

**Interviewee: Dorothy Cole
Interviewer: David Webster
Date: March 2002
Location: Cole Residence, Shelburne Road**

After graduating from the University of Vermont during World War II, Dot Cole spent the next 60 years in Shelburne working as both an elementary school teacher and traveling musician.

Topics discussed: school, World War 2, JFK Assassination, the Depression, Burlington, UVM, music, Shelburne Museum, Ticonderoga, UVM, Methodist Church, Noonan Family, Thomas Family, Cuban Missile Crisis, Shelburne Shipyard, Snelling Family, entertainment & games, Grange, Vermont Politicians, transportation, churches

David Webster: What is your full name?

Dorothy Cole: Dorothy Viola Franklin Cole

DW: How long have you lived in Shelburne?

DC: Since 1943.

DW: When and where were you born?

DC: I was born September 28, 1922 in Woodsville, New Hampshire in the Cottage Hospital.

DW: Who were your parents?

DC: Ira Marion Anderson Franklin and Rupert George Asher Franklin.

DW: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

DC: One sister - Marian Patricia Franklin Roland.

DW: So you were the first generation, from your side of the family, to live in Shelburne. How about your husband?

DC: He came here about ten years before I did. His mother came from Charlotte.

DW: What was her name?

DC: Josephine Elsie Colt Cole.

DW: Where do you live now?

DC: 3807 Shelburne Road in good old Shelburne.

DW: Where do you live before coming to Shelburne? In East Ryegate?

DC: Well, my home was there but I was at the University.

DW: So you came here directly after University?

DC: Well, after the summer.

DW: What prompted you to move to Shelburne?

DC: That is where I got my first teaching job.

DW: What is your first memory of Shelburne?

DC: Oh my. There were three of us who came down. Evie from Middlebury College and Gladys and I from UVM. We lived upstairs at the Methodist parsonage. I remember coming into town – nobody had cars – we had to take the Rutland Rattler to go anywhere. I remember coming into that house...it was big upstairs, we had the whole upstairs and we looked right out the window to the school, which was great. I think my first impression was the Methodist parsonage.

DW: There was a long room in the back...

DC: That was the kitchen. We had a big bedroom in the front, a parlor, a small bedroom, big bathroom and a kitchen /dining area. In the back, the backstairs and where we kept the icebox.

DW: Who were your closest neighbors?

DC: Helen Gadhue.

DW: And the Roberts next door...

DC: We did not see much of Fred.¹

DW: How long until you got married?

DC: Al was playing in the band for the teacher's reception. My first year, my first dance. He was up on the stage in the old gym in the old school – he was so handsome. My, he was good looking. He told the violin player "I am going to marry her."

¹ Fred and Ruth Roberts bought their Shelburne Village home in 1926. The land originally belonged to George Roberts, who ran the Roberts Farm on Webster Road.

DW: This was before you met.

DC: Before we even met. So, two years later, we were married.

DW: Tell me a little about the band?

DC: Al had a band in high school. A couple of the boys in his band, by the way, were on the death march in Bataan. That was the time- we were in World War Two.¹ So he had the band. Cliff, his brother, played in it. I played piano. When we first started, we played for the Older World Youth at Lincoln Hall in Essex Junction.² We just had piano, trumpet, sax and guitar because Eddie played guitar. We tried that and we kept adding and adding and go to playing all over the place.

DW: What did Mr. Cole play?

DC: Trumpet. He could play that trumpet. This is no exaggeration. Harry James was the big trumpet player at that time. Harry James was sloppy in comparison. This is the truth – cross my heart...which I did. He played a beautiful trumpet. The others were good but Al was outstanding.³

DW: What did you call the group?

DC: The Al Cole Orchestra.

DW: For how many years did the Al Cole Orchestra play?

DC: We started in 1944 and played until Al's lungs went bad which was about 1957.

DW: What kind of venues did you play in?

DC: We went north as far as the border. South as far as Rutland. East as far as Montpelier and West as far as "Bullwaga". We played every prom, I think, in any high school in that area. Proms were deadly. They were too prim and proper.

DW: What would have been a not so deadly event?

DC: Barn and square dances primarily. The most fun we ever had was up at Underhill at the Hen House. It was huge. It is now an apartment building but it used to be a big hen house...commercial hen house. They bought it, fixed it all over and put a good floor in it. We played up there for the whole time – every Saturday night. New Years

¹ April 1943

² Lincoln Hall was built in the early 1800s and was used as a tavern/restaurant/dance hall. It is now occupied by Essex Junction municipal services.

³ Harry James (1916-1983) was best remembered for his trumpet work with Benny Goodman and his starlet wife, Betty Grable.

eve was a foregone conclusion. We always went. That was one...we had a lot of fun with that. Bill Atkins. His wife came down to the funeral. She read it in the paper, god bless her, and came down. I have not seen her....

DW: What was Mr. Cole's other job at the time?

DC: He was working at the Buick garage then. He was a factory-trained mechanic.

DW: Besides loving to do it, the band must have been a nice income boost too.

DC: We got fifty bucks a night for the whole band. Comparatively speaking.

DW: Compared to what you were making as a teacher....

DC: I made 800 dollars a year.

DW: That ten dollars a night made a major contribution.

DC: It helped. It helped.

DW: When you were married, where did you live then?

