

Bayside Historical Preservation Society Oral History Project
Interview of Emma Downs and her daughter Suzanne Downs Molnar
July 31, 1997
Interviewed by Diane Melone

DM: Could you tell us your name?

SM: I'm Suzanne Molnar, and I was born Suzanne Week Downs.

DM: And do you mind telling us how old you are?

SM: Fifty-two. I was born in 1945.

DM: OK. And you live in Bayside now?

SM: I do. I have a cottage on Park Row.

DM: And how long have you had that cottage?

SM: Seventeen years. It's not an old family cottage.

DM: But the one we're in is, and could you tell us your name?

ED: Emmy Downs.

DM: And your age?

ED: Ninety.

DM: Birthdate?

Ed: Birthday, November 28 my mother said, but the records say December 2. I don't know who's right.

DM: Is that right? And what year was that?

ED: 1906.

DM: 1906. OK. And the address of this cottage?

ED: This is on the corner of Broadway and Griffin.

DM: And how long has this cottage been in your family?

ED: Well, we bought it about twenty years ago. We used to own one up on the... just up on the same street...we owned the Acorn cottage. We bought it for 700 dollars. Of course,

it needed a lot of repair, but in those days cottages at Bayside were very inexpensive. I was told that somebody owned two, so he gave away one of them. Well, I don't know. That was what I was told. But prices used to be very low.

DM: Yeah, I've heard that. And how did you first come to Bayside?

ED: My husband's parents were here for their honeymoon, I believe, I think probably at the Bangor Chapel, and they loved the place so when the World War was over, the second World War, soon as our two babies were born, when (?) was twelve months old, we came and they arranged for us to have an apartment at Bangor Chapel, and they had a room up over us, so we could...Walt's father just loved Bayside, so we could spend some time together. He always came every time he could, every chance he could get, he came down to Bayside.

DM: And what was Walter's father's name?

ED: Claude.

DM: Claude Downs?

ED: Claude Downs.

DM: And when did you first come to Bayside (to Suzanne)?

SM: Oh, I came when I was two years old when my mother came for the first time. That would have been June of 1947.

DM: And you have a brother?

SM: I have a brother fourteen months younger than me, and so he came when he was a year old.

DM: And his name?

SM: ... is Ernest Downs.

DM: And Ernest still comes, doesn't he?

ED: What?

DM: Does your son still come to Bayside?

ED: Oh, every chance he gets. He lives in New Hampshire. Sometimes he comes over- it's about 200 miles- I've known him to come over, get here for lunch at noon, go down to the beach and play with his little girl, and then come up and say, "I have to go because I have to work tonight." He loves Bayside, so any time he can get a free day he comes

over; in fact, he's coming tonight because he and his friend Richard Hewett are going on a weekend cruise and they're going to be here tonight so he'll get an early start tomorrow.

OM: How many children does he have?

ED: Who? Ernie? Just the one little girl.

DM: One little girl, and you have???

SM: I have two girls.

DM: Two girls. So there's three granddaughters.

Ed: That's right.

DM: That's the fifth generation now coming to Bayside? Could you walk us backwards a little bit.

SM: Uh, my father's grandparents came here, and I believe they were the ones that honeymooned in Bayside. Now maybe, maybe my grandparents did too, I'm not sure, but the story I heard from my father was that back when Park Row was quite new, and those cottages I think were built in the 1870's, and were rented by the week, as they still are some, that my great, great grandparents spent their honeymoon in one of them, and at first my father thought that maybe it was the one I bought, but then he later figured no, it wasn't, but that was...at first they didn't own cottages. My father was actually the first in the family to own a cottage here, but the two generations previously came, I guess, when they could. My father began coming pre-natally.

DM: So it was your father's grandparents, then your father's parents. Do you know the names?

SM: I don't know my father's grandparents' names. His parents were Claude Downs and...

ED: Sadie.

SM: Sadie Augusta Cookson Downs.

DM: And then Walter and Emma, and Suzanne and Ernest.

ED: Right.

DM: Right, down to...

ED: And then there's these granddaughters, Rachel and Julia and Cindy.

DM: That's a wonderful family heritage. What are some important places that you remember when you came here as a child, when you used to go out to play.

SM: Well, the park was the biggest thing. The play equipment was different. The play equipment had big, pretty unchanged probably hardly even repaired, but it was old sturdy stuff that didn't need repair very often from the time I was a child until about six or seven years ago, when the present playground was put in. The old slide was deemed too dangerous, and the old see-saws were considered too dangerous, and that was all torn out. And they were scary. They were things you worked up to as a child. The other thing that I remember most, was, well, the beach, of course.

ED: I think you enjoyed the Sailing School. Suzanne always had a boyfriend at the Sailing School.

SM: Well, that was when I was a little older, yeah. That's true, I did.

ED: When you were what? How old were you then? Not very old.

SM: Fifteen, or so. Fourteen, fifteen. There were two stores when I was little. There was Hastings Store up on George Street, and Parkers had a store in the Post Office down where the Blair Agency is now. At some point Hastings went out of business. I'm not sure when- by the time I was a teenager, at least, Hastings was out of business, and Parkers was the only store here, although they still...also when I was a child bread trucks came through, and ice trucks. We did not have a refrigerator, we had an old, oak ice-box, and trucks came through with the big blocks of ice that people brought out with the tongs and put in.

