

MARY THERESA TOBIN MILLS and MARIAN MILLS COBURN

Interviewer: David Neal

Interviewed on: July 29, 2003

Interviewer: Your full name?

Mary Mills: Mary Theresa Mills.

Interviewer: Your maiden name?

Mary Mills: Mary Tobin. I didn't have a middle name then.

Interviewer: Would you care to give your name?

Marian Coburn: Marian Coburn

Interviewer: And your maiden name?

Marian Coburn: Mills.

Interviewer: What is your birth date?

Mary Mills: July 4, 1904.

Interviewer: Born on Independence Day! And yours?

Marian Coburn: July 6, 1927. (unclear)

Interviewer: Two days apart! Can you tell me where in the township you lived?

Mary Mills: I was born in Washington Township. Then moved across the way, that was Elk Creek Township. Now I'm over here in Franklin.

Interviewer: Is this the only place in the township you lived?

Mary Mills: Yeah?

Interviewer: How long have you lived here?

Mary Mills: Since 1925.

Interviewer: Did your family build this house or did you buy it?

Mary Mills: They came from Connecticut. My husband's father came up here and built a shanty to get along with, until they cut the timber. And when I came over here, they built on that other part where he had a gristmill.

Marian Coburn: No, he built that on because when they put the road in, people stayed there. People stayed in the new part. It was built before you got over here. About 1929, when they put the road in.

Interviewer: So, you were living here when they put the road in? What was it like?

Mary Mills: It was put in with teams of horses. It was a gravel road.

Interviewer: Do you remember who did it?

Marian Coburn: Didn't the people just do it themselves? Your dad helped on the road.

Mary Mills: No, this was in the twenties. When Nepples? stayed here, what road did they put in, Ross Nepples and his wife? (unclear)

Interviewer: Did you guys have a farm out here?

Mary Mills: This is a farm.

Interviewer: Still?

Marian Coburn: We let people use the land; we don't...its still fifty acres.

Interviewer: What did you guys farm out here?

Mary Mills: (Mary) corn and oats, hay, milked a few cows. Years ago, people used to milk cows and canned the milk.

Interviewer: Let's talk about family members. Who were your parents?

Mary Mills: Thomas and Elizabeth Gossman Tobin.

Interviewer: And where were they from?

Mary Mills: My father was born in Crawford County, near here. My mother came from Germany.

Interviewer: When did she come over here?

Mary Mills: When she was about seven.

Interviewer: When were they born?

Mary Mills: I can't tell you.

Interviewer: What was your mother's maiden name?

Marian Coburn: Her maiden name was Gossman.

Interviewer: Did you have any brothers and sisters?

Mary Mills: John, Raymond, Richard and Lawrence.

Interviewer: How many girls were there?

Mary Mills: Anna, Helen and me.

Interviewer: Any relatives in the township?

Mary Mills: You want then? My husband was the only boy in the family and he had four sisters.

Interviewer: Who were his parents?

Mary Mills: Harvey T. Mills and Agnes Pieper. His grandfather was from Connecticut.

Interviewer: Whom did you marry and when did you get married?

Mary Mills: I married Perry Mills in 1925.

Interviewer: Where did you get married?

Mary Mills: In Crossingville outside of Edinboro at the Baptist Church.

Interviewer: Did you go on a honeymoon?

Mary Mills: We went to Buffalo. (laughing) It was a long, long ways away from home.

Interviewer: What were the names of your children?

Mary Mills: Marian and Elizabeth.

Interviewer: Whom did you marry and when did you get married?

Marian Coburn: Virgil Coburn, April 1948.

Interviewer: Tell me about the schools out here.

Mary Mills: Eight...one down here at Franklin Center, one down here at Silverthorn, Goodban, and Fry, Falls, Francis, Mohawk. There was eight I think.

Interviewer: Where did you go to school at?

Marian Coburn: Franklin Center.

Interviewer: What was that like?

Marian Coburn: One room school.

Interviewer: Do you remember any of your teachers?

Marian Coburn: Only had three in eight years. Delbert Hayes, Lizzie Callaway and Mrs. Pritchell? [Cutshall?]

Interviewer: Where did you go after that?

Marian Coburn: Edinboro.

Interviewer: How did you get to school?

Marian Coburn: A van.

Interviewer: Who drove the van?

Marian Coburn: Mrs. Thelma Mitchell.

Interviewer: Can you remember any different businesses in the township? Blacksmiths?

Mary Mills: Oh yes, John Pieper and (unclear) Ann had the grocery store.

Marian Coburn: They had a feed mill.

Interviewer: Where was the feed mill?

Mary Mills: We had one out here in the barn for quite a while. There was one down by Franklin Center School, but it's torn down now. Then Ted Roan had one down Franklin Center Road, first place on the right.

Interviewer: Sawmills?

Mary Mills: I don't know.

Interviewer: How about cheese factories?

Mary Mills: That wasn't in the township.

Marian Coburn: There was an Ivoray Cheese Factory, right hand side, so it might have been in the township.

Interviewer: Do you remember any shoemakers?

Mary Mills: Yes, there was one down here in Franklin Center.

Interviewer: Who was that?

Mary Mills: Was that a Pieper? I don't know.

Interviewer: What was Christmas like around here?