DC: We got married at All Saints which was then by the rotary. It is the Greek Orthodox Church now.¹ When Al was seven years old, he served on the altar up there. It is Episcopal and Lynn Smith married us. He got dispensation from the Bishop to marry out of his district. I had an apartment at 226 ½ Pearl Street in the back of Doctor Humphrey's office. I had the apartment when I first came and we stayed there for the first year until we could find a house. Then we found this place and been here ever since.

DW: You bought this in....

DC: 1947. I think it was '47. It might have been '48. When we bought it, there was four acres of land according to the deed. Now it's two. The state went from sixty-six feet wide on the road to ninety-nine feet and they claimed it. Nobody ever told us about it but it happened.

DW: When you lived at the Methodist Parsonage, all you had to do was walk to school. But when you lived in Burlington, you must have had a car?

DC: I would leave Al off at work and drive down. I would stay at Park Kent's mothers – because they lived across from the bridge then. You know, the Cole house – it's on

¹ The All Saints Episcopal Church is now located at the corner of Swift Street and Spear Street in South Burlington. The old site is now occupied by the Greek Orthodox Church Dormition of the Mother of God

the sign now. Then I would walk over to school from there. Go back after school, go pick up Al had go back to Pearl Street.

DW: This was your routine until your boys came along...

DC: Until Frank came along.

DW: Did you continue teaching the whole time you had children?

DC: No. I took ten years off. When Dan went into the second grade, I went back teaching again. I took ten years in there so I could be home with them. I have not regretted one minute of it.

DW: That would have been from...

DC: 1945 to 1955, I think.

DW: Who were your neighbors here?

DC: Next door were Harvey and Marianne Kaigle. They were French. They had a little farm – they had a horse and cow. This was the war and food was scarce. She made her own butter. We had fresh butter every week – a dollar a pound. She couldn't do much English and she didn't know how to read. She said "I don't read the words but I make the change." I had to teach her how to write her name when Harvey died. She took care of the boys when we went to play the dances. Two or three nights a week. She knew my health better than I did. Wonderful woman. People thought she was my mother. She had her little granddaughter with her for a while. Taught her all of her prayers in French because she did not know them in English.¹ I never worried about those boys. If anything had happened, she would have gotten them out of there. Every Saturday, we would come home from the dance, that house would reek of Lifebuoy Soap. The whole family. They did not have a bathroom so they would come over and take a bath, and then she would make a tea. They would play cards and eat until we came home. I can think of Lifebuoy Soap today.²

DW: So Saturday night was bathing night at the Coles?

DC: Well, for them. It sure was. I never begrudged it. Across the road was Andy Morrill. Andy was an awfully good neighbor.... they were good to us and we enjoyed them tremendously. Edith (Andy's wife). They had Russell and Henry and Leo. And then she had a couple of miscarriages. They lived in the house kitty corner to us. He brought her down to our house as a bride at age 16. When Russell was born, he was born in the house they turned around onto Maple Leaf Lane – it is at the end. She said she could look up at the stars because the house was not done. She wanted to be in her

¹ Harvey and Mary Ann Kaigle purchased their 17 acres in 1946.

² Lifebuoy Soap was created by an English Company, Lever Brothers, in 1895. The company is still in existence today.

own house – not with the in-laws. Then they bought the one right across from us and built it. And they built over here at #21. Then they started building down Maple Leaf Lane

DW: And Don Jones, the principal, lived there...

DC: He lived in the middle one for a while. That came a lot later. Then of course, we had the Farrells too. They were wonderful to us.¹

DW: Could you see the bay from where you live?

DC: Yes. When the trees dropped their leaves...from the second floor, we got a good view.

DW: Is that still the case?

DC: I can't from here.

DW: My father said that when he was boy from their living room on Webster Road he could see the bay. Everything was clear from there to the bay. You mentioned Lynn Smith, who was the rector here. What other religious figures can you remember in the town?

DC: I remember Father Cain. There was an imposing figure. Oh what a smart man he was. I was scared to death of him. I played organ at the Methodist Church for, I think, three years. I used to go over and practice. Of course, I lived right upstairs. He would be out on his porch doing his prayers. Walking back and forth and back and forth. One time he asked if I had to play quite so loud. (laughter) I had to practice the hymns and everything. I liked him.

DW: There was another father, I can't remember his name, and he drove a red convertible?

DC: That's right. It was a Buick because Al said all the priests used to come to the Buick garage. Also, we had Reverend Frank Bremen at the Methodist Church. He was downstairs under us. He was kind of fresh...out of school...starting in. He thought that he ought to marry one of us girls. He really thought we ought to. He would come up frequently and we would be sitting around the big table and Gladys would be doing her fingernails and her toenails. We would be correcting papers and everything. He would come up and talk and talk. He thought Gladys was pretty good. Remember Gladys Baker? She is on the school board now. He thought he ought to marry one of us but we were not interested.

¹ Minum and Wilbert Farrell owned a 183-acre farm on the east side of Route 7. The couple bought the land and buildings in 1914. The Farrell's daughters – Amelia Coffey, Catherine Farrell and Evelyn Farrell – continued to farm the land after their parents.

DW: It is unusual to have a minister who does not already have a family...

DC: That place downstairs was so squalid. The only clean place was the bathtub because we had a fifteen-gallon hot water heater down in that huge cellar. He would take every bit of it for a bath. He always wore his clerical collar.

DW: This was during the war?

DC: Yes

DW: What else do you remember of the war years?

