

Paul Mathews

Q: It is February 15th, 2021, President's Day. I'm Steve Young of the Quonochontaug Historical Society. It's my pleasure to do an oral history of Paul Mathews, who's also a Quonochontaug Historical Society member. Tell us your earliest connections to Quonochontaug.

A: My grandparents, Albert Randall and Grace Randall, both lived seasonally in Quonochontaug in Old Salt, which is on Oceanview Avenue. My grandfather built that home right after the '38 Hurricane in 1939. He grew up in Westerly. His wife, Grace Mueller, grew up in Stonington. They lived in New Rochelle, New York in the winter and would come to Quonnie every summer after 1939. I first came to Quonnie to visit them in 1951. We were living in Palo Alto, California, my family and I. I guess I should say who my family is. My mother is Barbara Randall Mathews Adams. After my father died, she remarried Sam Adams. My father was Paul Mathews the II. I have a sister, Kathie, who preceded me by two years. I have a younger brother, John Mathews, who is ten years younger than I am. In '51 we moved east. My grandmother was passing away in New York City. Was at Sloan Kettering. We came out to settle all that. The summer of '51 was my first time in Quonnie. I do not have remembrances of that first visit at that age.

Q: What year were you born?

A: I was born February 26th, 1948 in McAllen, Texas.

Q: Tell me about Al Randall. Did he work in New York City?

A: Yes. He was a sales and marketing executive for Scranton Lace. He would travel to the city on a regular basis. They lived in New Rochelle. The train ride was 40 minutes into the city. That was his career.

Q: Did he do that for decades?

A: Yes. Right up until he retired. Then I remember after his retirement, he would travel to New York maybe once a month to help pave the way for whoever succeeded him.

Q: When he built Old Salt in 1939, I take it that wasn't his first connection to Quonochontaug. Living in Westerly, I would presume he was pretty familiar with Quonochontaug.

A: Yes. I don't know about his particular business, but I know that he was coming to Quonnie since he was very young. His had two sisters: Hope, and Hope's older sister—her name escapes me at this moment. But her older sister, and Al's older

sister as well, she was the chief librarian at Westerly Library. They both worked in the library until they retired.

Q: I take it that with Grace being from Stonington, she was familiar with Quonochontaug before 1939.

A: Absolutely. But I don't know much about when she visited and how often she visited and the like.

Q: Would they have any old photos or movies of the 1930s or 1940s?

A: Not movies. We have some photos, but not many photos. My grandfather wasn't much of a photo bug.

Q: Are some of those of the 1938 Hurricane?

A: No. I don't have any of the '38 Hurricane that came from our family.

Q: What caused you to be in Palo Alto? Was your father working in Palo Alto or San Francisco?

A: He was going to school. He was a pilot. There were air fields all over Texas. He had been injured, and he could not fly overseas in combat. So, he got to train. My sister was born in Waco, and he was at the air field up there. Then there was one down in Brownsville, which was right around the corner from McAllen. So, when he was in the Brownsville air field, I was born in McAllen Hospital. He was in reserves for a while. He started in the Army Air Corps. There was no Air Force. I'm not even sure if the Air Force came about during or after the war. But was a reservist in the Air Force. Then on the GI Bill, he was accepted to study photography with Ansel Adams at Ansel Adams School, the California School of Fine Arts in downtown San Francisco. We went to live with his Father's sister, Hannah Mathews. She had a couple of acres in Palo Alto. Her husband had died. She had a cottage on the property, which we lived in. He would travel to San Francisco for his school work. He had a laboratory in Hannah's house to do some of his work. So, that's what brought us there. We were there for a little over two years. He had graduated that year, 1951, and his mother died, so we came to New York City.

Q: Are you Paul the fourth?

A: Actually, my dad was the second. I'm the third, but I've never used that. I was a junior for a while.

Q: When your father ceased his military flying, did he continue flying?

A: No. He didn't. I don't think his lifestyle allowed him access to planes. I think he's had enough of that.

Q: Did his injury have anything to do with planes?

A: He was a hockey player in high school, and he had a number of shoulder separations. Then he had another shoulder separation in basic training. Then his back injury was probably due to when he had crash landed. Not like a dive bomber, but he had to land in some farmer fields. He had a back injury from that.

Q: So, he graduated from Ansel Adams Fine Arts Institute in San Francisco. Then did he leave Palo Alto and bring the family east?

A: We all came east in 1951. At the same time, another famous photographer, named Minor White, who was the most hands-on at the school—the school was Ansel Adams, Minor White and another great American photographer named Edward Weston. Minor White came back to Rochester to curate the Land collection. He was also a professor of photography at MIT. It was coincidental, because when my dad came back, his career just took off, because he specialized in industrial photography. Manufacturing. He did a lot of studies in school with McDonnell Douglas. He was doing a lot of work for *Fortune Magazine*. He did so many covers for Kennecott Copper and all the industrial manufacturers of the day. Minor White really was the person who promoted his career in the east.

Q: When you came east, where did you live?

