

Kathy Kelly
Oral History Interview
August 27, 2013
Interviewed by Virginia Macro

MACRO: This is an interview for the Wood Memorial Library Oral History Project. The interviewer is Virginia Macro, and the subject of our interview today is Kathy Kelly. And, we are very grateful for you to do this interview, so, we might as well start at the beginning. Where were you born?

KELLY: Where was I born? In Hartford, Connecticut, St. Francis Hospital, 11/20/29. And we lived where you live.

MACRO: That's exactly right, that's one reason I wanted to do this interview, because you grew up in the house that I know live in, 1828 Main Street. So, after you were born, what was your schooling?

KELLY: What was my schooling? Well, I went off to St. Mary's School in East Hartford. I went to Kindergarten at St. Mary's School in East Hartford. And I was very sick with abscessed ears. So the next year, my mother sent me to Union School for first grade so I didn't have to wait out in the cold for the bus, the public bus, Connecticut Company Bus. And then my mother died.

MACRO: How old were you?

KELLY: I was in first grade. I think I had just turned seven, and—I might have just turned six. But anyway, my father couldn't stand living in at the Hill, he wanted to come home. And his sister, my aunt, and he were taking care of three children: my older sister, Ann, and me, and my brother. And we had a little sister, Ruthie, but she was put up to board, because these people were like in their late sixties taking care of three little kids. So we moved back here.

MACRO: And here is?

KELLY: 443 Rye Street.

MACRO: Rye Street. And so this is the family home?

KELLY: This was where my father was married from, yes. But I think the real family home was over on Ellington Road in Wapping, but that house burned. And when we lived here, Cumpidge lived there and my Aunt sold him that house and all the land that went with it, I think for \$3,000.00. And U&R Housing is there now.

And then I started in at Rye Street School, and I was then going into—oh I went back to St. Mary's for second grade, and third grade I started in at Rye Street School. I was in Rye Street School with Mrs. Ruth Spillane Anderson, our teacher and she was married to Harold Anderson and they had one son. Anna Fiori could tell you more about him than I know, because he never went on any trips that I went on. Mrs. Anderson would have us make our notebooks, she called them, scrapbooks, and we would get points and she would take us on trips, unheard of in this day and age.

We went to Plymouth Rock. I can remember being lost up there in the cranberry bogs. We didn't come home too early. Then we had another trip up to Wells, Maine. And if anybody would believe I'd go to Maine to live! They'd think I was crazy. But anyway, the black flies and mosquitoes were absolutely horrendous. And I can't say that we saw too much historical value at that time.

MACRO: Were these trips supposed to be focused on history?

KELLY: Pretty much, but that was when I was in Union. And we wrote letters all over the world. They sent us products. We had Spanish moss and god knows what else all. I think I have a picture of all of us in front of that too, somewhere. And we all went along. There were four children in my class, myself, Charlie Belsky, Johnnie Pranktus and Dorothy Myers, four of us. The people, when they closed up Rye Street School, there were only 13 students, and part of us went over to Wapping, and the rest of us went down to Union.

MACRO: This is kind of an interesting area, because you often think of Main Street and Wapping and this is sort of between the two. Right?

KELLY: Well, we always called Wapping, we called that out East when we were young and I lived at the Hill. And when they closed up Rye Street School, my Aunt moved us back. My father had died in the meantime. He died of pneumonia and heart trouble at age 68. So anyway then we went back into the Hill. And Mrs. Anderson took us to school because we'd have to get my brother who was in first grade, maybe it was in second grade, onto the bus at 7:30 in the morning. That's when the kids left from there.

MACRO: So you moved back to East Windsor Hill?

KELLY: I went back to East Windsor Hill and we took the school bus to Union School at twenty after eight. He and I both graduated from Union School. My older sister was sent over to Wapping School and I think that there were quite a few bullies. And my Aunt sent her away to school for seventh and eighth grade. But she's the only of us that graduated from Ellsworth.

MACRO: Really? Now the house on Main Street was the...

KELLY: My mother and father.

MACRO: So it's the one that I now live in. Is that correct?

KELLY: Mm [affirmative].

MACRO: So you were here from say first grade to..?

KELLY: No. I was here from third grade to the middle of fifth. And in the middle of fifth in January or February they sent us down to Union.

MACRO: I see, that's when you moved back.

KELLY: Yeah. We didn't move back until the summertime. And I don't how we moved back to be very honest with you. I have nothing to show. I think she had us at the beach and I think other people moved us. And at that point in time, of course, she had two houses that were filled with furniture. My Aunt had this house filled with furniture, she had my mother and father's house. And all that stuff was—there was a tobacco warehouse way out yonder there. And they had stored the furniture there. Yep.

When my sister got married her husband didn't like the idea that we owned, that my brother and I owned part of the house. So we had all kinds of trading going on.

