

Margaret Dingee McClure (1900-1996)

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The pages that follow constitute the transcript of an interview conducted as part of the Wilmette Public Library District's Oral History program, started in 1975 by a committee of the Friends of the Wilmette Public Library which has been chaired since its inception by Rhea Adler, a resident of the Village of Wilmette since 1932.

A copy of the tape on which this transcript is based is available for circulation, and may be obtained by checking with a Reference Librarian concerning circulation procedures.

This program would not have been possible without the cooperation of the many long-time residents of the Village interested in helping to preserve particulars of a fascinating past, and the patience, energy and effort of a small but dedicated group of interviewers, transcribers and typists who share this belief that the past is too important to be forgotten.

Richard E. Thompson
Director

ABSTRACT

Interviewee: Margaret Dingee McClure

Interviewer: Rhea Adler

Date of interview: October, 1981

Early years · homes · schools

New Trier High School years · subjects · teachers

Social life - Carnegie Library - Annie Long, librarian - Musically educated ·

moved to Highland Park several years after marriage to Lawrence McClure

Ravinia - property owned by Jewish Charities of Chicago - 1936 concerts began

after Mr. Eckstein's attempt had failed in early 1900's · an historic view of the

development of Ravinia 1936- 1981

Family picnics in Grandma's orchard - home grown peas · home made ice

cream on Fourth of July · awakened by fire-crackers · winter · Christmas

dinner at Grandma's · Thanksgiving with other side of families · Panushka

family · Grandpa was from Prague via St. Louis · Mother and siblings

attended Evanston H.S. but Mother was in first New Trier H.S. graduating class -

1901

Parents married in Evanston

Two Dingee Pickle Co.'s · Squire Dingee Co. and S. M.

Dingee & Son+- Evanston - a blight descended and they

could not grow pickles here · Removed to Wisconsin · Squire Dingee Co. sold

to Ma Brown+who sold to Beatrice

Food Co.

Pickles contracted from individuals in area · methods of sale and making

From horse and buggy to jet age+

Mementos of early years - Christmas tree ornaments · from Dingee and

McClure families · Santa Claus · candles · fire

Human relationships - Grandma - Maiden Aunt - neighbors Wreck of Lady Elgin -

Grandma Dingee's contribution to victims

Chicago Opera Co. - Auditorium Theatre - Harold and Edith Rockefeller

McCormick's support

Margaret Dingee McClure

RA: Would you like to tell me your name?

MDM: My name is Margaret Dingee McClure and now I live at 375 Woodland Road, Highland Park, but until I was 21 I lived at 912 Lake Avenue, Wilmette. When we were married - when I married Lawrence McClure in 1921 - we moved to Evanston for two years and then came to live in my husband's family house which was at 219 Broadway and I lived there until 1935. So, really, I lived in Wilmette for 35 years.

RA: I see. Uh, and then, uh, you - did you - most of your school life was spent in Wilmette?

MDM: Oh, yes. I went to the grade school over on Central Avenue and 10th Street through from first grade to eighth and then I went to New Trier High School in Winnetka.

RA: Oh, yes. And how large was - were the schools at that time?

MDM: Oh, they were small. They were small.

RA: How many to a class approximately?

MDM: Oh, I would say about 25 and I can remember when I was in fourth grade we had double desks and, of course, Wilmette was a completely white community at that time, but one Black family had moved in and.

RA: And how early was that?

MDM: When I was in fourth grade and as I am now 80, you will

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see that that was very early in my career and I drew the colored girl - the Black girl - at my double desk and when I came home and announced it, there was no shock, horrified reaction. It was, %Well, what of it?+She was an awfully nice girl and that was my first experience with the Black people - that I shared a desk with one at a very early age.

RA: So.

MDM: And very happily.

RA: This is where all experiences would hopefully begin and would be happy. My own was a very happy one, too - with the other race - and consequently I deal with many races in the volunteer work that I do. Tell me, you started in New Trier when it was very young then?

MDM: Yes, indeed. It was a very - it was a small school.

RA: How many were in your graduating class? Do you remember that?

MDM: No. I would have to look that up, but it was comparatively small. I would say maybe 250.

RA: That sounds like a pretty big class.

MDN: Well, when you consider all the communities that were involved, I....

RA: Communities? Were there four?

MDM: Wilmette, Kenilworth, Winnetka, Glencoe and the communities just to the west of them - Northbrook, Northfield. Now I think that's pretty small. I could look it up, I suppose.

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RA: No. That is not necessary, but it's interesting that you mentioned Northfield and Northbrook. Were they originally a part of New Trier?

MDM: Oh, yes. We had - we had them from those communities and, at that time, you see, here in Highland Park there was only one school for Highland Park and Deerfield and it was called Deerfield- Shields.

RA: That's right.

MDM: So, you see, these western communities did not have their own secondary schools at that time.

RA: This, I believe, we are prone to forget with the high school as it is now developed - was rather a late development in our cultural pattern.

MDM: We had wonderful teachers though. Very wonderful.

RA: Who were some of your teachers?

MDM: Miss Ulrjck was my teacher in Greek and Roman History and she was such an inspiration that my love of Greek and Roman things dated from that period. I was always into Greek gods, heroes and men. I can remember - of course, she soft pedaled the unattractive things and the only impression we got was a complete, lofty society so that when later on I found the Greek culture was really founded on the most abject slavery, it was really a very sad awakening. All my illusions (*Laughter*) were shattered. And we had a wonderful teacher for American History - a Miss Raymond. marvelous French teacher - DeForrest Walton.

