

Interview of Yvonne (Shorette) Currier
 Interviewers - Carol Nichols and Connie St. Louis

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 transcribe
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CN: Carol Nichols
 CS: Connie St. Louis
 YC: Yvonne Currier

CN: My name is Carol Nichols. I'm in the home of Yvonne Shorette Currier. Um, we're in her living room, on the corner of Stillwater and No. Brunswick and also asking questions today will be Connie St. Louis from French Island. So, the first thing I would like to know is have you always lived on French Island?

YC: Yes, I was born up there.

CN: What year was that?

YC: 1908. CN: In 1908? YC: I'm eighty-five years old.

CN: Oh, wow! Can you think of some of your earliest memories of the Island?

YC: Well, I can remember going to school there. We had school teachers at the time--was two Miss Knapps, from Old Town.

CN: Can you remember their first names at all? The first names of your teachers?

YC: I can't remember.

CN: Because you called them Miss Knapps.

YC: I know who would know, would be Otis Labree because they helped him a lot. They helped to get him clothes and everything. They were good for them.

CN: What grades were you in when you had them as your teachers?

YC: I can't remember. I left there--I think-- about the fourth grade and I went to the convent.

CN: What convent was that?

YC: St. Josephs.

CN: Oh, you did.

YC: Yeah. I graduated from there.

CN: What was the Island school like?

YC: Oh, It wasn't like what they call one room. We had different

rooms and we had downstairs and upstairs. The low grade, the kindergarten was downstairs and some of the first grade and the upper (The phone is ringing here and they turn off the tape recorder.)

CN: We were talking about the Island school, you said there was an upstairs and a downstairs?

YC: Hmmm. And we had, of course, we'd go out and play at recess. And when it was summertime, we'd go play in the yard then we'd break some of the windows, my father had to go put them in. (Laughing) That's the kind of kids we were. Then we used to play baseball in the middle of the road, which they can't do now. Because.. on the account of the cars, they travel much faster. There wasn't too many cars when I was young.

CN: Who were some of your childhood friends?

YC: Well, there was Melvina, she was a Ouellette, married a Theriault. Was that it? There was Hilda Bouchard, married Clement Ouellette. Thelma Bouchard who married George Sahoney from Massachusetts. She died in the meantime... now.

CN: Did you all live right next door?

YC: No, they lived way down on French Street, we were on Bosworth Street. And there was another one, was Lillian Cote, my cousin. She's married to a LeBretton now. She was married to a Ouellette.... then she married LeBretton. And Melvine Levasseur. Her mother had the store on the corner there.

CN: You lived right on the corner there?

YC: We lived right on the corner of Union and Bosworth.

CN: How large a family did you come from?

YC: Six kids. Six of us. Levi was the oldest one, Levi Shorette. He died. He lived in Massachusetts. Next to him was Oneil. He died and he lived in Millinocket. And then I was the next one. Next to me was Walter Shorette, he died in the meantime and then there was Sally Greenan and then my youngest sister Cecil who married a Legasse and then married a Justine. And she's in Pittsfield. So there's just the three girls living now.

CS: You had a brother you say--Walter Shorette.

YC: Walter Shorette. He was Blind. Aya.

CN: I remember him years ago, younger than you, and I remember that he had a dog. And he was one of the first ones on the Island to ever have a ...

YC: I think he was the first one in town to have a dog, that I remember.

CS: That he could go out with...get around with..

YC: He had gone to New Jersey and get his dog. He trained out in New Jersey. Then he come back here, and then he used to go to work. He used to work at the brush handle, not brush handle the ..huh,.....one of the shoe shops?

CS: Pie plate? Oh, the shoe shop?

YC: Yeah.

CN: So he could work even though he was blind?

YC: Yeah. His dog would take him where ever. Although, he had to know where he was going. You know, you're trained to tell him where to go. To lead the blind.

CN: When you were young what were some of the games you used to play? You remember some of the games?

YC: Yeah. We used to play tin can alley, one of them. And, ah., one we used to...hmm..what is it now..what was that game? You know you'd say "can I take an elephant step?"..like that.

CS: I can't think of what the name is either.

YC: And, you would have to say "May I?" CN: Redlight? YC: Huh?

CN: Is it red light?

YC: No.

CS: It's "May I", I think.

YC: "May I". You have to say it or if you didn't say it, they send you back. One that was the head of it at the time had to go around and say...if she turned around and caught you she'd send you back.

CN: Did you used to play with your cousins mostly or were they pretty much your friends?

YC: Uh, no. I had cousins up there. There was Flora Bosse and Olive Bosse now. Rose Bosse Flannagan and there was all the Graham girls. No, we didn't....