So anyway, but Mrs. Anderson, our teacher at Rye Street School went right straight through eighth grade with me and Johnnie Pranktus and Dorothy Myers. Charlie Belsky dropped out or either that or else he was on the section for Wapping. Of course the War came.

MACRO: So you grew up from that time with your aunt in the Main Street house.

KELLY: Until '42.

MACRO: And then what happened?

KELLY: Then what happened, my aunt had a heart attack and my mother's mother and father came to live with us. My grandmother and grandfather and my Aunt Jo, my father's sister and my grandmother were friends. My grandmother and grandfather started out up in Broadbrook after they married. They were from Rockville, but he worked in the mill, the Lowen Mill, up in Broadbrook and then from there they went to Rockville, and my mother graduated from Rockville High. And in the meantime, my uncle went to school in Glastonbury, where they had moved. He became the boss spinner in the mill in Addison. And one of my

cousin's sons lives in their house down there on Hebron Avenue. And who would ever dream it would be such a speedway.

But Mrs. Anderson was a very good teacher. As I say, I don't know how many people you've been to for Union School, but...

MACRO: Well no but we're gradually progressing, but we'd be happy to have suggestions of other people to interview as well.

KELLY: Well, I could tell you quite a few people that were in Rye Street School when I was there.

MACRO: That would be very good.

KELLY: Terasavage. Can you spell that? T-E-R-A-S-A-V-A-G-E.

MACRO: Oh, Terasavage.

KELLY: And there was Goulian. And Howard. And he had since died, he got killed over there on Paquonick after that big tornado, sawing up the wood.

And they lived in the little house that they took down for the park and that was probably one of the oldest houses, and then with the salt box that was up there.

I forgot to tell you about my singing wires walking to the school. I had singing, all those insulators, the wire sang away. But anyway—

MACRO: So did you walk from here?

KELLY: I walked all by myself, brother hadn't gone to the school yet. He must have come the next year.

And Eddy Myers.

MACRO: I can write these down.

KELLY: Do you want me to write them?

MACRO: If I have questions...

KELLY: Eddie Myers, Dorothy Myers, and they had a little cousin Olive Crawford. She was there. Albert Forest [sp?], Bobby Spilka. We had the Whitehouses for a little while, Evelyn and John Whitehouse. And we had Mary Lou Healy and Eugene Healy and there

were cousins of my cousins the Nortons up in Brood Brook. We had the Charlie Belskis, and we had the Jergaloffs, we had Tommy and Dorothy Jergaloff. She must be still alive.

And I suppose I'm forgetting...

MACRO: That's amazing you have given quite a complete list.

KELLY: Pranktus's were there, Johnny and Joe, Anna, and Francis, were all there. I'm trying to think. Myers? Nelson Strong. I wouldn't be a bit surprised if that isn't his grandson that's over on—that's where they lived is where that Strong repair shop is now for automobiles. And I'm sure somebody else will come up with a few more.

MACRO: So you're back on Main Street and you go to Union School and then...

KELLY: I graduated Union.

MACRO: Right, and then what?

KELLY: I got through three years of high school at Ellsworth and they announced I couldn't read. So I went down to Miss Gill's School with Carol Raymond Burden and the two of us sat there a year.

MACRO: And so you didn't go back to...

KELLY: No I didn't go back to Ellsworth, I graduated Miss Gill's School. I went with cheers to see all my friends graduate at Ellsworth, but I did not graduate with them. And I hang out with them. We're still hanging out, we're going out, I think it's tomorrow for lunch. And Sally Moulton Edlund went to the little school in Pleasant Valley and she's one that I hang out with and Shirley Vansickable VanWayner and Annie.

Ann I went to school with when I was in first grade at Union.

MACRO: And she wasn't there when you went back?

KELLY: Sure she was.

MACRO: That's what I thought. Well now you were also living next door to the principal of Ellsworth School, weren't you?

KELLY: H.J.A. [Henry J. Adams] Well that's who the house was rented to when we were out here, was the principal of the high school and when we moved home, Magnuson was the principal before H.J.A., moved next door and then that used to be Driscoll's

house when I grew up. We babysat for the Magnuson twins, babysat for them, babysat—I don't remember babysitting too much for H.J.A.

MACRO: He was a rather strict principal as I understand it, wasn't he?

KELLY: I don't know. Well it isn't like it is today where kids are busy chatting in their fabulous language or whatever. You know, you had respect for people.

MACRO: Yes.

KELLY: I think fear came into it and I was Catholic and there was a lot of fear in the Catholic Church. Yes, I think I feared.

MACRO: I was just curious as to living next door whether there was any...

KELLY: Oh no, he had me on some sort of committee that he thought up out of his head. I was picking up trash between the high school and my house. I forget what he called us, something or others. I won't say stupid, silly.

MACRO: Now, also, there was a fire in that house. Were you there when there was a fire in the house?

KELLY: Oh, you mean our house?

MACRO: Yes.

