

QUONOCHONTAUG HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Oral History

ERNEST (Ernie) BORNER

June 15, 2021

Interviewed by Anne Doyle

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Q: Today is Tuesday, June the 15th in the year 2021. I am Anne Schafer Doyle, and I am here with Ernie Borner who lives at 190 Hoxie Avenue in East Beach Quonochontaug. Ernie is going to relate some of his memories of being here in Quonnie.

A: My name is Ernest Borner. I started coming down to the Quonochontaug area when I was in high school. That was in 1948. I came down with my neighbors, who had a son my age, and we came down and we visited people in the West Beach area. We came down several times to visit these people with my neighbors, the Trammels—Frank Trammel. After we got a little older and we had driver's license, Frank Trammel, Jr. and myself came down and had a pup tent on the beach at the QEBA Beach. The land was owned by McCabe. That was Frank Trammel's great-aunt. Howard Thorp bought all the land around that area after the '38 Hurricane, but my friend's great aunt never sold the land to Howard Thorp. And so, we had a tent on the beach. We had a little pup-tent, and spent a couple of weeks in the pup tent on the beach. Then the next year, we bought an Army surplus 16X16 pyramid tent. We had it on the beach, and we built a wooden platform, and was there for several years. One of bad the storms, the tent blew away. At that time, then I went in to the service. When I came out of the service, I wanted to build a house on land in Charlestown at the beach. I bought a lot on Hoxie Avenue. I started to build my house in 1953. In 1954, a hurricane came. Some of my friends who thought I was crazy to build back from the beach went right by my house on the Ninigret pond with their house and all. And from that point, I've been working on my house and building the house. We did a tent at the beach, as I mentioned. We had a wonderful time. Even Howard Thorp, Sr. came down and visited us to see what we were doing on the beach.

Q: You had the tent on the beach, and you talked about the house. Did she rebuild on that too?

A: She never rebuilt. There was an empty lot, and we have trouble finding whether the lot was really—because there are really no markings on that beach at that time from the hurricanes.

Q: When were you in the service?

A: I went into the service in 1950, and I came out in 1952. In '53, I came down to look for property, and I met Neil Thorp for one session. And then I came down again with Connie. And then I bought my land on Hoxie Avenue. When I arrived at Hoxie Avenue, they were just developing this plat. And I built the fourth house on this street. I could have bought from my land all the way to Route 1, but I just came out of the service and I didn't have the finances to do anything like that.

Q: Did Mr. Thorp own this property then?

A: Yes. Charlestown Estates owned this property. That's who I bought my land from. As I said, I could have bought from here to Route 1, which is lot number 7. I guess there are over 50 lots I could have bought. The price then was \$1,000.

Q: This is a big lot.

A: Yes. Then the waterside was \$1,000, and the other side of the road right from the water was \$500. That's what all the lots were. From my house all the way down to Route 1 was \$500.

Q: So, that was all part of Charlestown Estates all the way up Hoxie Avenue?

A: Yes. I have a map here. You can take a look at that.

Q: Is there something else that you would like to add about this?

A: As more people arrived, we started our association, which is called Sunrise Acres Civic Association. When we bought this property, we had rights to two pieces of land right on the beach to left of the old Blue Shutters. The old Blue Shutters also came to this street by the hurricane. It landed in the bushes over in the back here.

Q: There is a house that is the original Blue Shutters.

A: Yes.

Q: Was that the '38 Hurricane?

A: No. It was '54. I've been here ever since. I'm the oldest one on the street right now. I'm the oldest resident on the street. My house is the fourth house on the street, and already two of them have been torn down and rebuilt for much larger houses. There is only one house older on this street than my house.

Q: When you built this house in the early '50s, did you come down and live here all year round?

A: No. Just summers and vacations. I commuted from here into Providence sometimes. I moved down fully in 1990 and stayed.

Q: What did you do?

A: I worked for the telephone company. I worked for AT&T.

Q: You said you were from North Providence.

A: Right.

Q: Did you know my family? My family was from North Providence? The Fishers.

A: Not Brad Fisher?

Q: Brand Fisher was my mother's uncle. They were from the northern part. The Seimans.

A: That's a familiar name. Brad Fisher had a brother. I believe it was Arthur.

Q: Arthur was his father.

A: I knew Arthur from North Providence.

Q: Maybe that was his brother.

A: Yes. I think it was his brother.

Q: They called him Chip.

A: I knew him as Arthur. I came from the Fruit Hill area, and he came from that Fruit Hill area.

Q: My grandfather grew up in the Fruit Hill area.

A: What was his name?

Q: It was Raymond Seimans. He married my grandmother, who was a Fisher.

A: I've heard the name Seimans, but I don't know them.

Q: Do you know Elaine Henry? She was a Wolcott.

A: No.

