



## Interview with Mary Jane Schwartz

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:** Rhoda Newman  
**Premises of Interview:** Ms. Schwartz's home,  
Ocean Grove, NJ  
**Birthdate of subject:** November 19, 1915

**Ms. Schwartz:** My name is Mary Jane Schwartz and as indicated, I was born November 19, 1915 in this house here at 72 1/2 Embury Avenue. According to what I have been told, I am the youngest of six children. My parents came from Philadelphia in about 1902 and rented this house. They rented it until 1922, when they purchased it. So that means that the Schwartz family has been living in the same house for close to one hundred years. Before that, my grandmother had a summer rooming house, a boarding house I guess you would call it, on Heck Avenue. She first came to Ocean Grove sometime in the 1870s, about 1877 or 1878. She operated that rooming house or boarding house for about thirty years until her death, before I was born in about 1913. Although I never had any connection with the Olive House, which was the name of the operation, I heard a lot about it growing up because my older sisters used to spend summers there. They knew my grandmother and a couple of aunts, which I never had the privilege of doing, because they were all dead before I was born. So I grew up here with four sisters and one brother. My sister Edna was the oldest. After she married, she lived in Philadelphia, and we used to visit her. I had a sister Minerva, who married, and she lived in Ocean Grove in an apartment on Main Avenue above the Acme Store. The Gannons have their office in that building now. Then when my parents purchased the house here in about 1922, Minerva and her husband moved into the other half of the house, because it was a double house. They occupied that half of the house until their death. Minerva died in 1969 and at that time, we inherited the other half



**Mary Jane Schwartz (right)  
with her sister, Ruth**

of the house. Well, that's why we have the house now. Then I have a sister Clara. Minerva taught over in Bradley Park School, which is part of the Neptune Township school system. Our sister Clara taught in the Bradley Beach Grammar School. I guess about 1938, sometime around that, she married and moved to Allentown, New Jersey. That just left Ruth, myself, and Bill at home. Bill is our brother William. Then Bill married in the early 1940s and he stayed in Ocean Grove. He lived up the street from us on New Jersey Avenue in a small house. After they were there for five or six years or more, they moved to a larger house on New Jersey Avenue, which they occupied until 1999 when they sold it and moved to Arkansas to be near their daughter. But anyway to get back to the beginning, we attended school at the Neptune Township school system. We walked to school every morning, came home at noontime, went back for the afternoon session, and walked back home again. Maybe that's why we are healthy, because we got plenty of exercise when we were young, in all kinds of weather. If the weather was very threatening...rain or stormy, the school system would have what they called a half-session and school was let out about 12:30 p.m. and we didn't have to go back in the afternoon. Across the street from the school building was the motion picture theatre called The Main Street.

**Ms. Newman:** Where was the school located?

**Ms. Schwartz:** Right here at the gate where the building is now...Neptune Township High School.

**Ms. Newman:** It is the same building as the High School?

**Ms. Schwartz:** Yes. The Grammar School was generally on the first floor and then as the attendance grew larger and larger, they acquired the annex and built a gymnasium in the annex, as well as additional schoolrooms for the Grammar School. But the High School continued to stay in that large, brick building. In the beginning, it was big enough to take care of both the grammar and high schools. We all graduated from that school, except my sister Edna, our oldest sister. She didn't graduate. She left the school and went to work at Steinbachs in Asbury Park. She was quite pleased with herself that she worked there and that she was in the jewelry department, which was the prestigious department to work in. She worked there until she married and moved to Philadelphia.

**Ms. Newman:** Now Ocean Grove was founded in 1869, is that right?

**Ms. Schwartz:** Yes.

**Ms. Newman:** Did you know any of the original pioneers...the old settlers? Were they still around?

**Ms. Schwartz:** No, we didn't. They might have been around, but they were such old fogies that we didn't know them. But I would easily say that our grandmother

did, and I know my father might have mentioned them. In fact, when my father was growing up, of course he came with his mother as a child, he knew the Lillegards. They had a son named Nelson, and Nelson and my father were very friendly to the extent that my brother's middle name is Nelson, named after our father's friend, Nelson Lillegard. They had the pavilion at the south end, I believe it was. But we didn't know them, and I think that one of them, Osborne, had a house on the back street. That's the only thing I remember hearing about them, but they were long gone by the 1920s when we were old enough to understand.

**Ms. Newman:** Were the streets were still unpaved when you were growing up?

**Ms. Schwartz:** Yes, the streets were unpaved. They went over them with a water wagon. Then they put something down...some kind of white stuff which was supposed to keep the dust down. Not only did the water wagon go by, but in the summertime we had the ice wagon, the iceman. A huckster would come every summer. In fact Schank was the name of one of the hucksters that I think went to school with my sister Minerva, because she seemed to know him. There were hucksters that went by.

**Ms. Newman:** Fruits and vegetables?

**Ms. Schwartz:** Fresh fruit and vegetables. You didn't have a supermarket like we have now. They had fish wagons, too. And then all these people, when we were kids growing up, would come to the back door. You'd get a brick of margarine that looked like lard, with a capsule that you'd have to squeeze to make it orange. There used to be old farmers that would come in from the Farmingdale and Freehold area in the fall with apples and things like that.

**Ms. Newman:** What about things like chickens and eggs?

**Ms. Schwartz:** Well, there were a couple of butcher shops and they had eggs at the grocery store. We would go around to Main Avenue every Friday. My mother would make out a list of things she needed from the market and she'd give it to my father because he worked at Ernest N. Wilston's Real Estate & Insurance Office on Main Avenue. He went right by the A&P on his way to work. When he came home for lunch on Friday, she'd give him the basket and the list and he'd drop it off at the store. When he came home at five o'clock, he'd stop in the store and pick up the basket of groceries/supplies almost like these 'westerners' that would go to town. The hucksters didn't come around in the wintertime because there wasn't the population to support their little vegetable business, besides the fact that fresh vegetables weren't even available then like they are nowadays. These people, I remember, did come around to the back door. There was a store owner, Titian



**G. William and Mary D. Schwartz, 1944**

Summers, whose store was on Heck Avenue next to the butcher shop there. He used to come and get orders, and of course the milkman would come and leave the milk. In the wintertime, you know, the cream would freeze at the top of the bottle. In the summertime, we would have lots of company. I wouldn't say 'lots' of company, but we had our share of company coming down from the city, from Philadelphia, because that's where our cousins and remaining family lived. They would come to Aunt Mary and Uncle Will's house and would be here for maybe the weekend or for longer periods of time. Of course we had the third floor with accommodations that could sleep extra people. What they wanted when they came to the shore, of course, was dinner. And the menu that we had was always very good, and they never got tired of it. I know I never got tired of it. We always had a big fish, either a huge bluefish or bonito. My mother would bake it and make a dressing and put in, and we used to kind of fight over the little pieces of bacon that she'd put on the top. It was so nice and crisp and brown. These were nice, fresh fish that you either got around at the fish market or from the fish man who came through the streets. My mother was a pretty good cook, and she always made a lemon meringue pie for dessert.

