



Interview with Marge Bramley

**Under the Auspices of the
Monmouth County Library Headquarters
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Flora T. Higgins, Project Coordinator**

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Name of Interviewer: Douglas Aumack

Premises of Interview: Ms. Bramley's home, Fair Haven, NJ

Birthdate of Subject: July 24, 1919

Mr. Aumack: It's a pleasure to be here today.

Ms. Bramley: Thank you.

Mr. Aumack: The first thing I'd like to ask you is, how did you come to Monmouth County and how did your ancestors come to Monmouth County?

Ms. Bramley: I was born in Atlantic Highlands, NJ in 1919. That was my mother's hometown. My mother's family, the Perrines, were Huguenots from the Isle of Jersey. They settled in Monmouth County in the 1600s. My father's family, the MacConnells, were from Glasgow, Scotland, settling in Pennsylvania in the late 1800s. My father had been from Montclair, New Jersey but was working in Manhattan, and my mother was going into Manhattan to take a course in short hand to be a secretary. She walked into the office of where they had an application for secretaries. My father saw her, and he said she looked like a little Russian princess, and he wanted to meet her desperately. But all the fellows in the office said, "Well, we're never going to introduce you." He finally burst into the office where she was taking dictation and said, "Oh, you must introduce me to your secretary." That was kind of a cute idea. That's how they met.

Mr. Aumack: Describe growing up in Monmouth County.



Marge Bramley's childhood home, 3rd Avenue and Lincoln in Atlantic Highlands

Ms. Bramley: I remember we lived in Atlantic Highlands on the corner of Lincoln and 3rd. My grandmother lived in a great big old Victorian right across the street, and I was the first child of four. I remember my earliest memories are waking up in my father's arms while he would take me across the street to leave me at my grandmother's house.

He and my mother went for a ride in the evening. That was one of the first things I remember. Atlantic Highlands in those days was a beautiful old town. It had a train station, at that time, and my father commuted to New York. He was a New York businessman. Of course sometimes my father took the boat, *The Mandalay*, that famous boat, between New York and Atlantic Highlands. They now have boating there a lot again. Anyway, I remember my mother would take me by the hand and we'd hide behind the schoolhouse, which was on the way home from the railroad station, and we'd jump out at my father. Those were things I remembered this far back. About two and a half years later my mother gave birth to my first brother, Donald. Eighteen months later my mother gave birth to twins, Douglas and Dorothy. We were a close family as children. We really had a wonderful childhood. We lived there until I was about six years old, and then moved to Red Bank because Red Bank was the "in place." In addition to that the nearby commuting had stopped so my father had to commute from Red Bank.

Mr. Aumack: They tore down the Atlantic Highlands train station?

Ms. Bramley: Yes, they tore down the station.

Mr. Aumack: Do you know why?

Ms. Bramley: I have no idea. But you know at one time, they had a trolley service that went up the line all through the Bayshore Area to Red Bank and that was their one way of getting around. There were no buses, but they had the trolley.

Mr. Aumack: So that was mass transit.

Ms. Bramley: I don't remember that, but I remember when I was a grown up talking about it.

Mr. Aumack: Do you know when that trolley service ended?

Ms. Bramley: No. I don't really remember, but I do know that there was a service. It was not called the trolley service if it came from Red Bank or Fairhaven. They called it the Stagecoach. But I don't believe it really was a

stagecoach. I had an older cousin who said that there was a route that came from Red Bank to Fair Haven.

Mr. Aumack: Comment more, please, on why you moved to Red Bank.

Ms. Bramley: I think my mother felt it would be much more fun socially. I'm going to tell you, we moved frequently. In those days my parents did not buy. They never were homeowners. They rented. It was much more the thing to do at that time. Usually if you owned a home it was because you inherited it from a grandparent or a parent. There was a lot of renting done. My mother was an interior decorator by desire, not professionally. So she would fix the house all up in just the way she wanted and then she'd start looking for another house to have more fun to play with. So we did move a lot in the Red Bank area. As a matter of fact, when I was in real estate, we would go out on Open House Day. I'd say, "Oh, I used to live here." I said it so many times that it got to be the joke in the office that I lived everywhere in the Red Bank area.

Mr. Aumack: Now did your mother stop being a secretary?

Ms. Bramley: Oh, yes, as soon as she was married.

Mr. Aumack: Was she paid for her interior decorating services?

Ms. Bramley: No. She just had the skills.

Mr. Aumack: How many houses did she redecorate?

Ms. Bramley: Let me see: we lived on Riverside Avenue. I have a big story about Riverside Avenue. The first one was on Riverside Avenue and then a bigger home on the same block became available but we had to wait between the leases, so we moved into a little house for three months before we moved into the third house. From there we went to Front Street so that's number four. We lived on Front Street where the parking lot for the hospital is now. There were a row of beautiful old homes; two were doctors' homes and one was a small private school. After we left there we moved to Silver White Gardens in Little Silver. Are you keeping track?

Mr. Aumack: Yes.

Ms. Bramley: We were living there when the Depression struck.

Mr. Aumack: So you lived in Silver White Gardens in Little Silver?

Ms. Bramley: Yes. That house is still there. Now after that we lived on Bergen Place in Red Bank. From there we moved to South Orange because my mother and her sister were able to save enough money together to open a Tea Room on

South Orange Avenue in South Orange. It was a very big home right on the main drive. There were living quarters for all of us upstairs, and the Tea Room was downstairs. That lasted for about two years, and then we returned to Little Silver. We lived on Prospect Avenue, and from there we moved to Monroe Avenue in Little Silver.

Mr. Aumack: How long did you stay on Prospect?

Ms. Bramley: Probably only as long as my father could pay the rent. It was a very bad time. He had been an executive with the Travelers Insurance Company so we were not struck by the Depression immediately, but then things happened where they got rid of all the executives. But they did offer him the opportunity to move to Hartford where the headquarters were. But my mother foolishly said, "Oh, I don't want to leave this part of the world where I've always been." From then on he never had real, true employment. So we came home and we lived on Prospect Avenue in Little Silver. Then he had this brilliant idea that maybe if we could live on a little farm we could support ourselves as far as food goes. Big mistake.

