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Len and Reid Higgins (transcribed by John Lim)

LARRY: Hold on one second, I'm just gonna close the door. First of all, I want to say that I'm envious of you, as much as I think Cotuit is great every season of the year, having just come back and unbundled from three layers, it would be nice to be in Florida. Where are you in Florida?

REID: Vero.

LEN: Vero Beach.

LARRY: Very nice.

LEN: 47 miles north of Miami, on the East Coast.

LARRY: Very nice. So what we're doing is just talking to lots of people. Phil and I are both intrigued by what makes Cotuit the special place that it is, and figured one of the ways to find that out was to talk to people who have known Cotuit for a long time and longer than we have. And we're putting together a series of interviews that for now we're just taping and then transcribing and donating to the Historical Society. And someday, I hope that we write something for a magazine or longer. I think the village of Cotuit is a lens into America, what makes America special in lots of ways. And I think that it is one of the least known but the most incredible places that I know, on Cape Cod for sure. And so what we're going to do is mainly, he and I aren't going to talk much, and we'd love to hear you two talk: maybe starting by taking us back to the first, the way you discovered Cotuit originally. When did you first come here, and why?

LEN: [laughs] Go ahead.

REID: As he was born. I was born, I was born in Exeter, New Hampshire. And at age about two, we moved to Cotuit. My father didn't want to be known as Little Dr. Higgins, his father was a doctor in Marstons Mills, and therefore, he didn't want to be down here competing with his father. When his father retired, my father moved the family to Cotuit. They bought the house that we lived in around the time that he moved there. And they did a lot of work on the house. They created the house into a normal Cape Cod house. They filled the left part of the house into a room that he made his waiting room and then his whole life until he retired was in that house.

LARRY: Where was that house?

REID: It was right across from Freedom Hall. Okay, my son has it now.

PHIL: Who you met, Larry.

LARRY: Right, so I met at Sue's house. Yes.

PHIL: Yes.

LARRY: Great.

PHIL: Yeah, we talked, we did one of these with Sue and Jeff. Jeff came over to see how the demolition and construction was going on at the back end of their place. So he stopped in and we chatted him up a bit on tape as well.

REID: Good. Well, we--

LEN: Yeah, we talked to him yesterday. Yeah, we talked to him yesterday.

REID: Yeah, he lives in the house. He's there at the house for three weeks out of his six. The other three weeks, he's on the boat somewhere. He was in Florida for a long time. He shows up in New York now, which is good.

LEN: Let me introduce—

REID: Go ahead.

PHIL: Yeah, we need to hear about you.

LEN: Good. No, no. Let me just give you a little more background here. Reid's grandfather had the practice at that red house at the pond at 149. That's where Reid's grandfather brought up a family of five children, Dr. Higgins being one of two sons. And Dr. Higgins, Dr. Hayden Higgins was one of the founders of Cape Cod Hospital. And he was given that house on the pond by his—

REID: Mother-in-law—

LEN: Mother-in-law's family, and they were from Dorchester originally, and that was a wedding present to Dr. Higgins and his wife when they got married.

PHIL: Wow.

LEN: And so, as Reid said, his father didn't want to be known as Little Dr. Higgins, so they came back to Cotuit—

REID: When he retired—

LEN: When he started his practice, and he practiced there until--

REID: until he was 65.

LEN: Until he was 65. And he also built a little house across the street. 990 Main Street, it's a four-story now, but he built this one bedroom house because he wanted a place to relax—

REID: A summer place.

LEN: To get away from his patients. So here it was across the street, and the people next door needed the money. And Mrs. Higgins said, "Don, I think you should help them out." They have 60 feet of waterfront and they want \$5,000 for it. Maybe we can help them out. And so they helped them out, and they built this little--

REID: Built a little house.

LEN: One-bedroom, one-bath house right there, at 990 Main Street. You can drive down that driveway and see this colossal thing that's there now, but anyway, that's how that went.

LARRY: So how did the grandparents end up there? They were given the house as a wedding present, but why Cotuit?

PHIL: Marstons Mills.

REID: Marstons Mills is only three miles away.

LARRY: But why there? Why the—

LEN: Why did your grandfather pick Cotuit?

REID: Because they got a house there, I guess. It was given to his wife. And then he practiced there his whole career.

LEN: We don't really know that. I don't think we really know that. I'd love to ask Jeff. Jeff has a mind like a steel trap, and he would have heard this from Mimi, Reid's, his grandmother, Reid's mother. I bet Jeff knows. Anyway, we'll find that out for you.

