

Lancaster County Historical Society
Oral History Project

Interviewee: Joe Myers
Interviewer: Barry Rauhauser
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Transcriber: Philip L. Moyer
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Interviewer: Well I always like to start off with the basics, and that is to just get an idea more about you. Were you born in Lancaster County?

Joe: Yes.

I: And about when?

J: 1921

I: 1921? Yeah. And lived in Lancaster County your entire life?

J: All, except the service.

I: Were you in the army?

J: Airforce.

I: Airforce? Yeah, during the war?

J: Oh yeah.

I: During WWII?

J: Between August '42 to December '45.

I: And where were you briefed, stationed in?

J: I was in England.

I: In England?

J: Then I went to Germany a little a bit, and came back to England again.

I: That's a whole nother interview I can talk to you about that. One of the things we're looking at doing is collecting histories, oral histories of that [term]. And always a big stories to tell. We've got a lot of people now who are starting to write down some of the

memories and get together with other folk, and always need to get some of those stories too.

J: Well I have two huge albums at home, but...

I: oh yeah?

J: Pictures and you know, there's scraps and things like that.

I: Do you still keep in touch with any of the people who were there?

J: They're passing away, yeah. We have, I belong to the 352 fire group association. Now I was in the same base as them, but I was what they called a service squadron, and we did the major overhauls. But anyhow that's [wrong] event. So I get in touch with a couple of people in there on occasion. But I see in the last few years a couple few more have passed away. And I certainly don't know up to...

I: Yeah. I think that the rate right now, I think they said that a couple years ago they were losing about 1500 veterans a day. That's pretty bad; it's just so many, so many men served in the [fourth lieutenant] its just coming to that time, when, they start collecting now for the Veteran's Oral History project.

J: I seen on TV some of that.

I: yeah, they starting to collect oral stories a little bit more. And its strange, everybody, there are some stories that are real specific, people who are POW's, or Battle of the Bulge, and then you've got a whole 'nother story here at home, and then a whole 'nother story of people who are stationed here in the states. A whole lot of stories , and its, I find it's a lot like the story of baseball too. Where there's a story that's written about it, but then there's this whole other story that nobody wrote about. And that's when it gets real important. So when did you first start playing baseball?

J: Well I actually played mostly softball, very little baseball. I guess, probably in junior high school and right out of high school. I played in what we used to call the old Buchanan Park League. There may have been six or eight teams in that league. And then of course we also went to a barnstorm. We played like around Paradise and Manheim. We played some places [good]. The cows just went [something] in. Then of course, right before the war, I , couple of people from our church, played with our church team and in our church league. Of course they went into the service and came back and I went right back into our church league again. Then I played until, let me think, I would say 1953.

I: So about, almost 1935 to 1953. Somewhere like that?

J: Somewhere, yeah that's pretty good.

I: Where did you go to high school?

J: McCaskey.

I: McCaskey. Did they have teams?

J: No, they had no hardball teams at that time. So unless you played with the legion league, you didn't play. And it was pretty hard to break in there at times. But [and I] had sort of [clips] if wanted to play. So most of the guys I played, we all played softball. We had a pretty good team, even went and played a few championships.

I: Now, was it the same in softball? Could just anybody sign up? Or was it sort of, you had tryouts.

J: Well you had to go to the church there. Now if you didn't really join, and they had to attend church two Sundays.

I: That's the way they got people to go to church.

J: But I was there anyway. And I [signed a crash] was no problem for me. Again I [] But they did get maybe a half dozen guys to come down and play ball. But they also went there to church and stayed there.

I: Great. Did they, which church was it?

J: That was, Faith Reformed at that time. Now its called Faith Evangelical Reformed, and its out on the Wabank Road.

I: Does it still have a softball team, do you know?

J: I'm sure they don't. I don't think there's such a thing as city church leagues anymore. The county has some. I don't know what happened though, they just didn't want to play anymore. But boy, we used to look forward to it. I could hardly wait to get out of the service to go back home and play ball.

I: When you had to go to church there, but did you also have to try out for the team? Or was it just anybody allowed on the team?

J: Well it was essentially a tryout, I mean you went out to play. I guess if you didn't, I was good enough, so there was no problem. We had some guys that stayed around a bit, and they didn't play much, and they just sort of took the hint.

