

# QUONOCHONTAUG HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## Oral History

# CLAIRE PENDELTON CARD

September 16, 2022

Interviewed by Ann Schafer Doyle in Warwick

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Q: Today is Friday, September 16<sup>th</sup> in the year 2022. I am Ann Schafer Doyle, the former archivist of the Quonochontaug Historical Society. I'm doing an oral history with a good friend, Claire Pendleton Card, that's C-A-R-D. Clair is spelled C-L-A-I-R-E. We are at her home in Warwick, 48 Union Avenue. I'm going to be talking with Claire about her years spent in Quonnie, and we'll see how it all goes. Claire, if you could state your full name, your birthdate and where you were born.

A: My name is Claire Yvonne Pendleton Card. My birthdate was 9/23/28.

Q: Where were you born?

A: I was born in the town of Charlestown.

Q: Who were your parents?

A: My father was Clifford Pendleton. My mother was Vera Theora Jencks.

Q: Where were they living at the time you were born in Quonnie?

A: In Charlestown. Quonochontaug.

Q: Where in Quonochontaug?

A: I don't know if they were living at the beach in a rented house, or if they were living at my grandfather's house. Repeat that question, please.

Q: Where in Quonochontaug were you born? I know they had a place on the beach. That was before the '38 Hurricane. After that '38 Hurricane, did they move?

- A: We didn't live on the beach after the hurricane. We lived with my grandfather all the time afterwards.
- Q: Did he live on West Beach Road?
- A: Correct.
- Q: At the farmhouse?
- A: Yes.
- Q: And he built the farmhouse.
- A: Yes. I have a paper saying that he bought the land from his brother-in-law, John Taylor, who lived on West Beach Road also. His sister was Susan Imlay Pendleton Taylor.
- Q: Part of the Taylor's home that they lived in is still there.
- A: It has a long driveway in.
- Q: We know what brought you to Quonnie: your parents.
- A: It wasn't the stork.
- Q: I have a list of questions here. I'm going to go right down the list and see what happens. Claire experience the 1938 Hurricane when she was going to school in Charlestown. Claire, could you tell us a little bit about that?
- A: I was ten years old. I attended Charlestown—it was called Pawcatuck Valley School. It was off of Route 2 just before you get into Carolina. It's still there. It was a rainy day. They let us out early. We had no forewarning whatsoever. Nobody did—about there was going to be a large storm. It was just a miserable, rainy day. The school bus driver was a man named Mr. Whitford, a real, nice—as we were kids, he was an elderly man. When we got down Route 2 to Route 1, Post Road, he turned left. We had the Jackson two children that lived right on the South Kingstown/Charlestown line that had to be dropped off. As we were going down Route 2, the area where the Charlestown Post Office is now was all flat land, and there was an airplane hangar there. I think it held two Piper Cubs. As we were going down that road, the wind was moving that hanger. It came up and was sitting partly in the road. Mr. Whitford just drove around it, dropped off the two Jackson kids. When we came back, heading towards Cross Mills, the wind had taken the hanger, and it was completely off on the north side of the road. We continued on and went down through Cross Mills to what's known as—I think they call it the Kingstown Farm, where all the big trees are, and a lot of curves. There used to be at least one accident every summer where people who were not used to that road would smash in. We could not get through, because there was a tree down across the road. So, we sat there. I remember watching a tree shaking as I looked out the window. I moved

