

Interviewee: Ruth Irish Morrow

Interviewer: David Webster

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The Irish family has lived in Shelburne for eight generations.

Topics discussed: World War II, Shelburne Creamery, Palmer School, roads, schools, churches, L.H. Palmer Store, Irish Family, farm chores, haying, Tracy & Maeck Store, Reverend Lynwood Smith, Episcopal Church, Methodist Church, Burlington, life at home, 1927 Flood, Shelburne Farms, fun and games, traveling

DW: What is your full name?

RM: Ruth Irish Morrow.

DW: Where and when were you born?

RM: November 22, 1923 at Mary Fletcher

DW: And how long have you lived in Shelburne?

RM: Not quite all my life.

DW: Who were your parents?

RM: My dad was Leo P. Irish, who lived on Irish Hilltop and my mother was Cornelia Martha Wheeler, who lived, it used to be 55 Dorset Street, now its where the botanical gardens are, and her dad built that house when she was ten years old.

DW: When were they married?

RM: June 23, 1921. I think it was 23rd or 22nd.

DW: What did they do for a living?

RM: They had a small farm and dad did carpenter work and there was also an apple orchard.

DW: What did you have for brothers and sisters?

RM: I had one younger brother, Wilmot Wheeler Irish. Just two children on Irish Hilltop.

DW: Where does he live now?

RM: He's in Ithaca.

DW: How many generations of your father's family lived in Shelburne?

RM: Let's see, Homer's uncle owned the place, so there was uncle, Homer, Wallace, Dad, I was there, and my children., o.k., Wilmot, his children, and his children's children. So there's eight generations there, isn't there?

DW: So eight generations through the current?



Photo 1 Dr. Perry Irish

RM: Through the current. And my children were the seventh. I think I'm right on that because Stewart said, don't forget to count the uncle that Homer bought it from.



Photo 2 Elwood Irish

DW: Where do you live now?

RM: I live in what are the woods, it's just a step up on Spear Street and there are two meadows in the parcel and the woodland. Mother divided up the whole place between my brother and I, and I got the brick house and the land up on Spear Street, and my brother got, we used to call it the yellow cottage, with the land down there except for the two and half acres that went around the brick house. Of course, we ended up with the buildings too you know.

DW: In your married life, did you always live in the brick house, before coming here?

RM: Well its interesting, my great-grandfather Homer built the yellow cottage for his son, Wallace, who was my grandfather, and he started his married life over there and then mom and dad did the same thing, and Rufus and I did the same thing. We were there about fourteen years before my father died and mom asked if we ever thought of coming over and living with her in the brick house. Of course it made a lot of sense because it was much bigger and with three young children it made a lot of sense.

DW: She was an easy mother to live with?

RM: Yes. Oh Yes.

DW: That would be the other ingredient.

RM: No, we were a very close family. Well we probably did have some discussions once in a while but, I mean, what family doesn't. No, we got along very well. Then I remember mother had gone up to stay with her sister, and I bought her down for a picnic, and my mother said "My gracious, just in the short time I've been gone, the traffic's here is terrible". So I said well, maybe we ought to think about building up in the woods, and that's what we did. Rufus thought I'd never want to leave the ancestral home, but with the four corners, and the house was nearer the road than it was in the horse and buggy days and the cars used to come from the north without stopping. Others coming from the south had no trouble. One time a car ended up over on the east side of the house by the hatchway, and I was standing right there and I thought for sure the corner of the house was going to go. You can still hear, sometimes when you are outside, you can hear the screech of breaks. You see a car go by, and then a dump truck just missing it, you know? Coming from up the hill. It's scary.

DW: What year did you build this house?

RM: We built it 1984. We moved in just before Christmas of 1984. I've had a doll meeting for the second Thursday of December, every year since '73. I told the contractor it had to be done for the doll meeting, and so the day before the doll meeting Chrissy came down to help me, and of course we couldn't do anything because there were plumbers and everything else here, so we started putting the Christmas decorations out and some of the carpenters would go by, "I've never seen anything like it, there's not a stick of furniture in the house but she's doing the Christmas decorations."

DW: So this is the third place where you have lived?

RM: This is the third place where I have lived.

DW: And they've all been on the property.

RM: All been on the property. Couldn't afford Spear Street now.

DW: So who were your closest neighbors?

RM: The Crowley's lived at Ledgemere, and Margaret, their daughter, we grew up together, the only place we never went together was at church...she went to St. Catherine's, and I went to either the Methodist or Trinity. Then the Thomas's to the South...Eutie Thomas and his big family.¹ And the Kings lived down the hill where Jean Stevenson lived, and Walter Maeck was to the north with his tenant farmers, they changed ever so often.² Those were the closest neighbors.

DW: Did you gravitate to the village or to the Falls? Where did you do your shopping, for instance?

¹ See Colleen Haag interview

² See Doris Maeck interview

RM: Well, the shopping would be in the village, or sometimes uptown in Burlington, but basically it was Tracy and Maeck's. Of course the country school, the old Palmer School House on Dorset Street just above the four corners, they would have activities and we gravitated over there to the things, naturally because we were generally in something. And we'd go to church in the village.

DW: So you didn't really do much in the Falls per se?

RM: Not too much.

DW: What businesses were there?

RM: There was the store...the Tracy's had the store, and Clay Shortsleeves, where Barbara Kent now lives, had a store in the basement part. Then there was the Granary where Civil Engineers is. As far, I think it was more high school age that we got to know more of the children.

DW: Do you think of the Falls as being separate from the village?

RM: No, it was all Shelburne.

DW: Now you mentioned the Palmer School. Now what school did you attend?

RM: I went the first seven years to the Old Palmer School. It was just on the east side of the road, on Dorset Street, just above the Four Corners.¹ Then we had a new school, the New Palmer School, right next to Mike Deavitt's. I don't know who lives in the school house its been made into a house...

DW: Rosemary Sadler

RM: Is that the name? We were quite excited about that because it had a stage and it had indoor chemical toilets. We didn't have to go outside.

DW: A stage?

RM: A stage, isn't that something?