I: Was it sort of a wide group of ages that played for the team?

J: Yeah there were some older guys, when I say older, at that time I was in my 20's, and my early 30's. There might have a couple around in their 40's, I don't think any older than that, at least not on our team.

I: Did you guys practice a lot?

J: Oh yeah, we practiced more than a lot of guys did. Like right now, the snows off the ground, we could hardly wait. It paid off, like I said, we played quite a few championships.

I: Did the church supply equipment, and things like that, and take care of the fields? Or was that sort of your responsibility?

J: Half and half. Now, taking care of the fields, sometimes I know we went down already when we knew we were going to have a big game that night, what we called a big game, you know, an important game. We'd go down and take lawnmowers down to Edward Hand there, and also, they'd play ball at Edward Hand, and over next to it, what is it, George Washington field, they'd play softball at this end, and hard ball at this end. We'd take our lawnmowers down, we'd mow the grass. Sometimes it would rain, we'd go down there on the Lincoln Highway someplace, and get sawdust or chipping [salt], hey we wanted to play! But as far as the ball got, I think sometimes we had a chip on our shoulder, I mean, every now and then we'd have a collection at church, and we had a couple of guys that were pretty good about aiding and supporting us, bought a couple of uniforms you know one time.

I: Who organized the games? I mean who came up with the schedule? Was it all done through the...

J: The YMCA church league. I don't know who exactly made the schedule. But I remember we had the schedule ahead of time, who we were going to play all year long.

I: And how many teams were there?

J: Oh yeah, two divisions, East and West. So I'd say maybe about twelve. Maybe a bit more sometimes. But there were always couple teams down on the bottom there, some of them eventually dropped out, they just couldn't get enough people out to play.

I: Were there any ringers, any teams that just always won every year?

J: Well we did a lot. I wouldn't call it, we didn't have any ringers. Although a couple times when we got into playoffs, I've heard of [Bill Connolly] he was a big, he was always a big name in softball in Lancaster. He was a good pitcher too. He died several years ago, well more than several years now. He had a lot to do with getting teams from Lancaster into the state tournaments, like Milton, up near Coatesville we played there. But what he would do, like he was always saw us, we were usually one of the top or around there. So he'd say you guys want to get in the tournament, yeah. So sometimes we

could pick up an extra pitcher or something to get in that tournament. And also when we used to have a tournament like that, to eliminate teams, you know, we had recreation league and the Lancaster league, I don't think there were anybody else. There may have been six, eight teams in that tournament. We'd play sometimes maybe two, three games on a Sunday, Saturday or Sunday. The one team, they put in a guy from Reading, we called him Boom Boom Beck. And he was supposed to be a hotshot with the [Wee Beanie], and I guess other teams had guys, some guys we saw there, that we didn't know where they came from. All of our guys were from Lancaster, but we did get maybe a guy from another church team or something. Usually try to get extra pitchers. 'Cause whether you played those days, you had a pitcher, he wanted to pitch everyday. He didn't want anyone to take, but you got in the playoffs you had to have someone. So we picked up, Donnie [Harskin] played with us one time. He never played with us in the church league, but he played with another team. But we had him, and we pitching most the time, Red McLain. He just died a couple of years ago too. He was a good pitcher. He didn't have any fancy windups, but he did have excellent fielding behind him. We had all good fielding.

I: Did the softball players keep track of their statistics, like baseball players did too.

J: Oh yeah, oh I did. I can still [front] the homers You don't even have to argue with that, the hitter was either there or he missed.

I: And what were some of your statistics over the years?

J: Well I know one year, particularly, '48 I think, I batted .417 or something like that. That was my best year. I'd say, normally I batted around at least over .300, except towards the end when my eyes started going bad, I was wondering why I couldn't see the ball anymore. And I did drop down under .300. And then eventually I did quit I was getting too old.

I: So most guys dropped sort of dropped out when they hit 40 or so?

J: Yeah, and even before that. I'd say then a lot of them got married, too, you know, and I guess their wives didn't want them to play or whatever. And of course even after I got married I played with them. Well my wife would come down and watch them.

I: Do you remember were there lots of people who came and watched the game or?

J: Depends on if there's a big game, like in our league the Church of Christ and us, and a couple of other teams had a following. But then there's always a group of people that just like to come down. Like when you're a junior, just sit and watch the game.

