

Town of Chester Public Library, History Through Voices
(Interview Run Time: 52 minutes)

Today I'm doing an interview with Jean Vetter. She is a retired housewife and the wife of Frederick Vetter who was the owner of Vetter's Hardware in Chestertown. This interview is being conducted on June 19, 2009, at Jean's residence, 16 Lakeview Road, in Chestertown. I am the interviewer, Linda Zila, and I represent the Town of Chester Public Library, History Through Voices project.

(This transcript was reviewed by Jean on July 27, 2009; her additions/corrections are italicized.)

LZ: I'm going to start off by asking Jean: where were you born and how were you raised?

JV: Well, I was born in New York City. We lived there – oh, (I was born) on Christmas Eve in 1925. We had an apartment just off Riverside Drive, and we lived there until I was a year and a half and moved then to Scarsdale. My uncle and his family had already moved out there and we followed in line. We all ended up on Brewster Road in Scarsdale; we were number 155, my uncle 108, my grandmother number 77, so we were all on one street so-to-speak, several blocks ~~away~~ *(apart)*.

LZ: Well, that must have been nice - nice for family get-togethers.

JV: It was great, yes. But they brought me up here to the farm the first summer when I would have been about 6 months old.

LZ: And where was the farm located, exactly?

JV: Right here. This is what I'm referring to.

LZ: Right, well, explain where it is, for the benefit of our audience.

JV: It's 1 mile up from the "Y" where Route 8 goes straight across to Riparius, and Route 9 turns right and heads up to Pottersville. We're 1 mile up from that point on Loon Lake. Loon Lake is a "T"...

LZ: "T" shape?

JV: "T" shape, and we are the knuckle at the crossing of the "T."

LZ: Ah, that's a good way of looking at it...

JV: It is, because there are 2 inlets coming in here, and you can't see my hands!

LZ: (laughter) So there's a T shape to Loon Lake with 2 inlets and you're at...

JV: ...the waterfall. (*the knuckle and the outlet is at the waterfall.*)

LZ: the waterfall where the public beach is located.

JV: Yes, that's right.

LZ: So your farm that you're referring to that you came to was located overlooking Loon Lake...

JV: ...which is where we are sitting right now! Bonnie Belle Farm. It's named for my grandmother, Isabelle Jacob, who was of Scotch and English descent, so Bonnie Belle.

LZ: Yes, I'm sure that a lot of people would be wondering where the name Bonnie Belle came from.

JV: Exactly, especially after that make-up company, remember Bonne Bell?

LZ: Oh yes, the make-up, cosmetics... I think I did sort of think subconsciously about that...when I heard the name Bonnie Belle. So you used to come up to the farm in summers?

JV: Yes. My father was the oldest of 3 boys and knew that he was going to be going into the family business. So he had gone to a very special - you call it a BOCES today - but it was more than that and had wonderful courses in the morning. His great aunt taught there and later became dean of boys. So he used to go from New York to Brooklyn where this (*school*) was and he had classes in the morning and then in the afternoon there were different crafts and so forth. And we have so many samples of his work here - a pin that he made for his mother, which has a "J" on it for Jacob and I wear it: a "J" on it for Jean!

LZ: Yes, that works.

JV: Yes, it does. And the sign down at the foot of hill here, that says Bonnie Belle Farm is hanging from a wrought-iron gorgeous thing that he made, think how old - he was born in 1893, so probably...

LZ: goes back to the early 1900s?

JV: Well, they bought the farm in 1905. We had a hundredth anniversary party here for it in 2005. So it must have been soon after that (1905) that he made the sign post...an "L"-shape with curlicues and it's beautiful, you'll see it when you go out.

LZ: Very decorative...so how many acres do you have on the farm property?

JV: The farm itself was 100. But my father was in World War I, but never got overseas – that’s another whole story. They crawled him through poison ivy on his hands and knees. He was in the hospital in Plattsburgh for like 6 weeks or more – they used him as a guinea pig, trying to find out how to make this stuff (poison ivy) go away and he was obviously very allergic. So anyway, he missed his group that he was training with for officer’s candidate school went and he had to start all over again. He was practically ready to go and then when he got to Camp Upton, his 2 younger brothers had been overseas and he felt he should be there (too) but the war ended. But he got that flu that was so bad...

