

**Cooperstown Graduate Program
HMUS 520: Research & Fieldwork
Oral History Project
Fall 2008**

Interview with Alice Talbot by Kyle Radke

Interviewer: Radke, Kyle

Interviewee: Talbot, Alice

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Location of Interview: Cooperstown, NY

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Description:

Born in White Plains, New York in 1923, Alice Talbot grew up in a variety of small towns and cities throughout southeastern New York. The conditions of her father's employment forced the family to move repeatedly, a total of sixteen times in as many years. She excelled in school despite the disruptions of moving, though she ultimately had to leave early to find work and help support her family. Following a series of jobs in and around New York City, Talbot enlisted in the U.S. Navy to earn necessary income and further her education in bookkeeping and accounting. Post-war employment brought Alice Talbot to Otsego County, New York, where she met her husband, established a family, and maintained a permanent home (in Cooperstown) for the past fifty-two years.

The interview with Alice Talbot, conducted with a broad biographical approach, deals with situations and events from her childhood in southeastern New York to more recent experiences in Cooperstown. As such, it touches upon a variety of historical contexts. For example, her father's multiple job changes in the 1930s, which included a stint with the Civilian Conservation Corps, illustrate the difficulty of finding steady employment during the Great Depression. This search for work not only affected a family's ability to manage its finances, but

also its ability to develop a sense of place, given the frequent relocations it required. Mrs. Talbot's time with the Navy (1940-1946) as a keypunch operator points to one avenue of opportunity available to enlisted women during World War II. Over 350,000 women served in the various branches of the military. Regulations excluded women from combat positions, and thus restricted their work to a variety of auxiliary functions, which ranged from clerical and administrative duties to medical and technological positions. Mrs. Talbot's computing and record-keeping tasks reflect the supportive role given to women during WWII.

The connections between personal experience and larger historical moments remain largely implicit. Still, the interview offers valuable information about sense of place, educational and employment opportunities available at the time, and the family dynamics experienced in childhood and adulthood. In addition, the latter part of the interview provides information about the village of Cooperstown itself. Her remarks cover the sites and daily life of Cooperstown at the time of her arrival, as well as its subsequent evolution. The town's growing baseball culture became familiar to Mrs. Talbot through her involvement with Baseball Hall of Fame activities, which resulted from her husband's former position as the Hall Director.

In the following transcription, I have tried to reproduce the language and substance of the oral history interview with only basic editing for the sake of readability. False starts, repetitions, and minor interjections like "ums" and "ahs" have been eliminated from the text, except when they might offer insight into the interviewer's thought process or the meaning of a particular remark. Inaudible words and missing words appear as bracketed text. The use of a dash (—), when it appears in the middle of a sentence, denotes a substantial pause; when found at the end of a sentence, it indicates an interruption by the other speaker. I have chosen to preserve some grammatical mistakes and turns of phrase to remain faithful to the recording.

Key Terms

Accounting
Baseball / Hall of Fame
Beauty Culture
Bookkeeping
Bowling
Brooklyn, New York
Cooperstown, New York
Edmeston, New York
Key punch Machines
Middleburgh, New York
New York Central Mutual Fire Insurance Company
Railway Express Company
United States Navy
White Plains, New York

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AT = Alice Talbot

KR = Kyle Radke

[START OF TRACK 1, 0:00]

KR:

Today is Friday, November 21, 2008. The following is an interview of Mrs. Alice Talbot by Kyle Radke for the Cooperstown Graduate Program's Research and Fieldwork course. The interview is being conducting at Mrs. Talbot's home on Pioneer Street in Cooperstown, New York. Actually I just realized I don't think I wrote down your full name, so even just starting with that, your full name is Alice—

AT:

You want my maiden name?

KR:

Yes, sure.

AT:

Losce.

KR:

Losce Talbot. When and where were you born, again?

AT:

White Plains, New York in Westchester County, 6-11-23.

KR:

Right. At that time, besides your parents, was there anyone else in the family? Or was it just you entering the home, a family of three?

AT:

I was the first of five children.

KR:

Okay. So when did siblings enter the picture for you?

AT:

Well, there were five of us. I have my brother, was born November 17th in '25. Then another brother in March 18th '24, my older brother was born. And then March 11th '25. Then I had a sister June 5th—oh dear, in twenty-, let's see, she would have been—I know you're waiting for all this to come out, but you know—

KR:

It's all right if it doesn't [come] right off the bat.

AT:

'24, I think she was born. Then I have a brother, and this last brother is the only one that's still living besides me, and he was born November 18th '22 or '21, '22 maybe. You should have warned me ahead of time [AT and KR laughter], so I could have looked up all this information for you.

KR:

Well, I was just getting a sense of how long you had to kind of rule the house as the only child, or how long till your siblings came along. That was all I was getting.

AT:

Oh, not long. Not long. In those days, you raised families bang-bang-bang, usually [AT and KR laughter].

KR:

You had mentioned [at a previous interview] that your father, supporting the family, worked for the Railway Express Company.

AT:

Right.

