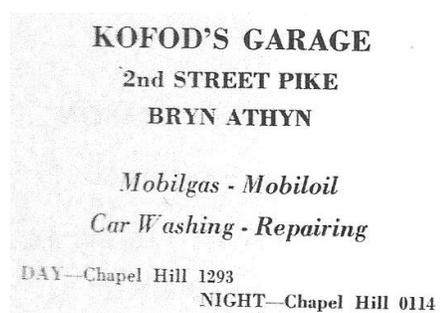


Margaret (Peggy) Charles Norbeck
1922 - 2011

Family History

My father, Aaron Charles, was born and raised in Germantown. I don't know whether he boarded somewhere or traveled back and forth. Somehow he and my mother met. My mother and father were married in 1915. My grandparents (mother's parents), the Kofod's, lived in Huntingdon Valley. My uncle, Otto Kofod, had the garage down at the bottom of the hill (Pike), but then he took over the garage at the top of the hill where Buck Road comes into the Pike.

I spent lots of summers with my grandparents and uncle. The Kofod's were from Denmark originally. My grandfather was an artist. The paintings in my living room are his, Lauritz Kofod. My grandmother's name was Christine. My grandparents lived on the corner of Murray Avenue and the Pike. I don't know what brought my grandparents out to Huntingdon Valley. It might have been that he worked for the Pitcairns, I'm just not sure.



I was born in West Philadelphia. I spent many weeks in Huntingdon Valley during summers with my Grandmother Christine Kofod and my Aunt and Uncle Otto and Irene Kofod and my cousins on Walton Road. My mother was a Kofod. I was 10 years old when my family moved here during the Depression. My father lost his job at the B&O Railroad, and we moved out to live with my grandparents in Huntingdon Valley. My older brother Bill was born in my grandparents' house on the corner of the Pike and Murray Avenue. I also have a brother Leroy, three years younger than me, and then my sister Janet. Four of us. We were happy to move to Huntingdon Valley permanently.

Our Friends and Neighbors

Mr. Fesmire built my Uncle Otto Kofod's house on Walton Road. Next to them was the Vanderbilt's, then the Bill Johnsons. The house on the corner of Wynkoop Avenue was the Wynkoop's house. We always pronounced that word with a long I. If you go up Walton Road from Wynkoop Avenue, next to Kofod's was a small house where a teacher, Mr. Anglemoyer and his wife lived. Then there was a large house whose property went up to Fettersmill Road where the Huntingdon Valley Trust Bank was. Clayton's store was on the other side facing the Pike. Up on top of the hill were the Greenawalts.

Then my parents rented the house on the Pike across from Doc Brown's Drug Store, right next to the Danenberger's. That house is now apartments and, until recently, a shoe repair shop. Clayton's store at Fettersmill and the Pike was the only store in Huntingdon Valley. The post office was in the store. Next to the store was a small house. The Markley's lived there. Mrs. Markley was our sixth grade teacher. Next to the Markley's were Mr. and Mrs. Clayton, then our house next to the Danenberger home.

Across the Pike was Doc Brown. He was the pharmacist, not a doctor, and owned several buildings there which included an American Store, a hardware store and some apartments on the second floor.



Brown's Drug Store was located on the northeast corner of Huntingdon Pike and Red Line Road, and an American Store was located at the northern end of the building, in this c. 1940 photograph. The drugstore had previously been the home of the Andrew Erwin store and Price's General Store and served both as a private home and business site. Erwin was reputed to own most of the mortgages in the area; the Hallowells held the remainder. The Huntingdon Valley Bank is currently located on this site.

Whenever young couples married, Doc Brown had an apartment for them. Then Doc Brown put in a soda fountain, and Ted Barrett made the best ice cream cones and sodas. That was really the only place in the valley for entertainment. All the men used to gather and “chew the fat” as we used to say.

[Photo: Brown's Drug Store, c. 1940; OYRHS]

And us kids, if we had a nickel, would get a huge ice cream cone. Then Doc Brown opened up a little part in the back of his store where he had tables and chairs. We'd sit in there and have a soda with our friends. I always got chocolate ice cream. Doc Brown was great!

