

QUONOCHONTAUG HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Oral History

LEAH BRADSHAW

September 23, 2009

Interviewed by Anne S. Doyle

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DOYLE: Today I am sitting with Leah Bradshaw, of Ocean View Avenue, Central Beach, Quonochontaug; and she is going to relate her memories—her own memories and her family’s memories of Quonnie. Leah, just state your full name and where and when you were born.

BRADSHAW: Leah Ann Bradshaw. I was born October 13, 1948 in Westerly, Rhode Island, in the Westerly Hospital.

DOYLE: Leah, who in your family first came to Quonnie?

BRADSHAW: I believe it was my grandfather, Clifford Eugene Perrin. He lived in Ashaway, with his wife Anna Oudsine Perrin, and their three children. And they wanted to build a house in what is now Central Beach. He had done some building in the Ashaway Colony; he was from Ashaway. My mother grew up in Ashaway. So my grandfather had built some houses in the Ashaway Colony area and built and sold some houses. And for his own family, he bought property on Ocean View Avenue and built what is now “Old Salt” at 40 Ocean View Avenue.

DOYLE: Now, was he in construction? That was his job?

BRADSHAW: He was a cement mason. He did basically cesspools and cement work.

DOYLE: And how did he know about Quonnie, do you know?

BRADSHAW: From his construction in the Ashaway Colony.

DOYLE: I see. Now when did he start building at the Ashaway Colony?

BRADSHAW: In the twenties – the nineteen twenties, before the Depression.

DOYLE: Can you tell me a little bit about your grandparents and what you remember? Were they both alive for several years of your young life?

BRADSHAW: Yes, yes. My grandfather I think died in 1958, and my grandmother lived until the '70's. They were – let's see; he was French and my grandmother was Scottish. My grandmother was raised by the minister in Ashaway. by the Seventh Day Adventist minister. And she had been an orphan, and the minister adopted her. And she was a bit older than his children, and in the course of things, she helped raise his children

DOYLE: Now what was her last name?

BRADSHAW: Anne Elizabeth – gosh – her married name was Perrin. I'll have to think about her maiden name.

DOYLE: OK; OK. Did she ever find out who her birth –

BRADSHAW: MacIntyre.– I'm sorry. MacIntyre.

DOYLE: Did she ever find out who her birth parents were?

BRADSHAW: I think she knew in a vague sort of way, But I think her birth parents were fairly humble and fairly poor and could not afford to keep her. As was the practice at that time; they would adopt out a child and maybe would be able to support their other children.

DOYLE: MmmHmm.

BRADSHAW: But my understanding from her is that she was an orphan; she didn't know her biological parents.

DOYLE: MmmHmm. . .And they lived – and built a house, "Old Salt," on Ocean View.

BRADSHAW: Right. And interestingly enough, the "Old Salt" house was almost a mirror image of their house in Ashaway--which was on Maple Lane, Ashaway, and is still there, and is cement! The outside is cement.

DOYLE: But this house is shingled.

BRADSHAW: Yeah.

DOYLE: How long did they have that house? I mean, until they died? Or – it was sold, obviously, along the way, but --

BRADSHAW: It was sold to Albert Randall. And that's one of the questions I had for Janet – it was sold to Albert Randall, Janet thinks, in 1946. I would have guessed it was a little before that, because I know my

mother was in “Old Salt” at the time of the ’38 Hurricane. So that would mean they sold it about eight years later, to Albert Randall.

DOYLE: MmmHmm. Uh –Now your mother, when she was young, she went to “Old Salt” when she came to Quonnie --?

BRADSHAW: Yes. From about 1929—my mother was born in 1915, so –

DOYLE: Could you state her name as well?

BRADSHAW: Alexine Denison Perrin, and later she became Bradshaw—married my father. But she grew up in Ashaway and went to high school in Westerly; but oddly enough, their summer house was only a few minutes away in Quonochontaug.

DOYLE: That’s what happened to several of those families that lived right around this area.

BRADSHAW: It was in Ashaway Colony – there were people who came to Quonochontaug in the summer, but did not come all winter long, even though they lived just a short distance away.

DOYLE: What were some of your grandparents’ and your mother’s friends in Ashaway that perhaps they knew here also in Quonnie?

BRADSHAW: My uncles knew the Mases; that would be the senior Mases: Dr. Mase, who would be Jean Mase’s father-in-law. Jean married their son and now is in the senior Mases’ house, which is the corner of Surfside and Ocean View.

