

11/17/2023

# My Childhood Memories

Before computers, Internet & Smart Phones...

Revised and Expanded 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition



My brother (with the bat) and I posing for mom...  
little did I know!

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Change	Description	Date
-	First Edition	11/07/2022
1	Updates from NH trip in August 2023	11/17/2023
2	Revised & Expanded 2 <sup>nd</sup> Edition	11/30/3023

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# **Chapter 1**

## **An Introduction to my Neighborhood**

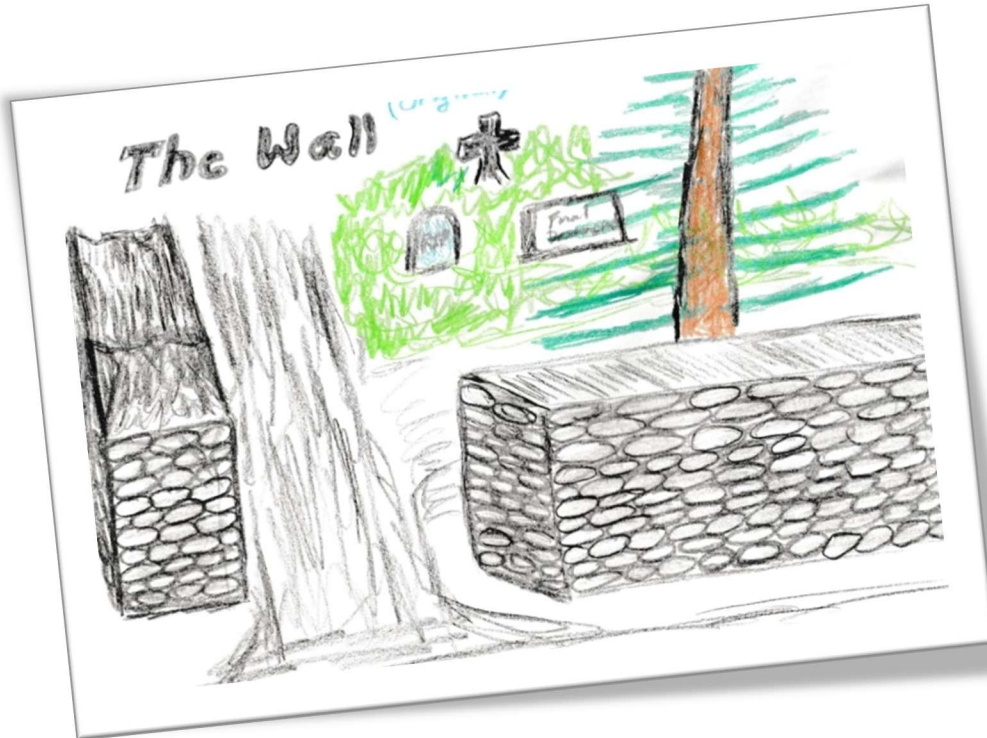
### **The Neighborhood and The Wall**

I grew up in the 1960's and 1970's in a small town called Newport in the state of New Hampshire, close to the southeastern Vermont border. When I was young, we did not have computers, the internet, social media or cell phones. So, we spent a lot of time outside which meant having to be very creative to escape boredom.

I lived in a neighborhood with around 20 boys and 5 girls. We were always ready for a football, baseball or basketball game either among ourselves or with the adjacent neighborhood. The adjacent neighborhood was made up of approximately 10 boys and 5 girls and we all attended the same schools, so it was a natural extension for both neighborhoods.

There was a Catholic Cemetery (St Patrick's) on Summer Street between our neighborhoods that became a key part of our childhood for many reasons. The first and foremost reason was we had to physically walk through the cemetery (more stories on that later) to meet up, or the alternative was to walk an additional 3 miles out of the way which was not either desired or practical for most of us.

The Cemetery had a 5-foot-tall and 4-foot-wide professional built stonewall fence on our side, lined with tall blue Spruce trees and this became our first neighborhood hangout known as the Wall, when I was in junior high school.



### **The Original Wall on Summer Street**

We would gather at the Wall in the early evenings and hang out socializing and planning upcoming activities and sometimes getting into a little mischief... ok maybe more than a little at times!



**Right to left Chuck, Willie, Denie (my brother) and me.**

As time went on there was some vandalism in the cemetery. Someone was knocking over random gravestones, and we took this very seriously since we all had family members and/or friends buried in this cemetery. There were some rumors that it was us young folks hanging out at the Wall that were causing this havoc. The fact is that we would go through the cemetery on a periodic basis and stand up those over-turned gravestones.



### **A Modern Picture of the Wall (Spruce Trees are gone!)**

This havoc led to the Cemetery maintenance staff closing off the exit on the West end butting up to the adjacent neighborhood. So now, traffic could only enter and leave from the East side where our Wall resided.

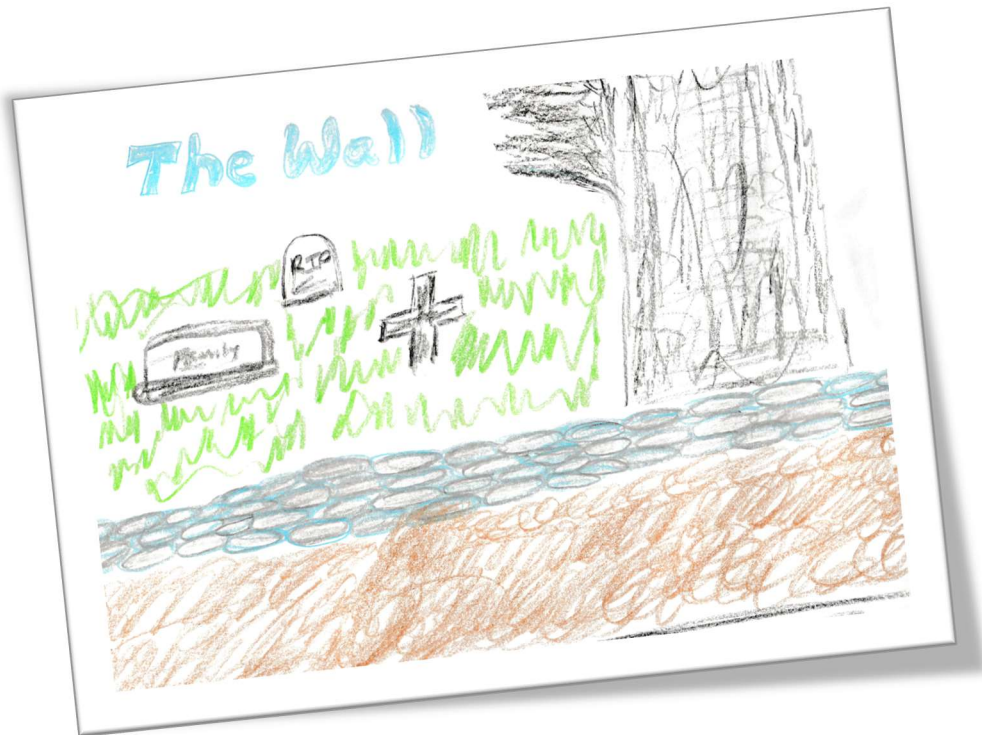
They built a 3-foot hand-laid stone wall on the east-end (Beech Street) blocking off the vehicle traffic between our neighborhoods. This did not directly impact us because we were (mostly) all too young to drive at that time.

As we got older, there were more and more complaints about the kids hanging out at the Wall because we (of course) could only be up to no good. We were strongly encouraged to not hang out at the Wall by our parents.

The east side of the wall saw a lot of traffic from our neighborhood and the Hospital just across the street a little further down the road.

We finally decided to give in and abandon the Wall on Summer Street to keep the peace. However, we did not really abandon the Wall, we decided to move the “spirit of the Wall” to the West end of the Cemetery on the Beech Street side where it was previously blocked off. This made much more sense since many of the neighborhood kids were starting to drive.

The west side hand-built stone Wall had much less vehicle traffic (on Beech Street) and it also had plenty of room along the road for parking cars as we met for our social gatherings. The older folks in that adjacent neighborhood did not seem to mind that we hung out there, as-long-as we kept things clean and didn’t cause a ruckus. We did play our music a little loud sometimes, but the houses were few and far between.



### **The Infamous Wall (on Beech Street)**

As we entered high school the Wall became a very important place for the entire high school for cruising and socializing. It was always the place to go just to see who was there, what they were doing but more important what was happening that day and evening.



The Wall was a place where forever friendships and long-lasting memories were made. The wall was a place to go after a funeral to honor a person's life. It was a place to go to seek out guidance for things on your mind requiring thoughtful insights from people you trusted.

We would meet at the Wall and then go cruising around (the town) in a pick-up truck or a dune buggy or sports car or a muscle car exploring the daily town happenings. But at the end of each day, we always seemed to end up at the Wall.

We said goodbye at the Wall to friends graduating high school and off to join the Military or off to college. Many of our friends stayed in Newport getting jobs and starting their adult lives while others (like my brother and I) moved off to different places.

The Wall was a place in my life for many years and is a place that I will never forget because of all the camaraderie and great times spent together with friends and family. There are many more specific stories about the Wall and the Cemetery that can be told but this one is more generic as an introduction to this local phenomenon.



**A Modern picture of the Infamous Wall (it no longer exists)**

## Sandpits and Hot Wheels

During our grade and middle school years and before the wall, having so many boys in the neighborhood meant there were always physical activities happening.

When we were younger, we all had Hot Wheels and Matchbox cars and trucks, so we naturally liked to spend time playing with them.



**Hot Wheels 1968 Original 16**

We had two areas in the immediate neighborhood where we played, both being large sandpits. A sandpit is ideal for building out communities including houses, garages and roads for these tiny cars and trucks. Of course, everything is made from packed sand except the cars and trucks.



### **A Modern Picture of (Overgrown) Sand Pit #1 Location**

We used tree branches and materials like small stones for roads and acorns for decorative entrances to enhance the look of our hand-built communities. We could spend days building out an awesome community that had functional roads from house to house and to businesses, hospitals and gas stations.

One summer thunderstorm would wipe the communities clean, and we would start all over, taking the next build to another level based on our experiences and lessons learned.



### **A Modern Day Picture of (now a House) Sand Pit #2 Location**



## **Mountains, Trees and Cabins**

Living within the mountains and trees encourage us to explore and build things. There was an old wagon trail that went North into the mountains at the end of Summer Street.



### **A Modern Picture of the Mountain Path (end of Summer Street)**



### **Mountain Path 2023 NH Trip**

The picture above is a shot I took while visiting NH in August of 2023. It is at the end of Summer Street and the beginning of the mountain path. My brother and I decided to hike the path to see if we could find five of the sites I have mentioned in this book (Water Tower, Big Rock, Log Cabin, Ministers Cabin and the Rope



Swings). The tree cabins were destroyed 50 years ago (by a couple of friends) when we were still living in NH.

## **BIG ROCK**

We explored this wagon trail for many years and over these years we discovered a place we called BIG ROCK.

This was off the main path to the west about 100 yards and once you arrived it was a very large rock area in a clearing with lots of sunshine. BIG ROCK became another place to go to hang out anytime of the year. It was another one of our small wonders!



**Big Rock**



### **Good-bye to Kevin (one of ours) in July 2021 at Big Rock**

There has been a lot of work done on this old mountain path, however it still looks very much like I remember back in the 1970's. It is obvious that some entity has attempted to make additional walking trails and they have added markers that did not previously exist. But they have done so to preserve and enhance the experiences for new generations!



### **Modern Path Markings**

I wanted to capture a few pictures of Big Rock to better represent what I was not able to show in my amateur drawing on the previous page.



**My brother standing on Big Rock 2023**



**Sunshine and Seclusion of Big Rock**

These pictures depict how time has stood still at this site for the last 50 plus years!



## **Minister's Cabin**

Traveling further up the wagon trail, we discovered the remains of a cabin with only the chimney standing and the outline of the foundation.