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A wonderful Latin teacher - Elizabeth Packard who went on. She was Assistant Principal - perhaps Principal, wasn't it - for many years, but the groundwork we had in those things. I was able to go on in French and when I did finally get to France, I was able to make myself understood....

RA: This is marvelous.

MDM:from four years of New Trier French. Our teacher, DeForrest Walton - I feel sure he must have had French blood in his veins, with that name -

DeForrest - for his first name, but he was a fanatic on accent and pronunciation.

RA: Yes.

MDM: So that all of those of us who took it seriously had a marvelous grounding, and I really did. I would say that to be able to go over there - I'd admit, it wasn't Parisian French, but at least I could make my wants known. It was a thrill.

RA: I think it's rather interesting, Mrs. McClure, that thirty years later my own daughters had Miss Ulrich and Miss Packard.

MDM: Oh, they were wonderful women.

RA: It was at the very end of their careers, really, but....

MDM: They both had a very commanding presence. They were tall. Miss Ulrich was tall and very slender. Miss Packard was tall and very corpulent, but they both got

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their message across.

RA: Indeed.

MDM: And stood for no nonsense and it was wonderful.

RA: Was - at any time during your attendance there was Mr. Harper on the.

MDM: Oh, yes.

RA:faculty?

MDM: Yes, indeed.

RA: Both Mr. Harper or just the one?

MDM: We - I had the one Mr. Harper in primary school. He was Superintendent.

RA: Oh.

MDM: And then his brother, of course, was Mathematics.

RA: That's right.

MDM: I wasn't fortunate enough to have him. I had Mr. Kahler.

RA: Oh, yes.

MDM: But he was great, too.

RA: Oh, yes.

MDM: And he was the first one to install any political consciousness into me because I had been brought up in a household - the word was that you voted for a yellow dog if he was a Republican. So - that was the password - when we got up to high school and I was inoculated with some of these very literal ideas, I would come home with them and there would be much outrage, %What are our children being taught up there?+

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RA: Um hum.

MDM: I said, %Well, I was learning Mathematics from him.+%Well, you're learning a lot else that we don't think much of,+but they were marvelous instructors.

RA: And this was in the days when your family considered the Republican as rank radicals?

MDM: No. Oh, no, no, no, no. The Bull Moose were the.

RA: The Bull Moose....

MDM: Teddy Roosevelt's party was the radicals....

RA: Oh.

MDM: (Indistinct) The old line Republicans - they were....

RA: Very staid and proper....

MDM: Oh, yes.

RA: . . . by that time.

MDM: Because, you see, Teddy split the party.

RA: Yes.

MDM:would remember that.

RA: Yes. That's - oh, indeed. Indeed. This was really very early in my experience, but I have been politically minded all my life (*Lcghte't*) so that through my family I get - but to date we have such set ideas about partisan parties that they have both gone through an evolution.

MDM: Yes. That's right.

BA: This - and I was thinking maybe it was the period when Republicanism was just coming into being.

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MDM: No, that was before.

RA: Yes. It was earlier. Tell me, what was your social life like when you were a young person?

MDM: You mean when we were in grade school?

RA: No. Well, tell us....

MDM: In high school?

RA: Tell us about what you did for sociability and fun when in grade school?

MDM: Well, mostly I read. You see, the library was my home away from home and I used to go over there at least every other day to take back one armload of books and get another.

RA: Now where was this?

MDM: And the library was - it was the old Carnegie Library. Oh, dear, I should remember that address. It was right where the present Library is.

RA: At the corner of Park and Wilmette Avenue.

MDM: At the corner of Park and Wilmette Avenue, but it was a red brick - an ugly, a horrible looking red brick.

RA: With many....

MDM: .. .with many steps and the children's - you walked in the big double front door - and the children's section was on one side and then the adult section on the other and the reference was at the back. And I always managed to take away a full load of books that were suitable for children and then I would also dip into the adult collection

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and I didn't understand half of what I read (*Laughter*), but I read it and Miss Long - Annie. Long who was the Librarian was one of the pioneer families and she was a wonderful woman. She was very kind. When I think of the brats we were and how kind she was and patient with us and it was thanks to her tact that the Library was a place of refuge that it was for us. And she was another tall woman and she was - she wore her hair swept up on the top of her head and she had some physical disability which made walking very difficult.

RA: Oh.

MDM: She was quite heavy and she couldn't get around as fast as I know she would have, but we - I loved her dearly because I figured that outside of my family she was one of the best friends I had. And, as I say, she never objected no matter what I wanted to take out. She knew perfectly well I wouldn't understand one word in ten, but I took it and I went through and digested as much as I could and came back for more. And, as you can see, if you look around you....

RA: Yes.

MDM: . . . it is still the main preoccupation of my life.

RA: You have a wonderful library.

MDM: And I can honestly say my love of books and my love of music are two things - nobody can take that away from you. You may amass a great deal of this world's goods

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which can be taken away very easily, but nobody can take away your love of Mozart. Nobody can take away your love of a good book and as long as you have your sight and your hearing, you have a full, rich life and I know because in the winter that's what my life is.

RA: Um hum.

MDM: Reading, listening to music. Television I take very sparingly. I think it is a tremendous force for good and it has been so prostituted that it is almost criminal. If you are careful, your life may be enriched by it, but you have to be there. And when I think what it is doing to young people, it's a tragedy.

RA.: This makes me think of my sophomore - Northwestern sophomore granddaughter who's been teaching young children this summer and she's talking about their short span of interest. And I told her she forgot when she was in second grade, but at the same time I agree with you that TV has really done a great deal more harm than good where young children are concerned.

MDM: Well, of older people - it's debasing....

RA: That's right. That's right.