DOYLE: Did they socialize with these families once they got here? – What was the kind of activities that – did your mother ever talk about what they did when they were here?

BRADSHAW: My mother talked a lot about West Beach, because I think they spent a lot of time on West Beach, which is now the Nuns’ beach. But my mother was very good friends with Miriam Jolly, who was in West Beach, and she was close to her sister Violet. Those were my mother’s friends—the Jollys. But they swam.

DOYLE: MmmHmm. Did she have any brothers and sisters?

BRADSHAW: She had a brother five years younger and a brother seven years younger.

DOYLE: And they also came to Quonnie, the whole family?

BRADSHAW: They came to Quonnie, but one uncle ended up in Ashaway, and one uncle ended up in Mystic. So they didn’t venture very far.

DOYLE: MmmHmm. And then your parents were married at what time, what year?

BRADSHAW: My parents were married in 1943 in Ashaway. And I guess the war was still on, and some of the provisions were very limited. I know that they had to borrow sugar coupons and flour coupons in order to make a cake and get some sort of reception together. They did it at my grandparents' house in Ashaway. They got married, I believe, in the Seventh Day Adventist Church in Ashaway, and then they had the reception on Maple Lane in Ashaway.

DOYLE: And then where did they live after they were married?

BRADSHAW: They lived in Ashaway on Oak Street. My dad worked at Ashaway Line and Twine, in the early years.

DOYLE: Uh, there are some other families that were connected with that company, right?

BRADSHAW: I believe so.

DOYLE: I've heard some other people talk about that particular company; must have been a very large factory or whatever, to have employed so many –

BRADSHAW: I think it was, but then I think in the '50's, or even the late '40's, because of the cost of labor, a lot of the textile mills moved south.

DOYLE: It's no longer there.

BRADSHAW: It's not, in its current form. No; the buildings are still there.

DOYLE: And what are your first memories here?

BRADSHAW: I have no memories of Old Salt, because that was sold before I was born. My memories are totally connected with our house, at 34 Ocean View, because I was born in '48 and the house was finished in '49, so I've never known any other house but that one here.

DOYLE: Did your grandparents own that lot, or did your parents just buy a lot next door to them?

BRADSHAW: I can't remember how it transpired; I believe my grandfather owned the lot. And as an inheritance, he gave my mother the house, so that we who lived in the south, would come up and visit them. By that time the industry had gone south, so our family moved to – we first moved to Greenville, South Carolina; and then we would come up every summer so that we could visit our grandparents .

DOYLE: Did you spend the whole summer here?

BRADSHAW: Yes. We would come up in a station wagon. And as soon as this house was built, we would come up and spend the whole summer and go back in the fall. My father would drive us up, and come back and drive us back.

DOYLE: Did your father come up and spend the whole time here, or did he go—

BRADSHAW: He went back and forth. He probably spent his two weeks' vacation here, or some part of that driving us each way.

DOYLE: What stands out in your mind about your early years here?

BRADSHAW: The simple activities that we used to do. We went bluecrabbing before – in the early '60's, before the breachway was rebuilt. I remember going – we had an old motorboat, --think it was used when we got it. And my father, being an engineer, would tinker with the motor, and it would be just great. And we would – they would fish in the ocean and my dad would catch things. But after a while, he became disenchanted with fishing and took up spear-fishing. So his chances were better after that, his results were better.

DOYLE: Spear-fishing! Did he jump off the boat or did he just go off the coast—

BRADSHAW: I think he went right out in front of the little beach.

DOYLE: I mean, that's dangerous –

BRADSHAW: Not the little beach –not the little beach, as we call it, but out in front of what would be Chris Young's house now. At that time it was Mr. Everingham's house.

DOYLE: MmmHmm. So did he not go on the pond, after that?

BRADSHAW: Oh yeah, oh yeah we kept our boat. We went bluecrabbing; we would go clamming, we would bring home steamers, we would bring home quahogs. My parents used to make quahog chowder. We have a recipe for Rhode Island chowder that involves white pepper. 'Cause, nothing could be black! It was a clear broth chowder.

DOYLE: And you still have the recipe?

BRADSHAW: I still have the recipe.

DOYLE: That would be interesting to have!

