

## QUONOCHONTAUG HISTORICAL SOCIETY

### Oral History

# HOLLY BLANTON SCHROEDER

September 23, 2001

Interviewed by Anne Schaefer Doyle

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**Doyle:** Today is Sunday, September 23 in the year 2001. This afternoon I am talking with Holly Blanton Schroeder of West Beach, Quonochontaug; and she will relate her memories of being here at Quonnie.

Holly, why don't we just begin with your memories of how your family found Quonnie, how did you come down here?

**Schroeder:** Let's see. My mother, her college roommate in the '20's at --she graduated in '22 so it had to be --was a Catherine Campbell, and her parents had a house -- the first house on what we called the Old Boardwalk, in Old Quonochontaug—I have some pictures I can show you--the Campbell cottage and my mother came down and spent some time with her. And fell in love with the place.

**Doyle:** Now your--you said something about your parents: your father proposed to your mother there xxx?

**Schroeder:** Yes, you have a good memory! Yes -- So after my mother and father got married, they came down too. He was up also in the Berkshires at college, at Amherst, so they came down; and he proposed to my mother on Picnic Rock.

**Doyle:** And your mother and father's names: can you just—

**Schroeder:** Yes. She was Harriet Marsh and my father was Alexander John Blanton. And after that, every August they rented the Campbell cottage.

**Doyle:** OK. And this was at – they were married in 19 what -- 22? That's what I have down here.

**Schroeder:** Yeah.

**Doyle:** Just to give a time frame of the whole thing.

**Schroeder:** Yeah. '22. Yes.

**Doyle:** OK. So they rented the Campbell cottage for a month.

**Schroeder:** For the whole month of August!

**Doyle:** The whole month --I see. Now when were you born?

**Schroeder:** I was born in '32. And so I came to Quonochontaug as a six-month-old, or eight-month-old child. And my brothers of course had come before me.

**Doyle:** Now your two older brothers: What are their names and about how much older were they?

**Schroeder:** My older brother is also an Alec, and he's four years older; and I have a brother Frederick, and he's two years older.

**Doyle:** So, then during the winter, where did your family live?

**Schroeder:** They lived in Irvington-on-Hudson, in New York.

**Doyle:** And so when you came down for the summer, then you drove down?

**Schroeder:** We drove.

**Doyle:** And did you have to pack up the whole car and take everything that you needed for a whole month?

**Schroeder:** Yes.

**Doyle:** Did your dad come for the whole month as well?

**Schroeder:** He came for two weeks, and then he came weekends. He took the train up from New York to Westerly. Xxxxx

**Doyle:** What are your very first memories as a young one, growing up here? How far back can you remember? Just some early memories –

**Schroeder:** I remember the insides of the cottages; they were fascinating because they were sort of dark, but not a bad dark. They used dark wood, as you saw in the Herschel cottage. And every cottage had a big, big high bed, similar to the one over in the little Mite box, filled with pillows. And you could sort of lie on it or play cards – we used to play War on it. They were fascinating, the insides of the cottage. Of course there was kerosene, and we used the old fashioned water pump—

**Doyle:** No electricity?

**Schroeder:** No electricity in the beginning, until after the '38 Hurricane.

**Doyle:** Oh, I didn't realize that.

**Schroeder:** At least here. And there was the outhouse.

**Doyle:** Oh, you used an outhouse?

**Schroeder:** Yes, oh yes. Loved the smell of it –we put lime in them; and still when I smell lime to these days, I'm trans- ---And some people had wonderful xxx outhouses, with all kinds of little hearts on the doors—

**Doyle:** Were all the outhouses in the back of the cottages? Lining the shore?

**Schroeder:** Yes. Yes. And you'd put lime in about once a month. So there was always this nice smell.

**Doyle:** I know you've talked a lot about the boardwalk. Tell me a little about what it was like to visit people and—

**Schroeder:** Well, that was sort of—besides the beach, that was sort of the center of your social life, and you would walk it. As children we would walk it all the time. We would drive –we had little carts that we put our dolls in, and we would drive those along. And my brothers had sling shots. [Laughter] And it was where you were if you weren't on the beach. And then the high point of the day was after dinner, everybody would go out and walk from-- the Campbell cottage was the last cottage on the boardwalk, and we would walk all the way down around to the breachway, and you'd meet everybody you knew and sit and talk to them.

**Doyle:** And you even were talking before about being able to just go into these cottages and the freedom of just—the openness of people in allowing people to come in and out of there.

**Schroeder:** Yeah; certainly in the daytime. In the nighttime you would sit on the porch. But then you'd be down on the boardwalk, too. And there were at least five places that you could go down steps to the beach. In fact you can still see some of the steps that fell down, from the '38 Hurricane, down towards the breachway. So you could go down onto the beach also.

**Doyle:** Were some of them cement and some of them wooden?

**Schroeder:** Yes. Started out cement at the Campbell cottage, and down—it got to about where the Eccleston cottages were, where there's a little tiny beach that we called the bathtub beach--it came down and it was wooden, and it went along the ground. And then as you came around that point to go into the breachway – this was the fascinating part of it – it rose up almost about 15 feet. So that you could look down on the houses. And we always thought artists –and some people looked down xxxx

**Doyle:** How could you look down on the houses? I don't understand that. If you were up on the boardwalk, I thought the houses were right there next to the boardwalk.

