

1/5/2021 – JUDY MEAGHER

JM – Judy Meagher

KG – Kate Gochenaur

KG – Ok it looks like the audio is recording. Could you please state your name and age for the record?

JM – I'm Judy Meagher and I'm 73 years old.

KG – Wonderful and it looks like the audio is recording well on my end. This is Kate Gochenauer. It is January 5, 2021. This is a socially distanced interview. I'm here at my home in Rainbow Lake and, Judy, where are you right now?

JM – I am on Upper Saranac Lake in Gilpin Bay. Gilpin Bay Road.

KG – Wonderful. Well, I want to get started. I know your family has a lot of history in the area on Upper Saranac Lake. Could you just tell me about your family and their history in this area?

JM – My dad was born in Wawbeek in 1904. My grandmother was the postmistress at Wawbeek, although the register, when I went back in history, was to find that the formal postmaster was a postmaster from Coreys, but my grandmother did the mail for the mail runs at Wawbeek from about 1898 until about 1910. So my dad was born in Wawbeek and he had two sisters and a brother. My grandfather was a caretaker and at that time, the early 1900s, he was a caretaker on Birch Island. I never did know for what families so I don't have the history there. About 1910 he was offered a position (this is my grandfather now) as a caretaker for the Graves family on Eagle Island. My grandfather and grandmother – well my grandfather - became the caretaker for Eagle Island for the Graves family from 1910 (the Graves purchased that property from Levi P. Morton and his wife Anna Livingston Morton) to 1929. From 1910 to 1929 my grandfather... My grandfather's name was William Meagher and he was a caretaker until apparently quite suddenly he passed away in April of 1929. So my father took over as caretaker from 1929 until the camp was given to the Girl Scouts of Essex County in New Jersey. It was actually January 1, 1938. My father was a caretaker from '29 to 1938. Would you like to hear more about how like he married my mom and my two sisters?

KG – Yes. Just to clarify quickly. Are these your maternal or your paternal grandparents?

JM – This was my paternal... This was my father's father and mother - Meagher's. My father was William Walter but everybody called him Walter. He took over the caretaking position in 1929 after my grandfather died. He was the caretaker as I said until 1938. I was looking in some old records and discovered that he had in 1930... he had a boarder on Eagle Island who was helping him be a caretaker. This is before he married my mom by the way. The man's name was John

McKillip. Of course I know the name John McKillip because he is an old Saranac Lake... McKillip's are an old Saranac Lake family. John McKillip's father was the caretaker at what is now Young Life. Then when John McKillip's father passed away John became the caretaker for what is now Young Life. It's a little bit of history that I didn't know until I was just going through records, census records, and it was really interesting to find all these names and caretakers. But at the time in the twenties almost every large camp in the southern part of Upper Saranac Lake had a caretaker. Most of the caretakers had families and they were all local and lived in Saranac Lake.

In 1930 my father married my mother. My mother's maiden name was Toole. My mom and her family lived on Riverside Drive in Saranac Lake. How they got to Saranac Lake – they weren't original Saranac Lakers – was my mother's sister had TB. She came in I think it was 1925. They came to Saranac Lake because my aunt cured there for many years. In 1930 my mom and dad got married. My father was living, again, full-time on Eagle Island and so my mom moved to Eagle Island and in '31 she had her first daughter, which is my oldest sister Nancy. In 1933 she had her second child Elizabeth, better known as Luppy (an old family name) and Nancy and Luppy were actually raised on Eagle Island. They are both now passed away but I remember hearing the stories of them running around the island and you know my mom and dad... there was no place to go so they just let the kids wander. They lived there not twelve months of the year because as you well know in the spring and in the fall if you were on the island and the ice came in you couldn't get off for at least six or seven weeks. In the spring, the same thing.