A: We jumped around quickly. My grandmother lived in New York City, so for six months we lived there. I can't remember the avenue. I think it was midtown 1st Avenue or York. Then we moved to Mamaroneck. We lived there for a year. Then we built a house and moved to White Plains, where I lived through high school.

Q: Did you go to White Plains High School?

A: I started there, and then I went to private school. I went to Hackley School in Tarrytown, New York.

Q: Did you go on to college?

A: Yes. I studied premed and ecology and environmental science and got degrees in both at Rutgers College. I got premed from Rutgers College, and then Rutgers School of Agriculture and Environmental Science, which is Cook College, I got a degree in ecology and environmental science from them. Back in those days, it was easy. You could matriculate anywhere within the system. There were so

many overlapping courses that it was not that difficult to do. I later got a master's in business from University of Washington in Seattle.

Q: Let's get back to Quonochontaug. What is your first memory of Quonochontaug?

A: Maybe I was five years old when I started developing memories. We would come and stay with my grandparents every summer for two weeks. No more than a week at a time usually. My mother's sister's husband died very young, right after she had four kids. They would come up, and my grandfather would rent a cottage for them. We would be there at the same time. We'd all be a family in Quonnie. About that time, I spent a lot of time with my cousin. There were four of them. Different ages. Randy was their youngest, and he was my age. We'd pal around. We would spend a lot of time mostly at the beach. At that time, raft riding was very popular. We all had these canvas covered rubber rafts. We would incessantly ride the waves. We developed some friends. The people that we spent the most time with, one was Buzz Conrad, who lived three houses down right next to the Henrys. And Bill Carpenter was a big raft rider. Another guy named George Arnold, who lived almost across the street. He lived with the Welnickys live now between the Huntingtons and the Flynns. Leah Bradshaw, who lived next door. Since we were there so sporadically, I would see those people every year for maybe a week. I didn't develop a lot of lasting, strong friendships, although I have reconnected with Bill Carpenter since we've been back, and of course Leah. At that time, Al Randall was deeply involved in Quonnie. He and your grandfather, Dick Moran, and Bay McLeod and Ham Schwarz and a number of others—and I do have photos from the '50s—they're in with the Historical Society Archives—of Al Randall driving the fire engine around and talking to the community from somebody's porch. I remember a lot of those events. I remember playing at the ball field in the ball games when I was young. I usually got a couple of weeks in on Sundays, or when I was really little on Saturdays. My family didn't have a boat. We didn't spend a lot of time on the pond, except clamming. As I got older, I became an avid surfcaster. I would spend much of my time surfcasting.

Q: Was that when you were in your 20s or 30s?

A: In my teens. I was not what you might call a Quonnie kid. As soon as my sister and I were ten years old, we belonged to a country club in White Plains, and we were on the swim team. Our days were spent at certain times at odd jobs cutting lawns, caddying or whatever, and then we would go to swim practice. That was the daily routine, swim practice, for my sister and I. The weekends where we would have the swim meets with all the clubs around Westchester—there were just tons of swim clubs at that time that had competitive teams. So, from about ten years old all the way through high school, I was maybe here a week a year. During high school, I was a lifeguard at a beach in Rye, New York, so I spent my whole summers as a lifeguard there, so I wasn't able to come here. But during the school years of junior high and high school, my parents would come up

usually for five or six days in the fall. None of the kids that I knew from the summer from years past or in the recent season were around then. I would go sailing. George Waterman had a beautiful sailboat. He loved me, because I would crew. He had retired at the time, and so he needed an extra hand. We would sail to Block Island most every fall together on his sailboat. That was a highlight. The other highlight was my father's work, he got this great job. Every year *Time Magazine* would do a spot on a vacation area in the eastern United States, so we would get out of school usually around the beginning of September for about a week, and a half depending on how long the trip was up to two weeks. We'd be home schooled. My mother was very vigilant. She was president of the PTA, so they had no problem. They knew we were in good hands when we were excused from school. So, we would travel to Boothbay Harbor to Catskill Game Farm to the Finger Lakes to Fort McHenry to—you name it up and down the east coast—Cape Hatteras. We would do that for seven or eight years. We would spend at least a week to two weeks every fall. Those trips were just wonderful.

Q: Would he do his photography work?

A: I learned a lot about photography. Not only that; about all these different environments. We did Gettysburg too one time. That was a fascinating visit. But when we'd come back, I spent many, many hours in the dark room with my father learning about that aspect of the trade. That was a learning experience for me. It probably paved the way for me to be in the sciences, chemistry, biology and all of that.

Q: Did southern Rhode Island every make *Time Magazine's* hit parade?

A: He did Mystic Seaport. I still have the photos on my wall downstairs. That was one of his photo missions—Mystic Seaport. I only have black-and-whites of those. I have eight-by-ten color negatives, but I haven't printed those. It was done in color for the magazine. Yes, southern Rhode Island made it. Actually, that's Connecticut. It's close. I don't think he did anything in southern Rhode Island, although we have some beautiful pictures of the pond that he took.

Q: When we were talking about consent, you mentioned that your father had 5,000 copy rights, and I didn't know what you were referring to. I presume you're talking about his industrial work.

