

QUONOCHONTAUG HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Oral History

PHILIP SCHWARZ

August 6, 2010

Interviewed by Anne Doyle in Charlestown

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Q: Today is Friday, it's August the 6th in the year 2010. I am Ann Schafer Doyle doing an interview with Phillip Schwarz of Quonnie. He will relate his Quonnie memories and his family memories too.

A: I'm Phillip J. Schwarz, J for James. I first started coming to Quonnie in the mid-1940s. We made some visits here before starting to build a house, but 1946 was the best data. We first stayed in a house that has now been reshaped. It's over towards the southwest corner of Beach Road. We stayed there for Thanksgiving. That was our first introduction to Quonnie. That was probably the fall of '46.

Q: Did you folks build this house right away?

A: Pretty quickly. Yes.

Q: You didn't rent?

A: No. We did not. I was only five going on six then. It was something new. We had photos of my brother, Tracy Schwarz, and I poking our heads through the cut holes where the dormers were going to be. He had a red cowboy hat and I had a green cowboy hat. We were of the period, definitely. We were just fascinated by the whole thing but didn't know what to make of it, except that we would learn about the ocean. Our father used to go to the ocean at Barnegat Bay, New Jersey, and then places near there in New Jersey. He grew up in Pennsylvania, but I think the family would go over there. He loved the ocean. He was born in Pennsylvania. My mother was both in New Hampshire. She didn't see much of the ocean. They'd go down to that southeast corner of New Hampshire and see the ocean, but most people don't associate the ocean with New Hampshire. It was a little new to her. She never swam that much. My father just loved it. He'd come back from a week or work in New York City, hot and miserable. He just

could not wait to get to the beach. He would often come in a three-piece suit, and change into his shorts and his famous straw hat, which he developed over the years. He loved it the most. We were there only in the summer. We would make friends, like Ann's brother Bill. We knew him fairly early. And Gerry Fogarty and others quite early. I am able to associate that to that time and those people because I have memories of them being at that first house, which we called Dunes Top. The color of the house is still there. It's light gray right in that row behind the first row. I can look at it and I can see the stone fireplace. It's exactly the same stone fireplace that was there, because I kept looking in when they were rebuilding and I said, "You have to keep that fireplace." And they did. It was sensible to do so. We were there for several years. Dad was a restless person. I usually wanted bigger. As time went on, while we enjoyed being there at Dunes Top, and I started paying attention to girls, and maybe one or two paid attention to me, and Margaret Saunders was next door renting, I believe—of course, the most dramatic incident was the 1954 Hurricane. I guess my father had been to the ocean. My mother didn't know that much about the ocean. The night before, we were at somebody's house celebrating, and somebody said, "There are going to be great waves tomorrow." It was late August, and we always looked to that, because they were fantastic. Nobody was getting hurt. Nobody was going to swimming either. We woke up in the morning, and the rain was just coming hard. The wind was increasing. Then my parents could not keep up with the water coming through the side of the windows. We had them closed. You couldn't see the waves, but we were very close. I went upstairs, and the clouds opened, and I saw those waves. It was upstairs. I was practically looking up at the tops of them. I ran downstairs. Here were my father and mother, who had really not been in that situation. But my mother first said, "I can feel the pressure blowing," which is a depression, and, "We better get out of here." My father said, "Do this, do that." Tracy, my brother, was there. We went out. I got around to the car. I don't know where Tracy was. Mother tried to come around the back. She came to the side, and the wind knocked her over. I was trying to open the door on the windward side. I should have understood to go to the other side. By that time, my father got to her and got her to the car. Then we drove out. People were standing on the former footpaths they had during that time. They had two cars, and they saw us leaving. They started out. Pretty soon after we left, one of their cars couldn't get through the water. It had already been coming up, so we got out just in time.

Q: Was there water already on the streets?

