

Dolly Buchanan

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Abstract: Helen Cordelia (Prickitt) Buchanan (1903-1999), commonly referred to as “Dolly,” was the daughter of Charles Abram Prickitt² and Helen (Norris) Prickitt. Her grandfather, Samuel Prickitt, was a well-known minister at the Centenary Methodist Church and a municipal judge, who was famously murdered by Archibald Herron after Samuel Prickitt sentenced him to ten days in jail for disorderly conduct. Ms. Buchanan’s mother was president of the Borough Improvement League and her father was a salesman for the Upjohn Company and purchased the *Metuchen Recorder*, which became a family-run business during the early twentieth century.

Ms. Buchanan graduated from Franklin School in 1919 and Douglass Residential College (New Jersey College for Women) in 1924. She married William Franklin Buchanan, the long-time borough engineer, in 1926. They had two children: Helen Alexandra (Buchanan) Snook and Joyce (Buchanan) Thomas. The couple originally lived with her parents at 76 Clive Street until moving into their own home at 56 Clive Street; they later moved to 44 Elm Avenue. Ms. Buchanan worked for the *Metuchen Recorder*, the Lendlease Department at the Raritan Arsenal during World War II, and the State Board of Child Welfare. Ms. Buchanan was also a member of the Quiet Hour Club, a volunteer for the Red Cross, and a member of St. Luke’s Episcopal Church. She is buried with her family at Hillside Cemetery.

In this interview, Ms. Buchanan discusses her family history, her education, her recollections of her childhood home at 76 Clive Street, and her work experiences. She also reminisces about various social activities as a young girl including her participation in the Metuchen Riding and Hunt Club, the Camp Fire Girls, the Metuchen Club, and Ms. Crehore’s dance classes. She also mentions the trolley, life during the Depression, and local businesses.

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E. Mc Cann: This is Eleanor Mc Cann, June 8, 1976 at 44 Elm Avenue, the home of Mr. and Mrs. W. Franklin Buchanan, sharing the memories of Mrs. Buchanan, Helen (Prickitt) Buchanan, known to her friends as Dolly, about her family and her life in Metuchen. [recording paused]

¹ Emily Binstein was a paid summer intern for the Metuchen Borough Improvement League (BIL).

² The family name is historically spelled “Prickitt.” However, in several twentieth-century publications, it is spelled “Prickett.” For the sake of consistency, the transcription will use the historic spelling “Prickitt.”

D. Buchanan: I believe Eleanor, you want—is this the correct volume? [referring to tape]

E. Mc Cann: Yes, it should be.

D. Buchanan: You want the background and since my maiden name is Prickitt, I'll tell you that the Prickitt family first came to New Jersey and settled in Burlington County in the late 1600s. According to family legend, the progenitor was named Barzillai, B-a-r-z-i-l-l-a-i. I believe it's a Bible name, I'm not sure. But they were Quakers and they remained Quakers until the period when, for some reason, maybe my great grandfather was right out of meeting, but he moved to Georgia because that's where my grandfather [Samuel B. D. Prickitt], who became a Methodist minister, was born. In between, there are many Prickitts still in Medford and Mount Holly area, but none very close. My brother [Charles Norris Prickitt] made the effort to establish the contact and I went down with my mother [Helen (Norris) Prickitt] years ago. And in a Medford, New Jersey Friends Cemetery [Medford Friends Meeting Cemetery / Union Street Friends Cemetery], there are about thirty Prickitts, which I think is more than are above the ground today. [laughter] There are the little Quaker stones that are only high enough to have the name and the date and there are about thirty Prickitts there, so I felt right at home there. [laughs]

But I had never been to Quaker meeting until a year or so ago, when being up at Lake Mohonk Mountain House [in New Paltz, New York]—well, it was several years ago. That's run by the Smiley family, who are still Quakers today and Mrs. Smiley invited those who wished to come Sunday morning to her living room part of her suite there and attend Quaker meeting. And it was the first time I had ever attended and I found it very interesting, very quiet. Somewhat similar to today's meditation, I think. And anyone who felt impelled to speak was permitted to do so. I know one gentleman present spoke about something he'd read in *The Times* that morning and I think a prayer was offered as I recall it now and it lasted about an hour. But that was my only experience in Quaker meeting.

But I was curious because so much of the background, my great uncle remained a Quaker, Abram Prickitt. And my father was partly named for him. My father was Charles Abram, A-b-r-a-m, not Abraham. [laughter] And my grandfather became, as I said, a Methodist minister, and served for the most part down in West Virginia where he was a circuit-riding minister, serving several churches and riding in between. They had a small family organ; I suppose they used a buckboard³ to store that in for the trips and I wish we had the organ today. I remember playing on it as a child; it was about four feet long, I guess, and probably two octaves in length and that, no doubt, served as the music for the meetings that were held wherever few were gathered together. Then grandfather transferred to the Newark Conference and had several churches in Dover and Succasunna. And as devilish, little kids we always loved to ask Grandma [Ellen Rebecca (Bates) Prickitt] where Grandpa had been ministered because she was having a little denture trouble at the time and to get her to say "Succasunna" was just great. [laughter]

³ A buckboard is an open, four-wheeled, horse-drawn carriage with seating that is attached to a plank stretching between the front and rear axles.

My father [Charles Abram Prickett] was born in Philippi, West Virginia and went to Marshall College [in Huntington, West Virginia], which was normal school I guess we'd call it today. And he graduated from that at the age of fifteen and I have his diploma upstairs. I had it re-inked by Mr. Swain [phonetic] so it could be read and all the subjects he certificated to have studied, quite interesting. [laughs]

E. Mc Cann: All on the diploma?

D. Buchanan: Yeah, and then—oh, philosophy, philology and a lot of things I don't even know the meaning of. Then he went to the, one year, at West Virginia Wesleyan [College] but his father, having only a minister's salary, wasn't able to keep up the tuition payments. And my father found out that he was not strong enough physically to work and study, so he went to the Philadelphia School of Pharmacy⁴ [in Pennsylvania] and it was there that he met the man who later became Dr. Lawrence N. Upjohn, one of the founders of the Upjohn Company⁵. And father started out with him in New York after graduating from the Philadelphia School of Pharmacy together and they roomed together in New York before father's marriage and the company was formed, which is now famous for citrocarbonate [antacid], phenolax [first candy laxative], the thumb on the pill [trademark]. We've heard many stories of how the Upjohn Company began. I wish I'd listened more carefully but Dr. L. N. Upjohn and Gratia, his wife, visited our home and brought their little son [Everett Gifford Upjohn], who is now, I think, the head of the company. The name escapes my memory at the moment. I can't recall it, but I saw it in the paper not long ago. And after father died, the old house on Clive Street was sold—this is a bit out of order—I found a sample case. Father had been a salesman for them and then became their sales manager in the metropolitan area and the sample case was fascinating. It had long bottles of brightly-colored pills and labeled with old-fashioned names, sometimes the names of the purpose for which the pill was intended. Oh, there was ipecac [syrup]. [laughs]

E. Mc Cann: All those oldies.

D. Buchanan: All the queer things. I didn't know what to do with it. We were just becoming aware of a drug problem in our country and I didn't want it to go to the wrong place and it wasn't safe to have around really, where children might be tempted by the bright colors. So I wrote into the Upjohn Company and asked if they would like it and they said they would. So I took it in one day and I don't know whether they were pleased to have it to exhibit or whether they were just being polite about it. [chuckles]

E. Mc Cann: It's probably in their archives, really.

D. Buchanan: I had a thank-you letter from them about it that I thought I disposed of in the best way. And then to go back to father's early days—am I going into too much detail?

⁴ Established in 1821, the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy became the first pharmacy college in the country.

⁵ The Upjohn Company was a pharmaceutical manufacturing firm founded in 1886 in Kalamazoo, Michigan by Dr. William E. Upjohn. The company was originally formed to make friable pills, which were specifically designed to be easily digested. These pills could be reduced to a powder under the thumb, which was a strong marketing argument at the time. The company was later headed by his nephew, Lawrence Upjohn, and by Donald S. Gilmore.

