

# QUONOCHONTAUG HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## Oral History

# JOHN (Jack) DAYLE YOUNG

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Interviewed by Anne S. Doyle

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Q: Today is Tuesday, December the 5<sup>th</sup> in the year 2006. This morning I am with Jack Young, who lives on the corner of Ninigret and Surfside at Quonochontaug. He will relate the memories of Quonnie and his family's experiences here. Jack, why don't we just begin by you telling us your full name, when you were born and where you were born.

A: I'm Jack. My real name is John Dayle Young. I was born in Norwich, Connecticut September 30<sup>th</sup>, 1922. I'm a family of an older brother and two older sisters. Most of my young life, I lived up in Norwichtown, Connecticut.

Q: What brought you to Quonnie?

A: I first came to Quonnie in August of 1942. I finished up my first year of college. I was going with a young lady who I met my last year in high school at Norwich Free Academy in Norwich, Connecticut. Her folks rented from '42 through '49 different cottages here at Quonochontaug. They did that that number of years always the month of August. Then they built a place here in '49 and moved into it in 1950. The girl that I met was Betty Moran. She was the daughter of Dick and Helen Moran, who had been coming here for that number of years. Dick Moran came from a family of five boys and one girl up in Norwich, Connecticut. It's rather interesting that that family started down here in Quonochontaug at the different hotels right at the turn of the century. I'm not sure of the year. It might have been 1902 or 1903. I'm really not sure of the year. But it was kind of interesting how they got down here in those days. Dick Moran's dad owned an insurance company, John A. Moran & Son. Dick turned out to be the son that was in business with his dad. Right after school closed in June, Mr. and Mrs. Moran, Dick's mom and dad, would get the trunks packed. Mr. Moran would hire a horse and wagon. They put the trunks in the horse and wagon. They would ride down to the Norwich Railroad Station. On the railroad they would come to Westerly, Rhode Island. He would have already ordered a horse and wagon down here. And that would have taken Mrs. Moran and the six children all together down here to Quonochontaug. They stayed at different hotels for the whole summer. Mr. Moran, Sr. was not able to come down because of his business. He would come down the week before Labor Day, and then moved everybody back up to Norwich a couple of days after Labor Day in the same

fashion that he sent them all down here. I don't recall the names of the hotels, but I remember one was Seabreeze. There were a couple out on the front. I guess it was always called West Beach. There were a couple out there, and they stayed at those until—I think Dick was around ten or eleven years old before they ended up coming down as a family in that fashion.

Q: Did Dick ever talk to you about his experience over on the breachway when they were there about what kinds of things he did? Do you know anything about that?

A: Not too much. A couple of things I can remember is that they had a small rowboat in those days—a flat-bottom rowboat. It was the old breachway in those days; not the one that's right at West Beach now. It was the one that was a little more towards Weekapaug. I remember that the boys were horsing around out there, and they turned the rowboat over. They were afraid to tell the mother when they got back that it was turned over in the water. Somehow somebody got it out.

One of the highlights of the Moran family days down here at Quonochontaug was a visit to the Carousel at Watch Hill. We can go back as far as Dick Moran's mother—I don't know what year she was born, but I understand that she rode the carousel. Therefore, Dick rode it. His daughter, Betty, who I married, rode it. Her children have ridden it. We have a great grandchild who was held on it this past summer. So, I think it's six generations. That's always been a highlight of their career having a few rides during the summer on the carousel at Watch Hill.

Q: Talk about when Dick Moran and Helen came down with their family, which included Betty, your wife, starting in 1942.

A: From '42 to '49, Dick Moran rented a house every year in the month of August. The first one or two years—I'm not sure—he rented what was known as the Thorp house, which over the years now became Ms. Dixon's of late, and now it's Ho's house down in the front. Then for a couple of years he rented the Fisher house, which is on Surfside also. He rented the Isaacson house for two years, which is on the corner of Ninigret and Oceanview. In those days there was no Ninigret. It was known as East Street or East Avenue. For a couple of years, he rented the Hitchcock's house, which is Ways Edge, which is also on Surfside and Pokanicut. I don't recall who the owner was in those days. It's the Inderfurth's house now. I know that was '42 through '49. This house was being built in '49, and they moved into it in the spring of 1950. Those were great months down here. Betty was in her last year of high school. I finished my first year at college. I worked during the week, but I'd get down here weekends. One of the highlights of my life was getting to know the people here at Quonnie. I grew up with quite a few of them. I wasn't here that much in the early days, but I got here as much as I possibly could.

