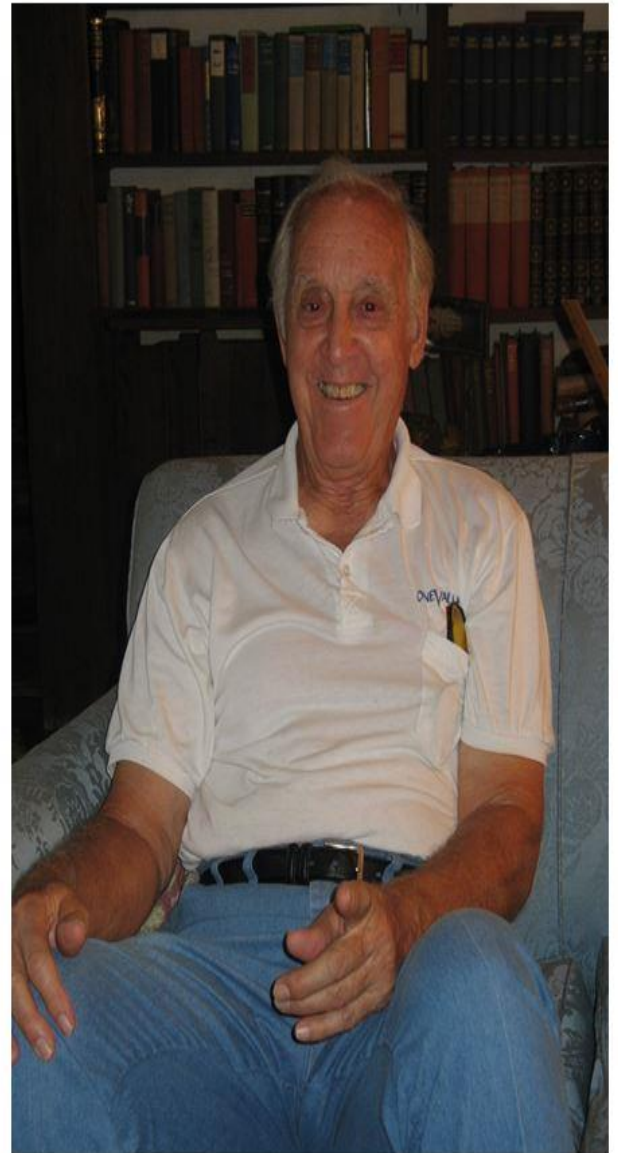


**TAPED INTERVIEW WITH HELEN DETCH HUFFMAN and ANDREW DETCH**

**BY ERIC HUFFMAN 2003**



## TAPED INTERVIEW WITH HELEN DETCH HUFFMAN and ANDREW DETCH

Interview conducted by Eric Huffman on Monday March 2, 2003.



1920 DETCH CHILDREN (L TO R): Esther, Rose, Mary, John, Lewis, Alan<sup>1</sup>.

### SIDE A

**Eric Huffman:** This tape recording is being made for the benefit of Conrad and Danae, my niece and nephew and any other family members of the Huffman or Bustamante or Detch families who want to learn more about their family history. We are here in Florida, Highland Beach, Florida at the condominium of Uncle Andy and Aunt Helen Detch, and present are Uncle Andy, Aunt Helen Detch, my mother Helen Huffman, myself and our family friends Irene Blore, Tom Sutter and Gabe Lopez. We are going to start some conversations and reminisce right now. Today is March 2, 2003. Mom is here.

**Helen Huffman:** I am sitting in my lovely comfortable chair, and I am 82 years old, excuse me I am 81, anyway I guess I will reminisce back to my early years. I had a good life, a good childhood, and I remember growing up, my daddy and mother worked very hard. There were four girls and four boys, and my brothers always looked after my mom and dad in some capacity. My brother, the oldest one (Lewis) would come home every weekend, and he had a car and he traveled from Pittsburgh. He always comes home with food. It's not that my mother and daddy don't have food, but he would bring far more goodies that you could buy in the city than the small town we live in. He would take us for a Sunday

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<sup>1</sup> Not pictured were Andrew and Helen, yet to be born.

drive. My mother would always have a dinner, and lunch, and Lewis would bring his wife, Olive, home, and I remember telling her fortune.



**Lewis Detch in garden**



**Helen Detch with Mother, Kristina**

**Eric Huffman:** Tell your mother's name.

**Helen Huffman:** My mother's name was Kristina, and my daddy was Lewis and living in a small town, everyone loved daddy, who worked in the mines, and they called him Old Louie, and as I recall growing up, I had a girlfriend,

Antoinette and Trisha, I can't think of her last name, she was a pretty girl, very effective, but I loved her dearly. We played house together, and Antoinette, I used to go to her house, and her mother made the best--they had grapes, they had fruit from a small grape vineyard, and her mother, they were Italian, and she made the best jelly. Mind you, my mother gave me ham sandwiches to go to school, and Antoinette always had jelly, and we used to trade sandwiches because I loved her jelly sandwiches, and she didn't have ham, so she liked my ham sandwiches. I went to school and had to study hard, I think it was in the fourth grade that I didn't get promoted. Do you remember that Andy?

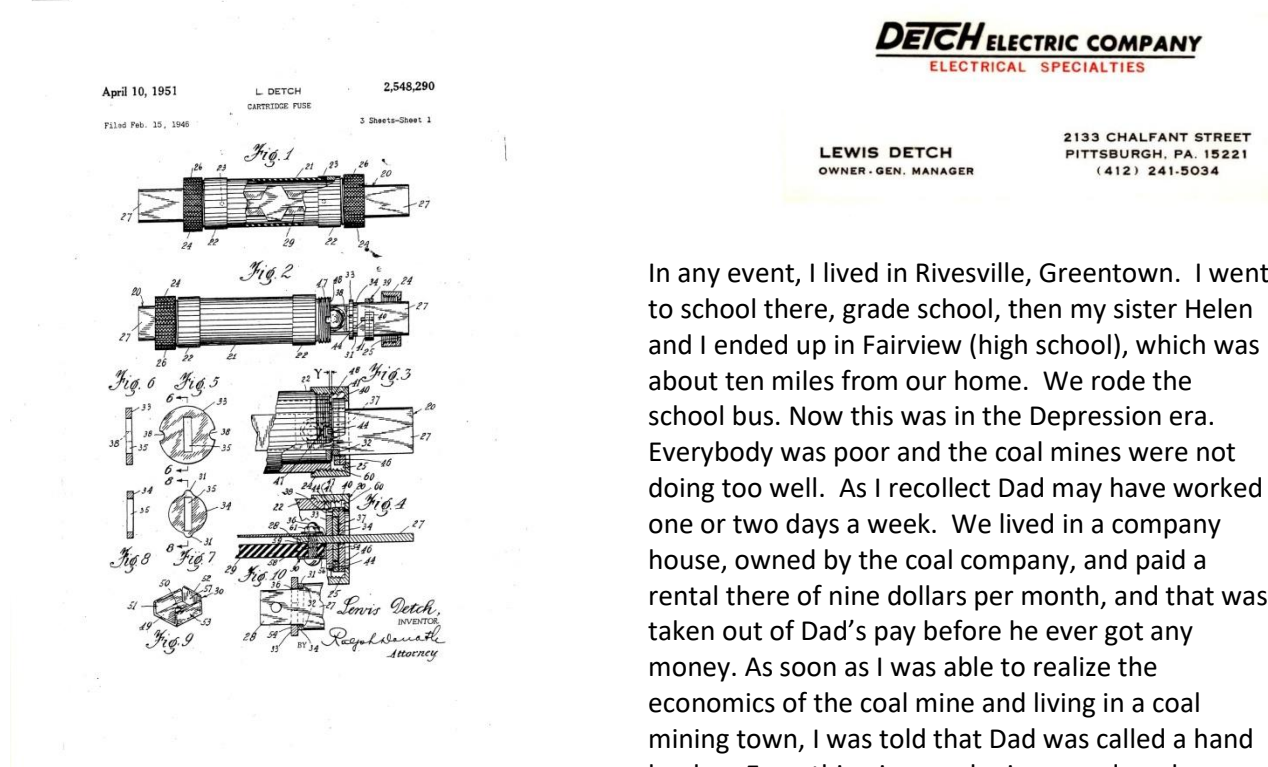
**Andrew Detch:** No I don't.

**Helen Huffman:** OK. Momma made me sit behind the stove that summer and study. She wanted us to achieve and do better in life because they migrated here. (Helen's voice breaks up).

**Andrew Detch:** Do you want me to take over? Well I will give you a general history of the family. My parents were born in Hungary in the area of Transylvania, which is now in Romania and Dad made four trips to the US and on the fourth trip he brought my mother, my older brother Lewis, and sister Mary. Dad was sponsored by the Methodist Church in Ohio and that is where he was supposed to move to and from Ohio he moved to West Virginia, I think in Taylor County, around the Grafton area where he worked in the coal mines. I was born in Taylor County, in Wendel, West Virginia, a small mining community that is no longer in existence.

**Eric Huffman:** When were you born?

**Andrew Detch:** On October 2, 1920. When I was three years old we moved to Rivesville, West Virginia, in the area of Rivesville called Greentown where Dad was employed as a coal miner. At that time, my recollection was all of the children were at home, the eight of us, and later Lewis, the older brother, moved to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where he worked in a fuse company, and incidentally, he was the inventor of a certain type of fuse that he had a patent on and the name of the company was the Detch Electric Company<sup>2</sup>, but I sort of digress here.



