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Sue Peirson
Transcribed by Sofia Tong

Susan Peirson 0:00
Yeah, that is fun.

Phil Odenca 0:02
And those are all real lit buoys.

Susan Peirson 0:05
Yeah.

Larry Tye 0:06
Yeah.

Phil Odenca 0:06
Wow, that's really cool

Susan Peirson 0:07
Course they change every.

Phil Odenca 0:09
Yeah, but at least at the time,

Susan Peirson 0:11
Yeah it's probably 12 years old

Phil Odenca 0:15
And do the blinking cadences correspond to the cadences of the buoys?

Susan Peirson 0:19
They do. And it comes in a little booklet. So it will explain to the novice what's going on.

Phil Odenca 0:27
That's super, huh.

Larry Tye 0:29
Could pause on you just to say, for the record your name.

Susan Peirson 0:34
Oh, Susan Pearson,

Larry Tye 0:36
Great and your maiden name?

Susan Peirson 0:39
Rothchild.

Larry Tye 0:40
And I'm going to ask you again, while the recorder is on, you're okay with our taping this?

Susan Peirson 0:45
Yes, I am.

Larry Tye 0:46
Terrific. So let me take a minute and tell you what this is. So Phil Odence and I came to this from different points. And for me, as somebody who is, has only been coming to Cotuit for 15 years, I'm intrigued by the history of the place, I have fallen in love with the place we started coming here at the beginning, we were here just weekends. And now we're here. Well these days, I'm here 100% of the time, and the and I'm intrigued by the history of it in two ways. One is intrigued, professionally intrigued and hope someday to write at least a magazine piece on Cotuit because I think Cotuit is a village that gives us a sense of what America is in a lot of ways. And it's so many things that are special about a wider world that we can see through the lens of Cotuit. But we're also taping these for the historical society to ensure that if we never get around to writing anything longer then it is there as a record. And we're talking to only the smartest and most interesting people in town about this. And we would love to do with just ask you some questions and hear. Some, this is about Cotuit. But also your sense of why this place is really different and original in the field. You want to get it started. Sure.

Phil Odence 2:23
Yeah. So I was you know what's interested me and in thinking about everybody we talked to and oh. First of all, I was gonna tell you, Larry lives in what used to be Jared and Edie's house.

Susan Peirson 2:34
Oh, for heaven's sake, wondered about that. Yeah.

Phil Odence 2:38
Yeah. And so we actually have Edie has said, she'll, she'll talk to us.

Susan Peirson 2:43
Oh Edie's great.

Phil Odence 2:45
So she she claims to remember nothing. says she remembers more than she's saying. Or maybe maybe more than she thinks so. And Larry will be interested to hear some of the history of that

house. But um, yeah, so one of the things that always comes to me is what? Everybody at some point, everybody's family at some point was a wash ashore, as they say. So I am I have a sense for what brought the Peirsons here, but I don't know what brought or when the Rothschilds arrived.

Susan Peirson 3:17

Yeah, that was after the war. And we finally got gas rations, so we could drive. Over the old Mohawk trail. Worcester to

Phil Odenice 3:34

Yeah, yeah. Did you grow up in Worcester?

Susan Peirson 3:38

No, no, we just had to go through it.

Phil Odenice 3:40

Okay.

Susan Peirson 3:40

No I grew up in Gloversville, in upstate New York in the Adirondacks.

Unknown Speaker 3:44

Okay.

Susan Peirson 3:45

And mother wanted to, we were very little kids. And she wanted us to go to the beach.

Phil Odenice 3:51

Yeah.

Susan Peirson 3:52

And I think she may have arranged this with her side of the family, some siblings to rent a house.

Phil Odenice 3:59

Okay.

Susan Peirson 4:00

And so they I don't know how they came across Woods Hole, but they did.

Unknown Speaker 4:05

Okay.

Susan Peirson 4:05

And they decided to rent a house there. And then my grandmother got wind of this.

Phil Odenice 4:15

Yeah

Susan Peirson 4:16

she lived next door to us. So that was easy. And she said, well, we have relatives very near Woods Hole, and then she told them about Marian.

Phil Odence 4:30

Okay, so that's my grandmother. So I didn't know if that was the connection or not, but Okay, interesting.

Susan Peirson 4:35

Yes. And my husband spent the last 10 years of his life writing this book, genealogy for our family and, and that proved the whole thing not me. The whole family. His side came over on the Mayflower and he was very proud of that.

Phil Odence 4:58

Yeah,

Susan Peirson 4:59

But in doing that your family is mentioned. This is this book is this thick in one page and one paragraph we have your family and then we have a picture of your of the can't remember her first name the Barnett and she

Phil Odence 5:22

Marion?

Susan Peirson 5:23

No.

Phil Odence 5:24

Well, there was a

Susan Peirson 5:25

This was before Marian

Phil Odence 5:26

No, but there's a Marian Barnett. I think

Susan Peirson 5:29

Oh. her name was Babette.

Unknown Speaker 5:33

Okay.

Susan Peirson 5:34

And she was my grandfather's sister.

Unknown Speaker 5:39

Yeah.

Susan Peirson 5:41

I got the books out for if you want. There's not much in it. On your side of the family. So she came, Marian came into Woods Hole convinced mother, that this was a place to raise children. So the next year, we came in, we rented the cottages that the Cotuit Inn.

Phil Odenice 6:06

Right.

Susan Peirson 6:08

And we came two years in a row. We liked it.

Phil Odenice 6:12

There are two little bungalows set way back

Susan Peirson 6:16

And those are for long term more stuff. But meanwhile, we got to know the lady of the Cotuit Inn. Did you ever, no you?

Larry Tye 6:26

who was that? who was it?

