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Brownie Swartwood – Emily Yang

Odense

All right, we're on tape.

Swartwood

Okay.

Odense

So this is Phil Odense. It's March 4 - a crappy, windy, blowing 60 knots kind of day in Cotuit. We're at the house of Brownie Swartwood, and Brownie, maybe just one paragraph on who you are and how long you've been around Cotuit.

Swartwood

Well, I was conceived in Cotuit.

Odense

Haha, that's a good start.

Swartwood

My mother's family came to Cotuit in 1934 and that came as a result of my grandfather, Slater Washburn, who -

Odense

I should interrupt. We should - I think we should acknowledge - this is a re-recording because we tried this once and the recording came out crappy.

Swartwood

Right.

Odense

So if I say something - if you're a viewer, I say something like, "Last time we talked" - then people understand why that it is.

Swartwood

Oh okay.

Odense

So, I didn't mean to interrupt. But you're a longtime Cotuit person and kind of full-time now and have deep family roots. That would be the starting point, right?

Swartwood

I guess. Sure. That's accurate.

Odense

Now, what year were you born, if we may ask?

Brownie Swartwood – Emily Yang

Swartwood

I was born on March 3, 1938.

Oden

So sorry. I didn't wish you happy birthday yesterday.

Swartwood

Yesterday.

Oden

Okay.

Swartwood

85 years old.

Oden

Yeah. So the original roots in Cotuit were your mother's family?

Swartwood

Correct. And then the next year, my father's family showed up.

Oden

Ah okay.

Swartwood

And that was in 1935. My father had just graduated from Andover and was on his way down here to Cotuit, because his sister had rented a house from the Baileys, which is next door to where I presently live.

Oden

So just to orient folks, we're between Oceanview and Main Street, close to Loop beach.

Swartwood

Correct. And so, as my father was coming down Route 3 - what then was - I don't know what the route was then - but anyway, through what is now Route 3 - Governor Curley had just opened the Sagamore Bridge to public traffic and was on his way back to Boston as my father – they passed.

Oden

No kidding. They knew each other and?

Swartwood

No, no, no, no, my father - Curley's son was in my father's class at Andover, but he was in his limousine, and he had just blessed and opened the Sagamore Bridge.

Oden

Is this the same guy who was the mayor?

Brownie Swartwood – Emily Yang

Swartwood

I'm sure, and Governor, you kidding me?

Oden

Yeah, and a friend of my grandmother's as well.

Swartwood

Haha, I don't doubt that.

Oden

I remember him and Mrs. Curley coming to dinner.

Swartwood

Anyway, so, that was 1935 and that was when my father and his family – his family is Swartwood, but his older sister was Mary Katherine Sinclair - Mary Katherine Swartwood Sinclair.

Oden

So let's get back to the Washburns and we'll connect your parents. What brought the Washburns here?

Swartwood

Oh, okay. My grandmother, my great-grandmother, was a Slater, related to Samuel Slater. Directly, with the granddaughter, I think, or great-granddaughter. And she owned a house in Narragansett Pier, a rather large house, fully staffed etc. And she had two children. One, Slater Washburn, who was my grandfather, and the other was Esther Washburn.

Oden

Who married somebody.

Swartwood

Out in Minneapolis, yeah.

Swartwood

Anyway, so every summer, they went to the Washburn site. Slater Washburn and his family went to Narragansett Pier and then they would bring, have friends come down, and it was fully staffed and all that kind of stuff.

Oden

Is Narragansett Pier like a village or around the pier?

Swartwood

It's a village. The Dunes Club is right next door to where my great-grandmother's house was. So, my grandfather had a speedboat called Stiletto, and he had one of his best friends and another guy - from Worcester, they were all from Worcester - come down and they had a - there was an

Brownie Swartwood – Emily Yang

accident. My grandfather ran over, somehow, his best friend and killed him. And so, he decided, my grandfather decided, that maybe they better not go back to Narragansett pier for a while. So they didn't. And my Aunt Annie, who was then in about third or fourth grade at Bancroft school in Worcester, was complaining to her teacher, who was brand-new to the school, who had just graduated from Vassar College, and her name was Anna Madison.

Odenca

Okay. We've interviewed her sister. You'll connect the dots. We've interviewed her sister and her son.

Swartwood

So, Anna, of course, was very aggressive when it came to touting Cotuit. Haha, pretty much everything. So, she prevailed upon my grandfather, to come to Cotuit. She said, "It's a perfect place. You know, there's no dress-up every night. There's no footman. There's no nothing. It's on the beach." And so, my grandfather and his family, including my mother, rented from the Baileys the house, but Bailey owned, and that was part of the so-called Bailey estate, and it had been moved. That house had been moved from the top of the bank, overlooking the beach, to its present location at the corner of Main and Oceanview as it comes up from the beach.

Odenca

Right, as you come up, it's on the left. And that one - that's the house that ruined the Madison's view of the water.

Swartwood

I'm sure it did. Haha, I'm sure it did. But that's the Baileys' problem.

Odenca

Yeah, and that had been a Captain Nickerson house.

Swartwood

I believe that to be true.

Odenca

Yeah, it's a very old house.

Swartwood

There's a picture that I gave the Historical Society of that house before it was moved, and they have somewhere. They occupied that house, the Washburns rented it somewhere. How they fit everybody in there - there were four kids and a staff - but they did - stuffed them in there. And that's, of course, when my mother and father met.