BRADSHAW: Still have the recipe, and sometimes I make it. My father had a process of opening the quahogs one by one, with a knife. And we had to be very quiet and tiptoe around so he wouldn't jostle the quahogs. I'm not sure that helped! He would put them in water and let them open up and drop their sand and the rest of it. And he would try to open them when they had started to open so that he wouldn't have to work so hard! But he was of the opinion that noise and--oh the motion of walking would cause them to close up so we had to be very quiet.

DOYLE: Is that a fact?

BRADSHAW: Probably not. I think he just liked peace and quiet.

DOYLE: What was your dad like?

BRADSHAW: He was quiet himself. He was very funny. He was an engineer and used to play practical jokes. He used to have this can of peanut butter—[I mean] peanut brittle. He would offer people peanut brittle and then

BRADSHAW: a puppet would spring out. They would just be putting their hand in to get peanut brittle when this puppet would spring out. He just loved that joke! He did some other practical jokes, and he would play little tricks on us. I remember that.

DOYLE: Did you play games a lot, any card games and things like that?

BRADSHAW: Only when the weather was bad; the rest of the time we were outside.

DOYLE: That's why you're always out when you're here now?

BRADSHAW: I like to be outside. It's probably not the best thing for skin, but—

DOYLE: Now what about Dean, your brother?

BRADSHAW: He learned to waterski on the pond. He would fish. My father and brother used to go out together, a lot, fishing, and then they both took up spearfishing. And one of the stories in our family is that my father told my brother --when they were out in the ocean-- "OK; this is a good spot; this is where we're going to fish -- drop the anchor." So, my brother dropped the anchor, but he forgot to see that it wasn't attached to anything! So they just drifted around and --my father made my brother dive down and look for the anchor, but it was never recovered!

[LAUGHTER FROM BOTH]

BRADSHAW: But we went blueberrying; we ate a lot of blueberry pancakes in our house. We used to eat corn and lobster, I remember, and chowder. And we used to eat --all of us, with the possible exception of my mother-- used to eat quahogs on the half shell. So my father had this little device, a quahog ring, and sometimes he would sneak back in his pockets the small ones, and we would have those on the half shell. But the ones that would appear in the bucket, if we were ever stopped, were all very big and all passed the ring test. It was just the little ones -- and there weren't ever very many, I'm happy to say.

DOYLE: Was your mother the cook in the family, then?

BRADSHAW: She did the cooking. Yeah, she did the cooking.

DOYLE: What are your memories of your mom being at Quonnie?

BRADSHAW: I remember my mom loving to be with my grandmother. And my grandmother would come down, and I remember that they would do things together like darn socks. That's one of my earlier memories of my grandmother, that she would sit on a couch and they had this sort of black egg-shaped thing, and they would slip it in the sock and darn socks. And my son now, whenever he gets a hole in his sock, throws that sock away. At least he saves the other sock! And eventually, he hopes to pair it with another sock! [Laughter] But we were --let's see. My dad was an engineer; he was a professional. But we never had a lot of money so my grandmother darned socks. They didn't throw things away --my grandmother made braided rugs out of remnants; I still have some of her rugs. There were some pink and black rugs.

DOYLE: Are they in your house here?

BRADSHAW: We have them; I'm not sure they're in the house but we have them. My father made things; he made desks, for my brother and myself, and he made toy chests and we still have those.

DOYLE: This was back in your winter place?

BRADSHAW: Well, the toy chests ended up in Quonnie.

DOYLE: But did he have a workshop in your winter home?

BRADSHAW: Right; in the basement. My father always took over the basement. His tools went in there first, and we got whatever space was left.

DOYLE: Now did your mom go down to the beach much?

BRADSHAW: My mom loved the beach, loved the water.

DOYLE: 'Cause our mothers knew each other.

BRADSHAW: Yeah, yeah.

DOYLE: And I just didn't know – I have some memories of them being together. I thought on the beach, but I wasn't sure.

BRADSHAW: I think that's what people did; they didn't spend a lot of time in their houses; they went to the beach. My mom would take us; there were certain rules—this antiquated concept that you couldn't go in the water until an hour after you'd eaten. And we'd sit there you know, with a wristwatch: Is it time? Is it time?

DOYLE: I didn't say that when you were talking to me, but that is a big memory [of mine] too.