PHIL: And Len, how long were you in Cotuit?

LEN: I'm third generation Cotuit. My family came from Worcester, and the Leahy [?] house belong to a family by the name of Smith, who were best friends with my grandparents. And my grandparents came and visited them for years. And then my family came. We've never owned anything, just always rented here and there, and then also my father's mother also came to Cotuit from Worcester and rented. She rented the Wings house, where Ring-ding[?], whatever Alice lived. And I mean, I have pictures of my grandparents at Sandy Neck in the 1920s, and they say the whole gang is here, and they're there with their bandanas on in their lawn coats and sitting at Sandy neck having a picnic.

LARRY: So this was summers? This was summers all this time?

LEN: Yeah, sorry. Yeah. Yeah.

PHIL: Most of the folks we've talked to Larry and I talked to probably a half a dozen folks. I twisted Larry Odense's [?] arm, and he talked to us and we talked to Sue. Rita. We got Edie Henderson on the phone. And maybe I'm missing--

LARRY: Jane. Jane.

PHIL: Oh, yeah, she's an exception. But most of the folks we've talked to have given the summer perspective. So we're also looking for townie perspective here on what you know what it was like from that angle, even though you sort of crossed over.

LARRY: When did you cross over? When did you go from being summer to year-round?

PHIL: Well, he started here--

REID: I was there my whole life pretty much.

LARRY: So when you moved from Exeter, this was year-round when you moved at age two.

REID: I moved to Cotuit year-round. My father was a doctor in Cotuit.

LEN: And he grew up and went to Barnstable High School. And then his last two years he went to Tabor, and then on to Brown. So he was a resident of Cape Cod. And then after he got married the first time, he had four children, and his jobs took him to Pennsylvania. And then his parents gave him this house, and so he moved his family back to Cotuit, and Jeff had finished high school, but the other two boys went to Barnstable High School and Cindy, the fourth child, went to Barnstable High School, and then they went on to various colleges around, so they grew up as Cotuitites also.

LARRY: So can I back you up for a second? Something you just said struck a chord, two things struck a chord. One is one of the names we forgot, and your saying Brown reminded me. John Murray we talked to as well, and he was Brown, and I was Brown. So that this seems like Brown--, the idea that three of our sort of seven or eight people here. But when your dad was the doctor here, was he a GP? And was he the only GP in Cotuit?

REID: He was the only GP in Cotuit, right. And for most of his life, he was, he was chief of staff at Cape Cod Hospital for a while. And he ran a large general practice out of the house.

LARRY: And what was that--, So that's intriguing. He must have known, better than just about anybody, everybody in town because you're the GP for everybody in town. What was it like growing up in a house that was also a doctor's office with people shuttling in and out?

REID: My mother one time took my brother and I, my brother had died in his 40s. She took us around at the front of the house and had to sit in the waiting room to meet to see my father. He'd been really tied up at the hospital. And we hadn't seen him for about three days.

PHIL: So you got an appointment.

REID: So she took us in to see him at that time through the waiting room.

LEN: Now, was she your father's secretary, or did he have another secretary?

REID: No, she was his secretary. She did all his billing and assisted him in a lot of things with women customers and so on.

LARRY: And did his practice snowball in the summer when you suddenly had the town grow?

REID: Absolutely, it did. Yeah. It was a lot bigger in the summer. Cotuit-- When I was a kid, I think there were about 1000 people in Cotuit. And in the summertime, there were like three or four thousand. So a lot of those summer homes were empty in the winter and busy in the summer.

LARRY: So if you had—

LEN: Also, he was a doctor for the Mellons.

LARRY: If somebody were coming in from Russia or from the planet Mars, and they said, “What is it about Cotuit that makes Cotuit different and special?”, what would you say? You've lived in different places, you know, this place from a young child: what is it about the village that makes it something unusual?

REID: Well, my personal experiences were one of freedom. I could leave right after breakfast, and I could be gone all day and come back in time for dinner. Okay, I mean, I played the beaches. We, you know, played in the woods. And my friend Jackie Bradley lived across the street, right next to Freedom Hall. That house has been-- I think it's been torn down now and rebuilt. I don't know who the new owner is. But Jackie and I were very close friends. His grandfather was the—

LEN: Caretaker

REID: The caretaker for Freedom Hall.

LARRY: Can I ask? So I interviewed last summer, um-- it is the same guy. So I interviewed Jack Bradley about I'm writing a book about Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, and Count Basie--

LEN: Oh yes, same one.