DC: Before I got married when I was still at college...I better not say this, but I am going anyway....I had a ball. I was writing probably to a dozen different servicemen. The Air Force was at the University and they would march by...cadence count. We would sit in the classroom. I had a date morning, noon and night. It was wonderful...I never had a such a time in my life. But then, things began to happen. I think I must have been engaged to two or three of them but they did not take. One of them was hurt in the Battle of Bulge and he was evacuated to Northern Scotland. That was not pleasant. The Fort¹ was going full tilt and I was one of the lucky fifty girls who were chosen from the University to be USO.²

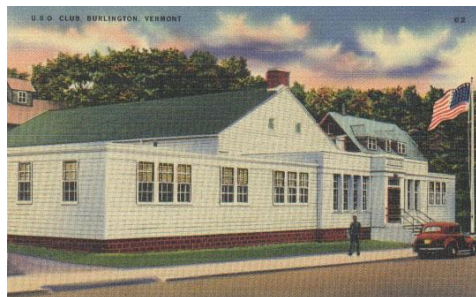


Figure 1 USO Building, Burlington

I had a lot of fun with USO. I love to dance. I would have rather danced then eaten. They had a lot of dances. I was an airplane spotter. You know the Old Mill, up on campus, the tower on the very top. That is where we had it all rigged up. Red phone and everything. We had to walk the stairs because there was no elevator. But I was an air raid spotter and I had access to all the different...Milton, the Islands, Albany. We had outlines of all the different planes and big charts. We saw anything that looked suspicious, we could call one of the others and have them check it. If it was still suspicious, then we would call on the red telephone. I loved it.

¹ Fort Ethan Allen, Colchester, Vermont

² United Service Organizations



Figure 2 Fort Ethan Allen

DW: You were busy..

DC: I was. And in town, I was also student teaching.

DW: What do you remember about rationing?

DC: That was terrible. My father had a store at home and when I was home, I was working, during vacation, at the store with dad. We had red things and the blue things. We also had gasoline and you had to have the things for that. It was an awful headache for the people who had to do it. And then you had to be sure you had your ration book. If it came to the end of the month, and you had no stamps left, you did not have whatever it was. Sugar was hard to get. We used to make cakes with honey. Coffee. We had ersatz coffee – chicory. Meat was not plentiful. Nobody ever complained because it was going to the boys overseas.

DW: What about material? Stockings?

DC: I worked one summer at Penney's. When they had a shipment of irregular nylons, the word would get out and there would be a queue lined all the way up. They kept them upstairs so you would have to go through and see all the other good stuff. That was something. They did not last very well because they were seconds. My wedding dress was parachute silk. It was very common. And cars they didn't make during that time. I think '41 was the last year they made cars until '46. You had to make due. Al was working at the Buick garage and he could repair things with a wad of chewing gum or a rubber band. He learned how. All the farmers would come in because they had all their equipment and everything. Al knew how to take one from a John Deere and work it on a Ford. He knew how to do it.

DW: Was that McGreevey who ran the Buick store?

DC: Before... it was P.K. Donovan. When he died, Leo McGreevey got it. The gas was rationed. We were able to get it for the dances because we were supposed to be doing something to keep up the spirits on the home front so we could get so much gas. Other than that, there was not much traveling about. We used to take the old Rutland Rattler and go into town and back. Get off down here at the station...the three of us girls...no

streetlights...and walk across by Tony Mears' place and come up on the main road. It was scary. The best times was when one of the Webb cars was on the siding and somebody would be there.



Figure 3 Shelburne Rail Station

DW: Who were some of the big families when you arrived?

DC: The O'Briens. Man, all kinds of O'Briens. Wonderful. We played for George and Helen's wedding reception. We had only been married six months or something like that. We were still in Burlington. They came to see about playing for that which we did. We played in Jim O'Brien's barn. We used to play dances there.¹ Then, of course, there were all the Thomases, Thompsons, Noonans. You didn't dare say anything. John McGee said "Don't ever say anything about anyone because there is so much inter-marriage." Eutie's folks and all the Thompsons. An Eutie was on the school board when I first came.

DW: Was there a lot of social interaction in the town?

DC: They had card parties. There were dances practically every week at school. And the churches all had things – wonderful suppers. There was plenty going on in town. Mrs. Byington had bridge parties. She asked if I could play bridge. Well, I didn't play very well. Mother and Dad used to have them all the time at home. I never did join.

DW: Who did you consider to be the community leaders?

DC: John McGee, of course. My headmaster in high school was McGaw and first my first principal was McGee. I looked up to him. Eustace, of course, he was on the school board.² Lester Thompson was on the school board.³ The members of the clergy. The Webbs did not figure too prominently in my mind because the school did not have

¹ See James and Pauline O'Brien Interview

² Eustace Thomas came to Shelburne with his parents in 1901. He went to high school at Saint Michaels in Winooski. Eustace served the community in a multitude of ways. Eustace Thomas served on the school board from 1929 to 1961 and he also served as Shelburne's Town Representative in 1961. He and his wife, Lena, ran a farm (the former Andrews Farm) near the junction of Spear Street and Thomas Road. Over the years, the farm grew to over 550 acres and it had over 400 apple trees.

