



Interviewee: **Joan Trolle**

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Interviewers: **Athena Aardweg, Judy Barricella**
& Tony Buba

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Joan

Okay, Joan. The way we start this is by you giving us your name and where you live and a little bit about your family. It's June 2nd, 2008. Okay, go ahead, Joan.

Okay, I'm Joan Trolle. I'm from Etna, Pennsylvania. I have two special children, my son, Stuart, is forty, and my daughter, Beth, is thirty-five on a three-year level, and she goes to Missy and Cal's special school every Sunday, or Saturday night, excuse me, which I'm happy for. Then I also do work at the church with the fifty-plus group and Pastor Cal and his sidewalk Sunday schools. So I try to stay active with the good people in this congregation because they have a lot to offer our special people.

So tell us a little about when your daughter was born. Was she born with delays, or what?

She was born normal and it was Easter weekend, she was eight months old. I buried my mother on Good Friday. Easter Saturday we rushed her down to Allegheny General, where she was born and the doctor refused to come in. It was not her patient. The next day they had her... I took her back down and we had her admitted, and she became severely retarded from intravenouses going into her system instead of – I mean, into her neck instead of her system, and I brought her home. They told me to institutionalize her and I said, “No way. The good lord gave her to me. I am taking her home”, and the doctors said you could of put a knife right through me because she would never have done any of this. She had come home blind, couldn't hear, had no movements whatsoever.

What caused you to take her to the hospital in the first place?

She had projectile vomiting and diarrhea. And what it was, it was interception of the bowel and the bowel had already gangrened. And they called a surgeon in, and the surgeon, thank goodness, was from Thailand. And he knew what hypothermia was, because she was also hypothermic. She could not undergo an anesthetic, and she looked like she was nine months pregnant and they did the surgery, but she only had an hour to live. So they transferred her to Children's, with nothing, nothing, no sight, no movement, nothing, and they told me she was going to remain this way all her life. And I said, “No, the good lord gave her to me and I am taking her home.” And the doctor said, “You could have put a knife right through me.” We never expected Beth to do anything. And then it came back as it left her – her sight, her hearing and it came back. She still has a lot of physical problems, as far as being gangly in movements, and this sort of thing, but this is what really started everything, and then I have a son also that's forty, but he's bipolar and he has all kinds of problems, and he was stabbed, he was shot by mistaken identity. So I've gone through this in life.

So when did she start to get her vision back?

She started to get her vision back – like I said, I worked with her 24 hours a day in doing things – “This is your hand, this is your leg, this is your arm.” Her eyes were stuck left in her head and I would say her vision came back probably when she was about maybe ten months, it started coming back, like shadows, like a newborn would have done.

And then just gradually she was –

Right, and then gradually things came back, like her ability to – I worked morning, noon and night with everything. I mean this girl was a total disaster. But the good lord gave her to me and I wasn't giving up on her. She was my baby girl, and things came back very, very, very slowly. She never walked again until she was five. She was already standing and taking steps at eight months. But she was five years old before anything came back. And they still tried to convince me to put her in an institution, and I said, “No, I'm just not going to do it.”

And then I had a very difficult situation, because no doctor in the city of Pittsburgh wanted to deal with Beth. One doctor at Children's Hospital, Dr. Bernard Michaels, and I adore that man to this day. He said, “I'm taking her on. She's my baby.” And he took her on with all of her problems, and he always said, “One day she is going to talk and look out, cause all this is going to add up to her. She knows everything you are saying, everything.” I'll say, “I lost something.” She would go right and find it and bring it to me and say, “Mummy, Mummy,” and there was my camera or whatever I lost, she would find it. Then she went to the Middle Road School, which was a special school, and out there her and seven other children were severely abused by a teacher. And she always was like a put-on. Like, “Oh, that's so beautiful, oh, I love it why didn't you do more of this?” and never even suspecting the fact that she was severely abusing the children. But she had, my daughter had real long hair and she would pick her up by her hair and wail her across the room off of a blackboard. And she was doing all this stuff and they couldn't tell you. And the parents took it to court. In fact, we were up in CanadohFta Lake, and I had gotten a newspaper to take up to my husband, because he was up there with my children, and my girlfriend was staying with the children I was working. And I brought the newspaper up and he read it. We read it in the newspaper what was going on with my daughter and her classmates. And they were all nonverbal, so how were they going to defend themselves? What really upset us was my husband's boss' wife worked there, but she had a zipper on her mouth because she was afraid of her job.

