

Name of Interviewee: Anne Perdue Von Hoffman

Recording Identification: Rec003_0040

Google Drive Folder: Oral Histories / Montclair150 / montclair150-01-vonhoffmann

Additional Materials: No Additional Materials Provided.

Date: 10/16/2018

Interviewer: Angelica Diggs, Debra David

Location: Mrs. Von Hoffman's home, the Rockcliffe, Cambridge Road, Verona

Introduction:

Anne Von Hoffman and Robert Perdue were siblings who, along with Ms. Von Hoffman's twin sister, grew up on Upper Mountain Avenue in [Upper] Montclair. Mr. Perdue and Ms. Von Hoffman primarily talk about their early childhood through their early adult years, centered around the Great Depression and World War Two.

She remembers the effects of the Depression very well, as she was born in 1928. During that period, she would sneak into the abandoned homes in Upper Montclair to check them out with her friends. She remembers Pearl Harbor. Mr. Perdue served in the Air Force. Their father was a warden during the war, and he would enforce blackout time and make sure everyone had their shades pulled down. They also had a family business in radio, owning several stores over the years. Her mother worked in the British Club, where she would roll bandages.

She moves on to talk about college, and the years after. She was married quickly after graduating college and raised five children in Montclair. Ms. Von Hoffman talks about raising her children, as well as her family and what they do today. She recalls a number of stores that her family would go to, including Bond's, Keil's Pharmacy, Angelbeck's, the Valley Diner and going to the various movie theaters in Montclair. Besides stores, her mother would send her to Highgate Hall [café above the Bellevue Theater on Bellevue Avenue] with her friend for lunch and a show. They also went to Hahne's, the Wedgewood Cafeteria, and the Meadowbrook for the big bands. She recalls a club of her friends called "the Lunch Bunch."

Some other things discussed include watching TV the day Pearl Harbor was bombed, coloring margarine to make it look like butter, her friend's Uncle Abbott who was a producer and gave them beautiful costumes, falling out of trees, jumping off the porch, and her neighbors that she referred to as "Grandma" and "Grandpa." Grandma would honk the horn from Bellevue Avenue to the driveway and then the butler would come out and carry the packages in.

Timestamps:

[00:00] She was born June 21, 1928. Her family lived in East Orange, in a large apartment. After she and her twin sister were born, they moved to 10 Watchung Avenue,

at the top of Watchung Avenue. Her twin sister was always bigger than she was. They started kindergarten in Edgemont. There were two sessions, morning and afternoon. There was another pair of twins in her class and then another two pairs of twins in the other session.

[2:30] They moved to Upper Mountain [Avenue] and went from 1st grade through 9th grade at Mt. Hebron [School]; then 10-12 at the High School. She was involved in a lot of clubs. She particularly remembers French club and volleyball. She remembers that they could not have a dance because we had black and white students mixed, so they wouldn't let them have dances. They didn't want the two races in a dance together, even though they played sports together. She guesses that was in 1942 or 1943. She remembers a blind black man that was in her class who did very well, getting a job in New York City.

[5:00] She went to high school during the war. One summer, she took chemistry and liked it. She majored in chemistry and French in college. She went to Randolph Macon Women's College. It is now Randolph College and is coeducational.

[5:56] She and her husband first lived in rooms in people's houses, then their first real apartment was in Brookdale Gardens. They moved to a bigger apartment after the birth of her daughter, Debbie. She and her husband moved to Albany on a rainy day in February because her husband got a better job there.

[6:29] She met her husband in Sunday School at St. James [Church]. Doesn't remember how old she was but said her husband always said, "I was wearing Mary Janes." His mother was in the altar guild, he was **crucifer** and she and her sister sang in the choir. He was two years older than her. She talks briefly about dancing school, junior assemblies, and other clubs in high school.

[7:44] Her family's business was Perdue Radio on S. Park Street; then they had a store by the train station. The store sold televisions and radios, including installations, especially churches. They had another store in West Caldwell. Then they retired.