I: Was there any sort of conflict since the game was on Sunday and church was on Sunday?

J: Well, we didn't play league games on Sunday?

I: No league games on Sunday?

J: No we would make, play, we used to go to up to Columbia and play. We would play, what are they called? The Shawnee something. And we went around the county you know. We didn't play Saturday either. The church league, in fact, there might been a day or so off in the church league. I think we played Tuesday and Friday something like that. I think it played Tuesdays and Fridays, something like that. We, I have an old schedule somewhere at home. I got to get up in the attic, soon as the weather gets better. I don't have heat up there. Of course I got my [allergies] I got to be careful, and on the steps I gotta climb up the ladder.

I: Tell me about some the championship games that you can remember then; that your team played in.

J: Well, there's one game, it wasn't the championship game, but was probably the highlight of my career. We were tied for first place with another team going into it. I was so happy [with the season]. I think we might of have both been even; lost one or were undefeated. And they had their best pitcher in, and we nailed him for 12 runs in the first inning. Had a grand slam in the first inning and I had a single, five runs in the first inning. [I'm normally not a home run hitter or anything] But [driving] the line drive, and retreating, I was pretty fast; I didn't have this [knocks on stomach and laughs]. And we also had eight [jobs], well they beat us that one year. I don't know what happened. We just didn't hit enough. Who we played, was a long time ago. We used to play down at Edward Hand High School. Do you remember Edward Hand High School?

I: uh huh, yes.

J: We used to play down right off of Anne Street there, at the bottom of the hill there was a diamond that you hit up towards Juniata Street. There also was a diamond down at that end, which you hit up, left field was up toward Anne Street this way. And then there was a diamond down in that corner, but you didn't use too much, every once in a while. Then also on the other side of Edward Hand was George Washington. And we hit there, we'd hit up towards where the hardball game was. So, every now and then the outfielders were crossing each other!

I: Was there any sort of competition between, well not competition, but how did softball players feel about the hardball players, and vice versa? Did they get along, or was it two completely different things?

J: Eh, we just didn't, I think they sort of looked down on the softball players a little bit; but nothing that they really made any issue on. But a couple, I know they, would try to get a couple of us to play hardball, but, I did play one game when they played against the Rangers. It was more of a practice game for them. We picked up a guy from the church league, mostly from our team. And that was actually the first time that I had ever hit at a hard ball in a game. And we played them some morning down there, at George Washington, I think. I had a triple and a single, so I ended up with a lifetime batting

average of .667. I could have, they put me [in relief], and the first pitch I nailed for a triple, out in left center field, I thought I'd never stop running the bases were so long. Wow! But then that was it, and then they said why don't you guys come out? But we were playing, and we were going for a championship too.

I: You couldn't do both.

J: No. Then you went into the service. I played softball in the service. We had a hardball team and a softball team. But I didn't go out for the hardball team, I didn't play much. Maybe in softball. We had a pretty fair team. Actually the team that beat us eventually went down into London; they had, we stayed in one of their stadiums there and they played us for the championship.

I: So you were playing in England?

J: One year.

I: And it was just American teams you were playing against?

J: Oh yeah, just you know, [just few teams] maybe another Air Force teams. We were called the Air Force Comets when we played. We had a pitcher, he pitched, and I saw it, an exhibition for the World's Fair in 1939 in New York. He was a pitcher in that, and he was good. But he wasn't doing nothing in the championship.

I: So what happened, when, what year did you come back?

J: '45, December '45. Boy as soon as March came down I was ready to play.

I: Were there still a lot of players on the team, you know a lot of guys who left?

J: We lost one or two in the service. We had a little problem. Before the war started, right when the war first started, we started losing players even then you know? We were getting a little short of players, and then, there's another church there on, called St. Stephen's Lutheran, on Duke and Church. They had [], so the church, they let us, the two teams join, Faith and St. Stephen's. We did pretty well we didn't win a championship or anything like that. But when we came back, we thought we could do the same thing. But when we came back, most of the guys were back too, so they wanted to play, and so there was a big hassle there. Well they said, well you can't do it. So a couple of us we decided we were still playing with Faith, we'd go with St. Stephen's. So we played with them that one year, and we won. But then I had, it didn't feel right, playing for the other team. But then I had to take a year off, you couldn't play you know change around like that.