In any event, I lived in Rivesville, Greentown. I went to school there, grade school, then my sister Helen and I ended up in Fairview (high school), which was about ten miles from our home. We rode the school bus. Now this was in the Depression era. Everybody was poor and the coal mines were not doing too well. As I recollect Dad may have worked one or two days a week. We lived in a company house, owned by the coal company, and paid a rental there of nine dollars per month, and that was taken out of Dad's pay before he ever got any money. As soon as I was able to realize the economics of the coal mine and living in a coal mining town, I was told that Dad was called a hand loader. Everything in a coal mine was done by

physical labor; the only motorized unit was the electric motor that hauled out the coal cars and the coal miners loaded the coal. This was done by shovel. They would drill holes for black powder which they inserted and placed a fuse in them and lit the fuse and then had to get out of the immediate area in order to escape the explosion of the black powder which cracked the coal, and finished the job by using picks to pick out the coal. Then they would load the coal car and at that time Dad was getting about 25 cents a ton. You don't realize how much a ton of coal is, but Dad was reputed to be the best coal loader in that particular mine.

Dad never said much and in some respect I never got much information from my parents as to their background or my relatives in Europe or Hungary. I was sort of envious of people who could say "I've got a cousin here, a brother there, an uncle here, a grandfather there." We had no such things. I could not go beyond my parents as to who my relatives might have been in Europe. My parents did not speak English and so I was not informed as to my parents' background, who my relatives were. When anybody

<sup>2</sup> Lewis Detch had seven patents relating to fuses. The first patent was awarded in 1951 and last patent in 1971.



[illegible]

**HERITAGE-SHIPS**  
Emigrant Ship Images

**S/S Pennsylvania at Dover**

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**Andrew Detch:** It is my recollection that Dad made four trips. Now that to me was quite amazing because Dad could not speak a word of English. He managed to travel from Hungary to Germany where he caught the ship that transported him to the US and to think that he did that four times with perhaps very little, if any, money. It had to be he was sponsored by some Hungarian person or firm or church. I was really amazed when I was old enough to realize it--how could this man who spoke no English make four trips from Hungary to the US and then come here and have a family and raise them all? My mother was very instrumental in that she made this threat, if you want to call it a threat, "You either go to the school or you go to the coal mines." When Lewis finished high school, Mother was ready to send him to the coal mines. Lewis would not hear to that, and that is when Lewis left. He went to Pittsburgh. He, too, was a hard-working man who helped the family in times we really needed it. There were seven of us (children) which means nine when counting our parents who had to live on a coal miner's salary of about two or three days a week. So when you speak of hard times a lot of people don't realize that. And if you try to transfer that to your children, they have no idea how rough and hard it was to live in those days.

**Helen Huffman:** I remember we had a garden, John rented a big plot.

**Andrew Detch:** We lived in a duplex owned by the coal company and there was a little space of ground we raised a garden in and my parents knew nothing about fertilizing the land. In essence what you got was tired, worn-out old soil that they grew the same crops on year after year for the 18 years I lived there. We all managed to live through it. We had all the childhood diseases, the measles, mumps and all that, but everybody went to school. All of us graduated from high school and had some college experience. My brother, Alan, had two years at Fairmont State College and then World War II came along and he was drafted. He was one of the first to be drafted. At the time, Alan was actually working with my Dad in a coal mine at a little place near Grafton, West Virginia, and Dad was at least in his seventies then and he was hand loading coal at that age. I always remember that Grafton was 30 or 40 miles from Greentown. My mother would bake huge loaves of bread and I would package them up, wrap them up in a package and take them to the Post Office and mail them to Dad. That is how he got his bread. At times I would wonder because I would wrap the bread just as they came out of the oven and it was hot, so I would go to the Post Office and I think right now they would think I was a terrorist (laughter). Anyway, that was one of the amusing things that I had to do, but it was because we were poor and we had a lot of mouths to feed. Mom would send him bread, Dad would work, and that was the last time he worked in a mine. He got to the point where he just couldn't do it physically.

**Eric Huffman:** How old was he when he stopped?

**Andrew Detch:** I would say 70, he was in his seventies.

**Eric Huffman:** So he hauled coal up until then?

**Andrew Detch:** Yes, he hand loaded coal.

**Helen Huffman:** Tell about John. He went to school, but didn't he work (in the mines) in the summertime?

**Andrew Detch:** Yes, John worked at the Dakota mine.

**Eric Huffman:** If you don't mind, could we just briefly start with the oldest (child) and work down to the youngest.

**Andrew Detch:** The oldest was Lewis and then Mary. Actually we called her Kladica, but in Hungarian means Clara, but we called her Mary. Then there was Rose Drabish, then Esther Janeczek, that's Andy's mother, then Alan, then me, then Helen.<sup>3</sup>

**Eric Huffman:** As far as you knew, the two oldest children were born in Europe?

**Andrew Detch:** Yes, Lewis and Mary were born in Hungary.

**Helen Detch:** And they both spoke Hungarian well.

**Andrew Detch:** Just as a side-line, the Hungarian government tried to conscript Lewis into their army while he was here in the US.<sup>4</sup>

**Eric Huffman:** Did they send him a letter?

Nr. înregistrării	Timpul (anul, luna, ziua) înregistrării	Timpul (anul, luna, ziua) nașterii	Pronumele, sexul, religia copilului	Pronumele, numele, funcția, locuința			Locul nașterii (caz în care copilul s-a născut în cunștința mamei)	Observări eventuale (caz în care copilul este semnat de semnatari. Semnatari)
				parinte	religia	etatea		
26	1905 Aug 21	1905 Aug 21	Ludovic baptizat ref.	Detei Ludovic Detei Christina Detei Christina Detei Christina	ref.	40.		

Înregistrare ulterioară, rectificări.

Adeveresc că extrasul prezent consumat este corect și conform cu registrul pentru nașteri al oficiului stării civile.

Detei  
Detei Christina

Oficiul stării civile

**Lewis Detch's Romanian Draft Notice, 1926.**

**Andrew Detch:** Well, some kind of documents trying to get him back to go to the Hungarian army. Incidentally, Dad was in the Hungarian army. He was in the Hussars which was the cavalry. When Alan was drafted into the army they sent him to Texas, in the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry, which was at that time still a horse unit. Alan was dressed in leggings and the usual horseman's outfit and he got leave and went home and I can remember that he walked up to Dad and Dad saw him in his uniform with the leggings. Dad just

<sup>3</sup> The naming of the children excluded John who was the third oldest and first child born in the United States.

<sup>4</sup> It was the Romanian government who sent Lewis a draft notice for the Romanian army.

stood up and clicked his heels together and saluted him. As I understand, Dad was in the Hungarian Cavalry under Franz Joseph who was the emperor of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire at the time. As a matter of history, the country of Romania sided with the Allies while the Austrians & Hungarians sided with the Axis. As a reward to Romania they were given their own country. That's how our parents' homestead ended up in Romania. As I was told, Dad and Mom had a very little modest farm and when they came here, truthfully, they had no intentions of staying here. They were going to make enough money so they could go back and pay and work and live on their farm. I do know that Mother and Dad sent money regularly to her sister, my aunt who lived on the farm at the time. The farm was lost when the Nazis invaded Hungary and as far as we know the farm was taken, confiscated, and the property taken from our parents and relatives. When we came through the Depression, I can always remember



that the principal of the high school had a reunion, I think it was the 50<sup>th</sup> reunion of our high school class, he said this was the first class that went through World War I, the Depression, and World War II. So we went from one bad area into the next. In the 1930s it was the Depression.

**Kristina and Lewis Detch.**

**Eric Huffman:** Tell us a little bit about, you talked about the modest farm in Hungary, what about the places you were living in West Virginia? For instance, did you have, electricity, telephone? What kind of heating did you have in the house, those kinds of things. Was there a toilet in the house or did

you have to go outside?

**Andrew Detch:** We had outside facilities. I can remember when I would go at nighttime I would go through the snow barefoot.

**Helen Huffman:** We had light from the company.

**Andrew Detch:** Such as it was. It was a one bulb hanging down from a cord, then we would put another connection and Mother would eventually use it to run a washing machine. Up until that time she would scrub all the clothes on a wash board. You can imagine how dirty a coal miner's clothes would get.

**Helen Huffman:** We made our own soap.

**Andrew Detch:** And the little garden we had, we had a few potatoes we put in the cellar through the winter.

**Hellen Huffman:** Dad made his wine.

**Andrew Detch:** Our Dad would make wine out of fruit, jars we had canned, when it went bad, fermented, Dad took that and made wine. It's amusing—at that time was Prohibition and you could not make or possess whiskey. Dad had a place where he could hide his wine as he made it. It was amusing also, Helen mentioned her friend named Antoinette Napalillo<sup>5</sup> or as Napoleo as we called it, her mother

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<sup>5</sup> Antoinette Napalillo was born in 1922, the daughter of Ralph and Mary Napalillo. Ralph Napalillo was listed on the 1930 Marion County WV census as the owner of a grocery store.



and father had a grape arbor that they made Italian wine from and she also made home brew beer. Every now and then, the state police would come in and raid the places they had been informed where there was whiskey or beer being made or wine and they would actually invade your house and confiscate all the brew and whatever. I remember Antoinette's parents lived on the second or third story of a building and the police were dropping all the home brew and wine and dropping it down, it was in glass and was smashing it, and the broken glass kept building up, I was always amused about the last bottle of wine or beer hit this glass pile and did not break, and her mother came down those steps and retrieved that bottle and took it back in the house. So the police missed that one, but that one in itself was quite an adventure that all the police would come in. We were terrorized. You can understand sometimes why the poor people didn't trust the state troopers. I remember the coal miners went on strike there at the local mine and the coal property was off limits so that any time, anybody, a coal miner or whoever, if they ventured on coal company property, I remember one time they severely beat this man about the head. They were riding horses, the state troopers, they took their billy clubs and literally beat this man down to the ground into a bloody mess. He wasn't doing anything, he just happened to be on coal company property.