CN: Can you talk about what the neighborhood looked like?

YC: Well, the neighborhood was so friendly that you never had to lock a door. And, every morning some of them during Lent, they would go to church, after that they would land at my

mother's for breakfast. They would have a breakfast there and then they'd play cards. Then they'd have a lunch and then go home to supper. That's how they lived then, now they don't, they're not friendly. Another friend was Ester McInnis. She was a great friend, her and Mac.

CN: What stores did you used to go to?

YC: We used to go to Levasseurs' store right across the street from my house. That's where .. ahh...Shorty Richards runned it for awhile. Now it's a house, I guess..a home.

CN: But the first that you remember it was Levasseurs' store?

YC: Levasseurs' Store, yup. And, I worked there part time. Of course, in the summer I'd do housework for Mrs. Levasseur also.

CN: Do you remember that, that...Mr. Levasseurs' name, his first name?

CS: It was Melvina, really that ran it. Wasn't it?

YC: No. T'was Odina.

CS: Odina?

YC: The mother. Aya.

CN: Was there any others?

YC: Yeah, there was Nadeaus' Store. Ah...

CS: Desjardins?

YC: Desjardins came in later. And then there was Taylor. Louis Taylor. And there was Louis Bouchard the barber.

CS: Louis Bouchard owned it first, didn't he?

YC: No. Louis Bouchard had the barber shop.

CS: Yes. But didn't he own the store also.

YC: I don't think so. It was the next one to him. Because I think Louis had that built. CS: Okay.

CN: Do you remember when the Shuffle Inn...was it always there when you were younger?

YC: Yes. It was there all the time, but who was running it at the time was Bill Michaud.

CN: Is he the one who founded it?

YC: I think so. I think so.

CN: Did you used to go there at all or just to party?

YC: We used to go there and buy our candy and things like that. Now, of course, it's the Shuffle Inn, since they bought it.

CS: When they owned it, it was more like..ah..it was more sandwiches, and it was like hamburgers, and it wasn't just a place where you went to drink beer. There were meals then?

YC: No. No. I always thought it was just candy.

CS: Just candy?

YC: It seems so.

CS: Oh, okay.

YC: That was a long time ago..(laughs)

CN: What kind of games did you play in the winter time?

YC: In the winter time, I'd hide my skates in the shed, and we'd go on the river.

CN: You weren't supposed to go on the river?

YC: We weren't supposed to go on the river. So, we'd go skating, Melvine Levasseur and I, so we had boyfriends that we'd meet down there.

CN: (Laughs) And who were they, do you remember? Do you dare to say?

YC: One of them was a Laforge, but I don't remember his first name..from Main Street.

CN: Were there a lot of people that skated on the river?

YC: Quite a few. Although it was opened in some places. And then, of course, when we got a little older, we hum...we used to chum.. all the same crowd.. chum together and in the winter time we used to go on sleigh rides at the University of Maine. And, we'd hire a horse and buggy from Mr. Cyr on the Island. Arthur Cyr..and all of them..that was their father. And we'd go skiing.

CN: You'd start right from the Island?

YC: Yup. to go to the University. We'd always go on Water Street first, and then we'd go on the back road, and then we'd go to the college.

CN: Do you know about how young you were when you started doing that? (Pause about 30 seconds) YC: (whispers - Wait a minute.) CS: Were you more like in your teens, maybe? CN: I've never heard that before.

YC: I could have been 16--around 16. I have pictures of that.. I'll find out for you.

CN: That would be nice. So, when you went to St. Joseph School..did a lot of people from French Island go too?

YC: All the Island went.

CN: Why did you go to St. Josephs instead of the public school?

YC: I didn't like the public school. And the priests were forcing mostly our parents to go to the convent. But, I liked the convent.

CN: When you went to the Island school, could you speak French in the school?

YC: Oh, no. No. It was all English.

CN: Can you talk about that a little bit?

YC: Well.t's so far back, you know. So far, I can't remember everything exact.

CN: At home. Did you talk French? You talk about talking French?

YC: Yeah, Yeah, we used to talk French at home. When we were younger, but as we grew older and went out... that's when we started talking English. When you start going to school, you talk English. And all your teachers were.

CN: Were English?

YC: Yup.

CS: That's at the Island school. But when you went to St. Josephs was it French down there that they talked?

YC: No.

CS: It was English down there also?

YC: Yes.

CN: Did they encourage you to just speak English there, or, could you speak French?

YC: (Pause 30 seconds). No. because everything was English. You had your English history, and you had you French catacism

though. We learned the French. And I knew my prayers in French because we had to say them at night. And, it was my parents ... that was always French.

