

Interviewer: Tom Girard (TG)

Interviewee: Bert Gagne (BG)

Date: Saturday, October 21, 2023

Location: Southern Maine Medical Center, Biddeford, Maine

Transcriber: Nicole Morin-Scribner (NMS)

TG: My name is Tom Girard. I am the interviewer and a volunteer with the Biddeford Cultural and Heritage Center. It is Saturday, October 21, 2023. Today I have the privilege of interviewing Bert Gagne and we are conducting this interview at Bert's home in Biddeford.

Bert, I'd like to begin by asking when and where you were born.

BG: I was born in Biddeford, March 1st, 1935. Do you want to know where I was born? I was born on the third floor of Williams Court. Do you know where that is?

TG: Is that down at the bottom of Hill and Pike?

BG: Do you know where Center Street Church is? It's Williams Court. [Note: Williams Court is between South Street and Center Street.]

TG: How did your family come to Biddeford?

BG: My mother came from Quebec. Saint Samuel, Province of Quebec. My father's father was Wilfrid Gagne and came from Victoriaville, Quebec.

TG: Is that near Montreal?

BG: Yeah. I think so.

TG: Why did your parents come from Canada to Biddeford? Do you know?

BG: For work. They came to work. My father never worked at Pepperell. He worked for Biddeford Box Shop. He was the owner of a Gagne Brothers Filling Station. Do you know where?

TG: No. Where was that located?

BG: It was across the street from St. Joseph Church. It was a little station there. He had his gas station on the sidewalk. He used to pump gas right on the sidewalk and they used to change oil on the street.

TG: I remember that gas station. Was there a little store there too?

BG: Yeah. That's where he spent most of the time.

TG: So, he didn't do mechanical work on cars?

BG: No. Just change tires. In those days, they had balloon tires. If you had a flat tire, they would take the tire off with like a crowbar. They would then put the tire in water. They had a big thing and they could find the leak that way. They used to get 50 cents. My father sold gas and oil for 10 cents a gallon. Ten cents a gallon for gas and ten cents a gallon for oil. They used to come in with their little jug, 5 gallon cans, and I used to pump the thing and fill up the 5 gallon for 50 cents.

TG: So, you worked for your dad.

BG: Oh yeah. I was his hire (laughter). I've got a picture of the gas station right here. There's a picture of me, too

TG: I'll take a picture of it.

BG: Joe Gagne was his brother. They were partners. During the war, he was called in and my father ran the place by himself. They used to have punch boards there. I don't know if you remember those. [Note: a small board that has many holes each filled with a rolled-up printed slip to be punched out on payment of a nominal sum in an effort to obtain a slip that entitles the player to a designated prize]

TG: I don't.

BG: They had prizes. Roland Gagne has some that he kept from the store. He came to see me months ago.

TG: Is that a relative? Roland?

BG: Cousin. Roland Gagne. He's quite a guy.

TG: Do you know how your parents met?

BG: Not really. Only thing I remember is my grandfather in Quebec, he used to walk 15 miles to work, back and forth.

TG: When they lived in Quebec?

BG: I don't know what he did for work. He had to walk.

TG: Did your parents ever go back and visit? Did you and your brothers go with them?

BG: No. I never went. I think Roger went. I never went. My father's father lived on Bradbury Street. We moved from the third floor [note: in Williams Court] to Bradbury Street. That's where I was raised, on Bradbury Street.

TG: So you grew up on Bradbury Street.

BG: You know where Bradbury Street is?

TG: Yeah. My dad grew up there too.

BG: Is that right?

TG: Yeah.

BG: They had the seven commandments there. Did you know that?

TG: No.

BG: Pepperell built what they called the 7 commandments. They are still there. Little houses. You know where Sevigny's Market was? It was almost across the street, going up Bradbury Street.

TG: Near the corner of Cutts Street?

BG: Yeah. They used to call them the 7 commandments. They were built by the Pepperell so that the workers would live there.

We lived on Bradbury and there used to be Irishmen who lived down Bradbury Street. The Frenchmen lived up the street. My uncle used to own, my father used to own two houses at one time, on Bradbury. There used to be a grocery store next to our house.

My grandfather lived across the street. As a kid, I was always over there. He used to grow his own tobacco on the corner of Bradbury and South Street. That's where he lived. There's another house they built on the corner next to his, but he used to grow tobacco and make his own soap. I used to go and help him with that. I used to hang out there.

TG: I never heard of anybody growing tobacco in Maine.

BG: Yeah? Well, he did. I used to try to chop it up.

TG: Was it just for his own consumption or was he selling it.

BG: It was for his own. He was quite a guy. He worked for Dr. Hill. Do you remember Dr. Hill?

TG: Yes, I do.

BG: My uncle worked for him too. He entered the hospital on May Street...

TG: Trull?

BG: Trull Hospital, yeah. I remember going up there and getting operated for tonsils. My two brothers and me. I remember going up the stairs there. They told us if you get that operation, you get ice cream after. So, we went up there, three of us. I remember that.

And I remember Dr. Hill, I used to cut his hair before he died. He was quite a man, quite a guy.

TG: Did your mom work at all?

BG: My mom, that's quite a story. She never worked too much but when the Central Hotel opened my mom used to clean.

TG: Is that on Alfred Street?

BG: Yeah. Where the jail is, but the police station.

TG: That was a hotel before it was a movie theater?

BG: No. That was a theater. Bill Lausier built that theater. I was pretty close to Bill. I can tell you plenty of stories about him. I used to go cut his hair. His house looked like shit. It was old. He wasn't rich.

TG: Now, was this Mayor Lausier? [Note: Louis B. Lausier aka "Papa" Lausier, mayor of Biddeford from 1941-1955]

BG: Yeah. I'm going to back to my youth.

TG: That's OK.

BG: This is another story, City Theater. I've got my kindergarten picture.

TG: Where did you go to kindergarten?

BG: At St. Joseph's School. 1941. Were you born then? It's a nun that wrote all in the back, all of the names.

TG: That's neat.

BG: You can tell it's a nun because you can read it. Do you want to keep this?

TG: Yes. I'll take pictures of some of these when we are done.

BG: We went to St. Joseph. After St. Joseph.

Let's talk about Bradbury Street. The Diamonds used to live on South Street, in a big house there. On George Washington's birthday, the Frenchmen and the Irishmen were friendly, very friendly. Sullivan and who else was there? I can't remember sometimes. Well, it doesn't matter. We used to gather all the Christmas trees after Christmas. We would put them all in Diamond's shed. We had probably 300-400 Christmas trees. We would have a guard so that no one would come and steal them. They had guards there.

TG: Where were the Christmas trees going to end up?

BG: They used to burn them behind the shoe shop on State Street. Is that the river there?