KELLY: Oh yeah. I was living in this house, that was when I was first married.

MACRO: Oh. When the fire occurred?

KAHTY: Yes. I was not at home. I think I was pregnant with Peter. And Margerie came down and stayed with—well it must have been Mary Joe and Art.

MACRO: So there were, as I understood it, there were young children.

KELLY: My sister's son.

MACRO: Oh, she was the one. Did she stay in the house after she was married?

KELLY: Oh, yeah.

MACRO: Okay. I did not know that.

KELLY: Yeah my brother-in-law didn't think it was right. The insurance, they got a lot of insurance. As far as I know a nice draw. Remodeling and getting more modern items in the house. It's nothing like this house, this house hasn't been touched.

MACRO: This is original.

KELLY: This is original.

MACRO: Didn't the babysitter lose her life?

KELLY: Yes, Mrs. Barry. And Mrs. Barry was Ann's best friend's mother.

MACRO: Oh wow.

KELLY: And they all live up here, T. and Beth live up on what we call Ellsworth Road, and on Rye Street going towards Broad Brook. There were six Barrys. They're having a hard time right now. And they lived in Lorraine Gilman's house.

MACRO: Right. I think I understood that. And so, what did you do as a teenager around South Windsor?

KELLY: Oh, we were bad.

MACRO: Let's hear some of that.

KELLY: Oh we played in those cemeteries. We had the cemetery down by the Mason's and we used to try and look in there with all our eyes peeled but we never saw a thing.

The Masonic Hall down there. I was a lot different than what it is today on Main Street.

MACRO: How would you describe the difference? What's changed?

KELLY: Well, most of the people, in reality, were older. I mean we had Betsy Risley and her mother and father in that house and her brother went to live in California. He was older. Betsy was in my brother's class. And then the Barrys came but before those Barrys came another Barry moved in that house. And Jack Barry was really a hellion. And we were down playing, Doris Hack, there were six Hacks kids too down on top of the hill across the street

from the cemetery near the Masons, and but most of the people were either really young, it seems to me the Bancroft girls—I babysat for them.

I babysat for Bobby and Nancy Peck. And the Idents lived where Carol lives but we never played with them, or at least I didn't. And the Lasburys were kind of, you know, they had their nanny and whatever. Eileen Barry when she came, she was another hellion and god knows what we might be doing. I know we put cornstalks out in the middle of the road up near somebody's house up in East Windsor and the cops came, the sheriff probably in East Windsor. And Dan Shea was our sheriff. And we ran and hid in the potato field, that's all I know. I must have come home awful dirty. And how we got home I don't remember. If we walked all the way from way over there from 1-91, crazy. Or somebody came along and picked us up? I have no idea.

I'll tell you another little story but I went to work one morning in tobacco and they said to me, "Boy you had a busy night last night." I said, "I did? I thought I went to bed." And evidently my sister and T. Barry and Russ Hack and Adam Lashetski had been out stealing the watermelons. And good old Dan Shea caught them. T. told me this. I guess my sister came home and said to my aunt that they had been arrested and all this and that and she said to her, "Well we'll take care of it in the morning." And I guess they did take care of it in the morning because Russ Hack was due to go in the Navy and if he had that little whatever on his reputation, they wouldn't take him. So it all got blown over somehow. But that was pretty much...

MACRO: So they didn't have any real penalty then?

KELLY: I'm sure they did but we weren't involved in anything really bad.

MACRO: You say you put cornstalks in front of somebody's house on the road.

KELLY: On the road. Halloween.

MACRO: What would happen to that? I mean why, what was the...

KELLY: I don't know.

MACRO: Would people just drive over them or..?

KELLY: I don't know if they were expecting an accident or what. I don't know.

MACRO: If anyone knew what the results of that would be.

KELLY: No. I ran.

MACRO: Did you go to dances or anything at the schools?

KELLY: We used to have square dances at the town hall on Main Street. Carol and Bobby, they used to have company that came, and that's another story. What the heck were their name? Sue was the sister. I'll have to ask Carol. Anyhow they came and all of us would go down to the town hall and do the square dances. And the mothers and fathers would go too, and but I never went to the one down in East Hartford or to the Polish one. I never went there.

MACRO: Was Hills Grove still functioning, do you know? Hills Grove was over off Sullivan Avenue.

KELLY: It probably was but I was not involved, and we had another one up here, Hari Gari Park in East Windsor. I never went.

MACRO: And did you associate at all with people from Wapping, in the Wapping area? Other than the one...

KELLY: Well, once we went to high school we did. But other than that we didn't know too many people. I mean I knew a few in East Windsor because I stayed with Margurite Trombley, while Jean Trombley went to the beach with my sister, and I came home in August. I liked working. I handed tobacco. I think John gave me fifty cents.

MACRO: John?

KELLY: Trombley.

MACRO: And handing it is not spearing it. Was this shaved tobacco?