Because people didn't use cars much. And we had...a lot of people were here without cars, even. We had a car and we still didn't use it much. It was somehow, people didn't think about driving as much as they do now, and so it was a lot of things being delivered rather than thinking you were going to go and get it in your car.

DM: I've heard that from other sources. Was the basketball court there?

ED: Didn't that used to be a tennis court?

SM: It was an old, broken-down tennis court when I was little, and I'm not sure at what point the basketball went in. I think by the time I was a teenager. By the time I was a teenager there was basketball there, Mother. Is that right?

ED: What was that?

SM: Was there, was the basketball installed by the time I was a teenager?

Ed: Yes, the tennis court was gone by the time we got here, and the basketball was started.

DM: Did you swim very much?

SM: I did. I used to turn blue, but I did. There was a diving tower on the float, on the swim float, and there was also, of course, the old diving board that was only done away with a few years ago. Other than that, it was very...well, it wasn't very similar. The bay was a lot dirtier. I came back here fifteen or twenty years ago, and thought that something had happened to bring a lot of rocks in, because you could see the bottom of the bay when there were only, you know, six feet of water. And when I was a child and teenager you didn't see down in this water more than about two feet. You never saw the bottom, even at lowest tide.

ED: Much of our dirt was caused by the chicken factory up in Belfast. That really was quite filthy.

SM: That, and the fact, you know, that everybody just dumped raw sewage into the bay. I remember how upset everybody got when they heard that we were going to have to put in sewage treatment here, and people were talking about how expensive it was going to be. It was just...it had been taken for granted for so long that you just dumped into the bay, and nobody really thought twice about it, but, of course, with all that was being dumped in, there were going to be lots of microorganisms feasting on it, and so the water was really quite opaque.

DM: Did it effect your health, or your desire to swim? It seems like it would!

SM: Well, I was used to it. I know Mother didn't, when there were visible things floating down from Belfast, Mother wasn't too crazy about us swimming. The worst of it would be chicken heads. It got that bad. And I once, when I was a teenager, got a bad infection on my leg from going into the water, and a nurse down on the float had said, "Oh, it's salt water. It'll be good. You know, go in the salt water." And she wasn't realizing probably what else was in the salt water. The salt was not up to cancel out whatever else was in there, and I got a lot of infection from just a little cut on my leg. So, we thought it was much cleaner than it was. I think there was really a sense of, here, of it being an undefilable resource.

DM: Did it bring in, you know, I don't want to say "sharks", but that's what I'm thinking about. You know, it seems like it would bring in things to eat the chicken heads. There were no problems with that?

SM: I don't know.

DM: That you ever knew of.

SM: No.

DM: There wasn't ever any fear of...

SM: Nothing big. No. Maybe there were more sand sharks around, I don't know.

DM: But it wasn't...

SM: There were never any big ones.

DM: Was there fishing? Did people fish, and eat the fish?

SM: Oh, yes. People ate the fish. We ate the crabs. We're not going to live very long, but, you know, we did.

DM: And lobstering was still...

SM: And clamming, which...

DM: Was there clamming?

SM: Oh, yes, we clammed Kelly's Cove, Marshall's Cove. It was very easy. You could just dig masses of clams anywhere.

DM: So that seems to be a difference from now.

SM: Well, at least now we know that they're polluted. They may have been just as bad then, I don't know, but...

ED: When Suzanne and Ernie were very young, the family could go down to Kelly's Cove, dig clams, and have a clam bake right there. That was real fun.

DM: Could you ever pick the lobsters out of the rocks?

SM: No, that may have been more true when my mother grew up, but, no, I don't think you could, but there again, the water was so opaque I'm not sure you'd be able to see lobsters very far away from you.

DM: Was there a life guard on the dock? Do you remember?

SM: (to ED) Did we have a life guard?

ED: No, we didn't have one.

SM: Well, remember the man who was... remember the year we had the great life guard. He was so great because on rainy days, instead of just taking the day off, he'd take us all up to the Community Hall and run games for us. That was a life guard.

ED: I think we first started having a life guard when you were maybe early teenage, or something like that.

SM: Well, earlier than that.

ED: Well, I don't know...

SM: Maybe I was eight or ten or so.

ED: I know your friend, your friend Nancy was life guard one summer.

SM: Yeah, that was later, though. We had life guards when I was an older child, like eight or ten.

ED: I don't know, but I know when I used to go swimming we used to go where no life guard would let us, and there was no life guard to stop us.

DM: Was the dock and the float set up the same?

SM: Yes, it was, pretty much, except there was a little...on the dock house, there was a little house up top the house...

DM: Really.

SM:...that was reached by a ladder that the race committee would, the race committee would perch up there in magnificent splendor with a little railing around it, and they'd run the flags from up there.

DM: Oh, that's great. I never heard that. Well, tell me about the sailing. Your father is named for..or one of our races is named for your father, is that correct?, so he must have been big in sailing and, can you tell us about that.

ED: He taught sailing thirteen summers as a volunteer taking no pay, so the kids could sail all summer for \$15.00, and adults could sail for \$20.00. And he used to...he thought everyone should have sailing experience, and if some child came for just one week, he would tuck that child in so he'd have the sailing experience, and then, he used to have classes in the morning, and races in the afternoon, and recently, I met Bobby Webster's grandson on the wharf. He said he was one of those who learned to sail, and quite a percentage of the yachtsmen who sail in the races learned in those classes.