to the other side of the bus. We stayed there for—it seemed to us like a long time. When a truckload of men from the Civilian Conservation Corps came along, that was headed back to camp—they had been out working—they got out of their truck, cut the tree up, moved it out of the way and we continued on our trip. We went along to Route 216, known as Ross Hill Road, and dropped off all the kids that lived up there. Their parents had all met at the top at one area. The bus dropped them off. We proceeded back down to Post Road. When we got down to Post Road, the—I don't know if it was a State Trooper, a National Guard or who, but they would not let the bus go down the beach road. The house at the head of the beach road, on the north side, was owned by Tom and Mary Alice Clark. I learned many years later that she was an ex-school teacher. They were not involved too much. They weren't church members or grange members, but they told the bus driver that they would take all of us kids in. There was myself, my brother, Palmer, who was two years older, there was Dick Curry, there was Beth and Arlene Bliven, who lived across the Breachway, there was Edith Larken, whose father was an officer in the Coast Guard Station, there were the Flurry kids. There was Mable and Faith, and one or two boys, who were in school. I can't remember if there was anyone else. But they took us in. Tom Clark took two of the older boys. They went over to Brightman's store. Got flashlights. Got food, bread, etcetera. Mary Alice and Tom Clark fed us our supper. We slept in chairs, couches, the floor—wherever we could find. They fed us breakfast the next morning. None of us knew if our parents were alive or dead until the next day. Richard Curry's mother came across the pond with another man, who lived on the Breachway, on a roof, and landed somewhere on the north shore of the pond. We all walked down. That was my experience personally of the '38 Hurricane.

Q: Can I ask a couple of questions? You mentioned an airfield or the hanger. That was not the one that was there during World War II?

A: No.

Q: So, this was there before that?

A: This was a private Piper Cub.

Q: Was it in the same location?

A: It was just about where the post office is now.

Q: Do you remember how you felt during this whole experience? Were you scared?

A: My big brother was there. I had a lot of faith in him. In retrospect, I don't know what he could have done, but I had a lot of faith in him.

Q: You mentioned the Currys.

A: Frances Curry. She and Dick Curry had a summer house on the Breachway.

- Q: Where did they live in the winter? Did they live nearby?
- A: They lived in the house that was here. The store was there. The Carpenters had a place there.
- Q: So, it was on the corner of Ross Hill Road and the Post Road?
- A: There was a dirt road that went like this. It came out on Ross Hill Road.
- Q: You said that she came across?
- A: She did.
- Q: Did she have anything to do with the King cottage or the King family?
- A: That rings a bell, but I don't want to mislead anyone.
- Q: Another thing that you mentioned was your brother learning how to swim in the Breachway.
- A: The Blivens lived across the Breachway. Not on the mainland. The other side.
- Q: Near the Coast Guard Station?
- A: Yes. The Coast Guard Station was near the ocean outlet, and they were probably the last house. When you're facing the Coast Guard Station, they were the last house on the right-hand side.
- Q: When you say facing it, do you mean from the Breachway?
- A: Yes. From the main shore. The Blivens had some geese. My brother and I, we were over there playing with the Bliven kids. For some reason, one of geese decided he did not like my brother. He chased him right off into the Breachway. I think it was probably low tide. There was about a 4-foot drop down into the water. He learned to swim fast.
- Q: Did they have geese for a reason?
- A: I have no idea. All I remember was that mean-looking goose chasing him. He was going lickety-split.
- Q: Weren't the Pendletons over by the Breachway there?
- A: No.
- Q: You also mentioned sitting on your grandfather's porch. He was Palmer Pendleton. And hearing a concert from the Music Colony. When was that?

A: I was in grammar school or junior high. Especially if the wind was right. There were outdoor concerts that they held. The Music Colony was called the Music Colony because it was founded by musicians from New York City, as you know. The streets at that time were all named for composers: Beethoven, Bach and all of that. Not always, but some nights they were having a concert, and if the wind was right, before his porch was enclosed into a sun parlor, his porch was open. I would just sit there. It was facing the north side. The end of it was open. I would sit at the open end. I could just sit there and lean against a post and hear the music.

Q: Was it classical music?

A: Oh, yes.

Q: Did your grandparents like classical music?

A: I don't know. My grandmother died before I was born. My grandfather was more apt to be out hoeing in his garden. My grandfather liked music. I liked it. My aunt liked classical music. I remember she had some old 78 records of violin music: Fritz Crisler and some of the other older violinists.

Q: Your aunt, meaning your grandfather's sister?

A: No. My father's sister. My uncle moved down to Quonochontaug.