E. Mc Cann: No, this is fine, absolutely fine.

D. Buchanan: He bought the Metuchen Pharmacy [at 396 Main Street]. And he was working for the Upjohn Company in New York, but he hired a pharmacist to run it and it was under the name of Prickett & Crampton. And it was in the back of that pharmacy that the first telephone exchange in Metuchen was installed—the first telegraph.

E. Mc Cann: About where [unclear] is now?

D. Buchanan: Yes, about there. Well actually, I've often seen [Edward] Allen Burroughs tapping at the key there right behind the counter where I used to go for prescriptions.

E. Mc Cann: It was right in the beams.

D. Buchanan: Yes, but the telephone company [Western Union Telegraph Company] was upstairs, I believe.

E. Mc Cann: Oh.

D. Buchanan: Perhaps someone could correct me on that because I knew our operators; no doubt some [unclear] still alive. And let's hope they find them the tape and correct me on that. But father was interested in politics. I can't put this in order, but he was a county committeeman and all my life I saw a huge life-size, or heroic size, steel engraving of [President] William McKinley in our hall. It was quite frightening when you came in the front door. [laughs] Here he was at back of the hall, in the dark at the back of the hall. [laughs] Father was very much interested in [President] Theodore Roosevelt and he was great idol of father's, and we all read about his life and his letters to his children and his jungle safaris. We didn't think then as I do today that such killing of animals was quite unnecessary. That was considered the glorious, manly thing to do; the macho thing we'd call it today. [laughs]

Where do I go from there? Father also bought the *Metuchen Recorder*⁶ from a man named [Joseph Bromley] Adams, if my memory serves me correctly. And it was about the turn of the century, about 1898, I think. Well, I haven't gotten my parents married yet, I better tend to that. [laughs]

E. Mc Cann: And also was your grandfather a minister here at the [Centenary] Methodist Church in Metuchen?

D. Buchanan: Yes, yes.

E. Mc Cann: And when was that? Let us fill in on your grandfather, who was a very interesting man.

⁶ The Perth Amboy Publishing Company, which owned and controlled the *Metuchen Recorder*, was incorporated by Joseph Bromley Adams, Wilber Laroe, and James S. Wight in 1894.

- D. Buchanan:** Well, I can only say that it must have been before 1892. It was because of his ministry here that when my father and mother were married during 1892, they moved here. It was a good place to commute to New York for father, and my grandfather and grandmother found that it was a pleasant place to live. And of course, my grandfather was minister of the Methodist Church here, the Centenary Methodist Episcopal Church in the first building that was then as the second building was later built at the corner of Main Street and Middlesex Avenue.
- E. Mc Cann: At the same location they were—
- D. Buchanan:** Where the Venture Theatre is today.
- E. Mc Cann: Yeah. The first one was there also.
- D. Buchanan:** Yes, [at] the southwest corner of Main Street and Middlesex Avenue. And father and mother rented, one after another, three houses belonging to the [Joseph L.] Moss family on Woodbridge Avenue before they bought the house on Clive Street. My brother was born on Woodbridge Avenue, [unclear] lived on Woodbridge Avenue. I think [he's] five years older than I am; he came along five years after they were married. And then they moved to 76 Clive Street and I was born five years after my brother at 76 Clive Street. My grandmother, my paternal grandmother, was Ellen Rebecca Bates and her family was from the Washington area. I don't know too much about them actually because her mother died when she was just a young girl and she raised her younger brothers and sisters. And she was a rather forbidden woman who took her duties as a minister's wife and, no doubt, some other of this rather large family very seriously. And she was the butt of many jokes that the children would play on her because she was so serious-minded. [laughs] But we loved her and father eventually had a home built for her and my grandfather on Clive Street at 92 Clive Street in between Mazar [phonetic] apple orchard, which later became the pasture for my horses. And now there is one home there [at 84 Clive Street], which was built by the Reynolds [phonetic] family and later occupied by the Waddells. Now it's occupied by Dr. [Earle] Peterson, I think.
- E. Mc Cann: The one next to the Prickitt's land?
- D. Buchanan:** Yes, where Dr. Peterson lives.
- E. Mc Cann: Right, but now the next one is where—
- D. Buchanan:** Ninety-two is where [William] Keers lived.
- E. Mc Cann: Ninety-two is where Keers lived then.
- D. Buchanan:** Well, that was my grandfather's and grandmother's home [at 92 Clive Street]. But he retired from the ministry due to failing health, and he was given the job of local magistrate and a case came up before him of a man who had gotten drunk and beaten his wife and son. And my grandfather sentenced him to the workhouse and he said he'd get even with him. And when he got out, he shot and killed my grandfather. And he was Archie Herron [Archibald Herron] and I guess there's no stigma for any the name in the family to feel. But the case was of

interest to legal minds because of the fact that Archie Herron, a convicted murderer, died of old age in the Death House of Trenton because at that time, the law required that a judge who sentenced a man had to set the date of his execution and the debtors died in the interim [unclear].

E. Mc Cann: So the execution date couldn't be set. How terrible.

D. Buchanan: And recently when this (Smith, was it?) was fourteen years waiting his fate, I rather resented the inaccuracy of the news stories saying that it was the longest any man had ever waited. And I even wrote a note to Jim Jensen [American anchor] about it; he had been broadcasting in just those words and questioned it, and I said, "If you questioned the facts, I have recently confirmed them from the morgue of the *Daily Home News* of New Brunswick and it happened when I was five years old." I'm now seventy-three as of yesterday. [laughs]

E. Mc Cann: Oh, I didn't know. Happy birthday!

D. Buchanan: Well thank you, it was. I cleaned out the oven. [laughter] Having celebrated the night before, my sister-in-law invited us up for a lovely dinner.

E. Mc Cann: Oh, that's nice.

D. Buchanan: And I'm not a very good housekeeper, I'm afraid. That's of little interest to record. [laughter] I have two ovens and I changed cleaning women and the new one tells me [mimicking accent], "I doesn't clean ovens." [chuckles] So I let it go for a while and then I tried Mr. Muscle [hard-surface cleaner] and the next day, I tried to rub it with a paper towel and it stuck. And I was too busy to bother with it then. So for days, I contrived all kinds of meals on [unclear] stove. [laughter] Finally, yesterday, I got the big oven cleaned; the small one remains. [laughter] But I have a different sense of values I'm afraid that I still have the New England pungence about housekeeping. I feel guilty, but it doesn't help me get things done. [laughs]

E. Mc Cann: I think many of us have to admit to that.

D. Buchanan: Well to go back to the family history, my mother was born and brought up in Washington, DC [District of Columbia] in a section then called Brightwood, which is now really part of the main city, but was then rather considered to be out in the country. And her father, John L. Norris, was a government employee and I can't remember what department at the moment. I think in the printing office, but that may have been my widowed great aunt, who was also employed there in one of the bureaucratic institutions which Washington's [unclear] continues so till this day. [laughs] My grandmother [Cordelia (Clarke) Norris], I'm very proud to say, learned to drive a little Maxwell car at the age of seventy-five and she felt that her Don, as she called her husband. And he called her Dolly, though her name was Cordelia—and getting that as my middle name as Claire, I got my nickname. And she felt that her Don shouldn't have the long trip into the heart of the city, so she learned to drive the Maxwell roadster and drove him to the bus station. Not into the heart of traffic, but she had quite a bit of gumption I think to do that. [laughs]

E. Mc Cann: That's right.

D. Buchanan: My mother never learned to drive a car.

E. Mc Cann: You need to be in that reach.

D. Buchanan: Mother was born (where do I have it?)—here comes some dates that are reliable—June 5, 1871, and died in May 1943. I then have the date and month here, and I have a mental lock on numbers so I can't recall it unless it's written down. Mother, of course as most girls do, helped a little with the housework, but her main love was her music. And her mother had been a schoolteacher and her father was a government employee, and there was very little money for her musical education. But her church, for whom she was the organist, the First Congregational Church in Washington, DC, put on a benefit concert for her at which she gave the program. And it was on that fund that she studied for a year in Germany and Berlin with Dr. Rashad⁷ [phonetic]—I should have that [unclear] there—and when she came back, was married to my father and they moved to Metuchen, Woodbridge Avenue house (the little honeymoon house is the smallest one up there). And I remember a photograph of the parlor, this Turkish parlor which was [unclear] then with heavy red draperies and a Victorian lamp with a brass base and a festooned-shade and big buck pillows, which were supposed to be sat upon on the floor but weren't used that way. [laughs]