CS: You talk about your father or your mother playing cards in the daytime. What other kind of entertainment did they have, that your parents have? Did they entertain at home? Did they go out?

YC: The entertained at each place. Every Sunday night they would go to different houses. There used to be a doctor here. Right across from... where the senior citizens meet now.. the community center. There was a doctor there, I don't remember his name now. He was a short man. Bergeron--I think it was. And, they would go with him on Sundays. Sometimes they would get a crowd and they would go on a hay ride. All our parents would go. All our mothers and fathers. I mean, sometimes they had more fun than we did. (Everyone is laughing)

CN: Can you talk a little bit about the depression years on French Island? How that affected your family, going through a depression?

YC: Well, that's it. We never had it at home. Because, my mother used to work at the mill, and my father worked on the railroad. He was a boss on the railroad here..Maine Central.

CN: And what was your father's name?

YC: Felix. Felix Shorette. My mother was Sadie Bosse. And..ah..well, I mean, we never...you hear kids saying "when I was young all we had is an orange." But that one thing...I just can't remember having that. We always had plenty. I think it's because my Uncle Fred, my father's younger..ah..what was his..Fred Mercier his name was. He used to come down from Caribou and Van Buren, and he'd always bring my father down a barrel of potatoes, a barrel of eggs (pause 10 seconds), something else. Flour. And then when he lived with us, he'd go out hunting. He'd get rabbit. He'd get a deer. I mean we never went without. That's why its so hard. Some people probably could... maybe more on the Island.. how poor they were.

CN: You just didn't...you weren't.. YC: No. CN: Did other people in your family hunt and fish?

YC: My father did. And, my brothers did when they were home. But, they left home... When they got..when one got out of High School he went to work in Millinocket, meat cutter. Before he did go, he worked for Brissette's Market... O'Neal, my brother.

CN: Where was the market? Now this was downtown.

YC: It was downtown, right before you go on the bridge. And Pete St. Louis was across. He had a restaurant and a store too. Gladys. Gladys St. Louis Jones. That was her father. And she had one brother, Norman.

CN: What was the..the..do you remember what the downtown stores were like? Can you name some of the stores downtown then? And, did you go down there very much?

YC: Well, we were down there all the time. Well, I mean when we grew up..when we got to be sixteen or seventeen, before that we couldn't even leave our yards. We played in our own yards.

CN: You wanted to..or was that just the rules?

YC: That was the rules. If the boys wanted to see us at that age, they'd come see us there. They'd come over sometimes, and we'd have to put our paper dolls away. We were cutting paper dolls out of magazines and out of catalogs.

CS: Most of your friends were from French Island though, when you played?

YC: They were all from French Island. We didn't have any from downtown. Because we weren't allowed down there too much. Sundays we could come down and go over to (Pause here 5 seconds) Morin's store, sit down and have an ice cream. We'd have a nickel to spend.

CN: Where was Morin's store?

YC: It was (Pause)

CS: South Main Street.

YC: Where...

CN: Down near where the bank is now, down in that area were the bank is.

YC: Not that one.

CS: Oh, no.

YC: Huh..huh. There was one there. But, I mean the other one was on the other..

CN: Other side?

YC: Louis Morin.. and all them.

CN: Okay. (Papers rustling in the background and pause here about 10 seconds.) What were your holidays like?

YC: Great!

CN: They were? (Laughs) What was your favorite holiday?

YC: Well, Christmas I think, we were all together. And, then New Years, all the Bosse's and us and the Cote's, we'd all go to one place and we'd have a party there. That was a family reunion every New Years. It was great.

CS: That was held right on the Island?

YC: Yeah. That was right where Richard had his store. My aunt lived downstairs... We lived downstairs and my aunt lived upstairs... Mrs. Cote.

CN: And did you have like family recipes that you remembered always having for New Years or for Christmas?

YC: Well, they used to make salmon pie and we had rabbit stew, tourtiere..meat..that pork pie.

CN: That's tourtiere pie. Tourtiere is pork pie.

YC: Tourtiere. Aya.

CN: (Laughs) What about corton.

YC: Oh, yeah. Corton was there. Our mothers used to make it all the time.

CN: Did you ever make that?

YC: No. I never made that. No. All I make is green mustard--green tomato pickles and zucchini pickles and strawberry rhubarb jam.

CS: That's recipes from your mother, that your mother had?

YC: No. Well, the mustard one is.. Not the mustard, but the..um..green tomato and onions is my mothers. But it's just the same as everybody's doing now.

