

Interview date: May 8, 2024

Interview place: Island County Museum

Interviewee: Marilyn Sherman Clay

Interviewer: Judy Lynn

Judy: This is May 8th, 2024, and I am with Marilyn Sherman Clay. We're going to talk about her life and get her oral history here for the museum. So welcome, Marilyn and I'd like to start by asking you when and where you were born.

Marilyn: Thank you. I was born February 27, 1948, at Harpole's Maternity Hospital, along with everyone else. My birth story is that my mother went into labor, and my dad took her to the maternity home, and Polly Harpole was there but she left to find Dr. Chafey.

Judy: You're talking about Polly.

Marilyn: Polly. Lets find Dr. Chafey, and neither of them came back in time. So, my dad delivered me. I guess he was successful and took care. Well, he's a farmer, so this is not unusual to deal with mammals giving birth, but I don't think that he had anticipated that he would have been the assistant in my birth.

Judy: Your parents' name?

Marilyn: Edwin and Jean Sherman. My mother was Jean Higgins. The interesting story that came to me not too long ago when my daughter is living in my mother's house, she found his scrapbook of that time during my birth. I had always thought there wasn't a baby scrapbook because my mom had scrapbooks for my brothers and nothing for me. Well, the scrapbook was a story she didn't really want to tell. It was a scrapbook full of letters and cards from friends. After I was born, she became gravely ill and was in the hospital for probably three weeks, so she had a newborn baby that others, relatives and friends were taken care of and her little boys. Vin was five and brother Dale was two. These cards and letters that are in the scrapbook are telling her how her children are doing while she's in the hospital.

Judy: Wow. Do you know why she was hospitalized?

Marilyn: I know that she hemorrhaged badly after I was born. In those days, I believe that women were in the hospital for a week after a birth or in the maternity home at Harpole. She stayed there for a while. She said staying at Polly Harpole's was heaven on earth. Polly waited on hand and foot and had good food, giant meals that she couldn't eat. But after she

got out of the maternity home, she hemorrhaged then she ended up in the hospital in Everett.

Judy: Why in Everett?

Marilyn: We didn't have a hospital until the '70s.

Judy: Right. My parents were certainly activists to getting a community That is a treasure trove that should go to the museum. She show cards and letters. So now we will all know that that exists.

Judy: And then what? Tell me about your early life in Coupeville.

Marilyn: I probably could go to kindergarten, which was in the basement of the Catholic Church. Mrs. Johnson was our kindergarten teacher. I have two great memories. Well, one is great, and one is huge, but not pleasant. Let's hit the gardens. Let's hear the one that Mrs. Johnson's husband, Mr. Johnson, who lived at the corner of Coveland and Broadway, just across the street from the park. It's Rudy's now. When they lived there, it was just a simple clapboard, farm style house, and that's the house that was built for the last native Americans that lived in Coupeville.

Judy: The Kettles

Marilyn: Yes, before the Kettles. And then the Johnsons after who lived in it for many years. Mr. Johnson made the most incredible logs for us to build forts and cabins to play in. They were made out of a really light wood and so they were hollow and just beautifully made. They were probably six feet long and a foot in diameter, but they're square. And we were able to stack little buildings out of them and play. It was just this great play, big Legos, giant Legos. They were beautiful. And my other memory is that there were times where I would have to sit in the corner on a stool with a metal dunce cap on my five-year-old head for misbehaving.

Judy: What were you doing?

Marilyn: I do not know. I don't remember that part. Because I really don't remember what I did that was bad, but I remember how hard it was to balance on this rickety three legged stool and hope that heavy metal round thing on my head that wouldn't fit so those stool wiggles that had wiggles and if the dunce cap fell to the ground, then you were in trouble again. She had her goods and her bads.

Judy: Do you remember her first name?

Marilyn: Evelyn Johnson. Anyway, other childhood memories, I would have to get along older. As you and I have discussed Jan Pickard was my childhood friend from birth. Our

mothers were Muriel Pickard and Jean Sherman. They were very close friends, and so we were raised as a sister as their cousins, but with a closeness. So our play in those years was wild and outdoors. We were both tomboys, we did not have dolls. We played with snakes and made forts in the woods and had axes and hammers and loved animals and each of us got a horse when we were ten... Jan was 11. Actually, she might have gotten a horse sooner than I did. So, around the age of 10 I got my horse as a bribe. My parents asked me if I would stop sucking my thumb if they gave me a horse.

Judy: Did it work?

Marilyn: Yeah, it did. It worked just fine... gave me something else to do. So, from then on I had other life other than Jan and horses, but Jan and I had the run of the prairie and there was not a highway then. There was no highway 525 or there was, but it was my driveway and it went through Prairie Center and Terry Road. So, all of that highway through town and what we call the overpass were not here then. Those were built in 1965 and 1966. And that highway also cut our farm in half, or not in half, but it divided the farms that were owned by the Engles and my dad and my uncle Clark Sherman. I suppose other private properties as well, but those were the three main farms that the highway cut in half, which changed some development here as well, but we could go on to that later. But it did turn the north side of the highway, it created building lots that were once open space. Our roads were gravel. Ebey Road that I lived on was a gravel road from Terry Road to the beach. It must have been a gravel road up the hill, up on the hill road as well.

Judy: So, tell me where you were living at that point. Is it okay?

Marilyn: I know that they lived in the house that Vin lives in.

Judy: Is that where you were?

Marilyn: Yes, as a young person. My parents owned it when I was born. My brother Vin Sherman now owns it. It's roughly Terry Road and Ebey Road. Our parents' home that we moved to when I turned about three is the corner of Ft. Ebey and Cook Road to the northwest. The house that my parents lived in when I was born didn't have plumbing. That came later. So, when my mother was raising her three little ones when I was a baby, there was no indoor plumbing. There may have been a sink with water, but there was not a toilet in the house. That was in 1948.