E. Mc Cann: Right, but in the Turkey style.

D. Buchanan: Yes. And mother went to the [First] Presbyterian Church in Metuchen, in there being no Congregational Church in the area. And she finally joined it, but father never left the Methodist Church though he didn't attend church. He said that, as a boy, he attended three times a day and that was enough to last him the rest of his life. [laughter] But my brother and I joined the Presbyterian Church or attended the Presbyterian Sunday School, and a minister pressured me at the youthful time to join the church. I rebelled a little bit. Mother said I didn't have to continue going to Sunday school, and eventually when I married a man [William Franklin Buchanan] who had been brought up half in the Presbyterian Church and half in the Episcopal Church when I was living in a section of town where it was more convenient to send the children to the Episcopal Sunday School. Well, I did join St. Luke's [Episcopal Church] as my husband did when our second daughter was confirmed there. Actually, Joyce [(Buchanan) Thomas] was baptized in the Presbyterian Church to please my mother. [laughs]

Well, that's getting ahead quite a bit. Let's see, father was a businessman, mother and her family, her career—mother had a brother, one brother [Dr. John Lawson Norris Jr.], who was a doctor, an M.D. [Doctor of Medicine], and he was assistant health officer of the District of Columbia and later became a doctor in veteran's hospitals. And it was at a veteran's mental hospital that a patient attacked him and shook his confidence so that it really ended his career as a doctor in the hospital. And he and his wife [Mary Morton (Marsh) Norris] and three children retired to a summer place they had outside of Hendersonville, North Carolina, which they winterized and that became his home for the rest of his life. The incident that really was quite serious occurred in Maywood, Illinois when he was there at the time. Other family members, I had only one brother I mentioned was

⁷ Ms. Buchanan's mother studied at the Berlin Conservatory of Music as a pupil of Professor Jedliczka.

five years older than myself, and it was—I haven't mentioned the fact that the *Metuchen Recorder* was bought as an income for my grandfather when he retired from the ministry. And his untimely death meant that the family produced it for many years. [laughs] It became a family effort. Mother wrote the social notes. And I, as young as I was, before I rode ponies and owned ponies and horses, I had a go-kart and my job was to drive the go-kart down to town with the out-of-town newspapers Saturdays to the post office. [laughs]

E. Mc Cann: Yes!

D. Buchanan: And one of the rooms in the big house [at 76 Clive Street] was devoted to an office and the addressograph was there, and it was my grandmother's chore to address the out-of-town papers. Of course, the town papers had to get out very promptly because the advertisers wanted to catch the Saturday business. So when my grandmother died and the family continuing with the paper, my brother was through with his schooling at that time, but he got a little tired of running the paper. And I promised him when I got out of college that I'd take it over. So I was an English major at Douglass and NJC [New Jersey College for Women]; I graduated in 1924 and took some short courses in journalism. And I still automatically proofread anything that I read. [laughs] And if I own the book, I make corrections. [laughs] It's a habit of many years' time. It bothers me to see such sloppy proofreading as we see today in the best of newspapers and magazines and books even. But I had fun with the paper. I sold the advertising, I attended the [Borough Council] meetings, I wrote the meetings, I wrote the social notes. The personals were the most popular item, and they are often deplored today for their absence in our present *Metuchen Recorder*. And people do like the personal note I feel, but typesetting is expensive today and it apparently doesn't sell the ads and that's the lifeblood of any newspaper. So I did that for a couple years and attended council meetings in the smoke-filled rooms [laughs], and it was through that that I met my husband. In those days, after every council meeting, there'd be a party. [laughs]

E. Mc Cann: Oh, that's fantastic!

D. Buchanan: And one of the councilmen, William Liddle, lived [at 64 Elm Avenue] at the corner of Linden Avenue and Elm Avenue, the southwest corner. And he usually entertained after council meetings and it was at one of those parties that I met Franklin [her husband]. I hadn't met him before. I was there writing notes and he was there as borough engineer. They had just moved up from Perth Amboy where he grew up, though he was born in Newark. And so I met him at one of those parties, and they were a lot of fun.

E. Mc Cann: How long did you have the *Recorder*, Dolly? I know you have told me. When did you sell it?

D. Buchanan: I can't give you the date, I'm sorry. But I was editor of it for only two years, and after that, I was married on October 16, 1926. I graduated from college in [19]24. So I ran it for two years and then I was more interested in my little apartment, which was on the third floor of my family's old home on Clive Street and the activities that went with housekeeping. So I didn't do very much on the paper. If they needed a town to be covered for advertising, I'd occasionally go and sell a few ads for a special edition or write up something that occurred where I

happened to be, that sort of thing. But by that time, father had hired a manager and father had always done the bookkeeping and written the editorials himself. And in addition to his working in New York, he was a daily commuter of course to the Upjohn Company, which was in [unclear] in Bedford. I don't know where they're located now, but they're in New York. But of course, their headquarters are in Kalamazoo [Michigan].

[reviewing her papers] I've reached a block.

E. Mc Cann: Would you like to go in to some of the girlhood life in Metuchen you were telling me about?

D. Buchanan: Yes. I entered the Franklin School, which is now called the middle school, the first year after it was built [in 1909]. And my brother had attended the frame structure [built in 1870], which later was moved to New Street and became tenement houses before they were finally destroyed. And I skipped a grade so that I was only eleven years in the school. I also never did learn long division, and I can't add two and two and come up with less than five. [laughs] But when I worked, applied at the job at the [Raritan] Arsenal during the war, those graduates had been solicited to do so. I said that very frankly and what they gave me, the job they gave me was checking the comptometers⁸. [laughter]

E. Mc Cann: They didn't take you at your word, did they?

D. Buchanan: No. [laughter] But I did find a million-dollar mistake one day! [laughter]

E. Mc Cann: So your nice little [unclear].

D. Buchanan: Of course, it was just a question of a decimal point. But I often saw the representative of the Russian government going into our head supervisor's office. I was in the Lendlease Department, and I corrected manuals on truck assemblies that they were sending over to Russia and on the guns and ammunition and I know the millions that went over there, which you don't hear much about today. And it was a funny thing. Of course, that was the time of the submarine attacking the fleets that went over to take the supplies for the war.

E. Mc Cann: Before we were actually in the war.

D. Buchanan: Yes, and when we were! So great secrecy was maintained as to where these shipments were to go and at the last moment, these shipping tickets were all made up without the address. At the last moment, the address was put on. And then the fleet was ready to go out. It was the shortest period in between, you see, when anyone knew where they were to go and could estimate the time. But I understood that, but I chafed at the fact that there were long periods of inactivity when we were told to look busy. Like that! [laughs] I understood that they had to hire large groups so that they could work in a hurry to get these addresses on to ship out the ammunition, the truck assemblies, and the trucks. But it still went against the grain to be told to look busy. I wasn't allowed to write letters, I wasn't allowed to knit, but I had to sit with pencil poised over the paper and that

⁸ The comptometer was the first commercially successful key-driven mechanical calculator patented in the United States by Dorr E. Felt in 1887.

just seemed absurd to me. [laughter] I made myself a little unpopular with my supervisor for testing [unclear]. [laughter] So did others!

One day I was talking to Mrs. Paul Nielsen, who happened to work in another department. Of course, this was strictly taboo to discuss your other work with another department, but I didn't go much by the rules, I guess. I was there doing my patriotic duty, being paid for it at one level above the messenger's grade, which was the lowest they were paid. And I said to her one day, "Well, how is it going today?" "Oh," she said, "I'm happy at last. I'm being kept busy." And I said, "What are you doing?" She said, "Well, you know I come in at seven-thirty and the supervisors don't get in till eight." I said, "Yes, I know because I've been on that ship too." And so you had nothing to do until the supervisor came and told you what to do. And she said, "I now have something to do." And I said, "What is it?" just [unclear]. [laughs] And she said, "I'm removing the O (meaning out signs) from the trucking center." I said, "I put those signs in." [laughter] We had a good laugh. No doubt it was necessary. To me, it was just bureaucracy in action.