Odenca

Okay, we can trace back your father. Just a little bit about him. He was a judge, right?

Swartwood

Well, yeah. And his father was a judge.

Brownie Swartwood – Emily Yang

Odenice

And therefore, all from upstate New York?

Swartwood

Yeah, county judge. My grandfather was a county judge and my father was a Supreme Court judge, which, in New York, is the trial court – high trial court.

Odenice

And we didn't really say much about you, but you -

Swartwood

I was also a judge.

Odenice

You stayed in the family business. And so, what got him on Route 3, driving towards the new Sagamore Bridge?

Swartwood

Oh, because his sister had rented the Bailey house.

Odenice

And to be clear, we talked about one Bailey house, which is on the top of Oceanview. This is the one you're talking about is, what's now Greg Beckman's house.

Swartwood

Right, next door to where I now live.

Odenice

Right, which is the second to last house on the right before you get to Loop beach.

Swartwood

Right, okay.

Odenice

So, ancestors in that house.

Swartwood

And I brought my father and also her sister, who rented the - what we call the **Great** Cottage - which is in the back of my house. And my grandmother, Grandmother Swartwood was there. It was - that's a big house. There was lots of rooms. I have 3 cousins - Bill Sinclair, Tony Sinclair, and **Hallie** Sinclair. And then, they were - an oh, they came.

Odenice

Mary Katherine,

Brownie Swartwood – Emily Yang

Swartwood

Mary Katherine. Okay, Mary Katherine

Oden

Mary Katherine Swartwood Sinclair is your aunt.

Swartwood

Right. She and her husband, Bill Sinclair, had a little argument about where they should go in the summer. They lived in Corning and they had a lot to do with Corning Glass, and they **could** afford to live wherever they wanted to live. So, Uncle Bill Sinclair's brother, I believe, lived in Newport. And Uncle Bill said, "My brother's there. Let's go move where my brother lives."

Oden

Sure.

Swartwood

And my aunt said, "Like Hell. I don't want my children growing up in that atmosphere." And then Pearson, who's a big family here in Cotuit. You've obviously talked to some of them.

Oden

Yeah, we interviewed Sue.

Swartwood

Yeah, good. So he was then General Manager, I believe, General Manager of Corning Glass, and his wife's family, the Gilberts and the **Northeys**, were related to the Ropes and had been going to Cotuit for generations, as I understand it.

Oden

I think he was related to the Coolidges.

Swartwood

Could have also been the Coolidges. Okay, so where am I going with this? Oh, so they socialized obviously, in Corning, and there weren't too many other people to socialize with, so they socialized with each other and had to deal with the Corning Glass Works bah bah bah bah. So, they suggested, during one of these discussions, about Newport or somewhere else, that they come think about Cotuit, and the description that Mr. and Mrs. Pearson gave to my aunt, especially, who was fairly strong willed -

Oden

Yeah, she was something.

Swartwood

Yeah, okay. I'm okay. I don't know why, all of a sudden - anyway, she prevailed upon my uncle, and she usually did in any argument, and so, they came to Cotuit and it worked out. I mean, it was perfect for them.

Brownie Swartwood – Emily Yang

Odenice

It's interesting. Anna's pitch to Cotuit sounds similar to Mr. Pearson's pitch. It's low-key. None of the sort of a high-brow crap, right?

Swartwood

Right. And that's why they came. And then, of course, my mother and father met each other.

Odenice

We're talking about living a few 100 yards apart in the summer.

Swartwood

And then they were here until the war, and then they took a hiatus from 1942, '43. Something like that. They didn't come down until '46.

Odenice

Because it was unseemly to go to a summer place?

Swartwood

Yeah, my aunt insisted that her husband, Bill Sinclair, go to work. Poor guy. But he was great. He was treasurer, and he would go to an office, and she also tried to prevail upon my father, her brother - younger brother - to go to work for Corning Glass. He had just graduated from Cornell or was about to. And she said, "Because it's an industry that's protected and if you work for them, you can't go." And he said, "Like hell," and joined the Navy, and served out in Tokyo Bay when they surrendered. He was on a destroyer.

Odenice

And had not gone to law school at that point.

Swartwood

Well, before that, my mother and father were married in February. Excuse me. Yeah. In February of my father's junior year. And he was at Princeton. And you couldn't be married as an undergraduate, so he waited until his first semester ended, and then they went to New York, and the next day, they got married, and then -

Odenice

But kept it on the q.t.?

Swartwood

Well, then 3 months later, I was born.

Odenice

Interesting timing.

Brownie Swartwood – Emily Yang

Swartwood

Yeah, haha, right. And then after the war, of course, we came down every summer. I came down every summer and stayed with my aunt. And primarily, I think, because I had the same name as her father and all that.

Oden

You were how old in the years you were staying with her?

Swartwood

Well, my whole family stayed with them.

Oden

That's a pretty big house.

Swartwood

Oh yeah, there was plenty of room. I was on a sleeping porch with Bill and the **piling**, and the whole bunch of people. I was gonna say - so then I got interested in Cotuit skiffs, and my father – then, the Tansy Bitters was for rent by Joe Madison, who at that time, owned the Tansy Bitters, and I rented it for two or three years. That boat had been, at one time, also owned by Gardie Jackson, but Gardie - Joe had plenty of money and he could afford the boat. And Gardie might have been a little short, who knows?