DW: Now what year would that have been that that was built?

RM: Probably, '35 or '36, because I think it was '37 I went down to the Village High School in Shelburne.

DW: How many kids would have been at that Palmer School when you were there?

¹ On the northeast corner of Dorset Street and Irish Hill Road.

RM: Oh probably a couple dozen. I've got a picture of it, I should count them. They were just families around. There were the Norris' where the Moores live now, of course the Lewis's, the Goodrich's were over on the Pond Road, and a couple years there was a Senesac's over on Hinesburg Road, you know that house? Tom Bushey had the farm across the road. I'm trying to think who else.

DW: Anyone on Dorset Street extension?

RM: No I don't think there were any children on that road. At that time.

DW: Who was your teacher?

RM: I had Mary Noonan for the first five grades and Pearl Savage McGraw for the next two, and in eighth grade I had Velma Thordick.

DW: Now obviously you walked to school.

RM: Yes, except in the wintertime if it was too, you know, bad, dad would hitch up the sleigh and take me over. I know that many times when Mary Noonan would ride up the hill with Will Bacon, he had the mail route, he had one of these Caterpillar cars that he was trying out and she'd ride up there and then we would all work over to school, going over the drifts.

DW: How were the roads maintained in the wintertime?

RM: There was a big huge Caterpillar tractor, I think they had something different before I can remember, and Maurice Palmer, Orris Knight, and Ralph Lewis used to operate it. They operated that big thing, and did the whole town. Your east and west roads drifted more than the others. They had snow fences up, that helped a little bit.

DW: You used a sleigh up through when, the thirties?

RM: Probably yes. Yeah it would have been into the thirties.

DW: What was the first car you remember?

RM: Dad had a Model T Ford, and he had a Chevy, I guess that was it for him.

DW: As a child you pretty much always remember having a car?

RM: Yes, but we used the horse a lot, going down to the village.

DW: With a wagon?

RM: Yup, or buggy or sleigh. I know one thing that was fun. They used to go over to the pond to get ice, and Fred Bacon lived next to the store there in the Falls. We'd go over and we'd hitch our sleds on the back and ride home on the back of his sled that was full of ice.

DW: So he would go and cut the ice

RM: And load it on his sled.

DW: Was this for his own use?

RM: Yeah for his own use, cause they had iceboxes then, they had icehouses that they put the big chunks of ice in and covered it with sawdust.

DW: Yeah, I think my father said that theirs would last until maybe August or something. They lined all the sawdust and they really knew how to put it away.

RM: They put sawdust down in the cracks and everything.

DW: How did you heat your house?

RM: We had a wood coal furnace with a big square register which we stood over and got dressed and undressed. The bedrooms were not heated. I can remember scraping frost off the ceiling. We had feather mattresses that we slept in and that was fun, especially after they were first made up.

DW: How did you keep the house lit?

RM: Lamps, candles, we studied by lamp, see it was in, I think before I got out of high school, electricity came through, in the late thirties, early forties. See it came up to just above where the Beans live¹, just above the bridge, but then there was that big long space and then the King house, then us, and so it took a long time, a lot of talk and then we finally got it.

DW: So you think somewhere along 1940.

RM: Probably 1940, 1939. I'm not good on dates.

DW: Well, you are pretty good so far. Where did the family spend most of its time in the house?

RM: In the living room.

DW: Did you have a parlor as well as the living room?

¹ See Donald and Jean Bean Interview

RM: Oh yes, the parlor door was shut in the wintertime along with the hall door, and there was a hole in the ceiling above the rectangle register, the heat would go up. That was fun if the folks had a card party or something, you could peak down and see what was going on.

DW: Now you mentioned card party, and you mentioned both churches. You had gone to the Methodist Church and then later the Episcopal Church. Where did your family make the change?

RM: Well, I guess the change was back with my Grandma Irish. She used to go to the Episcopal Church and I think Dad sang in the choir there also, and then when the Webbs came to town, they asked her to move. She didn't approve of being kicked out of her pew, so she went to the Methodist Church so that's when the Irish's transferred to the Methodist Church, and that's the story they told me. Dad sang in the choir there, and of course mother was brought up at St. Paul's. They'd go from Dorset Street in the wagon buggy. So we went to both churches growing up and at that point in time after Mr. Robbins, the minister, left, there was a period where it was hard to get somebody at the Methodist church. It wasn't continuous. Then, of course, Smith was there forever. We ended up, outside of going with the family to both churches, which came out pretty good because the ministers didn't know which church we were at, you know, we might not even be at church, we might be home. Then, when confirmation came up, mother said it was up to Wilmot and I to choose which church we wanted to belong to. So we both chose the Trinity Church.

DW: The reason I asked, because the cards made me think of it, I understand at one time, that there were a number of couples, younger couples, who would have been your parents' generation who left the Methodist Church and went to the Episcopal Church because card playing was frowned on.

RM: That could very well be.

DW: I believe the Marsetts did that because whoever the minister was very much frowned on them playing cards, and they enjoyed playing cards, Bridge or whatever, and so there were a few couples at that time that made the change because their behavior was suspect for playing cards. So I was kind of curious of whether that had been the case with your family.

RM: That wasn't mentioned. Grandma didn't want to have somebody else to tell her where to sit. I believe she was German, Ninkler, so maybe that's why

DW: Did you eat in the dining room or did you eat in the kitchen?

RM: We did both. A lot of time supper might be round the kitchen table. It was a very small kitchen, it was sort of like an alleyway. Of course you had your big black stove with a reservoir and a warming oven, and the kitchen was made larger when

Wilmot was over in Korea. They made the woodshed into the kitchen, so that made a nice big kitchen. We ate in the dining room quite a bit.

DW: What kind of foods did you eat?

RM: Oh boy, we had a big breakfast: liver and gravy and potatoes and sometimes salt pork, oatmeal, cream gravy, you know. Of course, men working out on the farm, they were hungry, and of course, we ate breakfast. I don't think they were being mean, but mother said she had to get breakfast for Gramp and she wasn't going to get more than two breakfasts, so we got up and ate with mother and dad. We had fruit, mostly apples I guess.

