

# PLAY



DP: What else did you do for fun when you were growing up? What'd you do in the winter?

SB: Oh, we used to go skiing over at the old country club. We made the skis out of barrel staves. We used to take an old leather belt and cut it in lengths and use that as a foot holder strap. We had more fun with homemade skis than bought skis.



DB: ... I wasn't too old. But there was an older girl in the neighborhood—was visiting and she decided she wanted to give me a birthday party. And they made it a surprise birthday party. So my grandmother took me to Paterson. Now, In my early days, there weren't things—stores around like today. So you did all—most of your big shopping in Paterson. And because my grandfather worked for the Erie Railroad, my grandmother had a pass. So that was her recreation—was to get dressed in the afternoon, walk out to the railroad station, take me along. And we'd go to Paterson and walk downtown, maybe just look at the stores and come back home again. Well, anyhow, she took me this one morning. And when I came back they had a surprise party all ready for me. Me, being the little shy thing that I was, was not interested in their party particularly, because they had given me what they call the jacks, you know where you throw up the sticks and you pick up—pick up sticks. I guess that was the name of it. And I just wanted to play with—play with those. That's the kind of a shy person I was.



1994

DW: Another nice spot for swimming was the crystal clear Hohokus Brook, which was home to several varieties of fish. Not anymore. [laughter] On the corner of Grove Street and Paramus Road Blauvelt's Pond attracted swimmers from quite an area. A large historic gristmill operated on its banks and here my mother would purchase freshly ground grain flour for the delicious grain pudding she made. The noisy clackety-clack of the mill's machinery always frightened us. [chuckles] The old Zabriskie lumber mill on South Van Dien Avenue, where Van Dyke's Nursing Home is now situated, was a busy spot both winter and summer. Neighborhood children with their little express wagons often went there to pick up free bits of wood for toys or school projects. In winter there were three favorite places for sledding, Chapman's Hill on West Ridgewood Avenue, the long hill on the old Ridgewood Country Club property and Boyd's Hill, opposite the new high school on Ridgewood Avenue, for many years known as Mastin's Hill. Old Mr. Boyd would permit us to sleigh ride down the hill. He kept a flock of huge geese [chuckles] and sometimes threatened to let them out if the—if some of us didn't behave.



1994

DP: ... Okay, now. What kind of games did you play? How'd you—how'd you spend for after-school hours? Let's put it that way.

MC: Well, I played tennis—

DP: Yeah.

MC: —among other things, because of course the tennis courts were right down there. And I have pictures of me about the same size as the tennis racket I was using.

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DP: Did you ever play with dolls? Paper dolls?

MC: Oh, yes. I certainly did play with paper dolls. I'd sort of forgotten about that. I had a great aunt who visited us a lot, would stay for long periods. And she was very good at the paper dolls and I enjoyed that very much. And I also— ... And I had dolls. They were—all the boy dolls were Gordon and all the girl dolls were Nancy.

DP: Oh. [chuckles]

MC: That is funny. ... What—well, we did the simple sort of things, like we rolled hoops. We played a lot of baseball in the lots. And this was—it was strange, the fact that there seemed to be so many more boys around than girls. Well, there were more—I was the only girl in my family and, also, all of the activities seemed to be playing ball. And so I was frequently the only little girl who was involved in this.

DP: Did you ever play marbles or jacks?

MC: Oh, we did indeed. We played marbles enthusiastically on my grandmother's oriental rugs, because the designs— ... lent themselves [chuckles] to all sorts of games. Yes, we played jacks. We played hopscotch like mad, you know. We roller-skated. Of course a lot of the roads—when I say roller-skating, it was sort of hard because the roads were not blacktopped. And Morningside Road was a dirt road and we had rural free delivery in a buggy.

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MC: Well, on Glenwood Road right where it takes the turn, three or four houses west of Hillcrest, there was—a large part of the year there was a little pond there. And always, there was a swamp and we used to catch frogs there.

DP: Was it good enough for ice-skating or wasn't there enough clearness?

MC: No, we ice skated at Cole's Pond .... Oh, well, a lot of our recreational life centered around Cole's Pond.

DP: And where was that?

MC: It's where the Sewer Authority has its plant now, just—just adjacent to where the Upper Ridgewood Tennis Club is located now. And it was a pond and the stream, which came from the west, I guess, was nice and clean and there was a little place called Little Button. Don't ask me why. That was upstream from Cole's Pond. And mostly on a Sunday, the fathers would take some of the kids down and the little kids went to Little Button and the bigger kids went to Cole's Pond and you went swimming there. And also, there was fine skating on Cole's Pond. We played ice hockey and that was—see, nobody—if you didn't live in Upper Ridgewood you wouldn't have paid any attention to that.