³ Lester Thompson (1885-1964) owned farmland near Shelburne Bay on Bay Road. Lester served the community for a long time as a cemetery commissioner and lister.

anything to do with it. But the people were so loyal. They worshipped at the shrine. Apparently, the Webbs were very good to the people who worked for them but I never had much contact with them at all. Jake (Everett) and Marion Rice. Then of course Tracy and Maeck. The Tracys and the Maecks. When we went up to give blood... Mr. Maeck was a big man...you put a needle in his arm and you had to work and work and work. It was there but it just did not want to come out. Genevieve Harvey was the town nurse at that time and she would get a whole carload of us. Up we go to the hospital and they would have to wait for me. I got it. Also L.H. Palmers.

DW: Where did you shop?

DC: Mostly at Tracy and Maeck. We were told also we had to be careful about that so we always got something's over at L.H. Palmers.

DW: Just so that you didn't appear to be favoring one over the other

DC: Oh, we had to be careful.

DW: Can you imagine telling that to a schoolteacher today?

DC: When I signed my first contract, I had to state that I didn't drink, smoke or play cards. I didn't drink, I didn't smoke, I didn't swear either but I did play cards.

DW: Who were the doctors in town?

DC: Doctor Norton lived right next to my in-laws. Julia was the town clerk. His wife was the town clerk. He always had ties with whatever he eaten for the last month all down the front of it and everything. He called my mother in law Jo because her real name was Josephine and everyone called her Nina. He called her Jo so I called her Jo because it fit. I could not call her mother so she was Jo.¹

DW: Doctor Norton lived where?

DC: Right behind the Methodist Church in the first house and my in-laws in the next house.

DW: Which is now the museum offices and your in-laws lived in the next house, which is also the museum offices.

DC: Yes. Directly across from the bridge. When Mrs. Webb had that bridge brought in, my mother-in-law was furious. She made big noises to the point when Mrs. Webb offered to buy the house and she couldn't very well back out of it. So she sold the house and bought a house on Saint Paul Street in Burlington.

¹ Doctor James and Julia Norton lived in a house in the village that they purchased in 1946. Julia (1884-1949) served as the Town Clerk from 1935-1948 and James (1865-1950) was the Town Moderator from 1929-1950.

DW: For a lot of years, I thought she lived in Shelburne Falls.

DC: She was miserable up there – she wanted to back in Shelburne, with Marie Hamilton. They bought the place in the Falls.

DW: The Museum office building is called the Cole House.

DC: On the sign outside they got “Cole House” at the bottom of it.

DW: What do you remember of the shipyard?

DC: Lynn Smith brought us – the three of us teachers – to the harbor and saw them a launch a sub chaser. It went sideways. It didn’t go down like you expected it. They launched it sideways. Oh, what a thrill. Those sub chasers were all over the Pacific. I remember Lucy Lowe in the captain’s house over there and she sang. She always had a chiffon hanker chief and she would hold it. She would sing. She liked to sing with our band and Edna would take the controls and turn her down considerably. Your father and mother were there. I love Selina’s name – a moon goddess from way back.

DW: Who were some of the memorable personalities?

DC: Tony Mears. He used to come and visit the first and second grade room. I had an old victrola that was in that room when I came. I had a few records. If it was nasty outside because teachers had to do gym and everything – if it was too nasty to go out, we would turn on one of the records. Big old LPs. We would play the 78s and march up and down the aisles, choose somebody to lead and everybody would march around everything. It was great fun and Tony loved that. I taught him how to print his name Clifford and then we had some people who did not wanting him hanging around young people.¹

DW: Somebody mentioned John Tracy?

DC: John Tracy! I loved him. He was always spouting Latin phrases at me and coming down to school to play the piano. We would go over to the garden and he would have all the boys working over there for 10 cents or 25 cents.

DW: Its funny that you mention him playing piano because I had not thought about that. When I was in fifth grade, we had it upstairs in the Methodist Church. John would come in occasionally and play the organ at church.

DC: He was a smart man. Helen Gadhue was unique. Betty Nowacienski² said one time that she was “Shelburne’s Treasure” because she could remember so much. I remembers some things about her too [laughter] Eustace was unique. I loved him. He

¹ Tony Mears lived on Railroad Lane

² Beatrice Nowacienski lived on Mount Philo Road with her husband, Stanley.

was the nicest guy. When his wife died, Mae was in the first grade and I can remember that little round face of hers and just crumpled up in tears. It was sad...really sad. And of course he married again later. Everybody in the Falls had their caps set on him. Kitty Noonan wanted him in the worst way...so did Marie Hamilton. They all were after Eutie. He married Herlene instead.

DW: How about Rita Mom¹?

DC: Rita Mom was a dear. She came to everything we ever had at school. We had a rhythm band and she came to that. One time, we bought Peter and Wolf – the whole thing. I said John “the whole school ought to hear it.” So John said “OK Bring your old Victrola.” We went up on the stage on the old school and I played it. Charged a nickel a piece and all the high school kids came and all the rest of the school kids came and they listened to Peter and the Wolf. Rita Mom came and she sat right in the front. If anything funny happened, you could hear her laughing all over the place. She was something else?

DW: She did teach too?

DC: Not for me. She may have but never in my room. When I taught music in the high school, they had Amelia Rose. They lived in a little house on the other side of the Farrells.

DW: It is gone now.

DC: Yes. She used to come down from the High School and I would have things planned out to do while I went up and taught music.

DW: So you taught music also?

DC: Yes. I had the kids for the music fest in Burlington.

DW: So when you first taught in Shelburne, you taught first and second grade. And then you took a hiatus and then you came back. What did you teach then?