Judy: Do you remember using an outhouse when you were small?

Marilyn: At my grandparents' house. But I think I believe that my grandparents had had indoor plumbing for a long time, but they wanted all the grandchildren to use the outhouse

in order to save on the septic system and all of that because William and Lottie did have 37 grandchildren. There are a lot of Sherman's to know.

Judy: It is.

Marilyn: We were 10 children. At a great expensive time. My grandmother was 47 when my youngest aunt was born. She had a 27-year period of time of giving birth.

Judy: Wow. And now only movie stars do that. The men.

Marilyn: So Jan and I growing up got to be pretty wild girls and we were very safe in our wildness because it seems that there were probably eyes on us at all times out on the prairie. We rode our horses, we rode bareback a lot. We got to ride in farmers' fields, but we didn't get to ride across them, we had trails on the edge of all fields so that we didn't interfere with the crops, but since many of the farmers were related to us or closely, it seems to me that they saved space for not just Jan and me, but there were there were quite a few other kids that rode around the island. We had a really active age group. Carolyn Hancock, Gail Boyer had a horse in those days. Jerry Reuble had a horse, Jim Henry was a huge part of our riding group. Christie Carter, who also lived on Ebey Road, Trevor and Trevor's child daughter. And younger kids, beyond us too, after we were gone. I think that riding continued, but I do not see any trail riders today out on the prairie.

Judy: Yeah, right.

Marilyn: There's different style, lots of stadium covered arena kind of riding and athletic competition. But in those days, we kind of had big old cow ponies and they were just for fun and transportation, and I was a lot of fun. We packed lunches, we swam at Evey's Landing. At one point, our parents had quite a bit of waterfront property down at Long Point, so we'd take our horses down there and spend the day and swim on them. It was so great. It was great fun. And then as we got older with the horses, we did have a 4H group. Knight Smith and Roberta Smith were our leaders. We didn't have horse trailers. If we were to go to the county fair to perform or compete, they loaded up the horses in an open truck. Like with sides on it. We just put eight horses in there and drive to the fair. I don't even know how we can get the horses in there. We would drive behind our horses in this open truck. We were tied to the truck. And we didn't know a lot about riding or style or much of anything, but I did win championship for grooming. Because I had a paint, a white and brown horse, and I used Prell for shampoo, and he was beautiful. He was just clean, white and tidy, and his name was Flash. And he was my buddy. So we did compete in some things, but our little club observed that the rich kids got all the blue ribbons. Not fair at all. They probably had better horses than they might have had a riding lesson or two. We don't know, but they did look more refined than we did, I think. So that was our 4H history. I still have my bandana

that we wore on our neck, that we got free from Purina foods because we collected Purina labels and mailed them in and the 15 of us, however many each got a Purina neck scarf.

Judy: And you still have it?

Marilyn: I still have it. I love it. It's got 20 different breeds of dogs in it. Very classy.

Judy: That's very great.

Marilyn: It is. It's great.

Judy: What are your memories of Coupeville during this period of time? Front Street and the city itself.

Marilyn: Front Street was practical. The businesses there were businesses that we used. So that's where the pharmacy was. It had a soda fountain, which my mother said she worked at when she was in high school. That's a very early memory for me because in the late 60s. It moved up to that newer strip mall across from Whidbey Island Bank, but that building stayed that way for so long that it's still easy for me to remember that fountain and the structure of that room, because somehow that stayed, even though the businesses did not.

Judy: Isn't there a back room that has the hole in the floor?

Marilyn: There is one in back of what's now Kingfisher. That's the only toilet that remains. That emptied onto the beach. And I do remember that from the beach. I remember septic systems draining out of the out of the bluff onto the beach and really not thinking anything about it. It's flushed twice a day. That was pretty typical. I wouldn't want to be underneath just the one at Front Street. But nevertheless, it was pretty efficient when you think about it.

Judy: Did you fish?

Marilyn: My dad fished a little bit. He didn't have a boat, but he had his own motor. He would borrow my Uncle Clark's boat and use his motor, and he fished out off of Keystone and fished for salmon. I remember going a couple of times with him and it was a long boring day, It seems to me that I just crawled up underneath whatever was called in the bow of the boat and just kind of napped there because there was not much else to do.

Judy: So, you didn't go down to the wharf and fish for pogies through the wharf?

Marilyn: We did, we did play on the water a lot because we had this property at Long Point that the Pickard family had and the Shermans. Edwin Sherman's family, and the Mickey Clark family owned three lots side by side. They bought those in the early '50s for \$1,500 apiece. And many summers were spent there. Margaret Clark, was a teacher, I'm sure that she'll be featured in a lot of oral histories. So, she had the summer off, and the moms pack

lunches and dinners, and we stayed all day, a couple of years, There were log booms on the beach property, which they must have logged all that property and the log booms were incredibly cool. They went a way out of the water, probably a few hundred feet. They had upright columns or posts that held them in place and they would tie these log booms to the post and when they would fill up, then they would hook the log boom up to some kind of a boat, a tugboat or something, and haul it away, to a mill somewhere. We spent a couple summers with log booms down there and I just can't imagine anything more dangerous for children to play on, but that was our source of fun.

Judy: So, you were on them?