TG: I thought that was the railroad track in back of there.

BG: That's where we used to burn them. They had tires and it was a big thing.

You know the big hill above Bradbury Street? We used to slide down that. There used to be a guy on the corner. If there was no car coming, well away we went. We'd go all the way to Sevigny's Market. That was quite a thing.

TG: They were doing that even when I was growing up. They don't do that anymore. They keep the roads too clear now.

You had three brothers?

BG: Two, Roger and Ray.

TG: They are both in Biddeford now?

BG: Roger has passed. Ray is still here.

TG: Did you have grandparents that lives close by or aunts and uncles.

BG: My godfather lived on Route 1. We hadn't moved from Bradbury Street yet. We moved up here on Elm Street from Bradbury Street. He was where Ames is.

TG: It's Marden's now, I think.

BG: It used to be another one before that.

TG: There were several different ones.

BG: Even the restaurant was there at one time.

TG: That's right. Governor's was there for a little bit.

BG: We moved there. We had a small farm there. We had cows, a couple of cows. We had horses and ponies. You couldn't ride those. They'd buck you right off. That was good there. There was a garage that opened next door. It's still there. It's been there a long time.

TG: When you were growing up, what did you do for family activities, around holidays and things like that?

BG: We used to get together. I had pictures. Roland has all of those pictures now. It was a close family.

My uncle Ted Dallaire owned Funtown. He was a Dallaire. His father, Henry Dallaire, started with an oil truck business. He used to have his phone at the gas station and they used to take the orders for Henry. Ted started when Henry gave it up. Ted started the oil business and went to his brother, Ben Dallaire. Ted Dallaire owned Funtown then Cormier. But Ted started the whole thing. Ken Cormier came in after. Ben had a miniature golf on the Ocean Park Road.

TG: Ken Cormier was just ahead of you in high school, right?

BG: Yeah. I played football with him. In fact, the first touchdown I threw was to him. (laughter) I was a freshman, no I was a junior. He was a senior. Even the insurance guy, he played with us. I had quite a career in sports.

TG: I saw that. We'll come to that and talk a bit more about when you were in high school.

Before I move on to that, the only part of your family we haven't talked about is I know your first wife, Connie, is deceased. Can you talk about how you met her?

BG: High school.

TG: You were high school sweethearts?

BG: Yeah. We were married for 52 years.

TG: That's a long time.

BG: Now, I've been married to Rachel for 13 years.

TG: You've been with Rachel 13 years?

You met Connie in high school?

BG: Yeah. I used to play the trombone. I don't know what brought that up. I remember carrying that trombone everywhere. There was a peeping Tom on the second floor and we started going up. I knew who he was after, not before. He came down running and took the trombone.

TG: You and Connie had one child, correct?

BG: Yeah. And she has a boy and a daughter.

TG: Rachel does?

BG: Yeah. Very nice. They accepted me and we are very close.

TG: How did you meet Rachel?

BG: You know where my barbershop is? She used to work next door, at Youland's Jewelry Store. Never met. Never saw her. One of my customers said, "Why don't you call her up? She is a widow." He kept going to the jewelry store telling her to call me. (laughter). Finally, she called me. I called her, took her out on a date and that's how we got together.

TG: That's a good story.

BG: When you re-marry, you've got to get along with family.

TG: I'm sure that is true.

BG: Her daughter works in Washington, her daughter and her husband. Her husband was a lawyer for the government. They just moved to Falmouth.

TG: Can you talk a little bit about your memories of growing up in Biddeford and how it relates to downtown Biddeford? Did you use to spend a lot of time in downtown Biddeford?

BG: I was 40 years on Main Street.

TG: Before you worked down there, when you were growing up. As a child, in elementary and high school, did you spend a lot of time in downtown Biddeford?

BG: We went to the Puritan.

TG: Was that the high school hangout?

BG: Yeah. The Puritan. That's about it. We weren't allowed too much anyways, in those days. We had parents that were very strict. I was too busy playing sports or playing some music, I was a busy guy. I used to milk the cows. I'd milk the cows and go play basketball. They used to smell me a mile away. (laughter)

TG: When you were in high school, I looked at your yearbook, you played three sports all four years. Plus, you were in the band. Plus, you were class officer all four years. Where did you find the time to do all of that?

BG: I used to take lessons from Jimmy Gendron. Have you ever heard of him?

TG: No. Music lessons?

BG: Yeah.

TG: Did St. Louis have a band back then?

BG: Yeah. Here it is. You probably have all of that.

TG: I have a copy of that book. [Note: they are referring to the high school yearbook] I was looking at that and seeing how active you were in high school and wondering when you found the time to do all of that plus work for your father?

BG: I wasn't getting paid. On Sunday morning, we'd get up at 5 o'clock. I'd go down there with him. I'd put the Sunday paper, you had to put it together. He used to sell a lot of papers. People would come out of church and they'd come and get their smokes, a paper and a smoke. We used to sell cigars, cigarettes.

TG: Did he sell beer and alcohol too?

BG: That's another story. (laughter) He sold it on the side, in back. That used to be a hangout. In fact, my grandfather used to be with the old guys and they'd talk about the old days. He would have been a good story writer. He could talk for hours. That used to be a little hangout there. Guillemette, the policeman.

TG: I remember him, big guy.

BG: That guy used to drink. It never showed, though. He used to stop with my father. He had a little jug and they'd go and drink. But him, he never showed. Never, never.

TG: When you were in junior high and high school, was the Mayfield and Clifford Park in existence yet? Were those places where you guys could play basketball and things?

BG: I don't remember. Well, I coached little league here, but I don't remember playing there. We used to play, the Biddeford Braves. Clifford Park, we used to have our own field. We went out there and cut brush. We made our own field. We'd call it the second base. We lost a lot of baseballs.

TG: Who did you play?

BG: We played in Saco. In the summertime, they had a guy ran a summer league and we played over there. It was really good.

TG: Was that the field behind Burns?

BG: Yeah.

Second base. Caron was the coach. Lou Caron.

TG: Lou Caron, I remember him. The Braves were still going even when I was growing up and he was still the coach.

BG: Lou lived down in Camp Ellis.

TG: Lou Caron did? I think he worked for one of the laundries. Landry's Laundry or White Star?

BG: He never worked too much (laughter)

TG: I remember he had a truck in which he would pick up the players sometimes. It was a laundry truck.

BG: Oh yeah.

TG: Did you ice skate when you were growing up?

BG: Ice skate? Oh yeah.

TG: Down at Westbrook?

BG: Yeah. I used to have a big blade.

TG: The racer skates.

BG: I didn't race though. I watched racing but I never. They used to jump barrels.

Gobeil, Paul Gobeil played with Ken Cormier. One was a fullback.

