

**Mrs. Charlotte Crampton - 5/2/76. Interviewer: Adele Miles.**

**This is an interview for the Russell Library Oral History Project. My name is Adele Miles. I am interviewing Charlotte Crampton at her home on 158 Mt. Vernon Street in Middletown on May 2, 1976.**

**Q: You're saying you're going to give statistics, or something, about like when you came to Middletown? How old were you--how long your parents were here?**

A: I was born--am I starting right?:

**Q: Yes, go ahead.**

A: My father had always lived in Middletown. My mother came from Cleveland to visit a friend and met my father who was probably in his early or mid-forties, and she was the youngest of five children. Her best friend had married a man in Middletown and it's where she met my father. I don't know how long they were married before I came along and I was the only child, and I was born on the corner of Court and Pearl Street. We lived there until I was about five and at that time there were a good many friends and neighbors. My father had been a bachelor for all those years and his parents were quite dependent on him. His father had rheumatic (rheumatoid) arthritis. I imagine it was that because he was in a wheelchair. And I think "Pop", as we called my father, and by the grandchildren. We didn't know him for very long. ( ) did a good deal for his mother and for his younger brother who died when he was quite young of tuberculosis. He knew a good many people and had known most of Middletown in his growing-up years and had a good many friends. And eventually they built this house. I can remember moving into it at the age of five. Many of our neighbors in the Court and Pearl Street and the Broad Street area were old families in Middletown: the Achesons, Richard Achenson and his family lived on Broad Street, and there were many doctors there who had been friends of our father's family.

**Q: Professional families?**

A: Yes, and then many elderly couples, Mr. and Mrs. Putnam, whom I remember vividly, as Mrs. Putnam was "Celestia". This name was perfect for her. She was a charming, angelic, celestial kind of person who didn't have children of her own and who loved having me as her next-door neighbor, as a small infant, because I was born at home as many children were in those days. And there was Anna Smith who was quite a character and who taught French and who vainly tried to teach the children my age French but finally gave up in despair because she found us not quite ready for such--

**Q: Did she teach French at the school, or did she--**

A: No, but she spoke French well and our mothers thought that that would increase our cultural educations at the ages of seven or eight, or thereabouts, but it didn't seem to work. I think she found us rather difficult to handle at that point. And there were a number of very interesting older ladies, older couples too, in that area, and when we moved here this neighborhood perhaps had one faculty family, Professor and Mrs. Mann who had known us well up until Mrs. Mann's death a month ago. They were always lovely neighbors and very kind to us and to their children who were a little younger; their daughters were a little younger than I. Otherwise, these families were mostly business

fathers, husbands who ran a business, oh, probably successful. I remember one man, Mr. Coles, was in the grain business. Mr. Lyon had a men's store very much like Camp's Store today. Mr. Smith is retired from a very busy and successful brick yard. Mr. Brewster was an automobile dealer and his daughter, Janet, who was a couple of years younger than I, married Edward Murrow, the radio commentator; and she was, is, a lovely and delightful person and always unspoiled by all of the exciting adventures. And it was a really great neighborhood to grow up in. There weren't too many children. There were the Coles girls and their older brother across the street, Margaret True, almost across the street where the Brian's now live. Robert True who lived where the (Gallups) do now. Their father had a busy and attractive jewelry store.

**Q: In Middletown?**

A: In Middletown. And the Lyons' daughter who was older than I, who went to Smith-- and I can remember Mother saying, "Catherine is a very nice girl. I hope some day you will go to Smith" and, luckily, I did. And it was ( ) the Coles girls, Margaret True and I were the ones who always joined ranks and went off to high school together. Before that, Margaret True and I and the many girls, as I remember, went down to (Brewster), went to a small private school that was just four houses up the street.

**Q: Towards Wesleyan?**

A: Yes. And that was really--as I think back to it, our children didn't go to private schools, just elementary schools through the eighth grade, so it's really, it was an unusually good private school.

**Q: This was only for girls?**

A: No, girls and boys; not many boys. One boy in our grade, poor fellow, he survived about probably eight girls and one boy and the teachers were quite well able to teach the students. They did a good job, I think, in keeping abreast of teaching, and we all survived. We had a fair amount of freedom. The director of the school, Mrs. Fisher, was an older person and really a darling, lovely person who would comfort anyone who got into difficulty swinging on the desks, as we did sometimes, and who, we found, was always ready to pick you up and even if you disobeyed a rule and were weeping she would pick you up and give you a hug and make you feel quite at ease and at home. And I think that was fairly remarkable in those days. You didn't feel that you were terribly hemmed in. You could run home at recess, if necessary, if you'd forgotten something, and going from that school to high school surprisingly was not a difficult adjustment. We had always during those days at that school went on strike because two teachers were leaving and we were very upset.