A: All of his work. I have what's called his negative files, which is 4,500 to 4,700 negatives that I keep stored. My basement has a number of dehumidifiers, and it's temperature-controlled. My guitar is down there. They like the same environment as photo negatives. His agents passed away a long time ago, so I don't get calls from his work anymore.

Q: When you were in grammar school and you were coming to Quonochontaug a week at a time, you weren't staying at Old Salt; you were staying in rental houses?

A: No. In 1956 we bought the Happy House, which resided on the lot at 27 Surfside where we live now. We bought that house from Dave Waite, who lived on the corner of Central and Surfside. It cost us \$10,000, which was a lot then. It was one of the original Sears cottages. There is one that is in very close state to the original Sears kit that was delivered, which is called Bercon, which is three houses up Surfside. When we bought the cottage, Surfside above the elbow where we reside down to where the Glassons live right now—well, the houses have changed. But down to the corner was West Road that we lived on. I can't remember the address on West Road. After 1956, my family would come up more often, but lots of times my father would be back working. When you have a dark room and you're producing a lot of your own prints, we would be here, my mother would come up or my parents would come up, and my sister and I would be looked after down in White Plains while we were swimming. But we rented the cottage for at least half of the summer. Some of us would come up on weekends.

Q: Were you a bike rider?

A: I've always ridden a bike. I was never an avid biker. I did it for transportation; not for exercise. My younger brother, however, is an avid mountain biker, who has mountain biked all over the United States. He has two hip transplants to prove it.

Q: When you were a kid and using a bike for transportation, what were your destinations in Quonochontaug?

A: When our cousins came, or when our best friends—we had good friends who married into the family at a later date. My Aunt Janet Morgan, her first husband died in the early '50s. She remained unmarried until she was about 45, and then she married my family's best friend and next-door neighbor, Dale Morgan, who lived next door to Albert Randall and his family in New Rochelle, New York. She married Dale Morgan, because his wife had passed away when he was about 50. They married in their mid-50s. After my grandmother was placed in a nursing home, they moved to Bay Street in East Beach, which is the Highlands near where the Wilsons grew up. I can't remember who else was on the street at the time. My grandmother had broken her ankle years earlier, and my grandfather had a hip replacement, and so they decided to build that house in '65. They moved out of Old Salt and moved over there in 1965. There were four of the Morgans. They would come up and visit and stay with us. Kirk and Watson, who were one year above me and two years below me, would come and stay with us. We would bike down to the bowling alley. That was a big hangout. Or we would bike up to Crompton's. It was called Crompton's in the early days, which was a

small general store. It was purchased and renamed. I'm trying to think of the name after that.

Q: Was it Brightman's?

A: Brightman owned it, but it was called—I'll think of the name in a minute. We would go up there. If we had earned any money—a nickel or a dime—doing some chores, we'd buy fire balls, baseball cards, chew the bubble gum. I remember one event where we rode across the pond. Another cousin of mine, John Bowman, who was my age—Ann, Elizabeth and John Bowman all lived catty-corner to the Thorpe cottage on Sunset. They had a rowboat. The four of us got in the rowboat and rowed across the pond back up to where East West Farm was, found our way through the weeds up to the barbed wire. That was interesting, because it was electrified. We found that out. We were wondering how to get over it. One of us tried to crawl under it. It was a riot. Then once we negotiated the barbed wire, we got in there and there was a cow. The cow had horns. We didn't know what it was. We thought it was a bull, and so we had a hell of a time racing across East West Farm. The neat thing about East West Farm is they had a small shop there, and it had a huge counter and behind it were a series of freezers and refrigerators. They sold dairy products and eggs. You'd walk in and there would be change and bills all over the counter, and there would be a sheet of cardboard and cross outs from the day before, because the price of eggs went up a dozen, and the ice cream bars were now 4 cents instead of 3 cents. It was the honor system. People would go up and buy milk, eggs and ice cream. They'd find their change on the counter and leave behind what they owed. That day we went to East West Farm, and we got ice cream. We didn't bring any eggs or milk back.

Q: What was the rowing destination? From the East West Farm's corner of the pond, where did you row to?

A: We embarked from what is now the East Beach Right-of-Way for their marina, which is between Cavanaugh's house, and I'm not sure who lives on the other side. But it's only about 50 yards or three houses down from the Central Beach Marina. Since the Bowmans didn't live in Central Beach, they kept their rowboat—that was only one house over from the Thorps. But we rowed from there across the pond. There were a lot of disputes and a lot of splashing over who had to row back. It was a great time. We spent a lot of time at the bowling alley. We would try to make a nickel a game if somebody wanted us to set pins for them. We bowled quite a few games on our own. You could get food down there. We didn't eat so many hamburgers or French fries down there, but we drank a lot of soda pop and ate quite a bit of candy that we purchased there. We'd sort of mosey around the breachway area while we were down there, and then ride our bikes back.

Q: Was Mother Brindley's in operation then, or does that go back years before?

A: No. I don't know the year that Ma Brindley's closed. It wasn't there at that time. The structure was there, but I think it was privately owned as a residence at that time.

Q: Did she build the bowling alley? What is the history of the bowling alley?

