

A YES, BUT HE WAS VERY GOOD AT EXPLAINING ANYTHING, YOU COULD SEE THROUGH IT VERY QUICKLY. FLORENCE AND I USED TO HAVE VERY GOOD TIMES TOGETHER. THE HOUSE WOULD BE RENTED IN SUMMER ALOT. THAT'S WHERE I MET CARTER WHITCOMB, PEM - THEY WERE THERE ONE YEAR. AND I ALSO MET THE SEED PEOPLE. THEY LIVED ON MAIN STREET.

Q WASN'T BURPEE?

A YES, NO, TWASN'T BURPEE, BUT THEY SOLD BURPEE SEEDS. NO, I MET THEM, TOO.

Q WERE THERE MANY HOUSES THAT WERE RENTED IN THE SUMMER?

A OH YES. YES THERE WAS A LOT OF PEOPLE WHO WOULD RENT HOUSES.

Q AND WHERE WOULD THEY GO?

A RENT ROOMS. THEY'D RENT ROOMS MORE THAN RENTED THE HOUSES. COURSE THERE WAS TWO HOTELS, SANTUIT HOUSE AND HOTEL PINES. IN THE SUMMERTIME IT WAS A LIVELY VILLAGE AROUND HERE. SO MANY THAT CAME.

Q SO THERE WERE PEOPLE WHO CAME AND RENTED HOUSES AS WELL AS THEY DO NOW, AND MORE ROOMS WERE RENTED WOULD YOU SAY THAN THERE ARE NOW?

A OH YES, A LOT OF ROOMS RENTED.

Q DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW MANY HOUSES THERE WERE IN COTUIT THEN?

A NO, I HAVEN'T ANY IDEA. I DO KNOW THAT SCHOOL STREET ONLY WENT AS FAR AS PINEY ROAD AT THAT TIME. FROM THERE ON THERE WAS NO ROAD.

Q FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE.

A SOME PEOPLE HAVE SAID THAT WAS MAIN STREET AT SOME TIME, BUT IT NEVER WAS MAIN STREET.

Q THAT PINEY ROAD WAS MAIN STREET?

COTUIT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

INTERVIEW WITH LILA CHILDS DOTTRIDGE

FEBRUARY 1, 1978

Q BETTY PECK

A LILA DOTTRIDGE

Q LILA DOTTRIDGE, YOU WERE BORN LILA CHILDS ON MAIN STREET IN COTUIT IN 1893. THERE WEREN'T VERY MANY HOUSES AROUND YOURS. WOULD YOU LIKE TO TELL US WHAT THE VIEW OUT YOUR WINDOW WAS? WHAT COTUIT LOOKED LIKE FROM THAT VANTAGE POINT?

A WELL FROM MY BEDROOM I COULD LOOK RIGHT OUT ON THE WATER AND SEE THE SUN WHEN IT CAME UP EVERY MORNING. THERE WAS JUST A MARSH ACROSS THE STREET. COULD SEE THE BOATS IN THE HARBOR THERE.

Q THAT HOUSE IS NOW OCCUPIED BY THE WELLS, AND IT'S THE SECOND HOUSE IN FROM PINEY ROAD. ANNA BRAMOVITZ NOW LIVES IN THE HOUSE NEXT DOOR WHICH I UNDERSTAND WAS JUST A SANDPILE WHEN YOU WERE GROWING UP? THEN YOU SAID CONGRESSMAN GIFFORD MOVED A HOUSE THERE AND FLORENCE CLAUSSON. FLORENCE GIFFORD CLAUSSON GREW UP WITH YOU AND YOU WERE FRIENDS?

A THAT'S RIGHT.

Q YOU WERE ALSO, SAID THAT CONGRESSMAN GIFFORD WAS A SCHOOLTEACHER IN THE ELIZABETH LOWELL HIGH SCHOOL. CAN YOU TELL ME SOME OF YOUR IMPRESSIONS OF HIM THEN?

A WELL, THE YEAR BEFORE I HADN'T PASSED IN -

Q IN ONE OF YOUR SUBJECTS?

A UH HUM. AND THE NEXT YEAR WHEN I TOOK IT FROM HIM, I PASSED AND EVERYONE SAID THAT WAS BECAUSE HE TAUGHT ME THE NIGHT BEFORE! BECAUSE HE WOULD STUDY HIS LESSONS AT HOME TOO. BUT I NEVER SAW HIM WHEN HE WAS STUDYING, SO I DIDN'T GET MY KNOWLEDGE FROM HIM.

Q BECAUSE HE WAS YOUR NEIGHBOR, THEY THOUGHT YOU HAD AN ADVANTAGE?