**Ms. Newman:** My mouth is watering!

**Ms. Schwartz:** (Laughter) And you know, this was sort of an old-fashioned family. My father was born the same year that Ocean Grove was established, in July 1869. My mother was born in November 1870. So they were brought up by Victorian parents, and that brushed off onto us, too. You know, you pass these things on to the next generation, knowingly or unknowingly. And so we were all taught how to be conservative and how to do things...how to clean corn, how to shell peas, and how to shell lima beans. Lima beans, heaven for bid! They used to be devils to shell. But this was the way you bought stuff from the huckster, and you had to shell your own stuff.

**Ms. Newman:** So what else did you have with your fish dinner?

**Ms. Schwartz:** Well, we probably had potatoes and whatever vegetables that were available, probably fresh corn or peas, or whatever was on the wagon that day. My mother would bake bread, rolls, and cinnamon buns. Coming from Philadelphia, we were partial to sticky buns, and she made sticky buns.

**Ms. Newman:** Were all you girls taught to cook?

**Ms. Schwartz:** Well, Ruth was, and Edna was the good cook. I never was much of a cook. Clara was a pretty good cook. I didn't cook because when I got to the cooking stage, Ruth was home to do the cooking and I was off working because for thirty years...well, we won't get to that yet. We're still talking about this other stuff. As I say, we all went to Neptune...the sisters, the brother, the whole bunch of us. Five of us graduated from Neptune High School although Minerva and Edna started their education in Philadelphia because they were born in the 1890s and the rest of us started in Neptune. So what we know today is what we learned at Neptune High School, whether that's good or bad. Minerva was born in 1892, Edna was born in 1891, and Clara was born in 1900. They say that Clara was two years old when they came to Ocean Grove, so that's what we use as our numbering business. If she was two when they came, it was 1902. We don't know what time of the year it was. It was Christmas, and she was born in November, so it was late in the year. That was all before our time. We're sort of spread out, our family. We had three older sisters and then the three younger...Ruth in 1909, Bill in 1913 and me in 1915.



**From left: Ruth, age 11; Mary Jane, age 5; Bill, age 7, 1920**

**Ms. Newman:** Did you travel outside of Ocean Grove? Did you go back to Philadelphia?

**Ms. Schwartz:** Yes, to see my father's aunt, Aunt Ella. We don't know too much about the Mager family, my Grandmother Mager. My Grandmother Schwartz's name was Mary Elizabeth Mager, and I don't know why we don't know too much about her.

**Ms. Newman:** How is that spelled?

**Ms. Schwartz:** M-a-g-e-r was my mother's maiden name. We don't know too much about them...the generation before, you know. As far as I understand, the Schwartz family came to the country about 1836. I think it was Michael or somebody by the name of Schwartz arrived in Philadelphia.

**Ms. Newman:** Where did he come from originally?

**Ms. Schwartz:** He came from Germany, I think. He was a baker, and he had a bakery, I imagine, in Philadelphia. He had a lot of kids, and amongst them was my grandfather, who married Mary Elizabeth Montgomery. The family hero is Uncle Charlie, who was one of my grandfather's brother. He was a Captain in some Philadelphia regiment during the Civil War. He served in that Army: I guess he enlisted about 1862. Anyway, he served in the Army at Potomac; that's where his battalion was assigned to. He was at the Battle of Gettysburg and got a

wound in his leg, and he was sent home to Philadelphia to recuperate. He rejoined his regiment during the Battle of Wilderness and was killed at the Battle of Spotsylvania Courthouse. One of his sisters went down to Virginia or wherever it was, recovered his body, and brought it back. He was buried in Philadelphia. We had a portrait of him that my Aunt Ella, which was another sister of his, had at her house. When she passed away at the age of ninety-eight, for some reason we got the picture. I don't know why...there was some kind of family business. Somebody else, another of our cousins, got a lot of Aunt Ella's belongings and we got Uncle Charlie's picture and a couple of other little things. That's neither here nor there. But there again, this was my father's aunt, and she lived to be ninety-eight, which was considerable when you figure she was born way back in the 1830s.

**Ms. Newman:** You come from good stock.

**Ms. Schwartz:** Yes. As I say, that's the Schwartz family, but I don't know too much about the Montgomery family. The only thing we know about them is that her father was a carpenter.

**Ms. Newman:** Did you travel outside of the state?

**Ms. Schwartz:** Yes. I went to overseas twice, and I went to England and Paris. I have been on an Elder Hostel just to England and Scotland, and I've been to Mexico. When we got a car, we used to go all over the East Coast, up and down the East Coast.

**Ms. Newman:** When did you get a car?

**Ms. Schwartz:** I got a car in 1951, and we started going to Williamsburg and took Minerva and Edna. We were interested in history, you know, maybe because there was something about the Civil War that my mother and father were always interested in. You see, they heard so much about that when they were growing up. My Grandfather Mager was in the Civil War. He went to all these encampments...Grand Army Republic had encampments and he'd bring back little things for us granddaughters. Edna and Minerva got little spoons and pictures that say Gettysburg or someplace else...wherever the encampment was held. Of course Uncle Charlie having been the hero at Spotsylvania Courthouse, my father had that instinct. My mother wanted to go to Spotsylvania Courthouse, and one time Edna and Frank, who was my sister's husband, went down to Virginia and went all through that area like Chancellorsville, Spotsylvania Courthouse, and all those little places. We belong to the Daughters of the American Revolution, and we know a lot about what went on in New Jersey during the Revolutionary War. We know what went on in the Philadelphia area because our ancestor through my mother's line. His name was Anthony Hoover; he was a Quaker and a member of a band and served in the Army Band. So we have all that background stuff. I've been to Gettysburg I don't know how many

times, we've been to all these places in Virginia, to Williamsburg about half a dozen or more times, to New England I don't know how many times, to Canada and also out to Illinois, and to Lincoln country. We haven't been much beyond the Mississippi River.

