

Chapter 7, continued: Oral History and Narratives of Migration

by Deborah L. Rotman

Rod Nackerman

Monday, July 11, 2011

The Brothers' Place

Conversation Summary: Mr. Nackerman spoke about family history, growing up on the Island, Irish immigration, class distinction, logging industry, favorite memories, old bachelors on the Island, Charlie Anthony, transportation on the Island, religion on the Island, leaving the Island, Gallagher homestead, and nicknames. Rod is a very active member of the local historical society (Figure 7.8).

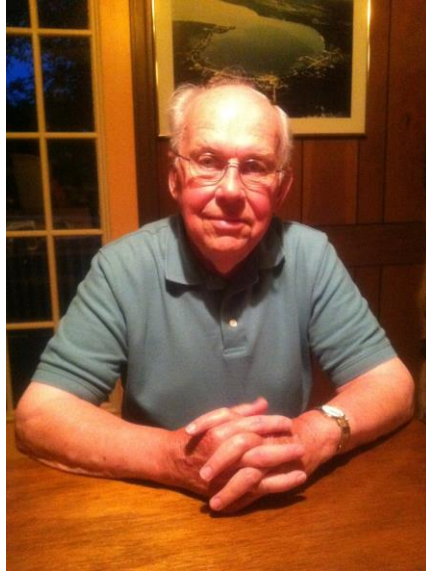


Figure 7.8. Rod Nackerman in his home, summer 2011.

KA: The first question I want to ask is when did your family first come to the island?

RN: My great grandfather, Pete McCauley, came to the island about 1886, I believe. And, he settled in Nomad, which was the other island---the other end of the island. There was the settlement over there, and he was a fisherman. They raised 14 children, and eventually, they all left the island except my grandfather-- my grandmother, I am sorry, my grandmother----and she came down to, Barney's Lake Road and her husband Fred--he had come from Elk Rapids, Michigan. They were married in a little church in Nomad of 1881 of all crazy things, 18th of January of the year, must have been a chilly day for the wedding. But anyway, they settled in there, they first built a log house and they did all right with that. But then in 1904, they settled the farmhouse, or built the farmhouse. And then, the old house they just tore down eventually. And they only had one child. And that was my dad. His name was Frank. It was a little peculiar because they were married for twenty-two years before they had a child. They stayed in that house, and my dad went to school there and graduated from high school, Saint James High School. It was at that time.

They and he went to college, which was quite rare in that days. He went to University of Detroit for two years. And his mother was kind of---pretty anxious for him to come back home, so he quit school and he worked in the auto plants for a while, and met my mother in Pontiac, on Cherry Street of Pontiac. And by coincidence, I met my wife in Grand Rapid, also on Cherry Street in Grand Rapid. So, anyway, when they came back to Beaver Island, there was no jobs at all and it was during the Depression and it was really bad. They were married in 1926, so um my dad, he served as treasurer and supervisor in the other township and made a little money in that. Now, all this time my grandfather, Fred, he was a bricklayer, and there was no bricks to be laid on Beaver Island. So, every spring, he would go away, go to the UP, sometimes Canada,

wherever the big commercial buildings were being built. And then he would come back on the first of December.

And in the meantime, my grandmother, she wanted to be a farmer, so she would hire local people to work, plant crops, everything they had chickens and turkeys and let's see sheep, a few cows and one horse. But the horse died. Well then, uh, my dad worked as--- in the WPA, there was a program for unemployed people. He didn't like it very well. Most of the time he would---people tell me that he would stand on a shovel and talk, mostly his thing. So in, didn't have a steady (unclear). In the meantime, we had four children, myself and my four sisters. So, he wrangled a job as postmaster on the island through political pull, and he was very happy. That was just his thing. Eventually, he stayed with that almost thirty-nine years for postmaster.

KA: Do you know about what time he became postmaster? What year?

RN: Yes. 1939. And because they lived out in the country, in the wintertime the plows were not---they didn't go to that road. You had to go up to where the gas station is now, by the cemetery, and then either leave the car there or walk to town. But eventually, we couldn't get the school moved to town, so we all had to transfer to downtown, and we would rent houses for a while, maybe four or five years. And then my dad bought, bought the post office and then by that time I was 17 or 18 and I helped him remodel it, remodel the upstairs, so that they could live upstairs. Now, let me see. For myself, do you want to talk about me?

KA: Mmm, hmmm

RN: Ok. I left the island when I was seventeen. I had already graduated from high school. I went to Pontiac, and I worked at a gas station, which I love that work. And it was time for military draft, so I enlisted in the Air Force. I served most of the time in Florida, which was a good place to be. I, ah, traveled a lot. I went to North Africa. I went to England, Alaska, North Dakota, various places. We would always come back. I was recruit chief on Beaver Island-47 six engine jet bomber.

So, I have told some of this but I will tell it again. In the meantime, when I was in Air Force, there was six young women from Beaver Island in nursing school in Grand Rapids, Saint Mary's. The girls from Beaver Island went right to the guys in Air Force. Or in the, yeah, Air Force or military. Umm, so some of them girls suggested maybe I should write to me. And, (Laughs) I liked that very well. I had been in service about a year at that time and had already gone to Florida. So I started writing, I never met this girl. And there were several other boys writing to this girl, but apparently I wrote a little better letters than them. So, we got to writing back and forth, back and forth. Then Christmas came along I was gonna drive her from Florida with some other guys. So I called her. I said "do you want to come and see me?" And she says, "Ohh, I'll probably be busy". So, I (laughs) I came back to the island, and I didn't even meet her that time. But we kept writing for another whole year. And eventually we had a date. Ahh, but to make a long story short. She didn't like it very well, at first. We kept writing. So, over a period of three and a half years, we wrote to each other. And we only saw, total days of 30 days before we got married. Because we knew each other really well, you know from... So we got married in ahh Cadillac, Michigan and a lot of the young fellas from Beaver Island that I knew and a lot of the nurses from Grand Rapids they all came to Cadillac and had a big wedding outside, and a lot of beer and drinking and everything. And one of the nurses met one of the guys from Beaver Island and, Skip McDonough. So, they got to like each other real well, and eventually they got married and settled to Beaver Island. And she's been here all that time. So, let me see, after that, for work, umm, I worked as a milkman side by side, I mean you know door by door by door.

KA: Here on the island or...

RN: No, in Birmingham, in Pontiac south part, down by that way. And loved it, it was outside. Just loved the job. And of course with five little kids, we had five children in six years. So, ahh, we umm there was always plenty of milk and ice cream so. Eventually, door to door milkman was starting to go out the window so I had to go to work, work at Pontiac Motors at the assembly line, as a supervisor for uhh 22 years. Uh, all this time I was going to night school. Ah and it was not a regular college, it was business college. So I paired up

with another friend, a veteran of the Korean War and one night we were studying tax, tax laws and we were comparing markets to the competition with each other. And I took, and I tapped him on the shoulder. And I said why don't we start a little tax business. And ahh, put a little ad in the paper. And we just started doing taxes. We paid, we would go to people's house for \$5 in some pretty bad neighborhoods. So we did that for quite a while, some 2-3 years. And then we split up because he wanted to work in his basement and I wanted to do it on the road. So, everything was fine. We were friends and everything when we split up. And I did that all the time. Then for 50 years, did the same thing, went door by door by door---no computer, just a little calculator like that. I had about 300 clients, some of them stayed with me for many, many years. Four families stayed with me the whole fifty years. Well, then in '05---in the meantime, my wife died quite suddenly in 1983.

KA: What was your wife's name?

RN: Her name-Ruth Anne.

KA: And was she originally from the island, or was she just a nurse?

RN: She was from Cadillac.

KA: OK, but she wrote to you?

RN: Yeah, she was still in training, nursing.

KA: OK

RN: Umm. She died quite suddenly with a hemorrhage in the brain and they couldn't---her blood pressure was too high, and she just couldn't make it. So, I never did find anybody else to get married. I never did find another woman, or did anything like that, like that. We were talking about that in the distance and...So, let me see what after that. Oh, after my wife died I joined a group called the Nomads. And they came out of Detroit. And they had their own plane, a big plane, they carried 80 (unclear). And we traveled all over the world, umm, including, one trip we went all the way around the world in 28 days---let's see, 28 days for 28,000 miles. And, just having a great time, and eventually, and I traveled a lot more-100,000 miles with this group. Most people were quite wealthy, and I found that they were kind of snooty, although I always had some people to...There was always like some women there traveling quite a bunch of them. There were single women, that the husband didn't want to go. So we had a lot of fun. We just had a lot of fun. (KA: That's good). It got too, ahhh, too expensive. So when 9/11 came along I was coming back from uhh Germany, Frankfurt and on that afternoon we were playing cards and we got, we were over Greenland and the pilot said we had to turn around. So we went back, we went back to Frankfurt in a beautiful hotel. The Frankfurt hotels were already filled so we went to a resort hotel way up in the mountains, in the river now, Danions (sp?), I think. And we stayed there for six or seven days, and I loved it, you know. The married people were awfully upset, their pills and their kids, and my dog and everything--- I enjoyed it all. But eventually we got back home again. I stopped traveling at that time. But I have traveled all the provinces of Canada, including I drove to Alaska twice, broke down on one of the trips. I went to almost all of the states except that I didn't want to go, like New Jersey. Umm, I drove back and forth to California for 19 times, back and forth. In fact, I guess that brings me right up to the present time.

KA: That's great. You've had good times (Laughs).

RN: Good times. And the kids turned out reasonably well (Laughter) two or three of them went through divorces, and which is too bad. But all in all they did pretty good. Yeah, they'll be coming, all of them will be coming before August.

KA: Another question. If we could go back in time a little bit. I was wondering if you knew anything about how, like, what your grandparents, even great-grandparents, I don't know if you knew them at all, like what their lives were like her on the island, like day to day...

18:00

RN: My great grandfather was a fisherman. And he did other things. A little bit of farming. Things like that. And even he and his sons, they loved to work in the woods, as a logger, in the U.P.

KA: And what were their names? What was your great grandparent's name?

RN: Pete McCauley. They called him "Black Pete" 'cause of his black beard. He's in the museum. My grandmother, I didn't know her very well, you know, because he was dead, or had passed. (?). But they married, they were married in Gladstone, I believe. In Michigan. I go to visit the grave once and a while. Uh, my—my grandmother always did, she was a farmer. She didn't work anywhere else. And my grandfather always did bricks. Brick, whole, yeah. And my mother—After my mother got into the post office, he wrangled a clerk job to—for my mother. By that time, the kids are gone and everything. And they lived up above the post office. So, on a typical day, my dad'd come make--build the fires and stuff he had going. Come lunch time. My—my mother would fix his lunch. And he would go upstairs and have lunch and have a little drink, and then my—my mother would come down to the post office and work for—during two or three hours, or something like that. So, when they retired they both got a pension. So, they did—They were pretty good, in good shape then, you know. Money-wise. At one point, too, I---when my sisters inherited the p—the post office, I didn't want to be a landlord. So, I bought out a portion of the post office. So, I don't have an—I don't have anything to do with it. And, any other questions?

KA: How would you describe your mother and your father? Like, what were they like?

RN: Ok. That's interesting. My mother was Scotch. Kinda straight-laced. Not much—not much loving. I don't remember any hugging or kissing, or anything like that. And that was kind of typical of that time. My dad was a romantic guy, and he loved to dance and he liked to sing. He liked to drink and—But, they stayed together for sixty-six years, and they fought like cats and dogs, but never—no hitting, and never any—I never heard them do any swearing, or bad language. As mad as they'd be mad, as either, but they never—they never talk like that at all. I guess that's a typical marriage these days. A few little fights. And they died.

30:15

RN: I guess you could say it was a good boyhood. Never went to jail, 'course you didn't have a jail, though. (Laughter). There was no jail. I didn't drink very much as most of the—and a little bit older Islanders drank a lot. I mean, a lot. Over—For a lot of years. And that possibly because I'm still around. Most of them my age, I think there's about two that are left. That group died quite young.

KA: What about things you would do in the summer? Were there dances and stuff, or? Maybe those were during the year too? Like school dances, or..?

RN: Yeah. Yeah, well I wasn't very good at that either. I couldn't dance very good. Yes we did have and I liked those parties. And we would have house parties, and I liked those. We would go out in the country somewhere. And they'd roll—In fact, a bunch of times they had it at our house, especially to celebrate elections when my dad would run for an office, we'd have a party for him.

KA: He'd run for office here?

RN: No, at the farmhouse.

KA: Right, but on Beaver Island.

RN: Oh yeah. On Beaver Island. Oh, I never left Beaver Island until I was sixteen, ever. I didn't go over anywhere, in Charlevoix, and then I hitchhiked to Ferndale, Michigan, and for a couple days, and then came back. Other than that, I didn't go anywhere off the island until I was seventeen. That's when I left to—I was on my own by that time.

KA: So, did you ever have to help your grandparents or parents with work when you were on the island?

RN: When my parents—When my grandparents—By the time, we had five kids they decided that the old folks would move to another house. And it's still there today. That yellow house by the township hall. They lived there for quite a long time, and I would go in and cut wood for them, and come and take care of them. My sisters didn't. Well, my sister didn't have anything to do with that kind of thing. She was very attractive, and very popular, and she had a gang, and she could sing, and you know, stuff. Just the complete opposite. So, she and I didn't get along. We didn't fight. We just ignored each other.

But, yes, I would help and I favor that, because I like the fact that I helped my grandfather and my grandparents when they were very old. I would go over and stay the night. And when my grandparents died, the wake was taken in to the yellow house, and I stayed, and sit there after they went home, I just sit there with my grandparent. And, my grandmother, she was Irish, a hundred percent Irish. And she knew about keening. Have you heard about keening? Where old, old Irish people---They have a terrible moaning, kind of, and crying thing. It's classic with Irish. And I remember throwing down on, when my grandfather died first, and she threw down on the casket, and just screamed and hollered, and I didn't know it at the time, that people in Ireland did it all the time. Called keening. In fact, I hire—You can hire a person to do your keening for you (Laughter). Anything else? Am I talkin' too much?

KA: No, it's wonderful. One question I was wondering about was when your—the Irish side of your family first came over here, or any of the other Irish families, do you know what the biggest sort of changes they faced when they first came to Beaver Island, compared to their life actually living in Ireland?

(34:52)

RN: Yes, very much. In eighteen fifty-six, I believe it was, the time of the—when people were starving, the English was driving people in Ireland across Ireland and in to the west country, and they would give them just—I've been there several times. They would have just a little place for their cows, and stuff like that, with stonewalls all the way around it, so that people from there, the English wanted to get those people out of there anyway, and they were starving, and I've seen pictures where they would be, a whole, a little hut, with a family underneath, and they would go by, and they'd look inside and the whole family had starved right there. And, people were on the road, they would eat grass, and their mouth was all green from eating grass. It was a terrible situation. There's a book that explains it really well.

Ok. So, the people that eventually went to Beaver Island--My people went to Johnstown, Pennsylvania, and worked in the steel mills for just a short time, and they found every—The Irish people were very literate and they wrote to everybody, back and forth, to the Old Country and everything. Just great for writing and reading. So, anyway, they would learn, "Well, there's this place on Beaver Island, where you can grow potatoes, and you can get ten acres if you want, and there's nobody, no king", and everything. So, they were glad to come to Beaver Island, and most of them settled up in the country—what we call up in the country, in the farms. And, yes, they were thrilled. The winters were bad, but they did—happy to be farmers, and good enough to eat, you know?

Even in the Depression, and when my grandfather had just a little pension from the bricklayers, and other than that, they had no money comin' in. Nothing at all. They'd had enough money to get salt and flour, and everything else was in—My mother, my grandmother, sometimes, she would sell a dozen of eggs or something like that. And we did good, even the Depression, when you read about the cities, the breadlines and things like that in the big cities, like Chicago is one, we didn't have that. We didn't know we were poor for one thing. And we had plenty—always got to eat. Now, a lotta times, that we would have maybe

cornbread with syrup on it, you know. That'd be the main dinner. And we'd have fish. A lotta fish. It was always you could get fish. You could go right down to the fishermen. And, my mother'd say how much of the—how big a fish you want, and go down and get it. Then she'd cut it, and most of us liked to eat fish. So, we did all right, pretty well during that time.

KA: Another question I have is, in light of the booming fishing industry, I was wondering if any sort of class distinction or division ever developed between the fishermen and, say, the farmers, or any other occupations?

RN: It was a friendly rivalry, but the people in town, they were a little bit wealth—They were merchants, you know. People had the stores, and the fishermen, and they did pretty well. So, they were a little bit like the McDonoughs, for example. They always lived a little bit better. They had, just, better cars, and all that kind of stuff. A lotta people didn't have any car at all. Alotta the times my dad didn't have any car. And, we'd walk to school. Walk to church. The church was up there, you know. Like for the Stations during Lent, we would all get together, and we'd walk up to church where the cemetery is there, now. And, in the dark, and groups would go over there and then later, they cut the church into pieces and took it down into town where it still is. Yeah. So, we al--We always walked to school of course. But, once we got into town, everybody, all the kids walked to school. There were no buses. I think it was a good life (39:58), because it appreciated the things that we had, and also, I think it was a healthy. We were out in the cold all the time, you know, and doing outside things. Except, we played a lot of Monopoly. And still.

KA: One question that Dr. Rotman had was if you knew anything about the relationship between the farming and the fishing industry, and the combination of the two? Because, from listening to interviews, and everything, you get a sense that a lot of families might be farmers, but one son might go off and be a fisherman. Do you know if a lot of those sons who would go off and be fishermen, would they be working for—Would they be fishing just to bring fish back to their own families, or would they be working on one of the fisher families' boats, and commercially fishing? Do you know anything about that?

RN: The fishermen had their boats, and at one time there was twenty-some out every morning. And, they mostly worked with the Indians. And the young men—Not their families so much, but the Indians would work, and then they'd get paid on Saturday or Sunday, and then they'd miss—'til Monday, and then they'd skip, and then they'd go back to work again. No, the young people from the island both in town, and out in the country, they went sailing. The thing was to go sailing. And the big boats. And many of them stayed with it. Some of them became captain. But I was—Had a terrible bad part about motion sickness, and I didn't...So, no, I wouldn't say there were rivalries.

No. Also, some of the people that were younger than I, well, when they'd be in their twenties or so, they could leave the island, and work in the CCC. I don't know all the letters, but it's a forestry camps. Camping trees, and stuff like that. So, when they didn't have anything at all, they would go to the CC camps. And, of course, the sailors, when December came along, the young men all came home, and then they did a lot of partying, and parties, and things like that. There was no unemployment at that time, but they would come home with the families, and then ship out again in the spring. And I never was glad—I never regretted that I did that, because it wasn't my kind of thing at all. (43:20).

DR: What did you miss most when you left Beaver Island to be on your own around sixteen or seventeen? What was so different?

RN: I was very independent. I might've—I probably missed my family the first Christmas. I remember that. I was only eighteen then, and I didn't get a chance to come back for that Christmas. I was pretty much taken out in the city life. I dunno how. I dunno why. I got well over that. But I—Well, like I say, we're not a really close family. My mother wouldn't--probably when I go away, she wouldn't cry or anything like that. She just—I guess I didn't miss anything. (Laughter). I wanted adventure. I wanted to get out, and see the world, you know. Always been that way. But then, of course, I come back again to Beaver Island. Always back. Come back. Everybody.

DR: Is it what you thought it would be when you came back?

RN: It was a little better. At that time I left, it was only two-hundred and fifty people left. It was almost deserted. And, by that time, the tour business started. Built up. And, so they fixing some of the old buildings, and starting new business and stuff like that. But, I never resented any of that either. You know, some people say, "Oh, well, we've always done this way". I like improvements. I like new things. Every time I see something new. I like to see it. I like new things.