Susan Peirson 6:30

I tried and tried to think of her name because I know it. But she looked like Loretta Young absolutely wore the same clothes and everything.

Phil Odenice 6:40

I'll make a note to ask Larry he might remember.

Susan Peirson 6:42

She was wonderful lady. And she sold the Cotuit Inn moved to Nantucket and bought another Inn and this came in really handy because mother was going to New York to a doctor's appointment, on a big jet out of Hyannis. And she gets they take off. And mother says oh, I don't feel so well. And so the stewardess tells the pilot to land in Nantucket. Well, it's way too big to land in Nantucket. And so they land safely, but they can't take off. This is a monster jet.

Phil Odenice 7:27

So what do you do at that point?

Susan Peirson 7:29

Well, all the passengers were ticked. So. They got off and they got put on small planes and driven to LaGuardia. And it was a big plane. It was it was it plastered in all the headlines.

Because the blank Lee so they dumped all the fuel and all the baggage and they only had one pilot. Yeah, that's how bad it was.

Phil Odence 7:54

Oh they would wait for a big wind

Susan Peirson 7:55

Yeah wait for a big wind and off they go. And so everybody was there to watch the plane take off. And so this wonderful lady of the Cotuit Inn she let me stay with her. At her Inn.

Phil Odence 8:12

Nice.

Susan Peirson 8:13

Was nice it's a nice inn today too. It's on the beach. I've never stayed there since. But anyway

Phil Odence 8:21

So how did you first become friendly with her?

Susan Peirson 8:24

Hm?

Phil Odence 8:25

With whom did you first become friendly? Who'd you meet?

Larry Tye 8:31

When you first came to town?

Susan Peirson 8:33

Oh, when I was little?

Larry Tye 8:34

Yeah.

Susan Peirson 8:35

Oh, well. We kind a little gang. Which was Brownie. And, and his cousin Cinnie. And even occasionally wells and Jimmy White, yeah.

Phil Odence 8:51

And how did you meet those guys?

Susan Peirson 8:54

Cove sailing? I'd started Cove sailing when I was nine.

Larry Tye 9:00

Yeah.

Susan Peirson 9:01

And, and my sister Linda. She tagged along. And we met all those people and then Mike and Larry introduced Larry Odense introduced Gail to to Larry and to also all his friends.

Phil Odence 9:24

Okay.

Susan Peirson 9:25

So there was so she got to know all of them.

Phil Odence 9:29

Okay.

Susan Peirson 9:30

And she actually married a man from Leana.

Phil Odence 9:33

Oh, I didn't know that.

Susan Peirson 9:34

Yeah.

Larry Tye 9:36

And in those days you were coming here just summers or for

Susan Peirson 9:40

Yes. Just summers. And and we rented but we bought too mother liked to make money in real estate. So if there was a good buy, she was a friend of Hellen Sloane

Phil Odence 9:52

Who keeps coming up in every conversation.

Susan Peirson 9:55

Right? You were in town.

Phil Odence 9:58

Yep.

Susan Peirson 9:59

I loved her she was terrific. She said, Sue, you'll never get rich selling houses. She said own them. And then you sell them.

Phil Odence 10:11

And she So, I mean, the house I remember is the one down by the Lloyds, but that wasn't she bought some others.

Susan Peirson 10:19

Yes, she bought the house right across from Laurie my daughter between the freedom Hall. And Mark Marta?

Unknown Speaker 10:29

Yeah

Susan Peirson 10:29

Downey used to live in it. Yeah. Well mother did it over. In 1950.

Phil Odence 10:35

Okay. Yeah.

Susan Peirson 10:37

I think that was the first house that she bought.

Larry Tye 10:41

So when would you? When would it have been that you first came that

Susan Peirson 10:44

It was 1946. Now that was to Woods Hall so it'd be 47. And we came every summer since then.

Unknown Speaker 10:58

Yeah.

Larry Tye 10:59

So when you, do you remember Woods Hole?

Susan Peirson 11:03

No, I was too too. I do remember one instance, where I befriended a troll who lived under the bridge. That's all I remember. And Linda was just born. And we would take her out in the carriage. I don't remember this. But Gail told me. And she would cry, cry cry, she cried all summer. And turns out she was allergic to sun. And we all kept putting her in the sun because we thought it would be nice for her. So as a result, Linda doesn't come to visit me usually till fall.

Phil Odence 11:41

Yeah.

Susan Peirson 11:42

Get out of the sun.

Phil Odence 11:45

Yeah, that's no fun.

Susan Peirson 11:46

But of course, this year, she didn't come at all.

Phil Odench 11:49

And the cove sailing was sailing actually in in the harbor.

Susan Peirson 11:54

In the cove was, that's what we call it.

Phil Odench 11:57

Yeah. And, and so where there skiffs moored there like near near ropes?

Susan Peirson 12:04

Just a few.

Phil Odench 12:05

Just a few. Okay.

Susan Peirson 12:07

Yeah. You know, a handful.

Phil Odench 12:10

Yeah. And who was who was running the show? Who were?

Susan Peirson 12:14

Leonard, probably.

Phil Odench 12:15

Oh, really? Okay.

Susan Peirson 12:16

Probably. He had the little wheel.

Phil Odench 12:20

Yeah.

Susan Peirson 12:21

Then.

Phil Odench 12:22

Yeah.

Susan Peirson 12:22

And out of this. He wasn't paid for this. This was just out of he liked the little kids. Oh, no, he was paid. Just he gave sailing lessons.

Phil Odench 12:35

Yeah, right.

Susan Peirson 12:37

I remember that.

Phil Odence 12:38

Okay.

Susan Peirson 12:39

He had a leopard bathing suit which was terrible.

