

QUONOCHTAUG HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Oral History

RICHARD HUTCHINS

March 24 1999

Interviewed by Anne S. Doyle

This is an unedited transcript of an oral history that is available in the QHS Archive Center. The policy for the use of this copywritten material can be obtained by contacting the Quonochontaug Historical Society (archivist@quonniehistory.org).

[NOTE: The following conversation between Anne Doyle and Dick Hutchins took place prior to the start of the formal interview. They refer to Barbara Ornberg Hutchins, who was married to Dick's older brother Bob Hutchins.]

Anne: I think I've met her; did she used to live in the little house? –

Dick: Yeah, next door. **Anne:** She did quilts. Because I remember going to talk to her.

Dick: She'll be living at Castle Rock, and so after you read this note, if you'd want to visit with her, I'm sure she'd be more than willing. Now she lived where the old Life Guard Station used to be, on the west side of the Quonnie Breachway.

Anne: Oh, I see. **Dick:** So she tells a little bit about the house that they lived in. **Anne:** When she was growing up –she lived there? –

Dick: She was five years old when the hurricane hit here. And she has quite a collection of photographs that she showed me when I was there. And talked about coming across the breachway in a skiff to get ice cream cones, and that kind of stuff. So there's a lot of history there.

Anne: That would definitely be wonderful, if she wouldn't –now should I get a hold of her –

Dick: Well, she'll be coming –she's flying up the first of the month; she'll stay with us one night and then the movers are to come in and you know, it will be a little while before she gets settled.

Anne: But she'll be here permanently.

Dick: Yeah. Yeah.

Anne: Thank you so much.

Dick: Anyway, so that's for you to read and I thought that you'd --Anne: Did you want a copy of this as well?

Dick: I don't need one; I shared it with Glenda so that she would have a chance to hear Barbara's --you know, read her written word. And so I wanted to share that with you. Mother also has some photographs that might be of value. But Barbara, of course, she didn't want to part with her photographs; but of course if she's here, then if you would --you know, she'd probably loan those as long as she could get them back.

Anne: And maybe we could have prints made, or something, from them.

[BEGIN INTERVIEW]

Dick: I'm Dick Hutchins, or Richard; and I was born 29 May of 1934. That was in Foster, R.I. My mom, Emma Rose, she was born in the Bronx, N.Y. February 26, 1913. My dad, Vernon H. --let's see, where was he born? He was born in Scituate, Providence County, on August 17, 1906. -- They were married in Scituate August 17, 1928. I'm not sure where he was born though. And I thought that would be here somewhere. They lived in Wallum [Dick not sure "who's involved here"] Rhode Island, which is under the Providence --Scituate Reservoir. Anyway, if you need more details, obviously I have them there--

Let's see, siblings: I have a brother, now deceased, Vernon H. Hutchins, Jr. [Known as "John"] He was born in East Greenwich, R.I. on June 13, 1929, and Robert H., now deceased; he was born in Scituate, R.I. on January 7, 1931. Then Louis, just older than I, and he was born August 20, 1932 in Coventry, R.I. I was born in Foster, as I said before, May 29, 1934. Mary Lou was born in Charlestown; that would have been November 9 of 1937.

You had asked in your questions when did we move here or when did we come to—

Anne: How did you get here to Charlestown?

Dick: Yeah we moved here in 1937; and farming brought us here, at least for my dad. My grandfather, my dad's father, he lived and worked at the Shelter Harbor Inn and he was kind of a groundskeeper or whatever; and because of his connection with the people that lived in Shelter Harbor, Dr. Swanson, who owned the property, was interested in someone running the farm; and through my

grandfather, my dad learned of that opportunity. So that's how we got into farming.

Anne: So was he working on a farm in Shelter Harbor or—this was at the Inn?

Dick: Yeah, yeah; he lived at the Shelter Harbor Inn. At one time they were talking about a country club or something, and he didn't – you know he was kind of like the groundskeeper around the Inn and all of that. A story of my grandfather Hutchins' work on two holes of Shelter Harbor Country Club was published in an edition of *Shelter Harbor News*. (That project lacked funds for completing the course because of the crash of 1929.) So basically it was employment that brought us here to Charlestown or Quonochontaug.

Let's see: What was question 5? When did you come and live at East and West Farms? Well, of course, East and West Farms was not there when we moved here. And that was because of the highway. There was a barn, some outbuildings, and the house that is up on the corner – not the new house on the corner of West Beach Road, but the first one down from that. Where the farm, barn, all of that -- you know where that is.

Anne: I'm not sure that –

Dick: The, the Cape Cod –

Anne: As you go down West Beach Road, and you turn –

Dick: No, right up here at Route One. **Anne:** Oh, oh. **Dick:** It's the original house; you know where the barn was.

Anne: Yes, yes.

Dick: Ok. Yeah. That house was moved to its current location. It was under the road where the saltbox house is. That's where Galapagos is now. OK. **Anne:** Now, so that –it was across – that little house was across from Galapagos or? –

Dick: Right underneath the highway, where it is now---

Anne: You say under highway. **Dick:** Before the highway.

Anne: Oooh. I see.

Dick: The little blacktop road that cuts out and goes up by the boat place and those things: that is the original –not the *original* original – that is the –well at that location, that is the original route from a little further up, in front of the –Josie's— that is a continuation of the highway that we see –that still remains there. But back there, there was –Route One was even further in. It, it, it, it curved even

more. So it was in the early 40's when they built the new highway; our house was in the path of the construction site, and so it was jacked up and moved to its present location.

[Dick reading question] Why did you decide to live here? [See above comment about moving to Quonnie.]

Anne: Can I just ask another question?

Dick: Sure.

Anne: The little house – was that where your family was actually living, in that house, when it was at that location?

Dick: Yes.

Anne: So when it was moved; OK.

Dick: Yeah. We, we lived in the house when we moved here, and we lived in the house as it was being moved, and we lived in the house – my parents lived there for 25 years.

[Dick reading question] Did you live in Charlestown before moving to the farm? No. [Reading question: How long did you live on the farm?]

Dick: Well, for my parents it was 25 years. And I think it was like 25 years to the day! [laughter] For me, of course, I lived there from age 4 until—I lived here about – let's see, '37 to '58 –

Anne: Till you went off to school—

Dick: I commuted daily to URI to receive my Bachelor's Degree. I left the farm in 1958 after I finished school and I was twenty. Yeah; it was then I left Charlestown to go to work with the public health service in Maryland.

Dick: Mother and I got a real chuckle out of this one: What is a typical day like on the farm? And of course --

Anne: Winter would be different than summer!

Dick: Yeah. There would be the seasonal differences, and then of course there would be the fact that we had what you would call kind of a general farm. We had dairy cows that were milked every 12 hours, or 14 times a week. And that was like clockwork.

Anne: And you all did that?

Dick: --Um --

Anne: Or did you have some help too?