DW: Did you dry apples?

RM: Yes, mother dried apples, and corn, and did a lot of canning, that's where we came on picking peas.

DW: Florence Horsford said that her mother had a thousand jars and there were always a thousand jars in the cellar.¹

RM: Mother would plan on how much of each vegetable that they would need for the winter and everything and can them and fruit too. I never did care for the canned strawberries. The juice was delicious, but the strawberries were sort of soft like. I just didn't like the texture. Raspberries they had a lot of, at one time. Of course, I can remember having to go in the cellar and get some eggs and reach into the big jar and it would be in that glass, and it would be all jelly-like and you would reach down in that cold thing and pull out the eggs. That's the way that they saved them because they didn't have... I guess you would have to save a lot because the hens would not lay eggs all the time.

DW: So preserved them that way?

RM: Preserved them. They smoked their bacon and their ham, sausage, headcheese.

DW: How complete a farm was it?

RM: We had chickens and cows and pigs, I can still hear the pigs when they were slaughtering, they make an awful squeal.

DW: People say they know. They know when it's going to happen.

RM: One thing I thought was funny, Dad had some little pigs, and he put an electric fence up. He put it at the corner of the barn, which isn't there now, and before he got to

¹ See Florence Horsford interview

the back steps, the little pigs were following him. They got right out. Of course, I giggled, and Dad glared at me.

DW: How many cows?

RM: I think he had seven or eight milking cows. It wasn't a big farm.

DW: But that was more than you used probably?

RM: Oh yes, they used to make butter and peddle it in Burlington; they had their regular customers. They had a butter print, I think, the butter thing that they used went up when the barn burnt.

DW: The out buildings that you had, did you have an icehouse?

RM: We had an icehouse, a hen house, shop, a pig house, whatever you call that, the sugarhouse was down there at that point in time, there was an outhouse, and then there was also one as you went through the kitchen door into the woodshed, you walked on a platform and then there was where you put the wood to the left, and to the right there was three more, small one's for the children, and that wasn't too bad because you didn't have to go outdoors. Then you had the washroom at the end of that, at the end of the woodshed.

DW: And did you have a smokehouse?

RM: Not like Walter Maeck did.¹ I'm trying to think what dad had, I think he had a barrel or something, and smoked them out in the barnyard.

DW: When did you get indoor plumbing?

RM: Mom's uncle gave her and her siblings money and they put in a bathroom, but before that they had to drill a well. They used to take the horses down the south hill, there's a spring there, water them, and they'd drive the cows up to the woods here and down on the lower right near what they used to call the New Road, which is no longer. There's a spring and they had a big tub so you'd go down three ledges to get to it, and I guess mother talked dad into getting a well, she thought it was wasting time. So they drilled the well, and at that point in time, they had stopped raising pigs, and they took the pig house/barn and moved it nearer to the Spear Street Extension Road. And they made a well house out of it and put a big tank and watered the horses and cows. Ran the iron pipes, which are still there, into the house and put a bathroom in what used to be the buttery. And that was around '39-'40

DW: Because you need the electricity to have the running water.

¹ See Doris Maeck interview

RM: Right. Right.

DW: Prior to that, was there bath night?

RM: Oh yes, Saturday night was bath night, in the kitchen, an oval tub. The water was heated in a big double boiler. They used to call them double boilers, you are thinking the cooking ones, but I mean the humungous ones.

DW: Copper with the handle on each end, oval so it would fit over two.

RM: High, so it would sit over two grills on the stove

DW: It would have to be lifted up and taken over?

RM: Yeah, or else dipped with a dipper. They had dippers. There was a pail for drinking water. It was a cistern, every house had a cistern practically, with a hand pump.

DW: For wash?

RM: Yeah and I guess we even drank out of it.

DW: Well, you would have had to, I guess, if you didn't have a well. So that was Saturday night. That's what my father said, theirs were Saturday night too. So you would be all nice and clean for church in the morning. Now you mentioned the sugaring. That was a fairly big operation?

RM: Yes, Gramps, and then Dad, they had a big bobsleds, I'd guess you called it, and the horses, and they would tap at least three hundred trees, up here where we are now, up in the woods, and lug it down to the house, and the sugarhouse was right next to where the pump house is now, facing the road, and put it into the barrels, into the tanks, and they had a huge evaporator and a brick fireplace, and the door slid open, a fairly good sized door. Then about in the early seventies, Rufus brought it up here to the woods. Rufus and I started doing sugaring. He'd get a little bit upset with me because I said we got to have more buckets out. We went to plastic bags. So we made over sixty gallons one year. We were both working we had to boil all night. Rufus said, this was just a hobby, let's get back to a hobby. We tapped about two hundred (trees). I haven't asked Stewart how many he put up. Rufus started going back to the buckets, we could have had lines, but that has problems too.

DW: The syrup, that was obviously, when your family was doing it too, it was maybe more than they would use?

RM: Oh, yes, they would sell it.

DW: They would make Maple Sugar?

RM: Maple Sugar, and the dark stuff they would save and the real dark, the last part they would save and make it into sugar and use it.

DW: So did you find that used Maple as a replacement for white sugar?

RM: Oh definitely, we still do, or I still do.

DW: So if a recipe calls for white sugar you make the transformation?

RM: A lot of times we do, or put it on cereal or whatever, instead of using the white sugar.

DW: So what did you have to go down to Tracy & Maeck's to buy?



Photo 3 Tracy and Maeck store

RM: Flour, and of course sugar, they made their own lard if we run out, their own butter, and milk, buttermilk. I'm trying to think... I suppose raisins and nuts, although we did have a butternut tree and a hickory nut tree. You know, some of the staples.

DW: Were there peddlers that came around? Raleigh?

RM: Raleigh man, and then there was McNess, there was two, I think one of them had Wrigley's gum, that was a treat, and then sometimes mother would try out some of their puddings.

DW: Spices?

RM: Spices.

DW: Patent Medicines?

RM: I don't know if they ever went into too much on that. I do remember if we ever had a chest cold, that the skunk's oil would come out. You haven't heard of that?