A: I don't know. I'd have to ask one of our fellow members of the Historical Society.

Q: When did the bowling alley go out of existence?

A: I can't remember what hurricane, but it got blown over on its side. I can't remember what year that happened. It may have been Carol in '54. But for some reason I thought it lasted past Carol. I'm not sure.

Q: Is your recollection that the end of the bowling alley was caused by a hurricane?

A: I believe so. Yes. Because it was blown over. I can't see that having happened in other than a hurricane.

Q: Were you a clammer as a kid or a teenager?

A: I was more of a mussel guy. I would go out on the rocks. I would walk down the end of the street. In those days, there were huge mussels twice the size of your thumb. Nice, big and meaty. Very accessible. We loved mussels marinara at our house. I would come back, scrub them up, purge them in a bucket of fresh water, and then steam them and take the mussels and some of the broth and introduce it to marinara sauce. At times, we would get clams. My father loved clams. There were times where he'd say, "Go get some clams," and we'd go down and get clams instead of mussels.

Q: In the pond?

A: Yes. In the pond.

Q: Did you have a favorite spot or a secret spot?

A: In those days, you didn't need it. You just walked in 10 feet and put your feet in the muck and they were everywhere.

Q: So, clams are harder to find and still plentiful, but what's really changed is the mussels.

A: Yes. That's something you and I have talked about. We were going to pay a visit to the American Mussel Harvesters up in Wakefield and ask them if they had

any knowledge on the environmental issues involved in that, or if they knew exactly what's going on. That is disappointing.

Q: They are few and far between in the rocks now.

A: Yes. In the old days, there were starfish everywhere. There were plenty of mussels. You could go out with a trident, which is like a fork on the end of a stick, and there were sand dabs, which were small flounder, and you could spear those in the breachway, or you could spear them in the pond. A lot of the pond life was more plentiful. The clams have been very cyclical. Maybe five years ago there was a dearth of quahogs, but the last three years they have been very, very plentiful. Maybe three years ago it was almost impossible to find softshell clams. They started coming back last season. We all know that there has been a lot of aquaculture introduced in the pond. A lot of oyster farming is going on now.

Q: Do you remember any aquaculture as a kid?

A: I don't. In those days, the demand was much less. The environmental issues that have plagued some of the salt water ponds weren't to the magnitude they are today. It really wasn't necessary to satisfy the culinary needs of the local Westerly, Quonochontaug environment.

Q: What is the explanation for the starfish disappearing?

A: I'm not sure. I remember reading things about that. I can't remember what the causation was.

Q: Do you remember the fishing being better in the '50s and '60s than it is now? Or is it as good now as it ever was?

A: First of all, they were much more plentiful. There was a larger variety of fish. Back in the '50s and '60s, when you went out surfcasting, striped bass were not only plentiful, but you could catch any size striped bass and bring it back and eat it. We know that regulations have been in place. You can catch one a day, 28 inches or more. There was a fish called a weakfish that schools would come in. They were very plentiful. They were excellent eating fish. Then bluefish were a lot more prevalent than they are now. Five years ago, the schools of bluefish were still huge. They would come in. The birds would fly in the sky and they would just be everywhere. I remember one day that the bluefish came in like that. Last year a few days. But it doesn't seem that bluefish in the last few years have been very plentiful.

Q: Are you interested in Quonochontaug birds at all?

A: I am not a birder, but I have four bird feeders outside my window downstairs. I love woodpeckers. I like to see the dynamics of the hawks around here, because he does a fly by a couple of times a day, and all the birds flush into the dense vegetation of the tree that they hang in. I remember watching out the window one day, and all of a sudden, I heard this thud. I looked out, and there was this big puff. What hawks do is they'll come down and they'll hit a rabbit, and they'll knock it out. Bam. They'll stun it, and then pick it up and fly away with it. Rabbits have been so prevalent in Quonochontaug. They're cyclical as well. We used to have a large fox population. We had a den in what was called the pit between us and Peter Mogielnicki's. It was about 14 feet deep. It was covered with vines. There were a lot of rocks. Of course, Quonnie is known for its rocks. There were a number of fox dens down there. Then when Peter expanded, he filled that in. The fox ended up digging out on the other side of a wall between us and that pit into our yard. One day we were sitting out there, and a mama fox pops out. It looked like she was coming out right from under a stone wall, and she brings out four kits. She brings them out, and they sit on the stone wall behind our house. They are just gorgeous animals. She took the kits away. For the next three years, you would see beautiful fox in the early mornings traveling throughout the yards and into the brush in the lesser populated areas of the neighborhood. Not so much in the afternoons. About three years later, I remember seeing fox in the middle of the day in population areas completely denuded from mange. There is an ebb and flow in the fox populations. There was a dearth of fox, and now the rabbits have reappeared in huge numbers. One of the things I love about Quonnie is we're surrounded by so much natural habitat. We can watch these things change. The deer populations here have grown immensely. You have to watch driving your car down West Beach Road, especially late in the evening, dusk or early morning. I don't see as many skunks. In this area, I remember smelling a skunk every night that I was here in the '50s and '60s. They would waft for a couple of blocks away. When all the houses here were up on stilts, which our house was, sometimes you'd get one under there, and they'd want to make a home. We had an albino skunk that lived somewhere close by or near our property. I don't see many skunks anymore. We see a lot of groundhogs. That population seems to have increased considerably in the last five years. They're the bane for gardeners. It's just great to see the wildlife that is available to all of us here.