CN: Did you used to have a little garden at your house?

YC: No. We didn't have no chance to have garden. We didn't have enough land there. Although my father used to raise a pig. Under the barn. Under the shed.. and the darn thing got so big he couldn't get him out. Had ot take part of the shed on the bottom out...(Everybody is laughing here.) Oh, he was a monster. So, then we had plenty of pork and blood sausage...boudin they used to call it.

CS Boudin was blood sausage, it was made with the pigs blood.

YC: Aha.

CS: Thickened.

YC: Aya. And, then they put it in a casing.

CS: And that's something that was a meal.. all the French people liked. On the Island..everybody knew what that was.

YC: I know. Aya. But, I like my salmon pie though, that's how my mother used to make it.

CN: It would be nice to get that recipe. CS: We're going to look for recipes after this. We're going to get recipes too. So, if you've got...

YC: Yeah. I can write some down and tell you about it. I'll give her green tomato pickles. I haven't got the mustard pickle though.

CN: Did you use to have like..um..Catholic Holidays like Easter and Lent? Did yo observe..

YC: Oh, yes. We had to. We used to come home from church... we used to have go to church during Lent at night. We'd come home..we'd hear the music from the Silver Slipper in Milford. We cried because we couldn't go. (Laughs) That's how much we loved to dance.

CN: Did you go to the Silver Slipper before?

YC: Oh, yes. I danced, I roller skated up there and everything.

CN: What was that place like?

YC: Oh, it was a beautiful big hall. They used to make snowshoes downstairs. Osgood...Eddie Osgood's father owned the place, and we used to go there.

CS: So, that was a large building, that was two floors?

YC: Yeah.

CS: One was where they manufactured slippers?

YC: Downstairs.

CS: The other was where they roller skated and danced?

YC: Ayah, Ayah.

CN: Do you know when that place closed? Do you remember how old you were when that closed? I've heard of it, but I didn't know when it....

YC: I must have been all of eighteen. Eighteen or nineteen anyway.

CS: Can you remember about the fights on the island? We hear about those from everybody.

YC: Yes. Yes. Ayah.

CS: Do you have any stories that you can think of about that?

YC: Not too much. The only one I can remember is when Henry used to fight.

CN: Henry?

YC: That's her brother (Pointing at Connie St.Louis) Henry Lagasse.

CN: Did you used to go to the fights?

YC: Yes.

CN: What was it like?

YC: Well, it was good. I mean they did fight. They really meant fighting. Not like they do now. It was good.

CS: Everybody was there. Everybody from the Island was there.

YC: Oh, the Island. You had anything on the Island ... everybody was there. That's about the only place we could have that at that park. You couldn't have no baseball, it's not big enough for baseball. Would have been all right after the school burnt, it was not good then.

CN: Do you remember when the school burnt? The Island school burnt?

YC: Yeah, I was one of the first ones there.

CN: Really. Tell me about that.

YC: Every time the fire bell would ring, I'd be out to the fire. Well, the only thing is we left the house--we weren't far from there--across from there, you know, from Bosworth Street there. We..huh..there was that woman in there with her two children. She got out, but by the time..when she went back in the door locked and she lost two, I think.

CS: That was the house behind the Island school.

YC: That was the house behind the Island school, that's right. Ayah. Ayah. That was Lillian CS: Cyr. YC: Lillian Cyr..she was Lillian Madore.

- CS: Of course, they tore the Island school down. It didn't burn.
- YC: Ayah. No. No. They tore it down.
- CN: So, you used to chase the fire trucks, huh?
- YC: Where ever there was a fire, I was there.
- CN: Was there any other big fires on the Island that you remember?
- YC: No. That's the only one.
- CN: Do you remember the lumber... little lumber mill that was on the Island?
- YC: On Hildreth Street. Hmmm...
- CN: Did you ever go down there? Do you know anybody that worked there?
- YC: No, I don't. In fact, my father bought his house on the corner there, from Mr. Hildreth. That's one thing I remember. Yeah, he owned the house.
- CS: Oh. So, it was already built then before your father moved.
- YC: Oh, yeah.
- CS: Where did your father come from?
- YC: My father comes from...ah...Van Buren. He was born in Van Buren. But he was brought up in ..ah.. after his father died, he left him and his sister. She was infant (active?).. but she died in the meantime. He went to stay with Father Bouchard's sister..ah..Father Bouchard's mother (Pause) in Caribou. She finished.. you know, she brought him up.
- CS: So, how did he end up in Old Town on French Island? Did he ever tell you that story?
- YC: Well, it was just like they were all coming here. You know, they'd come down in horse and buggy, and that's how they come down. And, I don't know where he stayed when he come.
- CS: Did your mother come from French Island? Is that probably how they settled on French Island?
- YC: Yeah. Hmmmhmmm. Yeah. They were all born up there.
- CN: Do you remember where your grandparents, your mother's parents, might have come from? Did they come from Canada or up North?
- YC: I don't know. I think Rose Bosse and Flora could give you

more on that.

