

Brian DeJong in Wheaton, IL on 8/9/08 with Mary Jo Miller

(BDJ) Brian DeJong

(MJM) Mary Jo Miller

BDJ: Would you give me your full name, maiden name, age, date and place of birth?

MJM: Mary Jo Miller. My maiden name was DeWaard. I was born in Rochester, NY in 1944. So that makes me 64 years old.

BDJ: It is Tuesday, August 19, 2008. I am Brian DeJong. I'm in Wheaton, Illinois with Mary Jo Miller. We are at her home and we are just going to talk for a while and learn a little bit about her father and some of her memories of her dad.

Why don't you start by just giving me some family history. Tell me about your parents, tell about your siblings.

MJM: My parents met in Grand Rapids, Michigan. My father had gone to Calvin College. I think he had graduated or was very close to graduation at the time that they met. My mother was in training at Blodgett Memorial Hospital where she later received her RN. As soon as they were married, they went to Princeton University in New Jersey. My eldest sister was born there. Very shortly afterward, my second sister was born there. There was just little more than a year between them. They were at Princeton for three years and gathered two small children and the credentials that he needed to go into the pastorate. At the end of those three years, he was offered a fellowship or assistantship, maybe a scholarship for further study, I'm not sure what. But he had earned the right to stay at Princeton and study. Because he had two small children and because he had a heart for the pastorate, he declined that and they took the call to Cedar Grove, Wisconsin. I think one of the reasons he was well suited for Cedar Grove was because both he and my mother had been raised by Dutch immigrant parents and spoke Dutch quite fluently. In fact, my father preached in Dutch, right up until the end of his life, when required.

BDJ: Yes?

MJM: Dad was raised in South Holland, Illinois and his parents were truck farmers. My mother was raised in Michigan where her father farmed in the Grand Valley. So they had a real common background. All four of their parents had immigrated to the US as teenagers or young people and had met and married after they had come here. So they had a strong commonality there.

BDJ: The South Holland connection, is that where he first got to know Cornelius Van Til?

MJM: Yes. They were young people together in adjoining towns.

BDJ: Interesting.

MJM: Of course, Kees was a year or so older than my father and he went to Calvin first and he also went to Princeton first. But they were very close friends. I think they were probably not real tight when they were young, but as their common purpose came together they became very, very close.

BDJ: Interesting. I was kind of jumping ahead.

MJM: Yes. They were going back to Wisconsin and my father was of course in the Presbyterian Church of the US, although they had both been raised in the Christian Reformed Church - I think, my sister pointed out to me last night, that there was a "thing" that happened. Let me see if I can get this straight. I asked her why he had gone to Princeton and she said there was a case in the CRC just about the time dad was finishing college and he was not happy with some issue. It was called the Janssen Case. Are you familiar with that?

BDJ: I am reading Jon Muether's book on Van Til and he talks about that case and how that was a pretty big deal that moved certain people away from the CRC.

MJM: So there were just a clutch of young Calvin students, who were concerned enough about that to look elsewhere, including my father who chose to go to Princeton.

BDJ: Interesting.

MJM: My parents just loved Cedar Grove. They were both raised, farm people, country people and it was just natural. The people loved them and they had the common Dutch language when needed and they were very, very happy there. There were two little girls when they moved there and then my brother, John, was born and my sister, Harriet, and finally my brother, Murray. They were there, I'm not good at the intervals, I think 15 years, maybe.

BDJ: And those were fairly peaceful years for the most part?

MJM: Yes, except for what was happening in the denomination. During that time Uncle Kees came to visit several times. My sister said John Murray came to visit too. She always hated sitting on his lap because he held so tight. (laughs)

BDJ: A little known fact about John? (laughs)

MJM: Yes. There were family friends, colleagues that visited.

BDJ: I was in Cedar Grove for their Dutch Festival, their holiday this year. We parked in the parking lot of the First Presbyterian Church. I had not been there. I'd been to Calvary a number of times, but I'd not been there – historic ground. Interesting to see that and even what's happened in the last few years with the church. Leaving the US.

Tell me a little bit about the conflict that lead to your dad's being put out of the PCUSA and some memories of that.

MJM: Again, I'd like to clarify that I have stories about it, but I wasn't there and I don't really know. I can't tell it from my father's vantage point because he died when I was 15 and my mother told me the stories.

BDJ: OK.