MDM: And it's a very frightening prospect because when you think how these people can be swayed by....

RA: The ads.

MDM: . . . things. Yes, the ads, the cheap appeals to instincts which are not good. It - it isn't a very happy prospect.

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RA: That's right and this brings me to - back to the library - of what a tremendous influence it had on your life.

MDM: Oh, I - you can't calculate it because when you hear these people who - who talk about - talk about books and what they're talking about is magazines. Reading books - the books that are worth reading....

RA: This is the difficulty. Today - in today's - in what's being turned out, I take five books home and maybe one's worth reading, but....

MDM: That's very true.

RA: I think we're going through a transition. I like to think the trend will be back toward more fundamental.

MDM: Well, let's hope so. I think we've seen something over here at Ravinia. We started it in 1936. We reactivated - Mr. Eckstein had kept it going during the opera years. Finally, in '32 it was too much even for his resources. He discontinued and the park lay idle for three years. Then, as you may know, the property really belongs to Jewish Charities.

RA: No, I did not.

MDM: That belongs to the Jewish Charities. If, at any time, concerts are not presented for a certain length of time, it reverts to them and it may be sub-divided I am told.

RA: They left that....

MDM: That is the stipulation - that as long as it is used for concerts and such things, it is safe. Well, in the 30's

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in the early part of '36, there was a rumor around that there was - going to be something happening to the park so a group of men from Highland Park got together and, of course, at that time they were just emerging from the Depression- there was no money, the orchestra itself was in trouble. So they went around and gathered money at a hundred - :and.at that time a hundred dollars was a lot.

RA: It was a great deal.

MDM: They got families to contribute a hundred dollars to underwrite a season, and the idea was that they would use the money prudently and if any of it were left over, it would be returned at the end of the season. The orchestra contributed by having Mr. Bogali, who was then their manager, plan the programs. He served as a consultant. He came out to every rehearsal, every concert. He paid for his seats. He paid for two tickets for himself and his wife for the whole season. He had said, to his honor - he didn't say, "on part of the organization. I should have complimentary.+He insisted on paying for them and, of course, his expertise was invaluable. We had conductors during those first years - Ormandy, Onsorme - the finest - the finest in the world - George Gsell. There was, of course, a couple of years - the war was on. They couldn't get - there was nothing going on in Europe. They were all in this country. Sir Thomas Beecham .

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you name them..

RA: Yes.

MDM:they were here.

RA: I was here then and they did have an advantage.

MDM: Then you know what wonderful concerts we had. Well, for a while that kept on. Then not only did they get this money, but at the end of the season there was some left and it was returned....

RA: Um hum.

MDM . . .with a letter of thanks and said, %f you wish to help us for another season, would you let us keep this balance and it will be the start of our bankroll.+ And many people did this. When they started out again, they got a larger number of subscribers to the sustained to the guarantee fund and this went on for quite a while. Then costs started to climb and one newcomer to the community said, %o you should have some popular music.+Well, these gentlemen didn't want popular music. This man said, %Well, let me do it. I will do it for you. I will book the attractions. I'd put them on. I'd give you a certain amount for the rent of the park.+ %Well, no,+they said. %f there's going to be any concert given, we will give them.+ And the first popular concerts were rather - shall we say- mild attractions, and they went over very well. Then somebody wanted to have some ballet. Well, the old pavilion - as you know,

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this was pre-1949....

RA: Um hum.

MDM: .. .was not suitable, but they did. They got some ballet and had it on the stage.

RA: Um hum.

MDM: And, of course, it was very successful so they had - and then, at that time, I was head of %Women's Division+and I said, %You haven't one thing for the children.+I said, %This is criminal. We always had music as we were growing up.+ So we talked them into letting us have a concert from the Quartet - the Chicago Symphony Quartet - a woodwind ensemble and a brass ensemble and the men agreed to do it for a very nominal fee. So that's the way the children's concerts were started again so I love to think that I had a hand in bringing music to other children here. Well, the rock music became popular and the popular series just ran away with itself. The crowds became unmanageable. They became destructive. They not only wrecked - almost wrecked the park, but they made nuisances of themselves - of themselves in the community.

RA: In some ways....

MDM: So rock was out and now it is lighter music. How long this will be able to continue, I don't know, because with the other places that have started up, the bottom line doesn't look too good.

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RA: I - I know. I wonder with the competition out to the west if that's a different type of competition and I think it draws a different type of audience than Ravinia has drawn mainly in the past.

MDM: Well, Ravinia has always hoped that young people would come and as they grew up they would gradually....

RA: Develop.

MDM: . . .grow in. Now you see, when I was growing up and came from Wilmette when we were in the grade schools, this was a great treat for us.

RA: Oh, yes.

MDM: We came up on the North Shore. You see, we didn't have a car.

RA: No.

MDM: We came up and the family would come up. We lived on- a half a block on Lake Avenue and Grandma was in the middle - she had her big old fashioned home in the middle - and Uncle Sam was on the corner and my father was on the other side of Grandma.

RA: And your father was whom?

MDM: Charles.

RA: Your father was Charles?

MDM: And Uncle Sam - that was Samuel S. Dingee. And some member of the family would take the lead on the day when the children's presentation was given and would organize the picnic and would organize the children

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who wanted to go. There were two in our family. There were three in Uncle Sam's family and sometimes maybe a neighbor would come and bring some of her brood.

RA: Oh, yes.