Q: So, you never went over to Shelter Harbor?

A: I didn't have transportation.

Q: Or by boat?

A: No. I couldn't row worth a darn. Expended all that energy for nothing. I basically lazy.

Q: You mentioned the bowling alley after the '38 Hurricane.

A: The bowling alley back then was submerged during the '38 Hurricane. We kids would go over there and go bowling. There was no automatic pin setup. We set them up for some of the summer people. We got paid a tip for setting them up. But because the alleys had been submerged in the water, if you knew which board to drop your ball on, you could usually get a strike or a spare every time. My brother would love to bet the summer kids that he could get a strike or a spare. He wouldn't tell them why. But he knew which board to put the ball on.

Q: Did he bet money?

A: Yes.

- Q: When you say it was submerged, did it move?
- A: No. It did not move. It was set so low in the ground. In fact, Mother Brimley's store didn't wash out. The house that the Flurrys lived in next to it didn't wash out. I don't know why it didn't, but it didn't.
- Q: Maybe it was the '54 Hurricane that moved it. I think something moved it. But it was warped by the water during the '38 Hurricane?
- A: Yes. At my grandfather's house, there was water surrounding his whole house. Whether it was water that came up from a tidal wave, or whether it was the water that surged at the pond, I don't know. But his wood pile was washed all over his hayfield. He had it piled up very neatly. My brother and I spent that first week after the hurricane picking up the wood and brought it down and restacked it. That was the fall that he built a woodshed so that it wouldn't happen again.
- Q: Where was his hayfield? Was that near West Beach Road?
- A: Here's West Beach Road. My grandfather's house. The pond over here. This was a hayfield here and here. It was L-shaped.
- Q: So, it's where the tennis courts are?
- A: Yes. Where the tennis courts are. And some here. But mainly where the tennis courts were. It was out to the West Beach Road—the wood. Some of it was in the road.
- Q: He had gardens. So, where were the gardens?
- A: He would plant north of the house in the house and the pond for about three years, and then he got that, and he planted a garden where the tennis courts are. When the tennis courts—where they are now, if he planted out there—my grandfather planted good, old sweet corn to eat, but he also planted popcorn. And he would plant his popcorn in the two rows next to the road so that if kids came up to help themselves, they'd get the popcorn, and they would probably break a tooth trying to eat the popcorn.
- Q: You also talked about living near the Breachway where the Crumbs and Hathaways and Charles Ross lived. Something about an organ.
- A: We didn't live near the Breachway—my father. We rented. I can't remember. Here's your Breachway. Here's the ocean. And the Breachway comes out here. And there was a row of houses here, and along the breach. And then there was a gap in the boardwalk. We rented the first house on the boardwalk here. The next house was rented by—I don't know if they rented or owned it. I have no idea. Two retired teachers from Connecticut. The Crumbs rented here. And then Hathaway was here, and Ross was here. And then there was a break. And then you'd move on to—

Q: The Marshes?

A: And then eventually another break and up to the Quonnie Inn. The Ashaway cottage is there.

Q: Do you remember much about these people? The Crumbs, for instance?

A: I remember Charles Ross. Helen Ross' father eventually settled up on Post Road, and she became principal down at Charlestown.

Q: In the elementary school?

A: Yes. And she had a sister that lived somewhere else. But Charles Ross donated an organ to the Charleston First Baptist Church.

Q: And Charles was the owner or the father? I forget what you said.

A: He was the father of Helen Ross. Harry Hathaway—

Q: Was he the ornithologist?

A: He was an Audubon guy.

Q: Yes. The birds.

A: A bird man. I just remember him being a tall, lean man, but nothing much about him. Reverting back to the hurricane, the Crumbs were grandparents. Their grandson used to visit. He was around our age. He had the best collection of toy soldiers. Very impressive. But they were the ones that got my stepmother into their car with my brother Charlie, who was nine months old. They got out to take one last look, and that's when the tidal wave hit. They found their bodies on the north shore later on. The two school teachers were killed in the hurricane—retired school teachers.

