

Peter Mogielnicki
Oral History

Q: It is July 27th, 2020, and I am taking an oral history on behalf of the Quonochontaug Historical Society of Peter Mogielnicki, who has been at Quonochontaug for a long time and has lots of interesting information to pass on to us. Peter, why don't we start by you telling us how far back your family goes in their visits to Quonochontaug?

A: My mother had a boss when she worked as a salesperson at G. Fox & Co. in Hartford Connecticut named Lila Crapo and Lila owned a couple of cottages in Quonochontaug. She would bring her group of salespeople down to Quonnie each fall to build morale and collaboration. My mother fell in love with the beach, and my dad fell in love with the fishing. They immediately began to wish that they could somehow arrange to be there permanently. This would have been in early 1938, I'm guessing—'37 to '38. Right before the big storm. They visited once or twice, and then the big storm hit.

One of Lila Crapo's houses was badly destroyed, except for some of the outbuildings. She gave my parents one of the beaten-up outbuildings, which was a small shed probably 12 feet by 12 feet, as long as they could get it off her property. My folks then negotiated with a family who owned quite a bit of property right outside of Central Beach, the Dowd family. The Dowd girls, they were called. There were two sisters, their mother and sometimes a visiting aunt. Their dad had been involved in lumber somehow I think in New York City prior to that. The Dowds had a big piece of property. For some reason, they were willing to sell my folks a small piece of property, about 50 by 80 feet. Barely big enough to put a small cottage on. The Dowd's property ran from the west edge of Central Beach right behind Paul and Julia's and Tom and Elaine Batista's places all the way to the Bobelis houses which are the two cottages just to the east of what is now the retreat of the Sisters of Norte Dame. A big piece of property. They sold us a parcel right next to Central Beach.

My dad and some relatives moved the little shed, built a small stick-framed cottage and extended it to include a bedroom and a living room. My parents were ten years childless at the time. Right about when they were working on it, my mom learned she was pregnant with me. That would have been late 1940. When I was less than a year old, we started to come there during the summers. My mother would come down with me. My dad worked in Hartford. He worked at the Hartford Electric Light Company. He was a very handy person. He was carpentry foreman at the Hartford

Electric Light Company. He kept the place from falling down. He would continue to work during the week. He'd come down for weekends. We'd had the pleasure of the whole summer at Quonnie.

Back then, the Dowds had a big Victorian cottage right on the water, and a smaller cottage on another part of the land. During the summer they would rent the big place and move into the little place. Now there is a hard-cover copy of a history of Quonochontaug, which was written by a priest who used to visit them at their big cottage called Neptune. I think that's where he spent the time that he wrote the book. I barely remember that. It was probably late 1940s that he wrote that.

So, that's how long I've been there. It's a long answer to how long I've been there. The summer of '41 when I was a little less than a year old.

Q: That's quite a story starting with a 12-foot by 12-foot outbuilding.

A: In 2008 when we decided to build a four-season house, we took down much of the part that he built. That small part, which was the old kitchen, is now the fishing shed and bunk house next to our current house.

Q: I notice your address is 26 Dowd Way.

A: Yes. It didn't have a name until after the Dowds passed away. Interesting, my parents tried desperately to enlarge that small lot. It took years of negotiation with the Dowd girls and their mother. And then bits and pieces were added a few square feet almost at a time. First, they had a right of way into the property. Then they bought the driveway into the property. Then there was another little piece that they bought. Finally, there was what was called the pit, which was between our house and the Matthew's current house. The pit was a deep, overgrown, jungly sort of thing, which I always thought maybe was a gravel pit. But as I learned about kettle ponds in the area, which is what the Kettle Pond Wildlife Refuge is named after—kettle ponds being big chunks of ice that were left there by the glacier, and then covered over before the ice melted, and then melting and some of the depression being formed. I think that that pit was an old kettle pond. When we built the house, we ended up filling it in with an incredible number of glacial boulders that we had to dig out to build the foundation of the new place.

Q: I too am interested in pits, because there was a pit next to our house where the Breck house is now. I've been trying to research what that pit was.

