

5/19/2018 – KEVIN HEALY

KG - Kayt Gochenaur

KH - Kevin Healy

KG - This is Kayt Gochenaur. I'm at the Saranac Laboratory and I'm speaking to Kevin Healy today on May 19, 2018. Okay here we go. (I'm just going to put this here.) So, your aunt, your great-aunt, was the one who cured here, right?

KH – Yes, my great-aunt had a cure cottage.

KG – She ran the cottage.

KH – Her name was Lorette McCabe so it was McCabe's cottage.

KG – Up on Franklin?

KH – Up on Franklin Avenue.

KG – Do you know the address?

KH – I can look it for you. I can call it up and I can look it up. She was a nurse and her husband who passed away in 1932 died of tuberculosis.

KG – So that was how she ended up coming to it?

KH – Yes, I believe so. I think she got her nursing degree in New York City. That's where they met and I think they came up here.

KG – Because he had TB.

KH – He had TB. My mother Jacqueline Charland and her sister Cecile Charland both worked as tray girls when they went to the Saranac Lake High School.

KG – And they were from Tupper Lake?

KH – They were from Tupper Lake, right. They were born in Tupper Lake. Lorette was their maternal aunt. She was my grandmother's sister.

KG – And that's Lorette McCabe?

KH – McCabe. Her maiden name was Monakey and my mother's maiden name was Charland.

KG – And what was your great uncle’s, her husband’s, name?

KH – Hugh McCabe.

KG – Charland. We’ll find that.

KH - So, my mother told me to add - her routine consisted of: in the morning after she cleaned – got herself ready – she would run breakfast trays. Then she would have her breakfast and then she would go up and retrieve the trays. Then go to school. Of course the school was on Petrova so she walked from Franklin Avenue to Petrova, came back for lunch, ran the trays to the patients, had her lunch, picked up the trays, and then went back to school. After school if there was any shopping to be done my mother went to Charlie Green’s Market. She would do the shopping for my aunt at Charlie Green’s market and then come home and prepare to do the supper trays. Run the supper trays, then have her supper, then bring the supper trays back down and then do her homework and whatever she had to do for the night.

KG – Wow. So she would walk from Petrova back to Franklin and then your great-aunt would have the meal ready? Would your great-aunt do the cooking?

KH – Yes, the trays would be ready. My aunt did all the cooking. My mother said that she dirtied every pot and utensil in the kitchen when she did it. But my mother said that the way that she prepared the meals was she made everything look really appetizing to encourage the patients to eat so there was always a starch, a protein, a green vegetable, and an orange vegetable and then some sort of dessert.

KG – Wow, so she paid attention to the color even.

KH – She paid attention to the color and every plate was made to look appetizing so that it would encourage the patients to eat. The majority of the patients were Norwegian seaman. I’m not sure... my mother graduated in 1942 I think... and I’m not sure how long the Norwegians were patients there but when my mother was running the trays the majority of them were Norwegian seaman.

KG – How many patients did she have at a time?

KH – I’m not sure. I want to say about 12 but I’m not sure. I don’t know exactly. She had of course cure porches. All the rooms had porches.

KG – Individual ones that you could wheel the patient out from the bedroom?

KH – Yes. There was no threshold across the door so that they could wheel the cure chairs out.

KG – Did she have much help? Did she hire other people to help out?

KH – She had someone that helped her in addition to my mother running the trays. There was other help I know. There was at least one other nurse. I'm aware of that. There was someone who helped with the cleaning and the laundry and that sort of thing. But my aunt did all of the cooking herself. She actually taught my mother. It wasn't my grandmother that taught my mother to cook, it was my aunt. My mother did more of what my aunt did than what my grandmother did.

KG – How many years did she operate the cottage?

KH – She passed away in 1957. I was three years old. I can just barely remember her. I believe that she was ill although I don't believe it was tuberculosis. I'm not sure when she started, presumably when Hugh was sick. If I were to look up probably property records, I could probably determine from that. I tried to go to the research room but it's not open today because on the Historic Saranac Lake website there is a picture of an ad that appeared in one of the health magazines for my aunt's cottage. That's on the website. Also on the website there are letters from a patient from New York to his family and he talks about staying at my aunt's cottage.

KG – So what type of rules do you remember your mom telling you about as far as her own safety in order to not get sick as well?

KH – She said that my aunt was very strict. There was a lot of hand washing. You had to wash your hands all the time. My mother wasn't permitted to handle any of the medicinal things like the sputum cups or anything like that. It was strictly just the meal trays that my mother handled. My mother didn't talk much about that. Her reference is more to when she was curing.

KG – Tell me about that.

KH – My sister was born in '48 I think and shortly after my sister was born my mother contracted TB. I should back up to tell you that my father contracted TB and he came from NYC to cure at Gabriels. He worked for a lawyer on Wall St. in New York and the lawyer wanted to send him to law school. My father became sick with tuberculosis and this man paid for my father to come here to cure because my father's family didn't have the money. He paid for it. He cured at Gabriels. After his cure he went back to New York but found that he missed it up here. He really liked it here so he came back here to live. He worked at Charlie Green's. That's how he met my mother.

KG – How old was your mother at the time?

KH – My mother would have been probably 20.

KG – Do you know what the year was roughly?

