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Interview of Cecile Pietrowski
Interviewers - Adeline (Connie) St. Louis, and Carol Nichols
CN: Carol Nichols
AS: Adeline St. Louis
CP: Cecile Pietrowski

There seems to be no introduction to the beginning of this tape. Ms. Pietrowski is speaking already of an event. The transcription starts in the middle of her story.

CP: ...because that's what is was, all French. Let me see, what was I talking about before...

AS: Where did you live on French Island?

CP: I live on Gray's Lane and up over my grandmother's (St. Louis).

AS: Whereabouts is that on the Island? Gray's Lane?

CP: Well, you go up, take the first hill on the right as you cross the bridge and then take your first left, and it's a dead-end street. It never used to be, because there used to be short cuts all the way through there.

CN: When did they stop the short cuts?

CP: The short cuts were stopped when one of the families up on the end of the lane bought a little house there, and by buying that house it connected the properties. And they were able to fence it off, and that's what they did. And that was, oh goodness sakes, how many years ago was that? That was a good 30 years ago if not more. Also, down to Gray's Lane there was a place between the Coté's and the Cyr's. We used to call him Fatty Cyr, his name was Louis. Nicknames, you know? Then in the alley in between their house, that was the short cut to go to school.

AS: Where they all related? Was everyone related in Grays Lane?

CP: No, they weren't all related. In fact, there was no one related really. There was the Treadwell family. There was the... I'm trying to think of their names

AS: Mrs. Tedd?

CP: Mrs. Tedd! That's right she was next. Then it was my grandmother's house, and then was Fatty Cyr, and then at that time it was the name of those people. And the one who lived where Arlene Cote lives now, I think they were Comeau's.

AS: Where is that house?

CP: Arlene Cote's house, that's in the alley between Gray's Lane and Bosworth Street. And that alley was big enough for cars to go through.

AS: And when they closed it off, were there like repercussions? Did people do anything to them about it?

CP: Well, the adjoining houses now... Because that just got closed recently. That's the last short cut to be closed, and that happened just recently. There were (chuckle) some problems. Because the land up here was so tight, people were building right on the lines. I mean one house on Gray's Lane that used to be Fatty Cyr's house, I mean, that is well, part of the kitchen is on my grandmother's land, and part of my grandmother's garage is on his land. I mean everything, there were pie shapes, triangles, it was a mess. But anyway that finally got settled down here on Gray's Lane. But I do think that was the last short cut up here to be closed up. There used to be short cuts right here where I live now to the point that cars were going through when we bought this house.

AS: In this house, did we say where this house is located.

CP: This house is right on top of the hill, between Bosworth Street and Front Street. Bosworth Street is 30 and Front Street is 31. So I call it Noah's Ark because it's such a big place. The on Top of the Hill Rest or whatever. I always enjoyed the Island. Of course, my husband Frank comes from Pennsylvania, he loves the Island. He can't think of living anywhere else now either. So, it's nice to think back, you know, of all the things you used to do. But some of these things I don't remember. Some people have better memories than I have of way back.

AS: What would be your first memory?

CP: My first memory is I thing riding really in my father's car and falling down, and cutting my nose here... bled. They used to have in the back of a car, they used to have these things, they remind me of a great big iron bar that they used to rest their feet on, and that's what I fell on, and I cracked... I still have the scar a little bit. But things like that I remember.

AS: There weren't many people on the Island that had cars.

CP: No, it was just before Depression, I think. Because when Depression hit, that's when the bootlegging started.

AS: Can you talk a little bit about the Depression?

CP: The Depression. Those were hard times all right. And like I said, people starting bootlegging. Just about every other house on the Island was bootlegging. They used to make home

brew. I remember they had what they called these little bottles, and that used to be the whiskey. I would call it whiskey but it wasn't. It was alcohol, that's what they called it, because it was all white. So, did they mention any names about who was doing this? Okay. So anyway, there was, well let's put it this way, there was someone in my family that used to do that. I could have been one of my father's uncles or one of his cousin's or whatever. But anyway, this is how come I remember so much about those days. Another thing, during the Depression things, I mean, were so tight that they didn't even... They'd boil potatoes with skins on, never peeled them because they were wasting. So by boiling it with the skins we used to peal them off and we had more that way. Beans! We'd have beans two days a week, and we had what they called (it was a French dish) ratatoune.