A: Yes. Pretty quickly, because once those waves started, the surge moved in. It came right over the roads, and around the various houses, and into some of them. Some of them were badly damaged. We went straight to the McCleod's house. That was home for us. That was a safe home for all of us. But then my father and Babe McCleod, as they called him, said, "The Saunders are down there in the second row," near where our house is now. The same row as Dunes Top. They were elderly people. Dad and Babe McCleod went down there. They were trying to find a place to get in. I remember my dad saying at one point he lost sight of Babe McCleod. He said that was the worst moment. Things were going crazy then. Finally, they got together. They went into the house, and the Saunders sensibly said, "We're in our 80s. We know we're at risk here, but we're at less

risk in the house than we are going out.” So, they left. What did we find out later? The people up in the front in the house farthest to the right before there was a big gap in front of the Brecks and the old Moran house, that people who were elderly there stayed there the entire storm. I guess they must have had a very anxious time. Once the storm receded, they weren’t getting pounded. But houses next to them had boulders knocked through the concrete or cinderblock foundation. They were fortunate that they didn’t have more trouble than they did. They got through it.

Q: They obviously would have experienced the ’38 Hurricane or they would have gotten out.

A: Yes. That’s right. And we had not either. I will never know why my mother felt that the pressure was lowering and knew that was a signal that we needed to get out.

Q: Did she have that extra sense?

A: All I remember is her saying that. That was the moment, “We’re getting out.” Our garage went into the backyard. The insurance agent said, “Of course, it was the wind that did that.” I don’t think the water could have, because we left the door open. We weren’t standing on ceremony closing the door. I think the wind got in there and blew it apart. It was all over the backyard. We had water damage, but that was all. A lot of the houses didn’t get much damage, but some really did get damage. There was Lake Carol in the back of our houses because a lot of water stayed there. There was some concern about sewage, etcetera. The best thing any company did—well, actually there were two companies. One was the milkman. Do you remember delivering milk by truck? He was there 5:30 or 6:00 doing his rounds. It was August, so it was light. He realized what was going on, so he started knocking on doors telling people, “Get out.” Then he came back to his truck, and he couldn’t get it started. He got out. He was safe. After things died down, people came out and were looking at each other saying, “This milk is going to spoil if we leave it there.” Electricity was out, so they started taking milk home. They didn’t hoard it. They just took it. It was a good way to deal with the situation. It was smart. Narragansett Electric was the other one, which of course is now National Grid. I hate them losing the Narragansett name. They stopped pouring beer into their bottles and sending them out; they poured water into their bottles and sent out case after case of bottled water.

Q: How did they get it to the—

A: Their trucks go out. They could probably get through. Police were blocking people up at Route 1, but it was a mission of mercy. Some people were getting fresh water.

Q: Do you remember getting some of this water?

A: I remember it happening. So, that was something. We got through it. I don’t think there were any fatalities at Central Beach. People were worried about a couple who had a house way down towards the Charlestown Breachway, but they came out okay. So, that was a very dramatic event. My restless father said, “There are houses in front of us.

We're not getting the view we got," and who knows what else he was thinking, "I'm going to look for another place," and there was this house that was up on pillars that some young girls and a young boy had come to, that was rented by their parents. The owners were going to sell. My dad said, "Okay. That's done." He bought it. He had it raised. He put a poured concrete foundation in front and got everything set up so that if a hurricane came, the water would go right through the back doors, if you had a chance to open them. That was always my question. But we had learned by then, "If you know it's coming, don't wait until it's really there. Get out." We never really had to use that, which is fine. He built that. It wasn't a lot bigger than Sea Biscuit when we first started, but he called it Swan Song. The swan song is the last song when the swan is dying. He said, "They're going to have to carry me out." That was exactly what happened. He had not died; he had fallen. But he died a week and a half later. That's exactly what happened. My mother died in the house. We were all there. That was good that the family was there.

Q: Can you give me a timeframe? Your mother died first.

A: 1986. My dad died in 1992. So, April 1986 and it would have been June 1992. At least I remember the year. What would you like me to fill in?

Q: Where did you come from in New Jersey?

A: Montclair, New Jersey. My dad commuted. He'd go to a ferry on the New Jersey side and would go right into lower Manhattan and go to his office on Wall Street. It was funny because Janet and I left our car and took the train up there. We were going to take the ferry across, so we wouldn't have the car in New York. We came to the ferry slip, and I said, "I've been here before." It still had this large opening. It had to be the spot. He would commute from Montclair to the ferry and the ferry into New York City. And then we would come back home. Mr. Restless—we moved into the house in 1946. We had been living in 119 Essex Avenue in Montclair. We moved next door to 121. This was a restless man. What were we going to do, say we're not going, we're staying in 119? No. Then we were in 121 Essex Avenue. That was in '46 or '47. Then he got restless again, and we moved to New Canaan, Connecticut.

