

JULY 27, 1993 7:00 P.M.
ALBERT AND RITA MICHAUD IN THEIR LIVING ROOM

AM Albert Michaud
RM Rita Michaud
CN Carol Nichols

CN Can we start out a little bit about your earliest memories of the Island?

AM Do you want who we are or you don't need that. CN Oh, yeah. that would be great. AM Do you want our family background... who our mother and father is and.. OK. I'm Albert Michaud of Old Town, and I'm 64 years old, and I was born on French Island on May 6, 1929. I'm from a family of 9. My mother was Alvine Lavoie and my father was William Michaud. I have three brothers and five sisters and my wife who will speak to you now is the former Rita England.

RM I'm 66. I was born in 1927. My mother is Jane Graham.. was Jane Graham and my father was Harold England. My mother was married a second time.. married to Bill Graham and they are all deceased. I have three sisters and two brothers.

AM My memory of French Island when I was younger was a memory that I didn't quite understand then but when we speak about it now at this age and even at an earlier age everybody tells us we were very poor. Everybody on French Island was very poor. But to my knowledge..I didn't think we were poor. We were rich. It's just what other people thought we were. Monetarily, we were poor. But that's a point that I'd like to bring out. We had a very good childhood.. most of us. For entertainment..the river was our entertainment. Mostly, we lived on the river. In the summertime, we swam all summer. In the wintertime, we skated on the river. We used the river to cross and go to school...to go to church and to go to town. We as parents today.. if we knew our children were on the river as much as we were, we'd die of fright. But we knew the river and we knew the dangers of the river. And we could avoid those dangers. As far as entertainment..for the boys it was..as children we used to fish a lot on the river.. there was a favorite spot on the end of French Island.. If you didn't get there early enough you didn't have a place to set a pole. So, we'd just go down there and set a fishing pole and wait for your mother to call you at night. And the mother that had the best voice was Louise Thibodeau. When she would call her children "Germaine, Francis and Pitou". That would ring all over French Island. So if the other mothers weren't loud enough to call their children..they could hear Louise Thibodeau calling her children. And, I've spoken to Henry Thibodeau who is just diseased a year ago..two years ago, maybe.. and he relayed so many things about French Island to

me that it's a great history and I'm glad this is being done
Because there's a lot to say about French Island.

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CN Could you tell me a little bit of what he said to you, Henry?

AM Well, my favorite thing was.. I mentioned it once at Franco-American time which I was MCing and I got in a little trouble. I always thought that French Island.. they used to call it Skin Island also. Of course, as a young man I thought they called it Skin Island because there was a lot of loose women on French Island. And it was common knowledge that I wasn't the only one that thought that. But I was mentioning that to Henry Thibodeau one day and he said, "Oh, no. That's not the reason for French Island to be called Skin Island. In the old days there used to be a tanning factory down at the end of French Island..which a lot of animal skins would be there to be tanned. That's why they called it Skin Island." Which was very enlightening to me. I didn't know that. And Henry..he had a great knowledge.. in fact, I was working in his house doing a room there and he told me.."You know, the room that you're doing now..when your father first came around here he boarded in that room." Which I had no knowledge of at all. I was fixing a room that my father was renting when he first came around here..when he met my mother. And my father today would be about 106 years old if he was still living.

CN Where did your father come from?

AM Cabano, Canada. He was a true Canadian. And that's why we are Franco-Americans. My mother was born in Old Town..but he was born in Canada. CN They met on French Island? AM They met on French Island. I don't know what brought him around this area.. I don't know much about my father's family..but he had a lot of relatives in the Waterville area. He came around here and.. he went back.. I never went with him.. but my brother visited Cabano with him.. and he really enjoyed it.

CN What did he do for a living?

AM My father was... what I remember was he was road commissioner in Old Town for quite awhile. And then when they opened the chains of liquor stores in Maine he was quite elderly then-- he was about 50 maybe 55 and he took a job with the liquor commission in one of the liquor stores, and he worked there until he retired. But my memories of when he was Road Commissioner... I was... my memory is at maybe 9, 10 or 11 years old... the old City Park now... used to be the city dump. That used to be where the city dump was.. and one of his jobs as Road Commissioner was to make a park out of that. And if you look now at the bridge...you can see the cribwork of logs there. Well, they went to Pea Cove..at the Green Bridge.. the city crews, and they got logs out of the

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river..because there used to be..they used to run logs down the river in the old days..and a lot of the logs would sink. Well, the men would use pick poles and raise those logs and bring them to shore and then they'd truck them to the old city park and made that crib work to raise the bank and then fill that all in. He used to take me to work with him in the morning, and he'd put me on one of those trucks and I'd ride back and forth which was great for me... just a kid. And that's a vivid memory. And before... if you're interested the dump that was there... the city park now used to be the dump and before it was a dump at the city park it used to be right across from French Island where the old grain mill used to be. That's where the city dump was. If you go down River Street where the...(Who was it used to live down there?)... Goodins the street where the Goodins used to live..the dump was directly across the ledges there.. That was the city dump when I was a kid. Where the Cotes used to live.