MJM: You know, they have a certain bias. But, as I recall her telling about it, one of the first things that happened was on a Saturday night one of the Sunday school teachers came knocking on the door of the manse. That house is still there, that beautiful brick manse. "Reverend DeWaard ("Domine", they always called him "Domine") I don't understand the Sunday school material. Here it says that they're supposed to circle which was the most important man. There are three other people mentioned, then Jesus Christ. I don't understand. He doesn't belong in here with these other people." So, he talked to her about that and how she should present it and there were some other points in the lesson that were very humanistic. He helped her with that. Then he started looking at the Sunday school material more closely and began to realize the influence of modernism. He had to help his Sunday school teachers. The next thing that mother mentioned was how concerned he was about the missions situation and how he needed to work with the session to figure out what they were going to do with their missions offerings. He couldn't, in good conscience, encourage them to continue to send money to the Missions Board of the Presbyterian Church. In all of this, of course, he was just a microcosm of what was happening everywhere and he was in correspondence with the other men who were more at the front of the battle. He knew, this was not original thinking on his part, particularly, he was just trying to fight the battle at his level. Because they loved it there so much, I think it might have been – I'm just guessing, mother never said this – but I think it may have been rather difficult to see the steps he was taking to put their comfortable life in jeopardy. But, I don't know that he ever had much of a struggle with it, he just knew what he needed to

do. Of course, eventually he was brought before the Presbytery for discipline, primarily because of the missions offerings, I think.

BDJ: By not giving the offerings . . .

MJM: For not supporting the denomination. I think it mainly centered on the offerings. Not supporting the denomination to the degree it was deemed appropriate.

BDJ: And having the audacity to be critical.

MJM: Exactly. So he was disciplined by the Presbytery of Milwaukee, I think it was called at that time. My sister mentioned last night that when he went to those meetings he rode the Inter-urban, Cedar Grove's little train.

BDJ: I didn't know that.

MJM: Yes. In fact, my husband and I have visited the Inter-urban station in Milwaukee, which has been restored into an office building. But there is a terminal in downtown Milwaukee.

BDJ: So, that ran right through Cedar Grove?

MJM: Yes. He would arrive and then go to these meetings. So, he was disciplined by them and the case was appealed to the General Assembly and in 1930 . . . I guess it must have been 1936. It would have been. His case came up before the General Assembly at Syracuse, NY and he was there. I have the letter that he wrote home from Syracuse in 1936 and he lost the case - or won, depending on how you look at it. (laughs) I don't know about the other men, if that was the same year that Machen was tried. It was probably a year later. I don't really know. I should look that up. In any case, before he went, or actually, at some point, he sent a letter to the Presbytery that probably started the whole business. My mother always told the story that she was down in the basement doing the laundry on a Monday morning. You know, the washing machine was in the basement and then you hang the clothes outside. So, he came down where she was busy with her washing and he had this letter in his hand and he said, "Mother, if I send this letter in, we are going to be out of a job, we'll have leave this house. I don't know what we are going to do with our children. If I send this in we are in trouble." And, she said, "just get it in the mail, I need to get the clothes out." You know, "Just do it, don't bother me, I'm busy." (laughs) Let it be what it will be and get on with it. She was, to the degree that suited her, she was supportive. I think she knew it was inevitable, because this was going to happen. Maybe she had already dealt with it. I don't know. But he wanted her to understand that this would be really hard.

BDJ: Counting the cost?

MJM: Yes. Of course, he'd already invested in a pension that would be nice for them later. Actually, they were very comfortable there. So, should I go on . . .

BDJ: Yes, carry on.

MJM: The next thing mother would tell would be that when we, well I don't know whether this was after the Milwaukee discipline or if it was after Syracuse, but it must have been after Syracuse, a gentlemen named Gray, I.M. Gray, was with the Presbytery of Milwaukee of the Presbyterian Church. He came to Cedar Grove to the church on a Sunday to announce to the congregation that the pastoral relationship was to be dissolved. So, I don't know how he did it, but my father got up into the pulpit first while Mr. Gray was sitting down. . .

BDJ: Good for him . . .

MJM: And he preached his sermon without giving the man an opportunity to read his statement. When he finished his sermon, I don't know if he gave a benediction, but when he finished his sermon, he walked . . . have you been inside the church?

BDJ: No.