Q: Did you ever know the reasons for that?

A: No. I don't know the exact reasons, except that he was restless. My mother dealt with it.

Q: Did he continue to commute into New York City?

A: Yes, he did. The New York, New Haven, and Hartford Railroad got worse and worse and worse. He got to new Canaan in 1950. He got on the club car, which was great, because he could get on and read the New York Times, he could have a cup of coffee and knew the people as time went on. He commuted all the way until the early 1960s. Well, are we going to stay in New Canaan? No. Then he decided on Quonnie, of course. But we have to make that our home; not just a summer home. So, it expanded again a little

bit going towards the back. Then when they lived there year-round, he added the music room famous for all the concerts he held in there. Everybody who talks to me, “I remember your dad and his concerts, and your mother playing the piano.” She was shy. She did not like to play the piano with an audience. What really helped her was when we moved to New Canaan, there was an arts center in the next town, Darien, and they had a dual piano group. She decided to try that out. That worked. She worked with other people. They’d even have concerts, and that was okay. So, we had two pianos up in a large room. That’s one thing that attracted people—to have recitals.

Q: Did they do it together?

A: Yes.

Q: I remember that, because my Aunt Edith Fisher played. I remember hearing about her going down to your mother’s and playing.

A: I only got to one of those concerts. It was just timing.

Q: I never went.

A: I was in charge of making sure that people had chairs. That was fine. I heard the concert and kept the chairs quiet. That was important. The house just expanded and expanded. We drove around the corner coming up here once, and there was this little thing up on top of the house. What do you call it? It was like a lighthouse. It’s that little room that’s up top. It’s obvious when you’re driving along the street towards the house. He and Pete Skipper and other people would play bridge up there in that room. He just loved that, because it was cooler up there, as long as he opened the windows because it gets hot. When my mother’s Alzheimer’s came in, and was getting worse, he thought that she should have regular sun. That’s when the dining room was pushed out. There were a few changes there. Somewhere in between, the back was pushed out too. There are all these additions to the house. If you walk underneath, you can see them.

Q: Did your dad organize these concerts at your house?

A: He did.

Q: But he didn’t play himself?

A: No. He didn’t play. He was the MC—the facilitator. He loved doing that and did it as long as he could. After Mother died in 1986, I think he probably still had concerts, and people were quite willing to help him. But then as he got older, things were getting harder. He had one person to come in to help take care of my mother. As things were getting harder for him, that person, Micheline Felice, from Westerly, starting coming in with my mother, but she started to need around-the-clock attention, and so we started having more and more people in there. It got to be complicated for him. He became more disoriented. He knew who we were. It was not severe at all. Some of that was a

sad time, but he was still near the ocean. There are photos of him down on the beach in that period with that straw hat.

Q: So, your mom had help coming in, and then your dad had a lot of help.

A: Later. Yes. My mother died in '86. Dad's downturn came shortly after that. It wasn't rapid, but it was a problem for him, so he needed help. One of my sisters lived up in Boston. She would get down when she could, but she had children. My other sister was a nun. She couldn't travel in those days, except when the nuns told her to. Tracy and I were in school or working with our own families, so it got lonely for him. I remember when he called me once in the winter, he said, "I'm looking out of the house, and I can't see a single light." But we were here in March working on the house to get it ready to be sold—December, March, May and now in August. It's a bigger house than I thought. I looked out the window and I couldn't see a single light from our vantage point. I guess March is not the most favored time of the year.

Q: Especially down in that corner of Central Beach. When we moved here year-round, one of the first few nights that we were here, Hank O'Brien called and said, "It's so good to see lights across the street." That really hit me.

A: You have to be tough to live here. You had to be tough to go out and walk in the winter. You had to be tough when the weather wasn't good. You had to be tough if you felt lonely. There were strong people down here. To the best of my knowledge, most people came through it.

Q: How old was your father when he died?

A: He was born in 1905. He died in 1992 just shy of 87. March 15th would have been his birthday. March 12th was his death date.

Q: He was very involved with the Westerly Chorus.