I: So you had to, if you changed between one team from another team, you had to wait a whole year?

J: Right. I played practice games when they played. But I couldn't play with them. So then next year, [it was '48], that's when we all got together again. Oh there was heated rivalry there. Not between the players, but the fans. Some people like you when you weren't playing against their team. I really, that's one thing I really miss, is playing ball.

I: What do you miss most about it?

J: Oh just the camaraderie and the playing. I enjoy the game. Like I go down, I love to field as much as just hit. I'd go down real early and chase drive balls.

I: Do you still talk to any of the other people that were on your team?

J: Once in a while, I had a buddy I got to call him again. He's had some problems with health too. I told him we'd go out right after the holidays but the weather ain't, not too good. So I'll get together with him. I'll send out, some of the other guys, well [some of them have] died. Some of course have moved out, lost track them, well after the season, moved on to other places. It was a lot of fun.

I: And what made you choose softball instead of hardball in the first place?

J: Well, when I was young, I lived right up on Common Field, its called [Pond Field] in those days, and I went down there to play. And of course they didn't play hardball there, they just played softball. And of course too, I was quite young and even when you start playing in the league you were probably in high school. But I got started with softball, and the guys I knew well, we all played softball, and I don't know why a certain I don't know what you want to call it, ended up playing hardball. Some guys did cross over, ever now and then. Dick Reese [].

I: I don't know if I met him.

G. Well he died. But he was a good hardball player, and a good softball player. But I don't think he crossed over during the season. He played more hardball. Then when I guess he started after I was [], then he played softball. See Lancaster back in those days, had some real good softball teams and some good softball players. We used to have a city [carrying] league in softball. Now a couple of leagues I remember, up on the hill, its Cabbage Hill, we talked about it, they had good teams up there. They were called [Der-Edmund] one time, some at home I have a lot of their names I have written down. They were a good team; Ed Stumpf had a good team. There were about three very good teams there, and the rest were okay. And between those three they always, practically won most of the time. I used to always root for Ed Stumpf's because they were out on Prince Street, that's down below me. I would really, in fact in four or five years ago maybe more, I wrote a little article in the Lancaster, you know Sunday News, on a story about the Pond Field. I wrote one about the Pond Field. At those times in the evenings, now this is before I even began to start playing, they'd have big crowds. I mean there were big crowds down there to see those softball games. Seriously, Depression. People didn't have money to do anything else. So every now and then they'd bring a team in from

somewhere, and they had uniforms. Oh, we thought that was great they had uniforms. Down there they must be worth like t-shirts.

I: You guys didn't have uniforms even in the church league or anything?

J: Oh they were, not when we first started out. But I say we bought some of our own too. I was trying to find one at home. I got a root; I just moved things around there in the third bedroom a couple of months ago. I want to get that cleaned; I know it's in there.

I: Did you notice a difference when you were playing teams outside of the area? Was there much rivalry between, especially when you had championship games?

J: [Yeah yeah, we won the [dispute]; it was down to two teams in this area]. If we didn't win or they didn't win, we sort of lose. So it was our softball team was superior to theirs. We won as many as we lost.

I: Any particular players you remember?

J: Well, I can go back. Red McClain, Bud Litner, and George Ruth played with us. Dick Rowe, he became, played with Maples, good team. He was a good catcher, very good catcher. And then sort of, the guys that played Dutch Buelheyson, he was either at Hamilton Watch or Armstrong. Jim Sutter. A while back I was going to write an archive, just wrote a lot of these names down. I'll see if I can find that. When you get 82 you start losing it, forgetting a little bit.

I: Now what position did you play?

J: When I was still moving around, 'cause I played in the outfield, I played left field. When I first started I used to have to play short center field. Of course they had ten players, see. You'd play right. If he was a right handed batter you'd take right back at short stop a little bit--left handed batter, back at second base. So I played that. Cause I was always small and pretty fast. But then later on I moved in to third base, and then I guess ended up at second base.

I: You like outfield the best?

J: I like outfield. I like chasing pop balls. I always had a good arm. I liked when you'd surprise them, they'd slow down and find the catcher holding a ball waiting for them. They used to get me, when I played that short center field, if I saw a guy hit one through the infield there, see my guy as soon they hit the ball, they'd think they'd slow down a little bit, and I'd hurry and pick up [and nail 'em] at first base. I got a couple in my life. They called me Showboat Nothing. That's the game, you run them all out.

