

## Elizabeth Casher interview with Linda Youngman, 25 April 2024

**Casher:** This is Elizabeth Casher interviewing Mrs. Linda Youngman on April 25, 2024, at the Gelnett Library in the Keystone Room. I have asked for permission to record this interview and Mrs. Youngman has agreed. This interview is part of a local history project conducted by students in the Public History course at Susquehanna University.

Ok, so, first question. Would you tell me about your childhood experience growing up in Selinsgrove, and what activities or clubs were you a part of?

**Youngman:** Ok, should I start at the very beginning?

**Casher:** If you would like, yes.

**Youngman:** Ok, so, when I, I was born I- we lived in Selinsgrove until I was in first grade. I don't remember too much about that. But I remember my first grade teacher who was Mrs. Sholley, and then my father got another job in New Jersey, so we moved. But we came back when I was in sixth grade. And this building right here was the Pine Street School. And that's where I, you know, it was like from elementary to first grade to sixth grade. And uh, I came back in half a year and I started here and made friends with a real good girl named Jeanette Sholley and we were like really buddies from then on.

Um, I don't remember too much when we were that age, except that we played outside! Ya know? We'd run back and forth to each other's homes and we would go into our bedrooms just like all girls and kids, and talk about things. But we were outside playing and I even played Kick the Can and Mother May I, and all that kind of stuff, climb trees and just have fun. And at that time, they had, High Street Playground where this, this is where most of Selinsgrove went in the summertime. They used to have arts and crafts and they'd play basketball and all kinds of games. And then they would have watermelon parties, and things like that. So that's mostly when we were that age. There wasn't too much, I think they had a Little League for boys, but there weren't many sports or anything at that time for girls. So we were out running around and playing house and playing with our Barbie dolls and Ginny dolls and all that kind of stuff. And paper dolls, I don't know if you've played with paper dolls?

**Casher:** I don't think I have.

**Youngman:** Oh my goodness! Well they were just paper! Ya know, the dolls were like cardboard! So little girls and little boys, and then they had clothing that had little tabs on it that you could cut out and you could change their clothes. So we'd sit on our porches and, play our little games. So, ya know, we loved that! Um, then seventh grade the high school was a junior-senior high school. It was the seventh, eighth, and ninth, was the junior high school. We were sort of in different parts of the building... we weren't ... you didn't get to go to where the sophomore, junior, and seniors were at. The cafeteria was maybe the area- but they kept us all very separate. So junior high was seventh eighth and ninth and at that time, I started to get involved with things, I was a cheerleader for the four years in high school, all the years, but we were cheerleaders, do you know what a cheerleader is?

**Casher:** Not entirely..

**Youngman:** We did cheers, we didn't do

**Casher:** Oh like all the crazy flips in the air

**Youngman:** Right! It was...we had certain cheers and you weren't on somebody's head, were not doing flips and all that. It was just cheering cheering, cheering, So we were really cheerleaders. And uh, when we were teenagers, some of the places in Selinsgrove that we would hang out at, is that what you want to know also?

**Casher:** Yes, that is the next question yes.

**Youngman:** Ok, um, one of the most, one of the things I must say when I was in high school I was in the chorus. Um, of course we went to the football games. That was the most interesting thing that we had. There weren't that many sports for boys even! Then it was mostly basketball, football, and baseball. I think in 1961 is when wrestling started to come to Selinsgrove, so there weren't a whole lot of, uh, sports, and especially for girls.

**[5:00]**

I think the only thing for girls was basketball and that was, I don't know if you remember how, or if you even know how that was played. The girls played basketball half court. They couldn't cross over. I don't even know because I didn't play basketball. I think the forwards were over here, the defense was here, and the offense was here and they couldn't cross over to help or anything, it was really just a dumb game. Girls just, they couldn't play basketball then. Um and then after the football games which, this was really a big part of our lives, was dances. I mean I was a cheerleader but I couldn't wait until the game was over to go to the cafeteria and go to the dances. Where we were that was a big thing.