**Schroeder:** Not up around. . . That may be – I'd have to check with Bob Gager on that; that may be my little [impression] as an infant. But there were some people that climbed down ladders to get to the bottom xxxxx of their house, from the house coming to the boardwalk.

**Doyle:** I see. I see.

**Schroeder:** And then it went around the point and started coming down; and then it would turn into cement. And some of the cement that's still there is the old '38. And it ended at the fish market. It went around. This was the old breachway; after Carol, the '54 hurricane, they re-dredged the breachway and made it straight through. But the old breachway, which you can still see, was a nice and windy and kind of fun.

**Doyle:** Now who were some of your friends that you had when you were down here?

**Schroeder:** Joyce LaBelle; we would drive our dolls up and down the boardwalk. Nancy and Peter—I forget their last names. They would come down—they lived with their godmother, Doris Patee rented a house.

**Doyle:** This is before she bought the one next door --?

**Schroeder:** Yes. Then there were a whole bunch of young men: Bubby and Russy, and Dunc Moseley; and we played with Palmer – my brothers did – big buddies with young Palmer, Palmer Pendleton, the grandson of the famous Palmer Pendleton, the nephew of Albert Pendleton, who built this house for him ; his father was Clifford Pendleton.

**Doyle:** So in terms of the Pendletons, then, it was the old Palmer and then he had-

**Schroeder:** Two sons and a daughter.

**Doyle:** All right; so the two sons were—

**Schroeder:** Clifford and Albert. And the daughter was –

**Doyle:** Helen I think; that's--.

**Schroeder:** Helen – Helen Bliven. Yes. And—

**Doyle:** So Albert –

**Schroeder:** Albert never married.

**Doyle:** Oh he didn't?

**Schroeder:** No. Clifford had young Palmer and his sister, who was a nurse. Mrs. Drew – Elsie Drew knows her. And then there was another child, who I think was slightly. . . slow. I forget what his name was.

**Doyle:** Now did they live in their farmhouse at that time? Where, where did they-

**Schroeder:** No; they had a house along the boardwalk.

**Doyle:** Oh they did? Oh, OK.

**Schroeder:** But they also had—

**Doyle:** The older Palmer had built the one down on West Beach Road.

**Schroeder:** Yeah, that wonderful old farmhouse. Yeah. But I remember going to young Palmer, yes, on the boardwalk.

**Doyle:** 'Cause I do remember Marjorie telling me –she was here, apparently –

**Schroeder:** Marjorie?

**Doyle:** Clifford's wife.

**Schroeder:** Yes;

**Doyle:** She was here during the '38 Hurricane, and she had a baby --and I don't know--at the time of the hurricane they got swept back; they were in a car or something?

**Schroeder:** Yes; they got swept down the road. M hm.Yeah. That was the second set of ch-- ; that wasn't Palmer and Claire. It was Clifford's second set of children.

**Doyle:** Yeah. But did they own -- Did Clifford own the business?

**Schroeder:** Yes.

**Doyle:** Ok. I see.

**Schroeder:** Is Marjorie still alive?

**Doyle:** She is still alive. I've talked to her briefly. [Marjorie P. deceased summer 2008] But she doesn't talk a lot about specifics. So it's been a little difficult to get some information. I found out through somebody else that she was here [during the '38 Hurricane]. That's why I was surprised that she didn't mention that to me.

Ok. Let's talk about the neighbors of the Campbells. On the western side of the Campbells' cottage was the Bogues' cottage.

**Schroeder:** Yeah. The Bogues were the sisters of Mrs. Campbell: they were Aunt Edith and Aunt Edna. And they had a--that's the cottage that Doris Patee rented the first time. And they had this wonderful parrot called "Dodo," who sat out on the porch. And everyone that walked by, he would say, "Poor Dodo." And Dodo was a real part of the beach. And he had his birthday party in August, and all the children on the beach would go to Dodo's--"Poor Dodo's"-- birthday party.

**Doyle:** What was her own love of --that's a strange pet to have. Or wasn't it at the time? I don't know!

**Schroeder:** No; no. We never questioned it. He was just a part of --

**Doyle:** Now was she connected with --I know your dad was an editor?

**Schroeder:** Yeah, a publisher – at McMillan. No; they weren't connected.

**Doyle:** Oh, they were not. It was the one after.

**Schroeder:** Yeah.

**Doyle:** Now did Dodo, did he go on the beach?

**Schroeder:** No; he stayed on the boardwalk. I think I showed you some pictures –

**Doyle:** Yeah; I'd love to see them again.

**Schroeder:** Yeah. Further on down were the Marshes, Chauncey and Helen Marsh. We would go there and she would tell –wonderful old --not quite ghost stories, but stories like that. And they had a marvelous collection of blue willow plates that... and china that we always liked. And then there was the Thomas Cotlow –we should talk to Ray Eccleston about xxx [unintelligible]

**Doyle:** Now the Marshes; do you know anything about their background? I mean, where did they come from?

**Schroeder:** They came from New Jersey. And I'm not sure how they originally came here. But they certainly were here pre-'38.

**Doyle:** Were they in the house during the hurricane?

**Schroeder:** No. No. They weren't, even though it was September 21.<sup>st</sup> Mr. Marsh: there was a story about him. He saved someone who was in trouble off of Picnic Rock and hurt his leg badly, so he was always in a –had a sort of a steel brace, which [caused] --kind of a limp.