KA: Could you talk a little bit about the logging industry and how it affected life on Beaver Island? Do you know anything about that?

RN: The logging was pretty much all over by that time. There was a few camps. They started one when I was a teenager, and some of the young people did work there. In the mills. And they built—They made roquet? Hammers and handles? I can't say that word. Roquet?

KA: I'm not sure.

RN: The game of...

KA: Oh! Croquet. Right?

RN: Right. They made them here in the mill. And there's some, at the museum, there's some that were made there. Logging, no, I would say now, when I—Like in the twenties, when they had the railroad going through there, and everything, that was a really big deal, but by that time, it kinda died down. (46:28)

KA: Was there—Besides being the postmaster would your father do anything else, at all?

RN: No.

KA: Any odd jobs. Because I know a lot of people here just sort of do whatever they can, you know, to make money?

RN: Boodlers.

KA: Yeah.

RN: Have you heard the term "boodlers"?

KA: Oh yeah. (Laughter). He didn't do any of that, but I just meant like---

RN: Not my dad, but he was in--The postmaster was a good job at that time. He was makin' three thousand a year, and that, well, in fact, they were able to send...One, two, three, yeah. Three of them all went to college. And, that was quite rare at that time. I wanted to go to the University of Michigan. And then, I studied—I wanted to study forestry, of all things. I was kind of a loner, and I liked to go out in the woods, and you know, watch animals, and stuff like that, but I got over that. (Laughter).

KA: Well, you know a lot about the loons here.

RN: Yes. Yeah. (Laughter). Lots a' loons.

KA: That's great.

RN: But, I have a really love for the old home place, and it's particularly Font Lake. And particularly, when I had a stroke, and I was recovering, and I couldn't speak or anything, I could write my hand—my name there. Couldn't write anything at all. And the two things I really wanted to do is save the tax business, which I

couldn't do anymore, and get back to Beaver Island, and work in the bushes, and I've got a strong love the island. (48:28)

Favorite Memories

KA: Do you want to share any of your favorite memories of the island, from spending your summers here?

RN: Let me see. We always came. We stayed in the farmhouse. We didn't have the other house. And, my wife didn't particularly love the island at that time. She would come because I wanted her to come, but four little kids, and no bathroom, just the outhouse, and no plumbing, so it was pretty rough for a while. Eventually, she got to really love the island. She had a lot of friends on the island too. I'm tryin' to think of really good times. Things.

KA: Just like Font Lake, and being on a boat?

RN: Yeah. That kind of thing. Yeah. And I went ice fishing. That was—After school, there wasn't much to do, and I built a shanty. That was the first thing I'd ever built. It was nice little shanty, with a little stove, and a little chimney (49:56). And I would go after school, and I'd warm up the little shanty, and fish through the hole, and they had a lot of fish. People'd get a lot fish really easy. And that was one of the things I did alotta times, like in high school.

KA: Would you ever go sledding or anything like that?

RN: A little bit, yeah. Sometimes the town kids would get together and build a fire on hills, just in a particular area every year, and they would get together and sled. Yeah, I did some of that. A little bit. I wasn't really good at anything athletic, you know, but some people just aren't I guess. (Laughter). I used to help kids, and the one fellow is Bud McDonough, the store, or—He used to—He had trouble with some--the math and stuff like that, and I would help him quite a bit. And, eventually, he'd become not rich, but very, very successful.

(51:10).

Old Bachelors on the Island

KA: Mm-hmm. So, when you were growing up, who were some of the old-timers who lived on the island? Do you remember any stories about them?

RN: Well, yes. And, especially out in the country, there were a number of old bachelors. Mostly Irish. And, our neighbor right next door, he was a—what do you call it?—He stayed home all the time. He lived alone. He didn't mix with other people very much. They would come over to our house. And he didn't have a radio, and he didn't a well, so he would come over. This is in the thirties, and my dad had a little factory radio, so he would come over and he'd listen to his radio, but the fights, and you know, the boxing, and things like that. Well, you could only play the radio for maybe an hour at night, because you had to buy batteries from Sears-Roebuck, and they were quite expensive. So, we held way back on their—Always liked music. I really liked music. Especially country music. I loved it. Still do. (Laughter). Let's see about that. Oh, yes. There were a number of bachelors, and sometimes in case a brother and sister that had a farmhouse and never got married, there's other brothers that stayed in the farmhouses. There was a number a' those. And alotta them were drinkers. Heavy drinkers. And I was telling you about the guy that froze to death?

Story about Charlie Anthony

KA: Oh, yeah. Could you tell that story? (53:07)

RN: Ok. That's kind of interesting. His name was Charlie Anthony, and he lived alone. And he came into town, and go to the Shamrock. He would drank too much, and get squirrely. And, so, they'd throw him

outta the Shamrock. And he'd go home. I think he probably walked home. I don't think he had a horse. But, he was about four miles out in the country. And they lived in an old log house. And after three or four days they didn't find, they didn't know where he was. So, somebody to check on them. So, he had—he was drunk, and he got in his house, and on the bed, with all his clothes on, and he froze to death right there. (54:05).

DR: In his house?

RN: In his house. Yeah. So, he had been there for three or four days, so they took him to town, and at that time the Shamrock would just—They were closed most of the time, and at that time in the deep winter. But, they had a little bit of heat on there, so they took Charlie, and stretched him up in the Shamrock with a low fire to thaw him out, so that they could bury him, so there was a house right from here, just a few houses over, belonged to relatives, and they always have wakes. That's one thing I love is I could go to wakes. I loved 'em. So, I would—They had a closed casket, but Jewell Gillespie wanted to see Charlie, and they wouldn't open the casket. Well, I slid in and peeked around, and Charlie was all pink, and there was frost come off his face from thawing him out to get so they could bury him. (55: 22)

DR: And why do they think that happened, that he froze to death in his house? Did he just not have any blankets on him?

RN: I think he doesn't—He wasn't able to build a fire, I think. There wasn't—There were no other heating except wood, you know, and you had to be reasonably sober in order find the wood, and get goin', and everything. (55:47).

DR: So, one night would've been all it would've taken?

RN: Yeah. One, and pretty cold during that time.

DR: Was that common at all? People having incident like that?

RN: Not very much at that time. That was very unusual. But, I'll tell you what was common, and even in warm weather, and some people cannot believe that it's like this. People would leave the Shamrock, and they'd be drunk, and they're headin' for home, and they'd find them just layin' there in the grass. Right between the Beachcomber's and the Shamrock and there he'd be. Clarence Palmer was one. And the Indians quiet often. They'd find them just different places, and up in the sand, or something. And they'd just stay there 'til somebody'd sober enough to go home. (Laughter). Sometime, the Irish people, they fought a lot. 'Specially, country people. They'd go to town, and they'd get drunk one another, you know, and Archie the manager of the Shamrock—

KA: Archie LaFreniere?

RN: LaFreniere. Yeah. Alvin's father. Archie. You know Alvin?

KA: Or uncle, right?

RN: Yeah. No, his father.

KA: His father. Ok.

RN: And, so they'd make 'em go outside and they'd fight. They'd fight like crazy and everybody cheerin' 'em on, and everything, and then they'd shake hands, and go home. (Laughter). They were just great fighters. Firm fighters. Little, simple, little things. And those things that I remember, you know, are unique from the island. Those things like that.

DR: Did your father ever go to the Shamrock?

RN: Yes. Not so much when we were young, but later on he took a liking to whiskey, but he was a happy drunk. He'd always, you know, dance, and he could sing, and he would hide whiskey, hide from my mother. And he would keep it in the back of the trunk, and one day he went to get whiskey where the Community Center is—It's the same building—And he left the car running to go into his—And it rolled down into the lake, and somebody had to help him pull—get it out of the lake. People all like the tell that story of my dad. There were alotta—There was alotta stories about my dad. He was just a happy guy. He just loved the island. For one time, there was one period over twenty-five years, that he didn't even go to Charlevoix. He had no desire to. My mother would go because her family was in Pontiac. And a big—She had a big family. And, no, he just stay home. When he finally, finally had to leave, he cried. I remember they put him on a—with my sister and brother-in-law—and my brother-in-law had a plane, and we were takin' him back to go to a nursing home, you know. And, we were pulling into the airport and he was crying, and it was so sad. He didn't want to leave that island. (pause)

RN: Do you want my personal, not history, I don't mean that—mental sight, or anything like that? Psychiatry, or psychology? Anything like that? Is there anything that you want to know? I'm pretty much an open book. (59:33). Really! Very simple. (Laughter). I don't hide anything. (59: 42).

Transportation on the Island/Story of when Rod was born`

KA: Another question I was just curious about was in your grandparents, and parents, and your time, was transportation pretty difficult, when you first were born and everything?

RN: Yes. Oh yes. Yeah.

KA: So, you mostly walked everywhere?

RN: Oh, yes. We did a lot, especially in the wintertime. My dad—We did have a car, but it would have flat tires and everything. I probably said first when I was born in the middle of February, the doctor came from town. The neighbor brought him over on a sled. And my mother was very, very small. She was having a real difficulty with the delivery, so the doctor sent somebody, a nurse, who was his wife, to help with the delivery. Then, they sent a lady, an Irish lady, who was what do you call with—the women that do..?

KA: A midwife?

RN: Midwife. A midwife. So, in the meantime, it's just a raging blizzard. Just terrible. And, finally, to this day I have a big head. That's part of the reason. My sisters, they were born at home, and they had no problem with them. Just me. But, yeah the weather, it was a big factor in those days, but we went to school everyday. And, you know, I was five, and I was workin', or walkin' with older kids, and that was just the normal thing.

KA: And, your sisters went to school too? And, what work would they do? Did they do work? Like, did they help in the house, or did they ever...?

RN: Not very much.

KA: Not very much.

RN: Just the dishes, something. Yeah. Neither one of them did—Even my dad—I didn't have to do very much work either. My mother did all the work. The house was clean. Everything was clean.

KA: She was in charge of the house?

RN: Oh, yeah. Nothing—I never had to do anything—The girls' work, I didn't have to do anything like that. And, of course, religion was a big part in our home. In our life. We are very strict Catholics. And they are.

Let's see. All of them are still are, yeah. And most of the grandchildren. Well, about half of them are still with the church.

Religion/Church on the Island

KA: Were there many non-Catholics on the island when your grandparents--?

RN: Very few. Only about four. The Pischners. The Pischners were Protestants. There was no other church at that time, you know. Either you went to the Catholic Church, or you didn't go at all.

KA: So, was the church sort of the center of social life, too?

RN: Oh, very much. And the priest was very much in charge. And, like any decisions we had, there were no judges or anything like that, so if there was a problem with anybody, they'd go to the priest.

KA: Who was the priest when you were growing up?

RN: Father Bordeau was the one that I was baptized by. But, they never scandal—No scandal about the priests at that time. They were doing as well as they could. I don't think they particularly liked to be on Beaver Island because Beaver Islanders was kind of—And to this day, were ornery. They wanted to do their own thing. So, he had to, you know, rein them in a little bit sometimes. And, about the drinking, you know. They had some kind of a program where they want people to be sober. I forget what they call it now. But, there a lot problem with families, where the father was mean. A lot of my friends, the fathers were mean, and heavy drinkers, but not my dad. Now, when—Didn't drink at all when he was young, when we were at home. I've never seen him drunk. After he had no many kids around, he started drinking a little. (1:04:37).

KA: And then, did you say when your farmhouse was first built?

RN: 1904.

KA: 1904.

RN: And my dad was born in oh-three ('03). Just as the house would be finished.

KA: So, did your grandfather build it then?

RN: Well, they hired...

KA: Oh, they hired.

RN: They hired to do it. My grandfather did the masonry work and stuff like that, but, no, skilled carpenter, with, not all, but a lot of the wood was from the island. But, some of the fancy trim they got from the mainland somewhere. It was one of the better homes. Not the largest. Not the best, but it was... But, you see, during, oh, say in the forties or so, and we were starting to leave and everything, and we let the house go. And the porches were down, and the ceiling was coming out, and things like that. And eventually, when I graduated, my dad wanted me to work on that house. And, do what he could do with it. To the porches. And, oh, I painted that house. I know forty years I painted that house. Like one side at a time. I would come in the summertime, even after we had kids. We worked really hard on that 'cause we loved that old house, and we wanted it to stay in good shape. And then my brother-in-laws did some. My son Pat does. And we all take a hand at the house, and people come to look at it. It's kind of a special house. They say you can't go back, but here, you can. Where we started. (1:06:38)

KA: Did the farming sort of stop on that house when your dad and mom worked at the post office or did they still--?

RN: Oh, yeah. He didn't—Yeah, at that point. About that time, when my grandparents were getting old, and there was no more farming after that. My dad had potatoes for a while, but he wasn't really—He might study or have a book about it or something, but he was destined to be a clerical person. That was his thing.

(1:07:20)

KA: Do you any stories about your cousin, Ed McCauley?

RN: Well, no. I only studied him maybe four years ago. That's when I discovered him.

KA: That's when you found him? Oh.

RN: Yeah. He came with some—Alotta the families came to study the roots, you know. And, for us, there's an awful lot of them. I do a lot of genealogy. A big study of it, and I wrote to people, and them if you have information, I'll help you, and then I would invite people to come, and everything. All, except one family. The name was Briggs, and they had eleven children, and they never came back to the island to study anything about the island. It's kinda strange. I got big books and books about genealogy. I was the only one that really cared very much, but you know. But, I'm glad I did now.

KA: So, do you know how he's related to you?

RN: Yeah. Yes. Pete McCauley, that started all the family, his oldest son was named Ed. And, Ed fell through the dock in town, and drowned. And, his wife was over on High Island with seven children. So, when he died, the fishermen brought him—got to body back. Went over to get the wife and the children from High Island. And, there was no way of making a living at all, so the wife—the widow, and the five children, they took them to the farmhouse, and for the winter, they kept the winter, until they left the island. And what were you sayin'? I forget the subject, my subject there? Oh! The relations?

KA: Yeah.

RN: Oh, no. None of them lived here. I had one or two grandmother's sisters from U.P. that would come once in a while, and one or two who worked on the boats, like the lighthouse tenders, and would come sometimes to visit us. And, it was a big thing for us because we didn't very many people from Pontiac either. Sometimes my grandparents' people would come, and that'd be a really big deal. We didn't have much company when we lived on, you know, at that time. If a car would come to turn around, or anything, we'd get all excited. "A car comin'! A car comin'!". A big deal. But, I don't have any regrets.

KA: A nice life.

RN: Pretty good life, yeah. (1:10:26).

KA: So, overall would you say Beaver Island's sort of always been a pretty tight-knit community where everyone contributes in their own way? It cycles?

RN: Yes. Yes, I think so. There was factions. There was clicks like sometimes, you know, one family would be mad at somebody else. Only small towns run that. There'd be somebody that, "You don't like somebody that's a Gallagher", or somethin' like that, but to a minimum. But, they had to work together, you know, because we weren't rich either, so people had to work together. And, it's more now than ever, you know. And, recreation for children, and children's age, there was nothing to do. Almost nothing. You'd go to the Shamrock at night. We'd go in there, you know, underage and everything. There was just nothing to do at all. And, some of the people that moved here, they'd be getting some activity for them. So the main thing was ride around in cars and drink. (Laughter). It was sad, and I didn't do very much of it (1:12:00).

Leaving the Island

DR: You mentioned, Rod, that your family wasn't very close? Do you think if you were you would've stayed on the island longer, or did you leave for other reasons?

RN: Yeah, well. Because I went one trip, and I wanted to go. I wanted to leave the island, and I wanted to work in the city. My parents were not trying to leave by any means, you know. I left. They wanted—There was no big fight about it or anything. I wanted to go. I wanted adventure. But, there was a big incident that came right at that time. When I left in forty-six or forty-seven, my older sister was very attractive, and she got pregnant to some guy on the island. And, this was very common. Very common. But, they would almost marry the same guy, and it worked out for alotta people. Like that. So, the guy that my parents' thought was the father, there was a big squabble over that, who it might be, and you should marry this girl, and some of the family, some of the Gillespies, they didn't want to. The suspected father, they didn't want to marry her. So, she and some single women from the island, they moved to Flint or Detroit--something like that, and there wasn't much—It was a lot of shame to it at that time. Alotta shame. And because of that, she hardly ever came back to the island. She got to be very wealthy. She had a boyfriend, and she didn't say very much about the island. For years and years, she wouldn't go at all. She'd come for my parents' funeral, and that's about all. She's still around. She's in a nursing home—or, assisted living. But she and I—Now, I see her every once in a while, you know. I really care about my sister, but we never did show it. Nobody showed any emotion like that.

KA: Did your other sisters, or most of the other kids your age, was that their plan? Just to leave the island right after high school, or?

RN: Yes, they both wanted to go into nursing, and they did. They were nurses. The third one, she was born—Her name was Colleen, and she came much later. There was a change of life. She was born in fifty-four--or forty-four. And, when all us kids had left the island, she can't even remember any of her sisters because she was raised like a single person. (1:15:00). And, she became a social worker. And she had two—several degrees, and that kind of a thing. My sisters did really well. They had good husbands, and they did—Well, there was one—My daughter, Colleen, married a former priest, and that didn't work out very good, so, she's still single. But, the three of them all get together really well. I mean, they're very close, and they like me, you know. They'd be nice to me. They want me to go eat a couple nights, and tonight they want to come again, and everything. I usually say no. (Laughter).

RN: Anything else? You must've run out of tape, or whatever you do?

KA: Well, this has been wonderful. Thank you so much, Rod. Oh, actually, do you know anything about the house we're excavating at, by any chance?

RN: Do what?

Gallagher Homestead/Father's Nickname

KA: Do you know anything about the house that we're doing the archaeology dig at? The Doney Gallagher house?

RN: Yeah, yeah. Sure. A lot.

KA: Did you ever know the people who lived there?

RN: Very much. Yeah. Patty and Mary.

KA: Could you talk about them?

RN: Yeah. They were both short, fat people. Round, round. And, they never had any children. And, he was a bootlegger, and during like in the Depression, during that time. And, when was...? Prohibition. Prohibition time. Well, he had quite a business goin' at home. A number of people had made whiskey, and people would

go to Patty's house to get his little jar of whiskey. And, I understand when they cleared that upstairs, there was a lot of bottles down there. And, most people didn't know about that. It's only recently people—My dad knew it. But, then, when they died, Mary was a hundred. And, she's on the tombstone. A hundred. And, Patty died first I think. And then, they inherited---the Gallagher family, Peter, and I knew them very well too. They were from first Irish. First generation. They were real Irish. Both the father and mother. And they were a little bit, what should I say? Not dumb, but just a little bit below—There were several families around where they were slightly low intelligence, I guess you'd say. And, they were one of them, but they were very outgoing, and they were great dancers. The best dancers. They were just wonderful dancers. And mostly, like working on the mill and logging and stuff like that. The Doney's. The name "Doney" comes from—It's really, it's Dan. His name was Dan Gallagher, but the Irish changed it to Doney because that's the way they speak the name. So, all the Doney's were—And there was nicknames. Everybody had nicknames on the island, 'cause there was so many big families, you know? And, well, is this one— There was one woman, and she was a good friend of my mother's, and she didn't know her father at all. And so to call her, instead of speaking of the father, her name was Patty Mary Ellen, 'cause her mother was Mary Ellen. So, everybody in that family was Mary Ellen, you know, 'cause there's no dad around. Everybody had a nickname. They used to call my dad, when my mother got to the island, they'd call her "Gracie Frank". There was other Franks, so she was Gracie Frank. (Laughter). And then, my dad was Frankie, of course. Slow Frankie, and they had that post office for so long when they named most of the streets, and somebody—I think it was Jim Wojan, they named that street Frankie Lane from an old country singer. So, that's Frankie Lane in honor of my dad, which I thought was nice. I didn't do it, but I think it was really nice.