MDM: so that when we finally arrived it was inevitably quite a group. We would hear the children's concert. Then we would have our supper and, if we had behaved ourselves properly and given a good account of ourselves at the concert and at the picnic supper, then we were permitted to stay for half of the evening performance which at that time was a symphony concert and it was Walter Damroch and his New York orchestra. And Walter Damroch, if you remember him, was a beautiful man in every sense of the word and his manner with children was never to be equaled. He just was - he was a beautiful man in every sense of the word and we had free seats naturally. We didn't sit inside the pavillion for the evening concert. We sat in the free seats, but we'd been there early so we had excellent seats and if we - always providing we behaved ourselves - we would hear this part of the grown-ups entertainment. We learned to conduct ourselves as ladies and gentlemen at a concert should. If we didn't, we were yanked out with no ceremony and dragged off to the next North Shore, so we very early learned that either we did as we were told and conducted ourselves properly or we

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did not get there. So we learned our concert manners in a hard school, but when I look around myself today I sometimes wish that parents would be a little more considerate of their fellow man and not bring children in to those seats until they're ready to behave themselves.

RA: Not only in the concerts, if I must interrupt, but at the grocery store, in parking their cars across two parking places.

MDM: Everything.

RA: Everything.

MDM: Now, I think - but, of course, they're getting to the point now where that - I know that they just dread to see these babies being brought in. I know that sometimes it works out all right and that's great, but the only thing is that these people who come with these really very young with them should remember their neighbors who had paid their hard earned money, too, and take the screaming infant or child, as the case may be, out where they're not going to spoil the concert for their neighbors, because it does do that.

RA: That's right. Now this was your childhood social life. Now, tell me, by the time you got to high school what kind of....

MDM: Well, let me just say one more in regard to the concert.

RA: All right.

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MDM: Every Fourth of July we had a picnic out in Grandma's orchard. After that everybody - cousins, aunts, uncles, close family friends, everybody - came and long tables were set up and many, many chairs - and infants - and young children, of course, all screaming. We had to pay again for our entry to this paradise. A sack - a gunnysack full of peas was presented and we all had to pitch in and shuck those peas.

RA: Oh.

MDM: And they were cooked and served with butter and a little bit of cream and nothing ever tasted as good as they did. Also, two freezers of ice cream....

RA: Homemade.

MDM:were made and guess who had to turn the crank?

RA: Oh, yes.

MDM: And we all had to pitch in. You see, we had to do it and we had to do what we were told and we had to do it when we were told to do it and how we were told.

RA: That's right!

MDM: It wasn't, %Do you want to? Will you?+It was, %Do this.+

RA: Well, and you knew that if you didn't do it - turn the ice cream freezer - the crank - diligently, you wouldn't have ice cream.

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be something. There were enough people so we knew the crank would be turned..

RA: Oh, I see.

MDM: .. .but unless we did it, we would not - we would be in the %unatic fringe+ so we did it and nothing ever tasted as good as those peas or that ice cream - when we could take the dasher out and lick it.

RA: Oh, yes.

MDM: There - it was absolute heaven, but that was a marvelous day in our lives. That was the high point of the summer.

RA: Yes. Fourth of July was really something.

MDM: Yes. You were awakened at dawn with...

RA: Firecrackers.

MDM: All the time. Well, one high point of the winter celebration was Christmas dinner also at Grandma's house and there were some - of course, the table out in the orchard could be extended out ad infinitum. I can never remember a rainy Fourth of July. There must have been, but I don't remember them.

RA: Um hum.

MDM: So you see, you remember the hours that shine.

RA: What about, Thanksgiving?

MDM: Well, that wasn't such a - well, you see each one of these families - there would be one member in it that wasn't a part of the Dingee family. She or he would have their own family background. So, after all, those other families

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had to get in their innings so Thanksgiving was spent with the other families that were involved, you see. In our case, we would go to a member of the Panushka family.

RA: Oh, yes.

MDM: . . .for Thanksgiving, but Christmas was at Grandma's and here the table was extended. She had a big dining room, but there were so many of us it had to be put on the bias - across the room - to get a longer table.

RA: Well, then, that was Grandma Dingee.

MDM: That was Grandma Dingee.

RA: Now you mentioned the Panushka's. Now where do they come in to your family picture?

MDM: They - well, my grandfather came from Prague when he was a young man and his family settled in St. Louis and he married Henrietta Thompson down there and then they moved up to Wilmette and Grandpa was in the insurance business and they lived at 1041 Forest Avenue and they had - you know they didn't build the way we do now. In the center of their property Grandpa built his house way over at the western edge of the property and then the eastern half of it was just like a park with beautiful big trees and they would sit on their porch and they would just look out over this expanse of - of park, really, it was and the other side of the house hardly even had - even had any windows in it.

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Everything was oriented towards the park. Came the day of the tornado and the park took a terrible beating. These grand old elms - most of them went down like nine-pins and had to be removed and now, of course, I think there are three houses where there were just beautiful lawns in the old days. But, anyhow, let me finish my Christmas story.

RA: Well, may I ask about the Panushkas? Then they were your mother's family?

MDM: They were my mother's family.

RA: I see.

MDM: And that was a big family. When they were growing up there was no New Trier. My mother and her older brother and sisters went down to Evanston Township High School for their high school learning and then when Aunt Sue along, New Trier had been established, so she was a member of the first graduating class.

RA: Now Sue was the youngest sister in the family?

MDM: Sue was the youngest sister and Ed was the youngest boy and the family was stretched out enough so that the older ones took care of the younger ones.

RA: Oh, yes.

MDM: And my mother was a very wonderful needle woman and she used to make all Suzy's clothes and loved it.

RA: Oh.

MDM: And Suzy was just like a great big doll to her, you know,

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and she just loved to sew for her.

RA: How much difference was there in their ages?

MOM: Oh goodness, I don't know.