But in those days, everyone was doing what they could and we were about to be frozen in our jobs. And I was dissatisfied with the inactivity of the job and the fact that my girls, who were then in junior high, were key-carrying children and I think about the unwashed dishes and the unmade beds I left behind me. And when I was on the seven to three shift, and when I was on the three to eleven shift, I never saw any of my friends or had any dinner so I wasn't too happy with the work. And my husband at the time was manager of the New Jersey Fulgent Company, which was making landing flares for airplanes. And Sam Wiley [Samuel Wiley], the grandfather of our councilman [Mayor John Wiley Jr.], was the head of that and they were our next-door neighbors on [36] Clive Street. By this time, we built our home [at 56 Clive Street] next door to my father's home. And it was also next door to the Wiley's home, which is now occupied by the Lupfers.

E. Mc Cann: Oh, that's the one. Yes.

D. Buchanan: I digressed and threw myself off the track there.

E. Mc Cann: That's all right. You want to go back to girlhood days, like the bull moose parade you told me about and your horses, and then the parties and things you also had in the house. That's awfully interesting.

D. Buchanan: Well, horses have always been my greatest love in my life, I think, as far as animals are concerned though I've sublimated somewhat since there is no really good place to ride around here or good horses to be found without going to too much trouble really. And I'm involved in things so that I can't spare the time to do it. But Mr. Powell, Ralph B. Powell [at 221 Durham Avenue], was a great horseman and he was always the marshal of our parades on Johnny Firecracker. [chuckling] And he could make Johnny Firecracker bark at the drop of a hat and be delighted in doing so. And he said to my father, "Charlie, you got all those twenty-four acres out there. Why don't you let me cut it as hay and I'll take half of it for my horses and you put half of them in your barn? I'll put half in the barn" because first father was in business in New York. And he said, "Let Dolly have a pony." So he said, "I can get a string of ponies for the winter from these

places at the shore that have dime-a-ride ponies.” So the first batch that he brought up for Metuchen youngsters came from Coney Island. I had little Nellie, a pinto and she was a gang little mare and would run when the big horses ran. And I got on and I held on to the pommel and that’s how I learned to ride in a gallop! [laughter] But the result that later on when I wanted to take some riding lessons to improve my form because I was going to ride in a horse show for a couple of owners, Gordon Wood [phonetic] over in Plainfield, who then had a riding stable on Prospect Avenue, said, “Mrs. Buchanan, you must learn to ride like a gentleman’s daughter, not like a blacksmith’s daughter.” [laughter] Well anyhow, Nellie was a lady. [chuckles]

And others who had ponies were somewhere in their own, privately-owned. But Mr. Powell brought one or two up for his children and [John] Kingsley Powell, his older son, and Frank M. Powell, his younger son, were great riders as was Ruth Powell, now Mrs. Richard Anderson from New Brunswick. And we had a lot of fun riding together. The Stewart Crowell’s lived on [60] Rector Street and the two Crowell boys rode, Stewart Jr. and John. And Harry Wemett [Harrison E. Wemett at 221 Middlesex Avenue] had a horse or two, and he and Helen, his wife then, would ride. They were their own horses. And gradually the need was established for trails to be made safe and for those spots that were soggy to be filled in, and for jumps to be arranged that could be taken in the course of a cross-country ride. So the Metuchen Riding and Hunt Club was formed. Actually, some hunters were own and several of our riders rode their hunters over jumps in horse shows. But there never really was a hunt established. And I hope that someone is interviewing J. Arthur Applegate⁹ [at 344 Middlesex Avenue] on the history of the Riding Club because he can refer to the older days and the beginnings better than I can. And he knows all the answers to anything about horse! [laughs] I’ve loved horses all my life, but when I talk to a real horseman, I find that I know nothing.

E. Mc Cann: But you just love them, maybe not professional, but—

D. Buchanan: I love to ride. And then, we didn’t have Girl Scouts in Metuchen in those days. There were Boy Scouts, and there was a gardener’s house on our home place at 76 Clive Street that was used as Boy Scout headquarters for a number of years. But in place of Girl Scouts, we had Camp Fire Girls and our leader was Miss Elizabeth Barr. And her home was where the—next to the Borough Hall—the “Hallejulah House” [at 520 Main Street, now 10 Library Place] is now.

E. Mc Cann: Oh yes, um-hm.

D. Buchanan: And she was the one girl, and there were three brothers, [William] Manning, [Thomas] Turner, and [Frank] Seymour. And they were stockbrokers that did very well, I heard. Thomas Barr was one of the men who financed the beginnings of the Borough Improvement League.

E. Mc Cann: Is there a—yes!

⁹ J. Arthur Applegate was a long-time resident of Metuchen and the president of the Commonwealth Bank for thirty years.

- D. Buchanan:** Their father. And they had a lovely home and Mrs. Barr was quite literary and I believe she probably was the one who organized the Emerson Club¹⁰. There was an Emerson Club.
- E. Mc Cann: Oh yes, I've heard about that. Right. Did you ever belong to that?
- D. Buchanan:** No, nor did my mother. I don't know about it really; I don't know much about it. The Litterst girls might.
- E. Mc Cann: They didn't mention it on the tape.
- D. Buchanan:** Has Mrs. [Elise (Burroughs)] Potter been—?
- E. Mc Cann: I don't believe so, no.
- D. Buchanan:** She should be.
- E. Mc Cann: And she's one that we should—yes.
- D. Buchanan:** Yeah. She was daughter of Ed Burroughs to whom my father sold the drug store [Metuchen Pharmacy].
- E. Mc Cann: Your father had it before the Burroughs?
- D. Buchanan:** Yes. And she was a sister of [Edward] Allen Burroughs [Jr.], who we remember as running it. Well, the Camp Fire girls were quite a group and we also had a Girls Luncheon Club at which it was a strict rule that the hostess had to cook everything that was to be served. And when we went to Eloine Powell's, she not only cooked us a chicken dinner but she had killed and cleaned the chicken [laughter], which in those days seemed impossible to me though I haven't kept chickens during the war. I learned never to kill them, but I did learn to clean them and pick them and cook them. [chuckles] And I should say in the Camp Fire Girls that our leader, I did say, was Elizabeth Barr (known as Liberty). She was always called Liberty Barr. And I don't know whether she is living today or not. She was until just a few years ago.
- E. Mc Cann: In Metuchen?
- D. Buchanan:** No, no. That's why I don't know because she moved away a number of years ago. Manning Barr was the last one that I remember and he lived in Plainfield in the house on Woodland Avenue that Bill and Edy Ellis [phonetic] might have bought, I believe; it's the same house just this side of Plainfield Country Club. Then as far as the parties in their old house were concerned, we had an Edison phonograph and we thought it was beautiful. It was the cabinet type, hand wound and the unbreakable records. And we used to have dances Saturday nights up there when I was in high school. And in the high school class that I was in in 1919, there were only three boys, so usually the junior boys were invited. [laughter] And we had a fiftieth reunion a few years ago and Bob Mook [Robert Mook], who was one of the Class of [19]19 boys, and I co-chaired it out at The

¹⁰ According to the *Metuchen Recorder*, Mrs. Barr conducted hour-long readings on Emerson on Tuesday afternoons at the Borough Improvement League.