MJM: There is a door, the church building is here and the manse is here and here is a little door at the front of the church that goes directly outside. There is a sidewalk from that door to the manse next door. He walked out of the pulpit, out that door and across that yard to the house. He didn't stay to listen to the reading of this statement. While my mother, you know, heart being full, got up and followed him, leaving 4 little children sitting in the pew. My sister told me last night that when she saw mother follow and she realized that she was left with all these children, you know, some of them were very young, she looked around and thought, "I'm not staying here". She got up and followed mother out, too. So, of course, all the little children did. They all traipsed across the yard home. But, God laid it on the hearts of all the people who understood what was going on and loved my dad. They all followed out so that by the time the statement was read, there was just a handful of people that stayed that wanted to know what was going on or because they didn't really feel like they were quite ready, to you know, to reject this . . . I don't know, but 300 people, I think I was told, followed my father out without staying to hear this statement. So the next Sunday they met, I think it was the firehouse had an adequate space, and the next week they met there and, what did my sister say – oh the town hall, that was what it was, they met in the town hall and she said that the songs just lifted the rafters. They sang "I know that my Redeemer Liveth", so that was the beginning of the OPC there in Cedar Grove.

BDJ: How soon then until Calvary was formerly constituted?

MJM: I don't know, probably within a fairly short time. We do have a picture somewhere around here of the first building project where dad was in overalls and digging. You know they did a lot of the labor themselves. So he was there when they first put the building up.

BDJ: He stayed for how many years in Cedar Grove after that?

MJM: I think he stayed about three years after that.

BDJ: What were the circumstances that lead to him relocating to Rochester?

MJM: Well, I think it was fairly unusual to get a call. Men stayed in a place for long years in those days. He got a call to Rochester, he was quite concerned. He didn't think it would be suitable for him. First of all because they were very happy in Cedar Grove and people loved him dearly and still do if you go back and talk to some of the . . . they loved him. He was the kind of person, that when the farmers where haying he'd get out there and help. . . he knew what to do and he did it. He'd worked on the farm. But anyhow, the call to Rochester troubled him because he heard that the church was the result of a group of disenchanted Christian Reformed people who'd withdrawn from their church over some non-doctrinal issue and were looking to start their own church. And he felt like this . . . he did not want to get involved in that. So he declined and he was asked again and so he wrote to R.B. Kuiper because R.B. practically had a foot in both . . . and knew both churches really well. He said that he's not inclined to do this but they have approached me again and what do you know about it. Can you help me with this? And R.B. Kuiper wrote back and said yes, there was the factor that they were disenchanted Dutch folks, but they were Dutch folks and many of them would really be blessed by the language, you know. Maybe that was why they were calling him, I don't know. But the other thing he said was that there were a lot of Presbyterians in Rochester, NY and some of them are starting to think about the issues and to have a strong OP presence in Rochester would be a really good thing. So, dad finally accepted the call with this idea in mind: that he was going to be able to minister to Presbyterians who were having to leave the mother church as it were. So they did move to Rochester. I think, perhaps another thing that may have been attractive in Rochester, is with a growing family, he realized that the educational opportunities would be much greater in Rochester. I never heard that articulated but I know what they did when they got there which was to take advantage of the educational opportunities for the kids.

BDJ: You mean Christian schools?

MJM: Yes, there were Christian schools, but my older sisters were in high school already by that time. But, the three younger ones of us were all enrolled in the Eastman School of Music.

BDJ: Oh, really?

MJM: They had a preparatory department and we all went there. A tremendous sacrifice on the part of my parents financially, I can't even imagine how they did it. My mother being a nurse was able to work part-time. So that helped a lot. I think all of what she earned went into our education. Because what my father earned was barely sufficient to live on. My mother was a very hard working person. She, as well as her nursing, she put up a good deal of our food. You know, canned green beans and things, you know, all summer long. Dad grew the vegetables and she canned them. We ate off of them all year.

BDJ: Still farmers at heart.

MJM: Yes, they went out and gathered fruit. I can remember sitting there peeling apples. We had jars and jars of apple sauce. So, she did that, but there was a woman in Sheboygan, no Cedar Grove, I don't remember her name, my sister would remember, she was the organist at the church and she was a very cultured person and very well trained and she gave my mother voice lessons. I think both my parents learned to love music from that woman. Maybe they did before but they were a little more educated after that. My mother just - to her that was what she did for her kids. Dad would tell us, I remember his saying this, what you put on their backs will wear out but what you put in their minds they will always have. So education was a great priority with them and I think being in Rochester was very helpful for that.