KA: Why was he called "Slow Frankie"?

RN: He did everything very--When he'd go into church, you know, he was always late coming to church. And he always smoked a pipe, except when he was sleeping and in church. And then, later, cigars afterwards. He was very healthy. But, he'd come in, wandering in there to mass, and he'd start in church, and like "In the name of the father, and the son, and the...". (Does the sign of the cross very slowly). Like that. And people laughed about that. He did everything—When he worked at the post office, they'd have to close the window, while he disturbed—They called it "disturbed"—distribute the mail . Everybody's in the lobby waiting, especially on Christmas time, you know. And he'd just take his time. Everything he did very slowly. And I guess that why he died—or, lived to be eighty-nine and a half.

KA: Did your mother have a nickname at all?

RN: No, she never did. She was kind of straight-laced. She wasn't mean or anything, but she wanted everything to be right.

KA: Kept everything in order?

RN: In order, yeah. She was very good with the figures. She would be on the schoolboard and stuff like that. Very intelligent. And she drank hardly—Oh, I don't think, probably like zero. Like, drank hardly at all. (1:22:17).

KA: Did you ever have a nickname, or did you name any of your friends or anything like that?

RN: Let's see. One time I had a nickname. I guess I've forgotten what it was. It'd be early in the game, when I was really small. I had a cat and they tried to name "Tinkerbell". "Tinkerbell something or other". And, I'd come in town at the gas station, or something, and say "What's the name of your cat?", you know.

KA: Tinkerbell. Aww. Alright. You've helped us a lot. Thank you so much for doing this.

RN: Oh, I'm glad.

KA: It's been great.

RN: It's kinda useless information really, but, you know, I kinda enjoy doing it.

KA: Well, thank you again.

DR: It was great to hear your stories.

RN: Thank you.

Roland Cull

Thursday, July 14, 2011

In his home on Beaver Island

Conversation Summary: Mr. Cull spoke about family history, Irish immigration, post-Mormon occupation, parents' lives, school and social life, winter on the Island, Irish traditions on Beaver Island, biggest changes on the Island, and the Marold II (Figure 7.9).



Figure 7.9. Roland Cull in his home on Beaver Island, summer 2011.

KA: Today is Thursday, July 14, 2011, and I am here with:

RC: Roland Cull.

KA: So, when did your family first come to the island?

RC: The first set of my family came to Beaver Island in 1857. That was the year after King Strang was shot. They were in the area from Mackinac Island in this whole area. They arrived here; they had left their two children in Ireland at that time with one of their sets of parents, the two grandchildren were left there. They settled in the Mormon house here on Beaver Island. My [great] grandfather in Ireland sold his sheep at a raffle, had a raffle for his sheep, made enough money to send his two daughters, granddaughters to America, one was eight, one was eleven, and the one ended up--the eight year old, ended up being my grandmother. My grandfather came from County Mayo in Ireland--and I forgot to say that--that the O'Donnells came also

from Mayo at that time. They---he was---came across, and I believe he must have walked across at the Sioux because there's never been no record in Ellis Island that he ever---that he entered the country. He was 16 years old; he was fishing at a place called Shoal's Creek up in Northern Michigan for a gentleman by the name of Pond.

My grandfather came from Ireland as a 16-year-old boy and he was fishing for a gentleman in Shishawa Point (spelling? 2:57) in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, it's about 25 miles east of the town of Manistique (spelling? 3:06) where Shishawa Point is located. He was living in the net shed of the gentleman by the name of Pond. There was three gentlemen up there; one of them wanted to possess Pond's wife who was a beautiful lady at that time. They came and there was a lot of lawless up there, partying and drinking and not too much law. And they came, they were fighting, they were on the beach, they came back, they started tearing down the net shed, it ended up they came back at 4:30 in the morning, started tearing down the net shed, they went in and choked my grandfather whose name was Dennis Cull. They had Pond come out of his house and said "Stop or I'll shoot, stop or I'll shoot", bang I shot. They found the gentleman the next morning.

Pond started to come to Beaver Island because King Strang's judges were still doing court cases here. He did not want to go to Mackinac Island because the sheriff was related to the gentleman that he shot. They were overtaken seven miles outside of Shishawa Point by the sheriff, and he was taken to Mackinac Island and was tried, found guilty, sentenced to prison, but ten years later the Michigan Supreme Court overturned this because he was protecting his servant. And that's where the expression comes "a man's home is his castle" because he was protecting his servant, which was my grandfather, Dennis Cull. Dennis proceeded coming to Beaver Island then. He knew my great grandparents from Mayo in Ireland who had received their two daughters from their grandparents over there; one was eight and one was eleven and he told the O'Donnells, "I will wait till she's 16 and we will get married." So when she was sixteen, they got married, and that was in 1874. The land that I own now has been in the family name since 1874. My one niece and nephew, sister-in-law, and myself have our homes located on it. My grandparents lived here. They had 11 children. My dad was the fifth child. He was born in 1885.

KA: What was his name?

RC: His name was Michael Cull. The, uh, he came from--the family-- He was the only one that stayed on Beaver Island at that time. His dad died in 1897. My grandmother married another gentleman by the name of John Buffalo Malloy. He had 12 children so it ended up that I had twenty-two great aunts and uncles. So I had a few. My parents on the other side--My grandfather came here, uh, in the early 1880s. He ran a general store in what's called Sand Bay now. It's next to Central Michigan University where his store was.

KA: And what was his name, sorry?

RC: His name was Hugh Connaghan (7:46). My grandmother that came from Ireland, she was born in 1854 and her name was, uh, O'Donnell, she came to Beaver Island and she married a gentleman by the name of McDonald. They had three children, and McDonald passed away by accident, I believe, is the way the story goes. She had to go to Escanaba to make a living. She left her three children here with her mother. She came back to visit them, and she cried all the time she was here. And Hugh said, "I will marry you then, Mary." So they ended up getting married and they had six children of their own. My mother was the youngest of them and her name was Mable. She was born Mable Connaghan, she was born in 1893. She married Michael Cull in 1914. They had six children, of which I am the baby. They had Betty, Jack, Ray, Larry, and Sally who is still live, and myself. I was born in 1938. We had a home where I was born in the home next to the museum on Beaver Island. Born and raised, went to school here. (9:57). Uh, I went to--After school, I went to Chicago for 40 years, got married, had one daughter by the name of Janet, who now lives in Minnesota. And after I retired I said, "I'm coming back to Beaver Island." So I have a home here on the property which was

bought by my grandparents in 1874 so that--So now I'm ready for all questions that I missed from these two young ladies.

KA: Excellent, thank you. So if we could go back a little bit to your great-grandparents and your grandparents who came directly from Ireland to Beaver Island?

RC: Right all four of them, my great-grandparents and my grandmother and my grandfather, um, the Cull side, and on the Connaghan side, both of them came from Árainn Mhór, uh, in Ireland, which a lot of them, a lot of the families on Beaver Island came from Árainn Mhór. And one of the reasons they say that they came, there was a lot of work being done at that time. They all left Ireland because of the Potato Famine. At that time, they were building two lighthouses here. There was a lot of fishing. There was some lumbering going on, so there was work here when they got here from Ireland. The one other story that, they came to Toronto--they ended up in Toronto. The ship that they came over on is called a coffin ship. A lot of the islanders came here at that time; the ship sank on the way back to England to retrieve another bunch of Irishmen to, to take to this country.

KA: Do you know what the biggest changes were for them, coming from Ireland to Beaver Island? Any--- were there any challenges?

RC: Well, you know the only changes, when they moved in the Mormon house they said the Irish drove them off but, the, they wanted to leave Beaver Island as much as the Irish wanted to take over. Some of the story goes that it reminded them a lot of home in Ireland, some of them. And the island--the ones that came from Árainn Mhór, this reminded them a lot of their home over there. They uh, that whole generation there was a lot came and they spent three or four years and then they left. There's people come back to fifth generation now looking for genealogy out of, out of them and out of the eleven in my dad's family, he was the only one that stayed on Beaver Island. They spread out all over, and all my other aunts and uncles on the other side after my grandmother remarried. They all left the island. A lot of them have come back to the great-grandchildren now, or come back and own homes here in Beaver Island, so, uh, I guess we all come back to some of our roots.

Following the Mormon Occupation

KA: I was wondering if you knew anything about whether or not the Mormon family that left the house that your family occupied, did they leave anything behind do you know of, or?

RC: They said that there was clothes hanging on the hooks and there was fresh bread in the breadbox, you know. They were right here after he got shot. They say---this goes against some of the books that have been written--- they say there was 2,700 Mormons here, but King Strang took the census himself so I think he added a zero to what he had. There may have been 270, and he said he had 2,700. They built the temple they said would hold 2600 people, so they said well there must have been at least 2,600 here. But my dad was born in 1885, so that was only forty years or so after King Strang that he can remember. He said that there was never enough land and never enough housing for 2,700 people. So, this is where I get my belief of, of how it goes. The people say, "well, he took the census, well, he took the census". He was a lying, conniving--we know that, but he was a great orator. He could sell the drowning man a rock. He convinced them to leave southern Illinois to go to Wisconsin, and then go to Beaver Island. He promised them the land of milk and honey; they found some milk, but never too much honey, I don't believe.

KA: That's very interesting. Did you know your grandparents very well?

RC: No, I--I have five grandfathers, two grandmothers, and never knew any of them. The last one died in 1929, nine years before I was born, so, my older siblings knew them. You know, they lived---My grandmother Connaghan lived with my mother for the last few years of her life up 'til then in the late 1920s.

KA: Did you ever hear any stories of what their lives had been like? What sort of typical day, or anything like that?

RC: No, it was, you know---the one thing that I will say is that my aunts and uncles used to come and I never wanted to listen to all them old stories. Now, now I would really love to, to hear, know all them stories, but my sister and I talked about it, you know all the time now. Something would come up about history and we say well, we should've listened to it. (Laughter) But, we never did so.

KA: So, your grandparents, when they came here they were, some of them were farmers right? And some of them were fisherman?

RC: Yeah, well, my, my dad ended up, ended up being a fisherman. Now I'm gonna give you that (hands us a letter) you can take both of these and read them because my brother wrote that uh, about my, about my dad. He went to fourth grade, now that's the equivalent maybe then the eighth grade, I don't know the education of, of the 1800s, but now we're talking to college students who gonna go for her Master's, I can just tell by her smiling! (Laughter). So, you know it's a great difference, you know. And yours truly he, he graduated school here no less than fourth in my class. There was four of us graduated. There was 76 kids K through twelve. This year there was sixty-one kids K through twelve, and four graduated. So, it hasn't really changed in fifty-five years.

Parents' Lives

KA: Ah, interesting. So could you talk about your parents a little bit? What they did for a living? Your dad was a fisherman, but um...

RC: My dad was a commercial fisherman until the lamprey eels put us out of business in the early 1950s. We had two fish boats at that time. The St. Lawrence Seaway opened up, and as great as that was for the country, it kinda ruined the Great Lakes. We're still being infested with the uh, different stuff that comes from the ocean in our, in our lakes: the zebra mussels, the gobies, the stuff that grows on the beach now, different varieties of stuff. One of our problems is the sun penetrates down through because they got the lakes so clean that the bottom rots and it washes ashore and it stinks the whole place up, and there's really nothing we can do about that. My dad ended up sailing on the Great Lakes to get social security, enough years of social security, when he was 68 years old. And I was still in high school, because he was 54 when I was born, and my mother was 45 so I always say I kept them young (Laughter). (20: 17).

KA: Great! Um...did your father---could you describe the relationship between the fishermen here on the island and the farmers? Do you know what it was like during your parents' time?

RC: There was... there was a great relationship between them. A lot of them were relatives, whether they be brothers or the women, from the fishermen married farmers or the farmers' girls married the fisherman, so there was a lot of camaraderie. They would give fish to the farmers, or the farmers would give them, you know. They survived when--- My mother always said it was before my time, that they never knew that there was a real Depression here on Beaver Island, because they had their own gardens. We were fishermen, and they farmed this. They had their own---We had cows, pigs, chickens, and we had all, all the vegetables they used to can, so she always said that we never knew that the Depression and the Depression years--A lot of the ones that had moved away had come back and lived with their brothers and sisters here. I had an aunt on one side, an aunt on the other side of my family, one on the Connaghans, one on the Culls, that had come back for a couple years and, some of their kids went to school here because it was really rough on the mainland and we had---So, like I said, they never knew that there was a Depression here, compared to what it was in the city.

KA: That's interesting. This sort of goes along with that. I was wondering in light of the booming fishing industry, you know in the mid to late 19th Century and then into the 20th Century, where there any ever uh, class divisions that developed like between the fisherman and the other occupations, or?

RC: No not---no not really. They'd fight amongst themselves, but uh, when push come to shove they'd all---they'd all stick together and, you know, they made a goal of it because the lumber men were here. And two of my uncles came through the lumbering industry. They came here and married two island girls, two of my aunts at that time. That's why I can talk about nineteen hundred and nineteen-ten, because I was so much younger than---You know, like I said, my dad was fifty-four, and my mother was forty-five, and my aunts and uncles had kids, grandchildren, older than I was, so.

LF: You mentioned the lumber company. Do you know if the workers who came over, how they interacted with the, the people here on the island? Did they just assimilate, or what?

RC: As far as I know, I never heard of a lot of trouble. They, like I said, they married a lot of island girls at that time. And I guess, they were good for the island. And our Beacon, our monthly paper, they put in what happened a hundred years ago, and I believe it was this spring, or last spring, there was a fire down at the south end of the island--a forest fire--and it says, all the Beaver Island Lumber Company was down fighting the fire, so, you know they were here like everybody else trying to make a living. Now the ,uh--we had the train that ran here at that time with the Beaver Island Lumber Company, and up at Protar's house, there was a train accident, and the engineer got killed and that was in 1908, and that's the last time the train ran here on Beaver Island was in 1908. And they---Five years ago, a lady asked, "Are we going by there?", and I said, "Yes we are". She said, "That was my grandfather." So that was---that was really, really something. And, they tore the railroad up in 1914 and they used the steel for WWI.

KA: So, what year were you born again?

RC: (Laughter) 1938.

KA: And you were born in the house next to the print shop, right?

RC: Yes, a little, a little story: my one brother was born, seventy-three years later, he died five feet from he was born in the house, down next to the museum.

KA: So, what was life like for you growing up here on the island?

RC: Life was a lot different than it is now. The one thing we did learn was to communicate. We weren't sitting working our thumbs on toys now. We all learned to dance. We were all, all pretty good dancers. And like I said, we learned to communicate, because there was few enough people that all the weddings, all the parties, most of the--- You took the whole family, and we associated with adults a lot. We all learned to play cards. We were all considered good card player,s because you had to fill in when they needed an extra player, so you had to play with the adults. You had to learn, you had to think, like an adult. It was, you know, we knew no, we knew no differently. That time, the US when I was growing up in the 40s and 50s was just, just booming after the Second World War, that was when the boom age came through to, to uh, the United States at that time and it, it was different, but we made our own entertainment, we, we ice skated on the harbor down there. I could put my ice skates on in the house, walk across, ice skate for the, for the evening. We had our own fish nets out there, we could fish perch in the harbor so, we had a lot of different stuff that they didn't have in the, in the mainland, but we maybe missed something, but I, I don't know, I can't think of too much that we missed.

KA: So, you had---you were one of six?

RC: Huh?

KA: You had five other siblings, or?

RC: Yeah, five. Yeah, I had two sisters and three brothers older than me. I was the baby of the family, spoiled (Laughter).

KA: Yeah. What was that like, living in your house? What was it like living with all those siblings? That was pretty normal to have that many, right?

RC: My older sister was gone when I was---when I was born. My next brother was uh, married when I was five years---five years old so, it---actually, there was four of us when I was growing up. And then when I was a teenager, they started moving away 'cause the fishing industry was gone, and my two next brothers, and then my sister graduated, and I was home alone, you know, for the last few years, for the last six years, with my mom and dad. They would come home for vacation, but they all moved to different places to live. (30:05).

School and Social Life

KA: And did you mostly interact with people in town, since you lived in town by the Print Shop, or were you able to go out in the country a lot, and play with kids, or?

RC: Well, the, the first up, up to high school, and then high school, we all went together. And then, we all hung around together, then, with everybody on the island.

KA: Ok. Could you describe your experiences at school? Where'd you go? Did everybody go to the...?

RC: When, when I started there was two schools here. Sunnyside School, which was up by what, we call the Four Corners where, where the gas station sits now and the laundry mat, right, right behind the laundry mat, that was first through eighth grade. Downtown at the main school we had first through grade. We had no, no kindergarten at that time, and we were taught in a public school, but Catholic nuns. Can you imagine was the ACLU would do in a day like this today? They would be here in mass form (Laughter). And school if---we had first through fourth grade and fifth through eighth. If you were in the fourth grade and you, you didn't understand what was going on. You didn't pay attention because you heard for four years before this. Or, if you started the fifth grade, by the eighth grade, you better know something because you heard it for---that's the fourth year you were hearing all that stuff, and the education was like a one-on-one. You didn't come home and tell mom and dad, "Well, the nun was picking on me", 'cause you'd get picked on again. And, that's the way it is now. They have enough teachers--it's like one on one. So, the education, I believe, is equal to probably anywhere.

KA: Do you remember-- who were some of the other kids who were in your classes? Who did you hang around with?

RC: I graduated with Rosemary McDonough---she was valedictorian of my class--Hubert McCauley, Donna Smith, and myself. We graduated nineteen fifty-six, and at that time, there was nineteen of us in high school. The, the ninth grade had, had the big class, they had nine in their class, so, so yeah, and you girls probably went to a school with three hundred, or four hundred, or five hundred kids, so it is a little--- it is a little bit different. There is advantages and disadvantages, but we, we had always had our high school prom, and we had a lot of different---we seldom missed out on anything that went, I don't believe.

KA: And how did the, the prom work? Did the whole high school participate?

RC: The whole high school. The whole high school went to make enough to uh, and a lot of the parents, a lot of the---you know, all the teachers, the parents, and we could invite different people, you know, to make up for.... So, there'd be plenty there, and we---with the year we graduated, we had the superintendent come, we had, from Petosky (34:27) He came over to give us the diploma. Uh, a little bit different, we graduated in a church, which is, would be a complete no-no again today, so, you know there was a lot of different, a little bit different things at that time, that took place, that couldn't happen today, because they would go completely crazy on that.

KA: When either your grandparents, or parent, or even yourself were growing up, would you say that the church was sort of the center of the community life, or?

RC: Yeah, probably. But, the church was outta town, so---But anything that took place took place in the hall at that time. All the dances, all the, you know, meetings. Whatever took place, the hall woulda been there. At that time, they had a bowling alley here. They had the Hibernia here. They met upstairs, where I was born. There was a hall up there, and Hibernia used to meet up there, and they had a band, and there was a lot of different stuff that went on at that time than there is now.

KA: Do you remember any of the dances or the house parties? Do you remember any of those?

RC: Yeah. All the dances and house parties. There were two or three houses that always had a lot of the house parties. And they had the fiddler and the guy that played the guitar and the piano, and they were the entertainment for all the dances. We all learned to square dance at that time. And a lot of people don't even know how to square dance one step, but that was one of our things. One of the interesting places growing up was the Villa, which was up over at...the Coast Guard station. He had a hotdog stand. A gentleman just passed away about three weeks ago. His name was Carl Felix. He came from Chicago, and he built a small place so we could have a place to dance. And he bought a jukebox. We'd put our quarter in. At that time it was six songs for a dollar. We'd get six dances, and go for another hour. And we'd come back and put another quarter in and have our six dances. It was a nice place and it was quite a deal for him too. To build that for---He built that for us kids at that time, so.