Dick: Well, um, as --let's see, question 8 had something about --this is the answer -- apparently who was -- My mom's words: her husband or my dad was the boss farmer; and my mom, she kept the fires burning at home, and the children were the worker bees. And that's about the way it was. With four boys, of course, we all had our chores to do. And with, with my older brothers, the individual boys would have their chores to do.

And that was fine until they all left the farm, and then I inherited all the chores. No more older brothers!

Anne: So you had to do the chores before school and after school and --

Dick: Oh yes. Yeah. We were up-- most of my life, I was up before 5 o'clock in the morning, maybe like 4:30 to 5:00. One morning, I didn't get up as early as my dad thought I should have and a bucket of water got me up pretty fast. [Laughter]

Anne: Did you ever not want -- well of course there must have been some mornings you didn't want to get up --

Dick: Oh well, you know, I just overslept that morning. We were expected to get up.

Anne: But you just didn't question the fact that you had to be a part of doing --

Dick: Oh, oh -- absolutely. Oh sure. Yeah-- And I guess --in fact I had a cousin that always thought that my dad was pretty tough on us. But in retrospect, and when, I think, all of us got out into the real world, we were more than adequately prepared. We knew what responsibility was because we were expected -- for example when my parents would take vacation, which was usually to go to a fair or travel up north home, if they took a week off, then I would do everything. And that was expected.

And of course when they left, then there was always something that went wrong! You know, the milk cooler would stop and there was no way I was gonna have milk spoil because that was our bread and butter, you know; so --

Anne: Now, you didn't --did you hand milk for a while or was this all machine done?

Dick: No, we had milking machines, on the farm. Now the interesting part was, back in March of --that was in the mid--early -- well, no that would have been '54, '55, maybe '56, somewhere in there, we had a real spring snowstorm; and it dumped you know a couple feet of snow--enough to take down all the power lines. So we

were without power on the beach road for about two weeks, and yet the cows had to get milked. Now we didn't have power, but we were creative: we milked the cows with our tractor! And we did not generate power from the tractor; we used the vacuum from the intake manifold of the tractor. And that could run our milking machines. So you know, we survived no matter what.

So – that's a—you know I remember that moment. In fact, I was in college at the time and I was scheduled to go on some kind of a class trip to Boston; and when I got up in the morning to milk the cows, there were no lights and that seemed strange. And it seemed terribly still. I looked out the window and you could just see the wires just right down on the ground. I mean they were just loaded and stretched --and you know it was a beautiful snow, but for us it was extra work. But we got through it.

Anne: When you were going to college, then you stayed home and commuted?

Dick: Yes, I commuted. Yes. To URI.

Anne: Now what about the crops, and taking care of that?

Dick: Yeah. We had – of course springtime was planting time. So we had a vegetable garden, the usual things, and of course many of those we sold on the farm. With hay and corn for forage for the cattle, of course that was usually every x number of years you would re-do the pasture land or the meadow land or the hayfields. Corn was an annual crop that you would plant and –

Anne: For food for the cows?

Dick: Well, yes, yes, yes. For silage. That's the term; when you ensile either grass or legumes or corn. Then that becomes roughage for the cattle during the winter. Then, and of course, once you've planted it,--well you have to prepare the land, plant the crops, manage the crop and care for it throughout the growing season; and then harvest it in the fall. Standard procedure, you know; nothing, nothing exciting. You just did it.

And then of course in the fall, not only did we harvest crops but then we would harvest animals too. We raised our own meat, beef-- and we had sheep and lambs and hogs and chickens so –

Anne: It must have been a very big area, the whole farm.

Dick: We, well we used other land that wasn't a part of the property. There were a couple of pieces of land, one over on East Beach Road, for example, that we would either plant or harvest the crops wherever they were, whether it was grass or otherwise; or we did plant corn over there. And some other places where houses now exist was actually crop land back then, so we used whatever was

available. On the north side of Route One, the farm extended the property; and of course in the winter, we harvested wood for fuel for our fires until we had a central heating system put in. That happened to be coal, coal-fired and that was probably in the 1950's --I'm thinking mid-50s we probably put in that system. Steam heat. But the bedroom, where I slept upstairs, where the boys slept, there was no heat; so --then even when we put in central heating, we didn't have heat up there. I can remember on cold winter days taking my clothes, putting them in under the cover, just to pre-heat 'em before I'd get out and hop into them and go! But -- we didn't seem to mind. We never questioned it. And you know, we didn't have to.

OK; what else do we have?

Anne: I know we used to get eggs, too--so you must have had chickens and --

Dick: Oh yes. Yes. We had laying hens, and of course laying hens were good for a year or two and then you have to replace them because their production rate would drop off. Yeah, we had broilers, we had laying hens, we had ducks, we had -- you know, you name it--we had it at some point or other.

Let's see: You asked this question about --I should have put a number over here, so that I could--oh, Quonnie--Do you remember any Quonnie ~~xxxxx~~ things that you could relate of your memories on the farm? Suppose that might have been [question] eleven --but there's a question here; my Mom's answer: "When my daughter was born." Oh --"What was your fondest memory?" Yeah; I think that's it. That was when her daughter was born. Because after having four sons, she wanted a daughter. So, that, that I think was her fondest memory. [Laughter]
Ok then --

Anne: Why don't you read the question, so we'll have it on the tape.

Dick: OK. What was most challenging to you and your family in making a life at the farm? And mom's answer to that was "Survival is quite simple when you live off the land." Challenges were caused by --Anne: Mother Nature --

Dick: Oh, --by unsurvivable-- or by severe winter conditions. Yeah. Yeah - Like when I mentioned the power lines were down, we didn't have power. Or a hurricane would knock out something, then that was a bit of a problem. In fact, during the '38 Hurricane --and that was before the house was at its present location, or before East and West Farms--my dad and I were picking up potatoes. He was digging, and I was picking 'em up 'cause I was only four years old, and I wasn't in school. And that was behind --there's a field off of Ross Hill Road behind some of those buildings, and this is again kind of north and west of the saltbox house.

And that afternoon, of course, there was no warning of the storm. But my dad sensed that there was something blowing up, because the large oak trees that

surrounded that field were really getting bent. And so he said, “Well, we’d better finish and pick up and get home, “and we picked up the potatoes and went back home. By the time we arrived home, we had some old apple trees that were just getting torn up out of the ground and tumbled around. And my dad went down nearer to --near the pond, where we had cows fenced in; and he cut the fence because he knew that the area would be flooded, and the animals would have perished if they couldn’t get out of the water so -- that was something I remembered.

You’re talking about happenings – you know the construction of the road of course was a big deal because when we were little guys, to have this heavy equipment placed on those days was like something we’d never seen before.
Anne: So the road went in in --

Probably about --you know, ’40, ’41’42 --somewhere in there. Yeah. I’d have to

Anne: In the present—where it is presently.

Dick: Yes. Where it is presently. Before then was a road not any larger than West Beach Road today. And that was Route One, ran all the way from Key West, Florida to Fort what-is-it xxx or whatever it is up in Maine. That was the main route. That was the Boston Post Road.