AS: How did your mother make her ratatoune?

CP: Mama made her ratatoune, she take salt pork and fry that up, always with a black frying pan. She'd saute her onions in there, and then she take her potatoes, after they were peeled and slice them, and throw them in there. Then they'd put just enough water so that that would cook through. And it was delicious. Very good. It stuck to your ribs, I'll tell you. And homemade bread, molasses, we used to take the homemade bread and just dip that in molasses. Look how healthy though, look at all that iron we had in that molasses and beans. That was healthy. People were poor but we all ate healthy. In fact, they ate healthier then I think.

AS: Did you have a garden?

CP: No. In fact, I remember we went to, just about everybody went to the City Hall. We used to have a wagon, and we used to bring home butter if we were lucky, and there was dried prunes. Of course, always the milk, powdered milk. And then there was flour, and there was grapefruits, oranges, and I can't remember what else, but there was a lot of stuff.

AS: It was a food the government was giving?

CP: Yeah, the government gave the food. And of course just about everybody, and nobody that I know of wasn't getting it. Then they had the games on the Island. That took up a lot of nice time. The married women against the single women. And some of these women had worked hard all day doing their laundry, and hanging out cloths, and they'd get what they called 'charlie horses' in their legs you know, and they're limping around the bases.

CN: Did your mother play?

CP: Oh yes, she played. I remember Tracy Seymour, she had one of those charlie horses in the leg, and she was trying to make

those bases, and she's was going around there. And by geez, the married women won against the single girls. Then they had the single guys against the married men. Then they had the boxing ring on Friday or Saturday night. I think it was Friday night.

CN: Who were some of the boxers? Do you know?

CP: Some of the boxers were Cyclone Violette, my father who they called Cyclone St. Louis, and then there was Petit Nègre Cote... another nickname, you know what Petit Nègre means? Nigger. Isn't that something. Nigger. It's terrible these nicknames they have up here. Terrible. And then there was Upper Cut Roy... no that was later in the years, but he was a boxer too. Oh God,there were so many of them, I can't think of half of them.

CN: Was it all men from the Island or where people there from over town.?

CP: No. From all over. They come from all over to challenge the guys up on the Island here. And then they had the little guys, in their early teens fighting or boxing, whatever you want to call it. That was interesting, it was cute.

CN: Who ran the boxing?

CP: A guy they called Peanut Dubé from the Island. Another nickname.

CN: How'd he get that nickname?

CP: I haven't the faintest idea, some of those nicknames... I've asked people they don't know how they came by them either. But Peanut Dubé, I think because he was so short, tiny, just about all those Dubés were short. But I think his real name was Lionel. So that went on for quite a few years in the summer time. Then there was the fireworks. Did I tell you about that one? There was the fireworks we used to have every 4th of July. They'd go around and collect from people on the Island, and with the money that they got they'd have a fireworks at the Island School and it was beautiful. They had fireworks that when they went up in the air it was an American Flag, and then there were some that were all different shapes. You don't see that today. That drew the crowds, because the Island always had something going.

CN: Where did they set off the fireworks?

CP: Right at the Island school, right there in the playground area. That would go on for hours.

AS: Do you remember who did that?

CP: I don't remember who the men were, but they were of course men from the Island but I don't remember who they were. I can't even remember a face, you know. I can take a guess but I better not, because I'm not sure. What else did we have? Oh, we had a lot games that we played when we were kids. There was something going on all the time. There was the Tin-Can Alley, Odd or Evil, Red Light, marbles, hopscotch, and I mean that was in the alley all the time. I never... it seems as though the only time I left the alley, Grays Lane, was to go to school or church.

CN: What did you do in the wintertime?

CP: In the wintertime, we built forts out of snow, and we made a lot of snowballs and had snowball fights. And then we did a lot of sliding down at Goodin's Hill. We called it Goodin's Hill because the person who lived at the bottom of the hill, that was their name, Goodin. And it's still Goodin's today, because there's Goodins that live there.