Phil Odence 12:42

I heard about it. So they were probably living at the porter.

Susan Peirson 12:46

They were.

Phil Odence 12:47

So that was convenient.

Susan Peirson 12:48

Because when we came to Cotuit, Marion always had us come for Sunday dinner.

Phil Odence 12:56

Yeah. At noon.

Susan Peirson 13:02

At noon, and father, the fisherman. Who was the minister at the Church.

Phil Odence 13:11

Craft. Was it Walter Craft? Like a Catholic or no?

Susan Peirson 13:24

Yeah, father. I don't know we all called him father. And he loved to loop it. He was very quick. We were little kids. One of the fun things about Cotuit which you'll never see today. We were allowed to get up in the morning, ate breakfast by ourselves and go. And as long as your home by six for dinner, or whatever.

Larry Tye 13:58

So it was safe. It was everybody knew one another.

Susan Peirson 14:03

Everybody did and Dr. Higgins lived in the middle of town. So if you fell off your bike. You went to him and he patched you up. and all the little stores downtown. There were much more then than there are now. and the little stores sold candy and ice cream were real which you know were seventh heaven for a kid.

Larry Tye 14:37

Did the place have more of a sense of community? It must have been, there's nothing in the center of town now other than a post office and [] home. Was that a gathering spot where kids and others were just would come and spend time?

Susan Peirson 14:54

Yeah, there was a school because we lived next to the school had a play yard. So that was a gathering place for the little guys.

Phil Odence 15:03

And that's where the post office is today.

Susan Peirson 15:05

Yeah. And after we spent time in the Cotuit inn, we rented a house, two doors down from Cotuit inn the Whipple house. And we rented that for two years. And that had access to the play yard. So, and we were little. So we played there a lot. And that's when the Alstons started having square dances and maybe the Verges's. There's a couple of square dances, which was everybody loved. And they would just get up at a yacht club meeting and say, Oh, it's gonna be a square dance tonight. So

Larry Tye 15:51

And where were they where were the square dances happening?

Susan Peirson 15:54

People's houses. You watered the lawn a couple days before, because it really did a job on your lawn. And they got in the early days, they didn't get a keg in of beer, but that didn't last long.

Larry Tye 16:10

So they were outside.

Susan Peirson 16:12

Yes. Oh, yes. And bare feet.

Phil Odence 16:15

That was the first time I ever saw a keg of beer.

Larry Tye 16:17

And was there a caller? Did somebody call the square dances?

Susan Peirson 16:21

No.

So Sheldon was still there.

Larry Tye 17:00

Who was who would have been headmaster of Peabody? So you're having square dances, and you were saying there was no caller, but the who, so just somebody from the or just everybody knew what they were doing. So they didn't need it?

Susan Peirson 17:27

No nobody knew what they were doing. We made it up at the time. We danced in bare feet. And the girls wore skirts, which was something they didn't laying around. But in those days, we wore big skirts. And we used a record player. And we used to get Leonard who couldn't carry a tune or sing or anything, but he could play the record player. And he could push you around. So he would push the little ones around. And everybody danced with everybody with their own little kids and other people's little kids. And then a little kids would go off to bed. And then they would bring out the keg of beer.

Phil Oden 18:14

And this still survives.

Susan Peirson 18:17

We have a little bit yeah, we have

Phil Oden 18:19

not quite as frequently as in the day.

Susan Peirson 18:21

No. What happened was

Larry Tye 18:24

when you say they still survive, you're talking the freedom home ones or there's something else?

Phil Oden 18:27

no the backyard ones. Yes.

Susan Peirson 18:30

Yeah. And again, they just stand up at the meeting, say oh, you know, there's gonna be a square dance tomorrow night. And they do play records. And they people push everybody around, but

Phil Oden 18:45

and, you know, I'll dance with somebody who's three foot 10. Yeah.

Susan Peirson 18:50

And you can throw people too that's acceptable.

Larry Tye 18:54

So did your universe hear center around sailing and the yacht club?

Susan Peirson 18:59

Yes. That was a group of people. There were always the fierce townies. But they, they evaporated and they got included after about 20 years.

Larry Tye 19:16

So that's interesting. Can you just so people know when the when you talk about townies, these are people who were yearround people who there was a separation of the summer people in the town?

Susan Peirson 19:30

Yes, because the year round people saw each other in high school and other schools. So and they sort of congregated. And and then in the they got a reputation of being you know, snobby.

Larry Tye 19:53

That's interesting. The do you think those were deserved reputations of the or just a natural separation of inner townies in every, in probably every summer community, anywhere on Cape Cod and around the world. There are often separations between year round and whatever. But when you say they evaporated, they evaporated because the townies left or because barriers came down?

Susan Peirson 20:24

No, the townies some of them started sailing. One of our best sailors, nobody even knows. That is the best sailor. And that is Bobby Hayden.

Phil Odence 20:35

Yeah.

Susan Peirson 20:36

Bobby Hayden's a hell of a sailor. He can take Oleana Senior right to the dock, at 25 knots.

Phil Odence 20:44

Yeah.

Larry Tye 20:46

But can I just stick with the townies for one second?

Susan Peirson 20:49

And he is a townie.

Larry Tye 20:50

I'm intrigued by that because also, so many people who started out as summer people ended up either in retirement or because they felt so much in love with the place coming for more of the year or coming for year round. Did um, are you year round now?

Susan Peirson 21:08

No.

Larry Tye 21:10
Where do you go back to?

Susan Peirson 21:11
Florida.

Larry Tye 21:12
Oh okay. So you're through the shoulder season, and then go to Florida for the dead of winter.

Susan Peirson 21:17
Right. And we were going to move here. And we were preparing this house to be well it was always winterized not always but when my father in law had it. But we realized that the tax laws were hugely favorable for us to go to Florida. So we did.