- Q: They were all from the North Providence area. She took me up in that area and showed me some of the—
- A: Where she lived?
- Q: Yes.
- A: The Fruit Hill area is kind of an old area.
- Q: So, you grew up in the Fruit Hill area?
- A: Yes.
- Q: Did you go to the schools there?
- A: I went to Fruit Hill Grammar School and to the North Providence High School. Then I went into the service.
- Q: Where did you go in the service?
- A: I was mostly in Guantanamo Bay, the Mediterranean and Norfolk, Virginia. There was a big fleet in Norfolk, Virginia. And also, Little Creek, Virginia where I was on an amphibious ship.
- Q: Were you involved with one of the wars?
- A: I was called to active duty in the Korean War, but I was one of the lucky ones that ended up on the east coast, and ended up in the Mediterranean. I spent five months in the Mediterranean on a ship.
- Q: Let's get back to Quonnie. What are your first memories when you got to your home here on the pond?
- A: The abundance of seafood in the pond. Quahogs. Littlenecks. Even scallops. It was loaded with oysters at that time. You could go out and get all the oysters you wanted in half an hour. The people in the Narragansett Bay found out that there was such a good crop of oysters in the Ninigret Pond. They actually came down with those big boats, and they raked the bottom of the Ninigret Pond. It was a shame, but that's what happened. Now, there are commercial ones out there. A lot of commercial beds out there now.
- Q: I heard there was also a disease that came about. I don't know if that's true or not.
- A: I never knew that. It never bothered me. Let me put it that way. It never affected me.
- Q: I was talking to Art Gantz. Do you know Art?

A: Yes. I know Art.

Q: He had mentioned that.

A: In fact, Art had a boat over at Briggs' land. That's right in the back here.

Q: What is it called?

A: It's Briggs' property, but she sold it. Loretta Briggs was her name. She had a house there. She had quite a bit of land in that area. The whole area basically.

Q: Is the launch area still there?

A: I don't know. Her old house has been torn down. They built a mega house now. And then they put four other houses there, because there are a lot of wetlands, so they couldn't develop all the way up to Route 1.

Q: Did you cook the oysters and clams? Did you eat them?

A: Yes. Everything. It was all for our own use. We didn't sell anything.

Q: Did you have a sisters or brothers that would come down with you?

A: Yes. I had a sister. My sister Nellie was here quite a bit with me. And then my mother was down here for a while before I came down full time. She died at 99 in 1986. Then after she passed away, we started getting really serious about coming down here to Quonnie.

Q: Full time and year-round?

A: Yes.

Q: How did you make that decision? Was that a hard decision to make?

A: No. It was very easy. It was a good move. There's no question about it. I go back there now to visit, and the traffic and everything is so bad up there now. We used to slide down the hill on the street. You can't even—it takes you five minutes to get back on the main road. We used to slide right through that road down into the woods. But everything has changed so much.

Q: I wish I could say for the better, but that's hard to say.

A: Right.

Q: How did you get down here when you were in Fruit Hill and you wanted to come down here for part of the summer?

A: I had a '28 Chevrolet that I bought. That's how I came down. Then Frank Trammel, Jr., who came down most of the time, he had an old, big Buick. I can tell you something about that Buick. When we had the house on the beach, they were starting to develop a house on the corner. There was a lady with three small children in that house. We woke up the day of the '54 Hurricane, and that ocean was really roaring. We knew something was wrong, so we took a lot of the stuff out of the house and brought it up to Frank's father's house, which was on Seabreeze Avenue.

Q: Out of which house?

A: Out of the little house on the beach that we had. Right on the beach.

Q: So, you did have a little house on the beach?

A: Yes. We built a little house on the beach. It wasn't my house. It was Frank's, but a group of guys built it. It was Frank, Jr.'s house. Not Frank, Sr. Then we moved that up. And there was a lady next door with three little kids in the house, so we went over and told her that she better leave, because it was really getting very bad. So, we brought stuff up to Frank, Sr.'s house from the little house we had on the beach. And we came back and the lady was still there, and we went in and said, "You better leave here." And she said, "My husband's coming down." It was getting really—the '54 Hurricane. So, we were moving stuff back and forth. One of the last trips down we took some of the stuff out of the house and we went over and told the lady, "You're going to have to really leave, because this is bad." And then she said, "Okay." We invited her up to Frank, Sr.'s house with the three little kids. She said, "Okay." So, we put some stuff in her car, and she couldn't get it started, because the wind and the sand were blowing around so badly. So, she got in her car with the three little kids, and we pushed her car up the street with our car. As we were coming up from the beach, two houses were following us up the street.

Q: That must have been very frightening.

A: We didn't get too scared. All of us went to Frank, Sr.'s house upstairs in the house. It had a cellar. We put most of the stuff in the cellar. And then after a little while, we heard this clinking and clanking in the cellar, and the water came up and everything we took out of the house was in the cellar and was floating around Frank, Sr.'s house.