DC: Seventh (grade) and eighth (grade) and then just eighth (grade). I had English and Social Studies.

DW: Did you ever teach high school?

DC: Yes I did...part time. During that ten years, I did substitute work. The first substitute job I had, John McGee called and wanted me to take his math class. I had no idea. But I was there...a presence in the class. Carl Lozon...I can remember being there. Johnny Clark...Glen Little. I can remember a lot of those kids.

¹ Rita Ann Noonan Thomas. Her husband, Frederick Thomas, went by the name of “Daddy Fred.” See Colleen Haag and Robert Noonan interviews.

DW: Do you remember kids from your 1 and 2 grade classes?

DC: Oh yes. Somewhere, I have pictures of them. I had Woody Smith and Jimmy St. George¹ and Raymond Lawrence. Do you remember the Bicknells?

DW: I remember Eraldine.

DC: You remember Eraldine!

DW: I know the name.

DC: I had her. When she was in first grade, she slid through a barbed wire fence at Christmas time. She had big scar on her cheek where that happened.² Coleman, Boudah (Bernice) and McDonald Yvonne St. Peter. Fishers. I had Bub. I didn't have Roger – he was in the third and fourth grade room. Driving tricks then – they put wooden blocks in there so his feet could reach it.

DW: He was driving trucks way back then!

DC: In the third and fourth grade.

DW: He was a natural.

DC: Oh, I guess. The Thomases. Mae Thomas. And Walter Fenwick.³

DW: Do you remember any celebrations like the Bicentennial?

DC: Oh yes. The march with the cub scouts. Frank was in the Babe Ruth league and Dan was a Cubbie and they both marched.

DW: What do you remember about the JFK assassination?

DC: Oh, I remember that well. I was at school. I had come down to Don's office for something or another – that was the old Home Economics place. I came down and he told me about it and it as if the bottom had dropped out of everything. I couldn't believe it. The whole school heard within a very short time –absolute quiet. Girls were crying and everybody turned white. I do remember that. I remember December 7, 1941. I was at University – it was a Sunday afternoon. My roommate and I were studying and we had the radio on. It came over the radio. I remember it so well.

¹ See Jim St. George Interview

² Eraldine Ann Bicknell (b. 1937) was the daughter of Wentworth and Florence Bicknell who lived on the south side of Harbor Road adjacent to the Webb Estate. This land, which once belonged to the John Roberts family, was eventually bought by Dunbar Bostwick in 1967.

³ Walter and Yvonne Fenwick owned the "restaurant" immediately south of the Cole House on Route 7.

DW: How about the Cuban Missile Crisis?

DC: I was scared to death because Frank was in the Air Guard and he had to have his shots. I didn't like that very well.

DW: Do remember sending us home from school?

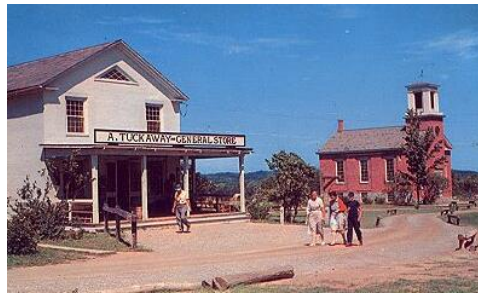
DC: Do you remember when we had to have air raid plans laid out? I was supposed to go out in the middle of the street and stop traffic to let kids runs across the road. Theoretically, cars were going to be going everywhere and I was supposed to be brave enough to go out and stop the traffic and let the kids across. Al was in Burlington and we were here. We had to make plans on where we could meet. Where we could go in the building – where we could be safe, getting under the desks. We had quite a contingency plan.

DW: I remember being sent home early one day. I remember we had to practice getting home and to our safe place. I think I was in first or second grade. What do you remember about the museum?



Figure 4 The Moving of the "Ti"

DC: When they brought the "Ti" across. Ricky Norcross was in something like the fifth grade. One year I taught the fifth grade because Don was mad at me for something and I got punished. {laughter} Well it happened. Remember Ricky Norcross and the Nashfull Ramblers? He was in the fifth grade and a whole bunch of the kids were always around. The picture of the moving of the "Ti" at the museum – you will find him and that group of boys. We watched that come across and when they brought the big silo over, with that big great helicopter that they got from Oregon. Everybody was taking pictures. I remember once it got under way, every year we would walk over to the museum with our kids and take the tour. The favorite place was the lunch bar. They liked the smith shop where the guy would make little horseshoes. They liked that because of fire and noise and everything. They liked the circus and the railroad cars. Some of the houses, they were not that interested in.



Picture 1 Shelburne Museum

DW: You mentioned going over to the shipyard? What else do you remember?

DC: It was a very busy place. Very busy. They were building boats, they were fixing boats up.



Figure 5 Shelburne Shipyard

DW: What do you remember of the Snellings?

DC: They lived over in the brown apartment. We used to have Republican Committee meetings over there. Of course, all the kids were in school. My lilac bushes out here. Jackie asked me would I like some lilac bushes because they had some over there and I said "sure". So she brought me three or four little twigs, which were the granddaddies of my lilac bushes.¹ Right out of their yard. I liked Barbara very much. Good kids. Smart kids.

DW: Who were the big farming families? Guilmettes?

DC: Yes. The Sinclairs had one over on 116 and Pauline did her practice teaching in Home Economics at Shelburne High. So that is why I knew them. Of course, the Wrights. His wife worked at Van Gelder's jewelry shop in Burlington. I remember her for that.