A: Is there still a depression?

Q: No. The Brecks bought the pit and built a gorgeous house. We have pictures of the pit, and we have pictures of us kids playing in the pit, because there were enormous boulders. One of the biggest granite rocks I've ever seen was there.

A: There is also a house in Central Beach that is built in a depression. As I've learned about kettle ponds, I've come to think might have been a kettle pond. They were all over the place. The Dowds sold us the pit. Then they were getting on in years. We tried to buy some more property. They didn't want to sell it. They said, "No, we're going to give it to our nephew" I think from Florida, who rarely visited, and, "He'll make a wildlife refuge out of it." Now there are a couple of pretty big houses sitting on that wildlife refuge.

Q: Is that Jim?

A: No. That's Joe Walsh, the house to our west. Next to him is the Pack house. The house that's currently in front of us is Jim Atwood. The piece of property that Lila used to own, she sold it to a family called the Burnetts. Then the Atwoods bought it from the Burnetts.

Q: Were you an only child?

A: I was an only child until I was ten.

Q: What happened at age ten?

A: My mother was shocked to learn that she was carrying twins—my twin brother and sister. When they were six or seven, I was about sixteen, and my dad built a second house in Central Beach on Lucas Avenue. That's the house that my brother Jack has. Unfortunately, in the interim, my sister had died. When my mom passed away, there were two cottages and two of us. Jack got the one on Lucas Avenue and I ended up with the one on Dowd Drive. After the Dowds died, we officially named it Dowd Drive.

Q: And the twins were born?

A: The twins were born in 1951.

Q: How old was your mother when she delivered?

A: Mid 40s. I don't remember the exact age. They were another surprise I think.

Q: Did they have any interest in Quonochontaug?

A: My brother is retired there.

Q: What are your earliest memories? We've taken our kids on trips. When they were under five, they never seem to have a memory of being in Hawaii or being in Alaska. Things that you have such a vivid memory about, they're like, "What are you talking about?" I'm not sure when memory starts, but I think it's five or more.

A: I have murky memories from the beginning. It's always hard to know whether you're remembering real events, or people talking about them—things that were emphasized. I don't remember the exact date, but I remember quite well—of course, there were a lot of things going on around the world. There was World War II at that time. I do remember seeing war ships on the horizon. I remember off to the east there would be one ship that arrived, and then two or three more, and then four or five more. I heard at the time or later that these were convoys waiting to be accompanied. And then one morning you would wake up and they were all gone. These were off the horizon presumably coming out of Narragansett Bay. I also remember, and I don't know if this was after the war ended or whether it was during the last years of the war, you could watch for submarines that would come out from the west probably from Groton. We'd watch them come out towards Block Island, and then sink below the surface. Or you'd watch a submarine, if you caught it, suddenly emerge on the horizon. They were doing comings and goings around that time. Probably the late '40s, early '50s testing them out. And of course, I remember the Hellcat planes, which we're going to talk about at this year's annual meeting.

Q: Did you ever hear the story of a German submarine off of Quonochontaug?

A: I know of the story. I don't think I knew what was going on at the time.

Q: Weren't there blackout windows and everyone kept their drapes down?

A: Absolutely. There were blackout shades. They were very dark. You'd pull the shades down if you wanted to have lights on. I think there is a lot of

information about those. There may even be one in the Historical Society archives. There was certainly concern. There were patrols on the beach that you'd hear about. I never had any interaction with them. I know other families did at the time.

Q: Were they civilian or military?

A: I think they were Coast Guard. They were known to patrol the beach walking back and forth after dark. There are stories in some of the oral histories about finding rafts on the beach and things like that. Also, dirigible training often back and forth—big blimps.

Q: I wonder where they were from.

A: I don't know.

Q: Quonset was a big air station at the time.

A: Yes, indeed. Everybody loved Quonnie so much that we didn't travel much when we got to Quonnie. If you went to Quonochontaug, you stayed where you lived, swam, laid in the sun and went over to the pond every once in a while to catch crabs. We chased horseshoe crabs. I know you're a horseshoe crab expert.