Q: Was Frank, Sr.'s house the house that's on Seabreeze? Where was that?

A: That was on Seabreeze.

Q: At the corner of Midland and Seabreeze?

A: The opposite corner. John Trammel, Frank Trammel, Jr.'s son, lived there for a while after Frank Trammel, Sr. left. He remodeled it. And then he sold it. They remodeled it made it bigger again.

Q: Did he live across the street as well? Did they only have one?

A: Frank, Jr. built a house on Midland.

Q: So, you went there.

A: Yes. And we stayed there until the eye of the storm went by. That lady's husband came down, and we stayed in the house until it was all over. Then I came over to my house here. I was building my house at that time. The night before, I was shingling my roof with Frank Trammel, Jr. Then we went onto the beach to sleep that night, and that's when the hurricane came the next morning.

Q: Was anything damaged here?

A: I had no damage here. But the water came halfway up my lot.

Q: Did you know the Bittners?

A: No.

Q: They used to live on the pond.

A: I knew Gibby Burdick. At that time, Gibby Burdick was there, and his sister, who had a house next door. And then I had a friend that built a house next to his house. Their name was Circleson.

Q: Is there anything else that you want to tell me about that experience during the hurricane? Did you have to help with anything after the hurricane was over in terms of other people?

A: We helped some people. I can't explain everything we did. We were out for about an hour looking around. One thing I will say is we went back to look where the houses came up, and they landed in the road.

Q: Highland Road?

A: Yes. And we looked in the windows of the house, because you could stand right beside the house. We looked in the windows, and there was a kitchen table all set. Everything was set. The house just floated very nicely. It was very set and very nice. It seemed like nothing was disturbed. Just that the house moved.

Q: Do you remember the woman's name who you tried to get out of the house?

A: No. She was a renter.

Q: After the hurricane, did you stay here?

A: I went home that night, because I had no damage here. I had some damage at my home in North Providence. I was also a volunteer fireman at that time in the Fruit Hill Station. With our fire truck, we went into downtown Providence. We were pumping out a cellar from one of the big buildings with our truck. There were several towns and cities other than Providence down there pumping out cellars.

Q: Where did you pump the water?

A: Right in the street. It went down the sewer lines.

Q: So, the hurricane barrier wasn't there at that time?

A: No.

Q: I thought maybe it had been put up after the '38 Hurricane.

A: My sister worked in People's Savings Bank, and they built a new building right under the mall in Providence, and they had flood doors, so they closed them. She was up in the building looking at Westminster Street. The shoe stores—all the shoes were coming out the door, and everything was floating in the streets.

Q: Was there looting?

A: I don't think so at that time.

Q: So, you went back there for a while?

A: The next day. Then I came back here.

Q: Where did you stay? You still hadn't finished your house, right?

A: No. I don't know where I stayed. I only came back. I might have stayed in my own house here. But it wasn't finished. I went back to Frank, Sr.'s house—the Trammels.

Q: How well did you know the Trammels? You said that they were from North Providence too. Did they live on the same street as you?

A: Right around the corner. Within 1,000 feet. We played together—we played football and everything else together as kids. I know the Trammels very well. Mr. Trammel also worked for the phone company. I think Frank had just started working for the phone company.

Q: How did they know about Quonnie? Was it their aunt?

A: Yes. Their aunt. And then they had some friends that were staying over in the West Beach area.

Q: Were they from North Providence?

A: I don't know where they were from. Most likely from the Providence area.

Q: How long of a period of time did it take you to finish the house?

A: It's not finished yet. I had an addition put on. I had professional people put it in. But I built the original house.

Q: What was the original house?

A: That doorway used to be windows. There was a fireplace, and the chimney used to be on the outside. But now it's in the bedroom. It has nice bricks in it.

Q: Where is the bedroom?

A: On the other side of that. And I had an upstairs, but it was just an attic. I lifted the roof up. That's facing the water.

Q: Did you have a boat?

A: I had several boats. I started with a 14-footer and went up to a 22-footer.

Q: A sailboat, or a motorboat?

A: A motorboat. In those days, we did a lot of water skiing. We all were water skiing. And of course, we went up to the breachway and went out in the ocean.

Q: Do you mean that you brought your boat to the breachway?

A: No. The Charlestown Beach. That's about three-and-a-half miles up.

Q: Did you go out into the ocean?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you ever fish out there?

A: Yes. That's what we went out there for. We did a lot of water skiing, and then quahogging. We spent a lot of time on the pond.

Q: Did you know we were having a program?

A: I just got the notice. It's on refrigerator.

Q: We're going to do a quahog evening in August, so you're going to have to go to that.

A: Yes. I would like to. I also noticed that you're going to have a Howard Thorp—I talked to him several times.

Q: Did you know Howard Thorp?