**Helen Huffman:** I know nothing of that.

**Andrew Detch:** You were younger.

**Helen Huffman:** I'm glad I am learning from you.

**Andrew Detch:** Anyway, that more or less is the trivial stuff, as far as history. Lewis decided he wasn't going into the coal mines so he went out and made a successful life. He did well, and he helped the family when we really needed it. As we got older, Mary went off—she married quite young—she lost her first son of about two years old, then she had another son, Charles, who is your cousin, who lived in Rivesville, Greentown, until his death just a few years ago<sup>6</sup>.

**Helen Huffman:** He was in the Navy.

**Charles Horvath in Navy coat, ca. 1944.**



**Andrew Detch:** Yes. As a matter of fact, that was interesting because he enlisted in the Navy under his brother's name who was two years older.

**Eric Huffman:** In order to get in?

**Andrew Detch:** Yes, in order to get in, and they (the Navy) found out about it and discharged him and when he was old enough he got back in.

**Helen Huffman:** The Navy gave him credit for his previous service and when he retired he was quite young.

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<sup>6</sup> Charles Horvath was born January 7, 1929 and died March 21, 1999, son of John & Mary Detch Horvath.

**Andrew Detch:** He got a Navy pension. Mary only had a high school education; yes I am pretty sure of that. Anyway, she had a hard time. She separated from her husband—her first husband just left her with the baby, child.

**Helen Huffman:** You know Helen told me it was an arranged marriage; Mommy and Daddy wanted her to marry.<sup>7</sup>

**Andrew Detch:** I don't know that. I have no information about that but I suspect that might have been true because I think all those people from that area of Europe made arrangements for their marriages, and they wanted them to marry within their own population.

**Helen Detch:** Mary did well after she married Bill Black. She worked and worked hard and Bill worked. I wanted to say that John taught school. Did he go to Fairmont State to get his two years?



**Andrew Detch:** He taught school at Sugar Lane, and he was determined to go to law school. He taught school long enough to earn enough money to go to law school, and he eventually went. He graduated from the law school in 1935 and set up his law practice in Summersville, West Virginia.

**Helen Huffman:** When he taught school, he rented this big plot of land, it had a lot of peach trees, 5 or 6, and the family, I remember lived on, and when Daddy would walk to the farm he always had a can, you remember that, he would take us children, or I would go with him because I wanted to eat those big fat peaches. They were delicious and we would bring home corn and different vegetables. My brother, John, did that because he knew that we could have the food so we would not go hungry, not that we ever did. My mother would give half of that food away.

**Mary Detch Black, September 1943.**

**Andrew Detch:** Yeah. It might sound humorous but not too humorous to me. Fortunately when I was in high school and grade school I made good grades with little effort.

**Helen Huffman:** That's right, he was very bright.

**Andrew Detch:** As a result, when it came to semester exams I was exempt which meant I got off two or three days from school. Well, Mother was overjoyed with that because she would take me to the farm or garden which was two or three miles from Greentown and I would hoe the corn and plant the potatoes and then when it was ready to harvest I was in the same position. I would not have to take my

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<sup>7</sup> Transcriber note: I think the name of the person who mentioned this arranged married was Mary rather than Helen.

exams so I was shuffled off to pick up the produce. I carried them in burlap sacks, if you can image that. Now I could carry, I only weighed about 125 pounds, if that, I would walk two or three miles, fill up the sack with either potatoes or corn with as much as I could carry. Along the route there was three or four mine tipples where they loaded coal and each one of them had beams at just the right height where I could put the sack of produce on it. After I got it home my mother would distribute what I carried home to the neighbors. Here were these guys down there on the street making (audio unclear) and here was me sweating bring all the food home and of course I resented it.

**Eric Huffman:** Why did she do that?

**Andrew Detch:** Well she was just a generous woman. She believed in giving the neighbors the produce. John taught school there right next to where he rented his garden plot, it could be an acre or more. He had to have it plowed.



**Helen Huffman:** My mother canned, and I wanted to tell you in the cellar where my Daddy had his goodies, we planted potatoes, we had them in the wintertime when it was snowing, he had in his cellar, I can still remember the dirt, he had the potatoes covered, and he covered cabbage we used for sauerkraut. But as I was growing up I wanted to mention that I did get a doll. I don't know if you remember, but one Christmas Momma gave me a doll, it was called (audio unclear) and I loved her. I remember one year I got a red dress, I have a picture of it in the album standing next to the roses Mommy had in her garden. I still have the cuttings that Mary gave me. She told Conrad and I those roses were at Mom's place for many years, and she (Mary) took some cuttings to Pittsburgh, then when we visited, Alan went and got me some cuttings.

**Helen and Lewis Detch (Sr.)**

I still have those roses in my yard. They are over or not quite 100 years old, the roses Mom had in her garden. But anyway, I had a bicycle, it was handed down and I got it and I would bicycle to Baxter to see Carrie Campbell. They had a farm way back in the country and I used to go see her; I liked her. She became a school teacher, she was a smoker and she died in San Francisco.

**Andrew Detch:** We had a little modest garden we grew a little bit of corn and tomatoes and cabbage and onions; onions would grow anywhere. We subsisted on that. I can remember when 25 pounds of flour costed 25 cents.

**Helen Huffman:** Milk was 10 cents.

**Andrew Detch:** Most of our early lives were spent in Greentown (Rivesville). Now my brother Alan and I had chores to do. Our chores were to cut the wood, gather the wood and the coal for cooking and for heating the house. There was a coal mine within a quarter of a mile from the house, and there again Alan and I would go down to the tippie where they loaded the coal. A lot of the coal fell off the sides and the coal at that time had rock or slate, and they had men who would kick that off the coal hopper, and we could knock off the coal from the rock, put it in our burlap sacks and haul it home. In the time I can remember when I was old enough, and I can say I started hauling coal like that when I was perhaps 8 years old or even earlier, and I did that until I left there at age 21. My recollection was that by the time my brother and I were doing all that work we never had to buy a ton of coal. The wood that we burned was actually railroad ties. We had a trolley there that ran from Greentown to Fairmont, West Virginia. And of course they used creosote ties. When the ties got rotten in some areas and could not be used by the trolley, they would come along and pull those out and pitch them over the side of the bank. Dad and I and Alan would go down there and take those ties and we would split them. If you have ever used a pole axe, if you know what a pole axe is, it has one flat side and a blade, and you can use it for pounding wedges. We would split those logs (ties). Mind you, Alan was about the same size as I, he was shorter than me, but we are talking about carrying about 75 pounds of wood on our shoulders for a mile or so and then we would chop it up in lengths to burn for cooking and heating the house. So that was Alan and my chore and actually I did that until the time I left there at 21 years old.

**Helen Huffman:** Mom always encouraged us to go to school.

**Andrew Detch:** As I said, she said you either go to school or you go to the coal mine.

**Eric Huffman:** Did you have a phone?

**Helen Huffman:** We did one summer when I worked at the Western Factory as a (audio unclear). I got a phone for Mommy and I would call her at the house. I can't remember, it was a factory on each side.

**Andrew Detch:** Westinghouse?

**Helen Huffman:** Yes. I worked there for one summer to get some money and I got a phone for Mom. I would call her at night, it was new to her.

**Andrew Detch:** Mary worked at Westinghouse for some time, it was a glass factory.

**Helen Huffman:** That's right. I don't think it was a glass factory where I worked, but Mary worked at Westinghouse.

**Andrew Detch:** Rose, I am trying to go in sequence as to when they left. Rose went to Fairmont State Teachers College, and taught school. Esther went to a business school and I went to a business school for two years there in Fairmont.

**Helen Huffman:** See, I did not know that.

**Andrew Detch:** Lewis actually paid for that, but that is where I got my typing skills which eventually ended up in my being taken into the Navy as a yeoman second class. I had a rating as a second class yeoman when I entered the Navy because of the business school experience I had being able to type and take short hand and that resulted in my becoming a Chief Yeoman in the US Navy.



## Allen Detch Leads Jungle Patrols

WITH 12TH CAVALRY REGIMENT ON LUZON—As the notorious campaign gradually draws closer to the "mopping up" stage the burden increases for the guerrillas and cavalry patrols in their reconnaissance missions to the foothills. One of the outstanding squad leaders on many of the patrols is Staff Sergeant Allen Detch, son of Mr. and Mrs. Lewis Detch of Rivesville, W. Va., a battle-hardened non-com in his four campaigns in 32 months overseas as a member of this outfit.

Detch and his squad start out on the patrols of two or three days with the sole purpose of pushing in behind the Jap defenses, estimating the strength and supplies of the enemy, then sneaking through the Jap outposts again with the reports. The staff sergeant and his men usually have one or more guerrillas accompanying them to have a greater knowledge of the terrain. Although vastly outnumbered, the reconnaissance platoon will shoot their way out of a tight spot if forced to, and such has been the case here, as well as at Arawe, New Britain; along New Guinea's Driniumor River at Aitape; and lastly, in the rugged mountains of Leyte. All of these struggles were successful because of the extremely good reconnaissance despite slimy, mountain trails, thick jungles and constant ambush.

The sergeant, one of four members of the family in the armed forces, holds four campaign stars and the Combat Infantryman's Badge and has seen action on Philippine islands of Mindanao and Leyte.

**Helen Huffman:** Tell about Alan.

**Andrew Detch:** Well Alan was drafted and went to Texas in the First Cavalry. Now he was later taken into the mechanized unit of the First Cavalry. They did away with the horses, and Alan was sent to the South Pacific. He went to that area in the South Pacific where the Japanese had taken over all those islands. He was in the areas where it was jungle. He was a scout. He was a platoon leader and I asked him one time after the war, "Alan, did you kill any Japanese?" He said, "I think it was seventeen." He was in the Philippines, Leyte, New Guinea. He had a platoon, he was a sergeant, and they would go behind enemy lines and scout the Japanese people there. He related to me one incident where he was coming back from a scouting expedition; Alan was short and he could have passed for a Japanese soldier. He was taking quinine for malaria, and taking that type of medication caused his skin to become a yellow tint. He was coming back from a scouting mission when one of his own men saw him and started shooting at him.