Q: I have to ask you about the pit that existed between your house and the Mogielnicki house. I am mystified by the pit that was next to our property at 150 Surfside where the Breck house now is. There used to be a 14-foot huge pit with huge boulders. I can remember a boulder that must have been 20 feet high. I have pictures of my brothers and sisters on that pit. I'm fascinated by what caused the pits.

A: On a shoreline that's been buffered by some of the weather we've had, over the years I think some of them were naturally formed. I'm not sure about that one. But I'm glad you brought that up, because there is a picture on the mantel or on

one of the shelves in the Breck house of your grandfather and your grandmother in that pit. I can't remember who they were with. That escapes me. But there is a great picture of your family in the pit with some others. There were maybe four or five people there. That was a great play spot. We played cowboys and Indians there, because it was huge. With the boulders, you could hide behind them. I don't know if the roses grew in there gradually on their own, or whether they were planted. But it became a massive rose garden towards the end. It was beautiful. It was absolutely gorgeous.

Q: I think the picture you're referring to had some roses in it.

A: Yes.

Q: I don't think they're natural. I think people needed fill and excavated pits on vacant property.

A: It could be. We need to pursue that as members of the Quonochontaug Historical Society. We're going to have a list that we're going to have to pursue now for the next few years.

Q: Maybe our talk in 2022 will have a talk on the pits of Quonochontaug. I didn't know there was a second pit. Fourteen feet is pretty deep.

A: Yes. It was very sandy soil. The vines grew all over the place. There wasn't much vegetation on the sides. They remained as if they were cut yesterday of this very sandy soil.

Q: I heard you mention earlier the Thorps. I think you were referring to Neal Thorp's house on Sunset.

A: Yes.

Q: Did you know Nelson Thorpe?

A: No. My grandfather knew them well. I may have run into them at some event and said hello, but it's nothing that I recall.

Q: When you were talking about what my family calls the runny nose club, which was Al Randall, Dick Moran and Ham Schwarz and Bay McLeod, you mentioned Dave Waite's name. Wasn't Dave Waite also in that group?

A: I know they were friends, but my remembrances were more of the four of them. They all had canes. Some of them might have been ornamental. But I remember them with cocktails in hand, the four of them strolling around Quonnie in the early evening, after 5:00, before sundown as a group and just having a grand time. I know Dick Moran always had a great joke. He also treated the

younger kids differently. He was a wonderful guy to be around. My grandfather—the cane was part of discipline sometimes when things got out of hand over at Old Salt. My grandfather never hurt us, but he had this stroke where he'd just whack you on the ankle if you weren't paying attention or you did something wrong. There was no swinging, no swatting, but there was this ankle tap. His cane—I don't know what it was made of. It must have been some old briar, because it all these little stubby things on it. If it were turned the wrong way, it would hurt.

Q: Do you remember John McCormick?

A: I know the name. But I really can't place him. I can place Ham Schwartz. I can place your grandfather, Dick. Bay McLeod. I can't recall much interaction with others of that group.

Q: One thing that you said that I found interesting was that Al Randall built Old Salt in 1939, and he lived in it until 1965.

A: I think it was 1965. Yes.

Q: And then he moved to Bay Street in East Beach?

A: Yes. He moved to a one-story house.

Q: Was he in his 60s or 70s when that happened?

A: He was born in '89, so he was about 75. He died in '89. He lived a very healthy life. His demise was rather rapid over a six-month period. My grandmother lived to 100. She spent ten years in the nursing home right down the street from Westerly Hospital. I remember visiting her. Every time we came up, we would spend some time down there visiting with her. I can't remember the year she moved out of the Bay Street residence to the nursing home, but it was the last ten years, so she would have been 90. It would have been around 1980 that she would have moved there. In the early '80s is when her daughter, Janet, moved in with Dale Morgan, who she had married recently.

Q: Do you remember Dr. Ruicci?

A: I do not.

Q: You said that you knew Neal Thorp.

A: No. I did not know Neal. The other people that I knew well were the Henrys. They weren't in my group. When my cousin came down, Bucky Cook, Bucky Cook would hang with Rob Henry. He probably would have hung with you and Steve Long, because Rob and Steve Long hung out together quite a bit. Ron

hung with them, because he was three years younger than Rob. Maybe four years younger. He was born in '41 I believe. Ron was born in '45. Occasionally we would go over and hang with Ron. We would just walk down the street and shoot the breeze and that sort of thing. I'm trying to think of other people that I had a lot of contact with. We'll keep going on. I'll bring it up when I remember.

Q: I wonder what happened to the old fire engine. It was pretty old when they bought it.

A: I think Bob Frost knows. I think Bob bought it back from the community and it got garaged somewhere.

Q: Do you remember the 4th of July parades?