My mom and dad had a place on Lake Street in Saranac Lake. Actually my mom would take my two oldest sisters and they would go to Lake Street for the spring time and the fall when the ice was going in and out. It was a very... my mother and father used to say that it was not an easy time living on the island in those days because there wasn't any electricity over there. Everything was kerosene lamps and wood stoves and heaters. Of course I wasn't born then. I wasn't born until post World War II. Of course I didn't know any of this but I used to hear the stories. Kayt, when I was a little kid I used to always bug my father, especially my father, because he used to tell me so many stories about the lake. I would ask him all about living on the island. He said well there a lot of buildings and he was forever repairing a lot of the buildings and keeping up with them. So, as a caretaker there was a lot of work to be done on those big beautiful camps on the island.

So it was a busy time for him and it was a very fun and memorable time that he spent on Eagle Island. He had a lot of cousins around the lake because my grandfather's brother was also a caretaker right across the lake on Bartlett Carry Road, the old Agar estate. My grandfather's brother raised nine or ten kids there. So there was a lot of family and there were a lot of family members of my family and caretakers and cousins. It was a very wonderful time for them to be here. I think it must have been very sad for them to see that time pass in the late 30s.

KG – Can you tell me some of the stories that your dad would tell you about life on the island?

JM – So he would say that... first of all there were many boats. The Graves owned several boats. The Graves were into not sailing as much as they were into motorboats. They had numerous boats that they used to race. Saranac Inn would have an annual boat race. I'm not exactly sure whether it was in the northern part – I assume it was up in the northern part – and they would bring their boats up and have a lot of races. So the Graves family were just a wonderful family. My father just adored the Graves family. My father was the same age as the oldest Graves son. So he spent a lot of time with them. He became very, very close to the Graves family. So spending summers up there he said they would bring a lot of guests over and there were always a lot of boats going back and forth. One of the biggest and oldest boats (and I remember this from the Girl Scouts even in the 50s) there was this boat called the Gwen, which happened to be Henry Graves' daughter's name, Gwendolyn. He named this long beautiful boat and I want to say it had to be 36-38 feet. It was very thin and a very long boat and I think it only held six or eight people at the most. They used to bring that boat back and forth from the island to the mainland to pick up guests. I remember this boat very well because the Girl Scouts still had this until about I don't know maybe the mid-50s. I don't know what happened to the boat but it was an absolutely gorgeous boat.

So the Graves family did a lot of entertaining. Their two boys and girl spent the majority of the summers up here in the mid-20s. The Graves family would come here in early June or right after school was over and they stayed the entire summer. One thing that was very interesting about that time was when very wealthy people had caretakers and year-round people they treated them just like family. What was most interesting was my father went to prep school in Dean Academy in Massachusetts. I remember saying to my father – I was a little kid – why did you go there, why didn't you stay in Saranac Lake in the schools? He said: "Oh well the Graves family sent me to private schools and that's how I went to college at St. Lawrence University." So families like the Graves and other wealthy families on the lake would take their caretakers' children and send them to school, which I always thought was just absolutely fascinating.

The homes and the buildings on Eagle Island during that time just had so many beautiful antiques, clocks, tables, and I remember asking my dad (I was probably 10 or 11) what happened to everything? Did they just leave it when the Graves family gave it to Eagle Island? He said to me that the Graves family said to my mom and dad take whatever you want. They took some outdoor furniture and they took some clocks and some lamps but the majority of the beautiful, beautiful pieces of furniture remained on Eagle Island. The number of dishes and pots and pans – they could easily entertain 50 or 100 people on the lake. It was a very, very grand time to be on the lake, to know the Graves and many of the other wealthy people on Upper Saranac Lake. there were many homes on the southern part of the lake owned by very wealthy people.

KG – Do you know if the Graves would ever visit the island in winter?

JM – No, they never visited in the winter. Not that I know of. But I do know that one year my father and mother were over on the island for Christmas and New Year and my father's first cousin – her name was Lilian Meagher – she came to visit and they drove down Gilpin Bay Road.