Oden

I think Joe kind of had a business. I think he was sort of playing small-time yacht broker, as I understood it. Trading boats around.

Swartwood

Could have, I don't know. All I know is that I was able to sail the boat.

Oden

And that was - because that boat was destroyed in the '44 hurricane?

Swartwood

Correct.

Oden

So this was prior to that?

Swartwood

No, no, no, no.

Oden

A later hurricane? I think I heard a tree fell on that.

Swartwood

That's correct. And it was the **Coins** who owned it at the time.



Brownie Swartwood – Emily Yang

Odenice  
Okay.

Swartwood

And they lived down here on Main Street, past the village. Yeah, I think I had it for two years, or two or three years, two or three summers. And it was parked right out here, right outside, you know, but all the boats were parked by Loop beach. And then the Yacht Club sort of became my aunt's pier, was used for, you know, all summer by everybody that -

Odenice

Right, and there's still a pier there. That's the first pier if you're walking towards Bluff Point from Loop and the Yacht Club ran out of there.

Swartwood

Correct. Yes, correct, and they had meetings. The annual meeting would be the Sinclair's house, which by then, they had bought from the Baileys. It was the first property that the Baileys sold. So going forward, the Sinclairs were there until 1958 or '59. Then they sold, because Uncle Bill, he'd had it - with the overflow with a yacht club that sort of treated his house as the - yeah - and then, they left, and then my Aunt and Uncle Ronaldson -

Odenice

And then, straight to Colorado - was that the - at that time?

Swartwood

Yep, yep. 1958, '59. And then, my parents had rented a house a couple of times. Here. I stayed here. For some reason, I was here, and then I used the Marsdon Bowden. Marsdon Bowden had a workshop with a bedroom, two bedrooms and shower in the back.

Odenice

And it was rebuilt, but it's still-

Swartwood

It's still there, sort of. Yes. And so I lived there with my cousin Semi and my aunt and uncle Ronaldson were still in the Great Cottage in the back of what now is my house, and we now own the Great Cottage, but it's on Ronaldson's estate right here.

Odenice

Remind me how the Ronaldson are connected.

Swartwood

Trenja Ronaldson is my father's sister and aunt's sister's sister. And so -

Odenice

How cool, though, that all the families, all the cousins are here?

Brownie Swartwood – Emily Yang

Swartwood

Not only that, but the Washburns were here, and they rented all over the place in the summer. Aunt Annie, especially.

Oden

But still, mostly everybody's within a five-minute walk of each other.

Swartwood

Right. Well, the Washburns and Swartwoods weren't necessarily holding hands. Anyway, and then the Ronaldsons were here until they died. Given to my three cousins and then I bought it from them. They were doing other things during the summer and stuff, so yeah.

Oden

So we've sort of alluded to the Baileys a bunch and I was gonna take you - take your idea of talking to Charlie, but maybe you could just do a quick summary on the Baileys and their history here.

Swartwood

I will, and Charlie can correct me. There was a guy by the name of Sears, and he owned a manufacturing of garments of something like that. He was in the manufacturing business, having to do with clothing, I believe.

Oden

But not Sears Roebuck.

Swartwood

No, no, no, no, he's manufacturing the stuff, not selling.

Oden

It's such a common name, though, people might -

Swartwood

Oh, I see. Yeah, no, no, Sears is - no, no, it was - and he was not married.

Oden

There was a Benjamin Sears, who had a store down in the center of the village.

Swartwood

No, I don't believe that's -

Oden

Probably another family.

Swartwood

Yeah, I don't think so. This guy was not married and never had any children. He had a partner by the name of Harry Bailey. And they spent a couple of summers over in - I'll call it Wianno but it's

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not. It's that part of Wianno if you go by the grocery store, and then you go down to the - there's a beach. Forgot the name of the beach.

Odenice

Is it eastern, going towards Centerville?

Swartwood

Yes, yeah. And there was a big hotel there. It was there when I was, you know, 30 years ago it was there, 40 years ago. Anyway, they lived there, and I don't think they were mixed up with the Wianno club at all at that time. But then, they found this property and it was everything from C Street, between Main and Oceanview Avenue, was owned by the Baileys.

Odenice

And everything south of that?

Swartwood

Yes, Sears and Bailey, but it was in Harry Bailey's name.

Odenice

But also the beach side of Oceanview.

Swartwood

And then they owned everything on the other side, from the Wickhams, all the way Penwickham, all the way down to Loop beach. So they owned the whole thing. Now that my aunt sold out, sold her house, and she bought from the Baileys the houses next door to me, towards the south, all the way from the beach, all the way to Main Street. And then, after she sold it, a number of years later, Jack Bush bought it. Then, he fell in love with a nice lady that owned the house, what we call the maid's corners. So he sold that to her, gave her some rights to the place -

Odenice

I think her name was Dee. Mrs. Dee.

Swartwood

Yeah, yeah, that wonderful lady. Absolutely wonderful. Jack died and then she sold it to Beninson. I'm sorry, but he kept the maid's house and then fixed it up. Expanded it. And he and Mrs. Dee lived there.

Odenice

And it was the laundry too. The maids lived there. And it was where the laundry was.

Swartwood

Yes, correct. For aunt's sister, it was.

Brownie Swartwood – Emily Yang

Oden

Yeah. So you and I have talked about this many times before, and I can't remember if you actually connected the dots in this conversation to say, Mr. Sears died without any heirs and left it all to Harry Bailey.