LZ: Oh yes, there was the epidemic, the worldwide flu epidemic, I think it was 1918.

JV: That’s right. He had pneumonia, he was flat on his back for 3 weeks and used to tell about how he had to learn to walk again literally when he was allowed to get up after the fever had broken and what have you. But they sent him up here to recuperate and he lived right here with the caretakers, taking care of him for a year. He worked with the Boy Scouts...and he took over the drugstore while Mr. Janser went away on a vacation, and he filled prescriptions...

LZ: Wow – you couldn’t do that today!

JV: No, not today, and he took inventory for him and he ... more than a couple of pills in each little bottle... when he was here, he went to a lecture from a man at Cornell talking about replanting the entire East Coast had been defoliated so-to-speak or clear cut of white pine for the military uses. So they wanted people to replant white pine. So this man was talking down at Pack Forest - he had a bucket full of pine seedlings – he couldn’t give them away. So my father took them. And I have a book over here that he kept all his receipts. And he planted...over 45,000 white seedlings; he had a helper, and in those days, they planted them 6 feet apart, thinking it would make them straight well it did, but they were straight toothpicks, reaching for the light. So they went in later and they cut out every other one...

LZ: So in other words, they had to give these trees more space...in which to really flourish.

JV: That’s right. They thought they were doing the right thing, but they weren’t.

LZ: So you started off planting 45,000 seedlings, but probably by the time it really grew, they were down to maybe half that number?

JV: Could be. But there were just not plantations in the regular forest. But my father was buying up old abandoned farms. People had thought they were going to come here and farm, and it’s just about impossible to be self-sustaining on a farm. So he was able to get them for very little. And he started planting these seedlings. And when his father came up in the summer, he took him up to show him his trees and he had to part the hay to see these little seedlings! And my grandfather said, “What in the world do you want to do

that for?” And dad said, “Well, I’m going to pay my taxes with it eventually.” And he did for many years, and we have sent – it has helped us send 2 girls to college – doing selective lumbering and so forth... It became a Tree Farm (*a Tree Farm is a national designation*) when tree farms came to New York State and he was one of the original 11 but in effect, that was in 1953, but he had his starting in (1919) I know his last tree was planted in the year before I was born, so it would be between 1919 and 1924. So he really had a tree farm; they just didn’t call it that.

LZ: I see – he was a little ahead of the official move in New York State to create tree farms.

JV: So we became State Tree Farm of the Year a few years ago and went down to the Governor’s Mansion to get a proclamation.

LZ: Do you know approximately what year this was?

JV: I have to look it up...I had just had a cataract operation the day before... I think it was in the 1880s...

LZ: 1980s?

JV: 1980s, yes. (laughter). I wanted to tell you how we happened to get another 700 acres, because he kept buying up these farms and so when Fred and I inherited it – I did - we took this weird shape thing and we blocked off the appendages, I’ll call it that, because there’s a farm over here you know and we kept the center part. So the 700 acres is down now to between 4 and 500...

LZ: So in other worlds you’ve sold off some of the parts...and you retain...about 500 acres.

JV: And you know that’s an awful lot to manage/manage alone so we decided we needed a small development. And my younger cousin who is an architect and had a friend who was a landscape architect, they were out of Connecticut and New York, and they helped us... the beginning of developments at that time in the ‘70s, late ‘60s, early ‘70s, so we owe so much to him for having helped us because I don’t think we could have quite visualized how he did it, but he made a road, and it goes up to a turn-around up here, and there are counting the big house, there are some more houses behind the barns over here, I think there’s about 20, 22 lots.

LZ: 22 housing lots?

JV: Yes. And lots of restrictions. And people at first said, “Oh- you’re going to just restrict yourself right out of the market.” Well, it hasn’t worked that way at all. What it’s done is bring people who have the same ideas that we do, which is kind of nice. I mean, they’re not – there’s no ~~water skiing~~ (*no personal watercrafts*), no ATMs up in the woods, no guns. Although I was – I had my first gun when I was 7, but you know I would be

shooting with my father at a target very carefully. When you have 20 some odd families living together, you just don't want any guns around, right?

LZ: Right.

JV: So that is one of the restrictions. We have made it so that people are to use stain instead of paint because we like it to sort of blend in.

LZ: This is to put a finish on their homes?