**Doyle:** Did you see him do this?

**Schroeder:** No. I just heard about it. He was a nice man.

**Doyle:** Now was Picnic Rock kind of a centering for a lot of you that lived right there? Did you actually go and bring your lunches down at the Rock and –

**Schroeder:** Yeah; m hm. But we also played a lot on the rocks in front of what's now the Hathaway cottage. And we spent mornings there, with sailboats, and catching crabs that we would sell to people who wanted to go fishing. And we bartered some with that famous Mother Brindley so we could get candy. She would take a rock crab and leave penny candy. So our first bartering experiences were down there.

**Doyle:** Is there anything else that you can remember about her that would be fun to —

**Schroeder:** No; she sort of -- well, you would walk in there and she had a rocking chair there; and lots of little kittens. Sort of playing in the sun. And then this wonderful glass case full of lovely candies.

**Doyle:** She didn't serve lunches, and everything did she? It was more ice cream—

**Schroeder:** Just ice cream and candy.

**Doyle:** Somebody said that there might have been a one-armed bandit type of thing. Was that there?

**Schroeder:** That was probably the Bowling Alley.

**Doyle:** The Bowling Alley. All right. Other people have mentioned going in there and sitting and playing checkers or games or something—

**Schroeder:** Yes. M hm. Yeah.

**Doyle:** So the children felt really free to go in there by themselves--?

**Schroeder:** Yes; much more than in the Bowling Alley. At Mother Brindley's.

**Doyle:** Was she living all by herself? Or did she have—

**Schroeder:** I'm fascinated now by her; I would like to find out more about her: Where she came from in England. We know she worked at Bradford Dye; she came from England to work in the Bradford Dye. And the-- Mrs. --who we should call up—Mrs.--

**Doyle:** Hope Andrews?



**Schroeder:** Hope Andrews-- filled in some more. Her father owned those buildings, and she might know how she got here and why.

**Doyle:** Her father owned where Mother Brindley had her store?

**Schroeder:** Yeah; that's my understanding. But I don't know whether she was married or a spinster or a widow or --We do know that she rented --it's still today-- a two-family house; there was something attached to the back of it. But she rented to somebody who worked at the life-saving station across the beach.

**Doyle:** I heard that during the hurricane there were some people who survived the hurricane in part of her structure there. Is that--do you know anything about that? I don't know.

**Schroeder:** Probably should have gone to that lecture! Now Jackie Eldridge was another one we used to play around with. His parents owned the Eldridge --it was called the casino. I remember his telling me where he -- they were down here at the hurricane. It seemed to me that he was in someone's bathroom-- hanging on to the basin or something. This is -- I'd love to see him again.

**Doyle:** Now he's still living--

**Schroeder:** Yes, he's still living; he's our age. He was the superintendent of schools on Block Island for a long time. [Agreement from Anne Doyle]

**Doyle:** I also heard that -- and I don't know if you remember this --but there was a couple of years that for some reason Mother Brindley gave up her store, and there was a woman named Rose Gee over in Central Beach that had a tea room there. I've heard stories about that. Do you know anything about that?

**Schroeder:** No, I don't. Unless Marcy Duhaim might know something about that. Yeah --took you to work-- She's across from Ecclestons'

**Doyle:** Oh, OK. Thank you. Thank you. I just--There are so many names it's hard for me to remember them all. OK.

[Shift to new topic]

**Schroeder:** We're right on the beach, or on the boardwalk or catching crabs. This time of year we would collect grapes and back in the--

**Doyle:** And what did you do with the grapes? They're not edible are they?

**Schroeder:** No. Our mother made grape jelly out of them. And then blackberries-- There was a wonderful pond in the middle of the --I've got to go find it again --pasture, and there was a farm there. And we would get our--every evening we would go over to get our milk; this was raw milk.

**Doyle:** Was this the Clarke farm?

**Schroeder:** The Clarke farm, yes. And the [xxx] when you go in there, it's now, as you know, a house. But it's still a cement floor. And that's the cement floor that those cows--

**Doyle:** In the barn that she's living in, is that it?

**Schroeder:** Yeah. And there was -- I still remember-- but then they must have filled it up- a trough where the cow droppings went. But there was a wonderful pond -- there was a pig pasture way out in the back, but that's where the garbage people would drive their truck in there and dump it into the pig thing; we loved to go there and watch them do that. And then there was this wonderful little fresh-water muddy, muddy pond that we would have a--we pretended that we were Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn and we would get a raft and pole around the pond.

**Doyle:** This was a fresh-water pond!

**Schroeder:** Yes! It's between the barn and Whistling Chimneys. And I've got to go find it again.

**Doyle:** You know, you're the first person that's started talking about blackberries and picking and all that, and to me that's--

**Schroeder:** And blueberries!

**Doyle:** And blueberries! To me that was half my Quonnie life--out in the bushes. Getting all these berries --

**Schroeder:** Yes! Yes! And the grapes.

[Much laughter and agreement]

**Schroeder:** Yes --And Mother would make grape jelly. In fact, she'd have it in cheesecloth, over a chair.

**Doyle:** My mother did blackberry jelly that way. It was pure; no pectin, nothing. Pure.

**Schroeder:** Oh no! Pure, yes, and it made you shiver, 'cause there was hardly any sugar in there, too. Yeah. The '54 hurricane—we'll come up to that later— but we left those three big cheese bags of grape jelly in the house that got washed away! So we haven't been too fond of doing grapes!

