

Montauk Library Oral History Program

Interview with Richard White, Jr.

November 15, 2022

Interviewed by Virginia Garrison of the Montauk Library

Virginia Garrison [00:00:00] Today is November 15th, 2022. My name is Virginia Garrison. I'm a library assistant at the Montauk Library and I'm conducting an oral history interview with Richard White, Jr. The interview is part of the Montauk Library Oral History Program. We are conducting this interview from the Sound Studio at the Montauk Library in Montauk, New York. So I just need to confirm on tape that you're good with the consent form and being recorded.

Dick White [00:00:32] Yes, of course.

Virginia Garrison [00:00:33] Thank you. Would you mind pronouncing and spelling your first name and last name?

Dick White [00:00:39] Richard, R-i-c-h-a-r-d. But I prefer Dick, D-i-c-k. Middle name Fox, F-o-x. And my last name White, W-h-i-t-e, followed by Junior.

Virginia Garrison [00:00:52] What year were you born?

Dick White [00:00:54] I was born February 21st, 1941.

Virginia Garrison [00:00:57] Where were you born?

Dick White [00:00:58] Southampton Hospital.

Virginia Garrison [00:01:01] Can you tell me a little bit about your family heritage and where your parents and ancestors came from?

Dick White [00:01:06] My mother was born in Brooklyn, but her family moved to various parts of Nassau County. They lived in Mineola. They lived in, the last place that my mother's family lived was in Port Washington. My dad's family, my grandfather was born in Canada and my grandmother, his wife was born in on the Isle of Wight in England. I'm not sure where my grandfather met my grandmother. I'm assuming New York City or somewhere west. But when my grandfather came to East Hampton in the late 1800s, at that time he owned about five drugstores up around Glen Cove, Oyster Bay, Bronxville, Rockville Centre. And the reason he came to East Hampton was because a lot of his customers were very wealthy and they had summer homes in East Hampton. So he and his wife, Alice, Fox was her last name, moved to East Hampton and they bought a house on Huntting Lane. And in that house, my father, my uncle and my aunt were all born in the house on Huntting Lane. And then later he sold that house and had a house where Johnny Papas is now. It was a house that was built in the 1700s, and in the back was the barn where they kept the horse and everything. In those days that that whole parking lot was all barns in the back and big, big oak trees and maple trees and so forth. Anyway, he had the drugstore which is there today and still the name White's on it. He bought the drugstore from some man named Muchmore. And off Newtown lane, up where Bucket's Deli used to be there's a lane called Muchmore Lane. And anyway, my grandfather had the drugstore in East Hampton, and my father graduated from East Hampton High School and went on to Dartmouth. My uncle graduated from East Hampton High School, went on to Wharton, and my aunt was at the Miss Porter School when

my grandfather, by this time he was what was known as a 10 percenter. He would buy lots of property and houses and things 10% down and catch them for the rest. Well, the Depression caught him up and he went penniless. He lost the house on Main Street because he couldn't pay \$400 in taxes. And anyway, by that time they had opened a drugstore in Montauk. When Carl Fisher came here, in 1926, and my father had to leave Dartmouth, and he came and opened this, ran the store in Montauk. My uncle ran the store in East Hampton, and they lost the rest of the stores. My mother graduated from high school in Port Washington and she worked for a lawyer in Plandome and she came out to Montauk to visit her aunt who's I don't know her first name. She was known as Ma Honey, and her husband was known as Pa Honey. And Ma and Pa Honey owned the hardware store, which today is more familiar as Montauk Printing.

Virginia Garrison [00:05:09] Do you, I've seen that name, Honey, in a couple of places with different spellings. Do you know ...

Dick White [00:05:15] H-o-n-e-y. they're buried in the Amagansett cemetery right across from the Amagansett Firehouse. If you could pull up to it, it's in the right hand, first row, right hand corner. And it has both their names. And I've forgotten their first names, but my mother's aunt was Ma Honey. And so she came out to visit Ma Honey. And there was my dad dispensing not only pills, but ice cream sodas and tuna fish sandwiches at White's Drugstore, which is today White's Liquor Store. And that was the drugstore for many, many years. I'm getting ahead of myself.

Virginia Garrison [00:06:00] That was like a gathering place, too, right?

Dick White [00:06:03] Well, in those days now, when I was born in '41, my family lived over the drugstore, and Montauk Village had about 500 people. And in that section of town, there was the drugstore and the middle store was actually the post office. And that had been converted from the movie theater. There had been a movie theater there, and they closed it during the Depression and the post office went in there. And then my father on the day of the 1938 hurricane, he was in in Manhattan, picking up the license for the liquor store. And when he came home, he found that the side of the building had blown out. The side of the drugstore had blown out. Anyway, I get back to where I was living up there with my family. So we had the drugstore downstairs and post office and the other store, which was the print store, was the liquor store. And then across the street was Sears Market, a barbershop, Shagwong Tavern, and on the corner, which later became Johnny's Tackle Shop, was David Edwardes photo. And then next to that, later on, right after the war was a five and dime and that closed and it became a laundromat.

Virginia Garrison [00:07:29] Do you remember who owned that?

Dick White [00:07:31] The laundromat?

Virginia Garrison [00:07:32] The five and dime.

Dick White [00:07:33] Yeah. It was Louis Seitz who married Celina McDonald, was a sister of Frances McDonald Ecker. And but that didn't last long. And then Mary Woods took it over and made a laundromat out of it. And then between the laundromat and Sears market was Charlie Appleyard's plumbing place. And then next to Shagwong Tavern was Tuma's Tackle Shop. And that's that. Yeah, that's a picture. I was born in 1941. So at some point in my life I became aware of my surroundings and I would stand in my crib and look out the window. And of course, across the street was Shagwong Tavern. And in those days, Montauk was inhabited by the U.S. Army, the U.S. Army Signal Corps, the U.S. Navy and the Coast Guard. And I saw many of those men chatting with each other as they rolled out of Shagwong Tavern swinging at each other.

Virginia Garrison [00:08:49] Oh, really?

Dick White [00:08:51] Yeah. Because I just looked down and saw it.

Virginia Garrison [00:08:55] From the second story.

Dick White [00:08:56] Across the street. Anyway, my when my mother came out to visit her aunt, she saw Dad and they started dating. And then she came out the day after the hurricane and stayed with him to help him put all that stuff back together. Because if you look at this photograph, you can see how much damage there was. And he was picking up pieces of cosmetics and so forth, hoping to get some money back on them. And then, of course, later on they put the wall back up and back in business. But that drugstore and my father was the kind of guy—you have to picture Montauk with 500 people in it. And the school in those days, which was first grade through eighth grade, had 58 kids in it. They only had four classrooms. Each classroom had two grades. Well, anyway. During the summer, if you were a tourist and you came in and you said, I need a pair of socks, Dad would say, We don't have any today, but I will tomorrow. He had a haberdasher guy over in Greenport named Abe Brown. He would call Abe and say, Hey, Abe, I need some socks. And Abe would put the socks on the bus that went to East Hampton and the driver would drop it off at the drugstore in East Hampton. And my dad would go to the drugstore and pick up the socks. And by golly, the next day we sold socks. And that's the way it went. So by the time I was old enough to work there. Well, actually, I worked there when I was about eight or nine doing various stuff. We had just about anything. It was like a general store, right? But you needed that to make a living because you couldn't make it on on just the prescriptions and so forth. You needed just about everything to get through the winter. The difference in those days when Labor Day came, that was it. I remember sitting on the steps, watching the cars leave, and they didn't come back till the next Memorial Day. And they didn't come back for Columbus Day or...

Virginia Garrison [00:11:22] No shoulder season.

Dick White [00:11:23] Nothing. It was that was it. Now, you were back to the 500 people who were here. And Jimmy Hewitt used to say that I really didn't have any friends. But the fact that my dad had a ice cream fountain and chocolates and comic books. Guys our age wanted to come and visit me in the afternoon because it was, you know ... Yeah, pretty good chance you could get a fresh comic for free and a ice cream soda or ice cream cone.

Virginia Garrison [00:11:58] So you went to the Montauk School?

Dick White [00:12:00] Oh, yes.

Virginia Garrison [00:12:00] So who was in your class?

Dick White [00:12:03] Timmy Gilmartin was in my class, and he beat me by a scant, I don't know, 1/10 of 1% for the valedictorian. I was salutatorian and Timmy was valedictorian. Also ahead of me was Paul Forsberg. I'm trying to think of Betty Martell who married Charlie Morici. Baker Tuthill was there. Jimmy Hewitt, Bill Steck, Normie Tuthill, Dick LeveyCount [?]. Jeanette Bimson, Lorraine Kronuch. My first date ever was with Lorraine Kronuch, and we walked up to the Memory Motel. It wasn't like it is today. It was just opened up and Cap, Cap, Cap Roys [?] opened it up and they had a special, they had a sizzling steak on the menu. And I bought a sizzling steak for my date, Lorraine Kronuch. I think I was in the seventh grade. Really? Yeah.

Virginia Garrison [00:13:16] It's pretty impressive for seventh grade.

Dick White [00:13:18] Oh, I was way ahead of my time, I learned it from the summer kids. They were always ahead of us.

Virginia Garrison [00:13:25] Did you always work at the drugstore when you were a kid?

Dick White [00:13:29] I was an indentured servant. I didn't have any choice. Oh, yeah. And I got paid. Well, I'd get not much, but I got paid and I saved my money. And I'll never forget. I wanted to buy a knife that I saw in the window in Tuma's Tackle Shop and it took me about four or five weeks of putting newspapers together and sweeping the floor and so forth. But when I turned 14, then I really had to go to work there and and I worked there. And then my dad sold the store in 1953, I believe, to our Al Rattiner, that's Dan Rattiner's father. And the problem was Dan Rattiner thought he owned the store and I thought I owned the store. So it didn't work out too well.

Virginia Garrison [00:14:22] Which building now are we talking about? Not the current White's?