Q: And a lot of bike riding?

A: I never had a bike there. Others did. We have bikes now. But back then, I didn't bike ride. It was walking down to the bowling alley, walking over to the pond. I enjoyed the place very much.

Q: I remember the bowling alley a little. What do you remember about the bowling alley? What was down there, Mrs. Brindley's?

A: It might have been Mrs. Brindley's. I didn't know it by that name. She was a fixture there. But I would go there and set up pins. I was probably ten or eleven. You would sit there at the end of the alleys. The alleys were interesting. They were a little sinuous. They would kind of weave. The place had been picked up by the hurricane and shifted around. They were challenging bowling alleys. We'd go there and set up pins for tips—sit at the end and watch people bowl.

Q: Were there two lanes or four lanes?

A: I think there might have been two.

Q: Were they relatively short compared to regulation?

A: I don't know what regulation is. I don't know the answer to that question. But they were lumpy and curvy.

Q: I presume people would pay a nickel or a dime or a quarter to bowl.

A: I would hope for a nickel or a dime tip. Maybe they paid a quarter. You got your score sheet when you paid money.

Q: You mentioned the inn. Are you referring to the Nun's house?

A: I'm referring to what is now the Nun's house. The inn was a special place for us, because it had the only accessible telephone. We didn't have a telephone at the little cottage. The inn had a crank phone on the wall. The owners would let people use it. If we had to call my dad—we didn't do it often, because it was a long-distance phone call. It cost money, and we wanted to be careful. But if we needed to call my dad during the week, we would go up to the inn, ask if we could use the phone. They would get the charges from the operator before they rang up the phone. We'd get to chat with my dad. Not for very long. You couldn't talk very long, because you wanted to be careful. If there were a hotel there now, my sense it would ruin the place. It would just be full of people coming and going. It would be very different. The old inn was a quiet place. There were folks that came. They used the beach. There wasn't a lot of music. There wasn't a lot of drinking. It was a very civilized kind of place.

Q: That was the 1940s?

A: Certainly the '40s. I'm not sure when it was sold. I think it was sold directly to the Sisters of Notre Dame. They are wonderful neighbors now. No loud parties at all.

Q: They always seem so grateful to be there.

A: They love the place. I don't know whether you have chatted with any of them. They're very liberal order. They're pushing hard for an increasing role of women in the Catholic church. They're very progressive.

Q: I have it in my mind, and I don't know where it came from, that they had some wealthy benefactor who basically bought it for them as a summer retreat.

A: I would not be at all surprised. I haven't explored that, but I don't imagine there is a big source of other funds. It must have been some sort of a bequest. It's a teaching order. They are widespread in the northeast. I know they have many teachers in Canada and elsewhere.

Q: What would be your best estimate as to the year it switched from—was it called the Quonochontaug Inn?

A: Yes. As opposed to the Seabreeze Inn, which was up on West Beach Road. It was called the Quonochontaug Inn. I'd have to guess. I must have been at least the late '50s. I would say somewhere in the '50s. By the time the '60s came around, I was in college and medical school. I snatched bits and pieces of time at Quonnie. Not nearly enough. Always a little time each summer.

Q: Was your family into photography at all? Did they capture some of the old places?

A: Most of the photographs are of little babies. There are a few photographs of places, but they weren't documenting things at all. I have one precious photograph of my dad. I look like I'm about eight in the photograph. My dad just caught the biggest striped bass of his life. He's holding it next to him. I think the reason I'm in the picture is that I'm about as tall as the bass was. Looking very proud, and I'm looking proud of him. There was a family there, the Mase family. Dr. Mase was a dentist. The Mase family had subsequent children who were scattered around Quonnie. Dr. Mase was the fellow who introduced my dad to salt water fishing, and I think he was the one who took the photograph. Fishing back then was—of course, the olden days are always better than the present. The fishing back then was different than it is now. There seems to have been more fish, in general. One thing that we've noticed recently is that the mussels have disappeared. In the past, you could go down there and in five minutes you could pull up a dinner's worth of mussels an inch-and-a-half to 2 inches long. Nowadays they sometimes make it to three quarters of an inch, and then they seem to disappear. I don't know why.