CN There was a grain mill?

AM There was a grain mill. The grain mill used to be.. the track used to run right along side the grain mill on Water Street and the.. of course they'd unload the grain right from the boxcars into the grain mill. They had chutes there. And I remember as a kid.. I remember picking coal on the railroad tracks for us to burn. Because there was a lot of coal cars and a lot of the coal used to fall off, and we'd go over there and pick it up and bring it home and that's what we'd burn. In the spring... everybody'd save wood... river wood for winter burning. There was a lot bolts... of course, in the high water it would wash away all the logs from the shores and would carry them down river and everybody was waiting with pick poles.. there was nothing got by French Island.

CN Was the water clean back then?

AM I wouldn't say it was. But it wasn't as dirty as it was later. But, there was a lot of swimming holes, and it was very common to have swimming hole right next to a place where the sewerage went into the river. But, we just never noticed those things. CN Your mother was from French Island? AM Yes. CN Was her family... lived on French Island?

AM Yes. My grandmother used to live... We used to live on Heald Street..which is a street off Front Street... When you go up the first hill on French Island it would be the.. one, two.. it would be the third street on the right going down towards the river. And, I was brought up there.. and my brothers and sisters were all brought up there, and my grandmother used to live across the street. And, it was mostly relatives in the area. My wife lived on top of the hill that I remember..but

she lived in different places but always in that vicinity.. So, I've known my wife all my life but she never looked at me until I grew up I guess. I was always one of those kids who was in the way.. and if

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everybody remembers of Pearly Nadeau's or the Shuffle Inn now... well, before Pearly Nadeau owned the Shuffle Inn my father owned it. I don't remember it but my oldest sisters.. Doris Nadeau and Adeline Cates.. they tell me that they used to work there when they were girls.

CN Was it a restaurant?

AM It was the very same thing as it is now. A family gathering place. Chop suey sandwiches, and hamburgers, and beer.

RM The kids used to gather in one small room and many of the parents would be in the other room having a beer, and the kids were having soda and a hamburger or whatever in the other small room. Families met there. It was different than it is now.

AM Some of the old names that you used to see there was.. Fatty Cyr, Moxie Taylor, Roy Cary... of course, those are people that were a little older when I was young... and used to sit in there. Your father, Harold, and I, we sat there a good many times... that would be a meeting place. We'd be going somewhere... we'll meet at the Shuffle Inn. We'd all meet at the Shuffle Inn and then go somewhere as young men.

CN Do you remember any of the stories? I heard before that that was a great place for story telling. People would get together and talk about their adventures. Is there anything that comes to mind?

AM No. Not..we used to have our own adventures but.. the older people and the younger people never mingled much. We used to listen to them.. but their stories didn't seem to interest us. We had our own stories.. our own hunting stories and our own fishing stories.. when we were real young it was a great place in the wintertime to sit and tackle cars. Because there weren't many cars in those days.. but when they come up on the Island they used to have to turn to go on Union Street..and when they'd make that turn they'd have to slow down. So, there was always a lot of young people on the porch.. me included.. that we'd jump.. I don't know if you're familiar with the term tackling cars.. but when the cars would come around they had to slow down.. so we'd grab onto the bumper, and we'd slide along with the car.. that was tackling cars. And that was very, very common. And also common, was sliding. Everybody used to slide with sleds. And we used to start on top of the hill where the old T&K was and we'd go down that

hill by the Shuffle Inn, and then we'd turn down to where my house is on Heald Street and we'd go right down onto the ice. So that was quite a ride.

CN On top of the hill. What hill was that?

AM That was on top of where you live now.. where your mother lives now. Right about there was an old T&K right up there on top of the hill. There was not Peanut Dubay.. there was a beer joint. Not Jerry.. It was Peanut. The other one was Jerry. There was Peanut Dubay on top of the hill and then after that there was a T&K, and then there was a little store there where Nelly Bouchard used to make potato chips in there. He was the potato chip man of Old Town. He was the one that started potato chips. Nelly Bouchard. And my father also had made a great big toboggan one year. It was two little sleds hooked together with a long plank. There was one sled in the front and then a long plank. And it sat about 12 people. There was a steering wheel up on top of it. It was a homemade toboggan and that thing used to be going every night.. we start out at the T&K... of course, I was too young. I couldn't get on it. My brothers and sisters they'd slide. And every hill had a little ice slide where kids would slide.. little kids would slide down with their cardboards and everything. The Goodin hill was famous for that. And, the other hill down by where Kenny Taylor lives now.. which was the Taylors.. where Five-inch Taylor used to live. CN Cotes?
AM Yeah. Where Cotes used to live.. Kenny Taylor lives there now.