Dick White [00:14:26] Where the liquor store is today.

Virginia Garrison [00:14:28] Okay.

Dick White [00:14:30] The White's Department Store that you know, that was built in 1964 or five.

Virginia Garrison [00:14:40] Oh and the Rattiners' own that?

Dick White [00:14:43] Yeah. Al and Jen Rattiner. And in fact the birth of the Pioneer, which was Dan's Paper, was in the bones of the old White's Drugstore. When Al bought the store from my dad, he had a lease, and the lease lasted longer than when he built the new building, so he kept the store. It just was closed and they had paper on the window. But Danny used it as his office to create the Pioneer.

Virginia Garrison [00:15:19] Because they weren't using it anyway.

Dick White [00:15:20] Yeah. And his office consisted of a two door filing cabinet, some cement blocks, and an old door that he used as a desk an old typewriter. And that was his office. Anyway, by then, now we're up to 1964, 65. I had gotten married and Betsy and I lived upstairs back where I was born. And so I lived there for another eight or nine years.

Virginia Garrison [00:15:52] Other than going to college and stuff, had you lived anywhere besides there? That was pretty much ...

Dick White [00:15:57] That was it.

Virginia Garrison [00:15:59] You must have known everybody on Main Street and all the goings on.

Dick White [00:16:03] On. Oh, it was amazing. I mean, because we were the only drugstore and at that time the only liquor store and the post office was there and my bedroom was over the post office. So every morning, Mr. Cook, the postmaster, would come down there at around quarter after five in the morning and he would hand-cancel the mail that had been dropped in the box the night before because it went out on the 6 o'clock train from the railroad station. So every morning I woke up to [taps on table] two on the ink, one on the envelope, two on the ink, one on the envelope. That was right over, right under where I slept, so that was my alarm clock. And another story about living over the post office. I came home from school one day and I had to go up to my room and take my school clothes off and put my after-school clothes on. And I had to hang up my pants and shirt and whatever, and it had to be neat. Well, one day I was in a real rush and I just threw the stuff on the floor and my mother found it. She opened the window and threw out everything I owned.

Now where did it land? On the sidewalk in front of the post office so people going to the post office had to step on it or over it. Naturally, I had to pick it all up, bring it all back and put it away. I never did that again.

Virginia Garrison [00:17:43] Was she strict?

Dick White [00:17:44] Oh, she was German. Both sides. Her father, her mother, both were German. And yes, she was very strict. And she had a hell of a right cross ooh yeah that hurt. Those were the days, my friend.

Virginia Garrison [00:18:02] I can't imagine what the Montauk School was like when you were there.

Dick White [00:18:06] Well, it was about one third the size, there were four classrooms. First and second grade, Peggy Joyce taught that. Third and fourth, Mrs. Hannah Tilden taught that. Fifth and sixth, I had two teachers, three. Mrs. Barnes, Mrs. Babinsky, but she was Mrs.—Miss Osborne at that time. But later, Mrs. Babinsky, and then Mrs. Reutershan. And then seventh and eighth. In seventh grade I had Kenny Ross and in eighth grade John Morales. But same room, Ken. The way it worked was the eighth-grade teacher taught seventh and eighth grades. He or she was the seventh, eighth grade teacher and also the principal. They didn't call them superintendents. They called them principals. So basically there were three teachers and the principal and one janitor.

Virginia Garrison [00:19:09] And who did you hang out with for friends?

Dick White [00:19:14] Donald Bryan. Wally Droebecker. They were the ones near me, but over in Shepherd's Neck would have been the Belbers and the Tuthills and the Gilmartins. And then later on, Harry Barry, who lived over by Sunset Cottages. Jimmy Hewitt and Jimmy.

Virginia Garrison [00:19:35] And what was he like as a kid?

Dick White [00:19:38] Not much different than he was, except. Okay, I'll leave that part out. I'll leave it to your imagination. But. Well.

Virginia Garrison [00:19:46] Were you a good were you a good kid or a bad kid or a wild kid?

Dick White [00:19:53] Oh, I. I pushed the envelope. Yeah, I did. And Jimmy helped me push it.

Virginia Garrison [00:20:01] I can imagine.

Dick White [00:20:01] Yeah, I remember going there one day. We were going to go duck hunting in Stepping Stone. And so I go over there and there's a note on the door. Don't go in the house. Mom's having a baby. And that's when Patty was born. She was born in the house. But we always loved to go to Jimmy's house because he had a couple of pigs, and then he had geese and he had ducks and he had chickens and lambs, and he lived right on the water.

Virginia Garrison [00:20:39] Was this Old West Lake? Yeah, yeah.

Dick White [00:20:42] Right on the water. You know where Jeanette Kaiser lives—lived? Yeah, well, you know where a Stepping Stone is.

Virginia Garrison [00:20:52] Yeah.

Dick White [00:20:53] Well, if you go south and as you go along the road, just Stepping Stone across the street, there weren't many houses there then. In fact, the Kaisers' house was up near the road and Jimmy's house was down near the water. One thing about it, George and Eileen Hewitt had seven or eight kids, but each kid had friends and I'd be in there and there'd be 15 or 16 kids, and

there was always enough food for everybody. It was amazing. The one thing it never stopped there was the laundry machine. Every time I went there, the washing machine and dryer were running. I guess when you got that many kids there's a lot of laundry.

Virginia Garrison [00:21:37] You you didn't ... high school. You you went away to boarding school.

Dick White [00:21:42] When I went away one year, I went away. I went to freshman year in East Hampton. And then my folks decided that I was associating with the wrong element. And I have to hasten to say that one of the wrong elements was John Walsh, who wound up being the physics dean at Dartmouth College, which. So there. There, I guess there. And Timmy was also one and he wound up going to the Air Force Academy.

Virginia Garrison [00:22:16] Timmy who?

Dick White [00:22:19] Timmy Gilmartin.

Virginia Garrison [00:22:20] Oh, okay.

Dick White [00:22:20] So these are the people. But anyway, I think my father really wanted me to go because he had gone to the same school, Williston Academy. So I went there. I was there three years until I got kicked out. I actually got kicked out twice. I got kicked out once. And it was for well, actually for drinking. And I was I was with a whole group of guys, and I was the only one that fessed up to it. And because I fessed up they kicked me out for a little while, then let me back in. And then there was a series of things that breaking the rules of the school, which were pretty strict. And they finally said, I think you're better off someplace else. So I wound up going back to East Hampton High School, in which I graduated from in 1959 with Mr. Hugh King, the town crier.

Virginia Garrison [00:23:25] You were in the same class?

Dick White [00:23:26] Yes, we were.

Virginia Garrison [00:23:28] I must have been fun, too. Did you hang out with him?

Dick White [00:23:32] Well. Not so much. Yes and no. I mean, I don't remember ever going double dating or anything, but we were friendly and and did things in school and not so much stuff out of school.

Virginia Garrison [00:23:51] Now, you and Tim Gilmartin were.

Dick White [00:23:57] Tim was actually because I went away to school, I went back a grade. And so Tim graduated from East Hampton High School a year before I did, and he went off to the Air Force Academy.

Virginia Garrison [00:24:09] Who did you do the Explorers Club with.

Dick White [00:24:12] That was Mr. Gilmartin, Timmy's father.

Virginia Garrison [00:24:15] Timmy's father.

Dick White [00:24:16] And that was an impromptu, unorganized. Dick Gilmartin had a big '98 Oldsmobile, and he would take these smelly ten year old boys and pile 'em in the back. And off we'd go. And we'd go to the Shinnecock reservation. We'd go to parts of East Hampton, we'd go to parts of Montauk where there had been from Camp Welsh. There had been a artillery firing place over on off of Edgemere. And they fired over by the lake and they exploded. And there would be pockmarks there, we'd find many balls. And we would go through the old highway, through the

woods, which is all now overgrown, very hard to find, Split Rock. And he told us about all the Indian things that happened.

Virginia Garrison [00:25:17] And that must have been fascinating.

Dick White [00:25:20] It was. And he did it on his own. It was no organization. He just he loved local history.

Virginia Garrison [00:25:28] And he was sharing.

Dick White [00:25:29] Oh, yeah. Yeah. And because of it, I got this inner thing about local history. I mean, he made it come alive, and he made it interesting, and he made you want to know more.

Virginia Garrison [00:25:44] And you felt that way even that young.

Dick White [00:25:47] Well, yes, yeah. Oh, yeah. He, he, he inspired us, but and then later he became the Cub Scout master. And. And don't forget, he was a paraplegic at this point.

Virginia Garrison [00:26:04] He was at this point, yes.

Dick White [00:26:06] What happened was he had been in an automobile accident, and someone in their attempt to get him out of the car actually did what the you're not supposed to do. And it it screwed him up for the rest of his life.

Virginia Garrison [00:26:20] The spine or something. Yeah.

Dick White [00:26:21] Yeah. On good days, he could walk with crutches, but most of the time he was in a wheelchair. But he managed to get in the car and drive the car around. And I mean, he didn't let it stop him. And he formed an organization called Skills Unlimited. I believe exists today. And I think Timmy has kind of picked up the cudgel on that and runs it.

Virginia Garrison [00:26:49] That's great that he made such an impression on you, stoked that interest. And you went to Monmouth College?

Dick White [00:27:00] I graduated from Monmouth College, but prior to that, I had a somewhat of a college experience at St Lawrence University.

Virginia Garrison [00:27:11] Uh huh.

Dick White [00:27:12] For a while, until they said no, you need to grow up.

Virginia Garrison [00:27:17] Did you get kicked out of there?

Dick White [00:27:18] Yeah, I had two roommates. The same thing happened.

Virginia Garrison [00:27:21] They got kicked out?

Dick White [00:27:22] Out. Oh, yeah, the same year. One went in the Army and then came back to St. Lawrence and graduated and did fine. The other boy went off and became a rep for Rossignol Skis.

Virginia Garrison [00:27:36] Oh.