**Eric Huffman:** They thought he was Japanese?

**Andrew Detch:** Yes. Alan said he ducked down and finally made him realize he was an American, and this soldier that shot at Alan was actually transferred. It affected him to the point he could not take it anymore. Alan came through and he was a good soldier.

**Helen Huffman:** Yes he was.

**Andrew Detch:** Two years later, because Alan was two years older than me, I turned 21 and was in Charleston, West Virginia. I was working at the Naval Ordnance Plant. You talk about coincidences, I was working in this plant that produced gun barrels for the US Navy; they were called 3 inch barrels. The first ship that I was assigned to was the *USS Brennan* and they had 3

inch guns on the ship and they had imprinted on the barrel, US Naval Plant, South Charleston, West Virginia. So the gun had come from the very place where I made guns. Anyway, I went to Charleston, I was working at the Naval Ordnance Plant, was boarding there at a boarding house and they had a chief recruiting officer for the Navy. I asked him (about enlisting), because I had turned 21, and I know it was just a question of time before I was drafted because I was unmarried, they were going to get to me. So he said yes, as a matter of fact when I told him I had office experience and typing, he said we need you and I can even get you a rating. Of course I was unaware of what is a rating in the US Navy. He told me I could get a Second Class rating. He got me that. On October 31, 1941, I was inducted into the US Navy on the capitol steps at Charleston, West Virginia; there were 60 other recruits. That's where I was transferred from Charleston to Norfolk and back to Charleston. Now the Naval Intelligence Office was engaged primarily in getting Intelligence Officers and getting information as to their background to see if they were suitable for Naval Intelligence work. I was in charge of the records in that office, and I came

**Andrew Detch in Navy uniform ca. 1942**



across my record and I was interested in determining what did they say about me. I can always remember the officer who investigated me to see if I was eligible for working for the Intelligence Office, and he said I was a "quite unassuming country boy." (Laughter)

**Eric Huffman:** Were you?

**Andrew Detch:** Well a coal miner and very naive. Alan had already been transferred to Texas and later on to the South Pacific. I think Esther and Rose got into the Army. I think they were Waves.

**Helen Huffman:** No, they worked in the Army where they made (words unclear perhaps guns?)

**Andrew Detch:** As a matter of fact, they were in Aberdeen, Maryland. I was sent to boot camp which was just a short ways from Aberdeen, so

Rose and Esther would come up on visitation day and visit me at boot camp. Helen, where did you go during the war?

**Helen Huffman:** Well Mary got me in. I went to Pittsburgh where Mary said, "Why don't you go into the service?" So I went in.

**Helen Detch:** To the regular Army?

**Helen Huffman:** Yes, into the Army Air Corp.

**Eric Huffman:** The Women's Army Air Corp. WAAC



**Helen Huffman:** Yes, and I met Dad, Conrad in Texas. No-- in Miami? From Miami I went to get out of the service. I think that's the way it was, it's been so many years ago.

**Eric Huffman:** San Antonio?

**Helen Huffman:** Yes, I met Dad (Conrad) there, and we dated and he was going to get out and I was going to get out.

**Andrew Detch:** What year was that?

**Conrad and Helen Detch Huffman ca. 1944.**

**Helen Huffman:** 1944 or 1945. Then he wanted to go to California because his life was almost like mine but instead of coal his was wood. His daddy worked at the mill.

**Eric Huffman:** The Kirby Lumber Mill, that's what I've been told.

**Helen Huffman:** Yes. They would burn wood and our family had coal. Our life was almost alike. So we married and went to California. He said he would never live in Texas and he did not want to live on a farm. He sent money home to his mother. When we got our mustering out pay he had \$500 his mother had saved for him and we came to California with our duffle bags. We worked, he would go to school and I worked while he went or I would go to school. He wanted to go into the beauty business and he also went to USC and got his degree in business because his hands broke out. Your Dad developed some products with his brother's help to develop a permanent that wouldn't hurt his hands. Your Dad loved the beauty world and doing beauty things. That is how we got started and as far as we have gotten today.

**Eric Huffman:** Mom, what did you do for the government in the service?



**Kristina Nagy Detch, March 1958.**

**Helen Huffman:** I assisted dentists in cleaning teeth, I was a dental assistant. I met your Dad in the mess hall. He said he saw me walk in with some girl that I ate with; he sat 4 or 5 tables away. We dated, then lived happily ever after.

**Andrew Detch:** Mother's maiden name was "Nagy." N\_A\_G\_Y, pronounced "Noj" but spelled Nagy.

One year Dad was out of work, he applied at this coal mine office with this superintendent asking for a job. Dad can't speak English and the superintendent's response to Dad asking for a job was, "we are full up." Dad keeps hitting his leg and

saying no "full lop". Now Dad had misunderstood what the superintendent had said. "Full lop" meant "wooden leg" in Hungarian, and Dad was saying I don't have a wooden leg, but he eventually got the job. This coal company was within walking distance.

**Helen Huffman:** I also want to say that when he (Andrew) came home, my brother Johnny encouraged him (Andrew) to go to law school, and Helen helped.

**Andrew Detch:** That was after the war. Dad also had a job at what they called "93", which was Consolidated Coal Company Number 93 which was 4 miles one way. Dad would walk to the mine, work a full day, then walk back. We would travel that path on occasion to pick blackberries, and we went right through this pasture, and one day while we were coming back from berry picking, Alan and I were



ahead of Dad. Dad had broken his leg and he limped so he was lagging behind, we came upon this bull. I think maybe a Jersey bull, I understand one of the meanest type bulls you could encounter, and the bull was stomping and had his head lowered down, shaking at Alan and me. We had never seen a bull, didn't know what it was, it looked like another cow to us. So Alan and I were trying to get the darn bull to get out of the way when Dad came up and shouted to get over the hill, run, (laughter) because he knew we were in danger. The darn bull was going to charge us at any time and hurt us. Sort of an amusing incident but not too amusing when you think about how easily we could have been hurt.

**Helen Huffman:** Tell about your incident of picking berries.

**Andrew Detch:** Well one year, it was a Sunday, Dad and I went to this area to pick berries. There was one area that was owned by the coal mine so it didn't make any difference who went there, the public was invited if they wanted to, but it was close to a privately owned farm, and we had picked our buckets full, and without our knowledge had gotten over onto the privately owned berry patch. We hadn't been there very long when this man came along with a shot gun. He confronted us, told us we were on his land. Here I was just a young kid. Dad knew about guns, and the man said; "those are my berries." He made both of us walk. Dad said he couldn't walk, so he made me take two buckets of berries and take them to his house and he emptied them and gave me back the buckets and told me not to go back there again. So Dad and I went home with no berries. I always resented that, but I'm not sure but I think ...

(Tape stops here, end of Side A.)

## SIDE B

**Andrew Detch:** (The audio on the tape is broken up and not clear, but Andrew was talking about the man with the shot gun, then he begins the story of his Dad's serious arm injury.) .... They said it was blood poisoning, which was a common term at that time. Dad was in the hospital; they took my brother John along to interpret for him. The doctors told John that the arm had to come off, amputate, so John told Dad that the arm had to come off. Dad said, "Son, you tell that doctor that when they bury me, they are going to bury me in one piece". He said, "I am a coal miner who makes a living loading coal and I can't support my family with only one arm." So he told them in no uncertain terms, "you do not cut this arm off". He recovered and eventually went back to work in the coal mines, so that was one of the factors in Dad's life. Dad was always very mild-mannered.

**Helen Huffman:** A sweet man, gentle.



**Andrew Detch:** In all the time I can remember in my life-time, I don't remember Dad ever laying one hand on any of the children or any of the family or anybody else.

**Helen Huffman:** Mom ran the house.

**Detch family:** Front L to R: Lewis Jr., Kristina, Lewis Sr.  
Back: **Andrew**, Helen. 1943.



**Andrew Detch:** Mom was the iron fist, and she didn't have to tell you more than once if you were misbehaving it was time to stop. You knew if you didn't, you suffered the consequences. In any event, our parents were not cruel to us, never mistreated us, and worked themselves to death to support the family. They were very high-minded people. During the Depression, Franklin Roosevelt came up with the WPA, the Works Progress Administration and that provided jobs for people around the area. I believe Rose, my sister Rose got a job through the WPA, and helped to support the family. They were also giving away flour, butter under this program, and Mom said no, you don't take charity. They were honorable enough that they didn't believe that you got anything for nothing, you worked for it. Our parents never tolerated stealing or doing any criminal act. In our whole community those people were primarily Europeans and it was a disgrace to be arrested. I didn't know if I should go over this but in the area there were a lot of trees, apple tree, walnut trees, fruit trees and you would be surprised how much food they provided for the people. Blackberries. People would actually be able to make it through the winter with these crops that grew on the company lands. The company owned thousands of acres.

**Helen Huffman:** They were wild too.

**Andrew Detch:** Oh yes, everything was wild. There was an occasional apple tree, I don't know if you have ever heard of persimmon trees, Paw Paw trees and wild cherry trees.

**Eric Huffman:** What are paw paws?

**Andrew Detch:** Paw paws are fruit almost like a banana, a short almost miniature watermelon, green and in the wintertime when the frost hits, it becomes yellow and it tastes like sweet soft bananas, but it is very nutritious. I knew practically ever apple tree, fruit tree, nut tree within a radius of, I would say five miles. An interesting fact was the native chestnut trees were quite plentiful in West Virginia right about the time I was 5 or 6 years old and then the Chinese blight was brought over here somehow, and affected the chestnuts and killed every chestnut tree. You will not find a native chestnut tree. It provided bushels of chestnuts. People there would turn their hogs loose to forage out in the chestnut fields and forest. They would fatten those hogs and butcher them so the chestnut crops were a staple for the people during those hard times. I remember when Dad said they could get up in a chestnut tree and shake the tree and they had burrs on the fruit, the nuts, and get literally truck-loads of nuts from these trees. Chestnuts fed the animals, the wild animals, wild turkeys, deer—that was a staple for them. I can only remember because John remembered when they brought in chestnuts for eating. I got all the walnuts, hickory nuts, and the paw paws that grew along the streams. There was a Paw Paw Creek.