What year was this, Joan?

Oh, my goodness, back in '72, '73. She graduated from Middle Road School. She had a good - like the rest of her after they got rid of the teacher that did all this. And the principal, he wanted - didn't want to hear anything bad, nothing, so he kept everything hush hush. But I worked for Hill's Department Store, and my boss said, “Honey, you can leave – anytime you want to leave here, you leave. If you feel like you need to go, go. I'm not going to dock you.”

They were great with me. They had my daughter's class come in, decorate the tree, anything that the employees were supposed to do, Mr. Sovack made sure the special kids did it. So they came in. And then I had met up with a manager I really really adored, with Giant Eagle, and God bless the man; he just passed away about two years ago as a young man. We needed someone to speak at graduation, and he said, "I've never done this before."

I said, "John, I have all the faith in the world in you, and I know you can do it, I know you will do it." And he came out there. After he saw this graduating class, he said to Giant Eagle, "And I think that - I don't think, I *know* we should hire these people to work for us," and that's when the kids started working at Giant Eagle. Yep, and they're still working there. I'm sure if you go into Giant Eagle - so I've made a lot of different connections. Dorothy Hamill - I got a hold of her and took her behind closed doors with my daughter and my son and met her. My daughter was so excited. She loves Dorothy, and to this day she'll take and shake her head Dorothy Hamill style.

Then we had a doctor that demanded that he knew how to treat non-verbal children. So I take her to him for an examination. He said to me, "I can't test her, she can't talk."

I said, "You knew this, sir, you knew this."

"Well, what I want you to do is I want you to take this set of cards home with you and bring her back in five weeks."

I took her back at five weeks, and I put her hair in a gum band on top of her head - this was an umbrella to her, and so I trained her for the cards, what he wanted. [Track 2] So we got back there and he said, "I guess she does know this stuff."

I said, "Yes, but you're professional testing her, and I don't think I should be paying this \$400 bill." And I did not pay it, because I figured, I took her home to tell him what he wanted, and he was a professional. So I've been there and back with a lot of situations. A lot.

And I've belonged on the Variety Club, which does for the handicapped children. I've been with them forever. She had a teacher that was part of the Variety Club, and she said, "Oh, you have to come to the Variety Club, and I still go out one week in the summer. They are out at Woodlands now, in Bradford Woods. I meet a bus at the zoo, and it's all the city children that are - if we didn't have that bus going out, those kids would all miss out on it. So I go out, I monitor the bus going out and coming back. And I've done that every year. So I've gotten involved with the handicapped from - in fact, the University of Pittsburgh, the last Saturday of every March, they had what they called a hand-in-hand festival, where the students were paired with - the students were paired with a student for the day, and if the student - if the child was very involved, they would put three or four children, and all the fraternities and sororities had to set up a booth geared to those kids, and these students were not allowed to go out and solicit for prizes, so I offered to do it. By the time festival time came, my house was to the ceiling with all

the gifts for the kids to win. And it was beautiful. Then a lady got in there that really was very very, I don't know what you want to call her – she didn't want anything to do with handicapped children. So what she did, she deleted everybody's name from the list, and the students, then we moved it to the, there's a club right out in front, and there was nothing, nothing at all, so the students now don't do it, because they lost all of their contacts because the woman just - she wanted nothing to do with the handicapped people. Nothing. But I always told them, "Students, this is not a handicapped festival, this is a handi-capable, because if they can smile, move their eyes, they are capable of something, and they changed it to handicapable. So I've been there and back with a lot of handicapped.

But you still had this other child who is not, who is five years older?

Right. My son was diagnosed as – went all the way through 11th Grade, and what they did, what they didn't finish in 1st, they took to 2nd; what they didn't finish in 2nd, they took to 3rd. By the end of 11th Grade he was only doing 7th Grade work, and I knew this wasn't normal. Something was amiss here. So I had him psychologically tested and the psychologist said, "Honey, do you want your son or a piece of paper that's not going to mean anything?"

I said, "I want my son." He was bipolar. By the end of 11th Grade, he was only doing 7th Grade work. He could not handle it, so I have two disabled children.

So how's he doing today?

On medications, but it's very very... That is one of the hardest disabilities I've ever dealt with. Very hard.