Dick White [00:27:37] And I spent a year in Manhattan, which probably, short of going to the Marine Corps, it was a good thing for me because there I was. I remember I worked downtown in an insurance company and I was a I started out as a file boy. That's how I got the job. And I got paid 65 bucks a week. And I lived in an apartment on 88th Street with two other guys and the rent was 100 bucks a month. And that included electricity. Well, anyway, and I got promoted from file boy

to a claims manager and so I had to wear a suit every day or remnants of a suit. So I had, my shoes had a hole in them. I called home to get some money and my mother said her father had that problem in the Depression and put cardboard in there. And so I got the message. You're out of the nest, pal. And my mother told the story, and she hung up and cried for about a half an hour. Because a mother is, you know. But she had to do it. And it was the best thing for me, actually.

Virginia Garrison [00:29:00] What they call tough love.

Dick White [00:29:01] Yeah. Because I was, you know, irresponsible. And, you know, I could do it, but my priorities—

Virginia Garrison [00:29:10] Did you try the cardboard?

Dick White [00:29:11] I did. And I saved the money. And I bought a pair of shoes instead of spending it on something else.

Virginia Garrison [00:29:19] Did you and Betsy marry while you were in college?

Dick White [00:29:22] Yes. Betsy had graduated. She graduated cum laude from the University of Florida in education. And actually, she was teaching in Fort Lauderdale.

Virginia Garrison [00:29:33] Okay.

Dick White [00:29:34] And but she came up and worked at the Manor. That's where we met. In fact, Timmy and I decided one night to go to Surfside to have some drinks. And guess who was there? We didn't know them. It was Betsy and Nancy.

Virginia Garrison [00:29:52] Yeah. Oh, okay. Nancy ended up being Timmy's wife.

Dick White [00:29:56] And Betsy ended up being my wife, and we met them both the same night. And they were both Manor waitresses.

Virginia Garrison [00:30:02] Manor waitresses. So they came out for the summer.

Dick White [00:30:06] Sort of like the mail order brides. They used to come out, you know, the Manor waitresses were the future wives for Montauk kids. So anyway, yeah, Betsy and I got married in '63 and I graduated in '64 the following year. '64. At that point, I had gone to Monmouth College in Monmouth, Illinois, and Betsy had graduated. And we got married. We got married in September. I went back and Betsy got in the meantime, Betsy got a job at the Montauk School for the following September, and I went to the dean in Monmouth. So I needed three classes to graduate, not in my major or minor, but just 3 hours. And they were kind enough to let me come back to Montauk and take the classes at Southampton College at night.

Virginia Garrison [00:31:02] Oh, great.

Dick White [00:31:03] And send them. And then they. They credited me and and that's where I got my diploma. I get a piece of paper. But I was working in the liquor store and eventually then I bought the liquor store from my father.

Virginia Garrison [00:31:16] What year was that or how old were you, either?

Dick White [00:31:21] Let's see. I started working in a liquor store in the spring, in the summer of '64, so I would have been 23 and. And I stayed there.

Virginia Garrison [00:31:37] How long before you bought it?

Dick White [00:31:40] Probably four years. Maybe three or four years. Trying to think, because in 1970 I was elected to town board and I'm thinking, did I buy it before then or after that?

Virginia Garrison [00:31:56] So that was 1970. I wasn't clear on the timeline for town board stuff.

Dick White [00:32:01] Prior to that I was on the planning board and I was chairman of the planning board for three years, I guess. And then so I would have been elected in 70 and I served four years on the town board and then I chose not to run again. And I was appointed budget director. And then I went back on the planning board and then Betsy had cancer and I had to quit the planning board. I had to quit just about everything except the business because Betsy was in the hospital in New York City.

Virginia Garrison [00:32:49] I didn't know about that.

Dick White [00:32:50] That. Yeah. And so what the way it worked was Betsy's mother had moved up here and was living where Lee lives now in the same where the house where Lee and MaryJo live.

Virginia Garrison [00:33:05] Oh, okay. Yeah.

Dick White [00:33:06] And she. She would go to New York City to be with Betsy. Betsy was at.

Virginia Garrison [00:33:16] Sloan-Kettering?

Dick White [00:33:17] No, no, it was on Central Park West, but way up. What's the big Episcopalian Church? That's way up that way. Well, anyway, the. Oh, St. Luke's.

Virginia Garrison [00:33:33] Okay.

Dick White [00:33:34] She was at St. Luke's Hospital, and across the street was the former St. Luke's nursing building. And so we could go there. And for \$3 a night, you could stay in a St. Luke's nursing students dormitory. Oh, it was spartan, but it was \$3 a night and it was right across from the hospital, so it was perfect. So Betsy's mom would go in for a week or two and I would take care of the kids and then we would switch.

Virginia Garrison [00:34:07] How old were the kids at this time?

Dick White [00:34:09] Ricky was in fifth grade.

Virginia Garrison [00:34:12] They were pretty young.

Dick White [00:34:13] So how old is fifth grade?

Virginia Garrison [00:34:17] Ten.

Dick White [00:34:19] Well, if that's the case, then they're two years apart. Lee is two years older, Heather's two years younger. But when I was in there, Ma would stay at the house and take care of the kids. And then when she would go in, I would take care of the kids and take care of the store. But I had help in the store, so I didn't have to worry about that as much.

Virginia Garrison [00:34:41] What's Betsy's maiden name?

Dick White [00:34:42] Lee.

Virginia Garrison [00:34:43] Oh, okay.

Dick White [00:34:46] Her. Her father was from Kentucky, hence I used to call him the colonel. Colonel Lee. Okay. And her mother was actually born in Wales, but lived most of her life in Detroit, and that's where she met her husband, Lester Lee. And then he had a heart attack and then he retired. He worked for American Standard Plumbing, and in the factory he was a Midwest manager and he designed the plumbing for Fort Knox, for example. Big, big jobs. But then he had to retire and he moved to Pompano Beach. And that's why Betsy was in Florida.

Virginia Garrison [00:35:34] Where when you were raising the kids and everything. And I didn't realize that Betsy had been sick during that period. But where were you living at that time? Still over the store?

Dick White [00:35:46] Oh, oh, no. I'm sorry. No, no. At that point. No, that point we had moved to North Farragut.

Virginia Garrison [00:35:53] Okay, that's where you are. Are you there now?

Dick White [00:35:56] No, no, I'm not. Dave Webb built the house Betsy and I on North Farragut.

Virginia Garrison [00:36:03] Okay.

Dick White [00:36:03] We bought the property from the guy who was the surveyor, an engineer for Carl Fisher. When Carl Fisher picked his lots, this guy picked his lots and he and he moved back to Saint Louis and didn't even know anything about Montauk.

Virginia Garrison [00:36:19] What was his last name, do you remember?

Dick White [00:36:21] Well, I think it was Webb, but no, we're.

Virginia Garrison [00:36:26] Not like the locals.

Dick White [00:36:27] Oh, not no relation. Or at least I don't think so.

Virginia Garrison [00:36:30] That's a is that, that must be a very nice spot there, the views and stuff.

Dick White [00:36:34] Oh I was. Yeah. So everything grew up you can't see I mean when I, when we moved there you could see all of well you could see Fishers Island and all of the Rhode Island coastline, the lighthouse, Block Island. But now everything's grown up and and you can just see the boat and stuff.

Virginia Garrison [00:36:56] That's amazing. So. But you don't live. And that's.

Dick White [00:36:59] You know, actually a couple of divorces later. Well, the first divorce was from Betsy. And then I built the house on Beech Hollow Court next to Bettie Duryea was living there at that time. Tom Bogdan lives up there. Richie Nessel lives there. On the way to the Montauket, there's a left that goes into a little subdivision that has a cul de sac at the end, that's Beech Hollow Court. And then I married Rose Tuthill from Greenport, and we were married for, I guess, about 15 years. And then we got divorced.

Virginia Garrison [00:37:41] When was that?

Dick White [00:37:43] Oh, about ten years ago. So that would be 22. So 2012. So what happened then, I had a choice. I had this—Rose owned half the house because we were married. So. But by then, my mom had died. And so I had my mom and dad's house that was rented to Jimmy Barnds and Faith Nicoletti.

Virginia Garrison [00:38:15] Yeah, but where was that house?

Dick White [00:38:17] Where it is today on the golf course. Oh, next to them. Across from Doug Haak. Across from Bri Prado.

Virginia Garrison [00:38:28] Okay.

Dick White [00:38:30] Do you know where called Carl Darenberg used to live? You know where Kari Ecker Shaye lives? Marshall Prado.

Virginia Garrison [00:38:38] Yeah.

Dick White [00:38:39] Okay, that's. That's the Fairlawn Drive. Well, we're right on the one. And Fairlawn Drive has two ends, one on Essex Street, and then it comes out on Fairview. Yeah, we're right there.

Virginia Garrison [00:38:55] Gotcha.

Dick White [00:38:56] It's on.

Virginia Garrison [00:38:56] On the golf course.

Dick White [00:38:58] On the 18th fairway. And so, anyway, I had a choice. I had to sell one house and give the money, and I decided that I would rather be over with the Prados and the Grimeses and my son Lee and the Montauk people than to be where I was with.

Virginia Garrison [00:39:20] Beech Hollow.

Dick White [00:39:21] Beech Hollow.

Virginia Garrison [00:39:21] Seasonal.

Dick White [00:39:22] Which was more. Well, it was a beautiful spot. I mean, I used to sit in my living room and watch TV and look out the window and see the ferry coming in from the New London coming between the island. Oh, oh. And Orient point. And what's little island?

Virginia Garrison [00:39:47] Fishers?

Dick White [00:39:48] No where hoof and mouth.

Virginia Garrison [00:39:51] Oh, Plum Island.

Dick White [00:39:52] Oh, Plum Gut? Where the boat, the ferry comes in at Plum Gut, I used to sit there, so it was a beautiful, beautiful spot. But most of my friends were over there, so. And the house was perfect for an old fart like me because it's all on one floor.