Q: Who do you remember? Can you think of any of your friends that you got to know?

A: The Brecks came here, who live next door here now. They came in the very early '50s. I'm going to say '52, '53. I've known John and Barbara all my life, and of course, their

youngsters in those days. I knew Scott Miller well for a number of years. I think I'd have to go through a book to remember. Maybe I should do that.

Usually on those weekends, when I came down to visit Betty and her mom and dad, and she had a brother, Bob, also. They were from Norwich. It was a little bit different in those days than it is these days. As we know, the youngsters now have a great time at the beach in the evenings and into the night. But we never were allowed very often to do anything like that. We played cards and things like that in different houses, or over in the Moran's—whichever house they rented. We'd get together and have Cokes, make popcorn and that type of thing. In the daytime we would go to the beach from—as early as we could get down there until dark. There was a lot of barbecuing in those days. There was not the fishing in those days as there is now. There is a tremendous amount of fishing now. My grandkids—I've got grandsons that spend hours out there fishing out of kayaks. One of my grandsons shoots darts—I can't think of the name of it. I'm 84 years old. The summers were really quite different. The summers seemed to be close family. We played with each other on the beach and all that type of thing. And the families sat together on the beach. It seems different than it is now. But it was great. We enjoyed it. That's the way we were brought up, so we enjoyed that. I'm sure that if I was a teenager now, I'd be having a good time.

When Dick Moran rented down here, it was my first year in college, and I would work summers and so forth, and there was gas rationing in those days. The war had started in '41. During the weekends in the summertime, I'd ride down with him Friday nights down to one of the cottages down here, and then when he'd go back up to work Monday morning, I'd ride back up with him. That was the way we did it, because being in college, I didn't have a gas car. I remember that. I was always using my sister's car. I could use it weekends, because she needed it, and I would have it down here for the weekends. I'm not sure what the year was, but I remember Dick and Helen and Betty and I were playing cards over in the Hitchcock's house, which is now Bob and Kathy Frasier's house—we were playing cards, and there was a knock at the door. Helen went to the door, opened the door and there was a soldier with his rifle on his shoulder standing there, and he said, "Ma'am, would you be kind enough to pull the curtain completely across the window in the front, because we can see light through it." We always did that during that period of time. Everybody did it on the front down here because of the submarines being out here in the area. The Army didn't want us to show any light.

Later in the early '50s, I believe it was, there was a group of ladies and their husbands here who would meet at different homes on Friday nights only for an hour or so for a cocktail. They would all go home and have dinner. As I recall, all the ladies wore long dresses. Some of the folks that were in that were Helen Moran, the Todds, the Mases, the Randalls, the Lockwoods and the Burns. Those are the ones I can remember. It seems like there were one or two more, but I remember them. It was the highlight of the week for the folks down here. Especially those that came earlier. Some lived here year-round. Not too many, but a few of them lived here year-round. With the spring and the fall when there aren't many people around, these folks always lived down here and that's

how they would get together. A lot of the women would play bridge in the afternoons. At the same time, there was a group of men known as the Runny Nose Club. There were about a half a dozen men involved in that. They all carried canes. They did a great deal of walking. There was Dick Moran, Al Randall, Bill McCloud, Ann Schwarz, and at times there was Brad Fisher. Then they would all come back after their long walk. It was cool in those days. They would come back and they'd sit on the porch here at this house. Each one of them stayed the whole length of time, because if one of them left, they knew that the other guys were going to talk about them. Brad Fisher had to leave, because he was building houses around here. He had things to do. Most of these other men were retired or had free time on their hands, and just as soon as Brad would go out the door, they would just cut him up unmercifully.

Q: In fun?

A: Always in fun. I was sitting out there one time, and at first I started to believe, but I never believed anything they said from then on.

How they got the name the Runny Nose Club, in the early spring and fall it was pretty cool around here, and they had their handkerchiefs out more blowing their noses than they did anything else, so it was known as the Runny Nose Club.