**Ms. Newman:** Essentially you've lived most of your life in Ocean Grove but you would travel elsewhere.

**Ms. Schwartz:** Yes, that's right. These were vacations.

**Ms. Newman:** You graduated from elementary school and went on to high school?

**Ms. Schwartz:** Yes. We don't have anything higher than a high school education, Ruth and I. Of course Minerva and Clara went to Trenton State, two years at that time, to become teachers. That was all that was required of them. Well, I did graduate from high school and then went to the business school in Newark for several months...I forget how long. I remember commuting on the train. Eventually along came Word War II, and I was employed at Fort Monmouth where I worked for thirty years. I had enough sick leave piled up that they gave me credit for thirty one years, which made it nice to have an extra year on my severance pay as far as that goes.

**Ms. Newman:** How did you get to Fort Monmouth?

**Ms. Schwartz:** At the beginning I carpoled...I went with somebody and when it was necessary, I'd have to go on the bus. You could go to Asbury and get the bus there.

**Ms. Newman:** What did you do there?

**Ms. Schwartz:** Well, for eighteen years, I guess it was, I worked as a clerk typist in the procurement department. For the remaining twelve years, because of the civil service requirements you can get bumped and there are changes and stuff like that, I worked in the motor transportation department. I couldn't wait to get out of the place because it was a dead-end job. I took the early retirement that they offered. I was the right age and I had the right number of years of service.



**Four of the six Schwartz siblings in 1993. From left: Clara, Ruth, Bill, and Mary Jane. Not pictured: Edna. Deceased: Minerva**

**Ms. Newman:** When did you retire?

**Ms. Schwartz:** I retired in 1970 or 1971. I've been retired now almost as long as I worked.

**Ms. Newman:** Sounds as though you don't lack for things to do.

**Ms. Schwartz:** That's right. I'm not sorry. I don't think my brother, at that time, was very happy with the fact that I was retiring at the age of fifty five. After that, for a couple of years, I did volunteer work but for some reason I didn't like it. Maybe I had picked the wrong fields, I don't know. I didn't like it.

So for five summers I worked as a cashier down at the theatre at the north end of Ocean Grove. And then that closed and I....

**Ms. Newman:** When did that close?

**Ms. Schwartz:** I don't know when that closed. They pulled down the hotel, you know, and they tore it down.

**Ms. Newman:** People have such happy memories of the north end.

**Ms. Schwartz:** Oh, yes. It was fun out there. The job was confining though, because it was six days per week with no days off except Sunday. You had to be there every day in the afternoon for the matinee and in the evening for the evening show.

**Ms. Newman:** Did you get to see the pictures?

**Ms. Schwartz:** Well, I got passes for the rest. (Laughter) If I wanted to see a picture, the box office didn't close until after the main feature came on, and you always kind of missed the first ten minutes or something like that. Every night you had to close out your tickets and count your money and make sure everything was ok.

**Ms. Newman:** Were these shows pretty much sold out in the summer?

**Ms. Schwartz:** Well, it all depends. What was interesting to me was they always had three different pictures every week...three different features per week. On Monday, or whenever the new picture was shown, people would come to the first day because if they liked the film, they would come back and see it again...particularly in the afternoon when the prices were lower. When I first started it was like fifty cents, and then it was seventy-five cents for the matinee. Then the prices went up over that period of five years. My bosses, Jack and

Loretta Houston, were nice to work with. They really lived in that theatre from the time it opened in June until it closed in September. They had to be there more or less all day to see that things were in order and to be there when the films were delivered and all that stuff. They changed the pictures in the showcases and all that stuff. It was an experience.

**Ms. Newman:** What were some of the big hits of the day?

**Ms. Schwartz:** Well, there was the *Poseidon Adventure* and one year they had a picture about, I forget what the name of it was, but it was the story of the great Norwegian composer. It had such beautiful music in it...the soundtrack was terrific. That was very popular, and they'd have that almost every year. Towards the end of the season, they didn't seem to have too much luck because people went home around Labor Day. People used to go home earlier, and by Labor Day, it was time to close up. But it's not like that anymore. It would always close the following Saturday, and by that time people had gone home and there weren't too many people around. But it was fun.

**Ms. Newman:** What was the population here when you were growing up and how did it expand in the summer? Did it double?

**Ms. Schwartz:** Oh, I'm sure it would double. It would triple probably. When we were living here on this block, how many houses were occupied in the wintertime? (note: question asked to her sister, I believe) There were about seven or eight...on this particular block...on both sides of the street.

**Ms. Newman:** So, there were a lot of summer homes.

**Ms. Schwartz:** That's why when these people buy these houses today, they weren't built for year-round. This house...we can remember that behind this wall here are pocket doors, and in the dining room there was a pot-bellied stove. There was a hole in the ceiling, and the only room upstairs that had any heat was the middle bedroom. That's where the stove was. There was no central heat in the house.

**Ms. Newman:** So how did you manage in the wintertime?

**Ms. Schwartz:** Well, we had a stove in the kitchen and a stove there (pointed to another room). We had nice quilts on the bed to keep us warm at night. I think we had hot and cold running water. But, you know, it was just very primitive.

**Ms. Newman:** But it was what you were used to.

**Ms. Schwartz:** But that was the way we were brought up. We didn't know anything different. Besides that, after all, we had been through the Depression. Hard times came to the Philadelphia family...they lost their business and had to give up their home. So where did they wind up? Right here at 72 1/2 Embury Avenue. Fortunately we had the third floor, and there was room for them to sleep. There was no heat, but we had plenty of blankets and stuff, and we survived, and they did too. Unfortunately, they are all dead now. My brother-in-law worked for the C.C.C...some kind of public works.



