

Matthew Winkler, Vicky Wesson

Wesson

From the Ropes' beach. I don't know what you did there or what your plans are.

Phil

Well, the the wildflower came in a lot better than we expected.

Wesson

Yeah it did

Phil

And we're we're told that they'll be better next year even.

Tye

So they came in wonderfully.

Phil

I was happy to not have trees on that slope with the [unintelligible]

Wesson

Oh you were? I thought you wanted some privacy maybe.

Phil

No, no. I mean, we we had plenty of privacy. But trees were breaking with every storm. And I'm sure the last one would have been a disaster.

Wesson

Oh don't even tell me about it.

Phil

And we got we got a few down. I I spent last weekend in the company of my chainsaw.

Wesson

Yeah, I'm waiting for my tree man over there three days before.

Phil

Yeah

Wesson

Cleaning [unintelligible] and topping stuff and whatever. And then that storm hit. You had never known they'd been there. So now they say they're not free till March.

Tye
Oh, geez.

Wesson
You know

Tye
The. So you know what today's date is?

Phil
13th?

Wesson
Uh, 12th. 12th I think.

Tye
Great. So we are

Wesson
Or is it the 13th.

Phil
Close enough

Tye
In Cotuit with Victoria Wesson. And we're either the 12th or the 13th, whatever that Saturday is in November. And let me take one minute and tell you what we're doing with this project and the how this got started. And the um when Jim Gould was leaving town, Phil and I spent an hour or two with him. And we were safely uh protected from any COVID infection. But we were infected with his obsession for Cotuit history. And

Wesson
Which was 90% incorrect as far as I could tell.

Tye
Okay, so

Wesson

But, but Leonard was 100% incorrect.

Phil

Yeah.

Wesson

Anyway.

Tye

So what we're doing is, we don't pretend to know enough to um talk about Cotuit history, though Phil does, the um ourselves. But what we're trying to do is interview the most interesting people in town. And it started out with a few interviews. And then everybody we talked to says you've got to talk to these three other people. And if there's any single question that is driving this inquiry, it is a question of what makes Cotuit the most special place not just on Cape Cod, but maybe on the planet, and talking to people who have been here a long time and have roots in it and help under, to help us understand that. And what we're going to do with these interviews, is the these um are easily transmitted as electronic recordings, and we're doing transcriptions of them. And those will go to the historic society. And someday

Phil

Along with the recordings

Tye

Along with the recordings. So the actual recordings and the transcripts of them will be on file at the historic society. Um and someday, we may write a piece for the Globe magazine or for the New York Times Magazine, and possibly for NPR, because the interviews, hearing people in their own voices tell these stories, I think, are intriguing. And we're also hoping that in some small way, this becomes a model for how communities should be doing oral histories. Everybody always says we should get people down on tape, while the people who know the stories are around to tell them and nobody ever bothers to do that. And the good news is we've got some incredible stories. The bad news is that in the short time we've been doing this, a number of the people we've talked to are no longer here. Edie Henderson who we talked to, Jane, how do you say her last name?

Phil

[unintelligible]

Tye

[unintelligible] We, but the our last interview was with a guy who I found fascinating named Wingate Lloyd.

Wesson

Oh Wingate, yeah, he's really nice.

Tye

Who was telling us great stories. But the so a number of people we've talked to have pointed us to you including most recently, Jim Heck, who says you've [unintelligible]

Wesson

Well, I don't really know him

Tye

You don't know him.

Wesson

But other than that I've met him. But anyway, do you have any intention of correcting some of the things Jim Gould did because my my real sore spot with him, I didn't [unintelligible] by the book it was so bad was the uh his uh description of the Ralston family which is they tore the house down now, Evergreen and Mr. Crawford have it and it was the hotel and how it ended up that way. And he was so wrong on that that it was just I, because Bobby Ralston was a great friend of my fathers.

Phil

Yeah we'd certain, we'd certainly like to get the story.

Wesson

And it was just so incorrect it just made me burn up and that brings us to the Burns's, who he gave credit to and the widow Burns or whatever married old man, um, uh, Ralston and ended up getting the money but he said it was her son died in a fire, wasn't her stepson everybody hated her the Burns's is didn't have any money. So they got the Ralston's money and everybody in town, anyway.

Tye

So the answer is we were corrected by asking you about it and getting it correct in this version. And that's the I hope that this whole project is a corrective to all the wrong histories are out there. Um on the other hand, everybody's memories only as good as a [unintelligible].

Wesson

Exactly.

Tye

So we've talked to lots of people. Um...

Wesson

And and you had Richie Bug?

Tye

Um so he's on our list. The um we talked to

Wesson

And Brownie. Brownie doesn't go very far back.

Tye

So Brownie was wonderful. Dr. Rap was really interesting. There are a lot of people um who we've talked to, but what I'd love to do is start with you in terms of how, what generation of your family ended up here. It was Arkansas based?

Wesson

No, no.

Tye

Where were

Wesson

Massachusetts.

Tye

Massachusetts based. So

Phil

Springfield right?

Wesson

Yeah, Springfield.

Tye

Springfield. So I'd love to hear who first came here from your family and why Cotuit, how they ended up in Cotit. And if you wouldn't mind it, if the tape misses our questions, that's not bad,

we don't want it to miss your answers. And if you could just occasionally look, if you say something, you'll watch the bars.

Wesson

I can't see a thing. Oh, hold on a minute.

Phil

Yeah, we're burdening you because we we had it crap out on us on one one, we lost the whole thing.

Wesson

What what am I supposed to be? Oh, turn [unintelligible]

Tye

Yeah. Do you see bars, yeah do you see bars moving as you're saying anything?

Wesson

No.

Tye

Now say something. Just test it on and the

Wesson

Ah, hello, goodbye. Where am I supposed to see bars?

Tye

So bars will be, they are they're moving across here. The um

Wesson

Oh, little teeny things

Tye

Little teeny things, yes. That just indicates that it's recording.

Wesson

Well that's a challenge.

Tye

It is. But you don't have to pay attention to as long as

Wesson

Now is this the part I have to speak to or just the face of it?

Tye

Any any part of it. It's

Wesson

Oh, okay.

Tye

Great. So tell us how you ended up, your family ended up here.

Wesson

Um, my great great grandfather, Frank Luther Wesson came here from uh Springfield, Massachusetts, right after the Civil War. And he stayed at the Santuit house and uh at where Ropes' beach now is and uh he had four children. And he was uh uh, they drove and my aunt Cynthia said it took when she was older, it took her three and a half days by horse and carriage to come from Springfield.

Tye

So

Wesson

Where they spent the night around the road I have no idea.

Tye

But why come all this way from Springfield, what was it?

Wesson

Because there were a lot of electrical storms in the Hudso, in the Connecticut River Valley and it caused him migraines. So they said there were no electrical storms on Cape Cod. So he came here to get away from his migraines.

Tye

Wow.

Wesson

And he married my great great grandmother, was from a Montreal and her father was in publishing and uh Lovell, the name was Lovell. And then he was killed. My oldest aunt Mabel was 10 years old. And my aunt Cynthia was six months old because he was escorting a maiden

aunt back to Montreal, because women couldn't, uh travel alone in those days. So he was on a train and it was before you got to Canada, and it was a railroad bridge. And the railroad bridge collapsed onto the frozen river below and he was killed. But apparently he was the only person that was killed.

Phil

Really?

Wesson

Ah, and well because he was found stripped naked on the ice, because he had a sable lined overcoat. And uh whatever. I think he was a bit of a [unintelligible], I don't know. But he was the youngest in his family. And there were older brothers and sisters. I think—

Phil

I've seen somewhere or read somewhere that there was a Lovell connection and I wonder does it, are they

Wesson

But it was Montreal

Phil

But not so not not the Andrew Lovell family?