Pines [Manor at 2085 Lincoln Highway, Edison]. And I have a bad habit of saying “and a.” I have to stop. [laughs]

E. Mc Cann: Wouldn't worry about that. [laughter]

D. Buchanan: But I catch myself. The songs in those days were “Poor Butterfly,” and the “Michigan Waltz,” and the “Lulu Fada,” and the “Message Brazilian” [phonetic]. Then our dancing class was taught by Miss Edith Crehore in the house—oh, may be sure—it's either where the Crowne house [at 304 Amboy Avenue] is today or the Cortright house [at 312 Amboy Avnue] next to it. And I think the first. I think that was the Crehore house. I don't know if he's got the right one. Anyhow, there was a big, long living room and we had our dancing class there and Edith Crehore would go up to the Castle house and study with Vernon Castle, Mr. and Mrs. Vernon Castle [famous ballroom dancers]. And when she came back one day, and said, “There's a very exciting thing that has happened, they introduced the Foxtrot” ... [recording ends]

[END OF TAPE 1, SIDE 1]

D. Buchanan: Ready?

E. Mc Cann: Yes.

D. Buchanan: I went to dancing school, as I mentioned before, at Miss Edith Crehore's and she went for instructions at the Castle house where Mr. and Mrs. Vernon Castle taught and she came into to class one day. Of course, we all lined up with our white gloves and curtsies. [chuckles] And after we had started the day's lesson, she said, “Now my sister Amy and I are going to show you a new dance that we've just learned at the Castle house. I don't think you will want to learn it because it's very rowdy. It's called the Foxtrot.” And it was very rowdy. She and Amy danced from one end of the room to the other, just swinging away! And we all decided we really didn't want to learn it. But we did learn the Skating-Step and the Lulu Fada; I think that's also on the sheet you're filling that I mentioned. And the One-Step of course was the thing then, which today I don't see very different from the Foxtrot as it stands today by people who aren't marvelous dancers who study all the time and do very well. Most of us just do that side step around the room. [laughter]

E. Mc Cann: Yes, keep out of everyone's way.

D. Buchanan: Yes. [laughs] To go back to the days of pony riding, I recall riding with Eleanor Bloomfield who lived down just beyond the intersection of Amboy Avenue, and is it Grandview Avenue that crosses it? Goes up the hill there.

E. Mc Cann: It's Woodbridge [Avenue], isn't it? Woodbridge comes across it where they cross [Route] No. 1.

D. Buchanan: Yes, yes. And coming from Metuchen going to your right, you go out to the former Raritan Arsenal. And to your left, goes to Grandview [Avenue]. But just beyond that and on Amboy Avenue, on this side of Fords, was the Bloomfield

home and it was a beautiful home. It was large and pillared and had a double row of trees and a double driveway around it. And Eleanor lived there with her brothers [Howard] Lundy and Harold. And her mother was in my mother's bridge club, Anita [Irene (Lundy)] Bloomfield, and she was quite a political worker and a very lovely person.

E. Mc Cann: Was this before women's suffrage?

D. Buchanan: No. [laughs] This was later. See chronologically, I'm a bit off. I can't keep the times separated in exact little pockets. It's very difficult for me even with your nice outline, which has helped me.

E. Mc Cann: No, that's all right. No, I just wondered where that fit.

D. Buchanan: My father had a long-standing feud with Charles A. Bloomfield, Eleanor's grandfather, as he had with the grandfather of a neighbor with whom I played on Clive Street, George Benner. And I don't remember the cause of these, but it was probably a political argument. But anyhow, Eleanor had a fat little black pony and she joined our group that went out riding, particularly weekends and after school. Annis Dolph, now Mrs. Charles Mayes, living in Princeton had a little pony called Dolly, a brown pony. And the Schenck family had a rather taller bay [reddish-brown] horse called Kitty, and Cecelia or Sam Schenck would ride her. And I don't know whether Lois [Schenck] rode or not. We'll have to ask Lois someday when you tape her. [laughs]

E. Mc Cann: We must tape her too.

D. Buchanan: Yes. But Lois being younger than I am, and the two I remember were Sam, who was about my age, and Cecilia just a little older. We had a lot of fun riding our ponies around. There was room to ride in those days; where Roosevelt Park is now was particularly delightful to ride through.

E. Mc Cann: That wasn't a lake always?

D. Buchanan: No, I don't remember a lake there. But there was a ravine there that we could ride along the edge of. And this again, ask J. Arthur Applegate about, because he was the one who would lead the rides there in later years.

E. Mc Cann: Well, wasn't there a riding area up behind your property?

D. Buchanan: Yes, we had several shows to pay for the work on the bridle trails. And I rode for Bill McKenzie [William McKenzie at 43 Rector Street]. I rode General, who could put you into first place all by himself. [laughter] Virginia McKenzie used to laugh at that because she really didn't enjoy riding much, but old General would just hear what the judge called for and he'd do it. And I might have got myself a blue ribbon except Adelaide Gray [at 30 Clarendon Court], later Mrs. Jack Morris, took it away from me because when we had to change horses to help the judges decide, I didn't recognize Brown Lady, Arthur's horse, and I held her too tightly and she almost bucked if you held her too tightly. [laughs] So Adelaide got the blue that day, and I have a red which I treasure. [laughter] But for several years, there were horse shows held behind father's property on Clive Street before it became Clive Hills, long before it became Clive Hills. And the rings were

built there and prizes were offered and riders came from other towns to compete. And I have some of those programs; J. Arthur I'm sure has the whole thing and Franklin [her husband] had some when he was secretary of Riding Club until recently. Now Reub Hediger [phonetic] is secretary.

E. Mc Cann: You require a lot of those because—

D. Buchanan: Yes, there are pictures. And there's a picture of J. Arthur clearing a jump. [laughs]

E. Mc Cann: Fabulous. Oh, that's beautiful, uh-huh.

D. Buchanan: And another one of Harry Wemett, who has died. And Frank Powell was a marvelous rider and so many of them are not with us anymore. But J. Arthur's memory I'm sure is very good, and his memory of those particular things would be better than mine. But we had a lot of fun riding over the years. But in the early years, Mr. [Ralph] Powell was always at my beck and call if I got into trouble with my horse. By that time, I had had—Nellie was my first pony from Coney Island. The next year, I had Matt from Asbury Park, a little shaggy brown [unclear]. And then I had Freckles from Asbury Park, but it was a sad time in the spring when they had to go back to the dime-a-ride places down at the shore.

E. Mc Cann: Your boarded them, really.

D. Buchanan: Yes. We had lots of hay and our only expense was the shoeing and the oats. And it wasn't very expensive and I shoveled plenty in those days. [laughs] We had a man by the day, now and then, who would help out. But for the most part, I took care of my own horse. And I never will intentionally own a white horse, particularly if they're in the habit of lying down after they've eaten up all their bedding. [laughs] See, we had so much hay. We used hay for bedding, raw. And they would—

E. Mc Cann: They would eat their bed.

D. Buchanan: —eat it up. [laughs] And then lie down, so when they got up, they were pinto instead of white or gray. And I'd have to wash them before I could ride them out in public.

Eleanor Bloomfield went on to a teaching career; she never married. She lives in Newark, would like very much to come back to Metuchen to live, she told me recently. And I've kept in touch with her, and she has with me to some extent. In connection with the ponies, and my previously-mentioned interest in my father's and the career of Theodore Roosevelt when he ran for his second term, they decided to have a bull moose parade here in town and I rode my pony in Rough Rider costume, so-called [chuckles], a campaign hat that—I don't know where I got it from—perhaps my brother had worn it in the SATC (Student Army Training Corps)—and a divided cocky skirt. [laughs] I felt very much the Rough Rider¹¹.

¹¹ In 1898, Theodore Roosevelt was the Assistant Secretary of the Navy and he organized the Rough Riders, which was the first voluntary cavalry in the Spanish-American War. Roosevelt recruited a diverse group of cowboys,

Let me see, what were we going to talk about besides—?

E. Mc Cann: Now, the Prickett house and the backyard parties there, and you know the rose garden. You haven't mentioned some of these things—the nitty-gritty.