And then of course the Navy base, at Charlestown, the Naval Air Station that was constructed and I think, one reason why the road was built, to -- In fact, when that road was built, it did not go beyond where the Grange Hall is now, in the early ’40’s; it stopped there. And then another section was built after that. Anne: You mean, it was built here and then stopped, and then -- Dick: Yes. And then later on yeah, yeah. The next leg was from there to the Air Base. And I don’t know the vintage of when those --I may not have been -- well, no -- I was here when they went down to the Air Base, but I don’t know about where the --I want to say Gift Barn, but not that -- this side of it where the Information Center is --you know how the highway curves in --the original one is on the south side of the Information Booth.

Anne: What is now 1 A.

Dick: Yes.

Anne: Now do you have memories of the Naval Base being -- and lots of people around?

Dick: Oh definitely. Oh yes. In fact, we had-- naval officers -- who were married -- lived at the Wilcox Tavern. And there were several, several couples that lived there, and we had a mess sergeant from Burlingame --there was an Army camp at Burlingame during the war -- and a mess sergeant and his wife -- Bohugden was

his name—He lived and shared the other end of the upstairs in the little house there. So, a lot of memories about the war years.

And one of the purposes of the Charlestown field was for night fliers to practice touch and go, receive touch and go training so that they would be qualified to land and take off of aircraft carriers. And with the Army up at Burlingame, they would have their training maneuvers, and the beach was a great place for the Army to go down with their aircraft guns and things like that while the Navy fliers towed targets. And I can remember as a kid, at night, looking out our bedroom window, watching the planes – well you could hear the planes first; you couldn't see them. And then search lights would go on, that would spot the plane, light the target and then there would be shooting by tri-cycles or whatever trices basically, from these large guns to hit the target. So that was – you know, it was almost like war was very close to us.

Anne: Now, the Army, you said, was going to have maneuvers on the beach: Now did you go down to the beach when they were –**Dick:** No, no –most of that was during the evening. It was –you know – in coordination with the Naval training field. But they had tanks and they had infantrymen, and we used to go there and pick up garbage at the mess halls - there was actually three mess halls. And then we took the garbage and feed the hogs with it.

Anne: Dick I've heard that there were patrols going--.

Dick: Yes. During the war there was watchmen—probably watchmen and not watchpersons as today -- that would walk, and basically you know like any guard would have to clock in his position at a – you know-- at a pole that had a clock on it along the beach. And of course I remember the U -2, the subs, the German subs that were caught and depth-charged off the coast here.

Anne: I've heard a story, and I don't know if it's true or not but they're saying that there were some people in Red Top, right on Central Beach there, that –there was something about spies and sending signals out to the –

Dick: I don't know about that but I wouldn't be surprised. I've heard a story similar to that –not here in New England but one of the physically challenged people that I've gotten to know on --via the computer. She's originally from Massachusetts but said that she lived somewhere in the Carolinas and had a spooky experience on the beach down there, where she was bathing as a young child, with her mother. And some gentlemen came on the beach in business suits, and some individuals came ashore in some kind of a boat; and the businessmen got on the boat and they went out, and they figured that that was German spies or something and they were going out to get on a U-Boat or something. I haven't heard anything like that around here, but –

Anne: While we're on the subject, do you know anything about the blasting of that rock?

Dick: Yes, yes. Fresh Pond Rock, because it was a land feature that could be kind of an easy thing to locate yourself on, they blasted the top of that stone off so it wouldn't be so visible for –

Anne: Did you actually –

Dick: Witness the blast? No. I did not. My sister-in-law Nancy – she --I'm not sure – she spoke of it too, and whether or not she had any knowledge or you know first-hand experience, I'm not sure.

Anne: There's also that bunker or –I don't know whether it had something to do with communications – at the end of East Beach Road. Do you know anything about that?

Dick: Those were—most of those were ammo storage facilities –ammunition. And most of those – that one I recall was pretty much just a bunker. I don't remember a structure other than just the earthen-covered –you could see the door-type thing.

Now behind the Quonnie Baptist Church, of course, that was a look-out position, where --I was trying to think of –Summerfield—what her first name is –But she – but that had, you know, actual gun emplacements; and they could observe the sea from that location.

Anne: So that it was looking somehow over the church? –I mean it's high there.

Dick: Looks completely over the church, yeah. Kind of concealed by the church and by the woods on the hillside. But from that location you could –

Anne: Are there remains of that?

Dick: Oh, sure. Very much so. It's been a home for the Summerfields, then their sons – I'm trying to think – certainly the 70's if not before then. Whenever the military gave it up, or sold it I suppose, well, they turned it into a home. But the original concrete reinforced flat is still there, so you know you can go and touch and feel part of it.

Anne: [laughing] And get lost.

Dick: Yeah, you probably should. Uh --let's see – Anne: That's the first I've ever heard of that.

Dick: Yeah; oh, yeah. That's –and of course down at Green Hill and places like that, there's more of those gun emplacements and things of that nature –

Anne: Did they actually have the guns up there on the outside –but they shouldn't –

Dick: I believe that --you know, I'm not sure that they had large guns out there –not like you see down at Point Judith. But they certainly had slotted windows for some purpose and it may have been just so that they could see out and not –

Anne: One if by land, two if by sea?

Dick: Something like that. It could have been – I'm not sure.

Let's see. My parents – because you were asking about the changes that have taken place –my parents probably in-- I want to think around '46 or '47 – purchased what was, prior to them buying it referred to as the Latin land; and the Latin land included the property south of the farm, all the way down to where the tide comes across the road down here. And goes back -- includes all of this property back to –well there's a couple of stone walls – the furthest stone wall. And then all the way up to Route One, about 1200 acres.

Anne: So they were renting before, is that right?

Dick: Well, no; they never owned the farm. They operated the farm for Dr. Swanson. But they purchased this 1200 acres –

Anne: Part of the farm.

Dick: Well, never, never, never part of the farm; just as kind of an investment. You know, an opportunity to buy the land. But one of the prime reasons for buying that – the Quonnie Grange, which we see now, was built shortly after my parents purchased that land because they donated the land that the Grange is on, from that purchase.

Prior to that, the Grange was behind where the Charlestown Cutlery is; that's where the original Grange is, and I can remember as a kid – you know the Grange was kind of a community center, so clambakes and you know at Hallowe'en bobbing for apples and that kind of stuff.

Anne: And dances, I heard about that –

Dick: And dances, yeah. In fact we had square dances at the farm, in the barn. And that was in the early '50's— '50, '51, 2, 3—somewhere in there. We would have it before the first cutting of hay. 'Cause once we started harvesting the hay, then that, the haymow was tied up with hay and we couldn't have dancing. But several years, several summers we had dancing.

Anne: So was that your parents' idea?