I: What field do you think you probably enjoyed playing at the most?

J: I believe I like the one down at East Junior even though it was a rough infield. I liked that one where we went up toward Juniata Street. Plus, the gym was down there, which was in foul territory, and I was pretty notorious pull hitter, a couple of us were. And we'd hit a lot of softballs up on the roof, of the gym. And we didn't have a lot of softballs, we didn't have much money. So every now and then some kid would shimmy up the pipe and get the softballs down for us, so we could quick finish the game. [You wouldn't pick 'em out]. I find the same when I play golf, I pull the ball. And then we stopped [in the summer, before the service]. The church league always had a festival, and had it down at Steven's Trade somewhere. [And I'm there, whip] Some of the players, we had to go out and operation of a stand at the wheels. And the girls would come around and we would let them cheat a little. Give them a bucket of candy.

I: When did the church league start to end?

J: Let me see. At least 10 or 15 years ago, anyway. Cause I used to check to see if they're playing anymore. But I do see where the South [inters] something like that, you know out in [] county. I don't think that there are any city teams in there. We used to play them too, just exhibition games. Conestoga down there, and up above a Manheim, basic good players. On a whole, they didn't, weren't a good team.

I: How did you guys get to all the games?

J: Well, in town we always walked, usually. Well back in the service I used to drive down to East Juniata. But, before we always walked down. I had a pitcher that lived up on High Street. He'd come down and pick me up, and we'd walk all the way to East Juniata. Now if we played out of town course, ride, someone always had a car. Or someone from church would take us. We played in New Holland, a ballpark out there; somewhere out over the rail road tracks. We played down across from Coatesville High School, [] Park. We played our playoff games; there were teams [from across the counties]. And then we also played in tournaments in the Chef Boyardee Field up in Milton near Williamsport.

I: Pretty far away.

J: We left early morning. Four o'clock. In fact one time, it wasn't even late yet, they're like "hey, you guys are due for a game". We had to run. At that park, they played two games, and two teams were eliminated. They used to fields. One was out on an island. So we had to hurry out on that island, and we got beat in a close game. But we played a lot of them, in fact we still weren't even limbered up yet. Maybe the other team wasn't either. And we played under the lights when we played at Chef Boyardee. But we usually we were in the semi finals of it. I think after I left one year, the team did win up there I think. I think I did tell you this. A friend of mine he used to be strictly baseball. Barry Giberson, you might have, in fact he had something in the newspaper a couple of months back. Some picture of a team. And he was showing me, he'll come to my house every now and then, we exchange post cards and things like that, about baseball and all kinds of ball fields. So he put on a whole stack of old pictures he had of ball teams. Now

I've been trying to get him, but he's a truck driver and so it's hard to catch a hold of him. But I was going to say, if you were interested, I can talk to him and see if maybe he can put some up.

I: Yeah, I'd love to see them, even if we don't, what would be great is, rather than putting his up there, what we could do is maybe scan into the computer and make copies of them that we could put up. That way he wouldn't have to leave them here or anything like that. Because, that's one thing it's kind of like the baseball. Almost everyone's got two or three baseballs that they've just sort of collected. Either they mean something because of famous people that used them. And I think it's the same way with baseball photographs. A lot of people remember the teams they either played for or other teams that they played against. They may only know one or two faces in the crowd, but quite a lot of teams out there.

J: Well this guy, these pictures, he knew most of them. They were mostly all hardball. They were Gibersons. Now if you were around here, that was a pretty famous name. See my grandfather was a Giberson. That's how I got in touch with this guy. He learned to call somebody, a family of Giberson, and asked me, was your mother a Giberson. And I said yes. So we start talking about that, then we get into baseball. But I haven't seen in a while. He lives down in Holtwood. But I do have his number. So if you're interested in what he has here, I'll give him a buzz.

I: I see photos every now and then in Jack Brubaker's column and things like that. It's always fun to see them, because there's always a few people that recognize the faces you know that are pretty old.

J: Well, you know those "Lancaster as it was?" I got, now if it's not interesting I don't cut it out. But pictures of people or places I haven't seen, old pictures. I have almost three albums. There's another friend of mine, he was with me the other day. He played ball too, he played hardball, I think up around in Salunga. So I'm sure he might have some, I'm sure he'd be willing to share too.