LARRY: He is. So was he a jazz guy then, or did he become a jazz guy after he met Louis?

REID: I guess he was-- He was out of Cotuit at the time. He may have been down South, and that that's where he ran into Louie Armstrong. I'm not even sure, you know, what he did. How he, how he got so connected with Louie Armstrong. He was a photographer for, I guess, for Louis Armstrong's career.

LARRY: He did. He donated tens of thousands of pictures to the Louis Armstrong house, and that's now their most cherished collection, because he took, he had everything documenting Armstrong's life in a way that was really special.

REID: Right.

LEN: You haven't talked to him in years.

REID: You know, a couple of years ago, I called him, he was on Cape. And I said to him, maybe we could get together and discuss childhood in Cotuit. And he agreed that we could do that, not that year, but another year. I haven't talked to him since. I don't know, he's still alive apparently.

LARRY: He's still alive, and his memory is not great. And his wife was trying to extract memories from him that were very difficult for-- he would recall by shaking his head when she said something and say, "That happened." But he had a difficult he's not having it real easy now. So you've clearly got a terrific memory. The idea of freedom as a child is an extraordinary thing. Was it just that it was so safe and everybody knew one another? Why were they giving you rein of the village?

REID: Everybody knew one another, for one thing. I mean, my father was a town doctor, and I met a lot of people, you know, that came for repair in the house. But also, I mean, it was a very small town. There wasn't--. There were several stores in town. Where the house is now, there was a grocery store. The town post office was downtown, that whole strip there where the park is now was a building that had a lot of businesses in it. There was a grocery store there, there was a barber shop, there was a post office. I forget what else was there.

LEN: A ballroom?

REID: No, that was a fire department. We used to play pool upstairs in the fire department, which was a volunteer system at the time. They didn't have regular staff that lived in that building. And they've improved that building, added onto that original building, you know, 100 times, with regular staff there, you know, to fight fires, and they have an ambulance there. My father went over and trained some of the people in basic CPS.

LEN: CPR.

REID: Yeah. Well, anyway, the freedom that we felt as children there was, you know, was total. I mean, my mother oversaw my freedom.

LEN: Let me tell the story about the fire department.

REID: Okay.

LEN: Talking about freedom, you have to hear this story: the freedom he had to go out and play, and it was a black barn up behind the post office, right.

REID: Post office is where the –

LEN: Yeah, the black barn burned down, because Reid and Teddy Nickerson, who in his adult life became a policeman for the Barnstable Police Department, lit the black barn on fire. And then they ran down the street, mind you, from the post office down to the fire department, to say, "The barn's on fire, the barn's on fire!"

REID: We went actually to the house where he was working, which was the house--

LEN: Oh, the fire chief was working—

REID: Right. We got him, and he got a fire engine, came up, put the fire out. Unfortunately... Go ahead.

LEN: Unfortunately, the matches they found all said Hotel Taft, New York City.

REID: Everybody in town knew that that's where he'd been.

LEN: Who had been to Hotel Taft in New York City but the Higgens at a medical convention. So he was caught. But that was a freedom he had.

LARRY: So... and he became a policeman? That was forgiving of the town. [laughs]

LEN: [laughs] Yeah, Teddy Nickerson--

REID: Yeah, he was a policeman.

LEN: Yeah. I don't know that he's still alive.

REID: No, he's not.

LEN: Okay. Yeah.

LARRY: So how did you get a—

PHIL: My father had a fire story as well. He was talking about it: a buddy of his and him were up, sort of behind the Shell Lane area, or maybe it's behind Hull Lane I think is where he said, and they tried to do smoke signals, they built a fire with blankets because they're trying to do smoke signals. They lit the woods on fire, but luckily, like yours, it was gotten under control before the town burned down.

LARRY: How did you get a mattress from the Hotel Taft?

REID: My father, he had picked up the matches at the hotel—

LARRY: Ah.

REID: And he had them at home, and I used them to start the fire.



LARRY: Incredible, so you could have gotten away with it, and he could have become a fireman instead of a policeman.

REID: Right, if it didn't have the name of the hotel on the matches.

LARRY: So there was a story: do you remember, Phil, the story that Sue was telling us about. Wasn't it with—

PHIL: Oh, the hammer?

LARRY: Yeah, the hammer. The story about—

PHIL: Your side of the hammer trophy?

LEN: Oh the hammer story?

LARRY: Yeah.