A: I didn't know him. But he came and visited us in the tent.

Q: The fellow that is doing the program wants to speak to people that knew him, or had some association with him. Can I tell him to call you?

A: Yes. We also met him at one of our Sunrise Acres Civic Association meetings. He was quite the character. He was going to give us some land. The people at that time were kind of reluctant to accept it, because they didn't want to maintain it.

Q: Do you mean that Sunrise Acres was reluctant?

A: Yes.

Q: Had Sunrise Acres already been formed?

A: Yes. At that time. And Howard Thorp came over here. We were going right over here. I can show you on the map. But anyhow, I remember that somebody said, "Who's going to maintain it if we take it over?" And he said, "If I give you an overcoat, I'm not going to keep sewing the buttons on when they fall off." I remember that so distinctly.

Q: Did you like him?

A: Yes. When we had the tent, he came down and visited us to see what we were doing. A couple of guys had a tent on the beach, and sometimes there were more than a couple of people, because we had a lot of friends.

Q: Did he try to enforce any rules or regulations?

A: No. He just asked us what we were doing. Just general. He wasn't threatening or anything like that. He was very cordial.

Q: How did your home progress in terms of being finished?

A: Basically, once I got the septic tank and the bathroom in, we came down on weekends. There was a lot of sheet rocking and a lot of studs going up.

Q: Did you do some of that?

A: Yes. But when I had the house remodeled, then I had it all done. I'm getting smarter in my older age. But I tried coming down here to work on it.

Q: I want to have you get into the Sunrise Acres Association. Did you help form it?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you have a charter?

A: We had a group of people get together. We got some kind of state certificate. We're actually chartered somehow. I don't know exactly how. Then we started to charge dues for maintaining the road, because it was a dirt road when I arrived.

Q: Is it private?

A: Yes. It's a private road. The road was dirt when we first came here. There was a lot of dust, and people didn't like all the dust. That was our first expense. Then when the hurricane came, we had expenses. We had the two lots on the beach that Sunrise Acres owns. We have to maintain those.

Q: What do you mean by maintaining that?

A: There was sand from the hurricanes. We put a fence around it on the street side. We have little fences on each side of our property.

Q: Are the fences still there?

A: It's just a chain there right now by the road, but we have some fences in the walkway to the beach for conservation to keep the dirt and sand from eroding.

Q: How did you get that to become part of Sunrise Acres?

A: Thorp had that as part of the buy-in. When I bought this land, Howard Thorp said I could also belong to the QEBA. A couple of our neighbors did join QEBA, but I said, "I've got two lots that I can use on the beach from Sunrise Acres, so why do I have to belong to QEBA?"

Q: So, you never did?

A: No. I never did. But at that time, people on this street couldn't.

Q: I was wondering what would be the advantage. Maybe just having more access.

- A: But I lived on QEBA Beach for about five years in the tent and the little house.
- Q: Back to that little house that you talked about. Is that where the tent was?
- A: Yes. The same piece of property as McCabe.
- Q: But that wasn't yours?
- A: No. But a group of guys built it from North Providence.
- Q: Do you still hear from Frank Trammel?
- A: Yes.
- Q: Does he ever come down here?
- A: Once in a while he comes down here. He was a police chief.
- Q: My family, that's where they started over the areas of Highland and all along the beach there. My grandmother used to mention people's names, like McCabe. I'm very familiar with the names, but not the people. I'm interested in that.
- A: We were not actually on the sandy part of the beach. There is a lot of grass that has disappeared. There is a lot of low grass. At that time, I bet from the road to where the beach would start is probably about 100 feet. And now it's not even five feet. It was at least 100 feet, so we had a lot of room in there.
- Q: Now there is a road.
- A: Yes. But also, at the end of that road, the Seabreeze Inn had a little house there, and people from the Seabreeze Inn used to go down that road where QEBA has their parking lot.
- Q: I didn't know that the Seabreeze Inn had their own beach.
- A: They had the regular beach, but they had a little parking lot. Not a big parking lot. If I remember correctly, there might have been an outhouse.
- Q: Is that off of Highland?
- A: When you go down to Highland, you take a left on that road. That's where the tent was on that road. Further down on that road was where the Seabreeze Inn had some kind of a parking lot.
- Q: Did you know many people from the Seabreeze Inn?

A: No.

Q: Back to the Sunrise Acres Association, were you the main person that got this started?

A: I was one of the main people that got it going. There used to be Carl Pruett and a guy named Ralph Fielding, and the Truesdales.

Q: I met her.

A: Not her. It was her mother and father. Things were very quiet on the street. As I said, I could have bought all the way down to Route 1. But after the '54 Hurricane, everybody from that strip was buying land on this plat.

Q: Do you mean the beach strip?