Another interesting thing, related to fishing, was that my dad befriended the skipper of a Stonington dragger. We used to go to Stonington for an outing when he came and watched the fishing boats unload. There was

quite a fleet of fishing boats back in the '50s. He befriended Harold McLaughlin. As I said, he was very handy, and so several times during the summer he would go out with Harold McLaughlin dragging around Block Island, sometimes out a little bit beyond Montauk. It was about a 70-foot wooden—one of those wooden green draggers called the Maurice. When I got to be ten, I was able to join him. That was a thrilling experience. We'd get up at 3:00, get down to the docks in Stonington around 4:30 just as it was beginning to get light. Harold would fire up the Maurice's diesel engine. The smell was between old fish and diesel smell. It brings back a recollection of the whole scene. Then we'd steam out of Stonington Harbor. I would doze down in the hold of the boat. There were a couple of bunks down there and a little stove for cooking. We'd steam out of the harbor and I'd be on the bunk. As soon as we passed the breakwater, you could tell, because inside the breakwater it was nice and calm, and then you'd begin to get these nice swells as the boat headed out towards Block Island. Then they would get out to the fishing grounds, set the nets. There was one mate, Happy Hoddely, an interesting fellow. Captain McLaughlin would steer the Maurice around. We'd drag for about an hour and a half, then pull in the nets. Most of the nets came in on a big steel drum with cables. The last of it would be pulled in by hand. Eventually the winch would be used to lift up a huge bag of fish. At the end of the net was this huge bag of fish. It was always the captain's responsibility or honor—I'm not sure which—to reach under this dripping bag and yank a knot, and the fish would spill out of the bag. And there they'd be two or three feet deep. You'd be standing in flopping and very unhappy fish, and all sorts of stuff that they dragged up from the bottom. It was really quite a treat. For some reason, they didn't have a lobstering license, but they would get a lot of lobsters. The first mate was a bachelor, as far as I knew. Harold McLaughlin's family hated lobster, because they had so many of them all the time. He was happy to get rid of them. We would come home with a bushel of lobsters and have these wonderful feasts. It's not something that we are treated with very often nowadays.

Q: Would you say dragger, dragging and trawling are the same?

A: I don't know if those are the exact terms. When I originally went out, they used the old Japanese glass balls that are now replaced by plastic. I think they adjusted the weights on the bottom of the net and the floats on the top of the net depending on whether they were dragging the bottom or going for the middle of the column. I think draggers still have these two wings. They're called boards, which open the net side to side. The floats open the top. The chains open the bottom. I know they certainly dragged the bottom much of the time, because we would get big fluke, flounder. They

were called doormats back then. Just an incredible variety of fish. Captain McLaughlin kept a 22 rifle in the cabin of the boat. Whenever they saw a shark, they would definitely go after it. I don't know if they ever hit one. But there was a lot of excitement when they saw a shark.

Q: How did the steel drum work? Was that for floatation, or was that for weight to keep the net down?

A: The drum was on board.

Q: The winch drum?

A: Right. It was run by a motor that was pulling up the bag at the end. There were steel cables that connected most of the net to the boat, and at the end there were ropes, which were pulled in by hand. But the steel cables were wound up on this big drum. Never when I was there, but the boat was outfitted for swordfish, and they would occasionally see a swordfish and be able to harpoon it. Of course, now they're all out on the Gulf Stream or further. To get a swordfish, you've got to go quite a ways out. But back then, there were swordfish right around Block Island. Occasionally they would be able to harpoon them.

Q: A surfcaster told me that the fishing for striped bass is actually better than it was decades ago, and that there are more striped bass. But in the olden days, there were a lot more black fish, a lot more blues. You caught more, but there were fewer stripers. I don't know if that's true or not.