D. Buchanan: Oh yes. Well, father bought the house at 76 Clive Street with twenty-four acres, which extended up as far as the present open part of the golf course [Metuchen Golf and Country Club] including the woods where the Ainslies have built [at 120 Clive Street], but all on the east side of Clive Street. He never was able to buy the pond lot and he only bought the lot where we finally built our home at 56 Clive Street by the connivance of my mother's cousin in Washington, DC because George Benner owned that lot and the aforementioned feud between them was such that when father put in a telephone line and it crossed the corner of his heir, he came over and put a ladder up and chopped the line down. And after that, the sidewalk, the flagstone walk that we would walk down to the Dummy Line car along—he ripped that up so we had only a cider path to walk on from then on. But I liked old George Washington Benner because he drove a very fast bay mare and he would stop at school to pick up his granddaughter, Ruth Mack, and I'd be given a ride too and he'd let me hold the ends of the reins. [laughs] I thought he was tops! I couldn't understand father's antipathy. [laughs] But it lent spice to the days! [laughs] The house itself was roomy and, I think, fifteen rooms. Shall I read from this, that I wrote?

E. Mc Cann: If you would like, it's a very good paper.

D. Buchanan: It will be a little better organized:

The Dummy Line shuttled back and forth along the Main Street of our small commuting town south to a junction with the Perth Amboy-New Brunswick trolleys and later briefly with the Newark-Trenton Fast Line about where Route 1 runs now. Going north, its single track carried its small one-man operated car about a mile to its terminus a block from our home. Gene O'Hare [Eugene O'Hare], Pat Riley [Patrick Riley] would watch us pass the dark underpass of the Reading [Railroad] coal spur if it were after dark. And if after ten at night, we could hear one sharp, deep bark of our retriever Newfoundland, Rex. Then the quiet might bristle our hairs as we passed the seldom-lit bulk of Aunt Phoebe Martin's large Victorian house, built as a sister to our own centenarian home by Captain Cephas Waite¹² when he retired from his life on the sea. As we set foot on the gravel path that led past the field of daises to mother's rose garden, Rex would hurl his huge black form at us from the long grass and breeding and guard us the rest of the way home [unclear] tail waving gaily. The square mass of our house spread its porches around in welcome for lights always burned late at 76 [Clive Street]. Mother used to say the old house loves a party, just light a lot of candles and cut a lot of flowers and it's ready. Strawberry festivals and baby parades were held under the rose of maples near the rustic summer house, and

miners, law enforcement officials, and Native Americans to join the Rough Riders. These colorful characters received the most publicity of any unit in the army during the war.

¹² Cephas Waite was also spelled "Cephus" in several publications. In 1873, brothers George and Cephas Waite, both sea captains, purchased an extensive tract of land from Cephas' father-in-law, Wesley Benner. Cephas built his home at 36 Clive Street and George built his home further north at 76 Clive Street.

the wide double-doors opened into a center hall with large square rooms on either side, which had provided room for twenty-five tables of bridge.

I think that was a benefit put on for the [First] Presbyterian Church, if such a thing was possible in those days to play cards for—

E. Mc Cann: Yeah. Well, I think that's where the [Dutch] Reformed Church and the Presbyterian Church separated—

D. Buchanan: Oh really? Well, I know my grandmother was Methodist of course. Always left the room if we started to play bridge. She wouldn't say anything, but she'd go upstairs to her own apartment, which was then the third floor of our home, which later became my own honeymoon apartment.

Back of the two front rooms on the left, the study opened into the butler's pantry and the kitchen across the back. On the right, the dining room opening into a back hall and again into the kitchen had been enlarged for alternate enjoyment as a ballroom during our school and college days. The two oriental rugs were easily pushed under the sideboard and the oval mahogany table reduced to round size and lifted through the French doors to the side porch, and the chandelier tied-up to avoid dancers' heads. The Edison phonograph in the fireplace corner played "All in a Jack," "Stumbling Along," "Poor Butterfly," or "Lulu Fada." And if you turned on the porch lights and turned off the dining room lights, you might dance in a synthetic moonlight. Sometimes there'd be a freezer of pineapple mint sherbet or maple moose if my brother or I had been ambitious enough to help.

The wide-grooved banister of the front stairs was marvelous for a quick descent, but the large newel post wore a protuberant nipple that we early learned to avoid by hopping off just before the bottom. On party nights, the alcove near the top of the stairs was lighted by a rosy glow from a wrought iron lantern, which guided guests to the only bathroom in this fifteen-room house. Later we found ample room to add four more baths by utilizing the butler's pantry, one of the two rooms in the servant's wings, a dressing room, and a third-floor water tank no longer needed since the connection of city water was laid on. The tank had originally been designed to channel rain water from the roofs for use inside, but the first big bathroom had a huge tub on clawed feet, a marble sink, and a toilet with a long chain running from an overhead water tank. Four square bedrooms looked out into the maple trees on both sides and to the front, and this pattern was followed on the third floor where my husband and I had our honeymoon apartment while waiting for our house next door to be completed.

Here we enjoyed many gay parties, our friends sitting on the floor or bucking their heads on the sliding ceilings. However noisy the party, mother always said she enjoyed hearing us even though we had one friend who invariably did a Russian Kazotzy [kick]. [laughter] Anyone who remembers Josephine Von Hartz, later Wagemann, may remember that she was a very gay party girl and a lot of fun, and often entertained in their home on [207] Lake Avenue. And her father [Carl Von Hartz] with true German hospitality always had one more bottle to bring up from the cellar. [laughter] "This is the last," he'd say on a New Year's Eve when perhaps the punch bowl had been drained; they had big parties.

Artsy Captain [phonetic] built a cupola instead of the more usual widow's walk. And a steep flight of stairs took one up to the only vantage point that cleared the towering maples. Here we could watch the stars at night or locate a fire when the whistles blew, as about ten-foot square floor was surrounded on all sides by shuttered windows. To the north laid the woods, where as a child I dammed the small stream under a huge beech tree. To the east ran a larger brook I jumped my first pony over. To the west, St. Joseph's [High School], the bishop, reared its turrets. And south of us lay our entire small town with the tracks of a Dummy Line running from our corner past the Pennsylvania [Railroad] Station to the junction with those other tracks. All those trolley tracks are long gone and cars and buses now jam our Main Street shopping area and community parking lots for a half mile around the railroad station. But old-timers love to reminisce about Gene O'Hare, Jack Reiser [phonetic], Pat Riffin [phonetic], and their contributions to the interest of life in a smaller town.

I didn't come across the reminder about Gene O'Hare to the ladies who were attending the Quiet Hour [Club]¹³ one day and got on the trolley to where they thought was to be and he said, "Oh no, it's not there! It's been changed, it's at Mrs. So-and-so's today! Got off at this corner." [laughter] And he would very often water the horses at noon or feed them if it was a holiday and men are usually fed them. These were the horses that drew Wilbert's coal wagons [Metuchen Coal Company], and Harry Wilbert and his wife, Marie, are still living in the Wilbert house [at 6 Plainfield Avenue] at the corner of Clive Street and Plainfield [Avenue]. And what used to be the coal office across the street [formerly at corner of Main Street and Christol Street] has been a gas station and is now closed. And its future has been debated quite seriously recently, I believe. [chuckles]

E. Mc Cann: Right. What is zoned to be there; a zoning problem.

D. Buchanan: Yes. Also Kramer's Department Store [at 441 Main Street] was a very important part of the life of this town. And the story is that Mr. [Edward] Kramer came to town as a peddler with a pack on his back. And he established the department store, what grew to be the department store eventually, and raised his family here. He was highly respected, he was a member of the [Metuchen] Building and Loan [Association], I remember, and officer of the bank [Metuchen National Bank], and raised a fine family. His son Harry [Kramer] was our postmaster and married Mary [Bender] Mayo and her daughter [Ruth (Kramer) Hume] is married to one of the Humes, to Don Hume [Donald Hume].

E. Mc Cann: Oh yes.

D. Buchanan: I went to dinner for [Sterling] Elliott Mayo [Jr.]. Did you go to that?

E. Mc Cann: No, I wasn't in town.

¹³ The Quiet Hour Club was organized in 1895 through the efforts of Hester M. Poole to bring together the women in Metuchen "for mental culture, social intercourse, and a sympathetic understanding of whatever women are doing along the best lines of progress."

