

Interviews

Life Along the Kokosing

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Interview with Dorothy Miller

Anne Crosby

Dorothy Miller

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Researcher's Name: Anne Crosby

Event: Interview with Dorothy Miller

Place: Dorothy's apartment in Danville

Co-workers Present: N/A

AC: How long have you lived in Millwood, you don't live in Millwood, when did, how long have you lived in this area?

DM: Well, I left here at the age of 7 when my mother passed away and moved to Pittsburgh and lived there 10 years and was in NY 35 years and I moved back here in 1977.

AC: What brought you back here? In 1977?

DM: Well, I had always wanted to live here, I had no choice at the age I left, but I had always wanted to come back and on vacations I came here every year. to spend my summer vacations here and I after my sister and brother in law passed away on Long Island, I came back and I stayed with a brother in Newark until I could get an apartment in Danville. So I've been back here 23 years now. But I had always wanted to come back to Ohio, actually I didn't even want to leave even when I was a kid, I don't know what it is, but a lot of people I know that have moved away from here have always come back. And there was an article in the paper some time ago about people from Ohio they travel all over the country and often come back here. Ah when I was a child on the farm, we lived next to the property where the Caves were. Of course I used to go down the river to watch the others swimming, I didn't learn to swim all my family learned to swim in the Kokosing River. And a my sister Sadie saved a girl from drowning. I couldn't remember who it was because I was only 3 or 4 at the time. I used to go down to what they call the swimming hole, a bunch of the kids would be down there swimming and I'd used to go down and watch them. but I didn't learn to swim there. I learned to swim in high school in Pittsburgh. So they were all better swimmers than I was,

AC: Living down by the Caves, What was that like?

DM: Well it was, it was great! I think that kids in the country really have a lot more fun than kids in the city because it's all natural. WE had not toys, and we made our own fishing poles and you know, a line on it and a hook at the end. Nothing like the fishing poles they have now, but we still caught fish and that was a big deal. When you caught a fish and brought it home., I never like fish, but I ate it. hahahaha I always worried about swallowing a bone and a it was just fun you know, in the summer time I'd take dog and walk up to the apple orchards and eat green apples, so now that I look back I guess if I had to trade that for New York, I think I would stike to Ohio, I think children in the country have a lot to see. christmas was nice, we went out in the woods and chopped down a tree, of course we didn't have electric lights and all these nice ornaments, we only had candles, the

kind that cliip on the tree and of course we were never allowed to light them, our parents would do that. But ah everything was natural. in other words everything was natural, most of the fun we had we made our own fun. we didn't have, we had one sled which everybody shared, I think it's a great way to come up, of course being on a farm we had pigs and cows and chickens and that was a great life, it's a hard life, but it's a great life I think. And a when I went to school I went to school in Millwood, 1st and 2nd grade, and we walked a mile and didn't even mind it in the winter time. Hardly ever a car came by, once in a while we'd get a ride to school, but mostly we walked. My father had a car but he had a model T ford, but he worked at the sand plant and he couldn't take us to school because he worked 12 hours a day for 2 dollars which is hard to believe today and we always had plenty to eat and you know a good home, actually the home was owned by the sand company. Of course that's all been dug up now, but a lot of these people in the area worked at the sand company, of course a lot of them ended up with that disease that coats your lungs, I can't think of the name of that, they didn't have masks to wear you know, so all that dust from the sand eventually effected their lungs,

AC: Is that limphoma?

DM: You know I can't think of the name of it, I know what it ismy father had it.

AC: I know what you're talking about.

DM: I just I just can't think of the fame, silicostas, that's what it was, silicosis.

AC: Was you farm right near the Caves?

DM: It was the property right next to the Caves. And once a year in the summer I think they used to have camp meeting and that's the first time I see colored people, they used to come and sing church songs of course they had coke and all kinds of sodas for sal, so we just walked across the field to see it. I think, well it didn't cost us anything, but it cost 10 cents if you drove in with your car, and one place I like to go across the Caves property down, the rocks is a place called the Caves and it was you know a cave that you could go through and come up on top of the ground. We used to like to go there when we were kids.

AC: do you know is that still there?