JV: Yes, exactly. Once you start building, it should be livable in a year. But there's no (rush) – you can hold it as land as long as necessary.

LZ: But once you actually start the construction, you want to see a finished project or livable home in a year.

JV: Right. And there was no limit on the cost of the house either. We figured we'd rather see a retired schoolteacher working on this to retire to for instance and maybe she didn't need a mansion...so that was our thinking.

LZ: So of the 22 lots are all of them built on at this point?

JV: They're all sold. Some have been resold. There's one being built right now. Several people have bought 2 lots.

LZ: OK, double lots, in other words.

JV: So they're not going to be built on...there are setbacks and that sort of thing that's not our idea, it's the town's but I agree, and you can build in the back corner, and you maybe would like the next lot empty.... We have a wonderful home owner's association, and the barns are still mine and will be, and they go with the house here.

LZ: And what are the barns currently used for?

JV: Storage, and my son-in-law has a shop there; he does beautiful work.

LZ: What kind of a shop does he have?

JV: Woodworking.

LZ: So he makes furniture?

JV: He can do just about anything. It's funny, because when my father died, he had such a marvelous workshop down in the basement, and tools to die for. I mean, he collected antique tools, too. In fact, I have somewhere here a picture of the hardware store, and we put Dad's antique planes for instance with a modern one and old hammer with a new one

and it was marvelous. But anyway, when he died, both girls were unmarried and there was no one hardly to give these tools to. So all the antique stuff went to the museum of New York City, but the other stuff – I mean my mother gave it away – but both my sons-in-law are woodworkers!

LZ: But they weren't at that time.

JV: This young man (*my son-in-law, Nick Avignon*) over here who lives next door, he has my father's workbench and one of 2 workbenches that came from (*our family's piano manufacturing business*); the other one is up at the museum.

LZ: Which museum?

JV: The Adirondack Museum. If you go into the boat (building), they have the section where they show how they build the (*guide*) boats, you walk along and turn to your left and there it is – a workbench. And you look and it says C. Albert Jacob Jr. as one of the donors. And that's what he donated, we donated - his workbench.

LZ: So the workbench in the Boats and Boating building in the Adirondack Museum was donated by your father after his death, your family actually...

JV: It was before his death, I think, because Mr. Inverarity was the first person who ran the museum and he and Marcia Smith was the librarian. They came for lunch here and I was invited to come over and have lunch with them. They sent down 2 huge trucks and took truckloads of stuff up to the museum. There's those carriages – buckboards – and I think there's a fur rug that it's in Trudeau is sitting in a sleigh and he has a big fur rug and I think that is from here. They took the sleighs; there were 2 of them I grew up with; 2 sleighs with a big tarp over them; we were not allowed to touch; all that stuff is up there...as a result, I have a life membership.

LZ: Well, it's a wonderful museum...they keep everything in very good order there.

JV: They're bringing the children in now. In every exhibit, there's (*an activity for children*).

LZ: Well, we've certainly got into talking about the farm first, which is just fine (laughter)...it's very important because it's a key part of the story. How did you meet your husband?

JV: I don't know when I first met him, ~~per se~~ (*exactly*). But when I was 16, I had my best friend from Scarsdale, who was a year older, up here with me for 2 weeks. And we went to the drugstore, and there was George Boles, (Mr. Boles' son), who ran the drugstore with Mr. Janser, and when Mr. Janser died, Mr. Boles ran it, owned it, after that. Anyway, George was his oldest child, and he was Fred Vetter's best friend even though he was a couple of years older. Well, George took one look at my friend and thought, oh I would like a date with her. So he talked Fred into going with me. So we had a double date. We