**Mary Jane Schwartz's home, 72 1/2 Embury Avenue, Ocean Grove**

**Ms. Newman:** Civilian Conservation Corps?

**Ms. Schwartz:** Yes. But then his health went bad on him. He had cancer of the lung and was in the hospital. It was unfortunate, but they didn't have a cure for the cancer, and the operations weren't as successful as they are today. So, he died. My father, having worked for a real estate business, knew the people who owned the house across the street at 69 Embury Avenue. My sister Edna, a widow at that time, operated that. It was a little income for her. She and her daughter worked over there for a couple of years, and then Edna got a job as a housekeeper/companion for a doctor in Hightstown. From then on, she worked as a companion. She had a job in Hightstown, in Bayonne, Allentown, and Ocean Grove. You know Davison Rugs?

**Ms. Newman:** Oh, yes.

**Ms. Schwartz:** They needed a housekeeper/companion for their mother, and Edna was a good one to have because Edna knew how to clean, how to cook, and was a good person to have around...an older person, too, as far as that goes. So, that's what Edna did. After she worked there, she also worked in the factory over in Bradley Beach. There was a clothing factory there that she worked in. As I say, we had the Depression but we didn't know anything about it. We never missed a meal. It might not have been a fancy one, but we never missed a meal. Our older sisters were handy with a needle, and they made dresses for us. We went around to Clayton Store on Main Avenue, of course the entrance was on Main Avenue, and we just scooted around and went in the back entrance. They had plenty of calico at Clayton's. We knew the clerks by name, and they knew us because we were there all the time. I remember at the back of the store where you went in, I suppose it's the kitchen now for those restaurants that are in the same building, there was a big, barn-like place where they sold rugs and linoleum. When you went in the back entrance, you'd have that nice smell because it was different. It probably wasn't good for your lungs, but it was

ok. Then in the back where you went through the little entrance, sort of like a doorway or archway, they had a little table where they would have the remnants. Every time I went in there, I used to straighten out the remnants. There were two clerks that used to be there...two ladies. One was Miss Crevatt and Harding was the other lady's name. They were there for years and years. In the film *Gone With the Wind*, there is a scene where Scarlett is in Atlanta, and she is in some scene. In that scene there is a big sort of cabinet where they kept spool thread. They had one exactly like that at C.C. Clayton's. I wonder whatever happened to that? It probably got thrown out. It was a big cabinet, and you'd pull your thread out the bottom.

**Ms. Newman:** What did you do for fun when you were growing up?

**Ms. Schwartz:** Oh, my goodness. We were taught to sew, and during the summertime, we never missed a day at the beach when the weather was good. My sister, Minerva, lived next door. Clara was off someplace...she was either taking a course in summer school, to the World's Fair in Chicago, or somewhere. She went to Europe one summer, too.



**Various toys**

**Ms. Newman:** That was adventurous in those days! Did you have bathhouses?

**Ms. Schwartz:** We had a bathhouse at south end. You could rent a bathhouse for fifteen dollars for the whole season. We had a set of towels that we saved from summer to summer that was for the bathhouse. When they got too dirty and smelly, we would bring them home and wash them and take them back down.

**Ms. Newman:** So you did all of your laundry here? Sheets and everything?

**Ms. Schwartz:** Oh, yes. The one extravagance that we had was a wash lady that came in every Monday and helped my mother do the washing. If it was a rainy day, we had nail holes in the kitchen where they would hang a line up and the stuff would be hung up in the kitchen to dry. Then we got a washer and the wash lady didn't come anymore. She was a colored lady and lived over in Asbury, and she used to eat starch. I remember that...she used to eat starch. We didn't go to the summer programs for some reason or other. We didn't go to them, and I can never quite figure out why. My friends would go to those programs...I mean the daily ones like Bible School and the young people's... I think my mother thought that we got enough of that at home. We had a piano, and I took piano lessons. We had a radio with a battery, and the battery only worked so many days or months before it had to be recharged. You know, all those things. During the war, we were rationed. We still have the old ration books up on that shelf in the kitchen in that cabinet. Of course, we went to school. Where my father worked was next to the Ocean Grove Times. Every now and then, there was some kind

of report that had to come out and had to be folded. He would bring home stacks of paper that we would all have to sit around the table and fold for the Ocean Grove Times.

**Ms. Newman:** That was when there was an extra edition?

**Ms. Schwartz:** No, not necessarily the newspaper, but a printing job. They did reports for the Methodist Home, for the Association I guess, and they did have other printing jobs. Those are the things we would have to fold. We would sit around and play games like cards other and games, and we had plenty of stuff to do. We sewed and embroidered, and we played with dolls. We had friends that would come in, you know. We had this third floor, and we had clothes where we would play dress-up. If we could only have those clothes now, they would probably be worth something! My father's domain was in the cellar. He had a jigsaw, and he made jigsaw puzzles and all kinds of things. During the Depression, we used to rent out puzzles. He would paste the picture on wood, and he would draw all the little figures like animal figures, etc. Then he would cut them out, and the puzzle part would be all around these animals. And he had such a stack of them that we had a little puzzle-renting business.

**Ms. Newman:** Your father was always in the real estate business and knew everyone in town, I take it?

**Ms. Schwartz:** He knew everyone in town, and everyone in town knew him. When he passed away, we got cards and condolences from people we didn't even know. They knew him and had written lovely little notes about how kind and gentle he was...so he was a very, nice person. To me, the only one who seemed to have his qualities was Minerva. Clara was bossy. Edna was very self-centered, I thought. You see we can say these things now because they're not around. But Minerva was very kind and gentle. You could go and talk to her like you could go and talk to my father. People would come, and they would talk to Minerva. There was just something about her that was like "counseling"...that you could talk with and discuss things with her and you would know it would go no further. Clara was very bossy, but she was good in her way. She was good to us, too. When they lived in Allentown, we could drive there before my brother was married, because he had a car. He would drive out there in the evening, when we could get the gas because it was wartime, when Clara was living out there. We could drive there and once in awhile, my father and mother stayed over night at Clara's. They would take her out. Of course Clara and Harold would come down here, too. They'd bring friends from Allentown and they'd be here for supper. When they came from Allentown, they always brought nice peaches or something. Harold had a half-acre of asparagus, and during asparagus season, we had it until it came out our ears! But it was delicious, fresh grown. He sold his asparagus at the farmer's market in Hightstown and raised it as a cash crop. That was the only crop he had because he was in the ice business. He had an ice route in, I guess you would call it upper Freehold township area, because