Wesson

No. So it was Montreal. And her father was in publishing and after the Civil War, that's where, well that's nice, uh, it was across, uh, uh, thing was he took in Jefferson Davis and his family after the Civil War in Montreal. And Jefferson Davis's mother actually died in their house in Montreal. So that's part of the, uh, that's the first sign of Southerner showing up but nobody had any knowledge of that. So he was killed in the railroad accident. And my great grandmother, great grandmother, I guess he was my great grandfather, not my great great, uh great grandfather, and my great great grandfather was Daniel Baird Wesson. And uh so he was killed and she kept coming down here and they had built this house. Uh, the it's right on the water there. Jim Manzi owns it now, a typical shingled house, and my great grandfather was in the post office or whatever. Um and he overheard two natives speaking and they said who's the dang fool building down at Rushy Marsh. And uh uh he said I am because there had been a terrible hurricane at one point and everything from Rushy Marsh down, there were houses and they got moved or whatever.

Phil

Those were like the original settlers

Wesson

Yeah

Phil

The Neckerson's and they [unintelligible] high ground, that was

Wesson

Yeah. So nobody wanted to live down there because of flooding or whatever it was. But it was sort of I think it's poetic. And anyway, a higher bluff. So he was there. And uh he was the last house down at that point in time. So my great grandmother raised the children here in the summer. And that's when my aunt Cynthia, who was six months old at the time he died, so four children between 10 and six months, and um two boys and two girls. And so she came down in the summers. And uh that's when my aunt Cynthia said it took so long to get down here.

Tye

And when they came, that that's extraordinary that they were coming in horse drawn carts.

Wesson

Well, it was right after the Civil War, there were no cars.

Tye

Exactly. But just the idea that the um, were they coming with provisions to, any idea?

Wesson

Um, no. I think they I know, they all had gardens and things. Um, I have no idea.

Phil

Presumably the other residents at Santuit house were doing the

Wesson

Same thing.

Phil

Same thing. Coming down from Boston probably, yeah.

Wesson

Yes. Yeah. So he built the house rather than keep on staying at the Santuit house. And then he was killed. So my great grandmother didn't know what to do with these two boys who were in the middle. I think one was eight and one was six. And so she bought him a cat boat. And they

cruised to the entire uh uh coast from Maine to whatever, open whatever, and uh did their own cooking and everything else. And the end result was my grandfather was a really good cook. His name was Frank Herbert Wesson, he hated her, but and, and his older brother was Harold. And uh so uh that's, that's how they were there. And then

Tye

Were they, was that generation? I don't know. When Smith Smith and Wesson started.

Wesson

Wow, that was earlier. 1800s.

Tye

Ah. So they were in the business?

Wesson

Uh, no he was in publishing. His, uh no well it's my my Frank Herbert, my grandfather was in the business.

Tye

Mmm.

Wesson

And as was his brother, but uh the uncles, their uncles, who were the brothers of the one who was killed in the train wreck. Um uh they were in the business. And then the younger brother was in publishing.

Tye

You don't know what publishing company?

Wesson

No, I've got some books at home. And so I do know, but I've long forgotten. He was in New York. And then the publishing in uh Canada, in Montreal, was, beats me. I don't I have books with it. But I couldn't tell you offhand.

Tye

And were you spending from the time you were a child summers here?

Wesson

I came all except one year during the war. And uh so I missed one year during the war. And I think that was it. So I've always been here and we rented bud Bailey's house, my father did. One

summer that was the summer of the 44 hurricane. So I've got myself pictures of myself with my father sitting on the lawn before the hurricane hit.

Phil

And that would be the O'Bri, what's now the O'Brien house?

Wesson

I don't know. Bud Bailey's house. No. Bud Bailey's the one here in the in the curve.

Phil

Okay, okay.

Tye

The White House right here.

Wesson

Yes.

Phil

And prior to that he'd been in the house across for Brownie.

Wesson

Oh, well, that was before he got married and whatever.

Phil

Yeah.

Wesson

Yeah. Or had children then they all split and got different houses. Those were all Mr. Sears houses.

Phil

Right.

Wesson

Mr. Sears had a very crush, a big crush on Mrs. Bailey, which is why they have, he hired her as to teach him Italian, he was a bachelor with no family. So he hired her to teach him Italian and uh Harry Bailey, Mr. Bailey senior, was Mr. Sears' secretary.

Phil

Right.

Wesson

Because there were male secretaries then as opposed to females, women didn't get jobs.

Tye

Can I interrupt for one second with that leaf blower going, it's best to turn it the other way.

Wesson

Oh, Okay.

Tye

And I think that the um, it may not pick up us as well. But the yes so continue.

Wesson

Okay. So uh they fell in love and got married. And uh but Mr. Sears was always in love with her was what we were always told. And uh so, so so and Mr. Bailey was just a secretary so he left everything he had to the Bailey's and uh

Phil

Including Samson's Island?

Wesson

All the all the land, all the stock all they whatever, they got everything. So anyway, and she was very pretty, Mrs. Bailey was. I think they both died of Alzheimer's. But anyway, that tend, tended to run in the family. So did all but one of the sons, I think.

Phil

Buddy, Buddy had it.

Wesson

Yeah, everybody did. Except, I think the youngest, Henry did, but I don't think Horace had it. But Henry did. And so did, they all did.

Phil

Horace was named after Horace Sears I guess.

Wesson

Probably, mhm.

Tye

So, you spent a few summers in the Bailey house.

Wesson

One.

Tye

One summer.

Wesson

And then we were in then Captain Nickerson's house. And my, I think we paid I just threw the bills out because they were in Arkansas. We paid 100 dollar, we paid like, it's the house that was the wall cuts were in. And I don't know who's got it now. And it's across from uh the Bones old house, which has, the the woman lives in it now. Painted yellow.

Phil

[unintelligible]

Wesson

Yes. Thank you. Um it's across from that.

Phil

Yeah, the front was just redone.

Wesson

Done, yep. And so we rented that three summers.

Phil

Yup.

Wesson

And uh then my grandmother wasn't well, and uh she just had a premonition that she wasn't going to last much longer. And she asked my father to move in and look after my grandfather. And sure enough, she died at the end of the summer. And I was 10 years old.

Phil

And and move in. This was to Jim Manzee's house?

Wesson

Yes.

Phil

Okay, but when did the—

Wesson

No! We were already there. We rented that for three years to, after the Nickersons. We rented my aunt Cynthia's house for three years. Then we moved into the other house. So we had

Phil

The big house?

Wesson

Yeah, we have three rentals and Bud Bailey's, the Walcott's, which was Captain Nickerson and you paid like \$100 for the whole summer.

Phil

Yup.

Wesson

And uh big difference in rent. And that was his winter house. He moved it in the winter and then he lived in the backyard in the summer, and rented it

Phil

And and, who built the big house?

Wesson

My grandparents did

Phil

Okay.

Wesson

And it was all the lumber came from Arkansas because my grandmother was from Arkansas. She was born in a log cabin in Frenchmans, Bayou Arkansas. And she, the reason she met my grandfather was she was in Boston at Emerson School of elocution, or speech, whichever it was, I imagine it's Emerson College now. And because she wanted to ditch her southern accent, and uh, whatever, and

Phil

How did that work out?

Wesson

As far as I know, I don't recall her having one. But I was 10 when she died. She was sort of a scary person. I thought she was very stern and strict. And uh but they all were back then. So anyway, and uh uh she met my grandfather who was at Harvard, and they fell madly in love, but it was considered a, uh, so they wanted to get married while she was only 18. And her parents not only objected, uh they objected because he was a damn Yankee. And so they sent her to Europe for a year to get over it. So instead, she went to Paris, bought her trousseau and had her wedding dress made and whatever, and came back. And when she was 21, she married him and the newspaper said, well, it was a small family wedding due to a recent bereavement in the family. While there was in the groom's family, there was no bereavement. Uh it was just that they were so ashamed she was marrying and people paid sympathy calls on her parents, but they ended up loving my grandfather. So they, it worked out just fine. He had a grand time. And but so that was it. And they lived in Springfield and down here and had two children.