Mr. Aumack: Where was this farm?

Ms. Bramley: It's where the Monmouth Mall is now.

Mr. Aumack: You lived on a farm that is now Monmouth Mall?

Ms. Bramley: Yes. Actually, we lived across the street from it.

Mr. Aumack: What year did your father buy the farm?

Ms. Bramley: He didn't buy it.

Mr. Aumack: Oh, he rented the farm.

Ms. Bramley: Yes, for thirty dollars a month. You know what we had? This little tiny house with three bedrooms and the bathroom was downstairs which was very inconvenient. The heating was so poor that we were never able to handle the furnace. The furnace was always going out. It was a very cold bathroom sometimes. But any rate, it was to be a great success, as we were going to farm. The first summer we were there, we had a lovely asparagus patch. We planted different vegetables but they all died because we didn't know how to take care of them. But it was fun that first summer because there were barns and we made bedrooms in the barns. Three kids slept up there, which was kind of fun until a bat came in one night. I never slept there again. The one success we had was raising chickens. We bought a bunch of them and they seemed to survive and of course they were to be eaten. That was the object of having them. Finally the time came, we had a couple of great big old roosters and Dad said, "Well this

particular one," of course, we named them all. We had one named Adam and he was the one that was chosen to be the first victim. The other one was called Mr. Garrison because he looked so much like a friend of my father's. Mr. Garrison never made the table but Adam did. My father said to my older brother, "There's a hatchet down in the barn. You get it and just grab him and it's over in a few minutes and it's good experience for you." My brother said, "Well I am going to leave home first rather than do this to Adam." The rooster was our friend. My father was disgusted, but he wouldn't do it either, so we got a local farmer to do it and of course nobody would eat the chicken. The kids wouldn't. Because it had been our friend.

Mr. Aumack: So it was like the family pet.

Ms. Bramley: So that was our experiences on the farm. We were not born farmers. But at that time, my father did pass away, and we were left there, and the boys were drafted in the Army. First my older brother and then my younger brother in two years. My mother, my sister and I, in the meantime, were employed. My sister and I both worked at AT&T in New York at 195 Broadway as messenger girls. We made fifteen dollars a week and we paid three dollars and fifty cents a week for commuting to the city. We were just surviving. One day my sister took a day off and went over to Fort Monmouth because she had heard they were starting to hire people. When I came home, she said, "Maggie you're never going to believe it. Guess what? I got a job as a typist, and they're paying me forty-five dollars a week! From fifteen!" Guess what? I took the next day off and did the same thing.

Mr. Aumack: Did you get a job?

Ms. Bramley: Oh you bet. And my mother got a job over there too. All three of us. So that's what we did during the war. My one brother, Donald, was with Patton in the 3rd Armored Division..

Mr. Aumack: How long was he with Patton?

Ms. Bramley: In April 1945 he was wounded seriously; that was the year that the war ended. So he was in the war four years.

Mr. Aumack: Was he drafted?

Ms. Bramley: They were both drafted. He crossed into Germany, and this was right before the end of the war. His tank was hit by a civilian who was in the church tower with a bazooka. As a result of that he lost his leg. Incidentally, he was extremely tall. He was six feet six inches. They had to make the longest artificial leg they ever had.

Mr. Aumack: Goodness. They had to amputate?

Ms. Bramley: Oh yes, he lost his leg, and he almost lost one of his arms. He was in Walter Reed Hospital for a year recovering because they thought he was going to lose his arm. Thank goodness he didn't. My other brother, Douglas, was out in the South Pacific. Actually he had been stationed in Australia and then was sent to New Guinea. He was there, not in a combat situation. The Red Cross came around and interviewed Donald at Walter Reed, and he was saying that he had a brother in the South Pacific. I think my mother was there, and she said, "Please get him home immediately," and they did. General McArthur actually signed the paper and released him to come home because we were down to the last surviving member of the family. They were very good about that.

Mr. Aumack: What was your official job at Fort Monmouth?

Ms. Bramley: I was a clerk typist. Believe it or not, my job originally was distributing coal to all of the GI's who were stationed around here. I guess almost everybody used to heat with coal, and the army, of course, had an unlimited supply, although most people had to really struggle to get it.

Mr. Aumack: What was your mother's job?

Ms. Bramley: I'm not quite sure. She was a secretary in one of the offices. As for my sister, my sister had a wonderful job. She was in headquarters and she was head of the whole filing department of all of the people who came. We even eventually had Russian soldiers there too. It was interesting to see them walking around the post.

Mr. Aumack: Why?

Ms. Bramley: Well, because they had been our enemies and now they were suddenly on our side. This was later on in the war. We also had a great number of Italian prisoners. They were all billeted at Fort Monmouth, and it was so much fun. Nobody ever took Italians as being serious bad guys. Nobody could feel that way about an Italian.

Mr. Aumack: Really?

Ms. Bramley: Yes. You know they had a bad leader. Mussolini was a jackass and got them into the war. I don't think their hearts were ever in the war at all. So they were out of it quickly, you know. First of all, we had captured tons of them. They probably said, "Take me, here I am." They were brought to this country. A lot of them were kept at Fort Monmouth. They had a whole section where all the Italian prisoners were kept. They worked on the yards and stuff, you know, lawn work, and jobs like that. But on a Sunday the whole place was surrounded by Italian-Americans. The Italians were all billeted on Oceanport Avenue, and they had a big wire fence that ran all around it. The Italian-Americans would come every Sunday. Tons of people from Long Branch, which has always been an

Italian settlement, would come, because they knew some of these families. You would see a long line of them; they would bring food and treats. They all knew how to speak Italian. At first, it was like, "Ah, they're out there with the enemy," and then you'd think, "Oh, well they're Italians, they are not really our enemies." It was quite interesting to see how they were soon accepted, and I'm sure some of them married local girls.

Mr. Aumack: Do you know how many prisoners of war were there?

Ms. Bramley: I would say maybe a couple of hundred.

Mr. Aumack: Did you ever talk to them?

Ms. Bramley: No, I never did that.

Mr. Aumack: You witnessed a fairly reasonable treatment of Italian prisoners of war.