Allentown is there. We would go there in the evening...having these older sisters, it was kind of interesting. Their friends would come here, and we were little kids. We were the younger generation, because there was a ten-year gap or more. We knew their friends, and then we had our friends. And our friends knew them, you know, because of the ages. To this day there is only one person that we know that is alive who was a friend of Clara, and that is Helen Strudwick. We just saw her a few weeks ago at the church for the Lenten Journey. We see her every year, and it's nice to see her. Of course she's an old lady now, but we still see her. She is able to be out, which is great. She must be...Clara would be ninety-nine this year, and Helen could be one or two years younger than Clara, as far as that goes. But they taught school together in Bradley Beach. They had a card club, you know, and we had to scamper out of sight then. We weren't supposed to be around when the teachers were here. We either had to go to bed early or go someplace else. My goodness, we went to the movies all the time. They had double features in those days. The best thing about the Main Street theatre was that they had vaudeville. This was in the twenties, you know. They still had vaudeville at that theatre, so that was great. We went over in Asbury to the Savoy, where they had a stock company. Once in awhile, we would go to plays there. I mean, we weren't denied anything. We went to Philadelphia...we went to the Centennial in 1926. There was some kind of Centennial in 1926. Coming from Philadelphia, we used to get our best clothes there. Aunt Ella lived on 21st Street and Spring Garden, and when we went to Edna's house, she lived on Fairmount Avenue between 17th and 18th Street. You just had to walk down Fairmount Avenue to 21st Street, past the prison, and go over to.... Aunt Ella was deaf as a doornail. You almost had to write her a note to tell her when you were coming so she would let you in. Her hearing was bad, but I guess her health was pretty good. She had one son, cousin James, who I do not remember. This is the tail end of this family, you know. We have one niece now, and she has one son. But we are really whittling down to nothing.

**Ms. Newman:** Was there a great change when the chains came down from the gate...was in 1969 or so?

**Ms. Schwartz:** Well, a lot of people were upset about that. At certain times, I am too. It came to the point, however, that you couldn't avoid it. It was in 1979, and I faithfully parked my car outside the gate, although some people were beginning to park their cars on Sunday before that fateful day when they finally opened the gate. It got to the point where... I used to rent a spot... There used to be a garage over in Asbury Park on Lake Avenue. I had a rental place there for I don't know how many years. Needing my car on Monday morning to go to work, I had to be sure that it was going to be there and that I could get it started. The weather was bad. It used to be worse in those days. We used to have more storms and if it was too bad, they didn't even do anything about the streets. I was able to park the car there on my way home from work and then walk over the bridge and come home.

**Ms. Newman:** Did they have snowplows?

**Ms. Schwartz:** Yes, but they didn't do the stuff like they do now. They didn't do it like they do now because they didn't need to, since there weren't many cars around. They just made a path in the middle, practically. The Association had a little snowplow in the twenties. It was a horse-drawn plow, and they used to do the sidewalks. But still in the 1950s and 1960s, and a lot of people used another garage. I used this one here because I felt it was better for me. So, I used to keep my car in the garage over there, but parked in front of the house during the week. On weekends, you couldn't find a place to park your car. If you went out on Sunday, it meant you might not have a place to park your car when you came back, even if it was Asbury Park or someplace else. I don't have anything to say about the Association because they didn't have any property in Asbury Park and didn't have any property in Bradley Beach for us to park our cars. Where they had property in Ocean Grove, they weren't inviting you to park your car.

**Ms. Newman:** But once the chains came down, was the parking situation better?

**Ms. Schwartz:** The first time I parked my car, they were having a St. Patrick's Day Parade or something in Belmar. We walked out of Ocean Grove to get our car parked over there in Asbury Park, and on the way we could count four or five cars that had parked in Ocean Grove. And the gates weren't open yet, but there was a way to get in. Technically, they weren't open. So we went out and on the way home I said, "The heck with this...I'm going to park my car in Ocean Grove." It was March 17, 1979, which was the first Sunday I parked my car in Ocean Grove. By that time I was sick and tired of this and I had only been doing it for twenty-five years, but there were people who had been doing it for even longer lengths of time. I decided that next to your house, your car is the biggest piece of property you own. Why should you be denied the use of it fifty-two days per year? People used to park their car on Thursday. Can you imagine that if they had a special place they wanted to park their car that they would park their car on Thursday just to get that spot? I couldn't understand that. And then the cars would be vandalized and it got to the point where Bradley Beach complained. In the summertime there was always a commotion going on because people would park their cars in front of driveways in Bradley Beach. Asbury Park was up-and-coming yet, and you couldn't find a place to park in Asbury. Well, anyway...parking just got to be impossible. I forget what happened, but the garage closed down, so I no longer kept my car in a garage. So I was like everybody else and joined the people and went out as early on Saturday as I could to get a place to park. Now when I was working at the Strand, I would park my car when I went to work on Saturday. Instead of walking down there, I would park the car in Asbury and walk from there. I was pretty lucky then because it was early on Saturday and you could get a place in the Press Plaza, which was a good place to park your car. Sunday night if you stayed up and went to get your car, it was gridlock to get into Ocean Grove. But generally I would wait until Monday morning and just walk out and go to work. And then I'd like to say

something about the Depression. Everybody had their stories about the Depression. Times were definitely hard. In Neptune Township they ran out of money, and some of the officials...instead of paying cash, they got script. That was kind of tough, because not everybody would accept script in payment, you know what I mean. Of course the banks closed. The bank in Ocean Grove closed. I didn't have any bank account yet, but I know of people who did and they were lucky if they got their money.

**Ms. Newman:** Were there homeless people in those days?

**Ms. Schwartz:** Not like there is today...not here.

**Ms. Newman:** Did they have family or church that would take care of them?

**Ms. Schwartz:** Well, there wasn't the population here. They were tough times. Of course, there were always colored people who were working for peanuts, you know. I forget how much we paid Edna, if we even paid her a dollar for a day's work. But it wasn't like it is today. People were different than the generation we have now. I think our generation had a little more pride, and they took more interest in doing things for themselves. And then of course with the rationing, it was a little tough getting enough sugar. You were only allowed one pair of shoes a year or something like that. Of course we went to Asbury Park, the dime stores, Steinbachs, Lemaisters, Tuckers, and all those stores there. We had a neighbor who lived two houses down and she worked in a store. I remember going into the store because she made hats and decorated them. She looked like she had palsy because she was making little, tiny stitches in the ribbon to make a ruffle or something like that. I remember thinking that if I could ever make stitches like that, oh my goodness. They were so even. We would go to the same shops in Asbury. Steinbachs, of course, was the star store. They had everything there...toys, yard goods, fur coats and everything. Fatty McGill's sister was Mamie McGill, and she worked in the stocking department. One of the policemen who used to be in Ocean Grove was Fatty McGill. They called him this because he was sort of portly. He was one of the Ocean Grove policemen; he lived there two houses east of us, Police Chief Franklin lived two houses west of us. There were more people living on this side (south side) of the street on this block. The summer people would come every year, and we still call houses by their original owners. Across the street there used to be a hotel on the corner that was torn down and two new houses built there.