REID: Well, the story started when Ned Pearson and I – I don't remember, Ned is gone now -- but he and I discovered that Peter was talking about nailing the girl that he had down for the weekend. And so we've, we decided that one way to get him was to run [?] hammers, things down Main Street, down to the house he lived in, was in Vineyard Road. It was... Anyway, and what I did was make a thing with a hammer on it. You know?

PHIL: A poster of some sort, right?

LARRY: It was a poster, a replica of a hammer that you--

REID: Yeah, I gave it to Ned at a party he ran in Boston. He went to Harvard. And I was at Brown at the time. And I went to, went up there and gave him this thing.

LEN: And he just became engaged to Sue, right?

REID: Right.

PHIL: You're talking about the trophy itself? Yeah. Yeah. Which is in the library today.

REID: It's in the library.

LEN: Is it in the library case? [laughs]

LARRY: [laughs]

REID: Wonderful.

LARRY: Do they know the real story?

LEN: And the year that we got married, 1983, Reed was looking to get it. But Sally and Chris Jackson got married that summer too, a month before us. They got it. But Reed was looking for us to get it.

LARRY: So people got to hold on to the hammer for a while after they were awarded it.

LEN: Did they hold on to it for a while?

REID: Yes, they did. Yeah. I guess--

LEN: Then they passed it on?

PHIL: It was lost for--

REID: ...got married that summer.

PHIL: It was lost for a number of years and then resurfaced and as with, you know, all the yacht club trophies, you know, it now sits in in the library so it can't get lost.

REID: Yeah, that's good. Yeah.

LARRY: So one of the themes that runs through all of your stories, and the hammer is a perfect metaphor for that, is a great sense of fun and whimsy that you all had: that you had a sense of community being in the village, and you had a sense of good fun, and you had a sense of mischief in terms of people lighting fires, and—

REID: I will tell you. Jackie and I got in a lot of trouble every year doing, doing something bad. Okay? With, you know, we both had to shower gun [?] when I've... rifles, we both had rifles. And you know, you could put a match down, one of these matches that that you strike on something and it lights down, they don't have a barrel. And one time, he and I were out on the field going out towards Lowells Point. Anyway the point that's near my parents' house on the water. And he fired off a round, and it started, I knew it was fired them in the underground. I remember him running around with his leather jacket that he had on, trying to put the fire out. He did get it out finally.

LARRY: I'm amazed that any of the town is standing, the village is standing with everybody starting fires everywhere. It's great.

REID: We just got into two fires anyway that I'm aware of. We'd get in all kinds of problems. During the war, a guy flying a Piper Cub landed on the point of where this comes out into the, into the channel.

PHIL: Oh, Bluff Point, [?] point.

REID: Yeah, [?] point. And he, the pilot was unconscious in the cockpit of this thing. And Jackie grabbed the stick that he controlled the plane by and ran home with it.

LARRY: [laughs] Wow.

REID: I think the police took well not the police department, the fire department from Otis finally discovered that he's the one that had the stick. I guess the pilot remained conscious and was taken to a hospital somewhere, but he had that, then they got it back from him.

LARRY: Did you ever--

REID: I got into a lot of trouble with him. I mean, we did all kinds of dreadful things with the BB guns and, you know, there was a streetlight down at the bottom of the hill just below the house that Jeff is in now. There's a streetlight and they would keep replacing the bulb, because Jackie and I, as soon as a new bulb appeared in there, we'd take our BB guns down and shoot this thing, shoot this bulb out.

PHIL: I knew there was the light in School Street, but I'd never I hadn't heard there was one in [?] Road.

REID: They hid one right down there. And the minute a new bulb appeared, we would get down there and shoot it and remove it, and then somebody would put a new bulb in, and we would go down and shoot that one too.

LEN: The thing to remember too: the mall wasn't there, and maybe we'd go occasionally to the movies in Osterville or maybe you go all the way to Hyannis. But there was a lot of parties, house parties, charades. And I remember being at the Jacksons' once doing charades of an evening. And then at the Holsteins' house in the back room, the play room, doing, you know, games and things, and it was you know, good, good, clean fun. And everybody just gathered as a group and did everything. Right. It's a very close group. And I think also what, what put the group together was the sailing. You know, this, this made everybody very comfortable together. And I think that's something else that brought everybody close.

REID: Right.

LARRY: Did the two of you stay here through your adult life as well?