### **Ministers Cabin (depiction from my memories)**

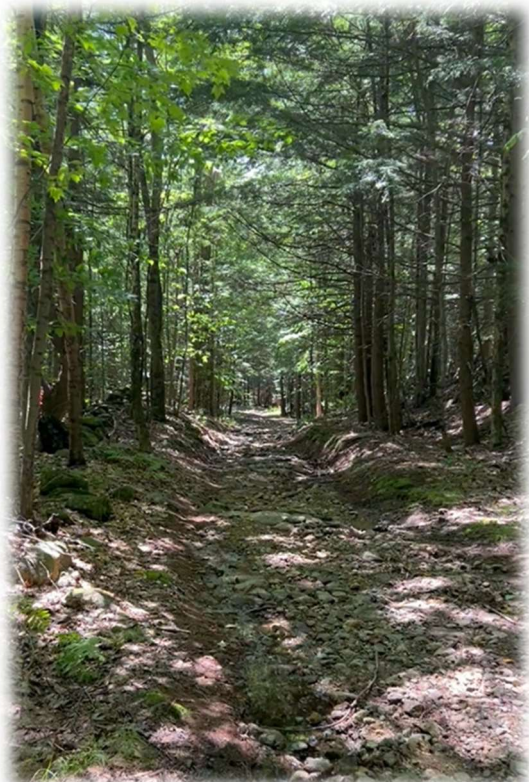
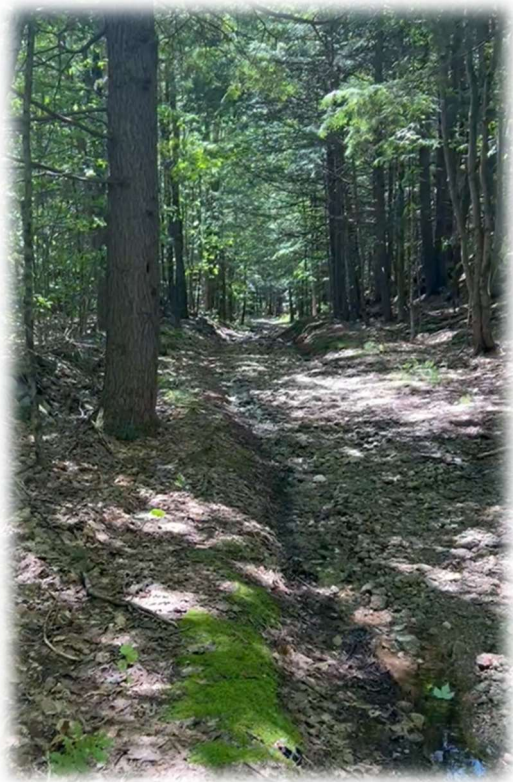
We called this the Minister's Cabin because it was rumored that a minister once lived in this cabin sometime in the 1800's. We found many artifacts like old wooden wagon wheels, old bottles of many colors (Brown, Clear, Blue, etc.) mostly with cork tops. It was very fascinating! The wagon trail went on for many miles that we later explored with mini-bikes, motorcycles and snow machines.

The Minister's Cabin is approximately a 2-mile incline hike from the base of the mountain path on Summer Street. I took several shots to show the path and various points of interest along the way. It was more strenuous than we expected but both my brother and I (ages 65 and 63 respectively) were having so much fun we didn't notice!



**Hiking the Mountain Path to the Minister's Cabin**





**South and North Path Views**

The depiction of the Minister's Cabin previously is what I remembered prior to this visit. Here are some pictures as it stands today, 50 years later!



**Minister's Cabin Foundation**





**Remains of the chimney**



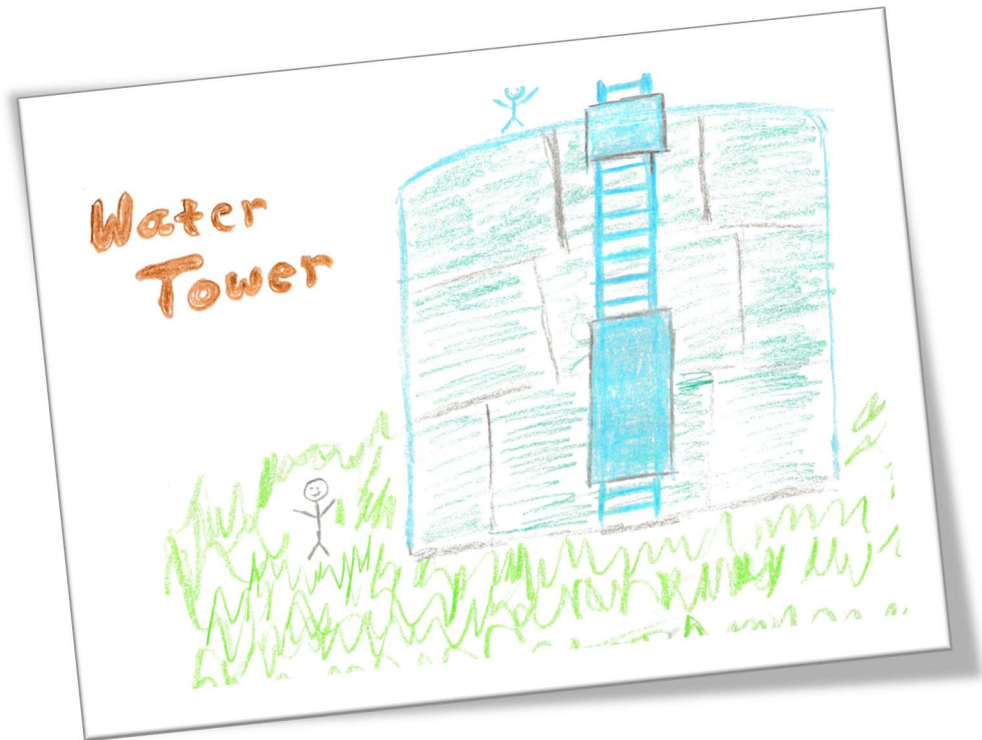
**Chimney at the foundation**

In obvious decay, there once was a chimney more like the depiction (in my youth) however, it is now starting to become one with the earth.

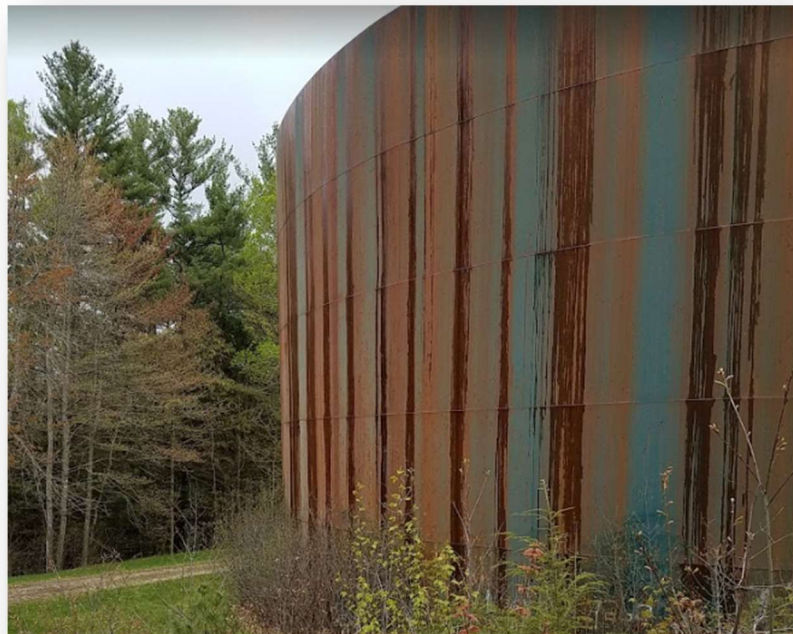
### **Water Tower**

One year at the foot of this trail the town of Newport built a huge water tank we quickly called the water tower, just west of the trail. This was always a challenge for the boys in our neighborhood because there was a ladder on the west side that was blocked off to prevent people from climbing it.

Well, that didn't last long! We climbed the tower and were able to see above the treetops. There was an entrance to the inside of the tank with a ladder leading down into the water. It was rumored that some of the neighborhood gang went swimming inside that tank in the summertime. But we could never reveal who, because our parents were so paranoid that the town may lower the inside water level leaving us stranded and not able to reach the ladder and of course drown! Well, that made all of us think twice... about admitting who did and did not swim in the tank!



**The Water Tower**



**A Modern Day Picture of the Water Tower**





**Water Tower Front and Back**

Well, the Water Tower has not changed much except they have added a second tower next to the original! I did not see the need to include the new tower in this book since it is irrelevant.

## **Log Cabin**

We spent more and more time on this mountain so one summer we decided to build a log cabin that could be used year-round for get togethers. We picked out a spot between BIG ROCK and the Ministers Cabin on the right side (east) of the trail because both the other sites were on the west side. It was about 100 yards off the beating path where we made a clearing by cutting down trees that would be used for this cabin.

Every day of our summer vacation (that year) we would wait for our parents to go to work and then gather food from our freezers, chain saws and other items needed for building the cabin. This included guns as we did not want to run short of food!

The trees we cut were on average one foot in diameter. We cut them into two lengths needed to build the rectangle cabin. All required notching at both ends and both sides so we could stack them just like the Lincoln logs we played with several years earlier.

The cabin was around 10 feet wide and 15 feet long, so it took some effort to lift the logs into place especially as the walls reached 8 feet high. Once together, we made a roof out of materials we scavenged from our homes. We cut out the door area and found an old door to seal the entrance. Not bad for amateurs!



**Log Cabin**

Since it gets so cold in the winter, we made a fireplace out of an old 55-gallon drum. We sealed the top, made a door in the side and a grate of metal bars at the bottom for the logs to burn on. We added a chimney and it worked for many years with no problems.

This cabin was mainly used in the winter by many who rode snow machines. We would have plenty of firewood and kindling to keep the cabin warm. We also

made an outdoor fire ring. We would make a round seat each year around the fire ring using snow and packing it into place.

That was a summer of learning for all of us and the results paid off for many years to come!

The Log Cabin was the most surprising to my brother and I because of the state we found it in. While hiking the mountain path toward the Minister's Cabin there is a Y in the trail with one fork continuing North and the second one headed East.

My brother remembered that we should pace off 50 to 75 yards on the North fork and then turn right into the Woods for maybe 100 yards or so to reach the cabin.



**Sign on the left side of the path near entry point to cabin on the right side.**

It took us about 45 minutes of pacing out 50, 75 and then 100 steps, north of the Y in the path to find the correct entry point! The last one (approximately 100 steps) was correct and we proceeded east into the woods. We stumbled around for awhile until my brother hollered look there is the stove!

Sure enough there was the 55 gallon drum that we made into a wood burning stove so many years ago. The door was missing but everything else was intact although a bit rusty and decaying!





**The Cabin Stove, one of the few remains.**

We investigated the area and could tell by the mounds that our cabin had completely disintegrated into the earth. That blew us both away! There were other artifacts in the general area shown in the pictures below.



**Old bottle**



**Chair Frame**



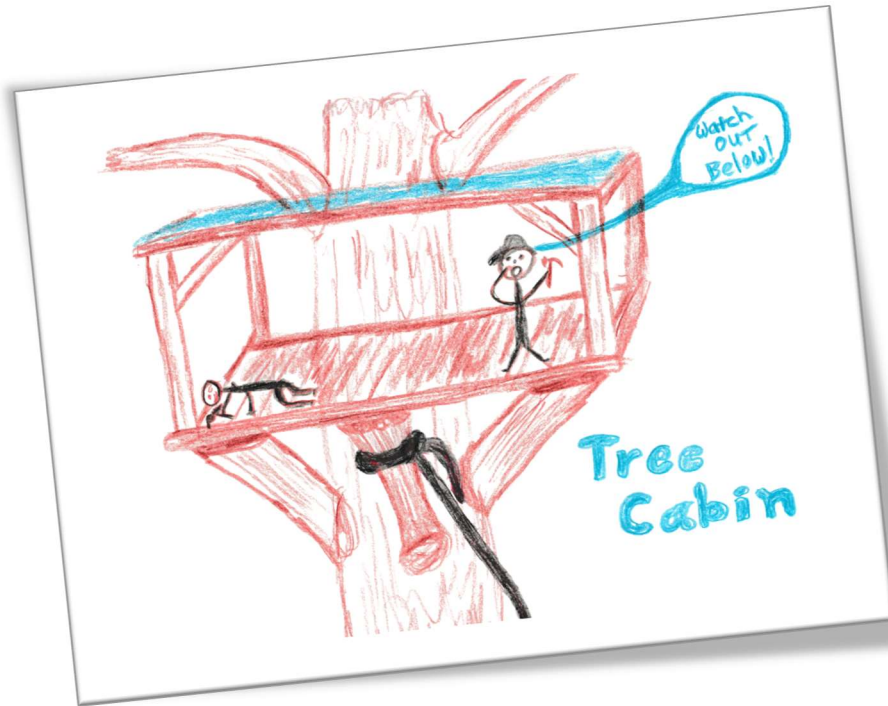
**Metal box or possibly a bucket**

## **Tree Cabins**

Some years before building the Log Cabin, we built some tree cabins. These were very different as we used wood scraps and hauled them up large trees and found sturdy limbs to make the floor and sides using the scrap wood (2x4, 1x6, 1x8 and plywood). These tree cabins were much smaller holding maybe 2 people, but they were challenging to build.

One time we had worked all day, climbing up and down the trees and it was starting to get dark. So, we were picking up tools, etc. for the day. Two of us were up in the “tree cabin” and two were on the ground, my brother being one of the two on the ground. We did not hear any noise below, so we thought they had started to head back down the trail. My friend took a claw hammer and sent it to the ground calling out “watch out below” as he threw it. Then we heard a thud and a loud painful shout. The claw caught my brother on the side of the head ripping open a large gash that was bleeding everywhere. We got him to the hospital which fortunately was only a mile away. After many stitches he was able to go home without any further complications.





