

Subject: Roger and Betsy Reids  
Becca Amesbury

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(first minute unintelligible due to wind)

Rogers: My name is Roger Belengame Reids.

Betsy: laughs

Roger: What are you laughing at?

Betsy: Just talk in a normal voice.

Roger: You talk when you want to talk. I'm the son of Lucretia Belengame, who was married to John Alexander Reid. And that's back in 1941. Just before the big- and I grew up here and I'm still here and they're gonna bury me here.

All laugh

My mother was born in (unintelligible). The reason she was born and (unintelligible) was her mother had gone over to help out (wind) passing away. Her mother was pregnant with Lucretia. And Lucretia was born over there was came back to Cotuit. My father came down to Cotuit in 1922. So was his father from Quincy, Massachusetts. Uh his father was a caretaker for Roloson down here. And then, of course, he was about when he when my father got down here, he was about 10 years of age. 10 to 12 years of age. Well, anyway, so he basically grew up here. We call him a (unintelligible)

Laughs

But then, so my grandfather had come down here to work for Roloson because Roloson was looking for somebody to plant some trees for him in and around the camp that the estate down there.

Tye: So was that this line?

Betsy: You know what evergreen was? That was Roloson's.

Roger: That was Roloson's.

Tye: Okay.

Roger: You gonna tell the story or you want me to tell the story?

(Wind)

Tye: So you're born here. And this has been year round the whole time.

Roger: Not me. I was born in Hyannis. Big time, big city.

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All laugh

Tye: And came here, at what age?

Betsy: He came here as soon as he was born.

Tye: And since then, here all the time?

Roger: Not all the time.

Betsy: (wind) years in the Navy

Roger: She wants to tell the story.

Betsy: Gotta get the whole story.

Roger: Go ahead.

Tye: So can we just get a bit of background and then we'll go into questions about that.

Betsy: I was also born at Cape Cod hospital, my parents lived here in Cotuit, uh Anthony Gabralt and Dorothy Doddridge Gabrealt were my parents, um, up on Main Street, when I was a young kid. Well, when I was real small, my father was in the Army, I lived with, we lived with my grandparents, while my father was in the Army. They were all Doddridges, you heard that name I suppose.

Tye: Yes, what generation of Doddridges? Any idea--

Betsy: Oh. Well, Doddridge family, you know the Doddridge house, the museum?

Tye: Yes.

Betsy: It goes way back.

Roger: So they brought it.

Tye: So, that's three generations.

Roger: It was 1808.

Larry: Wow.

Unintelligible, laughs

Tye: Did the two of you know each other from little kids?

Betsy: Yes.

Roger: Uhh, yeah sort of.

Betsy: We don't know exactly when we first met.

Roger: No, we went to the same Grammar School up here on where the post office is.

Tye: And the grammar school was there the whole time you were in school?

Roger: Yeah.

Betsy: And we went, yeah, it was there when we went to elementary school. Well It was grammar school, it wasn't elementary school.

Tye: And from there, it was, that was what grades?

Betsy: Uhh

Roger: One through six.

Betsy: One through six.

Tye: And after six where did you go?

Betsy and Roger: (Downsfield?) High School.

Tye: You did, okay, seventh grade past.

Roger: Yeah

Betsy: So then I graduated from high school. I went into nursing school, so I was away for well three years of school, one year I stayed in Boston and then I've been back here ever since.

Tye: Huh. So it was Boston, but back here as often as you could, or?

Betsy: Oh, yeah. It was back and forth all the time when I was going to school.

Roger: And were you married by then?

Betsy and Roger: No,

Betsy: Not- not til he got out of the Navy which was a couple years after I finished school.

Tye: Hm. And have you practiced as a nurse?

Betsy: Yes. I well (wind) Hospital for that one year I stayed in Boston. Worked at (unintelligible) hospital, Cape Cod Hospital, worked from, did home IV therapy, and I (wind)

Roger: I was in high school I was in the landscaping business with my uncle. He owned the business. (wind) I went in the Navy. And from there I come out of the Navy and I came back and went into the building trade.

Tye: What years were you in the Navy?

Roger: Uh I know, why do you want to know?

Tye: One reason I'm asking is because, uh yesterday we or two days ago we interviewed somebody who was World War II era, this was (wind) was it Korean War era, were you?

Roger: No, no, Vietnam.

Tye: Vietnam era, okay.

Roger: Yeah, I was from 1960 to 64.

Tye: And then you came back, and I interrupted you.

Roger: No, that's okay. I came back and because in my travels in the Navy, I found that Cotuit had the best drinking water.