LEN: Oh, no, we were both married. Reid says, "I've married two summer girls." His first wife was from Cleveland. And she wasn't happy in the marriage, and so they divorced, I don't know how many years ago, but late '70s. I went to Seattle, I lived in Seattle for 15 years, and I was a custom jewelry buyer for a department store out there and never felt so I belonged that I came back. My first husband died in '82, and Reid and I met on the Boston Plymouths bus again. We knew each other but we had never dated. I had dated Peter L[?] and Tony T[?], friends of his and, oh, how he got married to Joan was: I was dating Tony, and he said, "Well, Reid is coming home from the Marines, who should we fix him up?" And I said, "Why don't we pick them up with Joan Gordon?." Well, the rest is history. Anyway, we met, we met on the bus, and halfway down on the bus, I lived in Centerville at the time, he asked me how my husband was, and I said he passed away. And he claims that right then and there, we were going to get together.

LARRY: Ah.

LEN: And so he called me a couple nights later, and I was working for Filene's, and then—

REID: Invited you out for dinner.

LEN: Invited me out for dinner and to the Flume, and just went on and on, and invited me to go to Bermuda for "kick the tires" weekend, as he called it. And so he asked my father to come down from Worcester, and he asked for my hand in marriage, and

REID: In a dining room that was—closed the door.

LEN: Closed the door, and then my father came out and said, "I remember when I asked your grandfather for your mother's hand in marriage." Anyway, that's our story.

LARRY: And then you came-- when you got married, you came to Cotuit? You were living, you started living in Cotuit?

LEN: Yes. Yeah. He said, "I want you to marry me." And we were married in the backyard of 975 Main Street on a 90-degree day, September 10th 1983. And so we lived in that house for I don't know how many years. Mrs. Higgins died in '96.

REID: And we moved across the street –

LEN: We inherited the house on the water, and then the little house on the water got to be—we added on to it as F[?] room and had two bathrooms, and it was just a lovely little place. But the taxes got to be \$12,000 a year, and we could not afford that.

REID: For a one-bedroom house.

LEN: We could not afford that. So we sold that at the top of the market in 2000 and did very, very well for that 60 feet of waterfront. And we started coming we had started coming to Stuart, Florida. We've been we were in Stuart, Florida for 25 years, and that we wanted to go to an assisted living, and so we we came, we heard about this, and we came here, and we really like it here.

LARRY: And can I ask what, professionally you were working for Filene's, Filene's at that time? And, and what were you doing, Reid?

REID: I was working for Wellington Management Company in Boston.

LARRY: So were you commuting everyday?

REID: I commuted from Cotuit to Boston for 15 years. I did that. I went over to Barnstable, and you got the bus there. And I got up at 4:10 in the morning. I got a five o'clock bus in Barnstable. And usually on the way up, I did work that I had in my briefcase. But on the way home, I was asleep before we left South Station. Okay, headed down, you know, back to the Cape and to my car, which was in Barnstable. I did that for 15 years. And then I retired at age 55. One of the reasons I retired is that all my youth, really from college on, I was carving birds, wooden birds. Okay. And I carved about 800 birds total.

LARRY: Wow.

REID: There you go. And anyway, I did that. And we also did other things. I did a belt buckle company. I did about 20 different styles of belt buckles. I carved masses of shells and put them on wooden boxes and sold those off. We did shows all over the Cape, and then off the Cape too, for about, I don't know, 10 years, at least 10 years. And so did all three things, you know--

LEN: We did the craft circuit.

REID: We did a big craft circuit.

LEN: But I wouldn't have to live on it [?].

REID: We paid for all our travel. And we did a lot of traveling: we saw most of Europe. You know, we bought a house in England. We lived there for five years. And back and forth to the Cape.

LARRY: So hearing you tell these stories reminds me that-- we met one night-- would any of your craft work have been donated to the Historical Society for its annual auction?

LEN: Yes, yes. Paintings.

REID: We have done--

LEN: He's painting now.

LARRY: You regaled my wife and me with stories at one of the auctions about five or six or seven years ago, and I remember being fascinated then by somebody who loved Cotuit enough to do for 15 years that long commute to Boston, and that really is a commitment to this place.

LEN: Yes, we did talk. I remember sitting talking to you.

REID: Right.

LARRY: That was a great-- so what was it about, the idea-- I can't imagine getting up that early in the morning and getting on a miserable bus every day. You must have really been in love with this place.

