

Oral Histories of Tompkins County

Archival Finding Aid

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2017 - Generation to Generation - Oral History Project

The 2017 Generation to Generation Oral History Project includes seven* interviews recorded in April and May of 2017. Teenage youth from Tompkins County interviewed older adults about their lives and experience in Tompkins County. The project was supervised and coordinated by staff at The History Center and undergraduate student Elisabeck (Lisa) Peck (Ithaca College, 2017) as part of their internship with the Youth Education Department of The History Center in Tompkins County. The majority of the individuals interviewed in the project had been recent volunteers or collaborators on various projects, exhibits, and initiatives of The History Center. The interviews largely focus on memories of Tompkins from the twentieth century, including those of second generation immigrant families who established long running businesses in the community. Most interviewees were in their 70s, 80s, or 90s at time of recording, so the memories shared from their childhood and school years range from the 1930-1960s. Most of interviews also include a 10-20 minute section at the end of the interview with questions about the interviewees memories of voting, politics, and the interviewers views on the 100th anniversary of women's right to vote in New York State.

Most of the audio files appear to be at least two interviews that occurred on separate dates that are available as a single merged file. Details on the specific recording dates are not available, and as of 2024 the audio files are stored as a single file not separated by perceived shifts in the recordings.

*Please note, as of June 2023, we are unable to locate a copy of the audio file for the interview with Barbara Wilcox Thuesen in our records. Scanned notes from the project written by both the student interviewer and Barbara Wilcox Thuesen referencing the interview are held in our collection as is Thuesens release form for the interview. Community members with any knowledge of this interview are encouraged to reach out to archives@thehistorycenter.net.

Trigger Warnings: *mentions of Vietnam War and related deaths, mentions of death of a parent, nuclear bomb anxiety, discussion of childhood fear of atomic and hydrogen bombs, discussions on gun control and gun use, discussion of a friends experience of a "back alley" abortion in the 1950s, discussion of eating disorders, discussion of addiction and treatment locations in Tompkins County*

Interviews with:

(1) Eugene "Gene" Endres (01:32:04)

Eugene "Gene" Endres talks about his early life and being raised by two German immigrants. He talks of helping to run his family's deli as well as what it was like to grow up poor and German around the time of World War II. He talks about his

childhood growing up in Montclair, New Jersey, and what eventually led him to Ithaca. He details his time at Cornell University and his efforts to avoid being drafted, which lead him to join the Peace Corps. Endres also recounts his time in the Peace Corps, travelling to places like Costa Rica, as well as other jobs he has had over time, such as being a high school science teacher.

Trigger warning(s): mentions of Vietnam War and related deaths, mentions of death of a parent

- Recorded: Spring 2017
- Audio File: OHTC_2017-Endres-Gene_First Interview
 - MP3
- Transcript File: OHTC_2017-Endres-Gene_First Interview Transcript
 - PDF & Doc

(2) Eugene “Gene” Endres (00:56:45)

Eugene “Gene” Endres talks more about his work on the radio and how his radio program at Ithaca College led him to meet his wife Ashley Miller. He talks about his love for writing, and how he got back into it in his later years through the “Postcards from the Finger Lakes” newspaper articles. Endres also discusses politics, how he stays involved, and voting.

Trigger warning(s): discussion of childhood fear of atomic and hydrogen bombs, discussions on gun control and gun use

- Recorded: Spring 2017
- Audio File: OHTC_2017-Endres-Gene_Second Interview
 - File Format: MP3
- Transcript File: OHTC_2017-Endres-Gene_Second Interview Transcript
 - PDF & Doc

Irene Komor (02:27:04)

Irene Komor talks about her childhood in Ithaca. She discusses growing up as the child of immigrants and her responsibilities around the house as the oldest daughter. Komor reflects a bit about her time at local schools such as Cayuga Heights Elementary. She reflects on her travels to places like Paris, her careers, and highlights her many volunteer positions, such as at the local SPCA, that allowed her to give back to the Ithaca community. Komor also talks about some of the social justice causes she has been involved with throughout the years, equating her interest in social justice work to being exposed to anti-Vietnam war movements by her mother.

Trigger warning(s): n/a

- Recorded: Spring 2017
- Audio File: OHTC_2017_Komor-Irene
- Transcript File: OHTC_2017_Komor-Irene_Transcript
 - File Format: PDF & Doc

Joyce E. Holmes McAllister (02:32:22)

Joyce Holmes McAllister talks about her childhood growing up on her family's farm in Dryden. She talks about time at school and the various chores she would do around the farm, as well as the time she spent with her family friend, Mr. Charles A. Titus, on Titus Farms. McAllister recounts her time at Ithaca College and how the college and Ithaca has changed since then, as well as some of her first jobs immediately following college before she served as a registrar at Cornell University for 26 years. She also discusses her love of poetry and multiple chapbook publications, the importance of voting and civic engagement, and shares information about her mother while giving insights on feminism.

