

## Tom Marshall's Weekly News, February 1, 2010

**Palmer D. "Pete" Guest (1889–1941):** Everyone around Yorklyn knew Pete Guest, who definitely can qualify as a "local character." A native of the Mount Cuba area, he loved sports, especially baseball, golf, and trapshooting. A good athlete in early life, Pete played for Mount Cuba in a local baseball league that included such places as Centerville, Yorklyn, and Hockessin. The story goes that Mount Cuba was in the play-off for the league championship, and the final game was "down to the wire." It was the last inning, and Mount Cuba led by one run, but the opposing team had two men on with two outs. Pete was playing left field, and the batter hit a ball right at him that should have ended the game. Instead, however, Pete turned his back on the play and ran like mad for the woods just beyond the outfield. His teammates would have killed him if they had caught him; he had been paid off by the opposing team that cleared the bases and won the championship.

Pete married an attractive young woman named Ethel Hobson, who grew up on her family's farm, which is now underneath the Hoopes Reservoir. Pete never liked work, but with Ethel's efficiency and devotion to her family, they raised four daughters and finally one son, Edgar. Edgar and I were the same age and great buddies when we were young.

Pete liked trapshooting (which he really couldn't afford), and along with many Wilmington-area shooters, such as my father, took part in the shoots of the Philadelphia Trapshooters' League that flourished in the 1910s and early '20s. The Wilmington group usually went together on the train to wherever the shoot was scheduled in the Philadelphia area. Pete had a broken leg, but he went with the group to a shoot at Lansdale with his crutches. The shooting concluded about an hour before the return train was due to leave, so the shooters enjoyed the refreshments of a saloon near the station. Finally the station agent came to the door and called out, "Last call for the train!" and all left their drinks and ran for the station, Pete among them. His crutches remained forever propped up in a corner of the saloon.

My father liked Pete Guest, who helped him run the Yorklyn tournaments. In the late 1920s, dad had bought 18 acres from William P. Sharpless (Ruth Marshall's grandfather) to expand the Yorklyn Gun Club, and he gave Pete  $\frac{3}{4}$  acre, on which a comfortable four-bedroom house was built. In the mid-1930s Alice, the Guests's eldest daughter, was married at home. Pete was away attending the Atlantic Indian Trapshooting Tournament at Shawnee-on-the-Delaware near the Delaware Water Gap. Before he went, he had promised he would be home in time to give Alice away. An hour before the ceremony, however, there was no Pete. The family was much relieved when he came in the driveway in his Model A Ford coupe just before the guests arrived. In later years, Pete was quite deaf, but some of this was for convenience.

In the 1930s, Pete operated a small well-drilling business, with his drilling rig on the back of a Model A Ford truck. Several of the large estates in the area were being developed, such as those of Crawford Greenewalt, Henry Belin du Pont, and Lamot duP. Copeland, and Pete drilled many of the required wells, which improved his financial condition.

In 1939, when my father was president of the Amateur Trapshooting Association of America (headquartered at Vandalia, Ohio), Pete accompanied him on the train (the Pennsylvania Railroad's "Spirit of St. Louis") to Dayton and return to attend a director's meeting and the following spring in a '38 Packard to French Lick Springs to attend the annual Jenkins Brothers Shoot at Orleans, Indiana. About that time, the barrel on Pete's favorite trap gun, an old Marlin pump, blew out, but no one was hurt. In the early summer of 1940, Pete suffered a massive heart attack. He died in March 1941, at the age of 52.

Of the four daughters, only one, Marguerite (Peg), stayed in Yorklyn, marrying James W. Marsey. After World War II, she and her mother, Ethel Guest, were active with my mother in the Captain William McKennan Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. In later years, Jim Marsey told me he asked Pete for permission to marry his daughter. Pete's reply: "How big a ring are you going to give her?" Of the other

daughters, Alice lived in Baltimore, Phyllis in Brack-Ex (Delaware), and Josephine in Owatonna, Minnesota. Edgar (also called “Pete” after his father’s death), a good athlete like his father, was the athletic director at a local high school until his untimely death in 1974 at the age of 50.