DM: That's wonderful. What kind of sailboats did they use then?

SM: Something called Turnabouts. They were small catboats ...how long were the Turnabouts, Mother. Were they nine feet, or ten feet? They were little things. How long were the Turnabouts, do you know?

ED: No, I couldn't... if I tried to say it wouldn't be reliable. They weren't very big, but they were nice. I sailed them two summers, in a sailing class, and they were fun.

SM: About ten feet, maybe.

DM: And they were catboats.

SM: They were catboats, yeah.

DM: So no centerboard, just...

SM: There was a centerboard. A catboat means it's got just one sail, no jib.

DM: Oh.

SM: Just mainsail.

DM: I keep thinking of that as being a tub, kind of.

SM: They are, they do tend to be tubby.

DM: But they do have a centerboard, though, and one... just a mainsail.

ED: Those could learn to sail. Some of them. Boy, the way they would turn about in a wild wind, it was really something like Suzie, (what was Suzie's name?), well, anyway, she and Gordon....

SM: Rice? Susan Rice?

ED: Yeah, Suzie Rice and Gordon Fuller, we went once to Castine to race with them, and it was a strong wind, and a great current over there, and our group won because people like Suzie would turn around no matter what and go.

DM: And you'd go over to Castine in one of those little boats?

ED: Oh, no, we didn't. They had boats.

DM: Oh, you went there, and you...

ED: We went over to race with them, but they had boats so we could race in their boats.

DM: Well, was this program that your husband did, was that through the Yacht Club, or was the Yacht Club in existence then?

ED: That was part of Walter Downs' program.

DM: Oh, it was! OK.

SM: The Yacht Club was founded in the 30's some time, and the building was built, I think, in about 1949 or 1950, but this...I wasn't around during the sailing program. Dad did that after my brother and I grew up.

DM: Oh, I see.

SM: So that must have been...mid-sixties on.

ED: You know what? Walter had, he had different stages for sailors to pass tests, and they were so interested, whenever the weather was no good for sailing, they came over to this cottage, and you never had to say "don't do...". They were little angels, everyone of them. They'd come up and work just as hard as they could to get a higher rating, and then at the end of the sailing season, there would be a meeting at the Community Hall and all the children would get their ratings announced, and there would be always trophies, big trophies for the best racers, and the biggest trophy of all was for the most valuable captain. There would be someone who was the best, the most reliable for teaching the other kids because the captains sailed free. They got no pay, but they sailed free and they trained the other sailors.

DM: Now how did Walter learn to sail? Was it just for him a hobby?

SM: Oh, yes, he taught himself. He rented a boat one afternoon down in Camden, and took it out and decided he was going to learn to sail, and did, and then bought himself a boat and learned it from that, but he read; his recreational reading during the winter would be Cruising Guide to the Coast of Maine, and Yachting magazine, and this kind of thing. It was really entirely a hobby for him.

DM: So self-taught. Just a love and a natural ability.

ED: Well, we went down to Boothbay Harbor where I grew up, and Walter wanted to learn to sail, so he went to a place where they rented sailboats, and he watched somebody else to see how they did it, and the owner said, "Now, if the gale gets too strong, you cut the sheet!" Well, he thought the sheet was the sails. He didn't know then what the sheet was. Anyway, he went out in the bay, and practiced coming up to seaweed (? windward) until he could get enough control to come up to the wharf.

DM: That's great!

ED: And then he was to go out, while he was living, he used to go every day to practice.

DM: Now, what boats did he own here then? Did he just have one of the Turnabouts, or did he have cruising boats and...

SM: Yeah...

ED: Our first boat was a centerboard, a beautiful centerboard. It was a tall mast and an old Egyptian cotton sail, and we kept that for a year or two, but then Bot Witherill encouraged Walt to start cruising. Well, we found that we would have to have a cabin if we were going cruising, so we went down to Boothbay Harbor where there was a used boat for sale, and bought a Cabin Rocket, and we sailed that a few years, and then Walter had a new one made in Massachusetts, Amesbury, Mass., and that was a Cabin Rocket,

too, with inboard power. We sailed that a long time, and then he finally got a really nice Canadian boat which we really enjoyed.

DM: Did the harbor look like this? Were there this many boats out, would you say?

SM: Oh, no, there were very few when I was a child compared to now. Maybe a quarter as many as there are now.

DM: OK. Both sides of the dock like that- moorings. Was there always a harbor master?

SM: I don't know. When did we start having a harbor master, mother?

ED: Having a harbor master?

SM: Yup.

ED: Well, I don't know, for as long as I came, as long as we were boating there was always one, so I don't know when they started.

DM: Has Al (Keith) been it for...?

SM: Do you know how long Al has been? He has been it as long as I've been aware of the function.

ED: How long he's been harbor master? I couldn't say, but it's been a long time.

DM: That's what I thought.

SM: Was he actually harbor master when I was a child?

ED: I don't remember who was harbor master before him. All I can remember is Al.

DM: Can you tell me about the mail delivery?

ED: Oh, we used to have a post office, right down here.

DM: Where was it?

ED: Right down where the agent...

DM: Blair?