Ms. Bramley: Really, in some ways, it was a wonderful time. We were really young, and it was, in a way, a marvelous time of our lives what was going on in the war, and thankfully our brothers survived. That was the most important thing, and of course in the meantime, I had a beau who was in the war. He was in the Air Force. I eventually married him. That was my first husband, William Evans. I had my oldest son, David, by him.

Mr. Aumack: How did you meet him?

Ms. Bramley: We had all gone to school together around here. He was older, of course, than I was. I had an admirer who still is one of my dearest friends. He always said that he would've married me except I was too tall. He's not very tall. Bill Evans said to this admirer that he'd seen me down town someplace, and he wanted to meet me. So we dated, but not an awful lot. This is funny: the first night he brought me home, he said, "What are you doing this weekend and the week after and the rest of your life?" I said, "Who is this fresh cat?"

Mr. Aumack: After how many dates?

Ms. Bramley: One date.

Mr. Aumack: After one date he was proposing.

Ms. Bramley: Well, he was sort of.

Mr. Aumack: But it wasn't serious?

Ms. Bramley: No. Then we started to date every once in a while. He immediately was drafted. He was one of the first low numbers or whatever they were called. He was stationed down in South, so when he had leave, he'd send me a telegram saying, "I'm coming, please be free." Because, you know, we were young and cute and we dated a lot. My sister was a real beauty. That part of the war was fun. Fort Monmouth was loaded with all these young men. It was wonderful, because they were all being trained to be officers. So they were special.

Mr. Aumack: So they had an officer training camp?

Ms. Bramley: Oh yes. It was a signal school that they were being taught in.

Mr. Aumack: Tell us about Mr. Evans' service.

Ms. Bramley: He was a Bombardier on a B26. They were hit once, because he had a Purple Heart, but he would never talk about it because of the fact that my one brother was so badly wounded. He thought that his wound was so insignificant; it didn't even hospitalize him. I think he was hit by shrapnel.

Mr. Aumack: He felt a little insecure because your brother had lost his entire leg.

Ms. Bramley: Well actually, near the end of the war, my brother was in Germany where he was hit. They amputated his leg immediately on the field, but then they sent him to Paris to be in a hospital. Somehow or other through this wonderful mail system we had at that time, I was able to tell Bill Evans that my brother had been injured and in Paris. At that time, Bill was right near there, and because the war had ended, they were all free. So he tried to get into the hospital to see Donald, but just missed him. Oh, that's a story in its self about what happened to my brother. He was injured, and what they did at that time because there were so many injuries, they didn't leave them in Europe. They brought him home immediately. We had gotten a telegram that my brother had been seriously injured. My mother and sister and I got Sundays off because everybody worked on Saturdays in those days, and we went driving up there. We had already called my uncle and aunt in Freehold to say that we were coming up and that Donald had been so hurt. We clung together as a family you know. As we drove in the drive that night, my uncle ran out of the house and said, "Don is on the phone." I don't know if I can keep from crying because it was a very moving experience. We said, "What do you mean he's on the phone?" "He's in New York on Long Island. They shuttled those kids over, and he's only going to be there twenty-four hours, and then they were going to send him to Walter Reed Hospital." They had a big amputee section in Walter Reed Hospital.

Mr. Aumack: Where is Walter Reed Hospital?

Ms. Bramley: Washington DC. We had no gasoline in those days. It was so limited. So my uncle said, "We're going to go out there." So we went to Santini Air Base. I had never heard of it in my life before, or since. Actually, I don't think it was anything more than a little private airfield, but they were bringing in these big planes loaded with the wounded. So that was one of the most outstanding days of my life to see what we saw that day. They were just unloading these planes with guys on stretchers, you know, but they were also cheerful; they came yelling. When they saw Dotty and me they yelled, "American girls!" That was very moving, but then we went in and saw they had these kids in bed. They were just right on top of each other there was so many, but they were getting them out of there as fast as they could. So we saw my brother. He said, "Mom, don't even think about my leg." The fact that he lived through what he lived through and was home, you know, that was a big thing because the tank had been struck. He was a gunner in it and he was hardly able to get out of it because it hit his elbow and leg both. He always swore he heard my father say, "Get out of this." He said, "Don't worry, I'm so thrilled I'm home. What we were going through, I didn't think we were going to make it." It was such a horrendous battle; it was the Germans' last stand.

Mr. Aumack: Was that the Battle of the Bulge?

Ms. Bramley: He was in the Colmar Pocket. I think it's in France, but I'm not sure. He was across the line when he was hit. He was in Germany. They were chasing the Germans.

Mr. Aumack: Did any of Donald's comrades in that tank die?

Ms. Bramley: Yes. I think there were just two of them who lived.

Mr. Aumack: Out of how many?

Ms. Bramley: I don't know how many. They had big reunions every once in a while, but Donald did not go to them. He did fine as a young man with an artificial leg. But being so tall, he got to the point where his other leg gave away. So he was in a wheelchair for the last twenty years of his life and he just passed away three years ago. His wife and I, my sister-in-law, are very close friends.

Mr. Aumack: Let's go back a bit. How long did your father rent that farm on Wyckoff Road?

Ms. Bramley: Maybe three years. Incidentally it was thirty dollars a month rent.

Mr. Aumack: Why did you leave?

Ms. Bramley: Because our father had died, and both the boys had been drafted by that time. So we three women were most fortunate to find a housing

development that had been put up during the war for employees of the army. It was called Vail Homes. It is still there, if you know where it is.

Mr. Aumack: Where is that?

Ms. Bramley: It's in Eatontown. Well, it was called Eatontown then. It's off of Shrewsbury Ave. after you cross Sycamore Avenue. It's to the right just before you get out to Route 35. They were brand new, and we were able to get to live in one of those. They were small, and they were adorable. It was our lifesaver, because we didn't need anything more than that, and it was very cheap if you worked for the government, which we did.

Mr. Aumack: Do you remember how much it cost?

Ms. Bramley: I think it was thirty-five dollars a month.

Mr. Aumack: That's only little bit more than the farm was.

Ms. Bramley: Well, by this time, all three of us had these great jobs at forty-five dollars a week. We were rich.