DW: Shelburne was definitely a farming community?

DC: Oh yes. Town meetings were in the daytime. The farmers came.

¹ Jacqueline T. Snelling, the daughter of Richard and Barbara Snelling.

DW: When do you think that started to change?

DC: When the development came in and they wanted land and they swallowed it. The farmers were not getting much for the effort. Farm prices were down and if they wanted to make a living, sell the land.

DW: How do you think it has changed?

DC: I hate it. I am sorry. I had some kids in the 8th grade who came here from New Jersey or wherever. They built their nice big house and then they wanted to close the doors. I can remember talking about it in class and they would say "Don't let anymore buildings occur. No more. We are here. Now the rest of the world stay out." I felt that way a long time ago. I hate to see the pace of a nice little town change. Look what it has done to Charlotte. Right down the middle. They don't have what we have up here. They have more millionaires. Somebody said that something like 57% of Charlotte is millionaires. I have met some awful nice people, love the kids and all that but I hate to see the green disappear.

DW: How do you think it has changed the social structure of the town?

DC: We are not content with the same nice little things we used to have. We want things on big scale, a grand scale. We've got to work out at the gym. We got to go play tennis with our little white skirts on. We've got to do things like that. I'm sorry, I liked it better when we played bridge.

DW: In your lifetime, what do you think have been some of the best inventions?

DC: Pantyhose. {laughter} I don't know if we had stuff like scotch tape and paper clips and things like that before, but I couldn't live without those. Inventions? Television. And then all the computer deals. I don't have a computer and I don't have one. Microwaves...things to make housework easier. Still have a washing machine that theoretically works the same way. They just souped up the appearance. But labor saving devices have been great. They really have.

DW: When you were married, did you have a washing machine right off?

DC: Yes I did. It was an oldringer washer. An old Maytag. We washed once week.

DW: Saturdays?

DC: Yes. I had to. There was nothing else I could do.

DW: Then you hung out to dry?

DC: I had wonderful spot up here. I had a great big tree and a clothesline would go through there. The wind would whip through there – oh, it would smell so good.

DW: You also had a big garden?

DC: Yes. We are on it now. I loved to can.

DW: What sort of things did you can?

DC: To begin with, string beans. There is nothing that tastes as good as string beans out your garden can. I would do sixty quarts. Tomatoes, tomato juice. I had a grape vine – we did grape juice and made grape jelly. We had cherry trees, we made cherry jelly, cherry custard. I never canned carrots because we could always put those down in the cellar – the root cellar. And beets. Squash we never did. We tried corn and peas. I loved it. There was something very satisfying about it.

DW: Cherry trees too?

DC: Maraschino cherries. The trouble is that you had to cover it with some kind of paper or cheesecloth. The birds loved those cherries. It was a fight to who was going to get them. We always had enough. In fact, our first dog was buried underneath them. He loved to go out there to the cherry trees.

DW: What did during your time off/vacations?

DC: We didn't care about going anywhere. Most everybody picked off and went to visit relatives. All mine down in New York came up here. "Oh lets go visit Dotty and Al. They are up in the country. It is quiet and nice up there." I remember with some horror, the year that my father had his operation, that summer, every relative we ever had came. All I did that summer was peel potatoes and wash sheets. I was glad because it was nice for dad. Summer vacation, I had to go to summer school. The boys would love it. Back and forth. Al would go one with Babe Ruth and I would go the other way with Little League. In between, we would meet at all hours and so forth. Al and I liked to take day trips. When the boys were old enough to leave home, we would just go somewhere where we could go for a day and come back. I loved to go around the lake – that was one of our favorites.

DW: What did you remember of the depression?

DC: It didn't do a thing for us. It honestly didn't. Mother and Dad would talk and we were not supposed to hear it. They were concerned about it. Everybody in town was in the same boat. When it came time that I had a chance to go to college, I promised to teach in the state the same number of years that they paid for my tuition. I worked summers, waiting on tables, to pay for my books and my clothes. I got scholarships and I waited on a table in one of the dorms up here for my meals. I didn't have to spend much – I worked.

DW: Was there an exodus of teachers from the state?

DC: No. Surprisingly not. When I took some of the courses, we had teachers from New York come up. "What do you want to teach here for when you can't get any money out of it or anything. "There is a lot of pluses besides money." Inner city schools? Forget it. But the depression was not bad. One thing I regret – I had starting taking music lessons. I loved music lessons. And it got to the point where my mother could not afford to have me keep on taking lessons. I would have given anything to have been able to not give it up. Priscilla kept me on for one whole summer because I would go and play at her recitals. That is the thing I regret the most.

DW: Besides the band, what did you do for amusement? This was the pre-television days.

DC: There was a radio and it was big. We had a lot fun listening to stuff on the radio. At home, every Saturday night, when I was growing up, mom and dad would have a couple of couples come in and play cards. Marian and I would ease our way down the stairs so we could see all that was going on. We had things going on at church. We had things going on at school. My mother and I used to embroider every evening. She taught me how to embroider and I love to embroider. We would sit there and do that and have the radio on. My sister was younger, so she would have to go to bed earlier. Mother would play the piano and we would sing. Sometimes she and I would play duets. We sang duets in church. I was church organist when I was 12. It was a small town.

DW: What did kids in Shelburne do?