D. Buchanan: And many of the Mayo girls were there that I hadn't seen since Sunday school days in the Presbyterian Sunday School. [laughs] They lived in now Edison Township, then Raritan Township. So our paths didn't cross as often, but I used to see them at Presbyterian Sunday School. And of course, Mrs. [Irene] Meyers I knew from long years in the Metuchen Hardware Store [at 401 Main Street], Meyers-Mayo [Hardware Store]¹⁴. Miss Theresa was a great favorite, Theresa Kramer. She waited on customers at the store and her sister Bertha. One or both of them taught also. I don't know where. I think possibly in Perth Amboy, I don't remember. Helen Kramer was in my own class at school; she didn't graduate with me. I think she perhaps went away to school after that. But I have talked with her within the last five or ten years. And Mrs. Herold worked in there too, not the Mrs. [Fern D.] Herold who's my husband's secretary, now Mrs. [long pause] Crowhurst! [laughs] It's difficult for me to remember because so many of the Herold family have worked for my husband, you see.

E. Mc Cann: Yes, yes.

D. Buchanan: Fern as [unclear] the secretary for almost twenty years, I believe. And her son who was a graduate engineer and is now working his profession in the Midwest. I understand flying his own plane, consulting engineer flying around. And her daughter Karen married Mike Rubarski, who was also working for Franklin and during Mrs. Crowhurst's vacation time. Sometimes Karen would fill in before her family came along. And I think possibly even Barbara [Herold] may have helped out a bit down there, I'm not so sure! [laughs]

Where do we go from there?

E. Mc Cann: You want to tell us about the Metuchen Club and life there, and also the theater group.

D. Buchanan: Oh yes—which theater group?

E. Mc Cann: That was after the—I mean at the Metuchen Club that you were—

D. Buchanan: Oh yes. Well, the Metuchen Club was a social club, and was in the building that's now occupied by the Masonic Club [Mt. Zion Lodge No. 135 at 483 Middlesex Avenue]. I remember going there many times on many occasions. I don't know how the building is arranged now; I haven't been there in recent years. But the entrance downstairs led to a broad stairway and at the top of the stairway was a coat closet where the ladies shed their wraps and then went out into the ballroom, which was on the second floor. I remember being very annoyed when I was in high school and a cousin, who was just a year or two older, came to visit, but she was allowed to go with my brother as her escort to a club dance and I was not because I was not old enough. We didn't have a junior league in town, we didn't have debuts. But those that were considered old enough were allowed to go to club dances and I was not. [laughs] I was very much annoyed at that.

They had a regular program there of other activities, some dramatic. Josephine Flanagan Carman was a fine dramatic coach and was usually cooking up something either for Quiet Hour or for the Metuchen Club. And I don't know

¹⁴ The hardware store was originally known as the Meyers-Mayo Hardware Store before changing its name to Metuchen Hardware in 1946.

whether she was the coach at this particular occasion when *As You Like It* [William Shakespeare comedy] was staged by the ladies at the Metuchen Club. And I don't know now whether there were club members, ladies who were members of the club, or whether they just used the club. But I remember my mother reciting the part of Orlando [de Boys], "Nay; Tongues I'll hang on every tree." [laughs] The big sensation was that mother appeared in tights. [laughs] Purple tights, which were long johns that she had dyed purple to match the top of a silk bathing suit that was the nearest approach she could make to the costume prescribed for Orlando. And it was a bathing suit cut with a cut-out neck and sleeves, very much as any shell is made today. Except in those days, ladies did not shave. [laughs] Consequently the armpits were decorously covered by a piece of the fabric, which was taped with ribbons over the arms, the upper arms. Does that make it clear?

E. Mc Cann: Yes.

D. Buchanan: And many dances were there. I have somewhere a dance order from one club dance I attended where Almeda Baumann was there with Ken [Kenneth E. Baumann, her husband] and her sister Dorothy was there. We exchanged dances. I was in college or— yes, in college by that time. And there were many, many events held there that I was now allowed to go to. [chuckles] They also kept up the tennis courts there. And I'd like someone to check my memory whose interested in tennis, I think possibly Mrs. F. Morrow DuCocker [phonetic] would be the one because her husband, I seem to recall, was an avid tennis fan. It seems to me that Bill Tilden [famous American tennis player] played on our local courts. But I also recall going up to Cranford to watch a tennis match and it may have been there that I saw him. Perhaps Elsie (Burroughs) Potter would know if he was here. I don't recall. I took a snapshot of him I have to this day; you can't tell who he is, but I know. [laughter] [doorbell rings and dog barks] [recording paused]

I've been asked to talk about the effect of the Depression on lifestyles. I can't say the Depression hurt me very much; I always had enough to eat and a roof over my head. But it was rather amusing that my husband was paid in borough script. And when the grocer I was dealing with had exchanged groceries to me for my script for all that he needed to pay his taxes, I would have to find another grocer. And I was usually able to do so. Other than that, and the fact that occasionally my husband would come home and say, "I don't know, the men are in a belligerent attitude. I don't know what could happen." Whether he was speaking of workers at the Fulgent Company or workers for the borough, I don't even recall. Because of course he worked for the borough for fifty-one years. And the Fulgent Company, in between, during the war years, when out [at] Whitman Avenue, they made landing flares. I don't like to remember that they made incendiary bombs, but that was half of their business. The landing flares were interesting.

E. Mc Cann: Well now the script was an indebtedness of the borough? Or was it legal tender in the borough?

D. Buchanan: Legal tender in the borough is my understanding of it, because I paid the grocer with it and he paid his taxes with it.

E. Mc Cann: And the people though were unhappy with this?

D. Buchanan: I don't think so. But people who were out of work at the time—

E. Mc Cann: Oh, I see. Right, yeah, that's very good rumbling wise then.

D. Buchanan: Perhaps. I wasn't aware of it. But Franklin would sometimes say there's an ugliness in the air. And I don't know now, I should have asked him whether he sensed it among employees of the borough or of the Fulgent Company. Largely, the New Jersey Fulgent Company employed women, and at that time, nylon was very new. And they used the nylon to make parachutes. And many of the girls who were of marriageable age usually, when they were getting married, would make their bridal gowns out of this nylon. It really was lovely, quite thin and silky, and of course durable.

We did have trouble getting the house heated, I recall. But that was wartime shortages, and we moved back briefly from the house we built into the old house. This time instead of having the third floor of 76 Clive [Street], we had the north side of the first and second floors. And father and mother had the south side and we had separate kitchens, and my little kitchen was in the butler's pantry. And at that time, I had inherited a black houseman from a college professor of mine, who had moved into an apartment and really had nothing for him to do except to walk the dog, and she said, "You're living in that big old house, I'm sure that you could use a man there." And I said, "I certainly could." So Harold Jennings came to me and he was a good cook. He could—plain cooking; he could make a good pie. He cooked fish to perfection. The night that he arrived, he had come down with Edna [Livingston] Barbour, my [college] professor, from Haverford [Pennsylvania] where she was teaching in a girls' school. And that same night, we preferred to drive at night to avoid traffic, we drove up to Pine Point, Maine. So he had a long ride! [laughs]

E. Mc Cann: Oh yes.

D. Buchanan: Franklin and I, our two daughters, and our American Cocker [Spaniel] was then before we had English Cockers, and drove up to Pine Point, Maine. And we would go to Snow's (the name may be familiar to you from canned clam chowder and that sort of thing) and buy fish. I never got tired of the fish. We had fish so fresh that we had it every day, and Harold could cook it to perfection. That was really great. Well, after a while, he, when we came home, got the hustling the children a bit and I said, "Look, Harold, I won't need you at all if I didn't have these youngsters. And if they want to play and spread their toys out, they'll have to do it and I'll see that they keep out of your kitchen. But don't, the minute they get their toys spread out, hustle them to put them away." And eventually, we decided to let Harold go and because he had been sort of a bequest from Edna Barbour who was concerned with his welfare, I found him a job with Madge Seiler [Madelyn Seiler at 64 Hillside Avenue] and Madge and Ralph [Seiler] traveled a great deal in those days and left Harold with a charge account at the A&P [grocery store] and they also sold liquor. And Harold had never bothered us with his habits. Occasionally, he'd come in from his day off feeling a little gay and if I'd left the dishes in the sink, he'd rattle them angrily. And the next day, Franklin would say, "Harold, are you perfectly satisfied here?" "Oh yes, sir. Yes, sir. I'm perfectly satisfied." "Well, that's all I wanted to know," and that's all