TG: Are you related to Dan Gagne? He was a really good speed skater.

BG: No. I knew who he was. I used to cut his father's hair. He called me up at 5 o'clock in the morning. My wife would get upset. I'd go down there and say, "I'll be down around 7." I'd go down there and get in and he was sleeping. That's Gagne. I wonder if he still lives there. Is he still around? He was a plumber, right?

TG: I don't know.

BG: I think he was. I wonder if that's his daughter that is on channel 8.

TG: I don't know.

BG: There is a Gagne there. She just came in. She used to be for sports before. She left and just came back.

TG: What about bowling? Did you bowl at either of the two bowling alleys downtown?

BG: I remember playing basketball on top of the Pastime Alley. (laughter)

TG: They had a flat roof right?

BG: I was a low ceiling. I never bowled there but me and Rachel took that up in Florida.

TG: The big balls or ten pin?

BG: The big balls. We liked that. She was better than I was.

TG: You still do it?

BG: No. We stopped.

TG: What were your experiences with being taught by the nuns and the brothers?

BG: When I was in grammar school, I never had a hard time with the brothers. There used to be a lay teacher. Her name was Langelier. She lived there on Bacon Street. She was a real teacher. She was a lay teacher. I went there until the 8th grade. I never had a problem.

The only thing I had a problem with was my brother brought me the first day of school. He brought me to school, the bell rang and everybody took off. I was in the school yard all by myself, crying. I can see myself now. That's a long time but I'll always remember that. We went to the same nuns. I never had problems.

Then after 8th grade, you'd go to St. Louis. I can see myself running to St. Louis to be in high school. The brothers, I had a lot to do with them because playing sports, they were supposedly coaches. They used to tape your ankle. I never had trouble with them. When I did more than like something, I would do it myself.

When I graduated, I was going to go and join the Coast Guard. I went all the way to Augusta by myself. You are what, 18 years old? I went down there, I was going to get enlisted in Portland the next Thursday. On the way back, I stopped at the barber school. I don't know why. I went into the barber school. I didn't go in the Coast Guard. I always wonder how it would have gone in the Coast Guard.

TG: But you went in the National Guard.

BG: That's another story. I was a junior in high school. I joined the National Guard.

TG: They let you join in high school?

BG: Yeah. Junior in high school. When I was a senior, I had to go to Camp Drum. This is in the summertime.

TG: Is that in New Jersey?

BG: No. It's in New York. I should know. It's in New York anyways. Once in a while, we'd go up. I was in there nine years. We used to go up by train, so it's far up. We used to sleep on the train.

TG: Did you take the train out of Biddeford then?

BG: It's next to Niagara Falls.

TG: So, way over by Buffalo, at the other end of New York state.

BG: Yeah.

TG: Would you take the train out of Biddeford?

BG: Out of Biddeford, yeah. No drinking on the train.

TG: Did you have classmates that were in the National Guard with you?

BG: Oh yeah. And a lot of friends. That's another thing. We had a basketball team. Nobody could beat us. We had Al Daigle was in the National Guard and Boudreau. All good players from Thornton, Jackie Colpitts and all those guys. We would play and beat everybody.

TG: Were you in high school when St. Louis won their first State football championship? Did that happen when you were a freshman, sophomore or somewhere around there? Do you remember?

BG: I was probably in the eighth grade.

TG: When they won that championship?

BG: Yeah. It was when it was Bob Cote and those guys.

I remember his brother, Bob Cote's brother. He was a cheerleader for us. He died young.

TG: Was he in high school with you?

BG: He was a little older.

TG: Talk a little bit about stopping at the barber school and how that turned out for you.

BG: I stopped at the barber school, and I signed up and I started. You had to go to school for six months. Then you had to work for somebody for six months. That wasn't good because nobody wanted to hire you.

I finally got a job with Francis Prue. He was the owner. He had a skin cancer. He was all cut up. He had to sell, so I bought the barber shop. I think I bought it for \$500. That was a lot of money then.

TG: Where was that located, Bert?

BG: You know where the First National Bank used to be?

TG: Sure.

BG: Near Reilly's Bakery. There was a building, on my side, was a restaurant, Mitchell. On the left side was a food stand, Polakewich. They owned the building. I'm in the middle. On top is Moreau's Hotel. He raised three kids there, and he had a hotel. I don't think anybody has a picture of that building.

TG: That is where the parking lot is between where the First National Bank is and where Reilly's is now?

BG: Yeah.

TG: I don't remember that building.

BG: I was there two years, and I got a notice that I had to move. The bank bought it to make a parking lot.

TG: Where did you move to then?

BG: I moved across the street in the City Theater building.

TG: So that's when you were in that little one in the City Theater building?

BG: I couldn't find a place. I tried all kinds of places. I was married then too, I think.

TG: How long did you cut hair there?

BG: Four years, I think. Four long years. I had all the noise from the theater, running up and down the stairs. I'm surprised I kept that up. But then, Polakewich had a place next to Reilly's, right next to the original Reilly's. In fact, I have a picture there. Mrs. Polakewich, she felt bad that she kicked me out, so she said, "Take this rent". So, I rented that.

My plan was to move there from City Hall. I moved there and I kind of liked it there. When I moved there, across the street used to be A & P. Goff Kauff's used to be on the corner.

TG: I remember those.

BG: Cary Brothers had a jewelry store. Do you remember them?

TG: I do. Then, the bank turned that into a parking lot.

BG: Yeah. One day, a lawyer from Massachusetts came. He represented Polakewich. He said, "How much would you pay to buy this? What would you pay?" I said, "\$10-12,000." He said, "\$22,000 and it's yours." I said, "OK." So, I bought the place.

TG: You bought the building? I didn't realize that.

BG: I bought a lot of stuff. I had a lot of buildings.

TG: You don't own that anymore, do you? Do you still own that building?

BG: No. It's torn down. That's what happened. I used to do banking with them at the barbershop. I wouldn't go in the bank. What's his name, he just died. Anyways, he'd come in the bank and he'd go back and that's how I'd buy places.

TG: I didn't realize you dabbled in real estate.

BG: I had my license.

TG: So, you sold real estate also?

BG: Oh yeah. I did all right (laughter)

TG: You were cutting hair on Main Street, you were cutting here up here, and I believe you used to cut hair in the hospital sometimes, correct?

BG: Sunday.

TG: And doing real estate on top of that?

BG: Yeah.

TG: So it was high school repeated. You were just busy, busy, busy.

BG: I didn't sell real estate. I bought. The guy would come and I'd buy it. I sold probably two or three places. But I sold more in the barber chair downtown. This place right here, across the street, I was sold that. I sold it to somebody from Massachusetts. He called me up the day of the closing. He said, "I'm sorry but I don't think we'll buy that place." I said, "That's all right. I'll get another buyer." He hangs up, calls back and he's going to buy it. If he wouldn't have bought it, I'd own it. A lot of land in back there.