Tye

So from um rental houses to your grandfather's house or?

Wesson

Yeah, it was my grandparents house. Yeah. And the lumber all came

Tye

Just look again one time. Yes, and the lumber all came

Wesson

From Arkansas from his, uh, he cut all the virgin forest down, which was cyprus in whatever so the interior of the house was all ash and cyprus. I think it's been torn out.

Tye

From Arkansas?

Wesson

All from they sent a special train up, and a whole trade load of lumber, and that he had not only cut the trees, he had uh milled it. And uh there were columns in the house. And you could see the trunks of the trees were this big because they were single boards or whatever. And uh so that's what they built. And so when my father went to Arkansas first, he said he'd get tea sometimes, how's that little, they were supposed be a building a cottage, how's that little cottage on Cape Cod doing so, but you know, they all built big houses because when the families came to visit, they came and they stayed a month or two months. So you had to have a lot of bedroom. So the

larger houses into towns where people were coming from a distance and they had to have some place to put their relatives up. So and families were closer then and uh

Tye

Is that the house that you're in now?

Wesson

No, no. The house I'm in I built.

Tye

Ah. So which house, where is that now?

Wesson

It's Frank McCourt is in it now. Yeah. And he's gutted everything. Yeah. And

Phil

I remember hearing about the Wesson's wood lot up on like near Pecks Boats I think.

Wesson

Yeah, it was on 28 where there's a, uh, is a development now, I think because they changed the zoning on it.

Phil

And that was where you got wood to burn, right?

Wesson

Oh, no as well, all I know is after the 44 hurricane, it took them three years to clear. I gather there were 11 or 1200 trees around the house alone. And to get my father to go from Bud Bailey's house to check on my grandmother and I got a descri, she typed a description up of the whole 44 hurricane. And she was huddled in the big fireplace in the living room, they were huddled in that, with all her help. And, uh, and uh so and she said, just a perfect description that everyone uses, it sounded like a freight train was going through the house. Everybody has the same description of the really bad hurricanes. And so I have her written description and I have the pictures. It took him something like three hours to hack his his way in to see if they were all right. And they were scared to death, only had one window and you couldn't see the house from anywhere. It was covered up with the giant [unintelligible]. Totally, you couldn't see it from the beach. You couldn't see it from the road. You couldn't see it from anywhere. The trees were taller. Uh, one did go through a window in the library. And other than that one hit the roof. They did pretty well all in all.

Tye

So is everything that is McCourt land now, was Wesson land?

Wesson

That's correct.

Tye

Wow.

Wesson

No, no, he's added to it.

Tye

He's added to it?

Wesson

A lot, yeah.

Tye

When was, when did he buy the land?

Wesson

Uh, Oh, after my mother died 20, well, about 20 years ago.

Tye

Has he made, so we hear varying stories of whether there is a commitment to preserve land. Any what's your your

Wesson

No com comment. No comment.

Tye

No comment, okay.

Wesson

Yeah, yeah, he's put it in a conservation thing. And he keeps re upping it for 10 years and 10 years. And uh no comment.

Tye

So can you talk about

Wesson
A lot of speculation

Tye
A lot of speculation

Wesson
But uh there's a credibility problem. So sometimes, you know, you just, it would change tomorrow. It could change tomorrow.

Tye
And say again, it was your mother that sold the land or the...?

Wesson
Her estate.

Tye
Her estate.

Wesson
Yeah.

Tye
So can you talk about um, memories, you have watched Cotuit in these years change a lot. And you've watched other things preserve. What are your memories of what was different about the experience of Cotuit, what it looked like and what it felt like when you came here as a child to Cotuit.

Wesson
Everybody knew it, everybody. And so you, and you knew everybody's certain peculiarities. Everybody was peculiar. Or as my mother would say, he's queer as Dix Hatband. And they all had the same phrases. I of course, knew all my father's and grandfather's stories. And for my grandfather, uh this was kitty paradise, you know, children's paradise here. There was nothing. Absolutely nothing. And uh, um, I, you know, you you remember Foster Nickerson in his cart that Miss Riley, it was like an early golf cart, but because he had supposedly been dropped on his head as a baby. And so he was spastic. So he would deliver mail or deliver things for people. And you'd see him downtown, but you knew, so you'd say, kids would say good morning Foster, or Mr. Nickerson or whatever. And uh uh, then everybody was a bit eccentric, I would say eccentric would describe them.

Tye

Describe some of the eccentric people.

Wesson

Well, uh, we all left our, left cars here with our out of state plates, and they were put away in garages and barns in the winter. So they got older and older and looked worse and worse. So Mr. Lacquer, who had been born in uh China, his parents were missionaries in China. And uh he had an old blue one, and boy was it spotted and old. So he called my, and we were all friendly and whatever had been friends for generations. And they all call my grandfather, Uncle Frank. Because we were all split [unintelligible], the Lloyd's did too, call my grandfather, Uncle Frank. So they came along later down past us. So Lee Lacquer had this old car. And uh ours were old too but he called my mother up and having a tizzy because he said our sprinklers were spotting his car. So she said, I think Lee Lacquer is losing his mind. Spot his car? How could my sprinkler spot a car that's so spotted? That you can't, you know, anyway, and so everybody was eccentric and you called around and whatever. And my father and my mother took uh uh Terry Lloyd and Wingate Lloyd on their first cruise because the parents were older or couldn't do it. And my father had a Wianno senior. And so he and my mother took them to the vineyard for an overnight. Well, that must have been a miserable experience because my mother hated sailing and couldn't swim. And neither could my grandmother Wesson, she could not swim either. They hated the water. So they married avid sailors, and couldn't, couldn't, didn't enjoy it at all. But anyway, and I have pictures of them all on the beach, and their, you know, their full bathing suits and whatever turbans and whatever they wore. And So Terry and Wingate were treated to their first overnight sale to the vineyard with, must have been awful.

Tye

[unintelligible] everybody knew everybody were you let loose?

Wesson

Absolutely. We went, I went, I wandered the woods during the day, I would no more let my granddaughter do that then fly to the moon now. And somebody uh anyway, that's later, Mrs. Cox

Phil

And you were mostly, mostly in the village not

Wesson

Yeah we, no we were sailing, everybody was, the Bailey's.

Phil

I just mean, you were staying mostly in rental houses in your, in your youth in the village?

Wesson

Until I was 10.

Phil

Oh, okay.

Wesson

And then 10 I was in my grandfather's house, and he lived for 10 more years, but he was still working. So he came down on the weekends, from Springfield. And

Phil

[unintelligible]

Wesson

Uh, well, we had a staff and uh mother ran the house for my grandfather. And so yeah, there was a staff on the third floor. Um so

Tye

Was here just for the summer, or did people stay there year round watching it?

Wesson

They put the heat in after the 44 hurricane. However, they would come in the winter sometimes, and there were big heavy curtains across the big doorways. And there were fireplaces. So they heated it and there was an outhouse except nobody wanted to use it. So I won't even tell you how they handled that. But they thought they were brilliant. So they use newspapers. And then well everybody's in the kitchen. You use the newspapers and you put it in the fireplace and it went up the chimney said my father. He said it worked just fine. Uh so anyway, so they did come sometimes. And um uh so we lived on the water ailing was it. Rowing I wanted one year I had to buy my own rowboat. I had a Dory and for \$40 I bought this Dory or my father got it for me. And we had to paint all our own boats in the [unintelligible] and sand them and caulk them, my father said he'd pay for launching them but and he would pay for new rigging. But we if we wanted boats in the water, you had to do the work yourself. So we were, and we had to clean them daily when they were out in front of the house, whether he was here or not. And we

Tye

[unintelligible] how many, how many siblings?