Mr. Aumack: When did your father die?

Ms. Bramley: He died when we were still living on the farm in the beginning of the war. He had a heart attack and died.

Mr. Aumack: What was your father's official job in New York?

Ms. Bramley: He was an executive in the Travelers Insurance Company.

Mr. Aumack: Was that a lucrative job before the crash?

Ms. Bramley: Oh yes. We were considered rich. We always had a maid, and when the twins were born we needed more help. There was a German family in Atlantic Highlands. He was a baker in town, and he brought his younger sister from Germany after World War I. She was probably only a teenager then, but she lived with us for years. We always called her "Frauleine" because she took care of the twins. When they were little, they could speak German, as a result of her. She was a nursemaid. So we had a nursemaid and we always had a maid, and besides that, we had a lady who came in and ironed. They were very plush times, like it is now. See it wasn't just us. The Depression just knocked it all.

Mr. Aumack: You had a story about Riverside. Did you live there, too?

Ms. Bramley: Yes. Riverside Avenue. We lived on Riverside Avenue, which is now really like a highway, and this was before Coopers Bridge was built. You know the great big one, the original one.

Mr. Aumack: The one right near Oyster Point.

Ms. Bramley: Yes. We did not have any bridge there when we were children. Are you familiar with Riverside Avenue? There was no bridge there then. It was just a beautiful street because the homes on the river were gorgeous from the Oyster Point all the way to Maple Avenue. The houses on the river were great beautiful homes. And the most beautiful was where the Molly Pitcher is now. It was owned by a man named Burton Downing. He had two little girls. I played with them. Their home was so delicious. I used to love to go there, because it was on the river. They had the most gorgeous piece of property. Across the street and where Day's funeral home is now was their carriage house. They didn't have carriages, I'm not that old! Two beautiful cars were inside there, and above it was the maid's quarters, I can remember the name; it was a couple, Ellie and Ben. She was the maid in the house. I played over there all the time. It had a big wrap around front porch over the river. It really was a gorgeous spot. They eventually moved it across the street to where Dave's is now, and it became a funeral home, that beautiful old home, and then it burned down.

Mr. Aumack: When was that fire?

Ms. Bramley: It was a long time ago now. I guess probably sometime in the 1960s.

Mr. Aumack: When did Molly Pitcher go up?

Ms. Bramley: I think it was in 1927. I only think of that because on the corner stone they have 1927. But then there were other gorgeous homes along there, and we lived on the other side of the street. Our old home is still there on Allen Place. There was a bank at the end of Allen Place at one time. That was our first move into Red Bank. There were other beautiful homes on the river but they started to go to the dogs. Riverside Avenue did, too. They sold one of the big houses right across the street from where we were; they lifted it up off the cellar and put it on big timbers to roll it down to the river. They were going to put it on a raft and locate it someplace on the river. It didn't happen. One day when I came home for lunch from school at lunch time, we heard this god awful noise. It was a big explosion, and we ran up the street and saw a big column of dust and sand going up in the air. At the bottom of the hill was all lumber. That had been the house.

Mr. Aumack: Did it collapse?

Ms. Bramley: It collapsed, it got away, and it rolled down to the river. There's not very many people who know that story about that house. I was a very close friend with an ancient schoolteacher of mine, and she was the only one besides me to remember. Even my own mother said, "I don't remember that happening." It did happen, nonetheless. They built an apartment house there, which is now Twin Gables Apartments. They closed that. Then the next thing they did was to sell the other house near it to the Knights of Columbus. This is a personal story, part of this. We kids loved it, because once a year they had a big festival on the grounds there. They'd get a merry-go-round, they had booths with spinning wheels, and there was a lot of music for about a week, you know. Oh, we kids loved that. My family didn't think too much of it because it sort of made the neighborhood a little too commercial. I've got to tell you this funny story. One of my father's best friends was a man named Frank Byrne, and he was the father of Brendon Byrne, who eventually became the governor of New Jersey not too many years ago. He was more fun, this man, when he came to visit us, because he was the biggest tease in the world. He knew how to be a ventriloquist. I remember he would do the darndest things. When he came to visit us, a clock that never struck an hour would start to go "bong, bong." We kids were suspicious. If you'd tip over our dolls they'd all say, "Momma" or cry. We knew it was him, but we never could catch him. He could do it so well. He was a member of the Knights of Columbus. So he came down to visit, to go to one of the affairs and he stayed with us. My grandmother did not approve, you know, people were so bigoted in those days. Anything that was Irish was bad.

Mr. Aumack: Really, why?

Ms. Bramley: Because they were Catholics.

Mr. Aumack: Oh, and you were?

Ms. Bramley: We were Protestants! Of course, they always referred to Black people as "darkees." You don't need to put that in, that's pretty bad. Well, it was the times. But anyway, my grandmother did not like this idea of this thing going on across the street, but she'd sit on the front porch and watch what was going on. She had very bad ideas about what was going on over there because of "the wild Irish." Frank had gone over there for the evening, and he saw her sitting out on the front porch. So he put on this big drunken act. He was so bad. He stumbled, he ran into a tree, he came to the steps, and he would go up three, and go down two. She ran upstairs and locked herself in the bedroom and she never ever believed that that was just a joke. She would say, "Oh, no, he was drunk." I can't think of anything else about Riverside Avenue except we loved it, it was beautiful. Actually we were on Allen Place. There was a farmhouse sitting on the river. It was beautiful, and the Allen family owned it. That's where the street name came from. It had a beautiful grass tennis court on the river on the other side of the street.

Mr. Aumack: You mentioned other homes on Riverside Ave.

Ms. Bramley: I've one more to tell you about. Going up that street they were all riverside homes. They were beautiful homes, but further up, away from the one that fell down, was a lovely old house that sat way back. I remember it had a big curving driveway. It was owned by a very elegant pair of lady sisters who were in the candy business. Have you ever heard about any of this?

Mr. Aumack: No.

Ms. Bramley: It was called the Madaleine Candy Company. These ladies made wonderful chocolate candies. They were really well known because they had a very distinctive box that they put the candy in. It was sort of like white satin paper and in big gold puff letters it had "Madaleine." As children, you know if you ever saw one of these, you were hoping somebody was going to give you a treat.

