

ROYCE TIBBETS INTERVIEW Interviewed by Gina Cressey August 22, 2000
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Royce, I will ask you first time out, when did your family first come to Bayside?

OK, We were living in Liberty, as I recall Mom and Dad were in the teaching business, and for some reason they came to Bayside. I think they had relatives down here. Orrington folks, my mother had friends from. My mother came from Orrington. That's probably how we came down the first time.

Around what year would that be?

1936, 1937. That's when we were living in Liberty. We had a cottage on Main St. The third one up on the right on the park.

How soon did they buy that?

I think they probably bought it that first summer, because I don't think she would have come down unless she had a cottage here.

And how old were you then?

I was about seven, six or seven years old.

Tell me, now, where it was?

It was on the right on Main St. the third one up from the park.

OK Sure.

I still remember some of the neighbors there, Crosskill, and I think Soderburg was the next cottage up

What kind of condition was the cottage in?

It was a nice little cottage, I remember it very clearly. All the rooms upstairs were open, they really didn't have any ceiling, and they went straight up to the roof.

Did you have any brothers or sisters?

Two brothers, one older, one younger.

Did you share a room with your brothers?

I don't think so, I had my own room, and there were at least four bedrooms.

That was a good size cottage.

It was.

And what sort of conveniences do you have now that were not in that cottage.

Well I think they had everything, I think they had a bathroom, because I don't remember going to the outhouse. Running water, I think.

And was it hot, you didn't have to heat it on the stove?

Oh probably, probably did.

Did you have a telephone?

I don't think so.

That was would have been pretty unusual.

We had an icebox, I remember handling the ice, and everything else, lights, wood stove, we had it going much during the summer, might want to cook something. The old man lived in back of us, Harry Mahoney, nice old fellow, he paid us kids a nickel apiece for the all the eels we would catch. And he loved them, I guess. And he gave us a real nice boat that he made; a sailboat, was a model. And we had it for a long time.

What were some of the things you enjoyed doing as a child?

Thinking back, the earliest things we did, of course we had never been in a rowboat before and those were a lot of fun. Some of the young fellows that were here (as) year round residents and they had rowboats and would paddle around and go fishing, and we played on the wharf a lot. It was a little different back in those days. I think was bigger, further out.

The wharf itself?

Yes, they used to wash out several times, storms, build it back, because the Boston boat used to come in.

So, you remember that?

No, I can't, because it stopped coming a year or two before we came here. I remember seeing it up in Bucksport, but it was a lot of fun those days looking back, things we did, a lot different than it is today.

What would you say some of the biggest differences?

Oh kids, were localized, we didn't go up to town. We might go to movies once in a while, but that would be it with our parents.

Pretty much activity centered in Bayside

Kids today, come and go as everywhere, that's the way it is.

Was the yacht club there?

They had a yacht club, I thinking now of the 40's, I don't know way back then, I wasn't too much aware of the yacht club when we first came here. I know in the forties, there was the sailing school. Marion Eaton. Very interesting group of people whom she had from New Jersey, most of them as I recall. Teenagers like ourselves and younger. Kept coming and some of them still do. Some of them married and come back here and there with their wives and had cottages here.

What was your family's connection to the post office and stores?

OK, about 1940, we came and bought the store and lived up over it.

That's the store where the Blair Agency is?

Yes, it is. My mother was the postmaster, or mistress, as they were called, for about eight years, it was a summer job.

What were her duties?

She put up the mail and they had the boxes of course, selling stamps, just about what they do today at post offices.

How did the mail get here?

The mail would come down from Belfast by contract carrier. I can remember a fellow by the name of Otis, first name was Otis. Anyway he had an old big Buick or something and he had a lady that worked for him that would bring the mail.

Once or twice a day?

Twice a day. Once in the morning and in the afternoon.

Were you allowed to help with that?

No, she didn't touch anything. She had to hire a girl who helped her.

Was the post office sort of a social gathering place?

Well, I don't know, so much the post office as the store. We had a large porch. There was always a bunch, sitting around the porch. We had an ice cream fountain with a nice marble, really ornate. I had to learn to make ice cream sodas.

Can you still do it?

I don't know. I'm pretty good at it, because, these folks from New York were used to that sort of thing and they said I made a pretty good one.

Good! Now, what did you sell at the store?