Dick: You know, originally I think that it might have been done as maybe a fund-raiser for the church. But then they seemed to be so popular that my parents held them for a couple extra years. Yeah. They were a lot of fun. Especially the night that the transformer blew out – so we didn't have light, but again we had the tractor, which had lights, and we just kind of beamed the lights up on the roof of the haymow and just kept right on dancing.

Anne: Where did the music come from? **Dick:** Well, you didn't have, you know, you didn't have the boom boxes that you have today. **Anne:** I suppose they had live –

Dick: Yeah, we had an old upright piano and you know, banjo and the fiddle and whatever else they played.

Anne: Do you miss that part of life?

Dick: Sure; in a way – I guess you know life goes on, and things change.

Anne: It just seemed to be a more -- much more – closer-knit community when you have things like that going on.

Dick: Oh, certainly. Yeah. Oh definitely. Yeah, Yeah. Quonochontaug, you know, was kind of ruled by most standards; and you know the grange—the grange or the church-- was kind of the community hall, if you will, where people would congregate; and basically we knew those people -- you know they were here 12 months of the year.

And you know the summer crowd was just kind of an influx that just added to our environment, but you know life didn't—life pretty much had to go on 12 months of the year, and not just 3 months of the year that the summer folks would come in to enjoy the area.

Anne: What did you think of the summer folks? Did your mother ever –express anything about that? I don't know whether even to put that as a question, but –

Dick: Well, you had asked about who do we remember.

Anne: Oh yes.

Dick: Yeah. And we have a whole list—well, we have a list, the best that we could come up with. Like year-rounders like the Pendleton family; that's where the Blackmars' place is right now.

Anne: If you know anything about, if you remember anything about the families, or somebody in the family, I would be interested.

Dick: Ok. The Pendleton family, of course they had their own little farm down there for many years.

Anne: You mean the old farmhouse you're talking about?

Dick: Um hm.

Anne: And then they built their own, down where the Blackmars' is.

Dick: Well, no, the Blackmar house was the original farmhouse.

Anne: Oh, all right.

Dick: OK. The little house that's hard on the highway that's been there for many, many years was sister to or daughter of the Palmer Pendleton who was the elderly gentleman.

Anne: I guess I don't know about him –

Dick: Oh no, no – he just died.

Anne: Is that structure still there now?

Dick: Oh yes.

Anne: Is it in right front of the farmhouse, did you say?

Dick: It's just this side – in other words from Joan's house, there's like a -- still a wooded area not used. It's the first house beyond the wall past that wooded area. Just a little bungalow. And their names were Blivens. In fact, Helen Bliven, who was a Pendleton before she married to Bliven, lived there. But what I wanted to mention was that it would be Helen's father and Clifford's father and –who was the Palmer of Palmer Pendleton – their dad, he was the official Town Fence Viewer –

Anne: And what was his name?

Dick: He was um –was his name Palmer too?

Anne: Yeah. I've heard -- See I've heard somebody talk about him so I think you're right.

Dick: Yeah. I think – Yeah. I think the original -- now Barbara might remember him because she's related to the Pendletons, I think, including that group. But he was the official Town Fence Viewer.

Anne: Tell me what a Fence Viewer does?

Dick: Well, a Fence Viewer is – whenever there’s a dispute, like you live next door, Anne, and I live here, and we have a question about where our boundary is. Well the official Fence Viewer would come out and say, no the boundary goes from here to there. For example there’s a small piece of wall that’s on our property here, and that forms round meadow, and at one time there was a round meadow right next door, including where my brother’s, both of my xxx brother’s place was, and where my sister’s place was. Well the fence viewer would know – that’s round meadow. And he’d know the stone walls and the landmarks that were established way back when, when the land was first developed. Fence viewing I think has gone out, in the last generation or so.

Anne: Was he just Fence Viewer for this particular area or –

Dick: For, for, for Charlestown. Yeah. That was an official title that the town government—**Anne:** I never knew that; that’s completely new to me. **Dick:** I’m not sure—I have an old tax book and it may show a tax [Fence] Viewer as late as you know maybe the ‘70’s. I’m kinda thinking that that old tax book might be 1974. So I could check that.

And then, both the older gentleman, Palmer Pendleton and then his son Palmer they did a lot of repair work on the beach. I can remember the old gent hunched over, standing on roofs, steep roofs in his sneakers, shingling and things – and he was – he had to be –you know, when you’re younger, people who are older always look older than they really are. But as my mind’s eye pictures him, he could have been 70, he could have been 80. Because the son seemed to be 40 or 50 – something on that order. Did a lot of work on many of the homes –

Anne: Did they build their own home, too?

Dick: I couldn’t – I wouldn’t be surprised if they might have.

Anne: [muffled] xxx of the history of that home xxx.

Dick: Then the Brightmans that had a store on the other side of Route One, of course that was where –we needed bread or whatever – of course Mother baked bread so we weren’t dependent on those kinds of things. But anything that we needed to buy, that usually was through Brightman’s Store that we’d make those purchases.

Anne: Now I’ve heard that Brightman’s Store was in another location before it was across the street.

Dick: Yes. Yes. Where the saltbox house is now, there’s kind of a retaining wall. In fact there used to be running water –came out of a little pond behind the saltbox house. Used to come in to a little drainage pit, I suppose go from there

underneath the road and down eventually emptying into the Pond. Near that site, on the old original Route One, Mr. Brightman had a filling station. And that used to be located there. I can barely remember that, before the new location down here. But again, that was displaced by the new road.

Anne: The road. That's why it moved.

Dick: Yes. Later on, there was the Perkins. The Perkins bought property from my dad right next to where the Grange is, where Mike's Garage is now. But Ed Perkins used to --well he purchased the land; he built that original building there.

Anne: Was it a home? He lived there.

Dick. Yeah. He built a home and also the garage.

Anne: Oh, he had a garage there.

Dick: Yeah. The home is where the veterinarian's office is now, and then the garage is one of the pieces of Mike's, probably the one that has the bays or the garage doors that face the highway.

Then the Richardsons --that was the family that lived over on East Beach Road; the Burdicks --the Burdicks lived behind Josie's, and of course we grew up with the Burdicks.

Anne: Right. I've heard something about the Burdicks xxx farm. Did they have a farm too? Or was that another--

Dick: Ummm -- Doesn't ring a bell. No, I don't recall them farming. **Anne:** Was there a Burdick on East Beach Road? **Dick:** Well, there are three Burdicks that live there now; yes: Gilbert -- Harley Gilbert, and then Jean Babcock is a Burdick and then her sister, their sister Phyllis. And then there's one other surviving --he used to live on East Beach Road; he sold his property and is living elsewhere in Charlestown. But we grew up with them.

And then Currys: Currys used to live where the old grange location --the house is still there. Frances Curry was one that rode across the Pond during the hurricane, survived it. She and I think Mr. Finlayson might have been one that --

Anne: You say "rode across the Pond" --

Dick: Well, basically, rode on debris.