ED: Yeah, Blair's was the post office, and everybody went down around five o'clock at night to get his mail, and that's where you saw everybody. It was really a social gathering.

DM: Were there any restaurants in Bayside?

ED: Not after we came. When we first came, the inn was a real inn. They served meals, and we went down there and got oyster stew to bring home for dinner. That was really quite a place then.

SM: I didn't remember that, that the inn served, but Clyde Howard had a restaurant, the Gateway Restaurant.

ED: Oh, that's right. So he did.

SM: Out where Broadway diverges from George Street,

ED: Yeah, I'd forgotten Clyde.

SM: ...and I think where Dos Amigos is, there were various restaurants have been run in that building, and there was one out there when I was a child, too.

DM: Was the market there?

SM: Yeah. The corner store was there, wasn't it, Mother?

ED: What was that?

SM: Hasn't the corner store been there as long as we've been coming? The Bayside Corner Store.

ED: I don't remember when they first started there. They've had various owners, but I don't know when they first started. They've had it quite a while.

SM: I'm not sure.

DM: What were the social events in Bayside? Were there dances or...

SM: Oh, yes, you helped run dances for the teenagers when I was a little child, you've told me.

ED: Yes, during the second World War, people didn't have allowed to use much gas, you know, so they had a machine down at the Community Hall, and the teenagers used to go down there nights and have their dances and sometimes I used to chaperone their dances.
SM: There's an old juke box. I'm not sure if it's still in the Community Hall or not.

DM: It was for a long time. It may still be there 'cause I used it.

SM: It hasn't been used in my lifetime I think, or at least if so I was a very small child when they quit using it, but...

DM: Still there.

SM: Still there. Yuh.

DM: Probably too hard to move.

SM: And other dances, the community would have a community square dance at least once a summer, and there would be a community supper at least once a summer that was a...people would go around and ask people to find out what they were going to bring, you know, pot luck kind of thing, but a very organized pot luck. Let's see. I think they had ballroom dancing...I think they had community ballroom dancing, too, maybe once in a while, wouldn't they, mother? Wasn't there ballroom dancing once in a while?

ED: Ballroom dancing?

SM: You know, waltzing, fox-trotting, that kind of thing?

ED: You know they still have that kind of thing. The Yacht Club has a dance.

DM: OK. Were there any theaters?

ED: Not in (our audience??)

DM: Drama, productions...

SM: We did a variety show.

ED: I did a square dance class for about...must have been about maybe twelve years, and we had a lot of fun doing that.

DM: That would have been in the late seventies, early eighties, maybe?

SM: Mmm. The square dance class. But the variety shows was...that was when I was a child and a teenager, and that was mostly children, but adults would do things too-comedy or piano, or whatever.

ED: Those programs were a lot of fun to see. Everybody's child up there doing something.

DM: Would ever any famous people come to Bayside, that you can remember?

ED: Oh, Robinson, you know, has had his dancers sometimes. You know he has that group...

DM: The Ballet? The Robinson ballet?

ED: Yes. And he used to have classes there in the summer. He doesn't now, I don't know why, but he doesn't, and they would put on a program once during the summer...a really nice program.

DM: I think I remember some of those.

SM: That wasn't that long ago.

ED: His wife is very good.

DM: So other than Mel Gibson, were there...

SM: Mel really stood out. I think if famous people come, they probably come incognito. It's really not...we're not only not in the fast lane, we're not even on the inter-state, as far as that goes.

DM: Did you ever get water from the pump? Or did you always have running water.

ED: No, we never needed it, but Ernie does some times. He takes his little girl up just for the fun of getting water from the pump.

SM: My grandmother used to always like it. We used to always have it when my grandmother was down, because she liked the taste of it. And some years I've used it, just... some years Bayside water has not tasted that good.

ED: Some people like it better than the regular city water.

DM: Did you always have hot running water in your cottage?

ED: No, when we had that cottage that I told you we bought- the Acorn Cottage- we had an oil stove on the back porch. We heated our water there, and we didn't have a shower. Walt put one in after a few years. When we first went, there was no shower, but there was a canvas bathtub, and he used to put that out on the floor, and give the two kids their bath in the canvas bathtub. It was quite a stunt. And then you see..

SM: It was freezing! Absolutely freezing!

ED: He'd heat the water on the kerosene stove, and then he would have the job of emptying that canvas bathtub.

DM: So what did you and Walter do?

ED: What did we do?

DM: ...for a bath.

ED: Oh, mine was just what I call "partials", you know, in the kitchen, and I was glad when I went down to Boothbay to visit, and we had a bathtub.

DM: I bet.

ED: Well, then after a short time Walt put in a shower on the back porch.

DM: When you came to Bayside, how did you come?

ED: Oh, we had the car that we had all through the World War. Walt was in the Army and didn't make much money, you know, so we had the same old Plymouth that we bought just before the war started.

DM: So you always drove when you came?

ED: Yes.

DM: Did you tell me that some of your relatives used to come down on the river...some of his relatives?

ED: When I was here they used to drive down...his relatives from Bangor.

SM: But back in these times they would have come down by boat.

ED: Oh, yes, way back, but when we were here they would drive down; besides, something rammed the wharf so it never was long enough for a steamboat again, and then steamboats went out of style anyhow, so there was no wharf and no steamboats, so everybody came by car. But anyway, by the time we came, the roads were decent.