Marilyn: Yeah, we played on the log booms, and we danced across on them and sat on them and the log would break loose. We would build rafts. Well, we did not wear any sort of swim aid protective life vest, anything like that. My mom was a very strong swimmer, and I guessed that the mothers presumed if a kid started to drown, mom would go out to save them, which she did a couple times. So, it just seemed there was always mother watching us. Two would lie back in Sunday. They were so tan. Muriel especially would get the color of mahogany. It just is gorgeously, shiny brown. That was almost like a competition. The tanning while we played in the water. But our play in those years was all almost always reflected in some kind of a work: building rafts, digging trenches, building fires, It was just a very active plan play because it resulted in things, like putting puzzles together. The oldest Clark child was Patricia Clark, who was everything. She was a cheerleader in high school. She was a top student. She was very pretty, and she did fire batons, batons that were on fire. So during basketball games, in the winter, that was our often during the halftime show that would turn off the lights in the gym, and Patricia would twirl her on fire batons, and spin them in the air and she just really did an incredible performance. Her dad was Mickey Clark, some of the Mickey Clark field that we have named after him. The parents were very active in schools, and he delivered mail and coached Little League for a million years. Margaret was a teacher of second grade for 30 years.

Judy: Wow.

Marilyn: Most children during an enormous period of time in the last half of the 20th century in Coupeville were her students in second grade. And they were lucky for that. Not only did she have those skills, she also taught us to twirl and she created treasure hunts for all of the kids as the oldest. So, she would have a treasure hunt already drawn with all of the poetry and places of the prizes at the end before we even woke up at night. In the morning, they were all done and she was a delightful woman growing up. And I was a junior bridesmaid in her wedding.

Judy: Oh, really?

Marilyn: Oh, when I was 12. So, anyway, I digressed.

Judy: These are great stories keep going.

Marilyn: Okay. Where am I headed now? High school, and Coupeville.

Judy: Did you play a sport?

Marilyn: Well, horses. No, I wasn't athletic and there weren't sports for girls.

Judy: Oh, that's right.

Marilyn: We had two sports. We had track and tennis. Therefore, I was a cheerleader from Sophomore year on. I loved being a cheerleader. I really, really did. It served a lot of purposes in my life. It was creative. We even made our own uniforms, believe it or not, and some of them were not good looking. They were really bad. We'd never got any of those really cool sweaters with a letter on it or any of that stuff. But anyway, we did create, we made our own costumes, and we made up a lot of our own cheers. It was pretty athletic. It was not gymnastic. It was more dancing style. There's a lot of arm waving, and a lot of rhythmic cheers. But the entire crowd participated, including adults. The cheers related to the game, both in football and basketball. We cheered for the events that were occurring at that moment. I mean, we had regular chants to that the crowd did and so forth, but if we were at first and 10 on the football field, that was our cheer. First and 10, do it again. It wasn't like now it's more dancing and it isn't really, as far as of the high school games I've been to. There's not much participation in the cheers, except a few of the kids. There are a few chants or cheers that they do regularly, but it is not audience participation, and ours was all about the audience, all about bringing them into the game and all about the game itself, as it went forward. So, it seemed almost like playing the sport, which was great because we didn't get it. It's only what you could do.

Judy: Yes, because there wasn't anything else.

Marilyn: So, we had Girls Athletic Association, and we met every Tuesday after school. It was not organized by a teacher, it was organized by the students, and it was probably, it was the whole high school girls in high school, I'd say. I mean, it wasn't the whole high school, but it was 9th through 12th grade. We just went for it, and we played it. We do softball, the next week we would do baseball, the next. And then we do basketball or whatever. We would just pick a different sport and learn it and play it a little bit. Val was in it. She was great. Val Arnold was a wonderful tennis player. Really good. And a bit of an inspiration to me as a tennis player, but also, she just was a great athlete and was a good part of GAA holding that together as the seniors did. So, we just kind of passed the hat

along to each senior and then, I suppose after prop 13. After proposition 13, the Athletic Association went away and girls got to really play on teams. Which was awesome. But we did play sports, and our uteruses did remain within our bodies, without danger of them falling at them, in spite of male legislators' concern about that.

Judy: Was that the concern?

Marilyn: I mean, that's every ridiculous thing. Women were just too precious to play sports. They belonged in the kitchen. I don't feel that high school was as challenging academically then as it is now. I look at the things that my grandchildren are studying and the requirements that their teachers put on them, and I'm just astonished. I kind of think at least in this area, that we actually had really a good creative education. We got good attention at our school because it was small. We had some very good teachers. But, you know, we didn't learn any classics. Our parents did compete in a tiny high school. They studied more classic poetry and Greek mythology.

Judy: Is that where your dad and Herb learned that stuff?

Marilyn: Yes, it is. And I still have booklets of both of my parents' writing poetry. They would remember an entire poem. They hear a word to a poem, and they'd start just chanting away these poems. I don't know that memorizing things is a great education, but I don't even remember reading them. I remember hearing Herb Pickard and Edwin Sherman reciting things as adults. They were bright men and quick-minded. And certainly, if you think back in the 1920s at Coupeville, Washington, you would think that they might have been learning just math, or farming. Yeah, those two men. Herb did go to university. My dad did not. But they nevertheless, I always felt that I was around a very smart person.

Judy: Did you have a boyfriend?

Marilyn: I did have a boyfriend in high school. And his name was Ron Edwards. Oh, God.

Judy: And how'd that go?

Marilyn: I don't want to talk about that. I don't want to talk about it.

Judy: I don't blame you.

Marilyn: Yeah. Okay, that's a story for... that's a political story. It is modern women.

Judy: So how many people were in your graduated class?

Marilyn: 37? Maybe 38. A few still live here in that class.

Judy: Who?

Marilyn: Roger and Diane Elkema, Diane Cromie, are here and Jack Sell lives back here.

Judy: Is that related to Susan, Sell's brother? OK.

Marilyn: He lives at Sherman and Madrona. Do you remember the Wells house there and there's a duplex at the corner of Sherman and Madrona?

Judy: Madrona Way. Right.

Marilyn: And above the little duplex, there's a really nice house that is built against the bank. That's Jack and Charlene and they are still alive. Paul Messner. [Santa Claus] was my classmate. I think that's all that lives in Coupeville. A few other are local, but not in the town.