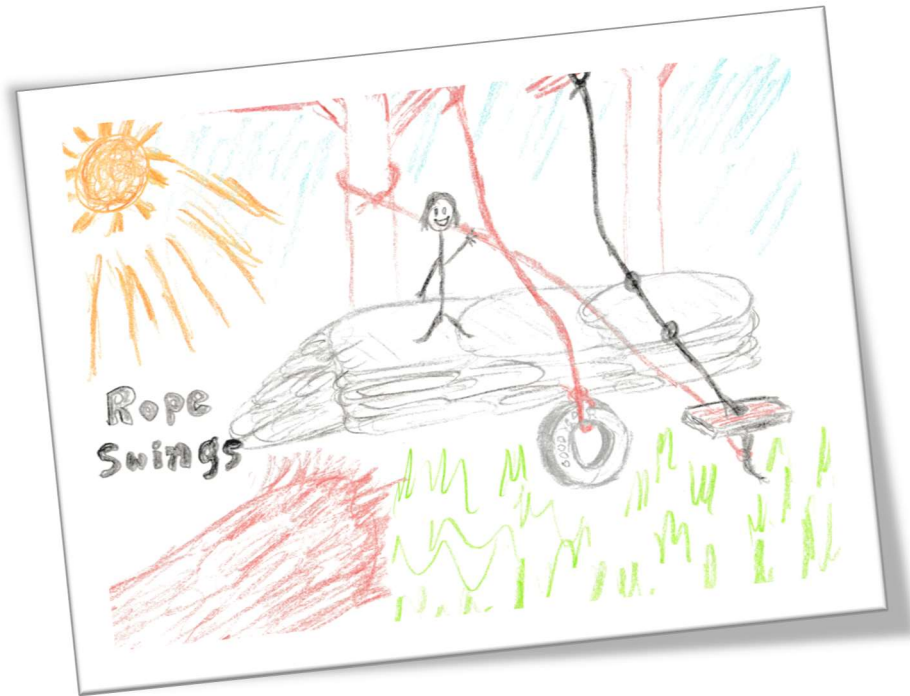
### **Tree Cabins**

A few weeks later we returned to the tree cabins, and both were destroyed! We suspected one of our friends destroyed them, so we confronted him. Why did you destroy our cabins? His immediate answer was me and Sonny (another friend) did not destroy your cabins. Well, we knew at that point what happened and just laughed it off. The answer was too funny for us to remain mad at him, and Sonny!

### **Rope Swings**

One time we build huge rope swings! We found a spot with large flat rocks at the base of our mountain trail. It was among many trees but there was a clear area to the south of these rocks.

It did not take much imagination to envision ropes from the trees, with tires and/or wooden seats attached for swinging on. We spent a couple of days gathering up the materials needed, and then climbed the trees to attach the ropes at one end and the seats at the other end.



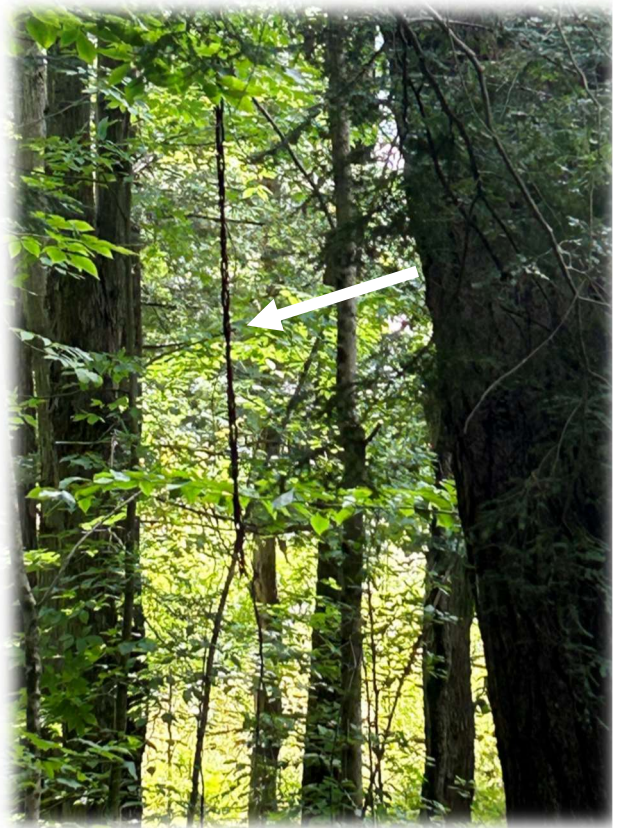
### **Rope Swings**

We created our own amusement park right there at the base of our mountain trail which lasted for many years.

The rope swings were on the east side of the mountain path at the starting point on Summer Street. We made another path through that area directly into the area where some of our homes were on Swan Street.

We located one of the ropes/cables on a tree as shown in the pictures below.





**Rope/Cable tied to tree.**



## **Get Lost!**

We spent a lot of time in the mountains and woods in our younger years to keep from being bored to death. One day my mother had invited a few of her neighborhood lady friends (other's mothers) for some coffee and catching up and most likely a little gossip. Us kids were in-and-out of the house causing a ruckus and the volume of our voices were cancelling out their conversations!

So, my mother (being frustrated) finally suggested that all the kids go outside and "get lost" so they could have some peace and quiet!

We went outside and played in our small rock quarry for a while. This is a place where we had real hammers and we would break the granite and collect the mica and pyrite (aka fool's gold) as the plunder. But we quickly became bored, so we started hiking into the thick wooded area southwest of my home.

We usually spent most of our time on the mountain side to the north where our infamous mountain path resided. Anyhow, about 10 of us and 2 dogs hiked for many miles with multiple conversations (going a mile a minute) deep into the thick woods, into areas we had not previously explored.

As we approached a mountain downhill slope, suddenly we were all confused as to our location. This should be easy for our experienced exploration team to solve so we appointed our best tree climber to climb the tallest pine tree to find a familiar landmark.

Meanwhile, back at our house, our parents after uninterrupted conversations over the last few hours, decided to round us up for dinner. They called out our names but no answer, so they tried again but this time much louder! Still no answers. As dinner time approached, they started to panic and called the local Police department for help. Well, they suggested waiting and surely, we'd turn-up soon. So, the parents set out on foot up Swan Street and then down Summer Street calling out our names but still no answers.

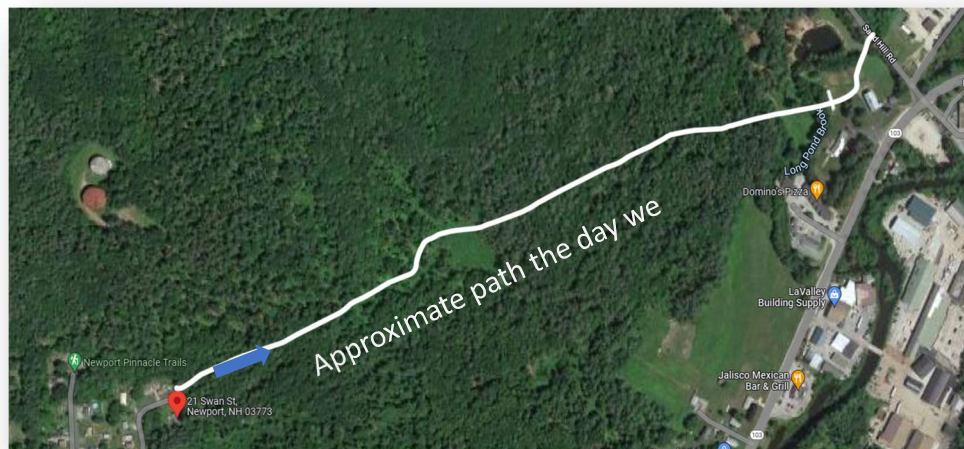
Back at the mountain downslope our trusty tree climber spotted a river at the foot of this mountain in a grassy meadow. There were no other clues as to where this location was, but we were sure this was the good old Sugar River which flows through the town of Newport. It turned out to be the Long Pond brook!

We were all tired and hungry including the two dogs! So, we got a second adrenaline wind and proceeded down the steep mountainside, on occasion sliding and falling on the leaves and pine needles that covered the ground below our feet.

Finally, we hit the grassy meadow and could see the river! By this time, it was dusk, and we knew nightfall was not too far off. We came to the river (or should I say brook) and had to cross it (dogs and all) to get to the other side. When we hit the grass on the other side, we could hear an occasional car and then could see the road not too far away.

An older man was in his station wagon headed toward us, so we waved our arms and shouted at the top of our lungs for him to stop. And he did stop! We approached his car and explained frantically that we were lost and needed help getting home.

He just chuckled a little as he eyeballed this motley crew of 10 boys and 2 dogs all wet from head to toe. Then he said where do you live? We said Swan and Summer Streets in Newport. As it turned out we were in Newport just to the north of the Ruger Firearms factory.



### **The Day We Got Lost**

He told us to pile in and then he proceeded to Summer Street. As we approached Winter Street (a cross street) we spotted our parents walking down the road still calling out our names. The man stopped the car and we all piled out and reunited with our parents! I never did know this man's name, but he was a God send that day!

## Paper Route

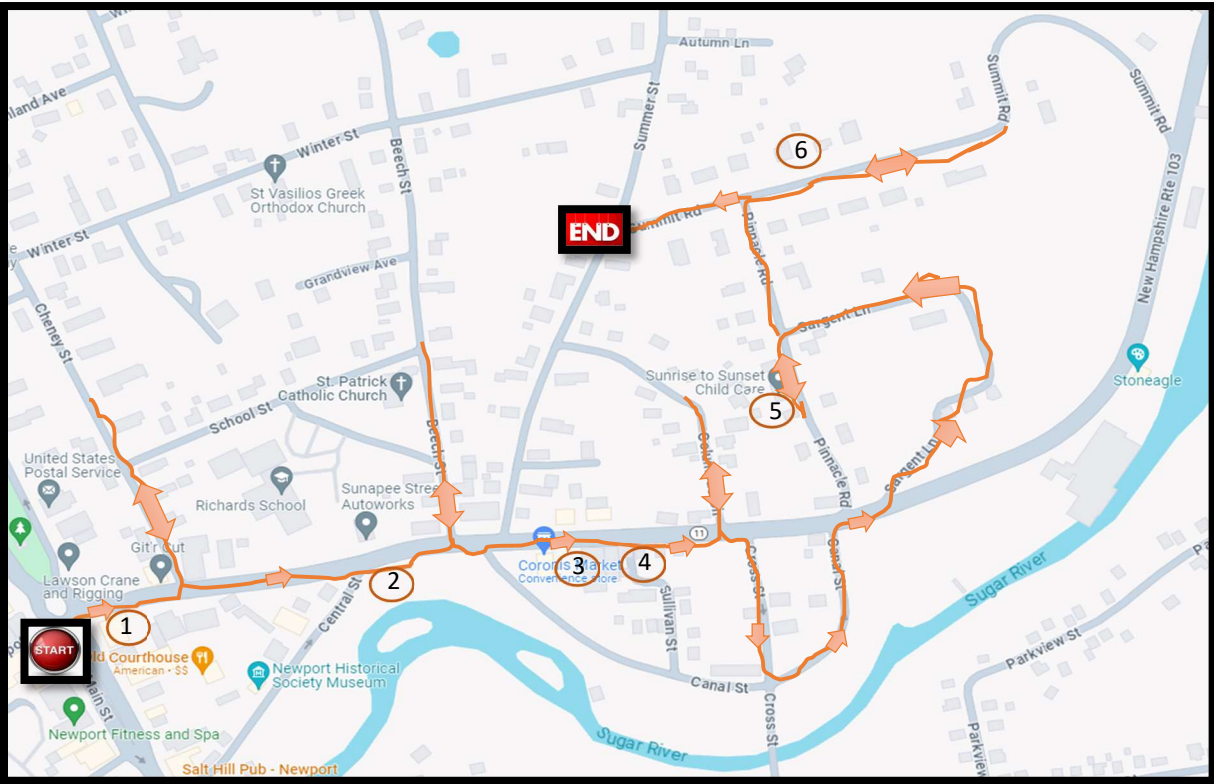
When I was 10 or 11 years old, I convinced my parents to let me have a paper route to make some spending money and start a savings account. I inherited the route from a friend of mine named Kevin. He took a week to show me the ropes and then the job was mine.

I worked for the Daily Eagle and delivered papers six days a week to approximately 65 customers. The paper was 25 cents at that time and the average content would have roughly 10 pages.

I generally walked or rode my bike in the late spring through early fall and walked during the winter. I had 2 baskets on the rear of my bike for the papers and used a newspaper boy bag during the winter months. I started my route every day after school walking (or riding my bike) from school to the Sugar River Pharmacy at the corner of Depot and Main streets (see Start on the Map below).



**Bicycle baskets and Newspaper Boy bag (depiction)**



### My Paper Route - Newport, NH

The first thing I was required to do was count the papers to ensure each customer would be delivered their paper. If I was short, I would have to make a phone call at the phone booth to have someone from the office bring the needed papers. We would meet at an agreed-to place along my routed based on their schedule.

I carried a 2 ring collections book with customer cards and a bank zipper pouch to keep track of the money and who had paid and who still owed for that week. I do not remember my paycheck amount, it was very little, but we were allowed to accept tips! Many people were generous with their tips, and it was appreciated!

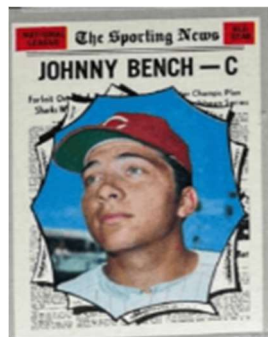
If you look at the map of my paper route on the previous page, I have labels Start, 1-5 and End and I'll use those references to point out items of interest that I remember.