DM: I imagine it is, to tell you the truth I have no I have not gone that far down, I have driven to what is the "Caves" now because I knew Helen and Bus Busenberg, well I have known them my whole life. Well I don't know if the Cave is still there or not. I have driven down there where they have all the trailers now but you know I dn't know if that's still there, I would imagine it was. I never thought to ask Helen about it. She would know because she lived down there for a number of years when they had the Caves. And a but I don't know. A lot of people going boating in that river in the summer a lot of the kids go down in inner tubes you know. the first two or three summers that I moved back here I rented one of those a trailers that was right near the river and i would go down, i didn't stay down there, but i would go down once in a while, and go with friends once in a while and have a cookout. it's really a beautiful area. There's still a lot of trailers. I don't know

the people who own that now, Helen has told me their name, but I just off hand don't remember. But I think they still have a lot of people that camp down there.

AC: Someone told me that the sand company owned the Caves now, do you know?

DM: Oh now I don't know. I thought they bought this property from Helen Busenberg and she could tell ya because a I never heard about the sand company owning it. Well my brother Raymond was not fond of the sand company, my father worked there, and of course you know he was a different age and he felt those men were not paid enough for how hard they worked, my brother Raymond was an electrician and a welder and of course you know the kind of money they make and he loved to fish and set traps in the winter. And a lady who worked for the sand company in the office told me once that I was up here in Renee's restaurant one day it's been several years ago, she said that brother of yours has some temper, I said yes I've known him all my life. haha, and he went to the office one day and he wanted to see the head of the Sand Company, and Rays came and they was polluting the river and he loved to fish, that was his hobby. fishing fishing and then in the winter he'd set traps to catch muskrats and things like that. Furry animals and he was up in the air about it, and I know when I'd come up here to visit he'd talk about the sandplant, he would rant and rave about how they were polluting the river, of course he was living in Ny at that time, but Buster Busenberg who later bought the Caves I think he even took them to court, you know I wasn't here I just know bits and pieces of what my brother Raymond told me about it and he said he took him to court and he they've got to do something about that because it was killing the fish of course other people who come down to the campgrounds to go fishing so i think they have done something about it, you know i'm not a person that goes fishing but I know that Buster did more about it than my brother Raymond.

AC: I think um, because the have now named the river a scenic river, that's there's probably laws about the pollution.

DM: I imagine now there is yeah. Well they've done a lot more now, you know years ago people didn't pay too much attention to those things unless you were a fisherman and then you were concerned about it. I don't know now how it is. I've never gone swimming in that river. I know how to swim now, but I think you have to be a good swimmer to swim in the river because there's an undercurrent there. And a somebody from Millwood drowned in that river, once after a flood. I'm sure Mr. Humbert would know who it was, I didn't know who it was, but the lady that lived there, Ida Busenberg, well her name was McKinley after she married now her husband and another man went down the river in a row boat and I think they both drowned, it was after a flood, and they say you should never go in a river after a flood. because of the water and a current. the one part of that river well if you've ever been on the Millwood bridge you could see it. I hope they're going to fix that bridge I don't know if they are or not, but there's one part there that's so shallow that you can walk right across.

AC: What would you like to see happen with the bridge?

DM: well I'd like to see them finish the bridge even if it was just a walking bridge you know i know it will cost, it will cost a lot no matter what, but i would like to see them finish it. Now there's a woman that lives on the other side of the river, Madeline Gilmour she's about 85 and she

lives on Millwood Road on the other side of the river and she walks up there to Spearman's every day to get a paper and walks back, that's a little walk, and there's a little hill coming up there too. right now she's in the hospital and she'd like to see it even if it was just a walking bridge. It would be nice, I think so, I'd like to see it finish. Actually when I come out of church, I go to the Presbyterian church in Millwood, when I come out of church Sunday I always drive down over that bridge instead of turning around you know. And coming right back to Danville, I always go over that bridge and come back. I suppose you know I'm just used to doing that, cause I remember that bridge when I was a kid that bridge had wooden planks and I lived a mile away and you know when a car went over that bridge, I could hear it. So that shows you what that bridge was like way back in you know in the 20s early 20s, you could hear it. well it's quiet in the country i mean when a car went over that bridge, you could hear those planks so i imagine they heard it pretty well in Millwood if I could hear it a mile away. course it's different now, I don't know if they'll do that, I think it's going to cost a lot of money. so, that may be the difference. And I don't know how many people use it. People on the other side there would use it quite a bit, see this way they have to get up on 62 and come into Millwood that way, course I always liked Millwood, being that I was born here, but most people never even heard of it. As a matter of fact I have been in Mt. Vernon at Tiffany's which is no longer in existence and run into people who didn't even know where Millwood was. And they lived in Mt. Vernon, that's amazing to me. They say well where is that? And I say, go down 36 you can't miss it. Well we had a Millwood Ny which was bigger than this, of course I always thought this Millwood was the greatest. When I first moved her I went up to the bank a lady, one lady in particular used to ask me if I was going to stay here. Are you moving back to NY? I said, no. you're going to stay in Danville, well I'm surprised, we've had people come here from the east coast and most of them move to Mt. Vernon, well there's not a country club or anything going on in Danville, and I said that's what I like, a nice quiet place, I've lived on Long Island, 30 miles outside on NYC and it was just being in the city because houses of people moving out to the island, well it's like being in the country, well it is actually, but this is country to me. I had a number of friends come here and they liked it. In fact several of them had wanted to move here I let them stay in the trailer i had rented down by the river. and they said they wanted to move here, but since then they've gone to heaven so i guess they won't be coming but a number of them that came to visit me that i had worked with really like the area such a change from being in area with 3 million people, so of course the city had 8 million so long island felt like country with only 3. that was their idea of country, well the beaches, people loved the beach there. and they have boats and of course i like the mountains, the beach is nice, but i always liked upstate new york that's a beautiful area, but a