CN: But, you always remember them having a home here on French Island?

YC: I don't remember much. Yeah, they always have. The same one they're living in now.

CS: That's Flora and Rose you're talking about.

YC: Yeah. Yeah. And they...ah.. I just can't remember where they were from.

CN: When your father came down, the earliest memories that you have of him..did he work, did he always work for the railroad?

YC: No. He used to work in the woods. And that's mostly what they all came down..they went out in the woods. Then he got a job on the railroad. Then he stayed there until he got old enough to retire.

CN: What about your mother... back then women didn't work as much as they do today.

YC: They worked at home. My mother worked after we were grown up. We were all going to school at the time. She used to work, but she used to have a housekeeper. A Mrs. Robichaud.

CN: Do you remember her first name?

YC: They used to live on top of the Island hill. An older lady.

CN: Did she babysit you, too?

YC: Oh, no. We didn't have to babysit. We were all going to school at the time.

CN: Oh. Can you tell me about..hmm.. you went to Old Town High School?

YC: I didn't go to high school. I went just the first year.

CN: Did you notice when you were..when you weren't no French Island .. when you were overtown, were there any discriminations?

YC: Not at all. Not at all. It was very...they got along so good. On the Island it was the same way. You didn't hear the trouble they're having now.

CS: Everybody watched out for everybody else?

YC: Yes. I say you didn't have to lock your doors.

CN: Do you think it.. maybe it was because people were all related?

YC: No.

CN: What do you think it was?

YC: Because we weren't... the Cote's and the Bosse's, well we were related this way, my mother's brothers and sisters ... well, outside of that we didn't have no other relation up there.

CN: What do you think it was that everyone seem so close on French Island?

YC: Well, they were French and, you know. They all talked French. The older people had to talk French. I don't know, they were just friendly. They were always ready to give somebody a hand. Now they don't care who your neighbors are.

CN: You lived on French Island for a long time, do you remember seeing when some of those changes started to happen? What might of caused it, or when you first noticed it?

YC: Well, I've been married 59 years. So it wasn't changed when I left there. 1933 when I left.

CN: When you left French Island?

YC: Yeah. I moved to Great Works.

CN: Oh, I see.

YC: But..ah..Oh no, it was nothing like that.

CN: You don't remember when... any of the transitions that you might have had about (It sounds like the recorder stopped here.) Any other things that might have made things change.

YC: I think its the generation that has started. Because like I say, I was married 59 years. I've been away from there 59 years. It's ...since then it's been terrible. Of course you have all those students up there, and that's doing a lot of trouble. And a lot of the older people have moved out of there.

CS: A lot of the older ones have died and it's gone to children, and they've sold to people that have moved off.

YC: Yeah. The houses aren't the same. Not at all. You could go out at night and walk. In fact, I used to work down at King's restaurant.

CN: Where was that?

YC: Hmmm... That was, wait a minute. (She kind of talks to herself here.) 54 years ago.

CN: Where was it?

YC: On Main Street in Old Town.

CN: It was called King's?

YC: King's restaurant, yeah. And, then I used to walk at home at night sometimes at 1:30. I never was bothered by no one. My mother and I used to walk. She worked as a cook, and I was a waitress.

CN: You'd walk home to French Island from there?

YC: Aya. Wasn't bad at all.

CN: Do you remember what it was like going to church? Did a lot of people on the Island go to church on Sunday?

YC: Yes. In the winter time we'd cross on the ice. Take a short cut. When we went to school we done the same thing. Jump on the box cars and run through the box cars. Peanut Dube used to be with us.

CN: Between the box cars?

YC: Yeah. Well, they were stopped you know. They weren't running.

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YC: We had to go, whether we want to or not. As we grew up we'd go to dances at night. Next morning whenever we got home, two or three o'clock, you still had to go to mass.

CN: Did you go to the midnight masses on Christmas Eve?

YC: HmmHm. It was beautiful.

CN: Can you talk about that a little bit?

YC: Well, it seems as though it always waited then until Christmas Eve before it would start snowing. We'd go to church and it was beginning to snow before we got out. It was beautiful. We always had one. When we were young girls, all chumming together, we'd all get a gang of us, we'd go to church. And then we'd always go to each other's houses after. Have a lunch here and a lunch there and a little drink of wine. But the mass was beautiful. It was nice. They used to come in with the child, Jesus. It was nice.