A: They lost their houses. Some of the houses went into the bushes in the back over here. They moved some of those houses. They bought land from Sunrise Acres, and moved their house there. Then the others that lost their houses completely, like the Kurts, they bought some land and built a house.

Q: Where was their house at one time?

A: It was originally on the beach. On this side here, they all washed away. Then they bought land. I didn't blame them. They wanted to stay down there. They liked the beach, but they only had small houses. There were not big houses in those days. So, they bought and built a house. There were quite a few people.

Q: Are they living anymore?

A: No. The Kurts are gone.

Q: I met them briefly.

A: Carl and Ginny.

Q: Yes. I remember.

A: You'll remember meeting Ginny.

Q: Yes. She got mad at me.

A: That's why I said, "You'll remember Ginny. But they were good neighbors.

Q: They were into sports.

A: Yes. He was an athletics director at Trinity College in Hartford.

- Q: Tell me more about the Sunrise Acres Association. Did you start having meetings?
- A: Yes. We started having meetings. We had an annual meeting. We had bylaws.
- Q: Where did you meet?
- A: We met in people's houses in the beginning. Then we used to meet in the old Baptist church. Then we moved across the street to the Lutheran Church. We have an annual meeting. We had a picnic at the end of the season every year. We had different functions as the years went on—golf tournaments and stuff like that.
- Q: So, you must be very happy about what you've done in terms of getting this all settled.
- A: Yes. And Sunrise Acres also has land right in front of me on the other side of those bushes. They own part of that. Sunrise Acres has a nice lot on Lagoon Avenue, which is the little road that goes down there. Right after that, there's a big parking lot, boat launch, kayak launch.
- Q: Where is that?
- A: Right down here.
- Q: It's really nice. This is part of Quonnie. I've been here since 1943. I never came over in this direction, so I don't know anything about this whole area. It's very interesting. Are you still having regular meetings?
- A: Yes. Next Saturday, as a matter of fact.
- Q: Do you know Jan Calden?
- A: Yes. I talked to her last night.
- Q: I talked to her a while ago. I started the historical society, and I was looking for somebody that might want to be part of our board from this area. I wanted a representative. So, if you mention that to anybody that you think might be interested, tell them to call me. It's nice to have people from all over Quonnie to be part. Some people think Quonnie is just where they live—West Beach, Central Beach or East Beach. But this is another part of Quonnie.
- A: Quonnie is really the peninsula. It's all part of Quonnie. I think that people think that Central Beach is Quonnie, but then you have the QEBA, and people say, "What does QEBA mean?" That's Quonochontaug East Beach Association.
- Q: Do you have any issues that you're dealing with now that you want to talk about?

A: No.

Q: I know there has been a lot of vandalism lately.

A: Way-way back when I first started to build, a radio was something that was taken. And they figured it was just a couple of kids that wanted a radio. Nothing was touched. This was way back in the early '50s.

Q: I talked to Art Gantz. They're having a lot of problems with vandalism in terms of the beach access and the fencing that's being taken. He said they've been spending thousands of dollars in repairing things.

A: This is QEBA's beach?

Q: Yes. That's why I'm asking if you have any of those big issues?

A: No. We just have an issue that our two lots are not big enough. But that's not a big deal.

Q: Is your parking lot on the beach side, or on the other side?

A: On the beach side.

Q: And you have a boat launch?

A: No.

Q: Not there. But isn't there a boat launch into the pond?

A: No. We've got a little boat launch. It's not a big boat launch. It's for kayaks.

Q: Is that right here?

A: Yes. We can take a walk down there so you can see it.

Q: This is really a neat area.

A: This has been a quiet street.

Q: Our quiet is gone. We built a little house. When I used to come here, we had dirt roads. It's not that way anymore.

A: You've got a lot of speed bumps over there too. We've got a couple on this street too.

Q: But it's also built up. It's changed.

A: I really enjoy it down here. I'm going to be carried out of here feet first.

- Q: It's good to know that that's what you want. That's what I want too. Do you have a president and all that?
- A: Yes. We have a president. We have a board of directors. We have a treasurer. We maintain our own road. I talked to the town engineer about a year ago, and he said, "We have one of the best private roads in the town that we maintain." We do a good job—our association, and the people in our association. In the very beginning, people were very reluctant to spend money to improve things. And now we've got a group of people that are like, "Let's fix it and get it nice."
- Q: Because they realize that if they don't take care of it—
- A: Right.
- Q: How do you get your water?
- A: Everybody on the street has a well.
- Q: Has there ever been a problem with getting enough water?
- A: Some people are limited in their well. They can't use all the water that they'd like to use. But I don't have any trouble.
- Q: That's what's beginning to happen in a lot of different places. Some people are having to bring in water. I was wondering if you had enough water.
- A: I think everybody on this street has sufficient water to be living here. Some people probably don't have sufficient water to do everything they want to—wash their cars and everything. But I think as far as day-to-day living, I don't think there is anybody on our street that has a big problem.
- Q: Is there anything else that you would like to share?
- A: The street is very quiet. It doesn't go anyplace. You come in from the main road on Route 1, and then go out to East Beach Road. It's not an awful lot of traffic. Amazon spends more time on this street.
- Q: If it wasn't for Amazon, COVID would have been a whole different experience.
- A: Yes. More of a disaster than it was.
- Q: I know you were out in the water boating, quahogging, fishing. How far out in the ocean did you go when you sent fishing?
- A: Through the Charlestown Breachway.