AS: Is there a name on that street?

CP: That street is River Street. And as you come up Front Street, it's the first street on your right. Down that steep hill.

CN: Do kids slide there today?

CP: No. You know you don't see kids today doing sliding. No, they don't do that anymore up here. Everything is, and then we used to skate... ice skate on the river! I think of how close I got to some places where it was very watery. Now, when I think of it! Yes, we used to do a lot of ice skating. Everything was on the river. We used to swim down by a place we called Brissette's, was one of them. That was on Bodwell Street. We called it Brissette's because it was the Brissette family that lived there, and they used to let us swim there in the river. Then another place was down River Street, and we used to swim down there. Course, they don't do that today. They have the high school swimming pool and all this now, which is good! Because it was very scary, really, when you think of it today. The things that we did when we were kids.

CN: Like what?

CP: Like swimming in that river. The sewerage run in.

CN: So was it clean?

CP: It wasn't clean. It's a wonder we didn't all get sick. And then in the winter time, which now that have skating rinks built for them. Of course, we had the river. That was very dangerous. There was a couple of drownings. One I think was a Labree drowned, and I remember these divers that went down. They weren't divers like today. They had these great big

metal things on, like deep-sea diving, and they had the hoses sticking up, to dive a look for these bodies. There were things that we did up here that was very dangerous... Very dangerous. Then the place we used to slide too is in the back... on the side of the Island school. I think, I don't know what they call that street now. I think they call it Cliff Street. And that's the one second on the right as you come up Bosworth Street. We used to slide down there. So, a lot of old places here and there but mostly Goodin's Hill. That place used to be packed all the time. But we used to jump... I lived up stairs and we used to jump in the snow from ... (Laughter) When they shovelled the snow it piled up quite high. We had some pretty bad snow storms then too. But we were out playing. Then we had, of course, we just had radio then. There was no TV. The families would get together. I remember sitting around the wood stove, and my mother would tell us stories of her farming days when she lived on a farm, and pop corn, and take potatoes and slice them up and put them right on top of the wood stove. {chuckle} That was good! Fudge. She used to make fudge.

CN: What about the holidays.

CP: Christmas and Thanksgiving. Those were our big holidays and Easter was too. It was... sometimes we would go on the farm up in Bradley, but up around here everybody had their own immediate family, and they had their big thing. But we didn't have any special thing. Except, now the French people used to at Christmas time, there was a pork pie they used to make and I can't pronounce it to save my life. La something.

AS: Tourtière?

CP: Yeah, you got it! And that was a big thing that you had to have. And then there was the... oh what was it, there was something else that was very important at the time. Oh, rabbit stew. Rabbit stew, that was delicious. That was after midnight mass. There was nothing different except going to church and you know, stuff like that but there was no ... families visiting, but otherwise than that our holidays, course other families up here might have had a little different than what we did. But it's... I have my own tradition now, things that I want my kids to remember.

AS: From your childhood? Things from your childhood?

CP: No, something that started, this is a big holiday for us here, Christmas. And then we have a big thing once a year in the summer time here which we haven't had yet in the yard here. I think it is very important for families to be close and get together as much as they can. I mean, I find it so. Because up here like we're so much family, you know, we know everybody but things have modernized so, and the women have started working and after that, things... people didn't get together

as much.

CN: Can you talk a little bit about changes on the Island?