KA: Either during the school year or in the summer, would you have to work, too?

RC: We all worked at that time. All during high school, especially, you would work because at that time there was no money. There was hardly anything here in the early fifties 'cause the fishing industry went, so we did what we could. I worked in the garage, which is pumping gas and changing tires, and that all through high school. Everybody else---I did a little perch fishing, trying to make a few extra dollars at that time. Anything to make it. And there wasn't tourism. There's more people coming one weekend than would be for the whole summer.

KA: And did your siblings do the same kind of work, or, what did they do?

RC: One of my brothers ended up being captain in the Great Lakes on the thousand-foot steamboat. My other one---Two of them ended up touring for trucking outfits in Chicago. I ended up retired from Cargo, Grand and Chicago. I was a house inspector for them.

Winter on the Island

KA: Could you talk about more things you would do in the wintertime for fun?

RC: Then, the sliding downhill was probably the big one, you know? We had different hills. We could light fires. And ice-skating was a big thing. We always had a fire out on the ice. You know, a warming---We never had a warmin' shed. We had a big fire that you could skate up to. There might be thirty or forty, and

adults. Everybody would be out there for the skating. So, that was primary, and the dances, or whatever. It was always a place that didn't take too much to start a party. When the party would go, we would all get our chance to go.

KA: How would you get around in the wintertime? Transportation wise?

RC: Your two feet. Two feet. (Laughter). Yeah. And there was a few cars, you know. Going to church was a mile and something. Most cars were full because a lot of people didn't have a car, so they would pick other people up. And we always wanted to walk. There'd be fifteen or twenty of us walking. That was always a big—Yeah. We'd set out. The farmers would bring, or someone would bring their horses to church at that time for that, 'cause they had no cars.

KA: Do you remember who some of the old-timers were when you were growing up? Any of the characters on the island?

RC: The characters? We had a cast of characters from Beaver Island. (Laughter). Some of them, I couldn't even tell you their story, but we had one gentleman by the name of Chapman here, and his ancestor, he was from Johnny Appleseed's ancestors. His boy and I grew up. He was a year behind me at school, but he was one of the characters. He always said "Johnny Appleseed had to have been crazy walking around with a pocket full of seeds, planting apple trees". And there was other ones. Some of them came that were loggers, and they lived out in the country. And some of them, the fishermen. Some of the old-time that was here weren't raised on the island. They were a cast of characters in their own rights, whatever may be. And the entertainment was, you know, story telling. There were some great story-tellers, you know. And like I said, dancing. Everybody--most people--were all good dancers. I can remember some of the old Irish doing the Irish dances. (43:43).

Irish Traditions on Beaver Island?

KA: So, other than the Irish dances, were there any other Irish traditions that came over with your great grandparents?

RC: Not that we ever had. And I don't know if any---I think that they wanted to leave some of their memories back there, because it was tough times in Ireland when they came. There was another family came here that ran the sawmill by the name of Wojan. They're still on the island now. We all learned to polka because they were of Polish descent. And that's one of the things that we learned from that family.

LF: What percentage of the population was Irish while you were growing up? What was the demographic?

RC: When I left here in fifty-six, it was around two hundred. Maybe two twenty-five. Now, it's five hundred, five-fifty year round. We have a lot of retirees here and that come that want to retire. (45:00). It's a lot different than it was fifty years ago. Now, now we've got all the modern conveniences of the world, from television to Internet to whatever. Plug something in and that—The electric light plant set and they'd get overloaded, and then they'd go out right at suppertime, 'cause it was always loaded. Now, we get our electricity from the mainland twenty-two miles underneath the water, and we very seldom lose our electricity here like we did in them days.

Biggest Changes on the Island

KA: Is there anything about the island that has changed or disappeared since you were growing up that you wish was still around, or anything about the way of life?

RC: The one thing that was gone right after King Strang was shot was the temple. I always thought---And that's right down on the corner from the Brothers' there. Always thought how nice that would've been if—

But, that was the first thing they burned after they shot the king they said was burn the temple. Well, that would have been nice to show everybody. I tell everybody—A lot of people come here now, they want to sink the boat and shoot the plane out of the sky. They want to be last. They say “Oh, we found paradise. We don’t want nobody else here”. I say “Well, you should’ve been here fifty years ago when there was nothing here”. I said “Without tourism, we died here. So, you can forget about having just you being here as this is your paradise”. And the changes, I—Some people mind them, but I believe that they had to change, and they’ve changed for the better.

KA: Great. In the car you mentioned your interaction with the Brothers’ Place. Would you mind talking a little bit about that?

RC: Yeah, the Brothers came here every summer when I was growing up. And, every evening, they would walk to the point. They’d be probably forty of them, or fifty of them. There was always a great group. We had a fish boat and we used to take them to High Island every once—That was one of their field trips. And they were always great athletes and played ball, and then they’d—They played the big kitten ball from Chicago. It was the big sixteen-inch. We used to play the twelve-inch. And being young, I used to be out by the Brothers’, ‘cause we knew where the cookhouse was. We knew all the cooks. We always made the mornings for when the rolls and the cookies, and doughnuts come out so we could always get free samples from out there. (Laughter) (48:22). It was donated—the land—by a gentleman by the name of Maloney. He lived in Chicago and I guess he knew some of the brothers down there. That was built in the nineteen hundreds and they had—Or, nineteen twenties, I believe. And they had all the good Island cooks out there, so all the Christian Brothers ate pretty good while they were here.

KA: So what have been some of your fondest memories of growing up on the island?

RC: Most of the memories was good. I support Beaver Island and most everything that they do. A lot of people say they got bad memories because we were poor and I say, well, everybody was poor, so it made no difference. And like I said, we never went---There was never anybody on Beaver Island that went to bed hungry. If there was, it was your own fault because there was always food, you know. So, the people that say “Well, this was wrong and that was wrong”, I don’t even listen to them because I think I loved every minute of it, or I wouldn’t have come back when I retired to do it. (50:10).

Commercial Fishing

KA: When we left off, you were telling us about your fond memories of Beaver Island and now I wanted to switch gears a little bit, and have you tell us about the fishing industry here on Beaver Island when it was in its hey day, when your dad was a fisherman.

RC: The fishing industry on Beaver Island in the late eighteen hundreds, early nineteen hundreds, there was more fish shipped out of Beaver Island than any other port on the Great Lakes. We had seventeen different fish boats outta here at that time. We had five fish buyers. One of them’s still in business today. Booth Fishery. If you go in the store, you can find frozen cod and different stuff from—that Booth Fishery sells. And over the years, there was great fishing ‘til in the forties, the lamprey eels came in, and they wrecked the fishing industry. We would set nets and they believed that the dead fish may have been eight or ten feet deep in there, because the nets stunk so bad when they came to shore, so the millions and millions of pounds of fish that the lamprey eels---Then they came back and they could use trap nets, and then they closed that down completely.

And now the American Indians are the only ones that can legally commercially fish the waters around Beaver Island due to the Treaty of eighteen fifty-five, which also gives them the right to all the casinos and makes them a sovereign nation in the land that they have. We have two gentlemen fishing here now on Beaver Island, and one—I think the one, they belong to Grand Traverse Band, and the other one belongs to

one of the bands in the north, in the Upper Peninsula. But, the fishing industry come back a little bit, and they planted the salmon in here for the commercial industry.

But, like I said earlier in the interview, the canal opened up--the St. Lawrence Seaway, as good as it was, it kind of destroyed our Great Lakes. Now, we got a problem coming through Illinois down there with the Asian Carp, they said, is now gonna be our next destroyer of the Great Lakes, so. So, and that was all manmade. They brought them in to do one thing and then they got flooded over, and they got loose, and now they're--And I guess, they're pretty bad. They jump right in the boat with you, so (Laughter). So, you girls watch when you go fishing that they don't jump in the boat. Ok?

KA: Yeah. Do you have any stories that your dad told you about fishing on the boats at all?

RC: When he was young, right after he got married, they went--They used to go to the Foxes, which is south of Beaver Island and fish in the fall. And he had one of the first gasoline engines on his small boat, and he'd come in to--He was overdue, and they'd come in, tow him--the two other schooners that were sailboats, and the gentleman run up and told my mother "Here comes Columbus! The Nina, the Pinta, and the SantaMaria!" (Laughter). So, that was, that was always my dad. And when they'd get a big lift, they'd always tie a broom to the smokestack. They had an overload of fish. They made a clean sweep. All the fish boats out of here that had Kahlenburg engine in it. Every Kahlenburg had a different sound of its own. You didn't have to turn around. You could tell. They go "Ping, ping, ping. Ping, ping". They had the different sounds so that you could tell which boat was coming. And they all had their--More or less, their own fishing areas that they used to fish in, so they never---They weren't cutting one another short in going in where the other gentlemen were fishing.

KA: Great! Do you have any more questions, Laura?

LF: No, not really.

KA: Ok.

RC: Well, I got one more story.

KA: Ok! Go ahead.

The Marold II

RC: The Marold, which was--The tanker Boyd ran aground up off northwest of Beaver Island, and it had aviation gas on it, and they were retrieving it. There's pictures where they went out on ice with old cars and they'd pump it in. Well, the Marold had run the route between here and Charlevoix, and they were using it. They said this was gonna be their last run. There was five of them on there. There was two Coles, Everett and Raymond. There was a Hill. Another gentlemen and one by the name of Bruce McDonough. His first name was Roland, and that's who I'm named after. That--The accident happened in nineteen thirty-seven. I was born in thirty-eight, and that's where my name comes from.

KA: That's great.

RC: So, what'd we miss? (Laughter).

KA: I think you covered everything! I just want to say thank you very much for letting us interview you!

Janet O'Donnell and Rosemary [Nackerman] Smith

Thursday, July 14, 2011

Janet's Beaver Island Home

Conversation Summary: Janet O'Donnell and Rosemary Smith told many wonderful stories about family histories, childhood/school life, town and country, Young Richie O'Donnell/high school dances, "Putting the Ice Out", horses on Beaver Island, social life, Irish traditions, wintertime stories, clothing, roles of women on the Island, Beaver Island characters, and music on the Island (Figure 7.10).

KA: Today is Thursday, July fourteenth, two thousand and eleven, and I am here with Janet O'Donnell and Rosemary Smith. And, the first thing that I wanted to ask them was about their family history on the island, and about what time your family first came to the island, who were they, and how were they related to you, so Rosemary, if you'd like to start?



Figure 7.10. Janet O'Donnell and Rosemary Smith in Janet's home, summer 2011.

RS: My great-grandfather Pete McCauley came to the island in the eighteen sixties, and he settled up on the south end of the island, and he had, I think, eleven children, and my grandma was one of them, Molly. And she married Fred Nackerman. So, that's how the origin of my—on my father's side. My mother grew up in Pontiac, and he met her when he was living in Pontiac. So, she did not come from the island, but my dad did, and he lived here all of his life except for those few years that he was going to UP college, and he was— After they got married he lived in Pontiac for about one or two years and he couldn't stand it. He was workin' in a factory and he came home one day and he said "That's the end of it. I'm just—I'm goin' home. And I just can't stand it anymore" (Laughter). So, and she came up here, you know, from a city, where they had electricity, indoor plumbing, no animals around, and cars and everything, and she lived at the farm without any of those things. No indoor plumbing or anything. So, she was not too happy. But, her dad called her one time and he said "Are you happy?", and she said "Well, if I had a radio, and a car, I would be okay". 'Cause it's isolated. You know, we were right up the road there. That's two miles outta town. And with no car. And in the wintertime, they didn't plow the roads anyway. So, her dad sent her a car—a used car—and a radio, so, he took care of those two problems.

KA: Oh, great! So, could you describe your dad a little bit more. What he did here on the island?

RS: Sure. He worked at various jobs until I was five, which would've been nineteen thirty-nine. And then, he became the postmaster on Beaver Island. And he was postmaster 'til nineteen seventy-three, which was thirty-four years he was postmaster. And Frankie—He was always called Frankie. Frank Nackerman. And Frankie Lane was named for him. The one that goes up and down by the building there. And that's what he—you know, he worked at that 'til he retired, and they still lived on the island 'til a few years before they passed away. They came and lived with us down when they needed help, 'cause we all five—there were five of us—and we all ended up in the metropolitan Detroit area. So, they were there takin' turns livin' with us, until they, well, they had to go into a nursing home in the end. Guess that kinda sums up their life.

KA: And then, what did your mom do when she was on the island? Day-to-day basis?

RS: Oh, what did she do? Housework, cooked, cleaned, washed, did the laundry. That was a whole day's job doing laundry back then. Hangin' it on the line. She had a washboard, tubs—three tubs, galvanized tubs, maybe there were only two. They would wash in one, and then turn a hand wringer and the clothes would go—to get the soapy water out—and then they would go into clear water, and then she would have to wring them out again so they would be dry enough, and then she'd go out and hang them on the line. And in the wintertime, that's still how we dried clothes. And, believe it or not, clothes freeze-dry. You put them on the line in the winter. They look so funny out there 'cause they're stiff as a board. And then, they dry. By the end of the day, they're usually dry. Sometimes she had to iron them to keep them completely dry. Your mom probably did the same time?

JO: Mm-hmm. I remember after school, goin' out and takin' 'em off the clothes pins, and--

RS: Yeah.

JO: Big long things.

RS: But, she was so embarrassed when they moved to town because we still had an outhouse. And we brought a chicken co—well, Daddy built a new chicken coop---had a chicken coop, too. And, you know, being a city girl, it was hard on her. But, she got so she loved the island. Once they moved to town, she was happy. She liked it a lot. And towards the end of her life, after we grew up, she was the clerk at the post office, and then eventually she became the assistant postmaster. So when they retired, they had a good retirement.

JO: Pretty, pretty lady.

KA: Oh yeah?

RS: Even when she was old, the nursing home used to say, "Your mom is so pretty". Yeah.

JO: And her hair.

RS: Mm-hmm. Yep.

Janet O'Donnell's Family History on the Island

KA: That's great. Janet would you like to tell about how you're connected to the island originally, like who your—

JO: Well, we were born and raised here.

KA: And do you know when about your family first came—

JO: Well, I'm just gonna read here about what I got down.

KA: Mm-hmm.

JO: In the eighteen seventies, after King Strang left, that the Irish people started movin' in here then, and that's how my grandfather, one of the boys, one of the Gallaghers---He was the oldest son, and he was James H. Gallagher. And my dad, the son of him, was James W. So, they called James H. "Old James", and my dad they called "Young James". And that went through all their life, I guess. They started that right out. And, they were in the fishing business. And then, when the fishing all went, my dad went into lumbering, and a farm up at the stone house. And he had that. But, we used to have to pump water the night before we were gonna wash clothes, and fill up those tubs.

RS: Mm-hmm.

KA: Wow.

JO: And then you had to put the big—one tub on the stove to heat up the water. Next morning, before anything was done, you had to get that going. And, we had to haul in the wood. And, now that I'm older, (Laughter)—This is something. I always helped—I was the oldest of three, so I was always out helping my dad. And milkin', and shoveling out the dirt, throwin' down the hay, and everything. And he built our house, in a pile of sand. No trees around. And, he had a little window down in the basement. That's all. There was only the one window down there. Half of it was sand, and then just where he had a furnace, and some shelves and this big wood box. And, we'd haul in that wood, and have to stoop down to get those blocks of wood in that little window.

RS: Oh really?

JO: And later I got thinkin', "Why was that window so little?" (Laughter). It was little. Just big enough. But, you know, that's how he had built it, like that. So, that's what we did. And my sister stayed in the house. My mom wasn't very healthy.

RS: Oh. So, she stayed in the house and helped your mom?

JO: Mm-hmm. She did the cooking and things like that, where I was out helping...

KA: Your father?

JO: Mm-hmm. I liked it outdoors. That was good. (Laughter). So..

Childhood/School Life

KA: So, another question. Just a general question for both of you since you both were in the same class: what was school like for you guys?

JO: We went to what was called McKinley School. It isn't there anymore, you know? It was behind—It had a big long building behind the woodshed, that it was called. We used to try and throw the ball over.

RS: Yeah. We used to play what we called "Annie I over". And half of us would get on back, and half of us would get—every day, this was like our recreation for recess—And we would line up, and throw the ball over. Then, say "Annie, Annie I o-o-o-ver!" And when they'd say "over", they'd do it. And then of course, they didn't know what part of it was gonna come. And, you wouldn't see it until it got to the peak of the roof. And we would try to catch it. That was our big excitement for recess.

JO: Mm-hmm. (Laughs). Run around and see if they caught it. I remember I used to do that because they would yell and say, you know, "Yeah. We got it!". And--

RS: (Laughs) Oh, they were cheatin' a little.

JO: And then, in the wintertime, they had a big old stove upstairs. The first floor was all one to the fourth grade. One teacher, the nun, Sister Thea. And then, we moved upstairs to the fifth grade.

RS: Mm-hmm. Five to eight upstairs.

JO: That was a big change. Sister Gilbert.

RS: Yeah, she was pretty strict. (Laughter).

KA: Do you have any stories about her that you can remember?

JO: I remember we had to carry up wood, and I did not like height. And, the stairway in the back was, you know, long, and it didn't have (10:00), and it didn't have the back part of the step. It was just the board out, and so you could see down, the sand and everything below it, plus carrying up that block of wood, you know? Oh, I just hated that.

RS: Really?

JO: Uh-huh.

RS: I remember a funny story about that building because it was an old building and it was rickety. And, the younger kids were downstairs, and the upstairs kids were five to eight, and some of those eighth graders, you know, they got to be pretty big guys. And of course, with the nuns teaching, you always did everything in line, you know. At the same time, we all left, went down those stairs. Just one right after the other. And when you'd be downstairs, and those big kids would be comin' down the steps, they would shake the whole building.

JO: Mm-hmm.

KA: Wow.

RS: And I don't know why, but that's what sticks in my mind is hearin' those kids come down, and the building would wiggle.

JO: The worst thing about that school was they had chemical bathrooms. And the smell was terrible. And so, I'd hold my nose and run in. (Laughter). There was a little entrance way before you got into the classroom, you know, so we'd keep that door closed. So, I had good, happy memories of school.

RS: Oh, I did, too. Well, I did especially because we were—After my dad got the job in the post office, we couldn't stay at the farm in the winter 'cause they didn't plow Darkytown—This was Darkytown Road then. So, we had to move to town every winter. And, I got to come down where the kids were, you know. I had my brother and my sisters, but we didn't have any kids livin' out here so, goin' to school was—I loved goin' to school because I could come to where the kids were.

KA: Did you always grow up in town? (directed towards Janet)

JO: Yes I did.

RS: Yes, that's why I said she was the town girl, and I was the country girl part of the time. And then, eventually we moved to town. My dad, when he bought that post office building, just as I was going into high school, then we got to come downtown all year round. And that was—Boy! I was a happy camper. (Laughs). I was really, really happy about that.

Town and Country

KA: So, was there really not that many interactions between the people who lived in the country compared to the town, before?

RS: Well, if we wanted to town, like, if we wanted to go swimming, we'd have to walk to town. My sister Ellen and I. And, we'd have to walk all the way down, so you know, two miles, you walked down there every day, especially now, when it was hot in the summertime.

JO: And the people in town, and then out in the country, we called them "the farmers". I didn't know the farm boys until they came to high school.

RS: Yeah.

JO: And people cannot believe that. I mean, he lived here, and I'm down at—where the hotel is. Never knew the fella. (Laughter).

KA: Not until high school.

JO: So we gained---

RS: A whole new influx of boys! (Laughter).

JO: So, they came up to school up here at Sunnyside, and then, when high school, they had to come to town for the high school. And our high school was a little building. Or, I mean, a little part of upstairs. And then we had to go down to the hill, and the rest—

RS: It's where the kitchen is in the hall now, the Parish hall. That little part that's the kitchen? That was our high school. Plus, there was one other—but, it was fun getting to walk down the hill between classes. You know, got outside and everything. (Laughter).