Q: Did you go way out?

A: All along the coast, all the way down to Fisher's Island. Up to Point Judith.

Q: Did you go by yourself?

A: No. I wouldn't go out in the boat alone. Not in the ocean. I wouldn't go out in a boat alone anyhow. The pond here, yes. I've been lost in this pond in the fog. You can't get into the ocean. You can't go anyplace. You just keep on hitting land no matter which way you go. We had really heavy fog. I was with somebody else. We got really lost in the pond. Every time we hit land, there was always a sign, "Private Property. Keep off." That's where the air field is in the back. That's another thing. When I first got here, the air field was active. They were flying late into the night. When we had the tent, they were flying. This was almost at the end of the war. We did see planes crash—we didn't see the plane actually crash, but from the tent we could see the big cloud and flames.

Q: Did they crash into the pond?

A: Yes. There are a couple of planes that were in the pond that were removed.

Q: We found a piece of a plane on Quonnie Beach. Did you happen to see our program on the plane?

A: No.

Q: Do you use the computer at all?

A: Yes. Somewhat. I'm not a genius on the computer.

Q: We have a website for the historical society. Do you know Bob Patrone? Does that name sound familiar? He's a photographer. He lives on the Dingle, which is right off of East Beach Road.

A: I've driven through Dingle. Are you talking about the one that goes from Dingle over to where the Motts live? Ray Mott?

Q: Yes.

A: You used to go through there, and then it comes over to East Beach Road. We could drive through there at one time.

Q: It's not driveable now.

A: You can just about walk through there now. But I've driven through there. It's a good path. Then anybody could have driven through there at one time.

- Q: Before Overlook was put in, that's how people from East Beach used to go through the Dingle and then to the beach over in Highland. Do you know that old farmhouse?
- A: With the well in the front?
- Q: Yes.
- A: We used to get water from that well when we were in the tent.
- Q: All the deeds in East Beach had rights to that water in the well there.
- A: That's where we got our water when we had the tent.
- Q: Did you know the people that lived in that house?
- A: No. We might have talked to them up there. We used to go to the old Quonnie casino. [audio problems] You never came out very rich, but it was fun.
- Q: Did you go over there to earn money, or just for fun?
- A: For fun mostly. [audio problems] There were rooms upstairs in that place too. I remember that.
- Q: I'm trying to pinpoint the timeframe for you to be over there. Was that after the hurricane?
- A: No. Before the hurricane, because that's when we had the tent. Once we got the little house, then we didn't go over there that much.
- Q: Do you remember anybody else that you knew at that time besides the Trammels?
- A: I'm trying to think of names. Marylou.
- Q: Carter?
- A: Henry Carter. He had a little house. They were friends of the Trammels. Sometimes the senior Trammels came down and stayed at Henry's house, and then we went up there to eat with the seniors when we had the tent. I think Henry was the postmaster in Providence.
- Q: I knew Marylou growing up. Their house was down on Highland at one time.
- A: I'm trying to think of the names. I know the road that goes down to QEBA's Beach. That's what we used to go up and down on that road. That's where the well was.

Q: That's Highland.

A: Okay. It was just a little further down. And then there was a family name Duxta. They had two boys that we were friendly with.

Q: There was also a girl named Sue Duxta. She still comes here. Do you remember the planes circling around?

A: Yes.

Q: Was that all night flying?

A: Mostly night flying.

Q: Did you know any of the people that lived over there, or who worked on the base?

A: No. When we came down, we stayed around here pretty much, and on the beach. One of the girls that came down—it was our high school friends. We were all together. One of the girls was going out with a state trooper, and once in a while he had to work, and he stopped in at our tent. That was when we had the house, though. That wasn't the tent. We had the little house. Everybody was like, "What is the state trooper doing down here?" That was quite interesting. People were really concerned about us in the little house. If you don't know the whole story, you make one up, I guess.

Q: Were you mischievous? What were you like as a teenager?

A: I was an average boy. [audio problems]

Q: What about going out and getting things? Did you go to the neighborhood store? Did you go to Westerly?

A: We went to Crompton's. As a matter of fact, we used to use their facilities at times when we had the tent. They had a little restaurant in there too. They had hamburgers and stuff.

Q: I never went to Crompton's. I went to Brightman's.