CP: Well the changes on the Island...let's see we had that Urban Renewal up here. Oh, not too many years ago. That was from the government. Because houses were so close up here, that everybody was building practically right on top of one another, that they thought we should start thinning out the Island, because... one house catch on fire, it could set off whole Island. So they started buying houses that were too close and pretty well gone anyway. So they thinned out the Island a lot at that way. Then we took one business off the Island, Labree's Bakery. That used to cause a lot of big trucks and traffic coming up here, and it was hard to maneuver through some of these sharp curves up here. So that bakery relocated up Gilman Falls Avenue in town, so that eliminated that. And then they built the senior citizen's housing down there. And then on top of the Island hill, one of the hill's on Bosworth Street, there was Cyr's Bus, so that was another thing that got eliminated. They located also on Gilman Falls Avenue. And then they built that low income up there which is very well kept up. Then we didn't have the Island school anymore. We didn't have a school house anymore, that got torn down. So, we didn't have a place to vote, for one thing. We didn't have no hall, in fact, we were voting at Cyr's garage for a couple of years or more. So, when they took Labree's Bakery down, there was a little house there and they moved it up on Hildreth Street, which that's about four roads down on Bosworth Street to the left, and it's a cute little place. Now it got all fixed up, and the people who were on that committee, they went around the Island and collected money, and bought drapes for the place, and fixed it, you know, the inside, dressed it up some, and it's really pretty. It looks nice. So they had this committee on the Island. I was on it later, not at the beginning, and it was interesting. Anything on the Island, I like to get into. I wouldn't want to go somewhere else and do that.

CN: Were there any other things on your committee, different changes that you worked on?

CP: We worked on fixing houses that a lot of low income families couldn't, say put a new roof on their house. And then there was also senior citizens that didn't have the money to do some of the work that needed to be done. So, they did a lot, they really did a lot up here. They fixed a lot of houses. Tore down a lot. I think they tore down about 12 houses if not more. I have the paper on that, I should have looked that up.

CN: Were you involved with helping to choose some of the houses that (would be torn down)?

CP: Yeah. We walked around the island, and checked things out.

We would put it down, the address and the name of the people who were living there, that we thought the houses should come down because they were so close. It was so close, it was scary. They did, they took down just about all the houses, there were some houses that we thought should come down, but you couldn't take them down. I mean, if the people didn't want to. Like for instance, there were three houses that really should have come down, but the people were living in there. What they did was they relocated these people. Hey, they gave them more money than what their house were worth... much more money than their houses were worth, and relocate them beside... to a better place. They wouldn't go. I mean that's how attached they were to up here, you know. But, a lot of them are sorry today. I mean, I know of a few that had that opportunity and didn't take it. And then the land that it created in between these houses, the owners on both sides of that land could buy half, which they all did at a very low price, but they couldn't build on it, that's why the price was so low. So it didn't make any sense to build on what you tore down, when you're trying to thin it out. It was difficult to explain to some of them.

CN: What did they want to build? Garages.

CP: Yeah, which some of them would have built beautiful garages. The only thing they can do with that land... they can have a garden and put a fence up, but they can't put anything permanent. But, we did give them the leeway of being able to build on their line, where before you had to build so many feet from your line if you were going to build anything. So we gave them that plus a very... the price on that land practically... I guess the biggest price was $500. {chuckles} on that land. So I think it did very well up here.

CN: Are there any projects that you can think of working on in the future, for the Island?

CP: Well, what we tried to do, which we did for awhile, for the first two years, we used the community center, and we had Christmas parties for the kids. We all worked pretty hard. We made these little Christmas bags, and we'd put goodies in it. Then we bought gifts for the kids. They had a good time up there at the community center.

AS: Was this just low income children.

CP: No, no. Any one on the island. But then it was kind of hard to say just any body on the island, because a lot of them had grandchildren. So we put that in too. So it was pretty well packed, and they had plays. And we had our Santa Claus and everything, and it was nice. We would have like to have kept it up but we wanted someone else to take over. We figured we did... you know we wanted the younger people to take over. And nobody did, so the Christmas parties stopped. It was

interesting. I mean I'm passing my time here. Like my husband says, you know I'm good for quite a few hours!!

CN: We have more time... we didn't talk about families. AS The family... you didn't talk about the families.

CP: Oh, yeah. Okay, a lot of people up here of course had big families, and I come from a family of 6 children, 3 girls and 3 boys. I'm the oldest, but I'm not telling you how old I am! then my brother Norman, my sister Yvonne, my brother Joe, brother Ronald, and my sister Priscilla. My dad's gone but my mother is still with us. But that was a small family considering what they had up here. Whew... I guess!