JO: But, tryin' to write down Latin or geometry, "What did you write down for that?"

RS: We only had three girls in our class when we were goin' into high school, and then these six boys from the country came down, so that was---Yeah they did. They smelled like horses 'cause they came down with horses all the time. And, they had a buggy or somethin' in the summer.

JO: Ridin' a horse.

RS: A cutter in the winter.

JO: But, they'd have to do their chores before the came. Milk the cows or clean out the barn.

RS: You could sure tell when you walked in, even if you didn't see them! (Laughter).

Story about Young Richie O'Donnell/High School Dances

JO: I'll tell a story about Rosemary. I did not like the height, you know like I said, so one of our—must have been the ninth or tenth grade—picnic, we got to go---Usually we had to walk out to Mount Pisgah, or out to—we called it First Clearance-for picnics.

RS: Where the big old sewer thing is now where you dump all the sewage, that used to be a big clearance--

JO: First clearance.

RS: And it was like a picnic area. You could play baseball and everything in there. It was really nice.

JO: So, we'd have to walk out there from school for our picnic. But, this time we got to ride out to the fire station, and I had a camera. (15:01). And everybody's goin' up. And this one went up. And her and Richie were standing up, and he took my camera. I don't know why.

RS: Well, he wanted to take pictures for you from the top probably.

JO: Probably.

KA: This was Richie...?

RS: Her husband.

KA: Oh!

RS: He was one of the classmates. You knew that that they were in the same class?

KA: No, I didn't.

RS: Yeah. That's who she's married to now. (Laughter). That's why she's telling you in detail about the farmers coming down to town. Anyway, what happened with the camera?

JO: So, the two of them are standing together, and he was going to take my picture. I'm yelling, you know, "Ok, I'm ready!". Now, and he was gonna drop it over the side. And they're way up high, you know. Oh, I got so mad at him that day. (Laughter). He didn't, but—

RS: No, he didn't.

JO: She's standing there right by him.

RS: What did you want me to do? I don't even remember that part of it.

JO: No. (Laughter).

RS: I heard the part about him threatening to throw your mother's camera down, but I didn't know I was standing right there. But, I learn something every day.

JO: I can still see us up there.

RS: Yeah? (Laughter). It's a vivid memory in your mind, huh?

JO: Uh-huh. We did have fun though in high school.

RS: Yeah, we did have fun in high school.

JO: We had—The nuns taught us how to dance.

RS: Mm-hmm. We called it co-op.

JO: Friday afternoons we'd get into the hall, and have our dance.

RS: Square dances, and regular dances.

JO: Lots of square dancing.

RS: Box square for the waltz.

JO: I don't know how to waltz.

RS: Shotish? You remember that?

JO: All high school, you know, the tenth and twelfth graders.

RS: Yeah, there was four. Nine, ten, eleven, twelve all-together in one room. (Laughter). No, we had two rooms. But we would all go. And, that was something we would look forward to all—

JO: Friday afternoon.

RS: And the school picnics too. We really had fun on those, and other things we'd go out and climb Mount Pisgah, and do all kinds of silly things out there. (Laughter).

JO: We tried everything. Roller skating and skating on the ice in the harbor. When that would freeze over, they'd have big bonfire down by McDonough's there.

RS: Oh, and sometimes that whole harbor would freeze smooth. Be real smooth, and it was beautiful ice-skating.

JO: Nice. Pretty.

RS: But, it would be thick enough 'cause the men would always make sure it was thick enough so we were allowed to skate, but it would have cracks, and it was clear. You could see right through it to the bottom of the lake. And, I used to love to skate across from the post office over to the Coast Guard station. By the time you got out there it would start to make this cracking noise, 'cause it always cracks a little bit I guess just from the shifting wind or from the water movement underneath. I don't know which it is, but that would be kind of scary. But, oh! It made a nice skating rink.

A Story about Swimming

JO: She wanted to swim from the dock over to the lighthouse too one time with Glynn (Sp?).

RS: I don't remember that either. Are you sure I did that?

JO: Oh my gosh! Well, you wanted too.

RS: You know, we used to swim from where the boat dock is now, and where the township yachts—Well, that was her dad's dock. And then the boat dock. So, we would go to her dad's dock, and the boys would be there, and we'd be on the boat dock, and then we'd swim and meet in the middle. That was when I saved Peter's life that day.

JO: Another classmate.

RS: 'Cause he—Yeah, another classmate.

JO: Another farmer.

RS: He was a farmer. I don't think he ever swam before because he wasn't a very good swimmer. But, he was swimmin' over half way, and he was scared, too. I mean, that was really scary. I was scared, too. And, I was a little stronger swimmer than him, so we had learned, and the way you learned to save people's life when you were swimming back then was turn them over on their back and grab around under their chin, so I did that for probably, maybe three or four yards. Not very far 'cause he was kind of a heavy guy and I got tired really fast, but fortunately, right there about this far underneath the surface of the water, there was one of those piles—There used to be an old dock there.

JO: Spile. It's called the spile.

RS: Spile? It's got an "s" in front of it? Oh, I always thought it was "pile". Anyway, he found that. I mean, I took him far enough to get there, and all of a sudden he's rising up out of the water, and I thought "What is this? A miracle, or something?" (Laughter). But, then he had found that and he always credited me for saving his life. Just for pullin' him that little way to get to that spile.

JO: It was. It was scary.

RS: I didn't realize you were there that day. Were you, Janet?

JO: Mm-hmm.

RS: Yeah, it was scary. And he was white as a sheet when he got out.

JO: And I didn't want to go home and tell about it because then we wouldn't be able to swim there anymore. (Laughter).

RS: So, you didn't?

JO: But, the word got around fast.

RS: Yeah. We used to be able to dive off the fish boats. Fish boats would be parked down there. Those would be our diving platforms. We spent a lot of time at the lake.

JO: Yeah. And now we're payin' for it with cancer. (Laughter).

RS: Yeah. Yeah. (20:00). Sunburn.

JO: All the sun.

KA: Oh yeah.

RS: And spent a lotta time--I spent a lot of time climbing tress. Did you climb trees a lot when you were here?

JO: Oh yes. Out in back.

RS: Up by the farm there's that big old ironwood tree. Been out there?

KA: Mm-hmm.

RS: Well, it used to be in the back, towards the lake it was clearer than it is now, and if you climbed to the top of that ironwood tree you could see the lake. So, to me that was a big deal, just to see the lake, so I'd climb up there.

JO: Font Lake.

RS: You could see Font Lake. Yes.

KA: It's beautiful.

RS: Did you go back there when you were up there?

KA: Yeah. So, you'd swim. Would you go fishing at all, or?

RS: I never fished. Did you?

JO: Mm-hmm. Oh yes. Helped my dad with the fish.

RS: Your dad was a fisherman.

JO: Yeah. And, he put out the ice.

RS: Yeah, that was an interesting operation. He would put the ice out. Do you know what that means?

KA: No, could you describe it for us, please?

RS: Describe.

“Putting the Ice Out”

JO: They had to—Down where the dock is, he owned that. It was called Booth, out of Chicago. He had a fish boat that the Indians ran. You know, our Indians? We used to have a lot of them here. And they went to school with us. We had one, Josie, and she graduated with us.

RS: Yeah. She was the third girl in the class. One of ‘em. She was really nice.

KA: What was her last name?

RS: Lewis.

JO: Lewis.

RS: Josie Ann Lewis. Mm-hmm.

JO: But he had to wait until the ice was eighteen inches thick, and we used to go around and pick up everybody’s Christmas trees, and then he would stick that in the ice to mark it, you know. Where he was going to be cutting. And the Indians helped. And other men.

RS: Other men on the island. It was like a day job on the island for a lot of men, ‘cause you had—I bet there were about twenty people down there.

JO: Yeah. They had to plan, you know, when they were going to be doing the cutting. And, then the team of horses, they’d hook that up. And, he built an icehouse, up where the Whimsy sign is now. (Laughter). Down from the post office there. Big building. They bailed about hundred-pound chunks of ice. And then in the summertime, and then he’d chisel that down, and take it into the houses that needed ice, you know, for their milk and stuff.

RS: And he had like a conveyor belt--

JO: Yeah. That folded up.

RS: --to get that ice, ‘cause they’d always put it in from the top, ‘cause he built that house up all the way, and put sawdust on it to keep it, and it would last all summer long in there. ‘Cause we used to have an icehouse up at the farm too.

JO: Yeah.

RS: At one time. Yeah.

JO: I used to run ahead--bein’ out with my dad again working—run ahead and open up the screen doors, and get down and take out. Always it seemed like the box was down low, you know, where he’d put the ice in. And take out whatever they had in there, so he could put that block of ice. It was always in a block. And, fifteen cents he’d charge everybody.

RS: For a block of ice. Yeah.

JO: Fifteen. Yeah. No matter how big the piece of ice was, or whatever.

RS: That was our refrigerators back then, you know. They were ice boxes.

JO: Ice boxes.

RS: And you just got the block of ice.

JO: The one is still at the farm, you know. Got all the pictures.

RS: We had one at our farm too, but I don't think it's still there. Got rid of some of that old stuff.

JO: We just lived in a different world. (Laughter).

RS: Yeah we did.

JO: People don't—Even when I talk and try and tell my grandkids, you know, “Oh, Mom, you didn't do that”. Yes, I did. (Laughter).

RS: I don't know if you want us to interrupt your questioning there, but I belong to a Bible study at home, and it's all women and we do a lot of gabbing besides studying the Bible, and every once in a while, I'll tell them one of these stories about Beaver Island, and they get a kick out of them, and we laugh if it's funny, but they always look at me like “She's just making that up”. (Laughter).

KA: No one believes you?

RS: Yeah. Well, it's so—You know, they're contemporaries of mine, and they all grew up in the city, and they all had all the modern conveniences all their lives, and they just can't believe that anybody their age, you know, went through all of that.

JO: No buses. No buses on Beaver Island.

Horses on Beaver Island

RS: Yeah. Ride horses. Well, we used to ride in a horse and sleigh in the wintertime.

JO: I had a horse. My own horse. Fanny was her name, and she was so gentle. And like after school, Daddy would be out doin' something, you know, so, I could take her down to the store. Sometimes the kids would get on and ride with me, so if someone else wanted to have those reins, the horse, she'd stop, turn around to see who it was. (Laughter). She liked to do that.

RS: Did she? She liked to have somebody different?

JO: No, she wouldn't go.

RS: Oh. (Laughter).

JO: And if I had left her turned going down, you know, like the post office, she'd stay there until I came out of the store, but if we turned around, she'd go on home, just up to where the hotel is now, it's right on the cliff. She'd just leave me walkin'. (Laughter).

RS: So, you couldn't turn around until you were ready to go home, huh?

JO: But, all the kids. I remember Bernadette, too, she'd get so angry because the horse wouldn't go. (25:23).

KA: Did many people have horses around town?

JO: Oh, yes. Yes. We used to try to run out and try and get on the runners, you know? When the men would come downtown.

RS: Oh, yeah. We'd hitch a ride. Just for the fun of it, we'd hitch a ride on the back of Danny Boyle's one. He had a cutter, and it was like one of those fancy little things like you see on Christmas cards. And, there was like a ledge on the back so, you jumped on and get a ride all the way to the store. And then, you'd wait for somebody who was goin' the other way, and jump on. They didn't mind if you did that, but they didn't want you to, like with the sleigh behind it, because they thought it was too dangerous. They never complained if you just hopped on the back.

JO: One man didn't like it, and he had a big long switch. And, Margaret Ellen, she used to like to tease him. And she'd say "Well, you go on one and I'll go on the other". (Laughter). And I was always afraid. I didn't want to get hit with that, you know, oh my gosh. We did have fun.

RS: Yeah, we did. It was a great place to grow up I think. And it really makes you appreciate the conveniences for the rest of your life. I don't think anybody in my generation, with the exception of probably Janet and people that grew up on the Island, but you always had elec—No, we didn't get electricity on the island 'til we were five. But, they just can't believe that we grew up, you know, like a hundred years before them almost, because it used to be, there was like almost a hundred years between what the mainland was like, and what—you know, it was like we were back a hundred years in the past over here when we were young, when it was so isolated.

JO: Just ourselves.

KA: Yeah. That's amazing.

RS: Just ourselves to amuse ourselves.

Social Life

JO: And, too, going out at nighttime, you know, like now, my gosh, it just floors me. We didn't go out during the week. Friday night was our night to go out.

RS: And then we had to be home at eleven o'clock. Always eleven o'clock. Janet—

JO: I started at nine. I had to be in by nine.

RS: Did you? Well, you got up to eleven before high school.

JO: Yeah. High school.

RS: 'Cause you and Eleanor, and Ellen and I were the only ones that ever had to be home at eleven o'clock. We each had a younger sister. Eleanor was like two years younger than you, wasn't she?

JO: Four.

RS: Four? Ok. Ellen was only one year younger than me, so we kinda did everything together.

KA: Were there many opportunities, like for socializing?

RS: We used to have box socials. Did you ever hear of box social?

KA: No, what are they?

RS: Oh! This is something they used to do in the olden days a lot. You know, like, Little House on the Prairie. You'd see that on there probably. The girls would make fancy boxes. Any shoebox or anything, and you'd decorate it all up, and then you'd all go to the hall, and then the boys would bid.

JO: With food.

RS: Yeah, with food in it, and fill it with food. And, the boys would bid on the boxes. And then, if they bought your box, then they got to eat with you.

JO: Sit with you. Yeah.

RS: They'd auction them off. Called it a box social. That was fun. We used to spend a lot of time decorating those boxes.

JO: And you wouldn't let anybody know which one was yours either, you know, when you brought it down there to the hall.

RS: Right.

JO: They'd line them all up, you know. Oh gosh.

RS: What else did we use to do besides that? Lots of square dances. We did a lotta square dancin' growin' up. That was fun too. With live musicians. You know, Island men would play the fiddle.

JO: When we were younger, for paper dolls, we used funny papers, or papers that people had. We'd found out who had a paper. And Kay would cut out the picture of the doll, and Kay would draw for us. And we took piano lessons back then too.

RS: Yeah, oh yeah. The doctor's wife taught us how.

JO: Saturday morning. Fifty cents. (Laughter). I didn't remember how much they made us pay. But, the doctor's wife was a really good pianist. And Dr Palmer was—He probably delivered you. He delivered me.

JO: Well, I was born in Charlevoix.

RS: Oh, were you? Oh, ok. Well, he delivered all of the babies for probably twenty, twenty-five years up here. All my brothers and sisters. And, Rod and Ellen and I were born in the bedroom of that farmhouse. So, every time I go up there, I get to see the room I was born in. (Laughter).

KA: Wow.

RS: But, Barb was born in Pontiac, because they still lived there when Barb was born, and we used to rent a house in town in the winter after my dad got the post office job, because they didn't plow the roads, and he didn't have dependable car anyway, so we would live in town. And, we were renting Walter Wojan's house when Colleen was born, so she was born in Walter Wojan's house. That's our younger sister. She was ten years younger than me, so she was kind of like an afterthought. (Laughter). She was a changing leaf baby. That happened a lot back then (30:32).

JO: We had relatives, you know, that we'd go and visit, and eat and play with. That just was what we did.

RS: Well, you had a lot of relations, now. See, we didn't have—My dad was an only child, so, everybody else was related to everybody else, I think. But, all of my grandma's siblings, the McCauleys, they all left the island, but my grandma. So, we didn't have any like first cousins on the island at all left. Mother was from a big family, but all of her, you know, relations, her sisters and her nieces and nephews, they all lived in Pontiac. (31:10).

KA: Did you know your grandmother very well at all?

RS: My grandmother that lived in Pontiac, or the one here?

KA: Here.

RS: Yeah, I knew her quite well. But she was—She seemed a lot older than a grandma usual—She was more like a great grandmother because she and my grandpa were married for twenty-two years before they had Daddy. So, she was—he was—Ordinarily, you'd be having grandchildren by then, not, you know, just a child. And, she was quite old, as long as I can remember, she was like a really old lady. But it was my

grandpa, he was a good-natured—My grandma was kind of like you said your grandma was. She was always serious, and I don't think she was healthy. I think she had—You know, her back was always hurting. And I'm sure it really was, 'cause she had worked all of her life, and nobody ever went to a doctor for anything on the island. Whatever ailment you had, you lived with it. I don't think—I never went to a doctor because I was sick that I can remember when I was growing up.

JO: Well, they didn't have a doctor here either for a while here, too.

RS: Well, Dr. Palmer was here. I had the measles, but I don't think they took me to the doctor. And outside of that, we were really a healthy group. In fact, Bud always says he thinks that's why we're all living so long because we got to be so hardy, you know. (Laughter).

JO: Hard work.

RS: Yeah, hard work, and a lot of time outdoors. And, we ate sensibly 'cause that's what we had to eat. We had vegetables and fruit, and you know, we didn't have---We'd have candy maybe once a week.

JO: Pickin' berries in the summertime.

RS: Yeah.

JO: We'd have to walk up here, I remember, on this corner. It's all built up now with trees, and junipers, and the store. But, we used to come up here with pails to pick the berries.

RS: Well, you know where we used to pick the berries is out—there used to be a dump, before they opened the transfer station, and they closed the dump about ten years ago. But, before there was a dump, which I can remember. That was when we lived there in that little yellow house. And Mrs. Gatliff used to say back there where they put the dump in, that was the best place on Beaver Island to pick strawberries. We used to go up and pick wild strawberries. They were about this big.

JO: So little.

RS: And you had to pick about ten thousand of them to get a pail full (Laughter).

JO: And the women, you know, that we'd come up with, they wouldn't leave until—They'd come with a lunch, you know, and they wouldn't leave until their pails were full. 'Til all the containers were full.

RS: Yeah. Well, they needed that. They canned—That was like their jam for the winter and they made pies. Janet, who did you used to come up with?

JO: Mary Tom.

RS: Mary Tom? Yeah.

JO: Mary Tom Gatliff. Mary Tom, her husband was Tom, so that's---We all went by nicknames.

RS: That's how she got the two names. 'Cause there were a lot of Marys. That's why. Everybody—There were so many repetitions of names that everybody had to end up with a nickname.

KA: Did either of you have nicknames?

RS: Oh, I just was always "Rosie". And you didn't have a nickname, did you?

JO: No.

RS: But, Richie has an interesting thing, I think. He's got one of these where they tacked on their dad's name. So there was Danny, Barney—No, there was Barney O'Donnell, then his dad was Frank Danny Barney O'Donnell, and then Richie was Richie Frank Danny. (Laughter).

JO: That's how—It's the Irish way of doing it.

RS: Yeah. And there were only, you know, there was like O'Donnells and Gallaghers, and McDonoughs, and there were only an awful lot of families with the same last name, so everybody got a nickname.

JO: There was like seven Gallaghers here, so...

RS: And lots of McDonoughs. What was a couple other of the names that there were a lot of? O'Donnells.

JO: Greens. Bill Green, and yeah. They all—

RS: Johnny Green.

JO: Yeah, Johnny Green.

RS: And Nig Green.

JO: Nig Green. (Laughter).

RS: Well, that was what they called Peter's dad, Nig Green. And then they called him "Peter Nig".

JO: Yeah. Peter Nig. That was, I think, the Irish way of doing that.

RS: I think so, too. Yeah, I've read stories of how they do that.

Irish Traditions

KA: Did either of you know of any specifically Irish traditions that your relatives carried over from Ireland to here?

JO: On my mother's side, the name. The first name. They give you the first name and then your second name, and they call you by your second name.

RS: Oh, so that's how you were—You were really Theresa Janet?

JO: Yes.