AC: Do you have any favorite memories about the river or the???

DM: Well I know one thing I will always remember and I'm glad to be around to tell it. When I was about 4 years old a man came to visit my father as i recall it must have been a saturday. And he had a wagon and I don't know why I climbed in this wagon and one of the horses was wild so it took off and about just before you get to the millwood bridge it hit a big rock and turned over and of course i was under it and the first one there to dig me out was our old dog, he started digging. And a people who owned the Caves then, Mr and Mrs. Parker, ran after it and my mother and father ran and it was almost a mile run, and when they got there, they said 'are you all right?' and I said, 'let me outta here.' hahaha that was luckily i didn't get killed because the harness broke and the man had just had it fixed the day before and it broke and they got caught on the Millwood bridge.

And a of course they lifted the wagon and I got out and walked home, fell at the front door and skinned my knee. hahaha, that was in the paper, of course i dn't know what happened to this clipping but of course i almost got killed at the time. so the good part of that is i got out of it alive, so i remember that. Mr Humbert probably told you about my brother, Lewis, well he was about 13 at the time and I was 4 and they just turned, well they just got electricity in Millwood and they just turned in on in the country and he climbed this telephone poll and of course he was killed instantly. that was 1927, i was 4 years old at that time and one of my neighbors here remembers that he was in school with him, she said do you remember that? that was 1927. I said, yeah I remember that. I was 4 years old. I remember these things you know. But otherwise I would have to say you know I was it was a good life, I was happy on the farm. Of course once I got to the city, after moving to Pittsburg when I was seven of course you know how it is in the city, the lights are on all night, I didn't want to go to bed. I was it was so dark in the country it was quite a change. And of course when they put electricity in that was unusual, and to get running water in the house, it's amazing you know the things that happen when you look back. and today you think nothing of it, we had a victrola one of those things you had to wind oh gosh i used to play that for hours, then my father bought a player piano that plays those rolls I used to sit down and play that every night before I went to bed and watch the keys pop up and down. So I don't know, they were really all good memories, and I think the one really nice thing I remember is that when we came home from school we always had homemade bread and when you were walking down the lane you could smell that bread, and that was one really good memory that I had. In fact sometimes my brother and I would trade sandwiches with the kids in Millwood, they didn't have homemade bread. haha and boy today you'd give anything for homemade bread. haha, so ah we had everything good really, we always had enough to eat and another thing I remember, you couldn't get over how amazed people were when my mother would give them dozen eggs, oh a dozen eggs that was a great thing to get fresh eggs. but today you know you don't even think of these things. but at that time, everything meant so much more than it does now. There weren't material things, you know we didn't have toys, my big toy was one doll every Christmas. And that was it! And I'd play with that and the next year I'd get another one and being I was the youngest they said I got the most of anyone in the family, well that was the most one doll, hahah. but i think we had more fun just going down the swimming hole and going up in the orchard. I used to walk up in the orchard with the dog and eat apples and come home and luckily we never got sick, but those are the things I remember. So we didn't have all the kids have today, all these wonderful toys and computers. and I had one tricycle and I road it till the tires ran out, of course those were dirt roads then. So, a and one other memory that I have that I haven't forgotten was that my father was coming to a oh Danville and this little town that goes out of Danville, can't think of the name of that, it's out on 205, several miles out on 205. there's a church there on the corner, I forget the name of that. Jelloway, my father used to have to go to Jelloway once in a while. I think to get parts for a drill when he worked for the sand company he had a probaby as long as this room a big drill and with this they used to drill holes then put dynamyte in it and blast the sand. Blast the rocks so they ould make the sand out of it. Well one time we came out here in the winter and as we were coming up the hill the car tunred over on the side, it was a model T ford, I remember that. and it was one of those that a had had the a didn't have windows it had this icing glass that you could snap off and he just snapped that off his side and we climbed out of the car. luckily nothing happened to us, but just as we were going up the hill it turned over. excuse me, turned over on the ice, other than that I'd have to say everything was good. And a number of my friends that lived in NY born in raised in the city can't imagine why anybody would want to come back to a little place like this, well I said that's the way I was raised