went down here to Loon Lake Colony (*where OP Frederick's restaurant is now*) for hamburgers and danced. And I think I got 2 words out of Fred Vetter all night. (laughter) He was so shy and oh dear, so that was that. And I did not know that he had asked our caretaker for a picture of me. And he carried it in his wallet all through Europe with the Tenth Mountain Division but I didn't know that until he showed it to me afterwards. So after the war, we came up, my mother, father, and I. Fred's father ran into us at the drugstore, went back, told Fred hey, the Jacobs are up including Jean. And he called me – this is Saturday at 5 o'clock – and wanted to know if I'd go out with him. And I thought, gee, this is last minute. I was almost going to say no but I was so sick and tired of playing bridge with the old ladies at night that I thought ok, go. When Fred arrived, I couldn't believe my eyes. He had just come back from overseas and rock climbing in Yugoslavia with the army and he was brown as an Indian, but his hair was bleached almost white; he was slim, had lost all the baby fat... well, to make a long story short, (laughter) I came back to visit – he said if you come back at Labor Day I'd have more time and we could do a hike – so ok I asked my grandmother, she said yes. So we did. I came up on Thursday of Labor Day and I don't know – Friday, Saturday? – we climbed Crane Mountain and we came down engaged! (laughter) Neither one of us remembers saying “Will you? Or I will.” But it was a meeting of the minds, and ... yesterday would have been our 60th anniversary.

LZ: That's a wonderful story.

JV: It is. (laughter) I'm only giving you parts of it.

LZ: Well, Crane Mountain plays a significant role around here. I've heard many stories about Crane Mountain, I even know somebody who got married on Crane Mountain. And I'm sure there have been others...

JV: Bill McKibben and his wife have a daughter Sophie and her middle name is Crane!

LZ: Because they see Crane Mountain...so I guess shortly thereafter you got married?

JV: Yes, that was September; we were married the following June. It's interesting because his birthday was the day before we were married. His birthday was the 17th and we had a birthday cake for the rehearsal supper. And then we were married on the 18th... and we lived happily ever after!

LZ: (laughter) Ah, that's important! So you moved here then, permanently?

JV: Yes. The first year we were at St. Lawrence – Fred had gone to college there after the war and we had one more year. During his junior year, we were engaged and I was up for winter carnival and I'd meet him here in Chestertown when he'd come down for weekends and so forth. But then when we were married, we lived in what was then the chauffeur's cottage, it was little cottage which is no longer here. And we lived there in the summer, and then we went up and did his senior year in what they called Vets Ville, which is no longer there, and that was fascinating. It was old mining housing for mining

somewhere in the Adirondacks and they had brought in ~~2-state barns~~ (enough) to house the veterans but there was no cellar, just crawl space. I would wear my outdoor boots in the living room of my apartment and it was maybe 70 (degrees) around your stomach and 90 up by the ceiling, you know it was crazy...but fun because everybody was in the same boat. We all had an allowance from the government of something like 25 dollars a week that we paid for food. And housing was either free or very, very, very cheap.

LZ: And there were many other families going through the same thing?

JV: Lois and Bob Stevenson from Friends Lake were up there at the same time. So it was fun.

LZ: Sounds like the good old days.

JV: As I've said, the nicest part was that everybody was in the same boat. I mean you'd get together Saturday night, you'd bring a couple bottles of beer and a bag of pretzels. Everybody did that. I mean you never expected anybody would do anything more than that, because we all were on the same budget. (laughter)

LZ: Well, it sounds nice.

JV: Good beginning.

LZ: So after college was finished for your husband, then you came back here permanently...and did you live on this property?

JV: No, we lived in Chestertown. My father had best friends on Theriot Ave. The husband had come up to visit here at Bonnie Belle because he knew the Jacob brothers. and had met a Chestertown gal and they had been married, lived on Long Island, and had now retired up here. When you look at Theriot Ave., their house looked right up at the hill at an old white farmhouse. And my father used to say, "Boy if that place is ever for sale, let me know because I'd just love to fix that house up. It must have a gorgeous view of Gore Mountain," which it did in those days. So it became available, and the next thing we knew, my father was writing us and saying, "I'm going to buy that property and I'll fix it up for you two and you can pay me rent"...(laughter)...and we'd still be paying him rent. Anyway, we didn't argue because there were no apartments at that time, none available. And we certainly couldn't afford a house on our own.

LZ: Seemed like a good solution.

JV: It was. We lived there until after I had inherited this (property). My daughter meanwhile had gotten married and moved over here and a year later, we did, in 1974.

LZ: When you lived in Chestertown, your husband had a business. Tell me about that.

JV: Vetter's Hardware was started by his grandfather, who was also Fred Vetter. And then...

LZ: Let's take a break for one moment...

Side 2 of tape

LZ: This is side 2 of the first tape of an interview with Jean Vetter. We're going to resume where we left off, which is talking about Vetter's Hardware. So tell me about how the business was run.