KR:

Right. Was that that an office located in White Plains, or did he have to travel?

AT:

He was a traveling delivery man on a truck. All express items. He was alone on this truck, and used to have to carry heavy trunks up flights of stairs. I can remember him telling about how he had carried these trunks, alone, on his back. He had a strap that he strapped the trunks on his back with. That's what delivery men did in those days. They didn't have helpers, or automatic lifters or anything like that. It was all done manually.

KR:

Do you happen to know how he came to that job?

AT:

His father worked for the railroad, initially, and I guess through his father, he got the job as the delivery man. With the Railway Express Company.

KR:

And your mother at the time, she—

AT:

Stayed at home, raised her family. My mother, she went to work later in life, but not when the children were small. There wasn't time.

KR:

Right.

AT:

She was busy raising children.

KR:

What was it that she went on to do later in life?

AT:

She did just manual labor, housecleaning, and things of that nature. Because times were not very lucrative at that time. It was just, you took whatever you could get. She did not have an education. She came over from the old country, and I think she only completed two grades, second grade. She lived on a farm and she was working on the farm. She was the oldest of twelve children, and so she worked on the farm and helped raise the family too.

KR:

And you mentioned the old country, which country did she—

AT:

It was one of the small countries, and I'm not sure which one it was, that was swallowed up by Russia. A German-speaking country. I can't remember what country it was. I got the history upstairs, and I could look it up if it's important.

KR:

Well that might be something good to take a look at when we're done, and I can jot it down and fill in the blanks later.

AT:

Okay. Might take me a little while to find it, but I can find it.

KR:

And your siblings, what were they like? How did you get along with them when you were younger?

AT:

Well, we got along well. As children do, we picked on each other and got into battles, but we got along just fine really. All came out okay [AT and KR laughter].

KR:

In White Plains, where you grew up, I was wondering if you could describe the neighborhood where you were, what it looked like, or just the atmosphere?

AT:

Well, it was a city, and we lived in not a very wealthy [area]. It was not a slum section, but it was not a very wealth section, it was a poorer section of the city. Like any city, it was a block of apartment houses. I can remember that one time that I was visiting a cousin who was two or three doors away, and I followed my mother home and she didn't

realize I was behind her, and so I just kept right on walking and I got lost. Had to send police out looking for me [AT and KR laughter]. I don't remember too much about that because I was really very young then. I guess we left White Plains when I was about five or six, and moved up in Westchester County to Hawthorne, New York, which is a smaller town.

KR:

That's right. I remember you mentioning that you moved around a lot when you were younger.

AT:

Yes.

KR:

And that was because of your father's job?

AT:

Because of my father's job, right.

KR:

Something you mentioned about White Plains, you had other family there.

AT:

It was the cousin that I was visiting when I got lost.

KR:

Right. Is that how they came to live in White Plains? Did you have a lot of relatives there, or it was, again, your father's work?

AT:

It was my father's relatives, and they were all in that area, not all in White Plains, but that was one of the most affluent places to live at that time. Except for the really high class, I'll put it that way, high class towns, which were like Scarsdale, and Hartsdale, and those places were pretty affluent areas. My father was born in Scarsdale, actually not born [there], he was born in the Bronx, but then they moved to Scarsdale. [START OF TRACK 2, 10:00] He was raised by an aunt because his mother died shortly after he was born, so he was raised by another part of the family. These were his cousins that lived in that area.

KR:

When you moved, I know you were only five or six, but do you remember much about that process?

AT:

Of moving?

KR:

Yes.

AT:

I don't remember the actual move but I remember being in other houses. In fact, in between White Plains and Hawthorne, we had another stop in Hartsdale, I think was the name of the place. I believe that was it. We only stayed there a very short time, like maybe a year. Then we moved to Hawthorne, which was a much smaller village. That's where I started school.

KR:

How long was the stay in Hawthorne?

AT:

Not too long. From there we moved to Schoharie County for a short period of time. And my father by then had lost his job at the Railway Express, and he worked for an organization, which was called—well, he was with the CCC camps. They did, I don't remember too much about it, they did like—I'm going to say landscaping, but not for homes, landscaping out in the wilds, and they also planted trees, things like that. Like a reforestation company perhaps.

KR:

For the public.

AT:

Right, right.

KR:

Where was he working then with the CCC? Was he travelling for off from Hawthorne?

AT:

Well, we had moved to Schoharie County by then.

KR:

That's right.

AT:

We were living in Middleburgh at that time. It was awhile before we then moved back to Brooklyn, but I've forgotten just exactly the circumstances, the reason that we moved back to Brooklyn. Then my father went to work for the subway system in Brooklyn, and I've forgotten whether it was, there were different ones, the IRT, BMT, I don't remember what subway system he worked for. That was as a, well, I think a porter. Not a porter, he didn't carry baggage. What did he do? He worked in the cars, I guess, maybe even cleaning I'm not sure.

KR:

These are quite a few different places, and this is all in the span of how many years?

AT:

We figured it out once, and I think I had moved sixteen times by the time I was sixteen years old. So it was very difficult to remember what went on and when.