BDJ: He was there until his retirement?

MJM: He retired, I think, in 1958 or early 1959. He continued to preach in pulpits in different places. In August of 1959, he was in Ottawa, Canada where he was scheduled to preach at a Reformed church. I think it was a Christian Reformed church. He was to preach in the morning in English and then in the afternoon, - that would be a Dutch service, preaching Dutch. He was in big demand in Canada. So he traveled by himself and he was to preach on that Sunday and he went up early Saturday night so he could spend some time preparing for the Lord's day. In the morning the hostess couldn't rouse him and he had died quietly in his bed.

BDJ: Did they have a cause of death?

MJM: He had a heart condition and we had known that for a long time. Today he would have had open heart surgery. But, he had a seriously enlarged heart because there had been damage to some part of it earlier. They knew it was his heart.

BDJ: The years in Rochester, did he see the expectation fulfilled? Did Presbyterians there start to

MJM: Not so much. In fact the years in Rochester were very difficult. Dad was not a game player and he was very earthy, very direct and he'd been through this tremendous conflict and you know, really cared about these issues and he had these friends that were doing all these and here he was in this little clutch of people, Dutch people and they weren't really all that excited about anybody coming into their church that wasn't like them. They wanted it to be like their church was before. They wanted to keep things, they weren't open. Dad was impatient with them. They didn't understand him. They were very hard years. There was a lot of bickering and pettiness. Of course, they didn't understand my mother, you know, she works. She doesn't coffee-klatz with us, she buys second hand clothes for her children, what is this? You know, it was . . .

BDJ: So, it was a really hard time?

MJM: It was not a great . . . it didn't happen, the Presbyterians from the PCUSA coming into the OPC. I can remember some of the people who came into the church. There was one family, I think they are the PCA now, who came from the Presbyterian Church. They were interested in studying with Dad and they joined MOP. The other thing that my father just delighted in was working with young people. A lot of the sons of the congregation had gone away to the War and come back and started dating Catholics or non-Christian, non-Dutch. And my father just gathered these young people in and had classes for them. A young man would come in and tell my dad he wanted to marry a Catholic girl. Dad would say, "Bring her over, let's get to know her." He'd get to know her, he'd get her in class, he'd spend hours teaching her. He'd lead her to profess her faith and join the church. Then they got married. They actually did. He was very good at it. That happened in a number of situations that the young men would go outside the fold, but dad helped to gather them into the fold. He also excelled at, he was truly pastoral. He excelled at hospital visits because he'd go to see the church member that was in the hospital and minister to them, then he'd look around, who was in the next bed, who was in the hall. He'd go to see one person and he'd be gone for three hours. He would talk to everybody that he could around them. I think he was a tremendous blessing in that way.

BDJ: Some pastors seem to be more academic or bookish, it sounds like your dad was really a pastor's pastor, a people-oriented person who really took ministering to people quite seriously. Is that accurate?

MJM: I think that is true. But there was also a side if him that... I think he was pretty smart and very interested in what was going on around him. My growing up years, we lived on Highland Avenue in Rochester and this was within half a mile of Colgate Rochester Divinity School. They had a very good library there, they had all the periodicals, they had all the books and they could get anything that you requested. He spent probably a day a week there or a morning a week. He read all the periodicals. He knew all the issues that were going on in all the churches. He was deeply read in many areas. He didn't have money to buy books, but the Lord gave him this tremendous resource. So I can remember him coming downstairs from his study and walking up the street, he was gone to the Library. Of course, he corresponded all this time with, especially with Van Til. They would talk about books and issues and if Van Til mentioned something, he'd go up and read it and respond. He had that stimulus as well. He got none of that from his session or his church members. They were not interested in anything like that. So, it was a blessing that he still had these kinds of correspondence. Of course, we had visits. John Murray came pretty frequently. Always traveling on Saturday and leaving on Monday.

BDJ: Part of his principle?