RS: Really? I never knew that. I always thought you were Janet Theresa.

JO: And my sister, and some of the O'Donnell kids, they're the same way. Richie's. And my mother from her mother. From Granny, my granny. My mom.

RS: So, they would name after the mother, or the father, as the case may be.

JO: Mm-hmm. And I met a couple from Portage, Michigan, and I met the daughter. She introduced her daughter, you know, and her name was Catherine. So, their first one is always named the mother. Her daughter was Catherine. And all the way down.

RS: I didn't know that was a—See, we did that with my son, but only because I thought it would be too confusing to have two Harolds in the house, you know. So, we named him Harold 'cause Harold wanted him named after him, and then we called him "Terry". Yeah.

JO: Terry. Terrance. What else do we know?

RS: The only thing I was thinking of was the music, like when Patrick Bonner came here, I think he came knowing all those songs that he played for so many years for all the dances and everything.

JO: All the house parties.

KA: Oh yeah. How were the house parties? Could you describe any?

RS: They were fun.

JO: Lots of fun.

RS: Actually, we had some pretty good house parties right in that farmhouse there, you know, where Richie grew up, in the farmhouse there.

JO: Out in the farmhouse.

RS: Yeah. They used to make ice cream for one thing. They'd make homemade ice cream. Takes a long time so—

JO: They'd go out and kill a chicken at nighttime, and cook it, and then eat it at midnight. (Laughter). That's what they did.

KA: Was it multi-generational? Would everyone go to these house parties?

JO: Mm-hmm.

RS: Kind of, yeah. They were. I think there is more than there is nowadays, where people mostly stick to their own generations for parties. But, killing a chicken is another interesting story. And I don't know if you want to hear that or not. Did you ever hear how they used to kill chickens?

KA: Mm-mm.

RS: Did you ever hear them saying that somebody's running around like a chicken with its head cut off?

KA and MR: Yes.

RS: Well, my dad used to take a chicken and he'd have like a stump, you know. It was flat on the top. And he'd hold the chicken and he'd put the chicken's head on the stump and his neck, and he'd take the ax, and chop his head off. Well the chicken, the body part, didn't die immediately, so it was flippin' around the yard for quite a while, like a chicken with it's head cut off.

KA: Oh my goodness.

RS: That's where that saying comes from. And bleeding. It was an ugly sight, 'cause he'd be bleeding as he was doing it. Did you have your own chickens when you were growing up? Did you?

JO: Yes. Uh-huh. I took care of the chickens. Eleanor didn't, you know. She wouldn't go in that chicken coop. (Laughter). It was a big green building, I remember, with all the chickens, and that was my morning thing. Before going to school, I'd have to go out, and pump water for the cows and the horses, and as soon as that school bell would ring, I could run fast. (Laughter). I would quit pumpin' water--

RS: Could you get there? Who was it was talking about they used to ring the school bell, and if somebody was coming late, they would ring it for a long, long time, so they wouldn't be marked tardy? Somebody used to—

JO: Bobby O'Donnell. (Laughter).

RS: Was that who it was?

JO: You know we had—McKinley School had a big top thing on it, and the bell was up in there. And whoever got to ring the bell, that was a big thing, too. To go up there and do that.

RS: And put the flag up. That was a big thing. Take it down.

JO: Putting up the flag.

RS: We got little things really interested because there weren't any big things.

JO: Yeah. To ring a bell. What other stories have we got?

RS: I dunno. Do you have more questions?

Wintertime Stories

KA: Well, could you talk a little bit more about what it was like living here in the wintertime?

RS: I could tell you a really interesting story, I think. This was one of the one's that I told my Bible Study that I don't think they believe me. I can't remember for sure if my dad had a horse and sleigh, or if it was somebody we knew, 'cause I don't really remember having horses at the farm, but I was only five when we quit living there in the wintertime. (40:10). But we used to—When we'd go somewhere, we had an open sleigh, just a flat sleigh. They had what they called a cow's hide. I mean, it was a cow's hide, but they made it into a blanket, and it was really, really warm. And Ellen and I, my sister that was just a year younger than me, were the youngest at the time, and they would put us under that cow's hide. And, we could never see where we were going, because they'd always make us stay right under there to stay warm. (Laughter).

JO: We had sheepskin.

RS: Did you?

JO: Yeah. We still had Dad's and now Brian has it. And he has it on the floor in his living room

RS: Really? Well, they used to use—

JO: And it was. It's big and heavy.

RS: And nice and warm in there. I don't remember being really cold, but you know, those open sleighs, with the wind blowing, and snow coming, there was no shelter at all, so they probably were afraid we would catch cold.

JO: That's what—I'd hitch up Fanny, and that's how our sleigh was, like that.

RS: Yeah.

JO: And then all the kids could get on it easy, and get off.

RS: But, some people had what they called cutters, you know, like I said, like you see on a Christmas card, the fancy sleighs.

JO: Fancy! Some of them were fancy.

RS: Uh-huh. And they'd have the bells. You know, the horses—Jingle bells is what they sound like.

JO: I've got the bells downstairs yet.

RS: Do you? Yeah? Still got your horse bells, huh?

JO: Got a lot of the horse stuff yet. I like tradition. Living here. Well, we had to order everything off the catalog.

KA: Right. I was going to ask you about that.

JO: You know, because you didn't go any place.

Clothing

KA: So, all your clothes and everything? Or, would make them here at all?

JO: Oh yeah. Sewing.

RS: Oh yeah. They did a lot of sewing.

JO: We had sewing in school.

RS: Sewing, and knitting, and quilting. Yeah, we learned. They even got an electric sewing machine. Remember, Janet, when we were sewing? I loved that electric sewing machine, 'cause we had that old one, still there at the farm, that you had to pedal. And it had an awful little bobbin that you had to stop at like every seam, and—

JO: Keep doin', keep goin--

RS: --Keep fillin' the bobbin. By the end, you know, instead of the thread going forth automatically, like it does now, you had to thread it back and forth on this thing. It was a long, narrow bobbin. But, I learned to sew on it.

JO: We had to—First, we had to learn how to embroidery, do all that stuff on pillow cases, and towels.

RS: Knitting. My grandma taught me how to knit. I never got to be very good at it.

JO: Me too. And, I remember like in fourth grade, I made an apron. I was so proud of that apron. (Laughter). Like, where did we get the material even, you know?

RS: Yeah. Probably from some dress or something.

JO: Yeah.

RS: You and I took sewing lessons from Martha Miller up at Pat LaFreniere's store. You remember that?

JO: Right. Uh-huh. I made a bolero. And, I went working at the store in tenth grade. It was called "Dick's Store", where the Community Center is now. That building was a big store. And I made a dress because I was going to be working there.

RS: Oh.

JO: I had one pair of blue jeans. And now, I go and I see what my grandkids have. (Laughter).

RS: But, we didn't wear blue jeans like they do now. I mean that was what you put on to work in. You put on a dress or a sk—

JO: Skirt. Yes.

RS: Or something, or slacks. I had some nice slacks.

JO: I had a laugh lately--well, a few years back. One of the grandkids said something about “Well, did you ever wear dresses?” (Laughter). And so I went and I got a picture of me with a dress on. They couldn’t believe, you know? Where now, they don’t even own a dress. Oh my gosh!

RS: We used to wear dresses when we were little to play in. And at the farm—The grass never got mowed at the farm unless we had cows and they kept it, you know, eaten down, but usually it was long. And, there were always a lot of grasshoppers. Ellen and I would walk around in those dresses and those grasshoppers would hop up into the dress. Now, that is a terrible feeling (Laughter). Not fun at all, ‘cause you can’t always get ‘em out right away, you know?

JO: At the store, it sold everything. Caskets, you know, also were in the back room. And, night crawlers. Do you know what a night crawler is? A worm. And it’s about half an inch fat, big. For fishing. For fishing. And, oh my gosh, there would be so—I mean, a big thing of night crawlers were kept in this back cooler at the store.

KA: Was this Dick LaFreniere’s store?

JO: Dick LaFreniere’s store. And, so, that was my job, you know. When people came in to get the night crawlers, I’d just go and pick out how many they wanted. I didn’t think anything about it. (45:06).

RS: Well, your dad being a fisherman, you probably didn’t think too much of it.

JO: Uh-huh.

RS: We used to go down to dig night crawlers in the woods behind the outhouse, when our kids wanted to go fishing. And there’s always a lot of mosquitoes back in our yard. I used to hate that job. And Harold hated it too, so sometimes I’d do it, so he’d take the kids fishing. (Laughter). I would do the digging the worms part, but I didn’t like that.

JO: Um, catching snakes, like, in our basement. Half of the house was sand. The front part of it. And, it seemed every time I’d have to go down there for something, you know, a jar of something, or some of the canning things, it always seemed like there was a snake around someplace, so finally, I just got on to catching them. And, I’d put them in a jar, and put them out in the garage. We had a little garage, you know, off to the side. And, lined them up there. (Laughter). But, up at the farm, there are still snakes up there.

RS: Oh, yeah? Oh, well, there’s snakes up at our farm too, but none of them are poisonous, and usually, just as you’re walking along, they are scurrying away. I’m not really that afraid of snakes because when we had the outhouse, usually one or two of them went scurrying away when you were walking down there in the morning. (Laughter). As long as they didn’t come toward me, I didn’t mind.

JO: But, for them to still be living, you know, up at the farmhouse...

RS: The same snakes you put in the jars?

JO: No, no, no.

RS: Oh. I was like what—

JO: But, I mean, the snakes in the basement. They’re still up there. Different. When we first retired and came back here—We went to Grand Rapids. I went to Aquinas College and Rich was in the service. And, so, when we came back to retire, we were gonna live there, fix it all up, and live there, which we did. And—We started too.

RS: Which farm? Oh, the big farmhouse--

JO: The farmhouse.

RS: --right here.

JO: Yeah. And the snakes were around. Summertime, you know. So, people would come up to see the place, and so once I knew Clare Cull was coming up, her and Bud, and the snake was around. Well, anyway, I went and got the snake and killed it, and I left it out on the little sidewalk coming in. And she came in through the little gate thing there, and oh my gosh! You could hear her scream! (Laughter). He was dead, you know. He was all curled up dead, but oh my gosh! Then, we had one coming up—Well, the icebox in the house, they had a hole in the floor, where the water would drip down from the ice, and the sewing machine was in that corner. Now, the sewing machine is still an old sewing machine, is still in that corner. So, one day, a snake was coming up out of the basement through that hole.

RS: Oh! For Pete's sake.

JO: Uh-huh. So, anyway--

RS: So, is that when you decided you didn't want to fix that house up and live in it? (Laughter). I guess you could've plugged the hole.

JO: Yeah. That's what he did. Rich did that. But, we got that snake, and I was hanging on—He came up, and he was outside and I started yelling, and by the time he got in, I had the snake by the tail. Didn't want to grab it by the head or anything, you know. It was a good-sized snake. He's laughing at me, "What are you gonna do with it?" (Laughter). I said "It's yours! Your snake".

KA: So, you wore dresses everyday? Was that typical? And skirts?

RS: Yeah. Usually. I mean, we didn't have a lot of dresses. We usually had two of everything. At least we did. I don't know if you did or not, but we had two pairs of socks, and two pairs of underwear, and two dresses that fit us because you know. And of course it got passed down from sister to sister. You were the oldest. You probably didn't get that as much. But, one could be washed, you know, so one set could be washed, but do you want to hear a funny way of how we used to take baths?

KA: Sure. (Laughter).

RS: There were six of us at the time 'cause Colleen wasn't born yet. We would get out a big galvanized tub—That's what they used to use for the washing, too.

JO: Big, round.

RS: They were about that big around.

JO: And it had handles on it.

RS: And you'd have to heat the water up before you got the bath, so you'd heat the water up on the stove. And then, we'd close off the dining room at the farmhouse, 'cause there was a heater and stove in there so it was nice and warm. And we'd either stay in the living room or the kitchen. And we'd take turns, starting with the littlest. And Colleen—Not Colleen 'cause she wasn't--Ellen would get her bath, and then I would get the bath. All in the same water. And then Bud, and then Barb, and then Mother, and then Daddy. We'd all get our baths in the same--Can you imagine how that water was by the time it got to my Dad? (Laughter). But that was the Saturday night ritual. You did that on Saturday night, and put your clean clothes on. (50:12)

JO: I used to put my hair in pin curls and listen to the radio. I got to listen to the radio after bath time Saturday night.

RS: Oh really?

JO: Before church.

RS: We didn't have a radio at the farm.

(50:23).

JO: In the dark.

RS: Well, we didn't have electricity. We did have a radio. So, maybe you heard this story. Rod might have told you. My dad liked to listen to Father Coughlin, who was a priest, who was very controversial back during the Depression and the Second World War. That era. Every Sunday night he would come on. So, Daddy would go out and he would take the battery out of the car and take it in the house and hook it up to the radio, so he and Danny Boyle, our next-door neighbor, he would come over, and they'd listen to Father Coughlin at night.

JO: My grand—The grandparents, the Gallaghers, he would come up Sunday night, and we were very quiet. You did not make any noise.

RS: Yeah. That was the one radio program for the week. (Laughter).

KA: Wow.

RS: But, you know, we didn't miss any of that stuff because we never knew it. Didn't even know it existed for a long time. And, so, that's just how we lived. We didn't miss all that.

JO: No. We were poor, but we didn't know it.

RS: Right.

JO: Nowadays, everyone says, you know, "Oh, you were so poor". And, I remember too, our closet was about the size—My sister and I, she was on one side and I was on the other side, you know. And, what I wore on Monday to school, I'd put in the back of it, and then Tuesday, you know, and that's how we—

RS: She was very organized.

JO: Uh-huh.

KA: So—

JO: For Christmas, we'd get something to wear, and a game or something. I remember.

RS: Yeah.

JO: None of the stuff like my grandkids...(Sighs).

RS: More stuff than they—And they don't play with it. I mean, they get so much stuff, they don't even—We appreciate stuff.

JO: Yeah.

RS: Even now.

JO: We save and—

RS: But, some of us are worse than others. (Laughter).

JO: I think it's—I keep telling people, we lived on an island, with an airplane and a boat once in a while comin', well, in the summertime. But, you have to make do, you know, with what you have. You know, like I keep taking my same bag with my lunch in it, you know, every time. And the gal says "Oh, are you doing that again?" Well, it's still good. (Laughter).

KA: So, what were some of the other shops they had in town when you were growing up?

RS: They had two grocery stores at the time because Dick LaFreniere's grocery store and McDonough's, they were about---I mean, one got as much business as the other. And even when that store was in existence, when it started changing hands, there weren't that many people shopped at Dick's store anymore. Gradually, it got sold. Now, there's only one except for the gas station, I guess you can buy a little bit of groceries in there.

JO: Yeah. They have a lot of stuff.

RS: Do they?

JO: Frozen stuff. Ice cream things.

RS: I'll have to look in there.

JO: Pizzas!

RS: Sometimes, when you need something and McDonough's isn't open---

JO: They're open 'til nine. The station.

RS: Is it? Ok.

JO: The summertime.

RS: But, as far as other shops, we have a couple of bars, and the two grocery stores. Was that it?

JO: We didn't need them! (Laughter).

KA: Right. You had everything.

RS: Well, Dick's, out in front of Dick's store, it said "If we don't have it, you don't need it". That's what his sign said up on the top of the--

JO: He had some souvenirs in there.

RS: Yeah. And he had some candles. I remember buying candles.

JO: And the candy.

RS: Yeah. Penny candy. That's what my kids remember about coming up years ago. Grandma would give them penny candy so they could go up and buy—

JO: I used to just hate that. I'd have to get down on the floor because it was always on the bottom—

RS: Oh, when the kids would come in?

JO: Yeah. Uh-huh. "No, I don't want that one—No, that other one." (Laughter). What they wanted.

Roles of Women on the Island

KA: Another question we had, and my professor was actually interested in, was sort of—We know a lot about the fishing industry, and all the big industries, but we were curious about the role of women on the island? We know that they did a lot, but not a lot of people have talked about them, so..

JO: The women?

KA: Yeah. What were their roles typically?

RS: Well, there was Mrs. Redding. She was a seamstress. She lived where—It was King Strang's house, right? Where Mrs. Redding lived? And, I know my mother had some coats, that had been her coats that she outgrew, and so, we took those coats, and Ellen and I went to Mrs. Redding and she made coats for us out of those coats. But, she actually was a really good seamstress. I mean, all of the women on the island, they could sew, but she was more like a tailor, I guess. She could—

JO: Then, Martha Miller. She came along.

RS: Yeah, but that was quite a few years later.

JO: Later, later.

RS: Yeah. What other professions did women have besides teaching on the island? I'm trying to think.

JO: You mean a long time ago?

RS: When we were growing up.

JO: Oh, when we were growing up.

RS: Yeah, when we were growing up.

JO: Nels's wife had a hat shop. Like in my mother's time.

RS: Did she?

KA: Nels LaFreniere's wife?

JO: Mm-hmm.

RS: Nels. His first wife. Sophia.

JO: Sophia Boyle.

KA: Sophia Boyle. Oh ok.

RS: And I just thought of something else. The O'Briens had that ice cream parlor for a while. Do you know where—

JO: The Cruickshanks are.

RS: Yeah, where Cruickshanks are. They got kind of that ornate house.

JO: Blue. Down—

RS: Right down where the Vet's memorial is.

JO: Yeah.

KA: Oh! Ok.

RS: Yeah. Right when you go up that hill. It's got a lot of pretty flowers and everything. Well, that used to be an ice cream parlor in there. And she ran it along with him. As much as, I think she was the one that waited on you when you went in there.

JO: And the books, too.

RS: Did she have books in there, too?

JO: Mm-hmm.

RS: Yeah.

JO: And the Sheleighleigh. We used to go to the Sheleighleigh.

RS: Now, what was at the Sheleighleigh?

JO: That was that store next to the Store.

RS: Oh! Next to McDonough's store?

JO: No, next to Dick's.

RS: Oh. What is it now?

JO: Let's see. Buster and Rita Elms had that. The Sheleighleigh?

RS: Yeah.

JO: That had ice cream and sandwiches in there.

RS: Really? Oh, I don't remember that one.

JO: Was right up from the boat dock.

RS: Yeah, I don't remember that.

JO: And, over at the point, was—Felix had a log cabin.

RS: Yeah, that was after we were growing up though.

JO: Yeah.

RS: I can remember when he built those.

JO: They had—it had music, so we could skate over there. And he had hotdogs. Oh my gosh! And then one summer, he started putting tomatoes on the hotdog. Oh, I just loved those!

RS: You could see--He had a sign that you could see across the harbor, and it just said "Eat" in really big neon sign. "Eat". (Laughter). That was the Eat restaurant.

JO: Yeah.

KA: That's great.

RS: But, I don't think—I can't think of any other women that were professionals except for like the doctor's wife, who—They came from Canada. They weren't original Islanders, but she was a musician.

JO: Suzanna.

RS: Suzanna Palmer. She taught piano lessons. And most of the women were just--

JO: And manners. We had to hold our hands just so.

RS: Oh yes. And we couldn't step on the threshold. I remember the doctor would paint the woodwork white, and the threshold that you came in was painted white, and every time we went through, we had to step over, or—What did she call him? She called him “Daddy”, didn't she? “Daddy”, yeah. And the funniest thing to me was she would give these recitals, and, you know, at the farmhouse, we didn't have screens. We had flypaper. You know what flypaper is? But, there were always flies around. It was not a big deal. And a fly got in the house in the middle of her recep—of her recital, and you'd think it was—I don't know what you'd think it was! (Laughter).

JO: A big bee.

RS: I think some kind of monster or something. He made so much fuss about killing that one fly. So, they were really, really, fussy. Yeah. We had to—

JO: Uh-huh. Strict.