RA: Your mother was the oldest?

MDM: My - no, Aunt Mary was the oldest. hn died in 53 and she was 80. Aunt Sue died last year.

RA: Yes.

MOM: I don't know how old she was.

RA: And she was Sue Waidner.

MOM: Yes and - but, anyhow, there was a big - she was almost old enough to have been Aunt Sue's mother.

RA: Oh, yes.

MOM: And so she was - they had that kind of a relationship - the older ones taking care of the younger ones.

RA: Yes.

MDM: And I know when my Uncle Edward who was young enough that we all called him by his first name and on one of his last trips back, to this part of the country, he came and lived with my mother..

RA: Yes.

MOM:for about a year as a matter of course. Well, there - that was - she had more room. We were both gone.

RA: Yes.

MOM: More room for him there so he just settled down there for a while. They were a very close family, but now I want to finish my Christmas story.

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RA: Oh.

MDM: Now the table was on the diagonal, but even so there wasn't room for everyone so there was a little auxiliary table set up for the youngest children at this end and, of course, there was no greater disgrace than to have to sit at that table and the scrambling for places at that big table was horrendous to behold and many and dire were the threats if we didn't behave ourselves. We would not be permitted to eat dinner at all at any table and - but they were all wonderful cooks and I still use my Grandmother's recipe for cake and chocolate frosting. It's a very rich chocolate frosting that is the delight of any chocophiliac's heart - easy to make and I still make it.

RA: Oh.

MDM: And the children love it just as much as we did. So these things do continue.

RA: Oh, yes. Had she been a Wilmette person before?

MDM: Grandma?

RA: Your grandmother.

MDM: Well, they came - Grandma Dingee came from the east and they - she and Grandfather were married in Evanston and their first home was where the College - the National College of Education is now.

RA: Oh, yes.

MDM: They had a little house there and they lived there until their house was built on Lake Avenue.

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RA: Oh, yes. So they built that two bedroom....

MDM: She came here - she was a bride and Grandma Panushka came up here right after she was married so all the members.

RA: Yes.

MDM: Well, both sides of the family were born in Wilmette.

RA: I see. Well, then your Grandmother Dingee's maiden name was what?

MDM: Welstedt.

RA: Welstedt?

MDM: Yes.

RA: And she was Helen Welstedt then?

MDM: Yes, when she came to Evanston.

RA: I see.

MDM: And then they were married in Evanston.

RA: Yes.

MDM: And the pickle business was - we had - there were two relatives in the pickle business. One was the one they called Uncle Squire and he founded the %Squire Dingee Pickle Company+which later became the %Ma Brown Pickle Company+which later became the %Beatrice.+

RA: Oh, it's Beatrice Foods today!

MDM: Yes - part of Beatrice Foods.

RA: Yes.

MDM: But originally it was the Squire Dingee Pickle Company.

RA: Yes. We had a factory in DeKalb County of Squire Dingee

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Pickles.

MDM: Well, then the other one was S. M. Dingee & Son Pickle business and that was in Evanston.

RA: Oh, yes.

MDM: And my father and Uncle Sam both worked there and they used to go down in a horse and buggy, of course.

RA: Oh, yes.

MDM: You went to work. And they contracted - they contracted for pickles and the farmers would contract to buy - to grow so many bushels of pickles to be harvested at a certain time and then paid for. So when the harvest was ready, my father - part of his job was to go out and receive those pickles at certain stated locations.

RA: Oh.

MDM: And then they were received and paid for. Then they were put into brine at the factory and sold out to people who would put - who would bottle them. Uncle Squire bottled his, but our family sold them to the bottler.

RA: And what were the containers that they were in?

MDM: Oh, tremendous vats.

RA: Barrels were they?

MDM: No, vats.

RA: Oh, just open vats?

MDM: Yes. And they would have brine in them.

RA: Now your Grandfather Dingee, was he ever in the pickle

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business with John Westerfield?

MDM: That - I don't think so. We'd have to look to -
I'm ashamed to tell you that I can't remember all
those details.

RA: All right.

MDM: But I know that for many years they were in business
in this place in Evanston and the only reason it was
not continued was because a blight descended on the
pickle crop and they could not grow pickles any more.
They had to stop growing pickles and they shut down
the operation here and opened up in Wisconsin and they
had stations, as they called them, in Marshfield,
Stevens Point - many of those small - what were then
very small....

RA: Yes.

MDM:towns. They contracted for the acreage just the
way they had down here and continued the business under
the same system....

RA: Yes.

MDM: ... that they had down here. Then my Uncle Sam, in the
meantime, had moved up to Wausau, Wisconsin and he decided
he wanted to go in business for himself so that the two
companies were born. A

RA: Oh.

MDM: Uncle Sam had his own and my father and a younger brother,
William, had the S. M. Dingee & Company and they went on

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that way for quite a while.

RA: Did they ever go to Minnesota?

MDM: No. No. It was just Wisconsin, but the blight - I don't think to this day there is any commercial pickle raising around here.

RA: Around here.

MDM: Of course, there's no territory to raise them any more....

RA: That's true.

MDM:because, you see, when we were growing up we would go over - one of the big day's outings was to take the horse and buggy and go up about where Waukegan Road crosses Glenview Road. That was a big outing.

RA: I see.

MDM: We would go over there and visit a family that we knew and then come home.

RA: I see. That's interesting because the - Mrs. Michaels, who was Jacqueline Dingee from New York, that I met - when I asked her if she knew anything about the pickle business she said, %No.+She didn't and she said, %You mean they were in the pickle business ?%And I said, %Yes.+And she said, %Perhaps that explains why my grandmother's pickle recipe was so important to her.+

MDM: Oh.