[8:54] She recalls World War II. Her brother [Robert Perdue] was in the Air Force. Her father was a warden in Montclair, walking around to make sure the shades were pulled down and blackout was being observed. He walked around their house on Upper Mountain [Avenue], on the down-hill side between Bellevue and Bradford avenues. It had a lovely porch and railing. There is a discussion about the search light potential at Mills Reservation, but they don't know much about it.

[11:00] She talks about jumping off the porch and how her mother got so mad. She also remembers the speaking tubes in the house. Finally her mother got rid of it when she had the upstairs hall wallpapered.

[12:16] She moved back to Montclair from Albany after two years. Her father-in-law died, and they moved back. Her husband got to work in his father's firm. They lived on N. Fullerton, then N. Mountain, then Upper Mountain.

[14:10] She names her five children, gives years of their birth. Discusses especially her son Peter, who was a math teacher in Montclair. Peter was on Wall Street and made millions. Then came 9-11 and he was working for Merrill Lynch, across from the World Trade Center, and it upset him. Started teaching at Montclair [Kimberly] Academy before working on Wall Street. And he loved it. Long discussion about Peter and his ability as a teacher.

[18:00] Discussion about their boys who played lacrosse. Peter also played lacrosse, was All-American in college, now coaching. Eric and Chris also played.

[20:28] She got married 2½ weeks after college at St. James [Church] and a reception was held at her family's house.

[21:00] She said, "We had a barn behind the house, with hay from when there were horses. We just loved that when we moved in and were young." "Grandma" and "Grandpa" Della Pena lived next door [not actually grandparents]. She said, "Grandpa would go to Europe every year and would buy a car and take it out on the Autobahn and go as fast as he could. Grandma cooked in the basement on a coal or wood stove. She used to drive to go shopping and had a big vegetable garden in the back. She would honk the horn from Bellevue Avenue to the driveway and then the butler would come out and carry the packages in. You couldn't do that now, but there wasn't that much traffic back then."

[23:39] Her mother shopped at Angelbeck's, which started as a grocery store before it was just a liquor store. It did have liquor too, and they would have to drape sheets over it on holidays because they weren't allowed to sell liquor. They delivered, too. Sometimes she would walk down to get whatever.

[25:15] She talked about other shops in Upper Montclair. Olympic Shop was there, but smaller. She mentions Bond's Ice Cream store, but rarely got the Awful Awful (the boys did!), and Valley Diner, where she went on a date. It was located where the PNC Bank is now. Louvis' was there.

[28:20] She goes back to her memories of World War II. She mentions that her mother worked in the British Club and they used to roll bandages. She would make tea for them.

[29:20] Mrs. Sawyer taught dancing, but she didn't do that much of it. For high school graduation, she went to the Pierre [in NYC] and said, "we looked very grown up."

[30:28] She talks about the Meadowbrook on Pompton Avenue [Cedar Grove] which had the big bands there for 3 to 6 months. They also had a branch of it in Newark. She remembers her own club called the "Lunch Bunch." She recalls everyone getting a little pin (like a sorority pin) and she gave a dance at her family's house. They made corsages for the boys and had a band.

[33:28] She and her brother Robert talk about her sister, who lived in Holland. Then she moved to the Memorial Home on Fernwood and she should have moved out because she had cancer and open sores on her back. They wouldn't let her go in the room because of radiation. But the people at the home loved her so much that they let her stay. Her daughter has lived in Holland since she was married and although her husband wanted to live in the US, she "got her way." Now her sister lives in Holland because of the high cost of American healthcare.

[36:00] A discussion takes place about family feuds and people who are not speaking with each other.

[37:13] She started having children about 2 years after she got married. Worked at Holiday House, a gift shop in the Bellevue Theater. That didn't work out well, she says, because she wasn't a good salesman. Then she began to work with the wife of the man who ran the store [she later mentions it was in an office on Valley Road] and had a lot more fun. She worked until she had children.

[38:30] She majored in chemistry because she liked it, then she changed to French and had to read several books a week because she started French late. Her boyfriend was at Colgate, graduated in [can't remember], and he was in the Navy. She started dating him seriously before the end of her junior year in college, got engaged at Christmas, and married in June [after graduation].

[41:00] Talks about her roommates.