Phil Odence 21:43
And that means you have to spend one day less than half of the year there.

Larry Tye 21:49
So can I am trying to also understand there are lots of villages in Barnstable. And there are lots of towns on Cape Cod. If somebody was coming here from the moon, or from California. And you were to say, this is what makes Cotuit different from all these other places. What is it that defines Cotuit as really special in your mind?

Susan Peirson 22:22
I think that the fact that we were free, we didn't have to ask anybody's permission to go play ball or go to a show or do anything growing up. We had a pretty bad reputation for a while being too rambunctious. And getting in some trouble. But we got out of it.

Phil Odence 22:58
Is that the Royal way or?

Susan Peirson 23:00
I was thinking of some of the regattas that we got invited to.

Phil Odence 23:04
Oh okay, yeah. And then disinvited,

Susan Peirson 23:07
yes and disinvited.

Larry Tye 23:08
Why, why disinvited?

Susan Peirson 23:10
Well, they smashed furniture and they behaved not nicely. They had to go and apologize they did. And my husband was in on that. It was that was

Phil Odence 23:19
that was Egerton?

Susan Peirson 23:21
Yeah.

Larry Tye 23:23
So that went suddenly from we to they. That was not you it was your husband who would have been a little more rambunctious?

Susan Peirson 23:33
No, he wasn't in on that part. He was in on settling the differences between the two clubs. And Chris was too. He and Chris. That was I thought was something but we did it ourselves. We didn't ask parents or anything like this. And they were were naughty. Were and caused damage, you know, money.

Larry Tye 23:59
So when you talk about being free and being able to do even from the point of being little kids being free to do things, was there more freedom for some reason because of its physical isolation or other things in Cotuit. And if you had stayed in Woods Hole you would have been in Hyannis or somewhere else?

Susan Peirson 24:21
I don't know. Cotuit's little. So you knew everybody or you knew of everybody. And we had groups and we would go and sit in the beach. We had our own place. If another group was there, we would ask them to leave.

Larry Tye 24:40
We're talking which beaches?

Susan Peirson 24:43
Always in those when I would go to we went to Loop beach. period. the end.

Larry Tye 24:49
and you had your spot there and other people would leave when you told them that was your spot?

Susan Peirson 24:54
They would and then we had babysitters who took care of you know, a bunch of kids, and they would come and so we had they were big groups. So you might have 10 or 15.

Phil Odence 25:08
You saw the pictures at Frida's

Susan Peirson 25:10
Yeah, there were postcards made of us and stuff.

Larry Tye 25:13

So that was oh the same group in the same spot.

Phil Odench 25:16

Well, I'm not sure if it's the same group. So but you know, but the group I always said it was Hendersons. Yeah, yeah.

Susan Peirson 25:23

Yeah. They were a big family

Phil Odench 25:26

Kevin Smith and you know.

Susan Peirson 25:27

Yeah. And, and there's one case where there was this little boy, who was just obnoxious. And he kept throwing sand at us. And everybody said to him, you do that one more time. And your name is Mud forever. And we still call him Mud.

Phil Odench 25:50

Who was that?

Susan Peirson 25:51

Mud Coin. George Coin's little brother. And he's been around, he moved to Weano. And I think he lives full time in Florida now. I don't run into him.

Larry Tye 26:04

So you've been coming here for more than 70 years. And there was never a question of anywhere else on the cape that you'd want to have been.

Susan Peirson 26:14

Well we got married here.

Larry Tye 26:18

Here meaning in this house, too?

Susan Peirson 26:20

Oh, we had a party here for the wedding. But no, we got married in the Rose Garden it's on the water across from the island where they gave all that money to Woods Hole.

Phil Odench 26:35

So the Crawford state,

Susan Peirson 26:37

The Crawford's old place. Yeah. That's where we got married.

Phil Oden 26:40
Were the pines in?

Susan Peirson 26:42
The pines were still Yeah, but it was going. Yeah, but it was still there.

Phil Oden 26:49
Did you have any interaction with the pines? Did you ever go there? see anybody?

Susan Peirson 26:55
Yeah, my my parents sent me to a sailing camp on the cape, which I hated. And while they did that, they spent time in one of the bungalows up on Pine's. But we had a terrific relationship with the pines, as at some day of the week, Wednesday, after dinner for their guests, they would ask us to put on one of our square dances. And as we got older, we got you know, better. And we've got throwing people faster and harder. And so we've got paid with great big frappes.

Phil Oden 27:40
Oh, ok. That's fun.

Susan Peirson 27:43
And we did that for several years.

Larry Tye 27:47
Was this house. Your in laws's house?

Susan Peirson 27:50
Uhuh. They bought it in 04.

Larry Tye 27:55
Wow.

Phil Oden 27:57
That was Ned's grandfather? Who was a doctor right?

Susan Peirson 28:02
He was a doctor. But I think the money came from Bill Sharif, who was also a relative.

Phil Oden 28:08
Right. And that's what brought them here was the Sharifs.

Susan Peirson 28:12
Yes, yeah. Well, they married into the family. My Ned's great grandmother's a Sharif.

Phil Oden 28:20
Yeah.

Susan Peirson 28:21

And they live just down the road. And then the Northies lived across the street, it was all family and they had tea,

Phil Odence 28:29

Northies were connected to the Sharif family? And the Tree house is the one on the corner of Coolidge. Right.

Susan Peirson 28:40

Yeah, The yellow one. Yeah.

Phil Odence 28:41

The yellow, The yellow was the corner at the time before the house was bought. The yellow one yeah.

Susan Peirson 28:46

Yeah, yeah. They had a lot of land and then they sold huh. They don't have that place anymore.