A NO, THAT SCHOOL STREET WAS MAIN STREET.

Q SCHOOL STREET.

A BUT IT NEVER WAS BECAUSE THE CHURCH, THE LIBRARY, THE POST OFFICE AND EVERYTHING WAS ON THE MAIN STREET AND THAT'S WHAT'S MAIN STREET NOW. COULDN'T GO TO FALMOUTH THAT WAY, BECAUSE THERE WAS NO BRIDGE.

Q NOW YOU'RE THE DAUGHTER OF SEABURY CHILDS AND HE WAS THE SON OF THOMAS CHILDS. AND THE CHILDS FAMILY APPARENTLY GOES WAY BACK. THOMAS CHILDS WAS THE BROTHER OF WILLIAM CHILDS WHO LIVED IN LITTLE RIVER AND BUILT NOT ONLY HIS LARGE HOUSE THERE, WHICH IS NOW, HAS BEEN SINCE CUT IN TWO. HE ALSO BUILT OTHER HOUSES. WE KEEP COMING BACK TO THE CHILDS FAMILY WHEN ANCESTRIES ARE TRACED. IN FACT, YOU TOLD ME ORMAN HAS SOME CHILDS IN HIS ANCESTRY.

A MM HMM. HIS GRANDMOTHER WAS A CHILDS. ON THE CROSBY SIDE, ON HIS MOTHER'S SIDE.

Q ALL RIGHT. YOU WERE MARRIED TO ORMAN IN 1920. YOU HAD GRADUATED FORM HIGH SCHOOL IN 1911, THAT GAVE YOU A FEW YEARS. AND ORMAN IS YOUNGER THAN YOU AND YOU WERE IN HIS SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS?

A NO, HE WAS IN MY SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS!

Q OH, YOU WERE THE TEACHER?

A I WAS THE TEACHER, HE WAS IN MY SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS!

Q OH, I UNDERSTAND NOW. I WONDERED WHY, WITH THIS DISCREPANCY OF AGE WHY YOU WERE BOTH IN THE SAME CLASS. YOU WERE THE TEACHER!

A I WAS THE TEACHER.

Q I SEE. YOU WERE ABOUT EIGHTEEN AND HE WAS TWELVE.

A AND I WORKED FOR MILTON CROCKER FOR ABOUT EIGHT YEARS, IN THE STORE.

Q I SEE.

A BEFORE I WAS MARRIED. WHEN HE WAS IN THE FIRST STORE. I NEVER WORKED UP HERE. WHERE IT IS NOW.

Q WHERE WAS THE FIRST STORE?

A ON MAIN STREET, CORNER OF - I DON'T KNOW WHAT THEY CALL THAT - OLD WHARF ROAD? SOMETHING LIKE THAT.

Q TOWN DOCK, ROAD DOWN THERE?

A TOWN DOCK.

Q WELL THAT WAS, I DIDN'T KNOW THERE WAS A BUILDING THERE!

A MMM. IT WAS A THREE STORY BUILDING AND IT HAD THE TELEPHONE OFFICE AND THE GROCERY STORE AND THE JEWELRY STORE ON THE GROUND FLOOR AND A LARGE HALL UP OVER THE STORE AND AN APARTMENT OVER THE JEWELRY STORE WHERE VICTOR NICKERSON AND WIFE LIVED FOR AWHILE. - WHILE THEY WERE HAVING THEIR HOUSE BUILT UP ON MAIN STREET, OFF MAIN STREET.

Q FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE. AND I THINK YOU TOLD ME THAT BEFORE THE NEW CHURCH WAS FEDERATED THAT THE METHODISTS WHEN THEY LEFT THE WHITE CHURCH UP ON THE HILL, HELD THEIR SERVICES THERE?

A MM HMM. HELD THE SERVICES OVER THE GROCERY STORE. IN THE BIG HALL, WHILE THE METHODIST CHURCH WAS BEING BUILT.

Q AND YOU HAVE A PICTURE OF THAT?

A MM HMM.

Q VERY INTERESTING. I NEVER KNEW A BUILDING - THERE WAS ONE ON THAT SPOT. I'VE NEVER HEARD ANYONE REFER TO IT.

A THAT STORE WAS THERE WHEN THE PORTUGESE CAME UP SANTUIT. I WAS TELLING SOME OF THEM THE OTHER DAY THAT WE THOUGHT WE WAS ALL GOING TO BE MURDERED, ALL OUR THINGS WAS GOING TO BE STOLEN JUST AS SOON AS THEY ARRIVED. AND NOW THEY ARE SOME OF OUR BEST PEOPLE WE'VE GOT IN THE VILLAGE!