My first two deliveries were Ambargis Dry Cleaners and the Newport Fire Department (number 1 on map) on Sunapee Street! Imagine an 11-year-old boy having to deliver the paper to the firemen on the second floor (living area) at the

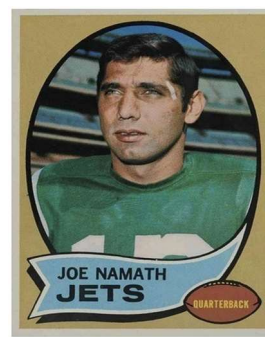
fire department. That brass pole was right there, and I was allowed to slide down it, so cool! Friends liked to join me on occasion to do the same.

Next in line were the Coronis brothers' stores (number 2 on map), first was Blackie's and the John's not too far up the road. Blackie always offered some snacks and John would not let me pay for one of his famous Grinders, yum!

I liked to collect Baseball and Football cards, so I always purchase them from one of their stores. If I only knew, I would have kept my collection and all the duplicates!



1970 Topps Johnny Bench All-Star  
#464 Mint condition today worth  
\$25k!



1970 Topps #150 Joe Namath  
Mint condition today worth \$3.2k!

### **Topps Baseball & Football Cards (1970)**

Further up Sunapee Street was Buds Bowling Alley upstairs and Buds soda bottling shop (number 3 on the map) on the ground floor. My very next customer (forgot their name) stands out because I remember finding her paycheck on the sidewalk by her house. I knocked on the door to return it and she grabbed it from my hands, slammed the door and started shouting at her daughter for not depositing the check. I felt good returning the check but worse for the daughter!

Back on Sunapee Street (number 4 on the Map), my customer had a large (and mean) German Sheppard that was generally in the back yard on a chain. Somehow it got loose and met me at the door of her house and started attacking my paper boy bag (fortunately for me). I knocked hard on her door, and she came out and scolded the dog by hitting it with (you guessed it) a rolled-up newspaper!

My mother did not like that situation and she told the police department if that lady cannot keep her dog under control, she (my mother) would take care of the dog! So much for tips from that customer!



Number 5 on the Map on Pinnacle Road was Mr. & Mrs. Pepin's house. They really liked me because the paper was always delivered on time (rain, sleet, snow or shine) and it was never wet (protected by plastic bag). On extremely cold days, they would invite me in (cleared with my parents of course) to warm up with some hot chocolate! Their house was in the home stretch of my route, so it was really appreciated. They both hunted so I enjoyed their trophy room.

Number 6 on the Map was a wealthy neighborhood in Newport with many nice houses. I recall all the colorful leaves that would be on the ground in the Fall and neatly raked to the curbside for disposal.

My paper route was quite an entrepreneurial experience at such a young age. I had many responsibilities including handling money, etc. not to mention the daily exercise.

In 1972, I was invited along with other paper boys to go to Washington, DC for Richard Nixon's Inauguration and to see all the sites including visiting the Smithsonian Nation Museum. I was able to use the money that I earned as a paper boy for this trip. I still have the photo album containing all the pictures from that trip and on occasion look through it to remember that awesome weekend.



### Trip to Washington, DC

I had other jobs as I got older like washing dishes at the Lakeview Inn at Sunapee Harbor, stock clerk and bag boy at the Shop Rite supermarket and Machinist apprentice at Micro Precision in Sunapee, NH.

### **Small Engines, Minibikes and Motorcycles**

As a young boy, I loved to tinker with anything mechanical for as long as I can remember. My neighbor, Jimmy at the top of the hill, and I collected small engines starting around 8 or 9 years old.



### **Small Engines (depiction)**

We had Briggs and Stratton mostly but on occasion, we would find a Tecumseh (pronounced “ta-coom-sa”), Sachs (pronounced “Saks”) or other brands that we would quickly scoop up out of curiosity!

By collecting I mean buy, sell and trade with each other and many others that had the same hobby. The reason for the collection was to tear them apart, clean them up and rebuild them as necessary so they were worth more than when they were acquired.

I had several engines in the basement of my childhood home and that is where I would work on them on my dad’s work bench. We had to learn by trial and error and share our lessons learned as there was no Internet or YouTube in those days.

A natural progression from small engines is minibikes and then motorcycles. So, we did the same, buy, trade, fix up, ride and then sell to buy the next better bike. It was a cycle, no pun intended!



Taco 3.0 HP



Honda 50 Mini-Trail



Yamaha GT80



Yamaha Enduro 250

### **My progression of cycles (depiction)**

My first cycle was a purple Taco minibike with a 3.0 HP Briggs and Stratton engine, one I knew well by this point. I had a lot of fun with this minibike and rode it everywhere.

One day I was riding around the house and my mother was outside sunbathing. She hollered to me, “be careful and slow down before you get hurt!” Another few laps around the house and she hollered again, but this time “that thing is on fire!” I looked down and sure enough flames are shooting out around the gas tank right between my legs, yikes! I jumped off and laid the bike down in the loose dirt. By then my mother was hysterical drawing our neighbor Harry’s attention. He was a volunteer fireman, so he threw a couple of shovels of dirt on the bike to extinguish the flames.

We talked it over afterward and my mother told me she thought the bike was going to blow up and start the house on fire, that is why she didn’t want me near it. She was happy that Harry was there quickly to put out the flames. I was a little pissed that Harry threw dirt on my engine, afraid it would be ruined, but also happy that he knew what to do.

It took a couple of weeks of pleading with my mother to let me work on the minibike so I could get it back in running condition. Finally, she gave in, and I



discovered that the gas cap gasket was missing allowing gas to spill onto the tank and other parts of the bike (from the vibrations while running). The muffler on that engine was right above the gas tank (about an inch). When I was racing around the house and let off the throttle, the engine backfired a couple of times starting the bike on fire!

I knew I had to have a good story with visible corrections and an explanation of the problem to keep and ride my minibike. So, I added a 6-inch extension pipe to the muffler ensuring it was well beyond the gas tank and put a new gasket on the gas tank cap. I was able to explain the cause and then demonstrate the gas tank no longer leaked, and my muffler extension was an added safety precaution and that did the trick!

Not too long after that I had an opportunity to buy a Honda 50 mini-trail with an automatic 3 speed transmission! I had saved some cash from my paper route however, that was not enough. So, I worked out a trade, my Taco and some cash for the Honda, what a deal!

I loved my Honda, finally I have 3 gears that provide sufficient power to ride the mountain path with ease! I believe the top speed was around 35 MPH and you could travel 100 miles on a tank of gas, what fun!

Several months later, a friend of mine had a Yamaha GT80 that was not running very well, and he was selling it very cheap. So, I bought it and discovered the coil was bad causing it to misfire and run poorly. I saved some money and purchased a new coil and my “new motorcycle” with a manual 4 speed transmission was ready to rock and roll!

I was able to ride the GT80 on much longer and more complicated trails with my buddies. One day Scotty and I were riding on the trails on the east side of the Airport (in Newport) on the hillside and we saw my neighbor Gary riding his BSA (I believe) on the road below. We rode up to the edge of the slope and waived our arms to get his attention and say hello. He looked up and somehow lost control of the bike and went into a slide on the road (at 45-50 MPH). Amazingly, he was not injured, and the bike had only minor damage. He always wore a helmet and leathers when riding and they were most likely his saving grace!

One day when I was not home, my brother decided he would take my Honda 50 for a little ride around the neighborhood. When he returned home, he decided to go down the grassy bank and across the creek like he always did with his Yamaha 250. But unfortunately, when the much smaller front tire hit the creek, going close to top speed, the bike stopped, bending the front fork and tire into the engine and throwing my brother over the handlebars onto the ground. Fortunately, he was not hurt, but I was so mad when I got home and discovered what he had done!

Even though I had my newer Yamaha GT80, I had plans for the Honda 50 that didn't include scrapping it! Besides, he had a Yamaha 250, what's up with riding my bike without permission?

I guess I made a big stink because my mother's punishment to my brother for taking my bike without permission was to give his Yamaha 250 Enduro to me. I probably should have ended that sentence with an exclamation point!

I discovered why he was not riding his Yamaha, because the throttle cable was broken. He tied a string to the broken cable and pulled the string rather than turn the hand grip for acceleration (a very dangerous work around). I was able to get it fixed and enjoyed riding the 250 until I sold it for an obvious profit, thanks Bro! But I did take a severe beating on the Honda 50 selling it basically for scrap!

## **Vehicles and Mechanics**

I learned to drive when I was 10 years old. My grandfather Norm taught me to drive in his 1970 Chrysler Newport. He would let me drive from his house to my house (or vice versa) teaching me how to keep it in the lane, proper braking and acceleration. Later, he purchased a 1958 Willys Jeep that I racked up many, many miles in before I turned sixteen! I always liked to be around cars and helping whenever I could to gain the experience and knowledge of doing so.

My neighbor Dougie bought a 1970 Plymouth Cuda with a 340 engine and four-speed transmission. It was an awesome car and he raced it at the drag strip on the weekends.



**1970 Plymouth 'Cuda 340 / 4-Speed (depiction)**

My Uncle Butch purchased a 1970 Dodge Super Bee 440 Six Pack and raced it at the drag strip on the weekends.



**1970 Dodge Super Bee 440 Six Pack / 4-Speed (depiction)**

Being around such nice vehicles is very inspiring and exciting! You always learn a lot when you hang around people that work on (and race) their own cars. Even if sometimes you are only the gopher (go for this and go for that), you still learn so much.

In 1974, when I was fourteen, I purchased a 1968 Chevrolet Impala from my Uncle Butch for \$300.00. It had a 307 small block Chevy motor which was simple to work on (no computers / smog devices). I used to drive it around the neighborhood when my parents were at work until one day my neighbor (Dougie's wife) mentioned it to my mother. I liked to get the cobwebs out and I guess sliding around the street corners didn't settle too well with Jean!





**1968 Chevrolet Impala (depiction)**

Over the next few years, I spent many hours working with my good friend Jimmy (at the top of the hill) on his many buys, fix up, trade or sell automobiles. I remember working on his 1957 Chevy by the lower garage at his house. His dad Paul was a master mechanic and had all the tools needed for car restoration and repair.

We were pulling the engine and transmission out of the '57 and we couldn't get the rusted crossmember off the frame. So, we grabbed a couple pry bars and started prying on both sides when my bar slipped loose and struck me just below my right eye. Almost knocked me out, but I was ok! That hurt like dickens and left a small scar for many years. I remember us laughing so hard after the initial shock of the blow was over! We did get the engine and trans out of the car that same day.



**1957 Chevrolet Bel Air (depiction)**

We put many hours into that old Chevy and Jimmy drove it for a while until someone wanted to buy it. He sold it and had money to invest in the next ride!

Another of Jimmy's cars that stands out (in my memory) is the 66 Mustang fastback. It was a Ford Orange with black louvers across the back window.



### **1966 Mustang Fastback (depiction)**

This was a purchase to fix up, drive for a spell and then sell for a profit. We spent many hours under the hood working on the small block 289 with the 4-speed transmission. We changed the camshaft (low-end torque), added a Holly 600 CFM carburetor, new wheels and tires. Always fun learning to work on different makes and models of cars!

Another experience I enjoyed when I was younger was visiting my grandfather's parents' house in Grantham, NH. This is where my grandfather grew up after his family moved there from Vermont when he was a teenager.

They had 4 or 5 old Model T's out behind the house and adjacent to the garage. They did not have bodies, but they did have the frame, engines, seats and at one time they were functional.

My grandfather would tell stories of buying Model Ts for \$5.00 and then chopping them up including shortening the frame to make "tractors" for many uses including racing each other in the fields.



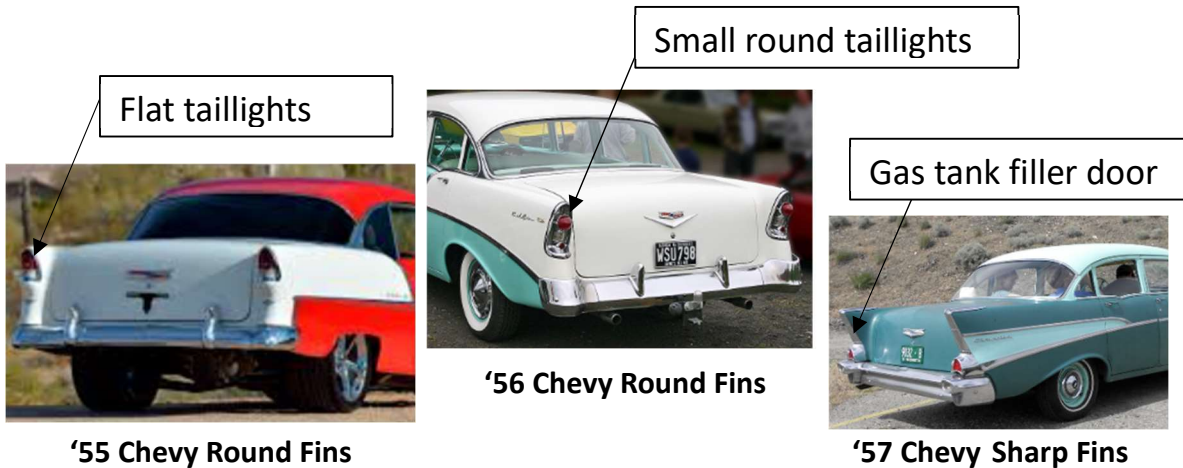
Model T "Tractor" (depiction)

I learned a lot about the Model T by asking questions to better understand the three pedals on the floor, the extra levers (throttle & timing adjuster) on the steering wheel (not a shift lever or directional signal) and the spark boxes!