So those were Boston people, but Ofelt was academia because the Peirsons are related to A Lawrence Lowell and people like that. That's all in this book.

Larry Tye 29:12

So I'm intrigued by him. And you, I'm sure know this, because you've lived here all the time and your husband's genealogy research. The when I think of the Cape today, and I think where artists or writers or academics are, I think of it being wellfleet and Truro sort of towns like that have a reputation of that. Jim Booth was telling us a week ago, that the place that was the original artists and academics home was here, because the Lowells that brought other people who were connected to Harvard and connected to the literary or arts world When you were growing up here, as a kid, was there a sense that this was the place where the arts world was thriving at the time?

Susan Peirson 30:11

yeah, the the older people bragged about it. Yeah,

Larry Tye 30:16

that was part of what they thought made it distinct and interesting.

Susan Peirson 30:18

And they did and we would have library sales. And there you could meet some of these great people that you'd heard so much about.

Larry Tye 30:29

So I'm intrigued about that. And I want to just stick with that for a second. When when I think again, today, people who come to Cotuit if they're going to buy a nice house in Cotuit today, it's not inexpensive to do that. And the and I'm wondering, at the time when your mother was buying places here, was it? Clearly, the inflation has had an effect on what it costs to do

everything. But was there a sense that it was more affordable for academics? Even if you were teaching at a great university or a prominent professor at Harvard, you were not making a whole lot of money?

Susan Peirson 31:08
Not in those days.

Larry Tye 31:10
Not in those days. So was it more affordable as a community then?

Susan Peirson 31:19
I suppose. mother bought her house on the water for \$21,000 in 1950.

Larry Tye 31:29
So I'm trying to pick what I don't have any inflation calculator in my head. But my guess is the \$21,000 in 1950 for a place on the water would put it substantially less expensive. And that'd be today to buy place.

Phil Oden 31:43
Yeah, I think so. I'll give you my, my theory, and you can react but I think first of all, when A Lawrence Lowell started, his uncle George started coming here, the captain, the whaling industry was gone, you know, sailing was sailing ships were going out, the captains were leaving, I think, probably houses were pretty, pretty cheap. It was a lot of demand. And then I also think Harvard professors, probably many of them, you know, made money the old fashioned way, by inheriting it. But it's also the case that, that, you know, even then, there was, you know, the waterfront was, there was plenty of waterfront plenty of land and plenty of places there and there wasn't the people pressure. So, you know, popbanessa bay, nobody would have thought of paying and paying, you know, more than you know, \$1,000 for a lot on popbanessa bay, because there were no houses there, there was no, so there was plenty of waterfront property for very cheap in those days and nobody was buying it.

Larry Tye 32:49
What can I ask what your parents did?

Susan Peirson 32:53
my father bought owned a leather tannery,

Larry Tye 32:57
which was famous in Worcester

Susan Peirson 32:59
Not in Worcester, in gloversville.

Larry Tye 33:01
Oh gloversville.

Phil Oden 33:02
Like gloves.

Susan Peirson 33:04
Like gloves. He tanned you know leather for gloves. It just happens that Worcester has lots of good tanners and burgesses.

Phil Oden 33:15
And the burgesses.

Larry Tye 33:16
And Can I ask so your maiden name is watts. Any relation to the Barron family?

Susan Peirson 33:27
No.

Larry Tye 33:32
So I guess part of why I'm asking you I'm trying to envision what the place looked like and who was there then but also the distinction between today the distinction between what we call townies and summer people would be a pretty wide gap, because it's very expensive to buy waterfront places and all back in those days, there would have been less of an economic or socio economic gap.

Susan Peirson 33:59
No, I think it was the desire to give their kids you know, a place to run around in. I think that's what my parents.

Phil Oden 34:14
I don't feel like any. I didn't get the sense when I was a kid that anybody was building barriers between townies and the yacht club folks it's just the townies didn't think of sailing or maybe they would have liked to but didn't know how to approach and I think the yacht club is pretty, pretty approachable and democratic know if anybody was interested. I mean, you could go down to the beach and if it was windy, somebody was going to ask you to crew. So I you know, I just think it was just kind of it was because that's the way it was.

Susan Peirson 34:48
Yeah, it was. And I remember bringing a friend from Gloversville, we were 10 and she hated here, because we all knew each other. And we all had our in jokes, you know. And we're sitting around in our group in a gloop. And she stayed for two weeks and left and told me later, she never wanted to come.

Larry Tye 35:20
So she thought she was an outsider,

Susan Peirson 35:22

She was an outsider, she's from upstate New York, which has nothing to do with, you know, the seashore and all this sailing stuff.

Phil Odenice 35:36

Yeah I think was, that was very real. Such a, maybe there's no barrier, per se, but the club was such a tight knit community, that it just felt unapproachable.

Larry Tye 35:50

So, when you came here, had your parents done any sailing before or this was when they learned?

Susan Peirson 35:57

No they had my mother in Woods Hole ditch. She had never done it before. And there was a boat and a captain for rent that she could walk, and so she did

Larry Tye 36:08

So that was just a year or two before that was not she had not grown up with sailing. But you all grew up with in your blood, because you were doing it every summer.

Susan Peirson 36:19

We did. I've had a boat for 75 years.

Larry Tye 36:26

And you met your husband here.

Susan Peirson 36:29

Yes, I sailed against him, we didn't like each other.

Larry Tye 36:34

Because you beat him?

Susan Peirson 36:36

And he bought your father's boat,.

Phil Odenice 36:38

Yup. Well at some point you started liking each other.