CN You keep mentioning all these French names. Some that I hear a lot.

AM A lot of French names. I had an aunt.. they used to call her Momah..why I don't know. Your uncle Bebe.. there was a lot of Bebes. There were a lot of people called Bebe.. There was Bebe St. Louis and his uncle, Bebe St. Louis. There was Bebe Taylor and Fatty Cyr and Moxie Taylor.. and those were all nicknames... Five-Inch Taylor. CN Why was he called Five-Inch? AM I really don't know.

CN Do you remember the activities that used to happen on the Island?

AM Yes. I remember mostly the softball games..which had started. It was a great place for softball because there were so many rules. When you look at the place now.. I just don't understand how you play softball there, because it isn't big enough. But, if you hit it in a certain place you were out.. if you hit it in another certain place it was a two bagger.. if you hit it in another place you lost the ball, because the lady that lived there she wouldn't give them back. That's the

way it was. And, after that I remember the Island School where they used to have the fights. It was a great fight.. it was, you know, nationally known as a fighting place. Of course, some of the fighters.. there was Al Rosaire, which was my uncle. He was a great fighter and his son Norman went on to fight and Norman's son John went on to fight.. so it was a fighting family. CN Did you used to go? AM Oh, yes... and Uppercut Roy was a fighter, which Uppercut Roy was my neighbor when I was younger. CN What was his first name?

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AM Evan. (Pronounced E-Van). Evan Roy. We used to spar together, but I never had the guts to go into fighting like he did. Which he became a great fighter. Evan (Uppercut) Roy. And Tarzan Howe, Sweet Pea Dalton. CN Can you name their whole names? AM I don't know their whole names. Tarzan Howe..I don't know what his first name is. CN They just always called him Tarzan? AM Sweet Pea Dalton is still living today and he's a sergeant on the police force down to the University of Maine. And, he was a great fighter. And, your uncle St. Louis... Cyclone St. Louis... I don't know what his first name was. And, there was Cyclone ... Clement... yeah, Clement St. Louis. And there was also Cyclone Violette. They were all fighters in the area. Of course, there was fighters from outside the area that came in too. But those were all local fighters. And after that was French Island (School)... which my wife and I were really involved... we turned it into a youth center. The Better Youth Center...they abandoned the school... they didn't use the school anymore. So, we gutted it out and made two halls in it.. one upstairs and one downstairs and of course, what my wife and I remember most about it is... when we were getting it ready... our wedding was going to be the first wedding ever held in the Better Youth Club.

RM The first wedding reception... the first bridal shower and reception.

AM We were hurrying to get it ready for that. That's back in '51.

CN What was the school like? Do your remember early... ?

AM I don't remember the school. RM I do. I remember the school. I went there for one or two years... two years... I think. It was a nice little school. I remember a teacher.. Mrs. Greenan... and one other teacher... now I can't think of her name... but she was wonderful. I wish I could think of her name. But I just went there two years... and I transferred to St. Joseph.

CN Did they speak French at the school?

RM Oh, no. No. No. They were English speaking teachers. They couldn't understand French either. CN Did you speak French?
RM I spoke French when I was little. My grandmother... I lived with my grandmother for awhile... for several years when I was little. CN What was her name? RM Her name was Philomine Landry and her husband's name was Frank Landry. I understand that I spoke only French then... but then I lived with my mother and father, and my father couldn't speak French at all so we had to speak English in the house, and of course, then when I went to school and everything it was English. We had St. Josephs.. we had to do some speaking of French in St. Josephs School. A lot of them... We had to learn to read and write it all through there... until we got through the eighth grade. But at home I spoke English because my father couldn't speak or understand French. He did get to understand quite a bit of it..he even spoke a few words... you know, but by that time I was quite grown up. CN Was your father from French Island? RM No. My father was from Bangor, and he was English. CN But your mother was? RM My mother was from French Island..she was French.

CN What were her parent's names?

RM Philomene and Frank Landry. And they both came from Canada. So, they were French-Canadian. Oh, yes. My grandfather ran a little grocery store there.. on the Island. Landry's Market. I remember I used to help him in there. When I was a kid I used to work behind the candy counter. I ate more candy than I sold, I think. He knew it too. CN Where was the store located? RM Right on Front Street.. at the top of the hill where Al lived. And, it was just a little tiny market, but he served an awful lot of people on that Island.

CN How did you two meet?