Laughs

Roger: Okay. The best drinking water. We had it until up until a couple years ago they started putting chemicals into it. But we did we had best drinking water because I was on the ship I was down in the engine room and I know where the drinking water came from. People weren't defecating in it. You know, Navies treat their men pretty good because they don't want them sick. They ain't no good to the Navy sick.

Betsy laughs

Tye: It's true. So you come back here and what what happens then?

Roger: Well, you got to make a living. So I started going to work and working for different ones all over the place here and finally, I ended up in business for myself.

Tye: What kind of business, construction?

Roger: Well, construction, I was like uh home repair stuff in the end. Yeah.

Tye: it's a great business to have, and generally been here?

Roger: Yeah. Oh, yeah. I had some very good customers here. Yeah.

Tye: And when did you get married?

Roger and Betsy: 64

Tye: So certainly, you've been off in the Navy, you had an incredible nursing background at a place like Children's Hospital. You could've gone anywhere. Can we talk about the drinking water? I presume you're serious about the drinking water, but you could've also still gone to a lot of places with good drinking water (wind) Cotuit. You knew this place really well. What was it about Cotuit? Having seen the world in the Navy, to come back here.

Roger: It's a good place to bring up children.

Tye: Because?

Roger: Because (wind) got influenced by a lot of the outside stuff later on in their lives. We, we got a beautiful bay. I used to swim across this bay, you see. Used to go (wind) used to go crabbing out there. Let em go, don't have to worry about (wind), as long as he didn't go outside the harbor he's alright he'll come back.

Tye: So it seemed like a bubble, that was a safe bubble?

Roger: Oh, nice place. Safe, yeah.

Betsy: We both had a lot of family here.

Roger: Yeah.

Tye: And still didn't have children?

Betsy: Yes.

Roger: Yeah.

Tye: Any of them here?

Roger: No.

Tye: No.

Roger: They can't make a living here. Not the kind of living they got. I mean, one's a chem- uh, mechanical engineer and another one's a CEO of a company.

Tye: So, you've been in Cotuit long enough you've seen a lot of things change

Roger: Yeah

Tye: including the landscape of everything from, you know, what the center of town looks like, and the businesses that were here and left.

Roger: Yeah

Tye: Can you talk about memories of what was there before and how you feel about what's here now? What was what do you remember about the center of town? What was what was here in terms of businesses that mattered to your life as kids?

Betsy: Well there was a big there was a big uh building right on the corner

Roger: The post office. And the barber shop. (wind) store.

Betsy: Yep. That's where the original post office was.

Tye: So we joke all the time about hating to leave the bubble to go do anything from getting a haircut to going to the store.

Roger: Yep

Tye: You didn't have to do that, you didn't have to leave the bubble

Roger: No.

Betsy: Oh, yes, we did. The nearest grocery store other than you know, these are just little stores. If you wanted a real grocery store, you had to go to Hyannis. Almost everything was at Hyannis.

Tye: Osterville?

Roger: A and P

Betsy: There was and A and P in Osterville eventually, I don't know if they, but we used to go to Hyannis to buy groceries or Falmouth.

Tye: Now (wind) referred to the store that was here the grocery store that was here (wind)

Betsy: In Cotuit? I don't think it was an A and P.

Tye: It may have been earlier or he may have just

Betsy: Yeah, uh I don't think so I mean Herb Long had a store there. Was there a grocery store after him?

Roger: No, not really. Not really.

Betsy: I don't think there was ever

Roger: McDowald and Giffith, they ran out

Betsy: Yeah that was a little bit after

Roger: Um

Betsy: Actually didn't (wind) grocery store down there?

Roger: Was it Esther Dottridge? No

Betsy: But the building we're talking about was it was another one.

(all mumbling)

Betsy: Yeah that one there. Yeah. Oh, that's right. Yeah.

Roger: Great aunt there started a-

Betsy: cousin

Roger: store up there

Betsy: Esther Dottridge

Roger: It wasn't Esther, the other one.

Betsy: Not Esther, Grace.

Roger: Grace.

Betsy: She was a partner of –

Tye: Oh really?

Betsy: She worked, she did the books there until she retired.

Roger: Yeah

Tye: How old, when was that?

Betsy: When she retired? Oh, God.

Roger: When she retired, 1950, almost 1960 probably.