I

think I've told this story to people on the lake many times. They drove down – her and her husband or her and her boyfriend (I don't think she was married at the time) – to the end of Gilpin Bay Road and they went out where Pinebrook is. They took their car and started to drive across the lake but the lake wasn't totally frozen yet and their car went in the water and all the Christmas presents went in the water. They survived, they didn't end up in the water, they jumped out before the car sank. My dad said they had to wait until the spring to pull the car up and get all the Christmas presents and everything out. They always laughed that it was a very funny story. Thank God they had the doors of the car open when they started across the lake. That was a story my dad always told about spending the winters on Upper Saranac Lake.

KG – Are there any other stories you can think of that he'd tell or things you heard from sisters about growing up there?

JM – So my mom... they lived upstairs over what was then the maintenance building. You know I haven't asked the Girl Scouts what they called the building but I know years ago the Girl Scouts used it as an infirmary. It was a two-story building but at that time in the 20s it was the maintenance. My mom and dad lived upstairs. It was 2 or 3 bedrooms and the story I heard from both of my sisters growing up (they were 5 and 7 when they left the island) was that they enjoyed playing there but one day I guess my mother was scolding my two sisters and said 'ok you have to stay upstairs and stay in your bedroom' and they closed the door. I don't know my mom and dad must have been outside or something. My oldest sister got very upset and she went out the back door of the two-story house and tried to get away. My parents were very, very upset that she disobeyed them but I guess my sister never forgot the fact that mom and dad made her stay upstairs. She remembers that house so vividly. She just passed away a couple of years ago. So that was one of the stories that they always told about living up there. As kids they loved it. It was just a wonderful to spend all their time there.

KG – To get the dates a little more straight here. When was your dad born?

JM – Oh my dad was born in 1904 in Wawbeek. He and my mom married in 1930.

KG – And what was your mother's first name?

JM – My mother's first name was Elizabeth. Betty, everybody called her Betty. She was born in 1909 in Nashville, Tennessee. She was originally from, believe it or not, East Orange, New Jersey, which was where the Girl Scouts from Eagle Island from Essex County, New Jersey was from. That was just kind of ironic. My mother's mother, believe it or not, was from East Orange, New Jersey. Of course they didn't know the Graves. They stayed in the area after 1938 but never did any caretaking after that. Of course that was the time of the Depression and a lot of the

families, like the Graves, left and gave these homes away. The Girl Scouts were very fortunate to receive that beautiful parcel of land.

KG – I'm curious if you know (this might be more of a speculative question) I'm curious if between the time that your grandfather was caretaking on Eagle Island and when your father stopped caretaking do you know if there was a great change in the way things operated? That's almost a 30 year time period.

JM – You know, I have no idea. I don't know. That's a really good question. No, I don't know. I would assume that it did but I guess I never asked my dad that question.

KG – It would be hard to.

JM – When my grandfather was a caretaker from 1910 to 1929, his brother was also the caretaker right across from him. I told you his brother's name was Robert Meagher but everybody called him Uncle Rob. He had nine kids. They had – this is at the Agar Estate, William Agar Estate which is directly across from Eagle Island – and they actually had a school that kids from Upper Saranac Lake on the water would be brought there to go to school.

KG – This is at the place by Bartlett Carry?

JM – This is on Bartlett Carry Road. As a matter of fact that home happens to be Jim and Chris Crane's home on Bartlett Carry. It was a school at one time and the kids went to elementary school there.

KG – Do you have any idea who the teacher was?

JM – They brought in a teacher. It might have been... who knows. It might have been a teacher that was the wife of one of the help on the Agar Estate. I don't know. I'm sure it wasn't my grandfather's brother's wife or somebody. I think they brought in a teacher who taught the kids on the lake.

KG – Do you have any estimate about how many kids that would have been?