Plus they had something called a teen canteen. They had juniors teen canteen and the senior teen canteen. We couldn't go to any of the senior things. This was for dancing. Teen canteen was, you know, you go in the bottom of this building and we'd have the records and stuff. So the junior high would go down there on Friday nights and you could dance, and I think they had light refreshments and stuff but that was our real communication. The dancing stuff. So we did that, and we just lived for that.

And the rest of doing things is we had, we did have a lot of stuff in Selinsgrove, a lot of places. One of the real hang outs was called Coney Island. It was just a little restaurant. It had little hamburgers and just the short order stuff, you know, and I think they even had like, ice cream, and stuff like that. In the back they had a backroom that was another place you could go to hear music and dance, you know, and just hang out. So, Coney Island was one.

Then we had Cole's drugstore and that's where I worked a lot. They just had a little soda fountain, the drugstore, the pharmacy, but you could go in and they would, you could get breakfast and you could get lunch. I don't think they had any dinners, but we could go in there and you made short order stuff. Hamburgers, sodas, you know. And we all went down there after school to get our soda and chips. We'd save our lunch money, you know, "I'm not buying lunch today I'm going down to Cole's and buy junk," you know? So we'd go there. And uh, there were a couple other places, they were up on the Strip now, where you'd go up

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There were nice little shops and restaurants up there where people would go to hang out, if you could drive, when you got to the higher level of high school. There was a place called The Lampost, that was really a good little restaurant. They had people who came, they had... you stayed in your car, car hops!

**Casher:** Oh! Like the Red Rabbit?

**Youngman:** Mhm yeah that was one that, you know you could do that with, and there was another place called the Custard Cup. That was up on the Strip and it was the same thing, they had car hops. And um, also, um, Little Norway. That was, have you ever gone over to the Isle of Que?

**Casher:** No not yet.

**Youngman:** Well you have to get over there! Well there's a waffle bridge from the borrow, well to the island. And if you look to the right there used to be a big ice skating rink in there, really neat. And that's where we'd go in the winter. And the winters were cold, so we could ice skate all winter long. You know, and they had music, and you could hear that all over town. You'd hear this music and go "Oh, Little Norway, that sounds really cool." And you'd either be an ice skater or you would just go down and stand on the bridge and watch all the ice skaters, skate every night. It was just really fun.

Let me see, we also had, we had a movie theater called The Stanley, and that was another thing. You would go down Saturday morning and pay 25 cents, I think it was, to get into the movie theater, and there we would watch the Lone Ranger, Hop along Cassidy, and the Three Stooges, and all those things. That was a big thing.

**[10:00]**

So the movie theater was another thing where people would gather. And uh, we also had the Selinsgrove Fair. We used to have a fairgrounds. Do you know where the racetrack is right now? That's where the fair was. There had a track, but they had a fair all the way up around. It was like the biggest night fair—it was only a night fair—it was the biggest night fair in Pennsylvania. And that went on for years! I think it was like, geez I can't remember when it really left, it was maybe like late '70s when it stopped really being anything. So that was somewhere that everybody went and every year was a biggie. It was a week long, usually in July, and that was a community thing where...you saw everybody down there.

Do you want to know anything about the shops we had in Selinsgrove at that time at all?

**Casher:** Uh sure yah! I also wanted to touch on, um, I heard that you really liked the Rolling Green Park, and I did some research on that so I was interested in that.

**Youngman:** Oh boy well, it was sort of like, um, Hershey but of course it was way smaller. And Hershey at that time was way smaller. But it had all the rides you could ever want. And that was a place where everybody came, there weren't many parks at that time, so everybody came from far away to the park part. We went to the pool part. That was about the only community pool around. I had some friends who maybe had a private pool at the

time. But there weren't too many in Selinsgrove who had pools. You know now almost everybody has their own pool. But every Saturday, Saturday and Sunday at least, everybody was at the pool from Selinsgrove, Sunbury, Lewisburg, Danville, 'cause it was the only big pool around.