Q: I don't know their names.

A: I forget their names. They were killed too. The only thing left of the house that we rented were the cement back steps.

Q: And those are probably still on the beach. There are a few cement steps that are still on the beach.

A: The front porch of Northup's house, who lived on the Breachway—

Q: The Northups?

A: Yes.

Q: I remember that name.

A: He owned the house that we rented.

Q: Why did you rent it? Was it just for the summer?

A: No. My dad was married, and he wanted a house. He couldn't afford to buy a house. It was during the Depression. It was a matter of—if it was clothes, you wore them out, and used them up. Like most anything else in the Depression, use it up, wear it out, do without, make do.

Q: So, that was your home at the time all year round where you lived for a while?

A: Yes. My dad and mother lived there. I remember that.

Q: So, when your mother was alive, they lived there?

A: Yes. And then my dad was in the Coast Guard, and I think I lived at my grandfather's house. I know I lived at Hanna Green's house up on Post Road.

Q: Can we review your family? Your dad was Clifford.

A: Yes.

Q: And your dad's dad was Palmer.

A: Palmer Hall Pendleton. My brother was Palmer Clifford Pendleton.

Q: Your grandfather was born in the Scheffield farmhouse.

A: Yes.

Q: It's hard to keep everybody straight.

A: It is. They had big families back then. Whistling Chimneys—there's a dirt road that comes out across from the Quonnie Inn. On the south side of that road, but in a little ways, there's a cemetery in there.

Q: On which side? I know it's Old West Beach Road that goes into the regular West Beach Road. The inn was on the left near the Ashaway Colony.

A: Yes. Do you know where the Scheffield house is?

Q: Yes.



- A: It's across the road from where the old Sheffield house was.
- Q: It's still there?
- A: Yes. Across the road from Whistling Chimneys. It was all cleared up and cleaned up. I know when Marge was doing some family searching, some of the headstones in there were just plain stones. Some are little stones that have initials on them. Only two Pendletons are there.
- Q: I talked with Marge at one point. She gave me a list of some of the people that might have been buried there. Not many of the stones had initials.
- A: No. They were just stones.
- Q: So, it was part the Pendleton family?
- A: Yes. And the Sheffield's. My grandfather was born there. I don't know about any of the other—his brothers and sisters. I have no idea.
- Q: Did he come from a large family with brothers and sisters?
- A: Yes.
- Q: They're all probably in Westerly.
- A: Stonington. Yes. My grandfather's brother, Uncle Dave, lived down here just before you get into Apponaug on a farm.
- Q: Did you know that before you moved here?
- A: Yes. My grandfather—"What are you getting a place down there? Nothing but sand."
- Q: What did your grandfather like to do most? Was it his garden? Was it repairing or building houses?
- A: Whatever he did, he liked. If he didn't like, I don't think he did it. He did not talk to politicians.
- Q: Is that an inherited trait?
- A: One day, when we were visiting him, in an election year, we were helping him flip Japanese beetles in cans of kerosene to kill them, because he really didn't think much of spray stuff. And these two men in their late 20s, politicians drove in the yard, came up and started to talk to him. He did not acknowledge that they existed. He kept on doing what he was doing. He didn't speak to them. He didn't look at them. They looked at us,

and we just shrugged our shoulders. He did not talk to them. He didn't acknowledge them by a blink of an eyelash. And they finally turned around and left.

Q: Do you know why he was so adverse to politics?

A: No.

Q: He didn't like to talk that much. Did he?

A: It depended. He had some people from the beach that he knew and liked. They would come up to buy eggs from him, or he had been in business with and come and talk to him. He'd pick flowers and give them flowers. Or he would sit and talk about some old days in Quonnie and stuff.

Q: If you got him on something that he was really loved, he did talk?

A: Oh, yes.

Q: I've heard from a couple of other sources that he was reticent to talk.

A: It depends. If he didn't care for you, you could hardly get a word out of him.

Q: At least you knew how he felt about you.