KR:

How did you cope with moving so often?

AT:

Very well. I did well in school. At one time, when we were in Schoharie County living in Middleburgh, I was in contention with the young man who was top of the class. I had no problem with learning. It was very easy for me, so that was not a problem, as I say.

KR:

How about your siblings? Did it work out as well for them?

AT:

Well, not all of them. My brother that was just below me had a rather difficult time. For some reason or another we were in the same class, and I think it was because when I was in first grade, I became ill, and they kept me back for a year after that. I was ill for awhile, and I've forgotten what my problem was even. Then he caught up with me, and so we were in the same class, and he was always very angry with me because I did so

well in school and he did so poorly [AT and KR laughter]. Then my next brother, he struggled. He had a time in school. He didn't do too well. But then my sister did very well, and my youngest brother did quite well. So we all came through unscathed.

KR:

Well, I imagine you had many schools and many teachers.

AT:

Exactly. The teacher that I remember the best, for some reason or other, was in Middleburgh, because it was the first man teacher that I had, and his name was Mr. Mustard. That just stands out in my mind.

KR:

Was he a good teacher or is it mostly—

AT:

He was an excellent teacher. Tall, good-looking man, so all the girls paid special attention.

KR:

Were these large schools, or relatively small schools?

AT:

Small town schools, mostly. Middleburgh is not a very big community. Just one school in the village like here in Cooperstown. Not too many children. I don't remember what the population was at that time. That was a long time ago.

KR:

My next question was going to be what the typical school-day was like, [but] with sixteen different schools, in there, I don't know if there is a typical, but—

AT:

Just went to school. We stayed in the same class with the same teacher up until we went to Middleburgh, and that was because I was in seventh grade by then, I guess. That was the first time we started changing classes for different subjects. So Mr. Mustard was my homeroom teacher. Then we changed classes and I don't remember too much about them, except that I enjoyed school and I enjoyed being there. It worked out fine, that's all.

KR:

What were your favorite subjects then, in school? Did you have one in particular?

AT:

Math.

KR:

Math?

AT:

Right, and that's how I became an accountant, why I became an accountant.

KR:

I thought you might have answered that based on our conversation before, but I thought I would ask anyway. You mentioned before that you had education that went up through junior year of high school, that's correct?

AT:

Right.

KR:

I was wondering if we could talk about that a bit more.

AT:

Okay. That was when I lived in Brooklyn and I went to East New York Vocational High School. My mother felt that it would be a good idea for me to become a hairdresser, a beautician. So she sent me to vocational high school and I studied, besides academic subjects, [START OF TRACK 3, 20:00] beauty culture, is what they called it then, and I guess it still is occasionally called beauty culture. I learned to become a hairdresser. I didn't finish, as I said, my senior year, because I had to go out and get a job. Both my mother and father became ill, my father lost his job as a result, and I was the oldest of

five children, so I had to go out and get a job. I went to work for an import-export company in New York City. We were living in Brooklyn at that time.

KR:

What was that like, what kind of work was the import-export?

AT:

It was like a messenger girl delivering bills of lading, all sorts of things relating to the import-export company. I went all over the city, traveled all over the city, delivering things and picking up whatever had to come back to the company. Like a mail girl, sort of. That was my first job. I think I got fifteen dollars a week at that time.

KR:

This is the late 1930s, at this point, right?

AT:

Yes, exactly. I was seventeen years old, so it was 1940, wasn't it? Yeah?

KR:

Yeah. You mentioned that your mother had encouraged you to study beauty culture. Was that something you were interested in at all?

AT:

No. She thought that would be a good thing for me to go into because her brother owned a barber-beauty shop, and he was looking for a beautician. She just thought that if I had that background, that I could go to work for him. When I went to work for him, it did not work out at all, because I did not like that kind of work. I liked figuring and that kind of thing. So it didn't work out. I only stayed there about six months and then I went and looked for another job, and I went back to Brooklyn to find that job. I found a job in a bank, and went to work in, I think it was the National Commercial Bank, maybe.

Wallabout branch. Now that's the only thing that I remember about it. That was the branch of that particular bank. I'm not sure of the name of the bank either. I do remember the Wallabout branch, that's all.

KR:

Sounds like you had left the city for a time then. You were a messenger in the city, and then you left to work, where was her brother's—

AT:

That was in Warwick, New York. I told you I moved around a lot. I only stayed there six months. I just didn't like that work at all. So I went back down to visit my folks. Looked in the papers and saw this advertisement for—what was the name of the machine that you would run? It was like starting out sorting checks for the bank. Eventually I went into the bookkeeping department, and from there, I even went in as teller too. That was at the time of rationing, when they had stamps for different things that you needed stamps for. Like meat stamps were red, and sugar stamps were blue. I've forgotten all the colors, but

that was taken care of by a teller in the bank. People came in with slips that said [what] they needed. They were allotted so many stamps for each one of those things, and that was my job, to give those out.

KR:

Did you enjoy your time at the bank?