Betsy: No, not 1960 'cause I worked through the summer after I graduated from high school in 1960 and uh (wind)

Roger: Yeah

Tye: She worked the she worked the checkout

Betsy and Roger: Yeah

Betsy: (wind) and came later

(wind)

Tye: The barber shop here and uh had more choices of kinds of things to do, it feels like the only things that make you feel like you're part of a community here in terms of commercial things now are Cotuit Grocery and Kettle Ho. If you had all those other things, did that matter?

Betsy: It's not so much that as the people, I mean, we knew everybody. As a kid we knew every- you walk down the street people went by you waving all the time. Now I don't, you know

Roger: Now I don't know anybody.

Betsy: I feel like I don't know a lot of people.

Tye: More summer people or more people who really aren't here much?

Betsy: There are more new people (wind) kind of knew everybody

Tye: Was there more than year round population as a percent (wind)

Betsy: I don't think there were more, I think 'cause of the houses and everything

Roger: What was it in the winter, 300 in the winter?

Betsy: No

Roger: More than that?

Betsy: Yeah

Tye: I think it depends on the (wind)

Betsy: I think because then in the summer it was like three thousand, it tripled in the summer.

Roger: Laugh



Tye: My sense is the proportion's about the same

Betsy: Yeah, there's just I mean, there's more houses, you know, places that were woods now have houses.

Roger: I think, uh

Betsy: We were kids, you could walk through through the woods to, you know, you you never went a direct route, you always went through the woods-

Roger: No, we had paths

Betsy: We had paths when we went places

Roger: (laughs), we cut across people's property

Betsy: You could cut through people's yards, they didn't care, 'cause they knew everybody. You know, they knew us.

Tye: Where was your house?

Roger: (Highland?) Avenue

Tye: And where was yours?

Betsy: Uh, Main, up on Main Street, just beyond the (wind) and then until I was then when I was 13 we moved to School Street. I have a hat somewhere but I couldn't find it when I was

Roger: Had a trucking outfit. Had two or three trucks and then we, you know, for his landscape business, and then in the fall we cotted cranberries. You know, (wind) named after was a foreman for (wind) cranberries. And (wind) and company, well cranberry king on Cape Cod. But anyways, from the canal to the Hyannis Airport. Well beyond that, uh, what the heck was his name?

Betsy: Howards

Roger: No, not, yeah, Howards, but uh I'm trying to think Seriella (?) was the foreman for down the Cape. It was split by the company. And so we cotted for Seriella, sometimes we'd have to cot empties into Roger, up here we'd get it out of the West (unintelligible). I went down there two years ago. And you know, trying to find some of the bogs and they're gone. They let them all grow up. We used to go in the early in the morning like 5:30, 4:30. Load up the truck and then take (wind) or take it into West Arlington or North Howards screening house or, take it all the way into Wayham. Depends, you get the (wind) and uh the deer. Used to see the deer going off the bogs early in the morning.

Tye: Wow.

Roger: Now you come around here you don't see no deer. No, no deer anywhere, you see coyotes, but we ain't got we ain't got deer.

Betsy: We didn't have coyotes then either.

Roger: Everybody tells me there's deer here, I ain't seen a deer here.

?: I have some sense for what little boys did around here my father

Roger: Yeah

?: He wasn't here when he was real little but high school he was, but what did little girls do to keep themselves amused?

Betsy: Oh, we roller skated, played games. I remember every Saturday I played Monopoly with a friend of mine.

?: Where would you roller skate?

Betsy: Right down Main Street.

?: Just down Main Street.

Betsy: We had the, you know, the (wind) It was fun. It was usually frozen over all winter when we were kids. We were always down there at night, have big bonfires.

?: Yeah, sledding was at the golf course.

Betsy: right

Roger: Yeah

Tye: And your kids, when your kids were growing up here um was there still a grammar school here?

Betsy and Roger: No.

Betsy: Uh well there was up on the newer one that's now closed. They went to the one on (wind)

Roger: Oh, Highland (?)

Betsy: Yeah, that's where they went

Roger: (wind) We were all skating down on Rider's bogs, Rider's bogs, that's, that's a different place now, that's uh

Betsy: That's uh Willabend

Roger: That's Willabend. We were all skating down there, well come on a snowstorm, right, now we ain't got no way home. We're just 15 year old kids, you know, go anywhere without too many clothes on. We come out to the road, thank the lord, here comes Doctor Ap in his, what'd he have he had a Volkswagen, one of those black bugs and I could see us guys. Some of them got in. (laughs) We were standing on the bumper on the back holding on. And he'd come up the road. We got up here to School Street whatnot where uh School Street and Highland Avenue and I jumped off there. But that's- that's the way we were here.

(wind)

Roger: Oh yeah, he's an uncle of mine.