I: Sure would love to; would love to hear from him. It's always great, definitely add to what we're doing here.

J: Another thing that I might have, that might be of interest. I gotta check what I have. I used to always save, if I could, the programs of ball games I went to. Now I have some from the old [Yanks and Roses], and I have a little booklet, I got out there one time, the history of the interstate league.

I: Great, I haven't seen that one yet.

J: Of course, I have a whole lot of baseball cards. I'm so glad my mother didn't let my dad get a hold of any. She saved them for me. I didn't save many after the war. [It seemed then I stopped.] (interview pauses)

I: [you were about to tell us] about the Red Roses game.

J: Well, I liked the long ball hitters. I was a big [Philadelphia] A's fan. You know for a while the [Philadelphia] A's their farm, [they were their] farm team. Stevenberg, a big guy, he could hit the ball a mile. One time, I swear it was going to end up on the Manheim Pike. Sometimes they had good teams, sometimes bad teams. I'm trying to think when I sort of broke off. After I got married I think. But, I used to watch them, of course in the beginning, it was the Interstate League. Then you went, I think it's called the Eastern League or something like that. I saw some of those. I used to like to, when they played an exhibition game, against, the A's would come in or the Phillies. One year they actually beat the A's. It was the Manheim, one-zip, one-nothing. Shut out. I don't think they were trying that hard, but I don't think they wanted to be shut out.

I: No one wants to be shut out.

J: I saved some of those photos. I gotta look, see I got so many, boxes of them. I got to get something, label some of that. Old programs. I can put "ball", "baseball".

I: Actually, I bought two of them recently for the collectors here from the old Red Roses. I think these are '40, I don't know the year years, I think it's actually '54 or '55, something like that, more recently. And whoever was looking at it, was keeping the score; so it was all written down.

J: I used to keep score. Had my own way though. 'Cause I used to have a baseball game played.

I: Oh you played the APBA or whatever that was called.

J: I played that already too. [and this one year] my mother got for my brother for Christmas, and he wasn't interested in sports, it was football and baseball. So I took it over. And, it wasn't, he just rolling these things. I can even remember today what they meant. A 19th batting average, is everything. The whole season for the A's or somebody. And mother would say you're going to go crazy playing game.

I: That's one of the parts of the exhibition we might include. I guess there's a gentleman here in Lancaster that invented a game like that, that uses dice. I think its called American Professional Baseball, it's a dice game.

J: APBA? Oh yeah that's what it is. They had basketball and football too.

I: Yeah, I know, I saw one of them online, the other day, that you can buy them.

J: My nieces and nephews both of them are []. They might yet want them. They play games, and they play guys down in New Jersey and places. Now I never did that. But he took my place, the younger one. He's always bringing his football or baseball game. It took longer the way I played. You can play a game in about ten minutes. But, it's fun.

I: Do you remember any sort of big games that the Red Roses played at all? Any winning seasons?

J: Hmmm, they had some winning teams there. But I remember mostly when they had the A's. See a lot of times, they weren't the A's, they played the A's like Wilmington, Blue Rock for the A's team. And I'd go out, and half route for them. Elmer Balough played for them and a couple of other guys. I did see quite a few of them. I bet if I looked at Elmer's old photos then I'd remember some names. I mean they had some exciting games. They used to get a pretty big crowd out there.

I: What do you remember most about the field, and stadium and all that stuff?

J: Well the big thing about the field was, that in a game, we started at seven, when the sun went down, sometimes you had to hold off the game for about ten minutes.

I: Sunset came down.

J: Yeah, the batter couldn't see, and neither could you. Yeah, that's one thing.

I: Yeah, I heard it's reversed from most teams. Most teams face east, and that's where the word southpaw comes from. Because a left handed pitcher, his throwing arm would be south and that would be viewed, face the opposite direction. So a southpaw is really a right handed pitcher.

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J: See I guess, that field was here before the [Rose plate]. [So, probably gaze at me now], but who gives a hoot; it's nice having a place to play. But then, it wasn't always, but every now and then, it was extra brighter. Maybe even a certain time of year, and they stop and they'd have me sit and wait there, and start having [the]. I miss during the war years, when the lights went out and they stole second base.