A: It wasn't much of a restaurant. They had like a bar and a couple of tables in there.

Q: Do you remember the Brightman's?

A: Henry Brightman built my garage.

Q: That was probably his son.

A: His father and him built it. It was Henry. He looked like Ted Williams. He was a good-looking guy. But I understand he had a lot of physical problems later on.

Q: Didn't the Brightman's own on Peabody? Maybe they built houses on Peabody. The Brightman that you're talking about, he built for other people.

A: Yes.

Q: I think he did a smattering of building all over Quonnie.

A: It was either him or Brad Fisher that was doing all the building around here. Brad built the house next door.

Q: Is that right next door here?

A: Yes. The Caylans bought that land.

Q: I have photographs of every house he built.

A: Fisher built that house.

Q: Did you know anybody else on this street very well when you first came here?

A: There are only four houses. I knew just about everybody at one time or another. I was the president for a while. I knew everybody. But now it's changing pretty fast around here. Houses are coming and going.

Q: Did you ever go into Westerly at all?

A: Yes. We went mostly to Wakefield on our way back and forth.

Q: Did you buy food from the trucks that used to come around?

A: No. We mostly brought our stuff with us from North Providence as a general rule. We did buy milk and stuff. Crompton's had some of that stuff at that time.

Q: I don't know if you remember Consumer Dairy.

A: Yes. I remember them.

Q: Maybe now I can take a look at some of your things.

A: If you have any questions, I'll be glad to answer. This is the plat of Sunrise Acres. Asa Briggs. This was Mrs. Briggs. There is a scale.

Q: One inch to 80 feet? Is that what you're talking about?

A: No. The date: '48.

Q: I see, 1948. This is Peabody.

A: This is Peabody. Even parts of East Beach Road are part of the Sunrise Acres Association.

Q: What about the little grouping of all the places right on Post Road?

A: Those are the condos.

Q: Who owns that?

A: A whole bunch of people own those condos. East Beach Landing is the name for it.

Q: Do they have an association?

A: Yes. They have an association. It's a condo association.

Q: This is nice. You should have this framed.

A: I have friends that have it framed.

Q: Lagoon.

A: We were talking about Lagoon. This is the lot. I bought his lot for \$1,000. Then I bought this lot, number 6, for \$3,000 several years later. Then I bought half of this lot with the neighbors over here for—we paid \$12,500 each--\$25,000 for this lot. So, from \$1,000 to \$3,000 and a half a lot—

Q: Do you know where I could get a map? The historical society does not have this map? Is there anybody that has this map that I could have?

A: Let me check to see what our association has.

Q: Maybe you could bring it up at your meeting.

A: Yes. I'll see if we have one. I want to give it to my association if they don't have one. But if they have something, or if I could find somebody else that's got one, you can have this map.

Q: That's up to you.

A: I'm trying to downsize and get rid of stuff. My house is full of stuff.

Q: If you make that decision, call me.

A: Yes.

Q: Who's this? Sans?

A: I don't know. That's where the East Beach land and condos are. They bought this land.

Q: These are all stone walls.

A: This is a road going, and there are three houses that are all part of Sunrise Acres now. This is Autumn Lane, and there are three houses in here.

Q: Are they part of your—

A: It's part of it now, but it was not on this particular map. Anything on this side belongs to East Beach land and the condo association.

Q: In '48, it's spelled without the H. That shows up in a lot of maps.

A: Without the H?

Q: Yes.

A: Charlestown Estates & Company.

Q: Thank you for showing that to me. Is there anything else that you want to tell me about?

A: I bought my land, number 7, and after I bought here. I was talking to Thorp about buying these lots for \$500 each, and then the hurricane came, and they went fast before I made my decision.

Q: Did they go fast after the hurricane?

A: Yes. The '54 Hurricane.

Q: Why would they be so—

A: To put a house. They moved—

Q: I see what you mean.

A: They landed here in the bushes on Rich's property. One house here was Rob Field's, and he moved his house to the house right on the corner. Part of that house is still—

Q: Isn't that the Truesdales?

- A: The Truesdales bought this one. Some of the lots on this side were sold for \$500. But after the hurricane, people were buying all of these on the street.
- Q: This was the '54; not the '38?
- A: Yes. It was developed in '48. Now, this was in the Providence Journal. That was the piano we had in the tent. We had that in the tent, because Frank Trammel, Jr. was a piano player, but he wasn't really professional at it.
- Q: Can I copy this?
- A: You can have that. If something happens to me, this is all going to be thrown away.
- Q: Okay. I'll take it. This was in '51.
- A: Right. I was in the service at that time. This was a tent here. This was part of the center post. I remember him playing the piano. In fact, I helped move that piano down.
- Q: What made it topple over?
- A: The hurricane.
- Q: But it's '51.
- A: The '54 Hurricane. The tent blew away. That was before the '54 Hurricane. But we had our little house in the '54 Hurricane that replaced the tent.
- Q: And this is Faith Arden. I wonder whatever happened to that. It obviously couldn't be used again because of the water.
- A: No. Frank Trammel, Sr.'s stepfather owned the moving company. We moved that down with his moving company.
- Q: So, it came from North Providence to here?
- A: Yes. In fact, this piano was in my house in North Providence.
- Q: And you just told them that they could have it?
- A: Yes, because I was down here. My sister was taking piano lessons. She didn't want to take them anymore, so we wanted to get rid of the piano. Also, when we built flooring for our tent, we built it up in North Providence, and Frank Trammel's grandfather moved it down in his moving truck.
- Q: That is really interesting.