A: Yup.

Q: Tell me a little bit about working at the Quonnie Inn.

A: I don't know what the age limit is now, but you had to be fourteen to get working papers. I wasn't fourteen. My aunt did chamber maid work down there.

Q: Who was that aunt?

A: Aunt Helen.

Q: Was that Helen Bliven?

A: Yes. Helen Pendleton Bliven. Yes.

Q: She was probably not a Bliven at the time.

A: She was a Bliven.

Q: I didn't know whether she had been married.

A: Bliven was her second marriage. Her first husband died. The cook down there at the inn, at that time—the only cook I knew down there—was Arthur Barber. He was a cousin of Blakely Bliven, my uncle. He was a nice guy. He set the rules that the help would always get fed before the guests got fed. We ate our breakfast before the people that ate breakfast. The same with every meal. You can work better if you've got a fool stomach. I would help my aunt as chamber maid. My brother was working as a bus boy and dishwasher, because back in those days, no mechanical dishwashers. So, he would wash, and I would wipe. I'd listen to him gripe about these women that had lipstick so thick that it got on all the glasses. But at least once every summer, inspectors would come around checking to see if you were meeting all the criteria. And wherever they were coming from, those people in the other inns, the Leonards happened to be friendly with would call and say, "They're coming today. Be ready." So, what they would do with me, being underage and not having working papers, they'd throw me in the linen closet. Occasionally, if one of the gals or waitresses were sick, or for some reason weren't there, I would wait on—the meals were all served family style. You would serve from the left, and take away from the right.

Q: Did you like what you did? You were earning money, obviously.

A: I was earning money. Yes.

Q: How old were you?

A: I was thirteen. One summer, I did housework for various people. Some of them were nice.

Q: In Quonnie?

A: Yes. For the summer people. Some of them were just plain condescending and snooty. But some of them were really nice. The Browns—Chanly—they were really nice. In fact, she would have me come over to do dishes, if she had a dinner party at night. She drilled into me that you wash glassware first, silverware next, dishes next and pots and pans last. The two girls were nice. The oldest one was the nicest one. David was a temperamental thing. He would practice his violin. If someone interrupted or bothered him, he'd—as my sister would say—pitch a hissy. I met up with them, including David, when they had an open house on the historical side at the church—the Lutheran.

Q: Saint Andrews?

A: Yes. And they said, "He does the same thing now."

Q: The sisters would always get after him. Betsy was the oldest.

A: Yes. Fredericka.

Q: And Fredericka was the youngest.

A: Yes.

Q: Did you know Fredericka?

A: Yes. Betsy was nicer. Betsy was a real gentle person. She was someone that if she lived there all year round, I would have loved to have had her for a friend. Betsey was a little bit spoiled when she was a kid. She was younger. I guess she was the youngest. Mr. and Mrs. Brown were just a delightful couple.

Q: I just saw Betsy a few weeks ago. She came to a program that we had . We had a program on Whistling Chimney, which I would love to have you see some day. We had our videographer take film of the inside of the house and so forth. You might be interested in seeing that.

A: I love those big, wide floor boards that were in the dining room.

Q: So, you were over there during a time when they had gatherings and that type of thing?

A: Yes.

Q: Were you friends with Betsy? Were you about the same age? She's still living.

A: Yes. I was older than Betsey. No. Betsy, me and then Fredericka. I was older than Fredericka, younger than Betsey.

Q: Do you remember a woman by the name of Ann Hanson?

A: No.

Q: What about Mr. and Mrs. Learned? Can you give us an idea of what they might be like? Were they strict?

A: Only in regards to how they treated customers—guests—how the staff treated their guests. The girls that were waitresses, in the morning and afternoon, put on bathing suits and go swimming and all that sort of stuff. As long as they treated the guests with respect and did their work, there would be no problem.

Q: Was there any entertainment at all? Any music?

A: I wasn't there at night. I don't know.

Q: What might be a meal that they would serve?

A: We got the same thing that the guests got. I remember chicken a la king.