A: I would say it depends on the decade. As a fisherman myself, I've done a little bit of trying to track down this business. There was a period of time in the '70s and '80s when the striped bass population plummeted. There was a complete moratorium on taking striped bass for a while then. So, there was a period when there were virtually none. The blue fish were available. Then the population came back. But prior to that crash, it seems as though there were quite a few more. But that may be like, "Oh, yes, I remember back in the old days." It seemed like there were more back then. I'm talking about the late '40s, early '50s.

Q: Did they ease the moratorium where it had to be 32 inches, and then went to 30 inches and then went to 28 inches as the fish came back?

A: I don't know the size sequence, but you couldn't keep any for a while, and then they opened it back up. Presently, it's 28 inches.

Q: Do you think that collapse was due to over fishing in the '70s and '80s and they were just gone?

A: That's my sense, because it came back coincident with the moratorium on keeping any.

Q: I can't remember your opinion about what happened to the mussels. I remember as a kid how plentiful they were and how you could get a two-inch mussel or an inch-and-a-half mussel and go crabbing pretty easily.

A: Yes. If you were going to go black fishing, you started with a mussel. Then you used the mussel as bait to catch crabs. Then you used the crab as bait for black fish. It was all in sequence. But of course nothing caught us. We ate the black fish. The food chain stopped right there. When we noticed the mussels disappearing, we got in touch with a mollusk pathologist, if you can imagine such a thing—a woman who was at URI, who is an expert in mollusk diseases. She sent her laboratory technician down. She took some samples of the existing mussels. I communicated with her a year or two after that asking what they found, and she said that they were able to find no single cause. She attributed it to a multifactorial sort of thing: changing water pH—of course, the pH is becoming a little more acidic, increased water temperature. The mussel range has shifted north pretty dramatically. Now they're up there in Maine, but we don't have any. She thought that was a factor. She also thought that overharvesting might have been a factor. It's interesting, because during the years before they disappeared at Quonnie, they suddenly began to appear in the grocery stores. I think that what happened was all of a sudden people who didn't used to know that you could just go pick your dinner, they realized you could buy it in a store. They never ate them before, but then when they showed up in the supermarkets they said, "We have the same things on the beach. Maybe I can eat those." So, I think harvesting sort of picked up right around then. I think that was in the late '60s, early '70s. But that's been my hypothesis.

Q: There are big aquaculture farms in Prince Edward Island where the water is cold. They farm them commercially and sell them. I wonder if overharvesting was a factor, or if it was more pollution and global warming.

A: She didn't offer a definitive answer, and I certainly don't have one. They are gone. That's for sure.

Q: You see a spawn, and you see quarter-inch ones, but they never seem to get to adulthood.

A: Yes. We have the same observation. It's puzzling.

Q: Were you or your father pond fishermen too, or just surfcasters?

A: Do you mean in Quonnie Pond?

Q: Yes.

A: We didn't fish there for some reason.

Q: What other changes have you observed decade after decade of coming to Quonnie?

A: I don't know when Howard Thorp began to develop Central Beach, but when I began to remember things, there was more empty space than houses in Central and East Beach. There were gradually more and more houses, and more and more of the habitat disappeared. When I was around ten, what the land was like was sort of the first stage of woods that followed the open fields that used to be there back in the day. There was a big population of bobwhite quail, if you can believe that. We never see a bobwhite quail there now, or virtually never. But there were bobwhite quail. You could whistle them into the yard. They would respond to a whistle in the springtime and they'd show up in the yard. So, there was quite a bit of open land. There were no deer, because the deer had been wiped out of Rhode Island. There were no coyotes. Coyotes were something that were out west. So, what we had was plenty of rabbits and some quail. That was the major wildlife, aside from the sea birds. But there was a good deal more habitat that would support the rabbits. It's interesting that we didn't see any foxes or coyotes. I may have never noticed them.

Q: We lost a lot of houses in the 1938 Hurricane, and then the war came. It seemed like a building boom right after the war in the late '40s and early '50s.

A: Yes.

Q: Thorp sold a lot of lots.

A: He must have. That sounds familiar, but I wasn't paying attention. Is that when your house was built?