MJM: Yes. I remember being told, I don't remember this myself, but I remember being told that on one Sunday afternoon while he visited with us, my parents had to go to something at the church. So they left me in John Murray's care and he followed me around all afternoon while I played in the yard. He was reading a book and he just followed around. I didn't think he was paying any attention to me. But, when my parents came home he said, "John, Mary was good but, on Lord's Day shouldn't she be studying her catechism instead of playing in the sand box?" So, they talked that over. He didn't think I kept the Lord's Day very adequately. I remember him, there was always a strong odor there in the guest room when he visited because he took his, he had an artificial eye - he lost an eye in the First World War. He'd take it out and put it in a disinfectant stuff overnight. So, that was a very pungent odor. Things kids remember.

BDJ: Yes, Well the interaction with Murray and Van Til, I'm sure your dad must have been on his toes to keep up with those men and their altitude is quite significant and must have been stimulating for your dad?

MJM: Yes, it probably also, I'm just guessing, but probably also was very comforting to be able to pour it all out, this is what's going on, and feel confident that there's

complete discretion. Murray wasn't quite like that, he wasn't that kind of a person. But I think that it was really very important part of Kees's life to be able to put on his old jacket with dad. In fact, I've been told there was something going on, I don't know what it was, some issue, or conflict. Kees had written to dad about it and Dad didn't have time to answer the letter properly so he just sent him a card saying, "illigiti non carburundum". Do you know what that means?

BDJ: No.

MJM: Don't let the bastards get you down.

BDJ: Oh. (laughs)

MJM: Dad went to Philadelphia regularly, because he was on the Board of the Seminary.

BDJ: How many years did he serve on the Board?

MJM: A lot. I don't know. It was a lot. All my childhood I remember him getting on the train and going down to Philadelphia. I have pictures of my parents at the Seminary, probably graduation or something, but I can't tell you the dates. Have to find out from the Seminary.

BDJ: Was that also kind of an outlet for him, an opportunity for him to function in a sphere that he didn't in his pastoral work?

MJM: Probably yeah. I don't think he did it as primarily an outlet. This is what matters - this is what matters. The truth being upheld and men equipped to preach it - that we have the right men in the Seminary.

BDJ: A life or death struggle for them.

MJM: It was.

BDJ: It think we've lost some sense of how dire things were at that time. Kind of grown easy with now we're us and they're them and we kind of co-exist without much interaction but I'm sure it was much "hotter" then.

MJM: It was and I always remember my mother thought in very black and white terms, they're either with us or they're against us kind of a thing. And this man, well he didn't come out strong enough, so he probably is not with us, kind of a mentality. Of course, my mother, she was extremely loyal and really was a wonderful wife to my dad but she relied on him to explain things.

BDJ: What do you remember about your dad's preaching? You sat under his preaching for many years.

MJM: I sat under his preaching for 15 years but what do you remember about the preaching you heard in your first 15 years? (laughs)

BDJ: I would say this, I never had my dad in the pulpit. My children, I'm the only pastor they've ever known. I see them, especially when they are growing up, I see them interacting more. It is an interesting dynamic to have your father in the pulpit.

MJM: It is, yeah, I remember his passion.

BDJ: Did he shout? Or was he more controlled?

MJM: I think he got pretty heated up sometimes. I don't know that he shouted. I have his sermons, I have some them, you know written copies of the sermons.

BDJ: Manuscripts?

MJM: Yes, Manuscripts. The problem with that is, that he never finished them. He always laid out the argument of what he was going to do and then it was all out of the heart, the conclusion, the finale I guess. So, we don't have that. All of his sermons have been given to Westminster Seminary Library in Philadelphia just recently, the papers and such as they were. But, I'm sorry to say I don't remember very much. I don't think that I experienced the real work of the Spirit in my heart until after he was gone. I was in my own little world. I don't think my heart was very involved.

BDJ: What do you remember about him just in terms of him being a father, you being a daughter, your personal interaction one on one?

MJM: I feel that dad in the last year or two was very burdened. He was very burdened with the church, the personalities and his own ill health. He probably was not well. His heart issue was coming on for a long, long time. I remember him being rather distant. He would be preoccupied with his books and his life and so forth. On the other hand, I remember some wonderful trips like going to the orchard, those kinds of things. Taking me out to the garden and helping me find a watermelon. So when he surfaced, he was a lot of fun to be with. He was a very genial kind of person. He had my breakfast ready every morning and packed my lunch for school. Sometimes after we kids were in bed at night and asleep, he would come home from Session meeting and yell up the stairs "Ice cream, kids!" And we'd run down to the kitchen for a midnight snack. In those days the refrigerator only had a tiny slot to hold one ice cube tray so ice cream was not a thing you ever had on