**Helen Huffman:** That was where we swam.

**Andrew Detch:** I caught a lot of catfish and for years catfish was our main meal.

**Helen Huffman:** Besides chicken.

**Andrew Detch:** Yes chickens. We raised the chickens but then I would always bring home catfish.

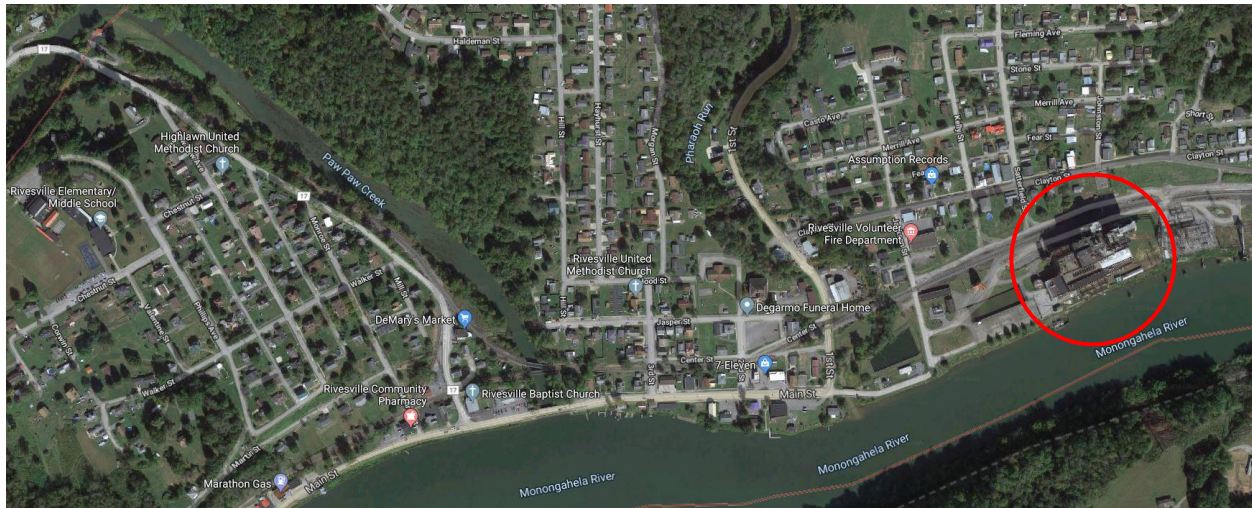
**Eric Huffman:** Supplement it with catfish.

**Andrew Detch:** Oh yeah. It got to the point where Mother finally told me not to bring any more.

**Helen Huffman:** (Speaking in Hungarian) How do you say "fish" in Hungarian?

**Andrew Detch:** I forget. Anyway, it was interesting, I loved to fish, I think that was the only thing that kept me out of the penitentiary (laughter) because everybody else was going around stealing things. Junk at that time was worth a lot of money. A piece of copper was worth 10 or 15 cents, 10 or 15 cents would get you into the movies, it would buy you a whole sack full of candy.

**Helen Huffman:** We went to movies once a week.



**Aerial view of Rivesville, West Virginia. Monongahela Power Company on right.**

**Andrew Detch:** I was always on the fishing bank and so these other fellows got into trouble. They would steal people's aluminum pots and the power company would have brass and copper. The younger boys would go swimming in the Monongahela River. The Monongahela Power Company had a power plant right there where the coal mine was where we gathered the coal and they would dump the coal directly into the power plant. The coal was pulverized by big steel balls in drums, and then they would take that coal dust and shoot it into a furnace that produced a lot of heat which in turn produced a lot of steam that ran the generators that produced electricity. Behind the power plant was a tunnel where the hot water would come out into the river. That was a favorite swimming hole. The Monongahela River was a navigable stream that had steamboats up and down it. We would go and swim there and right next to the power plant was a bin where the power company would dump its brass and copper from the power lines that they had left over. The boys would go by and take a bit of this and a bit of that, and all the time they were being watched by the people in the plant who called the police. Fortunately, I was not with that bunch. They had them all taken—I guess there were 25 boys—taken before the Justice of the Peace and all of their parents had to go there. You can imagine where in this little community to be arrested was an absolute no no.

**Eric Huffman:** They stored the brass pieces?

**Andrew Detch:** No, they sold them for junk. The junk man would come there, that was a big business at that time during the Depression. A pound of copper you would get maybe a dollar. A dollar would buy a lot.

**Helen Huffman:** Down by the river those big steamers would come up and Vergil Adams and several others would go swimming. I was a good swimmer and they would say, "come on lets go out to the

steamer” and they told me how to swim because it was swift water outside of the barge and they would get me up there. The man who was running that thing would chase you off. They would say, “Now Helen! Dive way out” and I did because I did not want to get sucked under. I did that. I guess, I was a little bit wild.

**Andrew Detch:** We would swim right behind the paddle boat, the paddle wheel, and swim there. Sometimes they were pushing coal barges and sometimes we would get aboard the coal barges, but of course we wouldn’t go very far because then you would have to swim back, sometimes they would call the police when we were swimming down there, and needless to say we swam in the buff. (Laughter)

**Eric Huffman:** Weren’t you afraid to swim in the river. You couldn’t pay me to. If you would offer me \$10,000 to swim across this river in front of this condominium I won’t take it. I would be scared to death.

**Helen Huffman:** No, I was not afraid, I was younger.

**Andrew Detch:** We are talking 60 years ago. The water wasn’t clean by any means. People were still using the outdoor toilets and a lot of them had their toilets right on the river and the raw sewerage would go right into the river. The coal company was dumping sulphur water. The water that came out of the coal mines would come out as sulphur water and cause red deposits on the bottom of the streams. If you picked up the water it would look clear, but it was just as red and killed all the aquatic life.

**Helen Huffman:** We went swimming for recreation and another thing we went ice skating.

**Andrew Detch:** Oh yes, when the river froze we skated in our shoes because we can’t afford ice skates. The blades would strap on to our shoes.

**Helen Huffman:** Then I went into Fairmont and they had roller skating. I would take the street car. I went ice skating with that fellow whose daddy and momma owned a store. He was so nice and he would take me and we would go swim together because I was afraid I might fall in or something. I can’t think of his name, the store was at the bottom of Highland. They were Italian. Anyway, he was well liked.

**Andrew Detch:** I had an amusing incident. The Monongahela River is a big river and every now and then it would freeze maybe to a depth of 5 or 6 inches of ice. On one occasion some idiot decided he wanted to take his car out onto the ice and needless to say he was lucky he got out of there alive because the car sank.

**Helen Huffman:** Do you remember who it was?

**Andrew Detch:** No, but I remember it was an old Model T Ford. He drove it out there and was sliding around then the ice broke but it sank slowly enough that he got out of it. The river had a lot of memories, but that was the only recreation we had. You swam, you fished.

**Helen Detch:** We had Hungarian dances. Antoinette’s mother and daddy had this store and on one side was a dance hall and they lived on the upper level. They had these country dances where country men would come in and play this wild music. I never did go to them.

**Andrew Detch:** Well you should have gone to the Hungarian dances.

**Helen Detch:** Oh I went there over at the KP Hall where they had grapes hanging.

**Andrew Detch:** The grapes were hanging down from the ceiling and doing the Hungarian Czárdás dance<sup>8</sup>. I remember seeing Mary there.

**Helen Huffman:** Mary would let us go with her.

**Helen Detch:** Didn't Mary have a boy-friend drown swimming?

**Helen Huffman:** I don't remember, which boy?

**Andrew Detch:** One of the Jimmy boys. Where Paw Paw Creek flowed into the Monongahela River, there were three bridges. One was the car bridge, the second bridge which was just a little higher was the railroad bridge and the third bridge which was about 100 feet high was the trolley. Now we had to go from Greentown to what we called "Highlands" in the community of Rivesville and it was a shortcut to go over the trolley bridge. They had huge telephone poles along the side of the bridge and there were 2X8s about 6 inches apart attached to the telephone poles and a lot of the high school kids, well actually the junior high kids would cross that bridge and never thought about the trolley and there were many occasions when the trolley was coming and everyone had to get out by those 2X8s and the trolley won't give an inch, but as far as I know nobody got killed.

All the people there were very generous. I was particularly fond of the Italian people there because if you were hungry they would feed you. Many times I had spaghetti at Chicky Gerrards<sup>9</sup>.

**Helen Huffman:** Oh yeah, they liked you.

**Andrew Detch:** Even back then there was what you might call discrimination, but I don't think it was because the blacks and the whites worked together in the coal mines. There was no animosity or anything like that. They did, however, house the blacks in one area and whites in another. I can remember several of the black young people being friends with me. Nobody ever used the words like "niggers", there was no animosity at all. You didn't get into that area until you left and got into the cities, and then you began to hear about blacks and whites and unfortunately even back then for some reason there was prejudice against the Jews. I don't know what it was, but apparently Mother carried it over from Europe. She was suspicious of them, for some reason. We being younger had no idea there was discrimination and things going on like that. I can always remember Mother went to a butcher shop or grocery store across from Sacowski's store<sup>10</sup> and they had a Jewish butcher there. Mother would go there to buy the meat and she would always tell the butcher, "Get your thumb off the scale".

**Helen Huffman:** Oh I don't know that. What I was thinking about was when my sisters were older, as they would date, there were these two handsome Jewish butchers, and they were in a big red truck opposite our house, across the way. Mommy would say, (speaking in Hungarian) she didn't want my sisters to even think about dating those men. (speaking again in Hungarian).