**Q: This was in high school?**

A: No, this was the Mt. Vernon School and that was rather advanced, I think, in those days.

**Q: What did you do? How did you get--?**

A: Well, I don't know. I suppose we read about it or heard about it.

**Q: From the labor strikes, or something?**

A: Yes. I suppose in those days--but we marched up and down with placards and the teachers were wise enough to just let us do that. We went up and down in front of the school and we didn't go rushing off or boycott who was in the school. But those were the kinds of things that, when I think of it, I realize what a very good job that they were doing even in that far-away time.

**Q: What subjects did you study?**

A: Well, just the regular. We had the usual subjects, along with music and art, not things called Social Studies, not that ( ). We called them Geography, Civics and History up through the eighth grade.

**Q: Any foreign language?**

A: No, no.

**Q: Science, or such?**

A: No, not really, no; I don't think so. And the upstairs part of the school had a very big room for plays. We did quite a lot with music and dramatics; and then there was a dancing class in that upstairs area to which many of us went.

**Q: Was it ballroom-type dancing?**

A: Yes. That was a ballroom for dancing for seventh and eighth graders. Most of us went to a dancing class downtown. A good deal of that was later on when we went to high school. But that was the time when I first met my husband, more officially at least. He went, as most of our friends did, to the public school, Central School, and had to bring his bag and slippers to school and had to hold his own against a lot of the boys who kidded him because he had to go as a sissy, taking shoes and a bag to dancing school. He didn't really dance with me but he always says he did, but I think he danced with the girl across the street, who was one of my best friends, instead. That was a long time ago but high school, as I think I said before, was surprisingly easy to adjust to because, of course, it was a much broader mixture of different groups, particularly ethnic groups, who comprised Middletown at that time, mostly the same groups that exist now: Italian, Irish, Polish, not very many blacks in those days. I think those were the only groups that I can think of but we never thought of there being any difficulty or even THOUGHT of differences. We were all part of a group and there didn't seem to be any discrimination in choosing people for class officers, for instance. It didn't matter whether you were one nationality or another. I was fortunate to be at Middletown High because the teacher, Mrs. (Jako), was wonderful. Maybe you may have heard of her through the college, she got an honorary degree from Wesleyan and then went on to teach at Deerfield after she retired from Middletown High. She was a most remarkable Latin teacher and she made Latin really exciting for everybody. I took a class, in fact, well, I went on and took one year in college. I must confess I didn't want to take Math very much but I really would never have taken Latin if I hadn't liked it so much. ( ) and almost--I think almost all of us who really wanted to go to college were able to go without too much difficulty. Perhaps it was easier then, I'm sure it was, to get in.

**Q: How so, in terms of expenses, for instance?**

A: Well, that was one aspect of it. I suppose there were quite a few wanting to go. There were two of us in my--no, I was the only one who went to Smith from my class, but a number of them went to Mt. Holyoke and other schools in (Massachusetts?). That was where Dianne Brewster went a couple of years after. She was a couple of years after me. My father was very much interested, as Mother was, in having me go to college and Pop worked as a bookkeeper in a bank in town and also worked for the Middletown Building and Loan Association as secretary of that. It kept him very busy and his favorite activity was golf so that he was a "Sunday" golfer whenever he had a chance to go off with a friend in a Model T car.

**Q: Did he have a car?**

A: No, he didn't have a car. No, no, we either went on the trolley which ran up and down the street.

**Q: Up and down the streets?**

A: Yes, or walked, or occasionally went with friends. But not too many did have cars. Well, a lot of the neighbors did but there were still a good many that did not.

**Q: Did your mother work at all? Did she have to?**

A: No, no. I did have, oh, I had baby sitters and nursemaids. I went through a baby book this afternoon for fun and I still remember some of the nursemaids or great baby sitters I had. I had one very nice Swedish girl and a Polish girl who really wasn't a baby sitter as much as she was a live-in maid. It would be unusual to have someone like that in those days but she was very much like a member of the family and we had one other who didn't live in but came daily. ( ). My parents entertained some, not a great deal, but usually they'd give a tea or a dinner, that type of entertainment, so that there were a lot of people coming for one night. Since I was an only child I was well behaved surprisingly so. When I sometimes see grandchildren I think that I must seem rather dull in contrast to them, but maybe a little more relaxing in some ways.