A: Yes, he was. That's true. He wanted to help people in various ways. He was devoted to the arts, because of Mom. The help part was Easter Seals Rehabilitation Center in Connecticut. There was a rehab center there named for him. On the arts side, he was very helpful to the arts center in the chorus room. I was talking with Whitney Reynoldson Frost last night. She was talking about that. She said, "Do you have anything to contribute to our archive, that would be great. We remember your father." She said, "I've been in the chorus for 37 years." The great event, in order to draw support, was Rudolf Serkin, a world-famous pianist who came and played at the center. Dad arranged that. The reason he was able to arrange that was in the Vermont period in the summer, he lived right up the road. He was just another person up the road. We had people who were his students stay with us there and in New Jersey. He asked him if he would come, and he agreed. I'm sure he wasn't paid what he was usually paid. My dad was in the hospital then, and we had photos of Rudolf Serkin sitting beside my father in the hospital. He had this enormous smile. He was a wonderful person. Everybody loved

him, except those who couldn't play as well as he could. There were those outlets for him. They were important to him. He and my mother were both very generous people. It was a good model. I don't have the money to do what he could do, but we try our best.

Q: What were your mother's interest outside of music? Did she have any other interests?

A: She read and she read and she read. If I came around to say something to her, she had a book in her hand. She practiced the piano a lot. She would practice when we were around. She wasn't worried about that.

Q: Was she fairly quiet?

A: Yes.

Q: I knew who she was, but I never really talked to her.

A: She was reserved. Very bright. A college degree at Mount Holyoke way back in 1930. Dad never finished college. His father's business went bad, and there were other things. He never finished college. Too bad he wasn't a success. Well, it was his native intelligence and his aptitude for finance.

Q: So, he wasn't a lawyer?

A: No. He was an investment banker. He started in Lazard and Brothers. The last firm was a smaller firm, F. S. Smithers. He retired from that firm. He became a limited partner, and then after he left, the firm dissolved. That was sad for him that that happened. He dealt with that. He'd have his ups and downs, but he got through it. My mother didn't swim very much. She liked being on the beach. She had great skin. She loved seeing the kids. When all the grandkids would come in and start running around the house, this reserved—we knew we had to keep the kids under restraint so they didn't bother her. She was very supportive of the Westerly Chorus and the center for the arts and Rudolf Serkin. She went to the Eastman School of Music and played piano and joined a piano group. She had that outlet as long as she could do that. Then later she could not.

Q: What are your earliest memories of being here? When you got to Quonnie, what did you do?

A: I was scared to go underwater. The heavy father and the supportive mother—finally, my mother took me to the beach right in front of Dunes Top. We worked through it, and I finally went underwater. I was scared of the waves. They were much bigger than I was at eight and nine years old.

Q: Did you ever have experience in a pool or other kinds of water?

A: A little bit, but no waves. That was new. I had been to Barnegat Bay in New Jersey. In a bay you're not going to have too high waves, unless it's a hurricane. I remember

starting to make friends. I mentioned Gerry Fogarty and Bill. Margaret Saunders a little later.

Q: She lives in Westerly now.

A: I haven't seen her. I probably won't. I asked Sam Beck about her two years ago when I talked with Sam for a while, so I knew she was living there. She had an older sister. Then there was Tom—I don't remember his name, but he was at Brown University for his last year while I was there for my first year. The boarding school that I went to in Rhode Island was then called Portsmouth Priory School. It's now Portsmouth Abbey School.

Q: Is that where you went?

A: Yes. Tracy did too. He went before me and graduated before me. They kept us in check when we were younger, but sometimes we would hitchhike in the '50s. We never ran into a problem. Our parents never knew we hitchhiked. We were certainly not going to tell them. But we'd hitchhike into Newport, take the ferry across and hitchhike down and walk in to the beach and then go back to the school. I did it alone once, too. A cop picked me up. He checked what was in my pockets and all that.

Q: Why did he pick you up? Was it because you weren't supposed to be?

A: I was a teenager, and I was walking along the road. He was just checking me out. What was I doing out there? That's the only time I had ever been stopped by a cop, except January 1st when I hadn't changed my plate. I was one day late and he got me in New York state. When I was applying to college, I applied to Middlebury, Columbia, and Brown. Well, guess what I picked? The closest place to Quonnie.

Q: Was it because you felt really attached to this area by that time?

A: That had something to do with it. By the time I could have a car, my friends and I would come down. Of course, I always drove the legal speed limit and always behaved. We'd have fun down here. This was another one of Dad's changes. This would have been in 1960 or '61. With various female friends, we drove down behind the snow plow during a big snowstorm. We went through the sod farms where it was clear. We just followed the snow plow. We couldn't get into Central Beach, so we came down to East Beach and we were able to get in. We walked across the ice. I don't think you can do that now. I think it's probably too full of stuff to freeze through hard. One person had good boots on. Her boot went through, but her other one didn't.