I've been asked to elaborate on my life here at Quonnie and after Quonnie. Betty and I were married in June of 1947. We lived in an apartment up in Hartford pretty close to where the cathedral is in Hartford. We bought a little house up in West Hartford. Steven and Chris were born up there in '48 and '49. They're only thirteen months apart. In those days, I was with the Schering corporation, and then Pfizer came along with their wonder drug, as they called it, Terramycin. They picked up some of us guys to cover different parts of the states. I moved to Rhode Island. I would visit the doctors in the state of Rhode Island and the state of Connecticut. After that, I had a difficult time traveling. The firm by the name of Saunders, which was the so-called leading medical textbook firm in the country, in those days I believe a medical student would use 34 or 35 textbooks, and Saunders had 27 or 28 of them—I loved sales, but that wasn't my job with Saunders; my job was to get a hold of the primary doctors throughout Connecticut, New York, Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Most of them were teaching or in hospitals. I would get them to write textbooks for us or put in chapters in textbooks about medicine or surgery—whatever might be their bailiwick. That was very interesting. Then I couldn't travel anymore, so I went into the brokerage business. I worked in New York for a number of years with EF Hutton, got transferred to California and finished my career out there in 1987 with EF Hutton. I enjoyed every minute of that. I left California. We lived out there until 1994, when Betty passed away, and then I came back and lived here at Quonnie, but I do visit my sons and daughters. I have two daughters out in the Houston area, one son out in California, a son in Boston and a son in Darien, Connecticut. I have fourteen grandchildren and one great grandchild. Unfortunately, I had fifteen grandchildren, but one passed away about a month ago at twenty years old.

Quonnie is the place. I remember my wife saying when we lived in California, “We should do something else once in a while.” When we were going to do something, we’d always go to Quonnie. Our children do the same thing. If the kids are going to do something, they come to Quonnie. They spend a week, two weeks or three weeks—whatever time they can spend here. I have one son that owns a house three houses down from me on the corner of Spray and Surfside. They’re up here at least weekends all the time, and in the summer more. When somebody asks me where I’m from, I always say, “Quonnie.” I was born in Norwich. I lived in Connecticut. I lived in Rhode Island. I lived in New Jersey. I lived in California. But, “Where are you from?” “I’m from Quonnie.” There’s no other place.

Q: When you were in California, did you come here for summers with your children?

A: Yes. Summertime when we lived in California—we went out there in 1960—’60 or ’62 until ’94. Most summers I came back for at least a week, but the family would come back for a month. And then the older boys came every once in a while. My two daughters, when they got in their teens, they’d come and stay with their nana here, which they loved and enjoyed a great deal. So, Quonnie is the only place.

As all kids grew up here, I have three sons and two daughters, and I don’t think any one of them has ever missed being at the beach sometime every summer since they were born. They’d come from California—everywhere to do it. They played all kinds of games on the beaches, as kids do, and climb the rocks and so forth. One of our favorite rocks is in front of Little Beach where we always sat, whose name is Slant Rock. On high tide they’d be able to go up on the beachside of this big rock, and then dive into the waves. As the waves went over, sometimes they would flatten themselves out and the waves would bring them over the rock. We have a lot of pictures taken there. We have a lot of pictures of Ship Rock and different areas. I don’t know where those names came from. I don’t know if they’re our names, or if they’re old names at the beach. I really don’t know. But the kids have always had a great life here. The boys and one of my daughters always played in the ball field on the weekends. They always had things to do. Played some tennis. A couple of my boys do quite a bit of sailing and all that type of thing—playing golf and so forth. At least where they play golf, they can see the water, so maybe they think they’re at Quonnie. It’s a wonderful place to bring kids up. They’ve enjoyed it so much that they make sure that their kids never miss some summertime here at Quonochontaug. I think all of my fifteen grandchildren and great children have all been here every summer. I can’t think of a summer that any one of them has missed.

It’s a great family area. You get to Quonnie and you really don’t want to go anywhere else. You’re here. You’ve got to go shopping and get food, but I would say, “Steve, how about you do it today?” and, “You do it today,” or whatever. We just love Quonnie.