- Q: Was there a choice?
- A: They might have had a couple of choices for an entree. But the vegetables, they probably had two or three. If anyone had a medical problem, and couldn't eat something, all they had to do is let the cook know what they could have, and he would make it for them. In those days, people would come down and stay for a long weekend, or they'd stay a week or two weeks. They would wait until they were leaving to tip the cook. They would come down and tip the cook. He put on some darned good meals. I had my lunch there, and my evening meal.
- Q: Did they often work there for a week at a time? Or a few times?
- A: All summer long. One summer I worked with Ann. One summer I did housework for about four different people—four or five. One of them was—the name was Steve Green. He worked for the Providence Journal. A lecherous old man. You can delete that.
- Q: Do you remember the name Shirley Barret?
- A: No. The last summer, I spent the summer up at Dunns Corners. I lived with Edna Bunstead. They called her Bunny. That was her maiden name: Bunstead. She was a nurse. She was a night supervisor and OR nurse at Westerly Hospital. She had a young baby, and she had the older boy, Richard. Her mother lived with her. Her husband was in the Coast Guard, and he was overseas during the war. He was in the English Channel. Sansivere was his last name. Edna Bunstead—her mother worked at Hamilton Propeller in Pawcatuck. She worked as a janitor.
- Q: Was that during the war?
- A: Yes. But she didn't get off until midnight. She didn't get home until around 12:30, 1:00. Bunny had to leave at—she went to work at 11:30. She had to leave at 10:30. She wanted someone to be there. I lived with her all that summer. Whatever she did—if she went shopping in Providence, I went with her. If she got hamburgers at the local place, I had hamburgers. I was part of the family.
- Q: So, you started working at thirteen and fourteen until what grade?
- A: Until high school. The three high school years I spent working at the inn.
- Q: Do you mean starting at thirteen?
- A: I turned fourteen in the fall. I couldn't get working papers. I did that. The next year, my junior year, I did housework. In senior year, I babysat for kids. They had a nice dog—a good, little dog. When the summer was over, I went into nurse training. That fall, I was at Rhode Island Hospital. I never left home after that.
- Q: Did they have a special dormitory at the hospital where you lived?

A: Nurse's home. They had one that the students were in, and they had another dorm for grads that didn't have a place to live.

Q: What about sailboat races? Was this before you were in nursing school?

A: I never came home after that. I don't remember when I first started paying attention, but they raced sailboats from Weekapaug down to our end of the pond. They turned around and went back. The good sailors, and some lousy ones. Sometimes my dad our uncle would go out and help them turn a sailboat that had capsized. These kids all knew how to swim. But they weren't so good at maneuvering, especially if it was windy. There would be a dozen-and-a-half sailboats coming down from Weekapaug.

Q: Did they come all the way down near where your farm was?

A: They came down. The post that they turned around was opposite Pitman's house—no; Richardson's house. They were way down the whole length of the pond.

Q: And you never handled the boat?

A: No.

Q: We talked about Palmer's gardens. Is there anything else you want to add to that?

A: One of his gardens, the one between the house and the one facing west, that garden there—he had some vegetables in it. But primarily all flowers.

Q: Why flowers? Did he sell them? Or did you bring them in the house?

A: My aunt lived up in Hope Valley, before she moved back to Quonnie, she would come down every Wednesday and bake for the men, which was before my dad remarried. The men would go home—they were building houses, or whatever they were doing. They had lunch. My uncle and my dad would go back to work. My grandfather and aunt would go out and cut flowers, and they'd go around to cemeteries and put flowers every Wednesday on the graves all summer long. I used to go with them sometimes. I think cemeteries are nice, peaceful places. He made his own vases for the flowers. He had dahlias, zinnias, asters, poppies.

Q: Did he have gladiolas at all?

A: Yes. He had—I can't even remember some of the other flowers.

Q: So, putting flowers on the graves was a very important part of the summer for them?