Judy: Okay. So, any other memories of Coupeville before you move on... before I move somewhere else?

Marilyn: Yeah. So, memories of the way the town looked, of the way that it functioned, we had three or four service stations. gas stations. We had on Front Street a doctor's office, a lawyer's office, and a pharmacy. We had a marine shop, and marine repair that was posted. We had a post office. We had a grocery store. We had two grocery stores on Main Street. We had two meat markets in town. At one point, we had three meat markets in town. Main Street Market, the Tyee, but it was Pat's Place when I was a child. And then Prairie Center was a fixture. Prairie Center honestly did sell absolutely everything when I was a teenager. That's where we bought our long play albums, our 33 RPMs. We could order ahead of time, but when a new Beatles album came that was released, they would also be released at Prairie Center. We got the new stuff. And we went there, and we bought it. As you know, we could buy a little Honda motorcycle and a lawn mower and lumber and food and Levi's and hammers and nails and we had at Prairie Center, you checked out in a circle. Do you remember that? So, the checkout was circular, and you would put your cart, so all the checkers stood in the center, in the circle, and put your cart into an opening in the circle. And then they would calculate what you owed, and at least in my family, you didn't pay them then, it went on your bill, which wasn't a big rolodex behind all of them. And they filled in. There was a cheese, a round of cheddar cheese.

Judy: I was going to ask about that.

Marilyn: Yes. And if you guessed the amount, you got the cheese for free.

Judy: Yes.

Marilyn: My Aunt Mary got at least 10 free cheeses in a lifetime. She's the only person I know, but she could guess it. You had to guess it to the ounce. And she was good at that,

and that cheddar cheese was really good. It was really, really good because it wasn't packed in plastic, like Kraft cheese. That turns rubbery, it was kept like Beth keeps cheese at Bayleaf, it's out and you open it. It's a living breathing thing and it doesn't get killed. Anyway, most people carried a tab at Prairie Center. I can't imagine the billing, the accounting that was involved in managing that business. I think the meat market was a separate business. I think the guy that worked at the meat market might not have been Herbs employee, he might have been Herb's partner, in the meat part of it. He gave away a free hot dog if you're with your mom, to just eat it cold, and they were delicious. I remember one time going in after school. I was probably 11 or so. On my way to walk home, and I went in and asked for a hot dog, and he said, "I can't give you a hot dog when you're not with your mom." And I said, "Well, then, can I charge one?" And he said, "I can charge a pound of hot dogs, but I can't charge just one." So I said, "Then I'll take a pound." And I bought it and they charged it to my parents' account, and I ate my hot dog, and I've got this rolled up package of hot dogs in white butcher paper, and walking home, I thought, well, I'm probably going to get in trouble. So, I guess I'll just throw the hot dogs away. And so, I did. I threw them away and I walked home. Then, my mom got home from work and I'm crying, and she said, what happened? And I said, well, I bought these hot dogs. And then I thought I'd get in trouble. And so, then I threw them away and she said, "Get in the car. We're going to find those things." So, we got in the car and all we could find that was left were the papers. Something had gotten to the hot dogs before we found them again. I wasn't punished.

J: You didn't have to wear the dunce cap?

M: No, I think that my mom could see that I punished myself enough and her resolution was great. Let's go get it. You made a mistake. Let's get those hot dogs that happened for dinner. But somebody some other beast before we did. So, we were good to the critters. After high school, I went to Washington State University for two years. I was a Cougar. At the end of my sophomore year, I was in a relationship with a charming basketball player and became pregnant and got married that summer. That was in the old days.

Judy: What was his name?

Marilyn: Ryan Chamberlain. And we lived on campus. He graduated as an engineer, and we moved to California. He worked for Kaiser Steel after that in the Bay Area. I worked out of Oakland. We lived in the East Bay.

Judy: With the baby?

Marilyn: Three children, yes. So, we actually had four children. We lost a little boy in surgery, in heart surgery during that time.

Judy: What were the children's names?

Marilyn: Scott, Jeff, Corey, and Alex. Yes, after that, we moved to Colorado, lived in the Denver area for five years, which was delightful, and then to Reno, Nevada for two years, which was also fun and a great place to live and raise kids. And then back to the Pacific Northwest. We lived in Bellevue and Woodinville. Actually, I lived in Woodinville for 15 years. That marriage ended, and I married Bob Clay. Bob and I moved to California.

Judy: What part?

Marilyn: Bay Area. And then to Memphis and then back to the East Side again. During that time, my kids graduated from school in Washington. And moved on to college and so forth. So, my first marriage lasted about 20 years. My second marriage. I am still married to Bob, is 30-something-years. So, and then back to Whidbey Island in 1997.

Judy: All right. And why?

Marilyn: My dad passed away in 1996. Bob and I were living in Memphis, and I didn't want to go back to Memphis when he died and decided that I wanted to be with my mom. And that was a great decision. I had been a realtor for eight years in the Woodville area. I went back to actually that same job in that same position for a year after Memphis, and then I interviewed with Sandy Roberts, here at Center Isle Realty. He enthusiastically hired me. I was no longer working when we moved to Whidbey. Working for Sandy began my almost 30 year career of selling real estate here in Central Whidbey. Which I am now retired from. I retired at the age of 75.

Judy: So, you were already trained as a realtor.

Marilyn: Yeah, I already had a pretty good career in real estate.

Judy: So, when you came back, where did you live?

Marilyn: We moved to Lovejoy Point. We rented a house from Jerry Saia, who still owns that house and who still lives in it. It's a house with white marble floors, white carpeting and pink walls. And it was very cream puff and beautiful and fun to live in and it had a trail down to the beach, just to the north side of Lovejoy Point. And when we first moved back, we ate mussels five times a week, I just skipped down that trail and picked mussels and steamed them and we ate mussels until we'd almost turned into mussels. They were so good. It was so much fun to just go down and pick food off the beach and eat it. So delicious. One of my first neighbors and friends here was Carmen McFadden.