[Laughter]

**Doyle:** [Not exactly] the best of memories! Now I know that the '38 Hurricane wiped out the Campbell cottage; at least it was destroyed. And that is the point where your parents decided to buy the land that the Campbells had their cottage on. Is that correct?

**Schroeder:** Yes. Stella Campbell was her name. And she was a lovely, marvelous woman. Great intellectual. Spiritually kind of intellectual. And she sold the property to my father and mother. And the two sisters, Aunt Edith and Aunt Edna Bogue, sold their property to the juvenile— the children's editor at my father's publishing company, who had come to Quonnie visiting us.

**Doyle:** And this was Doris Patee.

**Schroeder:** This was Doris Patee. Now the other--

**Doyle:** Were they just fearful at this point? Is that why they wanted to sell, do you think? I just --

**Schroeder:** Um, I think Mrs. Campbell felt that the ocean had betrayed her; but maybe that's —Now her daughter Catherine did come back, as did Catherine's sister Avis Campbell. As a matter of fact they rented something up in Central Beach. And the Bogue sisters, Aunt Edna and Aunt Edith, wanted something up in Central Beach. I remember Donna had a birthday party at Central Beach, after the '37—

**Doyle:** Now there is a Campbell family right now on Central Beach; I'm wondering if—

**Schroeder:** No; it wouldn't be--no, 'cause there was only — Avis didn't marry and Catherine had one son, who didn't come. And she used to go down and stay at the Ocean House, too; yeah; she did come back.

**Doyle:** Which, quickly, reminds me: Did you go into the hotels? Do you remember going into the hotels before the '38 Hurricane?

**Schroeder:** Yeah; certainly: the Quonochontaug.

**Doyle:** The Quonochontaug Inn. All right. Before we get past the '38 -- now what is your memory of the inns and hotels? Did they have entertainment going on or did--?

**Schroeder:** Yeah; 'cause that was [the thirties?] ; I was about six. I do remember the Quonochontaug Inn, but I remember it more from after the Hurricane.

**Doyle:** OK. All right; so we've got you --your folks have bought this land, and then, what was the next step for them in terms of doing something with the land?

**Schroeder:** Now most of the houses along the boardwalk had the big house up front, and then they had sort of a garage with a guesthouse upstairs and then the outhouse back there, too. So my parents decided that they would start with the building that they would later turn into a garage and a guest room, guest suites upstairs. And then build the bigger one up front. So, that we did in 1941. But it was a lovely little house: the stairs were on the outside, which we liked. And the first floor was cement, 'cause it was xxx you know, it was covered with a sea- xxx or something, because later it would be a garage. And it had a big high bed --

**Doyle:** Now was this over where the "Mite Box" is now--

**Schroeder:** Yeah; just a little, maybe, to the west. And yeah; so we were here practically all summer, from '41 --it was completed in '41 -- until--and Palmer Pendleton, of course, built it.

**Doyle:** The old Palmer --

**Schroeder:** The old Palmer, yes. With the help of Albert. And then in '44-- this was before they had names for hurricanes -- I think it was in October, but I'm not sure --

**Doyle:** I didn't think we had hurricanes in October --no, but we do! Certainly; I mean-- I forget -- but there was a November one in 1912 --

All right; so the first house after the '38 Hurricane was built in '41 it looks like--

**Schroeder:** Yeah. [Searching for something--photos?] Oh, here; yeah --here it is.

**Doyle:** Did your folks come down to watch it being built?

**Schroeder:** I think so; [Looking at photos?] uh huh, here it is. .... Ok, now it's completed.

**Doyle:** And then, after it was completed, then there was another storm, which was not called a hurricane back then—

**Schroeder:** In '44.

**Doyle:** All right. And that was in '44.

**Schroeder:** Yeah. And Mr. Pendleton's famous remark!

**Doyle:** Which was ....?

**Schroeder:** Hurricane '44. Here it is.

**Doyle:** Ok.

**Schroeder:** Second hurricane, '44. And so it broke in the front, and though these doors were bolted in cement-- and maybe that's what saved it: that it was able to go in and out, plus it pushed us against the telephone post there. And when Mr. --wonderful Mr. Pendleton came around and looked at it, because the floor was cement (because it was going to be a garage at some point), there was about eight feet of sand in it. He looked at it and he said, "Well, it didn't [help] your floor any, did it! "

And then, so he jacked it up and moved—and fixed it all up. But we gave up any idea of building a big house in front. The [deck] would be vulnerable.

**Doyle:** So you left it in that form, then --until -- at some point you did build the Albert house, so that was in the early '50's I think --

**Schroeder:** No; there was a hurricane, Carol, in '54—

**Doyle:** '54, yeah.

**Schroeder:** Wiped everything out.

**Doyle:** Uh huh. That wiped out this place—

**Schroeder:** Yeah, this place. It ended up on Duck Island, in the pond. And I was able to –yeah, by this time I’m out of college and working in New York. And I took time off and rowed around Quonochontaug Pond, finding – very interesting, almost -- a mattress, with the sheets and the blankets still on it out in the islands and along –[a fact I found amusing?]- Mr. Pendleton’s property. I could find -- I’d been down to Watch Hill for the bathing-suit sale, and bought a one-piece and a two-piece bathing suit. And they were on the—(no, they must have been in the back [bedroom], I think it had twin beds)—on the other twin bed. And I found them on Duck Island, right together. And I still have them: the two-piece bathing suit and the one-piece bathing suit, within five feet of each other! And yet, the bookends – I had a library up there—all my college books went out to sea, except the poetry books: I’d put them in my apartment in New York, so that was good. They were almost – I found the bookends, that were quite close to each other, about three miles [from the cottage site?]; one was in front of Priscilla Hatch’s house; the other one was some place down by the Bowling Alley.