A: Yes. My aunt did it. And I did it for a number of years. And then I couldn't do it anymore. I used to around on Memorial Day and decorate all the graves. First

Hopkinton Cemetery. My father's wife was buried there. They had a child that was buried there.

Q: What was his wife's name?

A: Jenny. That's who my sister was named after. There was an infant that lived just a couple of months that was buried there. My grandfather always put white flowers on her grave.

Q: Which cemetery was this?

A: First Hopkinton Cemetery. Do you know where that is?

Q: I kind of do.

A: When you're on Route 3 leaving Ashaway, on the left-hand side, you go down a dirt road. I guess it's tarred now.

Q: A couple of people that I knew in Quonnie, their parents were buried in Hopkinton Cemetery.

A: Hannah Green is buried there. In fact, in that book, there's a thing where she willed or put ten bucks—she gave my grandfather the cemetery lots up there.

Q: Is it because they went to a certain church?

A: I don't know.

Q: They were part of the Quonochontaug Baptist Church.

A: Yes, I know. But I don't remember my grandfather ever going to church. My Aunt Olive, my grandfather's sister—a maiden lady, a member of the WCTU—the Women's Christian Temperance Union—she would be at his house off and on, on Sundays. And if it was summertime, after lunch, my grandfather would get up to go out and hoe his garden.

Q: Would he have a little drink?

A: Yes. Aunt Olive would say to her brother, "Palm, it's the Lord's day. You're supposed to be resting." And he'd say, "Olive, the better the day, the better the deed." And they'd go back and forth every time that happened.

Q: It sounds like they had a nice relationship.

A: Oh, yes.

- Q: They weren't at odds with one another?
- A: No. I don't remember my elders ever being at odds. If they did, they kept it from us. But when my grandfather's mother—she was a diabetic and became blind—my Aunt Olive, who I think must have been a nanny, she'd send postcards to my dad and Uncle Alva and their cousin Alfred, it would be from Boston or from New York or here, there and yonder. She was the only unmarried sibling. She came home to look after her mother. The boys in the family—her siblings—either they built or bought that house up on Haversham on the corner for her afterwards.
- Q: When she came to be there to take care of her mother, did she come to the farm?
- A: I guess. I assume. I don't know. My grandmother died before I was born, so I don't know.
- Q: Did you Aunt Olive take in children from the state?
- A: Yes. From the state. You're right. My mother-in-law took in kids from Children's Friends and Services, which is a private agency that did the same type of thing.
- Q: You're the one that introduced me to the fact that Shirley Mott was one of those kids.
- A: Shirley and Katherine both.
- Q: Were you friends with them?
- A: They were like cousins. Whenever my aunt was there, they were there. They had meals with us. They were the ones that, once my aunt got them, they were there until they went to work. They had other kids that didn't stay that long.
- Q: She also had something to do with the Shelter Harbor Inn, didn't she?
- A: She did a lot of housework, laundry and things like that. She became very good friends with—I guess he was a lieutenant. He retired as a brigadier general—Carter, who retired. He had a place over there in Shelter Harbor. He stored his sailboat at my grandfather's—the mast all winter long was up in the—a wooden mast back then. It was at my grandfather's hay mill to keep it from warping and dry and all that stuff. She got invited to his wedding. She drove a Model A Ford. But many times, she preferred walking. She would walk down to my grandfather's. Walking up West Beach Road, and all of a sudden she's not with you; she's over in the woods ripping off a piece of sassafras or something—tree bark—and chewing on it. They were more into nature than we are.
- Q: That worried me with the kids. They don't look around at what they're experiencing. I tried to do that with my two grandsons this summer. I would introduce them to some of the plants.