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<sup>8</sup> Czárdás or Csárdás (pronounced Shadadash) is an old Hungarian folk dance.

<sup>9</sup> Transcription spelled phonetically

<sup>10</sup> Transcription spelled phonetically



**Eric Huffman:** What does that mean?

**Andrew Detch:** Don't associate with those bad Jews.

**Eric Huffman:** What about Grandfather Detch. Was he ...

**Andrew Detch:** Dad never made one remark about anybody. Dad was never demonstrative about anything.

**Helen Huffman:** They called him old Lewie they loved him down at the beer place.

**Andrew Detch:** I have to tell you about an amusing incident that happened to my brother John, I mean my brother Lewis. There was a beer garden down in the town, it was about two blocks from home and every weekend or every Saturday Lewis would drive from Pittsburgh to Greentown.

**Eric Huffman:** So he had a car?

**Andrew Detch:** Oh yes and sometimes he used that car to bring produce from the garden we were talking about on Sugar Lane. He (Lewis) would go down to this beer garden, it was run by Dominic Cavalier<sup>11</sup>.

**Helen Huffman:** Oh fine people. They were Italian.

**Andrew Detch:** Dominic was actually telling this happening. Lewis came in and he (Dominic) said, "When Lewie drinks, everybody drinks." So they all sidled up to the bar and when they got through Lewis said, "when Lewie pays, everybody pays." (Laughter). It's a wonder he didn't get beaten to death.

**Helen Huffman:** You know that everyone liked my brother because they knew he came home to look after my mother and dad. He (Lewis) would take Daddy down to the beer hall and buy him a beer. My Daddy, when he was older couldn't control himself and peed in his pants. They would come home and my Mother would say (speaking in Hungarian) "Oh, you pissed in your pants". (Laughter)

**Andrew Detch:** You have to realize that he was close to 80 years old.

**Eric Huffman:** OK, tell me something. After Grandfather Detch and Grandmother Detch had gotten too old to continue to create an income stream with his job, how did they live?

**Andrew Detch:** By family support, the children supported them.

**Eric Huffman:** They sent so much a week or month?

**Andrew Detch:** Primarily John and Lewis, they were working, but we were too young. There was no work available to us, but when I got into the Navy I would send money home. Mother lived in Greentown and I think Lewis primarily supported her, Dad had died.

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<sup>11</sup> Dominic Cavalier was born in 1903 in Italy. He was listed on the 1930 Marion County WV census as a policeman.

**Eric Huffman:** When did Grandfather Detch die?

**Andrew Detch:** 1954. He was supposedly 89 years old.

**Eric Huffman:** And Grandmother Detch?

**Andrew Detch:** She died about 11 years later. Mary eventually took her to Pittsburgh and Mother lived there until she died.

**Eric Huffman:** She died in 1965. She continued living after Grandfather Detch passed away at that home for a short while?

**Helen Huffman:** She became sick, she ate some food that was not right. My brother Lewis called Mary as I understand it. Mary came down. She stayed with my Mother for several days. Mary eventually said "why don't you come live with me".

**Andrew Detch:** She came to live with Mary and her second husband Bill Black in Pittsburgh.

**Eric Huffman:** Did she own the house or was it a company house?



**Andrew Detch:** Yes, we never owned the house in Greentown in Rivesville. We continued paying rent, I think eventually the people who lived next door, it was a duplex, bought the house, and ended up paying rent to them. The company got rid of all their real estate property.

**Helen Huffman:** A lot of people bought those homes, I know when I went home (unclear).

**Detch House, Greentown, 135 Satterfield Street, Rivesville, WV.**

**Eric Huffman:** So far we have talked about different aunts and uncles, but we haven't talked too much about Rose and Ethel. I'm sorry, I mean Esther.

**Andrew Detch:** Yes Rose after the war taught school in Maryland for a long time. She was a very good teacher.

#### **Rose Detch 1935 High School Graduation.**



**Eric Huffman:** What was her married name?

**Andrew Detch:** Drabish. She was married to Nicholas Drabish. She had two children, Richard and Linda. She was living with Linda at the time she died.

**Eric Huffman:** When did she die? A couple of years ago?

**Andrew Detch:** No, it has been longer than that<sup>12</sup>. She died in 2000 near Washington, DC. or Friendsville, Maryland.

**Helen Huffman:** She taught school. It was my understanding that she was such a good teacher they brought in student teachers to learn from Rose how to handle a class. They always brought the new ones (teachers) in to her because the principal .....

**Eric Huffman:** Rose was always a mystery to me because I met all my other aunts and uncles but I can't remember her.

**Helen Huffman:** You met Rose. She was kind of a loner, she seldom wrote to me.

**Andrew Detch:** Her husband, they separated. He was an amicable person, but not prone to do much work. For all purposes, Rose had to support him. She had the children, and so she separated from him, and went on and did very well.

**Helen Huffman:** You have to admire her. She went to college, I think in Altoona, if I remember correctly. She worked in the dime store to continue her education. She wanted to get a teacher's job and she was qualified but she had to have certain qualifications so she worked in the dime store. Did she have her degree then? I think the principal got sick, he had cancer, and she had a chance to get a job.

**Eric Huffman:** How about Esther?

**Esther Detch.**

**Andrew Detch:** Well a lot of Esther's problems were after she and Walter Janeczek separated. Esther had mental problems, and lived from here to there and worked in different places. She was a schizophrenic. As long as she stayed on her medication she was fine, she was able to function alright, and later on it got to the point where she went to a facility. It wasn't exactly a mental hospital, but a home that provided her with a job and a place to stay near



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<sup>12</sup> Rose Detch Drabish died on October 4, 2000.

Huntington, West Virginia. It was a home and I think she was there. My belief was that she eventually stopped taking her medication. As a result she went off on a tantrum. John had to go get her and help her.

**Helen Huffman:** John had to raise her kids.

**Andrew Detch:** Yes. He took Andy and Mary, and he and Rosalie, brought them up. They went to school and are doing very well now. That was a lot of credit to John and Rosalie. I want to comment how gracious your Mom and Dad (Helen & Conrad) were for taking over our brother Alan in his last few years.

**Eric Huffman:** Alan needed the love and 24/7 care because of his Alzheimer's. My Mom took absolute 24 hours a day care of him so his last few years were very happy ones.

**Helen Huffman and Alan Detch.**



**Andrew Detch:** He had a hard life.

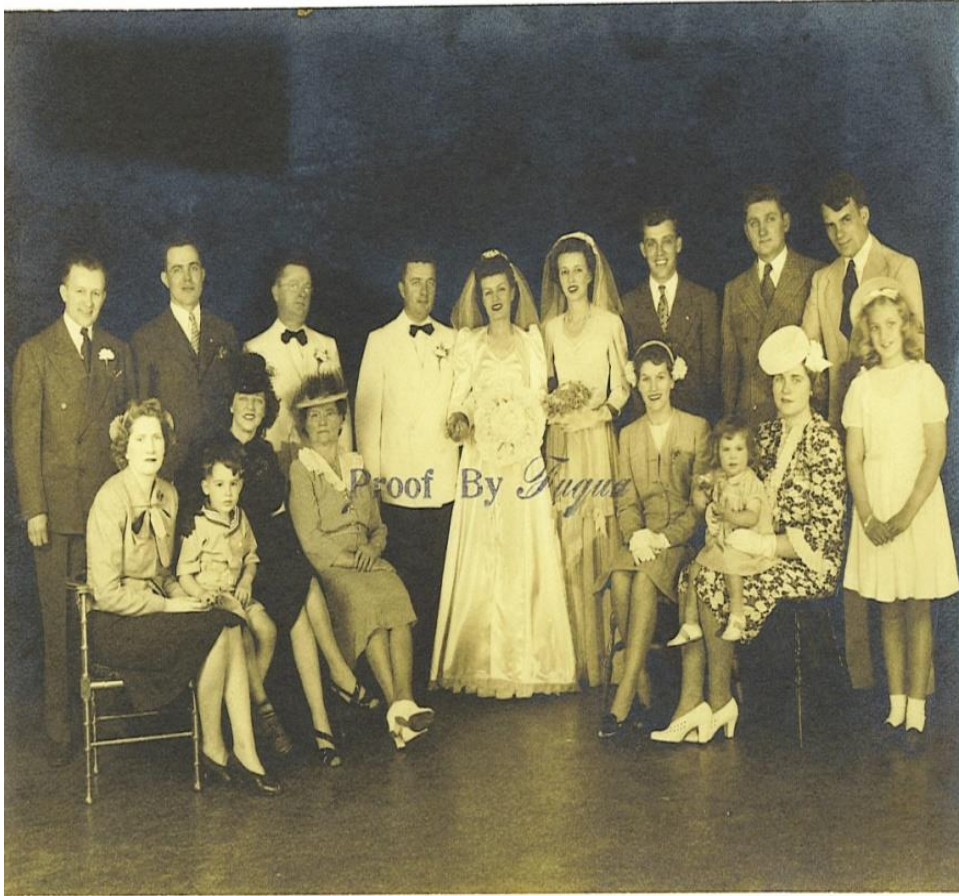
**Helen Huffman:** That place in Pittsburgh wasn't good.

**Andrew Detch:** No, it wasn't the best but it was all he could afford at the time.

**Helen Huffman:** Those steps.

**Andrew Detch:** No, it wasn't top-notch facilities, but under the circumstances it was the best the opportunities offered at the time. But anyway, Esther had a pretty rough life. At one time she thought she was in hog heaven when she and Walter were living together. He was working for his parents in the car business. When that (business) folded Walter became a drunk, he became an alcoholic, and that resulted in Esther being thrown out, practically on her own with the two children. That's when John picked up the children. As a matter of fact John and Rosalie helped Mary's son, Charles (Horvath), got him up until the time he entered the Navy and when he came out he was on his own, but there again the family helped him.