**Doyle:** How on earth did you find them?

**Schroeder:** Just bumped into them!

**Doyle:** Do you still have those?

**Schroeder:** Yes, m hm. They’re upstairs.

**Doyle:** So did you try and collect as much as you could, from the debris, afterward?

**Schroeder:** Yes. See that marvelous bureau that you’re looking at?

**Doyle:** Yes.

**Schroeder:** You’ll notice that it was in –I’ll have to go back to the old house –It was in—it was part of the house for the ’44 hurricane, and I think it stayed there. But in the ’54 hurricane it went out, and we found it in the pond. And as you can see, it’s over ten feet tall.

**Doyle:** Intact!

**Schroeder:** Intact. And we had no house to put it in. I think Mr. Brown said he would take it to a carpenter – --perfectly intact; and it was so well built that none of the drawers warped. And there it is sitting, to this day.

**Doyle:** And the drawers open and close OK?

**Schroeder:** Beautifully. Yeah.

**Doyle:** Then, after the '54 hurricane--?

**Schroeder:** We didn't have a house here, for – I think two summers. I think we rented: one summer we rented the Bob White, over by the barn, and I don't know what we did the other summer. But then we bought this lot here from the Gerrishs, whose house used to be here before the '38 Hurricane. And built Albert House. Hopefully it will be -- it's far enough back to be [not] to be hurt by hurricanes.

**Doyle:** When you say "we," you mean your parents and –

**Schroeder:** Yeah. And again, it was-- Mr. Pendleton was still alive, our Mr. Pendleton, Palmer; and he helped with it, but Albert, his son, was there. That's why we called it Albert House. He almost built it by himself.

**Doyle:** By himself. And that includes –is there a fireplace here?

**Schroeder:** No, there was a stove here.

**Doyle:** Ok; 'Cause --I was wondering--I know that the Pendletons also did stonework.

**Schroeder:** Oh, and it was beautiful, yeah.

**Doyle:** Janith Dorsey was saying that the Pendletons built their fireplace.

**Schroeder:** Yeah. Well it was a chimney they were missing.

**Doyle:** Yeah. There is a chimney.

**Schroeder:** A chimney over there, too. But, let me go back; we forgot about that. As you probably know, during World War II, the Quonset Naval Air Station had an auxiliary airfield down here in Charlestown. And they trained night fliers. And as a child, we can all—they would only fly at night, and you'd hear them droning overhead. Obviously they were no jets then. So it was very calming, going to sleep,--you probably remember-

**Doyle:** I remember that.

**Schroeder:** And after the war they closed the field, and they sold all the buildings to people – anybody who wanted it. And they bought – my mother – understand my father's not living –she bought the officers' –bought their night club, or what do they call it--

**Doyle:** Bachelors' quarters?

**Schroeder:** Bachelors --Club, and that's the little Mite Box that's there now. And it was cheap and it included moving it down here.

**Doyle:** So this was right after—did she put that in there right after the—

**Schroeder:** Yup, before we built the Albert [House].

**Doyle:** All right, before this was built—

**Schroeder:** Yeah, about two years, yes.

**Doyle:** So you did have a place to come.

**Schroeder:** Yeah, yeah. One year we didn't, and that's when we --- . And Albert jacked it up and put the wonderful cedar posts that are still holding it up.

**Doyle:** How did they get it from the base to here?

**Schroeder:** You know, I can't remember! I don't remember.

**Doyle:** That's always a big question to me. I know after the hurricane they moved so many of these houses, for instance, and I just don't understand how they did it.

**Schroeder:** Yeah. Shirley Barrett's house got moved up from the breachway with a load--oxen pulled it.

**Doyle:** Yeah. Yes.

**Schroeder:** The Greene house; that's the way --

**Doyle:** So Albert --And my mother had this theory that all cottages at the beach had to have porches on at least three sides, so that you could get in the sun, out of the sun, in the wind, out of the wind. And so Albert put porches over there on three sides, and he put a chimney in, for a wonderful stove. And then two years later, we built Albert House; then there's a porch on three sides, and we no longer had the stove. The pipe is -- the pipe men covered it up with a picture. The stove kind of disintegrated. So that takes us up to -- this was built about '56.

**Doyle:** Now once this was built, you were out of college, right?

**Schroeder:** M hm.



**Doyle:** Now did you—did your family come and center right here in Albert House? Who used the –you know, the little Mite Box. Or did you just kind of flow back and forth?

**Schroeder:** Well, my mother kind of liked the little Mite Box, ‘cause –

[ Whispers and sounds of equipment moving]

**Doyle:** Now we are talking about 1948.

**Schroeder:** My two brothers in a dory, in fact Carl Brown’s dory, rowed from Quonochontaug Breachway to Block Island. And they were supposed to come back that night, but there was a storm; so the wonderful fishermen on Block Island hid their oars so they couldn’t come back. They rowed back the next day.