CN: Did you have any traditions after midnight mass? I know some

families did.

YC: No, well we didn't too much. Because other families sometimes they come and they unwrap their Christmas the night before, Christmas Eve. We weren't allowed to do that. Whether we were grown up or not, we had to wait until morning or until my brothers and my sisters would all come for dinner that noon. My mother would have the family at noon. Even when we had all our children. My brother would come from Massachusetts. The other one would come from Millinocket with his. He had five. And, the other one from Massachusetts had two. I had my two. My sister had two, Cecile from Pittsfield. Those were Lagasses. And, then..ah..we'd have dinner late...because a lot of us, like myself I had to go to my husband's mother and father for Christmas dinner. Then we'd have to go home for Christmas dinner again.

CN: (laughing) Got two big dinners.

YC: Two big dinners, yeah.

CS: Was there a special dish that she cooked for Christmas?

YC: No. It was usually the turkey and all the fixings.

CS: And your mother was a good cook now. She cooked in a restaurant.

YC: Yeah. She sure was. Very good. Very good. She was good at home too. And, no matter if there was fifteen coming in and she was ready for ten, she'd find more. If she had twenty coming in there would be more for them. Of course, I'd have relatives coming in from Millinocket, from Waterville rather. And, they'd come with car loads Saturday afternoon. But, there was enough to eat for all of us. I don't know how she ever did it.

CS: They knew how to stretch in those days.

YC: And she certainly knew how to put them up at night too. You'd double up whether or not you wanted to.

CN: With six kids in that house did you have to share bedrooms?

YC: Well, we had two rooms way up in the attic. The boys would sleep there. And then on the second floor, she had three bedrooms. One for her and one for father, of course. I had one by myself, and my two sisters had to sleep in one. Then downstairs we had a large kitchen and a large livingroom.

CN: And a big barn with a pig in it.

YC: Yeah. In the barn..underneath. (Laughing)

- CN: Were there a lot of large families back then?
- YC: Very big. Most everywhere. Everybody had....across the street from us was St. Louis. Irene St. Louis. She had a big crowd. She had a big family.
- CN: Can you name some of the other families, early families that were on the Island that you remember besides Irene St. Louis? What were some of the other names?
- YC: The Ste. Maries. Arthur Ste. Marie and his family. (The phone is ringing here.)
- CS: You were just talking about Ste. Maries.
- YC: Mrs. Tedd.
- CN: Mrs. Tedd?
- YC: Tedd. She had a big family.
- CN: Is that what her last name was, Tedd?
- YC: Tedd. Last name was Tedd.
- CS: Now did she live near you?
- YC: She lived right behind the store.
- CN: Richard's store?
- YC: No.
- CS: Nadeau's.
- YC: Nadeau's store. Nadeau's just had three kids anyway. The Choinard, I don't know. Bouchard had quite a family, didn't they?
- CS: Where were they, the Bouchards?
- YC: The second house on that street going down that way.
- CN: Which street was that?
- YC: That was Union, I think...huh. (Pause here about 30 seconds) The Beaulieu's on the corner there next to the Shuffle Inn. There was quite a family of them at the time. Bea Beaulieu's family. And the Richards. But they weren't around our place though.
- CS: They were down on Hildreth?
- YC: On Front Street. On Front Street.

CS: The Richards?

YC: Yeah. Weren't they??

CS: Are you thinking of Leo Richards and Shorty Richards, their father. Is that what you're thinking of? They were on Hildreth Street on the end of the Island.

CS: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah. Okay. Hmmm..Mrs. Larouche. Yeah. Her son is running that Larouche's thing out to Pushaw. (They are talking back and forth here in low tones.)

CN: What is it?

YC: It's a kind of a place where they have birds and flowers and everything.

CN: Oh, Hirundo?

YC: Hirundo. They lived on the Island.

CS: Oh, really. Okay. We talked a little bit about your father if he raised any animals, and you said all you can remember is him raising a pig. Do you remember any other families that had any other animals, like had a farm on the Island?

YC: We didn't have no farms on the Island.

CN: Even when you were young?

YC: No. No farms.

CS: Hardly no one raised animals then?

YC: Well, people might have had chickens and things like that, but outside of that I doubt if they had anything else. But most everybody had a pig. Because they would have something for the winter.

CS: Where did you do your grocery shopping? Where did your mother and father grocery shop?

YC: Levasseur's and Nadeau's.

CN: What about clothes shopping?