JV: Well, after Fred's grandfather died, his 2 sons, Earl Vetter and Ralph Vetter, who was Fred's father, took over the business. Meanwhile, Fred had worked there every summer and vacation and so forth. When he came back from college, he went in business there, just working for his uncle Earl who was mostly there. When Earl died, Fred inherited it, no he bought it from...

LZ: the estate?

JV: That's right...so anyway, in the meantime, hardware businesses had changed as you can imagine. People used to talk about how wonderful Vetter's Hardware store was. It was so clean and organized and so forth. They carried – they did plumbing, heating, refrigerators, washers and dryers, stoves, etc. Now there were appliance stores, like Ace Hardware and all that. Fred tried to go with Ace, I think he was the first one in New York State. But you just could not compete with the bigger ones in Glens Falls and Albany. I mean they used to go all the way to Albany to get their parts that they needed and so forth. Lots of trucking back and forth and you have to charge for that. Obviously, your prices are going to be higher than the big guys...so anyway, he had a young man working for him who was interested in buying it, and Fred said, I will sell it to you, so he did. And it was really nice because Fred had always wanted to go to forestry school. He wanted to be outdoors. His mother, on the other hand, when she got him back from World War 2 did not want to lose him again, so she let him go to St. Lawrence, which was the closest school, not to Syracuse forestry school. But then when he sold it (the hardware store), we were able to move over here, and he spent the rest of his life working, both of us at the beginning making this development work – all those lots had to be surveyed and so forth and so on. And he was outdoors.

LZ: Sounds like that was his first love.

JV: It was, and he spent his winters at Gore Mountain, on ski patrol. I think he was a volunteer early on, but then he was on paid ski patrol until he finally had to take off because of a bad knee...but anyway, he really enjoyed being out and about and working on the tree farm.

LZ: Just to finish up on the hardware store, what happened to the store after (it was sold)?

JV: Well, it went through several owners and nobody could make a go of it as a small hardware store, nobody could.

LZ: Competition was too strong.

JV: Yes, and so it was at one time, (a store) actually selling clothes in there. That didn't work, but then the man who's there now, who runs the Ural Motorcycles.

LZ: So the motorcycle shop has been there for a number of years.

JV: Yes, I can't remember just when. I know Fred was aware of it – he just died 2 years ago.

LZ: Just mention - when did your husband die?

JV: December 30th, 07, just at the end of (20)07.

LZ: So really up until when he sold the hardware store and until his death, you lived here at Bonnie Belle Farm. He developed the property and the tree farm.

JV: That's one thing when I was telling you before, about the development, they had the use of the woods. It goes with the property. We gave them the lakefront.

LZ: Who's them?

JV: The homeowner's...association. We gave them the lakefront. So that will never be developed. It's one of the few spots on Loon Lake that isn't developed.

LZ: In other words, there (are) no homes on that stretch of land.

JV: That's right. So we gave them that and we also gave them a 25-year easement to use the woodland. But the 25 years is up and we have not renewed it, but we are saying, you know, "Be our guests as long as you behave yourselves"... (laughter)... the same rules still apply. We would ask our friends the same thing.

LZ: So they have the privilege of using the woods – that's great. I guess I'm just wondering if there's anything (more) back to the business, that you remember about the years in Chestertown and what the town was like at that time.

JV: One thing I will tell you because it was quite a fun thing. I was not involved with the business per se, except that I used to have go down and get Fred because he always came home for lunch. Anyway, I'd be in and out. Every year at Christmas, I was given the corner window to decorate whichever way I wanted, and then the hardware store... would put bargain items for Christmas gifts in the other window. So every year, Jackie and Jennie, our 2 daughters, and myself would be planning this window for months ahead.

And we had more fun doing it, and there are pictures of it. One time it was a living room with a fake fireplace with tree, and ...presents around. Then another year, Jennie had one of those big dolls that was as tall as a 2 year-old...

LZ: Yes, I remember those dolls.

JV: So we had one of her. And we had a hill with a white sheet over it, and a toboggan coming down the hill... we had more fun planning these windows, and everybody was very interested – what's in Vetter's window? (laughter)

LZ: Were there other stores that also decorated their windows?

JV: Decorated, but not quite like that.

LZ: Sounds like you brought a little bit of 5th Ave., New York...to Chestertown.