Anne: But where -- they were on, they happened to be --

Dick: They were on the beach, and the storm hit, and the houses that were destroyed – you know the whole area was covered, and they just clinged to whatever, although she was a good swimmer and might have survived because of her swimming skills.

Then Martha Crandall, she lived in the old house at the corner of 216 and Route One; that's the old property that's completely fallen in now. But she had a little barn; and a gentleman that worked for her, Mike Durkin, he lived in the basement of that house. Crandalls--were like John Crandall and Henry Crandall, has a little – you know they've been around here for years. The Nurmis that ran the Sea Breeze Inn –

Anne: Did you have, did you remember them specifically? You know who they were –

Dick: Oh yes.

Anne: Now can you just go back a little bit to –no, the Crandalls –he—that's where they—the fish –

Dick: Yes, yes.

Anne: Now did he used to sell fish on the breachway?

Dick: To my knowledge, no. **Anne:** No. **Dick:** No. No – yeah, yeah; when he built the fish market up there I want to think that that's during the '50's, same as the fruit market. He does have a place where I think he ties his boat, and he may have storage for the seafood or lobsters or whatever down at the breachway, but to my knowledge he never sold there. But he may have.

Anne: Now the Nurmis –

Dick: Yes. The Nurmis –they ran the hotel; of course Mrs. Nurmi was the – I guess she did all the cooking; and Otto, he used to come and --well he used to purchase milk and eggs and things from us, for the Inn, and then he would come and help us cut wood in the winter. And unfortunately he had a problem with liquor, so he would get a little high, and show up and I can remember once or twice when he would show up and it was terribly, bitter cold; but to him –he was all set. And we'd go to the woods and he would take his jacket off –of course he usually had his bottle in his jacket, and he didn't want us to know that, so he'd take his jacket off and he hide that behind a tree. And we'd fell a tree and while we were pulling it up, to pull the logs out to cut 'em up to take 'em home, he would take a break, go over behind a tree, and kind of tip his jacket you know with the bottle in his pocket so that –

Anne: He thought he was fooling you –

Dick: Yes, right, yeah. And if course it was kind of dangerous for him to be in that condition; I know one day we felled a large tree, and it hung up on a smaller tree. And what possessed him to do it – obviously he wasn't thinking logically – he swung an axe and cut into that small tree, which – the whole thing came crashing down and – but he was a perfect gentleman.

Anne: Where was the wood?

Dick: Well, that was a part of the farm, that was north of Route One, behind the saltbox house, behind Wilcox Tavern, where the new development is, that goes up across –if you go straight across [from] West Beach Road, go up in there; I can still see some of the old woods roads that we traveled with people like Mr. Nurmi to go in and harvest wood.

In fact, when we – there was a porch on the back of the farmhouse and we enclosed that; in fact it had some enclosure, but they were kind of temporary kinds of things where they had glass in the winter but you'd take 'em down in the summer so you had an open porch. But it wasn't –you know over time, those things have to be replaced. And we, we built more of a room there and we lined it with light cedar that we harvested from up behind there; there's a cedar swamp. And we went up and brought wood down, and I have to revisit the farmhouse just to see if that original cedar is still there. It could very well be.

Anne: Now I've heard about Mr. Clark having a farm –

Dick: Yes.

Anne: Was that part of that area too, across the street?

Dick: That's the house that's kind of highly decorated with a lot of stuff. Yeah, yeah – that was Tom and Mary Alice Clark and they used to have a barn, and they used to have cows –

Anne: This was separate from your farm—

Dick: Separate --yeah, totally separate from us. Another farm that used to be close at hand was Munroe Hoxie, down near Ninigret Pond –let's see. You go past the Burlingame entrance and where the—there's two, three houses – well, in fact the first two houses on the right, after you go past the Burlingame entrance, those two houses were a part of his dairy barn; and they were cut in half and those two houses placed on-- or those two sections--placed on foundations, where Mr. Hoxie lives in the second one, on the right. And he's one that knows a lot of history of Quonochontaug.

Anne: He's still –

Dick: Oh yes, yeah, yeah.

Anne: Now isn't there a Hoxie up here? Was this a part of –[Dick saying no]

Anne: No. There's another old house that's on the left – **Dick:** There could be Hoxie property above, but I'm not sure, I don't recall where it might have been.

Anne: Now you bought-- your parents bought this land then from Dr.Sw –

Dick: No. No, no, no.

Anne: I was wondering who owned it before –

Dick: It was the Latin land.

Anne: Oh, the Lat—But what does that mean? That's their name?

Dick: Yes, yes, yes.

Anne: Oh, I didn't understand – I thought it was the –

Dick: Well Glenda had the same problem; she thought there was something unique about this land, where it's probably that it was originally owned by the Latin family, and they had passed on and my parents bought the land from the estate.

Anne: I understand; I'm glad you clarified that.

Dick: Let's see – Of course, Brad Fisher; we knew the Fisher family and Vars –I don't know if I mentioned –well, that's over here.

Anne: Did you know Brad Fisher was my mother's cousin?

Dick: I think you might have mentioned that before, yeah.

Anne: But now Mr. –Oh the Vars, yeah.

Dick: Well, that's summertime though; I need to cover that. There was the Greene family; they lived up on Ross Hill Road. They had a little farm up there too, and he had horses and so we spent a little time there.

And then I have Clark here; that would have been the family that you asked about across the way. She was a very large woman, and he was a very tiny man; and they had an old Ford pick-up truck, and he smoked a pipe and she needed a block, because of her size, to get up into the pick-up truck cause pick-up trucks back then were a little higher than they are today. So Tom would get the block out of

the truck and set it down so that she could get in and he--he -- we --my brothers and I over the years, you know, we had lots of stories to share about some of these --and one of the stories, one of us --it wasn't me but one of my brothers was driving to Westerly, on Granite Street hill, which is kind of steep, and he's striking a match on the dashboard to light his pipe as this thing is kind of wheeling its way down the hill; it's like --you know --will we make it? And they also had chickens, and my brother just older than I --Louis I believe --he would go over and mow the grass for them and then he would also pick up the eggs. And the first time, I think, he picked up the eggs, he picked up a china egg; a china egg is something that you put in the nesting area so that the chicken knows: Oh, that's where I go and lay my eggs. So Louis inadvertently --either on purpose or otherwise --took one of those in the house. Well, he got chewed out for bringing in something that isn't an egg. You know, it's a plastic egg or glass egg or whatever it was.

And she also was --she, she was a business woman; she had a --she made rust-off. And rust-off was a secret formula that she made in her kitchen and she bottled it up, and it was a product that if you had a rust stain on --you know a piece of clothing, you could apply this and it would remove the stain.

Anne: It really worked? **Dick:** Apparently so. Yeah; it really worked. I don't know what ever happened to the secret recipe, but she --Anne: And she sold it?

Dick: Well, yeah. In fact my dad used to get roped in to --she would put together a dozen bottles or whatever a case would make --Well; he would go to the city, like to Providence to pick up supplies and do whatever; and she would say, well take this to such and such a drug store; they're expecting this delivery. And he would get there, and it's like: "What?" So he found some of those little tasks a little embarrassing.