I: Yeah I've heard that story too. I have no idea if that's true.

J: yeah, its true.

I: I haven't found the person who stole it yet, so...

J: Well that one year, they, Elton Fox played second base for them. And then there was a guy who came down from southern Lancaster County, and Buster McCrab with them for awhile. Now he did grow up with in A's, but the A's were pretty lousy at that [time]. So almost everybody got to throw the ball. I guess they won some games. Although I followed them, I didn't follow specifically as much as I did, the big A's. See I was a die hard, every year, they might have been 20 or 40 games out last year, and this year we're going to do it. Well, you'd go down to spring training and oh boy we're going to do it.

I: Did you ever get to see any of the A's games, besides the ones that were played here?

J: Oh yeah, I used to go down maybe half a dozen times a year.

I: Wow, great.

J: You see, you'd go down, and unless they were having a hot team, you'd always get a good seat. Well, I used to call in; I would always go down opening day. I called in and get a seat. First time I met a big leaguer, first time back from the service. Who did they play? They played the New York Giants. And I got seats right along the first base line, back at the dug out which sounds good. Except, you were uphill, and unless you could see past his head, I said no way. So I used to try to get seats in the upper deck, second deck, right around the first or third base line. First row. Look right down.

I: Opening day.

J: I memorized a verse going into high school. My mother, I said, it's almost like going to church, hallowed ground. All those, Babe Ruth, and [] Fox. See the first game I saw, I was in first or second grade. And my dad was going down to Philly, to another guy, to buy a radio. Someone called, and my granddad, my granddad was a big A's fan. My dad didn't care much.

I: Oh so even your grandfather was a big A's fan too.

J: Oh he's the one who got me started on baseball. He was a big A's fan. So we drove down there, parked the car. At that time you could park on the sidewalk, and if you paid they'd watch it for you. Now it was a double header, the A's played the Cleveland Indians, and I don't remember the score. For a long time I had the program. It might be still up in the attic still somewhere. The A's won a double header.

I: That would have been like 19...

J: 27 or 26. That's when the A's had that great team. They won the World Series in 28. They had Altimus, certain things rang a bell. In a double header they had three home runs, you had to get two in one header. Billy Fox, Metsy Grove, and boy, I saw those guys. I thought oh. But yea, even later years when I'd go down in there, you'd think so much has gone on here. I thought I don't feel that way about baseball anymore. Too much money. [] That tees me off. Maybe you're a Yankee fan? I don't know.

I: No, actually, I don't know if, I enjoy watching the Yankees play. But I think this year, a lot of people, because of the money they sink into the team, expected them, like a given they would win the World Series. So this year I was almost glad to see that someone else would. You know, because it really dos become a lot about money in the end. And its fun to see teams that don't spend as much do well. Although, all of them really do spend an enormous amount.

J: oh yeah, when I looked when the [] when they won the pennant, the world series a couple years back. Now you can't blame a guy for getting the most money he can. But yet if you let that ruin the whole thing, then...

I: You're always going to have the same of boom and bust.

J: I was getting excited, you have a good player who's going to leave.

I: You see, just looking at the history of things, York's minor league team and the history of Lancaster's minor league, the Red Roses. It seems to me a lot of that same story, a lot of this that boom and bust. Where you build up the finances of the team, you have this great team, you win, but now all of a sudden every player knows that they're worth more, so they begin to branch out and go other places. The next year, they start to fade out.

J: They're forgetting, I mean, I understand they want to get the most money they can. What are they going to do? Sell potato chips or something. But now, when you have a team, where a bunch of guys are good, and then all of a sudden, this team says, well we'll take them. Now all those fans that were looking forward to that team, like the Phillies right now, I think they have a legitimate chance of going all the way. If a couple things pan out for them. But say they do, and next year they get rid of about three of them. Now the guys going to get more money, sure, but how about the poor fans that have been routing for the team all through the low years. I think they should be considered too. I never was in favor of that free agent thing when they first started. It got all started when the Phillies traded Dick Allen to the Cardinals for Kurt Rudd. Now Kurt Rudd was a good ball player, although Dick Allen was more of a power hitter, he was more controversial. But Rudd decided he didn't want to play for the "Phillies". So he quit. You're a pain. Now Dick Allen was out in St. Louis, he had a couple of good years out there. I think they might have given the Phillies, Mark Inez, but he was no Kurt Rudd. I can see what's going to happen, exactly what happened.

