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Riley, Teresa oral history interview

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Interview with Teresa Riley by Mariah Pfeiffer

Interviewee

Riley, Teresa

Interviewer

Pfeiffer, Mariah

Date

August 7, 2006

Place

Rumford, Maine

ID Number

MC 101-11

Format

Audiocassette

Biographical Note

Teresa Riley was born in 1924 in Rumford, Maine. She has lived in the area for her whole life. Riley's father was a supervisor in Rumford's paper mill. Riley graduated from high school in 1942 with the man who would be her husband; he left to serve in World War II, but they married when he returned. Three of Riley's children have moved out of state, but the fourth manages a Hannaford grocery store in Saco, Maine.

Scope and Content Note

This interview covers Riley family biographical information; economic issues: the Great Depression, decline in the United State paper market, the service economy in Maine, the price of gas, and jobs versus the environment; business in Rumford: local businesses, national franchises, and good business practices; the Androscoggin and its tributaries; having fun: mill-organized events, Riley's gatherings with other seniors, school outings, skiing, carnivals, movies, and the Rileys' camp in Roxbury; Rumford's paper mill: jobs, pensions, changing ownership, community engagement, and decline; Riley's children living out of state; population issues: Rumford's population decline and influx from Massachusetts; Riley's moving plans; Rumford's future: development grants, re-creation of Rumford of the 1940s and '50s, economic prospects, and hope; the Rileys' painting abilities; and legislative decision-making.

ANDROSCOGGIN RIVER ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Q: So I guess I'd like to start off with a little bit about your background. You grew up here, you said. When were you born?

A: I was born in 1924, right here in Rumford. And my mother had four children, two boys and two girls. The second boy, that would be her second child, he was hit by a truck when he was five years old and he was killed. And then my other brother, he died when he was fifty-nine. He lived in Connecticut and he died from an aneurysm. I still have one sister left.

Q: Okay, and did you grow up right in this house?

A: Oh no, no, I've been here almost sixty years, but I lived on Hancock Street for several years. I went to a Catholic school and graduated from there, from the eighth grade, then went on to Stevens High School, graduated from there in 1942. My husband was in my class and he went away to war, and when he came back we got married. And then, probably two years after we were married, we bought the house.

Q: When did you get married?

A: Nineteen forty-six. He was in the Marines. There he is, right up there.

Q: That's wonderful.

A: I'll show you a picture of where I grew up. This, my daughter found on the coast and it's really deteriorated since, but this is what we call (*name*), Strathglass Park. It's got all those brick houses, there's a gate right here, and I lived up on this street over here. And this was a company project, Oxford Paper Company, and only people who worked there could live here. You could not buy them until several years later, but when we lived there you couldn't buy them, you could just rent. So that's where I spent my high school years. But she found that on the coast a couple years ago and said, my God, I got to get that for my mother.

Q: Memories from childhood, right?

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: So was someone in your family working for the Oxford Paper Company?

A: My father was, yes. He was the supervisor in what they called the coating mill.

Q: What does that mean? What's the coating mill?

A: The coating mill is that shiny paper you find in magazines, like the *National Geographic*, very nice magazine. Yes, that's where he worked.

Q: So he was overseeing that operation?

A: Yes, he was in charge at least of his division.

Q: And he worked there the entire time you were growing up?

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: What kind of things do you remember from his work there?

A: I remember that I used to bring his lunch down to him at noon time. I remember it was very hard right after the Depression, we were just – actually hadn't been there, because we didn't have the Depression. It was, but we didn't have that Market crash until 1929, so I was going into that area, and we didn't pull out of that until after World War II, and then things started to look up financially. But it was very difficult. Things have changed so much. We used to go to the store, a small store, leave a list. You didn't have a lot of choices. The person who worked in the store

would fill your order and you'd go back and pick it up later. It wasn't like you'd go to a big department store now, you know, it was a lot different then. And oranges were very scarce. We didn't have a lot of things that we take for granted nowadays. I remember my father would buy a pint of ice cream and we would share it, the three children and my parents would share that, only a pint, because the wages weren't that great back in those days.

Q: How would you describe the town of Rumford when you were growing up?