Well, for some of our visitors: Of course, Howard E. Thorpe, who probably is the creator of Central Beach as we know it today: he was a big figure. Stanley Griffin, where Joan Thomsen lives now, he lived in St. Louis, I believe, and he was a great Cardinals fan. So he would visit us on the farm and of course with four boys, sports -- we were Dodger fans because our old radio in the chicken house could pick up the New York station that would cover the Dodgers when they were playing at Ebbets Field. And of course he was from St. Louis, so we used to have lots of fun with him.

The Springs were from Springfield, West Springfield, Massachusetts: Denise and I'm trying to think -- was his name Bill? Not sure. Build their house and it's still down on the beach. MacLeods, like you know Danny MacLeod and his brother, his young sister too.

Anne: Yes, Ibby.

Dick: Yeah. And the Zabels over on East Beach Road, and the Frosts, who used to stay at the Quonnie Inn, and then Vars –their house – of course he was a druggist in Westerly but their summer house was here, so Ruth and Charlie; and I just learned this past summer or fall, when we had a class reunion that he’s out in Oregon and was a mayor or held some political office out there, which I didn’t know about. Then the Hatch –Hatch people on the –

Anne: West Beach Road – Priscilla—

Dick: Frank and Elldina (“Sis”) Pulaski on the breachway; and the Dowds;

Anne: You know – like Dowds; I know the house, the Dowd house. Do you remember anything about that?

Dick: You know, I don’t; personally I don’t remember them that well. Seems like there were a couple of sisters or something –and again, seemed to be older people. But then “olders” –like with my grandkids – how could they get –you know—to be fifty or something like that? Then Duryeas, over on East Beach Road.

Anne: I’ve talked to Charlotte.

Dick: Oh you have. Ok yeah. Of course they were out of New York and they’d come during the summers. I was always – Ah, you know, I’m sure there’s other names, but Mom and I, when we were comparing notes, that’s the kind of thing we came up with.

Anne: That’s good; that’s terrific.

Dick: Now apparently there was some question, ‘cause here – and we’ve already covered this: Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter – the planting in spring, the seasonal crops, in summer vegetable harvest, haying and barn dances that were talked about, fall seasonal harvest, canning, freezing, and then we, in the winter, --Anne: Was winter more fun? I mean--just-- you had more time to enjoy – whatever? Dick: Oh – there was always something to do. When, in wintertime, you still had the chores with the cows; every 12 hours they were milked. ‘Course in the wintertime, different than summertime, when the cattle were off during the summertime, that meant that there was less to clean up in the barn. When they were in the barn, during the winter, you had all their waste to be removed. So that’s extra chore that you don’t have during the summertime. But then wintertime was a good time to do repairs and fix up and do things like that; and then we butchered animals.

Anne: I was gonna ask you that when you were talking – you slaughtered your own –

Dick: Um hm. Yes, yes.

Anne: And did *you* do that?

Dick: Um hm. Yes, yes, yes. Well, again; that was a chore. My dad – we were helping him. And yeah, many many hogs; we would butcher probably-- I can remember maybe as many as 20 a winter. And beef cattle was more a to-market experience, with those-- one or two of those –

Anne: Did you ever get attached to any of the animals and –

Dick: O---h, yes and no. I showed animals at the fairs; and at Eastern States Exposition, and ‘course an animal that you’re gonna show, you have to spend a lot of time with ‘em so that you can – so that the animal follows your commands and things of that nature. But no; I guess you never really get too attached--

Anne: How about horses?

Dick: There’s two horse stables at the bar—at the –it’s in the—we called it the Wagon Shed, but it’s the main building that’s there now behind the house. We never had much luck with horses and relied more on tractor power. But we did have it -- a couple of times. And of course when --you know --it’s an old thing – like horses: you raise that issue, and horses-- we lost them, they die. So now you have to bury this creature that’s three-quarters of a ton in size or whatever.

Anne: You have to dig the hole?

Dick: You have to dig the hole and bury the remains. And I often think that someday, at some point, somebody will do some digging up there and they’ll find these skeletons, and they’ll say, Wow this must be ancient! [Laughter]

Anne: That could happen, I’m sure.

Dick: Now that was all part of, you know, life on the farm.

And then you’d asked a question about East and West Farms. East and West Farms really didn’t happen until after the highway was built and the house was moved and the new buildings were built. In fact, my mother has pictures of some of those buildings when they were being built. But there’s a wall that separates and kind of established-- where we moved to was on the west side of the wall and where the new barn and buildings were built, that was on the east side so when it came time to give the farm an official name, we came up with East and West Farms.

I guess you asked about animals – cows, chickens, hogs, horses, guinea hens, sheep, and a couple goats. That’s about what Mother and I had discussed when I visited with her before Christmas, of ’98.

Anne: That's wonderful. Thank you.

Dick: I can remember -- then winters, where the Greene family was on Ross Hill Road-- They had a nice meadow, and we would go up there and we would -- my dad bought us a toboggan --that was the big thing, with a—it could carry 6 or 8 people. We'd go up to the Greene farm; it was a decent place to slide downhill. And we could do some skiing, although back then we usually made our own skis; not successful -- but the toboggan was really something. Anne: Do you remember having more snow when you were younger? . . . We all think it was more snow every winter though--

Dick: That reminds me of a cartoon that I remembered from *way* back when, and the cartoon had this gentleman and his young son; and his young son is like barely up to his knees. And the father is saying, "You know, son, this is nothing like what we used to get in the way of snow." And of course the little guy is --

Anne: Just --he couldn't walk, like it was a mountain!

Dick: We probably had more snow; we certainly had colder temperatures. I can remember --you know, you ask about wintertime. Well, we had our own water system, well, --

Anne: How did you --was it a windmill?

Dick: No; no, we had electric pump. That pumped the water. Then the water was distributed from the basement of the home to the barn, and to all of the outbuildings. Chickens -- you don't realize how much they drink until you have to carry 'em water, and then suddenly you have some appreciation. So in the chicken house we had automatic fountains where the chickens could go and drink. And as they drank, they continuously would refill themselves. And the same in the barn; when the cows drank, they could xxx on water, and that would race --and bring about some interesting things. [Dick's subsequent explanation: Sometimes the automatic valve would get stuck when the cows were drinking; the water would then pour out, flooding whatever was nearby. If the barn had not been cleaned out, the flood made an even greater mess for those doing that chore.]

But what I was about to say was, in the wintertime, although those lines were well below the frost depth, I can remember lines freezing where [they] came up, into the garage for example. The garage -- If you have animals in a building, the animals will keep the building warm, as long as it's reasonably tight. So in the wintertime, during winter, the barn --we would have to leave windows open by exhaust fans that would automatically come on to keep the barn cool, because it would get too warm. But in the garage, where there was no heat -- we did have a coal stove in there, where we would heat water, and that's where we did our butchering -- When you butcher . . . a hog, you have to scald it to scrape its hide off, or its skin, or its hair. And if the boiler wasn't boiling, there would be no

heat; and the water line would freeze where it came up out of the ground. So you'd have those kinds of chores in the wintertime—How do you [thaw] a water pipe that's not where you can pour water on it? It's tough, you know, it isn't easy. I've had a well where we would do it with wiring.