BRADSHAW: And then when the second hand swept, we would be in the water. We would sometimes go in the water three times a day—before breakfast, we would go down, and then once in the morning and once in the afternoon! But it wasn't just half an hour; I mean, we'd spend time on the rocks, we would run around the rocks. We had those rafts—that people had in those times --canvas or whatever, and we would ride the waves and ride the waves until we were exhausted, go home, eat, and come back and do it again.

DOYLE: Yeah. Um – what memories do you have about Hurricane Carol?

BRADSHAW: I remember being in our house. It was August of '54? Can't remember the date—

DOYLE: --the last day of August— if I remember correctly.

BRADSHAW: It was August 31st. of '54. We were in our house getting ready for Labor Day. And there had been some hurricane warnings; this one didn't come up. I mean, there were some warnings. And my father decided we would stay in our house. At the time, we had the upstairs. We had a wooden floor, which we still have, which was not one whole piece; there were these wooden squares that were pounded down. They had been left over from one of my grandfather's other jobs. And I had an old iron-frame bed; they called it an iron bedstead. And then the mattress was on top of that. And I remember: our house was not insulated, and the windows were not so

BRADSHAW: wonderful. I remember the wind coming through the walls, moving my bed around that night. And I would complain, saying "My bed is moving," They would say "Just try to sleep."

[See transcriber note at end of this document.]

DOYLE: So you stayed upstairs –

BRADSHAW: I stayed upstairs, and it didn't get cold, in temperature, as much as it got horrifically windy and noisy. And we heard the wind –I heard the wind against the house. Wind against the windows and wind against the house and things blowing. You know, tree limbs blowing, and all this movement around. It was just – and I tried to sleep, and occasionally things would crash and I would wake up, but I remember this loud knocking on our door that occurred after dark. And we were on Ocean View Avenue, and there was an evacuation. And I remember the National Guard knocking on the door. It was a loud knocking, and I guess they were ordered to evacuate the area. And my father said that we would just stay and take our chances because we had nowhere to go. We could have gone to my grandparents' in Ashaway, but I remember thinking it was a great adventure. It was a wonderful adventure. My parent's bedroom was upstairs; my brother's bedroom was downstairs. And I remember them talking, and I would come downstairs, and they would say, "Go back to bed." So, I would go back upstairs, not necessarily to sleep but to try and snoop and hear what I could hear.

DOYLE: But the National Guard DID come and try and evacuate! Your road.

BRADSHAW: But apparently it wasn't mandatory. they didn't make us leave.

DOYLE: Yeah.

BRADSHAW: And our land was high enough at that time, so that when we woke up in the morning, there was water everywhere. There was a lot of water on the road out front. But there were several cars that neighbors had driven into our driveway, because our house was slightly higher than theirs. So, we woke up and saw these strange cars. We always had a station wagon, a black and white station wagon, or a white station wagon. My parents would park it way back in the corner, so that meant we could accommodate several other cars in our driveway.

DOYLE: Now how far up did the water come? Up to your road, though, right? From the ocean –

BRADSHAW: Oh yeah, oh yeah. I won't say the whole road was underwater, but there were things that had blown around—all sorts of things you know, blowing.

DOYLE: And most everybody else evacuated?

BRADSHAW: No, there were people around; it was almost Labor Day. I think it was a Friday. It may have been a Friday – or not. But everyone was getting ready for the Labor Day weekend. And everyone wanted to see the big surf and my parents swam in the surf! And that’s always been a tradition in our family – that we swim in hurricane surf!

DOYLE: They swam?? But at what point?

BRADSHAW: When the waves got small enough and the current was such that they could swim. They did – my dad.

DOYLE: Goodness!

BRADSHAW: And even now, you’ll notice, if there’s a hurricane or big storm, if you’ll drive down to the parking lot there are often people in the water.

DOYLE: But you know usually they’re like surfers or they have— but your dad just went in by himself –

BRADSHAW: Well, there were other people in. I mean there were other foolish people in! But that’s something my family does: swim in hurricanes. Or shortly after.

DOYLE: Is there anything else that you can remember about Hurricane Carol?

BRADSHAW: Let’s see – just that there was a lot of clean-up required.

DOYLE: Was there much damage? Around you? In terms of to the homes or – nobody lost their lives --

BRADSHAW: You know I was a kid and I just remember it being more fun than anything else, and exciting. I don’t remember the actual damage part.

DOYLE: Now I know you have talked to me about some of your mother’s memories of the ’38 Hurricane. I was wondering if you could just relate that.