KELLY: No you pick up the plant off the ground and you hand it to the spearer.

MACRO: Ah, I see, a separate job.

KELLY: And you had the person that takes the lathe that has the six plants on it to the rigging. And somebody drives it off when it's full.

MACRO: But that can be a sort of dirty job too, can't it? I mean handing the...

KELLY: Oh, tobacco tar is pretty ugly. Yep. You got soaking wet suckering in the

morning. When I made fifty cents it was when I was about ten years old. I liked the beach but I didn't like to stay there for too long. And I'm the same way with Florida, six weeks of Florida is plenty.

MACRO: But you mentioned suckering, and that's just nipping off the top of the plants so that they...

KELLY: No, no. Evidently they don't do that anymore, they have some sort of thing that they can put on it. No they grew between the leaves on the plant.

MACRO: So they'd take the strength away from the...

KELLY: From the tobacco, I suppose. He's the tobacco person, not me as far as knowing about it.

MACRO: And so after you graduated from the school, Miss Gill's?

KELLY: Yep. I went to New Rochelle with the Ursuline nuns.

MACRO: Where was that?

KELLY: New Rochelle, New York. I went on the train, on the boats.

MACRO: And that was a college or was it a convent?

KELLY: Yes, four year college. And I went to work at Pratt and Whitney. And my husband was from Springfield, and that's where I met him was at Pratt and Whitney. He didn't like living in this house, he thought it was going to fall apart. And it hasn't fallen apart yet, but it's almost there. So we went to Vernon, and that's where the kids got brought up. Then I took them to Maine when I got a job up there after he died. So I've been in Maine almost 40 years.

MACRO: I have another question, you went to work.

KELLY: I went back to school again.

MACRO: You did?

KELLY: Oh yeah.

MACRO: When was that?

KELLY: Well, the kids were growing up and I had to find a job. I mean you couldn't support four kids on what my poor husband was making. So I knew I had to go to work. So I figured the only thing I could do was something to do with schooling, so I started off being a biology teacher. Well then I decided, no I guess I won't do that. Then I went to library school down to Southern Connecticut and I ended up getting a Master's in elementary education, but I had enough credit so that I was a certified school librarian and that's what I did.

MACRO: Did you do that in Connecticut?

KELLY: City of Hartford was where I started. In a validated school, Kinsella, and my husband got real excited at when Martin Luther King died that I would get hurt in the City of Hartford. So he didn't want me to be there, so I quit. I guess I shouldn't have but I did. And then, well I went on to get the Master's degree finally and so in '74 I went north and got a job. But I never did use my elementary education.

MACRO: You remained a school librarian, is that right?

KELLY: Yep. I did for 22 years. I've worked with Mrs. Flood. Do you remember Mrs. Flood?

MACRO: No.

KELLY: She had already moved on when you moved in. But she was librarian at Wood and then she went to work as a high school librarian and she was in charge of the High School in East Windsor, and the library in Broad Brook. And I could have had the job in Broad Brook, but my husband died the end of October and my friend who was the librarian that I had been to library school, riding back and forth to New Haven, she dropped dead up in Casco, Maine and she was the librarian at the Middle School and I just, you know it was just too much for me.

But I assisted her a bit. I was her assistant up in East Windsor. And then the Floods went to Belgium. So I could have stayed in my house in Vernon and I could have had her job, I suppose, at East Windsor High, but those kids were a little out of control to say the least, and they had—I had a whole class full of drunks at one point. And the Assistant Principal came in and he sent one kid out and that was it, and left me with the rest of my rowdies.

MACRO: And this is in the Seventies?

KELLY: That was '73. Yeah, 1972, '73. I started in '74 but then I went north. I got a job up

there.

MACRO: I know what I was going to ask you, and I don't know if you have any feeling about this but, some of our interviewees who have been Roman Catholic, felt that there was some strain at times in, especially the Main Street area, or in South Windsor. Did you ever have a feeling of...

KELLY: No. I went to Christian Endeavor with the non-Catholics down to the Congrove Church. I was also in girl scouts. I never noticed anything.

MACRO: You never noticed anything.

KELLY: No. And I'll tell you my friend Doris Bergdorf tells me that the German people were looked down upon during the Second World War. Well I never gave it a thought. And I don't know, really, I think I spent a very naïve life when I was young, very naïve. No I never noticed anything at all but as I say, you know, Carol and Bobby weren't Catholic and certainly I never—I don't know, I never felt any distinction. The people next door, the Stiles's, they were an older couple.

MACRO: No, I just think sometimes there are distinctions between the Main Street area and Wapping at times and how much interaction...

KELLY: The girl that moved over from Vernon to where Piro's Orchard used to be over there near Orchard Hill School, she moved over. She can't stand anybody on Main Street. She thinks that they're snobs.

MACRO: Still today?