AT:

I did. But then I decided I wanted to do more. I wanted to get more of an education in bookkeeping and accounting. So some friend of mine said “why don’t we try enlisting in the Navy,” or the Army, some branch of the service, and she said “it says here that you can get an education by doing that.” It was in an advertisement in the paper or a magazine or something, I don’t remember. So we went together and enlisted in the Navy, and that’s where I got my actual accounting degree. I didn’t get a degree, but where I took my classes.

KR:

I’m sorry, what was your friend’s name?

AT:

Oh, gosh. That was a long time ago. I had corresponded with her up until just a few years ago. I’ll have to look it up. I can’t remember.

KR:

It's okay. I thought you [said it]. Just wanted to make sure I didn't miss it.

AT:

I've got pictures in albums upstairs, and when I look at it, I'll know it. But I can't think of it right off-hand.

KR:

You met her at the bank?

AT:

Yeah. We were working together at the bank, and we decided that we wanted to do more. We wanted to get more of an education, so we decided we would do that. My parents weren't too happy about it, but we did it and it turned out okay.

KR:

That was one thing I was curious about, your parents' reaction. I guess at that point you were old enough, where—

AT:

I was eighteen.

KR:

Did you get to stay with your friend when you were in the service?

AT:

No. We were separated. She went to Washington, DC, and I went to Bainbridge, Maryland, which was a boot camp. You know what a boot camp is? Boot camp is where new recruits go, these are men, went to be tested. They decided where they should go, what part of the Navy that they should be sent to. Whether they should go on to school, or driving a truck, or whatever. Decide what they should be doing in the Navy. For men. We did the testing programs and the placement, I guess you call it. That was by then using the early computers, IBM keypunch machines. That's where we punched in their scores and, depending on what their score was, they were placed. Not by us, we just did the groundwork, there were officers who decided where they should go, what branch of the Navy they should be in.

KR:

What were these machines like?

AT:

They were huge, humongous clonkers. [START OF TRACK 4, 30:00] They were great big things. The keypunch machine itself was not. It was a small machine like this [indicates distance with hands]. It wasn't with a regular typewriter kind of keyboard. You had a little keyboard on the side, which had numbers. You typed in names and things on the regular typewriter keyboard, then you punched in the scores and the numbers on a

little machine on the side. I've forgotten what you call it. You know this was sixty-five years ago we're talking about. My mind isn't that open.

KR:

So the punch part is relatively small, but then the rest of it?

AT:

Well, the bigger machine was like the sorter. This keypunch machine punched holes in cards about this big [indicates size with hands]. Those then were put into a sorter and sorted out by the holes that were punched in the card. I can understand that part of computers, but later on, when they started doing computers over telephone lines and the like, I lost track of that. That was beyond me. I couldn't figure out how that could work. And now, it's just unbelievable what can be done over, the air I guess, because I don't know how you get from one place to another without having wires going back and forth. Can you figure that out? [AT and KR laughter]

KR:

No, I'm not that good with computers either. Even the punch cards.

AT:

The punch card is something that I could look at and see how it worked. I could see that. When they went beyond that, then I gave up.

KR:

So part of the day was working with these early computers, and then part of the day was your continuing education, is that right? In bookkeeping and accounting? You mentioned that you were going to get that through the service.

AT:

I did my classes at night to learn bookkeeping and accounting and so forth. It was like night school. I was working for the Navy as a Specialist I. Seaman First Class Specialist I. That was my work day, keypunching and doing all that kind of stuff. But then at night, I went to school to take up accounting and bookkeeping and so on. I went from working during the day until, it was a regular work day, five o'clock. Then you had your dinner hour. Then from there, I think I started at seven o'clock at classes, seven to nine. I had three classes a night to get my degree, which I never did get. It never materialized for some reason or other. I guess I didn't stay in long enough, as I remember. I was only there two years and I guess it really took three years to really get a degree. It was like college. You had to take so many courses to get a degree, and I never did get a degree. But I had enough education so that I could go out into the work world and do what I had been taught.

KR:

It sounds like a busy day then, that you had for two years straight.

AT:

Oh yeah, for two years. You had weekends, of course, and usually you went home on weekends. Except for the weekend when you pulled duty, which you had to stay on and be—I've forgotten what they call it. You had to be there in the dorm to check on people coming in and out, so on and so forth. Just like an attendant, whatever they called it, I've forgotten. I can't remember.

KR:

But when it wasn't that weekend you would make the trip from Maryland back to the city?

AT:

Back to Brooklyn, by train.

KR:

Was that a long trip then?

AT:

From Bainbridge, Maryland, it was below Baltimore, between Baltimore and Aberdeen. I can't remember, but I think maybe like a three or four hour trip by train to Brooklyn. Then my father would pick me up, I'd be at home. Well no, my father didn't always pick me up because he couldn't always pick me up. I would take the subway from the train. It was a subway to start out and then it turned into an elevator. You know what elevator trains are?

KR:

Yes, I do.

AT:

I went both subway and elevator back to Brooklyn to spend the weekend at home.