Mr. Aumack: Were they all chocolate?

Ms. Bramley: Yes; they were filled with things like creams and caramels and stuff like that. I remember that they must have made a living by it. Somebody in my office remembered the story about them, too; one of the gentleman there. Every once in a while, they would make some kind of nugget or something that would take a lot of egg whites. They'd come across the street and they'd have a big bowl of just yolks and they'd say, "Does anybody want to make a pound cake or something? We've got all these egg yolks to give away."

Mr. Aumack: Did people flock to it?

Ms. Bramley: Well you know she just went to friends; to my mother and another family right behind us, the Ross family, and that's another whole story, but anyway. They were very good friends. We benefited by it, so did Mrs. Ross.

Mr. Aumack: Were the candy company ladies considered outlandish?

Ms. Bramley: No, they were very elegant. It's interesting that women who were in that business lived in such a beautiful home. Maybe they needed the money or maybe they were just talented in making this particular kinds of chocolates. They were very well known.

Mr. Aumack: Were they discriminated against sometimes because they were women?

Ms. Bramley: No.

Mr. Aumack: Were they affordable candies?

Ms. Bramley: I think they were expensive. I would guess that they were.

Mr. Aumack: Where did they distribute their candy?

Ms. Bramley: They evidently advertised, because people knew about them. I think they were quite well known, and not only locally.

Mr. Aumack: Did they sell their candy to places in New York?

Ms. Bramley: I wouldn't have known. I was a child.

Mr. Aumack: We were talking about Riverside Avenue and all the houses. Now these houses were literally on the side of the river.

Ms. Bramley: Most, yes. We did not live on that side. The two homes we lived in on that street were not on the riverside.

Mr. Aumack: But you were across the street from Riverside Avenue. Why did they take some of those homes down?

Ms. Bramley: It started to get commercial. As I say, first of all, the apartment house, The Twin Gables, went up there. A doctor lived in one of them. But I think probably, the onslaught of the Molly Pitcher Hotel is what really changed the street, completely, because then it became commercial. Also having that bridge open, because suddenly you had this great outpouring of traffic from New York City, and from all of Northern New Jersey. Before that it had been just a little sleepy street.

Mr. Aumack: When did the Cooper Bridge go up? Do you know?

Ms. Bramley: I have a picture of my grandmother and my brother standing on the bridge the day that it was opened, believe it or not.

Mr. Aumack: Do you know what year that was?

Ms. Bramley: I keep thinking 1927. I don't know whether that's true or not. But it appeared, at that time, in a famous newspaper called the *Herald Tribune* and every Sunday they had a photogravure section. Do you know what that is?

Mr. Aumack: No.

Ms. Bramley: I bet you don't. It was a picture section. The pictures were brown and everything was brown and white. It was just a part of the *Herald Tribune* and



**New Cooper's Bridge between
Red Bank and Middletown,
May 22, 1926**

it had a picture of my grandmother. I can show it to you if you want me to. I don't know if there's any point.

Mr. Aumack: Sure.

Ms. Bramley: It is sort of old and ratty looking now, but it's in our book. Some kind of historical book was printed not long ago, and they actually showed that picture. It didn't say who the woman was; she was about this big in it. She was my grandmother. I'll take it out so you can see it. These family albums are about to fall apart.

Mr. Aumack: All right, we were talking about the Cooper Bridge and we were also talking about the Molly Pitcher Inn. When did the Molly Pitcher Inn go up? What is the history of that property?

Ms. Bramley: I never knew anything about it except I was enamored as a child of the parents of the house, because the inside of the home was always my idea of a dream home, it was so beautiful. On the third floor there was a huge room and it was just called "the nursery" and it had drawers into the walls filled with Halloween costumes and blocks and all kinds of things that kids love. It was meant for the children. There were only two children in the family. It had windows looking down at the river. That was the most glorious part of that whole home. It was just wicked that it was ever destroyed or moved, but of course, the Molly Pitcher is a great thing, too. I just always had felt very sad about Riverside Avenue because it was such a glorious street at one time, with beautiful homes. It's just a commercial fly by now.

Mr. Aumack: So you think that the community of Red Bank changed because of the direction of Molly Pitcher and the Cooper Bridge?

Ms. Bramley: Yes, I think they changed that part of town. I must tell you another love story I have for a certain part Red Bank and that's the Carlton Theater, which is now the Count Basie Theater. I think that was built soon before we moved into town. That's where every child spent Saturday afternoon watching the movies.

Mr. Aumack: Watching what movies?

Ms. Bramley: Well, there were serials and of course there was always a cowboy picture. I have to tell you this one story. When you went in, it was always cold and dark and beautiful inside and from the ceiling hung a great crystal globe, which gave off an enormous glow. While you were waiting for the show to start it would rotate; it had lights playing on it, and they'd play music. This was all boring to the kids. We were waiting to see a serial called "Mark of the Frog." It was frightening, I remember that. It was some stupid thing about somebody wearing what they used to call an aviation helmet. It had big goggles, probably from

World War I. Well, anyway we went every Saturday. A matter of fact, one time all four of us had the chicken pox at the same time. So we were home from school, all four of us, and my mother didn't know what to do with us. So she took us and put us in the theater by ourselves and we spent most of our chicken pox time down at the theater. On my twelfth birthday, I had a new outfit, and here I am, the oldest of the kids, and we go down there. When I put out my dime, the girl said, "How old are you?" and happily says I, "Twelve years old today." "Well you need a quarter if you're twelve years old." So I started to cry, and she said, "Go home and get the rest of the money from your father," which I did. At that time the manager was a dear man called Tony Hunting who had been in vaudeville. Oh gosh they were the most wonderful family. It was Tony and Corinne Hunting and they had their own act in vaudeville.

Mr. Aumack: In New York City?

Ms. Bramley: Yes, well they traveled all over the country. Here, in Fair Haven, this whole area had vaudevillians who summered here during the off season.

Mr. Aumack: The same, yes. Would you like to comment on that?