BRADSHAW: What she said is that she was alone that September of 1938; my mom was born in 1915. So how old would that make her?

DOYLE: Twenty-three?

BRADSHAW: Yeah; so she was alone in the house—my grandparents’ house on Ocean View Avenue – Old Salt. She was there by herself, and I’m not sure [about] her parents– her mother was in Ashaway. I don’t think she had phone contact with her. And my grandfather

was working, around checking, you know. And as the wind continued, my mom told it that she felt very safe in the house. And she would – a three-story house that she would simply go up a floor when the water came, so she went from the first floor to the second floor and then from the second floor to the third floor. And she said that the sum total of damage to Old Salt was that it lost a shutter. I mean things blew! It lost some shingles and a shutter, but no permanent damage. And she was fine. But she said the water -- a wave did come up as far as Ocean View Avenue. And that may have been that rogue wave that swept away Mrs. Crepo.

DOYLE: The surge – it happens, at the end. And she had some memories about looking out. And seeing this person – Can you just relate that?

BRADSHAW: I don't know if she actually saw that. So, I won't say that she did. I think she knew that it happened and described it, but I don't think she actually, physically saw Mrs. Crepo and her attendant being swept away.

DOYLE: Did she talk about being frightened?

BRADSHAW: No; she didn't attach much emotion to it. It was more that she had survived and the house had survived and there was lots of debris everywhere, and people did lose their lives and days in the cleanout. But that she was fine.

DOYLE: Did her parents come down as soon as they could, knowing that she was in the house?

BRADSHAW: I don't know if they could get through. I think she stayed where she was, and they stayed where they were. There wasn't an instant information; [everything] was shut down. They ultimately were all happy to find each other; it was all fine.

DOYLE: They didn't have many telephones around here at that point, I don't think. Did you have a telephone that you remember, in Old Salt?

BRADSHAW: I never lived in Old Salt. We had a telephone – we were on a party line with Red Top. Our first phone in our house was a party line with Red Top. But I don't remember if there were phones in the '40's; Janet Morgan remembers that Topsy had a phone, in what would have been the '40s.

DOYLE: Did you listen in on conversations?

BRADSHAW: Yes! [Laughing]

DOYLE: [Laughing] Tell me about that!

BRADSHAW: You had to be very quiet—and they weren't even that interesting, but—we had a ring, and Red Top had a different ring. And so my father said we were only to pick up our own ring. And we weren't to have long conversations. And we weren't to—but every once in a while you'd want to use the phone and you didn't realize that people in Red Top had made a call. So you would pick up our phone, which at that time was this black wall phone, and you could listen—you could hear that there was a conversation in progress; so you had to very quietly put it back.

BRADSHAW: But there were times when we didn't put it back; we just listened. And I'm not very proud of that, and it was never very interesting.

DOYLE: So tempting, right?

BRADSHAW: But tempting, yeah! But you had to be quiet because you couldn't let Red Top hear that you were picking up or further, that you were putting down.

DOYLE: Did you know the people in Red Top?

BRADSHAW: No; no, I don't think so.

DOYLE: Um—then once you were married and came down with Bob, and Josh—so what kinds of things did you enjoy doing together?

BRADSHAW: Let's see; Josh was born in '81, and we started repairing my mother's house, started getting it ready to rent, or whatever it had been. My mom left here in '84, to move to Maine, and we came back in '86, to begin renting her house. So we—it had fallen into some disrepair. So we sent—let's see: Joshua would have been-- in '86 -- would have been five. So we sent him to Camp Winnapaug with his cousin. Used to drive him up to Shelter Harbor where we'd catch the Camp Winnapaug bus. And that was kind of scary; we put this little kid on that bus. But off he would go, and come back just a few hours later, and then we were free to work while he was gone, on the house. And then when he did come back, we would pick him up and all go to the beach. That was fun.

DOYLE: Um—And now of course you have a grandson—why don't you say his name and—

BRADSHAW: Thomas Robert Patterson was born in January of 2008. So he came here for the first time in late June of 2009; so he was about a year and a half. And just old enough to begin to appreciate Quonnie. And he loved the beach; he would jump into holes that

bigger boys had dug and try to chit-chat with them, but he doesn't speak in words—only baby babble. So he would jump into holes babbling, and the little boys would look at us, wondering what language this kid was speaking. But he would run all around the beach with his shovels and dig and play. He had a great time. After we were there one day--I had brought old pails and small shovels-- and after we were there one day, we could see that this wasn't going to work. So we went and bought BIG shovels because those kids had very big shovels – not like I remember but shovels with wooden handles, and you could actually dig big holes. We filled them in when we left the beach, but he loved to dig, and of course, he loved the water.