JM – Well, they had nine kids themselves. I know that my father went to school there, you know first and second and third grade probably. I know that my father's two older sisters went there too. So, I would say that they probably had 10-15-20 kids probably. At least that many if not more. I have no idea of the size. I'm wondering if Jim and Chris Crane might know since their home actually was that school.

KG – That would be fascinating to know.

JM – I should ask Jim and Chris sometime. I do know that they did go over by boat and that's how they went to school. Of course when my father got older – I think he was 12 or 13 – he went off to Deen Academy in Massachusetts. When both of my aunts got older they also went to boarding schools. The Graves sent them to boarding school. So it was apparently a grand time to live on the lake. My aunt who died in 1989 – she was born in 1900 – her name was Edythe. Edythe Ryan Donovan. I wish I had had a tape recorder. She came to visit me 3 months before she died and she told me stories about when she was very young living on the lake. Now she never lived on Eagle Island but she did live on Gilpin Bay before she got married because my mother and father had property at the beginning of Gilpin Bay, actually almost very close well, next door to where I live right now. She would say that the caretakers (as I told you before everybody had caretakers and everybody had caretaker's... most of them had wives and kids and sometimes the kids became the caretakers) and she would often say that after sunset you would see a lot of boats rowing and canoes going and little motors going putt-putt to visit the caretakers around the lake. There were a lot of people at that time in the 20s or early teens that their romances were caretakers' kids and they would go by boat.

KG – That's so interesting.

JM – She told me numerous stories. Again I don't remember them but I should have had a tape recorder about who married who and how many kids they had. She said 'oh the daughter of this married the son of that person' and she said that's how a lot of people got married is from the romances of the caretakers. Again I wish I'd had a tape recorder at that time because I could have told you a lot of other stories about life on Upper Saranac.

KG – I'm wondering if you can describe for me like a day in the life of your father as a caretaker or your grandfather, just a little bit of their daily duties and the things they had to check on.

JM – So I think that the typical day that my father and my grandfather had was when the families were not visiting they had to make sure that all the buildings were ok. I know that my father would go through each of the buildings and he had lists of what needed to be repaired and fixed. Trees had to be trimmed and paths had to be maintained. Roofs had to be repaired and wood had to be stacked for heat for the summers for the fireplaces. As I said before the Graves had several speedboats and my father and grandfather both had to make sure that the boats were running, that they had the gas or the diesel necessary for them to run or to make sure that they did run. At that time there were... (I'm trying to count) two very, very large boathouses on Eagle Island. So they had to make sure of course that the boat houses were in good shape and the boats were maintained. Since there were so many buildings on Eagle Island, that was a full-time job, which is why I'm sure my father and grandfather needed help. I know that when my father wasn't in school and prior to him taking over as caretaker he spent all of his summers helping my grandfather caretake. There was a lot of work to be done just to maintain the buildings.

When the Graves family would come for the summer they had to worry about making sure that they got food, that they had enough water to drink, that they could transport it. There was a lot of taking the boats back and forth to get all the food ready for the summers because as I said the Graves did spend the entire summer up there. So there was a lot of work from I'm sure very, very early in the morning until late in the evening spending the time to make sure that everything was all set and that there were no problems. I know that one of the biggest fears during that time period was fires so they were always trying to make sure that everything was fine, that buildings were ok, and that there would be no fires. That's how most of the buildings... (my dog is trying to chew my quilt, I'm sorry. My dog is right below me) Fires is one of the ways so many buildings got destroyed in the Adirondacks. Fires were something to be very scared about. For my dad it was a full-time job, 365 days a year, just to make sure that everything was ok for them and that they were able to come up – the Graves family – and enjoy the summer. That the buildings would be in top notch shape and that they would be able to have fun on their boats. They also had a float plane. I don't know whether... how many years the Graves family did have a float plane but I actually have a picture of a float plane right off... One of the Graves was piloting the plane and brought the plane down. I don't know whether that float plane stayed on the lake or not. My father never flew a plane. There were a lot of boats and as I said the plane so there was a lot to worry about as a caretaker. It was a very large piece of property.