Swartwood

Yeah, correct. Including the business and including a mansion in **Westerner**.

Oden

And including the end of Samsons Island.

Swartwood

Correct. And then Harry Bailey gave that to the Audubon Society subsequently. And then, after Harry died, I then bought most of what is between C Street, Oceanview Avenue, Main Street, and my aunt's old property. I never owned anything over there.

Oden

But you never bought the big Bailey house which -

Swartwood

No, no, no, that was separate.

Oden

I had thought you bought it, because what I remember is - there was one rainy Labor Day. You organized us to have the Yacht Club meeting in that house.

Swartwood

I did, but I didn't own it. I got permission to do it. So that's it.

Oden

That's great. So, it must have been for you - I'm just thinking, you know, I knew you sailed, and I think were maybe the youngest, probably always the youngest, winner of the CMYC.

Swartwood

I was not. I was 15. Bobby Bailey, and what's the guy that was killed.

Oden

Oh, John Wood.

Swartwood

Yeah. Were both 14. So I was 15.

Oden

Oh I thought you were the youngest.

Brownie Swartwood – Emily Yang

Swartwood  
No, I was 15.

Odenice  
I don't think, in the way that the fleets gone. I don't think we're gonna see anybody that age ever again, just for whatever reason. But as I was saying, what I wasn't thinking about - it was at your house, essentially, you're living 100 feet from the dock.

Swartwood  
Yeah, oh sure I went sailing every day. And then there was a family. Rogers, Mrs. Rogers and Nancy Rogers were full-time employees of my aunt, 365 days a year. In other words, they were paid, whether anybody was there or not.

Odenice  
And your aunt was here for three months or something. Wow, good work if you can get it.

Swartwood  
Yeah, and Nancy. Excuse me, Mrs. Rogers, son, Charlie. And so going ahead to 1992 or 1993. I tore down the old house that was here and built a new house. And it was built by Charlie Rogers.

Odenice  
And you've been friends with him?

Swartwood  
No not really, not really. I had finally convinced my aunt that I really didn't need to go to dinner at nine o'clock at night, where everybody was half-smashed. So I ate with the help, and that way, I could get out early.

Odenice  
And you're like a young teen at that point?

Swartwood  
No, no, I would say yeah, 10. Something like that. So that worked. That was terrific. So, Charlie came by and I said, "Charlie, I want you to build a house and stuff." And he looked at the plans and he said, "Okay, well you're the lawyer, you drove up the plans. That means a contract." And I said, "We don't need a contract." He said, "Well, what are you talking about." I said, "You're gonna send me a bill, and you're gonna send it to me either every two weeks or every month or however you are gonna want to do it? Or every week, I don't care. And I'm going to pay that bill and the bill is going to be the costs and stuff and your profit and overhead." I mean, I represented contractors all over the place and I know how they operate -

Odenice  
No indemnification or warranties

Swartwood

No nothing. And so, we finally had a disagreement. And so, we had no writing at all. The bills - they were paid. So, then we had an argument and it had to do with the flooring of the porch - porches. And, my then-wife wanted the porches blind-nailed, so you don't see the nails. And Charlie said, "Look Brownie, it's not going to work. It's going to buckle." I said, "Well, look. We're going to do it, and so here's what you do. You write me a letter. And you say, I disagree with this. And if something happens, it's your fault, not mine." And I said, "Fine." I put it in the file. And that was it. It finally did buckle up, but it took a long time. And it didn't all buckle, just a little bit.

Odenca

So some of the impression I got from a lot of these conversations is that Cotuit actually had neighborhoods, like summer neighborhoods, and so, you know, this is where I grew up too, in your neighborhood. And the people didn't circulate as much as they do now. I don't know, I think there are more cars or whatever, but you kind of hung around Oceanview Avenue as a kid, right?

Swartwood

Well, yeah. Jimmy White, Wells Burgess, and I were all the same age. **Neddy Pearson** was a friend of ours. He was a year or two older, and **David Happenstole**, who happened to live where Johnny Murray's house is now. Who else we got?

Odenca

Prue used to come?

Swartwood

Well, then we had the two girls. Sally Wadsworth that lived on the North Bay side of Cotuit harbor. The Narrows, really, the entrance to the Narrows was a great big Spanish house, and then Prue Lloyd who lived on the opposite side of Cotuit. And oh, Richie Bowden and Freddie Bowden were part of our group. So, you know, this is one summer. Sally Wadsworth was my girlfriend. I considered her my girlfriend. Haha, I don't think she considered me a boyfriend. But anyway, none of that makes any difference. And then the next summer, that didn't work out so -

Odenca

My daughter went out to the hunt this year and met Sally Wadsworth and just thought she was the greatest.

Swartwood

She's been here a couple of times. Goes sailing with me. And then Prue, of course, I knew Prue well.

Odenca

Well, that covers the geography of Cotuit. But I guess, you know, we talked at **Henderson**. There was an interview with **Mrs. Cabot**.

Swartwood

Yeah.

Odenice

It sounds like things were much more, sort of, concentrated in neighborhoods.

Swartwood

Correct.

Odenice

You guys were crossing the lines. Was this where you tended to hang out? Because the Yacht Club was here? Was it more in this neighborhood? Or were you kind of all over the place?