**Doyle:** Do you think they would have if they’d had their gear ?

**Schroeder:** Uh huh! Well, they thought so! –The fishermen thought so! They thought they were –

[Sounds and mumbling in background]

**Schroeder:** They loved fishing. And there’s that flat rock, on the other side of Picnic Rock, that you can only get to at low tide. And as children we go out with him, we could walk there, with hand lines, and we would catch blackfish!

**Doyle:** Hand lines?

**Schroeder:** Hand lines; yes, hand lines. Yeah.

**Doyle:**

Did you ever go snorkeling, and did your father ever do that, spear fishing and that kind of thing?

**Schroeder:** No; we didn't. I have since, become a scuba diver; so –

**Doyle:** We're talking about friends of the Blantons. Around what time--- this would be? Before the '38 Hurricane?

**Schroeder:** Before the '38 Hurricane and between the '38 and the '54. And they were in the part of the breachway nearest the breakwater.

**Doyle:** And their names again?

**Schroeder:** They were the Keenes, the Finlaysons, the Smiths, the Moseleys, and the Crooks. Now the Finlaysons have since moved their house up onto West Beach Road, which is where the Drews are now. The Greenes –

**Doyle:** Yes. Now was this after the '38 Hurricane?

**Schroeder:** No; after the '54.

**Doyle:** After the '54. But they also have built another house, where the Summit was --?

**Schroeder:** I think they had three houses because –

**Doyle:** Oh, OK; yes, because they did have more than one.

**Schroeder:** Yes. Mrs. Dorsey is still there. And the one that Bob lived in is the one that's up here. And then there's that little red one, where Spences are.

**Doyle:** Where the Spences are. Ok; so there *were* three. Now where did the one that the Drews ran, where did that come from? I mean –

**Schroeder:** Some place near where the Mungers, Finlaysons, the Smiths, the Greenes-

**Doyle:** OK; so it was in that grouping down there. Was the actual house brought down there, or did they just build a new house?

**Doyle:**

**Schroeder:** I think part of it was brought down there, 'cause it's very much expanded now since the Drews have taken over.

**Doyle:** Now do you remember much about Mrs. Keene or any of these families?

**Schroeder:** Yeah, yeah.  
Well, why don't we just –

**Schroeder:** Yeah; wonderful [gates?] where you'd walk along, and they all had docks out into the breachway so you could--and nobody minded-- you could sit on their docks and look at their boats, and talk with them; and you could fish off their little docks, catch --. Probably the Moseleys we knew the best, 'cause they had children our age. I remember the mother from after the '38.

**Doyle:** Now when you'd go swimming, say with your friends, where did you go? Did you go across the breachway or did you go right here?

**Schroeder:** No; in the old days, before the breachway got dredged, you could walk across the breachway at low tide, just up to your waist and hold—

**Doyle:** Hold what?

**Schroeder:** You'd hold your towel and everything above your head, up like this.

**Doyle:** There was no line then, that stretched across, that you just kept a hold of –

**Schroeder:** No. And there wasn't that much current. As I've said before, it was a winding breachway and it was quite shallow compared to now. And even in high tides you could swim across, quite safely. But you could swim in the breachway.

**Doyle:** Is that where you learned to swim?

**Schroeder:** I learned to swim, yeah, at the little beach to the east of the – in fact I have a picture –

**Doyle:** [Was that] called the “Baby Beach” ?

**Schroeder:** Yeah; to the east of the breakwater. Now it's very rocky, but in those days it was not so rocky. But it had very little waves and things.

**Doyle:**

**Doyle:** Now what about the Greens; do you remember anything in particular about them?

**Schroeder:** Yeah; that was Shirley Barrett's mother. I certainly remember her. She was a Cong--she was in the state senate. I don't remember her husband; but her husband wasn't Shirley's father.

**Doyle:** Father--no.

**Schroeder:** And Finlayson: don't remember what Bob's father was like. What about the mother?

**Schroeder:** No; uh unh. The Moseleys I knew well, but mainly from afterwards, after the '38. And Smiths [were] the parents of Cathy Reed, who's down next to the Mungers, down on the breachway. She's somebody you probably should talk to.

**Doyle:** I don't know that name at all. I think -- are they near the—

[Abrupt shift of subject]

**Doyle:** [It's] now 1954. When did you graduate from college?

**Schroeder:** '53.

**Doyle:** And where did you graduate from?

**Schroeder:** I graduated from Smith College.

**Doyle:** From Smith. OK. Then what did life bring you at that point?

**Doyle:**

**Schroeder:** I was an International Relations major, and I did my senior thesis on the International Refugee Organization, which was a specialized agency at the UN. It doesn't exist any more because they thought refugees would be only a temporary condition of mankind! And so when they---it was fortunate in 1953, August of 1953, I was lying on the beach, waitressing at the Inn. And my mother said, when are you going to find a job? And I was very happy waitressing up at the [Quonochontaug] Inn. I would walk -- I would get up at 8:00 and sort of put on -- I put the last waitressing shorts I'm sure, walk up the beach barefoot, with my apron, sit on a rock and put on my shoes and apron, and present myself to waitress at the old Inn.

But it was August 5 they passed the refugee relief act, so I had to pull myself together. And I knew everybody -- I knew how the whole thing worked in this country, since I'd done my great research paper on it. So I presented myself to the head of the refugee center (most relief work in this country is done through non-governmental agencies) so I presented myself to the head of the Protestant and Eastern Orthodox refugee resettlement and relief agency, which was called Church World Services, and said "You've got to be hiring people." So he obviously hired me. And I spent about ten years in the whole field, re-settling --I received the dossiers that came in from all the camps in Europe and the Far East.