Q: Yes. My grandfather bought the lot in 1946 and built a house that was ready by 1950. Howard was selling the lots. Maybe it was a good price at that time, but we look back at it and \$1,500 bought you a lot on the water.

A: Isn't that something? As I mentioned, in the late '50s, my dad built a second cottage. He bought a lot on Lucas Avenue in Central Beach. As I've come to learn more about the evolution of Quonochontaug, I've always been a little puzzled about why Howard sold my mom and dad a lot in Central Beach, because I think back then Howard did not sell to many people who were not well-established American families. Mogielnicki is not a well-established American name. I think we may have even been among the first people to whom he sold a lot, or the first people who had a multisyllabic name. But I've been curious about that. What I've come to guess is that Lila Crapo Soule, who was my mom's boss, and who gave us the little shed—I think Lila Crapo Soule had a relationship with Howard that I've heard about second and third hand, and she may have vouched for the family. We were not crazies. We were sort of okay. And as a result, he sold my folks the property in Central Beach. It's a pure guess, but there is a little evidence that maybe that's what happened.

There is an interesting story about that house, the house that my brother now owns. The one on Lucas Avenue. My dad worked at the Hartford Electric Light Company. He was a carpenter by trade. The Hartford Electric Light Company tore down a structure that they no longer needed, and they auctioned off the lumber. There was quite a bit of lumber in that structure, and they auctioned it off for a very good price. They wanted to get rid of it. My dad bid for it and he got it. A lot of lumber. A big truck load. None of the nails had been removed. So, he stored it for a while on my mother's uncle's property in Hartford. I distinctly remember—I think I was ten or eleven—pulling a lot of nails out of that stuff, but it was good, dry lumber. My dad understood that if you build with dry lumber, it doesn't shrink. You know what you're going to get. This was first-growth timber. It wasn't the stuff that's grown on plantations now and pushed with fertilizers and lots of watering. This was old and original timbers. So, that's the lumber that he used to build the place on Lucas Avenue. And when he was building it, the neighbors were very concerned, because this house looked like it was going to be some kind of a shack, because there was all this old gray lumber; not nice yellow stuff that was being built. But it was old gray lumber. What is this place going to look like? Of course, they finished it off with nice shingles and the place looked just fine when it was done. In fact, it's a nice sturdy house, because it was all built with dry lumber. Everybody was eventually happy, but there was a fair amount of concern when it was being built that this was going to be weird place.

Q: Have you ever seen restrictive covenants that were in those original deeds in the 1940s and '50s?

A: I haven't. I've heard of them. Have you?

Q: I am looking into it this summer.

A: I would be very interested to see what you find. Speaking of restrictive covenants, when the Dowd girls sold my folks the property, the original deed was for a right of way to the ocean. It contained a handwritten note that said, "Not for heirs of assigns." It was only for my parents. That troubled them. They missed that when they went to the closing. But then, the Dowd girls sold that very land to the house that Joan Gurney now occupies to Joan's parents. So, their house was built right on the right of way. Then my parents had no way to get to the beach. This would have been in the 1950s. I remember the great consternation talking at the kitchen table, "How are we going to get to the beach? What are we going to do? Oh, my goodness, we don't have a path to the beach." By that time my folks had bought the place in Central Beach. Thorp had taken the mortgage. They were very careful to pay Howard every month. He got his payment. They kept it right up. At that time, Thorp had a right of way that went from our property to the ocean. He had originally felt that that would be a right of way that was given to the development that he was building along the pond, and he thought, "That's great. We'll sell those lots on the pond. They can use that path to the beach and walk right down that road that goes through the Dowd's property." That didn't sit well with the Dowds, and the Dowds put a stop to it. Once people started using that path, they first put up some signs that said private property. The people showed them their deed that they were able to use this right of way, but they did not have the right to cross the Dowd's land, land which is now where Pack's house and Walsh's house are. In fact, the squabble escalated and eventually got to the Rhode Island Supreme Court. The Rhode Island Supreme Court upheld the Dowd's assertion that no one could use the private road over their land. As a result, the path from our house to the beach was stranded. Nobody could get to it, except us. We were abutted. My mom and dad talked to Howard. Howard seemed to like them, and so he sold, to my mother and dad, the right to use that path for \$1, so we then had our right of way to the beach. For years we used it as the right of way, and called it the right of way. After my mom died, and we were about to build a permanent house, one thing led to another and we basically thought that it would be wise if we owned that instead of having it just a right of way. So, we bought it from Nelson Thorp, his son. Nelson