A: The town when I was growing up, what I can remember of it was fantastic. It was growing by leaps and bounds. And people would come from all the small towns, the stores would be open Saturday nights and you couldn't get by on the sidewalks, because there were no shopping centers in those days, it was just downtown. And they had every kind of store on the island that you could imagine, and it was always packed. And now there's nothing there. But now we have your doctors and your hairdressers and your brokers and banks, only two or three stores. It's just changed so much. The whole town has changed, as far as shopping goes. There's no place to shop. If you want anything, you got to go to Walmart or uptown.

Q: So you see the shopping as the biggest?

A: Oh yeah, big, big thing. Because we used to have several dress shops on

the island, shoe shops, men's clothing, we had everything, restaurants, and it was really, really buzzing. It was great. You'd go into Freddy's, which is closed now, it's been closed a few years, a Chinese restaurant is open there now. In fact, the second one. But when we were kids, they used to have the jukeboxes in there, and you'd go in and put your money in and everybody would be in there. You couldn't find a seat. There was always a bunch of teenagers. That's where we hung out. And there was no drinking. It was just ice cream, banana splits, that kind of thing.

Q: Oh wow, that sounds good to me.

A: So that has changed too. There's no place that the kids will go now to congregate like they did in the old days.

Q: To go to the river a little bit, do you remember the river, growing up?

A: Yes, I do, but it was more the Swift River than the Androscoggin, which is the one coming down from north, from Roxbury and meets the Androscoggin down the Mexico-Rumford Bridge. And we used to go swimming there. We had swimming lessons and we had picnics, we'd go berrying. There were no houses up on that area when I was young. It was all trees. Where the high school is now, that was all trees. There were no houses up in there. So I don't remember so much the Androscoggin, but I do the Swift River.

Q: And the Swift River leads directly into the Androscoggin?

A: Yes. I don't know if you know that there's a bridge you could cross over down on Lincoln Avenue here, into Mexico. So where the bridge is, if you're facing Mexico on the left, that's the Swift River. It goes into the Androscoggin right there.

Q: So you learned how to swim in that river? Cool. What do you remember of sort of the mill culture in town. Do you remember (*unintelligible*)?

A: Not too much, because you don't pay attention to that area when you're young. More so after I got married, I did. I don't know if you want those years too.

Q: Yes, sure.

A: Okay. Well, my husband was in, I don't know what you would call it, you wouldn't call it management, he was a boss, (*unintelligible*). And we used to go to different parties that the people in that section of the mill would have. We'd meet all these people, folks giving parties. There was a lot of things going on. We used to have dances down at the Armory every Thanksgiving I think it was, and there were a lot of things going on when I was first married, growing up. (*Unintelligible*) shopping centers started coming in, and then all that stuff seemed to go.

One thing, and of course the fact that you can buy overseas paper cheaper now, the mill started to go downhill. They went from having probably three thousand or more employees down to probably less than a thousand now. I'm not sure what the figures are, but I know it has dropped a lot. So that there, I think it had an effect on the younger generation. A lot of them moved away because there was nothing here for them.

Q: Would you say that's what happened with your children?

A: Well none of them worked in the mill. Probably, in a way. What they wanted was not available here. Although my oldest son did live in Maine until last fall. We had a cottage at Roxbury Pond and my husband and I had turned it over to our oldest son, and so when somebody approached him, I guess they wanted to buy it, because they had built behind us and they wanted access to the lake. And so we got thinking, you know, probably he should. Because if he's going to move, I've got nobody to take care of the place for me, and it's very hard to get somebody to do the small jobs around. And so we decided to sell and – I forgot where I was going with that, and don't put that on tape.

Q: You were talking about your son and how he lived in Maine.

A: Oh yeah, so then he left. He's a teacher, and he taught at Telstar in Bethel, and his wife did too, so they went. Then my oldest daughter, she's a teacher, and she teaches in Attleboro, Mass., but she taught here in Rumford too for a few years, but her husband was from out of town so they moved to Massachusetts. And then my other two daughters, they just went out west to Seattle, and then one moved back to Indianapolis because they got an opportunity to do other things, so they moved too. So that left one daughter here in Maine, (*unintelligible*).

Q: What does your daughter do here in Maine?