**Q: Do you see any differences between ( )?**

A: Well, I think you mean among the families whom I knew as a child like my friends' families. I think most of us, perhaps the Coles family across the street, were a little more relaxed and easy-going than my parents were. Mary and Elizabeth Coles always seemed to have maybe a little more fun in some ways but there were two girls and a brother and relatives nearby that accounted for some of the difference and my mother was ill. She had then what was called an involution of melancholia. Well, it really was a kind of depression during the "menopausal depression", as it was called in those days. She was at a private institution in Cromwell, Cromwell Hall, and then at the Hartford Institute of Retreat, it was called then, so that I was at the Coles' house a great deal. We had a housekeeper but the Coles' were very friendly and warm and loving so that I was there a lot of the time. So I had a chance to see what fun it was to be in a family where you did things together and had more games and fun things to do that were the things you missed even though you

didn't get as much attention, perhaps, as an only child does; but many other things that made up for it.

**Q: What kind of games did they play?**

A: Well, we all played Cops and Robbers and Hide and Seek, Hopscotch, the same, many of the things they play today. Of course we did more of the--well, we also played games like that that required a little more imagination and effort on our part, than just going to the movies. We were allowed to go to the movies but only Saturday afternoons. Then if we went we'd be left there or expected back at a certain time. Then we'd go to special movies, not just do anything that came along. There was a good deal of selection on the part of parents, although eventually we did get to go see things like Pearl White who was always hanging off the end of a precipice just as the installment ended. You couldn't wait to go back until the next Saturday afternoon but usually--and then there were many outdoor activities, especially in the winter, as there was lots more snow, sliding and skating, and there was really good weather for it.

**Q: You'd slide down the hill at Wesleyan?**

A: Yes, and we also skied and slid on Indian Hill at the cemetery.

**Q: Oh, skied?**

A: I'm sure that isn't allowed now, at least we haven't seen any skiing there for a long time. We often walk over there.

**Q: Was it downhill skiing or cross country?**

A: Yes. Between the gravestones. I remember my parents would come sometimes to watch me. I didn't realize until much later how scary it must have been for them to see us, but nobody was ever hurt. There was tobogganing there too but I think that's probably not allowed. Of course Foss Hill, but then it was broken by the street which ran Mt. Vernon ran straight through to Cross. It's only recently that it's been blocked off. Since we came back to live after my husband finished his medical practice. Perhaps I'm getting ahead of myself again.

**Q: ( )?**

A: Well, high school was a very rewarding and good experience because it was small enough so that you knew everyone and I enjoyed people and got along well with them, well enough to be class vice president, and do a lot of things that I guess I would describe, you know, as a "good" kid, conscientious, hard working and who did a job that had to be done and didn't complain, and those are always the ones who get the jobs. I really liked doing it. I liked people.

**Q: What did you do?**

A: As vice president or running a class, helping with--although we haven't had many class reunions, but class parties or picnics, and doing that kind of thing, or helping run class meetings. There never was a girl president of the class. It was always a boy who was president.

**Q: Was that, like, a common agreement, or was it always--?**

A: Has it always been the case? I'm not sure it's the case now. I wonder if it is?

**Q: ( )?**

A: Of course Middletown High now, I don't know. I didn't keep track of them but they were an awfully good group in the class and we , although we haven't kept in touch with reunions. Of course quite a few are still living; quite a few of my classmates are still living in this area. Although I went off to college I still came back to work during vacations. I worked playing the piano for summer school and Sunday school. Small children would come for a kind of play group during the morning. I wasn't that great a pianist but at least I could play enough so that they could sing or play games or do that kind of thing; so that I was able to keep in touch with classmates and have a job and earn a little money. And it kept me busy and that was a very good arrangement, and a lot of my friends were doing similar things.

**Q: ( ). What was the year you graduated from high school?**

A: 1926. It was when I came back from college, during the college vacations that I did playing and working at the school for awhile, until they ran out of money and couldn't afford to keep that kind of program going. But I was lucky not to lose touch with my college friends who visited.

**Q: Do you remember what they've done since? Have some gone on to other jobs or left Middletown?**

A: Well, a lot of the--(Bill) Abbey was in our class. He is probably retired now from working at the bank. One of his claims to fame is that he went to Hollywood on vacations and then gradually got to know many of the stars and photographed them and then gradually got to know them well enough so that he was invited to visit with them and have dinner with (writers) there. So he was a well-known speaker around town, telling his adventures in Hollywood and that kind of thing. ( ) unusually famous, I guess.