hand. We went to General Assembly in Denver one year. We drove all the way out there in this old Plymouth and camped. He took us up to the Continental Divide. Travel was also an opportunity for education. I can remember several, I mean, really extensive trips that we took. Once he took us to Hannibal, MO to see the Mark Twain stuff. Lots of interesting travels. He always made things very interesting. But, as I say, in those later years especially when I was in my pre-teen years, becoming a teenager, he was like in another world. But my most vivid memory is of a morning within a few months before he died. We got - Lake Ontario. That is another whole story. He'd been given, my parents had been given a house by a woman who supported Westminster Seminary and because he was on the Board he had a lot of interaction with her. She also loved my parents, so she had willed them her house. It was right on the beach. It was a wonderful old Victorian cottage. Very early one morning I was up, by God's appointment I think, because I'm not an early riser and never have been, but dad was always up early and he was out there sitting out in a chair under the apple tree. So I went out too. It was so early that the sun was just rising. In the East there was this glow of vivid orange, and yet in the West it was still dark. Because this is Lake Ontario you have a lot of horizon to check out. So it was totally gorgeous and vivid color in the East and still dark in the West and we're sitting there. This is the most amazing thing. We are not talking. Then he says, "Mary," no, he called me "Puss", he always called me Puss, "Puss, the darkness is like a life without Christ. The glorious light is like life with Him." All I can remember about those last years. He may have been distant but . . .

BDJ: Still loving.

MJM: He knew my heart. I think a big part of his distance was probably his health. The burden of the Church. But, of course, when he died he'd already retired and a lot of that lifted that heaviness. He was enjoying jaunting around and preaching different places.

BDJ: Me, as a father of six children, I'm more and more aware that having six is harder than four or two or one and paying attention to all of them proportionally is difficult and then when church things come up it really is hard to juggle all those balls and keep them in the air. I've often times though that my younger children are the ones that kind of fall through the cracks.

MJM: Exactly.

BDJ: It grieves me, but being finite creatures, there's a point where you just say I can't do more than I'm doing but I do love my children.

MJM: When I was younger I sometimes felt, it was self-centered, they just let me come up. They thought they did such a good job on the older ones that they just let me come up any old way, they didn't pay me any attention. But, that is not true, they did what they could. I'm sure they agonized a lot over me.

BDJ: In terms of his involvement in Presbyterian General Assembly what roles or posts did he hold, do you know?

MJM: You know, truly, I don't know anything about Presbytery. I'm sure he did his duties, but I don't know anything about them. I do know that he was on the Board of Westminster Seminary for many years and he moderated the Third General Assembly.

BDJ: I thought I'd read that somewhere.

MJM: Yes. I have the minutes of their General Assembly. I think he served on different Presbytery committees in New York and New England but I don't remember what they were. I know he was off at meetings and things, I'm sorry, I don't know.

BDJ: You got so much helpful information that I came up dry every once in a while with a question, that's fine.

MJM: Let me see if my sister knows, I did ask her that, too. No she really didn't know about Presbytery.

BDJ: Let's explore a little more the relationship with Van Til. You told me a little bit about how that started. What other things do you remember just about the dynamic of their relationship and how that played out over the years.

MJM: Well, maybe I could get really personal. They were family friends. Rena, Kees's wife, always remembered my birthday, every year. Every year I got a gift or a card or both from her. She was very faithful in remembering graduations and whatever. My parent visited them in their home and vice versa. But, I think the friendship was primarily based on the correspondence. The letters were regular and frequent, I don't know where they are. They wrote back and forth a lot. Of course, dad went to Philadelphia for meetings so they were always together then. You know, Kees grew up in Munster, Indiana and dad in South Holland, Illinois. These were sister cities in the Dutch community. They had a very strong commonality and they probably knew each other from young people's gatherings.

BDJ: They didn't go to the same church, though?