was very kind and sold it to us. So, now that's an extension of our piece of property. Interestingly, when we went to build the new place, the town building inspector, when we were going for the permits, said, "You have the strangest-looking lot in Quonochontaug, or in Charlestown. We had this funny driveway, and then we had this single piece of property—an extension to the property that goes 400 feet down to the ocean, but we're very lucky to have it.

Q: Does your driveway come out on Sunset, or does it come out on the West Beach Road? Not Sunset; I mean Surfside.

A: No. It goes out to West Beach Road—it's hard to describe—right after the fork, just before the place where Old West Beach Road rejoins West Beach Road. It's Dowd Drive.

Q: And you share that with five or six families?

A: We share that with the Gurneys, with the Atwoods and the people renting Rich Thompson's house.

Q: Any memorabilia that you've collected over the years?

A: We're not real collectors. We did find one of those wonderful huge glass balls that the drivers used to use. And we found a couple of smaller ones. Back when we had mussels, the other critter that we had a lot of was starfish. Do you remember the starfish at all?

Q: Yes.

A: You don't see any starfish now. None to speak of. We used to take the starfish and dry them out, and they were sort of decorative once you dried them out and let them de-smell for a year or two.

Q: Have you got a collection of lures?

A: We've got a big collection of lures that washed up. Yes.

Q: You've talked about your childhood. What happened when you were high school age, college age, medical school age?

A: Not enough time at Quonnie. My mom would be there. When I was in college, my brother and sister were in their early years, so they would all spend the summers at Quonnie. When I would go there, I would do the

usual: swim, sun, fish. My dad died when I was eighteen in college, and so there was a fair amount of maintenance to maintain the little place. Money wasn't easy then, but it never occurred to anybody to sell that little place. That was not something which anybody talked about.

Q: Was it winterized at all?

A: No. The other house had been built by my dad before he died. He was planning to retire there. So, it was insulated and had a space for a heating system, which my brother has taken advantage of and winterized. Patches is what we call the little place, because it was built with patches from the hurricane. That house was never insulated. It was just bare stud walls. In 2007 and 2008 when my mom had passed away, Nancy and I had the little place. And we had children. They were beginning to have grandchildren. They all wanted to come. With a certain amount of sadness, we decided to deconstruct the original cottage, use as much of it as we could to rebuild a four-season house that was big enough so that we could have much of the family there when they could come. That was done in 2008.

Q: Did you go up a second story?

A: We went up a second story, and we used as much of the original little house that we could—refinished it. We took a lot of the Douglas fir rafters, which were 2 by 6s of virgin Douglas fir and split that up and used it as flooring. It's very handsome when you refinish it. That's the story of the current house.

Q: Did you go to Dartmouth as an undergraduate?

A: No. I was at Cornell as an undergraduate. Then I stayed east. I went to Harvard for med school, and then stayed in Boston at the Massachusetts General Hospital for my internship and residency. So, I was nice and close most of the time. I spent a couple of years at the National Institutes of Health after that. I took my vacation and came up to Quonnie. I spent most of my time in Washington. Then we came back to Boston for several years and then ended up in Hanover.

Q: What years were the NIH years?

A: That would have been '69 to '71, I think. There was an alternative service that one could do—the public health service. That was in the Vietnam War. There were some research slots available that you had to apply for.

I was fortunate enough to get one of those and spend my draft years at the National Institutes of Health as a U.S. public health service member.

Q: Was that uniformed?