Swartwood

Well, we were pretty much all over the place. No, no, the Pines hotel was there when they had the little ice cream store, and you go up and get an ice cream thing. The nighttime and, I mean, we were little kids. You know, I was talking about girlfriends and boyfriends. We're talking about 14 years old or something. When I say Sally Wordsworth was, one summer, was my girlfriend - I don't think - we never held hands. We never kissed, so I mean, this was not a - these were pals.

Odenice

So what was what was like typical day for you all?

Swartwood

Well, my cousin Sim and I are just a year apart. He rented Anna's boat, Number 38. And so, I would get Mrs. Rogers to breakfast, you know, make me out a little sandwich and little pouch and stuff. And then Semi would do the same and then we would go down and get on the boat and go sail. And we get over to Oyster Harbors. Excuse me. Crosby Yacht, and I have a nickel, and I can go in and I could get a Coca Cola, and then Teddy Crosby, who turned out to be a very good friend of mine wanted no part of some kid from Cotuit. I mean, you know, come on. And his uncle -

Odenice

And is he working?

Swartwood

Yeah. Of course. As a young kid, you know, go fetch this, go this and that. Why, he turned out to be one of my best friends, you know, later in life.

Odenice

Yeah. You know, you're describing me and Gordon Jackson going up when I was a kid, just sailing for the day, and if we didn't have a sandwich, we might try to find some clams to pop open.

Swartwood

Well I didn't go that far. So, then there were some neighborhood issues. Now remember Buddy Sousa and his group. They hated us.

Brownie Swartwood – Emily Yang

Oden

Who were locals.

Swartwood

Yeah, they really disliked us. And there were fights. Yeah, no, there really were. I remember my sister. My sister beat the shit out of Buddy at one point. So there were some strains and it didn't stop until, all of a sudden, I became a friend of Frog Ashley. And it all stopped.

Oden

And what was the root of that? How did that all come about?

Swartwood

With Frog? In the '44 hurricane, I ended up going to school here, cause we couldn't get off the Cape.

Oden

So you couldn't, you literally couldn't get it off.

Swartwood

No, you couldn't. We were lucky to get down to the village.

Oden

Because the roads were blocked by trees. And you were supposed to go back to school.

Swartwood

Yeah, right. But my mother goes, "Get rid of him," and I ended up at the school, and Frog and I were a year apart. But everybody -

Oden

And Frog is Donald

Swartwood

Donald Ashley - (deep exhale)

Oden

I know you guys were good buddies.

Swartwood

(Deep exhales)

Oden

I mean, you were friends with him? Right up until a few years, when he passed away years ago?

Swartwood

Yeah, yeah. Matter of fact, I was there. I had just left when he died. I gotta take a - I gotta -



Brownie Swartwood – Emily Yang

Oden

Yeah, I'll figure out to pause - hold on...

Oden

(After pause) So, you met him, just at school?

Swartwood

Yeah, he didn't remember it, but I think he was a friendly guy, and then what happened is, I was 16 and had a license. And he was 15 without a license. And so, the trade off was, you know, he and I would go drive around.

Oden

Whose car was it?

Swartwood

Mine

Oden

Oh you had a car at 16?

Swartwood

Yeah, no, no. I guess I was a little bit older. I was driving. I don't know what the hell I was driving. I had a Cadillac convertible that was a permanent convertible. I had to bail it out. I mean, it was unbelievable. I paid 200 bucks for it. I was 16, 17 years old. So Frog was - all I know is, I had a license. Frog didn't. I was Frog's transport. Out of the neighborhood.

Oden

He was your protection.

Swartwood

Well, it turned out to be a good thing, because then Buddy Sousa and all his crew stayed away, because Frog said. Frog was a tough guy.

Oden

And was Frog's family down in Santuit?

Swartwood

No, do you know where the Gilberts house? You got the Pearson house. And then the next house was the Gilberts house. And then the next driveway and the next property was Frog's. And Newt Robinson owned it for a while and then sold it.

Oden

So right by the ballfield and the entrance to the school.

Swartwood

Correct.

Brownie Swartwood – Emily Yang

Odenice

The Main Street entrance to the school.

Swartwood

And on the end of Frog's property, Frog's family's property.

Odenice

And then later, was it - ultimately was, he had the house back, back off Main?

Swartwood

And that was Frog's house. And built that.

Odenice

And the Sousas? I don't know Buddy Sousa and how he connects with - there's a few Sousa families.

Swartwood

They live right here. Just right. Great.

Odenice

On Main?

Swartwood

Do you know where **Kopi** lives?

Odenice

Yeah.

Swartwood

Oh, that was the Sousa property.

Odenice

Okay.

Swartwood

And then Walter Lux lived in, on the other side of the driveway.

Odenice

So kind of, close to Shell Lane and Main on the woodside?

Swartwood

Yeah, correct. And then, once a couple of summers, I worked for John Frasier in the graveyard, mowing the lawns, basically. That's what we were doing, and then he was expanding the graveyard to, as you go out of Cotuit, it goes up and then there's a fence - all that was wild. So he cleaned that out.

Brownie Swartwood – Emily Yang

Oden

So this was -

Swartwood

I was in college.

Oden

So Kirkman gave a bunch of money to the graveyard. That would have been before this. Now the graveyard is well-funded.

Swartwood

No question about it.

Oden

Yeah. And was it all on the one side of Putnam Avenue?