Virginia Garrison [00:40:11] The current house. Yeah.

Dick White [00:40:12] Where I am now. So that's where I moved to. And no more divorces because I'm out of houses.

Virginia Garrison [00:40:19] That's funny.

Dick White [00:40:25] We skipped around a lot here.

Virginia Garrison [00:40:26] Yeah, I know. So the liquor store, what was that like?

Dick White [00:40:33] The original liquor store was where Montauk Printing, it was there

Virginia Garrison [00:40:36] Yeah.

Dick White [00:40:37] It was there and it was small and I was running it and my mom and dad would go away for the winter. But there wasn't any reason to be excited because we'd have two or three customers a day. But funny story, one day this very notable person came in and bought probably \$2,000 worth of very, very fine wines, which we had never sold. I mean, we sold gallons of muscatel and gallons of port wine to the people. Yeah. And so I thought, well, we're on the cusp of a whole new.

Virginia Garrison [00:41:25] Trend or something?

Dick White [00:41:26] Yeah, new clients -- they're going to deserve having a better selection of wines. So I went off on my own and at that time a good bottle of Beaujolais cost a buck 49. And you know, Paul Martin would cost that was expensive. That was for 4.99. Well I started bringing in some Chambolle-Musigny and and Marché and now we're up around 50, 60 bucks a bottle. My father came home from Florida and said, What the heck are you doing? Holy crow. Who do you think you're going to sell this stuff to? I said, Well, look, I just sold well to one person one time.

Virginia Garrison [00:42:13] Who never came back.

Dick White [00:42:14] Oh, no, they lived here for many, many years. It was Edward Albee. He had just written Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? And that's when he and Uta Hagen moved into town. And all of a sudden, we were getting people like that. And the clientele did change, and they did want better wines. Maybe not quite as high as I shot, but.

Virginia Garrison [00:42:40] So what decade would this have been?

Dick White [00:42:42] We're talking about the middle seventies.

Virginia Garrison [00:42:45] Okay. Oh, yeah, that makes sense.

Dick White [00:42:47] And were you here when? The bicentennial? Yes, for 76.

Virginia Garrison [00:42:53] Yes.

Dick White [00:42:54] Were you here for the keg party?

Virginia Garrison [00:42:57] I didn't go to that infamous keg party. The BMB.

Dick White [00:43:02] Phil Berg. Yeah. Yeah. They're the ones that caused the reason the town enacted all the beach laws, because prior to that, we didn't have beach laws. But Phil says to me that actually there were more than 76 kegs. We just. We just told everybody it was 76.

Virginia Garrison [00:43:25] That's still.

Dick White [00:43:26] That was I.

Virginia Garrison [00:43:27] Infamous?

Dick White [00:43:28] I still think back to those days. And I loved that that whole period of the seventies.

Virginia Garrison [00:43:36] What did you like about it in particular?

Dick White [00:43:40] I guess it was my age, number one. I was in my 30s.

Virginia Garrison [00:43:42] So you would have been.

Dick White [00:43:44] Between 30 and 40.

Virginia Garrison [00:43:45] Uh huh.

Dick White [00:43:46] My kids were not babies anymore. They were getting a little older. Not certainly not. We had to have babysitters, but they were older. And then there was Jimmy Hewitt across the street and Shagwong and it was pretty notable. And Watson and I was in that group.

Virginia Garrison [00:44:15] Fun.

Dick White [00:44:16] It was a fun time. I had a Willys Jeep that had no top. No sides. One seat and we fixed it up and I put piping on the back so my kids wouldn't fall out of it. And I used to use that to hold a skeet thrower and we'd back up to the cliffs. Now, the cliffs today are all hoodoos. And back in those days the cliffs were straight up and down. And I could back the Jeep right up to the edge of the cliffs and then shoot, throw the skeet out over the ocean and and shoot. And I'd be there with Charlie Grimes and Paul Neff. And who else? Baker Tuthill, a whole bunch of guys. And we just we did things like that.

Virginia Garrison [00:45:18] It does sound fun and sociable.

Dick White [00:45:20] Yeah, it was. And that you can't do anymore. Like, you get people getting really excited when you start showing up with a shotgun over your shoulder. You know, when I lived over the liquor store and I was, say I'm 12 or 13, I would go duck hunting on my own in Fort Pond and I would get dressed, come downstairs, walk along the sidewalk. —I was too young to drive—with a shotgun over my shoulder and go to the pond near where Harvest is today, in the reeds there. And I'd come back and people would, nobody got excited, they'd say, what did you get? It'd be like carrying a fishing rod, what'd you catch? But today, I don't think. Yeah, I think it people would get a little. I think cops would be on me in a heartbeat.

Virginia Garrison [00:46:19] Child Protective Services.

Dick White [00:46:21] Yeah. Yeah.

Virginia Garrison [00:46:22] So, so, like, so let's see. So. So Betsy was sick in, like, the seventies.

Dick White [00:46:28] She had cancer. The story is a kind of a neat one. She. She wasn't feeling well. And she went in to see Dr. Medler.

Virginia Garrison [00:46:39] In East Hampton.

Dick White [00:46:40] Yeah. Yeah. That's when the funeral home was the medical.

Virginia Garrison [00:46:44] Yeah.

Dick White [00:46:45] They used to call it the clinic, and I was in the liquor store, and Medler called me and he said, Betsy's got to go to St. Luke's Hospital to Dr. Bell. And I said, okay, I'll arrange it. I'll go first thing in the morning. He said, No, you're going tonight.

Virginia Garrison [00:47:03] Wow.

Dick White [00:47:04] I said, Holy crow. So I called I forget. Oh, I got ahold of Betsy's mom and my mom and I said, I got to go. Somebody take care of the store, somebody take care of the kids. I got to go. And I drove her into the hospital. And that night they arranged for me to stay in St Luke's nursing home across the street. And I came back the next morning and the doctor was there and he said, We're going to do a biopsy. And she had it up in her chest and they took an X-ray. And it wasn't it was an undefined mass and they couldn't operate, but they took a biopsy in her throat. And that afternoon he called me and he said, it is cancerous. And she has about maybe six months. Well, what am I supposed to tell Betsy? And I said, Well, I don't know. I don't I don't know. I don't know. I didn't know. I mean one side of me says, I guess you have to tell her. And the other side says, well, why not not tell her and let her enjoy the six months? Well, he took the problem out of my hands and told her. Her reaction was, Oh, no, no, no, no, I've got three kids to put through college. I can't be screwing around with it. So you do what you have to do and I'll do what I have to do.

Virginia Garrison [00:48:47] And she lived much, she went on to live decades. Right?

Dick White [00:48:51] Right. And the night she died, we were at a lighthouse dinner at Gosman's. And I was sitting here, Ruth was sitting here, and Betsy was sitting here.

Virginia Garrison [00:49:04] Now, is Ruth your partner? Okay.

Dick White [00:49:09] And Ruth nudged me and said, Betsy's got a problem. And I looked over and she was like this [puts hands to throat], this is classic. So I immediately.

Virginia Garrison [00:49:19] Did a Heimlich?

Dick White [00:49:19] Heimlich, Heimlich, Heimlich. Nothing. Who was in the group but a couple of EMTs, an EMT instructor, Coast Guard guys. And Ellen Cooke said, put her on the floor right away. I'll take over. And Dutch Riege was in there, too. And he was a paramedic, not a paramedic, an EMT. And I called and asked for the ambulance as it was. The ambulance was out on a drill right around the corner. They were there in a heartbeat. They kept doing CPR, they kept doing Heimlich. Nothing worked. And they took her to the hospital. And by the time she got there, she was brain dead. Because of the lack of oxygen.

Virginia Garrison [00:50:09] Yeah.

Dick White [00:50:10] And what happened, we think, is she had a stroke and all the food that was in her throat was all the way down. It wasn't just a piece here. It was just loaded with lobster. She was eating lobster and she had the stroke and it paralyzed her swallowing capacity and she couldn't swallow.

Virginia Garrison [00:50:33] And it blocked off the air.

Dick White [00:50:36] Yeah. And so they the doctor said, who was I? And I said, Well, we're divorced, but she's the mother of my three kids. And Lee was there and doctor said, What do you want me to do? And he said, I've got to wait till my brother and sister get here. And they decided to let her go because they said even if she lives -- the curse, she had a very strong heart, but no brain.

Virginia Garrison [00:51:12] So that's that's I mean, I'm glad that she had the ex-, you know, the years beyond the cancer.

Dick White [00:51:19] Oh yeah.

Dick White [00:51:22] She never used the word cured.

Virginia Garrison [00:51:24] Mhm.

Dick White [00:51:25] She said it's still in remission 30 years later and every year we would go to the doctor, her oncologist, and she would be a nervous wreck the night before and she would be on top of the mountain after she had sat with him because there was nothing there. It was all gone.

Virginia Garrison [00:51:46] So I should, I should ask you about I mean, and I saw that your father did a lot of these things, too, but just all these involvements in with the church, the fire department, the town, I don't even know where to start, but I guess maybe you want to talk a little bit about first your involvement with the town. Was there anything I feel like you were involved in, like the county park, things like that. But it seems like there were several things sort of on behalf of Montauk with the town that you were.

Dick White [00:52:27] One of the things that I'm most proud of is when I was on the planning board was when the the idea of making there was about 2,000, 3,000 acres over on East Lake Drive, making it a county park. And I was the chairman of the planning board at the time, so I was able to make a recommendation. I offered the resolution, we got a second and to make a resolution asking the town board to acquire the property. By the time the town board got it, I had been elected councilman, so I got my own pass, I caught my pass, I guess.

Virginia Garrison [00:53:13] You get to.

Dick White [00:53:14] Vote on it. I got sitting there, but we then asked the county to acquire it. Just before that I had been appointed the trustee from the town of East Hampton to be the East Hampton Town rep to Suffolk County Parks. Again, I caught my own pass and so we got it through. Another part of that was one day I was in the liquor store -- now that didn't include the Third House, that was just all the upland property.