(Child)

And his eyes is bad.

(Joan again)

Yeah, he was shot in the eye when he was twelve, with a beebee. The boy across the street and him were target practicing, so he lost the sight in his eye. And he was shot, gun shot, carjacking. That was when I had my aneurysm, he was in hospital. Then they had another shooting because of the car. That was when I come home from the hospital, and he went back in the hospital. They shot through his jaw, it went through his arm, through his jaw. Shattered his jaw, shattered his arm, I mean it was messy.

(Cody, the child)

And also, he...I forget.

(Joan again)

Cody's been my right hand man. He took his pap his oxygen in and out of the hospital. He helped me to take care of grandpap, didn't you. And we have a kitty cat that since my husband passed away, she goes from his chair to his bed, from his bed to the chair, all

day long. He's always had her a fresh cup of water. It was a cat that he wanted to keep. He had to keep that cat. Now she's really missing him, really bad.

When did he pass?

A year ago in June, on vacation. Canadohta Lake.

Just suddenly?

He had emphysema. He had all these other problems and it ended up being a heart attack. Every year I would catch him – for Father's Day and birthday, which are within days of each other. I would catch him a fish, and I would bring it in. I would say, "Happy Father's Day," and then I'd go and get "Happy Birthday." This year did not change. We got up to the cottage. He said, "I cannot go in that bedroom."

I said, "Frank, you can go to the door, walk two steps and go on to your bed."

"No, nope."

"Come to my room –"

He said, "Nope can't do it."

Okay, so he gets onto the couch, and I said, "Thank the good lord." He had his foot – he had two pinched nerves. He put his foot over the arm of the couch and fell asleep. In the morning I got up, he said – I said, "Honey, would you like coffee, would you like" –

"Nope, nope."

So I said, "Well, I'm going to go out and try my luck fishing." So I went out and I brought in an 18-1/2" large-mouth bass. Now I'm going to test him. I said, "I got an 18-1/2" bass."

"No, you did not."

I said, "Yes I did."

He said, "Where did you get that?"

"Down at the end of the pier."

He said, "That's not a bass, that's a perch."

I said, "I told you it was a perch, but it's a large mouth"

So then I went out and I brought another one in. I said, "Now you've got Happy Birthday, Happy Father's Day" just like all the other years.

His friend came down to the cottage, and he said, "Where's Franklin?" and I said, "He's in the cottage, on the couch."

He went into the cottage, he took his pulse and he was gone. That was it. But he got his usual gift in what was really unreal about Canadohta Lake is the fact that my husband originally is from Wisconsin, where I met him. That lake was created - Two natural lakes only in the state of Pennsylvania and they were both created by a Wisconsin glacier. Three weeks before he died I said to him, "Frank, do you know what? No wonder you like Canadohta."

He said, "Why do I like Canadohta?"

I said, "Because it was created by a Wisconsin glacier." So he got to know that before he passed.

But he's up there and he's having a good time with... my mum died very young, his sister, everybody's... you know.

So, Joan, what's been the biggest struggle of your life?

The biggest struggle? Hmm, I had so many struggles, that I got through all of them because the good lord was there with me with all of them. I'm very serious. I lost my mom at age 51, my dad two years later, so I've just - I'm very, I'm a French, Indian, German and Irish, so I stand on my own two feet and put my foot down. But the biggest struggle was Beth being abused at school and different things that I couldn't handle.

(Cody)

And also she went through many twisters. Yeah she can live through tornados but not hurricanes. Only twisters.

So, did you actually go to court over that abuse at Middle Road School?

That was the silliest thing. We [Track 3] were up at Canadohta Lake when this all went down, and my husband was emergencied into Titusville Hospital with a bleeding ulcer, and this woman sent the State Police to my cottage, and there I was sitting there with my two kids, with Beth and my son, and all of a sudden a State cop comes to your door. What do you think?

He said, "This woman needs you to call her immediately because she needs you in court to testify on her behalf, and I showed them the article that I had shown my husband as to what had been done to our daughter and the other six children in that class, and the state trooper said, "She better not show her face, because we will arrest her."

But they moved her from Middle Road School, and she is still teaching. Oh, yes. She is teaching at North Allegheny.

In a Special Ed class?

Mm-hmm. I met her at a, I didn't even want to – I did not make a point of recognizing her, because I have this thing about my, what had happened to my daughter. Okay. I didn't recognize her, but she was at a garage sale, a church sale.

