (she's funny), "Hey, You're not getting nothin'." [Laughter] I said, "I'll get even." It was a joke. But he really kept it for me. I thought that was so nice.

RF: I'm confused. You're saying --

JC: My nephew bought my house [cross talk].
Billy Thiel. The candy store. He was sure I'd come back.
[Cross talk]

RF: I remember when you moved it was like a
big deal. Like, "Hey, the Cunnings are moving from the
Terrace. It's going to hell." [Cross talk]

JC: Everybody who sold, it was a secret. I
thought that was terrible. I told them I was leaving.

HM: Why would it be a secret?

JC: Because of these crazy people! Who cares
if you move?

HM: Exactly.

JC: I can remember her coming over, crying.
"I didn't want to tell you, but my brother sold the house."
And I'm like, "Lou, wonderful, you have money." I spent
every dime I got; they didn't.

HM: Maybe that's what it is. They think people will be envious, or think that they made out like bandits or something. Right? I don't know why you would hide it.

JC: And people liked to tell me, "You know what you could get now?" I said, "I lived there, I had a wonderful life, and I don't care."

HM: This is the story that everybody tells.

DC: You moved because you couldn't afford it. Your taxes were \$6,000 or \$7,000.

JC: I had a mortgage on the house. Every time we paid the mortgage, we did something else. We did the beach. Now our beach is no more. We're the last of the bungalows. Eddie did them all over. Eddie got seven houses down there now.

RF: And where is that?

DC: It was East Keansburg. Now it's Middletown.

RF: Oh. Right.

DC: It's forty-five minutes from here.

JC: We have our own pool. And everybody knows
us.

RF: You have your own Terrace down there. You
don't go for the whole summer though, do you?

JC: Sure we do.

RF: You do. I didn't know that.

JC: I got to breakfast every day with my son,
except Saturday, Sunday, and Monday, his wife's off. It's a
big joke. "Oh, is *she* there." [Laughter]

HM: You're not going to share him.

JC: We live back to back, with big yards.
Over here he has four houses, and if you keep them nice, you
can keep the block nice.

RF: Does he live down there full time?

JC: Yes, yes.

RF: I remember when he moved out, everyone said, "Oh, yeah!"

HM: They're deserting.

JC: Well, they didn't give up the apartment for a long time. Well, his two sons were here. Now there's one left.

We like it. And his daughter doesn't like coming to Hoboken. I say, "What is wrong with you?" But she went to high school there. They moved when she went to high school.

HM: Soon, she'll want to be here.

DC: It's funny. When they're twenty-one, you see a lot of them --

HM: Exactly.

JC: Three of them are twenty-one this summer.

[adds later: Mary, Katie, John]

DC: Our daughter and Eddie's daughter

[unclear].

JC: She's the first, and John.

HM: My brother used to make fun of me for living here. Now his son is dating a girl from Jersey City, and his best friend lives in Hoboken. [Cross talk] He used to call it "Housebroken."

JC: In Rome, a couple months ago -- a month ago -- we went into a store, and we had to hire our own guide, because we didn't want to be -- I don't know why, but that's what they wanted. We had a private guide. I said, "That girl's American," and he said, "No. Only Italians work here." So she said, "Where are you from?" and we said, "New Jersey." "Me, too," she said. "I live --" I forget where she said she lived. So Jane said, "My sister-in-law lives there." She said, "What's her name." What the hell is her name?

DC: Angela's sister-in-law? I can't think of it. [Unclear]

JC: And does she have another sister, this here? They lived next door to each other. They went all through school together.

HM: I love it.

JC: This girl went to Rome to study, came home, came back and married a guy.

HM: Usually that's the joke -- like you're with the cab driver, and he knows one person from your town, and [unclear].

JC: I know when we were in Aruba, we were sitting with two women, my girlfriend and I, and they were from Buffalo. I said, "Oh, my family's from Buffalo. My uncle -- " Their name is Smith." And I laughed. I said, "I guess you know 100 Smiths. She said, "No, only one -- Father Arthur." I said, "My cousin." [Laughter] She said, "What!?" It's funny. But everybody has a kid who lives in Hoboken, I don't care where you go.

HM: It sure seems that way.

RF: Okay. This was fun.

[End of Interview]