Susan Peirson 36:46

Yes at some point. No, it's really very funny. Everybody went to prep school. The prep schools started on a different schedule than public schools. So we're sitting around living room and he asks if Carol's gonna be around. No, she's leaving. Sandra went through the whole gang in the living room. And then he looked at me and he said, I'll pick you up at 8.

Larry Tye 37:25

Did you go to prep school in New York or

Susan Peirson 37:30

Boston,

Larry Tye 37:30
Where'd you go.

Susan Peirson 37:31
Walnut Hill.

Larry Tye 37:33
my sister went to Walnut Hill.

Susan Peirson 37:35
Yeah,

Larry Tye 37:35
That was Yes. She would have graduated from there in 68 I think. Walnut Hill is now an art school or what is it?

Susan Peirson 37:55
It's a really good one.

Larry Tye 37:56
It is a good one. Okay. Yeah.

Phil Oence 37:59
They have a lot of dance right

Susan Peirson 38:01
No. Yeah, they they do everything. They I've been to a play that they put on Camelot. And you might as well been at Broadway. Super singing, you know, and they could project their voices. And they built the school itself. Built beautiful buildings for them. And they come from all over the world.

Larry Tye 38:28
And it's not a boarding school. Still?

Susan Peirson 38:31
It is.

Larry Tye 38:33
Okay. So, back to Cotuit. When you think of we asked you tap into very limited memories when you think of your favorite stories about what made Cotuit interesting and growing up in Cotuit. What haven't we asked you, you'd like to tell on tape about your adventures here at Cotuit. You spent all these years, that's a long.

Susan Peirson 39:01

Yeah. Well, we went out as little. And we were off. And in our little gang that we had, and we're on our bikes. And we played war. We played war in the woods. The Woods weren't paved in those days it was great. And we had a little Jeep, army Jeep, we could fold down the windshield. And so we dug foxholes, and stuff like that. And we played war against the townies. And maybe this isn't you know, we're on a different level with the townies. And they stopped playing with us when we didn't play fair. We dug holes and covered em up with branches and leaves and things that they didn't see them in. One little boy broke his leg. And that was the end of our war.

Larry Tye 40:01

So you're talking about Cotuit woods. Where where, I'm not sure where you mean here.

Phil Odenice 40:06

We're anywhere that wasn't main street pretty much.

Larry Tye 40:09

So just the woods were all around.

Susan Peirson 40:10

all around the woods. We knew by heart.

Larry Tye 40:13

Wow.

Susan Peirson 40:13

Going on our bikes and stuff

Phil Odenice 40:15

Back in behind you and

Larry Tye 40:16

And so how did the war game, how did war work?

Susan Peirson 40:21

Well it didn't work. I think it was just who got rid of the other one is how it worked. We did things like we drive around the loop beach and it was jammed with cars. They didn't have any, any, you know, system much. Sort of cars everywhere. Everybody's going slow and brownie me and Sim, we used to drive along and then hit the car with our hand and then oh oh!

Phil Odenice 40:54

Oh you mean the moving car.

Susan Peirson 40:56

And then this little old lady. oh! She'd go.

Phil Odenice 41:01

Bad kids.

Susan Peirson 41:04

Very bad kids. That was our favorite things like this. And today your mother's right there. You know you got your, your Teflon mother.

Larry Tye 41:19

What did you do at night? What was the entertainment?

Susan Peirson 41:22

We sat around living rooms and we played cards. And then Ned had it's still there. You can't see it right now. He had a Play House, which was a house the size of you guys to there. Yeah. And he lived in the tenant farmer lived in it. And he helped the Pearsons grow vegetables. And then he left and so Ned took it over and made a playhouse out of it. And he sold he didn't sell he gave away Moxie. And he had it wired up at all. So we would play in that. We took up a lot of we used our boats at night. More than the kids do. I think today I don't know. Maybe I'm not out here. We went sailing and we would go to places where we could build a bonfire.

Phil Odence 42:30

Where was that?

Susan Peirson 42:34

Down at the spit at Pappa nessa. And we would gather after dinner somewhere and we went we would go bowling. But only after one of us got a car. We needed a ride. You'd have to go into Hyannis, Yarmouth.

Larry Tye 43:13

you're describing the front of that having a tenan farmer before the were there many people who used their cottages or sheds for servants. Most people have somebody who helped out the house in the

Susan Peirson 43:36

this house where we're tearing down, that was the servant's quarters and they didn't spend any money on it

Larry Tye 43:47

were servants maids or cooks or what kind of servants?

Susan Peirson 43:51

All of them. There was a cook Mary Stewart she lived here. She was local. Fortunately, she lived up the street. and tenant farmer I never met. and this house was I learned a lot about this house. When we went to go for a two family permit in the garden. So anyway, that they had a lot of, hey Jeff.

Phil Odence 44:51

Yeah, you're a little further down our list.

Susan Peirson 45:09

Yeah, and your mom. oh, that would be nice.

Phil Odenice 45:41

I think the hammer trophy would be a good story. As a recipient, I'd like to hear

Susan Peirson 45:49

Oh, yeah, his father. His father was Dr. Higgins. And they live in his house now across from freedom Hall. And so that's been in the family for a while.

Larry Tye 46:09

And what's the story of the hammer trophy?

Susan Peirson 46:11

So we got married and Reid and my husband were good friends. So Ned asked him to be the best man. And he was. And so we ended up taking him on our honeymoon the four of us and we went down to Florida. And we had a wonderful time. It was a stick pot. And we were not terribly familiar with spring cuts. But the very Yes, yeah, the boys. Were pretty good at mechanics, you know, for cars and stuff like that. So we had a lot of adventures on that boat. We ran into a drowning and the coast guard commandeered us. And that wasn't very good. Because they found him with a grappling hook. And we had all sorts Oh, and then in the middle of Delaware bay we sank. And that wasn't very good.