Wesson

I had an older brother and a younger brother. We were all four years apart. And um and so my father just told my mother to let us go. So we rode our bikes. And I used to ride from downtown, back and forth to the house with no hands on the handlebars. Uh in my schwinn that I had to earn. My grandfather gave us bikes, but there were jobs we had to do to earn them.

Phil

It's funny, you know, your, your experience is more like mine. When we talked to Eddie Henderson. She wasn't allowed to go, you know, more than 100 yards up the street.

Wesson

Huh.

Phil

In either direction. Yeah, her parents I guess were very, very, particular.

Wesson

Very strict. Huh.

Phil

Yeah, they were, she was pretty...

Wesson

Well, I remember her sailing. And I remember her sailing when she was pregnant once. And I was maybe a teenager, early, whatever. And she had a leg swung over the tiller, and she was racing a skiff. Yeah. Anyway, uh...

Tye

So it sounds like idyllic, and the uh...

Wesson

Absolutely. And as I said, you knew everybody's peculiarities. And and you accepted it. And you, it didn't mean you're talking about it, but you accepted it and it made it fun and you knew absolutely everybody.

Tye

It also sounds like your grandfather, you could have been spoiled. And he was big on

Wesson

Oh no. Tough New Englanders. Tough New Englanders. No, you did not. And you didn't spare the rod either. There was a leather paddle, oh boy. It was known as a hot hand south of the

border. So you had to lie across the bed. Oh, boy. Wish you got spanked and now you'd be reported to child welfare or something I guess.

Tye

So this was, um, your living, after your grandmother died, your living in your grandfather's home.

Wesson

Yes.

Tye

Were you, um in the winter were you back in Springfield and close to

Wesson

Oh, I wasn't because I was raised in Arkansas. So I was born and brought up in Arkansas then went off to boarding school when I was 12. And my brothers went when they were 10 because the schools were so bad down there, that uh, anyway we were shipped off so that

Tye

Where did you go?

Wesson

I went to Concord Academy in Concord Mass and I went to St. Timothy's in Stevenson Maryland.

Tye

Interrupt quickly to say that my um wife and daughter and sister-in-law are Concord Academy people who, father in law was chair of the board for a while my wife was on it for 15 years.

Wesson

And what was her name?

Tye

Her name was Frushtyre. And he was, I'm trying to think when, so he would have chaired the board something like 30 years ago and took it over in a moment when it was financially teetering as you know, girls schools had a tougher time raising money.

Wesson

Oh, yes.

Tye

So I went to school at Middlesex class of [unintelligible]

Wesson

Oh, Lord, yeah.

Tye

But the Concord Academy was a much more interesting place than Middlesex and Concord Academy just named uh headmaster, the first, black headmaster there and at any school around. At the same time, Middlesex was suffering through a race related scandal, Concord Academy was, Concord Academy is, um, it took going to Middlesex to realize what a great place Concord Academy was.

Wesson

Well, it's awfully hippie now, would be my description. I call it hippie. There's a couple people. Sally Hinkleson went there. Well, he's a bit of a hippie. It was all girls when I went, and I was the first

Phil

[unintelligible]

Wesson

Yeah, he went well, well, after me, because his father was younger than I was. But yeah.

Tye

You started to say

Wesson

I was the first seventh grade boarder they ever had been. Then they did away with the seventh grade, which tells you something. I think they had one more after that. And it was a girl who ended up being president of Harvard. I think she was at and she was from West Virginia, I think. And uh so anyway, uh...

Tye

Not um, why am I blanking on the historian who was recently President of Harvard.

Wesson

Yes.

Tye

She was at Concord Academy?

Wesson

Yes. Yeah. Yeah.

Tye

And I'm blanking on her

Wesson

I just, I just did too, but I'll think of it a little bit here. But anyway, so I was the first seventh grade boarder and I had a wonderful time because I was from the middle of a farm in the middle of absolutely nowhere. So I thought this was uptown. And you had an allowance of two or \$3 a week. Well, I spent it all at Sally Ann's bake shop. And then there was a jewelry store. And there was a record shop and ice cream, two ice cream places. And if you really wanted to shoot your wad, you spent 25 cents for the one that had Jimmy's on at the place that gave you a sugar cone with Jimmy.

Tye

So I remember that was our biggest decision of going to town would you go to friendlies or brigands? And they were competing ice cream places, and I remember Sally Ann's really well. That's very funny. And where did you go from Concord?

Wesson

Uh, went to St. Timothy's. That was for my last four years because Concord was so small. They had a very small boarding department. I think there were either 36 of us or 46, or 50, it was a small number. And my father said that there's always a rift between day students and boarders. And usually I never saw it because I got, I got asked home since I was the only boarder I got asked home every weekend by a different classmate. Well, it took me 40 years to figure it out, was the headmistress had called the mothers together in a mother's meeting, which my mother, of course, wasn't there. And I said now and said, we got this little girl coming all the way from Arkansas, and I expect all of you to do something for her. Well I thought everybody liked me. And I was the most popular person and they were just so nice. And I wrote bread and butter notes to every single one of them. And they couldn't have been kinder except every single one of them said and we know how to make every mother said I know I make very good fried chicken. For some reason they thought that's all southerners ate. And I can do it the way a Southerner does it well, every time it was not done correctly, but I never said a word. Thanked them very much, and had great fun, and they'd take you to the movies and it was fun. Yeah.

Tye

Ann must have made easier coming here to come to Cotit from um...

Wesson

Well, I came sometimes to visit my grandfather in the winter. We never I think we went home at the holidays usually for spring break and Christmas. Pretty much. Uh, sometimes I think we came here one year for Christmas with my grandfather. Um, and I would take when I was at Concord, I came down here for I couldn't obviously go home at Thanksgiving, it was too far. It was you know, DC threes, and you change planes and you stopped the whole way. It was an event to get home. And so I'd come here or I'd go to Springfield and then he and I would drive down. I'd take the train from Concord to Springfield.

Tye

So the, your parents were not involved in the business in Springfield?

Wesson

Oh, my father was in. It was a board of directors. And then after my grandfather died, he was chairman of the board until we got raided. But anyway.

Tye

So you can't say something like raided with me not asking you what was it raided for?

Wesson

Uh, because it had a big treasury. Anyway, so it was, and we I had some relatives who put their stock up for sale, and we only had 49%. So they got control. These people who raided it got control. It was one of the first takeovers, unfriendly takeovers anyway, couldn't do anything about it.

Tye

So, Concord, St. Timothy's.

Wesson

And then I went to Katherine Gibbs secretarial school in Boston, because my father said he didn't like smart women. And I was already too smart for my own good. So that was that I went to secretarial school and then I went to work and I went to work in Arkansas first um making fiberglass covering for airplanes for control surfaces and fuselages and whatever with it, with the goal to get uh the government's General Services Administration's uh uh blessing to that all the planes that went into Vietnam into the jungle were fabric covered, and the jungle rotted up. They were only covered with cotton and linen at that point. And we did this uh fiberglass that didn't rot. And uh so the only product after a little bit of to do that they could use uh on these planes was ours. And except in their usual governments, usual great wisdom, they recovered him every time they went in just as though they were cutting fiberglass. But anyway, they were short takeoff and landing old planes leftover I think from World War Two or Korea, or Korea

Phil

And the glass was [unintelligible]

Wesson

Yes. Mhm. And then of course, they came in with mylar. I don't know what they're covered with now. And as I said, this was over 50 years ago.

Tye

So from Arkansas, how did you end up back?

Wesson

Ah, I couldn't live it

Tye

[unintelligible] one more time.

Wesson

Yeah.

