

Oral Histories of Tompkins County

Archival Finding Aid

The History Center in Tompkins County
110 North Tioga St
Ithaca NY 14850
607-273-8284
www.thehistorycenter.net
archives@thehistorycenter.net

2006 - Interviewing Our Elders - Oral History Project

The *Interviewing Our Elders* Oral History Project includes five oral histories recorded in August 2006 at Longview Senior Living Community and the Greater Ithaca Activities Center (GIAC). The interviews include memories of growing up in Ithaca, and highlights of the early twentieth century like when the circus would visit, and the Great Flood of 1935.

This project was the result of a summer internship developed by Gabriela Cestero, a native of Trumansburg, who was a student at Wellesley College during this project. Cestero's internship with The History Center was funded through the Office of Work and Service Summer Internship program at Wellesley. Cestero worked in collaboration with The History Center's Director of Education Kelly Calnon Falck to match participants from GIAC's Pre-Teen Program with elders from GIAC's Adult Program. The recording project was inspired through Cestero's experience listening to National Public Radio's StoryCorps program which was founded in 2003.

These interviews were originally recorded on Mini-DV tapes in 2006. The tapes were converted to digital format in 2022 by Southtree digital processing, and accessioned into the Oral Histories of Tompkins County collection in 2023.

Related Materials: 'Inspired by Stories' article by Gabriella Cestero in the Fall 2006 ArtiFACTS newsletter of The History Center in Tompkins County.

Interviews with:

Ruth Davis (00:57:08)

Reflecting on her long, eventful life, Ruth Davis talks about her experiences growing up in Bridgeport, Connecticut, after World War I, and the ups and downs of studying, socializing, and dating as a young adult during the Depression and World War II. She recalls moving to Ithaca with her husband and two infant children in the immediate postwar years, and the struggles of living on a limited income on the Cornell campus while her husband studied for a Masters and Doctorate degree. Ruth later established a number of youth theater initiatives in Ithaca, for both Ithaca College and the local community, and she reflects on her experiences straddling the town-gown divide.

- *Interviewer:* Laura Williamson and Meredith Buchberg
- *Interview took place at:* Longview Senior Living Community, 1 Bella Vista Dr. Ithaca NY 14850

- *Recorded 8/22/2006*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2006-8-22_Davis-Ruth*
- *File Format(s): MP4 & MP3*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2006-8-22_Davis-Ruth_Transcript*

Nina Ebb (00:40:55)

Nina Ebb is a survivor of the Holocaust and the concentration camp Terezin. Ebb recounts a happy childhood in Czechoslovakia, the experience of being a Jewish child in a Nazi-occupied Bohemia, and the horrors of life in Terezin. For a large portion of this recording Ebb is reading from a written account of her life she had already prepared.

Trigger Warnings: discussion of Holocaust, experiences of antisemitism, discussion of sexual violence, experiences of hunger, childhood experiences of death

- *Interviewer: Laura Willemsen and Meredith Buchberg*
- *Interview took place at: Longview Senior Living Community, 1 Bella Vista Dr. Ithaca NY 14850*
- *Recorded 8/22/2006*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2006-8-22_Ebb-Nina*
- *File Format(s): MP4 & MP3*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2006-8-22_Ebb-Nina_Transcript*

Laurie Meeks (Carrington-Meeks) (00:21:55)

Laurie Carrington-Meeks is asked about her childhood growing up in the Southside community in Ithaca. She recalls the block parties on Plain Street that she would organize with her friends (with the support of Southside Community Center), the odd-jobs she would perform for neighbors for pocket-money, and the shared responsibility of parenting that helped define the community.

- *Interviewer: Jessica Winter*
- *Interview took place at: Greater Ithaca Activities Center, 301 W. Court St, Ithaca NY 14850*
- *Recorded 8/10/2006*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2006-8-10_Meeks-Laurie*
- *File Format(s): MP4 & MP3*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2006-8-10_Meeks-Laurie_Transcript*

Benjamin “Ben” Nichols (00:04:21)

In this brief interview, former Mayor of Ithaca (1990-1995), Benjamin Nichols, is asked about the jobs and chores he performed as a young person growing up in Staten Island.

- *Interviewer: Verista Henderson*
- *Interview took place at: Greater Ithaca Activities Center, 301 W. Court St, Ithaca NY 14850*
- *Recorded 8/10/2006*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2006-8-10_Nichols-Ben*
- *File Format(s): MP4 & MP3*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2006-8-10_Nichols-Ben_Transcript*

Helen Rogers (00:15:23)

Helen Rogers discusses growing up in Ithaca in the 1930-40s including West Side House, the fair, the circus, the flood of 1935, and being a teenager during World War II.

- *Interviewer:* Bria Swails
- *Interview took place at:* Greater Ithaca Activities Center, 301 W. Court St, Ithaca NY 14850
- *Recorded* 8/10/2006
- *Audio File:* OHTC_2006-8-10_Rogers-Helen
- *File Format(s):* MP4 & MP3
- *Transcript File:* OHTC_2006-8-10_Rogers-Helen_Transcript

CITATION FOR THE COLLECTION

“2006-Interviewing our Elders” Oral History Project, 5 oral histories recorded in 2006 by Tompkins County youth, The History Center in Tompkins County. Oral Histories of Tompkins County Audio Archives, Ithaca NY, 2023.

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