RM Well, we always knew each other, I guess. But, I'll let Al tell you. AM She was always chummy with my older sister, Gloria. Which Rita is a couple years older than I am.. a couple years older. She never looked at me as a kid.. but, when I returned from the service..our favorite stop over was the Shuffle Inn which was Pearlys then.. No it wasn't Pearlys then. I don't remember who owned it.. what they called it. But, it might have been the Shuffle Inn back then. But, I think she started noticing me, and I started noticing her so we started going together.. we married. RM I remember just one time talking to Al.. he used to go to the seminary, and one time he was home one summer. He'd come home summers... and he was sitting on the front steps of the Shuffle Inn. And I noticed he never talked... you know he would be with a bunch of fellows and we all talked together... boys and girls... and Al never spoke. So, I remember one day saying.. "Why don't you talk?" He just shrugged his shoulders. And then I didn't

talk with him until he got back from the service. CN He was shy? RM I guess so. I guess he was.

AM I think she's right. Shy in the sense of not having gone to a public school and I left right from grammar school to go to the seminary... I was very uncomfortable with girls and everything. So, I think that's what she noticed. Because I didn't have the training with girls that you would get in public school. And, of course, from the convent school... and by the way, the Island School I think there was six grades but most Catholic people... which were mostly Catholic on French Island anyway. Most parents sent their kids.. at the most... about two year at French Island. Because it was too far for

(337) them to go to the convent school... There were no busses in those days. You had to walk. So, most kids usually went a couple years at the Island School, and then they'd go to St. Joseph's School... the parochial school. And, most of them would graduate from there then go to high school.

CN Which church did you go to?

AM St. Josephs. Well, that's another matter. St. Joseph's because you weren't allowed to go to St. Mary's. CN Why? AM Because it was an Irish Church. Because the old priest that was there then and I'll name him... Father Biglin... he would very often say, "You frogs go down to your church down there." And this... it happened that Father Biglin was a great man, huh? I used to like him and everything. But, he did have something about Franco-Americans. And it was a big thing when we were kids. It was separated. The French and the Irish were really separated. And, it is getting together now. But, it's a fact that we have to face. It was there. That's why the Irish Church was built in the first place.

CN Do you notice any discrimination or prejudice when you went to high school because you came from French Island?

AM I didn't go to high school.. so, I never noticed that.. that prejudice or anything. RM I did. Yes. I did... and I have heard a lot of people say that they did feel prejudice. And, always felt that they were less than the other kids that did not come from French Island. But, I must say that I never felt this. I never did. And, I don't know why especially. But I really never, never felt that. Maybe because I don't think I ever had a French accent, because most of my friends..for one thing, did have French accents because they mostly spoke French in their homes all the time. And, I got out of that real young. So, maybe that's why. I don't know. It's the only thing that I can think of. I never felt prejudice.

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CN Can your remember back in your childhood what your home life was like... the kind of meals that you had?

RM Yeah. All right. We had big meals. Always had to have a hot breakfast because we had a long walk to school. There were no busses in those days. And then we had to walk home for lunch. So, we had to have a hot lunch..especially in the wintertime.

CN You had that long of a break?

RM We had to have an hour, because it took a long time to walk to and from. There were no hot lunches at school and we couldn't take our lunch to school. We had to walk home. That's a long walk from French Island down to St. Josephs Church and school. So, and then at night we had another big meal. So, we had.. always had lots of vegetables... and my poor mother cooked like crazy.

It's a lot of work when you have a big family and you have to cook three meals a day.

CN Did you have -- growing up Catholic -- special meals?

RM I don't think they were all that different. I know that on Friday we ate fish. We didn't eat meat on Friday because that was a Catholic way. And, CN Any family recipes that were handed down? AM Well, let's see. My mother used to make a great roast of beef and pork which I have copied. And my family loves it too. That's the biggest one, I think. We always really liked that a lot, with brown potatoes and carrots and gravy.. you know.

AM I think my family more had French meals more than Rita's because of her father being English. And, most of the meals that if you go to a Franco-American time now..which they advertise.. that's what we used to have. But a lot better. La Tourtiere, la puish (sp), la fricassée.. CN Do you know how to make them? AM No. I don't know how to make them.. because they don't.. La Puish is just hamburg and tomato sauce and peas and vegetables or whatever you have left over all put together.. that was called Puish (sp). And ratatoune was usually hamburg again with .. in those days, hamburg and potatoes were the staples.. And it was kind of cooked with onions and sliced the potatoes..cook them all together and we called that ratatoune. Because at home la tourtiere.. I always remember la tourtiere being a salmon pie. But that's not true. The real tourtiere is beef and pork pie. But I see a neighbor that's nodding her head, and it was that way at her house. Tourtiere was salmon pie. But.. different places I've been I've always asked them what there thing was..and it varies. A lot of places tourtiere they really had.. the real

tourtiere which was beef and pork pie..ground up. But, salmon was the staple... which was a very cheap meal then. I remember Saturday mornings... when I was a little kid... my mother used to give me a dime. I used to go up to my wife's grandfather's store, Mr. Landry's, and Saturday for noon we always had the same thing... Bananas and milk. And for ten cents we had all the bananas we wanted. All the bananas. There's something I'd like to throw in here... memories of... is it too late Carol? (TURNED TAPE) A memory I have... a vivid memory is right on the corner of Brunswick Street and Willow Street there used to be a donut factory in there, that they used to call McMullen's Donuts. Now MacMullen used to discard their waste donuts... or whatever you want to call them... they used to throw them over the Milford bridge into the Penobscot. There was none of this second hand buying or anything. They just got rid of their stuff. All us kids... and I'm talking about we kids... ages 12 to 15 maybe... like I said, we used to live on the river. Well, we knew that come 5 o'clock they were going to dump donuts over the bridge. So, there was always three or four boats sitting under the Milford bridge, and as soon as they'd throw the donuts in we'd dive and get them before they'd get all wet. So, that's.. this might ring a bell with some of the other kids that used to be there.