One thing that was very important to us motorheads was knowing the various makes and models of cars. This required time and knowledge because we did not have the Internet for finding quick answers.

You needed to find people that were already knowledgeable, had sufficient experience (and time) to teach you the characteristics for identifying cars. For example, the '55, '56 and '57 Chevy could be identified by the rear-end and taillights. The '55 had rounded tail fins with flat taillight covers. The '56 had similar rounded tail fins with small round protruding taillights. The '57 had distinctive sharp tail fins that came to a point at the top end and the gas cap was located above the driver's side taillight (under a small door).





### Car Characteristics

In addition to the makes and models for cars of the 50's, 60's and 70's, we also knew the engine types and sizes by manufacturers (i.e., Ford – 289 / 390 / 460, Chevrolet – 283 / 327 / 454 and Chrysler/Plymouth/Dodge – 318 / 340 / 360 / 440 / HEMI, etc.).

I worked with many different people on their project automobiles over my younger years as I loved anything mechanical. None that stand out as much as those mentioned above but each opportunity was a learning experience that is part of my combined knowledge today. When you learn things by doing them, they stick with you for a lifetime!

I am very thankful for all the learning opportunities available to me in my younger days. It was all about the knowledge and experience that you glean from hands-on activities and from working with extremely skilled people.

# Chapter 2

## Childhood Mentors

### **“Grampa Norm”**

I was very fortunate to have had a grandfather (my mom’s father) who loved to be around children (and more) to teach us things that have lasted a lifetime. He was born in 1916 and was the oldest boy in his family of 13 siblings. His youngest brother (Rusty, short for Russell) and my mother were the same age! Grampa Norm lived through the great depression, and he was in World War II, I believe these experiences made him appreciate his life and possessions that much more. He was also very knowledgeable and talented with a very broad range of skills.



**Grampa Norm (left) and his brother Zeke (younger days)**

I remember his toolshed very well and can still picture it in my head. He made wooden toolboxes for each type of trade, having an electrical toolbox with all his electrician tools, a plumber’s toolbox with all his plumbing tools, a carpenter’s

toolbox with all his woodworking tools and a mechanic's toolbox (metal Craftsman) with all his automotive tools.

He rarely threw away anything like parts, materials or hardware as I believe this was common for people that went through the great depression. He established an organizational system for storing all the various smaller items that he saved. I remember him saving and using glass peanut butter jars, affixing the covers to shelf bottoms and then filling the jars with parts, nuts and bolts, etc. and then screwing the filled jars back onto the covers. This is a system that I have used for many years in my own garage, a great use of space!

My brother and I were very happy to tag along with grampa Norm on the weekends learning how to fix plumbing issues and repair various things around the house. This included working with electricity in the house or anything related to cars no matter what the issues may have been. My brother was more into sports than I, so my passion to learn these things was far greater than his at that time.

The house that my grandparents lived in "up on the hill" (as we called it) was built in the early 1900's. It was a large house with 4 nice sized bedrooms upstairs, 1 bedroom downstairs, a kitchen, a large walk-in pantry, a formal dining room and a living room. The ceilings were very high, and I remember the bathtub was an old clawfoot stand-alone.

There was an entryway from the driveway to the front door. I remember the 55-gallon drum in that entryway, filled with Kerosene that was used for the independent heater upstairs. We used kerosene for many things like cleaning old greasy parts when working on the automobiles, rototillers or lawnmowers.

That entry way also connected the barn to the house. We never used the barn as a garage for the vehicles because it had a wooden floor! There was another covered area (mini garage) below this barn with a dirt floor used for storing various things like wheelbarrows and other things. There was also an area above the barn that was used for storing various things collected over the years. I remember the wooden floor up there would shake (a little) as you walked across it. You could hear the rattles of the stored items as you walked.



There were so many mentoring opportunities! Outside there were four garden areas across a three-tiered land area looking to the east. And to the south there was a chicken coop and a Blackberry patch. Another feature of this property was all the Maple trees, they ranged in sizes and were plentiful!

Perhaps the most disappointing part of my trip to NH in August of 2023 was the random visit to my grandparent's old home up on the hill. The picture below is from the internet as I chose not to take any pictures to preserve the memories in my mind.



**Grandparents' Home Entry Way (house in back)**

The sign (No Thru Traffic) did not deter us as I drove in the lower driveway with my brother, sister and mother to take a closer look at what remains. The upper driveway no longer exists as it is now part of the grass that covers the property.

We arrived at the end of this entrance and the now owner appeared from his garage. We introduced ourselves and he very cordially allowed us to tell our story and reminisce. He was very interested in the history of the house and property, so we talked for 20 to 30 minutes.

I talked about the underground forts that we used to build (with friends that lived close by) in the woods on the south and eastern sides of the property. He mentioned that his friend Steve told him similar stories and it turns out that Steve was one of our friends mentioned above, small world! My brother told the story of how we would light the plastic (roofs) on our cabins and the melting drops would make a whirring sound, but they hurt like you know what when they landed on your skin!

Things I noticed were there was no upper driveway, the garden areas no longer existed and were all overgrown with grass and trees. The blackberry bushes were no longer east of where the old chicken coop once stood. But most prevalent was the missing 3 story attached barn which included a dirt floor on the bottom, wooden floor on the main deck and an attic or upper deck. They had rotted away and had to be torn down!

The screened-in porch was always a favorite, having a large table and chairs, refrigerator and freezer for many years. The family card games, and clam bakes were always enjoyed on the porch! It no longer exists as it too had to be torn down due to rot issues.

They say you can never go back, and I believe that is true. But my memories of that old house will be with me forever!

## **Home Improvements**

In 1968 when I was 8 years old, my grandparents wanted to refurbish the outside of their house. So, we assembled a team (made up entirely of family) to do the job! I felt so privileged to be a part of this team but had no idea how much work was ahead.

They wanted to replace all the clapboard siding, all new shingles on the roof and new modern windows. The house was built in the early 1900's and it had large

windows with counterbalances (weights) inside the window frames to assist with opening and closing.

My mother's cousin Barry was the knowledgeable carpenter (by trade) and the foreman for this job. We spent hours tearing off the existing clapboards and removing the tarpaper down to the bare boards. It was amazing because some of the boards were 16 inches wide and the 2 x 4's were 2 inches by 4 inches!

We replaced all the windows, tearing out the large one's including the counterweights and rope mechanisms. Next, we built new frames and installed the new windows sealing them with weatherproofing materials.

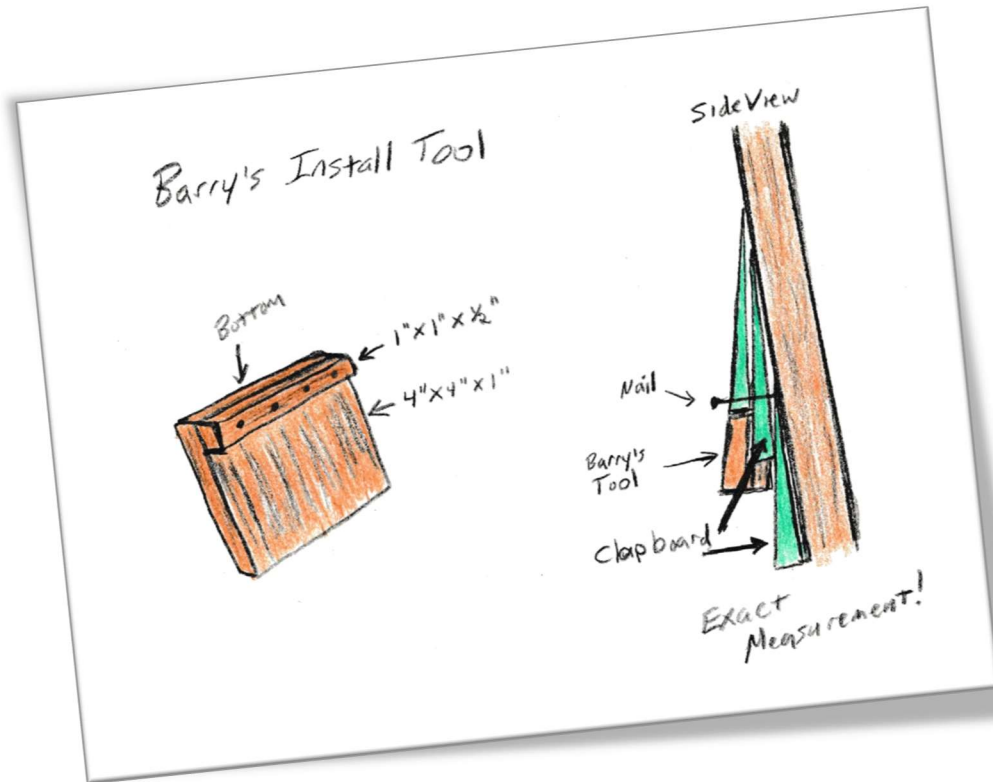
Then came the new tarpaper, rolled out and stapled to the boards underneath. Once the tarpaper was complete, we started with the new clapboards. I learned that clapboards must start at the bottom of the wall and then work their way up until the top has been reached.

To make this process a little faster, Barry showed us how to make an installation assist tool. Basically, a 4 x 4 x 1 (inch) piece of board with a 1 x 1 x 1/2 board attached to one end. Clapboards are wedge shaped and the thick end is facing down. The next higher clapboard overlaps the thin edge of the lower one by 1 inch. Barry's clever tool allowed two people to precisely hold the board in place while nailing it down. No measuring necessary! He got our team working efficiently on the siding and went up to the roof (two stories above) to begin removing the old shingles and tar paper.

My grandfather thought working on the roof was a little too dangerous for us kids, so we continued with the siding and then painting. We got to climb the ladder to the roof and carry bundles of shingles to hand off to the roofing team. That was quite a chore for an eight-year-old! And one day Barry summoned me up to the roof (cleared with grampa Norm first) and showed me how to cut, place and nail shingles into place. What an experience!

We worked every day that summer and eventually the entire project was completed. My grandparents were thrilled with the outcome!





**Barry's Timesaving Tool**



**Home Improvements**

## Maple Syrup

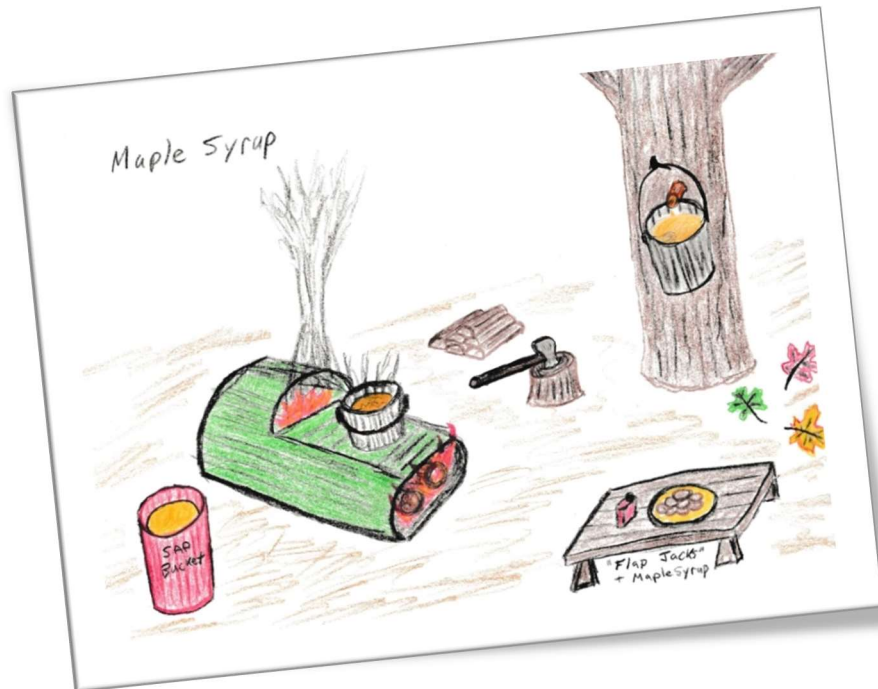
At a very young age, my brother and I (and our cousins) were taught to tap Maple trees in the Spring with a ½ inch by 3-inch copper pipe and then hang a 10-quart (2 ½ gallon) bucket, to catch the sap overnight. The best weather for collecting Maple sap was cold evenings followed by sunny days (or Spring). We collected the buckets in the mornings and brought them back to the house pouring them into larger containers and then returning them to each tree.

My grandmother Doris had a propane stove and kept a large pot on top for boiling the sap down into syrup. It takes 40 gallons of sap to make 1 gallon of syrup! If you keep boiling it down, you will eventually get Maple sugar candy (very sweet).

To help in the process of boiling the sap, my grandfather (and us kids) made a wood burning stove out of an old 55-gallon drum. We laid the barrel on its side and flattened the bottom, so it was stable. Then we cut the top side of the barrel about ¼ of the way and flattened it down for 2 large pots to reside. Then we would load the wood into the barrel for the fire and boil the sap!