One of the highlights of being at Quonochontaug all these years has been the kids enjoying rides on the Watch Hill carousel. I don’t know the year that that started, but I know it was in the 1800s. I think it was in the 1860s, but I’m not sure. It is either the oldest, or one of the oldest carousels in the country. I don’t think the world, but in the

country. Our kids rode it when they were small. All of them have. On Betty's side of the family, it starts with her grandmother riding it, her mother, Betty, of course, her children and one great grandson. So, it's been six generations there. On my side of the family, it's only five generations, because my grandmother never rode it, I don't think. I have talked to people to try to find out, but nobody can really say that she did or didn't. I guess it's five generations from my side. That's always one of the highlights when the kids are here. We try to do it on a Sunday evening as a rule, because most of the people have left the beach and left Watch Hill at that time, and there are still some open horses over there to have a ride on. I can never do it, but I did when I was a kid. My legs are so long, I would drag them.

One of the other highlights of Quonochontaug has always been the 4<sup>th</sup> of July parades. I was very fortunate this past 4<sup>th</sup> of July to be the master of ceremonies—the ambassador or whatever they call it. They call me a lot of names. The grand marshal. That's what it is. That was enjoyable. I really enjoyed it. One thing I've always told people riding around is that I've never seen so many different faces in Quonochontaug. I think there are a lot of renters this year, but the people that I've known over the years, a lot of them have passed away and even some of their kids have passed on. There are so many people here. I don't know them. I see them going by when I'm on the porch, and I say, "Who are those folks? I don't know who they are." But the parades have always been a good thing.

One year, Betty and I were judges. Anita Bennett and Ray Bennett also, and there is another couple. I think we had about eight or nine grandchildren in it. I can't remember what they were dressed up as, but I remember going over to Ray Bennett and saying, "There are three different sets here of the same thing. There's that set over there, and there's that set over there and this set off to my right. They're all my grandchildren. And if you want another glass of scotch at my house, you're going to vote for them," and he did. They won the prize.

There is never anything crooked here at Quonochontaug. Everything is straight up.

Dick Moran passed away in 1977. A year or so after that we kind of took the place over. Helen lived here a couple of years, although she went out to Santa Barbara to live with us in the wintertime for a few years until she couldn't do it anymore. Then she went to the Westerly Health Center. That opened in 1985. She was the fifth one in there that year.

We did certain things to the house. We put some bedrooms upstairs and that type of thing. We added to the porch.

I came from a family with an older brother and two sisters. One of my sisters is living. She's 90 years old. She's doing quite well. She's in assisted living. She lived in Norwich all of her 89 years.

I have a sister who moved to Severna Park in Maryland, and lives very close to her oldest son and that family down there. My other sister passes away in 1993, the one in

Connecticut. She was a nurse most of her life. My brother, who passed away in 1989, he was a doctor in Providence. One of the things my brother and I always looked forward was we used to go to Block Island every year and take the boat from Point Judith over. He had a patient in Providence for many years, who had moved to Block Island, and someone would pick us up and drive us around the island. There was nobody over there. It was always a couple of days after Labor Day. I can't remember exactly what it was. My brother would make brownies. My sister and I would make sandwiches, and we'd bring a bottle of wine and sit on the deck of a restaurant right near the harbor on the ocean side of Block Island. We would sit there and eat, drink and then get the ferry back again. A gentleman would drive us all around the island and show us different things. We went down this old dirt road years ago, and we couldn't get down any farther, because there was a big puddle there. He said, "You fellows look at that gray house down there," and he said, "That's where [inaudible 33:19] Wilcox shot his wife," and he backed out and we went on the rest of our tour. We didn't know Mr. Wilcox or Mrs. Wilcox. But that's how it was in those days.

Q: Tell us about some of the people that lived at Quonnie.

A: I guess starting with my father-in-law, he was an insurance man in Norwich for a number of years. His dad started that business previously. His dad was John A. Moran, and it became John A. Moran & Son. He did that insurance for a number of years. Helen Moran, Betty's mother, was quite a cellist in her day. She was secretary to the principal of Norwich Free Academy for eighteen years. The Randalls, who lived on Oceanview, her mother was a linen salesman. He sold napkins and tablecloths and other linen articles. I remember him telling me one time that his biggest customer was J.C. Penney many, many years ago.

Q: What was he like as a person?