AS: Do you remember some of the names of the bigger families on the island?

CP: Oh, let me see. The Michauds were a big family,

AS: Who lived next door to you?

CP: To us on Gray's Lane? The Thibodeaus had a big family. Treadwells, they had a bigger family than my mom and dad did. Ah, there were a lot of big families up here. There was, I think the Coté's had a big family, too.

AS: These were some of the early families?

CP: Yeah, that was early families. I mean that there children would be about my age. There were quite a few. I just can't think of them all now because it's been so long ago, but there were a lot of big families up here! My God, I mean, it was loaded.

AS: You felt out of place if you weren't from a big family.

CP: Yeah, you know, but everybody lived the same. There was nobody trying to outdo to other person.

TURN TAPE OVER

CP: Yeah, there was you know, everybody lived the same, nobody was trying to out do anyone else. We all wore hand-me-downs, and we all ate about the same kind of food. But the women weren't working then, there was just the men working. I mean, women were supposed to stay home, take care of the house, and have a family. So then, when women went to work, well things changed.

CN: Where would they have gone to work?

CP: Well, my mother went to work in the woolen mills. And she worked there for a long time. Some of them worked at the canoe company, and then there was the pie plate which we don't

have anymore. The shoe shops were the biggest place that everybody worked. I know, I was one of them but not for long. I did restaurant work. And that's another thing, there were a lot of restaurants. Up here though, there were a lot of grocery stores up here. We don't even have one today. There was Landry's, there was First National, there was Babe and Arthur St. Louis, there was Taylor, and there was 2 beer parlors up here. One right on top of Front Street hill which was Dubé's, Peanut Dubé used to run that... the same one who ran the fights. And then the Shuffle Inn, which they call the Shuffle Inn today anyway. My first recollection of that place and if I'm not mistaken was Mr. Michaud had that place. Then there was Ouellette's and then Moody. Perley Nadeau, Perley Nadeau, I remember him more. And he was a friend of the family's, too. And then a guy from New York took over, Bob Famigletti. I'll never forget it. Boy, that place was really jumping, and that's when it got called the Shuffle Inn.

CN: Talk a little bit about that?

CP: About the Shuffle Inn. That's how it got it's name anyway, from that guy from New York.

AS: How did he know about French island?

CP: Well, what happened is, he married someone from French Island. Bouchard... Regina, I think her name was, and they lived in New York because that's where he came from. He's health wasn't that good, so they moved to Maine. And they lived in the old homestead which was on Union Street, and that was just a few houses from the Shuffle Inn. When he bought that, he had a good way about him. He had a good personality, and he was a good cook. I mean the meals there were fabulous! Especially spaghetti. I remember I used to ask him... I used to work there... I'd said, " What do you put in your spaghetti sauce Bob?" He says, "Something on that shelf right there, see if you can guess." I looked and I saw all these spices and stuff and I said, "I can't imagine what you've got up there that I don't put in." He said "what do you put in your coffee every morning" and I said "milk". It was sugar that he put in the spaghetti. See, I don't put sugar so I couldn't... It was sugar. He used to put, say for instance, if he made some for just family, he'd probably put a tablespoon of sugar, and it would cut the tang to the spaghetti sauce. You know sometimes it can be a little too tangy. I do that to this day. That was his secret, adding sugar.

AS: Was it a gathering place back then?

CP: Oh, very. It was a gathering place then and in my younger days it was a gathering place then, too, when it was Michaud's and Perley's. They used to have benches on the outside, and that's where the men would gather. They'd shoot bologna, and whatever, and that's where they'd spend their

time. And today, they put a bench in there, but it's not the same, they don't seem to sit out there.

CN: Did families go there?