and I guess that's the those are the good memories that I have. It's nice to see the other side though, it's nice to see the city. and a I wanted to take a trip to California once, so I did. I took a couple months off from the office and picked up my sister in cleveland who was a nurse and we went to California and back. And another year I went to florida and back and I said well that's it, I've seen it. hahaha. I remember going through Chicago, boy I tell ya, the cities so congested, the traffic and everything, you get used to it, cause I learned to drive on Long Island and believe me there was always traffic. But a my relatives, I have a nephew in New York and one in California, and boy when they come here they think it's another world. Well it is compared to where they live, well it is the isalnd has 6 million people now. my nephew in California lives in California lives in Redwood City, and they'll be coming here again in june, she loves the White Oak Inn. Oh she says you wake up in the morning and you hear the birds singing, oh it's something, and I say 'oh it sure is' and they have a great big beautiful home. And she's vice president of a company and she has a company car with a phone, and a haha she calls New Years Day and she says you know Aunt Dorothy I'm going to be 50 years old, I envy you what a life you have. Come and go when you want, I said, 'you'll do that too when you retire' hahaha, so they love this area they do. but they're not going to live here, because they've decided to live on an island off the state of washington. I think that's a little far out, you have to take a ferry to get there, but they love the water they don't have a boat and they don't care about swimming either, but they love to be around the water. And they thought this was a beautiful area.

AC: have you seen the area change very much?

DM: you mean as far as the river is concerned? or this, or Millwood, I think Millwood has been about the same. I think years ago, around Millwood, according to the Census was aroudn 250. I doubt if it's any more than that now. Well when I was a kid there was a general store of course that's closed now, I thought maybe the Amish would buy that and make something of it, but they didn't. And it was too bad. Well, there's a gift shop there now, there was a ceramics store for a while, but there was a gift shop in Millwood now, right there by Spearman's. Of course Spearman's has been there for years. 40 some years. I stopped there once to buy gas, my sister Sadie and I and a somebody by the name of sample owned it then. I think I had a I still have the ticket, I think I had an oil change. It was something like \$2.50 and I showed it to Mr. Humbert and I said what do you think of this, cause we just laughed about it cause that was a long time ago, but I just happened to keep the receipt he gave me after I had the oil change. And I think he lives in Danville now, Mr. Samples. And he says gee that was a long time ago, and at the time I remember course I had a NY plate on my car and he said, well where are you girls from, Sadie and me, we said, "well I'm from cleveland and I'm from here, and I am too." So how in the world did you ever get to NY, and I said, well it's a long story and he had pictures he said of me when I was a kid and he said I don't know what happened to you, but you had real blonde curly hair. I can't remember who it was it was a long time ago. But I still have that receipt you know that they give you when you pay for your oil change. Now Spearman's, well we had a garage there for a while until they had that fire. And then they just turned that whole other area into a restaurant, that was a gas station for years and years when I was a kid. Well there's some new people in the area now. Than when I lived here years ago. I didn't know Humberts at the time, course he knew my father quite well and a I think he was friendly with my brother Lewis I think they were about the same age, but I don't have any relatives at all now. My sister Sadie was nurse at University Hospital for

many years and she lived here in the complex, she moved here from Cleveland I think in I don't know about 76 and I moved her in 1978 I've been here quite a while

AC: In these apartments here?

