

## Jane Burns Warren

*This interview on March 24, 1982 is part of an Oral History of West Islip project, sponsored by the West Islip Library. I am Ethel Morris of the library staff and I will interview Jane Burns Warren, who has lived in West Islip since 1932. (Her family owned the home later owned by the Gilmores.)*



*Morris: Jane before you moved to West Islip, where did you live?*

Warren: We lived on Park Avenue in Babylon village.

*Morris: And you moved to West Islip in 1932?*

Warren: Yes.

*Morris: Did you as a child sometimes a move can be very traumatic, did you mind moving away from Babylon Village?*

Warren: Yes I did because I had many friends in the village and it was very populous where I lived on Park

Ave. A lot of things going on and when we moved to West Islip on Parkwood Road, ... (Tape is damaged) ...there were open spaces, fields with cows grazing, a lot of woods...

*Morris: I can't imagine Parkwood Road like that. Where did you go to school?*

Warren: I went to St. Joseph's and most Catholic children in the area did located in Babylon as it is today.

*Morris: What do you remember about your school?*

Warren: St. Joseph's in those days was very, very strict. We had the Sisters of Mercy and they were very, very strict. I remember particularly we were taught our spelling in a very unique way. We stood up each morning to spell words that were assigned to us. If we misspelled a word the nun hit our knuckles with a ruler and you can bet we didn't misspell it again. So we certainly learned our basics of spelling, reading, writing and arithmetic.

*Morris: And you say most of the Irish children went to St. Joseph's.*

Warren: I would say almost all Irish children in this area went to St. Joseph's

*Morris: So religion played an important part?*

Warren: Religion was almost your whole life as a child because the nuns as I say were very very strict and we spent a lot of our time either at school or at church or church related activities. It was very important

*Morris: Why do you think religion was so important to the Irish people?*

Warren: Well, you know, I don't know what my father told me that there was genuine persecution in this country when the Irish first came and they felt in order to shield their children from being hurt that they should have their own schools and that they should be brought up strong in their religion so that they have it all of their life. That they should associate with other Catholics. This was very important to the Irish.

*Morris: As a child, what did you do for recreation?*

Warren: Well, as I said the school took up a lot of our time, but living in West Islip as I did on Parkwood Road, there was a large field across from our house. We would be able to play any kind of game. We had all the room we needed. There were trees for climbing. Hawley's Lake was very large and beautiful. We did a lot of ice skating there. Also, at Hawley's there was a trail extended through the woods up to Paumanok Avenue. We packed picnic lunches and we'd be gone almost all day. Babylon Yacht Club was in existence

at that time and during the summer we just about lived at the Yacht Club because it was great for sailing, swimming and all kinds of sports.

*Morris: You mentioned Hawley's Lake, that is on the western boundary of West Islip. right, on the boundary between West Islip. and Babylon and there was an estate where that lake is now, the Hawley's estate. Do you remember how far to the east it went on Montauk highway?*

Warren: I think it came over to the Captree House

*Morris: The Captree House Restaurant on the corner of Parkwood Road.*

Warren: Right, that would be the gate house of the estate as far as the whole estate, I understood it took in all of the Parkwood Lake area and even more extensive than that. I don't know the exact boundaries.

*Morris: Huge estates they were. Do you remember anything about the depression, Jane?*

Warren: Well I do, I remember there was a lot of poverty in this area. In my school there was a lot of poverty. Some of the children were very poor. We would bring lunch, some of them wouldn't have lunch and I remember one day a little boy in my class got sick to his stomach, and sister asked him when he last ate, and he said two days previously, and this really, really bothered me. And I remember coming home and my mother and I making a basket of food and bringing it to his home. They were very poor. Also I remember people stopping by our home on Parkwood Road, uh, men asking if they could do some work around the house in exchange for a meal. Most of the times we did have them, find something for them to do and then give them food. It was, it made a very indelible impression on me. I never want to see anything like that ever happen again.

*Morris: I understand that your family knew and you knew Robert Moses?*

Warren: Yes my father knew Robert Moses very well and was very, very excited about Jones Beach. Previous to the building of Jones Beach, there was only - ocean swimming was only available for very wealthy people. And Jones Beach the property was owned by wealthy people. My father thought Robert Moses had great courage to go against the so-called establishment and build this beautiful beach so that all kinds of people could enjoy ocean swimming which is a wonderful sport. Robert Moses was very courageous. He may have stepped on some toes, but what he did for the poor people in this country will always remain as a monument of his memory.

*Morris: Do you remember what kind of person he was? Did he ever visit your home or did you visit his home?*

Warren: Yeah, he visited our home. He was a very aggressive man, but a very brilliant man. I didn't really know him that well, as I say, the relationship was with my father.

*Morris: Did your father vote for Franklin Delano Roosevelt?*

Warren: Oh very definitely he voted for Franklin Delano Roosevelt because he thought this country was headed for a revolution. After all there were graduates of Princeton selling apples on the street. I remember when he and my mother would go into NY. They'd come home and say that they'd seen soup kitchens. The country was in a state of potential revolution. Something drastic had to be done. He thought and my mother thought that Franklin Delano Roosevelt was going to be the one to save this country, and to feed the poor.

*Morris: Evidently he did help to pull us out of the depression.*

Warren: I think so, I don't think there's any question about that.

*Morris: What was the attitude of young people in their late teens and 20s about voting?*

Warren: Well, when I was in my late teens it was during the war, the war was going on and of course Roosevelt ran every time and you hardly detected much opposition to him because of the war at the time, and I don't think voting was the issue as much as we were concerned about the war and whether our friends would come back alive, so I don't think we were political at that age.

*Morris: Did you vote?*

Warren: I certainly voted every time there was an election, but I don't remember political discussions. Discussion centered mainly on the war effort.

*Morris: Did your family own a boat when you were growing up?*

Warren: No, we didn't. My brother and I had a sail boat and sailed at the Yacht Club. We went out on the boats of friends or family. I remember particularly my aunt and uncle, Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence had a boat called the *Loralei* and they took the priest from St. Joseph's over to Oak Beach on Sundays to say mass and they used to give their nieces and nephews turns, and I'd always be glad when I had a turn to go.

*Morris: Jane, if you had your life to live again, would you choose to live it in this area?*

Warren: Yes I would.

*Morris: Why?*

Warren: Well, because it's an hour away from the center of the universe.

*Morris: Of New York City?*

Warren: New York City!. And it's on the ocean which I love. On the other end, it's an hour away from real country and farmland. I just like the area.

*Morris: Thank you very much, Jane for a very interesting interview this afternoon.*