Tye

And it is still

Wesson

Okay. Uh, it was outside of going to Memphis for social life. It was pretty bleak. And so I moved to Boston, worked there one winter. And then I went to New York, and I stayed in New York for 15 years. And then I moved to New Jersey, and I think I was there about 15 years.

Tye

And all of this time, the Arkansas, New York, New Jersey, back here for summers?

Wesson

Yeah, yeah. But when I was in New Jersey and New York, I came here on the weekends, because my Aunt Cynthia also had gotten elderly. And I had to coordinate all her nurses.

Tye

But it seems like this was, did this did this seem like

Wesson

Oh, this, I always enjoyed it here more than anywhere else. And plus, if you live in New York City, you got to get out sometimes. I mean, anyway, I thought I'd never want to leave. But you know, I go back now and I spend a week and that's more than enough. And yeah.

Tye

And full time here since when?

Wesson

Um, about 20 years.

Tye

So are your—

Wesson

Oh, no, no, before then. No. No, I was back and forth. Because I didn't sell the house. Let's just say 20 years for sake of argument, might be a couple years more.

Tye

If we had somebody here, your kids and grandkids they feel as attached to Cotuit as you did growing up?

Wesson

My son certainly does and I think my granddaughter does too. I only have, have one son and one granddaughter, that's it. And and I always commuted back and forth to Arkansas too because my younger brother died and I was left in charge of this farm. That was part of the woodlands that my great grandfather cleared. And that's what my father did as well.

Phil

Is your brother Lee still

Wesson

No, he's he just moved to California. Why anyone would move there, I don't know. But he just moved to California.

Phil

Oh no, but is he alive?

Wesson

Oh, yes, he is.

Phil

Is he doing alright?

Wesson

Yeah, let me see. He's four years ahead, he's 83 now.

Tye

So when you think of what makes Cotuit this place that you um spent such great years of all of your life, um is it an accident that we're a special place? Is it my imagination that we're different?

Wesson

Oh I always thought it was special, I always thought it was different but it's not anymore. Nobody knows the new people. Um, um, um they don't want to know you. They're not interested in the history. All you have to do is watch when they buy a property, and the clear it lot line to lot line. And they just no, of course, I grew up when things were being planted back after the 44 hurricane. So I've got a clear. I mean, there's certainly a lot of pictures of this town that was it was, my grandfather said Cotuit was the eye of the hurricane, which in 38 did not hurt Cotuit. 44 was the killer. And uh,

Tye

And meaning cleared

Wesson

Clear, cleared. And everything went down. And um um, my grandfather's, so Cotuit was supposed to have been the eye of the hurricane. And my grandfather said the eye of the eye was his property. And it really was it was just for whatever reason, it was blitzed beyond belief. And then of course, the 54 hurricanes. 54, 55, the three in a row, two summers in a row. Edna, Diane and Carol, and I can't remember which were two one year and one another year. And uh uh, but everything had already gone over that was gone over, going to go over. So things hadn't grown back enough to be wiped out. Um...

Tye

So hurricanes in the 50s

Wesson

54. Yes. No, the real replanning was before then, because from 44 it just took him a long time to clear it.

Tye

So it survived the 50s hurricanes, the replanting after the 44 hurricane.

Wesson

Right.

Tye

And that's what's

Wesson

Yeah, yeah.

Phil

I mean certainly I remember—

Wesson

But they're clearing it everywhere.

Phil

Yeah. I remember it not being nearly as wooded as it is now. Before the hurricane, before hurricanes was it more like it is now or was it not quite as...

Wesson

Oh tons more pitch pine.

Phil

Okay.

Wesson

Yeah. Yeah, a lot more pitch pine.

Phil

So a lot more deciduous trees got—

Wesson

Yeah. So after the 44 we had Thatcher Gifford, which Leonard did a job on him too, uh, Thatcher had two sons. One was a little skinny guy. Thatcher was a little skinny guy. And one was a great big, great big fella and heavysset fellow, and they put in all the summer docks. So he'd go back into our woods, and cut all the little pine saplings, those were the post, and then we had planks, and then we had pulley lines going out on either side of the dock. I've got pictures of that, too. And he put the dock up. And sometimes he was later doing it. And sometimes he'd

vanish for a few days and my father would have to lay down the law and say Thatcher, I got to have that dock, well, Thatcher had a bit of a drinking problem. But everybody, that was his peculiarity, you know, everybody accepted it. And so one day, he was down there, and my father was watching and trying to move the job along because he didn't get to come much in the summer because that's the busy time on a farm. So he said, he saw Thatcher take a swig out of a flask that was in his pocket or whatever, or a jar or a bottle. And he said, oh, let me have some of that Thatcher. So my father took a swig and he put it in his pocket. And Thatcher said, give it back to me, you SOB. And Father said as soon as you finish the dock I'll give it back, and Thatcher said, I'm going to tell Harry Crocker and uh uh, or maybe it was Milton, I don't know. Anyway, so I'm going to tell Harry Crocker and daddy he said he won't believe you. And he came back the next day. And Daddy said, Well, did you tell Harry Crocker? He said Yes, I did. And he told me he didn't believe me. So he finished the dock and daddy gave him back his bottle. That's how, whatever it was \$100 to put the dock up.

Phil
Yeah.

Wesson
\$100.

Tye
So I can't help but ask, when I go by, um, when you walk by McCourt, various pieces of McCourt property, you see what looks like a coat of arms saying Rushy farms.

Wesson
Well, it was a well, he didn't have enough imagination to come up with his own name. So it was my grandfather's Rushy Marsh farms was what it was called. And then my mother took when we ceased having the chickens. That was another story with my grandfather. Uh, when we didn't have the chickens anymore. Mother took the farms off. We had stationaries say Rushy Marsh farms Cotuit, Mass, with the whatever. And we had the same post office box for years. So anyway, um, uh, he kept he kept the same name. I just can't believe it. He calls his place in Florida that too so, you know, I would have come up with my own name, frankly, but each to his own.

Tye
So—

Wesson
And it doesn't look the same at all. It's the grounds had been done by Olmstead originally and after the 44 [unintelligible] the first on the cape, after the 44 hurricane and and Jamie McCourt

said to me, that was wife number one I've known everybody's first wives I just don't know the second one. And ah, so she said, oh, every place we seem to buy the grounds have been by homestead and we always rip them out. So you know, it's not Cape Cod and they use all this. It's just not Cape Cod. It's like we live in Brookline is what it is or Chestnut Hill is is the new look down here. And I call brownie to say is there some ordinance that I don't know about but I thought you might know. Everybody's putting in these granite entryways to their driveways and whatever. What is that about? I said, is it a law? I said, you haven't done it, but I'm not gonna do it unless they force me to or something. And he said, Nope. I said, Why are they doing it? It was pretty funny. He said to show off.

Phil

That's good.

Wesson

I don't know. I don't know if it's expensive to do or not. But they're all seem to be doing it. Well, this is not Chestnut Hill. So the flavor of the town has definitely changed. There is no question.

Tye

So your memory of what the center of town was like when you were growing up, was it a place that

Wesson

Oh, the park had all the, had the post office a grocery store and the barber shop maybe something else in there. And Mr. Hobbelazow, nobody put that in there. Things, everybody did things in town and they didn't put their names on it. It was old fashioned New Englanders you didn't toot your horn. And Mr. Hobbelazow who lived up in the Benwick Smith house, that, uh, who are the people who live there now Cummings. Uh but it was originally the Benwick Smith's. And they had I think it was the son or whatever had a canoe accident or whatever and drowned. So they left because it was depressing. Same thing happened to Mr. Ailing in Centerville, he lost his son in a canoe accident. And um, so he Mr. Hobbelazow bought the buildings and tore down and gave the land to a town for the park. And but his name wasn't on it, or he didn't want any thing of it. Because I just remember my mother saying to him Carl, that was awfully nice of you to do that. And it certainly improved the looks of the town. They were at that point there were even shops going down to the town dock. They were all all over there were a lot of shops here.