Our big...Selinsgrove and Sunbury were those two towns, you know it was sports, it was the girls and the boys. We didn't like the Sunbury kids and they didn't like the Selinsgrove kids. And we had that thing going. The girls always wanted to steal out boyfriends, and you know that kind of thing. So so that was a big thing. But, yes, the pool was just always packed. And I just remember, you could go there...I remember my husband saying, when we were eight years old, we had a bus. A bus that went from Selinsgrove to Sunbury, and it would be there every half hour, and it would come and you would get on it. And you could get off anywhere you wanted. It would start at the end of town here, it would go down the Strip, go to Rolling Green, you could get off the bus and go to the pool, and then they go and they go to Sunbury and make their rounds in Sunbury, and they'd come back down and you know, it was that big thing. They had a bus schedule, I think it was almost 24 hours a day. But that's how you had to get around! That's how we had to go!

So, that was another thing that was really cool and you'd get on the bus and ring your little bell when you wanted to get off, and you would get to know the bus drivers. They were all friendly and it was just a community thing. So that's another thing, and that was where Sunbury had all the good stores. On Saturdays we would get on the bus and go to Sunbury to shop. They had shoe stores, they had women's stores, and all that and it was really bustling there. So that's where we shopped.

But Selinsgrove did have some pretty good shops at one time. We had a ladies shop called the Lion Shop, we had a hardware store, Aucker's Hardware Store. We had Hummels Sporting Goods, we had Snavelly's shoe shop. So we had stores here, they were just local. But then, the mall came. So, things went.

**Casher:** Right, was the mall very busy during that time? Because now it's kind of like-

**[15:00]**

**Youngman:** Oh my gosh! When that came in, yes. I mean for the longest, longest time. I think it had just been in the-oh boy, I think most malls now are kind of like-

**Casher:** Going down?

**Youngman:** Yes, going down, it must have been the Nineties and early 2000s it was still busy, and still full. You'd go to our mall, you'd go to Williamsport, Harrisburg, wherever. But yes, it was very, very busy. And that's another thing where the kids went. You know, just to get together and walk around. You know, going in stores and stuff. That's how they stuck together.

**Casher:** There was one thing that kind of goes back to high school that I was interested in. I know I had my opinions of high school, but were there like certain groups of people that people liked or disliked, like cliques?

**Youngman**: Oh yes always. You had the farmers, from Selinsgrove, the farm kids who were backward, we thought. And when I go to our reunions now all these people are very successful and they all got to be- like and you think, wow back in school these people did all those stupid things, ya know? But yes, and they had- Now today, in high school, you can take courses with juniors and seniors, not when we were in school, boy, you had a curriculum for everything, and you were never mixed, ever. You know, you had all your classes with seventh graders, you had all your curriculum for seventh grade, eight grade, ninth grade—you were never mixed, ever. You had all your classes with seventh graders, you had all your classes with eighth graders, and on through. You know, I don't think that started till, around here, I can't remember if my boys had classes with others, it had to be at least in the '80s.

But we had academics, who were going to college, I guess, and you had the business people. And so it was divided into those kind of categories. So it was hard sometimes to make friends with everybody, because you were stuck here in this little group. But we did it! I had a lot of friends, I was in the business courses and a lot of my really good friends were in academics. And we had our crew, and like you say, yes, you had cliques. But I don't remember people bullying each other. I just think you had your best friends and you would talk to other people if you weren't involved with them a lot.

**Casher**: Interesting, so that kind of goes into, I know you were crowned homecoming and prom queen, so what was that like?