TG: You wouldn't know it by looking over there.

BG: It was \$50,000. I bought one on May Street for \$8,000. Advance Auto, where they are.

TG: Up on the Alfred Road?

BG: Yeah. I sold that. That was mine. I bought it from a customer who came in. He owned that little yellow one. I said, "OK. I'll buy it." I bought that and Lefebvre, do you remember Lefebvre? He used to deliver stuff.

TG: Merchant's Express. Andy. I knew Andy well.

BG: He owned that other place next door to me. It was a big snowstorm. I said to my wife, "I'm going up there and I'm going to go buy that." The two together would have a lot of land. So I walked up to there. He didn't give me a bargain though. I think that one was \$100,000. I bought it. He is still living?

TG: Andy? I don't know. Was he a St. Louis graduate?

BG: Yeah. He had something to do with St. Francis. [Note: St. Francis College, now University of New England]. He was working there.

TG: He was a really good golfer. He was a hard worker.

BG: Yeah. A big talker.

TG: Del Dallaire. Do you remember Del Dallaire?

BG: He is my cousin.

TG: He worked with Andy for a long time.

BG: Del, he used to walk from here to where he had his camp. It's about 20 miles. Back and forth. He used to drive truck because it was good for his back.

TG: Both of those guys were really hard workers.

BG: He died, Del. Did you know that?

TG: No. He and I were neighbors for a long time but we sold our house near his.

BG: He made a bad move there. You still live there?

TG: No. I moved away for a long time.

BG: There was a banker who lived there too.

TG: Bill Denier

BG: Is he still there?

TG: No. He died just a few years ago. He lived right across the street from me. He and I were very friendly. Yes, you would have known him from being right by the bank.

BG: When I sold my place on Main Street, he was the banker there, the president. I made a deal with him that they pay me so much a month for 15 years.

TG: Like an annuity.

BG: So we did that. Reilly's was there. He paid a lot for him.

TG: I thought they were going to put an addition on to the bank, but it's just a little park?

BG: They are supposed to make it so they could go from one building to the other. Keep the bottom open.

TG: When you were cutting hair, my memory and it may not be correct, is that there was a strong barber's union in Biddeford and Saco and you weren't in it.

BG: They came to my little shop there in City Hall. There were two guys. His name was Boudreau from South Portland and the barber on ...well anyways. They came in. They could hardly fit in the place. (laughter) I said, "I don't think I'm interested." I had other plans. My plan was to move here. It would have been all right too, I think. I think I would have made out there. When I moved here from Main Street, I had too many customers, too many customers.

TG: Did you ever think of bringing somebody in with you?

BG: She was a hairdresser next door. My wife was next door.

TG: This is Rachel?

BG: No. Connie.

TG: Did you both move your businesses up here?

BG: She was here already. When I moved here, that was the deal. I had a relocation.

TG: When did you stop on Main Street in Biddeford? What was your last year there?

BG: (can't recall)

TG: That's OK

BG: I was here 18 years, so 14 years there. I was 40 there, at least 40.

TG: You started cutting hair in the late 50s?

BG: 1955

TG: Not too long after high school. So you were there until 1995 or so, before you moved to cut hair here.

BG: Yeah.

TG: Back when you were growing up and you were cutting hair on Main Street, downtown Biddeford was very vibrant. There weren't empty shops and it had nice stores and lots of people. When you left Main Street, it was very different.

BG: Up our end was pretty good. It's on the other end.

TG: How did you feel about seeing what the malls and everything were doing to the downtown area?

BG: It didn't hurt me. I know Nichols there, I'm trying to think of his name, he bought from the old man Nichols. He was my best friend. I think you probably know him too. My first wife worked for Nichol. The old man Nichols, he was a nice guy.

TG: They did a lot of business in that section of Main Street. Nichols, Butlers, the Polakewiches. Across the street was Penny's and Fishermans.

BG: Reny's

TG: Reny's went in there eventually. It was a different downtown.

BG: The Puritan was a busy place.

TG: When you hung out at the Puritan, were there kids from Biddeford High School hanging out there too?

BG: Oh yeah.

TG: You always got along OK?

BG: Yeah. We never had trouble with those kids.

TG: You also mentioned coaching little league. I have a memory that you were involved in the startup of West Biddeford Little League, that you had something to do with that.

BG: Me and Ralph [Note: Ralph Eon]

TG: You were coaching Pastime?

BG: That's right. How did you know that?

TG: I started little league that year. My first year, my dad was involved in the startup. He was the treasurer. Jack Minutti, the Eons. A lot of the people on Westmore Avenue. That's where I grew up, were involved in the startup. I remembered you having some role in that also.

BG: My boy, Russ, played little league. I remember umpiring, he used to hate that. (laughter) That's another thing, I refereed basketball.

TG: Really? High school basketball?

BG: Yeah. College.

TG: How long did you do that?

BG: 4-5 years. I didn't really like it.

TG: Did you ever referee games with Jack Minutti?

BG: Yeah. I remember my first game, girls' game, it was Wells and Elliott I think. I never saw a girls game in my life. The rules were different.

TG: They were different than they are now. They play by their own rules.

BG: Nadeau, the guy who refereed, was a guy from Sanford. I told Nadeau, "I don't know anything about this." He said, "Don't worry. I'll get your back." You only could dribble twice. When they shot the ball, it went in and they took the ball, take it out at half court. I remember the coach was a woman. She told me, "Come here. Call the foul. I don't want my girls to get hurt." It's a little different today (laughter). I don't want my girls to get hurt.

TG: Yes. They are as aggressive as the boys are. Weren't the rules too that some of the girls couldn't go over the midline? That they were just defensive players and some were just offensive?

BG: There was a red line there that determined back court.

TG: One of the questions I wanted to ask you was as you were growing up, did you speak mostly French to each other?

BG: On parle en francais. On parle le bon francais. When Roland comes here, we speak French. Sometimes we have a hard time. (laughter)

That was another thing at the barbershop. There were Irish people and French. Some wouldn't like it when they were speaking French. They wouldn't like that. I remember too, smoking. They'd come in and some people didn't like smoke. I had a rule, smoking on your left and the right, no smoking. That didn't work (laughter). So, no more smoking. "Oh, you are going to lose me." "Well, you can go smoke outside." That's a long time ago.

TG: Do you have any good funny stories that happened in your barber shop?

BG: I had a few fights.

TG: Did you really?

BG: Yeah.

TG: Over sports or over something else?