**Doyle:** These were people wanting to come to the United States?

**Schroeder:** Who were eligible under the legislation; and it was the last—maybe it'll change-- the last really omnibus: it took care of refugees over the whole world. It was amazing; even to White Russians and Hong Kong, Palestinian refugees that ---

[To Side Two]

**Schroeder:** We were displaced by World War II. And of course the escapees from behind the Iron Curtain were now coming, Greek earthquake victims, Dutch flood victims, really – but I've never [alluded] to my famous story about my White Russians in Hong Kong?

**Doyle:** Noooo!

**Schroeder:** Well, see, when I came and took over this –see I received all of these dossiers that had to be eligible—and I used to think that all of our overseas offices were run by British civil servants that were no longer in Rhodesia,. And I had to shape them up. So I said, I want something I can sell to them –you know, the Baptist Church in Iowa. And you know, it doesn't tell me whether it's a school or what it did or anything. So it took me two years to get them to give me something that – to give me a good educational picture of xxx—that didn't say they worked in an office; they told me what kind of office they worked in, something that was really sellable, so you can use the word. Then suddenly I got these –my man in Hong Kong has relaxed, and he sent me these wonderful White Russian women; they all had pictures, so you can look at them. And it sort of was kind of vague about what they did. So I fired off a note saying he'd relaxed or something; and after the revolution in Russia, north Russians either went to Belgrade or Shanghai. And then of course when these countries became Communist, the ones in Bosnia ended up in West Germany; and the ones in Shanghai went to Hong Kong. So he kind of laughed when he wrote me back, and he said, "Obviously you don't know about Shanghai: pre-war, it was this wonderful, wonderful city, where there was a German sector, a British sector, and a French sector. And it was very famous for its, its houses of ill repute! And the Madams were these White Russians!" [Much laughter]

And what else could I say, except dealing in goods and services! So we [ended up] sending them to all the Council of Churches in Chicago, and they did very well, very well. Good business. They had a--

**Doyle:** So you were actually in Europe, though, for a period of time –

**Schroeder:** Yeah. The Refugee Relief Act finished – anywhere from 1953 through '56. There were *non-corda* visas for these people that were out there, refugees and escapees. And then there was the Hungarian Revolution. And I lived in Camp Kilmer, everybody did; and I went over –you'd go every year, a lot, to interview and stuff like that. And then, in '58, I went to Holland, and worked mainly with Dutch-Indonesian repatriates, who had come from the former Dutch East Indies after Circolo took over, and repatriate[d] to Holland. And there was a special program for them to immigrate to this country. In a sense they weren't yet refugees because they came from a country that was poor. But, um--yeah; so that's the last language I learned. I'm fluent in Dutch, which is kind of – and everybody tells me-- Dutch people tell me I speak it with an Indonesian accent. 'Cause I spoke it with my -- and then-- let's see –

**Doyle:** So, at what point did you come back and re-connect with Quonnie?

**Schroeder:** Yeah; I came back on long leave. So that must have been in –'60. Yeah. And then I went back to Holland, and then I came back in '62 and got married—to a Dutchman, but not a Dutchman I met over there, a Dutchman I met here. And I got completely out of the refugee business at that time.

**Doyle:** Now you have a daughter –?

**Schroeder:** Two daughters.

**Doyle:** Two daughters. And do they come down to Quonnie now too? They love Quonnie?

**Schroeder:** Yes. Yeah. And they spent a lot of time – 'cause after my mother died and we took over the place, then it became – the taxes went from \$600 a year to —no \$300 a year to whatever –to \$3,000 or whatever it is –we've had to rent the big house. So the girls and I and their father would– he would come on weekends; but we spent summers in the little house – and we've done that for –

**Doyle:** What do you--what are your feelings about Quonnie now? Is it any different than years ago?

**Schroeder:** Not really. In all xxx it's not that different, because it's all the same families. At least from after the '54 hurricane. The Marshes pre-date, and the Hathaways pre-date '38. [Also] the Ecclestons; that's three new houses there.

**Doyle:** Did you know the Ecclestons – how far back do they go?

**Schroeder:** They were up there on the boardwalk, too.

**Doyle:** So you knew them before the '38 Hurricane.

**Schroeder:** Oh yeah. Yes. They had this famous swing behind their house that we all --you know -- that you could go and use any time that you wanted. Oh, it was a swing that had a-- it was about -- the pole was at least forty feet high, so you can imagine the swing you got in it!

Now another thing from pre--'38 that I remember -- I'm sorry-- is that there were people that came [unintelligible comment re license?] -- Mr. Brown came once a week, and you ordered your meat and kind of poultry from him; and then he would deliver it the next week and take your order for the week after that. And then there was a fruit- and-vegetable man, I've forgotten his name, but he was an Italian from Westerly--

**Doyle:** Sammy!

**Schroeder:** Sammy--Yes. And he would come every week.

**Doyle:** He would come and --my grandmother was a Fisher; [he would call her] "Mrs. Afeesh, Mrs. Afeesh!"

**Schroeder:** Now that house that I took you into yesterday, the [xxx] house--and he did Misquamicut, all up and down --and so he sometimes got mixed up; but at least they were two-family houses. And so Charlotte Amelie got her-- up--her father; and then he [Sammy] would say, now what about the family upstairs? Every customer was approached there. [Much laughter; then comments not understandable]

**Doyle:** Now did you have -- How did you do laundry and all that? I mean, do you remember that whole -- you know. Some people have told me over at the beach they'd definitely come down and take their laundry and bring it back. I don't remember that.