On cold days, my grandfather would make us “flapjacks” which were basically mini pancakes, and we would use the freshly made (and still warm) maple syrup along with a little butter for the toppings! Yum!!

There are few things more rewarding than taking mildly sugary sap from a tree and making syrup for your very own flapjacks! When the sap ran off the trees in a natural state, they would form icicles that we would break off and eat as a treat.

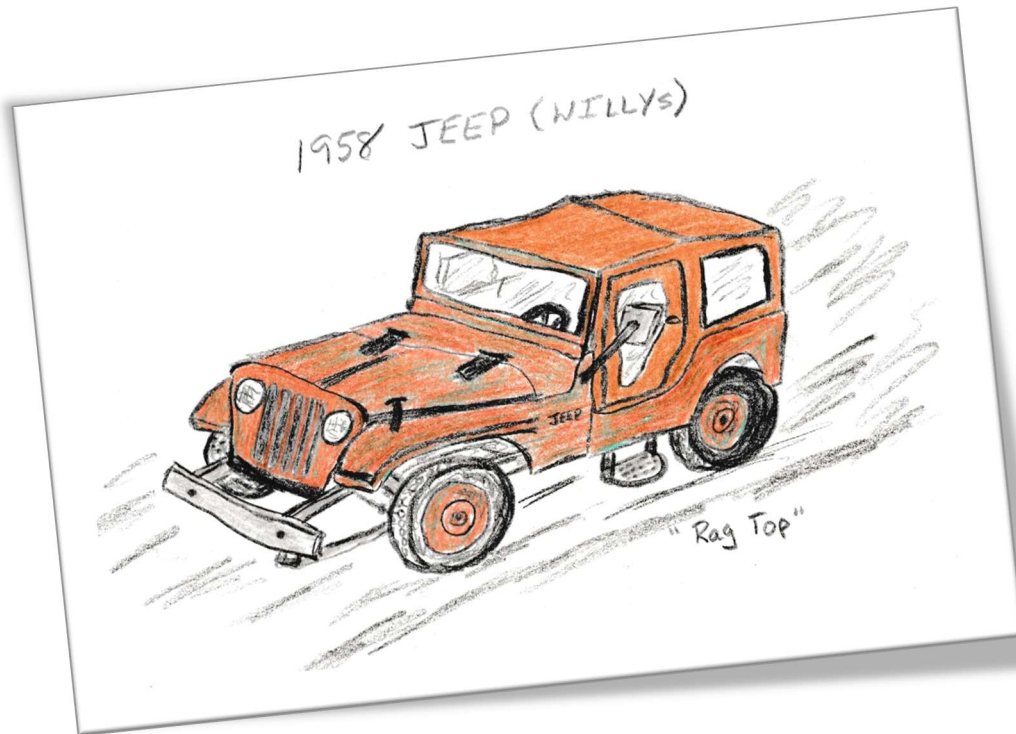


## Maple Syrup

### Willys JEEP

My grandfather Norm purchased a 1958 Willys JEEP with a ragtop and a Snowplow for keeping his driveway clear during the wintertime. He knew having two grandsons and several nephews (all around the same age) that he would have new mentoring opportunities related to driving, in addition to the maintenance and care of this vehicle.

The JEEP was old, and the ragtop was ragged, but it ran well with a 3-speed manual transmission and four-wheel drive. You had choices between 2 and 4-wheel drive, high and low range plus the 3 speeds (transmission) in each selected option. You could see the ground through the holes in the floorboards but it was built like a tank so there was no danger of "falling through" because the metal in place was solid.



### **1958 Willys JEEP**

The JEEP did not have a heater/air conditioner or if it did, it certainly did not work! So, 90 degrees in the summer or 20 below zero in the winter made no difference to us 14-year-old boys. We cared more about driving than the weather, besides we had layers of clothes in the winter and a cool breeze with the windshield down and the top off in the summer!

My cousin John and I took primary responsibilities for the JEEP because we both loved to drive and work on the JEEP when it was broken. Whatever broke, my grandfather would walk us through troubleshooting, finding the correct parts and then fixing the problems. The JEEP was never down for too long before it was fixed and operational once again.

I remember one day John was driving the JEEP plowing snow on the lower driveway at my grandfather's house. It was a circular (more of an oval) driveway that went all the way around the house. When he turned the steering wheel right to hit the upper driveway, the steering shaft broke, and we went straight into the woods hitting a small tree and coming to an abrupt stop.



Another time I was plowing on the lower driveway (the opposite direction that John was going) and I pushed the snow off to the right toward the trees. There was a 3 foot drop off that I forgot about, and the JEEP landed on the frame. The 4-wheel drive was no help in this situation! Fortunately, one of the neighbors had a 4-wheel drive truck and he pulled us out with a chain.

I learned so much about working on vehicles with this JEEP as it frequently required minor repairs like changing the battery or starter or rebuilding the carburetor. Plus, learning to drive alone with a manual 3 speed, 4-wheel drive and manual steering was an experience of its own!

### **Vegetable Gardens**

I mentioned previously the four gardens that were spread over a three-tier landscape east of the house. We always planted by Memorial Day and harvested by Labor Day.



**Three Tier Gardens**

The top tier was one large garden area (~ 75' x 30'), the second tier had two specific garden areas and the third tier had one garden area.

To begin, we would use the Sears Rototiller to till up the four garden areas. My grandfather, brother, cousins John and Allen and I would take turns running the rototiller until the ground was ready for planting. We used garden rakes to smooth over the soil and then a homemade row maker (like an upside-down picket fence) for creating the rows for planting.

The top tier was where we planted and grew Russet Potatoes. We used leftover potatoes from the previous crop that were stored in a bin the cellar (already had extending sprouts) by cutting them in half and planting.

The middle tier left garden was used to plant radishes, onions, green beans cucumbers, tomatoes and lettuce. The right tier was mainly for planting corn, peas, beets and carrots. The bottom tier was used to plant more tomatoes & cucumbers, bell peppers, cabbage, zucchini and cauliflower.

We hand watered the gardens over the summer as needed and kept a close eye out for gophers! We used traps at the gopher holes and the single shot 12-gauge gun for finishing the job.

The potatoes would shoot up green leafy vines while they grew underground. When they reach 8-10 inches, we would rake the soil up (called hilling) around the vines on both sides. Hilling allows the potatoes to form and grow properly and is usually done two times a season.

We always had plenty of fresh and tasty tomatoes, cucumbers, bell peppers and radishes during (and after) the growing season. Corn and green beans after a few months and cabbage came later.

After ninety days or so we'd check the potatoes for growth, nothing like a potato fresh from the ground! You work it in your hand until the peeling comes off, then rinse it off and eat it with salt of course, yum!

Our entire family and extended families enjoyed the fresh vegetables for many years during my youth!

## Dad (Aka “Eddie” to Friends and Family)

My dad was born in 1934 and he was a Korean War Veteran, serving honorably in the US Navy from 1952 until 1955. He was on the USS Trathen-DD530 a Fletcher-class Destroyer.

As documented in the Trathen’s Wikipedia: *“During her Korean deployment, Trathen's main and secondary batteries pounded railroad lines, trains, bunkers, and transformer stations. On 11 March 1953, the destroyer joined the "Train Buster Club" when she destroyed a railroad train”.*



**Dad & Trathen at Sea 9/3/1952**

Dad was a man of many talents, first and foremost a Master Machinist working in the industry over 40 years at Joy Manufacturing, Micro Precision and K&M Machine. He would look at 2D Drawings and then make the items depicted (as they came to life) on his Lathe. He was one of the first to be trained in Hardinge automated Lathes in Elmira, NY when they were first introduced. These were pre-CNC (**C**omputerized **N**umerical **C**ontrol) using a series of switches and relays and they required a lot of expertise taking hours to set-up for a production run. He made it look very simple, and he was one of the few that possessed those talents.

He liked hunting and fishing and especially ice fishing in the winter. He worked evenings during Deer hunting season with his brother-in-law Pete at “the Park”

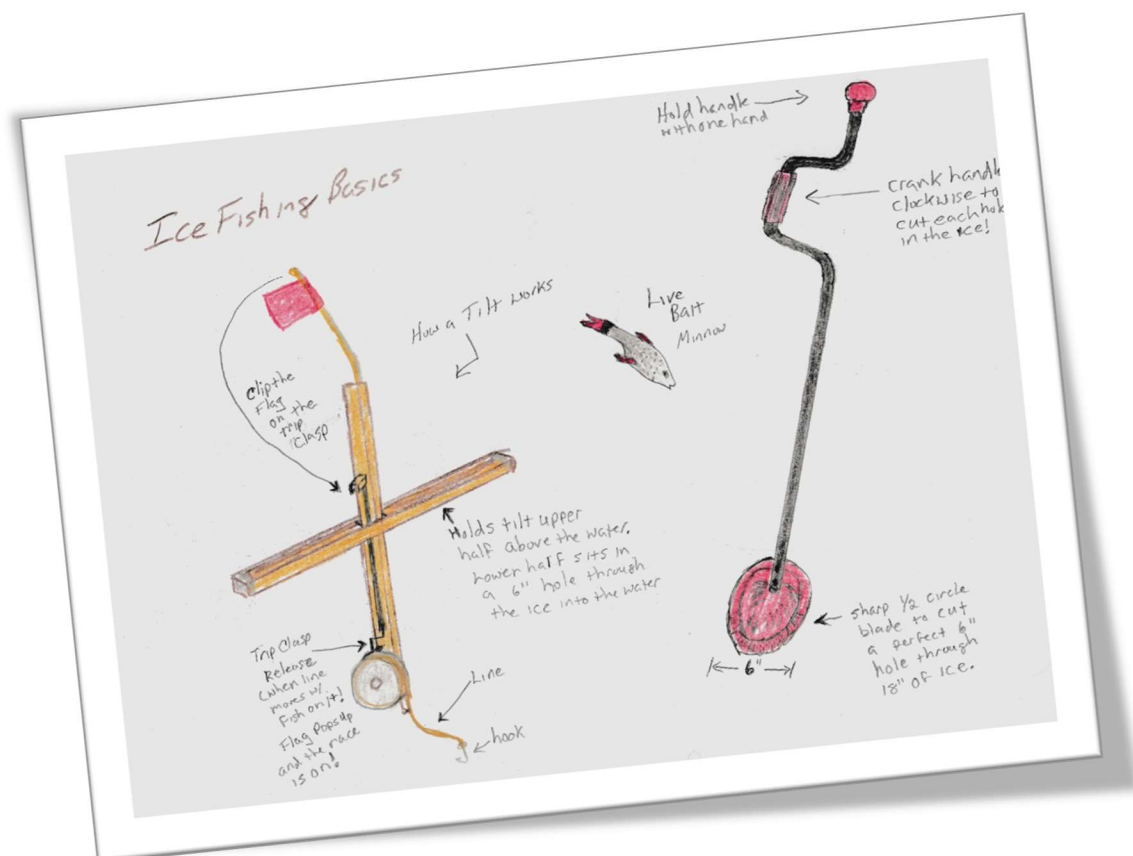
where they would process Deer for local hunters. My uncle Pete was a professional Butcher at one of the local grocery stores.

My dad was very easy going, laid back and non-threatening, but you knew when he meant business! In his retirement years, Dad really got into cooking and man could he cook! BBQ on the grill, soups/gumbo in the fall and winter or most anything else you could imagine. My brother inherited that gene! Dad was married to my mother (Janice) in 1956 until his death 60 years later in 2016.

## Ice Fishing

We loved to ice fish in the winter. Off to your favorite pond or lake for a long day of fun filled and very strenuous activities.

If you have never ice fished, it is very different than fishing in open water on a boat or from the shore. First, I will cover some basics about this sport.



**Ice Fishing Basics**



When you arrive at the pond or lake, you must first ensure the ice is safe. So, you scout the area looking for dark ice because this means the ice is very thin and the water is close to the top. Stepping on dark ice could be fatal, so avoid it!

In the picture above (Ice Fishing Basics), there are three items I'll discuss in a little more detail. First is the old-school auger which was our tool of choice (per Dad) for cutting 6-inch holes down 18 inches through the ice until water was struck. Uncle Pete eventually purchased an automated auger with a gas-powered motor assist which made opening holes much faster and was less exhausting.

Next, is the Tilt which is used in place of a fishing pole. The Tilt is made of wood and folds for storage. It has a flag that connects to the trip clasp once it has been setup with bait and deployed. There is a reel of string with the fishhook at the bottom where the live bait is hooked and then sent into the ice-cold water to find and attract the fish.

When a fish takes the bait, the reel on the Tilt spins and trips the flag causing it to wave in the air getting your attention for pulling in the catch!

The last item depicted above is the bait, which are live minnows, brave souls that must make the sacrifice. They are the stars of the show and there would be no fish caught without them.

I should have also added an ice fishing skimmer, which is basically a little larger than a kitchen straining ladle. This was used to skim the ice off the fresh holes as they start to freeze over in the freezing water and outside weather, Brr!