BG: Customers. One guy came in once with his kid. He left his kid there. "I'll be right back." He went for an errand. He came back. This was an old guy, sat there. When the kid was through he started coming (to the chair). The young guy grabbed him and said, "No. He's my kid. I just went out for a walk." They started rumbling around. What can I do, right? At the end, they finally stopped. They didn't hurt each other. They stopped and the guy with the kid said, "I'll never come back here again."

Things like that, little squabbles. I never had too much trouble.

I used to work long hours. Five in the morning. I'd start at 5.

TG: On Main Street?

BG: Yeah. Even here, I'd start at 5. I'm surprised that the neighbors didn't complain.

TG: Did you catch people coming off shift or going on shift? Is that why you opened that early?

BG: People in those days, didn't sleep too much. It was always the same ones. I was pretty busy from 5 to 7. Pretty busy. I had to get up early.

My wife ended up, she was on dialysis for 8 years. So, we moved from here. I bought her a condo on Elm [Note: should be Hill] Street. You know those condos there?

You know Dale Smith? [Note: should be Bill Smith]

TG: Nichols? Yes.

BG: He was a good guy. He was one of my best friends.

TG: Was he a St. Louis boy?

BG: Yeah. Bill Smith. Remember when we were talking about...my memory comes back. I remember Bob Hodge and the other one was Kenneally. He was superintendent of schools.

TG: And he was down at St. Francis College, wasn't he, for a while?

BG: Yeah. You know there is a book that a guy wrote. I bought a book last week. It's all old stuff. But another guy wrote a book. He was one of my customers. He taught at St. Francis. The book is more modern. He got the barbershop. He got my name and the building in 19??

I don't know if you want to see that now.

TG: I can look at it afterwards.

BG: 1875. He got my name on it. (laughter)

TG: You were re-incarnated, Bert.

BG: Bill Smith.

TG: I remember who he is. What did you think about the closing of St. Louis High School?

BG: It was time, I guess. I don't know. I think they were running out of brothers.

TG: Running out of money anyways. Not as many brothers, probably more lay teachers.

BG: Do you remember Brother Damien?

TG: No. I've seen pictures of him in some of the old yearbooks though.

BG: Joe Regina, McSweeney. My cousin had the same coaches in Old Orchard.

TG: They went to Old Orchard, didn't they? I had a friend who student taught under Regina, when he was in Old Orchard. They ended up down there. Teaching in a Catholic school, paid as well and they didn't have a pension.

BG: You know what Fran Parker was making? He was a coach.

TG: No.

BG: \$2,000 a year. So, Joe Regina probably made \$5,000 the most.

TG: Were they good teachers and coaches?

BG: Looking back, I don't think they were. They did the best they could. You used to have to teach yourself. We had Joe Regina for a baseball coach. He was a baseball and football coach. McSweeney was basketball.

Me and Joe Boisvert, he was quite an athlete. He was a widow and lived with his mother. He used to take us to dinner at his mother's house in Old Orchard. He was a nice guy.

McSweeney was a nice guy but Joe was a little rough. His brother was a State Trooper. He got shot in Westbrook.

TG: I don't remember that.

BG: He was the head of the State Troopers. He used to come.

TG: You probably don't have memories of the Depression because you were born in 1935. Do you have any memories of the outbreak of World War II? I would think you would have some as you grew older.

BG: My uncle was called in, in the war. I remember carrying his bag to the train station. The whole family went. He was 34. He was pissed off. He didn't want to go. "I'm too old." He was there a couple of years. He ran the liquor store in Old Orchard.

TG: Do you remember rationing? Or were you even aware of anything like that as you were growing up?

BG: Radio. We'd listen to the news on the radio. We'd all get by the radio and listen. I remember the end of the war. Big parades downtown. There were no TVs.

TG: It was mostly the radio when you were growing up, right?

BG: Yeah.

TG: When do you first remember getting a TV?

BG: LeBlond there. We lived not too far from the shop. We used to go there on a Friday night and watch a fight. [Note: LeBlond's TV Sales and Service that used to be located at 473 Elm Street]

TG: In their show room?

BG: No outside. We'd crowd.

TG: Because they'd have it in the window?

BG: Yeah. He had the first cable. He had a cable going in Biddeford. He was one of the first. I'm sure he made a lot of bucks.

TG: What about the fires of 1947? Do you remember anything about those at all?

BG: I remember I used to come home from school, and I used to water the roof. That was my job. Across the street was a big cemetery.

TG: Yeah. I know where you mean.

BG: There was fire there.

TG: It got that close?

BG: They had no firemen. It was burning grass. There was no big burn

TG: Was your brother involved in the fire department at that time or was he too young?

BG: Too young. He was involved in the other one.

I remember the National Guard. They'd take anybody. Sixteen years old.

TG: Did they mobilize you to help fight the fire? No, you were too young then.

BG: Yeah, but not by much.

TG: What about the fires in 1963? The Grafton Lumber fire and the Hooper Street fire.

BG: I remember that. I used to be in the barber shop at the Theater then. I remember cutting hair while the fire was going on.

Murphy's Music Store was there too.

TG: They were in the small store?

BG: Yeah. And they had a fur store too.

TG: Was that called Murphy's too?

BG: I think so. Leo Drapeau ran that. He ran WIDE too. [Note: local radio station] It used to be above Youlands. Drapeau used to do a French show.

TG: Marcel Drapeau?

BG: No. His brother. Leo Drapeau.

TG: Langevin's Clothing store was right next door.

BG: Yeah.

TG: The USS Thresher. Do you remember that?

BG: Yeah.

TG: Did you know there were some local folks that were on there?

BG: I had a couple of customers that went down. I don't think I'd remember their names.

[Note: the USS Thresher was a submarine out of the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard that went down in April of 1963 during a deep-diving test. All 129 crew and shipyard personnel were killed]

TG: There was a Dineen I know.

BG: Dineen. That's it. His son used to come in here.

TG: That was a tragedy. Do you remember where you were when John F. Kennedy was assassinated?

BG: I think I was...what year was that?

TG: 1963. November of 1963. It was the Friday before Thanksgiving. You were probably at your barber shop, the City Theater one, right?

BG: I drew a picture of OJ Simpson. Somebody took a picture of the barbershop. It looks pretty good there.

TG: What kind of impact do you think growing up in Biddeford had and working in Biddeford had on your life?

BG: I had a good life, a busy life. I can't see people on welfare. Working to me was joy. When I bought that barbershop, I did a lot of work in it. I ended up I had a florist shop. Lord's Flower Shop.

TG: That was yours?

BG: Yeah.

TG: I didn't know that.

BG: Yeah. Lord's Flower Shop. Upstairs, I had a beauty shop. I can't remember the name. It used to be a guy from Kennebunkport. I'd fix all of that. I had a guy when I bought the place, there was a guy that didn't pay rent for 5 years. He was a dud. He was supposed to be in real estate. I don't think he sold anything. I had to fix it up. I did a lot of carpentry.