**Q: They were usually unsuccessful? [Chuckles]**

A: I guess we don't hear as much--I guess the middle ground ones were--well, some of the presidents of our high school class were ( ). There was a bank president in Cromwell, for instance. Oh, and another classmate worked quite a while in Bunce's. I don't know what he's doing. He lived a bit on the seedy side and finally he disappeared from sight. I'm sure he hasn't died because he's been living here all the time you're sort of high on the obituary notices. You often know many of the people who were around your age who eventually appear in that notice ( ) keep in touch with their wives or their husbands, not as much as you often mean to but ( ), college friends too, and through that contact there you go on to a wider group. It's so difficult to keep them all going, as much as we'd like to.

**Q: How much, did you enjoy Smith a lot?**

A: Well, yes. I think I would have been probably happier in a smaller college. In many ways the first year I felt--Well, the high school was small; I was used to doing everything and being--

**Q: How many were in your class?**

A: About five hundred to start with and I felt absolutely stunned the first year. I was on the registrar list as a Freshman the first semester, which meant that if I didn't pull up my grades I might not survive. It really was scary and I worked and worked and I really didn't know very much about studying. Most of the girls in the class, or a good many of them, had been away to various good boarding schools. I was in a French class that was an awfully good one where I understood and could read the French well but I was scared to death to speak it as, almost everybody had a French governess so she'd been speaking French since she'd been five or--so that I really managed to get back on my feet at the end of the semester and then I was all right. But I never really felt easy, at least for a year or two, about doing all the things that I would, I think, have enjoyed more, singing in the choir. I started doing that and then got scared and dropped some things. But I just didn't feel I could do it right with all my classes. I think that although, I really got a great deal out of it when I look back at Smith. I look back on it with a great deal of loyalty and affection--

**Q: Were there--?**

A: I think I've probably been more forceful since I've been outside, in some ways, than when I was actually there, oh, fund raising and doing things for reunions and that type of thing. I did feel that I really got a tremendous amount out of it. I made very good friends in my senior year and actually enjoyed going back. Connecticut College, about that size ( ) I think would have been better for me. My mother was very happy that I went to Smith and particularly as she said Catherine Lyon was a very nice girl and a nice neighbor, and she thought Smith would be a very nice place for me to go because she hadn't gone to college, of course. A girl finishing school gave her no idea of college. I'm sure it hadn't been part of her life or probably her sisters' lives either.

**Q: Had she gone to college? ( ).**

A: No. I'd never been to (Hartford ) but the Butterfields we knew well from the time we came back here to Middletown. ( ). Yes, that was even before; I guess we knew them when they were first here. My husband had taught at Wesleyan and shifted from Medicine to, or teaching Biology, and earned his Ph.D. to go into Medical School, which he always wanted to do; and after we married we both decided that it was the thing to do. I wanted to do it too; so after we were married, well, I finished college in the '30's. We were married in '33 and then I worked in New Haven and he went to Medical School at Yale.

**Q: He lived here, or did you--?**

A: He lived in Middletown too, he and his family, on Brainerd Avenue, off and on, and so--

**Q: Oh, but, did you live in Middletown when you were first married?**

A: No. We lived in Higganum. He started in at the Medical--no, we lived at the Children's Center where I worked, the Children's Agency, social work agency, or child-caring institution. I was able to live there and he earned a little money by being a part-time house father; and after awhile when he really got on the Boards he couldn't continue with that so he was right in the hospital and he went through the residency in Obstetrics there and I went on to the Children's Center doing case work until Steve was born ( ) in '39; and then we came back here in '41, after a great deal of thought. His parents were getting older and my mother had died and Pop was alone. He had a housekeeper but we finally felt that we should be nearby. ( ). There were a lot of places where he might have thought of going into practice and then we, of course, had still many friends in Middletown, friends at the college, who might have gone to Wesleyan. That was when we renewed our friendship with the Butterfields. I remember my father was saying one evening when the Butterfields were here and after they'd gone we all had a beer or something, and Pop was amused, and he said, "Well, remember the day when the president of Wesleyan would not have had even a glass of beer? I never thought I'd be sitting and having a glass of beer with a Wesleyan College president!" He thought this was great and they had a very pleasant time drinking. The times had changed even for him from the time during his lifetime in Middletown. It simply wasn't being done by Wesleyan College presidents.