CN Did you do that too?

RM No. I didn't do that. I didn't do half the things that Al did. I wasn't as adventurous as he was.

AM And another memory that I think of that used to scare our parents to death. Of course, we used to.. to go to school a lot of times we crossed in a boat. And, our favorite thing was... like I used to live right near the river, and we used to have what we used to call the little eddy there and that's where we used to put our boats. Well, the girls used to cross with us and everything and sometimes the girls would cross alone in a boat. So, at night we'd go down there... being the frog pond was always full of frogs... fill the boat full of frogs. So, the next morning when the girls would go they wouldn't dare to take the boat. And then, directly down the end of the Island where the Cotes lived and everything... right across is what we used to call in French... la Pointe aux Puce.. which I don't know what that would be in English [flea point]. But, anyway, the Rossignols and the Lavoies used to live over... and the Petries... they all lived over there. When they used to go shopping in Old Town they'd take their boat and cross over onto French Island and they'd... most of the time... they'd walk from French Island to downtown... Or they'd go over near where the railroad track was. But most of the time they'd cross on French Island. Well, we wanted to go swimming. Most of the time we'd swim to

the boom... what they used to call the headwork. We'd swim there, and we'd swim all over the place. But, if one of those people had gone over with the boat to go downtown we'd take that boat and cross the boat... so when they'd come back from shopping that boat was back on the other side. So... those were the mischievous things we used to do as kids.

CN Who were some of your friends?

AM Oh, my God. Raymond Marquis..which is deceased just last year. Lionel Robichaud, Walter Simon, Raymond Martin and.. oh, my God. We were an awful bunch of.. but I can't remember most of them.

CN Did you play with your cousins?

AM Oh, yes. Cousins.. in fact I have a cousin.. Don Voter that is like a brother to me. Maybe a couple years younger. And Harold Lacadie..which we were all brought up on the Island and very knit/tied families. Some of us chummed together, but others didn't chum together..but we were close.

CN Did you find that French Island was broken up into different sections?

AM Yes. To a certain extent. The people living on the east side of the Island and the west side of the Island. Which... where the Island School was would be the east side of the Island, and the other side of the Island. People didn't mingle. Very friendly and everything... but you were friendly with your own side of the Island more than... as far as the boys go. I don't know what the girls did. And, we used to have a lot of fights in the wintertime on the ice. Because, like I say... then the river used to freeze all around the Island. You could skate around the Island comfortably. You didn't have... well, we didn't worry... but, our parents did. And everybody had skating rinks... like the people on the French Island side... which would be the Milford side... they had skating rinks there. And the people from Pointe aux Puce... we used to call it... they'd have one. And then the people from Greatworks... they'd have skating rinks. And the people from Bradley had skating rinks. So, you can imagine... everybody skating around. Some didn't want you in their territory... it wasn't any big thing like you see the street fights today. It was little disagreement fights. You stay in your own rink... or.. but that's the way it was in the wintertime. In the summertime the river was open. We used to go up to the dam. And I can remember a vivid thing... when I was real young the Island just below the dam we used to call it Sand Plum Island. My sisters used to take me there when I was real young... we'd go up there... and to me, it was an immense island. But you look at it today and I don't think it's 25 feet across. But

they told me the story that that's where Tarzan lived. So, whenever I went up there I'd look all around trying to see Tarzan. And that's a vivid memory with me. And then the Island right below there... which we used to call Muskrat Island... Which would be right across from where the old Chapman mill used to be... right at the foot of the Island hill... for those that remember Chapmans. There was an island there we used to call Muskrat Island..and we used to go there an play cowboys and Indians all day. It was very easy to swim across. It wasn't 20 feet across there. Do you have any memories?

CN I'd like to know a little bit about what your childhood games were like.