MJM: No. They were students together. They studied the same stuff and read the same stuff and heard the same professors. I had one really historic picture of dad and Kees standing next to the open coffin of Gerhardus Vos. They were the only two people from the church at large that went to that. Vos was pretty much forgotten or neglected by that time by the church. I think maybe you get more of a picture of the relationship when you think about the later years, which I'm more familiar with. My husband and I lived in New Jersey when we were first married. My mother came to visit us and it happened to be around the time of commencement at the Seminary. Dad was gone and we didn't have that relationship anymore, but she wanted to go to commencement. I don't remember if it was the speaker or someone she knew was graduating. So, I drove her down to Philadelphia to commencement. Uncle Kees wasn't feeling too well, she'd chatted with him a little bit before and she knew he wasn't feeling too well. So she sent me to get him a glass of water and give him an aspirin. There was kind of an intimacy between them even at that time. Later on, in those first years I was married, Rena was ill, her later years and unable to do much and mother would go and stay with them. The three old folks together. Mother would wait on Rena and do things for her and I don't think she was there for extended periods of time, but she'd go for a week or two and give them a little boost. Mother used to say how Kees would come to the foot of the stairs in the morning and sing "When morning gilds the skies, my heart awakening cries "May Jesus Christ be praised," and then say, "oatmeal is ready." They were friends. After Rena's death, by this time, my mother was living in Grand Rapids, Kees would come to Grand Rapids for whatever, I don't know if he was speaking or maybe he just came to see her but they'd sit on the porch together in rocking chairs. They'd just sit there and be content. I remember her telling, it was kind of cool one night, she brought an afghan out and put it over his knees - they were close. They were very close. It wasn't just dad and Kees it was the four of them. As far as what dad and Kees talked about and what their issues were, I think anything that came up in his life that he was concerned about, or anything at the Seminary or anything in theology I think Kees talked to dad about it. He kept the confidence.

BDJ: Which is such an important role, especially for someone in the kind of pressure packed situation Van Til was in to have a friend to be a sounding board and to be able just to open up let's let the hair down.

MJM: I don't think dad would talk to him about his own troubles that much because his troubles were petty. Petty things. People betraying people . . .

BDJ: Your dad's relationship with Machen. You mentioned that they corresponded a bit.

MJM: Yes. Machen died so early. Dad's relationship with him was more of a student/professor type of thing. I know that Machen was the hero and dad admired him tremendously. I know that he learned from him. Probably, it would be safe to say that the direction of dad's life was set by his appreciation for Machen and what he'd learned from him. He thought he was wonderful. They grieved terribly when he died. It was a tremendous loss. I don't know, there wasn't that kind of intimacy certainly not like with Van Til and certainly not with like with Murray, but that I don't know because that's so far in the past.

BDJ: This is kind of a side line I'll probably edit this out of the transcript but I preached at Calvary. The first year we were there 2005 had a joint service with Calvary and Bethel and in my sermon I took a quote from Dr. Machen and mentioned as Machen said and it was a great quote. And, after the service some of the older folks came up to me and thanked me. They said that is the first time we've heard Dr. Machen's name in so long. They were just so appreciative that I'd say something positive or even just mention it. I thought, Oh my, we are forgetting our past. We are letting go of some things that, no only important in their day but has a lot of importance for the continuation of the OPC.

Let's learn a little more about John Murray. One of the interesting things, I had read some of his stuff but I'd never heard a tape of him preaching and I, through Mt. Olive tape library, I got a tape of him preaching and I was so surprised with his voice. This is not the bear of the man that I've seen in the pictures. The voice and the picture just didn't mesh for me. What do you remember about John Murray and what kind of person was he? Other than the fact he was critical of your Sabbath activities. (laugh)

MJM: Maybe the best way to answer that is to flash forward a lot of years after dad was gone. Jerry and I went to Scotland on a vacation and we went to visit him after his marriage. He's interesting. He had that same quality that Kees and dad had. He was of the earth. He had a huge flock of sheep. The day we'd arrived was during lambing season and he'd been up a good bit of the night, lambing. He was tired. There were two small children and they were pulling his books off the shelf and I was in great distress because here all these theological books are lying on the floor because of these children. A neat little cottage. Those cottages are so much part of the land. It was a beautiful place. His wife was a little bit harried and frazzled. Would we stay for tea? I said we'd love to stay for tea. Then she came back well would you like, do you mean tea with food ("tea" in Scotland = supper) or just a cup in the hand? (laugh) Just a cup of tea. She couldn't face feeding us. It was a very domestic scene. I think he probably liked it a lot. He followed us out to the car and we talked. It was a wonderful visit. There's a picture somewhere of Dr. Murray leaning over the hood of our car pointing out on the map where we should go to find the churches we should visit. He told us where we should stay and what

time the services began to make sure we were keeping the Lord's day on the whole trip.