One of my classmates was Nathaniel Saint. It turned out that the natives that he went to do missionary work with in South America were not friendly. Also, I remember the Ridgways and would go swimming in their pool. Then there was George Flack, our first policeman, who lived down the Pike. He was always at Red Lion Road when we were walking to school. Of course, Schmidt's Dairy. Oh Boy! Eddie Schmidt has his horse trained to stop at each house to deliver milk. Then he finally got a truck. And ice, we had an icebox. Shep Barrett delivered the ice. On a hot summer day, he gave us ice chips. Ted Barrett was at the drug store making those great sodas. Also Mr. Fellenz, at the second house down from Red Lion was a barber and had the barber shop. He also raised bees. We would buy the whole honeycomb and eat the wax. If you go to the Bryn Athyn Thrift Shop, they sell Danielle Odhner's bee honey. I volunteer there at the shop.

Growing Up

I became best friends with Lolita Danenberger. “Leet” was her nickname. She had polio and wore a heavy brace on her leg. We spent lots of time together. I was ten years old then and in the fourth grade when we moved. I was also friends with Jean Calvert and Eleanor McOwen. We remained friends, kept in touch all our lives. Those three are gone now, and I still miss them.

It was 1933 and the “Great Depression” had come to the USA and brought hard times for many families. Our family was one of them. As I think back, we were fortunate to live in Huntingdon Valley. I must say that there were great people who were more well off. They were kind and helpful to those of us who were having a hard time. Mr. and Mrs. Clayton who owned the only food store on the corner of the Pike and Fettersmill Road, and lived next door to us, allowed us to pick cherries, apples and current berries. My Grandmom and mother preserved and canned them.

Then Mr. Clayton told my dad and another neighbor that they could plow up a piece of land behind our house and theirs to make a garden. We raised lots of veggies, even corn. My brothers and I were taught to weed and cultivate, carry water when dry weather made more work for Grandmom and Mother. We all helped shell beans and peas. We picked blackberries on Hallowell Hill which were preserved. We would walk up Hallowell Hill with my grandmother to pick them. We didn't like that, all those sticky blackberries, but we went. And it got so we could walk all the way up and over that hill down to the Bryn Athyn area, across the railroad track to a little opening along the Pennypack Creek. It was called Alnwick Grove. Not a very big area. But we could go swimming. Some of the boys found some lumber from the trees and made docks. They would dive into the water, it was that deep! It would freeze up in the winter and we would ice skate there. If we didn't walk over the hill to go there, we would walk up Fetersmill Road and then down the railroad to the creek.

But we had lots of fun, too. Roller skating on the Pike. When the wheels wore out, we could buy new wheels for five cents from Mr. Reshard's hardware store. He lived on the right hand side of the Pike two houses down from the Presbyterian Church and had the only hardware store in the area. My dad showed me how to replace the wheels.

There were no sidewalks above Red Lion Road. We skated right down the Pike from Greenawalts place on the top of the hill. The skates were the kind that you strapped on our shoes. We would sit on the wall in front of Danenberger's and count the cars on the Pike. Boy, if we counted five cars in an hour, that was a lot. We sledded down the Pike. There just wasn't traffic. If there was snow, there were even less cars! We could go down the hill to the Huntingdon Valley Trust bank and give a few pushes and sled all the way down to Bethayres. Roland Willard and George Wright were there. Mrs. Clayton's nephew Harold Utzey had an old car. He worked in the store and would put a long chain on his car and a rope and pull us up the hill. We would hang onto the rope and each other's sleds. He had chains on his tires, no snow tires then.

We also sledded down Greenawalt's hill across Danenberger's back yard onto the Pike. Sometimes we sledded down the hill behind Mr. Danenberger's barn onto where our garden was. We used a cardboard box or an old piece of rug. It was kind of bumpy! One year there was such a deep snow that my brother and some of the older boys dug it out and made a toboggan slide. We came down that thing, across Danenberger's yard onto the Pike. Great fun.

Mrs. Danenberger was a wonderful lady who would let us in her house to warm up, put our mittens on the radiator to dry and give us hot chocolate. There were 10 children in that family but there were always neighborhood kids there. The Danenberger's had a big basement with a marble floor. We kids skated and played there lots. If we got too noisy she would bang on the pipes upstairs. That meant "That's enough!"

Since I was Leets friend, we often played Monopoly. If the game was not finished that day, we came back every afternoon until someone won. Then there was Mr. Danenberger's barn where fertilizer was stored. He was salesman for Armor Fertilizer Company. We played Hide and Seek there, pulled a bag out and hid in the hole. In the spring, my brother was allowed to sweep the barn of any fertilizer loose for our garden. We would play baseball in their backyard.