JV: We used to take Jackie down to visit her grandparents in Scarsdale. In fact if we went anywhere after Thanksgiving, we had to walk down to Lord & Taylor's and up to Tiffany's and we always had to go out on 57th Street to piano row, where my family had a store along with Steinway and all the other (*piano companies*).

LZ: So the family ~~visit~~ (*business*) there in NYC was ~~the~~ (*piano business manufacturing with a factory in the Bronx.*)

JV: And real estate...Isabelle Realty. (laughter) Everything was named for people.

LZ: Well, that's a good way of doing it.

JV: Well, it worked.

LZ: What was it like to be in Chestertown in the winters back in the 50's and 60s?

JV: Oh it was great. When I tell people we used to stay at the Rising House, they look at me like you're nuts. It was lovely then. And run just so. It was the Chester House that was on the corner where Nice 'n Easy is now. That was the vacation spot, the destination spot. But the Rising House was the commercial hotel.

LZ: How do you spell that word?

JV: R – I – S-I-N-G. There was a Mr. Rising.

LZ: So therefore, the house was the Rising House. And that was at the corner where the Nice 'n Easy is now?

JV: No, no. That was the Chester House. The Rising House is the one that's across from the drugstore that's so horrible looking. It's falling down, right in the middle of town.

Yes, that's the one. It used to be much nicer, it had big elm trees in front. The road has been widened now. And it had green flower boxes with geraniums on each level of the porch, I think there were 3 levels. When we stayed, before we got heat in here other than (a) woodstove in the back, where the caretakers lived, we finally got a hot air furnace put in. Then we could come, it still was not hot upstairs, believe me, but at least in the living room, it was bearable. We would stay over at the Rising House... *(and come to the farm just for the daytime)*.

LZ: I asked what was it like in the winters?

JV: That's it, yes. There was so much snow in those days. They didn't take it away in truckloads. And Fred often used to say to me, "Didn't you ever meet my grandfather?" We were having breakfast one day and there was a hat walking down one side of the street. And my father said, "There goes Mr. Vetter, up for the mail." And ... the piles of snow – all I could see was his hat!

LZ: That's right – the snow was so high that only his hat showed above the snow piled up on the street. (laughter) Did there used to be any kind of outdoor activities when all the snow piled up?

JV: Daisy Hill off of Theriot Avenue was a great place to slide; it's been whittled away and changed now, but it was a wonderful place to slide and just ski a little bit. That's something I should tell you about – that my father was very concerned about 2 things. One, was zoning. He said, "If you don't do something here, it's going to be like Lake George Village, 9N, all the way up to the Canadian border." But you need zoning. And he was way ahead of himself *(the times)*, or the general thought. He did get it started and here in town, and I'm so glad that he did... You know, having setbacks, and all that sort of thing is important; otherwise everything would be hanging right out over the water.

LZ: Yes, it makes a difference.

JV: It does. And the other thing was at that time, there was some sort of government handout...that they would give money if a town...they wanted towns to have green area...like a village green in New England?

LZ: Yes, I understand.

JV: And so, he talked to them *(the Rotary and Town Board)*, that Chestertown should do the same. And that's when they got busy and they bought Dynamite Hill... and there was a rumor that the Vettters make a killing on that... well, believe me, they didn't make a killing...if it was \$100 an acre, it was ridiculous, but believe me, they didn't make a killing. And somebody said, "Why was it always in Chestertown? Why didn't they do it in Pottersville?" Well, that's where the hill was. And that's the story.

LZ: OK.

JV: It's called Dynamite Hill, because that's where the Vetter's Hardware Store used to keep their dynamite.

LZ: Really?

JV: Yes, they used to sell dynamite and you don't want that stored in the basement of your store. So they had a little shack out there and the dynamite was kept out there.

LZ: I always wondered why it was called Dynamite Hill.

JV: Now you know the rest of the story.

LZ: Why did they keep dynamite there? That was something that needed to be sold?

JV: Yes, very important.

LZ: So in other words, it was one of their products?

JV: Yes.

LZ: So people could use it for construction purposes?

JV: Well, yes....

LZ: So that was a very interesting story you told about the dynamite and Dynamite Hill. Just want to finish up (the interview) by going through some of your family members. I understand you have 2 daughters? Tell me about their growing up here and what they now do: their names, first.