RS: She put on little plays. She put on “Pure Gent” one time, I remember.

JO: There's a music picture of us down at the library. Have you seen that? In the music room, up on that side. In fact, Barb's in it.

RS: Is she? Yeah?

JO: Mm-hmm. Her older sister (referring to Rosemary).

RS: I don't remember Barb taking piano lessons, but she could play piano.

JO: And Eleanor, and Bertha, and Margaret Ellen, and me. And, I'm standing there with my hands the right way! (Laughter).

RS: I think maybe I have seen that picture.

KA: Were a lot of people--A lot of kids—Did they get involved with music? Was everyone pretty—

RS: A lot of them picked up music on their own.

JO: Yeah.

RS: Like the Palmers, they were always—I think they were born learned to play the piano. Or, no, not piano. Harmonica. 'Cause it was Cuckoo—Russell Palmer, Eddie Palmer's older brother—Eddie's the one that plays the old music now all the time--But, he was the musician when we were growing up. I guess he was our contemporary.

JO: Ride around—They'd have their guitars and we'd ride around in cars and sing.

RS: And harmonicas. Pick up in cars, and ride us around--

JO: Uh-huh.

RS: And when the Kennys moved to Island, the accordion was brought in 'cause Merrill (59:45) played the accordion.

JO: I always wanted to play the accordion.

RS: It seems like if you could play the piano, it woulda been easy.

JO: I know, but—

RS: It wasn't.

JO: Every once in a while, we're in a flea market or a flea shop, you know? And I keep asking, you know, about them. But they're five hundred bucks for—

RS: Really?

JO: Yes. For, you know,

KA: Wow.

JO: You know, so...But, I enjoyed playing the piano, and now I got grand-girls that are playing, and that's fun. (1:00:15). And they're really enjoying it.

RS: Are they? Yeah.

JO: Mm-hmm.

RS: I liked playing the piano, too, but we never—we always had a piano at the farmhouse, but we didn't live there year round, so I never got to practice that much. When we were in town we didn't have a piano, so you really can't learn to play the piano if you can't practice, so...But, I always wished I would have and I almost bought a piano after we were married--

JO: Oh really? Aww. So relaxing.

RS: --to start taking piano lessons, but I decided to go back to college instead, and I never did do that.

JO: My dad built our house, and he had a dining room in it. The kitchen was small, but the dining room was long, and the door going into the living room was across the front of the house. So, we had this piano they got from Traverse City, 'cause Eleanor and I both took piano. My sister and I took piano lessons, so when we got older, and started having fellows coming in, they couldn't shut the door from the dining room into the living room because the piano was big. (Laughter). All that was in that room was the table, and then mom had the china closet, but that got moved out, and the piano went there. That's how big this dining room was. But, you couldn't shut the door because the little edging on the top of that piano hit the door. So, my mother--she did everything. She sawed that off, so they could shut the door, so when we'd have—

RS: Then you could entertain your boyfriends.

JO: Uh-huh. (Laughter). Or, like on Sunday nights, you know, to listen to the radio.

RS: Listen to the radio. (1:02:00).

KA: So, was church a big part of the social life, community life?

RS: Oh, definitely. That was—I'd only think that was the very center of the social life when we were growing up.

JO: Mm-hmm.

RS: ‘Cause everybody on the island was Catholic just about, and—

JO: One or two families.

RS: Yeah.

JO: Van Erkels.

RS: Van Erkels. Yeah. But, they were just here for a while, ‘cause of the Coast Guard.

JO: Yeah.

RS: But, yeah, it was a big part.

JO: We were kinda—Excuse me. We were kinda divided, too. From uptown and downtown. Where the light plant used to be. Well, where the park is now, the Veteran’s Park. We used to have a light plant down that way. And us, we couldn’t go down past that.

RS: Really?

JO: We could go down as far as Connaghans’.

RS: Oh, really? You couldn’t go around to the point?

JO: Uh-huh. We couldn’t go down by the Martins. (Laughter).

KA: Why is that?

RS: Did they think it was dangerous? Or they just didn’t want you to go that far?

JO: They were kind of rough, I think.

RS: Well, yeah. They had kind of a rough reputation when we were growing up, but they all turned out real--

JO: Didn’t want to get into any fights.

RS: We also had like a layer of people who obeyed the rules and didn’t obey the rules. I guess that’s one way of putting it, ‘cause like I was saying, Janet and I used to always—And our sisters-- had to go home at a certain time. Well, there were some girls, they evidently didn’t have a curfew, and so, it got to be like, you know, the guys would hang out with us for the first part of the evening, take us home, and then they’d go hang out with the girls that could stay out later, and drink a little beer with them. (Laughter).

JO: Yeah.

RS: That was another thing though. We didn’t dare drink any alcohol.

JO: I didn’t drink ‘til I was twenty-one.

RS: Oh yeah. I didn’t either. I can still remember my first champagne.

JO: Still not drinking or smoking. No smoking.

RS: No. Well, we never had—I had never had the desire to smoke. I used to wish I did smoke because when I was in nurses training, there were three hundred of us, and I think there were three of us that didn’t smoke. So, I felt like I was an oddball, so I thought “I’m gonna learn to smoke”. And, I couldn’t stand the taste. I got

that taste in my mouth. I couldn't get rid of it all day long, and I didn't have a lot of money and I thought "I'm not gonna waste my money on something I don't even like". But I really did. And when we were first married, we'd play cards, and I'd be the only one that wasn't smoking, and feel like an oddball.

JO: I went to college, and of course, they had a smoker's room downstairs, you know. And that was just covered, you know. Gray. And, "No, you gotta learn how to smoke. No, come on", so I tried it, but that was it. (Laughter).

RS: Yeah, I did not like that taste.

JO: I have tried things. (1:04:50).

KA: Could you talk a little bit about—If you don't mind, about what courtship and dating was like during your teen years on the island at all? Was there any of that going on?

RS: There was a lot of just the guys driving by and saying "Come on for a ride". And then, of course, I had the rule I couldn't get in the car with a boy, so that didn't work out too---But that was a lot of it. In fact, I think it was when you and I and Ellen started dating that we got the idea that they should come pick us up. It was a novelty on Beaver Island. But, they went along with it. Didn't they? Robert and Richie, and Peter—

JO: Yeah. Peter.

RS: Yeah. All those guys. And Eleanor's boyfriends, when she got a little older. She was a little younger than us. But, the dating was mostly just kinda getting together. We'd ride around.

JO: A bunch of us.

RS: All of the girls would pile in a car on Sunday afternoon for—That was our recreation time, Sunday afternoon. And we'd ride around the island. And of course, the boys would be all piled in another car and ride around the island. And we'd usually meet up somewhere, and tease each other more than anything. (Laughter). Pretend we're gonna throw cameras at each other.

JO: Singing. Singing.

RS: Yeah.

JO: Did lots of singing.

RS: And dancing, too. Sometimes, out-door suppers.

JO: Sometimes, early, probably ninth and tenth grade, I'd have to be home on Sunday at four o'clock for chicken dinner. And, probably, that's when I started, you know. Oh, I didn't like that at all. (Laughter).

RS: Well, you know, we used to have dinner earlier, but my dad was one of these people who ate very slowly, and then he had his coffee, and then he poured his coffee in his saucer so it would cool off, and then he'd pour it back. And, it was a long ritual. And we girls would want to clear the tables, get the dishes done, so we could go have some fun. And he would get really mad if we took the dishes before he was done eating. That was one thing. You didn't rush him through dinner (Laughter).

JO: Do you want coffee? I'm sorry I didn't even offer you anything. Gosh! (Laughter).

KA: We're fine. Thank you.

JO: Talkin' about the dishes at their house, when something was going on that we wanted to go to, well, if I asked my folks and they said "No". Well, ok, "No" was just "No", the first "No". So, then we'd talk about it at school or something, and then, "Well, why don't you ask your folks?" So, then she'd ask, and they'd say

“Yes”. (Laughter). So, then we’d go back, and usually after Daddy ate was a good time to approach him. I still do that with—

RS: Do you? Yeah?

JO: Give him a good—So, then, we’d say “Well, Rosie and Ellen said they can go”. “Well...”. And then the time, and who you gonna be with. Lots of questions. But, we’d get to go. So, we went back and forth.

RS: Glad that worked out for you, Janet. (1:08:00).

JO: Mm-hmm. But, then we’d get down there, they’d still be doing their dishes. We’d be so excited because we got to go.

RS: Oh. We’d have to finish up the dishes before we got to go. It was a long process, ‘cause we didn’t have hot running water, and so you had to heat up the water, and you had to wash the dishes, dishpan on the stove, and you used half a bar of soap because we didn’t have dish detergent back then. So, it would kind of get greasy water in. And, you had to stand on the back part of the woodstove. The water would stay warm, but not be too hot. But, it was mighty hot standing there washing dishes. The steam from the stove. And we didn’t have any nice stainless steel pans that were easy to clean, and we didn’t have a lot of extra water to soak pans before you washed—It was quite an ordeal washing dishes.

JO: I hated to do the silverware. And, so, by that time, I’d say I had to go practice the piano.

RS: Oh, I thought you were going to say I have to go to the bathroom. (Laughter).

JO: I still have that Fels-Naptha soap (1:09:05). Do you know what that is? It’s the best thing for poison ivy.

RS: Oh.

JO: Yes.

RS: That’s the kind of soap we used—I think, they used it for washing clothes with, too. Very strong soap, and it does have a very distinctive smell. Got used for a lot of stuff.

JO: It’s way up high. Who’s the tall one? Are you tall?

KA: I’m not that—I can try.

JO: I just keep it in case of someone getting the poison ivy. You know they go over fishing to the other island over there.

RS: Oh. I didn’t know that was good for poison ivy.

JO: Oh yes. (Pause). Smell it. (Laughter).

RS: We used to wash our hair and everything with that stop. Yeah. Shampoo was a real luxury.

KA: It does have a distinct smell.

RS: The one time I decided—Go ahead.

JO: My dad had the farm up at the stone house, and then we had the farm downtown too. It had cows and horses. So in the fall, they would go on the boat and sell the cows over in Traverse City to make some money for the winter, and they’d buy their winter stuff, and that was always before Halloween. He’d come back with a package of Halloween candy, I remember. But, that was a big thing to get some money for the winter, but we had the beef, you know, too. Butcher the cows.

RS: We'd get a hindquarter of beef, and freeze it. Soon as it got cold. And you'd butcher it so it would freeze if you left it outside. They'd wait 'til it was cold enough. And my dad used to get a saw out and saw the pieces, 'cause they didn't want to thaw out the whole thing or it would spoil, so he'd saw a piece off and bring it in. Just with a regular-end wood saw.

JO: Yeah. My dad had the fish-boxes, and that's what he put outside that window. That was all full of the meat, you know, frozen. In the fish box.

RS: Oh, really? He cut it up ahead of time, then.

JO: Yeah.

RS: My dad'd wait, and cut it up before he'd use it.

JO: And we did a lot of canning I remember, too. Peeling, peeling, you know.

RS: Oh, my mother didn't can much.

JO: Peaches, and tomatoes.

RS: She made good homemade strawberry jam, though. That's about all she canned that I can remember, but we didn't grow a lot of our own food either. But once Daddy—

JO: The garden.

RS: Yeah. We didn't have much of a garden. But, once he got the job at the post office, we could afford to buy food, so...(Laughter).

JO: The sailors used to come home too. And they would come home with games for us, you know. The renter. And candy.

RS: Yeah. That was kind of a part of the dating ritual, I guess, 'cause guys would work on freighters--

JO: That was a big thing when the sailors were coming home.

RS: Yeah. They were gone for nine months at a time, and they'd just come home.

JO: On the freighters.

RS: And they'd have quite a bit of money saved up, 'cause they were on the boat all the time. Bud would say they didn't make a lot of money, but they weren't able to spend it, so, by the time they come home for the winter, they seemed pretty rich to us. So, there was a whole new crop of people to date. (Laughter).

JO: That was a big thing.

RS: Yeah, it was.

JO: A lot of the older gals married them.

RS: They did. Yeah.

JO: Yeah. So, that was good.

RS: I never thought that would be much of a deal being married to somebody that was gone nine months out of the year. Didn't want that.

JO: What other questions?

Beaver Island Characters

KA: Well, who were some of the, you know, real characters on the island when you were growing up? Like, any of the old-timers, or anything?

RS: Well, Raymond Lewis was a character.

JO: Stanley Floyd.

RS: Yeah. Raymond Lewis was a Native American Indian. And he was a brother to the one that was in our class.

JO: Josie Ann.

RS: She was an intelligent, really nice person, but he was a little retarded, but he was a nice guy. Really good-natured. So, when we got married on the island, the church was up on the hill by the cemetery there, and we got married in January. Middle of January, and it was a blizzard. It was almost like a blizzard. It was snowing really, really, hard. So, Raymond Lewis decided that the bride should not have to walk in the snow, so he shoveled snow all through the ceremony from the door of the church to where our car was parked. He just stayed out there and kept—Because it was snowing that hard. And that was—

JO: Oh my gosh!

RS: That was so nice! But, he was kind of a character. He was kind of like Budger. Budger, did you—you don't know Budger. (Laughter).

JO: Perry is his name.

RS: You tell her, you tell. Oh yeah, and his brother was Russell, and we always called him “Cuckoo”. We did. I never even knew his name was Russell. Tell her about Budger because you were around more when he was—In more recent years than I had been. What was he like? He was definitely a character.

JO: He would tell jokes, and then he wanted money. He was asking for money. I mean, finally he was even up to twenty dollars, just—

RS: Really?

JO: Asking everybody. Strangers, we call them “Strangers”. You're strangers.

RS: And didn't he tell kind of nasty jokes? Dirty jokes, yeah?

JO: Yeah.

RS: But, I don't know. He held a job on the mainland for a lot of years, and then he came back here.

JO: He was on the freighters.

RS: And I always thought he was really retarded, but he must not have been if he could hold a job.

JO: He knew what he was doing. Joe Mafroe was another character. (1:15:04).

KA: What did he do on the island?

JO: Did you hear about him? Joe Mafroe?

KA: I've heard him mentioned, but I forget, could you tell me about him?

JO: Well, all I know is when he'd be in the bar, he'd want someone to take him home, so they'd take him home, and they'd stop at the store or somethin', or whatever, he wouldn't go in the house. He'd just go right on, you know, get another ride and get back up town again. (Laughter).

RS: I didn't know that. There were some characters. Some people said my dad was a character, 'specially in later years I guess.

JO: I liked to watch them dance. That's her mom and--

RS: Yeah, my mom and dad when they—

JO: Always dancing.

RS: When Daddy died, Sherry Timsak wrote their obit, a little obit in the Beaver Island paper, and she said they were Beaver Island's Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers.

KA: Oh, that's great.

RS: They were really good dancers. And Eddie Palmer, he always tells me this story, when he used to be playing, and he knew Daddy's favorite waltz, so he'd always play Daddy's favorite waltz, and he'd notice before they got up to dance, where they were sitting, 'cause there used to be chairs along the edge of the hall for people to sit, you know, when they weren't dancing. So he would make sure the music stopped when they got back to the chairs, so they wouldn't have to walk all the way across the floor to get to their chairs. (Laughter).

JO: Wow! What a good idea! When my dad died, when I heard that, I thought "Oh, I won't be able to dance with him anymore".

RS: Oh. (1:16:39).

JO: That was something.

RS: I really miss my dad because he was such a char— He was a character. He was definitely a distinct person in---I don't know. Just---

JO: In the way you said he did things.

RS: Very slow and deliberate. Billy McDonough's always telling me, or used to tell me how he made the sign of the cross, he'd go "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen". And he said he always made a big production out of it. And we always were a few minutes late for church, and my mother always said it was because Daddy wanted to make a grand entrance. (Laughter).

JO: Oh! To go to church! We always sat in the same spot. They had the little thing in church with your name on it.

RS: Well, you rented it. You used to pay pew rent, for that pew.

KA: Rod has a pew, right, still in church?

RS: Yeah, and he's still got my grandpa's name on it. Yeah, we don't have to pay pew rent anymore, of course. That was in addition to the collection back then. But in the collection you probably maybe put in a dime or something, and you know, it was not like now.

JO: That much.

RS: But, they always managed to keep that church going financially. So, it must've been—

JO: We used to sing up in the choir.

RS: Yeah. All through high school. Whether you could sing or not, you'd sing in the choir, because there were such few of us. Janet was a good singer. I never was a good singer. Your mother was a good singer, too.

JO: Yes. Right up 'til the end too. She used to sing Ophelia.

RS: She used to sing Ophelia and that's the only time I ever heard that name. And where Barb is—Oh, I'm getting off the track here—There's a girl named Ophelia there. She's the recreation director.

JO: Oh. You should ask her if she knows that song!

RS: Yeah, I should. I should. She's a really nice person.

JO: Oh, my. It was a pretty song. (1:18:29).

Music on the Island

KA: So, when you played music or heard music from the fiddlers, was it all—What kind of music was it? Was it traditional Irish music, or was it more popular?

JO: Irish. Irish.

RS: Yeah, Irish.

JO: Jigs.

RS: Yeah, and as years went by, kind of country music got kind of mixed in with it, but mostly it was old Irish. That's why I think Pat (Bonner)—In fact, I read about him one time where he had traveled a lot before he came to live on the island. And the work he was doing was he was picking up all these songs, you know? The melodies and the lyrics and everything. So, by the time he came to the island, he had quite a repertory of music.

JO: He used to come down to my grandparents'. They lived not too far from him. Every night. And they'd play music. He'd play music and sit there.

RS: Really? Yeah? Is that—

JO: Granny and Papa's.

RS: Yeah.

JO: Every night.

RS: Well, didn't they live right next door to you out there?

JO: No, they were out in the country there.

RS: Oh, ok.

JO: Piper's corner. Up where Mary and Ron are.

RS: Well, who was Aunt Maggie?

JO: My granny.

RS: Your granny. Is that who you're talking about?

JO: Yeah.

RS: Didn't they live in town next to you?

JO: Oh yeah, but that was in their later years.

RS: Oh, ok. Ok.

JO: Yeah. When those boys came to high school. (Laughter).

RS: They came to town when the boys came to high school.

JO: Their house burnt. My house burnt. A lot of houses used to burn.

RS: Oh yeah. Your house burned right to the ground, didn't it? (1:19:59).

JO: Big places. Their place was so big. We used to go up there a lot.

RS: And there was no fire department at all available. I mean, once a house started, it pretty much was gone, 'cause I remember periodically, we would go out and watch a house burn.

JO: Mm-hmm.

RS: It was kind of like a—

JO: Sparks and everything.

RS: People didn't have running water so they didn't have hoses that they could hose them down. No fire department.

JO: A lot of houses burned.

RS: All wood. All wooden houses.

KA: You just had to wait? Wait it out?

JO: Mm-hmm.

RS: Yeah. Pretty much. Yeah. I dunno when your mom and dad's house burned. They were no longer living on the island?

JO: No, no. It was empty.

RS: Did they still own it?

JO: No, Madonna and Bing had it then.

RS: Oh! They were living there when it burned?

JO: No. They, you know, they built that motel first?

RS: Yeah.

JO: Well, it was before that.

RS: Oh, okay. So, it burned down—

JO: Mother and Daddy were over in Charlevoix then. And the big house that the great-grandparents built out on Font Lake there, that burned too on Fourth of July night. Lightning and big storm. I was thinkin' the other day when it stormed and we had the horse and cows, you know, not too far away from our house downtown then, and it stormed, you could hear them kicking, you know, and everything. And one July I counted how many lightning storms, you know, 'cause Eleanor didn't like that. She'd take off into Mother and Daddy's bedroom. (Laughter). And I'd be in that room, you know,--

RS: By yourself, huh?