DOYLE: Somehow I didn't see him. And he's really now getting older and running around the beach, relating to some of the other kids—or trying to anyway.

BRADSHAW: Trying to!

DOYLE: Trying to! Yeah --

BRADSHAW: I thought he would stay with us. That was my dream of course that he would play right around us. But that was not what he did. He—and I saw a lot of little kids just going toward the water. You know, the water softened the sand; and the sand was very wet. And digging there—

DOYLE: Did he like the water?

BRADSHAW: Loved the water.

DOYLE: So did you take him into the water?

BRADSHAW: I took him in; yes, I did.

DOYLE: He wasn't afraid of the waves?

BRADSHAW: Well, he had on this –um—almost a little rash guard that his mother had bought him. And I said—after seeing him head over there, and we'd watch him head down and then one of us, one of the three of us would go and pick him up and bring him back. And it went on and on and on, and it was very warm, and the water was warm, and there was a lull in the waves, so I thought this is the time. So I told my son and daughter-in-law that I wanted to take him down into the water. And they were shocked! But they didn't say no, so I picked him **BRADSHAW:** up—I think they were surprised – I picked him up and carried him; and then my son was right on my tail, saying “Mom, what are you doing?” I said, “Can't you see he really wants to be in the water?” And he was

laughing hysterically. Every time a wave would break, we would jump up and he would laugh. And of course, he was swallowing some salt water, and they said, “You can’t do this” and I’d say, “He’s having a great time.” And they’d say, “But he’s shivering!” But he was laughing while he was shivering.

DOYLE: [Laughing] Shivering!

BRADSHAW: So we stayed in a while

DOYLE: You said he had some kind of a life jacket on – or was it – what did you call it?

BRADSHAW: It was --you know, a little --one of those little, vey thin wet-suit material rash guards that you see the kids running around on the beach with --he had one.

DOYLE: MmmHmm.

BRADSHAW: So, he had some protection. I think that’s protection mainly from the sun, but it also does a little insulation.

DOYLE: MmmHmm. And so once you have done it once, did you keep on doing that for the rest of their visit?

BRADSHAW: I most certainly did. And they did too.

DOYLE: Yeah.

BRADSHAW: They were afraid, but once they saw that he wasn’t afraid, I think we all thought it’s important not to transmit fear to him --about the water. We want him to love the water. He takes swimming lessons at home, so he’s got some water experience. Just not with salt water and breaking waves.

DOYLE: Most of the kids who come here have had some experience with water, but it’s been in a lake or a pool. So, the additional – a lot of them are threatened by the waves. But sounds like he was just fine.

BRADSHAW: He thought it was very funny and wonderful to have this water breaking over him, and he would laugh. But --I mean I held him close to me and if he shivered too much, then I brought him in.

DOYLE: MmmHmm. I also want you to talk a little bit about how you ended up in California. Because you’re here at Quonnie for a few months now, but your home is in California.

BRADSHAW: Oh, well –

DOYLE: That’s where your son is , and your daughter ,[-in-law ?].

BRADSHAW: I moved to California in 1973, because that previous winter had just been very extreme. And I had been living in Massachusetts, in Milton, and working at Curry College.

DOYLE: What were you doing at Curry College?

BRADSHAW: I was a counselor. I had gotten a Master's in counseling and that was my first job. And it was very cold; it was a terrible winter. I remember spending the whole winter with my face down, you know. Just this pelting rain and snow and – so I moved –

DOYLE: Now, how old were you at that point?

BRADSHAW: Let's see –

DOYLE: And where did you go to college?

BRADSHAW: University of Rhode Island. And Boston University; I took some classes in social work there. But this would have been '73 – so I would've – I was almost 24. So I moved to California when I was 24. I had only moved for a year; I had a friend from Curry who was getting her Ph.D. at Boston University. And she went out during the year that we were there, for winter vacation; she went out and came back and reported that San Francisco was wonderful. So that's where we headed; we moved to San Francisco, and I was only going to spend a year there—

DOYLE: You and your friend?