**WEDDING OF ESTHER  
DETC & WALTER  
JANECZEK, May 25, 1946  
Baltimore, Maryland**

**Seated** (L to R): Olive Detch, John Lewis Detch, Jr., unknown, Honorata Janeczek (mother of groom), Helen Detch,, Charlotte Detch, Rosalie Detch, unknown.

**Standing** (L to R): Lewis Detch, Stephen Janeczek, Andrew Janeczek (father of the groom), Walter Janeczek, Esther Detch, Rose Detch, Andrew Detch, unknown, John Detch.

**Andrew Detch:** I don't know if Helen wants me to go back to my Mother's problem. When the Depression hit, Mom and Dad had a real modest bank account there in the local bank in Fairmont, West Virginia. Of course when the banks went down they lost their money.

**Eric Huffman:** Do you have any idea how much that might have been?

**Andrew Detch:** About \$800. During the Depression that was a lot of money. They were saving it primarily to take back to Hungary. They wanted to go home. They never considered the United States as their home. I think that may have been one of the factors why they didn't learn English, they weren't interested in learning English. They just wanted to earn enough to go back to their home and farm in Hungary.

**Helen Huffman:** They were going to take me with them.

**Andrew Detch:** When that happened, the banks failed and Mother snapped. She had a nervous breakdown. I think I was about 12 years old. I can remember distinctly when this happened because we were in this duplex in Greentown. I was in bed and I heard my Mother talking, mumbling, talking. I got out of bed and she had gotten up about half way up the staircase to the bedrooms and she was sitting there talking to herself. Being a young kid, I had no idea what was going on. We were flabbergasted.

**Eric Huffman:** Had she ever done that before?

**Andrew Detch:** No.

**Eric Huffman:** She had been lucid before?

**Andrew Detch:** Yes, and she was the head of the household.

**Eric Huffman:** So basically overnight she snapped (he snaps his fingers).

**Andrew Detch:** Yes, this one incident when she heard the bank had failed and she lost all her money. One of the things, I'm sure she too was schizophrenic, but she wasn't a violent type. A lot of the schizophrenics, as I understand it, become violent and will do harm to others. Mother never harmed anybody, but she would constantly talk about others who were bent on harming her children. So she was giving them a going over, saying you don't harm my children. That was the extent of whatever violence you could say she ever experienced. And that stems from paranoia.

**Eric Huffman:** You think if we take a look back about what was troubling her it possibly could have been treated with modern methods.

**Andrew Detch:** Oh yes, they had none of that. Under the circumstances normally at this stage, they would have caught that, and treated that, and she would have been fine, just like it did Esther. But they had no such medication in those times, and nobody could afford it because everyone was dirt poor. My Mother was actually taken to a mental hospital in Weston, West Virginia. She was there for a while and eventually they let her go and brought her back to her home in Greentown. She lived there alone and was able to function and feed herself.

**Eric Huffman:** Was this after grandfather passed away?

**Andrew Detch:** No this was before he passed away and she lived there after he passed away.

**Eric Huffman:** How did he relate to her after she had her mental breakdown?

**Andrew Detch:** He never changed a bit. Mother was well enough that she could cook. She fed him and she took care of us.

**Eric Huffman:** So she was not constantly schizophrenic or constantly unable to function. She could function in certain situations?

**Andrew Detch:** Oh yes, it never affected her ability to function physically, maybe mentally. She could discuss with us intelligently. I could talk to her in Hungarian. She had some knowledge of English, but there was no difference in our communicating our feelings with her than before this happened.

**Helen Huffman:** Sometimes she would sit alone and talk to herself. If she were sitting, she would talk to herself, she was always talking to somebody. I would ask her, "Momma who are you talking to", and she would name them, maybe somebody in Europe, I don't know. She knew every state in the union.



**Kristina Detch.**

**Andrew Detch:** She would name the individuals she was talking to. From what I gathered, it was primarily they were trying to do us harm and she was in essence defending us. “You are not going to harm my children”. That primarily was all she talked about, but she would have her lucid moments and she would talk to us normally.

**Eric Huffman:** I’ll bet there were any number of psychotropic drugs that just would have absolutely made her well again.

**Andrew Detch:** Oh yeah, but in those days they didn’t have that.

**Helen Detch:** You need to mention she had a sister that came to visit her.

**Andrew Detch:** Well I didn’t know that. There was some correspondence about that. Mary told us about my Mother’s sister, my Aunt Anna, came over here, and I think Mother might have paid her way over. For some reason she didn’t want to stay here.

**Helen Huffman:** Her son had cancer.

**Andrew Detch:** I don’t know the reason, but in any event she went back to Hungary. Then when she got there, she wanted to come back. Mother said no, you had your chance; I’m not going to pay for it again.

**Helen Huffman:** Her son had cancer and she thought she could go back and heal him.

**Andrew Detch:** A lot of my history beyond my parents I was not aware of. Lewis and John obviously knew all of this, but not for one minute did they ever discuss this. When Lewis died, his wife Olive, was very resentful of the Detch family because Lewis would make trips home to help them.

**Helen Huffman:** He helped her (Olive’s) Mother.

**Andrew Detch:** Oh yeah. Her (Olive’s) Mother lived with them for quite some time<sup>13</sup>. She (Olive) was very adamant about it and I can always remember at Lewis’ funeral that Olive made it abundantly clear that she did not want to associate or have anything more to do with the Detches. I said, “Well fine if that is the way you want it,” and we never had anything more to do with her. John and Rosalie<sup>14</sup> did though. They went to see her after that, and maybe she might have relented somewhat. Why she had those feelings, I don’t know. But that hurt. It was really a shocker to us because he (Lewis) spent all his time there in Pittsburgh.

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<sup>13</sup> Olive’s mother was Ella Rebecca Harris Allen, July 18, 1871 – December 11, 1967.

<sup>14</sup> Reconciliation with Olive was by John and his second wife, Mary Morgan. They were married in 1973; Lewis died in 1975.



**L to R: Ethel, John, Olive, John Lewis Detch, Jr. 1987.**

**Eric Huffman:** I remember her. I remember Lewis coming out to visit us in Los Angeles, and Olive was there. We would go out to a restaurant. I remember that very distinctly. I remember the Detch Electric Company, and I remember those fluorescent light locks he used to sell. He called them a lamp lock. It was made out of nylon or some material like that. I remember Olive very well.

**Helen Detch:** Your aunt's name was Anna Lazer and your mother also had a sister named Helen? That is what Mary told me<sup>15</sup>.

**Eric Huffman:** There are all of these people, my grandmother's sisters that stayed in Europe or went back to Europe.

**Helen Detch:** Mary said one time, a cousin, a son of Anna Lazer, came through this country, and called Mary and he was going to Canada. Mary didn't invite him and she didn't want to get involved. I don't remember his first name.

**Eric Huffman:** And that was the son of who?

**Andrew Detch:** Anna, the one that went back to Hungary, your great aunt. My mother's sister.

**Eric Huffman:** So we have no way of contacting him.

**Helen Huffman:** He had lost a leg. He had only one leg.

**Andrew Detch:** If there were any records or history other than what letters may have passed between my parents and her kin, there is nothing left.

**Eric Huffman:** Do you think those were amongst the items that Lewis' wife burned?

**Andrew Detch:** Yes, they may have been. That was one of the things I was quite disappointed in that John and Lewis never discussed with Alan or me or Helen or Rose or Esther about our family background. I've learned more in the past few years about the family than I did in all the times up to that point.

**Helen Huffman:** We have learned about where we came from through Ethel.

**Andrew Detch:** They got that through letters that John had.

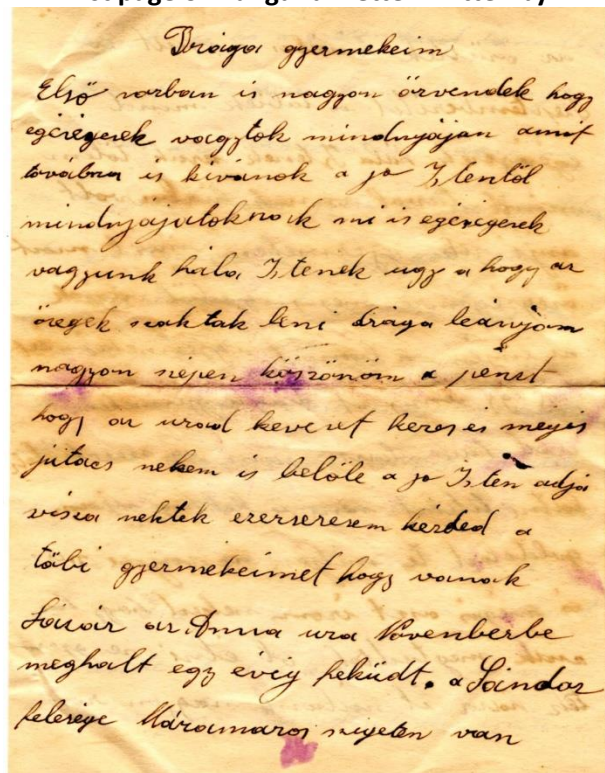
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<sup>15</sup> Kristina Nagy Detch was the daughter of Elek and Anna Nagy. She was the oldest of eight children.