**Youngman**: Well, it was the first homecoming week. That was homecoming in '62, that was when they developed the first homecoming, in 1962. And you know we were all sort of- we didn't know what it was all about, but we had a queen, of course. And it was wonderful, I didn't expect it, but it was really quite nice, and just having homecoming and everything that went along with it. You know the football games and the driving around in the cars, you know that kind of thing. So it was exciting.

**Casher**: So I actually have this photo here-

**Youngman**: Oh no, oh yah. Who's that girl? Ahaha, who's that little girl? I don't know her. Yep I remember that, yep.

**Casher**: So then I also kind of wanted to know about, you were a part of the Selinsgrove Women of the Moose? Is that right? And I remember I read in a paper that it was your birthday and they called you the "club sunshine girl," well my question was not necessarily about that, but did you find the attention with the queen-naming and the club, did that benefit your experience in Selinsgrove or was it a bit difficult with that attention?

**Youngman**: It was, it was a good experience. Because I don't recall girls being jealous of ya or mean or "oh she made it because..." I mean you know how girls can be. And girls can be pretty nasty, but I don't remember that happening, I remember it being a good experience, both with homecoming and prom. But you know it's funny, I didn't feel like I was this popular person. You know or stand out-ish, I didn't do anything spectacularly for that to be, but it was a great experience. I was very appreciative about it and I was happy.

**[20:00]**

**Casher:** Ok, um, so this also, when you were talking about the joint high school, so I know you and your husband both went to the same high school is that correct? So is that where you met then?

**Youngman:** Well I was in eighth grade, he was a senior, when I knew about him. He was like, *the guy*. I mean all us little eighth graders, “oh look at him he's just the most wonderful person.” But I didn't know him yet, they were completely different. I mean I think knew of him and, you know we'd see each other, but we didn't really know each other then.

Where we met really was when I was... it was the end of my junior year and he was in college and it was the downtown thing. You know where everybody went downtown, you interacted down there then, at Coney Island—that's where we sort of met for the first time and talked and evolved into going for a walk and a date, and it went from there.

**Casher:** So when he was away for college would you meet up and stuff like that?

**Youngman:** Well he would, he wrote to me every day, I have all these little letters and he's an art student so he had these really neat envelopes so, you'd know when it was coming! So he wrote me letters and I'd write back. And occasionally we'd talk, but you know it cost, when we were young, it cost you to call long distance, so you couldn't really talk a long time. He had to go to a payphone in his dorm to pay, to call home or anything. And you couldn't really afford that, so once in a great while we'd talk on the phone and most of the weekends he would come home. He went to Kutztown.

**Flood:** I live in Fleetwood!

**Youngman:** Do you! Oh well my whole family—my husband, my older son, his wife, my grandson, and now my granddaughter all went there, well my granddaughter is going there now, but all the others went there. So, we own Kutztown. Oh that's interesting. Yah we spend a lot of time in Fleetwood. There was a place there that one of the boys that Jim knew, uh lived in an apartment and he'd have some “parties,” and we were invited so we've been to Fleetwood a couple of times.

**Casher:** Well, to bring it back to Selinsgrove, um, speaking of parties and what not, I was interested in the traditions that Selinsgrove would hold uh when you were growing up that would bring the community together?

**Youngman:** Oh let me see...not really anything that was planned, I think it was just doing things all the time with the community, like the fair! Well we did have, I think the 70s or 80s...we had the longest banana split that went from one end of town to the other. And there were little troughs that everybody had their own little banana split so that was one thing that everyone wanted to get in on.

**Casher:** Did you help with that? [25:00]

**Youngman:** Yes, I did. You'd get the ice cream out and get ready and you had to all eat it at the same time. So that was a biggie there. But other times it was junior women, where the women would get together, and the men you know mostly sports. And it was just a community-based place where you did everything together and you knew everybody. I could go up my streets in Selinsgrove, any street, he lives there, he lives there, she lives there, she

lives there. Everybody lived in Selinsgrove, except for the farm people who had to live outside. And going to school everybody walked, because we were all in Selinsgrove! Now they have Monroe Manor, you know all those outside- they were never there, you know it was very small and we'd just walk to school and you'd know everybody in town. We never worried about somebody catching you, but you could have gone to any house, any street because you know someone. It was so neat, and you didn't have to be afraid or anything in town.