Tye

Was the hotel, the center of activity or not?

Wesson

No, not for us. It was it was some people moved here after having stayed at the pines. And it was the two buildings. The only place I remembered going was because you got ice cream cones. And I remember being taken over when because it wasn't very far from the Nickerson house that we rented, Captain Nickerson's house, and you got an ice cream cone there. But the other of it was if you went swimming and wanted to us their slide, people did it in the middle of the night. We never did. It was private because it was and so it's a private hotel. And some people like the Hills, they they bought here after having stayed there because they'd liked Cotuit.

Tye

So one of the early histories, more talking about um Jim's history and other ones that got it wrong. One of the early histories here that I'm intrigued ago was one hundred years ago that President Lowell from Harvard.

Wesson

He was a friend of my grandfather's, I've got his hornet's nest in my library. Yeah, that that my my grandfather was invited down. He came he was a friend of my grandfather's, older. And my grandmother asked him said Lawrence, my father was getting [unintelligible] age needed to go to a better school. I think it was just public schools in Springfield or something. And Lawrence, where do you get your best prepared boys from? And he said because my grandfather had gone to Harvard and my grandfather's boarding school in Rhode Island had closed and Gates Lloyd senior had gone to it. And nobody can remember what the name of it was. But it was in it was in Newport. And it's it was long gone.

Tye

Portsmouth prairie.

Wesson

No. I think that's Catholic, isn't it? They would never in those days have gone to a Catholic school. Anyway, um, so he said St. Paul's, so she went to the headmaster of St. Paul's. And she said where do you get your best prepared boys from? And he said Aiken preparatory in Carolina. So my father went, [unintelligible] you know she that was her way of doing it so it wasn't, uh

Tye

So all the Lowell's, I mean the, so [unintelligible] Aiken, St. Paul's, Harvard.

Wesson

Yes because [unintelligible] Lawrence said whatever. She was very smart. My grandmother was. And so did that. And um what was his other, what was his other thing? Oh, so they were friendly and I do have a picture he signed with a notation to [unintelligible] my grandfather or whatever. And then he died and he left a list, this is also very New England. Uh Harriet Cavett did it and

Mrs. Ropes in it. You leave a list of items that you want given to a friend to remember you by. So this was open, apparently the house had beautiful antiques and books and whatever. So she asked my grandfather he was on the list to come down and select something and uh, Chinese export porcelain everything, so my grandma was waiting at home to see what he'd come home with rather excited. And he went down and said to the widow, I've always been jealous of envious, not jealous, envious of Lawrence's hornet's nest. And home he came and it looks like an American buffalo. It has a big eye. And it has moss on the sticks that it came off. And we have it in the corner. And it was over at the big house. And I moved it over to my house and it's in the library. So it's A Lawrence Lowell. And I said, rather than going in, that was a New Englander, you didn't take the most valuable thing. You took the thing that had no value whatsoever. But that's what he wanted to remember him by. So I thought it was uh really cute. And I still got the hornet's nest. And then another time they they always told this story was uh you get asked for dinner and so they'd have duck. And uh so one duck came in and Lawrence Lowell was carving away and carving away and uh wasn't much duck left and there were no, appeared to be no seconds. And the wife kept saying, Mrs. Lowell kept saying Lawrence, there's another duck in the kitchen. Lawrence, there's another duck in the kitchen. So they got home and they were still hungry. And my grandmother said, why didn't they bring in the second duck so we can all have enough for more? And my grandfather said, oh, don't you know, Lawrence likes cold duck. So that was, that's all I know about his story.

Phil

I wonder if, uh, some of the

Wesson

Sacco and Vanzetti, which I didn't know about at the time. And of course, oh, he was the one who ruled he was head of the commission to execute Sacco and Vanzetti. It was terrible. And he was vilified later for it. And the law firm, I believe was Hill and Barlow. And they went and which was Sally's husband where he worked. Anyway, it was a Boston law firm. I think it was Hill and Barlow. Anyway, they went in and they got, uh, they got it overturned, because they didn't like it on the law firms reputation that they had not been able to save Sacco and Vanzetti. So the question was, were they really guilty or not? But there was a huge black hand. Uh, yeah, there was there were a lot of gangs and stuff in Boston.

Tye

So that's really interesting, because I always associate overturning, um being Mike Dukakis was with Hill and Barlow, then, and he must of

Wesson

Yes, yeah, you got it.

Tye
Interesting.

Wesson

Yep. And then the same thing, the dormitories at Harvard, they had no dormitories. My grandfather lived in an apartment. He was a classmate of FDR's and uh hated him. And then I didn't realize how everybody else hated him too was until they did a special on the Roosevelt's about two years ago. And I don't know if it was, uh, what's his name. And anyway, there was a history of the Roosevelt's. And it turned out he was the most unpopular boy there, as was his son, James, who my father, he was in my father's class, he said he was the most dreadful whatever person so nobody liked him. That I did know. But I thought it was just they were prejudiced against democrats, and the income tax and a few other things. And but anyway, they didn't like him. And so Lawrence Lowell was on a train going to New York or something. And he was sitting next to a man who was going to Yale, a big supporter of Yale's, and he said, uh Lawrence Lowell said I'm going down to raise some money, we've got to have dormitories and need to build them. And the man ended up after hearing the story, giving the money to build two or three dorms, Lowell House and whatever it was, what I heard.

Phil
Wow.

Tye
The, you were in the middle of asking

Phil
Well, no, it's just, you know, you talked about the eccentricities in town

Wesson
Yep.

Phil
I wonder if some of that was, you know, there was a lot of Harvard professors who followed

Wesson
Oh, a lot of them. Oh, a lot of them.

Phil
That might have brought some eccentricities along?

Wesson

Oh, absolutely. Yeah. Well, but everybody kept to themselves. My grandmother got in the carriage with her calling cards and paid a call on somebody. And the person opened the door and said, we don't pay calls in Cotuit and shut the door.

Phil

Oh my.

Wesson

Yeah, it was very, you didn't, everybody stayed, so I guess where we were, the Bars and Lowell's had enough to entertain themselves. The Bailey's had enough people to entertain themselves, enough a large family, and the Lloyd's had enough. And then there were a few of us in between. So they started, Charlie Hatches day camp in the barn at the Ropes's, and that was for two years. And so they thought all of us kids really needed to know each other other than yelling across, boy room at a race or something, that we should know each other. So we had this day camp and we played Capture the Flag on the Ropes's lawn and all this kind of thing, but we ended up knowing each other, so Terry White was my age. And uh some of the Lloyd's.

Phil

[unintelligible] your contemporaries.

Wesson

No, Brownie's older.

Phil

Okay.

Wesson

Thank you. By about five or six, five years, five years at least. Thank you.

Phil

[unintelligible]

Wesson

Well, I knew I knew.

Phil

I thought it was hard [unintelligible]

Wesson

Anyway, so he was older. But you but you still recognized them or knew who they were.

Phil

Sure, yeah.

Wesson

You know?

Tye

So you mentioned when we started that um Jim Gould got a lot of things wrong in his history. Correct what he

Phil

Yeah, set us straight on everything.

Wesson

Well I didn't read it because I was so upset. I read about who I knew. And I would have to go back and read it.

Phil

You talking about the picture book?

Wesson

No, it was a history of Cotuit, or Cotuit Chronicles, or something.