RA: So she maybe was one of the sisters.

MDM: Maybe.

RA: Although - no, she couldn't have been because she was a

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Dingee. This Mrs. Michaels was a Dingee herself so that that could be - there had to be another brother.

MDM: Well, when I was younger I was always called Pickles. That was my nickname.

RA: Oh.

MDM: And for many, many years. And when my husband married me he said, %Well,+he said, %When I married you, I thought your family was in the pickle business, but I've never gotten a pickle.+And he would always bring that up in moments he liked to tease me about it....

RA: Yes.

MDM:but by that time, of course, the pickle business was long gone....

RA: Yes.

MDM:but it was the background to our early life. That and the horse and buggy, you know, on Sunday.

RA: Yes. Oh, yes.

MDM: That was the big moment and when I....

RA: Did you own your own horses?

MDM: Well, we didn't. Grandma did and Uncle Sam did and my father always said, %Well,+ my father was not well. He was asthmatic.

RA: Oh, yes.

MDM: And I can never remember him well. Always when he came in the house you would - when he was home - you'd hear this heaving breathing. And - so he wasn't up to - Uncle

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to have why of what.

RA: This happens. I - this is sad. I have begun giving my girls things that they had said they liked that are family things now....

MDM: Urn hum.

RA: . . . and I'd say, % if you want it, take it. I'd rather see it in your house.

MDM: Yes.

RA:while I'm alive....

MDM: Yes.

RA:than....

MDM: And see them enjoying it.

RA: That's right. This I tried doing with quite a good many things but, to get back, you still haven't given me an account of your Christmas celebration. I interrupted you. You had it with your mother's - your father's family....

MDM: My father's family.

RA: and your grandmother.

MDM: You see, the big moment, of course, was Christmas dinner - to get ready for that, but our own individual Christmases we all - each of us had our own Christmas tree.

RA: Under your own tree.

MDM: And our tree - by the time we had - we children came along, we had an older cousin who was old enough to act as Santa Claus.

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RA: Oh.

MDM: And our tree was - my mother always had a room sized tree, but it wasn't a tremendous tree like the - my husband was never satisfied unless he had to cut off a lot of the top. We got something shapely, but it was on a smaller scale and, of course, there were many, many old fashioned, beautiful ornaments and some of them I have and they're the basis of my Christmas collection which is something which is very, very dear to me and I have some of those ornaments that I can.

RA: Yes. Yes.

MDM: And I had them all those years - those ornaments that are made out of cotton wadding.

RA: Oh, yes.

MDM: You know the type.

RA: Yes, I do. I - we started our married life with some that had been on my husband's Christmas tree.

MDM: Well, then you were very lucky.

RA: And he came from a German family and they - many of the German pre-World War I Christmas ornaments that.

MDM: I have been able to buy some of those very old ones, but I can't say they were in my own family, but I kept my eyes open so that I was able to find some.

RA: I've given most of them to the children because....

MDM: Of course.

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RA: . . . I'm allergic to Christmas trees - live Christmas trees. Of all things - all the years that I have been - have done the decorating at home. I was the oldest and the one to do the decorating, but not any more. I have....

MDM: Well, aren't you lucky you found out?

RA: Yes, but I found out the hard way in the hospital for several weeks with a.

MDM: Ohhh.

RA:very bad rash and....

MOM: Oh, what a shame.

RA: it was almost - and then they gave me penicillin to which I was allergic - penicillin and so I had an awful time.

MDM: Um.

RA: But that's all lucky anyway.

MDM: Well, at any rate, you know we all had real candles.

RA: Oh, yes and a pail of....

MDM: And a pail.

RA: . . . water.

MDM: Unfortunately, when Raymond came in to act as Santa Claus, he was not quite as adept as he might have been and a fire started.

RA: Ohhh.

MDM: And it - oh, that was a - that was a terrible moment because not only were our illusions about Santa Claus

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shattered, but it was a - fortunately they were able to put it out in a hurry....

RA: Oh, yes.

MDM:but Raymond had cotton wool whiskers and that was the first thing to catch fire so it was really....

RA: Oh.

MDM: . . . touch and go for a few moments.

RA: Yes. I can imagine.

MDM: But we were so close together and, of course, growing up in a large group of children like this....

RA: Yes.

MDM: . . . that is, cousins and then neighbors - it's a wonderful thing in a child's life to have those games that you play together where about fifteen or twenty are participating - Run Sheep Run.

RA: Run.

MDM: And those big games of hop scotch and jacks were just beautiful.

RA: And what was the one - Blind.

MDM: Blind Man's Bluff and all those things where you learn, you've got to be a good loser or else....

RA: Oh, yes.

MDM: . . . nobody likes to play with you.

PA: That's right.

MDM: And you learn you can play until shades of night are falling and then you have got to go home. It seems

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to me that we learned so many of those lessons that way which is really the way to learn in the last analysis.

RA: That's right - by practical, pragmatic kinds of....

MDM: Yes.

RA: ... things. This is, I think, is the sad part of today's civilization. Children are deprived of much of those things.

MDM: Of many of those things and the wonderful relationship that you can have with your grandparents. You see, with Grandma just next door why I was over with her as much as I was at home and I can remember sitting and watching my aunt, who never married, brushing Grandma's hair. They always referred - everybody in the neighborhood always referred to her as Madam Dingee. My mother was Mrs. Charlie and there was Mrs. Sam and then there was Mrs. Will, but there was only one Madam Dingee and that was Fran and she had this beautiful long, white hair which she wore swept up on the top of her head and then she did a coil up there and every day Auntie would brush it for her and arrange it, and she sat in front of her long mirror with a combing jacket around her shoulders. And her bedroom was at the back of the house and there were windows - it was a long, narrow room and there were windows on both sides of it and the light came at her from both sides. She sat just like a queen sitting and I can see it.