CP: Oh, yeah, families used to go there, and it was always a respectable place... always was. You never had to be afraid to go there. I remember a few incidents when the college students used to come up. That used to be rough in a way because they used to, they'd be too young, and they'd try to pass their cards. You know, one would be old enough, and they kept passing the cards to one another, you know, under the... Finally, when it came I said, "Ahuh, no. I'm not going to serve any of you because your using the same card for all of you". (laughter) I said, "No, I'm not." They apologized, they did everything. But another thing about this Island, this Island has a nickname... did anybody ever bring that up? This island had a nickname for a long time, and every once and a while that nickname comes up... Skin island. Remember that? Okay, well, I found out why it got named Skin Island. It took me a long time, but I said I'm going to get to the bottom of this. So, what happened was years ago, way before my time that's for sure, the Indians had these Island, the Penobscot Indians. So this island they used to dry their furs up here and they (the Indians) the white people used to say that this is where they used to dry their skins, and that's where they got the name Skin Island.

CN: Why would they come all the way over here to do that?

CP: Well, their Islands... like I said they had a lot of islands. Okay, and they probably had this island to do the skinning of the animals up here... way, way back. Probably when they were doing all that logging in the woods. You know, all that stuff is way in the past. But I was hoping I'd live long enough to find out why, because they had another reason why they called it that they said... they said... they thought. I remember one day there was a bunch of us girls were walking towards the Shuffle Inn and these guys... it was during the war... the Second World War... (I've got to name which war it was.) and these guys came in... come up on the Island, a bunch of soldiers from Dow Field. They stopped the car and said, "Could you tell us where Skin Island is?" I says, "Yeah, we can tell you were Skin Island is." Know where we sent them? Indian Island. That's where we sent them. We laughed, we had more fun, I'm telling you.

AS: That was a put-down for the Island.

CP: Yeah, that was a put-down. Because people had... They said, "Skin Island" they figured, hey you know. I mean, what they thought it meant was very degrading. That's why I said, "I'm going to get to the bottom of this if it's the last thing I do." And when anybody asks me that today, I give them that

story. And every once in awhile I'll hear somebody say, "Oh, you live on Skin Island." and I'll say "No, I don't." But anyway, I tell them how that all came about... and that's because the Indians dried their furs up here. And it makes sense... they dried their skins. So REMEMBER THIS STORY.

CN: What are your early memories of Labree's Bakery?

CP: Labree's Bakery, my first memory of that was smelling all that nice cooking down there. That used to just seem to take over most of the Island. You could smell all that baking, especially their bread... early morning. And doughnuts, they had doughnuts. They were more famous for their doughnuts than anything else. Those were the best doughnuts. The Labree's were very nice people too. The bakery was... they started it in the cellar of their house, can you imagine. And then it got so big that they built a little place on their land back there. And it got so big that now there all over the place... New York. You know, frozen products now.

AS: That's where a lot of women from the Island worked at one time?

CP: Oh yeah. A lot of women from the Island worked there. I remember seeing a lot of them go down they had nice white clothing on, you know. Of course, they didn't wear slacks then. They wore dresses. Yeah, they were workers too. I'll tell you. And then the doughnuts, how that got started. Remember Taylor... Pete Taylor, he started the doughnut business on Gray's Lane, come to think of it, there was building there, it's not there any more. That's where he started making his doughnuts. And then he sold the recipe to Labree's. See where it went. I also remember a potato chip place up here too. There was a little building which is still there today, come to think of it. That little building and Nelly Bouchard used to make potato chips there. See, all this stuff is coming gradually here and yeah.

CN: How did he sell his potato chips? Do you know what brand it was?

CP: No. I don't remember the brand, I know he packaged them and had no problems selling them. Can you remember the name of those? You probably don't remember that any way.

AS: I remember when he made them there. But I don't remember... He used to package them in a paper bag, I think.

CP: Probably a paper bag. Yeah. So, he did that, and then of course that other building next to it was a T&K store, come to think of it, grocery store... one while. Of course, I worked there for a little while during the war to help... because the men were all gone, the women were pitching in trying to take the men's places in businesses. But all these little things, you know. Oh, another thing, we used to do when we were kids.

We used to have what we called... we used to make our own plays. We weren't very old, and we'd sing songs, and we'd have a little play. At the beginning all you needed was a pin... a safety pin to get in. Then in got to the point where you needed a penny to get in. But we used to have a lot of these little plays on the Island, all us kids. I mean there was always somebody in the neighborhood that would have one.