TG: Did you do it yourself or hire it out?

BG: Myself. I did it all myself.

TG: When did you find the time to do that?

BG: I enjoyed carpentry. I liked it. On May Street, that was a dud too. I didn't buy the best places. But I fixed it up.

TG: You fixed it up and turned it over?

BG: Yeah. I had guys doing the heating and plumbing. Electricity, I used to fool around but I used to read the book and it said, if you play with electricity, always keep one hand in your pocket. (laughter) Know what the other hand is doing. If something would have happened, I wouldn't get blamed.

TG: Do you remember when the building that Benoits was in burned? That fire? Did that touch your building at all?

BG: No.

TG: That was a pretty big fire.

BG: That was a Mason Hall.

TG: I remember going to banquets there. Was that on the third floor?

BG: Third floor.

TG: They rebuilt it to two floors. Do you remember what year that fire was?

BG: I can't remember. I was working there. What's the name?

TG: Benoits. I don't think they ever came back to Biddeford after that. Paquin and Carroll went in there.

BG: Bonang used to run that store.

TG: Oh really.

BG: Did you know him?

TG: I remember the name.

BG: He ended up hiring people for the tannery in Saco.

TG: OK. That's where I know that name.

BG: He's quite a guy. I think his wife was a beauty queen somewhere. He lives on the Saco River. He's quite a guy.

TG: What do you think the current perception is of Biddeford from folks in general now?

BG: I think it's doing well. I think I haven't been in the building. That's another thing, I worked in the Pepperell.

TG: When you were first out of high school, right?

BG: Out of high school. I worked at Kesslen Shoe Shop when I was in high school. Then I worked at Biddeford Box Shop.

TG: Up on Main Street?

BG: Yeah.

TG: What did they do? Did they just make boxes there? Is that what they did?

BG: They made boxes for the army. I used to be a nail puller. These used to have nails and half the time the nail would get crooked and I used to lift the nail and put another one in. We worked there as a kid, 9 hours a day. We had one hour for lunch. We used to go swimming in the river in back.

TG: The Saco River?

BG: Gosselin used to work there. Bob Gosselin. You know from the Alumni?

TG: Yeah. He lived over on Granite Extension [Note: should be Graham Extension].

BG: Roger worked there. But I was glad I played football because I could get out 2 weeks ahead of time.

TG: It was a hard job?

BG: It was very boring. Then you'd come back and they would show me that I didn't pull the nails out.

BG: But I was friendly with the guy that owned the place. He loved football. LeClair was his name. He lived on Elm Street.

TG: Why did they close the Box Shop?

BG: I guess it was too expensive. I almost bought it.

TG: Really? What were you going to do with it?

BG: I don't know (laughter) It was for sale.

TG: Riverfront property.

BG: I don't even know what's there now.

TG: I think finally everything is torn down and it's a vacant lot. Wasn't Sandler Brothers across the street? The food produce place?

BG: Throumoulos too. They had a food place next to the barber shop on Route 1.

TG: Throumoulos did? I didn't know that.

BG: He ran for some governor.

TG: Plato did.

BG: He's the one that ran it. That's quite a gang, those guys.

TG: They worked hard. They'd come over and start their own businesses.

BG: They were really smart.

TG: They worked very, very hard.

How has your life turned out so far, compared to how you thought it would be when you were young?

BG: Turned out pretty good. I've been lucky. I had a bypass when I was 58 years old. Six bypass. I had my own business, so I had nothing coming in right? I went to work almost right away. Somebody squealed on me, and they called me, "Are you working?" "No. I'm not

working. Just part-time.” I turned out good. I never had a problem. It’s quite a shock when they take you to the hospital. They didn’t do the procedure here. They used to go to York. They are closing it now I think, York Hospital.

TG: I don’t think so.

BG: Yeah. I used to go there. I said, “Am I all right?” “Oh no, you have to go straight.” So, that’s another thing. When I get there, Vilandry, I went to school with him. They brought me up. They put me to sleep. I get up there and he says, “Hi Bert. How are you doing?” I said, “Not too good.” He said, “Do you remember me? I played in the band with you.”

TG: Was this Ben Vilandry?

BG: The son. They are both complaining that they are not going to work overtime this week. “I’m not working this week.” There I am, laying there. That’s all you want to hear, right?

TG: (laughter) Yeah. That’s not what you want to hear.

BG: I’m in the hospital and the nurse is saying “I’m so exhausted. I put in 12 hours.” That’s all you want to hear.

TG: No. That’s not what you want to hear.

Bert, what haven’t we talked about that you would like to talk about.

BG: The army, I went to the National Guard. All I did when I was in camp was, cut hair (laughter). I had a jeep to myself. I

TG: They found out you were a barber and they had you cutting hair?

BG: Bill Grenier. He was a company commander. He was a St. Louis alumni. He knew me. We were there two weeks, haircuts every week. I used to cut hair in the latrine. They used to shut the lights off at night at a certain hour and it was all open. It wasn’t too swell. They used to use an oil barrel. They would sit on the oil barrel.

TG: Were they all just buzz cuts?

BG: Yeah. Not too short for in those days, the long hair was coming in.

TG: So it was OK?

BG: Some guys were pissed off. During the day, the Company Commander would call me or somebody would call me to come cut his hair. I'd cut the Battalion Commander. I was friendly with them.

One time, Ray was sick. He used to go to Norm Faucher, where did he go to college?

TG: St. Michael's

BG: St. Michael's. We used to go by truck. I used to do bivouac over there.

TG: At St. Michael's?

BG: Yeah. They had signs in the college about the war. Ray got sick there. I said, "I'm going to take you to the hospital." Well, you got to have permission. So, the Company Commander, you aren't supposed to talk to him. So, I drove in and he knew me. I said, "My brother is sick. He has to go to the hospital. Nobody wants to tell me to go. You gotta have permission. "Go ahead," he said. Come back when he's better. So, he went and came back. He remembers that. Ray was there. Ted Dallaire was there, the Funtown guy.

TG: All familiar faces.

BG: A couple of years ago, I didn't feel too good. Three years ago now.

TG: You are feeling well now.

BG: Yes. Better, much better.

TG: One thing I didn't ask you, you mentioned long hair. When people in the 70s weren't getting haircuts or at least young people, did that impact your business at all?

BG: Well you know who I hate the most? The Beatles.

TG: The Beatles (laughter)

BG: I hate those guys. They came here and brought the long hair. You know, we lost a lot of barbers.

TG: I know.

BG: That was better for me. So it turned out to be...

TG: It was OK for you?

BG: Well, it kind of worried me but it turned out alright.

TG: Now, barbershops are back in style and since COVID, you have to call and make appointments.