A: That was uniformed. It was not a military service. It's a uniform service. I've always felt as though perhaps my decision to spend a lot of clinical time working at the Veterans Hospital to some extent was driven by the fact that I was lucky enough not to have to be in Vietnam at the time, but ended up taking care of a lot of people who had very badly ruined lives by that war.

Q: When you were an intern and a resident, what was your specialty? What were you training for?

A: It was always a general internist.

Q: Did you have a practice, or were you a researcher?

A: I had a couple of years of practice in Boston after I finished my training and came back from the NIH. Then my wife advanced her career. She had gotten her master's in public health, but wanted to do some direct patient care, and she ended up getting a place at the University of Colorado in a pediatric physician assistant training program. It was right at the time when physician assistants were coming on the scene, and the University of Colorado program was considered one of the groundbreakers. It was entirely focused for two years on pediatrics. We had pediatrics in med school. We had pediatrics for a month with everything else. She had two years of pediatrics, so she became very well trained in taking care of little kids, which have always terrified me. There is so much at stake. So, we spent a couple of years at the University of Colorado where she did her training. At that point, I ran the emergency room at the University of Colorado. We knew that we didn't want to be in a big city. We wanted some rural environment, so at that point we looked around. We also wanted to be in a medical school. There aren't many. Dartmouth was one, and they happened to have this job open, so we went to Dartmouth and ended up with the job. It was a mixture with mostly clinical, a fair amount of teaching. Some protected time for research. I ended up with more administration than I should have. I was responsible for the medical service at the Veterans Hospital.

Q: What were the years in Colorado?

A: That would have been '74 to '76, or '75 to '77. It was right around the late '70s.

Q: And your move to Dartmouth was when?

A: That would have been 1977.

Q: The years that you were in Colorado, were you able to visit Quonnie?

A: I can't recall. I should have, but I didn't. We probably did come east, because that's where Nancy's family was. That's where my family was. We probably came to Quonnie, but I can't assert that.

Q: And you were at Dartmouth from '77 to?

A: Until I retired. I retired in 2002, and then we did some international work after that with my pre-retirement half time. And then 2010 fully retired.

Q: Did you ever live in Quonnie full time?

A: When we were building the rebuilding the house—taking apart Patches and putting together the current place, which we call Bittersweet, because there was lots of bittersweet, and second, it was sort of bittersweet to take Patches apart, because it had so many wonderful memories and build the new place. That was 2008. I was still working half time. I would commute back and forth. At that point, my son, John, had just graduated from Wesleyan, and that was the 2008 financial crisis where jobs were awful. He didn't know exactly what he wanted to do next, so we hired John and a friend of his, Jono Newton, and we hired a carpenter from around Galilee—Snug Harbor was his home—named Bob Mellow, a wonderful carpenter, to be our supervisor. Nancy was our general contractor. John's friend, Jono, our son John and I were the grunt workers, and Bob Mellow, the carpenter that we hired, was our supervisor. He did the fancy work. We pounded the nails, put in all the screws and things—dug the holes—did the hard work. That year Nancy and the boys spent full time there. We rented some winterized cottages where everybody stayed while we were building the house, and I would come down weekends. But I personally never stayed there year-round. They did.

Q: What was the year of construction of Bittersweet?

A: That was 2008, 2009.

Q: Is the Snug Harbor fellow the same as Bob Mellow, or are they two different people?

A: That was Bob Mellow. Unfortunately, he's retired. I would refer him to anybody. A wonderful guy. He had started his career as the mate on his father's fishing boat out of Galilee, but was plagued by horrible sea sickness, and also a fairly abusive dad. We heard some horrible stories about him, as the captain of their fishing boat. He then changed careers and became a carpenter, and a very good one at that. Then he retired a couple years ago.

Q: Is Bittersweet today like it was in 2009 when you completed it?

A: Yes.

Q: I think that covers your 75 years at Quonochontaug.

A: *Tempus fugit*, as they say. Steve, you've made this very easy. I've enjoyed talking with you.

Q: We've enjoyed it. It's very interesting. Thank you for all the history.

A: My pleasure.

Q: We'll put it to good use.