“Oh, my, isn't that nice.” I heard that voice and I knew exactly who it was.

And there are times that Beth will hear things and will set her off and they don't know why. I know why. I know why.

How old was Beth when this happened?

How old was she? She started school when she was five.

So it was then! She was little!

Well she was eight months old when she had the surgery and become disabled.

So that's when this teacher had her?

Yeah, she started school at like five or six. Yep, that's when this teacher had her – and everybody was afraid of their jobs. And that's like the busing situation. The one boy from the church here – always, when my daughter – there was one seat belt in the bus. One. When my daughter got out I made sure he was in it. Well, it was a beautiful day and the woman was going down over Parker Street. She slammed her brakes on and hit four parked cars. Thank goodness I had him seat belted in, because he would have went right through that window.

The next day, they send my daughter home with a man that is reeking of alcohol. They said, “Oh, no, no.” Fine, don't agree with me. Don't agree with me. I don't care what you do, but don't agree with me. The following day I went to the craft store in Millvale, and on my way home at the bar was the bus that was going to pick my daughter Beth up at school. So I got on the phone and I made a call to the State Police, and they met the bus up there. Yes, he was drunk, hauling these handicapped children. So then Shaler, I called Shaler because they were responsible for my busing, and I said, “Listen, we've got a problem here. Number one, there's no seat belts on those buses. No aide on those buses. You've got twelve kids on that bus. One goes into a seizure, all the kids are upset, and the bus company that was hauling these kids –

Was it Laidlaw? Was it Laidlaw back then?

I don't know if it was Laidlaw. It could have been. Could have been. Anyways, they inspected their own buses, and where my daughter sat, there was a hole that you could watch the axles go around. No seat belts, only the one, so she would get out and I would put Mark Boyd in it, and then she'd take him home. Okay, so I called the State Police and I said, "These people are being treated like animals." So up at Shaler, okay, we're having this meeting. All twelve sets of parents are there. Cause there's twelve kids on the bus. Gregg Rudman is sitting at the table – he gets a phone call. The phone call is "I'm going to be two hours late." Why was he going to be two hours late? Because he did this to our kids every day. He got a field trip that was going to pay him \$500, so the heck with the kids.

You mean the bus driver?

Okay, the bus company. Yeah, they'd send the bus driver on a field trip, to make more money. And all of a sudden Gregg Rudman's glasses flew across the table. I said, "Gregg, don't get upset. We get this every day. Every day. And these kids know when it's time to go to school, you're ready to go. Your bus is coming, and they don't show, so we need something done about this." I said, "And besides, there's no two-way communications – the busses, they have an accident, the bus driver's not allowed to leave the bus. They have no aide on there, no nothing. So he presented us with a paramedic as a bus driver, Jim Kelly, who was super great, a radio on the bus and seat belts on the bus. But when his glasses went flying across that table, I was really, I'm thinking, "Oh, oh, well see? This is what we get every day." And these kids know when they're to be picked up. They know when they're going to school.

Now who was this Gregg person? This man that threw his glasses, who was he? He wasn't a parent.

No, he was one of the heads of Shaler School District. It was a freezing rain morning when we had the meeting up there, and he was like awed because all of us were there. And then Owens called and said that he was going to be late, and then went the glasses across the table, and I just said, "Gregg, don't get upset, we get this every day, every blessed day."

So you have to be their mouthpiece all the way through for everything. But when she was being abused at school, they would not let you in the school without signing a list. I would never sign that list, because I felt if there was something going on, I was going to find it. I mean I'm just that type of a person. I don't want... Why should these children be hurt? They're being abused behind closed doors, and I will not stand for it. And I see, like out at the flea market one Sunday, when Wildwood was going, there was an elderly couple that took in kids for the money, and they would make like, whatever it is, like \$900 a month for each one of these kids. They had like eight of them, and they had the biracial, they had the black, they had the white, whatever. And one girl was standing there with a telephone because what they were doing, they were taking these kids out there and beating on them, fisting them, kicking them. And we witnessed it, so we called - this girl got on her cell phone and she said to me, "Honey, will you stand here with me

until I get the police? They're on their way", and I said, "Yeah."

And they brought each one of those kids out, one by one, and they were bruised and marked and everything.

That happened at the fair?