**Ms. Newman:** But the same summer people would come here year after year?

**Ms. Schwartz:** The same summer people more or less. There's a rooming house across the street. Oh this is interesting! That rooming house at 69 was one time operated by people by the name of Crooks in Trenton, and their son was one of the officers here named Richard Crooks. He used to come and visit his father, and of course his father was always playing one of Richard Crooks' records. He

was always screaming out the door, "Oh, sweet mystery of life." We had people by the name of Pigueron. They were summer people and rented a house on this block. Well, we became very friendly with them, and one of their daughters, Mary, was a Salvationist. Through Mary, we became friendly with another Salvationist called Alma Warth. When they were on vacation from New York, Alma would stay here, and Alma's sisters were also Salvationists. Once in awhile, the sisters would stay here too. I remember every time that they came, I don't know if they paid my mother or anything like that, but they got their meals here. They used to bring a package of candy from Loft's. There were two or three boxes of candy from Loft's. That used to be wonderful. For five dollars you could go on the bus to New York and you could get a ticket for a theatre show. First you would pick out what you think you wanted to see, and you'd go to the theatre and get your ticket. It would probably be in the balcony, but that was all right. Then you could go someplace for lunch, and you would have about \$1.50 left to maybe go to Kresges to buy some little thing or if you had a list of things you wanted to buy, you had extra money to get it.

**Ms. Newman:** All this for five dollars?

**Ms. Schwartz:** Yes, because the bus was only \$1.25, and you could get a ticket to the theatre for \$1.50. Buses were only \$1.25 to go to New York round-trip. The trains were around before the bus system began operation. Of course on the bus, it took you forever to get to New York, because it was before the highways were built, and you went through South Amboy, through Elizabeth, the Holland tunnel, etc. But then the trains would have excursions. We could see Fred Astaire and all these people on the stage. My sister would buy her tickets, and they would be for evening performances, and we would come home on the owl train, which got in to Asbury Park around two o'clock in the morning. You'd walk from the theatres in New York around 42nd or 43rd Street, wherever they were, down to Penn Station and get the train and come home on that. We forgot about Philadelphia because after the Depression, there wasn't any reason to go there. Edna was no longer living there. We would occasionally go to Philadelphia, but not much.

**Ms. Newman:** Did you hear the performances at The Great Auditorium?

**Ms. Schwartz:** Well, we would go there too. We'd go there more frequently, now that I think about it. We saw Marion Anderson and we saw Paul Robeson. Then the firemen used to have a night at the Auditorium, and they used to have Graham somebody. And the ushers used to have a program, and we never missed those things. St. Paul's used to have a night at the Auditorium...this is before the beginning of the series of Saturday night stuff.

**Ms. Newman:** Did you hear speakers at the Auditorium?

**Ms. Schwartz:** Yes, and that was kind of fascinating. Lowell Thomas was over there and then within days, he passed away. When we were in school, one thing that impressed me that I still think of once in awhile: how fortunate we were to hear Admiral Byrd at the Convention Hall, when he gave a lecture for students. We all went up to the Convention Hall and heard him, and he showed pictures and things. I distinctly remember the long walk home on the boardwalk in Asbury Park. And of course we were in school and heard Sousa's band.

**Ms. Newman:** Did you hear any of the presidents who were here?

**Ms. Schwartz:** If I heard any, I was a baby. They stopped coming after awhile. We went around there when Nixon was there, but that was a political rally or campaign. Nixon was actually the only one that we heard at the Auditorium because all those other ones were before my time. I think my father took us around in a baby carriage or something like that to see them, but that's all I remember.

**Ms. Newman:** And lots of people poured into town for Nixon's address?

**Ms. Schwartz:** Oh, yes. It was sort of exciting because of all the Secret Servicemen and they set up places for the press, and all that business. They had helicopters come in and all this business for Nixon, and it was exciting.

**Ms. Newman:** That was in 1970, as I recall.

**Ms. Schwartz:** That was in the 1970s. I had some slides that I took, but I gave them to the Historical Society. I have some other slides I should give them of pictures I have taken of places that are no longer around. I never was much into photography. We were more interested in handiwork, actually. My father had two sisters, and one was a dressmaker, apparently. She used her hands and things like that, and a cousin Helen who was very good with her hands. She was a good photographer and seamstress. We made doll clothes and cut out paper dolls and did all kinds of stuff...you know, more hand-type stuff. And here we are today. I was going to do several things when I retired. One of them was to bake bread with yeast, so I finally got around to doing it this winter. It didn't turn out too bad for the first time, but it could've been better. And it took me all that time. My mother used to make this good bread, and her sticky buns were terrific. Clara used to make good buns, and Edna used to make excellent buns. So I said, "Why can't I?" I still have to find out if I can.

**Ms. Newman:** Are there other things that you haven't done that you still want to do?

**Ms. Schwartz:** Well, I guess about the only thing I still thought I would like to do is to go through the Panama Canal, but that's about the only thing. I had a couple of little things I was going to do and I've accomplished those. I don't know where

you get these ideas, but one time I wanted a string of pearls and I got a nice string of pearls that I still have. They were given to me when I graduated from high school, I think, from my parents. I have nothing to complain about. One thing has been fortunate for us. Our niece, when she went to school, went to Indiana and married a young man from there. His first job out of college was in Indiana, and his jobs have always been in the central part of the United States. She has lived in Indiana, Omaha, Nebraska, near Kansas City and St. Louis, and she also has been in Greensburg, Pennsylvania. She has never been back to Ocean Grove, except to visit.