A: She is the store manager of Hannaford in Saco.

Q: Why do you think she decided to stay?

A: I don't know. She likes it here. I think probably because somebody had to stay for her mother. I don't know. All except for my oldest son, the others went before my husband died. And they were all settled, you know. And I know that Tommy, he's the oldest son, his wife wanted to go to Florida for a long time, because I got a second son down there too, two boys in Florida. But I don't know why they chose Florida. I never want to live there. Phoenix, now that's a different thing. I wouldn't mind living there, except it's very, very dry and the trees are scrubby things, and a lot of traffic and a lot of people. But at least, I don't know, it just seems different than Florida.

Q: Yeah, definitely. What kind of things have kept you in the Rumford area?

A: I don't know. I always liked it. I like the change in seasons, although the older I get the less I like winter. But I'm not spending my winters here anymore. I'm going to my girls' homes, so it makes it nice. But, of course, we could have gone. My father lived to be ninety-two, and I was the only one left for him. My brother and sister had moved out of state so I stayed, even though my brother and sister wanted me to move close to them. But I just felt that somebody should be here. So, my mother died when she was only sixty-five, so that left him alone. But still, he remarried but I still felt that I should be here. And I just never had the inclination to go, that's all. I like this. My friends are all here. You get used to your friends and your doctors and your dentists and your bankers, and then you go, oh my gosh, I have to move and start all over again? A lot of people do it, but I was okay here.

Q: Did a lot of the people that you grew up with stay in the area as well?

A: They did, but you know, all our husbands are gone. There are six of us who get together for birthdays and we're all widows. Actually, there are a lot on the fringe that are widows, their husbands are gone. So it is nice to have some girlfriends to go out with. But a lot of my girlfriends have died too, you know, not only the husband but the girls too. Well, I shouldn't call them girls. But like I said, we still

get together. In fact, one of them called me this morning. We're going to go blue berrying probably, the end of the week or the beginning of next week. Go to Wilton, those tall, big blueberries, you don't have to bend over or anything, you know, you're just walking and put your hand up and they all fall into your bucket.

Q: That's my favorite kind.

A: That's the kind I like. Because when I was younger, we used to go and get the ones on the ground. But that's an awful way of picking berries, and they're so small, and you're bent over all the time.

Q: That's true. In Wilton? Okay, I'll have to keep that in mind. What kind of things did you do for fun when you were growing up?

A: Well, when I was in school we had school affairs. Went to a Catholic School and, well just the grammar school because they didn't have a high school. Out to Old Orchard a lot, go to Portland, shopping, and we'd go places with our parents. And then after we got married there was, like I say, a group of us who used to meet. Every so often we'd play bridge or some kind of cards, until TV kind of wiped that out, and always getting together for different occasions, you know. And like I said, there were a lot of activities going around town that we would go to. We had the, oh, it was some kind of an art association. I can't remember. We used to have singers

and pianists and things like that come to the high school, and you would buy a season ticket and you could go to those concerts and things. And like I say, we had dances.

Oh, skiing, we belonged to the Black Mountain skiing. And we skied for nothing, because we had some friends who invested in it and if you invested you got a free lifelong pass. So they gave us their free lifelong pass and my kids and my husband and I, we skied for nothing for a long time. Then gradually they were going down the tubes, they gradually phased that out and you had to pay to get your tickets, you know, there were no free – by that time I only had my youngest son. There were seventeen years between my oldest daughter and my youngest son, so by the time he was up to probably high school, they had started charging for skiing, for the tickets, which he did get them, but. So we were lucky that way. We could go skiing and all we had to do is buy our stuff, which is expensive.

And we used to have carnivals. We had winter carnivals, and girlfriends of mine would run for queen. And we had a skating rink and ski jumps, we had a reputation for two jumps in this area. So there were a lot of things going on.

Q: When did you start to see the town change?