Phil

He did a, he did a series of blogs, a lot of blogs on

Wesson

Now this was written I read and he wrote about the Roleson's, and he had it wrong. So anyway, it was incorrect. And he said, Oh, Mrs. Burns did this, that and the other. Mrs. Burns was the widow Burns, married old Ed Roleson. And uh Bobby Roleson who burned up in the Chicago fire with his wife had all but one child. They died from smoke inhalation and everybody adored him. Uh, that was her stepson. And but they said [unintelligible] son. So she went after old Mr. Roleson, I think they owned a United Airlines and a few other things, and they were very well off. And uh from Chicago, there was quite a few people here from Chicago, the [unintelligible]. Quite a few people from Chicago. I know the Hinkles came from Cincinnati, I believe, um,

Phil

Cleveland as well, I think.

Wesson
Cleveland was later.

Phil
Yeah, okay.

Wesson
Cleveland was definitely later. Uh, era [unintelligible]. You know,

Tye
And were there, did you start any trend from Springfield?

Wesson
Uh, no outside of [unintelligible] no, nobody came. Now it was just it had to do with migraine headaches, was my thing. So anyway. Well, that's it, so when Mrs. Roleson number two, the former Mrs. Burns died, the Burns's bought a great big sailboat that they named Adele, which was her name. They, the Bailey's, the Bailey boys and my father absolutely furious.

Phil
This is the Burns's from Osterville?

Wesson
Yup.

Phil
Oh, okay.

Wesson
So their money came from the Roleson's in Cotuit.

Phil
Okay. I never knew that connection.

Wesson
Much to the chagrin of the people here.

Phil
[unintelligible]

Wesson

Yeah. Yeah, that was that was the version I heard. And they didn't like her. And Carter Whitcomb and my father once we're talking about going to the funeral. Well, he was so popular that everybody at the funeral was drunk as skunks apparently. And they didn't know each other, that that the other one was there. Carter was older than my Father and by quite a bit, and but I heard them reminiscing over a cocktail or something. And um uh my father was forced to ride in the car with Mrs. Burns, the former Mrs. Burns, but the current senior Roleson, the mother, the stepmother of the fellows funeral. And uh, yeah, and he, he wasn't happy with that. But she, she tapped him. But anyway, he was very popular.

Phil

Any other misconceptions of Cotuit history that?

Wesson

Well, I think Leonard was not only vicious, a lot of it was wrong. I mean, you could talk about some of these people, but everybody accepted their, either their foibles or their shortcomings whether it was alcohol or, you know, whatever it was. Uh nobody, they weren't doing anyone any harm.

Phil

Yeah, yeah.

Wesson

They were characters. It was the character of the village.

Phil

Yeah no, I thought I thought he was pretty mean and, and in a lot of way.

Wesson

And I only read one section, and that was the section on us. There were 80, 80 errors in it. So I just gave up. I certainly didn't buy the book.

Tye

So Vicky Wesson,

Wesson

Hi.

Tye

Concord Academy.

Wesson

Oh she went to Concord too?

Unknown Speaker

I went to Concord Academy, my sister did, my father did, and my father was really involved there for years. Did you like it?

Wesson

Oh, I loved it. I had the time of my life. So anyway, yeah. I loved it.

Unknown Speaker

What was your graduating class?

Wesson

Uh, 61.

Unknown Speaker

Okay, so do you know Kitty Haynes?

Wesson

She was a day student.

Unknown Speaker

And then uh Martha Livingston. I mean, [unintelligible] Livingston.

Wesson

I've read the name but what was her was she Helen Hardcastle or? See I don't know people by their married names. I recognize their

Unknown Speaker

Good point. Um, I'll have to wrack my brain. But Beau, Kitty and Collin were really involved.

Wesson

Yes, I've seen their names in the Bolton's. Yeah.

Unknown Speaker

My two nephews are there as well.

Wesson

I'll be darned. Well, I went to the 25th reunion and Tom Wilcox was the head then. And I'm, I wasn't thrilled with him. And then I went to the 50th and [unintelligible] we were supposed to have had our 60th last year and couldn't go, so, nobody could, so.

Unknown Speaker
Maybe for the 70th.

Wesson
I don't know [laughs]. Yeah, but it was whatever. But the town hadn't changed that much.

Unknown Speaker
No, no not at all.

Wesson
And I loved Mrs. Hall. That was, she was the headmistress when I was there.

Unknown Speaker
Did you know how to whistle?

Wesson
Uh no. I sawed wood a couple of times. But yeah...

Unknown Speaker
She sounds like she was amazing.

Wesson
She was fabulous, yeah.

Tye
Donny, Phil, Vicky.

Donny
Hello

Wesson
Hello

Donny
Hey, how are you doing?

Tye

Um the, and if we, Donny will get the kayaks.

Unknown Speaker

[unintelligible]

Donny

[unintelligible] no problem.

Phil

It's actually a great bit, great bit of history.

Wesson

I know gossipy stuff. But you know, I heard it basically from the horse's mouth. So you know, that's why...

Tye

So mainstream um, the one, when did it become, um... [unintelligible] it seems like [unintelligible].

Wesson

Extraordinary. Well, it's the building. And they've smashed my gates at least four times. And the man who did my gates doesn't want to come back and do them anymore. He said, wait till it stops. And that was Jim Manzi, it's all turning around, and I spoke to him. And he told me to just speak to the foreman, and he couldn't be involved. And I spoke to the foreman. And so they couldn't turn around and bash me more. And it was no point in replacing it, they, they were totally destructive to my property everywhere and fixed nothing. And I thought, well, I'll give them till September 15 to make amends. Instead, I started getting nasty messages. So anyway, but, and they don't like the fact that I marked the property line, they promised they were going to and they didn't. You know, conservation, asked them to do one thing and they say, Oh, they're going to do it. And whatever. And they promise they're going to do this, that and the other all of them, I see this, and they go in and just do the reverse. No, whatever. But I do know about the people on Nantucket, who sued, and took it to the SJC or something and beat conservation over there. And the man who I got this from Pete Solomon, paid 2 million out of his own pocket to beat conservation, but he won. So the Conservation Commission's can't afford those kinds of lawsuits. So they are really much do, but everybody does what they want to do. And then they seem to pass as near as I can figure out, they come over and, oh, we want you to do this, because it's the wetlands and it's, you know, conservation 150 foot, and they do what they want to do. And then they come over well, it's done. I got a fence and they said, so I'm watching a 10 and a half foot wall go up now in wetlands in a flood zone. So 10 and a half foot tall wall.

Phil
Okay.

Tye
The

Wesson
Nice to meet you!

Unknown Speaker
Very nice to meet you.

Wesson
Yeah.

Tye
What have we um not asked about that you think is really important for people to know about this village?

Wesson
Everybody stayed to themselves. It wasn't didn't mean that you weren't so civilized and, and whatever else. And uh um, I don't know, I, it was just it was you stayed to yourself, you had free range to go anywhere. If there was anyone now, there's three registered sex offenders in Cotuit. And, uh, you know, we didn't have that kind of thing. I wouldn't let my granddaughter go walk in the woods anymore. And with the traffic, the kids can't ride their bikes to sailing anymore. Even my son could ride his bike down. Uh and we of course, didn't have the sailing programs. We had Cove series in skiffs when you were 10. And uh so...

Tye
Explain something. You said two things that I find interesting and I want to understand how they jive with one another. On the one hand, everybody knew everyone back in those days. [unintelligible]. So was the, they understood the balance

Wesson
Right. And it didn't mean they didn't like you or whatever. So but when someone had a party, it was a big event. I've got a letter that after the war, and it was well after the war was over, but we still had rationing because we were trying to feed Germany. And uh so people didn't realize rationing, my grandmother had somehow gotten so, hold of two hams and she was giving a big dinner party and for everybody to come enjoy the hams because nobody had had a ham. And uh

Harriet Cabot said to her mother would, there's a letter, her mother was so excited. Everybody was going to try to find their best dress because they hadn't had new clothes either. They hadn't had anything. And in our attic were metal trash barrels, and one was full of sugar and one was full of uh matches because there was no sulfur that went in all your gunpowder and uh she said she was never going to do without it again. So she stocked up after the war in her attic because she was afraid that would be another one coming.