DW: No, what was that?

RM: Well, apparently if they caught a skunk that had oil and they saved it, that's supposed to be good for stopping a chest cold.

DW: Opened up the sinuses? Whoa!

RM: I don't remember it smelling, but just the idea of skunk oil, I didn't want that on me, but that was all right.

DW: How would you get ready for winter in addition to having the wood supply and the coal?

RM: Yeah the wood was a big thing. You had to stack the wood. I learned how to stack the wood, Gramps showed me how. You had to do it just right so it wouldn't tumble over. There was a section of the brick house that was his bedroom, then it was mom and dad's, the clapboard end of it. They put straw up around outside. They built a framework and filled it full. They might have put some house manure in too; that's supposed to keep it warm with straw on top, just around where it was, I guess there was no cellar under it per se.

DW: Did you have storm windows?

RM: Oh yes, they would have to go on every year and then take 'em off and put the screens on.

DW: And you did have screens?

RM: Mmm hmm and the washroom had wood paneling that they would put on and then in the summer take it off and put screens.

DW: Oh! Was there separate stove out in the washroom or would you boil it out in the kitchen and bring it out?

RM: Yeah

DW: And you mentioned that you rendered your own lard did you do that on the kitchen stove as well?

RM: Mmm hmm, in fact Rufus and I did that too.

DW: Really. So what would you use the lard for, piecrusts?

RM: Oh, it made nice piecrusts.

DW: Beautiful piecrusts, and anything that you were frying. Would you have any other uses for it?

RM: No.

DW: How about your water supply in the winter? You mentioned you had springs, but this was pre-well, what would you do?

RM: The well part, when we were over at the yellow cottage, they piped it in the main well over, now by Lloyd Paul. We'd have draw water, drain the pipes, and then in the morning we would open them up and start the pumps and get the tank full.

DW: Start all over again.

RM: If you ran out of water, we had plates, bring water and put in the cistern, that was at the cottage. At the main house, I don't think we drained the pipes, I think it was all right.

DW: What kind of chores did you have as a child, and as a teen?

RM: I had to come home and either bring the cows up or come and get them at night. They generally stayed in the barn at night because we didn't have a night pasture. I had to watch 'em in the early morning in the fall, while they went out and ate in the meadow, make sure they didn't get into the apple trees. Mother would give me a couple hot muffins, buttered, and I'd take them out. It would be quite cool too. We had the wood to tend to. In the summertime, I think it was three years that Dad and I did the haying alone and Wilmot got old enough he, of course, helped out too. I loved raking. We had a Morgan horse, and then another larger horse.

DW: How many acres were you haying?

RM: We did the two meadows here. We did across the road. We used to call it the shanty. Then around oh probably 30 acres, I'm not sure.

DW: The two of you, that was a lot.

RM: I'd draw the team and dad would put the hay on. I could place it the first round but then when it got higher it would get too difficult. Before we go the hayfork we had to, you know, tread it down, that was terrible, hot. The chaff would make you itch, but it didn't hurt us any. And the garden, we had to help pick peas. They would plant a lot and take them to Burlington, peddle them, and to the stores, like Verettes. String Beans, and we did yellow-eyed beans, and we had to look those over too. You know how they'd stand out in the wind and let it fall from a distance into a pan and the wind would take the chaff out. Then you would have a screen that you would put it on and the dirt was supposed to fall through, you would have to check to see if there was a bad bean or not.

DW: You'd peddle those in town too?

RM: Yeah. Yellowed-eyed. Potatoes, I guess too.

DW: So you had plenty of outdoor chores, how about inside chores?

RM: Well I'm afraid I never really enjoyed working inside, but we had to. I'd help mom with the canning, but we would go out under the tree and shuck the peas, a lot better than the hot kitchen. And then, with the laundry when I got older, and then dusting, "and make sure you get up high". And of course, now I'm not that tall so it's great I can't see what's up high.

DW: At Laura Twichell's funeral they read something that she'd written, and one of the things she'd talked about was dusting. She said her mother was very unlikely to pull her away from a book, I guess she thought reading was important. So when she had dusting to do, she knew as long as she was reading she could get away with not dusting.. That's how she became such a voracious reader, she said, because she knew her mother wouldn't say "put that book down you need to dust".

RM: Mother, would call to Wilmot and say, we go up in the living room reading because we both liked to read. And she'd ask him to do something, and nothing was said, so she'd speak again. She'd be out in the kitchen sort of long with the dining room in between and about the third time I'd say just a minute and we'd keep on reading. She wouldn't know the difference of who was talking. It was hard to put down the book. We had to tend to our own rooms. Mother used to say I did a good job when the spirit moved me, but it took a long time for the spirit to move me.

DW: What did you do after dinner at night, for family entertainment.

RM: Well, we read. When we were really, I don't know how old we were but I guess before we could read, the folks would read to us, like *Treasure Island* and *Robin Hood*, things like that, I remember that was one. Sometimes we would have a sing or a card game.

DW: Did you have any kind of board games?

RM: Yeah. Parcheesi, Checkers, I never cared for checkers. I'd be playing checkers and they'd be playing Give-Away. I'd be playing Give-Away when they were.... I never could get it. Rufus was good at checkers. In the summertime we'd tease him and they'd play Hide-And-Go-Seek with us. Dad would hide up in the tree and then we caught on and found him. And then sometimes in the summertime we'd go down to the beach, and take our picnic down

DW: When you say the beach where was the beach then?

RM: Basically we went straight down., Bostwick's Town Beach. The only people that would be there would be Mr. Lovalette and Mr. McGee, and Fred Roberts.

DW: So you had it all to yourselves?

RM: We had it all to ourselves.

DW: That was near where the Lake House was?

RM: You could go where you go in now, same beach. We used to go over and there was a little peninsula, just past where you turned, and we'd go in there? There's stones down there with holes in it, did you ever notice?

DW: I think that when I was a little kid that's what I remember. I think my father must have pointed those out. What other sorts of things did kids do to get together, were there dances?