The men would put on a show upstairs in the Red Lion School, Minstrel Shows, where they painted their faces black. Jim Briggs played the castanets. Mr. Gentzlinger who lived up on Fettersmill Road on the left side was the interlocutor, leader of the troupe, crack jokes, the “MC” of the show. The men had a joke for Mr. Clayton whose name was Seymore and owned Clayton’s store. “Oh Seymore’s out to see more.” and “Doc Brown imports his hair. From one side to the other.” Simple stuff. It just made everyone laugh. These shows were at least once a year.

I remember the big flood, maybe around 1938, right below the Presbyterian Church. The Danenberger’s eventually moved to Southampton, near Street Road and Buck Road, and dug out a little stream on their property to make a lake. Called it Skytop Lake. He bought a rowboat for each of his ten kids and each boat had the name of one of the children printed on it. We would walk all the way up from the valley, up Buck Road, to Street Road to their lake and farm. During this flood, the Danenberger’s boys brought the boat down in the back of their truck.

I remember the Abington Hospital June Fete. It was held at Justa Farm up the Pike, the Elkins estate. Mr. Danenberger used to get free passes and take me with them. The horse shows were great. There were the stands and different amusements. Lots of horses, a big race track. Really something!

Speaking of horses, I had a scary experience on a horse once. At Buck and Street Road lived the Hess family. They had a chicken farm. They also had horses to rent. There was Rose Hess, Margaret and George and the children. I guess it was when I worked at Fredericks, I met a nephew of the Fredericks family who maybe took a shine to me. Anyway, the nephew took a bus to get up here. Don Ivins was the bus driver. The Reading Railroad had a bus from Fox Chase to Richboro and George Pletcher and Don Ivins drove the bus. I had my brother’s little car, and I picked this nephew up and took him to the Hess farm to go horse back riding. We rode all the way over to Gravel Hill Road, over County Line to the Elkins Farm. Coming through there, the railroad crosses Gravel Hill Road. It was there that the horse took control. I heard the train whistle. I was scared simple! I hung onto the reins, pulled hard back and forth to get him to stop. Finally the horse stopped. Then I walked that horse all the way back. I’ll never forget that experience. I said, “That’s enough of that!”

School Days

Because Leet wore a brace on her leg, her brothers would take her to school down Red Lion Road. But when her brothers were doing something else, I would pull her to school in a wagon and back. Then she had an operation on her leg and was in a wheelchair. I would bring her the schoolwork. We enjoyed that. I was like the teacher. When we went to high school, Mr. Danenberger had a Pierce Arrow car with seats in the back that folded down. Eleanor, Catherine and John started driving Leet to school. I would often get a hop to school with them.

We had great teachers. Mr. Hoke, the principal, was a very understanding man. Miss Crowe, Mr. Shaffer, Mr. Anglemoyer, Miss Neilson. Miss Neilson was Danish also, and she was a good friend of my mother. Miss Nielsen taught 5th grade but eventually became principal of the grade school.

That old high school! I haven't been in it for years, but I remember the wooden stairs. We went to Washington D.C. for the class trip. Nobody had much money. I remember that I had \$3.50 to spend for the entire trip! But all of us girls wore our nice dresses, our hats and our white gloves. That's the way we went on the train from Bethayres. We transferred on another train in Philadelphia to Washington. I can't remember if our two Black students, Chester Jefferies and Agnes Raglin went on the trip. The Jefferies family lived down in Bethayres on Chestnut Street.

When we reached 7th grade, we were sent to the High School on Murray Avenue. When in 9th grade Lower Moreland High School opened its doors to students from surrounding areas that didn't have a high school, kids from Feasterville, Trevoise, Siles and Rockledge were bussed here. This was an exciting time for all. It was nice to meet people who we probably never would have met otherwise. Quite a few became high school sweethearts and later married. Among my friends, Gladys Lodge married Tom Schell from Rockledge, and Butch Willard married Isabell Senner from Trevoise.

My class of Lower Moreland "41" graduated in June of that year. The ceremony was upstairs in the elementary school auditorium. We had 34 graduates. Our high school days were wonderful. We had great teachers and Mr. Hoke was principal. We had basketball and football games and would go on the buses to the away games. My younger brother Leroy was a cheerleader. Our class trip to Washington D.C. was fun. Then as we all remember, WWII started.

World War II Memories

My brother Bill was in the Army along with lots of other local boys. Two of our girls joined. Eleanor McOwen was in the Navy, and Mary Pletcher was in the Coast Guard. This was the beginning of the "What Goes On" newsletter that was published during the war. Al Taxis published this newsletter.