BDJ: This really paints a much different picture of these men, I remember one General Assembly reference to the theological giants of the past and yet men who could enjoy gardening and farming. Do you think there was a theological component to that?

MJM: I do. I don't know whether it was deliberate on their part. I think that was just part of who they were. But yes, absolutely. The world is full of that isn't it? The seed, the growth, and the Lord sending the rain. That's just an image of what God does.

BDJ: Being close to the creation kind of lifts you to the creator in some ways. I know for Dr. Van Til that was a big theme of his thought that creator/creature thing.

MJM: He had beautiful flowers by the way.

BDJ: Did he?

MJM: Oh, he had a lovely flower garden. Probably tomatoes and things like that, too. I don't think they had room for a real garden.

BDJ: This biography from John Muether records some, maybe consternation is a little too strong, but some people who knew Dr. Van Til thought he should have been a farmer because he was so good at it. To go on to academics was a waste of his gifts.

MJM: Yes. Well, that's where they came from, wasn't it? I mean those guys were. I don't know about Van Til's family. But, certainly, my father... he was the only one in the family to do anything academic. Farming was a really good thing to do. He had gifts in that area and boy, that's where you made the money.

BDJ: Yes. John Muether's statement that your dad was one of the quiet heroes of the OPC's early years about the folk known too little? Do you agree?

MJM: I'm glad he said that. Yes. I think that sounds wonderful. I like that. I think that sounded true. Of course he's a hero to me and the family. Whether he is in church history, some other people would have to say that. I think he, quiet hero, yes. Because he certainly was no performer. He wasn't an up front, in your face kind of person. He was supportive, a good listener, and he was very strongly principled. He was a great leader, too wasn't he to his congregation.

BDJ: Yes. To have 300 people follow him out says a lot.

MJM: Yes, and you go back there today and I don't know how many of those people left but if you ask them about John DeWaard, they love him.

BDJ: Well, that is one of my future plans. In fact, I was talking to Ron Beabout the pastor of Calvary and he was telling me about one of the members who's at Pine Haven now that was one of the charter members of Calvary and said you should talk to her and Pine Haven is ten minutes from where I live.

MJM: And who was that, do you remember the name?

BDJ: I don't remember the name.

MJM: I asked my sister that question too. Of course, she said that Ron knows but Hazel Claerbout would also know if there was anybody around. Hazel is a member of that church.

BDJ: I should right that down. That was not the name that he gave me.

MJM: Hazel is a little younger. But she would remember and know who is around. Definitely try to talk to some of those people, even their kids.

BDJ: Yes.

MJM: So yes, I'm glad he said that and it is probably accurate to the best of my knowledge.

BDJ: The other part of what he said about known too little, would you be supportive if we tried to turn this into something in print?

MJM: Sure, Yes. That would be fine.

BDJ: Because this kind of stuff fascinates me. It is a window back and is something that really set the tone for who and what we are. (tape cutting out) I'm just fascinated with the man. (tape cutting out). I think it has a _____ with the current cultural context and the church context in our day and age. He really soared.

MJM: Wonderful. Sure.

BDJ: (Tape cutting out)

MJM: This is their eldest, they both have memories, too (tape cutting out) My brother John was in Florida. He has a cottage in Holland so he is here in the summer, but he'll be leaving after Labor Day. You might like to talk to him some. These two have died so they are not available. The other three are still. . .

BDJ: Can you give me names and addresses?

MJM: Yes, and I'll most certainly contact you if the girls are here. I can even bring them up to Sheboygan.

BDJ: I don't mind coming down here. It is not difficult at all. We could meet in Cedar Grove.

MJM: Yes. I tried to talk the three of them into coming for the, you know there is something going on in Sheboygan on the Dutch . . .

BDJ: Yes, that is coming up at the end of September.

MJM: I sent them all brochures thinking it would be so interesting.

BDJ: I am powerfully tempted to go to that. I think, if possible, I'm going to try to take in a couple of the seminars. It looked like it's got a lot of very interesting material they are going to cover.

MJM: I think the three of them would really get a kick out of it. I don't know if they can.

BDJ: Well, if either or any of them are interested and come up. That would be a very, an opportunity, too.

MJM: I'll go get my address book. I'm just checking my notes from talking with her last night. I think we've covered everything.

BDJ: Ok.

END OF TAPE