RM: First, Margaret Crowley and I would get together and we'd play house. We used to play house during recess, go out on the ledge flat stone, mark it out, rooms and everything, and we played with dolls until we went to high school. Isn't that something? Could you imagine them doing that now?

DW: Well, your still playing with dolls aren't you?¹

RM: When we got to high school we biked, we got bikes and we biked a lot. Around the block, which is not a city block, it's quite a few miles. We'd bike down for a swim. We wondered why by the time we got back up Irish Hill because we would be hotter than when we started. We never could.... I think I made it up once. These were bikes with no...

DW: One gear.

RM: Yeah, your feet, your legs. Remember there was an old pine tree just below Jean Stevenson's and they took it out by the driveway there, widening the road. Well we could get that far then we would have to push it.

DW: How about dances, were there dances?

RM: In high school, especially, there was Marsh Crain's Orchestra. By then Paul Crowley had his license so he would take Margaret and I. Then of course the Coles, Chris and Al Cole, had theirs.

DW: What was theirs called? Their group called?

¹ Ruth Irish Morrow has an extensive doll collection.

RM: I can't remember, and they were good, and Dot played the piano.¹ And they'd be like Richmond, Hinesburg, Charlotte, down at Jimmo's Four Corners, and at the Town Hall in Shelburne. We'd go around. Those were fun. Ed Newman, boy he could do a good waltz, he'd always ask all of us girls to waltz. He was custodian of the Shelburne School for years. Let's see what else. I think I biked to Jericho three times.

DW: When you went to the high school did you walk or did you get a ride?

RM: Pa had taken the horse and buggy and put it in the stables there at St. Catherine's and we rode then, and then they also had pick-ups with benches. Mr. Hill, from over where the Guilmettes live, I think that's where he lived, and he drove the school bus for a while. We walked or we rode our bike.

DW: So high school you graduated in?

RM: I graduated in '41. I went for four years. That's up where the I guess the SSD is now, up top facing Route 7. There were what, eleven girls and three boys or something like that in the class.

DW: At that point it was all four years?

RM: It had been back and forth earlier, sometimes only two.

DW: How about going into Burlington, did you do that much?

RM: Oh yes, I can remember mom and I went shopping. I imagine Wilmot tagged along too. Dad would stand on the corner there by Woolworth's. We'd come by and he'd generally have, you know the big chocolate brick that they'd use to get and break it up for us and he'd give us a piece and we'd go merrily on our way trying to keep up with mom, she walked awfully fast. It was just for the basic things, probably.

DW: How about clothing, did your mother make yours?

RM: Mom made my dresses and then when I got old enough, I was in 4-H and so I was making my own dresses. I had a cousin, her mother passed on clothes, and I grew into them. We didn't buy too many... I remember I had a pair of wool ski pants, but as far as just going out and buying new dresses, we just didn't do that.

DW: So would you buy the bolts of fabric at Tracy & Maeck or would she buy it in Burlington?

RM: I think she bought them in Burlington.

¹ See Dorothy Cole Interview

DW: What would you consider a luxury back in your say high school days? Or even younger?

RM: I can remember we always got an orange in the toe of our stocking, at Christmas time, and that was really wonderful, because we didn't get oranges that frequently back then. Of course, a doll was always nice. I did get a couple dolls. We always had to write a letter to Santa Claus, but we didn't seem to think much if we didn't get everything on it. It never occurred to us I guess at that time.

DW: You never assumed that that's what it meant.

RM: No. Shoes, we would have to buy shoes, and I think we went to Burlington to buy shoes.

DW: How about the movies, did you go to the movies much?

RM: We did have a radio. I don't remember when we got that. That was quite a thing. I think we had a radio before we moved over to the big house. I think Mom and Dad had a radio because I remember Grandma and Grandpa coming over to listen to it.

DW: That would be before you had electricity.

RI; Oh yes, it was a battery one.

DW: So they did use batteries.

RM: Yeah.

DW: How about telephone?

RM: We always had a telephone, everybody had a telephone. Of course you would be party lined. What was it that Gramps used to say? "Well if you listen in you'll get all the news fit to print and then some". And, they did listen in too!

DW: Yes, speaking to the other people on the line. Party lines of four or eight?

RM: I think there were eight at the time, I could be wrong. There was, well it went way over at the pond, the Mackenzies, the Hennesseys, they were great, and Frankie Palmer, George Palmer's wife, they were great, checking up with each other.. It was during November of my birthday and Mrs. Palmer brought over a nice chocolate cake for me, and I thought oh dear, I never should have thought of such a thing

DW: Well, party lines were really something. I do remember that myself. You had to be pretty sparing with the amount of time you spent on the telephone. People didn't use it the way they use it now.

RM: Well, I suppose not seeing people every day, that was their entertainment, listening to see what was going on, you know? They didn't have anything better to do.

DW: Who are some of the large families in Shelburne?

RM: Well, the Goodrichs over on Pond Road, Eutie Thomas. The Farrells were a large family, Lorraine was a year behind me, but we were in 4-H together. Those were the only one's I can think of off-hand.

DW: Did the O'Briens...

RM: Oh, the O'Briens. No they were here. They went to the Sutton School, and then they went probably to Cathedral. No, they were the big family too.

DW: Besides the Webbs, who did you think of as big land owners?

RM: Well I guess they were the biggest. The rest of them would have 2-300 acres or something.

DW: Fletchers had a pretty big...

RM: Yeah, Carl Fletcher. Well, Walter Maeck, now I don't know how many acres he had over there, I used to know, but it must be 300, 400.¹

DW: He ran that with a family?

RM: Yeah, he had different people in. There was a family by the name of the Crosses. The Cross' daughter was my age and we'd go back and forth. Of course, the Jimmos were there for a while. They lived down below the hill too. They were out there for a while.

DW: How about your place, did you have hired people on the farm?

RM: He had one of the boys, Georgie Griffin, he was in my class, come up and help one summer. Because dad had to go up to Vets hospital; he had emphysema. He got that when, or it started, he worked when he got out of school down in Proctor at the marble quarry. He was a foreman or something. The doctor told him if he wanted to live he better change. So he was bothered all his life. It got worse as he got older.