**Q: Was Wesleyan a separate type of entity or was it more in touch with the people in Middletown?**

A: I think it was less in touch then. I think it's much more open now. ( ). I don't know how the faculty feel about it. Awhile back they felt they weren't as in touch as much as they'd like to be and I think most of us feel that it's difficult to overcome all those blocks because the town has the same, has many reservations to overcome. The college is doing an unusually good job in trying to break down some of those. I've been a docent for the past year and that's just one, at the Art Center. That's just one very good way of bringing the town into the college, and that's just one of many ways that ( ) some of these cultural commissioned activities and the Bicentennial kind of things are ideal ways. Do you feel that way as a student?

**Q: It's funny because I know that they've tried their best with a lot of events, that Wesleyan is trying to keep in touch but I think ( ) and a lot of special students ( ) from town to take courses here.**

**Q:... But whenever I go down to Main Street there are certain people in Middletown that I rarely see just a few blocks away and somehow that the contact is with only a certain type of, or certain people, but perhaps understoodly so with Main Street feeling.**

A: ( ) is happening to us too because we used to go down, especially when my father was living. We used to go down Friday nights when we came back from New Haven for the weekend. It was a while back, of course, when I'd go shopping and my father and husband would sit in the car and they'd see dozens of people they knew, all kinds of people, friends and acquaintances. Now you see so many, many people you've never seen



before in your life. Even that still happens, but I think part of that is because people are going to shopping centers outside and the whole lifestyle of cities, not just in Middletown but all over the country, has changed by cars in the same way that entertainment and the way people and children entertain themselves, perhaps with a little more enjoyment. When we were small, of course, we had to devise a little more than they do now for younger ones, there wasn't TV and radio. I'd say easy stuff to rely on. Their imaginations are not working. Then, of course, you also have to have a place to do things and room to do it and a comfortable house and money to do it, too; it was my advantage to be just fortunate, to be lucky enough, to have.

**Q: One thing that Mr. ( ) asked me perhaps to get more exact on were differences between ethnic groups, meaning differences between people living here, Yankee and other groups ( )?**

A: Well, it was really that most of the neighbors here were people who always lived here and, well, their parents perhaps had always lived somewhere around in this area. Well, my father's parents had always lived in Middletown. My husband's parents lived in Madison, then they moved to Middletown and eventually wound up on Brainerd Avenue. Pop's parents moved from Broad Street to Court and then up here. And in the same way, I suppose, the Brewsters who were next door lived over on High Street, but a little way over beyond, not north, a part of North High, and then built this house after we lived here.

**Q: ( )?**

A: No, next to us. My parents built this house.

**Q: They designed it?**

A: Well, Mr. (Stuart) Ward who was an architect for the college too designed this house and, oh, half-a-dozen others on this street. That was considered fairly modern with all the windows and the space. There are several other houses on this street that he did when he was about twenty-two, I think. He did the Center for the Humanities. He revised--that isn't his best one, perhaps, although I think it is a very interesting building, far more so inside than out, perhaps.

**Q: That's very nice.**

A: And then he did--

**Q: This college?**

A: He reorganized old Judd Hall. That was quite a well-done thing and most of the families here had lived in Middletown or in a similar kind of situation. Actually the Lyons came from Bridgeport. Mr. Davis, across the street, always lived in Middletown. All his family has died now and they're replaced pretty much by--but mostly of the faculty families now, except about three of us who own our own houses--

**Q: Wesleyan---**

A: Well, it's natural for one to buy houses on this street and it's very interesting. We find it great to have faculty families because it brings variety and interesting families and ( )

with children and younger families. We have the Kahns across the street and we have the Silvermans and the young Rabbi and his wife who are now in Israel. Two houses down, I think, there's a greater mixture and very good for the street, too. They enliven it when the older ones pass on. We still don't feel we're that old. I know we are in a way, but-- and families who are living, and the newer immigrants who are coming, newer families largely living downtown, living on the river or the very end of North High Street were Italian and Polish and Irish families.

**Q: Did they live in certain areas?**

A: Well, largely Italians along the riverfront, although originally a lot of old Yankees lived there. That was long before, I think, even before the college that they were just beginning to move up when the Italian families were moving in. Polish families lived, well, mostly in the south end of the city where St. Mary's Church is and out in the South Farms District and some in Middlefield. Irish, well, I don't know, perhaps quite a few in the North End, as well as some Italian families. Many of the houses, at least at the present time, I think, really do look very neat and well kept, lots of trees and small yards, but everything very well pruned and raked. Because everybody wanted its little garden to look good. Our children, well, two of them anyway, attended boarding schools. The youngest one didn't want to go at all. He finished at Middletown High and then went to (Middlebury); but they all had friends in all parts of Middletown and of various ethnic groups. We felt very strongly about that situation and didn't like the places where there were quotas or were restricted. Some Jewish families? I don't know if there was any special spot. There were many older Jewish families that we've known for years and years, the Wrubel family, for instance. There were many Wrubel families; the Wrubel Store family now have no connection with the store but they have lived here. Lots of Jewish families have lived in Middletown for years and all of us have known them. Our children have known them through schools and social situations, too, so I don't understand this ( ) specific spot for Jewish families ( ).