KELLY: Oh yeah. Oh yeah. I don't know. I mean I grew up there and I was a papergirl too. I had 52 customers, but I figure now, I was the person that made sure everybody was living. I went all the way down to Lizzy Noble's. Do you know where Lizzy Noble's is?

MACRO: I've heard the name.

KELLY: Before the bridge, McNamara? The big white house that's in front of the brick house that's brand new back here. Oh, I guess it's Andelot's house, right, is Lizzy Noble's. And my cousin lives there too. Frank McGrath lived in that brick house on the other side of the Andelots and then it's Newburys and then it would have been Frank and Virginia.

And then Aunt Annie who lived in the gorgeous house up above, that looks like absolute slum right now. And my aunt Ellen, Aunt-cousin Ellen, she had that house so pretty and she had

woodwork—oh I can still remember it, plum. And she had scraped down the paint to find the plum. And she had it just so lovely.

MACRO: Was there a lot of paneling in that house?

KELLY: Oh yes there's paneling in it. I doubt very much if there is now. Probably ripped it off the walls to heat a fireplace, I don't know. We have a lot of damage here from where people took things to burn.

MACRO: Curious because that house that you just spoke about is very similar to the house you grew up in.

KELLY: Aunt Annie's?

MACRO: No, Ellen's.

KELLY: Well that was her aunt. Ellen's father was my father's brother. So in other words Aunt Annie was the sister-in-law to my aunt. It always seemed to me—well of course Aunt Annie was the only person living in the house. It seemed to me that everything in that house was pristine and probably more organized than our house as it was. But our house wasn't like your house is.

MACRO: The interior was not like it?

KELLY: No, no. The washroom was where the bathroom was and the backdoor was where the washing machine and dryer are. The sink was over against the wall. And we had that little corner there, there was a window here and a window here, and they had a little table right there, and that's where you mixed up all the cakes, cookies. And, there was a big pantry.

MACRO: In our house?

KELLY: In your house. And they took the pantry, I'm pretty sure they took the pantry out and they also, that backroom was like a junk room. And that had a room off it too for canning.

MACRO: Oh, really.

KELLY: Yeah. And down cellar they had canning jars.

MACRO: So the other McGrath's house didn't have a similar layout inside?

KELLY: I don't believe so. No I think they, I think they had the regular hall with the staircase going up. I don't know if they had two staircases in that house or not. All I can remember, really, about it is they had a fireplace upstairs in the—would be on this corner in the front. The East side I guess you'd call it. Yeah it would be Southeast, I guess.

MACRO: Now were those corner fireplaces in that house?

KELLY: No. No, they were little ones like these.

MACRO: Okay, because I think in 1828 in our house, they did have corner fireplaces.

KELLY: Well you had one in the living room when we were young, but I think they even did something to that after the fire.

MACRO: You had a corner fireplace in the living room?

KELLY: Well it faced this way.

MACRO: Yes, it went across...

KELLY: What do you call it, that bay window was there and this kind of came along like that. I'll have to get out some pictures for you.

MACRO: That would be great, I'd really like that. Because upstairs though there is evidence that they were corner fireplaces. So maybe originally before the bay window they had been corner.

KELLY: I can't believe that my mother and father did much in that house.

MACRO: And the bay window was always there?

KELLY: It was always there as far as I know. But that porch was added on. I don't know whose tenure that was.

MACRO: Oh, so it was after you it was there?

KELLY: Oh no it was there when we lived there.

MACRO: Yes, yes, okay.

KELLY: But that was an addition. I always loved that little back porch.

MACRO: Yes, we have a porch that just goes around, just a walkway sort of thing. Is that right?

KELLY: We have the big, what do you call it, the big rocking chair made out of, isn't bamboo, isn't cane.

MACRO: Is it sort of that...

KELLY: What did they call that porch furniture? Wicker.

MACRO: Wicker yes.

KELLY: We had a big wicker rocking chair out there and you'd just be out there in the sun. Oh it was lovely.

MACRO: Oh great. Maybe you have some picture of that. That would be really wonderful to...

KELLY: There are pictures around I'm sure. I don't know. I'd have to get him up to see what he has for pictures. I don't know if they're in that big...

MACRO: You don't have to get them right now. But why don't we finish our conversation and then maybe you can go and see if you can find them.

Is there anything else about your association, I mean you haven't been here I suppose for forty years but...

KELLY: I've been back for quite a while now.

MACRO: Yes. I know you made trips back and forth.

KELLY: It seems impossible. I think we've been going back and forth for ten years.

MACRO: Oh wow. And that's due to your brother's illness or..?

KELLY: Oh, he's fine, probably healthier than I am. No, he's fine. He doesn't really like to

lose sight of me for too long. That's what his problem is. I became like the mother, I guess. I don't know. I know my daughter's become my mother, so.

MACRO: Things get shifted around.

KELLY: It's all right. They care.

MACRO: That's the important thing.

KELLY: We always got along so.