DW: He was a veteran, from which war?

RM: World War I.

¹ See Doris Maeck interview

DW: And you said you were born in the Mary Fletcher Hospital, but that was not the norm probably in 1923.

RM: Probably not.

DW: Your Mother had to go into town.

RM: Of course it was in November and mother told dad he better hurry up and hitch up the horse, they didn't have a car apparently at that time. She thought they would never get up there, sleigh? So I can imagine it was a rather interesting trip. She never forgot it.

DW: As you were growing up, who did you think of as being the civic leaders? The important figures in town?

RM: Of course Eutie Thomas was into things, and I think was very good. Tommy Thompson was the constable, I think.

DW: Do you remember Tommy Thompson's famous fish chowders?

RM: That was Mike Thompson! Oh boy do I remember them, were they ever rich and nice. Tommy lived across the tracks in one of those houses there. Bert Marsett. I remember... who had your place?

DW: Mrs. Deyette

RM: She was in charge of the schools. I remember when she came over to the old school to visit, I was probably first or second grade.

DW: She was the supervisor. So that would have been after she retired because she retired from teaching at Burlington High School?

RM: I think she was the supervisor, of course they did things differently.

DW: Other teachers that you mentioned, Mary Noonan, what other teacher do you remember?

RM: Pearl Savage McGraw was a wonderful teacher. She brought in a lot of nature stuff and that was very interesting. John McGee, he was very good. I can remember we had an algebra test, and that was when mom was sick. The next day he said I want to see you after class. Well, I flunked the algebra test, and he said "what's going on at home?" I said "mom's in the hospital, she had an appendectomy". He said, "I knew there was something. You come in such and such a time and you'll take that test over," because I liked math.

DW: Your mind was somewhere else?

RM: I just couldn't concentrate. Marion Andrews had Home Economics and English. We had Eileen Buck for Latin and French. Jim Berry, I had him for Economics. He wore a gray suit. Economics was at the end of the day so we got into class and somebody had put some bubble gum in his chair and he sat on it, so that's what he talked about for the whole period. He wasn't too happy.

DW: He didn't have another one hanging in the closet to wear the next day. Besides Tracy & Maeck's Store, did you ever go into other stores in the village?

RM: Yeah, the Country Store.

DW: Who ran that?

RM: I think I can remember when Jack Ockert was in there, I could be wrong. Then there was Mr. Palmer.¹

DW: L.H.?

RM: L.H. Palmer

DW: But your family didn't buy much there?

RM: No, we'd go down lunch hour and maybe get some candy or something.

DW: Were Mr. Maeck and Mr. Tracy were always in their store?

RM: Yeah.

DW: That had everything?

RM: Everything, you could get rubbers, coal, groceries, overalls, nails, screws, hammers, name it they had it. I remember their Pyramid Chocolate; you know chocolate with the white inside it looked like a pyramid. They had a big box of those open, and that was very tempting, but I didn't take one.

DW: And everyone had a charge account then or did most people pay cash.

RM: I think the folks paid cash. They did have a charge account.

DW: How about some of the town figures such as postmasters, town clerks, do you remember?

RM: Postmasters? There was a Isabel Neary, was she a postmistress at one time? I have to stop and think. Who came after her? Can you remember some names?

¹ See Jack Ockert interview

DW: Well, I don't remember anybody before Ed Sevee. He's the earliest I remember.

RM: I'd have to look that up.

DW: What about Town Clerks?

RM: Yeah there was Julia Norton, and Harris Maeck and May Eldred, Edna Cole, Jeanette O'Neil, then there was...

DW: Ann Carr?

RM: Ann Carr, and then Colleen

DW: And library, now you were a library trustee weren't you?

RM: Yeah, Marjorie Marsett, of course, was there for ever and a day. She cornered me one day when I went in, that was when we were living over with mom, and she said "now just how are you and your mother getting along?" I looked at her I said "fine". Why? I remember stopping there one day to see Ralph, and she was out back step shaking her dust mop, and I said, "Marjorie, that's brand new, you don't have to shake it. Come up to the house and shake mine then you will see."

DW: She kept a pretty...

RM: Boy it was spotless

DW: Spotless house.

RM: It would be nice, but you wouldn't have time for anything else. Peggy Talbot? Who took over after Marjorie?

DW: I don't know, Peggy was in there. Peggy was wasn't she?

RM: Yeah, and then the lady from Burlington.

DW: Peg Mosley.

RM: And the one before that?

DW: Anita, Anita Danegelis. And, do you remember the beginnings of the Fire Department?

RM: Rufus was on that. Do you want to know who else was on it?

DW: I was just wondered if anything was a strong memory?

RM: Well, they had they had their regular meeting. They would go out and train. Once a year they would have their banquet, the Fireman's Dance. That was always a big thing. Korny Kapers was a big thing.

DW: Pet show.

RM: Pet show, yes!

DW: Some one asked me about that today. It was "spring has sprung the grass has 'ris I wonder where the pet show is"

RM: The children loved that.

DW: Who were some personalities around town?

RM: John Tracy! "How do you feel today John" "Puffy!" And then there was...who used to sit on the steps with John Tracy? He was somebody's brother. Whose brother was he? Babcock! Is that his last name? I know there was a Gleason Babcock, I think it was his uncle.

DW: And they were pals?

RM: Yeah. Jimmy Ball was a very interesting character. Not Jimmy but Walter Ball.

DW: I remember Walter in that truck.

RM: Then across the street his brother, I think it was his brother.

DW: Do you remember any fires that stand out?

RM: Yeah! I remember when Walter Maeck's farm burned. I watched it from the north window down the hall and I thought oh my gracious. It looked like you could almost touch it. Then another time we started to go to Burlington and the Marsett barn was on fire. There was a calf tied outside of it, and Dad, of course, stopped there on Marsett Road and got out and went and untied the calf. I thought oh my gracious those flames are so close. Those were the two big ones.

DW: How about the flood? Do you remember the Flood of '27?