DM: Do you have any memory of a policeman in Bayside?

ED: Oh, we have a policeman. I don't know, I haven't checked; we still have one, don't we?

DM: We do now, but do you remember...

ED: Oh, we didn't have one when we first came, no. I don't remember what year we first started, but we didn't have one until quite recently.

DM: And did you think there was a need for one?

ED: Not in those days. Criminals didn't get around as they do now.

DM: Right.

ED: I don't know. The kids didn't seem to do anything that ever made any trouble, so we never felt need of police. I don't think we did. I never knew police to be called.

DM: Did you do most of your shopping within Bayside, or did you go to Belfast or Camden?

ED: We've always gone to Belfast.

DM: OK. Were there any churches in Bayside? Or did you go to any church services?

ED: There is one on the road between here and the school house. It's on the left, and I think, I don't know whether..., I guess they had services when we first came, but the thing was sold and somebody converted it into a cottage. It still looks like a church. They didn't dismantle everything.

DM: Now when Walter's relatives first started coming, it was when it was the Methodist...

ED: Yes, it was a Methodist campground.

DM: Campground.

SM: But I'm not sure if they came for the campmeeting part, or if they just came, because people...I think, I'm not sure at what point people started coming just recreationally, but by the time of this photo, if I've got the times right, that would have been the 1890's and it was a recreational place, too, as well as the campmeeting. The campmeeting would happen I think, one week out of the summer, and I'm not sure, that family were Methodists, and so they may have come for campmeeting, but they may not have, too, I don't know.

ED: As far back as I knew there was the Bangor Chapel where they had their services, but they probably didn't have that when they were in tents. I don't know what they did. It probably took a while to get that big building built.

DM: There's not a cottage named Bangor, is there?

SM: Betty...Stover's cottage? Betty...what's...is her name Stover, mother? The woman who has Bangor Chapel now.

ED: What was that?

SM: The woman who has Bangor Chapel- Betty Chittick.

ED: Betty Chittick's parents... Let me see...They bought it...In fact they ran the inn. I think it was her parents that ran the inn.

DM: Where is that cottage?

SM: It's up on top of the hill next to the...the Allen cottage is on one side of it.

DM: So it's on Broadway.

SM: It's on Broadway.

ED: It's almost across from Harriett's. Yes, it's a big, big place, and Betty Chittick, their daughter, lives there now.

DM: Tell me about some of the people that are here now that you've known for many years.

ED: The Samways.. Very few of the people that we knew at first are here. They were here with their children, and now they just aren't here any more. Sally. The Lovejoys...Peg Lovejoy's parents were here, and Harriett's father was living here when we...of course he's been gone for quite a while, and Shirley's husband's parents lived about two doors from Harriett...

DM: That's the Rands?

ED: The Rands.

DM: That's a fair number, actually, considering...

SM: Now, let's see. When did the Holmses come, mother?

ED: Who?

SM: Sally Wilson's parents, the Holmses...Connie, and whatever her husband's name was...Bob.

ED: I don't know when they first came.

SM: Because I remember Betsy as, Betsy was a little child when I was a little child. I don't know if they came before we did or not, but she was at least around by the time she was four.

ED: I don't know when they first came. I know Leon Lord has been around here a long time. You know, Leon Lord, and Polly. They have a beautiful cottage, third from the end on Park Row, and...

SM: Leon was a chicken farmer, wasn't he?

ED: He was a very successful chicken farmer. He really made a lot of money. He still...he doesn't get out now. He's very lame, and he has an eye problem, like some of the rest of us. I don't know how old Leon is...whether he is...I guess he may be somewhere around my age, but I really don't know, but he still has a garden, with a great variety of vegetables even though he doesn't get around much.

DM: A garden here?

ED: No, it's up on...still on Broadway, but beyond the turn in the road, you know, beyond the park where the pump is. It's a short distance from there and it's on the left.

DM: The beautiful garden?

ED: A garden. He raises everything imaginable.

SM: Leon may be somebody you may want to talk to, too. I don't how long his family has been around.

ED: Yes, Leon has been a very interesting person at Bayside.

DM: What's the last name?

SM: Lord...L-O-R-D. You do have Robinson down, Ralph Robinson on your list?

DM: I'll ask.

SM: 'Cause the Robinsons have been around a long time, too. Was Snelling Ralph's father, or Ralph's uncle, mother?

ED: What's that?

SM: Snelling Robinson. What relationship he was to Ralph? Was he Ralph's uncle?

ED: Who's uncle?

SM: Ralph Robinson. What relation was Snelling to Ralph?

ED: Let's see. Snell was the father of the one that Terry plays with.

SM: OK, so it's Ralph's father. Snelling was the one who financed the Turnabouts.

ED: I don't know how long the Robinsons had been here, but they were here as far back as I knew.

SM: I'm not sure how my father came to talk about it with him...

ED: ...but one thing...

SM: Maybe she knows.

ED: Snell Robinson had a lot of money, and when Walt wanted some Turnabouts, he asked Snell if he wanted to help pay for them. He said if the people of Bayside care enough to raise money to buy two, I'll buy, oh, I think it was, two more, so he did.

DM: That's great. How many Turnabouts do you think there were?

SM: At a maximum, what was there? It got up to about six.

ED: I think it was about six.