BG: Do you know what I charged when I started?

TG: I know when I got a haircut from you as a little boy, it was 60 cents. That's what I remember.

BG: 50 cents and 25 cents for kids. It should have been the other way. (laughter). I wonder how I made it. At least I had to pay rent, two rents.

TG: You cut a lot of hair. That's how you made.

BG: Yeah. I had to work hard.

TG: Did you ever stop to think about how many haircuts you've given in your lifetime?

BG: I was averaging 30-35.

TG: A day?

BG: Yeah.

TG: 6 days a week?

BG: Yeah.

TG: That's over 200 haircuts a week.

BG: I did a lot on Sunday. I cut your father's hair when he was in the hospital.

TG: Yeah. I remember him telling me that.

BG: He was good guy

TG: He was a good guy, yeah. He was. A good father.

BG: Too bad he had to work in the mill.

TG: That was my uncle, that worked in the mill. My uncle worked in the mill. My father was a sheet metal worker in Saco.

BG: Oh yeah. I told Russ he was a sheet metal worker at Haley. But it was in Saco.

TG: He worked for Foss for a long time until it closed.

BG: I knew that guy, Foss.

TG: John?

BG: Didn't he live at the beach?

TG: He lived on the Pool Road.

BG: He re-married, he was older.

TG: You are thinking of the father. Dick Foss lived over on West Myrtle Street, the corner of West Myrtle and Grant. That's actually how my father got the job because he grew up right around the corner.

BG: That was your father.

TG: My uncle worked in the mill, my father's older brother.

BG: I knew your father. A little shorter with glasses. I can see him now.

TG: Yeah. My uncle is a little taller. They were both good guys.

When the mills started closing, that didn't impact your business either?

BG: No. I used to get a lot from the building behind Potters, the phone company. There used to be a lot of guys that worked there. I used to get a lot of those. I was always busy.

The Saco-Lowell, they moved out. They used to be on Lincoln Street. The foundry. In fact, my uncle died in the foundry. Paul Lajeunesse fell in the pit there in the foundry. I used to get a lot from there, then they moved to Saco.

TG: Up on North Street.

BG: They used to be there.

At my shop, pigeons. I had a lot of trouble with pigeons. My roof was flat.

TG: And they'd sit up there.

BG: I know what they do now. I used to do anything. Well they went in my building.

TG: They got inside?

BG: I had pigeons inside. I'd say, "I think you have pigeons in the attic." I had a big attic. We used the play cards at one time. There used to be a club, the Irishmen.

TG: Hibernians.

BG: They used to gamble on the third floor. They had a big table. There is a lot of history in that building.

TG: I'm sure.

BG: In that picture, Biddeford Savings wasn't there then.

TG: That is a long time ago.

BG: They took the building down and built Biddeford Savings next to Reilly's. I had a big place.

TG: Yeah, that was small

BG: It was long though. They used to bring me maple cream donuts right out of the oven.

TG: I remember those.

BG: Every day, two of them. Dr Emplorman [note: not sure if this is correct spelling] said, "That's what plugged you up, those maple cream donuts." (laughter). They were good though.

TG: Anything else, Bert, that we didn't talk about that you would like to share?

TG: Let me ask you one more question and then we'll look at the pictures, alright?

Is there any one thing you want people to take away from hearing your story?

BG: No.

TG: Any way you want to be remembered?

BG: I had a good life. I had good customers. I want to thank them, the customers. Rachel, she is a good woman. My wife is good. My two brothers, I love so much.

TG: It sounds like you've had a really good life. On behalf of the Biddeford Cultural and Heritage Center, I want to thank you for sharing your story with us today.

BG: My two brothers, I don't remember having a fight with them.

TG: That's remarkable

BG: I remember on Bradbury Street, the three of us would sleep in the same bed. We used to raise hell there. My father would come up and he'd quiet us down.

TG: Thank you very much.

Interviewer: Tom Girard (TG)

Interviewee: Bert Gagne (BG)

Date: Saturday, December 2, 2023

Location: Gagne residence Biddeford, Maine

Transcriber: Nicole Morin-Scribner (NMS)

TG: My name is Tom Girard. I am the interviewer and a volunteer with the Biddeford Cultural and Heritage Center. It is Saturday, December 2nd, 2023. Today I have the privilege of meeting with Bert Gagne again and to continue our earlier interview. We are conducting this interview at Bert's home in Biddeford.

Bert, you indicated you'd like to talk a little more about a few things and I'd like to ask you about your interest in art, which came up after we completed our first interview. Can you talk a little bit about that?

BG: I do a lot of painting. I've taken to it. I've been doing it for two or three years now. Four years ago, I was pretty sick. For my recovery my wife got me going on painting. I haven't stopped since. I get all kinds of paint. If anybody wants a painting for free, just call me (laughter)

TG: You've developed this interest later in life?

BG: Yeah. Oh yeah. I was pretty sick four years ago. I recovered pretty good. I feel pretty good now. I went to the nursing home for a while, for about two months. When I came back, my wife got me interested in painting by the numbers. But now, I do my own stuff. For a couple of years now, I started to do my own colors. I enjoy it very much. I sit on the porch for at least six hours a day and paint and I don't stop.

TG: Are these watercolors that you are doing?

BG: It's a brush. It's not color pencil. It's like a brush. It's good. I know Russ is trying to keep up with me with pens. They call them pens.

TG: You seem to have a variety of pictures. Do you have any specific interest?

BG: I like eagles. I love eagles. St. Louis Eagles (chuckle). [Note: Eagles were the mascot for St. Louis High School] I like animals. All kinds, really. My favorite is flowers. I like anything. That zebra there.

TG: Have you done portraits at all?

BG: No. I'm thinking about it.

TG: You have a picture that we will post on our website of the lady by the car and the gas pumps, which is one of my favorites that you have hanging up there. Did your father's gas station inspire that at all?

BG: Yeah. And Joe Gagne, his son is Roland, he comes here to visit. I was telling him about it. I was telling him, you don't remember the punch board.

TG: You talked about that earlier.

BG: Roland Gagne, my cousin, has some. When he comes, I'll ask him to bring one.

TG: And we'll take a picture of it.

BG: That was quite a thing in those days.

TG: You never took any lessons at all, painting lessons?

BG: No.

TG: What about in high school, did you have any interest in art?

BG: No. I was too busy.

TG: Yes, you were busy. That's all very interesting.

You had also indicated that you wanted to talk about St. Anthony's in Kennebunkport.

BG: Yeah. I wanted to mention Father Gabriel. Me and him were very close, very close. He died. He ran the school, he ran the whole thing really. I don't think he ever slept. He had a

high school there. He had fifty kids. He was in charge of those kids, from all over. There were three from Biddeford. I don't know if I should mention their names. There were three from Biddeford. They had a basketball team. It was quite a gang. I used to help somehow, coaching. They were pretty nice kids. I used to cut their hair at least once a month. Sometimes he'd bring them over here, about fifty of them.