Virginia Garrison [00:53:47] And who owned Third House at that point?

Dick White [00:53:48] Actually, Nick Monte he had bought it.

Virginia Garrison [00:53:52] I remember. Okay. Yeah.

Dick White [00:53:54] So Danny Rattiner, I'm sitting in the liquor store, Danny Rattiner calls me and he said, Dick, I picked up a piece of information that Nick is going to tear down Third House and build a major resort. He says, I think that's a travesty. I said, Well, let me see what I can do. So I got a hold of Tom Strong. And Tom Strong then was the county legislator from East Hampton. He was a legislator. I said, Tom, we have to buy Third House. I don't know how he did it, but he got it on. He passed the, the county went and bought Third House. And not only did they buy it, they had to condemn it because they couldn't reach an agreeable amount with Nick. I don't want to use wrong numbers, but let's say Nick wanted a dollar and the county wanted to pay \$0.50 and they were too far apart. So the only way to do it is through eminent domain, which is condemnation. And then what happens is the county pays what the county appraisal is, and then they go to court and fight over the difference. Usually it's split right down the middle. But anyway, that's how it was acquired and made part of, people today think it's all one time. No, it wasn't. It was actually several times because when the Air Force moved the GATR site, which is those poles at the top of the hill to the Carrillos' house, you know, where Vinnie Carrillo used to live?

Virginia Garrison [00:55:38] I feel like the Gator site is. Also by like I don't know where the Carrillos live, but like Bonnie Brady?

Dick White [00:55:43] Yes. Yeah, you got it. All right.

Dick White [00:55:45] Well, that was Air Force property and GATR is an acronym G-A-T-R Ground Air Travel Aircraft something. So it was it was part of the radar station. Right. But it was it was a defense thing for the Air Force, the radar so when the Air Force boogied from Montauk and the radar was no longer being used, that property was excess. Well, they gave it to the county parks.

Virginia Garrison [00:56:18] So that property is west of East Lake Drive.

Dick White [00:56:24] It's east of East Lake.

Dick White [00:56:27] East you go up the hill.

Dick White [00:56:31] You go up that hill, go up that road, there's a big archway with a C underneath it. C for Carrillo?

Virginia Garrison [00:56:38] Okay.

Virginia Garrison [00:56:39] You go up and if you go to the right, that was Vinny Carrillo's house. Vinnie Senior. And if you go to the left, was the GATR site. So I was very involved with county parks and Eddie Ecker senior at that time was Chief Deputy Commissioner of Suffolk County Parks and a very close friend of mine. And when Perry ran for governor, Eddie wanted to be part of the campaign team. So he took a leave of absence and they appointed me Chief Deputy Commissioner.

Virginia Garrison [00:57:17] Oh wow.

Dick White [00:57:18] Of parks. And that that was good. But it was a 75 one, 75 mile one way commutation every day 150 miles. So I was I was happy to give that job up because I had my own business and it was kind of cutting into what I was supposed to be doing.

Virginia Garrison [00:57:40] But that is something to be proud of. The thing with the park.

Dick White [00:57:44] Also I was part of the Duryea team and I am to this day. People ask me what is my affiliation? I say, I'm a Duryea Republican.

Virginia Garrison [00:57:54] What does that mean?

Dick White [00:57:55] Well, it's it's old. It's not the new Republican it's the old Duryea Republican back when Montauk was a lot of Republican. But we were we were Perry Republicans and whatever that meant. But that would have been Eddie Ecker and myself and Perry and Virgil Conway and Dave Webb. And, you know, I don't think philosophy wasn't that as much as having a good time around the bar was more important.

Virginia Garrison [00:58:33] That's a Duryea Republican?

Dick White [00:58:35] You know, when I was when I was chairman of the planning board the second time, Elbert Edwards was chairman of the ZBA.

Virginia Garrison [00:58:44] Okay.

Dick White [00:58:45] And Mike Finazzo was a councilman. So Saturday afternoons we would meet at, in those days, Elbert ran the ranch before Rusty did. And so we would meet there and one of the barns, Elbert with Jack Daniels, Mike with Cutty Sark and me with a half gallon of white wine. And we would solve the town problems.

Virginia Garrison [00:59:10] That's so funny.

Virginia Garrison [00:59:11] So, like, your father was on the school board, you were on the school board. 35 years.

Dick White [00:59:19] 35 years, when he retired I took his seat.

Virginia Garrison [00:59:22] That's how it worked? Yeah. So we were never at the same time you just you followed and the fire department, your father was and ...

Dick White [00:59:29] He was also the treasurer of the fire department and he died in office. And I went, well, usually the way it worked he was the Treasurer and when he would leave in the winter to go to Hawaii or wherever, I was the unofficial unknown treasurer.

Virginia Garrison [00:59:47] The ghost treasurer. Yeah.

Dick White [00:59:48] Yeah. And so when he died and I got elected and I've been there ever since, 20 some years, so between us we've had 60 years of being in the fire department. And that's not a testament to me. It's it's a thing that nobody else wants it. You know, you get elected treasurer when you're not in the room. It's like being the secretary. If you're not there, you get it.

Virginia Garrison [01:00:17] That's funny. But what else? So obviously you're an ambulance driver, too.

Dick White [01:00:22] Yes, I was back just before I was a councilman. We didn't have EMTs. There was no such thing. We had Red Cross training.

Virginia Garrison [01:00:32] Wow.

Dick White [01:00:33] That was it.

Virginia Garrison [01:00:33] Uh huh.

Virginia Garrison [01:00:34] And it was guys on the College of Physicians and Surgeons who decided that they wanted to improve the way we brought people to them. And that was the beginning. And that was the birth of the EMT course.

Virginia Garrison [01:00:50] So that's like for a better outcome or whatever.

Dick White [01:00:52] Yeah.

Dick White [01:00:53] Yeah. Okay.

Dick White [01:00:54] And the the initial stuff was three days in New York, at Columbia University, at the College of Physicians and Surgeons. And they had a three day course. It would start off in the morning where about 200 of us in a room, and they would be from New Jersey, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, New York and all kinds of people nurses, ambulance drivers, cops, you name it. Anybody that would be involved in an accident.

Virginia Garrison [01:01:25] Must have been really informative. No?

Dick White [01:01:27] Well, the first part was an hour, general stuff. And then you broke into classrooms. Mm hmm. Burns, legs, arms, eyes, neck, head, ears. And you'd go from one to another. And it was kind of intensive. Right. And after three days, you'd go back and then you had to follow up, and there was a Dr. Rowe. No, Dr. Abel, and Dr. Abel walked with crutches. I don't know what was wrong with him, but anyway, he picked up on it and he actually taught courses that would get

you to an EMT certification. At that time, just about when I was to get my certification was when I got elected councilman. And I knew I couldn't I couldn't do both.

Virginia Garrison [01:02:21] So which did?

Dick White [01:02:22] So I took the councilman

Virginia Garrison [01:02:24] Okay.

Dick White [01:02:25] Because that involved a lot more time. And I still had a business. I still had a family. I mean, yeah, so many ways you can cut the pie. Right. So. But I still remained a driver.

Virginia Garrison [01:02:37] Okay.

Dick White [01:02:38] Not so much in the back, but I'll be in the front. I help in the back, I mean, when we get there, I help or when we're loading up, I help, but in the back that's somebody else. Sure. Like today with Gene, we helped get him on and drove. We get there and pull out the stretcher, roll him in and get him in the bed. And then I make the bed again.

Virginia Garrison [01:03:01] Okay. So the. The fire department and then. Okay. We haven't gotten to. Oh, you go.

Dick White [01:03:10] Oh, my. Early days in the fire department, I was in Company 2, and it wasn't too long before I was a captain in Company 2, which is a it's an engine company. And these are the guys that actually go into the building because you have Company 3, which is the hose company. They give you the water, you got the aero company, you got the ambulance company, fire police company. And then I guess it was around year 40 ish I switched from company two to Company 6, which is fire police.

Virginia Garrison [01:03:45] Okay.

Dick White [01:03:46] When my father did it, we called it the Over the Hill Gang. The gang that couldn't shoot straight. And then all of a sudden, I'm one of them.

Virginia Garrison [01:03:54] That's what happens, right?

Dick White [01:03:56] And there was a an article in the paper that Richard Lewin writes for.

Virginia Garrison [01:04:04] Is it the Sun?

Dick White [01:04:06] Yeah, I think so. It was an article about the octogenarians in the Montauk Fire Department, and there's ten of us, and we're active. We're not retired guys. We're active. There's ten guys that are active, 80 year olds that are doing stuff every single day, whether they're driving the ambulance or directing traffic or flipping eggs or making pancakes or you name it, they're doing it.

Virginia Garrison [01:04:37] Driving an ambulance is nothing to sneeze at.

Dick White [01:04:41] So I, I find as I get older, I don't want to drive at night because when you're going through Amagansett and East Hampton and Bridgehampton, these people come out from cars and you driving the ambulance, it's dark out, and my reflexes aren't as good as they were 40 years ago. So I do the daytime stuff when I can see a little better.

Virginia Garrison [01:05:07] So the Historical Society?

Dick White [01:05:08] Oh.

Virginia Garrison [01:05:09] Yeah. We've got to get to that.

Dick White [01:05:12] That's the love of my life.

Virginia Garrison [01:05:14] It is the love of your life. How long have you been involved now? And that was Gilmartin?

Dick White [01:05:20] Gilmartin put me in the back seat of his car, basically.

Virginia Garrison [01:05:22] Right. It didn't even exist then, did it?

Dick White [01:05:28] I think it started with Dick Gilmartin and Bill Cooper. And I'm going to guess it was in the early sixties. Somewhere around there, they started the Montauk Historical Society. And then when Betsy and I came back from Monmouth and we were now living here, Ellis Tuthill got a hold of Betsy and said, We'd like you to be on the Historical Society. Well, she was an eighth grade teacher and she was teaching history and so forth. And.