A: Yes. We were in every parade. I can't remember half of the costumes I wore, but we would usually be up here around 4th of July. My mother took part in them, and my father. Al—he was involved in governance here and community activity. So, he was always involved. That was one of the highlights. That fire engine—when you were a kid, it was just fantastic. The other person that I knew well was Danny McLeod. Danny was older, but Danny was just the funniest guy. He would always let the little kids hang in the back of the group. He always had some good comments. I remember his brother Burnham, because Burnham was the tennis pro. Burnham used to pay Randy and I—we'd share a dime if we ran around and collected all of Burnham's tennis balls. We spent some time with Burnham and Danny. I have very fond memories of both of them.

Q: They had a sister, Izzy, right?

A: Yes. Ibby. Actually, Ibby would be here every summer until five years ago when they sold the McLeod house on the corner of Central and Ocean View to the DeFuscos. It was torn down and rebuilt. I haven't seen Ibby since then. I know Burnham passed away quite a while ago. Maybe ten or fifteen years ago.

Q: How has your neighborhood changed? You said when you bought it, it was Happy House.

A: It's still Happy House. But when you choose to live here all year round, since we had what was a modified historic house, we wanted to see if we could save it. But the ceilings were low. It was on stilts. To do all that reengineering to save part of it was very, very expensive. So, we had to tear it down and start from scratch. The footprint is very similar. It's slightly larger. It's set back further from the road. Maybe I should do a preamble to that. After college, I started in the pharmaceutical industry as a sales rep. I didn't enjoy that much. I joined a high-tech medical electronics firm that was involved in pioneering a lot of cardiac diagnostic instrumentation. I was a salesman and a regional manager for them in the northeast. Then I was recruited by a west coast company called Space

Labs. They were a medical instrumentation company that was involved in ICU CCU monitoring clinical information systems. We monitored the astronauts with all the physiological parameters. Then we got into the hospital business. We started with wireless systems. We were the first ones to introduce those. It was a different frequency than they use today in microwave wireless. We introduced that in the hospitals. I had a career with them. I went through the sales organization—an executive for sales and marketing for the country for about five years. Then we started acquiring different businesses. I became executive vice president in charge of every new business that we bought, and integrated them into the company. I had a separate business unit. When I joined Space Labs, they were in southern California. I was living in Atlanta. They moved me to Atlanta. Then they moved me to Germany to run Europe, the Middle East and Africa. Then they moved me back to Thousand Oaks, north of LA. I married Julia while I was in Atlanta. We met in Atlanta. She came to work for Space Labs as a clinical application specialist. We went to the west coast. She became a sales training specialist. I described my career advancement there. We lived in LA for one year. We were acquired by Squibb. They moved us to Seattle. We lived in Seattle for thirteen years. During my career at Space Labs, both of my kids were born in Seattle—both boys. Then we moved to Boxford, Massachusetts. I was recruited by Siemens. I was CEO of one of their medical divisions—Electra Medical—which was very similar to Space Labs. They did patient monitoring, physiological parameters, clinical information systems. I had three worldwide businesses. One was cath labs, one was ventilators and one was patient monitoring of clinical information systems. I traveled worldwide for them. I wasn't seeing my kids. I was under contract for four years. After two years, I disassembled most of the business and integrated with other business units within Siemens that were involved in medical. I outsourced most of the manufacturing. At that point, I really didn't have much of a business to run, so I went to work for Siemens Corporate Consulting for the last two years. We worked out of Siemens U.S. headquarters in New York City. I was on assignment for three major jobs. I was living in Florida for nine months living out of hotels. Then the next job living out of hotels in Santa Clara, California for a year. I was only able to come home once a month during that time period. Then they started a new consulting job, which was in medical, which I knew. They wanted me to go live in Texas to do a consulting job for a telephone handset business that they bought from Texas Instruments. I said no. I retired from my day job. I did some consulting. I got involved with a company twenty years ago, and the results are maybe coming to market in the next year. As an angel investor, I was in charge of business development and corporate development for them.

Q: What was that business?

A: Oncology. Forms of chemotherapy. I'm separate from that, except for my investment. Some of my best friends are still involved with the business—founded the business and financed the business. Just as I was retiring, my

mother passed away. She had this property and a property in Vermont. We kept the properties, and we would come here two weeks a year. We would travel here for two weeks. It was rented for about half the summer. My brother would spend two weeks here. We got to spend a lot more time here during that time period. That was from 1998 through 2010. We shared it between my brother's family and mine. He has three daughters. I have two sons. We would overlap for a weekend between the time so that we could get to spend some time together. In 2010, I had my home in Boxford, which was huge, that we weren't really utilizing once the kids went to college. We had this house, and we had the one in Vermont. I felt like I was worrying about three homes, and so my brother and I decided to divide this up. He wanted Vermont. He spent part of his high school years in Vermont, and he is just in love with Vermont. We divvied up the properties. I sold my house in 2007 in Boxford. Julia and I temporarily moved to Vermont, because it needed work, and it needed some overseeing. The property needed to be cleared. So, we spent summers there. We wintered in Alameda, California. My son was going to college at University of California, Berkeley. So, we spent the winters out there. We visited my other son in Colorado. He was going to the University of Colorado, Boulder. We did that for four years. After both kids graduated in about 2010, that's when my brother and I divvied up the properties. Julia and I came here. We rented the Henry's house in 2011 and contracted with a builder and an architect to develop this property here, which we moved into in May of 2012.