**Ms. Newman:** Have you been to visit her?

**Ms. Schwartz:** We visited her in Kansas City, which I thought was a wonderful city. This past fall her son was married, and we went to St. Louis for the wedding. Here's the picture of the bride and groom, my brother, Ruth and myself.

**Ms. Newman:** Oh, how wonderful. That's in St. Louis. That looks like a house that might have been in Ocean Grove.

**Ms. Schwartz:** The wedding took place in St. Charles, which is just outside. This is the chapel or the place for marriage that they have. It was really very nice. The wedding took place here, and the reception was also held there. It was like a Mississippi River house, as far as that goes. They finally settled in northwest Arkansas, and we've been there a couple of times. Actually it's on the border of Missouri, and they can go to Eureka Springs for the day. They're about 250 miles from St. Louis.

**Ms. Newman:** So you've done a fair amount of traveling. When did you first go to Europe?

**Ms. Schwartz:** I went to Europe with Edith Bradshaw in I think the 1960s. We went on The Queen Mary. She had cousins outside of London, and that was one of the main reasons why we went. She wanted to see her cousins, and she didn't want to go by herself. So I went with her. It was interesting to meet her cousins. They lived in Whimpton. While we were there, we toured up into Scotland and went over to Dublin, Ireland and down to Ring of Kerry, I think they call it. We went there and then came back again to London to visit her cousins again and then came back on another boat, Queen Elizabeth or Queen Mary. I have the stuff in the cellar. It was about 1992 or something like that, when I went on an elder hostel with Kay Sullivan, a long-time family friend who lived in Bradley Beach. We were in England for three weeks. Then we were in Scotland for a week, and then in London for a week. That was interesting. Of course there again, you have lectures and then they take you on these daily things, and it's very interesting. I really had a great time.

**Ms. Newman:** When you were a little girl, would you have thought you would have done all of these things?

**Ms. Schwartz:** Well, you know Clara went all around the area. She didn't stay home.

**Ms. Newman:** You all have a sense of adventure.

**Ms. Schwartz:** Yes. After church on Sundays, we'd go someplace for dinner like up to Flemington to the nice Union House and have dinner there, or we'd go to New Town and also New Hope. It was almost like you knew every single storeowner on the street. We used to go there a lot. When I was in high school, my friend Helen lived in Trenton at that time. I could take a train from Asbury Park to Trenton, and she would meet me at the Trenton Station and we'd get on two buses to get to her house in Trenton. Oftentimes she would come down here on the train for weekends because they were only here in the summertime at that time. They only came here in the summertime during that period, and we used to visit back and forth in the winter. Another thing that was kind of cute that we used to do when we were little kids... the train would have Sunday excursions to Asbury Park. My mother used to take us on Sunday over to the train station to watch the people going home on the train. You know, it was something to do.

**Ms. Newman:** They were people from New York?

**Ms. Schwartz:** Mostly from New Jersey. Of course every year, some of these companies would have special excursion days and the firm would close down, and they would have an excursion like we would have a Sunday school picnic, you know. We would go someplace like Clark's Landing. Mostly the Sunday school would go to Clark's Landing and a couple of times they went up to Highlands, and we took a boat to New York and back. We did different things like on these Sunday school excursions or took a boat ride in New York Harbor. Of course, we've been to the Statue of Liberty several times. When I worked at Fort Monmouth, they had a boat that they used to use when they had important visitors that would come, and they would take them around different places, particularly New York. A couple of times it wasn't scheduled for anything, so they could use it. I remember we went up to Highlands, and that pier that we had to go on was ready to fall into the ocean. Nevertheless, we went on the boat to the Statue of Liberty, and I thought that was kind of fun. They did go up the East River a ways, but not too far. Then we had to go back home again. But that was an opportunity that we wouldn't have had otherwise. Every Christmas they would decorate Headquarters, the commanding Officer's residence, and the public halls with Christmas decorations, and they needed greens and holly and stuff like that. So where did they get the stuff from? They'd get it from Sandy Hook. They would send a truck from the motorpool, and then they'd come back loaded with holly and greens and stuff like that they used to use to decorate with.

**Ms. Newman:** Now you were saying that when you were growing up you did not have a bathroom or a furnace. So tell me how you managed in those days.

**Ms. Schwartz:** Well, the way we managed was that we had a sink in the kitchen, and I remember Papa used to wash our hair for us. He used to make something out of our hair with soap, and we had laughing, good, funny times with the funny shapes he'd make out of our hair with the soap. He used to wash our hair, and I remember that. But on Saturday, that was the day you got a bath. We still have the basin that we would wash ourselves with at night. But my mother had a big, galvanized tub that she would fill with heated water that was heated on the kitchen stove.



**Mary Jane and Minerva Schwartz drying their hair in the backyard, 1942**

**Ms. Newman:** The stove was heated with gas?

**Ms. Schwartz:** No, it was a coal stove. The stove in the dining room was a coal stove, also. It kept the chill out of the house. At night we'd close this room off, because of the sliding doors. We had quilts to keep us warm in the bedrooms upstairs. But as I say, the kitchen door is the same but it had glass in it. I remember a towel went up over the doorway for privacy, and the door was closed. Mother was very Victorian, and we went one at a time, you know, because we had to be separated with two girls and a boy. (laughter) I remember her scrubbing us like we were a dirty spot on the floor. We got scrubbed real good.

**Ms. Newman:** Then you had an outhouse in the back?

**Ms. Schwartz:** It was a toilet that was connected to the sewer system.

**Ms. Newman:** But that was out back?

**Ms. Schwartz:** That was in the shed, what you would call the shed.

**Ms. Newman:** But that was not heated?

**Ms. Schwartz:** No, that wasn't heated, but it was right next to the house and I'm sure there was enough heat that would warm it a little. You had a crank that would turn to flush it, and that was down under the ground somehow or other. Now we have a regular toilet in there. After they bought the house was when the improvements started to be put in. I think the first thing they did was to dig out the cellar and put in heat. And that meant you could have a hot water boiler, too. It was around 1922 that they bought the house. Then beyond that time it had a slant roof, which was very uncomfortable because you were always bumping your head. So, I don't know if they needed a new room or whatever, but they put

in dormer windows on the third floor. There were two rooms on the third floor, one large and one small room. At that time, they put dormer windows up there, which makes it very nice. There's no heat up there to this day, but we open the door, and it takes the chill off. Sun comes in there beautifully on a sunny day. At that time, too, they put in a bathroom on the second floor. I guess it was in about 1929 or 1928, some time around that. Up until that time, the heat was coal...a coal furnace. Then the year Lois got married we had the gas heat put in, which was 1968. The coal furnace was taken out, the coal was shoveled out the window, and the coal bin just became another storage area. We have had to replace a couple of motors, but the heater itself has been doing ok. Then of course we've had other improvements. Since we don't move, we change the wallpaper every ten or twelve years. So that's it. This table is a Victorian table, which must have come from Philadelphia. This has been refinished because one of these little spindles and one of the legs was about ready to fall off. These little pom-poms on the bottom were forever falling out. So, this is an antique.