Tye
Did you ever—

Phil
I have to cut out. I need to get to the post office.

Wesson
Oh, okay. I went first thing I was over and born at eight o'clock.

Phil
Have a good one. It was very nice to [unintelligible]

Wesson
Okay, nice to see you too.

Tye
See you Phil. So I have one other question which is did you ever see any signs of rum runners?

Wesson
Oh Lord, yes. Ah, well, that that was one of our they ran it, they used our beach. And so a very a well dressed man, apparently very attractive, knocked on the door one fall when my grandmother was there. But my grandfather wasn't there and said, um plus I heard Bud Bailey's story, um, uh, could he use our beach some nights. And my grandmother said, well, I'll have to ask my husband. And uh my she asked, my grandfather said, oh my God, he said, you say yes. Because otherwise he'll burn the house down.

Tye
Wow.

Wesson
And so we weren't there. But sometimes my father came down in the winter and he had a horse. So he'd ride and watch him running it in. But uh he one, so we always got the only reason they

knew that the rumrunners had used the beach, that there was a gunny sack at the back door of uncut liquor.

Tye
Wow.

Wesson
So that was when they used the beach. The wagons went down, picked it up and left. Well, one.

Tye
[unintelligible] where would they, so they were dropping it off there, and any idea what happened?

Wesson
Sure they trucked it off somewhere. Yeah, wherever they were selling it, New York, Boston, I don't know. But they're running it in here. So one time there were two gunny sacks. Well, it turns out the wagon had gotten stuck on the beach. So they had to go over to our stables and get a couple of horses to pull the wagon out of the sand. And then a third time there were four gunny sacks of cut liquor, my grandfather was perfectly happy because they all drank not excessively but they had one drink a day and they sure like their one drink a day. And they didn't agree with prohi, prohibition. They thought it was a dreadful mistaken and it turned out it was. So so before gunny sacks, well, the Feds were onto them. And we had a laundry house in the backyard. And they stored the whole boatload in the basement of the laundry house to avoid the feds. So we got four sacks out of that, but nobody was home at the time. So anyway...

Tye
That's incredible. But also your grandfather sounds like he was really sappy and he knew [unintelligible]

Wesson
Yep. And then my father was in an awful automobile accident at Harvard. And uh uh one weekend, his cousin, he was [unintelligible] car went out on a concrete sidewalk. So he was at MassGeneral for eight or nine months, and uh terrible injuries. And uh so he still had it was the middle of the Depression. He still had two years of Harvard to pay for. My grandfather had spent all his money on the hospital. And uh so he drove a truck to the Canadian border. Four trips, he said, four round trips paid for two years at Harvard. And I said, well, did you carry a gun? And you know, the first time I heard about this was, I was young and working in New York, and and I was at a cocktail party with an older friend that my father had worked with during the war, who was in CIA, was OSS then. And uh he said, Oh, and her, he was introducing me to these people. And he said, and her father was a real character. He was a a a rum runner, [unintelligible]. And

I'm sitting there, my mouth hanging open, and I went home, and I said, Daddy, what were you, what were you doing? And so I always heard these stories, because he never said a word about anything he did. I'd always have to hear it through somebody else. And he was, uh, whatever. So anyway, he was a little wild. And um so he did four four round trips. And I said, did you carry a gun? And he said, no, because if you had a gun, they would kill you. You just gave him the load. And he said, he did not have an incident. And as soon as he got, made enough money, that was what he wanted, he wasn't going to continue it. He just stopped cold. He just did four trips, four round trip paid for two years at Harvard.

Tye

So one of the things that I just sort of [unintelligible] wonder if you think is true that [unintelligible] in a small village people [unintelligible] certain community, you know, [unintelligible] Cleveland or whatever, [unintelligible] but one of the things [unintelligible] just told me, that there were an unusual number of ex CIA people here. That the, do you think

Wesson

Uh, no. It was really afterwards I think Gates Lloyd senior, uh, was there and he had guests who came I remember passing him in the Wianno senior and you would see was uh uh was it Allen Dulles who was head of the CIA and and you saw and I had to play tennis once with a fellow he'd been indicted, he wasn't held to account. They roped me into playing tennis with him. Um, so, uh...

Tye

So the answer is yes, they were

Wesson

But they were visiting the Lloyds.

Tye

They were just visiting.

Wesson

They weren't here.

Tye

Lots of them who moved?

Wesson

No. My father, I spent two years, first two years of my life I was in Jamestown, New York. And my father was trying to make, they were trying to build drones. So there were OSS people up there that he met through whatever. And uh but that was separate. We didn't have anybody from

Tye

Did they succeed in building drones?

Wesson

Uh, no, never got one off the ground. Uh but the Germans had them. So we were trying to make them and it was I gather, more or less a secret operation. Yeah.

Tye

Any other, these are extraordinary adventures where little Cotuit becomes part of the big trend of rum running during Prohibition. Anything else like that?

Wesson

Well, Mr. Mr. Crocker fed everybody in the Depression. And uh my father always said how soon people forget. And that they promptly went to the big grocery stores when they came in and whatever. And uh he told my mother to buy absolutely everything from the Cotuit grocery that she possibly could. So she had ordered cases of toilet paper and whatever else, and she'd get a discount. And uh, yeah.

Tye

Did people afterwards try to pay him back?

Wesson

No, that was my father's complaint that people forgot that he'd fed a lot of Cotuit. Now we had our own chickens. So when I was a child, if we picked the strawberries and the vegetables, we could sell them to Mr. Crocker. That was Milton, not Harry. So we, that's how we got our spending money. We didn't we did not have allowances. Uh, you had to earn your spending money. So we picked...

Tye

So the grocery was always a centerpiece of the town?

Wesson

Yes.

Tye

Wow. He just did it out of the, he could afford to do it and was just a generous benefactor and thought that's the right thing to do?

Wesson
Who?

Tye
Crocker

Wesson
Oh, oh, yeah. People were hungry.

Tye
Just amazing that he did that.

Wesson
Yeah, we had cows. We had our own milk, apparently. I don't remember them. But I do remember the chick, chickens. and Mrs. Landers. We'd take our chickens down and she would wring their necks and dress them for us. She had turkeys. She was on Old Post Road. And her son ended up being a policeman but Mrs. Landers, yeah.

Tye
So that is all that um I have. If you think of anything else at any point, you've been-

Wesson
Well, Vincent Bailey, Vincent Bailey, the youngest of the Bailey brothers, there were four. Vincent got in a rowboat when they dumped a whole load at sea once and he went out and filled up his road out, filled up a skiff and rode back with a, and he was very, very young. I don't think he was over 10. But that was always one of the fun stories was that Vincent Bailey, as a little kid went out to get all the the liquor that had been thrown overboard.

Tye
So it was thrown overboard because?

Wesson
The Feds were on to them. And this was shallow water, which is why. Now they've used some sense like up in Popponeset for drugs. You know, they made some big hauls in Popponeset of drugs.

Tye

I didn't know that, the

Wesson

Oh, you've missed out on that. That's been relatively recently. Huge hauls.

Tye

Huh. Huge hauls that they busted them on, or?

Wesson

Yeah, busted them, caught the pot and whatever, bales of whatever.

Tye

That's so interesting that the um...

Wesson

But that's Mashby.

Tye

So you are an amazing storyteller

Wesson

[unintelligible]

Tye

[unintelligible] memory. And I'm not going to um I just want to thank you for giving up a morning to do this.

Wesson

Not at all.

Tye

And I want to do something else, which is help guide you out.

Wesson

Oh, okay. Thank you.

Tye

Easy to get out of there. And the easiest way I'm going to open

