

Interviewed by Em Jacobs

I'm eighty seven and will be eighty eight in December. I'm retired, so I can do whatever I want. I don't get up much before nine o'clock. I read the paper, then I go for a walk around the pond; three quarters of a mile. Then I'll stop up at the clubhouse and go to the library, sign up for bridge, or sign up for something else that's going on. If I'm not meeting someone for dinner that night, then I'll sign up to have my dinner delivered. In the afternoons sometimes I'll take another walk. On Thursdays, I volunteer over at the gift shop at the nursing home. In the evening, if I don't have my dinner at home, I'll eat in the dining room. Then, I'll go play bridge. That's about what I do. I play bridge and I walk and I eat. I'm not very interesting at my age. I think if you had someone younger to interview they might be more active. I used to play golf three times a week, but I don't play golf any more. I used to go over to ceramics once a week, then I played bridge a couple times a week. I used to be busy, but now I'm not so busy. If you got me five years ago, it would have been more interesting.

I have lots of old friends because of a club I started in high school. Most of the girls that were in my club are still alive, even though none of their husbands are. Most of the girls stayed around after they got married, and we always got together. Sometimes we would get down to the beach, and the kids would go and play together. Peggy and Dot came down here to visit two years ago and spent a week with me, but now they're too old. They're both having trouble with their eyes and they can't drive any more. They also don't want to fly. I think the older we get, the less we want to fly. I don't see any of my old good friends any more, but I do correspond with email and telephone.

My friends were mostly girls from my street that were in my class at school. There was a whole bunch of us. We'd all walk together to school. One would start off and pick others up along the way, and by the time we got to school there would be 6 or 8 girls our age. When we had that club, the principal of the school would call me into his office whenever a new girl moved into town. He would ask me to ask her to join our club because the girls that I was with were all in the National Honor Society and didn't drink or do anything strange. He wanted us to tuck the new girl under our wings. Sometimes we got too big for that, you know and we didn't do that.

After we moved to Ridgewood [New Jersey], I made friends there. And after we moved to Carolina Shores [North Carolina], I made friends there too by playing golf, going to ceramics, playing bridge, and just being neighborly. It was hard when I first came here because Ed [her Husband] couldn't hear very well, so the two of us stayed by ourselves. Now that he is gone, people are being friendly and they ask me to go to different places and eat with them and stuff like that. And that's nice for me, not to be so alone, though they are not like really good friends because I've only been here less than two years.

My sister Jean and I were more like friends than like sisters. We did everything together. On a rainy day after school when we had nothing to do, we'd take card tables and chairs and turn them upside down and make a tunnel from the front door into the kitchen by hanging blankets over the sides. When my father came home from work he'd have to get down on his hands and knees and crawl through the tunnel in order to get into the kitchen to kiss my mother hello. He never made us break it up; he'd just go along with us. He was so good with us girls, even though he always wanted a boy.

My father was a Mason. That's some sort of a religious thing. He was taskmaster of the Masons, and my mother belonged to the Eastern Star, which was the women's equivalent of the Masons, I guess. Maybe once or twice a year they would go to the movies and take us with them, but they never went out by themselves and they never drank.

My grandmother's husband died after the Depression was over and she stayed with us. She probably lived with my mother for twenty five years. And I had my mother in law with me for twenty five years, so you hand down from the family, sometimes, things that have happened before. The boys all wanted to be engineers because their father was an engineer. I took in my mother in law because my mother took in hers. But we had a wonderful family life, we really did.

When you lived through the Depression nobody had anything. No one in the whole town had anything, so we did not know what we were missing. There were no drugs and there was no sex or any of that stuff going on, so I had a really pleasant childhood.

I grew up in a God-fearing home, and I learned what was right and what was wrong and I tried to do right. You don't always live up to your own expectations, but I just felt that there is a Lord, and I believe Jesus is his son, and I'm sorry that some of my children and some of my grandchildren don't believe that. I think your dad, mom and you are on the right track and sooner or later the Lord will bring the others back into the fold.

I was the superintendent of the Sunday school for many years, and my husband Ed always worked for the church. He was down at the church 5 days a week even if he was tired. Ed was head of maintenance, and if there was a snowstorm on a Saturday night, he would get men to come in and plow the driveways, but since no one did the sidewalks, he and your dad and your uncle Steve shoveled the sidewalks of the church. I don't know if they remembered that or if they are trying to forget it.

Don't you want to know about growing up in the Depression? During the Depression, my father was working in the Empire State building in New York City. He was a sales manager, and he kept his job for a long time even though everyone else was losing theirs. We had a three-bedroom one bath house with a cellar and an attic. There was my father and mother, sisters Jinny and Jean, and me living in the house. My grandmother and my grandfather lost their house, so they came to live with us. And my grandmother's brother Dan lost his house and his job and his wife left him so he came to live with us. And then my mother had two brothers that were not working so they came to live with us. The three men were up in the attic. We had all these people in the house, and nobody was working except my Dad. When his company finally folded too, my mother cut hair for 10 cents, and my sisters and I would go out and cut grass or shovel snow or babysit; whatever we could do for a dollar or so.

I had a job when I was in high school. I worked every day after school and all day Saturday and I got a dollar a week. For a dollar I could buy a sweater or a skirt. What you did for a dollar a week then was like getting fifty dollars a week now.

I graduated from high school on January second and the next day I went to work at the phone company. I had an uncle that worked there, and he got me the job. I got ten dollars a week, and that was whoopee-doo. I gave my mother five and I had five dollars for myself. We still had this bunch of people living in our house, so none of us could go

to college. Everybody said if you want to go to college you can work your way through, but we had to work and put money back into the house to feed all these people who weren't working. I would have loved to go to college but my sister Jean should have gone. She was the smart one in the family.