KR:

And when you came home Seaman First Class and told your parents about what you had been doing, had their opinion changed?

AT:

Oh, yeah. They were resolved to the fact that that's what I was going to be doing, so it worked out just fine. They got over the fact that they were not happy about my doing that.

KR:

So you lived on the base in Bainbridge. What was the base like there?

AT:

Well, you lived in barracks, plain barracks with cots, double-decker bunk beds. Nothing very fancy. [Recording paused because of commotion in nearby room] I have pictures if

you would be interested, I could dig them up, of the barracks that we lived in. Is that anything you'd be interested in?

KR:

Yeah, that would be something that we could see.

AT:

Okay, you remind me later on to look that up, and I hope I can find it.

KR:

One thing I was curious [about], the training to work with these keypunch systems. It sounds like it was something you sort of had experience with at the bank, is that right?

AT:

Well, yes. I worked on a machine, a bookkeeping machine, and that was again a big clonker of a thing. Adding machines now, you have about nine numbers on your keyboard. That had about fifty or sixty keys to punch. Units, singles, tens, twenties, and so on. Each row of units had keys. A whole big keyboard, like this big [indicates size with hands], and that's what you punched in your amounts, when you were adding up checks or whatever you were doing. You punched those in.

[START OF TRACK 5, 40:00]

KR:

So when you went into the Navy, you needed some training with the new devices, but you had some experience—

AT:

I had some background on that, and that's how I really happened to get to where I was in the Navy. When I first went in, my initial training was at Hunter College in the Bronx. That was six weeks, I think it was, and that's where they decided where to send me. That's when they decided they would send me to this boot camp. I was hoping to be able to get overseas and do some traveling, but by the time I got into the job I was doing, they froze the rates, as they called it. Women were the first ones not allowed to get out of their jobs. They had to stay where they were.

KR:

You had to go through boot camp too? It had a physical part to it?

AT:

Oh yes.

KR:

What was that like?

AT:

I have pictures of that. You did parades, and practices, and marching, all sorts of things. That was part of your boot camp training. Then you graduated, and I have a picture of our graduation class. If I can find it, I have all that somewhere. I didn't think about getting it out. I didn't think we were going into it this deeply. I just thought I would tell you what I did and that was it.

KR:

I'm interested in hearing about your service, so this has been great. Do you have any particular memories or specific stories that stand out from your service or training?

AT:

I know that I didn't like shooting guns at targets. Target practice, I didn't like that. There wasn't an awful lot that I didn't like about the service. I thought it was rugged, it was not easy. Yet it wasn't impossible. Things were not impossible to do. They didn't make it that hard. The women who thought it was too hard were usually the ones who flunked out. They didn't make it. You had to be pretty tough to be able to get through it. At least, I thought it was pretty tough, and most of the women that I talked to said the same thing. It was pretty tough. There are friends here in Cooperstown who were in the service, not the same place that I was, but have said that they thought it was a pretty tough life, but it taught you to appreciate what you had.

KR:

And out of it, you said you had training that positioned you well once you had left the Navy. Actually, you mentioned that you left after two years and it was a three-year program.

AT:

I had enough points to be discharged, and I would have had to have gone on to a school to get any more training in what I was doing. They didn't offer me any more incentive to keep on in the service. So by that time I thought I had had enough and I would come home and look for a job. That's an interesting thing too, because while I was in the service, my parents had bought a farm up here in Otsego County. I came up after I got out of the service, came up for a visit, and I was going to go back to the city to get a job. But when I came up for a visit, there's an insurance company over in Edmeston, New York Central Mutual Fire Insurance Company. Have you heard of it?

KR:

I remember [it] from our interview earlier.

AT:

They were looking for a keypunch operator, and so they made me such a good offer that I never went back to the city. I stayed.

KR:

Did your parents, or did your family, expect you to take up work at the farm with them?

AT:

I went and lived on the farm, but no, they didn't expect me to work on the farm. Since I had been offered a job at New York Central, they were happy with that.

KR:

You had mentioned when we met before that starting the farm was a big mistake for them. I didn't know if we could explore that.

AT:

Because they really didn't make a go of farming. They sold the farm after a few years. Actually, I bought a house that we all moved into in Edmeston, with my GI Loan. They gave GIs loans when they got out of the service, and with my GI loan, I bought a house and we all moved into that. My father got a job at the school in Edmeston as a janitor. I went to work for New York Central. My sister was working in New York Central at that time already. They had moved up before I was discharged from the Navy. She was the one that told the bosses over in New York Central that her sister was a keypunch operator, and they told her to have me come in and talk with them. I did, and as I say, they made me such a good offer that I just couldn't turn it down. I couldn't have done any better in the city. At first, I thought, "oh well this is nothing." I can go to the city and get a much better paying job than that. I was on what was called the GI training. I got some money from the Navy to supplement what they paid me, what the job paid me. I've forgotten what it was called, there was a name for it.

KR:

How did you get along at the insurance company?