MACRO: That's good. So I just want to clarify in my mind, your movements back and forth. And you started on Main Street, moved here from third grade to fifth grade roughly?

KELLY: Well, actually we lived here till the summer of my fifth grade and I started sixth grade when we were in at the Hill.

MACRO: At Union.

KELLY: At Union.

MACRO: And did you enjoy Union School?

KELLY: Oh, yeah.

MACRO: And you used to go to Wood Library, I imagine, from Union.

KELLY: Oh, we went yeah once a week.

MACRO: And did you have your graduation up in the...

KELLY: Upstairs, yep. And my speech was at Wood Memorial Library.

MACRO: Your speech?

KELLY: My speech, "When the lights go on again all over the world," was how it started.

MACRO: Oh, and what was that?

KELLY: Well it was the Second World War, that's what it was '43.

MACRO: But, I mean, why were you giving the speech?

KELLY: Well I was chosen I guess. I don't know why I was giving a speech.

MACRO: As a class representative or..?

KELLY: Oh yeah. I don't know, three or four of us gave a speech. I don't know if Annie gave one or not. She must have. And we had Estelle. Estelle Schweitzer. She was from down on Main Street near—her uncle was Harry Cohen and her mother had gotten a divorce and she had three girls and Estelle was in my class. Muriel was in my sister's class. And I don't know if Harriet was in his class or not, but anyway. We had Estelle and Carolyn Driscoll. She came over from Wapping, and she graduated with us. Oh we did. We had some good times.

MACRO: And some mischievous times.

KELLY: Annie's brother played in some sort of town league and so he would bring Annie up to the high school and I would walk down from where I lived and we would go to all those basketball games. And then when we went to high school we were absolutely idiots with cheering.

MACRO: Were you cheerleaders?

KELLY: No.

MACRO: Just cheering.

KELLY: We were the audience. Yes. We were the ones busy praying that they'd win and we had Hugh Grier who went to UConn from Ellsworth. And Albie Levkowitz, he went down state someplace.

I had been to see another teacher that we had in high school, can't think of her name, can see her face, but anyway she was from Naugatuck. And she said that he would come and see her. And this is how many years later, 50 years later, he would come and say hello to her. Getting old though.

MACRO: Those sound like very good memories of all of that.

KELLY: Oh yeah.

MACRO: You never got involved in any of the political or...?

KELLY: No. Our mother was.

MACRO: Really? Your mother was involved.

KELLY: My mother was a Smith College graduate back in 1923, which was almost unheard of, but I think she went on scholarship. I couldn't believe it, the man from Salvador up in East Windsor, he had an article about the PTA in Union School. This was in October of 1929. I was born on November 20th in '29. So this lady with her big belly who had not a child in the school down there, my sister was only three years old, not a child—organized and became the president of PTA or whatever. I thought it was absolutely ridiculous. That's just me, I thought the whole thing was ridiculous.

MACRO: What the PTA or just her doing this?

KELLY: No, I mean why wasn't she home with her—my father was 58 when I was born. I mean he was 30 years older, it was kind of ridiculous. She was 28 at that time.

MACRO: That's interesting. My husband's family is similar, that age difference.

KELLY: Oh it's scary different. I was mad for a long time when I realized it. There was no way that man could have expected to bring up five kids.

MACRO: There were five in your family.

KELLY: There were five of us. My little brother that was born between my sister and I died in a crib death in out in a carriage at East Windsor Hill. And then, the little sister that was born when my mother died, died at age 6 in 1942 of ruptured appendix with peritonitis and I have two sisters-in-laws or had two sisters-in-laws and they both had it after the war. Everybody lived. My one sister-in-law died young, she had Leukemia. Ethel lived to be 90 plus.

MACRO: So tell me more about your parents. I mean how did they meet? How did they...

KELLY: Oh, they were friends. The Aunt and my grandmother, my mother's mother were friends. And they all had friends and they all met up here, in Rye street. Not East Windsor Hill. Albert Trombley and Marguerite. Marguerite was—we had an Aunt Mary and Marguerite had an Aunt Peg. And Mary went to work—they were Irish—as a maid or a cook's helper or whatever, in Hartford. And Peg was the cook. So they had that big [unclear], and my

cousin Ellen—they were all pretty much the same age, I think. They had another great aunt—oh, Loretta. That’s the other set of cousins. They had big doings, and they had dances, and whatever. I don’t know where, but I know that Marguerite met Albert Trombley at a dance. And they had big showers and all kinds of things going on here.

MACRO: But your mother was so much younger than your father. Did they meet up here or...

KELLY: No, my grandmother and my aunt were friends from St. Catherine’s church up in Broad Brook. So my grandmother and grandfather would come, I suppose, to say hello and whatever was going on, and they...

MACRO: They just got to know each other that way.