DM: Yeah, I stayed at my brother and sister in law's in Newark for about 7 months because they wouldn't let me in here because they said no dogs, they're destructive. but a my sister said, well you'll have to get rid, no I said, I'm not getting rid of the dog, it was my other sister's dog and she passed away and I said no I'm going to keep the dog, so finally after 7 months they agreed to let me come in and she said, oh they will, I said, you go ahead, you and your positive thinking. And so one day they called my brother's house if you pay a fifty dollar deposit for the dog and keep her on a leash and clean up after it. And that was it. and that dog went to heaven and someone gave me another one and I gave that one to a neighbor of mine that moved here from NY. And this one was given to me a few years ago, I said no more, but it was the daughter of a friend of mine who passed away from cancer and I was good friend to hers and went to the hospital with her many times at least 50 to say the least for treatments and other doctors so her daughter raises these red poodles and one day she gave this to me. Course it fit in the palm of my hand at that time. you know it was just a few months old. that's why i have another dog. and boy she barks, she's not barking at you because you're different. but anybody else knocks she barks right away, she's a good watch dog. I'm always worried...

side b

[other conversation irrelevant to Knox County and Millwood]

AC: Do you think theres, do you think outsiders come, are drawn to Millwood or the caves area? anymore? do they know about it?

DM: I don't know, I know when helen and Bus Busenberg owned it they had the same people come year after year. course some people leave their trailers there permanently, you know they pay so much a month rent, they didn't charge much and then other people come in campers well you know one couple came down and they bought a bus and had it turned into, they had it fixed up so they could live in it so they could travel, so I think they had a lot the same people year after year, I don't know how it is now, but I know when they were down there, they used to get, a lot of the same people would come every year. in fact some of them came in the winter and boy there's snow down there in the winter. they had it a long long time, then they finally sold it and moved to florida then they were down there a while and then they moved back here. [oh really] yeah, they lived in florida a while, they lived in sebastian, it's on the east coast. I can't remember how long they were down there, I know I used to write to them and I'd see them when they'd come up here. in the summer but a they wanted to move back because their children and here. They even have another son who was in Massachusetts and he moved back here and he wanted his boys to go to school in Knox county, so you see a lot of people do come back here. [yeah they do] there's something that draws them back. I came back once, well I wanted to come by myself, but one of the girls in the office said, well I'd like to go there, I don't know why anybody would go there every year on their vacation. I would like to see. alright, I said, I agreed to let her come. took a week off at Easter, and everybody we went to visit so oh you have to stay for dinner, you have to stay and then another

lady, well she was Bus Busenberg's mother, she was a ??? she knew us from the time we were born. She'd insist we stay for a couple days. Of course they treated her very nice, you know and when she went back home, she was ,her family was pretty, very well to do let's put it this way, they had a home in Long Island a home in florida, a boat on LI a boat in FL. It was not a sad case. haha, when she came home she was raving to her parents about how nice the people were in Ohio, they treated her like one of the family, she said I never saw anything like it. Most of the time they had open house at her house on New Years and they'd have a bunch of people come in and there was plenty of food and liquor, and she said, you know those people are different, mom, you never saw people like them. I said well let's put it this was they're not in your exactly in your money class. No, but she said, but they're awfully good to you, even though they don't know you. She suddenly thought because they had money that's why she had a lot of friends, she said, these people are different, they don't have much, but boy they treat you differently. I said, I guess they're not looking for anything, let's put it that way. hahaha, a little different than new york.

AC: Well yeah, I appreciate you sharing all your stories.

DM: Well I'm glad you got to see the Humberts because he's got a great memory for things you know. I know he'll mention at times different people that I didn't know, I know the name you know they were people that both my sisters knew because they were much older. And a he remembers everything I tell ya, he remembered about my brother gettiing killed and my father. And he talked about my father and how he was good to people. He really has a great memory.

AC: yeah he does.

DM: It's a shame he's really slowed down since he's had those two falls. He's really slowed down quite a bit. He had a bad fall one time at the church, but the gas man was coming and he was going over to open those doors you know to go down into the basement and he fell, so he was in bad shape after that for quite a while. He slowed up now considerably. Well he comes to church every Sunday he rarely misses a Sunday in church. Yeah, they're very nice people. They have a nice house, that's a real old house. They have one of those old stoves in there, I can't remember if they gave it to their daughter or you know those old stoves that you had to put coal in. you probably never saw one like it but years ago people used to have on in the house, we had one I know that.

AC: Okay, well thank you so much,

DM: Well you're welcome, I don't know if it helped you very...