Virginia Garrison [01:06:06] And she was at the Montauk School then, right? Yeah. Okay.

Dick White [01:06:10] And it was before our kids were born. And so she she got involved. And of course, when when I was elected Councilman Peggy Joyce was president of the Montauk Historical Society. And don't forget, she taught me in the first and second grade. So she had a hook in me that was forever. So she got the day I was elected she called me up and she said, Dick, oh, I had been appointed. Each councilman is responsible for certain sections of town government and being the new guy, I was in charge of dumps and parks and beaches and historic buildings. Peg found out about it and called me and she said, You know, Dick, you're in charge of historic buildings. At Second House we have raccoons. So, okay, so I got ahold of a Have a Heart trap, you know what that is?

Virginia Garrison [01:07:14] Yeah, yeah.

Dick White [01:07:15] And I go to Herb's and I get a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, and I lug this trap up to the attic of the Second House and bait it. And I go off to work and I come back, and sure enough, the trap would be sprung, the peanut butter sandwich would be gone. And no raccoon. So I did that four or five times, and I finally I went to Chappy, who was the dog warden. Howard Chapman. The dog warden. And I said, What am I doing here? I got a cage for you. I got a big one. He said, we'll get 'im. The only problem was I had to get in it to bait it. And I had this feeling that if trap comes down and I'm stuck up here, people aren't going to know that I'm here. This is before cell phones. So I did figure out a way to do it. And I finally did catch the raccoon and we had them. In those days, you could take the raccoon to Northwest Woods and let it go. Today you can't do that. So anyway, let's get back to historical society. So I had, historical society in those days was basically Second House.

Virginia Garrison [01:08:33] Oh, that was the focus then. Okay.

Dick White [01:08:36] And I would Betsy got involved with craft fairs and I would help her with that and help Peg wherever I was. And, and I was very interested in it. Well, then in 1985, there was an article in the paper that said the Coast Guard was going to automate the lighthouse and they were going to leave. And when they said they were going to leave there, what they meant was they were going to put plywood on the windows and a padlock on the gate. And it was a Sunday afternoon and Betsy was going to her monthly historical meeting. And I said, Don't call yourself a historical society if you don't step up and take that lighthouse. Because if they do that, it's going to be a matter

of how many days before it's vandalized completely. You saw what happened to the air base, to that barracks and everything. So she came back from the meeting and she said, Well, I got good news and bad news. I said, Well, give me the just give me the news. She said, Well, they voted to take it over, but you have to run it from top to bottom. Well, that's like throwing Brer Rabbit in the briar patch. I mean are you kidding?

Virginia Garrison [01:09:55] That's another meeting you weren't at.

Dick White [01:09:57] Well, yeah, but thank you. I stayed up that night till 3 o'clock typing on my Apple 2E with dot matrix printer and I wrote what would be what turned out to be the RFP to the Coast Guard [mimics typing by tapping on table]. Dear Coast Guard, the Montauk Historical Society, would like to take over the lighthouse. Here's how we'll do it.

Virginia Garrison [01:10:22] So you did the whole the whole plan?

Dick White [01:10:24] Three page. Send it off to the Coast Guard. They liked it. They said, well, but we have to put it out to bid. Okay. They did. And I think there were four bidders. We were one. There was another one that wanted to make a tea room out of it. Someone else wanted to live there for a private home.

Virginia Garrison [01:10:46] Wow.

Dick White [01:10:47] And there was someone else wanted to do a restaurant. And they said, well, the way the the thing works is that's the highest and best use for the most people.

Virginia Garrison [01:10:59] Oh, well.

Dick White [01:11:00] Bingo. Montauk Historical Society wins the bid.

Virginia Garrison [01:11:04] Nice.

Dick White [01:11:05] So the original. The original Lighthouse Committee was Peg, myself, Betsy, Craig Tuttle, Lena Greenwald and Vicky Schneider. Well, these were the nuts and bolts of the historical society. So anyway, now we have a lighthouse. We don't have penny one. We have nothing. And we have to go to Governor's Island because that was district one for the Coast Guard at those days. Now it's up in Boston, but then it was Governor's Island.

Virginia Garrison [01:11:46] Really? Okay.

Dick White [01:11:47] To sign the the lease. It was a 20 year, 30 year lease and no money involved, no dollar a year or anything. And it said that we would be responsible for maintenance and keeping it clean and putting up displays and opening it up to the public. And we were allowed to charge a nominal fee to cover costs and, and so forth. And I said I had learned that the color -- the white, brown, white -- was actually an aid to navigation.

Virginia Garrison [01:12:22] Oh, that band. Yes.

Dick White [01:12:25] Well, the Coast Guard was going to be responsible for aids to navigation, which meant the light and the fog signal.

Virginia Garrison [01:12:33] Okay.

Dick White [01:12:34] But I also found out that the color of our lighthouse was an aid to navigation. It's called a day mark. Mm hmm. And that means a ship sailing by during the day puts a glass on it and says, white, brown, white goes through the chart. White, brown, white. That's Montauk. You go a little further it's black, white, black, white, black, white. That's Fire Island. You

do the spiral that's Hatteras. They're called daymarks. So I said to the man there, I said, Well, you'll be in charge of painting the tower. And he looked at me and he said, Mr. White, I can put up a steel tower with a light on it and solve the mission. I don't care if it falls off the cliff. I don't care that you're going to paint the tower. I said, God, you guys play hardball.

Virginia Garrison [01:13:24] Seriously.

Dick White [01:13:26] Well, okay, we'll figure it out. So the first thing I did was I sent out a letter to everybody that had a mailbox between here and Brookhaven. And I'll bet you that didn't go two days when I got a phone call from Virgil Conway. "Richie Ritchie. I got your letter. Ritchie, put me down for 20,000, and I'll do that every year for five years." That was Virgil Conway. He at that time was chairman of the board of Seamans Bank for Savings. More than generous. Told me we're on the right track. This was a message from God. This is, you're okay. Don't worry about it.

Virginia Garrison [01:14:16] There's support out there.

Dick White [01:14:17] Just go. Do what you gotta do. And so the first thing we did was we got someone to live there. And I keep forgetting her name. She. She lasted two years and then went to Vermont, to Burlington, Vermont. And then Margie Winski went there originally. And then she the first year she was there, she lived on the first floor. And then two years later, she moved upstairs and she was there for 30 years.

Virginia Garrison [01:14:48] 30 years was it, wow.

Dick White [01:14:49] With with various Newfoundland dogs. Yes. And they're all pretty much the same personality. They would get on the porch and they would bark with such a bellow that anybody that was coming up the hill decided the hell with it and turn around. What if you kept coming and you got close to them? They rolled over on their back and wanted to scratched. They weren't tough at all. It was so funny, but anyway—

Virginia Garrison [01:15:17] Perfect for her for out there.

Dick White [01:15:18] So I just loved, every time I went there. I tried to imagine, what was it like in 1797 when the house was down at the bottom of the hill? Because the house that's there wasn't there until 1860.

Virginia Garrison [01:15:35] Okay.

Dick White [01:15:36] It was a small house at the bottom, you know where the garage is down below?

Dick White [01:15:40] Yeah, I think so.

Dick White [01:15:40] Well, that was a house from 1837 to 1860.

Virginia Garrison [01:15:44] And that's where the lighthouse keeper lived?

Dick White [01:15:46] That's where they lived. And they had a rope. And that part I never understood. We had logs and it said there was a rope tied to the house and it was tied to the tower.

Virginia Garrison [01:15:57] For wind?

Dick White [01:15:59] I never realized it until the day of the perfect storm and I was out at the end where a monument is, the Lost at Sea, and I was coming back and I couldn't. I had to crawl on the ground. The wind was so strong. And I said, Now I understand why there was a rope. You had to hold on to something because it was fierce out there. But it was quite an odyssey to start with a

Coast Guard facility and convert it to housing for a keeper, if you will, a museum and manage the cost. The cost of running that thing is well, for example, the insurance is like 75,000 bucks a year. Do you know how many people it takes going through the gate to make, to net 75,000 bucks? And then you've got the lawn mowing and then you got the painting every year. John Pomianowski has been our painter ever since we started. I think your husband did some work on the floor up there. He did in the in the Archie Jones room. And it was just, oh and displays. Those dioramas in the erosion control room are 15,000 bucks a piece. And there's four of them.

Virginia Garrison [01:17:32] Those are the ones with the little blinking lighthouses and stuff.

Dick White [01:17:35] No, that thing was \$75,000. That's lighthouses of Long Island.

Virginia Garrison [01:17:40] Yes.

Dick White [01:17:41] And when we first did it, there was no plexiglass on it. It was just wide open. After the first day, we were missing boats, lighthouses. And so.

Virginia Garrison [01:17:53] People were taking them?

Dick White [01:17:54] Yes, picking them off. They were just little things with pins in them. One of the neatest things was I said to the guy when he was building, I said, Now look, this button when you push it is going to light up a lighthouse somewhere. And up on that lighthouse is going to be a light, but it has to be the light that's on the lighthouse. Now you say, What do you mean? Well, the southeast ledge light on Block Island is not white, it's green.

Virginia Garrison [01:18:25] Oh, okay. Uh-huh.

Dick White [01:18:26] And Watch Hill is white and red. It's two lights and there's others like that. The guy says, holy cow, how the heck are we going to do that. What they did was the Watch Hill one and it was neat. They built the lighthouse, looks just like it. It's sitting here on a little bluff and it's got a light on the top. And what that is, it's the end of a piece of filament. Fiber, fiber optic filament.

Virginia Garrison [01:18:57] Okay.

Dick White [01:18:59] And that goes down below the water and into the box underneath. And there they had a motor and they had a clear disk under which they painted red and clear.

Virginia Garrison [01:19:18] Okay.