KG – When the ice was either coming in or going out did he then stay on the island while your mom and sisters went to Saranac Lake?

JM – So most of the time my mom and the kids, my two sisters, would leave but my father did tell me one winter – now it might have been their first or second winter that my father was caretaker – they decided to spend the whole winter out there. I said: 'well how did you get in and out or how did you know it was safe to walk on the ice?' He said the way you did it is you took a 2 by 12 very big piece of board and you slid it on the lake and you walked on it very carefully, very quietly, and if you heard anything that sounded like a little crack you very carefully backed up and walked off and the ice wasn't safe. That's how my father tested the ice is with these very long boards. I said to him: 'Gee that's... wow, you didn't have that far to go because it's very close by land from Eagle Island to the point at Young Life.' He said: 'Oh no, no you can't go that way.' I said: 'Why couldn't you go that way?' He said: 'Well lakes have a lot of streams that run into them and there is a lot of currents underneath and you have to know where the water and the currents run.' I said: 'Well how did you know that?' He said: 'Well I just know where they are.' Kayt, I must have been 8 or 9 and he took me around the lake all around Eagle Island, Gilpin Bay, the bays below it, around the middle of the lake to show me where all the streams came in and where the currents were.

KG – Oh my goodness.

JM – I know one of the largest currents is right off of where Young Life is – there are two of them there. One of the other biggest ones is where Pinebrook is. Pinebrook has a big stream

that comes right through their property. That current goes almost all the way out to the tip of Eagle Island.

KG – Wow.

JM – Of course I didn't know this. He took me by boat. I don't even think I was 10. He took me by boat and he showed me. He went all around the shores and he said: 'You have to know where the streams come in and then once you know where the streams come in you have to know how the water flows. You only learn that by knowing when the ice comes in, when the ice goes out, how thick the ice is. If the ice is really thick here then you know the stream is not going underneath there.' He kind of told me that so I found that just fascinating.

KG – Absolutely. When he would walk across the lake then would be go...?

JM – He would walk across the lake and at that time he would keep a car. You know if he was on the island he would have to wait until the ice froze and then he was able to get off the island and go get food supplies. I had asked him: 'well how many years did you stay on the island full-time?' and I can't remember, I think it was 2 or 3 years that he and my mom lived on the island year-round. He said it was like 8 weeks, sometime 7-8 weeks, before you could actually bring a car over. You could carefully walk across the lake if you knew again where you could walk but a lot of the times it took 6 weeks. Like I know right now I wouldn't walk across the lake. It's been a real mild winter this year but again you just have to know that. I was always fascinated by trying to understand lake currents and where things flowed but it had a lot to do with where the streams come in and where they go.

KG – So he would keep a car. Where would he keep a car on the mainland?

JM – He would keep a car on Gilpin Bay Road. From 1910 until actually the 80s – 70s? (I can't remember) my family had property on Gilpin Bay Road. Of course I live on Gilpin Bay Road but I'm on the property next to where my grandmother lived. They had a building there. My grandmother didn't live there year-round but it was a summer place and they kept a car in the barn there.

KG – Tell me... and I need to look back at my notes here but you mentioned your grandmother was the postmaster in Wawbeek.

JM – Yes, she used to take the mail from... apparently the mail would come by stagecoach from Tupper Lake and Coreys and then a boat would come from... through Middle Saranac and then another boat would come from Middle Saranac to Upper Saranac. That's how the mail got delivered – to Tupper Lake, from Tupper Lake, to Saranac Lake. She wasn't... I don't think she was the primary postmistress because according to the U.S. Postal Service the postmaster for Wawbeek was also the postmaster from Coreys. But I do know that my grandmother did the

mail for Wawbeek and used to get the mail back and forth so she might have been the assistant postmaster or something.