JO: Listening to the pounding outside there, but I counted seven lightning storms.

RS: Lightning strikes? Yeah?

JO: Mm-hmm. One summer. And I was thinking, we haven't had that yet. You know, this is July. We haven't had that.

RS: We just had—since we've been here—just that one good rain that one morning.

MR: So, back to your childhood, what was your fondest memory of childhood, or what was your favorite season on the island?

JO: Christmas. We'd always get something to wear, and so we could open that gift up first, before we went to midnight mass. We always went to midnight mass. And I got my ring, and I got a certain white band. Well, it was yey-thick. Like a hat. That was the big thing one year. Oh! And the doll. We used to play with dolls a lot.

RS: Yeah. We used to play with dolls a lot too. Mother used to—On a nice day, she'd put a blanket under the ironwood tree there, you know. It was kinda warm, so we'd be in the shade, and Ellen and I'd sit there by the hour.

JO: Playing with the dolls.

RS: I think probably my favorite season was fall, when the trees turned color. It was so pretty. And drive around. I loved the elm trees. I still like elm trees, even though the Dutch elm trees killed most of the ones, but I think there are still some elm trees on the island that lived. Anyway, yeah, I think that was probably my favorite season. I never liked the hot weather all that much, but spring and fall were nice.

JO: Back to school.

KA: Oh yeah.

JO: Back to see everybody.

RS: I don't know what my favorite memory was though. I'd have to think about that for a while. I know what it was! It was when we moved to town when I was fourteen years old. And we got to come downtown and live there year round because not only were all the kids there, but the beach was there, 'cause we used to get really lonesome out there on Darkytown Road with no kids around, except for that one when the Altmans lived there for a couple summers. But, aside from that, we were---So, that was my most pleasant memory I think of growing up was moving to town.

JO: Moving to town! Isn't that something to say to some city thing? Oh, this is going to be something! (Laughter). They're not gonna believe us!

RS: We used to move every—before school started, we used to come down for a while. Let's see from the time I was five 'til about fourteen, so for about nine years. We rented a house in town. A different house.

We've lived in three different houses there. And, there was one right where McDonough's store is. They owned a little house and we rented that from them, and then we lived in Walter Wojan's, but first place we lived was that place that you see when you first come in on the boat, and it's like a big old barn. What's that called now? It used to be—

JO: The Resale.

RS:---Stanley Floyd's place. Yeah, where the Resale stop used to-- And that was where we lived upstairs. And Daddy had sheep downstairs and my mother hated that. But, for some reason, we must've gotten two lambs, and no mother, because we fed the lambs with the baby bottle. And we got a big kick outta do that, Eleanor and I, 'cause we could do that as much as we wanted. We could feed those. Probably took a lot of time to keep those little lambs fed. But, that was a big deal when we got to come to town. Then, when my grandma and grandpa passed away, they lived in that house that belongs to—Who owns that house now that used to be the yellow house? The seven sisters that was in there--? Oh, I know. Ricksgers own it now. But, anyway, then we got to—We could walk to school, and so we could live there. It was a half a mile to school, but we would walk, and we didn't think that was so far, because it was two miles from the farm, so that seemed pretty close. And we used to walk, winter or summer, and no matter how cold it got. And it's funny now when I hear the weather now on the—They're so worried about the kids waiting at the bus stop because it's gonna be, you know, twenty degrees. And one couple stretch of days, we had twenty below zero, and nobody ever said “You girls better not go to school today. It's too cold out there”. They just bundled you up and you went. And some of the boys from the country, you know, the country guys, it was Walter McCauley and a couple of other guys were coming by with a horse and sleigh, and boy, were we---

JO: Glad!

RS: We really appreciated that. Yeah. (Laughter). But, we didn't really mind. I don't remember minding. We used to walk home after school. (1:26:34).

JO: You just did it.

RS: Yeah.

KA: That's all you knew.

JO: Yeah. Didn't know any different.

RS: In the summer when we'd walk from the farm to town, when we still lived out there in the summer. For all those years we rented in town, we'd still go back to the farm in the summer. And Ellen and I would want to go swimming, so we'd walk to town. And if it was really hot, we'd walk really fast through the sunny part, and then when we got under the shade of a tree, we walk really slow. (Laughter). 'Cause it'd be so hot, but we'd be good and warm for a swim. And then we would wait there 'til the post office closed at five o'clock and we'd drive back out with my dad.

JO: That's a good way.

RS: That's another that we used to do when we were little, when we were still living up there all the time. And, Daddy would come home, and he had an old car with a running board. You know what a running board is? It's like a step-up only it's on the outside of the car?

KA: Oh ok.

RS: It's like a long step on the outside of the car after the doors are closed.

KA: Ok. Yes.

RS: So, Ellen and I, about half an hour before Daddy was due to come home, Mother probably wanted to get us out of the house, but she'd say "'Bout time for Daddy to come home". So, we'd go out to the gate. You know how long that lane is going in from the gate to the house. We'd walk out there, and we'd swing on that gate, which we weren't supposed to do because it kinda made the gate—you know, they weren't really that— We were too heavy to be swinging on it, but it was too much of a temptation, and we would do it anyway. Waiting for Daddy to come home, and then we would ride with him from the gate to the house, and we'd stand on the running board to hold on. And that was our big excitement of the day.

JO: Big thing! Mm-hmm.

RS: 'Course, then it was dinnertime too. That was always good. We got in there.

JO: My dad had that farm out at the stone house, and of course, he was on the dock with the fishing, you know, fishing coming in. A lot of fish back then. I mean tons of fish they were getting in. And so, I got to learn how to drive. And we had Indians working out at the farm, you know, haying and putting up stuff, and so I could drive out there with their lunch. And it was always some that—Well, back in the store, we used to have the big, round things of bologna, and we used to have to cut that up for people, you know? And the big, round blocks of cheese was at the store, and stuff. So, I'd have to make lunches, and they always had pop. I wonder, I don't remember taking—Root beer was always the drink. Root beer. I don't remember taking water to them. Isn't that odd? Well, anyway, they went with the pop, so—

RS: Maybe they had water out there, Janet?

JO: Oh, maybe.

RS: Yeah, they probably had water.

JO: So, I got driving when I was thirteen.

RS: Really?

JO: Got my license---Well, my grandfather was, you know, Papa Gallagher, was the supervisor, and so I got my license when I was thirteen.

RS: Really? Oh, I didn't learn to drive until I was fifteen.

JO: That big red truck. My dad's big red truck.

RS: I dunno. I just remember your nineteen fifty Ford, 'cause Eleanor, whenever she talked about it, she always called it the nineteen fifty Ford. (Laughter). I think it was one of the first brand new cars that were ever on the island.

JO: The Ford. Uh-huh. Daddy and his Ford.

RS: But, I didn't learn to drive until I was fifteen, and I still to this day love to drive.

JO: Me too.

RS: I used to pester my dad 'cause if he had to go to the store for something, he'd let me drive, and I used to pester him all the time. I would try to think up things that we needed at the store so I could drive him over there. (Laughter). (1:30:08).

JO: I do all the driving in Florida.

RS: Do ya? Richie doesn't drive?

JO: Well, we get started—Nope, he gets on that other thing, and no, I sit and drive. I love to drive too.

RS: Do you? Yeah. I don't know why, but I just really think that's a big deal to be able to get behind a car.

JO: We're two of a kind. (Laughter). Livin' on an island.

RS: Yeah. Maybe that's why, 'cause we can go farther than a couple miles before we hit the lake.

JO: I could only go up as far—When I first started, I could only go up as far as Bundy's. You know where Bundy's is, down there? Ok. There was a turnaround there. And then, we'd ride over to the point. Every time, we'd go over to the point and turn around there and come back. (Laughter).

KA: That was your drive.

JO: That was our trip! When the fellas started coming downtown, and I'd have to be home early, nine o'clock, and they had older cars you could hear, so I got on to the sound of them. And some of them, that's what they'd do. They'd go up and they'd turn around, and I'd think they were goin' home—I was so, you know. I believed everything. (Laughter). They'd turn around there, and then they'd go back to hall hill, and you know, stay out for a while. You know, go to the ball diamond, or whatever was going on, wherever the group was, you know?

RS: They weren't gonna go home at nine o'clock.

JO: No. (Laughter). I finally got on to that.

RS: I got a kick out of Richie talking, you know when we were out on the boat with him and he was talking about buying beer when they were underage.

JO: Oh yeah.

RS: Evidently that was their main objective in life was to get somebody to buy them beer. (Laughter).

JO: A Jumbo.

KA: Oh, would they ask people to buy it for them, or..?

RS: Yeah and surprising—

JO: Raymond Lewis.

RS: Yeah, and surprising the people that would buy it.

JO: Well, it was fifty cents. So, they'd all get their money together--Probably didn't have much money, those guys—And, get the jumbo. (1:32:11).

RS: Well, you know what we used to do after we moved to town. We had those big oak trees right there by us, and on the weekends,--A lot of the Indians were day-laborers, and they would work through the week, and then they would get paid, and then they'd have a big party under a tree out there, and then they would go home...And, Ellen and I would pick up the bottles and take them back and get the refund, and buy candy. (Laughter).

JO: They worked for my dad, you know, at the farm, and then the fishing things, and Saturday night, they'd get about two or three—I remember writing checks. He'd write checks. And this one Little Joe, the Indian--we called him. He was kind of crippled, you know, and they'd always send him up to the door, and I'd have to answer the door. Eleanor would never go to the door for them. I'd go to the door.

RS: To give their checks?

JO: Uh-huh.

RS: Why? Were they afraid to come or something?

JO: I don't know, but he'd come up and he'd say "Young James, you write 'em check." That's what he'd s-- because my dad was called Young James. "Young James, you write 'em check". (1:33:15).

RS: My dad used to loan them money. They would spend all their money, and, you know, it wouldn't be pay day yet, and they needed money to feed their families on Fridays, so, he would loan them money, and my mother would always get mad at him for doing that, but they always paid him back.

JO: They did?

RS: Always paid him back. Soon as they got the check, they'd come and pay Frankie off. Yeah, and then they—

JO: They didn't get much, you know, from my dad.

RS: No, I don't think they got much at all.

JO: Later when the fishing, as soon as they bought the fish, he'd pay them right that night. Got on to that.

RS: Yeah, that probably worked out better, because then they wouldn't spend it all on the weekend and not have any to get through the week.

JO: But, then if they got a lot, then they wouldn't come to work the next day.

RS: Yeah.

JO: That was one thing. Sitting under the trees.

RS: That was one of the bad things that white men brought the Indians was that love of drinking. You know, firewater they called it. They don't have that in their heritage. It's just that they didn't have the willpower to control, I guess. Some of them.

JO: They had a certain spot, you know, in the Shamrock, just for them. For the Indians.

RS: And it really was a segregated community, 'cause you didn't—I mean, everybody was really nice to one another, but you didn't actually socialize. You didn't date an Indian. And, I can remember my dad explaining to me. He says "Don't ever be tempted to go out—Some of those guys are really nice lookin' guys", but he said "You date one of them and none of the white boys will ever date you again". Isn't that funny to think that recent—

JO: There was a lot of them around now that you mention it.

RS: And they were—Some of them were pretty nice lookin'.

JO: We had them in school with us.

RS: Sure.

JO: Gilbert High. Yeah. And they were nice-looking.

RS: Yeah. That's not like that anymore, 'cause—

JO: No.

KA: That's good.

RS: Yeah, it is good.

JO: They had their own little place, back in our time, they were here, and they were there, and different homes. They were all spread around.

KA: There were a lot more?

JO: Uh-huh. Well, there was more of them. Wabinimkees, and—

RS: Kenwabikise, and Wabanimkee. Wassagesik. They had unusual names. And they all meant something in English.

JO: I know one that lived down, like, where the church is now? Well, that used to be a big flat thing there.

RS: Plateau kind of.

JO: Yeah, because we used to jump off that thing way down. But, one lived down in there, and that house burnt too. That family. Wassagesiks.

RS: Yeah?

JO: Archie. Archie Wassagesik. Louise.

RS: I don't remember them so much. I remember the Lewises, and Naponts. He's still up here isn't he? Melvin Napont? Not too many years ago. Is he still here?

JO: Mm-hmm.

KA: One last quick question. Have you noticed since you first lived on the island, has there been any big changes, or anything that disappeared that you wish was still around today?

JO: When I first got married, I lived up at the farmhouse up here, and of course, all these trees and everything weren't here. But, just sitting up there on the front porch one day, one car went by. Today, I sit out here, and watch five cars go by. (Laughter). Every time, there's. And I had to stop.

RS: And there's dust everywhere.

JO: Yes. And I had to stop and wait for all the cars, but back then, you know, in the fifties, one car.

RS: But, the population went down to two hundred and fifty around when Colleen was in high school. There were hardly any kids in high school when she went. And now it's up to six hundred and fifty again.

JO: For people. A lot of retired people I think are here now.

RS: A lot of people have come back. Well, like you.

JO: Yeah.

RS: As far as changes that bother me, there's a lot of them. I mean, it's like night and day from what it was. There were no paved roads. The town was all sand. You know, everybody has those beautiful lawns? It was just sand hills. We used to go out there and dig in that sand and find old pieces of pretty colored glass. And they were so worn from the sand that they weren't sharp, so we were allowed to play with them. But, when I come up here by the four corners, and we lived in that house, that little yellow house—

JO: Across the way.

RS: And Richie's family used to live in that little house there by the lake, and there was nothing. There was a big field there. And then, where the big generator thing is over here, that was a nice hill. And when we lived there, right next to that, we used to go out there and fly kites. And sometimes Ellen and I would just go out there and lay down and roll down the hill. Just for something to do. But, I mean, it was just all open and beautiful, and now its—And it's noisy with that generator going, even at the cemetery, it's really noisy.

JO: Even now. Yeah.

RS: Yeah. So, that makes me sad. Yeah, to see it all—

JO: All grown up. And the junipers. They're so high. This was all just sand. This was a field. A hay field for the cows. For the O'Donnells, you know.

RS: Yeah. You could just see that house up there really clear. And from the farm, you could see Font Lake. In fact, I have a picture that Art, Barb's husband, took years ago. And he must've either gone up in the upstairs bedroom or he climbed the tree to get the picture. But, that hill behind the farm, where it's all woods now? That was all clear land. We used to pick strawberries back there too. And, well, my dad had cows, and so they kept that grass down. And junipers didn't grow. It was just like a meadow back there. So that's— Now, the boys have done a lot of clearing back there, 'cause you couldn't even walk to the shore. Those junipers were so bad. And just a few years ago, they started clearing out the junipers and Richie Gillespie cut down a lot of trees down there, so he could get down. All the kind of scrub trees, you know. Got out there. So, it's kinda nice back there again now.

JO: Yeah. You can see. (1:40:00).

KA: Do you have any more questions?

MR: I have a quick one. Just what was your contact with people, besides the Indians, did you have contact with people from the mainland or anything during your childhood, or was it just the small community here that you usually interacted with?

JO: We used to go down to the boat, you know, when the boat would come in. Well, I was at the beach a lot, at the playground, 'cause it was just down you know, and back then when the mail boat would come in at lunchtime, and my dad would be down at the dock. And as soon as we saw that boat coming in, we'd have to run home because he'd always come home for lunch before the boat came in.

RS: My mother being from Pontiac, occasionally, like maybe every three or four years, we would go down to Pontiac and visit my grandparents. And of course, that was like going to a different world. And then sometimes my grandparents would come up here, and my grandpa had a car, and they also had a camera, which was something we—The only pictures in existence of us when we were little are when my grandma and grandpa would come and take pictures of us. I think that's where all those pictures came from 'cause my folks never owned a camera. So, that was our contact with the outside world for a lot of years. But, only like, you know, maybe every three years. And my dad, once he got to be postmaster, for a long time he didn't have a relief postmaster, so he could not leave. He didn't leave the island for, I think, nineteen years in a row. But, Mother would and she'd take a couple of us kids with her when she went.

JO: Richie didn't leave the island until he was like thirteen.

RS: Didn't he?

JO: That was his first time off.

RS: Yeah?

KA: Wow.

JO: I remember going to Charlevoix, and the smells was what, you know.

RS: Oh.

KA: Really?

JO: It was so different. The smell of walking up that street. Bridge Street. We would always stay at the top of the hill.

RS: You probably smelled the exhaust from the cars, probably.

JO: And, they had oranges and everything sitting outside, you know. Big boxes of that stuff.

KA: That was what stuck with you? That's amazing.

JO: Mm-hmm. The smell.

RS: The smell. That's like going to Mackinac Island. That's what I remember from that 'cause, you'd get off—

KA: Horses?

RS:--and smell horse manure. (Laughter).

JO: We went there on our honeymoon.

RS: Did you?

JO: And it was the Fourth of July weekend and it had just opened the year before, and everybody was there, so we thought, well, we'll take the last boat off, 'cause we drove from Charlevoix up there, and went over on the little boat. And so, eight thirty was gonna be the last boat off so, everybody waited until that eight thirty boat. Not enough room. So, we had to wait for another one. (Laughter). And I wanted to make reservations, and Rich says "No, we might get some place, and you know, wanna stay", or "No, we wont make any reservations". Well, we never knew about that before. You know, makin' a reservation. So, we start driving and oh, it was raining, and we had a bad time. (Laughter).

KA: Oh no!

RS: Your honeymoon didn't end too well, huh?

JO: No! He was---

RS: Where were you coming back to? Were you coming back to the island?

JO: No, no. We stayed here until Tuesday, you know, to finish up the bills and everything, and then went to Charlevoix. And I remember we paid for the cake over there.

RS: Then, where did you go to live after that? Did you go to Grand Rapids then?

JO: Grand Rapids.

RS: Oh ok.

JO: Then we had wedding gifts in the car with us, and a couple blankets, you know. He had put around those in the trunk. But, we start driving, looking for a place, as everybody else, and dark, and finally we came to a

little store. A lot of people there. He went in, and they asked him—two men were in there—and they said “Well, we could—they were asking for beds, people were, you know---“Well, we have an aunt that lived out in the country and you could come and stay there”. So, we start with them, driving behind them in the rain, and we went quite a ways, and finally we went over some railroad tracks, and I started crying.

RS: All your wedding gifts were getting---

JO: “Where are they taking us? Richie, you’ve got to turn around!” So, we did, but we’re running out of gas. We left Charlevoix not thinking. We went to Mackinac for the day, started driving, so we pulled in to where a restaurant was. There was another couple cars there. (Richie walks in the house).

JO (addressing Richie): We’re still talking.

RO: A book and a half now!

JO: This is Maria. This is my husband Richie O’Donnell.

RO: Nice to meet you.

KA: Hi Richie. I’m KA. Nice to meet you.

RO: I know those two. They’re pretty wild. (Laughter).

JO: They got us together.

RS: We’re learning things about each other.

RO: Are ya? (Laughter).

JO (back to her story): So, we spent the night there.

KA: Wow!

JO: In the car, with our blankets. But the next morning, there were—I don’t know—a lot of cars there, at that little restaurant. But, the next morning we went into Sioux Ste. Marie, and got a motel. (Laughter).

KA: It all worked out. That’s good.

RO: I put the horse in the barn for the night. (referring to the car).

JO: Okay. (Laughter).

KA: You’ve answered all our questions and this has been amazing! Thank you for sharing your stories.

JO: Did you learn anything?

MR: Oh yeah.

KA: Oh, we learned so many things! You had excellent stories, so I just wanted to say thank you so much.

JO: We had fun growing up.

RS: We did. Good experience growing up.

JO: We were lucky.

KA: Yeah, this is an amazing place.

RS: It is an amazing place. It's too bad there's not—Well, it'd be a lot more crowded if there was a lot more employment, 'cause as soon as we graduated everybody left. We all had to leave.

(End of Interview 1:46:07).