Ms. Bramley: My father scolded Tony about the quarter. Tony said, "I didn't know anything about it. Of course I would let the kid in." Many years later, Tony and Corinne opened up a kindergarten in their home. It was like a play school, actually for pre-kindergarten children. God, it was so much fun because my oldest boy went there a couple of times, and she'd be sitting playing the piano and he would tap dance for us on the way to the door, as we would bring the kids in. So adorable. They were so great.

Mr. Aumack: We have to get to your real estate. We were talking about Corinne and Tony Hunting Vaudevillians who were entertaining kids by tap-dancing. You didn't go to his school though?

Ms. Bramley: No, No.

Mr. Aumack: Tell me more about the "Mark of the Frog," and the movie at Carlton Theater.

Ms. Bramley: They were always cowboys. For years I used to love Ken Maynard. I'm sure you never heard of them or Hoot Gibson. Those were the two cowboy stars of that era.

Mr. Aumack: About how long were the movies?

Ms. Bramley: I guess like a full-length feature today, but they always had the news first. There was a certain routine that you went through: news and then something light.

Mr. Aumack: Like what?

Ms. Bramley: A short comedy thing.

Mr. Aumack: Was it a cartoon or was it a *Three Stooges* kind of thing?

Ms. Bramley: I don't remember many cartoons when we were little. I remember the early Mickey Mouse. The big thing was the serials. They would always end with something dreadful about to happen, and then next week you'd go, and find that by some miracle, they'd survived.

Mr. Aumack: Did you ever see Tom Mix and his cowboys?

Ms. Bramley: Oh, yes, I used to see Tom Mix.

Mr. Aumack: Was he one of your favorites?

Ms. Bramley: Oh yes, but Ken Maynard was better looking. He had a horse, a big white horse named Tarzan.

Mr. Aumack: Of course everyone would know that. Where did you go to grammar school and high school?

Ms. Bramley: Another interesting thing that's a tragedy to me is the parking lot at the hospital that's on Front Street. The hospital's on the river, and then there's that big parking lot that's across that little friendly street. Well, of that whole strip, there's only one house left. That was a row of beautiful old homes, too. We lived in one of those homes. Right behind our house was a great big old white house which became Riverview Hospital. It was an old white house on the river; and there were other homes along there, too. There's a very old Victorian still there. An eye doctor has it. That's the last of those buildings. Two houses from us was a dear old home. It was so old that the basement was all brick and it had brick ovens in it. That was torn down for a parking lot. It was formerly the school called Burton Hall, and it was run by Georgie Hazard. Georgie Hazard ran that school all by herself. She had from kindergarten to high school. There'd be no more than four or five students in each class, and I was there as a kindergarten child. I think I stayed there until I learned how to read, so it must have been the first grade. She had her mother, who was a little round fat lady. I can see her now. You went to a special room where she taught you multiplication tables and spelling. I can see her sitting there now. Georgie Hazard was quite a wonderful person. She had been married to a Hazard of the Hazards who owned the famous Hazard Tomato Factory on Sycamore Ave. Have you ever heard of that?

Mr. Aumack: No.

Ms. Bramley: Oh that was quite long ago. It was before my time. All I know is that she had married into that family which was quite well to do. She evidently was divorced, or at least she never had a husband that I ever saw. She taught all of us there. The decorum was marvelous. Nobody spoke out of turn. That house of hers was so darling. There were two rooms in the front of the house; they were bigger, but each one of them had a fireplace, and all winter long when we went there she had a metal basket in there, and it burned cannel coal. Have you ever heard of that?

Mr. Aumack: No.

Ms. Bramley: You have big chunks of coal like this and they burn just like coal does, but slowly. They get real hot and after they split open, there'd be oil in it, so flames would shoot up. It was so picturesque: two lovely rooms with these fireplaces going on a cold winter's day. The other room across from these two rooms was the music room where she had a beautiful piano and piano lessons were given there, too. When that house was torn down, I could've cried, because I remember how beautiful it was, and with this old brick basement. You stepped down to big dining room in the back of the house, and if you were naughty and spoke out of turn, you had to go sit at the dining room table. I remember when it happened to me. Horrified. When that house was torn down, my husband and I went there. I was in tears that they were tearing down this gorgeous old home, but we resurrected one thing.

Mr. Aumack: Was this school a grammar school?

Ms. Bramley: No. I went there for a couple years, but eventually I went to the Oakland Street School, which is now that big restaurant. I went there through the third grade, and then I went back to Mrs. Hazard's for a year, and then I went into the public school system in Red Bank. It was great, and I went there until I graduated. That's the old school of course.

Mr. Aumack: So you graduated from Red Bank Regional?

Ms. Bramley: No. It was called Red Bank High School.

Mr. Aumack: Thee high school and that's what is now called the middle school?

Ms. Bramley: Yes.

Mr. Aumack: What year did you graduate from high school?

Ms. Bramley: 1938. That school is still there, but not the old place that they tore down with the elementary part of it.

Mr. Aumack: What did you do after the war?

Ms. Bramley: That's not very interesting, but after the war I married my Bill Evans. He didn't want to get married until he made sure he came home. We lived in Fair Haven on the river on Gillespie Ave. It was a wonderful, wonderful time in our lives because both of my brothers were back home. When we left that government development, my mother said that she wanted to have a big home for the boys to come home to. My one brother was coming home, and the other was convalescing in the hospital for a year . So here were we three women making a fortune by this time, we were probably making sixty dollars a week. So Mom came down here and found a house on Gillespie Avenue on the river. It was a great big old house for one hundred and fifty dollars a month rent. This is big stuff now.

Mr. Aumack: Was that called cheap?

Ms. Bramley: No, that was big money for us. My mother figured it out. If each of the three of us contributed a certain amount of money, and included a woman who was working with Mother over at Fort Monmouth who had three dogs, it would come out just right. That woman was having the worst time trying to find a place to rent because of the dogs. This house came with a dog kennel in the yard; it was perfect. So we said, "Do you want to come and chip in?" So the four of us were able to afford this big house. We had so much fun when the war was over because my one brother was immediately free to come home. My husband-to-be and I were engaged, and my brother was back and forth everyday to Fort Dix waiting to be ushered out of the army.