SM: I think they actually started with three. I think Bayside only had to raise money for one, and Snell bought two, and after that, even at twenty dollars a person, they just saved money and added to the fleet until they got up to six.

DM: Do you remember the VanFleets?

ED: Oh, gosh, yes.

SM: What do you remember about them, Mother?

ED: The VanFleets?

SM: Yeah.

ED: Well, he used to...he had some kind of a snorkel, or something like that, and he used to go out, like they go off the end of the float and do something with that, and the kids used to, you know, they used to have fun about that. And his mother...see, they came from Panama. Several people around here were working in Panama, and they were a couple. But his mother was, well, she was kind of...she really had a lot of voice, and she used to get very angry at him, and one night my dog (?) let her get out, you know, well she did, she followed me, and we got by VanFleet's cottage, and our dog, Babe, must chase VanFleet's mother's cat right up on the porch. Now the cat was on a ribbon so she wouldn't get away, and Babe wants to go and chase that cat. Well I thought probably the woman was going to tear me to pieces, well she didn't. She said, "You want to keep that dog at home!" so I was very much pleased that she didn't talk to me the way she did to some people.

DM: So that was Henry that did the Scuba...Scuba gear there.

ED: That was Henry.

DM: Do you remember their other son?

ED: There was another son?

DM: The younger one.

ED: I didn't know they had one.

SM: No, I didn't either.

ED: Henry was the only one I ever saw.

DM: Someone told me once that they had one that died from appendicitis when he was eleven.

ED: Oh, I see. Well, we weren't around here then.

SM: OK, that would have been before...

DM: I mean, I just was...you know, I've been told a lot of stories over the years. Look, too, I've heard about your cat, Snowball. Was it a white cat? There are different Snowball stories. And red rock stories. Do you have any red rock stories? Some of the...I don't know if they were yours...

SM: ...very faint.

DM: They're still there. There are rocks all around my house that were painted red.

ED: That's right. You live in VanFleet's house.

DM: I guess some kids, I can't remember who it was, one night as a joke painted them blue. Was (?) or not.

SM: I don't remember it.

DM: It got the VanFleets quite upset and they had to paint them back, I guess.

ED: I suppose Bill Paige's family have been around here a long time.

DM: Could be.

ED: As far as I can remember anyway, his mother, Ruth Paige, lived two doors up from us. She's in a nursing home now, and I really miss her, but I think that family...

SM: They were caretakers for the Pingrees, weren't they?

ED: That's right, he was caretaker for the Pingree estate, so when Mr. Pingree died, he left Bill that house.

DM: Oh, the big mansion right across the street. (The white, wooden house, not the brick house. Ed.)

ED: Yes.

DM: Aaah. So that's how they started.

SM: That was owned by someone named Pingree.

ED: Bill used to take care of the Pingrees.

DM: Do you have any furniture stories, like getting furniture up in your second floor.

SM: I think the furniture was here when we bought the cottage.

ED: We bought the place furnished. very nicely furnished.

SM: Most of the cottages tend to have the furniture with them when you buy them.

DM: And it hasn't changed? Has the cottage changed much over the years?

ED: Walter did a lot to it. He laid all these carpets, all the carpet all through the house. He didn't like dark things, so he put in this ceiling, and he put in the ceiling in the dining room because it was dark and he didn't like things dark. And he had the whole house electrified because the electrical equipment was kind of bad. It was...the wires were in under chairs and under carpets and so forth, so he had that done, and he made at least five closets. When we came there was a very scarcity of closets. But the bedrooms are very large, so he took a whole side off of one of the bedrooms and made a big storage closet.

DM: How many bedrooms do you have?

ED: Three.

DM: And was the porch just like this...wrapped around?

ED: Oh, before we came, they took a piece, the porch used to extend way back around the house...they took a piece off it and made a bathroom. That's the only change that has been made.

DM: How about your cottage? (to SM)

SM: Ahh, let's see. Not a lot...

ED: You did put in that basement.

SM: Oh well, it's been posted. It's not really a basement, but it's on permanent posts now that go beneath the frost line. Not much has changed in my cottage really since I was a small child. It, you can see that it has been built in three parts, but that's true for most of them. The front part was a big room upstairs that you can tell used to be divided into two, and then a back, somewhat lower second building that was built on which is now the kitchen downstairs and another bedroom upstairs, and in front of this is a bathroom stuck on front...kind of a shed roof thing. But that was all there when we first moved here. It's not had a lot done to it.

DM: still a Bayside cottage.

SM: Very much, one of the old ones, definitely.

DM: It's just not falling into the bay anymore.

SM: Right. Oh yes, when we bought it, the only thing level was the hearth. Anything else...not only would a ball roll, but a child would roll.

DM: Oh, wow.

SM: It was so out of aline that it had been...I would never be accused of taking good care of my cottage, but it had been extremely neglected for a long time before we bought it so things were really pretty decrepit.

DM: Now, you bought it seventeen years ago, so you have been coming up...have you always come every summer as far back as you can remember?

ED: There was just one summer when Walt and I took the station wagon and a tent and did the thirteen parks of the West, and that took about seven weeks, but then before school began they (we) came back here for...there were two or three weeks left, so we came back to Bayside for that two or three weeks, and Ernie was counselor at Roy Hillburn's Sailing School then, and he said, "I knew my parents would."