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RA: Now you mentioned a combing jacket · do you want to describe what a combing jacket was.

MDM: Well, she wore it around her shoulders. You see, she wouldn't have this thorough brushing until about the middle of the morning. The first part of the morning was too busy and then she'd go upstairs and Auntie would brush it. By that time, of course, she was fully dressed and she didn't want anything to get on her dress so it was a little · I suppose you'd call it muslin, maybe. It came around her shoulders and.

RA: Did it have sleeves?

MDM: No, it was just where you'd have a piece of cloth with a hole in the middle of it and you'd put it around your shoulders and tie it at the neck and then she'd · of course, she didn't have to do it herself.

RA: No. No.

MDM: Auntie did it for her.

RA: Of course.

MDM: She just sat there and enjoyed herself.

RA: She was really....

MDM: And she was really a heroine. Do you know · you've heard of the wreck of the Lady Elgin?

RA: Oh, yes.

MDM: Well, a lot of the people were brought to Grandma's

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house.

RA: Oh.

MDM: And she ministered to them and, not only did she minister to them, but she kept some of them at the house for quite a while. So when the - when her funeral services were held, the pastor of the Methodist Church who officiated told about her good deeds for the people that were wrecked from the Lady Elgin.

RA: Oh, yes.

MDM: She was a wonderful woman.

RA: Was that Reverend Leonard?

MDM: No.

RA: No?

MDM: Smith.

RA: That was after Reverend Leonard's time, was it?

MDM: Yes. Urn hum. I don't know - I'm sure the dates will be in that book.

RA: Yes.

MDM: Because, really, there's a great deal of information in that book.

RA: Yes, I'm sure there is because I've just looked at the first page and.....

MDM: She tells - my aunt tells so much about how the woods looked in those days.

RA: Oh, yes. This is.

MDM: Wildflowers that there still were and....

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RA: And the Wilmette Country Club - do you remember the old Wilmette Country Club?

MDM: I don't remember it, but we - I wish I could find all those pictures. We had a lot. Are they interested in old pictures at the Historical Society?

RA: It - the Library is interested in preserving old pictures.

MDM: Well, I'd go through things....

RA: All right.

MDM: .. .and see what I can find.

RA: If your family doesn't want them - your girls don't want them - I've done this same thing with pictures that were my grandmother's and my mother's. I've given them back to the families from whom I knew they came, their descendents and then some of the - I have a whole packet for the Heritage Society out there - to give to them so they will be preserved and, if you do have anything, don't....

MDM: I'd go through them because, you know, this generation isn't interested so much in that, I don't think.

RA: Well, now you would be amazed. Now I have - we have a young man from Evanston who researched a house in Evanston that his brother bought and they did it for a wedding present for his brother and it happened to have been built for George Washington Huntoon by his son, very late in his life. He only lived in it a short time, but he came up and wanted to see our plat books of the

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Sandburg [Sanbourne] Map that had to do with where it was. We do have all of Evanston and Wilmette.

MDM: Oh, really?

RA: And all - I don't know whether we have Ravinia and Highland Park or not, but a great many....

MDM: Probably not because they're Lake County.

RA: Well, we have - I believe we have some that Sandburg Map covered - the whole - they covered down to Calumet.

MDM: Is that so?

RA: Oh, yes. And they - the Chicago Historical Society has only a very few.

MDM: Humm.

RA: And their cartographer told me the other day that they were given by Baird and Warner. Ours came from Quinlan and Tyson, but they're much more comprehensive than the ones that Chicago Historical Society has and they are - Mr. Brubaker at Chicago Historical Society is drawing up a - an index, sort of, of where certain things like that are for a resource to turn to to look....

MDM: Of course, that's wonderful because people know where they can go.

RA: That's right. Well, right now I'm compiling at Newberry for an index to the University of Chicago holdings on newspapers. Every newspaper that has been printed in the city of Chicago - they want a record of. At the University of Chicago maybe they only had one or two

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copies so that is what I began on yesterday and these - these sorts of things are being done and there are people who are now studying families, interestingly enough, as a truly historical thing rather than just you know, they used to sort of brush family histories off as unimportant, but now family and town histories are becoming very important.

MDM: Um hum.

RA: They're studying peoples and migrations rather than economics and mores.

MDM: Well, after all, they're the important things in the long run.

RA: Well....

MDM: People.

RA: . . . you know, and now we're finding that families moved. It wasn't - now the Dingees came out, but along with them the Westerfields.

MDM: Um hum.

RA: They all came from Westchester County - the Gedneys - and I don't know how many more. It seems to me the Shantz family are related....

MDM: Oh, yes. That's my father - that's my father and Uncle Sam's middle name - Charles Shantz Dingee.

RA: Oh, really?

MDM: And Samuel - Samuel Shantz Dingee. There were both named after the Shantzes and they were first cousins.

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RA: Could that have been your grandmother's maiden name?

MDM: No, her maiden name was Welsted.

RA: Your grandmother? Then your great grandmother?

MDM: I don't know. You'd - you'd have to look that up.

RA: All right. All right, but I'd find a Shantz in the....

MDM: The Shantz's were - Joe was an early postmaster.

RA: Oh, really?

MDM: Joe Shantz.

RA: He succeeded - that's right, he succeeded the brother-in-law of Mr. McDaniel - the son-in-law of Mr. McDaniel.