REID: I had moved from Philadelphia area, and I've lived there for 12 years. The company had its headquarters in Philadelphia, and eventually the presidency moved to Boston. Okay. Then Jack Bogle was the president initially and had been the guy that you reported to, and the chief financial officer. And I moved to Boston to be there and be close to the new president in Boston. Okay. And then all of the houses in Cotuit were pretty much expensive to move, to live in. Okay. And so I decided the way to get to Boston was to take a bus and go up there. I had a lot of adventures on that bus, I won't even get into those with the wife. I had a lot of adventures.

LEN: Let me interject here. Quite a Reid story. His father brought the family over from Scotland in 1913, and Reid has about six or eight cousins in Osterville and Barnstable in here and there. And we have a cousins' party every September. I don't remember how many are left right now. I think there's six cousins and some spouses left. But his mother and her sister started the Osterville Garden Club back in the '50s. And also, Mrs. Higgins told stories about how in the Big Red House, Grandma Higgins would have little tea dances, and this is where she met Dr. Higgins, at the Red House on the pond. They went to the Lowell High School, where the baseball field is now: that's where they met in high school there. And anyway, Grandma Higgins had little tea dances and all of Mrs. Higgins' sisters would go, and that's where they met.

LARRY: Wasn't there also somewhere a story that I thought I remember your telling me about: one of the houses being moved? Was a house moved?

REID: Actually, the site where the house is now, there was a barn that was there that I used to—

LEN: Oh, the shack.

REID: Yeah, the shack, we called it. And then my father had it moved back and then built a house in front, on the waterfront. Right. And he did that...

LEN: 1954.

REID: Yeah, he built the house in 1954, but we had bought the shack well before that.

LEN: 1947

LARRY: Do you come back?

REID: Sorry?

LARRY: Do you come back summers? Do you come back summers now?

REID: We come back almost every summer. We didn't go last summer, because of the problem with the virus.

LEN: We own a condo, a Cotuit Bay condo.

LARRY: Oh, you do? Ah. So how much are you under lockdown there in Florida in your community now?

LEN: We're free to go out. We just have to be careful where we go. And when we come back, they take our temperature, and they ask us, "Have we been to the hospital," dadadada. We just say no, whether we've been in the hospital or not. And that we're being tested for the fourth time this coming Monday. There's 700 independent residents here, there's two campuses, and about 100 in what I call the last stop, Willowbrook Terrace, and then there's another in-between facility here. But we go downstairs for dinner, we make reservations couple days ahead, and we can sit at a table normally for eight, four people. Right. That's it. So social distancing all the way.

LARRY: So is it exciting to you that another generation of Higgins family is here calling Cotuit mainly their home?

LEN: Oh yes. Yeah. The fact that Jeffrey married Laurie Pearson. I mean, here's two old families merging now.

REID: I was. I was best man at his wedding.

LARRY: Wow.

LEN: Ned Pearson's best man. Yeah,

PHIL: I think we were making those connections when we were talking to Sue and Jeff showed up. Yeah. So I wanted, before we run out of time, I wanted to, as I said, we talked to more summer people. I wasn't in on the Jane Waniama[?] chat, but what I've heard from everybody about summers is pretty much sounds like my summers in the youth.

LEN: Yeah, right. Right.

PHIL: It didn't change a lot. But I'm wondering, you know, Reid, what was it like when all the summer folks went home, you know, when you were a kid, what did that feel like? And then also, you know, there's the discussion, well, the summer people were really separate from the winter people. But that wasn't true in your case, and how did you get involved with the summer folks? So I guess both of those questions are sort of wrapped together.

REID: Yeah, I was close to, I was in the Boy Scouts, and I was close to lots of friends in Cotuit. And they were still friends—

LEN: The question is, how did you as a townie get involved with the summer people?

REID: Well, I don't know. I got involved with a few of the summer people. I mean, I spent a lot of time with the Holsteins, girls at the Holstein house. They had the house up at the corner of Main Street in the big house on the side. Yeah.

LEN: Well, Tony Turbek[?] was another good friend.

REID: Yeah, he was part of that too.

LEN: He was a summer person that turned year-round. I think that's how he, I would say--

REID: Because of Tony--



LEN: Because Jackie Bradley didn't get involved.

REID: No, he didn't.

LARRY: It also seems like with your father, your father was the perfect one bringing summer people and year-round people together because he was everybody's doctor. Did that help?

REID: Yeah, he was.

LEN: Exactly.

PHIL: At least they knew who you were. Did it feel funny at the end of the summer, when everybody went home, and you were still here?