Q: What a career. I'm tried just listening to it.

A: I didn't know my kids. Both of my kids were Eagle Scouts, and we were involved in scouting. I was an assistant scout master. I'd have that time with them, but then I was gone for weeks and months at a time. I was lucky. I had a great career. I just came home and said, "I'm not going to do this anymore. I'm not going to travel." I got involved with something locally—this oncology business. I did some consulting, and I got to know my sons. That's one of the highlights of my life.

Q: What is your son's name that went to Berkeley?

A: Ian Mathews.

Q: And the son that went to the University of Colorado?

A: Spencer.

Q: So, you contracted to have your current house built in May of 2012?

A: It was finished. In 2011, we moved in and lived that winter in the Henry's. They tore down Jaboji. We watched the tear-down of Jaboji, which is on Ocean View. They owned a property all the way across to Surfside, and the property on the

other side of Surfside to the ocean. One of the interesting things was it took them three months to remove the rocks from that property. They had some heavy machinery there constantly drilling. They didn't blast. They used a chemical treatment that fractured the rocks. Most of it was mechanical. I think it must have been quite a surprise to the people who decided to develop that property. It's an interesting Quonnie rock story.

Q: I'm sure there were some huge boulders.

A: Oh, my God. Just everywhere.

Q: They built such a nice house, and lived in it for a very short time.

A: Yes. They were from Massachusetts. I guess they just didn't have the time to come down here and spend it here.

Q: Your connection to Quonochontaug goes back to your earliest days of life. It sounds like it was a one- or two-week experience through high school. Is that right?

A: Less than that through high school.

Q: Did you have a big gap where you were away from Quonnie for years?

A: I'm afraid to admit this, but going to school at Rutgers, all my buddies were Jersey Shore guys. First of all, I worked as a life guard for half of it. Then I worked for a roofing company for the summer of '69. That was Woodstock and all the fun and games of that summer. After that, I was at the Jersey Shore. One summer between graduation, we painted houses at the Jersey Shore. After that, we rented cottages at the Jersey Shore for summers through '74. But I would only come down maybe on Fridays through Mondays. I was working in New York City. I had an apartment in New York. At that time, I was managing the northeast for one of the companies that I worked for. During that time, I was busy, so I would see my parents on a weekend in Quonnie. They moved me to Atlanta. I was here very sporadically. Then, boom, on to Seattle. Let's bring the kids back for a week. Twice during that time period, I got here through the weekend, and by Monday I had to get on an airplane unplanned during my vacation and fly off somewhere and leave poor Julia with the kids all by herself here.

Q: So, for the last ten years, you've been pretty grounded in Quonochontaug.

A: Yes. That has really been delightful. I was reintroduced to some of the people that I had known when I was younger. Julia has been involved. Within a year, she was treasurer. She is in the middle of everything. She's a lot like my mother was. My mother formed the garden club here with Cheri Stabnick. She was the

first Quonnie historian and had reams of information. I think we got a pickup truck and moved a whole set of file cabinets over to her house with all the historical information that my mother could gather. My neighbor here, Tom Batista, got me involved with the Quonnie band. Then I joined the Historical Society. I was membership chair and winter secretary for four years or so. I had been involved in managing databases and things like that. I've been on the long-term planning committee. I was on beaches and dunes committee. We have stayed involved with the community. If you stay involved in the community and you're here all around, not only do you know the year-round residents, but it keeps you involved in the seasonable community as well.

Q: Tell me about the Quonnie band.

A: Tom is a very interesting man. I'm a strange guy. I had to do time and motion studies in a lot of the business that I was involved in, so I decided one day to map out the amount of time that was being spent in the band. I did Barry, myself and Tom Batista. And Tom spent over 300 hours a year in the band. You can't believe the amount of work that he did. All the charts—we'd come, and he'd have printed charts for us—all printed out of all the songs we did. They do that over the winter. Everybody would lose theirs. Then the next time we'd play, "I don't have my charts." He would build a 4th of July float. Lots of times, when people weren't around, and I hadn't moved here yet, it was Tom. There was no one here, and he would put all the microphones and lay out the speaker systems, lay out all the instruments on the trailer. We started with a small trailer and we graduated to a large trailer. He would conduct practices. Herding musicians is crazy. He'd get us all together. We would practice in his garage. Many, many practices. Tearing down and hooking up equipment. He was proud that he could serve his community in that way, because the 4th of July, once the band played the first year, everyone loved the band. They'd hear them for five seconds. Then we'd go down to the ball field and he would organize the presentation to the community and have the moderator come up and do her speech. We'd play a bunch of songs. He'd find people to sing the Star Bangled Banner. Then we would play at community events. The opening picnic, we'd get out there on the sand and sing for the people at the opening picnic and the closing picnic. The tennis club would hold an event. The garden club would hold an event at the Quonnie Yacht Club. We'd play at those. The last seven years, Tom started having an event in his back yard. It grew from maybe 25 people to well over 100 people every Labor Day weekend. It was all gratis. Everything was set up. There was no catering. It was all community driven. The band would play until—sometimes we'd quit at 9:00, and sometimes we'd stay on and play until 11:00, which was the cutoff time. That was the band. It was a lot of fun. A lot of work. But that developed a comradery for me and my family, and Julia as well. Tom's breadth of the people he touched in this community was very, very broad. As I was moving back into the community, there were people that I didn't know that I was introduced to by Tom. Then I met the musicians in the group and their families. I met the Reddicks through that. I met the O'Briens, the Carpenters,