Groceries. During the war, people didn't drive anymore than they had to. So most of the people here didn't go to Belfast shopping, because we tried to carry everything that they would need: meats, all the cereal, I remember eggs, cases of eggs. I used to have to drive to Rockland to pick up produce and Bangor to pick up a few things for the store and a little later on. I didn't get my license until in 1946 so it would have been then and after.

Was this produce that was grown locally?

Probably, there was a company in Rockland that supplied stores, and for some reason during the war they didn't want to drive anymore than they did, gasoline being the way it was. So we always had to go down and pick it up. And that was maybe once a week.

Do you remember what hours and days you had the store open?

We open most days a week. My mother opened at six o'clock in the morning. Stayed open until 9 or 10 at night.

Oh my goodness! What a big job!

During those years, there was a lot of people around they didn't go off at all. They wanted a place to go hang out, and they hung out at the store.

Did your brothers work in the store?

My older brother, yes. They all did.

And your dad, and your Mom were back in the post office.

The post office closed around five or something like that.

It sounds like your family really was the heart of Bayside.

At that time, I think it attracted a lot of people and customers and it was good, enjoyed it.

When you look back, you had a good time of it?

Yes, wish I could remember more! remember the porches.--sitting around in the evening, Dad would get a little upset, to get noisy, but he didn't do much about it.

But you lived up above it like Blair did...But with three sons I guess it's going to noisy, anyhow.

My older brother was gone pretty much most of the time. He wasn't around much, as my other brother and I were. He went to college in the mid forties.

So, cars were not a usual daily way to go back and forth? Not everybody had them.

No, they had them, but during the war, a lot of people began rationing of gasoline, and the just didn't drive them when they had to.

Sure. Where there blackouts?

Yes, I think there were. Searsport had an ammunition dump over there and they used to load ships. And I think there probably were some blackouts. I remember we had to keep the shades down at night and didn't make much sense, but we hope there wasn't a submarine out there.

The coast guard was pretty active back in those days. They'd call in every few days and check things out. Matter of fact, I can remember they would take cameras away from people.

Why was that?

Well with Searsport being right across there. I am sure maybe some one would like to see a picture of the layout

What was going on in Searsport at that time?

They were loading ammo at the docks over there.

So you want to keep that secure.

The navy had trained their flyers and they would fly up over the wharf. We always thought they were looking to see what people were doing, but I think they were just training. There were those Navy Corsairs, they were inverted gullwing planes very, very distinct. And you could look right in and see the pilot, they were that low. Almost eye level from up in the park.

I would think that would be scary.

We were just at that age, we thought it was exciting. We could identify any airplane that was near.

I bet!

Pretty much of a thing we did.

And when you thought of getting older and going to war yourself, was it, did you think it would be over before. . .

Well it was quite after that.

You were still young.

Interesting happenings.

Any particular stories? That you want to tell?

Well, there are some things that come to mind. I remember one Fourth of July we were having a fireworks display and the old building on the wharf, which was bigger than it is now. And they had a place where the judges went when they had sailboat races. And they were judging the finalists there and there was a box of roman candles, and whatever, they weren't the kind they use today, but they were the kind you could buy at the store. But anyway, some sparks got into that box and the whole thing went off at once. I don't think anyone got hurt, I don't remember. Maybe someone got a broken leg. But they bailed out of there; somebody fell down on the wharf. That was thrilling.

I bet people talked about that for a long time!

Yes, they did.

What else comes to mind?

I was thinking of some of people that were around then. Harry Mahoney, I mentioned, Joe Hussey. He was kind of a round about, he would do anything. He was a carpenter.

Where did he live?

He lived up in back, on Main St. I think, up toward the reservoir, In that area. Oh, there was, Harry had a brother, Paul, that lived in town here and there was Joe Hussey, as I mentioned. Jack McCaskle comes to mind. Jack, I guess he picked up the garbage and delivered ice. And had an old blue Chevrolet truck that I think he called the Blue Demon, or something like that-- a low rack body truck. He was always around; he was a nice old fellow. And I don't remember him later on. He was pretty old and may have passed away. I think his truck ended up in Belfast, because a friend of mine had one that looked just like it. And I always thought it was the same one.

I wonder if it was? So he must have been a well-known character.

Yes, he was. Of course there were some older folks around.

Who were they?

Some of them played golf (with) me and would come down and get us to go caddying for them. And we didn't like to caddy all that well, but they made it worth our while. There were Mr. Scribner and Mr. Pingree and John Gould.