KG – Would she be the one driving the boat and delivering?

JM – No. She never drove the boat. She got the mail delivered from say Tupper Lake by stagecoach and she would probably have to sort it because some mail stayed on Upper Saranac, some mail was delivered to the people at the Wawbeek (called the Wawbeek Inn at the time) and some of the mail had to be sorted to those who lived in Coreys and to those who lived in Bartlett Carry. Then a boat would come from Middle Saranac so any mail that had to go to Saranac Lake or Lake Placid would have to be put and batched and given to the boat driver. But no my grandmother never drove the boat. I think she just sorted the mail.

KG – Do you know what would... did they every deliver any mail in winter?

JM – I don't think so. I don't know. That's a good question. I don't know how they delivered it in the winter. I would assume by stagecoach, Kayt. I would say somehow by stagecoach because at that time there was a path from Coreys in to Saranac Lake and I mean a path. Apparently that's exactly what it was. But in the winter they couldn't do it by boat that's for sure. Fascinating. I never thought about the mail at that point.

KG – Speaking of the boats, the Graves boats – do you know how they would be stored in the winter? They would have to pull them out of the water, right?

JM – I assume they were pulled up by pulleys, old wooden pulleys. Well I don't assume I know that they did this. They had very big old wooden pulleys (you sometimes you can find them in antique flea markets) and there would be large heavy chains. You pull them up on the rafters in the boathouses and then they could take very, very large boards and put them across the boathouse and then lower the boats on the big boards to hold them. I'm sure that's how most of the boats were stored because these boats were huge. As I told you the Gwen was 36-38 feet long. I was going through my photos last year trying to find some pictures of this beautiful old boat called the Gwen and I don't have any pictures of it. But I do have some old pictures framed of some old boats of the Graves. They are kind of nondescript because I don't think anybody could determine what kind of boats they were. They were just out in the water and somebody must have taken a picture of them. I do have them framed. I don't know whatever happened to this beautiful boat, the Gwen. It was beautiful. The Graves were just a wonderful family and I'm sure it was a wonderful time for them. Their one son died in 1926 in a car accident and I think the other one, the second one, died in a car accident 6 or 8 years later. I'm sure that was a determining factor for them to sell the property, oh not sell the property, give the property away. They really lost interest in Upper Saranac Lake and it was a changing time at that point with the Depression in the 30s and the glory days of having these big old camps with many buildings and you know caretakers and you know people they would bring up to take care of

their kids and nannies and everybody else's. The glory times were gone by the mid to late 30s and things changed.

KG – Would they bring up a cook, like somebody who would make the meals?

JM – Oh I'm sure they did. I'm sure they did.

KG – I'm curious about groceries and where they were getting food from and if it was done weekly.

JM – Well, I know that my mom and dad used to go in and get groceries for them and have a lot of things stacked in storage for them when they came up. I do know that they would take the boat up to Saranac Inn in the 20s. Saranac Inn had a grocery store there at the inn. I'm sure that they took a car and went in to – of course the closest place was Tupper Lake – or Saranac Lake. But Tupper Lake was the closest place and I'm sure that that's where the maids and servants... They would bring you know people up to take care of the kids and people to iron and cooks and servants, yes. Definitely because I'm sure they didn't cook. My mother didn't cook for them and that I do know. My mother really didn't work for the Graves. She just was my father's wife and took care of her kids. I'm sure they brought up many, many servants as did most of the people on the lake. They would come up in caravans, not trucks but cars full of suitcases and clothing because they spent their summers up here.

KG – So tell me a little bit about... was it your mother's sister who had tuberculosis?