A: This was in the paper. You can have this also. I don't know if you've seen this. This is the Fresh Pond rocks.

Q: Is this Highland?

A: Highland coming down to the beach. See that little building there?

Q: That was the house?

A: That was the house.

Q: And that's where your tent was?

A: The tent was right in that spot there. Then you can see there's a little parking lot in the back.

Q: That's terrific.

A: And this my house.

Q: I wonder when this was taken? It's the Providence Journal, August, 1952. What is this?

A: This is Weekapaug. This is East Beach. This is the old Blue Shutters. This is where our parking lot is.

Q: This was in '52, so that was the one that was built after the '38 Hurricane?

A: Yes.

Q: The one that's up here on Hoxie was before the '38 Hurricane. That was from the '38 Hurricane, right?

A: No. This wasn't established in '38. In '52 it was still on the beach.

Q: I understand that. But this was built after the '38 Hurricane.

A: Yes. That was built after the '38 Hurricane, because this is all cleaned up.

Q: I think this is Garden Pond. Is that Fresh Pond? No, that's not Fresh Pond.

A: Can you see this little house right here?

Q: Yes.

A: I think that was the little house for the Seabreeze Inn. Remember how I told you there was a little house at the end?

- Q: Yes. But I wonder how they got there.
- A: They came down here on the one on the beach. The tent was right about in here.
- Q: So, East Beach Road.
- A: This would be East Beach Road.
- Q: Yes. That's East Beach Road. Is this Garden Pond here?
- A: This is Garden Pond.
- Q: And this is Fresh Pond. I'll have to study this. There's the farmhouse right there. I bet this is one of the Carter's houses right in there. Yes, because this is Tunxis. That's what it is. Fresh Pond is right here. This is Garden Pond, and this is—I don't know what they called it. I could study this for hours. I love to look at things like this. Terrific. Thank you. I'm going to have to be very, very careful. Weekapaug. This is phenomenal.
- A: These are all clippings. After the '54 Hurricane, they were talking about building a [inaudible 1:11:59], and I think that's one of the things they're going to talk about, but they didn't build it. But then this is the development of East Beach Road where the state took over the land here. Governor Chaffee was thinking about buying all this land at one time.
- Q: Can I take this home and read it?
- A: Once it leaves this house, you can't bring it back. That's what I tell everybody. This is more or less Watch Hill. They were having problems with the police in the beaches. I don't know if you want that.
- Q: I'll take a look at all of it.
- A: This is—
- Q: That's the '38. This is Central Beach. It's going to take me a while to go through it all. Thank you very much.
- A: I know I've got pictures of the point. I know I've got pictures of the house. It's in the house here someplace.
- Q: Give me a call. I'd like to come over and look at them. I didn't realize that I was going to see all this. What about this map?
- A: You can take that too.

Q: I put it acid-free sleeves so it preserves it for the future. That's what we do.

A: It also might be wise to take a picture of that. Copy machines are so good nowadays.

Q: Yes. I will do that, but I will try and preserve this as well.

A: You can see how much things cost in those days too.

Q: I have some, but I don't think have very much of it.

A: Do what you want with it.

Q: I wonder if I can do this and this. I'll be very, very careful.

A: If we have another one someplace, then you can have this too. I'm 91.

Q: Did you say when you were born on the recording?

A: I don't remember. No, I didn't.

Q: Say when you were born.

A: December the 18th, 1929. I can't deny it anymore.

Q: You're in such great shape. Thank you. I can always come back and talk with you. It's not like you're going anywhere or I'm going anywhere. Thank you so much. I really appreciate it. Did you go inside our archive center?

A: Yes. I went in with Dick Hutchinson. He showed me. But not lately. This was a couple of years ago. I was very friendly with Dick Hutchinson.

Q: Yes. I miss Dick. Dick taught me a lot about Quonnie. He was part of your church.

A: Yes. He grew up on a farm. We went to Theater by the Sea.

Q: Do you hear from him at all?

A: I understand he's slipping a little with his memory. One of his daughters still has a house over in Charlestown.

Q: We'll end this interview. I'll have you sign the papers. Thank you very much.