**Q: Is there a difference in the living situations of each group [missed a lot]**

A: Well, perhaps. I think in the early days they came over to work in quarries. I'm not so sure about that. I can't remember that. I'm not sure about that. In Portland there were many Swedish and Scandinavian families, some in Middletown too. I'm not sure whether they were doing farming ( ) they were living in Middletown and part of the high school situation. I didn't really get to know them as well until I got into the high school situation.

**Q: I'm interested in ( ). [General conversation]**

**Q: When was the trolley installed and when was it taken away?**

A: It was here before I was. I don't know how long it has been gone. I don't remember exactly when it was taken away. Let's see, my father is ( ).

**Q: Associated with ( )**

A: Well, I think it was associated with the influx of automobiles. Automobiles, although I'm not sure of that date. My father went back and forth on the--well, no, it was the bus by that time. I'm not sure.

**Q: Was it really noisy?**

A: No, not too bad; one just got used to it. It took them years to take the tracks away. Downtown ( ) then they ran to Middlefield and one branch went to Meriden. At the foot of the street here it ran right straight along. One went to Middlefield and another right on to Meriden because when my father played golf at the club between Middletown and Meriden, he went often on the trolley.

**Q: Did a lot of people play golf?**

A: Yes, quite a few.

**Q: ( )?**

A: Not too many, no. And he was also a bicycle rider. He rode to Springfield on a Century Run fifty miles up and back in a day. Well, that was, you see, he wasn't married until in his mid-forties and he and the boys would go off for a day, usually a Saturday or Sunday, and they'd have a special place where they'd go for dinner. Then often they rode high-wheeled bikes in the very early days.

**Q: Those big tricycles! Did they really?**

A: Yes. And then they played baseball. Of course they did a lot of athletics and enjoyed Wesleyan's place very much. And since he just had me as a child he used to take me to football games in New Haven, as well as Wesleyan. I pitched ball. I was the best baseball player in the street. He would stand in the yard and threw the pitch and catch.

**Q: Overhand? The baseball?**

A: Overhand, yes It was quite a good experience.

**Q: Was your mother or father involved in any social groups? ( ).**

A: I don't--well, there seemed to be a lot of teas. I belong to a literary club which is very much like the Monday Club only, well, rather like it, only it has to be smaller because we meet at people's houses. Well, the largest number we can have is thirty, but never thirty all come at the same time because lots of people go to Florida; and friends of mother's belonged but she was sort of half in-between. While a literary club isn't quite as--I think it was a great social ( ) in terms of the folks who belonged to it. It still is in a sense but not as it was in the early days, and most of the members in the early days were young women who didn't go off to college, wrote papers every week, but now ( ) someone gets a paper every other year and they meet once a month. But I don't think--my mother didn't belong to that, but some of her friends--I don't think she [Missed a lot]. But then a lot of people, mothers of friends of mine, went to Mt. Vernon school, did more of those things with the District Nurse, children's milk fund, and so on. Perhaps because they (lived here) and had lots more money and more maids. There were one or two families who had butlers and I think they were really, I suppose they'd be "Jets", so-called today for they had more time to do that if they were interested. Some of them were very interested and very civic-minded and generous. You see, mother was ill for quite a while so that when I was quite small she was at home and I did a lot of things with her, went places with her, to tea and would sit quietly . ( ) where one child is quiet and well

behaved ( ) as there was for my parents and I suppose for me too. Sometimes it seemed long but it was a different kind of life in those days. There'd be other children there too occasionally. They were equally quiet, except during a long Thanksgiving dinner or something like that ( ) wait. "Don't speak until you were spoken to", but all that is changed.