Most of our boys joined the services. George Wright was a tail gunner. He was shot down over Germany. I still have his memorial service program. Bill Gantt was engaged to Bea Wynkoop. Such a nice couple. He started college, but then became a Marine pilot. His plane was shot down, and his body was lost for years and years. We heard that his dog tag was found in a rice paddy somewhere in the Pacific conflict area. That was a terrible thing. The Wynkoop's lived next door to the Gantts on Walton Road.

During WWII, we all did our part. Gas rationing, tokens for meat, sugar, butter, etc. After high school, I went to business school in Philadelphia, took the train for three months and was the only girl from the suburbs. I was asked if I wanted a job in Jenkintown at Standard Press Steel. Of course I accepted and was hired in the Payroll Department. I earned \$16 a week then. Thought I was rich! Among other things I bought a record player and used it on Friday nights at

the Lower Moreland gym for dances for the high school kids. Back then it was the Big Bands. The kids had a ball!

Sometime after the war started, two of the Danenberger girls opened a Snack Shop. It was a huge success. Lots of high school kids enjoyed many good times there as well as older boys and girls.

Off to Work

Standard Press Steel made nuts and bolts for the war equipment. I made a lot of friends there. I worked in the payroll department. Back then, no computers, it was a lot of handwork. To get there I walked down to Bethayres station, went to Wyncote station. There was a little dirt path from there to the company. It was the station after Jenkintown.



My brother had an old 1948 Ford coupe, jacked up on cinder blocks. He took the wheels off and put them in the basement when he went into the army. I wrote to Bill and asked him if I could use his car. I had to put the wheels back on. Jacked it up and got help from my Uncle Otto Kofod who had the garage up the Pike. I got the car back together. My uncle said, “You did a good job, honey. You got the wheels on tight”. I gassed it up and used that to drive to Jenkintown.

[Photo: Peggy on the running board of brother Bill’s Ford, Paper Mill and Creek Roads in Bryn Athyn]

Once I drove down the Pike to where Holy Redeemer hospital is now. There was a car that slid off the road there. But I stopped. Now I wouldn’t do this today. There were two gentlemen, very well dressed, who didn’t know what to do. I asked them where they were going. They said, “Jenkintown”. So I said, “That’s where I am headed.” So they squeezed into my little car. They were bankers at the Jenkintown bank.

Fredericks Company on Philmont Avenue opened around that time. I had met a German girl who worked there. She rented a room on the Pike. She suggested I work there, which I did next. It saved on gasoline because I could walk to work. I liked to work with my hands, and that’s the kind of work I had there. The company made glass instruments. I made friends there too. Mr. Fredericks played violin in an orchestra in the Northeast area of Philadelphia. He would give us tickets to his concerts.

When I had my brother’s little car, it had a rumble seat, Once when I had my German friend in the car along with my co-workers it started raining. The ones in the rumble seat had to pull down the top over them to keep from getting wet.

Roller skating at Willow Grove Park became a fun thing. Some of us girls would take the train at Bethayres to Noble, then a trolley car up York Road to Willow Grove Park Skating Rink.

That Special Someone

I remember what the Pike was like before the bridge was built over the railroad. We used to walk down there because one of the Italian families who lived in that area sold firecrackers for five or ten cents. It was in 1941. We girls would take long walks. We were walking up the Pike on the sidewalk when my cousin Harry Sipler, my Aunt Karen Kofod's son who lived in Tacony, Northeast Philadelphia, had a Buick convertible, drove up, pulled over and took us for a ride. Eleanor McOwen sort of had a fancy to Harry, so El and Jean Calvert hopped in the front. Harry had brought a friend with him. That left the friend, Andy, and me in the rumble seat.

Andy and I started dating. He didn't have a car, so he came to Huntingdon Valley via trolleys and the bus from Fox Chase. Soon he bought a brand new Plymouth coupe. I was at the business school in Philadelphia. He'd pick me up and drive me home. One time we stopped in the Fox Chase Drug Store for a soda and sandwich. He was always joking. He handed the waitress a silver dollar that was cut in half. The waitress was stunned. Then of course he paid her in good money. Andy worked at the Diston Saw & File Factory.

When the war started, he was deferred for a year because he was welding armor plate for tanks. In 1942 we were engaged. Andy joined the Army Engineers and served in England during the Blitz. The Germans were bombing England then. After that he was sent to France. When our troops came home, he had to serve one more year. He was sent to California.