These were the gentleman golfers of that era.

There would be a foursome. They paid fifty cents for nine holes. Kids wouldn't do it today, for less than five dollars. The old store in Belfast run by Mr. Hasting.

In Bayside?

Yes, during the war, anything that with sugar in it was almost unavailable. So Moxie was a real popular drink back then and there was no sugar in it. I think there is today but it was a bitter drink. And we used to get all we wanted of that.

Did your two stores have a competitive relationship?

Not really, both stores were open; it was like being east side of town and the west side of town, that's all. Just with people coming and going from the wharf, I think probably we did more ice cream business and that type of thing.

I bet, plus you had the post office bringing people in.

Oh yeah, they came in every morning.

What else comes to mind?

Well, I thinking of some other things, we used to have a vaudeville show at the community building. That was once a year thing. They loved the skits and those programs, I remember they had a show where they black their faces and the man, Mr. Interlocutor, and I remember once upon a time there was a Mr. Crosskill and Mr. Mulvaney.

Mr. Crosskill was real slim, a small person, and Mr. Mulvaney was quite large, and they were really funny and they did a good job.

Now was this adults and young people together?

Oh yeah, everybody turned out. I don't know if they still do that or not.

No, that's gone.

And every year we used to have a summer cruise to Marshall Beach and Cove. Every body that a sailboat of any size or powerboat would take a load of people the coast guard should have been around then around then. Of course, nobody had any life jackets. But we always had a great time and we would go over there and cook out. It was pretty much the highlight of the summer.

That tradition is back, a lot of people do that now.

I can't remember, now, exactly how far it is to Islesboro, but there was a couple that came to Bayside, way back, and it was new to them, and they didn't really know what row boats were really used for. And they thought they would row to Islesboro. Well, they got there. We were really concerned about them later on; they didn't get back, before dark. What they used to do was light a bonfire down by the wharf, when anybody was overdue. Give them something to come in on. They got back; the gentleman's hands were like hamburg, from rowing.

They were sure lucky.

And the Mrs. is still a Bayside resident. Every once in awhile I see her.

Were they quite young?

They were young then, probably in their thirties.

Old enough to know better, eh?

This was fifty ears ago, you know.

I see her once in a while, but I don't mention it to her. And one of the things we used to do was to row up the Bay a little bit, up around the fish weir up in Brown's Cove and watch them pull sardines and mackerel in. That was always fun to do. A fellow had a pretty good speedboat that was an Old Town, lapstrake about a 16 ft. and a nice new lifeboat on it. We went over to Castine on it once. Going over can be easy but coming back sometimes things change and it got so rough, and I remember that very clearly. It was like going over the Alps with that thing. It was really up and down. His mother and father were quite worried and were very pleased to see us.

I also remember during the war years, as I said, sweets were hard to get but we had donut maker in Belfast, Hall's, Mrs. Hall's donuts. They were very, very, popular. I'd go up in the morning and get fifteen dozen, or something. And they would be gone before I got in the store.

Do you remember what they sold for?

Gee I don't remember. It wouldn't have been very much. Maybe, 25 cents a dozen, or something like that. But she was in business a long time.

I guess she had a good product.

She did. Right out of her house, made them in her kitchen.

I glad to see you did your homework.

Now this was the real highlight of the summer. They had a fire pump mounted on a trailer; there was an nice looking thing. I remember it had a Ford V8 engine on it. And the pump, and they towed it around to a fire. I don't remember any bad fires, but I know they had some but I didn't happen to see them. They tested it every summer. They brought it down to the park and at the upper end of the park, towards Park Row, there was a well with a well cover. Everybody gathered around to watch them shoot the hose. When they got around to getting that well cover off, they stirred up a whole nest of wasps and that would be end of that exhibition right there. And they swarmed out of there. I think it was Joe Hussey.

Some people have a talent for being at the wrong place at the wrong time.

I don't remember ever doing it again after that. I remember one day we were all down the wharf looking down the Bay and we saw a sardine boat coming. They looked as they were coming right at us. Sure enough. The guys were all asleep on it and hit the wharf and I remember we had to clear (out) because part of the mast came down on the wharf. They were quite embarrassed.

They should be. But they didn't lose their catch, huh? They didn't lose the catch-disturb the sardines?

Not too much. They might have shifted the load a little bit. There some other things, but...