## **Friends and Family**

Most of the time we went fishing we would either go with my dad, brother, uncle Pete and our cousins Peter (aka Joy) and Michael or with Fred (Dad's friend and local Police Officer) and his 2 boys Scott and Kevin. Many times, we all went together and most always we had friends from the neighborhood come along for the fun and experience.

Ice fishing is an event as opposed to an activity. The initial thing to do is cut the first hole with auger as this will give you the depth of the ice. On average, we like to see 18 inches of ice below our feet for comfort.

Once the depth has been verified, it's time to locate and build a fire right there on the ice for warmth and cooking up minute steaks when we get hungry.



**Ice Fishing (depiction)**

I mentioned above that ice fishing is fun filled and very strenuous activities. The reasons are cutting all the holes in the ice takes a lot of effort so, the more people the less effort per person!

Once all the holes are cut and the tilts have been baited and set, then we wait for a flag to pop up and the race is on! First one to reach the tilt gets to pull in and “catch” the fish. That was the only rule!

It could sometimes get cold waiting so we would bring the football for a game on the ice to keep our blood pumping and bodies warm. Sometimes the adults would play and other times they took advantage of us playing the game by keeping a close eye on the Tilt flags to quietly fetch the fish since we were all distracted.

When the snow was wet, we would make snow forts and have snowball fights which were always fun. Except for the time Kevin made a snowball that was very well packed. Then he called out his father's name, "Fred" and threw the snowball which hit Fred in the head as he turned to look. Fred chased Kevin all over the lake that day but could not catch him... lucky for Kevin!

One time I remember going fishing at Lake Winnepesaukee with dad, my brother, uncle Pete and my cousin. A flag went up and my cousin Michael got the jump on all of us, and he was the first one to the Tilt. He started pulling the fish in and it was putting up a big fight. Finally, the fish head appeared, (a large Pike) thru the 6-inch hole but the body would not budge. Michael grabbed the fish head with both hands and tried his best to pull it though the hole but to no avail, he had to let it go! That became one of our famous fish tales and it still is to this very day!

Although I have not been ice fishing in 45 years since I left Newport to join the Navy, my memories are as vivid as if it were yesterday. By the way I have not been ice fishing because I have lived in San Diego, California for all those years until just recently moving to Kansas. I hope to have the opportunity to experience ice fishing again sometime soon.

# Chapter 3

## Family Inspirations (for me)

**Sherman Proctor Radford**, my father's grandfather, was born January 3, 1884, and passed away October 16, 1980 at the age of 96. Although I did not know him very well, we did visit him many times (while I was growing up) at his house in the lower village of Hillsborough, NH.



**Sherman's House**

I recall that his eyesight was not the best as he was in his 80's to 90's during the time I knew him. He would always answer the door with a loaded gun, either a



rifle or a pistol and he would let you know it was loaded and he was not afraid to use it if need be!

Sherman was the owner and operator of the Hillsborough Laundry for close to 40 years, which he sold and retired before I was even born. He was well respected in his community and was known as a historian. Here is a little newspaper clipping from the Concord Daily Monitor, October 2, 1962:



**Sherman Radford Newspaper Clipping**

Sherman had many guns, both rifles and pistols with a story of how he acquired each one. He was an excellent storyteller that you could listen to for hours on end and then beg for more!

You see, being a successful businessman in his community, people would stop by his house regularly to borrow money. Many of them never returned to re-pay their debt, so Sherman decided he needed collateral and in those days many people still rode horses and carried guns. So, he would make the loan and take mainly guns for the collateral. I estimate he had well over 100 guns. They were all loaded, with rifles in every corner of his house and pistols stashed in drawers'

underneath towels, socks or whatever. Based on the number of guns he acquired, there were many people that never returned to re-pay their loans!

My mother was always very nervous when we visited because my brother and I were so young around so many weapons! My dad and us boys loved it and would always ask to shoot some cans in the river just below his house! We were able to shoot a different gun every time we visited. Even though his eyes were not the best, he was a very accurate shot as he loved shooting more than we did!

My dad loved Sherman's .303 Savage rifle and he would borrow it every year (for many years) for deer hunting season.



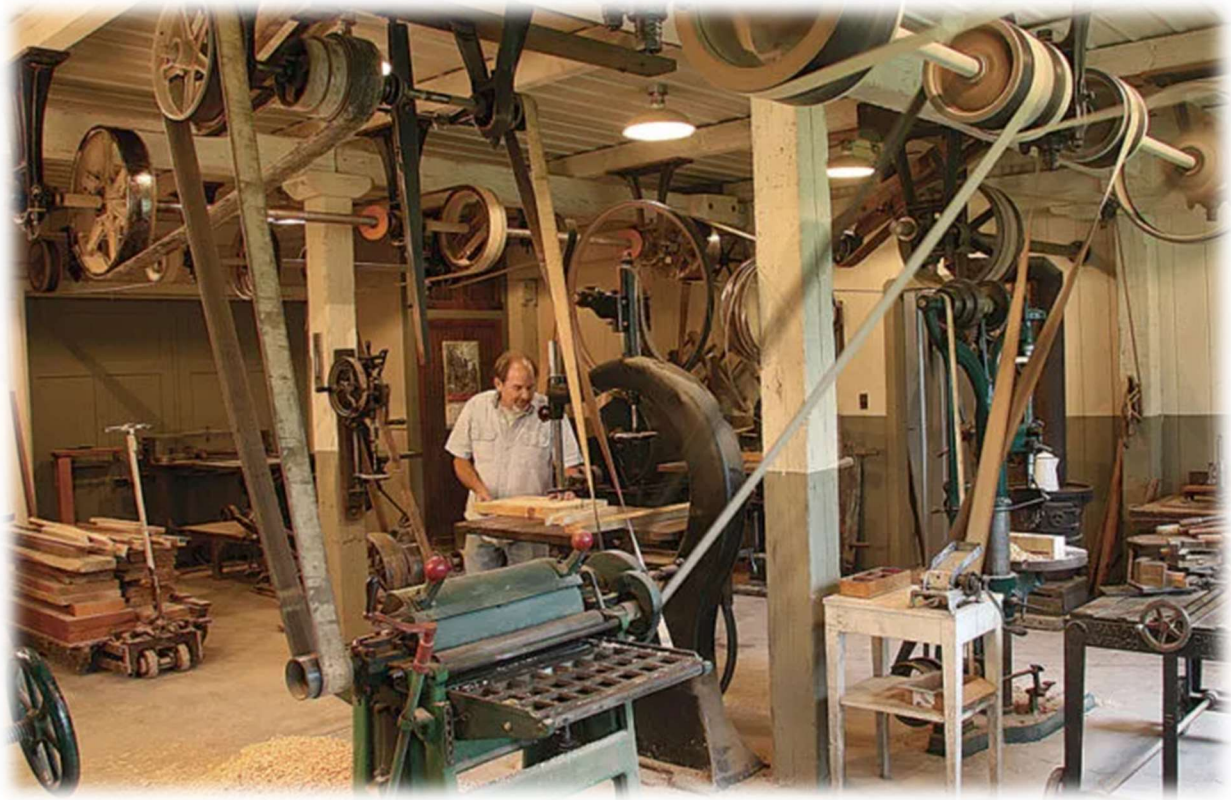
**.303 Savage Model 1899**

Here is a picture from a newspaper article at Sherman's home in 1974, age 90 and still driving!



**Sherman Radford Still Driving his 1960 Rambler Convertible**

What I found most intriguing was Sherman's workshop located in a large barn on his property. He was a master craftsman in woodworking and metalsmithing. He had saws, planners, edgers, grinders, lathes and many, many antique hand tools hanging all over the shop. All the motorized equipment was operated by one large motor on the wall by engaging the sophisticated belt and pulley infrastructure for operations. He probably devised the belt and pulley system based on his early laundry business using similar methods. It used levers to engage the belt at each machine, a pretty awesome system!



**Depiction of a belt and pulley system for machinery**

As a young boy, he was very inspiring to me because he was a very successful businessman, a community historian and a very talented woodworker and metalsmith. Most of all, I enjoyed all the stories he told!

I added his newspaper advertisement on the next page for an Auction of his home and shop just 3 months before he passed away!



## REAL COUNTRY AUCTION

Hillsboro Lower Village, Old Rte. 9

**Fri., July 4, 1980 at 2:01 p.m.**

Sherman "Duke" Radford has commissioned us to sell the entire contents of his home and shop at this time.

Duke, a master plumber, machinist, and woodworker, has decided that the age of 97 in January is a good time to retire. Mr. Radford founded the first steam laundry in Hillsboro, making the machines himself one of which is used as his washing machine even today and will be sold.

Join us for an interesting afternoon, as we sell out the house and shop simultaneously.

**IN PART, HOUSE:** Excellent marble top Bureau in walnut with high mirror, Oak Wall Clock from the Hosiery Mills in Hillsboro when owned by the former State Governor, Smith. Blanket inscribed on border, Blanket left at the Windsor, Vt. laundry by Marie Dressler, 1909 (she was a famous movie star) Ornate Oak Framed Mirror, Glenwood Cast Iron Cook Stove, 2 ft Square Pine Table w/splayed legs, Rare Childs Thumbback Chair, Old Captains Chair, Nursing Rocker, Mission Oak Chairs, 3 over 4 Bureau, TV, 4 Drawer Graduated Paneled end Transitional Bureau, Spinning Wheel and odd spinning wheel parts, Franklin Fireplace that sets into fireplace, Oak Library Table, Beds and Bedding, Pots and Pans, Cupboards full of dishes, Flatware, Tinware, Crocks and Jugs, Miniature Cannon, Small Copper Pan, Candle Lighter and Snuffer, Wooden Spoon and Scoop, Collection of Padlocks, Cheese Tester, Early Fishing Reel, Flint and Cap Box, Flint Safe, Ivory Picks, Postcards, Short Handled Peel, 3 Leg Turned Stool, Painted Bread Pan, Lap Board, Snow Knocker, Lig. Vet. Pulley Spring Bell, Kerosene Lamp, Good 6 Board Pine Chest w/ secret drawer, 1960 Rambler Convertible-needs work.

**SHOP:** Hercules Economy 3 1/2 HP Make and Buck Engine, all complete and ready to go, 24" Surface Planner, 3/4 Knife Head and Traveling Bed, Bracket & Shaw 18" Band Saw, Metal Lathe by Fitchburg Machine Works, Edging Mill, Wooden Table Saw, Bench Grinders, 1/2 T Chain Falls, Logging Chains, Pipe threaders, Cutters and Wrenches, Wood Clamps, Ladders, Stump Puller, Set Pulley Blocks, Copper Pipe and Tubing, Brass and Iron Pipe Fittings, Sledge Hammer, GE Induction Motor 7.5 HP and numerous other motors, Hand Saws, Levels, Braces, Tongs, Bench Vise, Tap & Dies, Drills, Beam Hook, Nuts, Bolts, Screws (new and used) Bld. Jack, Saw Blades, American Floor Sander, Wall Drill Press, Belt Driven Chain Binder, Lg. Stilyard, V Belts, 5' Lumber Rule, Saw Vise, Strap Hinges, are a few of his items we see at quick glance. Items will be added, if needed, to round out the sale.

Sale Per Order "Duke" Radford

Terms: Cash or Check      Chairs      Catered  
Preview 1:00-2:00 p.m. Sale Day Only

**YOUR COUNTRY AUCTIONEER, INC.**

Hillsboro, N.H. 03244 Tel. 478-5723

**Auctioneer: Richard Crane No. 1872**

**James Sweet No. 1879**

**Sales Mgr.: Roger Crane**

*Important Antique Tool Auction Hillsboro, N.H. July 19 425  
Plus Listed Lots.*

**Newspaper Ad for Auction of Home and Shop**



**Charles Matthew Thornton**, my grandfather Norm's younger brother (11 years his junior), aka "Uncle Chuck," was another family inspiration to me based on his many accomplishments and successes.

Uncle Chuck lived in Waterboro, ME and was a very successful inventor and businessman. He started out leaving home with only the shirt on his back and established a sheet metal company called Thornton, Inc. most likely in the 1950's. The following article describes some of the activities that were performed in the Waterboro area in the early days.

Journal Tribune - 24 Oct 1963, Thu - Page 16 - (Biddeford, Maine)

## Thornton Inc., Of Waterboro Leader In Sheet Metal Work

Work for practically every industrial plant in Sanford-Springvale has been done by C. M. Thornton, Inc., of Waterboro, according to "Chuck" Thornton, president.

A unique project just completed by the firm was the designing and building of a machine for Eastern Plastics Corp. of Sanford which is to be used for spray painting plastic heels automatically. This will result in production increase.

After careful design and engineering with the assistance of Carl F. Seibert Jr., general manager of Eastern Plastics, the Waterboro company-built machine consists of a conveyor, spray unit (not yet installed), and three ovens of different temperatures to insure the best possible adhesion of the paint to the plastic heel.

Thornton's also is building a dryer for the Limerick Corp. which will be used in the process of covering plastic heels with leather and various other fabrics. This machine will insure proper adhesion of the fabric to the heel and also increase production for the company.

Completely equipped for any type of welding project, the Waterboro company handles sheet metal work of all kinds, plastic welding, fabrication and heliarc welding, and various other jobs. The six-man firm is kept busy you name it and, if it is made of metal, they will build it.