Larry Tye 47:15

And this was all on your honeymoon. Wow. Hell of a honeymoon.

Phil Odenice 47:21

And the hammer trophy was after that.

Susan Peirson 47:23

No. During that, well. We had a sheep. We also had a fire on our boat. And we had Joanie's bed caught on fire somehow. And her sheet got burned. So we made a flag out of her sheet. And it was the flag of the hammer. And that was the end of the hammer. That was what happened was, we used to come down here for college. And we would stay in who's ever house, we could manage to stay at. And they go they go away at 330. I don't know. That's why I wanted you to come later. anyway, so one of our friends was brand new girl then. And nobody knew her. And she had never been down before. []. And he said he was gonna nail her. And so we got down a day before. And so we ran around with a white piece of paper and a black, we made black hammers, and we posted them on the telephone poles all over. And this went on for two or three times. And finally the older people couldn't stand it. What does the hammer mean? We said we don't know. And so we never ever told them and it drove them crazy. And they kept you know trying to find out. And then the hammer trophy was given all the time as a joke at cocktail parties and stuff like this. And still the older people didn't know. Oh yeah.

Phil Odenice 49:26

It was Cotuit it as given to the Cotuit male who was male in the sense of being married to a girl.
That was that was that.

Susan Peirson 49:40
I forgot that

Larry Tye 49:41
wasn't the original meaning?

Susan Peirson 49:44
Well, yeah, it was. But But they, they quit that when they? No they didn't.

Jeff Higgins 49:53
Yeah, I think my dad's idea was that Ned had just been nailed by you for marriage. And so that's why he made the trophy you know because it was just like uh, Ned had just got married. Then he made

Susan Peirson 50:08
I think he gave it to us. Cause we when Joni and I made the flag out of the sheet we flew it. When we came into Cotuit, we spent our honeymoon, bringing the boat up. And it was an old wooden boat, had no real value. And but I remember coming into Cotuit dock at noon, and there were 50 people out on the end of the dock. And you were there.

Jeff Higgins 50:41
My son

Phil Odenice 50:47
seriously, it was all relative.

Jeff Higgins 50:50
Well we didn't know each other. All of Laurie's grandparents and parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and my grandparents, parents, aunts, uncles they highway centerpieces of this one picture. My mom holding me talking to Gail Betts pregnant with Damon. And in the background, you can see Lori's you know paternal great grandfather, and great grandmother, great grandmother foreground. And then Lori's Nana, you know, Sue's mom, yeah. And my grandfather Higgins, and my grandmother Borden. And that is my uncle John, my mom's brother, various other people. And when Haig was a baby, you know, I showed her a little, just learning. Getting a sense of family, you go through the whole thing. And that's, that's pretty sweet. But they're all related to Heyden, everyone

Phil Odenice 52:00
So your grandmother Borden now where were the Borden's from?

Jeff Higgins 52:03
Needham.

Phil Odench 52:03

Ok.

Larry Tye 52:04

Okay. So it was, but it was your parents who were on the honeymoon with you and your husband, right?

Jeff Higgins 52:10

Right.

Larry Tye 52:11

And just so I get the sequence, right, the friend who was coming the college friend with the his female friend, that was before you were married. And then during the heingold, the hammer trophy was made or the

Susan Peirson 52:32

made the trophy

Jeff Higgins 52:33

before the wedding. Yeah.

Susan Peirson 52:35

I think He gave it to us for a wedding present. And he had a big varnished plank, and he bought a gorgeous hammer, and he varnished at all, like Reid can do.

Phil Odench 52:47

And then Nick Nikki and I won it the same year and then it was it here when it was last for many decades and then reemerged and think you can see it in the library today.

Larry Tye 52:59

When he made the original trophy. That was because you were getting married. That was what the hammer was made in the end, and the earlier meaning was where the nail idea came from, but not where this trophy was a different derivation, or it all grew out of one thing.

Susan Peirson 53:19

I think it all grew out of that

Larry Tye 53:20

same thing. Okay.

Susan Peirson 53:21

Yeah.

Larry Tye 53:22

Great. Can I ask just would you mind just saying this is just a tape that we're using you know, historical society, just, what's your name?

Jeff Higgins 53:31

What, it was that Jeff Higgins, ueah.

Larry Tye 53:33

Jeff Higgins great. Yeah. So this is what we're doing is putting together a tape for the historical society but also may someday grow into a magazine piece or something else about.

Phil Odenec 53:47

So Cotuit and construction techniques.

Larry Tye 53:52

So you want to

Jeff Higgins 53:55

No I just want to say hi. And I was admiring your lack of foundation.

Susan Peirson 54:02

Isn't it something? I think they must have picked up everything in the soil and just stuck it. When they first did it.

Jeff Higgins 54:16

was this was fieldstone about that deep, and then a layer one, you know, like three bricks, one layer thick on top of the fieldstone the whole house was like sagging down. You know, the the sill was right at just below grade.

Susan Peirson 54:33

This was an 1801? 1810.

Speaker 54:36

My house, yeah 1810 he says 1830 the historical society says 1830, my grandfather says 1810.

Larry Tye 54:45

you'd like to see the original foundation when they were digging down here now.

Susan Peirson 54:48

Although Well, today, it fell. And I wasn't here. It was just went konk. And so Nick looked up and there was just a hole and the house is just sitting there over nothing. So they're quickly ran out. They're getting a footing. And I heard there's an inspection next week too.

Jeff Higgins 55:17

Looks like they built the back the box with the proper footing under there. Anyway.

Susan Peirson 55:23

Yeah.

Phil Odence 55:23

Usually that goes in before that. Yeah.

Susan Peirson 55:26

Usually.