Judy: Who was she living there at the time?

Marilyn: She had already had a very relatively long career in real estate at that time. We worked together for almost 25 years after that as friendly, happy competitors and happy

cooperators with each other and just really enjoyed our relationship there and at Windermere.

Judy: What are your favorite stories about clients that you found houses for?

Marilyn: Oh, my gosh... Oh, I don't know. I had a lot of adventures selling this lavender farm up here above your house, Judy, at Zylstra and Arnold Road, Penn Cove Ranch. I represented three sales on that property and met really interesting people.

Judy: Is it on Arnold?

Marilyn: Yeah.

Judy: Yeah, okay.

Marilyn: Interesting fun people who are all still in my life as friends and relationships. No one has lived there permanently, that big 20 acres and 6,000 square foot house, just sits and waits for people to come and enjoy themselves there.

Judy: Oh, really?

Marilyn: Yeah. That was a part of some of my favorite parts of being a realtor, were being able to influence some open space exchanges, working on the trust board, working with some farm exchanges. I cooperated with the Keevas to help encourage the town of Coupeville of having part of Kruger Farm, the trails in the woods at the Kruger Farm trails, the property behind the church at the corner of the highway and Broadway. I worked with Arlie Lynch, who inherited about a 12-acre piece at the at the corner at the opposite corner of Broadway and Black Road, Yeah, in fact, it's probably the only corner of Broadway and Black Road. There's an eight-acre woods that I worked with Pat Powell and Arlie Lynch, who inherited the property lived ans who lived in California for many years. I helped coordinate getting that together and the land trust, purchasing the property, and after the Land Trust purchased the property, I believe that it has been deeded over to the town of Coupeville. So the woods there, that six-acre woods that is always been integral to the landscape of that area and it did not become developed, which it could have been. Those woods will stand in perpetuity. So, I'm really happy to have been influential in some of that work. I take some pride in that.

Judy: Thank you.

Marilyn: Thank you. Yeah, it was a good career I had a lot of fun and I'm very glad to be retired. But I met and worked with so many wonderful and instrumental people in our town and met so many that I would not have met had I not had my career.

Judy: Yeah, so when did you move into the house? Did you build that house that you're in now?

Marilyn: No, it was built by Lew Naddy. He built one on Broadway, too.

Judy: Yes, he did.

Marilyn: And he lived in it and Lisa lived in it.

Judy: Oh, is that right? Oh, that's not the one I'm thinking of. I'm thinking about one where you turn to the right off Broadway to go to your house. There's one just south of there, and I thought that was his house. I don't know.

Marilyn: Oh, but he did live in my house for 20 years. He built and lived there with his wife, Joyce, who passed away while they lived there. And then he built a house just below my house and moved to it, and then we bought a house we're in through from him. And that was 23 years ago.

Judy: Okay.

Marilyn: The house had a gorgeous beautifully planned Japanese influenced ornamental garden that featured probably 125 rhododendrons.

JUDY: And that's where you're in now?

MARILYN: Yes. It might have 50 rhododendrons. If we lost our water he drilled a well on the property, which we were able to use to water. But we lost that water source and only the strongest remain, but we still have a beautiful garden with beautiful rhododendrons in it just not the ones that needed water. But it was a lovely thing for him to leave. Which is what gardening is, very optimistic. Gift to the future.

Judy: What about the place that you, leased or something that you used a lot on Kennedy Lagoon?

Marilyn: So the house at the end of Twin Lagoon Lane I leased from the owner, and it was Rachel Colby. I could actually go back and talk about that house if you want. You go straight to Rachel Cobby's. Rachel Cobby and John Colby lived in St. Croix in the US Virgin Islands. They were a couple that were widowers, widowed, and married each other in their 50s. He was a real estate man, and her family was in the hospitality business. They owned a resource called the Buccaneer, in St. Croix, which is still in existence. Rachel's husband's name was Anderson. I think they were pioneers or whatever as colonialists, probably, of St. Croix and had that resort. I think they were a family of some wealth, but Rachel and her new husband, John Colby, went on a yearlong honeymoon and said she was retired from the hospitality business and they were just going to take a year off. So, the next thing that her

daughter, Barbara, heard from her, was a letter that said, "We've moved to Whidbey Island, and we've bought an inn. So, they bought the Captain Whidbey Inn and maintained their home, I believe, on St. Croix, in Christenstaden. They either bought or built a little cabin at the end of Twin Lagoon Lane. They bought other cabins along that lane and also on what is now called Captain Whidbey Road. They probably owned about 10 cabins that they just purchased with the Captain Whidbey, or during a period of time. She was living in one of those when I met her.

Judy: Are you sure it wasn't the cabin at the end of Twin Lagoon? Because it was remodeled and added on. I washed the windows but she wasn't living there. She was living in a cabin closer to Rachel's.

Marilyn: Yeah, Rachel's cabin, right. She also lived on Twin Lagoon. I don't know how long they operated it because it wasn't an active inn when they bought it, I believe it was like a personal residence or something.

Judy: Really?

Marilyn: They opened it, got it up into business, and started a business there or restarted business.

Judy: I believe Judge Still built it.