Q SURE. WELL, DID THE PORTUGESE ARRIVE IN A LARGE GROUP? WAS THIS WHAT WAS SO THREATENING?



A YES, THERE WAS QUITE A LITTLE GROUP OF THEM CAME AND SETTLED WHERE THEY ARE NOW. AND THEY COULDN'T TALK - I KNOW WHEN THE FELLOW THAT DROVE THE CART FOR THE STORE WOULD GO UP AND TAKE ORDERS, IF THEY WANTED PORK, THEY GOT DOWN ON THEIR HANDS AND KNEES AND GRUNTED!

Q ACTED LIKE A PIG?

A MM HMM.

Q RIGHT.

A ANYWHERE, THE THINGS THEY WANTED IN THE STORE WERE VERY SIMPLE THINGS. LIKE CORNMEAL AND THINGS LIKE THAT THAT THEY --

Q WHAT BROUGHT THEM HERE?

A I DON'T KNOW.

Q BUT THEY DID COME IN A LARGE GROUP?

A YES.

Q AND THAT WAS AROUND, BETWEEN 1910 - 1920?

A SOMEWHERE THAT WAY, YES.

Q ISN'T THAT INTERESTING. AND THEN THEY - DID JUST THE MEN COME OR DID WHOLE FAMILIES COME?

A NO, WHOLE FAMILIES. IN THOSE DAYS THE WOMEN WAS OUT IN THE FIELDS. THEY STARTED WITH THEIR GARDENS, UP THERE. AND THE MEN WOULD GET WORK DOWN ON THE SUMMER PLACES AND LIKE THAT.

Q DID THEY WORK IN THE CRANBERRY BOGS?

A I DON'T KNOW WHETHER THEY REALLY DID OR NOT. THE HOME PEOPLE USED TO DO THAT WORK.

Q THE WHAT PEOPLE?

A THE HOME PEOPLE. THE ORDINARY CAPE PEOPLE. BUT I IMAGINE THEY DID SOME.

Q SEEMS TO ME I HEARD SOMEONE TELL ABOUT THE PORTUGUESE WORKING IN THE BOGS, AND I THOUGHT MAYBE THAT'S WHAT BROUGHT THEM.

A IT COULD, IT COULD, YES.

Q THEN THEY STAYED ON. WE TALKED BEFORE ABOUT THE CHURCH BEING THE CENTER OF SOCIAL LIFE. YOU ALSO SAID THAT THE POST OFFICE WAS ANOTHER CENTER AND THAT'S WHERE YOUNG PEOPLE MET AND ARRANGED DATES?

A MM HMM. THERE WAS A HITCHING POST, TWO POSTS WITH A RAIL - YOU'D SEE THE MEN AND THE WOMEN MOST ALWAYS WAS INSIDE. WE HAD THE POSTMISTRESS THAT WAS VERY STERN, WE COULDN'T MAKE TOO MUCH NOISE IN THE POST OFFICE OR SHE'D PUT YOU OUT. YES, THE YOUNG PEOPLE ALL MET UP THERE.

Q WHEN YOU HAD A DATE, WHERE DID YOU GO, WHAT DID YOU DO?

A WELL, THOSE DAYS YOU WENT HOME! YOU DIDN'T HAVE ANY CARS TO GO TO RIDE IN. YOU MIGHT GO FOR A WALK. BUT, YOU TOOK YOUR DATE HOME.

Q AND WHAT KIND OF SOCIAL LIFE WAS THERE AROUND THE CHURCH?

A WELL, THERE WAS A SEWING CIRCLE. THEY WAS ALWAYS HAVING SUPPERS OR SOCIAL TIMES. BEFORE BRUCE HALL WAS BUILT, THE ROOM UP OVER THE CRAFT ROOM WAS - WHEN BRUCE HALL WAS BUILT, WE HAD A LOT OF SOCIALS IN THAT. AND THERE WAS A LARGE CROWD, - LEAGUE, THEY USED TO CALL IT, FOR YOUNG PEOPLE, TEENAGERS UP TO, OH, MARRIED AGE. AND THEY HAD SOCIALS, ENTERTAINMENTS. QUITE A LOT OF LIFE.

Q THE ENTERTAINMENTS BEING LIKE A VARIETY SHOW? WHERE PEOPLE PERHAPS DID MUSIC, PLAYED MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS OR -? RECITATIONS AND THINGS LIKE THAT?

A MM HMM. ALL THOSE THINGS.

Q IN FREEDOM HALL THERE WERE ACTIVITIES TOO, WEREN'T THERE?