[42:08] She talks about travels on Mediterrean cruises, and Germany with her husband to visit his family. She went to France after her husband died.

[43.11] She describes the Holiday House and Highgate Hall. Recalls when she was young, her mother would send her and her friend down to the Highgate for lunch. Her mother had prepaid for their lunch, and then they would see a movie, maybe Shirley Temple. She doesn't recall how old she was, but said, "we were pretty young." She recalls that her friend's uncle was a very famous producer/director on Broadway [later identified as Abbott] and said, "We got some costumes to play with, handmade, gorgeous."

[45:25] She doesn't recall playing in Anderson Park, but they did walk through Anderson Park.

[46:04] She just had two siblings, her brother and her sister. She has 14 grandchildren and four great-grandchildren and two more coming.

[47:16] She discusses reading Marcel Proust in French. By the time she was finished, she was thinking in French.

[48:47] She remembers getting ice cream at Keil's Pharmacy [Valley Road at Laurel Place] and sitting at the marble counter on Sundays. She also remembers going to Holsteins [in Bloomfield] and getting candy canes.

[49:20] She talks about going to other movie theaters, the Claridge and the Wellmont. She then discusses the closing of the Bellevue Theater [2017] and how she can't believe there is nothing that they could do about it.

[50:31] The interviewer asks what the Williams Sonoma building was [SW corner of Lorraine Avenue and Valley Road, Upper Montclair]. They discuss how it was originally a Masonic temple, then stores and shops moved in. She worked in one of the offices with the wife of the man who ran the store [Holiday House] at the Bellevue Theater.

[51:30] When asked who the most famous person she met in Montclair is, she refers back to her friend's (Mary Yergin?) Uncle "Abbott" [the producer] and he was the most interesting. She talks about their house in upstate New York.

[52:29] When asked what makes Montclair so unique, she says, "It's not as unique as it used to be." Then it had "a lot of really intelligent people living here and that makes a difference."

[53:07] They mention the Wedgewood Cafeteria, next to her father's store [South Park Street] and Hahne's. She talks about going to Newark for the stores. By the time she was going there, she was driving, so she recalls it must have been during her junior or senior year.

[54:37] Alan Dumont [who invented the first commercial television] was one of her father's best friends. Her family lived right below them. Robert Perdue mentions someone in Pennsylvania (Farnsworth?) did the same thing. One of the interviewers recalled how when you first turned on TV when she was growing up you had to wait for it to warm up.

[56:21] She recalls watching TV on December 7, when Pearl Harbor was attacked. Her brother was already in the army at that time, he had entered the previous January. Her brother recalls his service. She says that her husband did something medical during the war and went to New York. After he went to Colgate, he decided he didn't want to be a doctor.

[58:13] She talks about a grandson that is going to be a doctor; he is currently a resident. "All my children do different things." Only two of her children live in town. Her daughter Suzie lives in Morristown, having moved from Chatham so that their twin sons could play hockey.

[59:52] She says that she and her twin were not very alike but that her mother wanted them to grow up independently. She says to her brother, "Remember when I fell out of the apple tree and you moved my arms up and down because it took the wind out of me?"

[1:00:55] We had a lot of boy [male] friends, we would go up and down Upper Mountain [Avenue] and you could get into some of the houses where the people had picked up and left because the bank was going to ruin them [during the Depression]. The people walked out of the house with the food on the table and just left, probably because someone told them the bank was coming after them. We went into the house across from my family's house and they had beautifully tiled bathrooms, and in the basement there was a pool table and beautiful carvings. [She and an interviewer discuss the house; and it turns out it is the house that was owned by Benjamin Moore.] "We thought we were so brave and daring." She then wonders whether the food was on the table because a homeless person was living there and may have even been there when she was inside the house. She said, "you could get into most basement windows... I learned."

[1:00:36] She remembers we had to put coloring into the margarine during the war. It was one of her jobs that you had to stir it to get the color even. She believes the coloring came with it. They discuss margarine and questioned why it had to replace butter during the war.

[1:07:41] They briefly discuss rationing books. She mentions the girl down the street that got polio and had to go to the hospital. She mentions they were allowed to go down to see her.