Dick White [01:19:19] And then the motor went around like this and they had a light underneath it. And so the light went through the red and up through the filament and it shone red. And as it turned it went to clear and then it shone white and then it shone red.

Virginia Garrison [01:19:37] The, the disc has different.

Dick White [01:19:40] It had different colors.

Virginia Garrison [01:19:41] Like a pallette, kind of.

Dick White [01:19:42] Yeah. Different, red pie and clear pie and with the green one they had a just the whole green thing.

Virginia Garrison [01:19:50] Right. Right. It's pretty smart. Yeah.

Dick White [01:19:53] Damn right. These guys were good. We got these guys. We called, I'm going to say Smithsonian. And we talked to them and also. Museum of Natural History in Washington. And talked to some people and they said, you know, there's some guys in New York that built the New York City display for the World's Fair in 1964. And so we contacted them and they were up in Nyack and we went up and talked to them. And well, actually, the first thing we wanted was the evolution of the lighthouse from 1797 through the 1800s, 1900s and 1945. Okay. Because it changed the lot. Like when first started there was just a tower and the keeper's house down here and an outhouse. That was it, pretty much. And then we move over. And then there was the second house for the Keeper and the 1860 house and the Marconi building. And there was a Marconi tower and still had the outhouse. Oh, and they put another building up to generate steam for the fog signal. So this this had evolved.

Virginia Garrison [01:21:27] So there were different sort of periods.

Dick White [01:21:30] We took four periods and they were going to be in four parts of the room of the lighthouse because there's one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight. The little rooms, we were going to just spread them out. But when we went up to see them, they had them in a line and I happened to look and erosion popped out because they did the geodetic survey from each one. The lighthouse never moved. One, two, three, four. Never moved, but the shoreline moved.

Virginia Garrison [01:22:06] Oh, wow.

Dick White [01:22:06] It went from here to here to here. I said, no, no. We got to display these together. So when you stand here, you can see because erosion by this time, Giorgina Reid was a big thing. Greg Donohue and his crew, he called them Hill Apes, you know, Greg? Yeah, of course you do. So that's how that got started.

Virginia Garrison [01:22:30] And then that's probably one of the biggest challenges now, right? I mean.

Dick White [01:22:36] We just spent or the government just spent \$40 million. We're almost done. It should be done by February with a whole new revetment thing out there. And Greg has worked on this tirelessly since 1990. He's devoted his life to it. Well, anyway, so we did that, and then we followed up with the with the lighthouses of Long Island with that display. And that's been a big, big the kids love it because buttons to push, and lights, each light turns on a lighthouse and turns out a picture of the lighthouse. And the story of the lighthouse. It is a very complicated but informative display. And then we put it in the Gilmartin room, which is four rooms of the evolution of Montauk from Indians all the way up to Carl Fisher. And now, now I'm working on something that has meaning a lot of meaning, it's reestablishing the three and a half water lens. It's going back up to the top because now you've got this wimpy little light up there. You can barely see it. Well, now, when the three and a half water goes back up, it's called a loom. That big shaft of light that used to go out when the light went around, is going to come back.

Virginia Garrison [01:24:10] Is the actual lens in the museum?

Dick White [01:24:14] Yeah. When they took it down, they took it apart and they put it back together in the base by the tower and it's been there for 20 years. We just spent, I don't know, 20,000 bucks and we had three guys, experts come and they took it all apart, cleaned it all up, put the new gear mechanism in and getting ready to take it back upstairs.

Virginia Garrison [01:24:39] Is that going to happen?

Dick White [01:24:40] We're hoping by next spring.

Virginia Garrison [01:24:43] And it'll be operational?

Dick White [01:24:45] Working lighthouse.

Virginia Garrison [01:24:46] Oh, wow.

Dick White [01:24:47] Yeah. The difference will be it's an LED light. And the light that's here now is a 16 foot. I know. It's a 14 mile light. When we go up with this, it'll be a 20 mile light.

Virginia Garrison [01:25:02] Oh, wow.

Dick White [01:25:03] Yeah, much brighter.

Virginia Garrison [01:25:04] So it's more useful too. That's great.

Dick White [01:25:07] And and that's and I started this project about six years ago, and the keeper, Joe, said, You'll never get that done. I'll tell you what. I will buy you dinner for anybody you want if it happens.

Virginia Garrison [01:25:27] That's Joe Gaviola.

Dick White [01:25:28] So I told Joe, I said, I've made reservations at Le Bernadin in Manhattan for about 50 people, so you better start saving your money. So anyway, and the other project that was dear to my heart was the acquisition of the Fisher, Carl Fisher house. That was really big. And what saved that was, of course, CPF funds, is tons of money, and the Akin family really wanted it to go to the historical society. And so they had a market price on it of about 12, 12 million and they sold it for seven and a half to CPF.

Virginia Garrison [01:26:14] So yeah, because CPF can only pay so much appraisal above the market or not the market value, but the appraisal. Yeah. Right. Yeah.

Dick White [01:26:25] So that was kind of near and dear to me. And then other things that I did when I was a councilman was I purchased and got the Kirk Park Beach Beach.

Virginia Garrison [01:26:37] Oh, yeah. Yes.

Dick White [01:26:39] Those three blocks.

Virginia Garrison [01:26:40] Who owned that at the time? It was privately owned though is the point. Right?

Dick White [01:26:49] George Androtti came to me and I forget the man's name now. I was a councilman at the time, so anyway, I applied as a councilman applied for BOR funding -- the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation.

Virginia Garrison [01:27:04] Oh, where's that come from? What level of government?

Dick White [01:27:08] Federal. And so I put in the application and I just called it the beach and a guy called me up one day says, wait a minute, you don't have a name for it. I said, What do you mean, well, you need a name. I said, Well, it's across from Kirk Park Park. It's called Kirk Park Beach. Okay. That's how it got its name. You know who Kirk was?

Virginia Garrison [01:27:30] Like a general or ?

Dick White [01:27:32] General Norman Kirk, who was the surgeon general of the allied forces in World War II. He also lived next to Perry Duryea on Murder Hill.

Virginia Garrison [01:27:46] In the archives, we have a picture of the dedication of that rock.

Dick White [01:27:50] Yes. And him there. Yeah. And when he was there, he used to bring the grade kids up to give them tick shots.

Virginia Garrison [01:27:59] Tick shots?

Dick White [01:28:00] Yes. We would be on the porch, all the snotty kids from the grade school and he'd say, all right, soldier, come over on the porch.

Virginia Garrison [01:28:08] The porch of what?

Dick White [01:28:09] Dr. Kirk's porch. And he'd give us tick shots.

Virginia Garrison [01:28:14] Did they work?

Dick White [01:28:16] I'm still here. But we all had them. All the kids that wanted tick shots got tick shots.

Virginia Garrison [01:28:23] Like tick like t-i-c-k?

Dick White [01:28:25] Yeah, like spotted Rocky Mountain guys.

Virginia Garrison [01:28:30] And he would administer them himself.

Dick White [01:28:32] Himself, by himself. He'd sit there and okay, soldier. He was used to dealing with army guys, you know, rough and tumble. Here, we have little kids. Everybody was a soldier. Even if you were a girl, you were a soldier. But yeah. And the other thing, I managed to buy the transformers across from Surfside restaurant that was owned by the Navy during the war. And there was some equipment on there. It was called Transformers. I don't know why, but we got that in the park system.

Virginia Garrison [01:29:18] That's where the overlook is there.

Dick White [01:29:20] Yeah.

Virginia Garrison [01:29:20] Okay.

Dick White [01:29:21] Because that was private property and George Androtti again had somebody that owned it. And I said, George, here's what I want you to do. Draw me the why. In those days, the zoning for a hotel in Montauk was five stories high because of the White Elephant.

Virginia Garrison [01:29:39] Oh, wow. That set the precedent?

Dick White [01:29:40] Yeah. So I said, draw me an ugly five story building that you're going to put on the property. That's all I needed.

Virginia Garrison [01:29:50] Was he a developer? Androtti?

Dick White [01:29:54] Yeah, well, yeah. He was Montauk Securities. He owned the building where O'Murphy's Saloon was in. And somehow he got himself in trouble, and he lost his real estate license. But his secretary, Martha Greene, got her license and her broker and she worked for him.

Virginia Garrison [01:30:13] She was his secretary, aaah.

Dick White [01:30:15] But he was here from the days of Carl Fisher. But he was a naughty boy. He did something wrong.

Virginia Garrison [01:30:21] You don't know what though.

Dick White [01:30:22] I was way too young.

Virginia Garrison [01:30:23] I've heard his name and a lot of the oral history transcripts.

Dick White [01:30:28] But yeah, he was quite the guy. He would come up in the in the spring and go back to Florida in the fall. He had a home in Coral Gables. I was with him and my father and George Hammer's father on a boat in Biscayne Bay one day. And George Hammer's father looked at his watch and he said, Well, I just became a millionaire. He was the real estate broker that sold the Empire State Building, and his commission was a million bucks.

Virginia Garrison [01:31:01] Wow.

Dick White [01:31:02] And I forget why we were on the boat. I guess we were fishing. I was probably 11 or 12 years old.

Virginia Garrison [01:31:10] That's pretty impressive, though.

Dick White [01:31:13] What else you want to know? Historical society. Oh, the next project I'm with is Timmy and Gilmartin and Billy Walsh and Jimmy Grimes. We're going to rediscover First House. And my dream is to rebuild First House and put it back where it was.

Virginia Garrison [01:31:34] Isn't it all overgrown there and stuff? Is is that state land?

Dick White [01:31:38] Yeah. Well, yes, I say it is. Tom Dess says it is. Mia says, well, not so fast. Maybe it's not. Maybe it belongs to the town. I don't know how how she rationalizes that, but it has to do with the cemetery, which is next to it.

Virginia Garrison [01:32:00] And you can't really. Can you see the gravestones or whatever?