DC: There was the skating rink in the wintertime. We lived up here so we were not in the village so all the Farrell boys used to come over. And Bruce Hammond. Lilly's nephew would come over. And when Mrs. Kaigle had all her kids there, the grandchildren would come over. We always had a bunch. Nicky Farrell would come knock on the door "Can Mrs. Cole come out and play". With my apron on, I would go out and play baseball with them. You made your own fun. The kids used to get together and play ball. The skating rink was always fun.

DW: Did you have one up here or did you go to one in the village?

DC: We went out back. You have to go out back and on the way towards Johnny Farrell. It was a pond that formed up there. They used to have another one that was right at the base of the heights there that Mr. Farrell had for the cows and so forth. It was so polluted that they opened it up. We would take the dog, clean it off and play hockey.

DW: We used to go to a pond up behind the Marsett Farm

DC: Nice pond up there. There used to be strawberries up there.

DW: You mentioned the Republican committee. What other groups were there?

DC: And the Democrats too. They had their own little groups.

DW: Ralph Marsett?

DC: Yes. Helen Gadhue. Doc White. When we had the first Fire District up here, Eleanor White was the clerk. She gave me the notes and then I took over. The notes were on backs of envelopes and stray pieces of papers. I had to get those shaped up. The first thing we did – we got streetlights up here. That was pretty good. It was blacker than the haze of.....

DW: When was that?

DC: It had to be no more than '50. It could have been early 1950s.

DW: We forget what it was like before...

DC: When we first came down here after living on Pearl Street in the city and then coming down here. Come home from dances, it was so black. I remember coming into the yard a couple of times and there was a skunk in the yard. We didn't have the fence there then. So we would back out and the skunk would come this way and we would back up and the skunk would come this way and then we would try to ease in. And Mrs. Morrill, when we first came here, thought musicians were drunks. She figured we were drunk, backing in and out of the yard like that. Andy came over to see what was going on the next morning and they found out about it then. When Mrs. Kaigle and Mr. Kaigle had their horse, we let them keep their horse out here. Al came home one night – I hadn't played that night – and he had the 50 dollars which was a lot. He started up from the garage up to the house and he heard footprints coming after him. He got faster. He leaped over onto the porch and into the house. He said "Somebody's out there. Somebody's out there." He didn't know the horse was out there. We would go down in the cellar together. Neither of us would go down alone.

DW: Were there any grange activities?

DC: Oh, yes. That is right. I forgot all about that. Al and I went through 6 Degrees of Grange. Eutie was big in that and Rose Hurley and Ruth Palmer¹...Kitty Noonan. Quite a few from the Falls area. Ben Bates was master for a while. It was fun. We would meet regularly and join with the other granges around. We took our 6 Degree, which was is the State Grange. Harold Arthur was the governor at the time because he signed the membership papers.

DW: Where was the Grange Hall?

DC: We did not have Grange Hall in Shelburne. We went to Hinesburg and down to Charlotte.

¹ Ruth Webster Palmer was married to Maurice Palmer. She was the daughter of Milo and Lillian Webster who ran a 190-acre farm on the Shelburne/Charlotte border on Spear Street extension. Along with her brother, Henry Webster, Ruth inherited this land in 1938 and sold it in 1968.

DW: What did the Woodsmen do?

DC: Insurance as far as I know. The Modern Woodmen of America. My dad had insurance with them, pop had insurance with them.¹

DW: Was the Poor Farm still in operation?

DC: I know they had one in Charlotte. I don't remember one.

DW: How did people get help?

DC: At home, my father was overseer of the poor. He had a store and at that time, there were a lot of tramps who walked the tracks. The Canadian Pacific went right by dad's store. He was authorized by the town to give a loaf of bread and a can of beans. Once in a while, he would say "Don't ever make fun of them. They are down on their luck. Could be you, could be me."

DW: Shelburne also had an overseer of the poor too?

DC: Tommy Thompson I think

DW: Who are some politicians that you remember?

DC: Consuelo Northrup Bailey. She was a sorority sister of mine. Her sister Frederica was the head librarian at UVM.² Uncle Homer – Homer Saint Francis. There is a political figure that sticks out in mind. He was fighting for a lost cause and his daughter is doing it too. Thanks heavens, they are getting back to the roots now which helps a little bit. I remember the election between FDR and Thomas Dewey. At one time, they used to say: "As Maine goes, so does the nation." Because Maine had earlier elections like New Hampshire today. In that one, it was two states – "As Maine goes, so does Vermont." I can remember, way back, mostly because my father used to talk about it when Al Smith was running for president. He was Catholic and there were two Catholic families in East Ryegate. They burned a fiery cross up in the clay bank. Nobody knew who did it or nobody said anything. I remember that and I remember that Jack Roberts and Joe Devins did not vote.

¹ 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)

² Consuelo Northrup Bailey (1889-1976) was the first woman admitted to practice before the U.S. Supreme Court; one of the first women in the nation to be elected a prosecutor; the first and only woman to serve as speaker of the Vermont House; and the first woman in the nation to be elected lieutenant governor. Bailey lived in Shelburne Village near the Episcopal Church. The land and building once belonged to Truman Webster and before him, the Deyette Family.

DW: Was there mixing between the Catholics and the Protestants in Shelburne?