JV: Well their names are Jackie, for Jacqueline, and Jennifer, Jennie. And Jackie was born in 1953, and Jennie in 1958. And Jackie was the first granddaughter, grandchild, in my family, and really, the first in town, for the Vetter family, too. She had an awful lot focused on her, too much attention. We were quite happy when a second one arrived. I was bound and determined that she was not going to be an only child as I had been, because it's not so great...they make you the center of everything...she went to school here. I'm trying to remember – it was Jennifer who was the first one to graduate from North Warren...not in the new building, but they had formed North Warren at that point. And I know that the graduation was outdoors, because they didn't think they could fit everybody in the bleachers of the gymnasium in the old school, which is now the Municipal Center.

And they were involved with Girl Scouts, Jackie was. And they had their own little club, which was fun, the Pine Tree Club. They raised money and sent it to Korean orphans. I can remember getting letters from Korea, thanking the Pine Tree society for having their lemonade stands, and selling bags of pine cones for fire starters- anything like that, 10

cents for this and 10 cents for that...but it was fun. (*The girls raised about \$100 for the orphans; a lot of money in those days.*)

LZ: It all added up and they were doing some creative and good work.

JV: That's right and they had a good time doing it. And Jennie was 5 years younger, but she just loved to hang out with those older kids. It's interesting, but Jackie's first word was "dess" – she wanted a dress, not her overalls, after her nap one afternoon. Jennie's first word was "hoss" and she has been a horse lover and animal lover ever since. But she had a stick horse, do you know the kind?

LZ: Yes. A head on a stick, yes. (a hobby horse)

JV: She would ride her hoss, as they were parading around, running around, and she would cut corners to keep up, of course, she thought she was keeping up, but we knew better. (laughter)

LZ: Sounds like that might have determined their futures... Tell me about what they do now.

JV: Jackie works for Hudson Headwaters. She is program coordinator of the Greater Adirondack Perinatal Network.

LZ: That's quite a title.

JV: It is, and she has quite a lot to do. She organizes meetings of providers and does a tremendous amount of PR (public relations) work and pulling groups together to work more efficiently instead of each one in their own little bailiwick...and it's very, very gratifying work.

LZ: And you were telling me that her territory reaches all the way from Saratoga to?

JV: To Plattsburgh and Watertown.

LZ: That's quite a territory.

JV: It is. At times, it's more than she really likes but that's the way it goes. And Jennie... I went to Colby Junior College and Jackie went to Colby Junior College. By the time Jennie came along; I think Jackie was the last one when it was still a junior college. Now it's Colby-Sawyer, and it's in New London, New Hampshire. And when Jennie graduated, she was the equivalent of valedictorian, they have another name for it. She was accepted at UNH, they weren't going to take any more people from out of state, and her professor from Colby called the guys over there at UNH and said, "If you let this one get away, you're nuts." (laughter) They changed their mind and let her in and she graduated summa cum laude from UNH in...animals?

LZ: In other words, what her degree is in?

JV: Anyway, she came over here and got a job with DEC. She works for fisheries; that was the opening that came up. She has gone up and up as far as she would like to go, so she has said no more. I mean she didn't want to leave home, or go to the Albany area...

LZ: She wants to stay in this location.

JV: She lives in Saranac Lake. She and her husband are both Adirondack guides; they're 46-ers; they're long-distance paddlers; they are going this summer to Alaska again; they go out and do back country skiing where they drop them from airplanes way out back. It's been a great life for them and they both enjoy it very much. They're only about an hour and a half at the most from us, which is nice. They're going to be here for Father's Day on Sunday.

LZ: Great. Well, it sounds like they've followed in your father's footsteps in his love of the outdoors.

JV: That's right, they have. Yes, both of them, Jackie and Nick do, too.

LZ: Well, I want to thank you very much for the interview. Before I end this, do you have any other stories that you can think of about Chestertown?

JV: I'll think of a million after you leave (laughter). But no, I think you've gotten enough of me and mine, but it's been a pleasure... I'm thrilled that you're doing this because I wanted so badly for somebody to come and do it for my husband but they never did and they have really lost a huge fund of knowledge that he had.

LZ: Yes, well that's the importance of the History Through Voices project, and like you've pointed out, there are so many people that we really need to get to and record their stories... Well, thank you very much.