Q: This was with a car?

A: The car to East Beach, but then we got out and walked across the water. We walked on the ice.

Q: What water are you talking about?

A: The West Pond. We got over to the house. We got in there. It was cold. I assume we walked back over the ice and went back. There would be these various escapades down there. The funniest one was spring break. I asked my dad if I could borrow his jeep, which he used to use to drive to the station in New Canaan. Two guys were with me. We got out on the beach and it was time to start up. The engine revved up. That was fine. But it spun. What's going on? We all starting sweating. "Dad, the jeep is on the beach. We can't get it off." We were looking underneath trying to figure it out. Finally, one guy opened the glove compartment door, and there was the gearshift, and I didn't have it in four-wheel drive. I don't know how that happened when I got the jeep onto the beach. Can you imagine, "Schwarz's son leaves jeep on beach," and everybody would have known. So, we got it going. We got the jeep out. I was lucky on that one. I don't know whether I ever told Dad that that had happened. He would have laughed later. After college, I went to the University of Connecticut. I started trying something at Brown for a master's degree, and I didn't want to do that after a while. I worked in their library. Then I went to UCONN. I got a master's in English. Anybody who was alive when JFK was assassinated knows exactly where I was at UCONN. I walking out of the old library, and somebody was talking about Kennedy being killed. I checked with somebody, and it was true. I picked up a guy who looked like a student to take him into Hartford, and he said, "I didn't like his policy of letting negroes get equal." This guy was from Kentucky. I said, "Okay." We didn't get into a fight about it. I got my master's there. I was wishy-washy. I'm trying to get this back to Quonnie. I did go to library school. My first job was at Cornell. I was in the Business and Public Administration Library, and I decided that wasn't what I wanted. I really wanted to be a historian. I sat in on some classes. I was accepted and got my PhD. My PhD director said, "Next spring, I'm going to have everybody to the house," and I said, "They're all married and I'm not. What am I going to do?" I met this one librarian once. I'll ask her. Her name was Janet. That was the start of it. For some reason, she didn't run. Once we finished there, I was very fortunate to get a job as history professor at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Virginia. A lot of people would recognize one of our graduates, David Baldacci, the novelist. A lot of people who read a lot of contemporary novels will recognize that name. And there are a few other people. Nobody would recognize mine.

Q: Have you written any books?

A: Yes. Four. And I've got one more coming out. The last one was a documents book, which took me forever because publishers really take a long time publishing them. I wrote very scholarly books. None of them were a best seller. The first book was 250 copies.

Q: Did you enjoy the process?

A: Yes. I did. Sometimes there were frustrations. So, that's my career. Janet and I had a child in '72 and another child in '74. We started bringing them up here. We were introducing them to the water. Our son really took to the water. Louise—no. She didn't

care for it. That's fine. But they got to know Quonnie. Louise will be coming up in two weeks for her week. Every year she has a reunion. She was a counselor at an arts camp in New Jersey, and every year she has a reunion with some of those counselors here at Quonnie in our house.

Q: Is she a musician as well?

A: She's a playwright. She won the Master's Degree Prize for her play that she wrote at Columbia. She was at the School of the Arts there. She didn't come into much money. She's now working for a law firm—not on the lawyer side, but she has benefits now. She went through the starving-artist stage. Our son is a teacher. He's been substituting. This year we really have our fingers crossed. Louise is in New York City. The same apartment she had after her first year at Columbia where she was in a dorm that she hated. It's on West 108th Street. She has a dog, and the dog loves Central Park. She loves Central Park too. Dan, Martha, and Becky live in Alexandria, Virginia. They're pretty close to us. We took Becky up to New York a few weekends ago. Louise came out to Central Park after work, and we had a lot of fun there.

Q: Is there anything that your gang in Quonnie did together that you could relate? There was Iffie and the rest of them.

A: That was very early before I thought girls were equal.

Q: At night did you all gather at people's houses?

A: We sure did. Very rarely at our house, though. Max and Annie Moulton—we'd go over to their houses. People like them, and some other people's houses. I think Max played an instrument. Tracy did. And so, there would be singing. We behaved ourselves. We'd roam the roads and go to other people's houses. We just went out at night. It was safe. Nobody said, "You must be home before dark." I hope it's the same now. I would imagine it is.