RM: I remember mother going around collecting in the horse and buggy. Then I remember her sister and husband lived out in Colchester, and I remember going over the floating bridge there in Winooski. It was sort of scary you know because it wiggled.

DW: How about the bridge down here.

RM: I guess dad worked on that bridge, and I think I was a little bit too young to remember too much about it. I heard that dad worked on it.

DW: One of the questions on this list here, Shelburne celebrations? There is the 175th in 1938 do you remember anything about



Photo 4 150th Anniversary Celebration

RM: There's this picture and women and men dressed in the old costumes. In that picture, I'm up on the railing looking over; I'm in that with some of the girls high school

DW: So you are up above?

RM: Mom is in the picture. Nina Cole I think was in it.

DW: Marjorie Marsett.

RM: Marjorie, yeah. There are a lot of old town people in it. That was fun.

DW: They had a dance?

RM: They had a dance.

DW: In the town hall, probably some sort of meal too?

RM: I was trying to think. They used to have meals when it was voting day, Town Meeting Day, ladies from the different churches would put it on, Methodist or Trinity.

DW: I can remember being in the dining room of the Town Hall and of course it was so well appointed, the crockery...

RM: And the table and chairs. I remember the chairs, the legs sort of went out and it was hard if you were helping serve.

DW: Which is something the young people did didn't they?

RM: Yeah. We, the 4-H had whist parties. I remember that two of us played Eva Noonan and her partner. Of course, we didn't mind whether we won or not. They got very upset if they thought we were supposed to play a certain card and we didn't. They were very vocal about it.

DW: Do you remember anything about the bicentennial in 1963, that celebration?



Photo 5 1963 Parade

RM: Yes, Stuart and Chris are in one of those pictures. They were on one of the floats.

DW: I was on it too, with Mrs. Paterson.

RM: I didn't get too awful involved because I had these young children, and it was a little bit hard for me. Mother dressed up, and her sister came down, with an old-fashioned dress. We went to Saratoga for the thing that was fun. It was really great, and the barbecue that they had.

DW: Do you have any Depression memories?

RM: No mother mentions that she always felt badly that she couldn't give us children more. I said "Mom, we didn't know the difference." We were happy; we had a happy homelife. You used your head to make games, you know. As far as clothes go, everybody was in the same boat. Its not like it is now where everyone is trying to wear names brands and all this stuff. We didn't know the difference.

DW: Were you aware of any people that you thought were in the dire straits?

RM: I think, yes, there were a couple families, and I know the folks always passed on decent clothes, if we'd outgrown them. It was never that big of a deal, as far as children go.

DW: How about the Second World War? What memories do you have in terms of Shelburne in the War?

RM: Well. I remember gas rationing and also food stamps. Of course, I was in the Service. I remember one weekend, I was working at the University then, one weekend one of the girls and I were going up to Colchester to stay with my aunt. They wanted to come and pick me up, I said no, I guess Dad was going to take us out, so then they were going to take us back, and I said no we'll walk. So we walked down to the bay and then we walked into Burlington, and I was on Buell Street and let me tell you, those last couple blocks, stepping off the curb and going across the street was painful. My aunt gave us some candy to take and we were popping them in our mouths and talking. I said, "did you know I don't like the candy with the strawberry inside?" And Viola said she didn't either, so we finally decided to bite into them, and they were all strawberry. Mind over matter. No, I know we were concerned because some of the boys that I knew were going into the service. Of course you couldn't, you know, drive whenever you wanted to, of course we didn't anyway as far as that goes. I didn't have a license then.

DW: So you graduated high school in 1941. You were working at that point during the war. You said you were in the service.

RM: That was afterwards, I got in [the service] in what '43? Yeah, I remember when they announced it, you just couldn't believe it, you know? Of course, even back then you didn't get things as quick as you do now. You depended a lot on the newspaper. Things happen today and tonight you'll get it whereas it wasn't like that back then.

DW: So you went into the service in '43?

RM: I was in the Navy and I was a storekeeper, that's bookkeeping.

DW: Where did you do that?

RM: I went to Hunter College for Basic, and I went down to Millsville, Georgia for the storekeepers classes. Then I came back to New York City and worked at 99 Church

Street. Then I was shipped to Samson. Then I came back and worked at the Armed Guard in Brooklyn, and then I was discharged.

DW: What year were you discharged?

RM: I was in seventeen months '45, May of '45 I think it was.

DW: And then you came back to Shelburne?

RM: I came back to Shelburne, and I decided that I didn't know quite what I was going to do, but I was going to take some time off. I remember I was out weeding in my mom's garden, and mother came out. I was in shorts and a halter, and she said. Mr. Lyman was here to see you. Mr. Lyman? So I went in and he was in the living room and I sat on the piano stool very uncomfortable because I didn't have a shirt to put on or anything. He wanted to know if I had any idea about a job. I said no, I had just gotten out of the Service, and he said "We'd like to have you come and work at the Shelburne Creamery" He said, would you think it over or let me know now. I said well sure. So I went down there, Park Kent was the manager at the time, and I worked there.

DW: So this is '45.

RM: You know I didn't have to write a resume. So I stayed there for and then I got married August of '47. I worked that first winter and then I said I wanted to stop in May or June, I can't remember which month. So I stopped working for the Creamery.

DW: So you were there roughly three years. How did the Creamery operate?

RM: The bookkeeping was upstairs, a big office. You go up the stairs and at the head of the stairs turning left was a big conference room and you went down the hall and the office was facing Route 7. The store was active when they were bringing milk to the Creamery.

DW: So was the store that little building?

RM: The little building in front.

DW: So, the general public could go in and buy there?

RM: Yup. I remember one of the first charges that came through was for Bag Balm, and of course you had to say what it was for, and I didn't know if it was grain or what it was. So I buzzed Ralph Cox, who was in charge of the store, and I buzzed down and I said, "Ralph, what's bag balm?" He said, "I'll call you back later." I guess the store was full at the time and he wasn't about to explain what Bag Balm was.

DW: With people standing there!

RM: I laughed more when I found out what it was. I didn't know! . I think I took Kitty Noonan's place.

DW: So who ran the Creamery?