At the flea market on a Sunday! Yes it did, oh yeah. I would never stand for someone being abused, never. You know, I know my daughter went through a traumatic period of it. You know, like - and today, certain times, she will have an outburst . They don't know what it - they have no idea. Did she hear that woman's voice, or what happened? You know, she does. But the church has given me such support. When I had the aneurysm, there was no hope for me, and Pastor Cowell come in and prayed, and the next day, I knew my family. It took me a recovery period, but I knew my family and I had to learn to do things all over again, which I wasn't happy with, but I did it.

How did they know you had an aneurysm?

Well, I worked all day at Hills, and I came home, and my thing was to lay on the couch and read books to Beth when she got home from school. And my son come in the house and he said, "Mum, aren't you feeling well?"

And I said, "No, I have a headache."

So he said, "Well, I'm gonna go out, do you think you'll be all right?"

I said, "Oh, yeah,"

He said, "Well, I'm going to go out with my friends."

I said, "Okay, go ahead."

So he went out, and he come home and found me comatose. It had already burst. So they took me to St. Margaret's. Well, St. Margaret's does not handle majors, so they sent me out to Presby, out in Oakland, and I was out there and then I went to Montefiore, and then I went to Harmarville. I was a bad girl at Harmarville. Yes! I untied myself from the bed, got in a wheelchair and left. It was Christmas time. I was shopping. And they told me - they took me grocery shopping and I bought the stuff to make tuna noodle casserole. Well, I never did get to make tuna noodle casseroles. The good lord wanted me out of Harmarville.

So who was your doctor at Harmarville?

Dr. Milas Zernich. In fact he still, I just got a call from them. They moved [Track 4] to Harmarville. He had a new office down on Route 910 and he moved from there to another new office, and now he's on his own at Harmarville with the other doctors. So

now I'm going up to Harmarville. I only go every six months. And I'm on two pills a day – a pill and a half for blood pressure.

You're doing good.

Yeah, and the new girl he got as a nurse said, "You had a what?"

I said, "A fifth grade brain aneurysm burst 16 years ago."

She said, "Oh, my, you should be on a lot more medication than just a pill and-a-half."

I said, "Dr. Zernich, what is she talking about?"

He said, "Leave her alone. She's on the right medicines."

He's a good doctor.

I like Dr. Zernich. He was so down to earth. I just love him. And then when I'd go there, you wouldn't believe the people I'd meet from Fifty Plus. They all go to him. We all have a little congregation.

(Cody)

And also the hospital's really awesome.

St. Margaret's.

Joan, what are you most proud of in your life?

What's that?

What are you most proud of?

Being here. Being here, and able to help others. There's an elderly man that was in the hospital with my husband and I go over backwards to try to help him. I make meals and drop them at his house or something. But I just enjoy helping people that need help, and I always have been like that. Will never change. Pastor Cowell taught me well.

What does Beth do since she graduated from school? What does she do?

They take her to a work program every day. She lives in a community living, and we've had a lot of different troubles with that.

Which one is she in?

She's on Elfinwild Lane. Off of Mount Royal.

No, I mean who runs it?

Arc of Allegheny. Because the MHMR group was going to place her in Manchester. Now what chance does a person have in Manchester, that is disabled? So the worker got very upset with me and I said, "Well, listen to the news, watch the news – you'll see what I'm talking about."

So when they wanted to place her in that kind of a place, I said, "No, I'm going to go with Arc of Allegheny." So I went with Arc of Allegheny. And of course, we have had some problems there, but not half as much as what we would have had with MHMR. We had a woman that was stealing the drugs. Instead of giving them to the patients, she was taking them. Instead of letting – my daughter never had any money, but yet she did have money. This girl bought antique furniture with it. We would go to a garage sale. Beth never had any money, not even to buy a lunch, and I said, "Wait a minute. Something's wrong somewhere," so I reported it and she came into my house one Christmas and she insisted on knowing where drugs were in Etna. Where could she get them? Meanwhile my son is young, she ask him, "Where do I get drugs in Etna?" Right then and there I reported her because I thought this is no person that I wish to have with my daughter, you know, knowing that she was spending Beth's money on her luxuries, or whatever she wanted behind my daughter's back. So I opened my mouth. 'Cause I thought, no, that wasn't right. And then, I don't know about two years ago, they insisted that Beth have an internal examination. Well, I didn't go for that and I figured, "Why would you request this of my daughter, except that you've got a male bus driver?" And her being non-verbal, she can't tell you anything. Well, I guess they suspected him because they left him go.