AS: Can you talk about one?

CP: Well, let's see, I know there was one over to Pete Thibodeau's parent's house. Yeah, I remember that we had one there, and it was mostly singing. But, as you sang the song you acted it out, you know. I think I had the one "I'm a Poor Little Beggar Girl, I'm far from home." Anyway, I remember singing, Poor Little Beggar Girl, and I was very sad. Oh my God, it was really something when I think of it. And then there were some that did tap dancing.

CN: How did you ever even think to get together to do this stuff?

CP: I don't know, just a bunch of us kids would be playing, and the first thing we'd know somebody'd be saying, "Let's have a play." There was quite a few of them one while. I know we had one in my grandparent's garage. Like I said, Louise Thibodeau's, we had one down there. Then there used to be a great big apartment house over here, before it got rented as a big apartment house that was the Souvenier's. The name of the people that lived there was Souvenier. In the front part there was a porch like and anyway, he was a barber. I remember going in to have a haircut. And then we had... I think the biggest play was... in the back of that building was a barn. There was a big play there one time. I think it was the biggest one we ever had. It had everything there. They had ballets... little kids that were learning how to dance. We had everything up here. Nobody had to go downtown for anything. Nobody, if they didn't want to, didn't have to go down for anything. The only thing we didn't have up here was a fire truck and a church. Otherwise than that, we had everything, everything. I kind of wish sometimes, you know, to be able to go back for a little while. I remember some of these things. At night, if you didn't get in when the curfew sounded, you could hear the mothers hollering, especially one down below there, We could hear her everywhere! Louise Thibodeau. She'd get on the porch and she'd holler, "Petoo!" that was a nickname for one of her sons. I guess his name was Henry. He was my age. You'd hear, "Petoo!!!" (laughs) One time I said, "WHAT!!" (more laughter) "Come on home now!" I can imagine when he got home she probably said, "Why didn't you come home when you..." But anyway, you could hear all the mothers hollering for their kids... those that didn't get home in time. Oh God, it was funny.

CN: Was the neighborhood all related to each other pretty much?

CP: Well, no not really. No. They weren't related. They were just all French... all French, every house. Isn't that something. And today, well, I think I could count the people up here that would still talk French, and so it's sad. Oh, another thing they used to call this Island too, Frog Island. That never bothered me though because a lot of people who say "How come they call it Frog Island or French people 'frogs' because most French people have a deep voice, when they talk French, it's deep usually. So, I guess that's probably why they started calling us 'frogs'. I don't know. It doesn't bother me, I collect them. (laughs) The only one thing that bothered me as they used to say 'Skin Island', I'd send them all over to the territory. Boy, I'll tell you that was really something. Boy, oh boy. It was really great though, some of these things.

CN: What about, can you talk about the churches... St. Josephs and St. Marys?

CP: Well, St. Joseph was what they called the French church and all the masses were French. Until finally, when the English started coming out more and the French families, they had one English mass (9:00 mass) and St. Mary's they always called it the Irish church because it was for most of the English speaking people, who were Irish. So today, they are combined, but it was a long walk and we walked it no matter what the weather and then when the ice was thick enough, we used to short cut down below on River Street. The men used to test the ice, and then they made sure that we followed the right path, and that's where we used to go. That was a nice short cut. But that church used to be packed.

CN: You went to school at Old Town High?

CP: A couple of years. I only went to 2 years of High School. Being I was the oldest one and when my mother took sick, I stayed home.

CN: Did you notice any type of prejudice because you were from the Island?

CP: I never did myself but then I hear... not at that time. I heard a lot of prejudice from the Island, they'd say...even today... they'd say I wouldn't live on the Island. Well, that's another thing, those are fighting words! I mean because I get angry. And I say, "What's wrong with the Island? You married someone from the Island." You know, they marry people from the Island, but they wouldn't live on the Island. So this just didn't make any sense to me, you know? Yeah, you'd have that, I wouldn't live on the Island!! Well, huh!

CN: Why do you think they felt that way?