I: Is that one of the things that you would think has changed baseball the most?

J: I would think say, yep, uh hmmm. I don't know what the answer would be. I guess the fans are still rabid as before. But, I mean, I lived and died baseball. I used to cry when they'd lose.

I: Do you follow any team now like that now, that heartedly?

J: No, no I don't. Even last year I mean the Phillies were in there a while. But I was just expecting them to do something like they did last. But no, like I say, this [hooper] this guy, will he be here next year?

I: Yeah, he took that much, and had the guys all leave anyhow.

J: [Hooper]'s got Nolan. He was good. I agree with his theory, the Phillies weren't spending any money. But by the same token now, what was that guy that played third base?

I: Are you planning on seeing any of the minor league teams play when they're here?

J: I'm going to have to, I'll have to wait. I like to route for a team, that, where there's a good chance that some of those players are going to end up in the big league. I think that's very rare, you're going to have guys that can't quite make it and guys that are so old that they, it might be interesting. It's almost like watching college baseball or something like that. I mean, it's alright, when you have someone going to the school there, or you're an alumnus. But, I don't [see that] when it comes to baseball.

I: Well I think that's good. We covered a lot of stuff in a short amount of time. I think that's great. That definitely helped us out. I was really curious about softball, just to sort of know some of the main differences, that [came along] were there was any conflict. It seems that we don't have that. I think the history of baseball in Lancaster is really isn't written about, but the history of softball in Lancaster no one's written about because there was no. It seems to me a sport that still a lot of people play. It's different type of leagues and things now. They're not necessarily church leagues or anything like that. But there are still definitely softball leagues floating around. As far as the history of it, since there are no pro teams or maybe there's just no pro teams around here, no one really writes about them.

J: The closest thing around here. I played about 16 teams. They say its pretty good baseball. It's not the big league or anything. He goes to see some of the games. We went up to Middleton to play some of the games. I think the pitchers are all so tired. I think the game it was something like 27 to 2. He wasn't a big guy.

I: What was the last game you saw?

J: Hardball?

I: or softball?

J: Not on TV, one that you actually were at.

I: Oh, well, I go out to see a team, a senior citizens play. They play back in Roherstown. Manheim has a team, I saw them play. I took some pictures of them. A few pitches. But still wooden ones, a slow pitch. The first's not too hard. The other pitcher, he dropped over dead on the mound. Yeah, right there! He also helped to coach the Hempfield Girl's team. Every now and then, he tells me about it. Sometimes I remember, sometimes I forget, but I go to see them every now and again. But that, there aren't two good players on the team. It's a sport, girls softball.

I: When you were you playing was it girls and boys on the same team?

J: Oh no...

I: They had girl's teams in the 20's?

J: Oh yeah. By the end of the forties, like I said, I have some pictures I cut out of that Northern Lights. They were always one of the top teams. They had to [switch] girls for good. But they weren't as good a pitcher as these girls now. I believe I could hit that. Boy they really fly that ball in there. A guy played with us, his sister played with us. The Lancaster Rockets. They were pretty good. I guess they were both pretty much characters. He hit one over her head, and she was a little husky. As she was rounding second he yelled, "shake that fat ass." She swore at him. We used their pitcher and they used our pitchers. But even so we fielded. But actually what they say, most girls they can't run and field like men do. You'll find one once in a while, but not many. They just run differently.

I: Yeah I've seen some of them hit, and I don't there's anyway I could hit some of those. They're so fast.

J: The friend I'm talking about, he's an umpire. Well every year they have a seminar, Texas Arizona, Florida, different places. He goes there. It's almost a week. And see, when he goes there, what they do a lot is discuss the changes in rules and everything else. A lot of the girls, they're the ones on TV, he knows a lot of them. He talks to them. They have a good time, more drinking than anything else. Some of them are very drunk. He could [wrestle] with any of them. But I remember the girl's team, I can't remember their names. Couple of photographs are in the Lancaster { } lot of their names I forget, but Ed remembers. I'll talk to my buddy, Barry, see if he has anything. Pictures or whatever.

I: Yeah yeah.

End of interview 03/17/06