But then she fell at her house and they took her to Mercy Hospital, which I was having a fit it was so far away. But here the doctor that took care of her from the fall was the doctor that delivered her. And I said, "Dr. Detrick, I can't stand this. Don't you recognize that name?"

And he said, "Lemme see, Oh, my lord." When he came in to check me I'd been there 7 or 8 hours. When he walked out of the room, and bingo I had her. Breach. And he was like, "Girl you couldn't wait?" Nope, the baby wanted to see the world, but she was perfectly normal until she was eight months old. And the doctor's mistakes, which they're not responsible.....

So she goes to a day program?

She goes to a day program, she goes to Pittsburgh Vision. She does... she shreds papers all day. But she loves it. You know, that's what she does.

So she goes to the day program - how many people does she live with in the group home?

She has one. Now this girl is very, she has Downs Syndrome, and she's nasty. And she'll do stuff just to get Beth in trouble. Now she's going on vacation with her mother for two weeks in Florida. Well, when she's there I'll call the house – “No, you can't talk to nobody.” She'll slam the phone down. These are the things, and then Beth gets upset because she knows that it's Mom on the other end of the phone and she wants to talk to me, and I'll say to her, usually what I try to do is get a hold of the worker, talk to them to see how her day went, what's in her log, what did they do at work. And then I'll say to her, “Oh, Beth, you went to so and so for dinner today. Oh, I'm so proud of you. Like this week, now, she's going to make dinner for me some night. So I'll go up to their house and have dinner. You know, but if I know by talking to the worker that this Amy will slam the phone down. And now she's got another young worker who's good with her, but she's sort of like, I don't know how to explain her. She telling you she's getting married and she hasn't been going with this guy for very long. And now she tells you she's not getting married. It's really funny, but she's good with her. She's young. She brings her to Sunday school all the time. But see now it's at Saturday nights – they don't have an excuse. Sunday mornings they're too lazy to get up. Saturday night there's no excuse now. No, no, no – I won't accept no excuses now. Yeah, cause Sunday mornings, “Oh, well, she works all week, we couldn't get up.”

And then at Christmas they sent a girl down to the house with her and she's a non-Christian. She don't believe in Christmas. 'Cause I said to her, “Well, don't you go with you family for Christmas?”

She said, “Oh, no, we don't believe in Christmas.”

And I didn't know how to - how do I accept that, you know?

Does she come home ever overnight with you?

No, that she don't because I figured it would be – when they first moved her, they moved her three times in three months. Then they bought her a house on Elfinwild Lane, because I got hold of the state's representative, and I said, “Hey, what goes here?” and he said “That don't go.” He called them up and he said, “You buy a house for her.”

Frank Costella? Is that who that was?

No, but I did go to him. I went to him and his lady that told me that I could go back seven years on my son living at home for a thousand some dollars a year you get for a handicapped person living at home, and I didn't know that. But you could go back seven years, so that worked, and then every year I get a thousand-something, and I don't have to do income tax any more! I was like, “No.” Once you turn 65 you're done. My husband turned 65 and that was it. All we do is have to file the 1040A. But I thought you lived, you had to pay taxes. Nope, I'm out of that. I overgrew my stages. That's why there's so many elderly people working. They're allowed to make as much as they want.

Well, a lot of elderly people tell me it's for health benefits, to pay for their health care. I mean, you get Medicare, but they want that, um, whatever that is, that extra thing.

What you have to do, you have to get with a state representative that knows the ins and outs. The only thing that you have to file is a 1040A. And that gives you your rebates. Yeah. That's [Track 5] the only thing you have to file and it's only one page – name, address and phone number. Good luck.

So then I asked you about your challenges and what you're most proud of. Who's had the biggest influence on your life?

This church. Pastor Cowell.

How long have you been coming here?

I had my first class probably, I want to say almost twenty years ago. It was when Pastor Cowell first started the BBS. My daughter is 35. Okay. It has to be thirty years ago.

Twenty. Twenty years ago. First you said twenty then you said thirty.