Swartwood

It was. That was it. They used that money to buy the property across, but they were expanding it anyway on the water side. And I remember, Johnny Frasier. Well, the people who worked down there were -

Oden

I wrote down some names from last time. Harry Ashley -

Swartwood

Yeah, Harry Ashley. No, no, no, it's it's -

Oden

Did I not write it right?

Swartwood

Yeah, and Jamie Badger. It's not Baladger. It's Jamie Badger. Roger Reed, and Harry Ashley. All worked in the cemetery.

Oden

And Harry was Frog's brother.

Swartwood

Frog's younger brother. Yeah. And then, well, go ahead.

Oden

What was work at the cemetery?

Swartwood

Well, mowing.

Brownie Swartwood – Emily Yang

Oden

Okay, not digging any deep holes.

Swartwood

No, no, we didn't do that. We didn't do that at all. Maybe no one died. I don't know.

Oden

Yeah, the village was pretty small then.

Swartwood

I had no idea who dug the holes. I know I didn't. But I know what I did do. Johnny, Johnny was a smart guy. He bought - do you know when you go out of Cotuit now and you want to go to Mashby? You go on what - School Street, all the way out, past the -

Oden

The cracked bridge

Swartwood

Past that, past the country club and then you take a right on that road. No, it's caught. It's crossed. Well as it's got some name to it.

Oden

Before you get to the bridge?

Swartwood

Way before. No, before you - you know where that flower place is on that road?

Oden

Oh, okay. So you're -

Swartwood

Before that. There's a road that you'd have to turn in order to -

Oden

Orchard?

Swartwood

That's correct. So Johnny owned all that property. Okay. And so he had an excavator up there. And he had a truck. This truck was probably a 1938 something or other. It was a derelict. And so, he said, "Hey, boy, you drive the truck." So I did. And I would drive it up. And then I realized there were no brakes. And they could shift down, pretty much stop it. But they had no brakes and I'd get this earth and I would drive it through to Cotuit to the graveyard and dump it and go back and get some more. And I said, "Johnny, this guy got no brakes." "Okay, college boy, you figure it out."

Brownie Swartwood – Emily Yang

Swartwood

So I kept doing it. But anyway, Jamie Badger, Roger Reed, Harry Ashley. These all got to be good friends of mine. And even to this day, I mean I get along well with them. I don't see them that much, but I see them while I'm here.

Oden

Well it's a little unusual, because you know, there's some people who are locals and there's some people are summer folk and you know, not a ton of crossing.

Swartwood

No, I was able to cross that bridge for two reasons - Frog and working at the graveyard.

Oden

So you mentioned, last time we talked, you mentioned the Duke.

Swartwood

Oh, the Duke love the Duke. The Duke was Freddie Frasier, who was Johnny's brother, who was a 100% alcoholic. And he would get -

Oden

How old was he at this point?

Swartwood

How old was he? Well, he was a World War Two.

Oden

So, significantly older than you.

Swartwood

Yeah. No, he was in his 60s. Certainly. So the Duke. There was a whistle at 10 o'clock from the church, you know that - yeah okay. So, we stop work at 10 o'clock and have a break. And he'd say, "Hey, boy, go on up to the - " He'd give me the money. "Go up to the Coop and get me up a little thing of wine." Oh Jesus. So why not? If that's what he wants me to do. I took the scooter up there. And then he would take a little siesta behind some trees. And one day, I was driving the **advance car** for George Lodge running for President against Ted Kennedy. And we had a Cape Cod run. And I had the command car, I guess you might call it, because I knew the roads, and we couldn't get down to the Kennedy compound. The police stopped us. But anyway, it was a big show. So, we dispersed and the buses, because I was a bus driver, but in this case, I had the car. So, I was coming up Oceanview Avenue, coming to see somebody up here, or just to drive around and see my cousins, who were coming back. I came around the corner in the old hill house, you know the hill? I forgot his name now who owns it, but just as you turn the corner, just after the road that goes to the point. Continent's Point. You know, where those houses are? The next house is a great big white house, sitting back. Well, the Duke was asleep on the roadside.

Brownie Swartwood – Emily Yang

Oden

Oh, is it Jeff Connors' now?

Swartwood

Yes. It was the Hill House then. Okay. So the Duke's asleep, on the outside of the bushes. Some people in the house can't see it. He's sound asleep. So I pull up and I added a microphone. And I said vote for Fred Frasier for United States Senator. He goes, "Ohhh ghhh." He starts going like crazy, haha. And he just was a character. He was an absolute character. Smart as hell. Really unbelievable. I remember driving with my two boys, Alexander and Ther. Ther must have been four or five years. And the Duke would move to different houses. I mean, you know, it couldn't be tolerated. And here he was, sitting on that road where you go out Main Street, and you take a right. I forgot the name of the road, but, and then it'll take you out to 28.

Oden

New Town?

Swartwood

It could be New Town.

Oden

Like out in Santuit.

Swartwood

Yes, it's in Santuit. And so, I saw the Duke, sitting in a chair. And so we pull over and at the time, I was a part time judge. And I stopped and I said, "Hey, Duke, how are you? Nice to you bah bah, bah, bah." And he saw the two boys. He said, "Hey boys, come on over here. Get over here." He said, "We're gonna conduct court. And I'm the judge." And on he went. On he went. Needless to say, he didn't last. He died. I don't know how old he was. About 54, something like that. He was young. But anyway, but the bottom line for all of that activity is, and friendships, is that I got a pass. And it was good. It was fine. Even to this day.