Tye: Is he an uncle as well?

Roger: Yeah he's an uncle. Mothers my mother's half brother. My grandmother married twice. That's how come you got Couture Belengames and Hyannis Belengames. (Laughs) You know, go over there, produced a few more.

?: But Belengames an old... you know, got some here and there's one down here.

Roger and Betsy: Yeah.

Roger: Bob Belengame. He's a cousin of mine. Yeah.

Betsy: And he grew up in Yarmouth. Yeah.

Roger: Yeah he's a Hyannis Belengame.

?: Dan Belengame was a different family.

Roger: Who?

?: Lee Belengame?

Roger: Yes. His father was Joe Belengame.

Betsy: Wasn't he a?

Roger: He would have been an uncle to Bob.

Betsy: Okay. You know, it wasn't related to your grandfather?

Roger: Grandfather who?

Betsy: Belengame

Roger: Yeah.

?: That's what he's saying.

Roger: Yeah. My grandfather Belengame would have been Compton. Not Kelvin, but Compton. Okay, Kelvin.

Betsy: I know. Kelvin was the son.

Tye: What'd you do in the summers as kids?

Roger: Worked. I cut grass. I could start (wind) how many lawns from twentyeight to meadowpoint. I ended up down at Lloyds, Lloyds had a nice big green lawn out front there. Remember the big backyard?

?: Oh yeah, yeah.

Roger: Yeah, the cast iron (wind). I had to move that in and out sometimes. (wind) lawn down there I'd have to take the good wood, you know, and do that one.

Tye: How about you, did you work in the summer as well?

Betsy: Uh, yeah. Well, you know, when I was old enough, I worked uh I worked once I did babysitting and stuff when I was before I could really work any place. I worked at the snack bar over at Crosby's boat yard. Where the, what's the name of that...

Tye: There's a restaurant there now, a charthouse.

Roger: Did You work for Milton?

Betsy: Yeah, that was - I'm getting there. Now you're telling my story.

Roger: Go on

Betsy: Yeah then I- I worked one summer at the at the coop cashiering then I went off to nursing school.

Tye: Was there, in the summer, when there was an invasion of summer people, you said maybe as many as three times the population-

Roger and Betsy: Yeah

Tye: -did year round people and summer people (wind)

Betsy: Not a lot, it was like two different worlds pretty much. Some you know, some did you know like I had a friend that family owned next door owned a house next door and I got friendly with the with the daughter there. But you know, we didn't have boats we didn't belong to the yacht club or anything. So we didn't sail, a lot of the summer kids as you know did that and still do.

Roger: Yep.

Betsy: I like to watch them. But uh we never did that. You know there was some people that we knew, looked forward to seeing every year, and there were other people, a lot of money people that uh we didn't just didn't weren't in the same circles as those people, you know.

Tye: So when people are coming for the summer um they didn't have to, to be able to afford a place here, they didn't have to be big money (wind).

Besty: Well, they had more money. Yeah, they had they didn't have well, they weren't, they weren't big places. Some a lot of them. They weren't winterize houses, they weren't huge places like they are now a lot have been rebuilt and built, you know, much bigger than they originally were. A lot of them just for, well they weren't camps. But they were just summer houses a lot of them didn't have heat. And then eventually though, so a lot of those people winterize their houses so that they could come here in the offseason and stuff. And some some of the people within the big estates came from out of state.

Roger: Now what happened was, World War II, remember? I was born January '41, right?. So around 43 or 44. Somewhere back there. I was old enough, right? I lived up on Highland Avenue they'd march troops down from Camp Edwards, down the road here, down the other road all the way down to camp (unintelligible). I'd stand out there as a little kid at her grandmother's house and watch these guys march.

Betsy: Yeah

Roger: Yeah. (laughs) So now all these guys that came here 'cause I later on when I was in the Navy, I was in New York. I'm cutting across the road over there somewhere between 42nd street and somewhere else. And this guy said to me, he says, Hey, (wind) Boy, this guy. Who the heck is this guy coming onto me? Well (wind) he says "I want to hear you speak again." He says "Where you from?" There ain't nobody ever believes this 'cause nobody ever knows where I'm from. I says "I'm from a little place on Cape Cod." "Where?" he says. "Little place called Cotuit." He says "I knew it! I heard that language speak somewhere" he was a photographer for the Time Magazine.

Tye: Incredible

Roger: He he was stationed down here with the army to photograph things.

?: Yeah, that's funny.