Marilyn: It was. Yeah. It was an inn, and it had even had a dance pavilion and a lot of things. But during that history, I believe that it was a business off and on. But in the '50s when they bought it, it was not viable. It was just owned by somebody, who knows? Maybe it's just sitting there decaying. But anyway, they got a business going and I think maybe within five years they sold it to John Colby's niece and her husband, who had just retired from the Air Force, and that was Shirley Stone. Actually, it was Shirley Stone that lived in that cabin. It wasn't Rachel. She lived in that cabin forever and ever. So, they took it over and the Stone family owned it for many, many years and the ownership then went to John Stone. All of that is recorded everywhere, I'm sure. It was really an interesting bridge history of that building. But Rachel's husband, John, passed away during this period of time. At some point, I think early '90s, Rachel passed away in the house at the end of Twin Lagoon Lane. After she had added a bedroom and a bathroom and a bunk house and a master bedroom, my mother played bridge with her as did a lot of other women in Coupeville. Muriel Pickard being another. My mother said that one day at bridge, they were at Rachel Colby's house before Rachel died, some years before. And they were playing bridge with their friend Alice Boston, whose husband had recently passed away, and Rachel asked Alice what her plans were. Alice didn't know. She didn't want to stay in the house that they owned together, and she didn't know what her plans were. Rachel said, "Well, then I'll just build a bedroom on, and

you can come and live here with me." And that's what she did. So, Alice Boston lived with Rachel Colby for a few years. I don't know how long, but that's why there was a second bedroom on that. After Rachel Colby passed away, the house went to her daughter, Barbara. It was rented out for a while to different people, septic system failed, and things went bad. She eventually got in touch with me because she wanted the price opinion and I was a realtor, and I gave her a price opinion on the property, and she said, something to the effect of thank you for doing that. I can't bear the idea of selling my mother's house, but I can't bear to rent it out any longer. It's been too much work. And so, I thought it would be a really good idea if I rented it and managed it and took care of it for her. And she liked the idea too, and I rented that house for almost 18 years. I enjoyed it very much with Barbara's blessing. We had a nice friendship and we had a great correspondence. She would come and look at the house once a year, we would talk about maintenance issues or whether it needed or repair or this and that, which I mostly took care of myself because I loved the place so much, but occasionally, if we needed a bigger job done, she would pay for it. She was a wonderful, a wonderful landlord, and often said she should be paying me. Anyway, it was a very good relationship. Barbara passed away, and the ownership went on to her children, and they didn't want me in there any longer. The timing worked out well so that I probably couldn't afford to stay there any longer either. So, after a really good run and sharing the property with many, many people and having...

J: Including Ann Wilson and her daughter Shane, and I'm so grateful that you did that.

M: It was delightful. And I think that I always had Rachel's hospitality in mind. I felt like I was her. I was being big Rachel and having Bridge parties, which I did, and a lot of really, really delightful gatherings and weddings and sad goodbyes to people and just was across the board and a few people that rented it for a week at a time that became almost my partners in crime that helped maintain that place over the years. So, it was just a beautiful location. It was an opportunity that not many people yet have middle class folks like us.

Judy: Right.

Marilyn: It was great. The other property that I'm thinking of, when Jim and Michael moved back up here from Seattle, and their house was being built. They were living in a place behind Dale Roundy's office.

Judy: Yes. And tell me about that.

Marilyn: All right. That's a sixplex that was originally built by a couple that lived in it and rented out five other units. It was built by Ralph Ward, who built houses in those days. He built to very high standards, to commercial standards, so it's solid little building with six apartments in it. My husband Bob and I got it, around 1999. I still own it and manage it. My

daughter, Corey Chamberlain, lives in one of the units. She's the onsite manager of those apartments. Three of them are furnished apartments that are rented out for temporary housing. And at 30 days at a time, they're not Airbnb or anything. They're just practical rentals. Generally for hospital workers, so those stay full. Two other units are full-time people. And it's a great building, in a great location. And I have often fantasized about moving into one and having five other good friends living, five other old ladies, but that's not going to happen. But it was a good fantasy, and it's a really great idea for older single people. But I'm doing okay, my house, and I am an older, single person. Yeah, So I won't move there, I suppose.

Judy: So why don't you throw in the fact that Bob is now at Regency in Oak Harbor?

Marilyn: I could do that. So, yeah, that's the reason that I'm a single person is that my husband, Bod Clay, is in Regency in Oak Harbor, in Assisted Care. The very good life there. So that's a good decision.

Judy: And you enjoy playing with your collection of ceramics?

Marilyn: I do have a lot of dishware.

Judy: Tell me when that started and why and...

Marilyn: Gosh. I think that that's genetic. We still haven't even gone through all of my mom's beautiful dishes.

Judy: Oh, those were your mom's dishes.

Marilyn: I loved to set a beautiful table. And she was, I think, very good at arranging flowers as well. So, my setting of tables enthusiasm might have been grown from her enthusiasm for it... for making flower arrangements. And her gift and talent. I think, was for making an arrangement with what there is. She could go out in the field and cut wheat or mix in wildflowers and have the prettiest thing at the table. Always. There was always a beautiful arrangement on the dining room table in my home. And even older she just, I think, it was like a well made bed. You just couldn't have a table without a beautiful arrangement on it. That was a good lesson I've learned. So I had, in my first marriage, it was like almost everybody else's first marriage. I had some dishes, and if we ended up entertaining a larger amount of people, which was usually my family, because somehow I ended up when we moved back to Washington, I was the one that did the big Thanksgivings and so forth, but I only had eight dishes. And a yearn to have like 12 or 15 that would all match. And over the years, after my children were grown and Bob and I were married, I just had more money to play with, and we lived in Memphis. I think I started collecting in Memphis. And that was 35 years ago. I didn't know that you could actually walk into a thrift store and it would be

dishes. I just didn't imagine that. I thought I just can't go to the Bon Marche and buy a set of 12 for \$500. I couldn't imagine. I could have gone to a thrift store and gotten 12 plates for a dollar each.

Judy: Did you?

Marilyn: Well, I didn't. I just did not manage it. Yeah, I don't think I'd ever been to a thrift store. And now we all go. And even everybody enjoys that sort of crazy kind of shopping and I think it's even a part of our awareness that we don't have to buy new stuff.

Judy: Right. Recycle is a good awareness for all of us to have it.