AT:

I got along fine. I think I was not very well liked, because there were women that were working there that didn't get the money that I got, and didn't get as much attention as I got. I guess you might say they were jealous of me because I had a better job than most of them who had been working there for quite some time. It was just because [of] my time in the service. I was not there very long because my husband-to-be came along and decided that no wife of his was going to work after we were married. That was the end of it. I never did finish there, because no wife of his ever went to work until later in life. I'll tell you all about that later.

KR:

He met you in Edmeston?

AT:

Yes. He lived in Edmeston. He had just gotten out of the service too. Gotten out of the [START OF TRACK 6, 50:00] Army, and he was going to Utica School of Commerce, traveling back and forth. Things evolved and we got together, and we were married. I went there in '46, and we were married in '48.

KR:

Do you remember where in town, or how exactly you met? Your first encounter maybe?

AT:

It was a New Year's Eve party. We belonged to the same church first of all, and sang in the choir, so we knew each other. But it was a New Year's Eve party at New York Central, and all the women were told to invite a guest, preferably the opposite gender. I couldn't think of anybody else in town that I would rather ask, so I asked Howard to come to the party, which he did. With some, I won't go into that, that's a different story. He didn't want to at first, but his mother said that since I had asked him, she thought he ought to go with me. But anyway, he—where were we, I've lost track?

KR:

Eventually you end up going to the party together, and—

AT:

And then we started dating after that. That was New Year's. We really didn't have another date until Halloween. I remember it was Halloween because we went to a movie in Norwich, and they were having Halloween things going on. We dated for a few months before he decided that maybe I was good enough to ask to marry him.

KR:

What was the ceremony like? Where was it held, and who was there?

AT:

Our wedding?

KR:

Yes.

AT:

It was held in Edmeston at the Second Baptist Church where we attended. It was in September of '48. September 11th, actually, 1948. Then we moved to Cooperstown right after. He was working here at the Leatherstocking Office as an accountant, so we moved right after we were married to Cooperstown, and have been here ever since.

KR:

What were your initial impressions of Cooperstown when you came in '48?

AT:

I liked it. I thought it was fine. We didn't have a home at first. We just had apartments here and there, two or three different apartments. Then eventually we bought a home down on Walnut Street near where the elementary school is now.

KR:

What was that first home like?

AT:

It was a very small bungalow type home. We did have our first two children when we lived there. We finally decided that it was too small for us. That's when we decided to look for another home. We just let it be known that we were looking, and the man who owned this house got wind of it, or heard that we were looking for a home, and he came to us and asked if we would not be interested in buying this house. That's how we got here and we've been here ever since. Julie, our oldest daughter, was five years old when we moved here. That would be '56, right? She was born in '51, yeah '56.

KR:

What was life like then? You had Julie.

AT:

Julie, and Judy was the second one. We enjoyed life. We were not wealthy. Howard was just making an accountant's wage at that time. It was not until later that he ever got to be asked to work at the Baseball Hall of Fame. He wasn't with Leatherstocking too many years. He went there in '47 and I think he started at the Hall of Fame in '51. I think that's when he started, if I remember right. We didn't have a lot of money but we struggled and we got along just fine. As a matter of fact, a couple of years when we lived here, we went for the whole year without a car because we couldn't afford to buy a car. Our old car gave out and we couldn't afford to buy a car, so we went around with a little wagon that

we pulled the kids in, to do our grocery shopping in town. We struggled but we got along just fine. We were not always able to do a lot of things that we do now.

KR:

You would take them down to Main Street, is that where you would go shopping?

AT:

There was one store that was on Chestnut Street, which is now part of the county office building, the annex. That was a Victory Store, as I remember it. We did a lot of our shopping there. And there was an A&P on Main Street, and another, Danny's Market, which was where part of the Baseball Hall of Fame is now, actually. The part that's the store where you buy souvenirs, that part of it was Danny's Market. The Baseball Hall of Fame bought Danny's Market and tore it down, and added onto the building to use that part of the building.

[Recording paused because of ringing phone]

KR:

It's fine that we got here to Main Street in Cooperstown. I'm wondering what it was like then, as opposed to how it is now?

AT:

There were all kinds of stores on Main Street. There was a furniture store. There were two men's stores. Three or four women's stores. Businesses, regular businesses, not baseball-related. We liked it. We liked the way Cooperstown was. But, then of course, the Baseball Hall of Fame got to be so big, and baseball people from all over the world came in and [START OF TRACK 7, 60:00] bought up these places, started baseball-related stores and whatever. So that's where we are now.

KR:

So it was a quiet town even in the summer then?

AT:

Right. Well, we had tourists, but nowhere near what they have nowadays. My husband is better at this, he could tell you. He has told whoever was interviewing him all this stuff, so if you get together what he has told, and what I tell, it'll get to all work out fine.

KR:

A pretty good picture together. Eventually, while you're here in Cooperstown, you went back to school, or you continued your education, is that right?