Oden

It's interesting that it's continued. You going over the daily paper and meeting your gang and that's-

Swartwood

Yeah.

Oden

That's good. So, when you were a kid, you mentioned him as a real character. Who are some of the other like, older characters about town?

Swartwood

Well, you had the Charlie Brooks group. Yeah. You get to put this in perspective. The players were Charlie Brooks, Bill Shrieve, Charlie Winding, and Eddie Ropes. So you know, where Eddie Ropes - the Ropes house?

Brownie Swartwood – Emily Yang

Oden

Right. Right up above Ropes beach.

Swartwood

Yeah. Just above them.

Oden

What's now there above the Yacht Club?

Swartwood

Yeah, above the Yacht Club. Okay, that was the Ropes house. And Eddie Ropes, he was so-called Fred. He was about six, two or three. He was a great big, tall guy. I'll tell you a funny story. So the Ropes lived at 13 West Cedar Street on Beacon Hill.

Oden

Yeah, across street from my daughter. My daughter Charlotte lives across the street from there.

Swartwood

Oh really? Oh, I just live right up the street. Anyway, so they would have this party, every home game at Harvard. You know, these people just never graduate. This whole home game at Harvard. They would have an open house and people would come in and stuff like that, and it was crowded at every meeting. It was a lot of fun and a lot of people had a fireplace, but you had to go to the second floor and that was where the living room was. Right so, I was standing by the stairway talking to somebody or talking to Eddie, I guess. And this was when I was in law school. So, and all of a sudden, the doorbell started ringing, and he said, "Hey, come on in. Come on in." He'd yell down. Kept ringing. He said, "God dammit." So he stepped and then fell headfirst. Boom. And he did a total flip and he ends up on the second or third step, going up the stairs. Sitting. On the stairs, on the thing. And by that time, they decided they'd just opened the door and he reached out and said, "Hi hi, welcome." Haha. Anyway, so Eddie Ropes, you know where he lived?

Oden

Yeah.

Swartwood

And then you go across, past the coop. And the first house was Charlie Brooks and then Coolidge Street, and then **Charlie Winding, and then Bill Shrieve, the Shrieve house**, which was the yellow house, and so that's what they would do. That was the path, back and forth like that. And I remember when - they were all smart people and they were - all drank too much.

Oden

Charlie Brooks is one of the ones who was interviewed by Betty Packing.

Swartwood

Oh, yeah, good. Yeah, good.

Brownie Swartwood – Emily Yang

Odenca

And Eddie's sister of course, Mrs. Caddle.

Swartwood

Yeah, but I remember being with Betsy Minot's house, which was on the corner. Right there. So I'm sitting there trying to be friendly with Betsy, and all of a sudden, through the back door comes Eddie Ropes, through the house. I said, "Well, Mr. Ropes, how are you?" And "Hi boy" and he kept going. A shortcut. Haha, yeah right through.

Odenca

That's hilarious. So Betsy is another person we interviewed. Betsy. I feel like we did pretty good with our interviews.

Swartwood

Yeah.

Odenca

Okay. So, Shrieve and then, Charlie Winding.

Swartwood

Yeah.

Odenca

Got it. Got it.

Swartwood

And Charlie Winding, at the time was President of the Marine Midland Bank in New York, in New York City, New York State.

Odenca

Yeah. Any other characters just struck you as like folks about town. You know, in that old - when you were young?

Swartwood

Well, you know, we had our groups and always by age. You know, you had Reed Higgins, Tony Cherbuck. They lived on the corner. Two sisters. They lived in the corner, by the Coop and the white house. The two Holsting girls were part of that. They were all two or three years older than we were, and we were such a pain in the ass to them growing up.

Odenca

How about my grandparents? Do you remember them? Did they make an impression at all?

Swartwood

Well, yeah. Your grandmother, especially. I didn't know your grandfather very well. Meyer was his name, and I knew him in passing. I'm not even sure he knew who I was. But, but your



Brownie Swartwood – Emily Yang

grandmother? I saw with some regularity. She was around. And she would wander around, you know, to see what was going on and all that kind of stuff.

Oden

She was kind of a regular of the beach. Back and forth.

Swartwood

Yeah.

Oden

And they lived there, just to orient people, 100 yards from here.

Swartwood

Yeah. Absolutely part of the neighborhood. And your father Larry and my cousin Bill Sinclair. Of an age, they were best friends and still are. Well, he's dead, but they just ah -

Oden

Yeah, they were great, great buddies. And still, you know even when the Sinclairs moved to Colorado, they'd still talk. You know, occasionally, get together.

Swartwood

Yeah yeah.

Oden

One other story - I think that we should probably start to wind down, but you talked about some of your shenanigans and a particular incident at the federated church that I thought was a good one.

Swartwood

Let's hope the statute of limitations is run on that one. Yeah, okay. Well, it was August in some summer. Semi and I, and - Jesus, we just talked about him. He lived up there, by the low edge.

Oden

Oh, Peter Laquere.