REID: No, I didn't. I just went down, you know, I went to the local high school and had lots of friends there. And, you know, the people from Cotuit, two of us from Cotuit, all of us to Hyannis, to the high school. And it just seemed like a normal thing. You know, I mean, I had lots of good friends in the summertime, local people, and then also summer people. Yeah.

LARRY: So can I ask: that was at high school level. Where did you go to school before high school? Was there a grammar school that took you all the way from first to eighth?

REID: There was a grammar school where the post office is now. Okay. And there were three teachers in there and a principal, and each teacher taught first and second grade, kind of down the middle of the room, they divided it off into two sections. And then the next teacher taught the third and fourth grade, and the last person taught fifth and sixth grade.

LARRY: So you knew every kid in that school pretty well.

REID: I know, everybody in this school. I mean, yeah, absolutely. And they were all friends. I mean, you know, everybody in town was free to go where they wanted to go. In the woods, on the beach, anywhere they wanted to go, they could go, and the parents didn't worry about them. Today, I'm sure that they worry a lot more than they did in those days, you know. We had a very free life in those days.

LARRY: So I want to come back as a kid in Cotuit in those days, and I want to come back with my matches, and with my air guy. Sounds like it would have been a really special time and a special place to be a kid.

REID: It certainly was. We lived in the good years.

LEN: And then we had beer parties out at beer beach, which is way out Vineyard Road.

LARRY: So wait, take us there. Where is that again? It's called Beer Beach?

LEN: [laughs] Out at the end of Oregon.

LARRY: Ah. And they called it Beer Beach. I love it.

REID: We called it Beer Beach, because you could go there, we'd get a case of beer and go down there and have a huge party. We did that a lot. As teenagers we did that.

LARRY: So we live in a house that Edie lived in: it was next door to the house where she originally was, and then her parents moved over to where we are. And Phil and Edie were reminiscing about how they used to describe the basement of where we live as something called the groovy room. Does any of that to having parties in Eddie's old house ring any bells?

REID: No.

LEN: It was the red house?

LARRY: it was the big yellow house near where Ocean comes up from Loop. Do you remember where Edie lived? Did you know her growing up?

REID: I knew her, yeah. She was. She was a very senior person in the yacht club, you know. Former head of the club as a young person.

LARRY: Were you involved with the yacht club growing up a lot?

REID: Yeah, very much involved with the yacht club. I worked for Leonard Feck summers, painting boats with him in his yard.

LARRY: So the yacht club brought both summer people and year-round people together. Was it unusual to have year-round people involved with the yacht club, or was it as much year-round as summer?

REID: Well, it was a summer thing with boats involved.

LARRY: Right, but it didn't matter whether you were a year-round person or summer person, everybody--

REID: Either one: either one could join.

LEN: I think Reid was unique. [laughs]

PHIL: Yeah, I mean, certainly, it was open to anybody but practically, there weren't a lot of winter kids.

LEN: I can't think of any other counties that were involved with summer people.

REID: Maybe, I don't know.

LEN: I mean, Jackie Bradley wasn't.

REID: He had a boat, but not a skip.

LEN: The Haydens were. The Haydens were and they weren't. Betty Hayden was Reid's first girlfriend.

LARRY: Ah.

REID: She was in third grade, and I was in sixth. Okay?

LARRY: So can I ask about the word "townie"? Is townie your word that summer people would use about year-round people, or that year-round people would call themselves as well. Was there any negative connotation, in other words, is what I'm asking to the word "townie"?

REID: Well, if there was, I wasn't aware of it.

LARRY: Okay.

REID: No. Other folks might have had it.

LEN: I used it, but I don't think that we used it derogatively.

LARRY: So the more I hear you talk, the more it does strike me that you had a really unusual position in the town spanning all the camps. Because again, maybe, you know, started out because your dad was involved with everything.

LEN: I think you're right, you're right.

REID: He dealt with both groups.

LEN: Natives.

REID: Yeah.

LEN: And summer people.

REID: Yeah, summer people and year-round people, too. Right.

LARRY: So you just use the word native. I'm also intrigued by, was Cotuit during the time that you were both here as kids and beyond an all-white community? Were there Native Americans, were there any blacks or Latinos or anybody else? Or was it mainly a white community?

REID: It was mainly a white community? I think that we only had one black person in town, whose family was black, and occupied the home which I'd been in a lot. A friend of mine ended up buying it. I can't think of the name. Anyway, and this was a black family that lived there.

LARRY: Huh. And were there any Wampanoag tribe people here?