RM: Well, the directors.

DW: Were they local farmers?

RM: Yup, Fred Lyman from Hinesburg. Howard and Elmer Lawrence from Monkton, Lester Thompson from Shelburne and Walter Maeck from Shelburne.

DW: So those were the Directors.

RM: Yup, and Park Kent was manager at the time.

DW: When he and Barbara met he would have been working at the Creamery?¹

RM: No, she had met him before. She knew him in school. He used to come to the dances. Mother would bring him to the dances.

DW: He was from Burlington, right?

RM: No, they used to live above the garage that burned. His dad had the garage there. Then he went to Charlotte and had the garage down there.

DW: Oh, I didn't realize!

RM: I think Bovat got it, he went in afterwards.

DW: Aside from the Creamery what other businesses do you think of? You mentioned the Granary in the Falls.

RM: Well, there was the blacksmith shop. It's the one where the Craft School is now. I remember going down there. And then the building next to the store here in the Falls, that was a blacksmith shop too. Joe White was the blacksmith. I don't remember which place he worked. Elmer Smith's Meat Market. And then Gervia had a grocery store in the back of Woodmen's Hall.

DW: Do you remember anything about the Woodmen's Hall?²

¹ See Barbara Kent interview

² The Modern Woodmen of America is a fraternal life insurance organization that was founded in 1883 by Joseph Cullen Root in Lyons, Iowa. Root envisioned a self-governing society whose members came from local camps (lodges) across America. The lodge system, which remains in effect today, nurtures community spirit by bringing families together for wholesome, social, recreational and service activities. (source: www.modern-woodmen.org)

RM: No, just that the store was there. The King's Daughters where Russ Little had his garage, that used to be the King's Daughters where the Kings Daughter's met. I think Russ bought it from them. He used it as a garage. I know he used to drive the cars up the hill, he came up the hill there to see if he fixed them alright, he always tested them up Irish Hill.

DW: What do you think are the most obvious ways that Shelburne has changed over the years?

RM: The humungous houses going up where it was open land. I understand that it has to be because, you know, if you have a lot of land sometimes you have to sell when it gets to a certain point in your life. Of course there are a lot more people. We used to know everybody in town per se, and now you don't. I'm not saying that's bad. We're not as neighborly I guess, and I'm just as bad as the next fellow. I know over here and across the road and the Kirkpatricks. But as far as doing anything we don't do that anymore.

DW: How about the mix of people?

RM: We'll you've got entirely different type of people then when I was growing up as far as salaries, you know. Your folks and my folks they had to work hard for what they've got. It's entirely different. The prices, I know your dollar is not worth as much now, but you don't stop and think about it. Clothes! I'm just mind boggled if I had to dress three children now. Of course with the girls, you can make a lot of things. I'm not as good of a sewer as your mother is but.... And the thing, I imagine TV. has a lot to do with it, you know they have all these nice things that you can buy, very tempting. All that stuff. Everything's changed.

DW: What are some of things that you miss from the olden days? You mentioned not knowing everyone.

RM: I think, of course I am not in the school business anymore, but I know when I was, for instance the business teachers would come down, or one of them would come, and he'd be sort of discouraged that the kiddos would get over there and they didn't know decimals or percentages or things like that. They had to start from scratch to teach them that. Whereas I think we had a good lesson in the 3Rs per se, but I can see too that younger children learn things quicker in foreign language or computers, or something like that, than the older ones would. I don't know which is better. I do think the basics, I think you got to go back. You know our great-grandfathers if they went to school or if they were taught at home, some of those basics don't change.

DW: It is amazing the number of people who were educated eight grades in a one-room schoolhouse with kids from all grades. That to me is amazing.

RM: Well, you learned too from the higher class. And if you had trouble and the teacher was busy one of the higher class would come and help you. It was more one on one. If

you get a big classroom, I would think, I'm not a teacher, but I would think it would be hard because you don't have the time to be one on one.

DW: What do you remember about Shelburne Farms as a child or a teen? Did people go over there much?

RM: Yeah, we had the Dennises, Peggy Koppel, that was one family, Doreen, Keenan, and Shirley Paterson. The Patterson's and us went back and forth. Keenan and Wilmot were of an age and Doreen and I were. We were in 4-H. I know Wilmot and Keenan would camp out on the Point and whatnot. I remember I was mind boggled to think that the big house had, what was it twenty-seven bathrooms or whatever it was. I couldn't visualize that. It was pretty, when the golf course was there, I remember that made it sort of pretty driving, seeing the golf course. Then, Chrissy and Lisa were quite close too. They were back and forth. Alex and Stuart were of an age too.

DW: But the golf course...

RM: You can see how with the nice lawns for the golf. It was quite nice. It went by the big house through there and crossed over this side of the barn how would have been a good golf course.

DW: How about the shipyard?

RM: They made the boats. I knew that. Freddie Barrett, the Barretts lived there. There were two family Barretts Freddie, and I think Luke was his cousin. Freddie married Eleanor Dennis you know. I think they are in Alaska. Of course the parents would come to the town meetings. Things like that. The Fortunes. I think the Fortunes were over there too. I saw George a couple years ago when I went up to do the absentee ballot, and he had just moved into, what's the care place?

DW: Shelburne Bay

RM: Yeah, Shelburne Bay. He remembered the name, but I think he went to Burlington Schools. Pauline and Fred Barrett went to Shelburne and the Farrells went to Shelburne too. Of course, now they have Rice where a lot of them go, and Christ the King for the younger grades

DW: Was there much mixing between families that say who went to the Methodist Church and families that went to St. Catherine's?

RM: We seemed to sort of mingle together, but I know we had religion in school too, you know. I went to both. One year I went to the Methodist and the next year I went to the Episcopal. The St. Catherine's would come back, and the boys couldn't be in boy scouts because there was a Protestant leader, and they were open about it. I don't think they believed that it should be that way, but that's the way it was. I think World War II changed that a lot. Of course, that depends too on, I imagine, your priest. I know we

went down Sunday night to a Roman Catholic priests home, he had open house. We had a wonderful time, his mother was there.