JM – Yes, yes. My mom's sister had wanted to become a nun and she was going to go in and take her vows and they discovered she had TB. So my father – my grandfather, my mother's father – brought my aunt up to Saranac Lake and brought his other children up. My mother's mother died of TB at the age of.... I think my mother was 6 or 7 when my grandmother died of TB. So he brought the entire family up and built a home on Riverside Drive and my aunt cured. I'm not sure exactly where she cured. Whether she cured at the home in Riverside Drive with maids or she actually went to a cure cottage. That's one thing I have to research with Historic Saranac Lake is to find out where my aunt actually cured. That I never asked. Of course I knew my aunt very well. She died when I was in nursing school but I just never asked her where she cured.

KG – Did she every tell you anything about generally what it was like and do you know any more about how long she was sick for?

JM – Oh my aunt was sick for... she was sick for many years, Kayt. I would say 3-4 years. She was really very, very ill. I don't think she was really better until the early 30s. I would say she must have cured for 5-6-7 years if not longer. I never did ask her how many years. She took a job in Plattsburgh in the mid 30s during the Depression so she must have been curing for at least 5 or 6 years.

KG – They came up here in the late 20s?

JM – She came up in '25. They came up right around 1925. My aunt would tell me how she would sit out on the porch with all these blankets and even in the dead of winter she would spend all of her time out there eating and having lots of tea and reading a lot and praying a lot. She always had a missal and she was always praying. That I remember as an adult. She wasn't curing then but you know when I was a teenager she always had a missal in her hands. I know she did that as she was curing. I don't want to say she was fragile because a little on the heavy side as she got older but she had a pretty case of TB and it took many years for her to cure.

KG – Did you feel like there was ever any stigma about talking about TB or was it kind of out in the open that that was what she had? I'm just curious if you like spoke about it at home or heard it talked about a lot.

JM – No. I don't think... although we never really talked that much about it. All of us knew that's how my mom and dad met. I think my aunt was just very grateful that she was alive and that she had the opportunity to be up here and cure. I don't think so, Kayt. I don't really know but I don't think there was that much stigma. There might have been, I just wasn't aware of it. At that point I was really too young and I think my older sisters could have answered that better than me.

KG – Tell me her name, your aunt.

JM – My aunt's name was Frances Toole. I've got to look in the records to see if there is any place where it mentions she... I think she must have cured in a cottage but again I don't know that. That's how they met and I'm sure that's how most people in Saranac Lake met each other – it had something to do with TB.

KG – For sure. This is... I want to have a little bit of time to ask you some questions about the quilt you said you are making but before we move on is there anything else about life on Upper Saranac Lake and Eagle Island and your family history that I didn't ask you about that you want to share? Or anything else you can think of right now?

JM – I think my father's older sister was born on Birch Island.

KG – Oh. They wouldn't have gone to hospital?

JM – My father's older sister, Edythe. She was born on Birch Island. My grandfather was a caretaker there for... oh wow, well she was born in 1900 so he was a caretaker obviously then up until 1910 around Birch Island and I don't know where else he was a caretaker before he took the caretaking position with the Graves on Eagle Island.

KG – How did he and your grandmother first come up to the area?

JM – Ah. Good question. Both of my grandparents lived in.. (why does the name just escape me) in Essex County... (oh my heavens, I should have written that down) they lived outside of Elizabethtown. They must have met... Mineville. In Mineville. My grandfather's father – my great-grandfather) must have worked in Mineville. My grandmother – her name was Ella Meagher but she was a Hickey – she was actually born in Troy, New York. I think the Hickeys went to Mineville to work. That's how they met. That's really all I know about them. I never knew my grandmother. Well, my grandmother died when I was about 5 ½ so I really didn't know her. I was the only one in my family who really didn't. All my other sisters knew her quite well but I didn't know her. So, how did they come.... Well, apparently he got a job caretaking and they moved to Upper Saranac Lake to be a caretaker. I'm sure because that's all my grandfather that I know of ever did was be a caretaker. I know that my father went to St. Lawrence University and he graduated in '26 (I think that was the year) '26 or '27. I don't know what he did. Well, I know what he did. He helped my grandfather on Eagle Island as a caretaker. He kept caretaking until the late 30s.