Q: There is still that sense of freedom that kids have here.

A: That's good. Except I was walking past our front lot, which is behind the parking lot, and there were some beer cans there, but I picked them up. By the time I finished, I had 52 beer cans and several vodka bottles. What's going on?

Q: We have an Earth Day cleanup that I run every year.

A: Don't go in there.

Q: We've been in there. We know. They gather all around that parking lot area.

A: This was in May when I did that. It was either March or May. I can't remember. Nobody was around. I just couldn't stop when I saw them. We are conscious of hearing

kids up in the parking lot, but I was never conscious of them being up in that area. Who knows when that's happening, or if it's still happening. I couldn't check on the age of the beer to see when it happened.

Q: What area was that?

A: You know our driveway. Right up towards the road into the parking lot. We own up to there right next to the parking lot. The bike rack place is on our land, and that's per verbal agreement. I hope it will stay forever, because the lights by September 3rd will go on. Then they can protect it. We hope that the CRMC will help them make something out of the phragmites—the weeds—the invasive—

Q: That's a problem all over. Do you remember the cattails?

A: I sure do. I just saw a picture from the '50s that was down here right after the '54 Hurricane. The salt just killed them. It's not just Quonnie. It's up and down the east coast. It's all over.

Q: Did you ever spend much time over in the salt pond?

A: No. I was not a sailor. I probably went over there sometimes. I remember having some kind of beach party across the breachway, and going across to—

Q: The Weekapaug side?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you remember the old breach? Do you remember when it swung around?

A: Yes.

Q: You could walk across.

A: Yes. I'm glad you said that, because I was thinking, "How did we get across?" I don't remember being in a boat.

Q: At low tide you could walk across.

A: It's very different now. Did the engineers do that, or the state or the feds?

Q: 1960. They took all the land that was all around there.

A: Once we went in the other direction to the Charlestown Breachway. We were able to wade across that, because it was low tide. That current is pretty strong there. Maybe we didn't go all the way across. Maybe we got in, and maybe it was getting deeper and we said, "We better not." My memory is not clear on that.

Q: Did you have parties on the beach with all the kids, or not so much/

A: I don't remember any. We probably did have beach parties.

Q: Do you remember the bonfires at 4th of July?

A: Vaguely.

Q: Mr. Burn used to play his ukulele at the bonfire.

A: That's right. There was one funny thing. My dad decided he wanted a dancefloor. There were four sections. They're still in our back basement. Go talk to the Valettes and tell them you'd like to see the wood unless they took it out of there. There are four sections. He put them out in the driveway. We had square dancing or something like that out there. There might be some photos. When I start going through the photos—can you get them by email?

Q: Sure.

A: Some people just have DSL and it takes forever for photos. It will take a while.

Q: Do you remember going up to the Sea Breeze Inn to do square dancing?

A: Square dancing in that little building. Yes. Every time I go by—I wasn't here when the Sea Breeze burned down. I remember that little building. A lot of square dancing there many times. When I go by there, I remember it.

Q: What about the casino? Did you ever go up to the breachway at West Beach?

A: Do you mean the bowling alley? After Hurricane Carol, that was it. I went there constantly. A bunch of us would go and we'd earn big bucks setting up pins, because there was no automatic setting up. Bill was there, and maybe Dave Colton. Neal Thorpe maybe. But that's about all I can remember. We constantly walked up there. The hurricane of '54 I remember walking up the road to see how that place did, and there was a house right in the middle of the road, and some people were sitting in there in chairs having drinks.

Q: Was that right after Hurricane Carol?

A: Yes.

Q: I know where that house was.

A: There were so many incidents. As I'm remembering, I can write them down and send them to you.