KELLY: Yup. And they had another little ladies over in Rockville, the O’Keefe ladies, and they would come over too. My grandmother—both my mother and—I don’t know about my grandfather, but anyway...

MACRO: So most of that was taking place in this house.

KELLY: Oh yeah. This was a big farm. We had another uncle that never married as far— If we’ll look it up, we’ll probably find out he had—Tom. He bought this farm, I don’t know. I think that was my father’s across the street. I don’t know. They had, whatever you want to call it, a little bit of friction in the family with some of the gentlemen. And some of the gentlemen sold out.

MACRO: So the McGrath family was a farming family?

KELLY: Oh yeah. Tobacco and potatoes.

MACRO: Pardon me?

KELLY: The grandfather came from Ireland. I don’t know. I always thought they married here, but if you look up in the census, they started out in South Glastonbury working as a hired man. And she had quite a few children already when... I forget what census that is. My father was born in 1869 and my aunt in 1868, and all the rest of them were ahead of them, so they must have been in the late ‘50s, early ‘60s. There were eight of them.

MACRO: So then they moved to South Windsor and you mentioned they had a potato farm and—

KELLY: Tobacco.

MACRO: Tobacco. And did they, was there a lot of acreage involved?

KELLY: Oh at one time that grandfather, my father's father, owned more land than anyone else in the town of South Windsor. They owned that land over in Wapping and they owned the land up above, which we're trying to sell. We're trying to sell this too. No kids want it. Kids don't want anything. They don't want to help and they don't want—they just want what they want for themselves is all [inaudible].

MACRO: But when you were actually growing up you weren't—

KELLY: My father retired. My father retired in 1930.

MACRO: From?

KELLY: From farming. And in 1932, if you look at whatever, I think that's his death certificate, it says he had heart trouble. And my brother was born in '32. My sister was born in '36. So in ten years time they had five children. Unreal.

MACRO: And he died when, did you say?

KELLY: 1937.

MACRO: So that's quite a houseful.

KELLY: Yup, my aunt had her hands full and she did alright until the heart attack, she did alright. Cousin Ellen wanted to send us off to the orphanage. Aunt Jo wouldn't let that happen. She was our guardian. She and the bank. And the bank was very good, I'll have to say that. The bank took very good care of us.

MACRO: Which bank was that?

KELLY: Connecticut Bank and Trust.

MACRO: Really?

KELLY: Yeah. I have no idea what it's part of now.

MACRO: No. Bank of America. Good, well is there anything else you can think of—just

your general impressions of life in South Windsor or...

KELLY: Well, I think that I was lucky that I had Mrs. Anderson all those years because she certainly gave me a lot of stability in my life. I mean, most people have parents. She did take us on a lot of trips. Little kids that never went anywhere.

MACRO: Yes. Did you say that she started out at Rye Street and then moved to Union or was she—

KELLY: No, as far as I know she was only at Rye Street and then when we moved, she moved with us. She had 5th and 6th and then they brought in a 5th grade teacher, Miss Master [sp?], and they tell me all she did was artwork. But Mrs. Anderson moved with us.

MACRO: Well that's nice. Now was Arline Bidwell the principal down at—

KELLY: During the war—

MACRO: Union?

KELLY: Yup. When I graduated she was. My brother had her and my little sister had her. She was in Arline Bidwell's class when she died.

MACRO: And did you have—I know there was a group of African American children who went to Union School as well. Did their parents work in the brickyards, do you know anything?

KELLY: Well, some of them. Annie could tell you more about that. But we didn't have any black children in our school up here. We had Thelma Davis and somebody or other else. She has a sister or brother. He could tell you that too, but that's when we were in Union.

I can remember Josephine Green at noontime when we were in the classroom eating our lunch and she was telling me how they ate fried rat [laughs]. I never forgot that. Oh my. And I really think she was, you know, twisting my leg. "We just fry up some rats."

MACRO: Was she one of the—

KELLY: She was a little black girl. Actually, she wasn't little. She was a pretty hefty black girl. And I don't know if she was from the brickyard or where. We had a few gypsies that came too.

MACRO: Really?

KELLY: Yes. They stayed down in Bancroft, down near 51. They stayed in that field down there. And they came. I think that little girl's name was Daisy.

MACRO: And did they stay for very long or did they move on or?

KELLY: I don't remember. I don't think they stayed very long. Probably came in the spring and that was it. Then they'd start off back South again when it started getting a little cold. I don't know if they worked on tobacco or not, to be honest with you. Doris Pelton could probably tell you that.

MACRO: Well, is there anything else you would like to say or you'd like to wrap up now and if anything comes to mind we can...

KELLY: I don't know, other than, you know. I think she was a very fair teacher.

MACRO: Yes.

KELLY: Yes.

MACRO: I think you had a rather tragic young life, so it was very nice that you had that.

KELLY: Yes. I was lucky. I had enough substitute mothers. And my grandmother was a grand lady. She was an itty bitty woman.