Betsy: Today they say, what are you from Massachusetts? At least, yeah

Roger: But all these people, World War II, came to the cape. And I don't know how many of them came through here. I have no idea... 4 5 years... they came back.

Betsy: A lot of them came back.

Roger: Lot of them came back

Betsy: (wind) there were a lot of people, you know...

Tye: I'm amazed how many people spend time here as little kids and ended up retiring here because

Betsy: they still remember, yeah.

Tye: Wonderful memories

Roger: Oh yeah.

Tye: So

Roger: We ain't even get into the part about (wind)

Tye: Let's get into it

Roger: We'd borrow a boat.

Tye: Really?

Roger: Well, take it for a sail. But, here the thing we always did...

Betsy: We did not damage it, put it back where we found it.

Roger: No, we brought it back, put it on the moor, and go about our way.

Tye: Wow, how'd you learn to sail, Roger?

Roger: The hard way. Yeah the hard way.

Tye: You didn't have some (wind)

Roger: I had a kid here in Cotuit who I'd go out sailing with.

?: Yeah, who is that?

Roger: Well, the boat belonged to Diane Moore.

?: Yeah.

Roger: And then I'd out with Nick.

?: Okay

Roger: And uh we got out one time 'cause we we he N-Nick really like to push the boat to its limits.

(laughs)

Roger: We left rope speed, made attack for oyster harbors which would have been back then Blakelee's house. You know where I mean?

?: Yeah

Roger: Right. The temptation. Solution.

?: Right, it boy was the boys at the time.

Roger: Right, boys. Well anyways, we go going over there and he's hauling it in, hauling sheet in. Haul that sheet in (laughs)

Betsy: It was one of those kids 'cause it was the summer kids.

Tye: Yeah

Roger: He says, haul that sheet in. Wham, snapped the mast. On a Cotuit we snapped the mast.

Tye: Oh

Betsy: That's not good

Roger: No, it wasn't. 'Cause I-

?: Turn off that end of the sail and I never saw it out sailing (wind)

Betsy: Well Diane had that, someone said Diane took that to Florida-

Roger: She did, she took it to Florida.

Betsy: Yeah

Roger: The top seat. Yeah, something like that. See we even know each other's boats.

(laughs)

Tye: That's a great village. I want to go back to the story. I love the story about, you're borrowing a boat for the night, you might as well get 24 hour use out of the boat-

Betsy: That wasn't me, that was him.

Tye: But I love, that- it reminds me of a story that Dr. Ap told us, he said they had, when summer people left that kids would go in and –

Roger: Yeah

Tye: check out the house, and just see what things-

Betsy: I hadn't done that.

Roger: No, no.

Tye: But did borrowing the boat-

Roger: Yeah, we did.

Tye: Did, did uh anybody ever give a hard time about that?

Roger: Uh, I don't know. Like we never got caught (laughs)

Tye: You were careful enough

Roger: No, you make sure you tie it up the same way you found it. Yeah.

Tye: So there's nobody that we've interviewed that doesn't suddenly partway through it get a sparkle in their eye and say I'm not sure if I should tell you this, they tell us about other things they did too. Anything, anything that, uh, I love that story any other stories about what kids did for clean fun?

Betsy: Well Halloween was a big thing.

Tye: Yeah, what was it?

?: Oh, really?



Betsy: Halloween, teenagers would would borrow things from like rowboats, trash cans, and put them in the park.

?: Oh, really? That's funny.

Betsy: I remember one time going with a whole group of kids down to Weston's barn and getting some kind of a wagon that we were going to tow up to the to the uh park. But the police had other ideas. And we were right in front of Ed Mikehawk's house, on Main Street. And Ed claimed the wagon as his, and uh then we had to take it back or somebody had to take it back, I wasn't involved in that part, but I'm sure these kids (wind)

?: I don't remember ever seeing cops around here, maybe they came over for the occasion.

Betsy: Oh, for Halloween, yeah.

Roger: Oh they were here.

Betsy: They would come once in a while but they didn't they didn't come often. Well, there was one time, there was a while when we had a cop directing traffic downtown, how far back was that?

Roger: Are you talking about (wind)

Betsy: No, not that far back. No, but I can remember

Roger: Constable Hawksy?

Betsy: No, just a local, local cop. This was back, maybe in the 40s or something

Roger: No, I don't know. No...

Betsy: I don't know, I remember... and there were other stores, like there was a beauty parlor. There, um, do you remember uh Isaacson store in Falmouth? It was a clothing store

Roger: They had a-

Betsy: They had a little place downtown here. Yeah, yeah, um

Tye: You have to tell somebody who um had no idea (wind)