I went right from school to having a job, and then the war came. I remember when the war came, all heck broke loose. When they bombed Pearl Harbor, I was at a basketball game. The next day, every single boy on that team enlisted. So it was rough, because there were no men around. They all enlisted. There was so much patriotism then, there's not the patriotism now that there was then. The men just wanted to go out and defend their country. And so, the war years were mostly just women. We'd get together and play bridge and go to New York and maybe go to a show or something.

With no men around you had to grow up in a hurry. It wasn't easy. It went from bad to worse. The war came and I lost everything. Then, after the war, I met Ed. I had known him before the war. Then I got happy again. When I married my husband and had my children, those were the happiest parts of my life.

My first husband of course I went to school with. And with my second husband Ed, I knew him for a while before we were married. When I was in school, my best girl friend was Jean Davidson, and his best friend was Eddie Davidson. The Davidson's had the big house, and everyone went over there. Mrs. Davidson fed us, and the girls slept over and everything. Ed was always there with his friend Eddie, and I was always there with my sister Jean, so I knew him ever since I was in high school. He was two years ahead of me, and he had a car, and Jean and I were so young and we didn't have a car and neither of our boyfriends did, so we would be at the Davidson's house and I would say, "Would you drive us to the library so we could meet our boyfriends?" And he would say, "Damn kids, get in the car," and he would drive us to the library. He was engaged to somebody else, and I was married to somebody else during the war. It wasn't until after the war when he came home that I met him again. I just happened to bump into him. I went to the beach on vacation, and he went there for vacation for a couple of days after he got out of a POW camp. Ed weighed 120 pounds, and I didn't recognize him at all, but he knew who I was. So, we got together again.

In our day, people got married a lot younger, and when you were in high school, you were looking around for a husband. I always wanted to get married and I always wanted to have children. When my first husband died, I didn't have any children and I started looking for somebody else to be my husband. And I found one, which was happy. I got two good ones, and some people don't even get one good one. I always wanted children and I always wanted to get married. It's something I wanted to do ever since I was two years old. The girls today aren't that way. Sometimes they don't want to get married until they are 40. They want to have a career first.

In our family, we wanted our boys to go to college. The boys worked in the summer to get money to help pay for college. When they graduated college, and wanted to go for a Master's degree, they had to go work for the Master's degree themselves. Ed and I couldn't afford to give them more schooling, and they went out on their own. It was nice for us to see them to graduate and get their Master's degree and be able to support themselves and their families.

Ed had a rough job, working for the Ford Motor Company. In the plant, there was a lot of bad language. But he never brought any of that home with him. At home, he was always a gentleman.

When the kids were little, we used to hide candy in the Easter baskets. Then, when they got older, instead of having candy, we'd put a pair of sneakers, a pair of jeans, or a mitt or something like that in the basket. We'd always hide them and they had to find them. Sometimes, if the last person couldn't find their basket, if it was in the dryer or something, the last one would come and say "I can't find my Easter basket," then I'd say "Get on the phone and dial the Easter bunny and say Hey Easter bunny – where's my Easter basket."

What did I expect them to do around the house? Not much. They were good. They were always good boys. I never had to worry about them. They ate their meals, went to school, came back, and did their homework. They were really good, especially your dad. I had him first; that's why I wanted to have more. They had to cut the lawn, shovel snow, and stuff like that. Rake the leaves. They did their share. I worked inside, they worked outside.

I had to shop for food, I had to prepare the food and cook it, and feed them, and clean the house. I never did have any outside help; I always had to keep the house clean myself. In Wyckoff [New Jersey], we had the great big house. Five bedrooms and three baths and a mother in law and a dog and a cat and three kids and I had to clean up after them, so I was busy. I also did a lot of volunteer work with the cub scouts and the boy scouts and with the PTO. It used to be the PTO, now it's the PTA. I volunteered in the library at school. I volunteered at the nursing home in Wyckoff every Friday. I was in charge of the activities department, and I tried to keep the old people active, like they are trying to keep me active now.

One thing I still do is knit. I've always liked knitting because it's nice to make something for someone. And I like it because you can sit and watch television and knit. I always knew how to knit, but I didn't know how to crochet. My sister Jinny taught me how to knit. She is a great knitter. I probably have 20 sweaters that she knit for me over the years. When I go to dinner, people will say "Did you knit that?" and I would say, "No, my sister Jinny did." They would ask, "Is that your sweater or Jinny's?" The better ones are Jinny's because she always knit better than I did. During the war, we knit socks and sweaters for the soldiers. And I knit a bunch of blankets and shawls for the people that live in the nursing home up here. That's a nice feeling, to be able to knit for somebody who needs it.

I remember I made Jazz [grand-step-daughter] and you [granddaughter] some hats for Christmas, and they were really cute. You sent me a photo of your father and the dog wearing the hats. I guess that's what you thought about the hats, so I stopped knitting them. What? You liked them! Well, you shouldn't have sent me that photo then.

I knit hats when the kids were little, and that was fun and they always wore them. One time when Ed and I went up to visit, I knit Kevin [cousin] a hat. He was about two years old then, and I gave him the hat and a sweater, which came over his nose it was so big. He wouldn't take the hat off. He slept in it and everything else. And so I said, "Let me take it home and I will make it smaller," but he said, "I like it this way." The hat came over his nose, but he would not take that hat off.