MDM: And then Jesse - he had a sister, Jesse and Joe.

RA: Oh.

MDM: So see what you can find out about them.

RA: Well, I would like to find about them, but you - you say that they probably came then from Westchester County.

MDM: Well, that I don't know.

RA: You don't know?

MDM: No, I don't....

RA: Well....

MDM: They'd always been around a long time.

RA: They weren't related to your mother's side of the family?

MDM: Oh, no. No, no. This is the Dingee's side.

RA: All right.

MDM: That would be where they would be. Well, then I must have - I know our time is getting short, but I must tell you one experience that I had with one of the most wonderful ones

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of my life. It was when I was a senior in high school and my husband - at that time, he had a job with the Chicago Opera Company. It was during the time when the McCormick\$ supported it.

RA: Oh, yes.

MDM: Cleophant Camponneni was the General Director. Mary Garden was singing. Emilita Gallokerchi made her debut that year. Geraldine Farrar was singing here. Muritor - the roster was picture window ecstasy if you were a music lover and he had a job and I was able to go to the opera two and three times a week.

RA: Oh, how wonderful.

MDM: . . . because he had plenty of tickets and my family, fortunately, realized what an opportunity it was for a young woman.

RA: Yes.

MDM: At the time I was eighteen and, naturally, I had my Ravinia background of symphonic music, but that was before the time when Eckstein had opera here.

RA: Yes.

MDM: I heard Geraldine Farrar sing in %6nigskinder+with a flock of real geese on the stage with her. It was the most beautiful thing you ever saw.

RA: Oh, it must have been.

MDM: Hansel and Gretel - all these beautiful, beautiful operas - Carmen. Well, I heard the (Indistinct).

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RA: Oh. And this was the early opera company?

MDN: Yes. This was in 1918.

RA: Yes. It was world wide, too.

MDM: They didn't even think expense. If Camponneni wanted it, well then they had it. They were all beautiful....

RA: Mr. Eckstein was still alive?

MDM: Oh, but that was - he had....

RA: Then he had nothing to do with the downtown. Now where did....

MDM: It was all the Rockefellers' project.

RA: I see. Where did they....

MJJM: Edith Rockefeller and Harold.

RA: Oh.

MDM: Edith Rockefeller McCormick.

RA: Yes.

MDM: And Harold.

RA: Oh. That....

MDM: She was John G.'s daughter.

RA: Yes, I know.

MDM: And this was her pet enterprise.

RA: Oh, yes. And Wilmette, you know - the western end - part of Wilmette was part of that Krenn and Data development that she invested in....

MDM: Yes.

RA: . . . and took a great deal of her money before she died.

MDM: Um hum.

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RA: This is very interesting and those were divided into forty - no, they were divided into twenty-five foot lots so Wilmette - yes, and they arranged to put two lots - three lots together and divided them so that they became a minimum of forty feet, I think, rather than - and they are still much too small, but it was a way....

MDM: Better than it should - than it might have been.

RA: That's right and so - but, how interesting. To get back to the opera. Where was it held?

MDM: The Auditorium - our beautiful Auditorium. And, of course, at that time it was a dream, a beauty. It really was.

RA: Tell me about it because....

MDM: The building was so beautiful and, at that time, you know, that the days where the ladies always came in their evening clothes and it was - the boxes went all the way up and it was built in the old fashioned way, not like the present opera house is, which is like a glorified movie palace.

RA: Barn, I call it.

MDM: Yes. Well, that one was built in the gracious old way and the acoustics were marvelous and the boxes came right down - were a part of it so that the people on the main floor could really look to their hearts' content

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and see all these beautifully gowned ladies sitting there in all their jewels and looking so regal and they did look regal in those days. They....

RA: Yes, they did.

MDM: Their costumes were very regal so that that was a wonderful experience and the place where I was always permitted to be was the press box and, of course, there had to be a certain number there from the press.

RA: Yes.

MDM: And that's where I was given to sit.

RA: Now where was the press box?

MOM: It was at the back.

RA: At the back?

MOM: At the back. It was on the lower tier of boxes at the back and you had a beautiful view of the stage.

RA: Oh, yes.

MDM: But, you see, in order to see the people - the really - the cream of society - you would have to be down further so that the reporter would take the notebook and decide he would - at that time there were several papers, several society reporters and they would take their notebooks....

RA: Do you remember some of the papers?

MDM: Well, there was the American and there was the Daily News and the Tribune, of course. It seems to me there was a couple of more, but I know there was at least three.

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RA: The Chicago Journal?

MDM: Probably the Journal. Yes,, but I know the American.

RA: Yes and that was before it became the Chicago Herald American - before Hearst took it over. This is interesting. Just having reused those yesterday makes it come to mind clearly, but I....

MDM: So that was a wonderful thing and to have your standards established for you that way - that early in your life, it was a very expensive luxury when you get to the point where you have to pay for it yourself, but at that time, of course, it was a dream of pleasure.

RA: Yes, and yet it wasn't as expensive proportionately then as it is today.

MDM: Oh, no. Of course, you see, you had these people who were underwriting it. Now everybody has to pitch in and....

RA: That's right.

MDM: ...there's no one like that anymore.

RA: No. These sources of big givers have been drained off.

MDM: Um hum.

RA: And there aren't any little givers. Well, I'm interested in your description of the Auditorium because my husband's uncle was of the firm - the Adler of the firm of Adler and Sullivan that did....

MDM: Well, you know, it was beautiful before it was - well, they've done the best they can.

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RA: They have done.

MDM: And we should be thankful it's still there.

RA: Yes, but it does get - take an awful beating with the kinds of programs they take into.

(End of tape)