A YES, THEY HAD DANCES, THEY HAD ROLLER SKATING, AND THEY PUT ON PLAYS. PUT ON QUITE A LOT OF PLAYS. THE PEOPLE, VILLAGE PEOPLE TOOK PART IN IT. I KNOW ONE PLAY WAS A SCHOOL AND ALL OF

THE PEOPLE DRESSED UP AS CHILDREN, ORMAN'S FATHER WAS DRESSED UP IN - WAS ONE OF THEM THERE. HE WAS PECK'S BAD BOY, I GUESS! YES, WE USED TO HAVE GOOD TIMES. AND WE WENT AROUND AT HOMES THOSE DAYS AND HAD A LOT OF PARTIES.

Q HAD A LOT OF PARTIES IN HOMES?

A MM HMM.

Q AND THEN YOU SAID IN THE WINTER THE HARBOR FROZE OVER?

A YES, THAT WAS SOLID, YOU COULD WALK ACROSS, AND THEY WENT SKATING.

Q JUST ANYTIME, IT WASN'T JUST ONE WEEK OF THE -

A NO, IT WAS PERHAPS - IT WOULD PERHAPS FREEZE OVER IN JANUARY, NOT THAW OUT BEFORE MARCH.

Q AND YOU DID A LOT OF SKATING AND TOOK SLEIGHS ON IT AND HORSE DRAWN SLEIGHS?

A MM HMM. THEY USED TO HAVE HORSE RACES ON THERE.

Q FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE. AND THERE WAS MUCH MORE ACTIVITY IN THE HARBOR. LARGER VESSELS, MORE COMMERCE, THERE'S NO COMMERCE, VIRTUALLY NOW.

A THERE WAS LARGER VESSELS. OF COURSE NOW IT'S COMING BACK. PROBABLY THERE ARE MORE YACHTS, AND SPORTS BOATS AROUND THAN THERE WERE THOSE TIMES. BUT THEY HAD BOATS FOR RENT IN THE SUMMER AND THEN THE OYSTER, QUAHOGS, ALL THOSE THINGS. FISHING.

Q WHICH EVERYONE DID, MORE OR LESS?

A OH YES. IN THOSE DAYS YOU COULD GO FISHING, CLAMMING AND OYSTERING ANY TIME YOU WANTED TO.

Q GET ALL YOU WANTED.

A IF YOU NEEDED A GOOD MEAL YOU'D GO GET IT.

Q YES, RIGHT, YES. THERE WEREN'T AS MANY BOATS, BUT EVERYONE, YOU SAY, HAD ONE?

A MM HMM. IF THEY DIDN'T HAVE A SAILBOAT, THEY HAD THE SKIFF.

Q AND THEY WERE VERY CASUAL ABOUT LEAVING THE BOATS ALONG THE SHORE AND THE OARS AND THE OAR LOCKS IN THEM?

A YES, FOUND THEM WHEN YOU WENT BACK. I CAN REMEMBER BACK. THERE'S BEEN SO MANY THINGS INVENTED AND ALL LIKE THAT, IT SEEMS LIKE A SHORT TIME. COURSE IT TISN'T. WHEN YOU SEE HOW OLD I AM. BUT, - TELEPHONE, AUTOMOBILES, ALL THOSE THINGS. I CAN REMEMBER THE FIRST ONES IN THE VILLAGE.

Q AND WHO HAD THAT?

A WELL I THINK THAT DOCTOR HIGGINS WAS ONE OF THE FIRST ONES TO HAVE A CAR. BUT THE NICKERSON BOYS' FATHER OVER HERE HAD ONE. IT WAS A GREAT BIG WHEELS, NO TOP - AND I CAN REMEMBER HE GOT DOWN THERE BY THE LILACS AND TIPPED OVER. DIDN'T GET HURT, HE JUST WENT OVER, THAT'S ALL!

Q THE WHOLE CAR TIPPED OVER?

A HMM.

Q FOR GOODNESS SAKE. NOW YOU KNEW CAPTAIN CHATFIELD?

A YES.

Q WHAT KIND OF A VESSEL DID HE HAVE?

A HE WAS AN OLD, OLD MAN. HE COULD TELL A LOT OF STORIES. HE WAS VERY GOOD AT TELLING STORIES. HIS WHITE BEARD, AND SCARF WOUND AROUND HIS NECK IN THE WINTER. USED TO ALWAYS COME OVER THE POST OFFICE. HE LIKED TO KISS THE GIRLS. SO WE USED TO DUCK WHEN WE'D SEE HIM.