CP: I don't know. It's like it was a dirty word or something. I can't imagine. The only thing I can see that is wherever they were from evidently they had gotten the wrong impression. They had never been on the Island these people that thought that way. But you know, I hear that even today, and I really, I mean that really angers me.

AS: I think maybe that a lot of people thought that it was too crowded, too.

CP: But, they wouldn't give no reason. They just say I wouldn't live up there, and that's the way they would come out with it, you know? It's true. And some of them have lived up on the Island at one time or another, and they say that they would marry someone from the Island. You know, it just never made sense to me. I remember someone went up to my father when he was a policeman, and they said "Cyke, you come from the Island," and he said to my father, "I wouldn't live up there, just a bunch of kids live up there." My father said "well, we make them we don't kill them." (laughs) Hurray Dad!!

CN: Talk about your father.

CP: Oh Dad, oh yeah, my favorite subject. Dad was a policeman for a long time. He was a policeman for about... God, until he was, since he retired at almost 65. And everybody always spoke highly of him. He was, in those days, they walked the beat, and they used to come up on the Island, no matter what the weather was in the wintertime, they had to walk their beat. They had to come up on the Island at least twice a night. And, no cars, they had no cars for them. There was always a cop in the middle of the square at that time. Dad liked people, and he liked kids. I'll never forget the time (laughs) he said this guy that owned... they used to call it the Bucket of Blood downtown, so he got called to take this guy home... to jail, to take him out because he was drunk. So Dad goes, and he takes him out, and he says 'I'm not going to take you to jail, you got some money?" And the guy says "Yeah." He said, "Okay, I'm going to get you a taxi, and I'll have that taxi take you home." So he did. Dad says he comes down around again, and he was back. (laughs) Some of the things, I'll tell you, it was really something. I remember one time Dad had another call, and there was another restaurant in town on the corner, and so he gets this call and this guy doesn't want to leave. It was a eating place, it wasn't, you know, a bar room. I don't know what had happened, but he gave Dad an awful hard time. And there they are he attacked my father and there they were on the pavement. I'm telling you it was really something. It was a good thing Dad was a boxer in those days or he, it would have been even rougher. By geez, he got the best of him. He always gave the young people a chance. For instance, if they were drinking too much, and you know they did have car, he asked them to give the keys to him. Because I remember on Sunday morning,

you'd see these kids come up to the door of the house, and there's Dad handing out their keys. (laughs) And they'd say Thank you Cyke. So any way...

CN: Was there much trouble on the Island?

CP: On the Island? No, I don't ever remember having to have a policeman come up here for anything in those days. I mean today, yeah, but not in those days. No. Don't remember any trouble. Really, no not up here. Do you?

AS: Everybody kept their troubles in the house.

CP: Yeah, I never ever remember trouble when Perley owned the Shuffle Inn.

CN: Except for the time when the students, like you say...

CP: The students were the ones. Whenever they came in, and that's where they would always head, right off. They would, boy that place used to be wall-to-wall people. That was really ... and then another thing was when we had that urban renewal up here. Somebody mentioned "Well, if your taking down the business places, why don't you take down the Shuffle Inn? You know, buy the Shuffle Inn." Everything was quiet. Nobody said anything. Because it was mentioned from someone in the audience, you know someone on the floor, talking to the committee. So, we left that up to the guys, and the guys spoke up, and they said, "No, that's a landmark up here now."

CN: It is though.

CP: Yeah, so ...

CN: Where did the men, your father was a policeman, but in general, where did the men work?

CP: The men worked at the woolen mill for a while. Dad worked a little bit at the woolen mill, but not much. I can't remember if he worked at James River. Of course, during the Depression, after Roosevelt went in, they started out with this WPA. Okay, that's when all the men went to work. They were digging ditches probably for $16 per week, but at least they were working for their money. It wasn't being handed out to them. They worked for it. Then from there he did logging. I remember he did logging, I think, before he even did that.

CN: Where was this?

CP: It was up north, up in the Millinocket area. They used to... as the logs came down the river, and the logs would jam up sometimes, they'd walk on those logs, they had these spikes under their shoes. And they'd have these long poles that they'd try to, you know, try to break it up. But that was