(Here the tape ended and had to be reversed, and some was lost. In the next section, Emma is talking about the golf course.)

...now it's 350, but it was, it is, it has been so vastly improved, it's a most beautiful course, and a big one. The longest fairway, number 5, must be about 500 yards. It really is beautiful, and I've played there for years. I've been treasurer and used to do the handicaps, figure the handicaps before machines took over, and various things like that, so I've really been around there for years, and it was fairly easy to get trophies then, so I have a big batch of trophies up in the (?) room, and entertain Cindy, because she is interested in trophies.

SM: She's impressed with you, is what she is. She's very impressed with your golf.

ED: Well, I don't play, of course, as I used to, but I still go around the course, a few times a week, whenever I find time.

DM: Is it an 18-hole golf course?

E

D: No, it's only nine.

DM: That's what I thought.

ED: But if you want, some people go 18, you know, especially with buggies.

DM: They do have a second tee for every hole, don't they, so you can tee off from a slightly different position. In that way they can count it as 18 holes, but I guess it is really a nine-hole, eighteen-tee golf course, if there is such a thing.

ED: It really is a beautiful course.

DM: Do you golf anywhere else?

ED: Yes, I've played courses in California, and we used to play one in Lakeland, the Carpenter's (?) home, I played in a club up there.

DM: Is that Florida?

ED: Florida, Carpenter's home, Lakeland, and then five of us used to play in (?) City. That got sold, and then I started playing at the reservation, so named because it has a lot of Indian relics, and this year when I wasn't driving, I played a course I don't care an awful lot about, but I play a par three because I have a friend who lives close there and I leave my buggy in her shed, so that's where I've been playing this last year, but that's only a matter of driving. I really would prefer to play the bigger courses.

DM: Have you golfed all your life?

ED: No, I didn't start until I stopped playing tennis. Tennis was my love. I met Walt on the tennis court, and that was our life all through the World War, and then he developed eye trouble so he couldn't enjoy the tennis, and we tried golf. He didn't care for the golf, but I kept on. He liked sailing, so that's what he did, but I kept on with the golf. But I didn't play until my children got fairly well grown up, because I knew if I started playing, I'd be up there when I ought to be with the kids, so I didn't start until I was way up in the forties.

DM: I heard you got a hole- in- one.

ED: Yes, about three years ago, at the reservation. Yes, I played all those years, and I just decided I never was going to, you know, you could drive 18 inches from the hole, but that

doesn't matter, and I know quite a number of people who have played all their life and they've never had one. It's just a happy accident, so that was a surprise.

DM: Yeah, I bet. (to SM) Have you ever golfed?

SM: No, not more than just knock the ball around really casually.

DM: Did you do tennis?

SM: Some, I haven't recently. I did some. I was trying to think about things that might be helpful, I think, because for a very narrow period of time I have very vivid memories, because of being a child here. You asked about the size of the fleet, and I was saying maybe a quarter as many boats as now. Not only a quarter as many boats, but they were also very, very small. I think at one point there were maybe two sailboats with cabins on them. We used to go cruising, the Yacht Club cruise, used to be us and Bob and Jean Witherill, or us and the Witherills and the Martins, and that would be about it, and all the time I was really little, both the Witherills and the Martins were cruising in little open sailboats that nobody would expect anybody to cruise in. Martin was cruising in a 12' open sailboat.

DM: Did he have a family?

SM: He and one of his boys. He had two boys, and I think only two of them would go at a time, and Bob and Jean Witherill had, they had a big open boat, it was 14 feet. These were small boats to go out there, and that was when we had gotten our really substantial 23-footer, and that thing looked big out in the bay there. That was the Cabin Rocket mother was talking about, and the Witherills got one about the same size, and sold their 14-foot boat to the Martins, so the Martins were now cruising in a bigger open boat. These are very little things. They didn't plan a cruise three months ahead. They watched for the weather, and when a cold front would come in, they'd say, "OK, tomorrow we leave." And that's the way they managed to do as much cruising as they did. We'd go out to Isle au Haut. We really covered the whole bay with these very little boats. I remember Bob Witherill saying, I think because my father liked to hear him say it, talk about "Downs weather. If Walter goes, it's never bad weather." There was no mystery to it. Walter just waited until a northerly blew in with a cold front, and then they'd take off.

ED: We sailed in some pretty dense fogs.

SM: That's true. That's true.

ED: You know, when we went over to Northeast Harbor, we and the Witherills, we were caught over there in a fog almost a week.

SM: They may have stopped saying "Downs weather" after that. I'm not sure they wanted to.

ED: One noon, the fog lifted, and Walt asked someone over there if it was safe to go out, and they said yes. We went out...we just got there when a dense fog came, and we started up to a harbor. Walt said that's safe because we'd see the buoys. Well, there was something big white right in front of us...it was a granite ledge, so Walt backed off. We went out a way and there were the buoys, but we hadn't seen them because the fog had them hidden, so then we went to a..maybe it was Naskeag Harbor where we'd never been before, and we went in there and stayed overnight, and a northerly came, and the next day we headed up Eggemoggin Reach with a storm northerly blowing, and it was so wet, when the water came, there was no sense ducking it. I did the steering, but Walt was busy trying to keep the engine dry enough so it would run. You wouldn't think of sailing. And the kids were below mopping water as fast as it came in, and then finally the stay went. So then I had to get up on the cabin roof and hold the mast so that wouldn't break, and so we kept on until we got to Belfast, and there we could turn and get away from the wind, and we didn't see the Witherills again. They had babies then and I think their Old Town motorboat I think they had, so we didn't see them. They went into Buck's Harbor. We saw them in Bayside a few days later. Well, that was one of the funny adventures then...we had a lot of them, 'cause we sailed about 25 years, and we really had some honeys.