AM Childhood games? The biggest game was Odd or Evil. I don't know what you'd call it. I've heard it... Hide and Seek and Odd or Evil and. ... but, we used to call it Odd or Evil. Which you'd have a circle... you'd make a circle and you were two teams. One team would go hide and one team would seek. Now when you'd find the person you'd have to bring him and put him in that circle... they're caught. And then you'd look for the others. And then you'd put a guard... somebody to guard the circle. Now, if one of the other team that's hiding... if they can come and run through that circle without getting caught everybody that's in the circle are free again. So that used to go on and on. And then we used to play with tin cans... we used to put tin cans on your shoes... used to bang them just so much and they'd clamp on the heels of your shoes and used to play cowboys and Indians... Clomp, Clomp, Clomp. We'd run with that. And then another thing... we'd just take a wheel. I don't understand how we got amused with that... We'd take just an ordinary small wheel... a cart wheel or something... and we'd take a stick and put a board down the stick to make like a T stick and we'd push that wheel along with that... keep it going. That's a game that we used to play often. Of course, we'd get in the old rubber tires and roll and sliding in the wintertime.

CN Did your parents have gardens?

AM Oh, yes. A lot of gardens. We used to steal a lot in the gardens. Oh. The favorite one on French Island was poor Mrs. Blair... Mrs. Blair that used to live right on the corner of Bodwell Street and Front Street. She used to have a house there. and she had the best apples on French Island, and everybody knew it. And, she had an awful problem keeping apples. But, everybody had gardens, and everybody had apple trees... some better than others. And, they were raided often. But, it was an accepted thing. And the biggest thing on French Island... especially being Catholic... was Mardi Gras. Mardi Gras was a custom that the older people... well

the younger people would go around stealing candy. But actually it wasn't stealing... because the older people would make the candy... mostly la tire... la tire is taffy candy. They'd make it and they'd put it out on their porch. Whatever they'd make they'd put it out there for somebody to take... because the custom is that Mardi Gras is the day before Lent, and most everybody gave up sweets and everything... so you'd eat all you can Mardi Gras... because you're not going to have anymore during Lent.

CN When did they stop doing that? I don't remember...

AM Oh. I think that... oh, yes. A long time ago. Well, I'd say the last time I remember... would be 14/15 years old. And then Trick or Treat took over. Then they started doing Trick or Treat instead of Mardi Gras. RM It's a different holiday altogether. AM I know it's a different holiday... but that's where the thing of going around houses and getting things... before that it was Mardi Gras..we didn't have Trick or Treat.

CN What was Lent like? Was that what all the families...

AM Yes, Lent was observed. Mostly penance... a lot of people gave up things and a lot of people went to church. And me as a kid and being a seminarian... no I wasn't a seminarian, I was still in grammar school... but there used to be Alphonse Derosier that lived in Bradley, and Walter Simon, and I and a couple of others... for penance we didn't go to church in St. Josephs here... because we belonged to St. Josephs church... we went to the Bradley church. We'd ride our bicycles to Bradley and every morning when we'd come back we'd stop at Alphonse Derosier's house... Mr. Onizime Derosier... he just passed away awhile ago... a wonderful man. And, we used to stop there and he'd give us all an egg... a fresh egg... he had chickens and everything. He'd give us all a fresh egg... and we'd go home and cook the egg for breakfast. That's very vivid in my mind. He remembered that all his life. We were friendly, you know. Alphonse died at an early age... we were in school together. That's the way it was. Everybody went to church. As kids we went to church practically every morning. Confession was compulsory and most of us didn't want to go... but, being in the Catholic school you went... they'd just march you there and go to confession.

CN Did they have farms on the Island?

AM Yes.. No, not on the Island. There wasn't enough territory on the Island. That's the one thing wrong about the Island... the homes were too packed. CN Do you remember when it wasn't so packed? AM It was always packed. Before my time... if somebody owned a piece of land on French Island... we're all immigrants on French Island. Most of them came from Canada,

and they settled in a French settlement which was French Island... mostly in Old Town. If he owned a piece of land and started his family there... well, his brother would come down and... "Well, you build a house on my land... right here." And, they'd build them right close together. There were no zoning laws or anything so... the houses were piled right on top of the other. But, oh, here ten years ago... twelve years ago... they had a program in Old Town to take down a lot of the homes... which they did. You know... they'd buy the homes and they'd tear them down... which French Island is a little more open than it was when I was a kid. But the people were very, very close. Anything that happened... everybody was there to rally. And, not just relatives... everybody. Funerals and everything... were unbelievable. Marriages were unbelievable. Any disaster... everybody rallied which you don't see now.

CN Why do you think that isn't that way anymore?

AM Well, I don't think it's a French community anymore. French Island is not a French community... there's a few of the old homesteads up there but, you know, they're all people that were brought up there... very, very few homes that are in the old homestead. A lot of the homesteads are torn down.

RM I think that some of the change came about from the War. With the boys and the ladies who went into the service during World War II... met people from other states and migrated there at other states. And, the same... some brought wives or husbands back here, and so the French dissipated to a great extent because of it. You know, coming together with other English-speaking people limited the French. The world has become smaller.