Swartwood

Yeah, Peter. The three of us. It was late August. You know, we've seen each other every night. It was pretty boring. And, you know, and Prue was there, and I don't if Sally was there. And there might have been other people there. So we decided. Since we had nothing to do, that we'd go down to the church. And I'd heard about somebody in the 20s doing this. And so, this wasn't an original thought. And it was one of Neddie's cousins who told us the story we were little people. So, what we did is, we got a record. Fats Domino's "Yes It's Me and I'm in Love Again." And the church, you know, the bells would go off at noon, and so everybody would stop work because they can hear it. And so, we went into the church. Of course, it wasn't locked. When I found the the phonograph record. And we have -

Brownie Swartwood – Emily Yang

Odenca

Because of the bells weren't real bells. They were going out through a sound system?

Swartwood

Is what? Yes, yes. It was a record.

Odenca

The record of the bells.

Swartwood

Yeah. And that's what it was. But we had a 45 and we put it on there, but Fats Domino, turned up the volume, because we could see that, and then hit the thing and ran out the front door. And Semi, Semi is supposed to be the getaway guy. He was gonna get away all right by himself, and yeah, yelled at him and he stopped and we hopped in and went down and went down where my daughter lives, came around, and went down through where the golf course is and secured this room.

Odenca

So Fats Domino was blasting through the center of the village.

Swartwood

Until somebody got to the church and got if off.

Odenca

That's great. Well see now, now that I've heard that, then I can maybe revive it.

Swartwood

Well, I think they lock it now.

Odenca

Well, look Larry Tye would normally be here. If he was here, he would ask you one question to wrap up, which is, what do you think makes Cotuit such a special place? You know, it's sort of interesting. Maybe Anna and Mr. Pearson with their pitch, maybe that was part of. Well, you know, what they said at the time, but today continues to be a special place.

Swartwood

Well, first of all, no one knows about it. Right? If people say, "Where do you live?" I say I live in Cotuit. Well, where's that? And the reason for that is, I think it's clear, it's off the beaten path. Yeah, you go by it on the 28th. And then if you even got on any one of the three roads that goes to the four roads that goes to Cotuit, you're not gonna see anything unless you get down here by Loop beach, and then you go by the Yacht Club, and then go down to town dock, and then here, you'll get some ideas, but you don't know anybody here, and quite frankly, they don't even know each other. I know my neighbors from - well, I've lived here all my life. And they're not there anymore. They're gone. There are new people that occupy these houses and no one's gotten to know them and maybe that's the way they want it. The only way that I see people getting involved is through the Yacht Club.

Odenice

Well, you know, there are other organizations that bring people together.

Swartwood

Well, that's true. That's true. That's true. You got the church, and then you have the museum. And then you have your outfit. The -

Odenice

The Historic Site. Yeah. So there's, yeah, I think there's different things to bring people together. But yeah, I think the off-the-beaten-track hypothesis is pretty consistent.

Swartwood

Yeah. And then if they get off, there's nothing to do.

Odenice

Yeah.

Swartwood

What are they gonna do? Yeah, can't keep parking at the beach, because they haven't got a sticker.

Odenice

Right.

Swartwood

Yeah, they can stop and get a sandwich but that's about it.

Odenice

Yeah. Yeah. That's a good point. The other thing, I think, you know, contributed in some way and maybe it's less evident today, but the whole academic community moving in when the whaling captains started winding down.

Swartwood

Yeah, there's no question about it. My great-grandfather was in Congress, and he had two - he was head of the Commerce Commission - Committee, Committee - in Congress, and he had two professors - Henderson and Taussig. Both he had hired, if not, because he had nothing to do with Cotuit. He hired them - well, he did Harvard, and he hired them as experts for his committee.

Odenice

Yeah, and both those are Cotuit families. Hendersons are still around. No real Taussig connections.

Swartwood

No, Bill Taussig was the last one. Oh and, of course, Mrs. Taussig. Dr. Taussig. My daughter worked for her.

Oden

Oh, really?

Swartwood

Yeah. Would go every afternoon, maybe four o'clock or something like that. And then I just make dinner for her, and then I got to know her.

Oden

Yeah, I got to know her. You know, I was friends with Mary Henderson, who was her great-niece or something, and we would sleep over there at the house, right next to Oregon.

Swartwood

Oh, yeah.

Oden

But she, for folks who don't know, who might be listening. So she was a very famous surgeon, pediatric surgeon with Johns Hopkins Medical Center. I think it's right, invented an operation called the Blue Baby.

Swartwood

That's what I know. That's all I know. And I had no idea what a blue baby

Oden

Yeah, right. Picture it, right? Yeah. Something with the heart.

Swartwood

No, no. And then of course, you know, you had the president of Harvard who lived here, and it was an academic community, by and large, before it was anything else. And it was good. I think people tolerated people of all sorts of different backgrounds.

Oden

Well, I think you know, it was really complimentary of what was going on, which is when whaling captains were dying off. Whaling wound down after the war, and you know, the way there were no more whaling captains and then the coastal schooners went away, because you didn't really need to transport things by sea anymore. So, there were all these houses, these neat, old houses, which could be filled in by people who came here for the summer. And of course, professors didn't, you know, they had their summers free, so they moved the families down here. I think that preserved the houses and they didn't go away. All right. Well, thank you very much. It's been great. This will be preserved for posterity and your great-grandchildren who don't exist yet will enjoy it.

Swartwood

Yeah, well they've all heard the stories.

Brownie Swartwood – Emily Yang

Odense

Well, not the ones who aren't born yet.

Swartwood

No, not yet. Well, alright, alright. Good.