AT:

I went to night school to take a few courses. That was when my husband told me that if our children were going to go to college, I would have to go back to work. That was a shocker to me. I had no idea that I'd ever go back to work. I knew that I had to brush up

on my accounting in order to get a job, which I did. That's when Medicare first came into being. That was 1966. The hospital needed people to do Medicare billing, and so I went to work at Bassett Hospital. They hired me right off. I went for an interview one afternoon and they asked me if I could start the next morning. They needed somebody immediately to start this billing because it was thrown in their lap and they were not prepared. They didn't have anybody to do anything. There were three of us, actually, that went to work in the Medicare billing department. That's where I started there, at the hospital. I worked there for five and a half or six years, and then had a better offer from the county to work. I would get more retirement, I think I decided, from the county. It would be state retirement. So I went to work for the county, and worked there fifteen years before I really retired at the age of sixty-three.

KR:

But going back to work, [after] twenty or so years, you hadn't expected that.

AT:

No, I never thought I'd ever go back, but I got through it okay. It was a hardship. I would work all day and then come home at night and get meals, and do my housework on weekends. I was not terribly happy about it, but I got through it.

KR:

I guess my next question, or my last, would be if there is any specific story or memories of Cooperstown, or other parts of your life, that you wanted to share that we didn't get to just yet?

AT:

When my husband got to be director of the Baseball Hall of Fame after he had been there for quite a number of years, and I've forgotten the amount of years, I had to go to functions where I was in the limelight, so to speak. I was alongside of him and have to greet people that I didn't expect I would have to meet. I got involved with the Clarks, Jane Clark's mother, who was Jane also. Used to have me try to help her with baseball people. She thought I would know them better than she did, and I was not happy about that. It made me very nervous. This was above the kind of life that I had led. It just made me very nervous to meet all kinds of baseball people. But eventually I got used to it, and so I became friends with baseball people.

KR:

Had you been interested in baseball at all before that?

AT:

I liked baseball. When I lived in Brooklyn, we were not too far from Ebbetts Field. Was it Ebbetts Field? I think it was Ebbetts Field. I would occasionally go to what they called afternoon games, it was a certain name they called it. I would go and I enjoyed baseball, and I learned to like the game very much. One of my favorite players was Pee Wee

Reese. He was a shortstop for the Brooklyn Dodgers. Lo and behold, when he was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame, I was in Florida at that time, and met him. When I told him that he was one of my favorite players, he put his arms around me and gave me a big kiss and a hug. So that's one of the highlights of my life. But I've met a lot of baseball people since then.

KR:

Like whom, if you don't mind my asking?

AT:

I know—he's now out in California and has a winery. Names and I don't get along very good—it will come to me.

KR:

It's okay. I'm bad with names too.

AT:

I'm eighty-five years old and this doesn't work like it used to.

KR:

But that's great that you got to meet Pee Wee Reese.

AT:

I also have met Robinson, what's his name?

KR:

Brooks Robinson? Frank?

AT:

Brooks Robinson. Another Robinson.

KR:

Frank Robinson?

AT:

Frank Robinson. Yeah, I've met a lot of people. I know Bowie Kuhn. Most all of them, I know them. I'm not real friendly with them, but I know them quite well. We're still invited to the Hall of Fame parties that Jane has on Hall of Fame Weekend. Still see a lot of the people we knew while we were at the Baseball Hall of Fame, and they come up and speak to us.

KR:

Great. I should have asked that earlier, your interest in baseball, going to Ebbetts Field and all that. Is that something you got to do often, with your family or friends?

AT:

No. I probably only went maybe a half a dozen times before I moved to Cooperstown. Didn't go very often. It cost money even though it was called Lady's Day, I guess it was. It still costs money to go, and I didn't have a lot of money, so I didn't go a lot. I enjoyed it, and I still enjoy the game. I still watch baseball [START OF TRACK 8, 70:00] and football on television all the time, because I enjoy the games. I don't like basketball as much, but I do like baseball and football. Golf, I like golf. I'm not very good at golf, but I enjoy it.

KR:

Did you play golf when you were younger?

AT:

I tried. Let's put it that way, I tried. As I say, I wasn't very good. I guess I gave it up after awhile. Probably tried maybe about a year or two, and then I finally gave it up. Bowling was my big thing. I enjoyed bowling.

KR:

Oh yeah?

AT:

Yes. I did that for quite a long time, down at the gym, after I retired. But I did bowl before I retired too. Occasionally we'd go bowling at night to different bowling alleys.

KR:

Like in a league, or just with friends?

AT:

I belonged to a women's league. I don't remember just exactly when. I started in a women's league over in Edmeston, and then I didn't join right away when I came to Cooperstown, until after the children were older, so that I could get a babysitter and leave them. I didn't like to get a babysitter very often when they were little. I stayed home a lot with the children. I would say probably from the time that Julie was about ten, and Jim was five, maybe he was four, I then went evenings. As a matter of fact, both Howard and I belonged to a couple's league, and we bowled together. I also belonged to a women's league, and he belonged to a men's league. That was at the gym, and that was before it was down below town. That was when it was up on Main Street, where part of the Baseball Hall of Fame is now. The one annex, where the Baseball Hall of Fame offices are, used to be the gymnasium—

KR:

Really?