Marilyn: And so, I do a lot of that sort of thing.

Judy: Do you now?

Marilyn: I do, but I sort of, like you said, I recycle, so I tell myself I'm just renting these dishes for two years. And then I will sell them to someone else, or they'll go back to a thrift store. But I do probably have at least 30 sets of dishes. And they are stored in my basement. I very much use them. I do. I enjoy setting tables with them. At the age of 76, I probably will not use all of the dishes I have in my lifetime now.

Judy: Well, you've used them once, at least.

Marilyn: Yeah, and now I look at them and I really enjoy looking at them. I have them displayed on shelves in my basement for me to go look at.

Judy: Oh, good.

Marilyn: I flirted that a person collects, or at least in my case, if a person collects things and they can't see what they've collected, they keep collecting.

Judy: It's called hoarding.

Marilyn: It is. And then you might open a box and think, oh my gosh, I just bought a \_\_\_\_\_. And I've already owned them. So that's why I leave them out and enjoy. So, you can remember them and enjoy the beauty of them. Why collect if you don't enjoy them. So that's my story.

Judy: Okay. Tell me about your kids.

Marilyn: My oldest child is Scott, who was just here visiting. He lives in Los Angeles in the Venice Beach area. And he is married to Stephanie Pararish.

Judy: Do they have children?

Marilyn: They have two children. The oldest is Milo. He's a sophomore at Wesleyan College in Connecticut, and the youngest is Thea, and she will be going to college next year and will decide what college this week. We don't know which one. Scott went to USC, University of Southern California, and that's where he met Stephanie. They lived in Seattle a bit after college, but he's been an LA guy for many, many years. He and Stephanie both worked for Steven Spielberg for the Shot Foundation in the '90s as Scott was a writer and an editor and Stephanie as a multimedia producer. They created some incredible projects, and I think both of their lives were changed and enhanced by their projects. Both of them spent a lot of time interviewing and recording histories of survivors of the Holocaust. Jewish histories. And Stephanie is Jewish. And not raised with a strict Jewish culture, but enough, having learning these histories and becoming so close to this older generation. It would have been her grandparents' generation who didn't have those experiences. I think it was impactful for her. She did a lot of Jewish cooking after that. She's a wonderful cook, and so I think, as she called all of there were, I think, seven or eight survivors that they dealt with on a project. And she called them her survivors. "One of my survivors," she would say, and she got a lot of recipes and histories. My son, Scott, went to a liberal high school and I asked him what he gained from that whole experience. How did he feel about guilt wise or learning this overwhelming history that's almost beyond comprehension. And he felt or at least told me that he thought one of the greatest things he learned from interviewing the survivors of the Holocaust is that the United States, where they're heroes, that we state them. And I don't know if we really have studied that sort of history beyond our parents' generation and understand that. We went in and we saved human beings. We literally went into the camps and pulled them out. We do have some brothers in from Oak Harbor that one rescued the other. Do you know this story?

Judy: No.

Marilyn: Gosh, it's a Dutch family. One was a prisoner, and the other was part of the rescuers, that rescued his brother.

Judy: Really?

Marilyn: You can... It's easy to find. So, ask an Oak Harbor historian this story, it'll be a name you recognize. It's incredible, touching.

Judy: Wow. Okay, I'll follow up on that.

Marilyn: My middle daughter's name is Corey Chamberlain, and she now lives in Coupeville. She has had an adult life working with horses on Fox Island. She lived on Fox Island for some years managing the stallions on a breeding farm. The breed is called Holsteiners, and they are a German breed that is controlled by the German government.

Judy: Is that related to Dixie Lee Ray?

Marilyn: Oh, Dixie Lee, right? She lived on the farm on Dixie Lee Ray's pig farm. Big Fox. Dixie was a governor. Dixie's niece, Karen, inherited that property and developed the property.

Judy: Is Dixie gone?

Marilyn: She's been gone for many, many years. Corey now lives here and is farming with her sister, Alex Roos and Alex's husband, Brandon. They have taken over the farm that my father and mother owned, and that my brother Dale, and his wife, Liz worked and managed for 40 years, or 30 something years. So, they are planting sunflowers today and hoping that that will be an interesting agritourism draw. They're planning four acres so far.

Judy: Is that right? What about squash?

Marilyn: Planning, still planting the family squash, the golden Sherman Hubbards and a lot of pumpkins. Dale and Liz, Sherman started what they call the pumpkin patch, which has been iconic visiting tourism spot on in the middle of Ebey's for 30 years, I suppose. It's a tourist destination. It's also very local. It's very down key, and it's just very much a farm experience. And Alex and Corey and Brandon are committed to keeping it that way.

Judy: That's great. Not a Disneyland.

Marilyn: Right. Just riding around on a trolley behind an old tractor and maybe if we had tons of money, it would be Disneyland but the authenticity of it is, I think, after working there for a few Octobers, I can see how people appreciate the view. It is what it is. So, this summer, we'll see. There will be some fields of sunflowers. There'll be open spaces. There'll be trails to walk through them. Just places to take pictures, maybe have a picnic. I think it's going to be very sweet and beautiful. And probably pretty exciting to look at with 10-foot-tall sunflowers.

Judy: That's great. I love sunflowers. I'm from the Sunflower State, Kansas.

Marilyn: Oh, yeah, you are.

Judy: All on the highways. They're amazing. So, what organizations have you been involved with since you've come back?

Marilyn: My first one was Soroptimist that I joined. It is a women's group.

Judy: And we were in it together.

Marilyn: I was there at the very beginning. I didn't last long. When Nancy Connard started it, probably in 1997 or '98 when I moved here. I wasn't there then. A good organization. I've

met a lot of nice women. We had fun events, mostly the ones that I remember were the ones that the Rec Hall, which were dinner dancing parties, fundraisers. I love them. And we decorated for them, and I love decorating for parties and enjoyed them. I didn't love the meetings, and then my interest changed. I still go to Soroptimist events. But after I left Soroptimists, I think I had been there for three years or so and had done the work there. I went on the board of the Coupeville Art Center. That's when you were there.