MACRO: Now was this on your mother's side?

KELLY: Yes. Oh yeah, my mother was only 34 when she died. My grandmother left her home down in Glastonbury with my uncle and his crew were almost forcing her out. But she left her home and came to live with us.

MACRO: And what year was this your mother died?

KELLY: My mother died in '36.

MACRO: '36, right.

KELLY: They said it was postpartum trauma, was on her death certificate. I know everybody was pretty shocked that she had died.

MACRO: So it was right after the birth of the youngest child.

KELLY: Yeah. Ruthie. They named her after our mother. That's an interesting story too. My grandfather had a sister that was named Ruth that died young, my mother died young, and my sister died young. Okay, those are the three Ruths. I said, "Well, with three, I'll name my daughter Mary Jo." Well, Ben Lasbury got killed up in the Berkshires someplace in a car accident, but he was the fourth Benjamin. Mary Jo did not get that name. It's funny how things happen.

I don't know. East Windsor Hill is pretty isolated and those ladies that I hang around with have, they really haven't been out in the world. I feel bad, but they're kind of stuck. And I don't know. They're intelligent ladies, but how they got so stuck is beyond me.

MACRO: Well you've traveled a fair amount, haven't you?

KELLY: Oh, I've been.

MACRO: Didn't you recently go on a trip?

KELLY: Oh, I just went to San Francisco and this place that's burning. Yosemite. Went to Reno. Yes. No, I've been pretty lucky. My little grandson in married and living down in Santa Fe, so I've been to Santa Fe. We did the Florida thing. I've been in all 50 states. I've been to Alaska, Hawaii. Portugal, Italy, France, England, Scotland.

MACRO: Good for you!

KELLY: That enough?

MACRO: And you've had how many children? You had four.

KELLY: I have four. One's still here in Connecticut under the State of Connecticut Board, and I keep getting worried that they keep giving too much whatever, but we'll see. I certainly don't want anything else to happen to anybody. I shouldn't think that the state would, now for money they're going to start letting all of these people out on parole, if that's the right word. They don't have enough people to put the people out on parole. So I was calling up the parole lady when he was hitting my brother on the head. Parole lady said, "Oh, I'll be along next week." Well, when I called up to tell my brother she'll be along next week, somebody answered the phone and wanted to know who I was and was I a relation. I said, "Well, yes, I'm his sister." So then it all came out that my brother was on his way to St. Francis and Jack was on his way over to Manchester and would I please be telling them Peter's birthday and the whole nine yards.

They shouldn't have given him Haldol, and he was in jail for stealing a truck out of Colorado. I mean, the kid was sick! And they gave him Haldol, and they put him out on the street with no medication? I don't understand at all. But who am I?

MACRO: So he was diagnosed with?

KELLY: The rest of them are all in Maine with me. Arthur was in Colorado. He was in Florida and then he came to Maine. Mary went to college. She went to University of Colorado at Boulder and got mixed up with a little gentleman, and came home after her freshman year and announced to me that she was going to Alaska to live with a guy. So I said, "Well, that's fine. Don't expect any more support from me. You do your thing." So she did. She went there a week and left. She came home, but she came home to here. She did go back to college for the first semester in Colorado and then she came home to Maine and went to University of Southern Maine. And she said she wasn't graduating from the University of Southern Maine [laughs], so she went to UNH. She got her degree from UNH and then she got her Master's degree in education and she taught. She taught 27 years, and she's retired. And I forget what she is. 57, 58 years old.

And then the youngest one is Matthew and he's up here. He's doing this halfway house here.

They're themselves, that's all you can say. They're themselves.

But my Peter, the one that hit him on the head, he has a grandchild and a boy and a girl and they're all in Maine too. But he can't have anything to do with my brother, so it makes it kind of hard. But I guess it will be alright sometime. That was sad. That's the way life goes. What is it they say, "Cost you a rose garden." Yeah.

MACRO: Right. Well, I really appreciate your taking the time to do this interview and if there's any other things that you can think of that you'd like to add—

KELLY: We'll get out some pictures for you.

MACRO: That would be wonderful. We'd really appreciate that. And I want to take a picture of you as well for our files. I think we'll conclude this now.

KELLY: Oh my. All that went on there?

[END OF INTERVIEW]

Index

Anderson, Harold, 2
Anderson, Ruth Spillane, 2, 3, 4

B

Barry Family, 7, 8
Barry, Eileen, 8
Barry, Jack, 8

E

Ellsworth Memorial High School, 3

H

Hack Family, 8
Hack, Doris, 8
Hack, Russ, 8

I

Ident Family, 8

Lasbury Family, 8

L

P

Peck, Bobby, 8
Peck, Nancy, 8
Pratt & Whitney, 10

R

Risley, Betsy, 8
Rye Street, 1, 4, 7
Rye Street School, 2, 3

S

Shea, Dan, 8

U

Union District School, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 16, 18