CN Do you remember the Depression years? RM Yes. I remember that my father couldn't find any work. And, he was so discouraged... and I'll never forget the look on his face. He was sitting at the table just looking down and after being out looking for work. "I don't know what I'm going to do. There's just no work." I was young... I was very young. But I could see the pain in him then... I recognized it as a youngster. I remember feeling so sorry for him. Because I knew that it had to be terrible for him. And, he finally did get work as a... he worked for himself mostly before... and he was a painter... house painter and decorator. But when the Depression was on there was no work. Nobody could afford to have anything done. But, he finally got hired by a company as a boss painter... and I remember he made \$24 every two weeks as a boss painter. CN What's a boss painter? RM A supervisor... a supervisor.. they called them boss. CN Where did he work? RM Oh, gosh. I think the name... the name leaves me now... it was a company from Bangor. AM He was

self-employed most of his life. RM Yeah. But, they took him on as a supervisor and he made \$24 every two weeks... for quite a long time ago. That was quite awhile. Those were hard times. That's all I remember. I never remember not having enough food though. We always had enough. But, my grandfather was very good to us. He ran that grocery store and I think he fed about everybody on the Island... I guess. And people used to say... you know since I've been grown up... I've been asked, "Were you poor when you were young?" And, I remember the first time I was asked that I had to really think about it. Because I never considered myself poor. I never thought about it. But, that time I did think about it and I thought I guess we were... but we were no poorer than our neighbors. We were all poor I guess. But, we didn't know that. We had fun. Had a very good childhood. We all had fun... we made our fun. We laughed... I remember I have a cousin, Virginia Landry Stone, and we used to sit behind her mother's kitchen stove and we'd make ourselves laugh... we'd make crazy faces and tell tall stories and we would laugh and laugh and laugh. We had the best time just doing that. Fun! Honestly. We talk about it today and we start laughing all over again. Yeah.

(690)

AM

Carol, you asked me awhile ago..my friends..and you being here and everything reminded me that one of my best friends was your father, Harold St. Louis. And, we've had great times together Harold and I. And I remember Harold mostly he was very nervous in the car, and I think Connie can vouch for that. He was very nervous fishing.. he'd go on a lake..he loved all of it.. He loved fishing and he loved hunting but he was one that was very... When we'd go somewhere he had to drive or he wouldn't go. And I'm telling you it was slow driving. Maybe you know that. But, I remember going to Moosehead a great many times with him, and if he'd see somebody two miles up the road he'd start slowing down and start tooting the horn. So many memories... we used to go to camp a lot at his father's camp on Sunkaze Stream... we used to go up there a good many times and sleep. One night we were going up and Harold St. Germaine used to have a taxi service down the bottom of the hill... we had no ride out there so, of course out to the road and then we'd walk in to the stream. So, we got in the car... there was three of us I guess in the taxi... I remember I was in the front... Harold was in the back with somebody else there. Harold St. Germaine was known for a little fast driving... so, he started going up there pretty fast and I could see Harold sinking down in his seat... All of a sudden he cried, "Let me out!" And we had to let him out. I think I was one of the first ones that had a car... I had an old Model A - '31 convertible coupe I think, and I remember he was in it one day and we were coming up from Howard Street coming up to Main Street, and I think I was going a little fast on the curve... he never rode with me

after that. Never. I'd see him downtown... "Do you want a ride home, Harold?" "No." He'd never get in. So, Harold and I had a lot of memories. I think you know how much that upset me when we first saw him for a long time. Nice, nice man!

CN Can you tell me what you remember about the Depression?

AM I don't remember that much about the Depression. The first memory... of course, it's like Rita... I know we were having a hard time... but I really don't. My first real memory was of a flood that we had... and I think that was the 1936 flood which would make me about 7 years old. They expected the Old Town bridge to go out. The water was high enough and the ice was slamming against it. And of course, all the people on French Island were going down to watch the bridge go out. And, I remember my father taking me down there, and it didn't go out anyway. But, that's as far as I can remember is about 1936. But, I remember a lot of stories my father told me about the Island .. Yeah. I do remember something else when I was real young. Down in Bradley... near the Bradley dam... you know the dam down where the mill is. On the Bradley side there used to be a big platform there right over the river right near the dam. And, people used to go there when the salmon were running and they'd watch the salmon jump over the dam.. there were a lot of salmon in those days. He used to take me down there often to watch the salmon. It's a sight that very few people remember now. But, that used to crowd up there all the time to watch the salmon jumping up over the dam. Yeah. And, I don't really remember much of my younger days. St. Josephs... I remember vividly... some of the nuns that taught us are very good friends of ours now. We go over the old times... when they come visit. Our favorite nun was... my favorite nun was Sister Theresa... which is Sister Nora now. We see each other often. She's very friendly with my wife. A lot of the other nuns... She's in Biddeford now... Saco or Biddeford... one of those. She comes to visit often. Both of us were very active... because we had children in the convent school... we had one almost every year for awhile. We have eight children... so at one time there was almost one in every grade over there. We were always very close to the church anyway... we did a lot for the church. Of course, I left when I was younger... I left right from grammar school... I was four years in the seminary in Bucksport... Which, I knew I didn't want to be a priest... but I thought the training would be good so I made my high school there. Then I went in the service and then I met my wife... and we started a family.