DC: No. The Catholics were not allowed in our churches. The fence between the Catholic cemetery and the old cemetery – they have been wanting to take that down for years. Al and Phil had talked about it. No sir. It wasn't just the Catholics. It was some of our good Protestants. We were right in the middle of it because Pop was catholic. Al was baptized in the Catholic Church but when his grandmother was divorced from Florence Horsford's uncle, the Catholic Church excommunicated her. Mamie was a person who needed church. There was a deaconess at St. Pauls who took her under her wings and she became Episcopal. My mother in law became an Episcopal and the boys became an Episcopal. It was tough because sometimes my mother in law wouldn't cook fish on Fridays for my father-in-law. She would get mad at him and she would cook meat and Pop didn't eat it. There was a lot of fuss in not being allowed in each other's churches.

DW: I heard for a while that the Catholic kids did not join the scouts?

DC: For a while, they didn't. And then we have the Jehovah's Witnesses too. Dotty Sauls. That was tough because those kids did not observe Christmas, did not salute the flag – this sort of thing. You had to make allowances and even way back when, all I asked is that you had to stand. You don't have to salute the flag if that is against your religion. Just stand....that's all. You couldn't have birthday parties and presents, you could not have Christmas and presents. There has been a lot of antipathy towards religion. Unfortunately, some of it carried over.

DW: Would you say that it abated more these days then in the 1940s?

DC: Oh Yes. Mikey and Mindy Precourt lived next to us and Mikey is wonderful to me. So when they were going to have Scott baptized down at Saint Catherine's, Mikey said "We would like to have you come. We knew you were religious so we thought you might want to come." We were religious because we went to church every Sunday. Of course we went, we were glad to.

DW: That wouldn't have happened 25 years ago?

DC: No. They would not have asked us, but we would have gone. There was a lot of feeling...a lot of feeling. Even my dear father, who was one of the nicest men who ever lived...one time my sister brought home a high school boy who happened to be Catholic. The only thing that I ever remember dad saying that was a least bit biased was "Don't you know any good Protestant boys?"

DW: You mentioned that one of the biggest changes in Shelburne was the development. Can you think of any other tangible changes?

DC: Water and sewer. We used to have it just in the village. When it came across the river and up through here, we never thought that it could happen but we have water and we have sewer. It is on the heights...it is out to the point. Look at Charlotte, they have

no water and sewer and look at the problems they have. Clay. Sulphur. Dan was lucky, he had Bob White....remember when he did dousing...he went down and told him where to drill.

DW: Bob White did dousing. I did not know that. The same Bob White from the Falls?

DC: Yes. He did Frank too. Frank has an underground river – did you ever hear of that? It is almost free flowing. He has a beautiful well. Dan has something like five gallons in Charlotte. Good water. Well we had street lighting! That was biggest thing for here (north Shelburne). But the amount of building...it is everywhere. When Bob Vogel first came, he built his A frame up there and now the whole of Hullcrest – unbelievable. Now look out behind the school. When we first had the school, some of the Bostwicks' cows used to come and visit.

DW: I remember the cows used to stick their head in the windows.

DC: And trying very hard. Some of the boys almost got one in the back door one time. Look how it's grown. Look down at the harbor. The harbor and the captain's house. Nothing there at all.

DW: How about the school. You taught at it when it was just the one building. And then there was a 1948 addition, a 1961 addition and then you moved to anew building. Do you have an affinity to a particular building?

DC: Upstairs....southeast corner...7th and 8th grade room. I loved that room. It looked out on the road. Looked across to the Methodist Church where the skating rink was. Take the windows down from the top and up from the bottom. When the fire alarms went off, we shut the things in the back, where you hung the coats, because the noise was deadly...right over the top of our heads. Everything stopped and we all would go to the window whether it rang 3, 6, 9 or 12 times.



Figure 6 Old Fire House

DW: What would those tell you?

DC: Three was village and north. Six was south. Nine was west and 12 was east.

DW: That was supposed to tell the volunteers which direction to head in?

DC: Apparently so. We always knew where it was going. If it was three, I was nervous. I love that building. I loved the windows. At the middle school, you opened them out a little bit and then we had some people come and say "You can't do that. Kids will be running around and they will run smack right into a window." Anyway, the circulation....not good. You opened the end door and there was a little breeze through there. I would bring down the fan in the summer time and in the winter....flat roof in Vermont? Stupid. Absolutely stupid. They would go up there with snow blowers in the middle of the day and blow the snow off the roof.

DW: I could sum it up by saying that you enjoyed the village school more....

DC: It was much better. I never minded the openness over there. It didn't bother me at all. A lot of people did not like it because they did not have four walls. I only had two walls and a divider. It never bothered me at all. We had people coming from over to see that....new concept.¹

DW: How do you think the roads have changed?

DC: It wasn't paved when Al came. The roads are so much better. I can remember when we were going together, Al had a little Austin. You could pick it right up and move it. We were going over to the Harbor one time. We were on a hill and we got stuck and we could not get up it. One time they were fixing the sidewalks in the Falls and they put a whole layer of gravel in. Our little car could not make it through. The town has done beautiful job on the roads.

DW: Were there any other paved roads when you came to Shelburne in the 1940s?

DC: Spear and Dorset were not. I don't think there were any.

DW: So mud season was truly mud season?

DC: It was. We would go down to the farm – Mamie's farm in East Charlotte in the Spring like that – you didn't go. It just oozed out of the road. It was just awful. Of course, the tires were higher then. They had to be. Paul (Goodrich) does keep up the roads very, very well.

¹ See Gus Mercaldo interview