the Lows. Jack Low plays in the band. Pam Fury plays in the band. And then some people who are in East Beach—Mark Hinkley, whose significant other is Virginia Lee, who was the president of the town council for the town of Charlestown. He's keyboardist. And for a number of years, Eden Castille was in the band, and her husband Ron Cowe. Eden was the person who ran the Quonnie musical. The Quonnie musical ran for about five years. That was a huge gathering. What a community event that was. It was just a beautiful thing to watch that come together. And watch the kids partake in that and go to the community camp that Eden ran here. That was such an asset. There was a lot going on that had to do with the band and its outreach into the community.

Q: One of my big regrets is I asked Tom Batista, who I did not know very well, but we had a very nice exchange where I was trying to get him to do an oral history for the Quonochontaug Historical Society, and he just kind of put me off and said, "I don't go back in Quonnie that far. I don't consider what I know about Quonnie historical." And he said that he was going to pass. Unfortunately, then he passed away. All that Tom Batista knowledge wasn't captured, which I'm sad about.

A: Tom was an enigma in a way. He was such an outgoing person. He had a grace about him. You wouldn't think that a person who was that comfortable in that way would be so humble. There was a very humble side of him. I don't think he wanted to be interviewed. He knew the people here. He was part of the community. He offered what he could to the community. Tom was a guy who would wear some of the finest clothes of anybody I see here in Quonnie. He was a wealthy man. He was an accomplished man. He knew people. His best friend was Regis Philbin, but yet Tom would sit out in an 85-degree day in his driveway and pick the weeds out of his driveway while 80% of the neighborhood would stop and gab with him. That's just a different persona. In a way, he was an enigma. Living next to him, I got to observe that. To me, it's like this is very different. I really enjoyed Tom while he was with us. He added a lot to my life here. I'll say that.

Q: Was he in the entertainment business?

A: Yes. He was a big producer. Not only that, he traveled around the country. He worked a lot in California and St. Louis, Missouri. He would be sent out to develop the regional reach of—I think it was CBS. If they wanted to develop a marketplace, Tom went in and he developed that marketplace. Sales, marketing, outreach—the whole thing. Advertising development in that area. He did that in southern California. That's where he met Regis. He produced one of Regis' early shows. Not his grand show. I can't remember the name of it—the one in New York. When Regis was just getting going. That's where they developed that relationship. Then Tom came back to New York City where he was a producer as well as involved in business development. He was working in the Soviet Union doing business development for CBS there. Not living there. He

wore a whole number of hats. He was an executive VP when he retired from—I believe it was CBS.

Q: When you built your house on Surfside, did you take any ideas from Old Salt and incorporate them into your house?

A: That's a funny story, because I always thought that the lines of Old Salt were just gorgeous. There was something special and very different about all the other—it's a cottage look. It had that look, but there was something a little bit different about it. We got our architect from the Batistas. I'll remember her name in a minute. A wonderful architect. She had just put out her shingle, and did Tom and Elaine's rebuild. She did the little Pagoda-type roof on the top of one side of his house, and designed the pitch and rebuild over the garage. She did his, and we contracted her to do ours. She was very flexible. We talked about floor plans. First of all, Julia and I challenged each other to get a piece of graph paper out and draw what we thought we wanted for the living spaces. Then we worried about the outside. We came up with pretty much the same thing. It was just amazing. It was a bonding experience. Then we went to the architect, and we batted around some ideas. We let her do her thing. And then I took a picture of Old Salt and I gave it to her and said, "Make it as close to this as you can without doing a disservice to yourself," or pissing them off. She did a beautiful job of that. Where the porch is at Old Salt is my garage, and she put the little window strip above that. She pitched the roof very similarly, except the roof at Old Salt is curved on one side and straight on the other. Ours is slightly curved on both sides. So, she added that. And there are some beautiful touches. If you look at the back of my house, it looks twice as good as the front. She just did an exceptional job. We were so pleased.

Q: Is there anything that I missed?

A: I think we covered most everything. When Peter talks to Julia, I think she'll fill in a lot of the spaces with her own perspective. I think she'll give a really good picture of our time together in Quonnie. I didn't want to touch too much on what we did together, because I think she'll fill you in on a lot of that. It's been an enjoyable experience. I have really loved being with the groups—the Historical Society, the band and the long-term planning committee. It's just been a joy being here.