**Schroeder:** No; my mother had a big, big [xxx] thing out in the back –No, we left the sheets at the end of the summer at [xxx] Laundry in Westerly. And they washed them and just kept them over the winter, and we'd pick them up the next—

**Doyle:** There's something also, that nobody's talked about, that's in my memory, especially during wartime, in going to the beach and getting all that tar on our feet. And before you'd come back and go into the cottage, you'd have to sit there on the steps, and there'd be kerosene available to take all that tar off—

**Schroeder:** Yes, m hm; and there were two barracks right over in front of the Ecclestons' where the soldiers were, and they patrolled the beach at night time.

**Doyle:** There were barracks?

**Schroeder:** Yeah, m hm.

**Doyle:** I remember talking about that, but did they actually—

**Schroeder:** Yeah; they lived there.

**Doyle:** They built them there? I wonder what's happened to them.

**Schroeder:** There –maybe there were only four people at a time there. And they would come swimming, and you would get some poor little “wet behind the ears,” and they had never seen the ocean. And here they were patrolling up and down. And we all had blackout curtains.

**Doyle:** Yes. So that was blackout curtains for the other house, that you built.

**Schroeder:** Yeah.

**Doyle:** Where the Mite Box is.

**Schroeder:** Yeah.

**Doyle:** 'Cause this wasn't built yet.

**Schroeder:** Yeah.

**Doyle:** But everybody along the coast had to have blackout curtains.

**Schroeder:** Yeah. And if you came up on the train from New York, the conductor would come along and he'd pull the curtains on both sides. But you'd only have to pull the one that was close to the ocean.

**Doyle:** Huh! --So you remember them patrolling the beaches.

**Schroeder:** Yeah, yeah. And we tried to flirt with them.

**Doyle:** Yeah. OK! I like this. This is what I really want to know [Laughing]. . . I heard that you and Fredericka --that you went up the beach. Is that true?

**Schroeder:** Yes, oh yes!

**Doyle:** Can you give me your version of that?

**Schroeder:** Fredericka and I were great [friends]--We wanted to walk to the Charlestown Breachway. And we started off--there's a picture, I think in here, of our starting off-- and my poor mother said--obviously kind of naïve--"Off again!" I don't think they thought we were going to go as far as we did. Maybe they thought we were only going to go to Blue Shutters. And I don't know where my brothers were. And we got all the way up to the Charlestown Breachway. And then -- and I had the dog Jeffrey with me--and then we decided we would --there was a big telephone post or something, shortly, and we thought we would xxx Charlestown Breachway on that. And the dog swam right across and we kicked across on that thing. And up into the Charles-- past --about a mile beyond that-- and here it was about three o'clock and oh, we'd better get starting home. --And when we got to the other side of the Charlestown Breachway, there were our two mothers, sitting in a jeep, looking very irate, and a General who looked relieved, because we had walked through the firing range. But they were not firing when we went through; they must have [xxx], and we were very oblivious of everything.

**Doyle:** Did they practice firing, target practice, during the day as well as at night?

**Schroeder:** Yeah.

**Doyle:** I thought it was only in the evening. I didn't know --

**Schroeder:** They did in the morning, but we went through just –in that part between Blue Shutters and –

**Doyle:** --beyond there. Yeah.

**Schroeder:** Yeah. So we were very pleased, because we'd gotten ourselves in the dog house, but we got a ride back in a jeep. So we didn't have to cross [again], and also we were kind of tired. And the dog said nothing. And our mothers were very angry.

**Doyle:** Oh I would think so. Worried.

**Schroeder:** Worried. Yes.

**Doyle:** Spastic, probably!

**Schroeder:** Yeah.  
[Shift to new topic]

**Schroeder:** From a *New Yorker* cover at the time. The soldiers were –when they were patrolling, they were looking straight ahead so you really couldn't --  
There was this wonderful [mural], and I had it in the old house, on my wall, on the one that went out -- of three gorgeous women, with a spread of wine and sandwiches and xxx these soldiers marching up the beach; and they just marched right on.

**Doyle:** Where was this? I don't understand exactly where was this--?

**Schroeder:** It was on the *New Yorker*; you know, the *New Yorker* magazine. It was the cover.

**Doyle:** Yeah, OK. And so you put it where?

**Schroeder:** I ripped it off the magazine and hung it in my room! 'Cause that's what we were trying to do! [Laughing]

**Doyle:** Yeah. So this was again in the other house.

**Schroeder:** Yes, the house that went away.

**Doyle:** All right. All right. I get it! [Laughing] ....So it didn't work?

**Schroeder:** It didn't work! They were in – yeah but when they were off duty, particularly when they would come down and swim, we would fraternize with them.

**Doyle:** Now didn't Ray and ... talk about them coming to their house?

**Schroeder:** Yes, m hm. Yeah. They were closer to them, 'cause they were right in front of them. Huh. Yeah, Ray had them for Thanksgiving dinner.

**Doyle:** Yeah, that's right; I remember.