Mr. Aumack: Is this Douglas or Donald?

Ms. Bramley: Douglas. Donald was still in the hospital. Then he started coming home on weekends. When he came home those weekends, there was still a gas shortage, but we always had friends to say, "Come on, I've got gas. We'll go get him and bring him home," you know. We were all big card players, and we had this big, big round table, and we played cards night and day. I think it was mostly Rummy games. Then all the boys who had been in the army with my brothers, and old mates from school or college came around and visited. They all sort of did this. So we always had these wonderful kids visiting, and we had a third floor with extra bedrooms. It was a marvelous time.

Mr. Aumack: It was like a little hotel?

Ms. Bramley: Yes, it was.

Mr. Aumack: But you didn't charge anyone.

Ms. Bramley: No.

Mr. Aumack: They were all friends.

Ms. Bramley: I had married in the meantime and my younger brother, Doug, married. Then I got pregnant and had a baby, and there was still all this gaiety. We were right on the river, and we could be seen playing cards all night on a hot night, and the boys would run out in their shorts, take a swim in the river, and come back and play cards. It was so much fun. I always remembered the Frank Sinatra records. It was that time that he started to get popular. We had my baby in the carriage, and somebody would be walking it while we were playing cards, or rocking the carriage. We stayed there until everybody started getting married off. Then we moved up the street to a compound of three houses. My younger brother Doug married the daughter of the big house. My Bill and I bought the middle house, and then my brother Don bought the little tiny house, so we were all one family on the drive, which again was wonderful. My brother Don's family outgrew that house quickly, and then my sister bought the house from him. So we were still all there together. Then the bad things started happening. A short time after we were married, maybe after David was born, my husband started feeling poorly.

Mr. Aumack: Was David your first child?

Ms. Bramley: Yes.

Mr. Aumack: What year did you marry Bill Evans?

Ms. Bramley: In 1945. He had gotten a wonderful job. They were looking for people every place, and he worked for Exxon. He had a great job with them. But he was not well. For almost a year we didn't know what was the matter; we kept thinking maybe he had an ulcer. But through an examination with chest x-rays that was done throughout the Exxon company, he found out he had tuberculosis. They immediately assigned him to a sanatorium, and Exxon took over. They were wonderful. They paid for everything, continued his salary, and took care of us. He was in the hospital for two years. When he got out, he was still not well, and he eventually died at only thirty-three years old. I had my baby anyway and then I... oh God, I don't want to tell you everything, because there's so many things happened in my life. When we were in the big house, and I had the baby, my mother remarried. She married the father of a fellow that my sister had been engaged to who had been killed in the war. We loved him dearly; he was our stepfather. He was just a darling. We all lived together down on the driveway in my house. We lived there until I met my second husband, Bob Bramley. In the meantime, I had a big career in the city. I went back to school so I could be a secretary.

Mr. Aumack: You went to secretarial school?

Ms. Bramley: Yes. I got a job with *Boy's Life Magazine*. It was a wonderful job. We were in the advertising part of it. From there I went on and worked at *Time Life Magazine*.

Mr. Aumack: What was your job?

Ms. Bramley: I was the secretary to the department head of the advertising department. My boss had a certain number of accounts and we serviced them. I really had a good job. In the meantime, thankfully, my mother and father were living with me, taking care of my child, because I wasn't home all day. When I changed from *Boys Life* to *Life Magazine*, I had to stay in New York late one night to be interviewed to get the job, and on the way home on the train I met an old friend who I hadn't seen in years. He said, "You're still not married. What's the matter with you?" About a week later he called me up. He said, "I've got somebody I want you to meet." So he brought over Bob Bramley, who had just been divorced, and who had two children. I thought he was kind of cute, but he had the damndest outfit on. He had gone to New York, and he had a lot of ladies interested in him. They took him to the Irish Shoppe and bought him an Irish overcoat that almost went to his ankles. He was the darnest looking sight I ever saw

Mr. Aumack: What is an Irish overcoat?

Ms. Bramley: Well, it is very tweedy, very tweedy. He paid a fortune for it, I know, but he looked lost in it.

Mr. Aumack: They thought he looked really good. How did he really look in your opinion?

Ms. Bramley: Well, he looked funny. They picked me up and we went to somebody's house, and I thought he was kind of cute. But I never thought another thing about him. I was having a dinner party, and the person I was really dating at that time couldn't make it. So my mother said, "Well, why don't you asked that Bob Bramley? He seemed nice." I said, "You mean the one with the overcoat?" So I called, and he said, "Ah, I would love to be able to come, but darn it, a friend called and asked my daughter and me for dinner that night." I said, "Ah, that's all right." The next day, he called me. He said, "The most wonderful thing has happened. My daughter's come down with chicken pox, and we can't go. I'll come to your party." He looked much cuter that time.

Mr. Aumack: Oh that's good.

Ms. Bramley: It was the fastest courtship you've ever seen in your life. We met in February and were married in June. I had a wonderful life with him too, God bless him. We had a grand time.

Mr. Aumack: February of what year?

Ms. Bramley: 1951.

Mr. Aumack: Now how long were you married to your cutie pie?

Ms. Bramley: He was a cutie pie. He died thirteen years ago. We never made our twenty-fifth anniversary. He came down with cancer. He had been a big, big smoker. Smoking kills you. But he was a kid, you know. We both gave it up when Douglas, who was in school, came home, hiding my cigarettes, throwing them away. "Mom, I don't want you to die from smoking," he said. Everybody in school was told that to get their parents away from smoking, and we finally did give it up.

Mr. Aumack: That's good.

Ms. Bramley: Yes, but unfortunately it was not in time for Bob. He became one of the editors for *The Red Bank Register*. Writing was his true love. I have things that he wrote that really should all be put in a book sometime, especially his stories of World War II, because he, too, was in the war.

Mr. Aumack: What did he do?

Ms. Bramley: He was in the infantry. He was an officer and a Major when he finally got out.

Mr. Aumack: Who was he under? Who did he serve with?