YC: We'd go downtown down to Cutler's.

CN: Cutler's?

YC: Aya.

CS: Cutler's was open when you were young?

YC: Cutler's women shop and Cutler's men shop. And there was Goldsmiths...there was Ben Sklar's. (Pause)

CN: What about....do you remember the movie hall downtown?

YC: Yeah. We had three.

CN: You had three movie halls?

YC: Hmmhmm. We had the Strand, the Central..

CN: Where was the Central?

YC: On Water Street where the veterans..not the veterans but the legion is. The Legion Hall, that was the Central.

CN: Where was the Strand?

YC: On Main Street. Further up, some where around....(pause)

CS: I can remember the Strand on South Main Street. That's where the Strand was..on So. Main Street across from where the ah..clinic is now. Where..ah...hesitates)

YC: Was it that high?

CS: Yeah, it was. They tore it down.

CN: When the other movie hall close? Central.

YC: I don't remember.

CS: I never even heard of that one.

YC: Yeah. We used to go to the movies then for 5 cents. A nickel.

CN: Did you used to go often?

YC: On Saturday afternoon.

CN: What other stores did they have downtown?

YC: Well, they had Violette's barber shop. That was way down where the..ah..oh, what you call..around where Thibodeau is. There was Thibodeau's barber shop is now, was now. (A long pause)

CN: You didn't have big supermarkets back then did they?

YC: No. The only thing that was, there used to be a store way up on this end here. Upper Main Street.

CS: A&P?

YC: Oh, yes. I was grown up then, when they had the A&P and everything like that. Oh, that was a Gingsburg on Water Street that had a market.

CS: And he carried everything?

YC: I think it was Goldberg.

CS: He carried everything? Food, you could buy anything?

YC: Yeah. Yeah, he had everything.

CN: Was it kinda like the supermarkets we have now?

YC: Oh, no. Not that much. It was more like Levasseur's would have had. You know, canned goods and things like that. We didn't have what you call supermarkets then. Those came after.

CN: Well, one of things that I'd like to ask you--is there something in this oral history that you'd like your grandchildren and the people that are going to want to know about what the Island was like, is there something that you would like to share, a memory or a feeling of what it was like living on French Island?

YC: Well, like I say, it was so nice and friendly. It was just great to live up there. You live here now. I know my neighbor downstairs here, upstairs on the other end I don't know. I have a great grandson that lives across the street here. And I have a grandson that lives in Levant. I mean, that's not here.

CS: You don't know the neighbors like you did then?

YC: No.

CS: Not close. There's not the closeness that you felt.

YC: No. After my husband passed away, I was living in Great Works. I moved to Bradley. And that was just great. Just like being on the Island.

CN: Oh, really. Why?

YC: They're so friendly and helpful. They have a feeling.... There's a feeling there like there was on the Island. I mean you could go to a person's house, and the first thing they'd tell you, "Sit down and have a soft drink"... something like that. They wouldn't destroy nothing. You could put anything outside, and nobody would touch nothing. I wouldn't want to live up there now. No way! They could give me the Island and I wouldn't want it. But, I did have happy memories there.

CS: That's good.

YC: Yeah. Very good. But, I'll look for those pictures, and I'll let you have them. Cause I have some of Melvina Ouelette you know. Mina Ouelette we used to call her. And, all the others.

CS: You don't have anything of the Island school? You wouldn't have any pictures of anything at the school? Like they used to have when I was in school..they had a little band and stuff like that. They'd take a picture of that, the kids that were in the band, and they'd take class pictures.

YC: You're younger than I am, don't forget.

CS: You don't remember having any of those things?

YC: No.

CS: No, they didn't have any?

YC: Because I don't think Cecile, I don't think Cecile went to school there.

CN: Oh, I remember something I wanted to ask you. Peddlers. Do you remember any peddlers?

YC: Sure we do.

CN: Can you talk about that?

YC: Used to peddle meat. I don't know their names though. There's one woman from Bangor... on Hancock Street... her name was Malroon and she used to sell clothes.

CN: Door to door?

YC: Door to door. Aya. But the others I can't.

CN: There was a man with a meat wagon that came by?

YC: With a meat wagon and the ice man.

CS: That was once a week they came around?

YC: Yes.

CN: And there was an ice man?

YC: And an ice man, aya.

CS: The ice man was Mr. Richards on the Island?

YC: Mr. Richards. Yeah...hummm.

CS: Because he came around because everyone had ice refrigerators. Ice chests they called them. And you had to have the ice.

CN: Do you remember that, ice chest?

YC: I had one when I was married.

CN: Oh, you did! That must have been quite a chore to keep up wasn't it?