**Q: Were there any special activities for Christmas or Easter ( ) in Middletown ( )?**

A: Well, yes, there were lots of ( ) my parents' friends picnics. They were very picnic-minded and did a lot of things like that, not too many in this neighborhood; but there were families on Court Street and one family over by the high school, the Meech family, who were very active in music and musical things. Oh, we did quite a lot of that. My mother was always interested in concerts and there were concerts at the old Middlesex. They had DeKoven's opera, Robin Hood, and they had the ( ) quartet and various season tickets for series and my father didn't usually go because he worked at night at the Building and Loan. But mother and I would go and usually we'd have the afternoon series tickets, not the evening ones. And the Meech family--Mr. Meech, would sit down and play Hungarian waltzes with great vigor and they always had ( ) very heavy and very pretty ( ) and had great meals with lots of fattening things. I remember we always enjoyed going there. We had very good meals too, lots of nice things, but we'd go to dinner and lunch and some things like that. Families would come in. Mother's family was all in Cleveland. All of my father's family had died. I can't remember ever seeing my grandparents because he was that much older ( ). His parents were ( ). I don't remember any of his close cousins ( ). Mother's family in Cleveland I went to visit often with mother, perhaps once a year. Perhaps once a year we'd go out. She had three sisters and brothers. They ran a catering business and restaurant so we'd go out there and sometimes they would come here. They'd come to the shore or take a cottage ( ) and then we'd come and join them.

**Q: The shore? The Connecticut shore?**

A: Yes.

**Q: How was it--was the river very important?**

A: It was when my father was young, not when I was. It never flowed over that I remember. When Pop was younger it did. [Missed a lot].

A: A lot of boats, a lot more boating. Of course, now there's a lot more boating ( ). I don't think they even throw the pots in anymore, do they?

**Q: I don't know.**

A: I think not. I heard that recently. They don't like to throw them in the polluted stream or lots of others, either.

**Q: So you got away from Middletown, at least after graduation which was, I presume '40, '41?**

A: I went to work at the Children's Center as soon as I finished.: ( ): ( ): ( ):

**Q: In New Haven?**

A: In New Haven. And we were married and came back here in '41.

**Q: ( )?**

A: James was my second child. Steve was born in (May) and Ray was born in '42. I remember my husband went into the Navy in '44. He was in the Philippines for a year and then he did just obstetrics and gynecology. Stayed on- came back and then had a partner ( ). Dr. Craig was his partner here just before he went ( ). They were both sitting waiting for babies to arrive night after night. He was very congenial so they got together as a partnership and then finally added a third man.

**Q: After the Baby Boom, or during the Baby Boom?**

A: Yes, and he finally came up here many years ago.

**Q: They had an office downtown?**

A: They had an office downtown. Originally it was on Main and then they were □□ on South Main, and then finally it was ( )

**Q: We were just talking about your husband's business. As a doctor ( ) I was more interested in the medical services and quality perhaps?**

A: Well, before, when I was born, many of the doctors did obstetrics of a sort. One doctor had a box by his front door and if you were pregnant you'd drop a note in the box and say you were due on the 9th of May; and then you'd let him know when that date came, unless something unusual turned up before. ( ). The doctor would deliver you. I don't know how often anyone saw him- or those details, but I was delivered at home. That was very often the case. My husband was delivered at home, too. His younger sister was delivered in the hospital.

**Q: ( )? The hospital down here?**

A: Yes, yes. She was about eight years younger than I. In general, everybody was in obstetrics as general doctor practice. There wasn't as much specialization. There were surgeons who had quite good training and they did just surgery. And there was Dr. ( ) whose husband who was in (Classics?) Professor here did pediatrics. I remember she took care of me. She was an unusual person. She was really amazing. She had all kinds of ideas about women's lib and she really pursued her career and fought for women's rights. ( ). She was quite independent ( ). She died soon after a heart attack after she helped put out a fire along in the ( ) and Haddam area. ( ). She was right down there fighting the fire with the firemen. She did lots of things, and a good many things that were unusual. There were other women doctors. Dr. Ives was a Homeopathic physician where you could get a small dose of ( ) and she had many patients. She drove a horse and buggy and had an office where Huntington's Book Store was originally and where that a little restaurant is now on the corner of College and Broad. And I never had her as a doctor but I knew her. She was rather a very unusual person.

**Q: ( )?**

A: You mean flappers or other type of--

**Q: ( ) liberation?**

A: Yes, we were affected by Norman Thomas' (socialism). We were there during that time. We were all--

**Q: Did he stay here at Wesleyan for a little bit?**

A: He probably spoke here. He came to Smith and we were all carried away by his speaking and his ideas. I was very much in favor of all of them ( ). That was the main cause, or one of the main causes, that I recall at the time. I don't think I was that much of a flapper. I might have wanted to be. I wouldn't have had, probably, that much courage. I probably was grinding over those books.

**Q: Was there a library ( )?**

A: Yes.