I would love to hear about it.

Later on, the young folks from Belfast came down and visit the girls. Some of them met their wives here.

Anybody in particular couple you particularly remember?

Arnie Crosskill met her husband down here. I'm sure there were others.

Where did you meet your wife?

My wife was in Belfast, when I lived in Belfast. I remember the girl's names of some of them, mostly first names, Bettina, they were all in their teens and I imagine some of them still come here. I remember Zelma was one of the girls that was around and was very friendly with us. Some of them have passed away. They were all a good bunch of kids; I just can't get over what good times we had.

I can't get over how many people your age still have a fond spot in their hearts for Bayside.

I had a collection of Bayside postcards one time, very extensive, and I found that people that live here now take a greater interest in them than I did and I really wanted to share them. So I passed most of them along to others around here.

And where are they now I wonder?

Well, I'm sure they've got them still.

Well good, I hope the Historical Society has some.

I'll never forget it, when we moved into the store, there was a postcard rack that was filled with postcards. Most of them were of Bayside. Those Bayside postcards today would make a good retirement.

A lot of us collect them now and there were new ones issued just this year.

I know a dealer in Searsport was crying for them.

Oh sure. Now we all love them. Now, was it just two months a year that your store was open?

We opened early; we opened before school was let out, probably opened up the first of May . We lived up in Orono most of the time when we had the store.

So how did you go to school? Did you go into Orono?

No. We lived in Orono, and we opened the store around May 1, and then we come down after school was over. Back and forth. I remember when I graduated; I went from the graduation straight to Bayside.

And why did your family give up the store?

Well, business dropped off after the war was over. We just gave it up.

Did you sell it to someone else or did it just close?

We sold it to; I just can't remember his name. I think he may have had it. I don't remember when Blair bought it. When we first went in, there was a store right next door to us.

In the building where the Woolseys are now?

There was a Ramsey that ran the store there, He lived upstairs, they here year round. I think that they were open the year-round. There was quite a little population down here that lived here year-round. Most of them lived up around the Bluff Road.

And were the horseshoes here? Was there a horseshoe pit here?

Yes,

Did you ever do that?

Oh, yes. I pitched horseshoes up in back there. Outside of that there were the swings, and teeterboard, slides, and they had a bandstand in the middle. Every Sunday they had a band concert.

Was the inn open then?

The inn was open, it was known as Dutch's Inn when I first came here. And later on, a gentleman by the name of Stowell bought it and ran it.

I saw his daughter just the other day. Brought some memories for each other.

So do you often run into someone you knew from your childhood?

Yeah,

A lot of folks still around? Did your family ever come here out of season just to have a drive through town?

We might have come down in the winter. I think we did. I remember sliding down in the snow. You had to be careful though or everything would run off into the water. I think we might have been over around Park Row and slid down. That was back when I was ten or twelve years old.

And during the winter, did you ever see any of your summer friends or just see them just in the summer?

No, not too many. They were mostly all out of state. Mass, NY, NJ. Marion Eaton, most all of her campers came from New Jersey. A couple of those are still coming here. Don Knott, I haven't seen him this year, but some of the boats that were around, I remember those, one they called Popeye, an old sailboat. I was thinking there was a Wimpy; I think it was Whimsy, because I ended up owning it too, long ago!

Oh you did?

The gentleman that had it was down here with it when they first had. It was about the time I was here. It was called Popeye and Wimpy, but it was Whimsy.

And where did you sail?

It was a powerboat. A sedan cruiser. Thirty foot and we powered it all over the Bay. My wife and I over the last ten years. We had good times on it. Built in 1947.

That was a good old boat- it was well built, I guess.

It certainly was. Liked to have it back then, but someone else did.

Did you ever learn to sail here?

I never did sail, never was a sailor. Never cared for sailing. It was too dependent on something else.

How about fishing? Did you do any fishing?

Did a lot of fishing. You ought to see the flounders we caught off the edge of the wharf. I have never seen them as big. I was setting on the porch one day, and I think it was Harry Emmons came up the hill with a pail, and the tails were hanging all over the top. He said "you ought to go down there" So I went down and caught two or three myself. They were running for some reason. They were nice flounders.

Now, did your family sell the cottage at the same time they closed the store?

We bought it the same time we bought the store was sold probably in 1940, and then we went immediately to the store. She bought the store first, and then the cottage.