AT:

Here in Cooperstown, yes. That's before it moved down below the village.

KR:

Wow, bowling on Main Street, I had no idea.

AT:

You need some light? Seems to me it's getting dark in here. [Recording paused as AT turns on lights]

KR:

[Recording resumes mid-sentence] anything else that you wanted to tell?

AT:

I'm trying to remember the name of some of the other—Jackie Robinson is the Robinson that I met, and his wife, and became quite friendly with them. He was the first black baseball player. That's who I was trying to think of, the Robinson I knew quite well. All the other Robinsons I know too. Other stories? There probably are many, but when I try to think of something specific [AT laughter], everything goes blank.

KR:

Well that's all right. I think we've had quite a few good stories already today, so thank you for those.

AT:

Pretty well covered it?

KR:

Yeah. Thank you for those, and I appreciate your time with the interview.

[End of Interview]

After the above interview, Mrs. Talbot retrieved a photo album and book of family history to show the interviewer. The following is a transcription of their conversation, held as they examined the material together.

AT:

[Looking at a photo of her Navy graduating class] I've forgotten where I am. I think that's me right there. This one right there. That's me.

KR:

So you had quite a few classmates. Did you get to know all of these people?

AT:

Oh yeah. This was my graduating class. [Flips to photo of class marching as group] This was one of our regional reviews, graduation day. I'm back in here somewhere. This is my unit.

KR:

This marching was the kind of thing you had to do in boot camp?

AT:

We had to practice this, but it was mainly for graduation day. We didn't do that all the time. [Flipping pages] That's a picture of me in uniform. There's another one. [Flips page] This is my sister I told you about, and I've got a couple of brothers in here. [Flips page] That's one of my brothers and my mother and father. [Flips page] There's some

pictures of me. That's my sister. That's a friend of the family. My sister and a friend, and I think it's the same one and me. Just a friend of the family.

KR: That's New York City in the background?

AT:

Yeah, that was in Brooklyn. [Flips page] There's a brother. [Flips page] I'm trying to get all of us together. Well there's three of us anyway. [Flips page] This was a weekend in Washington, DC.

KR:

A family trip, or with friends?

AT:

No. This was when I was in the Navy. This is the girl friend who talked me into joining the Navy. We worked together at the bank. [Flipping pages] I guess the rest of these are mainly family pictures. [Continues flipping] Friends of mine from the Navy, different ones.

KR:

Do you still keep in touch with some?

AT:

No, not too many. These girls here, I do. This was our minister's daughter, and this was a sister-in-law's sister. My sister-in-law worked at the bank too with me. I can't seem to find a picture of her. She didn't like to have her picture taken. This is her sister again, and the minister's daughter. [Flips page] These were pictures taken in the barracks, they're not very good. This is the bunk bed that we slept in. This gives you an idea of what the barracks were like.

KR:

It's six to a room, or is this the corner of a large space?

AT:

Let's see.

KR:

I see there's three beds.

AT:

It wasn't a room, it was a cubicle. It didn't have walls. It was lockers that only went up just so high. It was really a big open building with these cubicles. That's what they were called, cubicles. [Closes photo album and opens book of family history] This I got out to see if I could tell you—[finds page with photo of her mother]—Leipzig, is where my mother's family came from. Leipzig. Bessarabia, which is a small country that was swallowed up by Russia.

KR:

So they came over in, oh this says born in the 1870s.

AT:

Right. My grandmother was born in 1874, my grandfather 1870. [Flipping pages] This is just all family history. I don't know that you want to get into this. [Flipping pages, stopping on page with picture of a kitchen] That's the old black stove that we heated water on, and this is a washing machine right alongside of the stove that we washed clothes in. It jiggled back and forth, and then you had to hand-crank it, dry the clothes with it.

KR:

That's what you had when you were growing up?

AT:

That's when I lived for a time with my grandparents. There was a time when we didn't even have a washing machine. We did everything by hand. Let's see if I can find a picture of my mother and father's wedding. I don't know if I'll ever be able to get back to it. [Flipping pages] As I say, there were twelve in the family, so there's lots of pictures. Springer was my grandmother's maiden name. [Continues flipping] This really goes way back. Here's a picture of my mother, right there. When she was a lot younger. She was the oldest of the Weiss sisters. I don't know if you're interested in any of that.

KR:

It's nice, it's very nice, and the pictures too are great.

AT:

But that's it.

[End of Post-Interview Discussion]

I, Alice L. Talbot, have read and agree to the terms of the procedure explained above.

I, Alice L. Talbot, do hereby give to KCR for scholarly and educational uses the following recorded interview(s) recorded with me beginning on 10/21/08 as an unrestricted gift and transfer to the New York State Historical Association the legal title and all literary property rights including copyright. This gift does not preclude any use I may want to make of the information in the recordings myself.

This agreement may be revised or amended by mutual consent of the parties undersigned.

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10/23/08
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Kyle Radke 186 Radke
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10/23/08
Date

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