Anne: But you used to butcher them in the winter?

Dick: Oh, definitely. Sure. We always butchered in the winter, except for chickens. Chickens and broilers and hens, we butchered those in the summertime. But you could cool and take care of them much easier. But when you have a hog or beef critter, because of their size, unless you have a very large refrigeration device, you use Mother Nature's coolness in winter. So you could butcher and then the carcass would be chilled within a short period of time after the critter was killed, so the following day, we would usually cut up the animals. In the case of beef, we'd let them age a little bit before we cut them up, but yeah, you used the natural refrigeration.

Anne: And then you would ship them to somebody else to sell?

Dick: Uh, well we—with the beef critters, generally we would sell a half a beef critter to someone else, or a quarter; but we would butcher for our own consumption. And we had freezers, and we'd freeze most of the beef. Hogs—we sold more hogs. People wanted fresh dressed hog; and like I said, some winters we probably slaughtered up to 20 or so. But we always had hogs and raised young hogs. In the wintertime, you know, there again you're feeding the hogs—

Anne: Did you breed the animals as well?

Dick: Yes. Yeah. We bred sheep, cows, pigs. -Chickens—we always purchased them; you know we'd see little chicks and then raised them.

Anne: The other question I had --you had mentioned getting the seaweed as fertilizer. Remember you showed me that picture?

Dick: Yes.

Anne: Did you remember doing that yourself?

Dick: Oh, absolutely. Sure. Yeah. Yeah. There was a couple things about living here and especially in the wintertime—and it's like you don't have anything to do; well there was always something to do. Cutting wood, of course was one, butchering hogs was another, repairing things.

On the beach—the beach would bring interesting things like a deposit of seaweed, and we would harvest it and scatter that on the field; it was kind of a poor man's fertilizer I guess you would say. And then other events—well, of course the

fishing trawler that washed up on shore at Napatree just –just a couple years ago—that was—seemed to be more frequent in years past where various size crafts would run aground, including coal barges. And then of course you would have this deposit of coal, and many of the people who had coal-fired furnaces or stoves would go down and harvest the coal from the beach. So in addition to harvesting seaweed, we would harvest coal.

Anne: Can you, can you tell me how you harvested? I remember a picture of the tractor –where did you go? How did you get--? [long gap; no sound]

Dick: Yeah. Usually -- Well of course Central Beach parking area was an area that didn't have the berm that it does now. Years ago that was more open. And so we would go on where there was a place where you could get to the beach. And we would take and load the seaweed into a manure spreader, which was designed for –when you'd come back to the barn, then you could spread that on or use that same piece of equipment for the seaweed. It had a container so we could take a meaningful load and then once we-- for unloading it, that was an automatic process, by just pulling it around the fields and having it scattered automatically.

Springtime was another time for lots of repairs. Chickens, for example, I mentioned how much they drink; well, when you get frost on a window, chickens like to peck windows, and if glass gets cold enough and it's pecked, it gets shattered. So I became kind of an expert in cutting and glazing windows; I can remember doing that-- it was like – that was probably one chore that I least liked and that was cleaning out the hen house. I'd clean out a barn any day, but a hen house was terribly dusty and the ammonia was just terribly overwhelming at times. So I used to find that the chickens – I used to call them “Stupid, dusty chickens.”

But lots of fond memories of those kinds of experiences, and --

Anne: Now what about the breachway? Did you go down to the breachway? It was different –Dick: No; the breachway that is there now is man-made. It used to loop around behind the old life-saving station, the Coast Guard station. Anne: [unintelligible question]

Dick: Well of course when, later, when we had a boat –we never really had a boat that we spent much time on the Pond with –we just didn't have enough time to do that. But we did have a nice little dock. It had two, two what would you call it? – two kind of wings --

Anne: On the back of the farm?

Dick: Yes, on the edge of the farm. In fact I've been thinking about going over there to see if there's any remnants of what I remember used to be there. That was built or provided when the farm was built.

Anne: Do you have the name of –I’ve seen pictures of Gavitt’s Coal Yard, for instance. I didn’t know where that was located; somewhere around the Pond. That doesn’t ring a bell ----

Dick: Gavitt’s ? Not off hand. The Burdick boys would – Gib Burdick probably would know about that. There was Bill’s Island – and you know, I’d have to pull out some old maps to find terminology that I may not recall about to --
Anne: So your **xxxxx** really was obviously land oriented and not—much water xxx-

Dick: Well, what we would do, --summertime was not an easy time for us ‘cause harvesting hay used to be a *real* chore. We used to handle it loose and stack it on the wagon or truck and then carry it over and then lift it into the barn. And one of my jobs, ‘cause I was the younger one, was to pack the load. Now when brothers and my dad would pitch the hay from the ground up to the load, well, you’d have to position it so that it wouldn’t fall off. And of course once or twice, the load wasn’t done right and part of the load was lost as went through a narrow lane-way; and a bunch of hay caught it and tipped it off and then you had extra work. At the end of the day, either weeding in the garden or haying, you were dusty, sweaty and groggy; and the farm was a great place to go and take a dip at the end of the day.

Anne: So you’d go in the back and – under your dock and xxx.

Dick: Yeah, yeah.

Anne: As far as clamming and all that you really didn’t have time for that –

Dick: Well, we would go quohogging and clamming; see it’s quahogging here. [laughter] And occasionally an oyster or two. And scallops, yeah. And yes – of course the pressure for those resources are much, much greater than they were back then.

We could go and –oh, another thing about springtime or summertime, I should say, is harvesting blueberries. And cranberries or anything else that grew on the vines, for preserves and pies and things like that.

Anne: So you would go out berry picking ?—

Dick: Oh berry picking, yes. **Anne:** And your mother would make—

Dick: Well, Mother would go out, usually, and we’d go out and help her too. And -- making pies and preserves and what have you.

Anne: Aren't we losing all those native plants? –and blackberries, we used to go blackberrying and blueberrying and all around and –

Dick: Something else that I should tell you about: When I was a real young tyker, probably when we first moved here, and I didn't realize it but my mom reminded me of it –that she had made me some kind of a piece of wear, from my dad's sleeve, so she would make a lot of our clothes. And of course the youngest of four boys – I inherited all the hand-me-downs. Yeah. Lots of them. So I have no idea when I got my first new piece of clothing. That could have been – but it didn't much ever bother me. That was not an issue. We were always clothed and kept warm and well-fed, and life on the farm was really a nice experience.

Anne: Certainly. .. All those strong people growing up on a farm.

Dick: Yeah, yeah.