TG: To the barbershop here at the house?

BG: Yeah. He would bring them right here and downtown. I knew him for a long time.

TG: Where did you know him from?

BG: Lithuania?

TG: I know they were from Lithuania but how did you meet him?

BG: Haircuts.

TG: Through haircuts. So, he was not a Biddeford native.

BG: Oh no. There was one Biddeford native. I don't know how he wound up with the Lithuanians but.

TG: He's there now?

BG: He's still there, yeah.

TG: Do they have students over there anymore?

BG: No. They closed. They had lay teachers, some used to teach. They had good food there, Lithuanian food. They made the best pizza I ever had. Pizza like they used to make. I think he's up in heaven thinking about me.

He'd come here and he'd meet with Rachel and we'd talk. He used to be a golfer too. He was pretty old. He died in the late 80s, my age (laughter)

TG: You never golfed, right?

BG: No. I didn't have the time. Some fathers used to golf. I didn't have time to do that. I would have liked it I think.

TG: When you look back, do you wish you had done more things like golf and worked a little less?

BG: No. I enjoyed my work. I enjoyed working. That's my whole life, working. I used to enjoy working. I don't know how people don't work. I'd go crazy. I remember when my wife got sick, she was on dialysis for eight years. People would tell me, "Why don't you retire and take care of your wife?" I didn't tell them but I thought, "If I stayed home, I'd go crazy." I took care of her. When she got sick, I bought her a place on Hill Street, the corner of Hill Street. She died there and I came back here. I never wanted to sell this place. I've owned it for 62 years. Russ was born the same year I bought the place.

TG: Was Russ born across the street at the hospital? [Note: Webber Hospital on Elm Street]

BG: Yeah. I remember one time I would play with him, throw him up in the air. He landed on the radiator. He cut his head open. I took him and ran to the hospital. I was close.

TG: That must have scared you.

BG: Yeah.

TG: You indicated earlier that you and Connie were high school sweethearts. How did you meet?

BG: Through high school. She graduated a year after me. That's how we met. We were sweethearts all through the four years.

TG: You were?

BG: Yeah. I used to take trombone lessons at Jimmy Gendron's on Foss Street. I would go there, take the bus. She would wait with me at the bus stop. She lived right on Cutts Street, right next to the church, in back. That's how it happened.

TG: Did you go to high school dances also?

BG: Yeah. It was strict in those days. Leo Bedard, he would tour around, "You are too close." I remember my brother, he was in Norm Faucher's class, he had the first dance. It was 1951 when Roger was there.

TG: The first dance at the Parish Hall?

BG: Yeah. I remember they were fighting for that. That was quite something. We lived in the best time. My father and mother weren't strict at all. They didn't have to because we were brought up right. We went to the school. My mother and father didn't have any trouble with us. They died young, 59 and 60.

TG: Your parents were 59 and 60 when they died?

BG: Yeah. I still miss them

TG: What happened? I know where you lived has been developed. We talked about the lot the last time we talked. Did you or your brothers hang on to that property for a while, your parents' property.

BG: My father sold that house the day after he died.

TG: Really?

BG: We all had our houses. My mother used to take care of Russ in the early days. That must be 1962-63.

TG: Where is Russ now?

BG: Russ, my son lives in Old Orchard. You must know him.

TG: Yes. He married Norm Faucher's daughter, right?

BG: Yeah. He lives in Old Orchard.

TG: How many grandchildren do you have?

BG: I have two. Nick and Chris. She has two.

TG: Rachel has two. So, you have four between the two of you.

BG: Yeah. I have two families, two nice families.

TG: Do you do family get togethers, with everybody?

BG: We just did for Thanksgiving. Chris, well he's in California. He works for Universal Studios.

TG: This is one of Russell and Susan's sons.

BG: Yeah. He works in the office. He figures out how much money they have to spend to advertise new movies and that stuff. He's got quite a job. He left school and went right to California.

TG: And he never came home?

BG: No. He comes home a few times a year with his wife, Alle.

TG: Have you ever gone there? Have you or Rachel ever gone out there to visit them?

BG: No. Too far. He just came. Nick just got married. He got married two years ago. He married a Canadian girl from Ottawa. She works here in Maine. She works for the state. Her name is Kristin, lovely girl.

TG: Nick is Russ's son also.

BG: Yeah. He works at Pratt and Whitney. He's a mechanical engineer. He went to school in Boston. He seems to be doing well.

TG: It's nice to have some family close by.

BG: They don't have kids, neither one of them. Chris, when he was young, we went to football. They were good athletes, really good athletes.

TG: Nick and Chris were?

BG: Yeah. Oh yeah. Football. They didn't play others.

TG: Did Russ play hockey in high school?

BG: No. He played hockey in college. He went to the University of Maine, his first year.

TG: This was Russ?

BG: Yeah. Then he went to New Hampshire College. He played hockey there. That's why he transferred. He tried to play hockey at Maine but there was too much competition, I think. He played at New Hampshire College.

He played soccer. He went out for football and one time he didn't show up. He had to go to something and the coach said, "If you don't come to practice, don't come here anymore." He didn't like the coach and he got out. He was pretty rugged, Russ, when he was young.

TG: Anything else we haven't talked about that you would like to talk about?

BG: All of my working days, I still have some pleasure. I used to go to a place I bought in Shaker Pond in Alfred. We used to go fishing, me and Russ and a couple of other kids. We had a good time there. We played a lot of ping pong in the cellar. I don't know who used to win between Russ and me . We had some good competition. We would spend some time in relaxation there.

TG: Do you still have that property?

BG: No. It's still there. It's a log cabin right on the road. I bought that from this guy who came here and said, "I have a log cabin. Do you know anybody who wants to buy a log cabin?" I said, "I don't know." He said the guy had a raffle. They raffled the log cabin, and he didn't want the cabin. He wanted that money. He was stuck with a cabin. So, I moved over there and put in a foundation. I did a lot in my life.

TG: Is this, your home where we are today, is this the only property you own now?

BG: Yeah. Thank God.

TG: (laughter)

BG: We have a good friend and I want to mention him. Paul Trask is his name. I've known him for forty years. He lives where the old Webber Hospital was. He does a lot for us. He goes shopping. He does everything. We call him and he's right here. You should meet him. You would like him. Good guy.

That's about it I guess.

TG: Well, Bert, I really want to thank you again for your time.

BG: For your time too. It's not everybody wants to do that.

TG: I really enjoyed catching up with you and hearing your stories and meeting Rachel. We really want to thank you a lot for participating in the program.