An interview with Joyce's brother Dr. Wallace Holmes was recorded and donated to the Oral Histories of Tompkins County audio archives in 2022. Researchers interested in the Caslick/Holmes family should engage with both interview recordings.

Trigger warning(s): death of a parent, mentions of air raids during World War II

- Recorded: Spring 2017
- Audio File: OHTC_2017_Holmes-McAllister-Joyce
 - Format File: MP3
- Transcript File: OHTC_2017_Holmes-McAllister-Joyce_Transcript
 - PDF & Doc

Phyllis McNeill (00:59:04)

Phyllis McNeill (1929-2021) shares stories about growing up during the Great Depression. Her family lived in Ithaca and in nearby Schuyler County during her youth as her father worked on local farms when he could. McNeill's schooling was split between Dundee, Watkins Glen, Boynton Middle School, and Ithaca High School. Most of her memories center around schooling and her early work at the Ithaca Savings Bank in the 1940s where she met her husband.

Trigger warning(s): discussion of eating disorders, discussion of addiction and treatment locations in Tompkins County

- Recorded: Spring 2017
- Audio File: OHTC_2017_McNeill-Phyllis
 - MP4 & MP3
- Transcript File: OHTC_2017_McNeill-Phyllis_Transcript
 - PDF & Doc
- Tompkins HistoryForge Person Record - 1950 - <https://tompkins.historyforge.net/census/1950/9044>

Kathryn "Katie" Myers-Prouty (01:15:44)

Kathryn "Katie" Myers-Prouty talks about her early life in Ithaca and the neighborhood of Fall Creek, as well as some of her family history in neighboring towns such as Cortland and Dryden. She talks about her time in grade school, especially her experience playing sports and her time at Ithaca High

School. Myers-Prouty mentions her brief time at Alfred State University. Prouty also talks about the work she has done throughout her life, specifically her time with the Service League before it was disbanded and her work in the Cornell Chemistry Department and Veterinary School. A shorter interview in the last fifteen minutes of the recording explores her views on changing political climate in Ithaca, and Ronal Prouty Photography, a film photography business she ran with her husband for thirty years.

Trigger warning(s): *brief mentions of suicide and alcoholism*

- *Recorded: Spring 2017*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2017_Prouty-Kathryn*
 - *Format: MP3*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2017-4-19_Myers-Prouty-Kathryn_Transcript*
 - *PDF & Doc*

Josephine “Josie” Leonardo Schug (02:05:53)

Josephine “Josie” Schug talks about her experience growing up in a multi-generational Italian family in Ithaca in the 1940s and 1950s. Her fathers family the Leonardos owned many local bars including Royal Palms and Leonardos. Schug shares stories about her family's experience as Italian immigrants to New York in the early twentieth century. Including stories of when members of her family were bootleggers during Prohibition, and many stories about raising children and moving around the U.S. after she was married. Schug worked for a short time for Dr. Carmine Russo the first urology practice in Ithaca.

A shorter second interview on the same recording includes Schug’s reflections on 2017 being the 100th anniversary of women’s rights to vote in New York and her views on men and womens equality in the workforce.

Trigger warning(s): *discussion of a friend's experience of a “back alley” abortion in the 1950s.*

- *Recorded: April 8th 2017*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2017-4-8_Schug-Josie*
 - *File Format: MP3*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_20174-8_Schug-Josie_Transcript*
 - *PDF & Doc*

Barbara Wilcox-Thuesen

***The History Center holds documents of both pre and post interview questionnaires completed by Barbara Wilcox-Thuesen, as well as a signed release form for an interview conducted on April 8th 2017. The audio file for the interview is not currently held in The History Center’s collections as of November 2023, and project notes are unclear as to who the student interviewer was. Anyone with a copy of the interview or knowledge of its location is encouraged to reach out to the archival staff at The History Center.*

- *Recorded: April 8th 2017*
- *Audio File: Not held in The History Center files as of November 2023.*
- *Transcript File: N/A*

ACCESSION NOTES

The audio files for this collection were recorded in 2017 and saved to The History Center server. Digital merging of multiple files for each interview into a single file was completed in 2021 under the MANY-IMLS grant. Transcripts for each interview were completed in 2023 under the AHA-NEH grant. Final review of the transcripts and creation of the Finding Aid was completed in 2024.

Generous support for processing this project came from a one year grant ‘Preserving Community Oral Histories’ from the American Historical Association and National Endowment for the Humanities between 2022-2023.



Generous support for beginning the processing of this project came from a two year grant from the Museum Association of New York and the Institute of Museum & Library Services between 2020-2022.