REID: I don't know.

LEN: I don't think so.

REID: No, I mean he was a black kid, and he had a black Family. He lived where... Tom ...

LEN: Tre[?]?

REID: No.

LEN: Tom White?

REID: Tom White lived there.

PHIL: Okay, right, 252 School Street.

REID: Right. And that house has been torn down now and something else is there.

LEN: Larry. I recently sent a lot of things to Cindy Nickerson at the historical society that I found about hurricanes, and you got the newspapers. And there's several pictures of the school in Marstons Mills with a whole mix of people. There's one picture I just remembered with a lot of Mashpee people. Ask Cindy, go down and ask Cindy to look at some of the things that I sent out recently.

LARRY: I will. Did you ever see, did anybody ever do an oral history, in writing, on tape, with your dad?

LEN: Yes, Betty Peck[?] did. I don't know where it is. You guys should ask Jeffrey. Because at one point I just gave, I said I want you guys to have it. Anything that I had, I just gave to Jeffrey. It might be there.

LARRY: He would have had a really—

PHIL: What would he be looking for, a manuscript?

LEN: He would be looking for tapes, Dr. Higgins interview with Betty Peck.

PHIL: Tapes.

LARRY: Wow.

LEN: Yeah, I think.

PHIL: Yeah. Okay, great.

LEN: That's what I remember. But he's got a lot of stuff.

LARRY: So can I just make one suggestion? We've kept you the hour that you promised us, and we promised we would liberate you. But if you should think of anything else, let us know, because a lot of the time, what we're finding is that when anybody for anything is called on to remember something at the moment, it's difficult. And then a day later or a week later, they say, 'Geez, I just thought of all of these things.' So we can append any stories. And Phil, do you have anything else now?

PHIL: No, no, I think it was great. Good. Good.

LARRY: This was terrific.

PHIL: Good to hear you guys, we missed you this summer.

LEN: We missed you too.

REID: The war years, I traveled to where my father was stationed. He was a flight surgeon in the US Air Force. He joined in '42 and stayed right in the in the Air Force until the war was over, which was '45 or

something, when they when they finally got the peace thing. But we went all over the country and lived with him, my mother and my brother and myself. I could name you 10 different places we lived during the war.

LEN: If you want to talk to us again, we'll be happy to talk to you again. His nap time is over. The reason we couldn't get together till three because his nap is like 2 to 3.

LARRY: That's great. So can you just remind me: you said at the beginning, was your grandfather a physician as well?

REID: He was a physician, yes.

LEN: And he had the first car in Cape Cod.

LARRY: Wow. But the idea that your dad, with all of these places that you were living, that he was living during the war, the idea that Cape Cod is where he ended up. What was it that drew him: that he just loved this place when he was a kid, or what was it that drew him here?

REID: Well, maybe he was born 3 miles away in Marstons Mills, in the house that my grandfather owned. And then he went to school in Cotuit. The school that he went to was where they play baseball now.

LEN: And then he went on to Clark University. And he was there when Dr. Goddard was there. Dr. Goddard asked him to come work with him in New Mexico, and he said no, he wanted to be a doctor. And he went to Harvard med.

LARRY: So Goddard of the Goddard Space Center.

LEN: Yup.

LARRY: So that in a way even more the idea-- A lot of people end up, it strikes me, on Cape Cod who had some roots here for either of two reasons. What happens to a lot of people who grow up here, as you know, and who go to Barnstable High is, when they get a chance to leave, they want to be liberated, and it was like they were living on an island and they don't want to come back. And there are the other people who have fallen in love, been bitten by something about Cape Cod, and look for ways to come back. Your dad had all kinds of options. Having seen the country in the military, and being a doctor and having the option of going out to the Goddard Space Center, and yet he ended up back here. He must have really been in love with the place.

REID: Yeah, he was absolutely in love with it. Yeah. He was. Well, you know, he had spent a lot of time in Cotuit, even growing up years. He went to high school where the guys play baseball now. You know, the school was there.

LEN: We got two minutes.

LARRY: Right. Okay. Look, you've been terrific. All I want to do my last word is just two words, which are "thank you." And Phil, last words?

PHIL: Nope, we're good.

LARRY: We're good. Thank you.

LEN: As you can see, I love talking about Cotuit. Any time, any time.

LARRY: Great, and live next summer.

REID: That'd be better. Good. Okay. We'll b there.

LEN: Yep. Have a good have a safe winter.

LARRY: Thank you, you too.