Judy: Really? What year was this?

Marilyn: Oh, 2000?

Judy: No, I left in '99.

Marilyn: Okay, it was 99.

Judy: Really? I don't remember you.

Marilyn: Good. So that's probably a topic for a whole other time. That was another board I was on for a short time. After that I was recruited to serve on the trust board Ebey's Landing. And that was a better fit for me because of my interest in the land and knowledge of real estate and my caring for the preservation and the history and so forth. So, I found a good fit there.

Judy: You were on that board?

Marilyn: I served on that board for 10 years, maybe?

Judy: Okay, who was the director of the time?

Marilyn: The director was at the very beginning, was Mark?

Judy: No, the original guy. Rob.

Marilyn: Was Rob Harbor? And he was fading out as I got on the board. Oh, maybe a year. He might have been there for a year. At that point, it was a fairly contentious board where we had knowledgeable people seeing that we weren't doing what the NPS was requiring of us. We weren't bringing them a budget every year. We weren't supplying them with all of the information that we should have been doing. On the other hand, NPS was very active here.

Judy: National Park Service.

Marilyn: Yes, which was great. I mean, we had a great benefit from that and we had a pretty good staff, especially had good National Park Service workers here that were working on maintaining buildings, like the Reuble ?? farm and the farm \_\_\_\_\_. All of those buildings were being pretty well planned and held together during those years, and Craig Holmquist

was crucial in that as a National Park Service employee. After Rob left, I don't remember if we had somebody between Rob and Mark, but I feel like we did. I don't remember anybody between. We might have had somebody temporarily. Because I was on the board for a while before I recruited Jan Pickard. I thought she should serve on that board because I felt she didn't understand what the trust board did and what National Park Service did, and the differences of what they were doing and the partnership, because I think she was disappointed in a lot of what was going on, of what was being preserved and what wasn't, and what the Park Service was spending money on and who they were paying attention to. And I did eventually talk her into it. Well, she had to be appointed because we all were. She lives in the county and so, I took the idea of her appointment to the county commissioners and the county commissioners thought that they didn't want to appoint Jan Pickard to the board. So, I went to Mayor Nancy and Nancy thought that she would like that, that Jan Pickard would be an excellent board member. And I'm not sure how that worked, that the mayor of Coupeville was able to appoint a non-Coupeville resident, but there was some kind of a floating board member, someone that she was able to appoint. So, Jan was appointed to the board, and she was an instrumental board member. Sure helped us. We had really strong board, good workers on that board, but she helped the board become a board because of her experience that she brought in. We had retreats where we learned what boards do, how they function, what our board was supposed to do. It just was like it opened up a new world to us, our working board members. A lot of the trust board rolls over a lot of people in and out a lot, but during that time, we had Fran Einterz as an excellent board member, John Roberts, served very well. I should name more, just a lot of really strong workers. I'm thinking of really local people that were on that board. Anyway, during that time, we hired Mark Preiss, and as you and I were talking earlier, he made great changes to Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve, and a lot of them are not popular. So, he brought a lot of attention to the reserve. He created some programs that will last for eternity. He spearheaded the idea of having an annual potlach, which is still very popular today. And that potlach was combined with a conference that was also extremely popular with classes. And about a variety of subjects, preservation, weed control farming, future, successes of farming on the reserve, hands on classes of woodworking and cooking local ingredients and just really fascinating classes. We even had some performances. We had Jill Johnson who is the playwright and performer who performed a piece about Berta Olsen, the tugboat operator that ran the tug on the north end of the island before the Deception Pass bridge. She was great. She did Rebecca Ebey's story, which was heartbreak and beautiful. So, a lot of wonderful things like that. I think we had three in a row, three conferences, felt like it was time to take a break from that, that we might have used up a lot of what we were doing, but the potlach has remained. It's the best.

Judy: It's wonderful.

Marilyn: It is almost a cooking competition. It's very popular. Generally, we have a talk and sometimes we give awards for best.

Judy: I got one, presented to me by Al Sherman.

Marilyn: Yes. For Volunteer of the Year, not past. It's just a wonderful community gathering that brings out the best in all of us and reminds us of what we have here. And Mark Preiss remained for maybe five years and moved on to other successes in other areas, generally related to either national parks or preservation or nature conservancy, but big, broad programs that he always added a spark to, and then moved on to another one sparked. This was a wonderful man. And after I went off that board after 2 1/2 terms, I just felt that I needed to relax from that for a while. Jan Pickard came to me and said, that the Pickard family had already formed a fund called the Ebey's Forever Fund in order to help people preserve their homes, and create grants for that, to protect buildings and barns and trails and it's moved on to well beyond. She had decided that that fund needed a nonprofit to support it and to generate more funds for it, yet to keep it alive. I was on the founding board then of Friends of Ebey's. So, I went straight from the trust board to Friends of Ebey's thinking I might have at least have gone to Hawaii once. But no. So anyway, I've been on that ever since, except a one-year break. I am president of the board this year. And last year, actually. So, this is my second year as president.

Judy: Thank you for doing that.

Marilyn: Yeah, well, it's a delightful board. We have fun.

Judy: So, tell me who are on the board right now.

Marilyn: It's Linda Austin as the chair.

Judy: Are you involved in any other organizations?

Marilyn: No. That's just enough. I just retired after 40 years of selling real estate.

Judy: Yeah, that's a long time.

Marilyn: So, this morning was like, oh, gosh, it's so nice.

Judy: I just want to thank you for being here. Thank you for being my friend. Thank you for all the other news. And bye. Thank you.