Before going to California, he had a 30 day leave. That's when we were married - September 1, 1945 at St. Leo's in Tacony, my husband's church. We didn't have big weddings then because of the war. His sister was the bridesmaid and his brother was best man. We drove in my husband's 1940 Plymouth on a honeymoon to Niagara Falls. No air conditioning!

Building a Life Together

I rented an apartment in Tacony just a block from my Aunt Karen. When his service time was finished, he decided to stop welding and, on the GI Bill, studied electronics, built a tiny TV that all the neighbors came to watch. He worked for a local man who had started a TV service. Andy's job was to install antennas on roofs and service TVs.

We stayed in the apartment for about four years. My Grandmother Kofod showed us an ad that said Mr. Earl Casey was selling lots on the farm in Southampton. We went to talk to Mr. Casey. He showed us the lots. We chose the lot on Cameron Road, seventh lot off County Line Road, ½ acre lot, and it sold for \$800.00. That compared with today!

In the meantime I worked in the office of Cottman Builders, owned by A. P. Orleans. When we saved enough money, we started to build. We had a well drilled and a basement dug. That was in 1950. I was lucky as we bought all the building material from Cottman at dealers' prices. It took us a year, as we did most of the work ourselves with help from Andy's brothers, friends, my brother and dad and some professional hired help. All this time we traveled weekends to and from Tacony to Southampton, staying over at my parents' house.

We moved in before the hardwood floors and window trim were in. We finished the first floor first. My Grandmother Kofod loved it. One day she asked us if she could come for a week. Andy had made a nice vegetable garden. Well, Grandmom worked the garden and ended staying with us for five years.

[Photo: Grandmother Kofod in the Garden on Cameron Road]



We finished the second floor and gave her the first floor bedroom. When she had a stroke, I took care of her. We had a big birthday party for her 89th year. All the family came in June of 1956. It was a hot day, so people crowded in her bedroom as we had an air conditioner in the window. Sad to say, she passed away on July 3rd. Her final resting place is in the Bryn Athyn Cemetery, next to her husband.

When we lived on Cameron Road, our daughter Karen was born on October 7, 1957, the joy of our life. The Cameron Road neighborhood was the greatest of all. Dr. Vanderbilt's daughter Jane married Rich Dietrich and bought the house two doors down from us. There were lots of children around for Karen to play with. I must brag to say they were all good kids, played nicely together. They have all grown up now. Most have become very successful.

We are very proud of Harry Ulrich who became a Four Star Admiral in the U.S. Navy. He was our paper boy when he was young. There were about eight couples who loved to play wiffle ball in the evening after the younger children were in bed. Andy ran electric to the backyard to give us a spotlight to light up McHeran's backyard since they had a double lot. More space to play. We all had many picnics in different yards. Roasted corn, steamed oysters. Everyone brought food. The kids loved those times. We celebrated 25th wedding anniversaries. Every couple received a silver platter with their wedding dates engraved.

Andy had started his own radio and TV business, but when color TV came, he gave it up. He then worked for about ten years for Rich Dietrich who was a landscaper. Andy's back was giving him problems. He then was employed by W.W. Adcock on Philmont Avenue for 13 years, finally retiring at age 67.

We spent all our leisure time on several projects. We bought an old 1941 Plymouth coupe from a neighbor for \$50. We restored it, put in a new motor, upholstered the inside, gave it a paint job. Also, we did lots of gardening. When our daughter started college, she needed a car. We bought her a second hand Dodge which she drove. We inherited a 1960s Studebaker. Eventually we sold the Studi to a Studebaker family member in Harrisburg. Karen bought a Mercury Caliente convertible. We had lots of fun with that car. Andy built an addition to the garage for these cars.

In 1970 we built an addition on the back of the house for my mother. She loved that. About six years later, we added a sunroom off the side of that room. Very enjoyable for everyone. Mother passed away in 1988.

Karen was married in 1990 to a wonderful young man, Brian Borner. We now had an empty nest, but we always found things to do. Andy passed away in 1995. I was alone for two years. I found it too much work so I turned the house over to Karen and Brian to enjoy. I now rent an apartment in Southampton. I'm making new friends, keeping in touch with my old friends. We still have class reunions every spring, although our numbers are fewer each year. I enjoy gardening for myself and my friends and also helping Karen with the gardening at home.

[Photo: Bill's Market on Huntingdon Pike just north of Red Lion Road. Photograph was taken across the Street at Fetters Mill Square]