CN Well, now I have a little stretch of a question from that. Do you remember the bootlegging?

AM Yes. Well, a lot of my friends their fathers sold bootleg and

we used to be there while they were selling it. Because along with the bootlegging there was always a card game or gambling. And the biggest thing was card games. They'd play cards and they'd sell beer and everything. And, there was a lady on our street that she used to buy all the bottles we could get... small bottles or big bottles... anything. One or two cents we'd get for the bottles. They used to make homemade whiskey... bootleg whiskey in the bathtub. Then they'd bottle it in those bottles that they used to buy. And, that was a good many people that used to sell beer... A lot of beer on French Island. I remember those days. But we thought nothing of it. We thought not a thing of it... nothing. Another thing that might fascinate... I always loved hunting and everything, and I know that when I was a kid a lot of people didn't have much to eat on the Island... So wild rabbits was a staple. And, the people that used to hunt rabbits they used to peddle them in little red carts. Of course, that's unheard of today. The Humane Society would hang you for something like that today. CN Explain that a little bit. AM They used to go hunt rabbits... wild rabbits... and they'd sell them on French Island. CN Go up and down the street? AM Yeah. They'd go up and down the street with a little red cart right full of rabbits and sell them. And there was a man that used to have deer in his garage all the time. You used to go in there and buy meat just like you would the butcher shop. You'd buy deer steaks or something. He'd always have two or three deer hanging there. It was against the law... but you know. Most wardens and everything paid no mind to it because the people were eating that food. They weren't just killing for nothing. A lot of people survived on that. My father... when he was younger he had a little workshop across the street from where I lived and he converted it into a rabbit pen. He made pens and people ate tame rabbit also... a lot of tame rabbit. And he raised rabbits for a long time and sold them. I remember... I used to have to clean the pens out when I was a kid. I used to... he had rigged it up so that there would be a sleigh that would slide under the rabbit pen and... a tray I mean, And you'd take those all out, and I'd put them in a wheelbarrow and bring them down to river and wash them and bring them back. And at one time he had over 250 rabbits in there. So, you know people did what they had to do. Everybody had gardens, like you say. I remember my father... oh, my God, I shouldn't name a name here. My father had a garden and he used to experiment a lot... he used to grow cantaloupe, peanuts, and he grew spaghetti squash they called it... where they used to eat the insides too. He was one of the first one experimented with white tomatoes... they were white when they were ripe. And one year he grew watermelons. And he got two watermelons out of what he grew. One of them he was saving in the back yard and a good friend of mine and I took it and ate it. You'd be surprised to know who that good friend was. I better not name him. It's not your father.

CN Could you tell me a little bit about what your remember... Any funny stories? RM No. I knew what went on, and I saw it. But that's about it. AM It was very open. It wasn't anything hid. RM There were so many people who did it. It was a product of the times I guess.

AM And today... looking back... I don't think it was anything bad, anyway. I think the Depression and whatever you call it when they didn't allow you to have liquor... I think that was a very bad move. When they put stuff like that underground ... it's worse. Anything that they put underground is worse. But, you know, it was a tradition with the older people to get together and have a beer and all of a sudden they cut that out. Well... you don't cut tradition out easy. I don't blame those people for doing it. It was getting together... that's all they had to do in those times. But, of course, some people took advantage of it like anybody else does. They made money with it, and they got the drunks in there and everything. But, there was very few places like that. Most of them were just neighbors come in for a beer or something. That was all there was..and I don't see anything wrong with it at all.

CN Do you remember the different stores on French Island?

(871)

AM Yes. There was a T&K on top of French Island hill, and then on Union Street there was an IGA market. And then there was Babe St. Louis... which before that was Levasseurs. That's what I remember it to be... Levasseurs store. And then Frank Landry had a store down on Front Street. And then what I remember most was Pete Taylor started a hot dog stand next to St. Louis' market which was Levasseur first and St. Louis bought it. And right next to that Pete Taylor started a hot dog stand and he started selling donuts... which today LaBree brothers bought the recipe from Pete Taylor, and LaBrees donuts today are Pete Taylor's old recipe. That's where it all started. They started baking donuts on the end of..down near you Connie. Yeah. Labrees' house. They had a little shop in the back and of course, they moved to bigger places. But, they acknowledge that... Almond Labree and Pat Labree. They acknowledge that... RM It's a big business today. AM And it was Pete... of course, Pete Taylor was a great cook. He was an army cook while he was in there, and when we went fishing everybody wanted Pete Taylor to be around because he did all the cooking.