Ms. Bramley: I don't remember if it was anyone particular but he lived in Germany for maybe six months after the war was over, and loved it. We eventually went back there. It was a wonderful trip. We went back and drove across France into Germany, because at that time I had a niece who was stationed there with her husband. So we went to a little town where he had been billeted for a time after Germany had fallen. The officers actually lived in someone's home. He found that house as we rode around and rode around and he got such a thrill out of that. There was a woman working in the back yard. Bob could speak German, and he approached her, and discovered she'd been the little girl when he had lived in the house, so they had a great reunion.

Mr. Aumack: Mr. Bramley talked about the war or wrote about it. Was there anything that changed his life?

Ms. Bramley: No. But he always had bad knees right after that, because the last winter of the war was extremely cold in Germany. It was wicked. They were spending a lot of time in the trenches. They would dig in, he said. He slept overnight a couple of times in those trenches, and almost froze to pieces. He always said he had arthritis from that. I have reams of stories about what he did during the war because he wrote for the paper. That was the best experience of his life, or the most exciting experience in his life: the war.

Mr. Aumack: How many children did you have? You had David from Mr. Evans.

Ms. Bramley: And then I had Douglas with Bob Bramley, and then we adopted another son, Duff.

Mr. Aumack: What changes have you seen in Monmouth County for better or for worse?

Ms. Bramley: I have really lived around here a lot. I still have a great love for all of it. I know Red Bank has changed terrifically, but I'm glad because, my God, about ten years ago, it was going down the drain. It was terrible, what happened to Red Bank. It was sickening. I think all this new growth is great. Sadly, there is something people in my generation say all the time: "I used to be able to walk down Broad Street and know ten or twelve people as they walk by. But now I don't know anybody, and nobody knows me anymore." It was a little hometown, and it's not now. But it's wonderful, I think. I have no complaints about it at all. It is a little overcrowded, but then I was in real estate, so I helped to do that.

Mr. Aumack: Who do you work with in real estate?

Ms. Bramley: First of all I worked with the Applebrook Agency, the big agency around here at that time. It was owned by one family, and I loved working for the son and father both, and eventually was transferred to the Rumson office where I was the manager for a few years. Then it started to go downhill. The old father had died and the youngest son, as much as I've always loved him, did not quite carry through. So I left there to go to Rumson Realty, which was a really classy agency. I loved that. Eventually we sold to Coldwell Banker. I stayed with them for about three years and thought it was time to retire. It had become a different world. Coldwell Banker, a big conglomerate, just wanted your money. There's no personal fondness for anybody. This is today's world; this is the way business is. Before long, everybody will be taken over by big corporations.

Mr. Aumack: What other examples in Monmouth County have you seen where big business has taken over small personal businesses?

Ms. Bramley: A lot of banks are crazy. Look at all the banks there are now. There's a bank on every street corner practically. There's no such thing as a "mom and pop" store anymore. Look at it that way. We had a cute little store in Fair Haven called Mack's Market for years. If at the last minute you needed a quart of milk you'd get the kids to get on their bike and go get it for you. It was right on River Road. It's now a French Hairdressers. It's right on River Road. You knew everybody then. If you didn't have the right change, they'd say, "Oh, bring it back tomorrow." That type of thing. Even at Acme, you'd get to know everybody there, so that there is a sort of warmth there. But it's just not the same as it used to be.

Mr. Aumack: Would they take your change the next day because everyone trusted everyone back then, or was it familiarity?

Ms. Bramley: Well, I think both, because I think life was so much simpler. I don't think it's a bitterness among our generation, but when we see our seven year old grandchildren walking around with a five dollar bill in their pocket, we all think they need a depression. I would never wish that on them or on the American economy. Wives shouldn't work because they should be home with their children. I didn't have to go to work until I was widowed. But that's just a narrow way of looking at it. I understand that there's so much to own; it's irresistible to want to make more money to own everything.

Mr. Aumack: Why was life simpler back then?

Ms. Bramley: I'm trying to think of why it was simpler. I think there was a lot of innocence, for one thing. I don't think there's innocence, even for children, anymore. Just life in general was more innocent. It was probably an offshoot of Victorian times. My mother always said, "Oh, we lived in the best times," which was soon after the Victorian time. They hadn't had a war since the Civil War. I don't know, I think that little kids know too much. Of course, the old, evil TV has done that, but what would we do without it? I love it.

Mr. Aumack: You love TV?

Ms. Bramley: Oh sure. I think it's wonderful. I love the fact that I can have a new car every three years because I lease them, which I learned to do when I was in real estate. There are so many wonderful things that technology has brought on. I'm finally learning the computer.

Mr. Aumack: You mean with the Internet and everything?

Ms. Bramley: Oh yes. I didn't want to be left out. I don't want to miss anything. I'm finally getting one. I have marvelous neighbors all around me. The man next door is in the computer business at home. He designs programs. He was getting a new computer, so he said, "Oh, I'll give you my old one." Well, I wanted it anyway because my children do not live around here anymore. Both of my sons are now living in Maine. One's been living there for years, and he owns a very famous restaurant. It's twenty-two years old. Then my other little one (actually, he's a big one, he's six foot seven), he and his wife work at the post office in Rumson. Both brothers are very close. They wanted to live near each other, so they finally got transferred up there, and now they are only five miles apart. Douglas loves it there; he bought a new log cabin. Have you ever seen a log cabin? They're pretty neat. It's on four acres in the Maine woods, I think it's great. I don't really have any quarrel with today's world. I do think it's mostly a lack of innocence. It seems a shame to me sometimes. Have you ever read John Wills' column? He writes sometimes in *The Asbury Park Press*, but he is a New York writer. He had articles about how today's humor does not seem funny. The sexual jokes and the body function jokes and everything else that is in movies.

Some of the movies are really rotten. Do you think that, or is it just that I am an old lady?

Mr. Aumack: No, I agree. My parents have always told me that I'm a person of a different age, because I study history and I agree with a lot of the old values.

Ms. Bramley: But there are certainly many, many more things that are better than they ever were. Like health care. Many people survive many different things that they never did before, especially little children. They used to lose children and babies frequently. They must have been heartbreaking times. It is better now.

Mr. Aumack: I think that's a beautiful way to stop. I thank you very much.

Ms. Bramley: You are welcome. It was a pleasure.