Frank would say in order to get the idea. [laughs] I'd get so mad, I'd blow up, you know, and he'd [her husband] say, "Now, now, don't say anything." [laughter]

But Madge, I think, became dissatisfied with Harold. At any rate, he developed a rather bad cough and he was sent over to Roosevelt Hospital to determine the cause of this cough. And of course, they x-ray and they found out that he swallowed a single denture that he had that had stuck in his throat. [laughter] Then he used to come and work for me occasionally on Saturdays when we were back in the house we built at 56 Clive [Street] and he'd polish the brass out on the back porch and look over toward the Wiley house [at 36 Clive Street] where they had a lot of chickens. We didn't have any at that time. And the next thing I heard, Agnes Wiley [the daughter], who was a nurse, had come home late at night and run her car into the open garage that they had—I don't think there was a door on it—and was frightened to death because a man ran out past her and she called the police. The police tracked him by the feathers! [laughs]

E. Mc Cann: Oh no!

D. Buchanan: So Harold ended up at the workhouse. At that time, I was serving on jury duty. And after I had finished my stint at jury duty, I'd go over next door to the jail and take Harold's cigarettes, and I said, "Harold, aren't you ashamed of yourself to be here?" And he said, "Oh, just a little misdemeanor, Mrs. Buchanan; just a little misdemeanor." [laughter] He was a real character! [laughter]

E. Mc Cann: Your work down in New Brunswick, you want to tell us about that?

D. Buchanan: My attention span to business seems to be about two years. I worked about two years at the [Raritan] Arsenal during the war. And then when we were going to be frozen in our jobs, my husband was commissioned to find a situation for a new plant down where help would be easier to get from a small town, or farmer's wives, and that sort of thing for the Fulgent Company. So I thought we might have to move there, so I went down with him. Gas was scarce and allotted very carefully in those days. But he was allotted gas for the purpose; we took a train down to Harrisburg [Pennsylvania], I think, or Pittsburgh [Pennsylvania]. And Mr. [Samuel] Wiley left the car there and he drove from there along the [unclear] drive. So this way, I got out of a job at the Raritan Arsenal. I mentioned before I was getting a little weary of not being kept busy there. But little digression while the dog sits in my lap. [laughter]

And then after many years, six years of volunteer Red Cross work at Kilmer Hospital, I was asked to take the local Red Cross job. It was a one-woman office in the Borough Hall and I went into New York for two-weeks orientation and became what—my title was home service director, but really was executive secretary because I had a lot of things of known service. I lasted about two years in that. [laughs] And then I got a little tired of finding that on Saturdays too, my day was not my own because if the sailor got stranded in town and needed cash, I had to go open up the office, talk to him, explore his story. Or if a family ran out of groceries, I had to go visit the home whether it was Saturday or Sunday. Because after all, I was spending publicly-donated money. I had to be sure that it was deserved where it was going. And I didn't want—I had taken the office with

the understanding that I'd work—set my own hours from ten to four, and not during the weekend. So I stopped that.

But then I saw advertised in the paper a position of social worker with children for what was then the State Board of Child Welfare. Now I think it's the Bureau of Children Services under the New Jersey State Institutions and Agencies. And [unclear] present yourself for examination, a civil service examination, and I did that and passed. And I don't know how I passed. [laughs] But the questions were quite interesting. They asked me if I had any prejudices against any people. And I thought a while and I said, "Yes, against French people and Southerners." [laughter] And I have friends in both categories that I love dearly. But I had met a great deal of discourtesy in Paris [France] and nowhere else in Europe. And I happened to have known a Southern man who had left his wife and gone off with someone else and this disillusioned me very much because he was very attractive. [laughs] So I realized that was my prejudice and they said, "Well, what would you—," another question, "What would you do given a certain situation? How would you cope with it?" And I said, "Well, I try not to play God, but try to bring them to a realization of what was best for them through discussion of it in general." Well, apparently, I read enough sociology so those were the right answers. [laughs] I passed my civil service.

Then I went and got the job as case worker. And my office was in New Brunswick on Paterson Street, and the area that I was supposed to supervise children in foster homes was Perth Amboy. And I had some very interesting cases since the homes were mostly on State Street, Perth Amboy. I mean the original homes of the children. And I was also supervising parolees and probationers in their own homes. And some of the foster mothers were perfectly fine, and my sympathy in a recent case has certainly been with the foster mother where they took those two girls away from their foster mother. That seemed to me very cruel. I've known splendid foster mothers, and in every case, even if the child is dissatisfied, he usually comes to the realization that he has it a lot better with the foster mother than he would have in his own home. I've seen children placed back in their own homes at their insistence and they are not happy there. Then they have a chance to compare and realize that they had it much better in the foster home.

I enjoyed the work thoroughly, but I worked there about two years before arthritis hit me and I suppose it was driving twenty to 120 miles; it would be some days three, four days a week. Well, the days that I had the car was supposed to be three, sometimes they'd be four. And I'd have to drive to Perth Amboy from estate car [station wagon] from the New Brunswick office garage and visit around there and if that day, a home that I was temporarily supervising in Carteret exploded—they were high school teenagers and I'd have to go knock a few heads together there. [laughs] And that happened to be the same day that I took two little boys down to the New Jersey School for the Deaf [in Ewing Township], one from Perth Amboy and one from New Brunswick. They'd be 120 miles. So I was very badly crippled with arthritis, my neck was twisted, and one hip was in the air, and I drove over. And about that time, I gave up my little clamps that I dearly loved for a [unclear]. Seemed like the imperial to me because just that little difference in wheelbase made it so much more comfortable for me. But after sticking it out for three months, I resigned. So my supervisor comforted me by saying that she knew that in cases of osteoarthritis, I could count on its

coming and going and that certainly was the case because I got better, [it] handicaps me very little now. Once in a while, it will.

But that ended the job that I liked very much. And I found I related better to the teenagers than to the little ones.

E. Mc Cann: Is that right?

D. Buchanan: We had to carry over a hundred cases apiece. And each one had to be reported on only once in three months. But that was the minimum and when emergencies occurred, you might have to visit one home three times in one week. So it really was a rather heavy caseload. And then when they appeared in court, I got rather a kick out of the fact that the juvenile court judge was a college classmate of mine, Aldona (Leszczynski) Appleton, from Perth Amboy. And if the judge's decision was to send the youngster to the diagnostic center, my friend Katherine (Ford) Ruttiger, whom I'd known from the first grade in school and was chief psychologist there, would take the case from there. And it was rather interesting to have, to know the full circuit of what was happening with the case you were interested in.

E. Mc Cann: Right, you keep track.

D. Buchanan: There was the little boy for instance who was born of a circus family and every child in that family—and there were six or seven—had been born in a different state and he was the eldest. And of course, he had babysat for all of them and this was his role and he was quite slow mentally. And I tried to arrange for him to have his teeth repaired, for instance, and he had two complete sets of teeth in his mouth. And I found that my dentist would pay him for free because the state could not pay for cosmetic surgery, which is what it amounted to. So then he would be moved. He would start acting out in that home and be moved to another territory so I didn't accomplish that. But I finally did get him into Vineland from where he eloped. [laughter] That was the expression they used then for space. Next time he appeared in the papers, he had been at the [New York] World's Fair [in 1964] and had picked up a little boy who was lost and taken him to his scruffy little apartment that he was supporting by washing dishes. And the New York authorities imagined all sorts of bad motives for this, but it seemed very natural to the judge of the court ... [recording ends]

[END OF TAPE 2, SIDE 1]

E. Mc Cann: Yes. Well Dolly, I want to say thank you. We do appreciate it and if you would like to hear it sometime, we are going to make copies of course. And then that way, everyone can hear it. It will be good for research and just for the memories that we have of 1976. [laughter] But thank you very much.

D. Buchanan: Thank you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]