Now, did any of their children in your family go into the retail business when they grew up?

No, I don't think we picked up too much. I was in sales. My other brothers were in teaching

Can you remember doing anything naughty that you shouldn't have done?

Oh, no, never, nothing like that. When Dad was alive, we used to have a little war. We had two sides. We'd have roman candles. It's a wonder we didn't set something on fire. We used to do it from the Pingree Estate.

Were the Pingrees there?

Afraid they were. We never got caught, but the gentleman that lived across the road was deputy sheriff. A Thomaston boy, we used to call him, but he never caught us. A foolish thing to do.

Well, kids have a tendency to do something that's foolish. Were there any fires?

I don't remember any fires. I remember one year there were some cottages that burned but I never saw it.

Was there a policeman in the village like we have now.

I think Joe Hussey might have been our local constable, not a real policeman. The social life was a lot of fun. We used to have these games going like treasure hunt,

Did the kids organize them or just the adults?

I think the adults did. The sailing activities, of course, were all organized. There was always something going on. This little community were in was really busy. I'm surprised it's much like it was, from the outside, anyway. Usually, something happens to these old buildings.

This one has stood here forever. And there were dances?

Oh yeah, dances. I was kind of shy but used to dance a little bit. They had a dance every week.

So it was pretty different. Just a lot of kids, lot more kids.

Seemed to be. I don't know what's down there now, but I know a lot of older people because they were the ones that were here then.

And we sort now have a lot of kids here, but they are only here for a week or two, and not for the whole summer the way it used to be.

Well, I know, that's the way it was, they used to be here all summer.

And after dinner you could just run off with your friends and come back at bedtime?

Oh yeah.

Did your parents have rules for you, on how far you could go, or curfews?

No I don't think we did. We knew what time to come home. We didn't go off far. During the day, if we went out a boat or somewhere, they would want to know.

Of course.

I don't remember anybody; I am talking about a ten-year period ever drowning or anything like that. Or even close to it.

You were pretty careful?

Well, I guess we were. I remember one guy he couldn't swim at all, and he would dive off the float, climb back onto it and do it again. I don't think he ever swam a stroke.

Maybe he was just luckier than any thing else.

Maybe.

Was there a lifeguard?

Yes, we did have a lifeguard, he was an instructor. Most years as I remember. I learned to swim at a very early age, so never had lessons.

There were a lot of towns that had their cottages here, like Orrington, and Orono even had a cottage here. Went around the other day and looked at the names on the front of the cottages.

You did? And when you were a child were they in use by the people from that town.

Yes, they were. I think it was kind of like, I never really thought about that, who had the rights to come to it. It was religious; I think it was a particular church in town.

**I guess it goes back to the original history of the campground.
Methodist, but when you were a child, it was pretty much over.**

It probably was. I think maybe originally, it was when the church had their tent.

Yes, and I guess that tradition must have continued, and that those cottages are in private hands but still retaining the name.

Up in Merrithew Square there was a pump where the water was real nice. I don't know how that is today.

**That's become kind of an ornamental pump. And what about Auditorium Park?
Did you ever go down there to the park below the pump?**

It was there, the auditorium, it only lasted only two or three years after it was built. I never remember it.

And the sailing school, was that there then?

It was down in that area somewhere. I can't remember more than one building.

But then as now, the main activity happens in front of your store.

Yes, they had settees on the basketball court.

And was basketball played then?

Oh yes, very, very much. There was always a game going on there. Young fellows from New York, New Jersey, were quite basketball oriented even then. We all played - three men, three on three.

So you had many ways to keep your self occupied here.

Yes, it's hard to believe that we spent the whole summer, and I can't remember all that we did.

Oh you remembered a lot. Is there anything else that comes to your mind that we didn't...

I'm sure there's a lot more, but I don't remember it just now.

You given me a lot, I am glad you took the time to write some of those things down.

There are a few things, that I can tell you about--but no names..

Now you said you might have just one more story.

Well, yeah, We had a neighbor that would imbibe a little bit. She was a nice lady. And she had this little white terrier or something. A Pomeranian or something. One night the dog got out and disappeared. This was around nine or ten o'clock at night. And she was out there bare-naked looking for the dog. She made quite an impression on all the folks.

I bet she did. Now everybody that hears this tape will try to guess who was the naked lady.

I want to thank you very much Mr. Tibbets for coming down and tell us your story.

Well you're welcome.