**Helen Huffman:** Yes, and they had them (transcribed) through an interpreter.

**First page of Hungarian letter written by Anna Nagy to her daughter, Kristina Detch, July 15, 1938.**



Drága gyermekeim  
Első sorban is nagyon örvelek hogy  
egészetek vagytok mindnyaján amit  
bármint is kívánok a jó Istenről  
mindnyajatoknak mi is egészen  
vagyunk boldok Istennek hogy a  
örök sokaték Anni drága leányom  
nagyon neves kisrónom a penét  
hogy az urak kevést kereses megis  
jütes nekem is belőle a jó Isten adja  
vissza nektek ezerszeres kérdet a  
többször gyermekeimet hogy vannak  
Léveir ur Anna ura Novemberbe  
meghalt egy évig feküdt. a Sándor  
feléje Maramoros nyelen van

My dear children,  
First of all, I am very happy that you are all healthy,  
and I wish that the Good Lord grant you continued  
good health as well. Thanks to God, we are also  
healthy, the way that old people are usually healthy.  
My dear daughter, I very much want to thank you for  
the money, as your husband makes little of it and yet  
you share it with me – may God return it to you a  
thousand fold. You are wondering how my other  
children were. Lazar, Anna's husband, passed away in  
November – he had been ill for a year. Sandor's wife  
has been on the island of Maramoros in the insane  
asylum since September of last year. The rest are  
healthy, thank God; they are all far away from me  
now. Even though I had all these children, now in my  
old age I am still alone. I am in sorrow for my children,  
as it is horrible here. My dear child, you wrote that  
you wanted to come home. I would so love to see you,  
I do not even need to tell you, you know a mother's  
heart, and yet, I tell you not to come back here, as  
long as you can make it there. ....

**Andrew Detch:** Yes, he interpreted certain letters and they noted the town or area the letters came from. That is when I was advised by John about the feelings between the Romanians and the Hungarians and there was animosity between these two people. I guess in essence the Romanians felt like the different nationalities in the Russian<sup>16</sup> hierarchy. They resented being under the thumb of the Austrian-Hungarians, and they broke away or at least were given that land so they didn't think too much of the Hungarians. That is where I learned the animosity was such that in Romania they painted the houses of the Hungarians a different color than those of the Romanians.

**Eric Huffman:** Like the Nazis' treatment of the Jews.

**Andrew Detch:** Yes, to some degree, yes. They were hostile to the Hungarians to say the least. So if you were unfortunate enough to be living in the area that later became Romania you had a hard time. I never heard as to how much that affected our parents in relation to the Romanians. I never heard Mother or Dad say anything ill about that. They were obviously permitted to own their own land there and farm. I'm not sure the local feeling with the people or the general population might have been unfriendly to say the least.

**Eric Huffman:** There is no way any of Grandmother Detch's siblings would still be alive? It would only be their children that might be alive.

<sup>16</sup> Transcriber note. I believe Andy meant Hungarian rather than Russian hierarchy.



**Andrew Detch:** If they had any, and I don't know if the Romanians destroyed the records there. When we went there to go to Hungary and go to the area, I had in mind, contacting an attorney in the area where our parents owned the property in order to see if there were any records of them being there and who may now own that property. It seems there was an abrupt cut off when the Nazi's moved in. Everything was just torn up. The land was taken and so I don't believe there was any way we could say we still owned or had an interest in that property.

**Eric Huffman:** Have you never been to Hungary or Romania?

**Andrew Detch:** We have been to Hungary and right on the Romanian border. The area as I understand it and where our parents were from is in Transylvania. That's where Bella Lagosi as Count Dracula was from. (Laughter). The tour guide advised us not to go in (to Romania) because at that time there was still the Communist ruling there in Romania and Russia.

**Eric Huffman:** I was actually thinking about taking Mom and Dad and I had discussed going. We had made plans to go but unfortunately my Dad got sick, then passed away.

**Andrew Detch:** If you went now, I don't think you would have any problems. As a matter of fact, I think the Romanians are welcoming tourists.

**Helen Detch:** Mary wanted us to go to the church there. She never had a birth certificate and she thought they might have a record at the church. But we couldn't get there. Churches keep records of births, but we didn't get to go.



**Mary Detch Black holding her Hungarian baptismal certificate, 1987.**

**Eric Huffman:** Do you all have pictures of you when you were young?

**Helen Huffman:** Yes, Eric had them redeveloped and hardened. I sent Rose one, I sent you all one. I don't know if you (Andy) is on there?

**Andrew Detch:** No, you and I are not in the picture<sup>17</sup>.

**Helen Huffman:** My sister Mary had a hat on with dark brown hair and Rose was good looking with blondish brown hair and Esther had dark hair.

**Eric Huffman:** Irene wants to say something.

**Irene Blore:** Talks about her family genealogical project.

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<sup>17</sup> The photo was probably taken in early 1920, before either Andy or Helen were born.

**Eric Huffman:** I would like to take Mom, Helen, to Romania. I would like to go there when we have enough time. I don't want to go there for 2 or 3 days because all you are going to do in 2 or 3 days is see a few museums. I am hoping we might be able to reconnect with some members of the family. That takes a couple of weeks because you have to do some snooping around, sleuthing.

**Helen Huffman:** I read again this nice packet that Ethel and Steve sent us. I don't know if I showed you, but they sent us a packet of Mom's and Dad's history, where they might have come from when they came to the US. You read that, and Anna wrote several letters, now that is my mother's sister. Ethel and Steve have these letters and they had them interpreted and Anna said how poor they were over there. I told you my mother would send them money.

**Andrew Detch:** There is enough background that you might be able to find a starting point. I would advise to go see, maybe go to the ambassador to start with, and contact an attorney there.

**Eric Huffman:** In the remaining bits of time we have, I would like to wind up if I can, just very briefly, since we are addressing Conrad and Danae, and any other children in our family, just give me a parting word of wisdom. If you were going to tell a child, now if they ever listen to this tape it will be years from now, it could be 10 years from now or 15 years from now when they get this tape, what words of wisdom would you give to these children, ways to live their lives, those types of words of wisdom?

**Helen Huffman:** Well I would say live a good clean honest life, be good to your family, and love everyone in your family, work together and be kind. I just hope life is easier for them, life was good to us. My Mother and Dad worked hard, they always wanted us to have a better life, and I would like for my grandchildren to have a better life.

**Andrew Detch:** That is normally the idea of family, everybody wants their family and children to have a better life than they did or experienced. I'm somewhat like my mother, education, education, education. Have regard for your family and your fellow man. Do what is right and listen to your elders, make sure you don't get off on the wrong foot, never lose hope because no matter how bad it looks it might turn out to be better than you think. I would like to indicate what I thought were some of the worst things in my life, turned out to be my life savers. I was shipped from boot camp in Bainbridge, Maryland to Miami, Florida to the submarine chaser station, and it was housed in one of the hotels here in Miami, the McAllister Hotel, which has been torn down and is gone now. I was at this hotel when they gave everyone a seamanship test. I had just come from Charleston, West Virginia and I had no idea you had to show the different type of knots and things you would encounter aboard a ship, but what they were giving you was a test about what you knew about ships. Well, I flunked it, so I lost liberty and I had to stay at the hotel. By coincidence, the destroyer escort *Brennan* needed a yeoman, and I was a yeoman second class, and I was the only yeomen in that hotel so I was shipped. Within an hour I was on the *USS Brennan*, which was a school ship for the training of officers in the Mediterranean area. What we did was take on officers and teach them in school and that saved me from having to go to the South Pacific. When the Germans surrendered, they ordered our ships to go to the Pacific. The Japs surrendered, but if it hadn't been for that incident that I flunked a test, which got me on the *Brennan*, which in effect saved my life because all the rest of the men that came with me were shipped to the South Pacific [to pilot] land craft that took the Marines to invade the islands, the Japanese islands. So in essence, I could have been shipped there and died if it hadn't been for flunking that test. I thought, Holy Mackerel! This is the worst thing that ever happened to me and yet it turned out to be the thing that saved my life as far as I'm concerned.

End of Side B

## ADDENDUM

### DETCHE FAMILY GENEALOGICAL INFORMATION

**LEWIS DETCH (LAJOS DECSEI)** September 13, 1865 – January 27, 1954

**KRISTINA NAGY** December 5, 1878 – December 31, 1965

**LEWIS DETCH** August 2, 1905 – December 23, 1975 married **OLIVE ALLEN**

**MARY DETCH** December 9, 1909 – September 23, 1997 married **JOHN HORVATH, WILLIAM BLACK**

**JOHN DETCH** August 3, 1911 – August 24, 1997 married **ROSALIE STEWART, MARY MORGAN GIBSON**

**ROSE DETCH** October 8, 1912 – October 4, 2000 married **NICHOLAS DRABISH**

**ESTHER DETCH** January 10, 1915 – February 25, 2001 married **WALTER JANECZEK**

**ALAN DETCH** March 19, 1918 – September 8, 2001 married **CARMELLA MELUZIO**

**ANDREW DETCH** October 2, 1920 – living married **HELEN ASBURY**

**HELEN DETCH** September 5, 1922 – May 11, 2018 married **CONRAD HUFFMAN**

Transcription of tape and genealogical information by Steve Rogers, November 2019

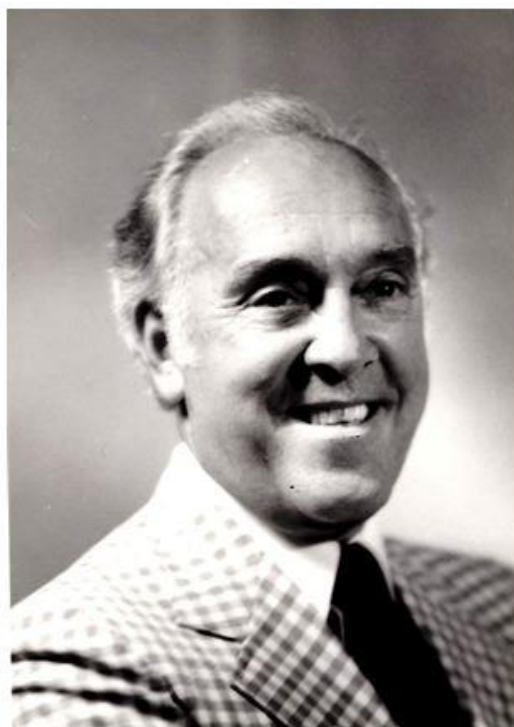


Helen & Andrew Detch

John, Mary, & Lewis  
Detch 1958



Helen & Conrad Huffman



Andrew Detch