**Q: In North Hampton, or in Middletown, Xavier High School?**

A: Well, yes, and sometimes the Wesleyan Library ( ). But we ( ) at Russell.

**Q: Did you work at Wesleyan?**

A: No. No, I worked just at the Children's Center in New Haven.

**Q: Did you live in Middletown?**

A: No, I lived there in New Haven. In fact, at that time we lived on the grounds (of the Children's' Center). The supervisor brought us up in his footsteps, so to speak. And then I went to Bradley School. I did go one summer to the New York School of Social work. ( ) when we could walk across to the ( ) 'way over on the East Side. That was--and I didn't continue because I didn't really intend to go on in social work.

**Q: Did many students after graduation go into social work?**

A: Yes, quite a few did. Then of course the Smith School of Social Work I think was (writing) when I was there. There were a lot of friends I know later that did go to Smith School.

**Q: What did you major in?**

A: I majored in Sociology and I was very glad I came back to take ( ) courses. ( ). I remember I was told by Judy Manchester, the author's wife--of course, she hadn't had Sociology in twenty years, "It's all changed since you've been in. You must come to this course". Well, I started in ( ) course and then I got called for Jury Duty and that was the end of that. I never finished it. No, I went into the Art Department then because I never took too much art at Smith. I took too much Sociology and not enough English and art, really. So ( ) not taking for credit because I audited courses.

**Q: Were you, did you take twentieth century art?**

A: No. There were lots of docents who were doing that but I did kind of screw up my courage and go into the docent corps last year. So it was a very good education to help make up for the lack of ( ).

**Q: When you came back to Middletown, did you work after having children? Did you have any jobs?**

A: Not any paid jobs, just volunteer work. Mental health, a great deal of that, family service. ( ). They didn't have enough funds to carry out their program. I'm not on that Board now. I think they're finding they're having much better luck in getting some Federal funds to go with private.

**Q: Has there been a change in ( )?**

A: They have some funds that come through the United Way. It's still a small ( ). The Monday Night Club which is a club for people who have at one time been in the mental hospital at CVH and have no outlet except the Monday night meeting with other friends who ( ). Once you're on that Advisory Board you're on it forever. Unless you say you're ready to retire, but it really is very (neat). Most of the group do accept that and I haven't done as much of that (Planned Parenthood) ( ).

**Q: Is it a controversial issue?**

A: Not so much now.

**Q: A few years ago, was it?**

A: Well, the State of Connecticut had a hard and fast rule against it. [Missed a lot].

**Q: How was Planned Parenthood still within the bounds of legality? With that statute? How did it exist within...?**

A: Well, some doctors prescribed anyway, or surgeons from out of the state.

**Q: Was it more of an educational type of--**

A: Yes. Now, of course, there are ( ) clinics ( ). It's going on right here, so. In the clinics they ( ).

**Q: Did you have anything to do with the college clinic?**

A: No, but my husband did.

**Q: He did?**

A: He was a college doctor. I forgot--six years after. ( ). He had been a "dollar-a-year" man but just then they had men downtown coming in to run the clinics but the supervisor ( ) doctor, who was full-time died and they didn't have a successor. Then he finally came up for about six years full-time. He decided it was about time he had a little more time and not be rushing every minute. And then he retired from there about three years ago. I think he worked part-time and accepted a volunteer job at the hospital.

**Q: Did he have any experience with the beginning ( ) waiting about two years to get a successor. The committee then (found) Dr. Hall and he retired.**

**Q: I think Dr. Hall's daughter ( ).**

A: Yes.

**Q: Oh, I was interested in your WWII experiences, especially on the home front. Was the nationalization effort ( )? During WWII, were different things going on ( )?**

A : Yes. Well, of course I had two small children, three children, really, because I had one baby who ( ) never saw. I had German Measles in early pregnancy before they knew all the damage it could do, and she didn't survive because of it- better for her and I suppose for all of us really. So I didn't really have time or a chance to mobilize and not much help and lots of loving family and neighbors came to lend a hand and I needed it so-- but I think everyone felt that it was a war that would end all wars. When my husband went he felt it was worth enlisting and volunteering for because they needed doctors. He didn't feel that way about this one. ( ). Well, our children, their ages, one was a little too old and one he was a little too young. But we were glad they didn't have to be.

**Q: ( )?**

A: I'll have to live a long time to see what happens next.

**Q: The next presidential election?**

A: Yes, that's going to be certainly a fascinating one.

**Q: ( )?**

A: Now it's going to be hard to know whom you're going to like.

**Q: It seems that this time that there should be some real choices.**