- Q: Everybody sees the same thing in a different light. That's the way I look at it. The memories are a little different.
- A: It's great to have so many of the people around who were around then. Steve Long was there the other night. I remember him. He's younger than I am.
- Q: He's my age. That's why we didn't really know each other at all. I knew who you were.
- A: Yes. I knew who you were, too. But you were a little girl. That's so stupid, but that's the way kids are. They're inferior to most of the world, but then there are some people who are inferior to them. As long as they weren't mean, you can get through that.
- Q: You leaving and McLeod leaving, I feel it—the change in Quonnie. It's the end of a big piece of history of Quonnie.
- A: I'm so glad you've been doing this. When I first learned you were, I said, "Good," because we need it. Where did you get the idea to do this?
- Q: I got going on this, because my parents have always collected photographs usually in boxes. When I got down here, I was starting to sort out some of the photos of my grandmother in 1900 when she was down here. I look at these photos, and I'm thinking, "Where was she? What was she doing?" I had all these questions. Barbara Matthews Adams had started collecting things. Stu Pomeroy had given her—
- A: Stu with his camera.
- Q: Yes. He has been doing his own albums. She had a collection from him. She was very sick the year we moved down here year-round, and I spent a lot of time with her in the summer. Then she went into the hospital that fall and she called me into the hospital, and she said, "Ann, I want to give you everything that I have collected thus far," and I said, "I'll take care of it." I didn't know what I was going to do, but I said, "I'll take care of it," and that's when it started. And then I realized that we needed to talk to the elders in the community before all their stories were gone. That's how it all began.
- A: Gerry Pitcher and I were talking about Dick Moran and his mouth. Were you old enough?
- Q: I knew who he was, but I never knew him.
- A: He had a mouth. He was really funny
- Q: When you say a mouth, do you mean—
- A: He could jab you verbally. He was mean. Gerry quoted him on something the other night with Dick Moran. He and Dave White and Al Randall and Dad and Mother—

Q: And Mr. McCleod?

A: Yes.

Q: Can you tell me about the snotty nose club that they had? They had a group of men that would walk and end up at somebody's house.

A: I didn't mean to refer to them as snotty-nosed.

Q: That's what they called themselves.

A: That's right.

Q: That's how people referred to them. And I have a picture of all of them.

A: I've seen one. I think I have one.

Q: In front of the Moran's house.

A: Yes. I think everybody got a copy. They were quite a group. Dad enjoyed them. He had a good sense of humor. My mother too.

Q: Were you hear during World War II?

A: No. We didn't come until '46. But I do remember the practice flying. Not in the summer, but just flying right over us, and making that circle back. You'd hear about circling around, but I never saw that happen. It might have been bad weather.

Q: I remember distinctly going to sleep at night with the sound of the planes going around and around.

A: Of course, they had to. The other thing I just remembered is that after—maybe during the time they were still there, by the late '50s Lonnie Row, he was a drag racer. We all wanted to be drag racers, but we didn't want to get caught, and we didn't want to wreck our fathers' cars. But we'd go over there for the drag races on the runway.

Q: Where was the runway?

A: At the air station. I don't know how many years it went, but they had some pretty hot cars, and they had just cars. I don't know where Lonnie ever went. He can tell you a lot about that.

Q: I've done a little history with him, but he never mentioned that.

A: That's funny. I'm sure he'd tell you. Was there something on Route 1 in that long, flat stretch? Of course, with the Macadam on the passing line to try to keep people from going too fast—in any event, this was a big deal. We couldn't go to California where it was started. We couldn't go to other places. So, we went over to Charlestown and watched the drag races. They may even have had some sports car races over there—small cars. I vaguely remember something about that. As you know, after Labor Day, they have the music festival. Tracy's son, Peter, has been to that. He's very musical. He went to Harvard Business School and got his MBA. He worked and lived in Austin, Texas. He somehow got in touch with a Texas sing band called Asleep at the Wheel. They're popular with swing band people. They said, "How would you like to be my business manager?" That's what Peter is now. He's a business manager in Austin, Texas for Asleep at the Wheel, and they're making money. That's good. He's got a little house there. Janet and I took one of the pianos, had it reconditioned, took it down to Richmond. Tracy's taking another one, storing it in Chicago for a while. He hopes for Peter—Peter plays everything. Cajun. It came down from Tracy to Peter. Peter will eventually have that piano. It's too big for his house. Somebody said, "Maybe they'll have a bigger house one day." It needs work, so I hope Asleep at the Wheel does really well. It's expensive to deal with that. Both pianos as staying in the family. Both came up here from New Canaan.

Q: Do your children know what the history is of the piano that you have?

A: Yes. I don't know how much they care. Neither of them are musical. But they know.

Q: Is there anything else that you can think of?

A: I'll think of it later.

Q: You like to write, so you can write it down. Thank you so much, Phil, for doing.

A: Thanks for having me.