Anne: When you-- when you relate what you did in a day, I mean it's –

Dick: Yeah, we worked hard.

Anne: Most of us have much more sedentary ---

Dick: But we also got some pleasure out of it too. With the four of us, we were always building something. We built a little merry-go-round that we could entertain ourselves with—We built a Ferris wheel –just because—

Anne: You figured out something you just –

Dick: Yeah. Things to do. Yeah. Anne: And it worked?

Dick: Oh sure! Oh yeah, yeah; everything worked. Yeah. There was this – the Curry family that I mentioned earlier, their son was Richard, as I'm Richard; and he and I shared the same birthday. He, much older than I, but he was an only child and he would kind of come to the farm; I think he was older than all of us. Yeah, he was. And he was kind of a macho guy, and we used to get great pleasure out of watching him –um--do stupid things. And we would allow him to do it! [laughter] For example, one –with this dock that we had on the pond, it was you know just probably a couple feet off the water – the height of it—and he came down with his new bike and we were going down at the end of the day, so he came down with us. And he was going to show us--although the water wasn't very deep at the dock –he was going to show us that he could ride off the dock, land in the water, and not get any more wet than whatever the depth of the water was, if it was a foot--whatever.

So we thought, OK –fine; he's gonna get a running start so that he can fly off the end of this and land somewhere out in the water—when --you know – he did not

do what we thought would have been our choice! He rode very very slowly. And we were just waitin' for the entertainment that we saw, because as the front wheel dropped off the end of the dock, the sprocket caught – of course-- the bike—and he just went flying into the pond. His new bike and him and -- of course we would laugh! [laughter]

Well, he happened to come one time and ride our Ferris wheel – no, that was our merry-go-round. And the way the merry-go-round was designed: we had this barrel filled with rocks or something to stabilize it, and we had a pivot point, and then we had these timbers. And someone close to the barrel would push this around –one of us, two of us –well, usually two was riding and two was pushing, with the four of us. Well, Dick came down, and he wanted to ride on this. And, of course the challenge was: “How fast can you go?” And we rode him around fast enough, long enough so that he became ill-- and he lost his breakfast! [laughter] Anne: And he kept coming back for more?

Dick: Oh he would come back, and we would just – you know it was just great entertainment for us.

Oh another thing that we use to do on the farm was cure --like hams and bacon. And that was kind of interesting because we had a little smokehouse, and it was near the road. And it looked like an outhouse or a privy. But it was our smokehouse. And the way this was designed, we had this ceramic, terra cotta pipe, probably two foot in diameter – 20 inches –two foot –that was buried in the ground. From that we had this pipe that came up from it on an elbow, traveling the ground and then up into the smokehouse. The purpose of this submerged pipe was to kindle or light the fire to create the smoke, to smoke the hams and the bacon and shoulders and whatever else. And we would harvest hickory, fresh green hickory, twigs and we'd get a little fire going; and then we'd throw the green hickory twigs in there, and add a lid on it, and it would just create this heavy smoke. And of course the aroma of it was just fantastic. But it was interesting because that was generally a fall or winter kind of thing. But occasionally someone who didn't know what it was would stop in to the farm and say “Your outhouse is on fire.” Because of course the smoke was coming up out of this –we never had an outhouse there on the farm, but people thought that that was one! So there's always lots of little stories like that—[laughter]

Anne: Three times a day!

Xxxxx

Dick: Young heifers. Those are female cows, before they are old enough to be bred and give birth and produce milk. They, along with dry cows --a dry cow is one that has produced its milk, has been re-bred, and is dry and is usually in the gestation period for giving birth to another one –well, dry cows and heifers we used to take down to --what do they call it – Whistling Chimneys?

Anne: --Yes, Whistling Chimneys –

Dick: In fact, I think that was – I think that farm used to belong to the Clarks, that had the farm up here. It had a little barn down there, and I think that's the building that still stands. They had pasture land there, and when the Clarks gave up farming, gave up their animals, we would take our heifers and dry cows down there during the summer. And they'd just kind of take care of themselves. And of course, that always added excitement because a cow would get out, or a storm would come, or the end-of-the-season drive, when we would go down and let the cows out on the beach road, and then herd them up the beach road up to the farm. And you could see where that would be kind of a hilarious experience, too, because a cow is a very curious [animal], wanting to go into every yard, yet we were expected to keep these things channeled and focused.

Anne: You and your brothers would be in charge of doing this?

Dick: Yes, oh yeah.

Anne: Well – so this must have been in --uh the late '40's or –

Dick: Late '40's, '50's—

Anne: Now I don't remember anything at all –

Dick: No, no. And then the other thing –because we had dry cows down there, occasionally a cow would give birth to a new –to a calf. And then we'd have to go down and locate the calf, and even a newborn calf, once it's –you know once they're born, they're up almost instantly, they're very fragile, they can – it's like: Will these creatures ever gain stability? If you don't get 'em early, they can outrun the fastest one of us. So that used to be almost an annual chore –one or two times during the summer, because there would be one or two dry cows that we would take down during the spring. Some time during the summer the new calf would be born, and then we'd have to go down and gather up the mother because now she becomes a producing cow, gotta get her into the barn because every 12 hours she has to be milked.

Anne: Would the calf – the calf would have to go up with her--?

Dick: Oh yeah. The calf would have to go with her. But we'd have to capture the calf, and usually the calf would be hidden some place in the brambles. And we would search and search and search, and of course the mother generally would be protective of her new calf—

Anne: I thought offspring would stay with the mother –

Dick: Well, they can, and they usually do. The mother wouldn't be far away, but if the mother knows that you're looking for the calf, she might not necessarily go and take you to the calf. So that was kind of an interesting chore, yeah.

Anne: Oh yeah. ----

Dick: And the bowling alley --Of course the bowling used to be where --

Anne: The Casino?

Dick: Where the --tennis courts are at the end of West Beach Road. And that was one means of entertainment, and we used to go down and set pins, too. That was a way to earn a couple of pennies, you know -- not much.

Anne: Just during the summer, though.

Dick: Oh yeah, sure. Yeah, that was just seasonal.

Anne: Were there many people that lived year-round at all down the West Beach area and the breachway?

Dick: Um --

Anne: There were no farms way down in there--

Dick: No, you know Bob Finlayson was one, probably lived there year round; I don't recall many living out there --

Anne: I think maybe before the '38 Hurricane --

Dick: Oh! Before the '38 Hurricane --that's like Barbara's note would point out; they lived right on the beach. Oh sure. But the hurricane changed life as it was prior to its time, and --you know, oh yeah, much, much, much xxx --Too many people lost their lives along the Rhode Island coastline. That was something like 500 I think that lost their lives. So yeah -- even Barbara today: moving back, she doesn't want to be on this side of Route One. She wants to be on the other side of Route One. So --And I'm sure it's because of her traumatic experience when she witnessed the '38 Hurricane. Right there on the beach.

Anne: Well thank you, Dick, so much Dick: You're quite welcome.