BRADSHAW: Yes. And while I was there, I took a state Civil Service exam to become a prison counselor. So after about a year, I was hired; and it seemed like a good job and so I took it, and I went to work at Soledad Prison –

DOYLE: And that's located right in San Francisco?

BRADSHAW: That is south of San Francisco, in Monterey County, in actually a little town called Soledad, California, which is in the San Gabriel mountain range.

DOYLE: MmmHmm. And how did you meet Bob?

BRADSHAW: I met him shortly after I got hired, because we had to go to these academies to learn our job. And so I went to an academy to learn to be a prison counselor, and there were some parole agents there. And they actually worked for Bob. So they talked about him, and I – at the conclusion of this academy period -- I went to a party. And that's where I first met him. And I met him again several years later when he was on the Parole Board and came to Soledad to have parole hearings. And as a counselor of some people, I would

write reports on them and submit them to the Board, and then they would make an appearance and be considered for parole readiness.

DOYLE: And you liked your job, you were happy—

BRADSHAW: Yeah, yeah.

DOYLE: And that's what you did until you retired?

BRADSHAW: Well, I then became a parole agent and all that, but I—yeah, I did stay there until 2003 when I retired. And then I've happily come back here every summer.

DOYLE: I was going to ask you how you felt, now that you're coming back regularly.

BRADSHAW: I love it!

DOYLE: Yeah –

BRADSHAW: I absolutely love it here, and the things that I love are – I love the brown rabbits—I mean lately I've been seeing deer; I love the smells, the salt air---I love it here. I love the quality of light, I like the sun in the morning. You know I just love it. I like the sky, I like the sunsets—I'm not too --

DOYLE: You like the kayaking if you're able to do it –

BRADSHAW: I love the kayaking; I love the pond. I love the birds. I've been out once with Judy MacLeod kayaking when all these little fish leapt over the front of our kayak—more her kayak than mine. I mean these bait fish just came over our kayak. And then the birds at the breachway. Jean Mase and I often go to the breachway before sunset, and we'll have a drink or we'll just sit and chat; we love it there. And we like to watch the cormorants and the egrets and the fishermen and find out if they caught anything. We like to watch the bait fish in the breachway and maybe see fish jump. That's our highlight – if we see fish jump in the breachway.

DOYLE: So still enjoying the simple things in life that Quonnie offers.

BRADSHAW: Absolutely. Absolutely. I just can't say enough about the quality of the light here, and the air. I love the air, I love the sound of the waves breaking, which I can often hear from my house. I love it.

DOYLE: But you also love where you are in California.

BRADSHAW: Right. I don't love the winters, New England winters.

DOYLE: And also, it's important 'cause you're near your grandchild and your son and daughter-in-law.

BRADSHAW: Yes, yes.

DOYLE: So at this point, you think that you'll be coming to Quonnie regularly --

BRADSHAW: I'd like to come forever. My brother and I own the house jointly, and he's also committed to staying here. It's a good way for him to connect with all of his family, have a yearly thing, reunion. But -- who knows?

DOYLE: Yeah. Uh, is there anything else that you can think of that you'd like to talk about?

BRADSHAW: Just that I think, like a lot of other people think, that it's a unique and special place here.

DOYLE: Do you have strong feeling about all the changes that are going on, or does that not affect your love of Quonnie?

BRADSHAW: I suppose change is inevitable, and it's much more of a sophisticated place than it used to be. And then it's necessary to change a bit, to adapt, to continue.

DOYLE: Anything else that you can think of?

BRADSHAW: Not that I can think of.

DOYLE: Oh, I've enjoyed this; I've learned something about you. And it's wonderful.

BRADSHAW: I enjoyed it too.

DOYLE: Thank you very much.

BRADSHAW: Thank you. I love it here. I guess I've said that 25 times--

DOYLE: I think us "Old-Timers" --we feel like our love for Quonnie exceeds everybody else's love for Quonnie!

BRADSHAW: Yeah! [Laughter from both]

END OF RECORDING

Transcriber's note:

Hurricane Carol, August 31, 1954, as experienced in Quonochontaug by transcriber, then age 20, was essentially a morning event. Winds, rain, and flooding were worst between 8:00 a.m. and noon. The sun was out by 3:00 p.m. However, it is not difficult to understand a 6-year-old child's impression, upon awakening during the darkest hours of the storm, that the blowing took place at night.