Wait. If Beth is thirty-five, she was like five years old. When we all started out out here. I had fifteen of them in my class. I'll never forget it. I had a big room with everybody in there. Oh, I loved it. And then we started doing Sidewalk Sunday School together, and oh, man, that was my favorite thing – going to the nursing homes and stuff. And I'm glad we're going to start that again this year. We didn't do that last year. Also we have BBS this year, for three nights in August.

So, do you go on the trips?

Once in a while. It all depends on where they're going, or how much. But there's a lady that I've connected with, and Phyllis only wants me to go – wants to go if I go. Everywhere. And I'll even pick her up when the van isn't running to her house, I'll go out and pick her up and bring her down, and I kind of look after her. And a lot of people at this congregation, believe it or not, I knew as a little kid out in Richland Township.

Is that where you grew up, in Richland?

Yeah. We built twelve houses in fifteen years, all over Gibsonia. I've been in Gibsonia in the Kendrick family from this church. They were on the Police Department and stuff when I was out there, so I got to know them, and I just learned about Wanda being in a nursing home.

Oh, I didn't know that.

Yeah, someone just told me that the other night, at the dinner they had - I can't even think of what it was! - the thank you dinner for the employees – the volunteers. I don't know what nursing home she's in.

So you know Lavern Kendrick?

Yep, that goes way back. The only one – I wonder what happened to their son, the heavy-set one. Remember?

Van?

Van.

Van is alive and kicking. I wouldn't say he's well, but he's alive and kicking. Yeah, because we have some contact with him at work.

Well is there anything that you want to say on this tape that I haven't asked you about?

No, I think you've asked me about just about everything, girl, and the thing that I find the most comforting, when things really get me down, is my pets will come to me, my cat, and just stroking the cat and knowing that that cat was the only animal that could quiet the Christ child and if it's a striped cat it will show you that because it has an M above its eye. It was marked with an M. And I never knew that, and I got a cat magazine that explained that, and it also explained how a cat went from Pittsburgh all the way to California in the airplane, in a carrier, and walked its way back home. Oh, my, that's a little bit amazing.

I'll have to look at my cat's face when I get home.

Right, if it's a striped cat and it has an M, it's right above their eyes. And if they have an M, that was marked by the Christ. By Christ. It's the only thing that could quiet the Christ child.

Where are you living at now?

Up on Hyde Street, way at the very top. I can overlook the city. I can see the 62nd Street Bridge from my window. I can see the Highland Park Bridge from my window. And if the trucks are going down the wrong way on Route 8, I'll say, "You're in the wrong lane, you've got to get in the other lane."

But they had me in Speech Therapy. They had me in all these therapies out at Harmarville, and I said, "Forget it. I don't need this." Why did I have to be sitting here saying, "A, E, I, O, U.?" when I was talking as well then as I am now. So then I had also made the suggestion to them that they set up a radio room like we used to have at the Veteran's Hospital. They used to have one there, and the guys would go down there one

night a week, and we'd talk to the outside world all the time, and it worked out really great. And then we would go over with like cookies or cupcakes at the holidays. Now this past holiday, I went to three different groups. I went to the- I took cupcakes with flags in them to the VFW down in Sharpsburg, and I took macaroni salad. Okay, took that down, dropped it off there – took some up to the Legion, did the same thing, dropped it off. Then I went down to the Millvale VFW, where I'd taken Cody before, and I even got to see the Millvale parade. Their parade came in there, and I took the macaroni and the cupcakes down there. So that was my Memorial Day. They have a singing group – now this time they had a band or an orchestra – but they had a girl there last year. She was bodacious. Her voice was awesome, and she took to Cody and then the one lady was dressed as a nurse, and she probably was a service nurse. She gave out little rubber duckies that were all the branches of service. And she made sure that I got my Marine for my husband.

(Cody)

And there was a homeless disc jockey!

(Joan)

There was a man there that must have been homeless, and he brought all these bags, one right after another, and he kept trying to hook up his equipment. He'd plug it in and and he'd rap on it and he'd smack it, and then he'd pull out another bag and he did this for two hours. Finally, he got it together, but Cody said, "I've never seen a homeless disc jockey."

Out of the mouth of babes.

So, do you live alone, or does your son live with you?

No, my son's back home He was in transit for awhile. Now he's back home again.

Is he working?

No. He likes to detail cars, you know if he has someone who wants their car clean...fix bicycles. Now he's doing things with Cody, with motorbikes and that kind of thing.