- A: My aunt could tell you the name of every plant.
- Q: Does picking grapes bring up any memories?
- A: Sure. My grandfather's house, and then there was an open pasture, and then from there down heading towards the beach, between there, I guess it was probably Taylor's land. Wild grapes. My brother and I would be designated to—with a bushel basket—bring it back. The womenfolk would make grape jelly, grape juice and stuff like that. It wasn't one basket. It was many baskets.
- Q: Was this to put away for the winter?
- A: Yes. We had grape jelly all year round.
- Q: My mother and grandmother used to do that with blackberries. We used to go blackberry picking.
- A: We did the same. My Aunt Helen's husband—we called him Uncle Butch—his name was LaCleve Bliven—he would row out. Eventually, he got a little 1 ½ horsepower motor, and go up to Bill's Island. After the '38 Hurricane, it was loaded with blackberries. He would go out and take two or three bushel baskets and fill them up. My Aunt Helen would make the blueberry jam.
- Q: Do you know anything about how that island? Did anybody live there?
- A: There was no house there.
- Q: Did you ever see any remnants of places?
- A: Not on the island. But I am a card-carrying member for the nature conservancy. My brother, Larry, cut a thing out. You know how they have, in the paper, legal notices when someone wants a building permit?
- Q: Yes.
- A: Someone wanted to apply to do a house on Bill's Island. And that's not a big island. I remember reading in the nature conservancy that they had spent something like \$50,000 seeding eel grass, or something, around. "Give me that clipping, and I'll call the nature conservancy," which I did. I said, "I know you people have spent quite a bit of money around there. I don't think that island is big enough to have a house and a sewer." They never got a permit.
- Q: The Weekapaug Foundation bought it, and it will never be built on. Did you know that?
- A: Good. No, I didn't. I'm glad, because let's not kill off the pond any more than it is.

- Q: I think it was Mr. Van Ost that owned it for a while.
- A: I did not like him.
- Q: I never knew him.
- A: I never knew him personally. But he bought my grandfather's house. His wife told someone that we know that my aunt thought she was getting a right-of-way at the edge of the property to go down to the pond. It turns out, it wasn't.
- Q: The property was on the pond.
- A: Yes. I know. But the—what the heck is her name—that owned the land on the other side of my aunt's house? Oh, God, I know his name. Anyway, the stone wall on the side of my aunt's driveway went all the way down to the pond. She thought she had a right-of-way along that wall to go down to the pond. The right-of-way that he designated for her to use was the one from Sunset Boulevard, to go to the pond for the people that could go and have access to the pond. That's what his wife told someone that we know. Whether it was Shirley Mott, or who, I don't know. But I was tipped off about that. My aunt used to go, "Climb over the stone wall," onto her neighbor's land, and walk down the other side of the stone wall to the pond.
- Q: I don't know who owned that.
- A: He used to have a house down at the beach along the Breachway before the '38 Hurricane. He was a nice man. He was good.
- Q: They're having a lot of issues now with access to all these places.
- A: Yes. The Richardson house, the people that bought and built there, I don't know what she did, but he was an athletic director in either East Orange or Orange, New Jersey. She would come up to get eggs. My grandfather and she would yak for three quarters of an hour.
- Q: He liked her.
- A: Yes. The athletic director would stay on our lawn and bat balls out to Palmer and I when the hayfield was low. They were nice people. They really were.
- Q: I have learned more today from you. Thank you, so much. If you think of anything else that you want to relate, we can easily attach this to the recording.
- A: I was really wanting to get Tom and Mary Alice Clark's name down, because I don't know if they ever got any recognition for taking us kids in. I think it should be noted somewhere in history that they took all of us kids and fed us two meals.

Q: It's now recorded, and it will be written. We transcribe all of these oral histories now. It will be down.

A: They had a couple of dogs—Irish Setters—red. Beautiful red fur. They used to chase us on bicycles and stuff. We'd come down from the Grange Hall that way up to Dick Curry's house, and they'd be chasing. We'd be on the old road, because we figured it was safer than out there on the four-lane highway. My brother would just put his foot out, and the dogs learned if they didn't get out of the way, his foot would clobber them. So, they stopped chasing us. Animals are not dumb. Sometimes they're smarter than some people I've known.

Q: It was wonderful. I enjoyed this so much. Before I close, is there anything else on your mind?

A: No, except I feel as though I've done a day's work.