DM: More excitement than I could take, I think.

ED: Well, we really had things that, you know, Walt would do anyway, and I never said no. His first race, we just went over the starting line when a squall struck, and everybody else went back to the shore. Not Walter. He was a new sailor, who stayed right out there, and they may have sent a motor boat to pick us up (??..I guess), and we had a...it was a centerboard which I don't trust too much. I used to lie out on the side, and that would help keep the thing from tipping so much. You don't think we had life jackets. We didn't wear 'em. But we went right out, boy it was wild, and (we could?) any sailor to sail that day.

DM: Did you win the race? You were the only one in it!

ED: The night we finished winning the race, we stayed out until one o'clock in the morning.

SM: That was winning the series.

ED: We were sent out at four o'clock at night when the wind died, and all we had to do was get one point to win the trophy, and our opponent had a boat that would point better than the Cabin Rocket that we were sailing, so we went up around the bell and down around the bell over by Isleboro, and the wind completely died. The moon went in; we had stripped the boat because we were going south. We had nothing to eat; we had no jackets, we'd climbed Battie that day, and we had nothing... we had no light, so we just let the waves toss all night. Finally they got frightened out. They'd been down by the wharf to see where we were. They got frightened, so they sent somebody out to find us. Well, we heard them, but we wouldn't answer (SM: Dad wouldn't), and they couldn't see us because they didn't have any light, and it was dark, so they came in and said they couldn't find us.

They should never have sent Walt out that time of night. He shouldn't have been sent out, but we went until 1 o'clock in the morning, and somehow got back between the markers. That was a night we finished winning the trophy.

DM: There wasn't much of a social when you got in, was there.

ED: There were people on the wharf watching to make sure...

DM: Is that right??

ED: ...we went through the markers.

DM: Oh, that was too funny.

ED: When we got through, our opponent said, "How are you going to get back to your mooring. There's no wind." Walt said, "We'll swim," but he said, "I'll come out and tow you. "

SM: Why didn't Dad have a motor? Was that motor not working?

ED: What was that?

SM: Why didn't you have a motor?

ED: You aren't allowed to use a motor...

DM: He was racing.

SM: Well, no, but I mean after the race was over. Was the motor broken as usual? It was that old engine...non-functioning often. Must have been.

ED: I couldn't tell you why we didn't use the motor to come back, but, of course, it was such a short distance. We were just up beyond the markers right out here, and we were just over the marker, and our mooring was a short distance.

DM: Sure, it must have been one of the times when the motor wasn't working.

ED: I don't know, maybe it wasn't. It wasn't working much of the time.

SM: Dad had a lot of trouble with it. The shipyard where he'd leave the boat a lot of time, they just seemed, they were oriented toward taking care of the boat, of sailing boats and a lot of times didn't work on the motors over the winter, so a lot of time we had a very unreliable engine.

ED: That motor, Walt would take the motor various places, and when he took it to Horseshoe Cove, the man there did nothing on the motor, so it often didn't work. We and Fred Martin were going down to Matinicus...no, no, Monhegan. Well, a hurricane came, so we lived through the hurricane and the day after the hurricane Walt said, "Let's go down and see what's going on after the hurricane," so we went, and he wanted to go on the outside of the island, we did, and when we got in, got back around the island, the motor died, and didn't work again all summer so we had to use the motor, no the motor was gone, we had to use the sail, so we went into Rockland and stayed there over night, and then came up the next day. But we were lucky, if it had ever failed when we were on the outside of Monhegan, we would have just been landed on the rocks because there was a storm northerly blowing, and it wouldn't be time to get the sails up before you're on the rocks. Well, we had a lot of events just like that.

DM: Do you think there was more wild life- animals, you've never seen moose or bears...

SM: Really I think there was more...I've seen more in recent years.

ED: Nothing but deer.

SM: We've seen moose in recent years, and I don't remember moose around when I was a child so I don't know if there's any difference. I don't remember any wildlife around earlier that isn't around now, do you, Mother?

ED: I don't remember anything but deer, but we used to go ashore on Western Island, and that's the place where the seagulls nest, and a large area was covered with the nests of the seagulls, with their eggs and their babies, and the smell.

SM: A lot of dead birds. Oh, I hated that when I was a kid.

DM: That was one of the islands?

SM: One of the islands out in the eastern part of the bay. It must have been one of the nesting areas, I suppose, because there were such masses of them.

DM: Oh, I never heard of that. Well, unless you ladies have anything else to say...

ED: Well, I think probably we've taken all of your time, and told stories that were more entertaining to us than to you...

DM: Oh, I thoroughly enjoyed it, and I want to thank you very much for sharing your memories with us.

ED: Oh, we've had an interesting afternoon. You know some of these things, they were a big deal to us, but they aren't to anybody else.

DM: Oh, I don't know. Thank you very much.