KH – She was born in '24 so she would have been 19 or 20. So it would have been like '44. She went to Albany Business College before they got married and they married before the end of the War I know that. They married in '44 or '45. She became ill and she said her chest X-Ray looked like somebody had taken something that was white and had sprinkled pepper on it. She said it was it just covered with all these black spots, not very big, rather small. She had thoracoplasty, which is where they collapse a portion of the lung. So she had ribs removed and she had a big half-moon scar on her back. She had the operation and cured at Ray Brook. My sister was young and lived with my grandparents in Tupper Lake because my sister obviously couldn't be around my mother. My mother said her sister would bring my sister to see her and would be down on the lawn. My mother would look at her and wave to her from the room in the sanatorium.

After Ray Brook my mother went to my aunt Laura's. She finished her cure at my Aunt Laura's. She said that she - in addition to the meals that my Aunt Laura made – my mother had to eat every day a big Hersey's chocolate bar. This big. To put on weight, to encourage her to put on weight. She said as much as she liked chocolate that was kind of difficult, to down a whole big chocolate bar every day. She remembered that. She said she had a nurse that I think kind of resented the fact that it was Laura's niece that she had to care for. The nurse was supposed to change the linens on the bed every day and this nurse wouldn't do it so to make her have to change the linens on the bed my mother would get up and pull the sheets apart so that the nurse would have to change the linens.

She said she asked the doctor if she could knit because she wasn't permitted to do anything. The doctor said: "If you can knit lying flat on your back, then you can knit." But he said: "You can't do anything that requires you to be in any upright position." She had to be on her back to finish the curing for the thoracoplasty. She was required to do some sort of physical therapy to move her arms. She said it was very painful and she wouldn't do the motion exercises so as an adult she had limited mobility in her left arm because she didn't do the physical therapy that she was required to do. One thing that kind of bugged me when I was a kid was on Mother's Day, I would want to make my mother breakfast in bed and she never wanted it. I couldn't understand why and then when I got old enough, she said: "I had to eat every meal in bed when I cured. I vowed as long as I was healthy, I would never eat in bed. It wasn't because I didn't appreciate what you were doing but it was so uncomfortable for me and such a memory curing from the tuberculosis that I didn't want to ever eat in bed if I could get up and move around."

KG – How old was she when she contracted tuberculosis?

KH – She would have been probably around 22.

KG – So this was after she was married?

KH – It was after she was married. Maybe 23 because... My sister was born in '48 so my mother would have been about 24 or 25.

KG – And how long did she cure at... was it Ray Brook?

KH – Ray Brook. I'm not sure. My sister might know. My sister would.

KG – Do you know the rough time period that she was curing? Years?

KH – It was a couple of years. The whole thing was a couple of years because my father lived in a boarding house because he couldn't live where she was curing because of the tuberculant patients. He lived in a boarding house for two or three years I believe. My sister lived with my grandparents in Tupper Lake. My mother... it was about the time that they developed streptomycin but my mother was allergic to streptomycin so she shouldn't take the streptomycin as a cure for the tuberculosis. My father said that (I don't recall) whatever type of medicine he said was small - less than a pint, a half pint - it took almost a full week's pay because it was so expensive. I don't recall what that was. I'm sure it wasn't streptomycin because she couldn't take that.

KG – How many week's pay did you say?

KH – Almost a full week's pay. He worked I think 3 jobs simultaneously.

KG – Wow. He was working at Charlie's.

KH – He was working at Charlie Green's and I'm not sure where else he worked.

KG – So were you raised here?

KH – I was raised here yes. I was born in '54. I went to St. Bernard's for grade school and then Pius middle school and then the high school and graduated in '72. My sister also. My sister graduated in '67 I think.

KG – When you were growing up do you remember a lot of leftovers from the TB industry? It was probably going downhill at that point.

KH – Yes. I remember. I can remember the money collections at the movies, then you've got the collections from the wrappers, the Trudeau Sanatorium - it had closed in '55 or '56 but it was still associated. The cottage 'Little Red' was still up there. I can remember going up to see that. I remember the Trudeau Institute being built and when that opened. I remember a lot of people (that to me were really old because I was young) but they were sort of leftover from having come here either to cure or as domestics for people who came to cure.

KG – Well, this has been a lot of great info. Thanks so much. I love it when somebody just walks in the door and has all of this stuff for me. It's great.

KH – I wish that I had recorded more when my mother would talk about it. I really wish I had recorded more.

KG – You know that's exactly what I'm trying to do. I have an online database and I'm just trying to collect stories and then people can hear them, researchers, and I'll try to curate some specifically and they will inform our exhibits and we can have first-hand accounts. That's what makes it come alive otherwise it's just dates.

KH – The house that I grew up in was the Duso Cottage. My parents bought it from the Duso's. It was a two-family home and it had just a small cure... they had a big porch downstairs but a small cure porch upstairs. I know from looking online that when the county health department would come after a patient passed away, they would come to sanitize it or ensure that it had been cleaned properly and that there was a reference to them coming to the Duso Cottage. I don't know the specifics of it. This is what I had hoped to find out in the research room. That house was built in '23 or '24. That was on Fairview Avenue. 13 Fairview Avenue. But I didn't know at the time that is was.... We had just lived in it as a private home. I didn't know it was the Duso Cottage. I found that out by researching online.

KG – It's been great. Let me turn off the little recorder here.

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