**Casher:** So kind of going off the community thing, I know bigger events affected Selinsgrove like the flood of 72 or maybe like the assassinations you had to live through- were there parts during those difficult times where people would get on each others' nerves?

**Youngman:** You know I don't remember a whole lot about that, but you know the assassination, I mean everybody was just devastated and every time you'd see somebody and say how awful and we all stuck together that way. And then with the flood, you know you see the community just goes in there and does what it can for everybody. And then the Towers. I remember that, it was just, I mean we were in school that day. I worked at the Selinsgrove Middle School for 30 years, and I just remember where I was that day, because I was older. Now when I was younger and the president was killed, you know I was still a teenager and it affected me, but the older you get you realize how important that really is you know what I mean? So the Twin Towers was a horrible, horrible experience. I mean it's dumbfounding almost. But I think that really keeps you close to your community, closeknit yah.

**Casher:** Alright, well so then I was interested in what your daily routine living in Selinsgrove is like, or was like, or any way you want to go about that, or things that you avoided? But hearing from you it seems like everything was really nice...

**Youngman:** I had a wonderful childhood in this community. I wouldn't change it, really wouldn't. Because I feel like I was safe I was able to do what I wanted you know I had lots of friends. Um we, of course you do stuff that you weren't supposed to do. But to tell you one thing...I never knew anything about drugs. In our day it was like a drug is an aspirin or antibiotics. You know that's the drugs you took. Some people go "oh how do you not know that?" And I'm like I'm tellin ya, I didn't know what marijuana was or any kind of drug, I mean it just was *not here*. Unless it was hidden here and we just didn't know, but typically not here ya know.

So I just felt safe and happy... You can run around town and not worry about anything and you know you could leave in the morning and your mom would say "just be here by supper time!" Ok! You know? And that's kind of what I told my sons when they were growing. It was in the late '70s, '80s, when they were in high school and I felt like they were protected, they didn't worry about what they had to do or when they did it, so it was really a great time to grow up. We didn't worry about too much stuff, we didn't have all that on your mind.

**Casher:** Good! So the last question kind of goes back to the touristy stuff with the Rolling Green Park, but I was interested in like, was the population very busy or quiet when you were growing up?

**[30:00]**

**Youngman**: I mean I think more people were downtown, the kids and stuff were downtown 'cause that's where we would be for the little shops and Coney Island and Cole's and that kind of stuff. I mean it was bustling for us, there's a difference between bustly today and bustly back then you know. But yah, at times, it was sort of low key, too, you could do what you wanted and be happy.

**Casher**: Well I'm glad your experience here was so happy and thank you for talking to me about it all I appreciate it!

**Youngman**: Well I'm so happy I could do that! I really am, that was great! I can't think of anything else to tell you... Oh, I know one thing that we did! There were other places we had a lot of fun at. One thing that we did...you know Sunbury was our nemesis. But every weekend, people who had cars, we'd call it "we gotta go cruising." So when you go to Sunbury and you go up Market Street and you go up and around and around the park, and that was the thing. Sunbury kids, Selinsgrove kids, all these people in their cars, just riding around, looking around. And the guys that had really cool cars, they were blowing their horns, just acting.... That was a biggie! "Oh, we're going to Sunbury today!" So that was cool, and then there was Jimmy's Roller Skating rink over in Northumberland. And I didn't do much of the roller skating, but they had concerts there you know, Chubby Checker, the old time-y, rock and roll people, Gene Pitney, the ones we always listened too. They had their concerts over there. So we got to see some of the popular people who were doing their tunes there, so that was another one! That's it!

Casher: Well, thank you so much! [32:00]