You said earlier that bipolar was the most difficult disability. Can you explain a little bit of that?

Very difficult. They look normal, you think they're normal, but you have no idea. No idea whatsoever that goes through these bipolar people. In fact, this girl that he met up with is bipolar also, and she was on the end of the thieving type bipolarism. No matter what you had, it was gone, in a heartbeat. Now Stuart, you can give him a car to detail. He will detail it to no end, in a minute! But you get him to know where he's at financially. I tried to give him responsibility. Now this girl taught him how to put an empty bank receipt in an envelope and put it in the automatic machine. Oh, yeah, oh, yeah. But financially, forget it. He's like all discombobulated. He cannot go to his dad's

grave at all. I've been up there a number of times with Cody, and I go up and put flowers and stuff on his grave, 'cause he's right next to my mom who died young. In fact, we went to buy graves, this was a while ago, and there were four graves right in front of my mother, my grandparents, my family, so we bought them. So he has his and I have mine and then the [Track 6] military played a game on me. They paid – they deposited his service checks for disability in a savings account down in Sharpsburg. Well, I didn't know it because they should have stopped them right away. No they didn't. They kept depositing them. Six months they deposited, now I have to pay that all back, but the Savings and Loan said it was their fault. They should have never done that. So what we'll do, is you pay us fifty dollars and then pay us twenty dollars a month until its paid. So, I think I owe another three hundred dollars and then it will be gone. We had all kinds of messes. And then the main thing, on my mantle I have his brass plaque that was to go on his grave, and the reason that I have it, was a man came to the house and he said, "Well, I need a deposit."

I said, "For what? He's got a military funeral and the grave is paid for and all this – No, I don't buy this. So I give him the twenty dollars – or fifty, whatever it was – I stopped payment on the check. It cost me twenty dollars to stop payment. 'Cause I realized what he's doing. Okay, he's going to have me pay \$3,000, but I'm not going to have this paid for how many years down the road. This woman calls me up and says the plaque's got to get out of my office today.

I said, "Fine, I'll be right out." I went out and brought the plaque home. My husband would have had a fit if I would have spent \$3,000 to have that put on a mount. Yeah.

Where's he buried?

Lakewood, that's where – when we went out there, my mom was there. My mom's there, my grandparents, my one aunt that I felt really bad for, she had a hard, hard life. Her husband left her when she had two young boys, and one boy was sixteen when a building collapsed on him. My mum and dad bought the grave and helped them with the funeral. You know, this kind of thing, because they knew the undertaker in Millvale.

One day I went out and this beautiful Madonna, gold. I said, "There must be a family member. I'm going to try to find out, cause who would have put that big Madonna on her grave?" Here, somebody put it there by mistake. I thought, "Oh, no." She's right next to the son that the building collapsed on. Then she had a son overseas and they sent an empty body bag back down to the undertaker, and my mom and dad said, we can't devastate her anymore. She just went through this with one son, so they went ahead like it was a funeral, but there was nothing in that bag.

One other question I had: How you heard about out project and what made you want to be involved in it?

How did I learn about it? I learned about it in the senior book. In the senior book. And I find that very interesting. I tried to pass this on to a lot of seniors. You know, that - like

the one lady, she don't want to believe anything. And I said, "Wait a minute, you're entitled to the rebate."

"No, I'm not."

"Yes, you are. You don't have to fill out – ." No. They don't want to change their minds, so I say, "Okay, fine."

But I use that senior book.

So what made you want to be involved in - on the project?

Because I have been with so many different, different groups of people, you know, that I just love. I'll tell you which one I really love is the Variety Club. Going out there is a panic. We had a boy that was – I don't know how old Mario was. But he was non-verbal, but he knew every single car by the year, when it was made, the whole deal, it's a Thunderbird, it's this, it's that – but he was non-verbal. I only found out last year, he knows how to print every name of the car, never misspelling one of them, and the years it was made. But he's non-verbal, and I used to have to block him in the seat because he would get up and – chu! - jet. And I said, "No, you're not getting up now, Mario. Oh, dear, you're staying where you're at." But his mom died when he was twelve, so I just had a real soft side for Mario. He was a big black boy. But I would sit there and block him. And here's little old me, riding out to camp. Last year, he jumped in the pool right before we left. He couldn't swim, so they had to pull Mario out.

We interviewed a girl that got a wheelchair from the Variety Club.

(end of CD)