A: He was quite a nice guy. He had a good sense of humor. He seemed very respectful of older people, as I recall, because we had quite a few older people here. I wish I could remember some of their names. He was the type of guy that would go over and visit folks who couldn't get around very well. He did that quite often. I was sitting on the porch with him one time with the Runny Nose Club, and he would tell about some of his friends that were members of the Runny Nose Club, and he things nice and funny to say about different ones.

Q: Do you know Mrs. Randall?

A: I knew Mrs. Randall to a degree. Not well. I did know her. She was a splendid lady. She lived for many years. I think she passed away at 103 years old. She was in a Westerly nursing home down the hill from Westerly Hospital.

Q: What about Mr. Schwarz?

A: The Schwarz family was a very, very nice family. [inaudible 36:36] Schwarz on Wall Street for many years. I forget the name of the firm that he was with, but he did very, very well there. He was wonderful with his money. He gave out lots of money to different things, like the Westerly Chorus and other things like that in Westerly. I'm sure other things too. Mrs. Schwarz was a wonderful pianist. She would invite groups over every once in a while to hear her play. It was just magnificent. I forget the young man's name who one of his sons. I can't think of his first name, but he is a musician also. Once in a while, he would play when his mom played. He became quite a big musician. He is down in Nashville now. He's been down there for a number of years after being up in Vermont. Their son Phillip owns the house here now. He lives in Virginia. They had a daughter. I'm not sure where she lives.

Over the past years with our buddy here, I spend quite a bit of time alone. The family is here from mid-June to well into September. I have one son and daughter-in-law who have a house up here near us. Their children are in business out on the west coast. I see them quite a bit. And I see my son in Boston quite a bit. But I must say that the people in Quonochontaug have taken tremendous care of me over the years. I've had problems with getting around. The Jaybricks next door have been fantastic to me over the years. I've enjoyed their company. And also, their children, Sandra and Sue Jaybrick have been great. Mr. and Mrs. Carpenter have both passed away. They would have supper over here. I'd be over there for supper. Maybe I should call it dinner, but it was supper to me. I've got so many friends here now that take such good care of me. They're always stopping by. Kathy and Jerry Picher have now sold their place on the corner of Oceanview and Ninigret, and have moved over to Green Hill. I see a great deal of them. We get out to dinner. I go over there for lunch once in a while. Some years ago, I had a dog by the name Rowdy, who was a Golden Retriever. I had to put him to sleep when he was fourteen years old. Kathy was so wonderful in taking him for these long walks all the way over the Sunset, down to the breachway and back up the beach. After I put Rowdy down, one of my daughters in Houston has a Golden Retriever by the name of Reilly. Reilly flies back and forth from Houston to Logan Airport in Boston, and he spends the summers here. He's been here since May, and will be going back next week to Houston. Kathy, even now that lives a ways away, she comes over very often in the morning and does the same thing. And the Breck girls are always doing the same thing when they're here. Jane Breck comes over every once in a while and takes Reilly for a walk. It's just unbelievable. I've got so many friends—the Brecks, the Carpenters, the Frasier, Bill Myer, Mrs. Myer, Ann [inaudible 41:04], a good friend of mine for many years now, and so many people around here. I really don't have to depend on them, because being Quonnie, you know how they are, they come to make sure everything's okay.

Do you need stuff to go to the cleaners? Do you need stuff picked up at the market? What do you need?" Everybody has been just fantastic down here. I think it's Quonnie. I don't know of any place that people are like that.

Before Betty passed away, after I retired, we looked at a golf club down in Palm Desert, California, and we had friends. They were very nice, but it's hello and goodbye. There was never this closeness that folks here at Quonnie have. I hope it continues this way.



Quonnie has changed quite a bit. I've made a lot of new friends here with new people who have come in. There are a lot of people that I don't know. The housing has completely changed down here. You buy a house for a couple million dollars, knock it down and build another one that's better, which is very nice, because it certainly keeps the property prices up. But on the other side of the coin, it's stretched our taxes up about as high as I want to see them go.

This house has been turned over to the five kids, because I know they'll take good care of it, and would rather be here with their kids and their kids' kids and so on and so on. I think you're going to see the name Young around Quonochontaug for a long, long time.