**Ms. Newman:** These were all family pieces.

**Ms. Schwartz:** Yes. We don't have any others downstairs but upstairs in our bedrooms, we have some old furniture that must have come from Philadelphia. Ruth has a lovely antique bureau in her room, and that sewing table with those lovely glass handles on it is an antique. In my bedroom, I have a marble-top stand and a wardrobe that have been in the house since the day I was born. Other than that, you have to replace some stuff with modernized stuff. I remember we used to have oak furniture there...a sideboard there with a mirror and little things on the side where you could put stuff like knickknacks. I don't know whatever happened to that furniture, but now we have this furniture. We got this over at Asbury Park at Banker's Furniture Store. We got that in I guess the 1930s. Banker's Furniture is no longer there. There's a big, empty spot now. You see pictures of these communities where they had late 1800 brick buildings with the fancy things over the windows and all. There is only about one left in Asbury Park now, but there used to be a whole block of those. A friend took me there one time, and we went upstairs and there was a Chinese restaurant up there. But anyway, that store is no longer there. You see how Main Street is today...blank. All those little shops that were there, the two theatres, and one in Asbury Park, which was for the colored people, they're all gone. You can't say there wasn't division of the colored people, because there was. They had their own little theatre. As I say, our parents were brought up and weren't highly educated, but they had the advantages of city life. And I think that they wanted us to have it, too. That was available here and was given to us, to the extent that they could afford to give it to us. So, we were fortunate.

**Ms. Newman:** It sounds as if this house has a lot of happy memories in it.

**Ms. Schwartz:** Yes. Up on the third floor, we finally found them after we thought we had gotten rid of them, is a box of Christmas tree ornaments and balls. Well,

they started having Christmas trees in this family when Edna and Minerva were small. They were born in the 1890s, and they used to put a Christmas tree in one of these corners here. The tree that Papa bought wasn't filled out like he thought it should be because the ceiling was not that high, so some of the branches were cut off the bottom and inserted in the trunk of the tree to make it fuller. And he tacked it up with a string to stabilize it. And we used to sit and play games with the Christmas tree like "I see", where you'd pick out a special ball. You'd describe the colors in the ball, and the people had to guess which one you were thinking of. Well anyway, we had plenty of stuff to do. We had books to read...

**Ms. Newman:** What were some of your favorite childhood books?

**Ms. Schwartz:** Well, we had *The Bobbsey Twins*, and Bill had *Black Beauty*. We had *The Wizard of Oz*, *Raggedy Ann*, *Robinhood*. and all those. We had encyclopedias to look at, and stuff like that. So I think they did their best. We don't have a computer, so we don't know anything about that stuff. It confuses me, and it worries me to see what you can do with these computers. I wonder how you can absorb all that stuff...you don't have time to sit down and read a book, think for yourself, or have an imagination.

**Ms. Newman:** What has struck me is that you essentially grew up in this small town and had so much imagination and such a sense of adventure. You traveled, read a lot, and you were connected with the world.

**Ms. Schwartz:** Yes. Nowadays, I understand the reason why some people are two generations behind us: some of these people want to have all these quiz programs. There is a very popular one that will probably go by the wayside in another six months or so. But they are simple questions that you feel people should know, but they don't know because they've been looking at a computer instead of reading a book. Our cousin Elizabeth used to come here for some reason or other, and she used to read to us while we were doing sewing. She used to read to us out of a fairy book, *Grimm's Fairy Tales*. We were brought up on all those "bad" things. I've never read Dr. Seuss, so I guess I'm illiterate. Not having any children of my own, I didn't have any reason to read those books.

**Ms. Newman:** But you remember all the classics.

**Ms. Schwartz:** Yes. Those books are now classics for that age in which they represent. The only comic I look at is Charlie Brown or Haggar, and on Sundays I look at Prince Valiant, which I always look forward to. We used to get children's magazines like *Child Life* or something like that. We were brought up on *Collier's* and...

**Ms. Newman:** *The Saturday Evening Post*?

**Ms. Schwartz:** Not necessarily *The Saturday Evening Post*, but Minerva used to get *Collier's* and used to look at it all the time. And we got the *National Geographic*. It took us forever to get rid of all those we had. But these are the things that we were brought up on. There again, I think it was that Victorian business...nothing was supposed to come into the house that was off-color. Boy, if you brought a *True Confession* magazine in, you went out the door as fast as the magazine! Nowadays, there is no such thing as True Confession. You just see it all on the television.

**Ms. Newman:** It sounds like a very happy place to have grown up.

**Ms. Schwartz:** Yes, we have no complaints. My mother had a heart problem, and she died very suddenly. My father had...

**Ms. Newman:** How old were you...were you grown?

**Ms. Schwartz:** Yes, I was in my thirties. She died when she was seventy-six or something like that, about a year after the War ended I think. After she died, Papa kind of went downhill a little bit. Let's see, mother died in 1946, and Papa died in 1950. He went downhill, but he had cancer of the lung. He didn't have any operation or anything like that.

**Ms. Newman:** Are they buried locally?

**Ms. Schwartz:** Yes. These are the first ones that were not buried in Philadelphia. They are out at Monmouth Memorial on Highway 33, and there are spaces there for us, too. My sister Edna, my sister Minerva, and her husband George are all buried out there. Clara and her husband were cremated, and they are up in Pennsylvania because that's where his children were.

**Ms. Newman:** This has been extremely interesting. I thank you very, very much.

**Ms. Schwartz:** Well, do you want to see the rest of the house?

**Ms. Newman:** Yes.