KG – This has been fascinating. A very different era.

JM – An extremely different era. There is not a day especially in the summer when I take boat rides and I go past all these beautiful buildings and some of them have been torn down, some of them have been lovingly re-done and there is not a day that goes by that I think: 'Oh Dad, if you could only see how beautiful this lake is now.' He always called it the jewel. The jewel of the Adirondacks. I would say to him: 'Well there is many other pretty lakes in the Adirondacks' and he goes: 'Oh no, not like Upper Saranac.' He loved it here. Very, very fond of it. I really love this place too. I very, very much as a very young child would always say: 'someday I'm going to live here.' I kept true to that word believe me. I do love it here.

KG – It's a beautiful place.

JM – It is, it really is.

KG – Well I wanted to ask you a little bit about the quilt. Tell me again about how many quilts you've made since was you said it was February or March?

JM – OK so since last (I'm thinking...) February I've made 5... 7... I'm just starting my 8th quilt. I gave 4 of them away to good friends this year. A baby quilt to a good friend's first grandbaby. I just like making quilts so I say to my friends: 'So do you want a quilt? What color do you want?' So I start making one.

KG – You mentioned also that you had made a few masks?

JM – Yes, so the Saranac Lake community headed by Gail Brill... Do you know Gail?

KG – Yes.

JM – She put out a notice and I think it was Hannah Hanford who sent me the link to say hey they need help making masks. So I went over and picked up some... a pattern and a few other things and I made 20 masks. I thought that would be something to help the community.

KG – Well I guess I'm curious about how covid has impacted you. Do you find that you have more free time to quilt or do you always quilt this much?

JM – I don't normally quilt this much. That's interesting because I was just interviewed by North Country Public Radio. Amy at North Public Radio sent me a note two weeks ago and said: 'Hey what's the silver lining of covid?' 'Ah two big silver linings. Reading like crazy and making quilts.' So I actually sent her pictures of three quilts that I made. I think I sent them to her a couple of weeks ago. But, yeah I don't normally make this many quilts but it's given me an opportunity to really be creative and say oh, you know, I wouldn't make that but yeah I have time. Of course I'll make that. Let me re-design. I actually designed a whole quilt myself. I looked at a pattern and said 'well that's a cute pattern but I don't like the way it is' so I completely changed it.

KG – Wow. How long have you been quilting for?

JM – Let's see. 6 years. 5 years. 6 years. But I sewed as a child. My mom used to sew all my clothes. So I learned to sew at a very young age and when I was in high school and college I made a lot of my own clothes then and then for years I didn't sew that much. Every once in a while I would sew but I always wanted to get back to it. I made a lot of table runners. I make a lot of wine coasters and cocktail napkins so when I go visit somebody I bring a bottle of wine for dinner and I usually bring coasters or napkins for them. I make a lot of those. I have a whole basket that I have of those. And wine bags – I make wine bags. Shopping bags. Table runners.

KG – Now are you involved in any sewing group or quilt group?

JM – No, I wanted to. I wanted to get involved and I was going to do that last March and then covid hit so I am not part of a sewing group but I'd like to do that. I would definitely like to do that. I think that would be a lot of fun to share some ideas.

KG – Oh for sure.

JM – I give most of it away because you know give it to people who will appreciate it and enjoy it. I like to do it. It's fun.

KG – Wonderful. Well, this has been a wonderful interview, Judy. Is there anything else you want to say while I've got the recorder still on?

JM – Just to say that I want everybody to support wonderful Historic Saranac Lake because it is just a fabulous organization and it is preserving our history. We've got so much history in this area, the Saranac Lake area, and although I wish I had more history that I could share with people there are so many people that can share that history and that's what Historic Saranac Lake is all about is to be able to have these stories and preserve them and share the history for the next several generations.

KG – Thank you. I will turn off the recording.

END