Sales and service of furnaces and oil burners is another facet of the Thornton business. Over 1,400 warm air, hot water and steam heating systems have been installed by the company. "If you are interested in a new heating system, first ask your friend or neighbor to inspect the system which we installed for them and then call us for a free estimate," says Thornton.

Quality and customer satisfaction are very important factors at Thornton's where each job is checked and double checked before it is labeled complete. The shop is open Monday through Saturday between 7:30 and 4:30 p.m. Miss Alice Ramsell is office manager. Other employees are Philip Green, Donald Haskell Jr., James Kerr III, Edward Pawlowski and Ray Caron, oil burner service.

### Newspaper Article 1963

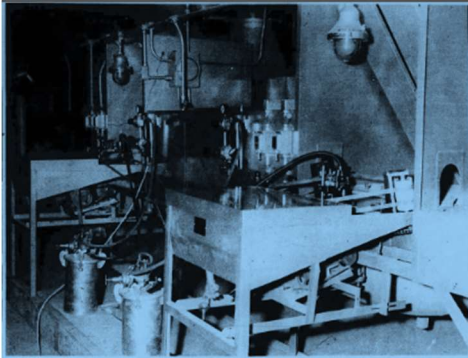
Uncle Chuck and Aunt Jean were the nicest people that you could ever meet! In the late 1960's and early 1970's our family used to go camping at Old Orchard Beach in Maine close to where they lived. My grandparents (Norm and Doris) and

my mother, father, brother and I made the trip and many times. On occasion, one of my grandfather's other brothers (Norris) and his family would join us! It was a terrific vacation spot next to the Atlantic Ocean with a waterfront amusement park!

However, my highlight was our visit to see Uncle Chuck and Aunt Jean and sometimes spend time with their boys (Johnny and Steve). They were much older than my brother and I so they would get out the riding lawnmower for us to ride around the compound and make it fun for us. Gary was the oldest and was off at the military academy at the time.

Uncle Chuck's shop was right there on the property adjacent to the house. So, we would take a tour to see what they were working on each year and listen to all the stories about business opportunities (like the following)!

Journal Tribune - 30 Dec 1965, Thu - Page 15 - (Biddeford, Maine)



C. M. Thornton Machine Revolutionizes Heel Industry

A machine designed by C.M. Thornton, president of C.M. Thornton Inc., of Waterboro, has completely changed the processing of plastic heels used on women's shoes throughout the country.

Almost all of the companies processing plastic heels were painting them one by one and placing them in racks to dry plus wasting 95% of the paint used. This created a problem both for storage while drying and the cost of painting and therefore a method was desperately needed to speed up painting and processing.

To overcome this C.M. Thornton, Inc., spent many hours engineering and designing a machine that would solve the problem. The present Thornton-built machine can process approximately 156 heels per minute, electrocoated, completely dry and ready for packing.

One other item of interest to the manufacturer is the saving of paint. On the Thornton machine approximately 1,000 heels are painted from one gallon of paint as compared to 750 to 1,000 heels using the same amount of paint on the hand machine. Labor saving has become a great factor with the machine since it is completely automatic.

Flat-vinyl heels are also processed on the Thornton machine through another operation which involves painting the heel the desired color and then applying lines

to stimulate a stacked leather heel. This process and the electrocoating operation are accomplished on the machine built by the company and is the only practical method of processing heels.

Heels which are processed on the Thornton-built machine are used daily on shoes manufactured in the Sanford area as well as all over the country and abroad. Whether it be a high heel or a low one on your shoe, chances are they were processed on the machine designed and built by C.M. Thornton, Inc., of Waterboro. This firm has many machines throughout the Midwest, New England, and Canada and is presently negotiating sales in other sections of the country.

Many companies have tried to duplicate this method but have failed. The Waterboro company is the only company to date that has successfully designed and built a machine to paint heels without the problems encountered on the hand-type machine.

Sheet metal work is still a major factor at C.M. Thornton Inc. Blower systems, heating, ventilating and air conditioning are installed at reasonable prices by qualified workmen. The plant is open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. Free estimates may be obtained for any work by calling Waterboro 247-3121.

## Newspaper Article 1963



In 1969, Thornton, Inc. started designing and producing Eastern Travel Trailers described in the following newspaper article.

SECTION A, PAGE 10 THE SANFORD TRIBUNE Thursday, April 23, 1970

## Eastern Travel Trailers From Thornton's, Waterboro

Two Eastern Travel Trailers per day are being produced at C. M. Thornton Inc., Waterboro, which unveiled its all-new quality recreation trailer last fall. There are two 18-foot models, one having a front dinette and the other, a side dinette.

A 26-foot model is on the assembly line at this time, reports Charles M. Thornton, president of the firm and designer of the trailer units.

Travel trailers are a new facet of the well-known Waterboro plant which has built a fine reputation for sheet metal work. It became a leader in designing and producing automated machinery for the plastics industry and is continuing its work in that field.

By the time the first Eastern Travel Trailer was on display at the plant, 10 others were in the final state of completion. A staff of 22 men and women to build, furnish and decorate the units was increased to 35 persons.

All cabinet and woodwork is done by Thornton craftsmen. The colorful interior upholstery also is handled at the plant. Special equipment was designed by Mr. Thornton and fabricated at his plant in order to build the trailers from scratch. This included a machine to unroll



**ANOTHER FINE PRODUCT FROM THE STATE OF MAINE** is the all-new quality Eastern Travel Trailer which is being produced at C. M. Thornton Inc. Waterboro. The recreation trailer was designed by Charles M. Thornton, president of the firm, and introduced last fall. He is shown with the first unit which came off the assembly line.

aluminum sheeting, shear to desired lengths, and emboss various designs in a single operation; a steam oven for treating the oaken strips that add strength and durability to the mobile unit; and jigs to facilitate construction of frames and sidewalls.

Freight costs are cut to a

bare minimum, not only in Maine but throughout the New England area, says Mr. Thornton. He purchased a new diesel tractor and trailer to deliver the Eastern trailer models. Savings are passed on to the purchaser.

The Eastern Travel Trailer

is self-contained with sleeping

accommodations for six persons, is equipped with a three-burner gas stove, having an oven, range hood, and fan; has a combination gas and electric refrigerator, and a gas water heater. The buyer has a choice of vinyl flooring or carpeting. The trailers are another fine product from the State of Maine.

### Newspaper Article, 1970

Unfortunately, in September of 1970, the shop caught fire and was destroyed.



### Newspaper Article 1970

In October of 1970, Uncle Chuck announced he was moving his operations to an Industrial Park in Biddeford, ME.



the questionnaires will be returned to the commission of-  
fice here in time for review by  
Shur before the Oct. 27 meet-  
ing.

1963. In 1966, he was co-author  
and director of a model cities  
project for Biddeford.  
A graduate of St. Louis High  
School and St. Francis College

Portland, Me., Press Herald, Tuesday, October 13, 1970

## Trailer Firm To Locate In Biddeford Park Area

BIDDEFORD — C. M. Thornton of Waterboro announced Monday that it will locate on four acres of land in Biddeford's Industrial Park.

Thornton said his firm, C. M. Thornton Inc., which hopes to be in production in Biddeford within 45 days, will employ 20 persons initially with an ultimate employment goal of 40 people.

He said his firm will erect a 60 x 260 metal building plus a 20 x 60 office building and 14 x 100 enclosed storage area on the site alongside Route One in the Park.

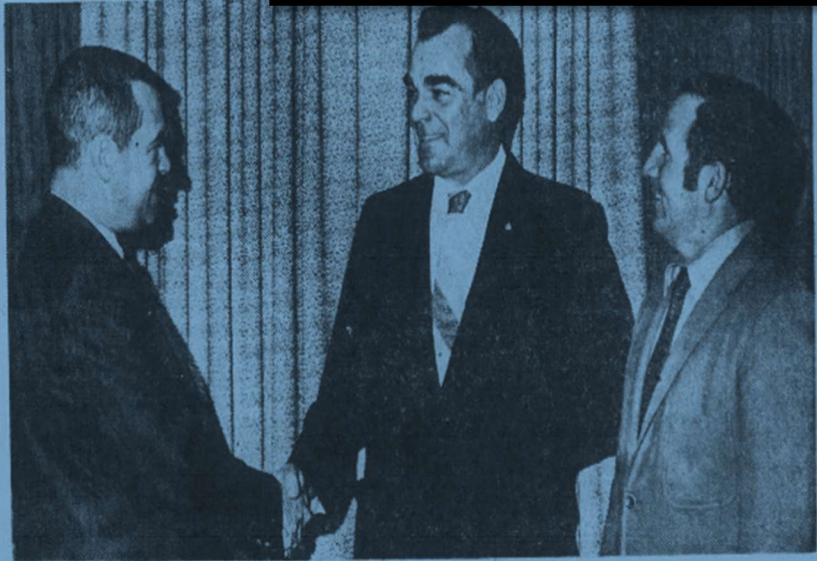
Thornton will manufacture 18 and 25-foot travel trailers and truck campers in Biddeford as well as a one-piece fully fabricated garage for mobile homes.

The 14 x 25 garage will be transported to the mobile home site intact and is designed to blend in with mobile homes.

C. M. Thornton Inc. is the second firm to locate in Biddeford's Industrial Park. Volk Packaging Corp., manufacturer of cardboard boxes, located in the 95-acre park on six acres of land in 1967.

Commission Chairman Conrad Grondin said that Thornton had also taken an option on 3½ acres of land adjacent to his building site in the park.

Thornton's plant at South Waterboro was destroyed by fire last August. The firm then attempted to locate its plant on land next to the Sanford Airport but was turned down because it was zoned agricultural residence not limited business.



**NEWEST OCCUPANT** — Conrad Grondin, left, chairman of the Biddeford Economic Improvement Commission, welcomes C. M. Thornton to the Biddeford Industrial Park as Mayor Gilbert R.

Boucher looks on from right. Thornton announced plans Monday to locate on a four-acre site in the industrial park. (Photo by Metafax)

### Newspaper Article 1970

In July of 1971, Uncle Chuck made an agreement with General Motors and Dyna-Van Inc. of El Segundo, CA to produce the GM Dynavan's at his new facilities.

BIDDEFORD-SACO, MAINE WEDNESDAY, JULY 14, 1971



## Contract With GM 'Exciting'

Mayor Gilbert R. Boucher of Biddeford said this morning that he is "really pleased" that the city will have another 65 jobs, referring to a joint working arrangement between C. M. Thornton, Inc. of Biddeford and Dyna-Van Inc. of El Segundo, Calif. which was announced yesterday.

The arrangement which, subject to definitive agreements, is expected to lead to a merger of the two firms gives C. M. Thornton, Inc. exclusive rights to manufacture the recreational vehicle in accordance with a General Motors-approved design.

Mayor Boucher said he has spoken with Tom Rathbone, president of Dyna-Van and noted the California man was "very interested" in the Biddeford Vocational School. He (Rathbone) feels the school will be a big asset to the company, the mayor said.

(Continued on Page Two)

**FINISHED PRODUCT** — This Dyna-Van camper will be manufactured by C. M. Thornton, Inc., of Biddeford. Thornton said this morning that General Motors will deliver the G. M. C. van to the Biddeford firm. C. M. Thornton Inc. will then remove the roof of the vehicle and add the fiberglass top and camper

accessories such as cabins, beds and flooring. The firm intends to expand its present 34-man work force to 100 by mid-1972. The first 39 campers are due off the assembly line by November and will retail for about \$8,000. Annual production after that is expected to be 2,000 units. The Thornton firm makes Eastern Travel Trailers.

**Saco School  
Fate Put**

### Newspaper Article 1971

Uncle Chuck was greatly admired by his older brother Norman, my grandfather and of course my brother and I (along with most others in our family)! He was a self-made man who changed small parts of the world of plastics and metal fabrication. Someone we were all proud to know.

I remember in 1972 (I was 12) sometime after the Dynavan announcement was made, Uncle Chuck and his middle son, Johnny were delivering travel trailers to a NH dealer on their 18-wheel flatbed “big rig” truck. They stopped at my grandfather Norm’s house to visit and backed the rig into the lower parking lot and Johnny demonstrated the tilt capabilities of the flatbed trailer.

Uncle Chuck left a few new brochures of the Dynavan with us before they left to return home. I sat down and drew a picture of it and showed it to my grandfather and he told me to send it to Uncle Chuck as he thought it looked pretty good!



**Picture of Dynavan from brochure**

I did send the picture along with a letter to Uncle Chuck. He took the time to send me a very nice thank you letter with a \$5.00 bill stapled to it! Pretty exciting for a 12-year-old!!

## **Summary**

This book has covered many aspects of my childhood that I will always remember. There are so many more stories that come to mind once I began writing down the events that have already been captured. I intend to continue adding to this book as long as the memories continue to be at the forefront of my mind.

Looking back, I had so many awesome opportunities available to me! I am grateful to have grown up at the time and place I did and with the friends and families that were part of that chapter of my life.

It has been over 45 years since I left Newport to join the Navy. I lived much of that time in San Diego, CA and have now retired after 15 years with several Defense Contractor companies and another 29 years with Northrop Grumman Corporation. I am now in Kansas close to two of my three daughters and six of my seven grandchildren for the final chapter of my life.