Dick White [01:32:03] Oh, yeah, you can. Yeah. You know where Cemetery Road is?

Virginia Garrison [01:32:07] Yes.

Dick White [01:32:08] Well, if you go off, second of all, Montauk Highway and just go on Cemetery Road about maybe 100 feet stop, you'll see a little path that goes in. Keep walking, walk and walk. And then you'll come to the cemetery.

Virginia Garrison [01:32:28] After you get your tick injection from Dr. Kirk.

Dick White [01:32:30] Walk on the mud.

Virginia Garrison [01:32:34] Well, let's see. What else?

Dick White [01:32:35] Aren't you bored yet?

Virginia Garrison [01:32:37] I'm not bored, but I think we're going to run out of steam. Not at all bored. But. So you sold the liquor store to Tom in 88. So you have been able at the time or ten years later, I think you said that you did that because you wanted to have more time for local history. And it sounds like you've been able to do that.

Dick White [01:32:59] Yeah.

Virginia Garrison [01:33:01] What have you been able to fish, go fishing and stuff like that?

Dick White [01:33:06] You know, I had more time to fish when I had the store.

Virginia Garrison [01:33:08] Why is that?

Dick White [01:33:09] I don't know, I. I guess. Well, it has to be priorities.

Dick White [01:33:14] Yeah.

Dick White [01:33:14] You know, when I was had the store, I knew I had to be there when it opened, and I had to be there. So if I got a moment and I could go fishing, I took it. Well, now I got seven days a week. I can go fishing. And so the pressure is all gone.

Virginia Garrison [01:33:30] So you don't go at all?

Dick White [01:33:31] Well, now I go. You know what I love to do? Well, of course, now they're bigger. I'd love to take my grandkids on the Bones.

Virginia Garrison [01:33:38] On the Lazy Bones?

Dick White [01:33:40] I love to take them and to have their their first time experience.

Virginia Garrison [01:33:45] What are their names again?

Dick White [01:33:47] Well, I'll start with the oldest, Lee and MaryJo's kids are Jolee and Andrew. Okay, then Rick is Erin. She just graduated last spring. Yeah. From TCU. And she's now on her way. She's just got a real job. She's living with her boyfriend. He's got a real job.

Virginia Garrison [01:34:07] Where is she living?

Dick White [01:34:08] Dallas.

Dick White [01:34:10] She's working for a food company. I don't understand it. He's working. He's sort of an engineer working for a construction company.

Virginia Garrison [01:34:20] And Megan, is she still in school?

Dick White [01:34:22] And now Megan is in University of Michigan and her boyfriend is at the University of Georgia Tech and he's from Wainscott. I used to call him a Bub, but he's really not a Bub because he's from Wainscott and they only moved there a few years ago. Nice. Nice boy. Good. The two of them are great. Megan is in her sophomore year at Michigan. Okay. And then we have Heather, Heather's daughter Darby graduated two years ago from Georgetown, got accepted to Georgetown Law School and has decided to take a trip through South America instead. So. She's the one. Her brother Bryan graduated from Loomis and he's at Boston University. So but I took each one of them fishing when they were little.

Virginia Garrison [01:35:21] And they liked it.

Dick White [01:35:23] Some did about 50-50, some did, some didn't. But it was fun for Poppy.

Virginia Garrison [01:35:32] Are you still involved with the Montauk Community Church, too?

Dick White [01:35:35] I am. I'm not I'm not an officer or anything. But I go to church. I like Bill and Val.

Virginia Garrison [01:35:43] Bill Hoffmann and Valerie. Valerie works at the library.

Dick White [01:35:46] Yeah, I like. Well, Bill, you know, it was a they used to call him smokejumpers. I think they call them hotshots now. These are the guys, the professional woods.

Virginia Garrison [01:35:59] For forest fires?

Dick White [01:36:01] Yeah.

Virginia Garrison [01:36:02] From the planes?

Dick White [01:36:02] From Wisconsin.

Virginia Garrison [01:36:03] Oh, wow.

Dick White [01:36:06] He was one of those guys. And I don't. I never. He was originally from Amityville, and I never asked him why he went from firematic to—

Virginia Garrison [01:36:19] Ministry or whatever.

Dick White [01:36:23] And he he was a terrific EMT for us here in Montauk.

Virginia Garrison [01:36:29] Is he still doing it?

Dick White [01:36:30] No. He resigned. He he, I guess, feels he means what happened, I think was was COVID, when they had to close the church. And the the number of parishioners kind of just dwindled. I mean, he did try he had some outdoor services in the summer a couple of years.

Virginia Garrison [01:36:58] It was probably hard for all the churches. You know, it just.

Dick White [01:37:03] And I think it dwindled so much that he felt he has to really put all his effort into rebuilding.

Virginia Garrison [01:37:10] It back up.

Dick White [01:37:12] Because it's not only the spiritual part, but it's the financial part. I mean, it still costs the same to run the church. The fuel oil is a killer. You got to mow the lawn and you got to keep the roof from leaking.

Virginia Garrison [01:37:28] Yeah, yeah. You think about that stuff.

Dick White [01:37:32] But I was baptized there and Betsy and I were married.

Virginia Garrison [01:37:37] Married there.

Dick White [01:37:38] And both my parents were. And Mrs. Lee, we're. We're buried from the church. Oh, wow. When my mother died, she was, as I said, born in Brooklyn. So she was a Dodger fan forever. And the other things, she was the hated the Yankees. That's why I had the.

Virginia Garrison [01:37:58] Your mother put that Dodgers uniform on you?

Dick White [01:38:00] Yeah. There was no way I was the Yankees uniform, even though I was a Yankee fan. But anyway, when. When her casket was coming out of the church, Ricky managed to get a tape of a Met promo and played it over the loudspeakers.

Virginia Garrison [01:38:21] That's evil.

Dick White [01:38:22] Which which pissed off some of the local, which pissed off some of the olders but the family loved it.

Virginia Garrison [01:38:30] That is pretty funny.

Dick White [01:38:31] Her brother laughed. He broke up laughing and he said he could just picture Ruth.

Virginia Garrison [01:38:37] That's so funny.

Dick White [01:38:38] She would be laughing and and pointing her finger at Ricky or me.

Virginia Garrison [01:38:45] That's pretty funny. And then during COVID, you had that drive by 80th birthday thing that.

Dick White [01:38:52] I you know.

Virginia Garrison [01:38:53] That was so nice. I know.

Dick White [01:38:56] I'm going to start crying again.

Virginia Garrison [01:38:57] Oh, you got tissues right there if you do. It was good.

Dick White [01:39:03] I had no knowledge and it was COVID. So Ricky had decided that since the weather was okay, we would have the family gathering outside on the lawn.

Virginia Garrison [01:39:19] At your house. Yeah, okay.

Dick White [01:39:21] And they came and shoveled the snow. It wasn't was much, but they shoveled off—

Virginia Garrison [01:39:26] That right, cause our birthday's in February, right?

Dick White [01:39:28] Yes.

Virginia Garrison [01:39:28] Okay.

Dick White [01:39:29] And they set up tables. And actually that morning, Rick and Kelly were in the Bronx getting their COVID shots. And they said, you know what? I knew about the party that part I knew about? So I said, While you're in the Bronx, go to Arthur Avenue, and that's ground zero for the best Italian food in the world. I mean, you want lasagna, you want ziti, you want salami, you want cheese. It's there. I mean, except for going to Italy itself Arthur Avenue is the place to go. So they did. So when they came back, they had all this stuff from all these different bakeries and butcher shops and so forth, and that was quite a surprise. Well, anyway, when they're setting it up, I heard a siren. Now in my phone I get all the calls, and there was no call. Uh, I'm thinking why is there a siren and no call?

Virginia Garrison [01:40:39] Right. And why don't I have it on my phone?

Dick White [01:40:41] And I said, it's my birthday. Uh, I suspect something. And sure enough.

Virginia Garrison [01:40:50] So what was it like? It was like these cars driving or people were stopping or how did that.

Dick White [01:40:55] Oh, it started with all the fire trucks, every single fire truck in the building. So that's 19 people they had to get without me knowing it.

Virginia Garrison [01:41:04] Wow. And they they. Did they stop? Did they drive by? What did they do?

Dick White [01:41:09] They stopped. They blew the siren. They yelled and screamed. And, you know, they did this stuff. And, of course, I just started crying because, yeah, that was too much. And then then there were other people that knew about it that got in line. And they just kept going and going and going and going. It must have been about a hundred cars.

Virginia Garrison [01:41:35] That's awesome.

Dick White [01:41:37] Oh, man, that was you know, I was grand marshal. That's that's a once in a lifetime thing.

Virginia Garrison [01:41:46] Is it a lot of fun to do it?

Dick White [01:41:50] It's a lot of fun. And it makes you feel and that. Yeah, that's that's one of the things if you're a Montauker, that's one of the things you you say, boy, it's like that's being recognized.

Virginia Garrison [01:42:04] That's like a real confirmation.

Dick White [01:42:06] Yeah. And Howard Friend, you know, did you know Howard?

Virginia Garrison [01:42:10] When we moved out here, he was the minister at the community church.

Dick White [01:42:14] Well, Howard had an expression about Montauk cocktail parties. He said Montauk cocktail party is when Billy Joel, Perry Duryea, and Michael Volk, the garbage man, are all standing together talking about fishing. And he said, that's Montauk.

Virginia Garrison [01:42:33] That is.

Dick White [01:42:34] The essence.

Virginia Garrison [01:42:35] That's a great quote, actually.

Dick White [01:42:37] Yeah, maybe not Billy Joel, maybe Dick Cavett more or Percy Heath, definitely.

Virginia Garrison [01:42:44] Talking about fishing, that's for sure.

Dick White [01:42:47] Yeah.

Virginia Garrison [01:42:48] This is the end of the November 15th, 2022, interview with Richard White, Jr. The interviewer was Virginia Garrison. This recording can be found in the archive collection of the Montauk Library.