Mary Mills: We had a Christmas tree and that was about it, at that time.

Marian Coburn: You didn't get a lot but you always got something. Just the whole family would be there.

Interviewer: Were your gifts homemade or store bought?

Mary Mills: Mostly were homemade.

Marian Coburn: Some of them were bought when I was growing up. I know my mother made all our clothes.

Interviewer: Any other businesses way back?

Mary Mills: They used to make crates and a planing mill. I used to hear them talk about it.

Interviewer: What kind of jobs?

Mary Mills: Farming around here. My father had a threshing machine. Can't tell when he started, around 1925, I think.

Marian Coburn: They built silos, too. He worked for the state highway and retired in 1967. You worked for the assessment office for 19 years in Erie.

Mary Mills: It wasn't only an assessment office. (unclear) At election time, the Democrats and Republicans, (unclear) we'd go through all those books, every name that was running for office. Then when election was over, we'd put all those numbers beside these names. Then we'd compare them with the commissioners...or somebody else, if they couldn't be there, one was Republican and one was Democrat. (unclear). So, that was election.

Interviewer: What jobs did you have?

Marian Coburn: I farmed 'til 1994, then I worked for Klimek's, since the 7th year. Klimek's Auto Store in Girard, delivering parts.

Interviewer: Do you remember any Civil War veterans in the township?

Mary Mills: I don't know.

Interviewer: What churches were there in the township?

Mary Mills: Methodist. There was one at Eureka.

Marian Coburn: A church and a school together.

Interviewer: Any other churches?

Mary Mills: We didn't go to any.

Interviewer: Any special school or church events?

Marian Coburn: They used to have box socials.

Interviewer: Were you involved in any of them?

Marian Coburn: At school, yeah.

Interviewer: Anyone involved in politics in the township?

Mary Mills: (laughing) We both were in politics! I worked in the Court House.

Marian Coburn: She was a committee woman. You was committee woman here for years. I'd go around, get everyone to register so they could vote. Then they counted the votes in Erie. See, I worked both places.

Interviewer: Where did people vote around here?

Mary Mills: Right down here in Franklin Center, the one place. That's all.

Marian Coburn: They called it the town hall.

Interviewer: Do you remember any Road Supervisors, Assessors, or Constables?

Mary Mills: Harvey Mills was an old-timer. That's my father-in-law.

Marian Coburn: You collected taxes at one time.

Mary Mills: Yeah, I taught school at one time.

Marian Coburn: Mohawk, that was in this township.

Interviewer: Who were the School Directors?

Mary Mills: Fellows, Leeson... Clair Wright.

Interviewer: Do you remember any of the road names that changed over the years?

Mary Mills: They changed this one to Old State Road. They put in a new road, up here, I can't tell you when, that was quite a while ago. There's one down here. I'd have to study these for a while. (laughing) When you get to be as old as I am, it takes a while to think!

Interviewer: You mentioned your mom coming over. Do you remember any other people in the township who were immigrants?

Mary Mills: My mother wasn't from the township. That came over, no I can't remember any.

Interviewer: Do you remember any natural disasters?

Mary Mills: Yes, there was...how many killed down here?

Marian Coburn: There was three killed down here in Franklin Center.

Mary Mills: Yeah, that was the first year you started high school. [Referring to Marian.] Wasn't there a tornado that come through here, too? Art Walsh getting killed.

Marian Coburn: Yes, there was three--Art Walsh, his daughter and grandson all killed down here.

Mary Mills: There was a tornado that come through here, too. When did it take that barn down? It was 1917, I think. They were building a barn over here and it took it down.

Interviewer: Do you remember any diseases? Do you remember the flu epidemic—1918?

Mary Mills: Yes, but I don't remember when it was.

Interviewer: Anyone taken ill from the flu epidemic?

Mary Mills: We were all ill, but not serious. There were a lot of them taken, I'll tell yah. Not from here though.

Interviewer: Any other diseases?

Mary Mills: This, that and the other...whooping cough, measles.

Interviewer: Where were people from the township buried?

Mary Mills: All over, a lot of them were buried at Francis.

Marian Coburn: Some of them are buried in McLane. Grandpa Mills is buried in McLane.

Interviewer: What can you tell me about the Depression?

Mary Mills: It didn't hit us as bad as it hit others. We were on a farm. We raised our cattle, pigs and chickens. We could go out and kill one of those. We'd cook it and put it in jars. It was quite a time then. Didn't we have a Cider Mill then? We had a Cheese Factory on the corner of Ivoray.

Interviewer: Who had the Cider Mill?

Marian Coburn: Clay Hough had that.

Interviewer: Is there anything else you'd like to talk about?

Mary Mills: I have to think about it. We raised our own garden and that's all we had to live on in the wintertime. We'd kill a pig, canned it, put it in brine. We were busy most of the time. But that was before I come over here.

Interviewer: What did you do for fun?

Mary Mills: A dance every Saturday night.

Marian Coburn: You danced upstairs.

Mary Mills: Yes, we danced upstairs and we voted downstairs in the right room.

Marian Coburn: All that in one building.

Interviewer: Anything else you'd like to add?

Interviewee: I really don't know what you want; only what you have asked us. Well, when you get home, you can burn it up!