Jeff Higgins 55:29

I saw that. But last week, like it was going to whole foundation, but like it was still standing. I guess it just crumbled. How's your foundation under your house. Did you have to ever have it redone at all or was it?

Phil Odence 55:44

It was okay. Yeah. We had it. It was brick. We had it skim coated on the outside so it's protected.

Jeff Higgins 55:52

That's right.

Phil Odence 55:52

Yeah, we didn't. We thought about you know, flipping the house to go dig in.

Jeff Higgins 55:58

Yeah. We had to look up under the side of the house and dig a trench and then build a block foundation where that fieldstone

Phil Odence 56:08

the girls may swear at us one day for not doing that. But we didn't.

Larry Tye 56:12

what's your dad, a GP?

Jeff Higgins 56:14

My grandfather,

Larry Tye 56:15

Your grandfather. And he was the GP in the center of town.

Jeff Higgins 56:19

He was.

Larry Tye 56:20

So he was the one that you said? Or was it Reid was telling us when you did the kids went out and played It was convenient having a doctor right in front of the. And any idea when he came?

Jeff Higgins 56:36

Well, he was born Marstons Mills. And then his father was the doctor there. And then he first at his practice. When he first came, you know he went to medical school. And then he went up to

New Hampshire for the first two years of medical school practicing up there. And then there was a need here. So there's a house that's like, pretty much right next door to the coupon bread on the corner of Coolidge street, kind of a stately looking place there.

Larry Tye 57:11
Birkings?

Phil Odenice 57:11
Yeah.

Jeff Higgins 57:12
Is it maybe Yeah, yeah. But my grandfather rented that place and had his office there for like two years. And then he bought our house.

Larry Tye 57:21
So they advertised looking for a doctor?

Jeff Higgins 57:24
not advertised so much. I mean, he was from the area.

Larry Tye 57:27
Oh so he just came back and it was immediate

Jeff Higgins 57:29
and he was a graduate of Cotuit high school. So he knew everybody.

Phil Odenice 57:34
This is where the ball field was

Susan Peirson 57:36
he wanted to be a physicist.

Jeff Higgins 57:39
He was frustrated into being a doctor. Well, the I think he wanted to be a doctor too but it's a long story. His story is a long story. There's a little shrine to him and my great grandfather down in the historical society. There's a whole room.

Larry Tye 58:01
And did he ever tell his story on paper and

Jeff Higgins 58:05
no no he didn't.

Larry Tye 58:07
Are your parents still alive?

Jeff Higgins 58:09

Yeah, both my parents are still alive. My mother's here. My father's in Florida. He stayed down there because of the virus and he has a house near the didcombs.

Larry Tye 58:19

Do you think they'd ever want to put their story on tape?

Jeff Higgins 58:22

Maybe. My father probably but he's a he's a little I wouldn't say incoherent but a little scattered. He had a couple of strokes and tends to lose his thread a little bit. But

Susan Peirson 58:41

if you prompt him, he's pretty good.

Jeff Higgins 58:43

Yeah. oh yeah.

Larry Tye 58:44

And your mother?

Jeff Higgins 58:46

My mother is quite coherent, and very vocal. But I don't know how much Cotuit history she knows really. She was a summer kid here. And then she's lived here most of most of her life. But as far as the history, I'm not sure. If you want to talk to her.

Larry Tye 59:09

We'd love to and history, there are two kinds of history we're looking for. One is the history that people know before them and the other is the history they lived and she's lived here for

Jeff Higgins 59:20

most of her adult life well we lived in Pennsylvania, for 11 years, I still came here in the summer. She was a summer kid before that.

Larry Tye 59:29

And when did she become year round? Or is she year round?

Jeff Higgins 59:31

1975.

Susan Peirson 59:35

she moved in next door to us. So we have my sister Linda and me and we're teenagers, maybe 13

Phil Odenice 59:46

Where were you living then?

Susan Peirson 59:48

We're down at the house across from Bud Bailey's and the loop road.

Jeff Higgins 59:55

Okay.

Susan Peirson 59:57

Used to be Brown.

Larry Tye 59:58

Where they married when they went on their honeymoon?

Susan Peirson 1:00:02

yeah, they were

Jeff Higgins 1:00:04

Yeah I was 8 months old.

Susan Peirson 1:00:08

Yeah, it was it was fun.

Jeff Higgins 1:00:11

And they ditched me. My mother in the picture talking about

Susan Peirson 1:00:14

It was a 44 foot power boat. We've been in dinghies

Jeff Higgins 1:00:18

My mother said I wouldn't meet her eye for like three or four days after.

Larry Tye 1:00:23

Hey but who gets a chance to go on a second honeymoon? That quickly. That's the

Jeff Higgins 1:00:27

there was their only honeymoon my parents eloped so they didn't. They never had a honeymoon.

Yeah. My dad was in college at the time. Anyway, I got to run.

Larry Tye 1:00:43

Thank you, appreciate it. Nice meeting you.

Jeff Higgins 1:00:45

Nice to see you guys. Yeah. All right, uh. Sue I guess I'll see you tomorrow night probably if uh the weather's not too bad.

Susan Peirson 1:00:52

Tomorrow night?

Jeff Higgins 1:00:53
Nick said.

Susan Peirson 1:00:56
They don't put me in the loop.

Jeff Higgins 1:00:58
Oh okay

Susan Peirson 1:00:59
They come over and drag me.

Jeff Higgins 1:01:02
I'll make sure that they do. Okay. All right. See you later.

Larry Tye 1:01:06
Bye. Bye. So I'm going to make a suggestion, which is we've taken up enough of your time now. And we'll as we talk to other people, surely have more questions. And I just wanted to say, unless you've got something else now. No. So I wanted to just say thank you