YC: Well, yes, you had to watch the water underneath. It would drip through see. Ice box, we used to call them.

CN: Ice box?

YC: Aya.

CN: Any other peddlers that would come by?

YC: I was trying to think.

CS: Of course, I remember Mr. Nachum. But that was in the forties. And, you weren't even on the Island then. So...

YC: What was he doing?

CS: He peddled clothes. He went around. He had a car and he had that full of clothes. There was everything from sheets to coats to dresses to anything you could want.

YC: Old Mrs. Malroon had the same thing. I don't know how she carried everything. She'd take orders you know. If you wanted her to come back she'd have it.

CN: Would she make the clothes?

YC: No. She bought it. I don't know where she got it.

CN: Can you talk about the polio outbreak that happened in the area?

YC: Well, one I knew of... I didn't tell you before that... There was my sister and my brother. She said she was... I really don't know, you'd have to ask her for that age. It left her one leg that was quite bad, and my brother didn't bother him one bit. And then Mrs. Sibó, her husband used to run the ..uh..(Pause)..The hardware store man.

CN: And he had polio too?

YC: She did. His wife did. She was in that, you know, whatever it was..you know... that tank there (iron lung).

CN: Oh, really?

YC: Aya. She was bad.

CS: So who treated your brother and sister then.

YC: Well, the only thing is my mother would have a tub in the middle of the kitchen, and she'd put them in that. Sally mostly because like I said she had it bad. And she'd give her a treatment every morning.

CS: Is it something the doctors told her to do?

YC: It must have been. I don't know. It's just like I say, she remembers but...Then she had to wear a shoe that was built up on one foot.

CN: Who was your doctor?

YC: I don't know if it was Madden at the time. CS: I remember Dr. YC: Dr. Landry probably. There was a Landry. Dr. Landry.

CN: In Old Town... or was he on French Island?

YC: No. They're from Old Town. We didn't have no doctor up there.

CN: Did you have any policemen on French Island?

YC: Yes. We had Mr. Martin. I mean, he worked downtown but he was from the Island. And there was St. Louis.

CN: What was his first name? Do you remember?

CS: Clement.

YC: Clement. Clement St. Louis.

CN: What was Mr. Martin's first name?

YC: (Pause) Well, I can't remember. All I know is he's Pepper Martin's father.

CN: Pepper Martin?

YC: HmmHmm.

CN: Oh, nicknames. That was one of the things. There were a lot of nicknames for people.

YC: Yeah, well. Pepper Martin, we used to call him that.

CN: Did you have a nickname?

YC: Yeah. They used to call me Petite Vonne...meaning little

Yvonne.

CS: Oh. Did many in your family have nicknames? Cause most families did have nicknames. My family all had nicknames.

YC: No, my family didn't have. No, Walter kept his name. Levi, O'Neil, Sally. Just me, Petit Vonne.. Cecile was always Cecile, no.

CN: How about with your friends.. and did you notice a lot of nicknames with the people around the Island?

YC: No. My friends didn't have any nicknames.

CN: No?

YC: No. We must have been the good girls, huh? (Laughs)

CN: Do you remember anything at all about the prohibition days?

YC: Well, I remember some people use to make home brew and others use to make what they called moonshine--but in French the called it Baggose. These people would color it, some would put yellow in it. It was very pretty and other had pink.

CN: Did they have stills?

YC: No. No. It was jus ah..I really don't know. I know the home brew was made behind the stove.

CN: Really? Huh.

CS: That was for their own use and for company, when they had company.

YC: HmmHmm. That's right. No. No. It wasn't for sale.

CN: I had heard from others that there was people that had stills on the Island.

YC: Really? No, I don't remember that at all.

CN: Do you remember any bootlegging go on, on the Island?

YC: Oh, sure. CN: Oh, you do? YC: Oh, sure.

CN: Talk about that.

YC: Well, we used to go to dances Saturday night, and before we went to the dances, the boys we were with used to go and buy it.

CN: From the people right on French Island?

YC: Yeah. They'd buy beer or they'd buy hard stuff. At the time they were selling that regular hard stuff.

CN: How did they get that?

YC: They used to come up from Boston. They used to order it. I know a lot of people did. Order from Boston. Come up on the train.

CN: It was illegal, wasn't it?

YC: Well, people had it in their house. And then another thing is we went to a dance one night and the boys had bought a gallon of cider or whatever it was, and they were drinking it and there was a hole from where they were drinking it, underneath it and they got it all over themselves. (Laughing) We had fun then though. I mean it was all good fun. You never heard anything about raping at all, you never knew about that then.