Q WELL THAT'S VERY GOOD. I'LL PROBABLY COME BACK ANOTHER TIME. WOULD YOU LIKE TO HEAR WHAT WE'VE DONE? - STOPPED TAPE -

FROM THESE PICTURES YOU'VE SHOWN ME, THERE WERE MANY, MANY MORE BUILDINGS IN THE CENTER, MORE COMMERCE THAN THERE IS TODAY. DO YOU KNOW WHY THIS VILLAGE HAS GROWN SMALLER WHERE MOST VILLAGES GROW BIGGER IN COMMERCE, HAVE MORE STORES THAN BEFORE?

A THAT'S A GOOD QUESTION. I'VE NEVER EVEN WONDERED WHY ALL THOSE STORES WENT OUT OF EXISTENCE. THERE WAS THE BIG STORE ON THE CORNER WHERE THE POST OFFICE WAS AFTER IT MOVED FROM THE ORIGINAL SPOT AND THERE WAS A BARBER SHOP AND THERE WAS, I THINK, AND A&P WAS IN THERE AT ONE TIME, TOO. AFTER IT GOT THROUGH BEING A GENERAL STORE. THAT GENERAL STORE HAD AN UPSTAIRS AND THERE WAS A MILLINERY SHOP UP THERE.

THEN YOU'D GO AROUND THE CORNER ON THE SCHOOL STREET AND YOU CAME TO A FISH MARKET AND THEN TO A ICE CREAM PARLOR AND A BARBER SHOP AND OH, WELL, THERE WAS A BLACKSMITH SHOP THERE, TOO. AND A BAND ROOM.

Q A BAND ROOM?

A WE HAD A NICE BAND HERE IN COTUIT. AND ON THE OTHER SIDE WHERE PERCOPPIO'S IS NOW ALONG THE CORNER WAS A SHOE STORE WHICH CHARLES SAVERY'S FATHER RUN AND THEN IT WAS A CHRISTIAN SCIENCE READING ROOM AFTER THAT, AND IT'S BEEN MOVED UP ON TO ROUTE 28 AND WHERE PERCOPPIO'S STATION IS WAS ONCE HAMBLIN AND FISH, BUILDERS, AND PHOTOGRAPHERS SHOP AND IT WAS - ONE END WAS WATER DEPARTMENT OFFICE WHEN THEY WERE BUILDING THE WATER DEPARTMENT.

EVERYONE CAME FROM WEST BARNSTABLE, MARSTONS MILLS, OSTERVILLE, TO DO THE SHOPPING. NOW WE GO THERE! BUT I REALLY DON'T KNOW WHY THEY ALL GAVE IT UP!

Q WELL, COTUIT WAS, WAS, - HAD DEEPER WATER. WAS MORE OF A PORT. DIDN'T LARGER VESSELS COME IN THEN THAN PERHAPS OSTERVILLE OR CERTAINLY MARSTONS MILLS? OR A BETTER HARBOR THAN BARNSTABLE?

A I REALLY DON'T - CAN'T ANSWER THAT. I WOULD THINK MAYBE THEY DID. AND THEN WE HAD THE TWO HOTELS WHICH DREW THE SUMMER PEOPLE HERE. SO THAT MAY BE THE ANSWER SOME. BUT, OF COURSE, OSTERVILLE HAS GROWN SO. I REALLY DON'T KNOW.

Q I DON'T SUPPOSE COTUIT WILL REVERSE AND GO BACK TO THE WAY IT WAS, THAT MORE STORES WILL COME, BECAUSE WE'RE KIND OF LOCKED IN NOW ABOUT ZONING. IT WOULD BE VERY HARD TO BUILD A THREE STORY STRUCTURE SUCH AS WAS ON THAT CORNER NOW, WHERE THE OYSTER REALTY IS IN THAT SMALL BUILDING WHICH EXISTED AT THE SAME TIME.

BUT CAN YOU IMAGINE WHAT IT WOULD BE LIKE NOW IF SOMEONE ENTERTAINED

THAT THOUGHT, THE RESPONSE THE PEOPLE WOULD MAKE? OF HAVING A -

A I WONDER.

Q OF HAVING A DEPARTMENT STORE, A BEAUTY PARLOR, JEWELRY STORE, ALL OF THOSE THINGS? EVEN THOUGH THE VILLAGE NEEDS JOBS, THERE ARE SO MANY PEOPLE UNEMPLOYED HERE. DO YOU THINK IT COULD HAPPEN?

A I DOUBT IT. NOW THAT THEY HAVE AUTOMOBILES. IT'S MORE A RETIREMENT CENTER, NOW.

END OF TAPE