A: Well, it was a gradual thing, of course. Actually, I think it started back when

things, like we got MacDonald's, we got all these different things coming into the town that we didn't have before, you know, store chains. And then they started closing. I remember we had what they call a Mammoth Mart. You probably don't remember this, it's been so long that it's been out of business, you know. Then we had Zayre's. That's gone. Then we had Ames, and that's gone. So by the time that probably Zayre's was going, that seemed to be starting, you know, things started going downhill. The stores weren't making it, the bigger stores. Actually, one new store came in. It was not like Walmart. They knock a lot of the stores out. A lot of the stores, smaller businesses, went across the river into Mexico, that were in Rumford, because they wanted to be near Walmart, you know, one-stop shopping. And that's what happened, I think. And of course the mill too. I told you about the mill started laying off people, or not hiring so many, so that made a big change, yeah.

Q: Now, did your husband get to keep his job all the way to the end
(*unintelligible*)?

A: Yes, we were very lucky. He kept his job, and he retired with a nice pension and all the benefits, which thank God I still have, knock on wood. So yeah, he kept it.

Q: That's great. How have you seen the population of Rumford change?

A: It's about half of what it was when I was young. Oh, we used to have theaters. We used to have about three theaters. We don't have any. We did finally get a drive-in theater. That was packed all the time, because you could bring your family, you know, and of course the movies were great in those days. They were nothing like the movies they have nowadays. But when I was a teenager, we had at least three theaters. We don't have one now. They're all gone.

Q: So where do people from here go?

A: Well, I think if they go, they either have to go to Bethel, there's one in Bethel, or Auburn. I think they may have one over in Farmington, but I'm not sure. I've never gone there to a movie. But they may have a theater in Farmington, which is probably a little bit closer than Auburn, but it's probably no different than Bethel.

Q: So you mentioned something about how Rumford and Mexico have been growing because of the Walmart in that area?

A: Well, yes, the stores have been moving over there. They have a couple of auto parts stores that were new, and (*name*) which used to be here and closed, they are over there now, and that sandwich place, Subway, they moved from here to across the river. Things like that, the smaller businesses, they're over there now,

not here. And of course that hurts our tax base, because we're not getting taxes from them.

Q: And Mexico's a completely separate town?

A: Yeah, yeah. We are in the same school district. The years we were alone we had what they call a union. We had Andover, I think, and Hanover. I'm not sure about Andover. Hanover was part of our union, which is up on the way to Bethel. But then these two populations went down and we weren't being able to supply everything that the kids needed because there was not that many kids to keep the class going, so we merged with the Mexico School Department.

Q: Did that happen when your kids were going through school?

A: No, that happened later. I think they were all out by that time. I'm not sure about Chris. Oh, must be though, he's (*unintelligible*).

Q: I've heard other people in the area talk about the smell coming off the river. Can you tell me a little bit about what you remember?

A: I never noticed it. I don't know if I'm upwind from it or I don't get it up here, or I'm just so used to it that I don't even smell it anymore. I know that people do complain about coming into town on Route 108, but I think if you've lived here all

your life you just don't notice it. Did you notice it?

Q: I have before, but yeah, only on some days.

A: Well, of course it isn't as bad as it used to be. Because they used to have different materials and they don't use those same materials now, so the odor is better to start with. Plus, you get used to it. Because I don't notice it, and I'm up here away from it anyhow.

Q: When you were living down in Strathglass Park, did you notice it more?

A: No. (*Unintelligible*).

Q: No? (*Unintelligible*). Wow, okay, that's interesting. What kind of things do you hope for the future of Rumford?

A: I was hoping that they would get going again, getting business in here. But they're trying, and they are getting some money, some grants for it now, so they may be successful. I don't know. (*Unintelligible*) for the town, but for us old people who've got to go shopping, in order to get what we want we have to go out of town for it. And it's getting harder and harder, you know, although I guess there's a bus that'll drive you down there if you want to go. But we're used to taking our own cars,

and if you have to depend on a bus to go, you have to go when they're going and you have to stay there until they return.

I remember I used to go on those, they used to have these tours that the senior citizens would have on certain occasions, and you would go on a bus ride. Like you'd go down to Connecticut and do some gambling, or New Hampshire for dinner or something. Well, two or three times I went and I got sick, you know, but I had to wait to come home because I was on the bus. So you have no control, and I don't like that. And I haven't gone since we went to New Hampshire one day. Oh, my God, was I sick. It was an Irish concert they had, and it was good, but I couldn't eat the dinner, and I couldn't go home. So I didn't like it, I haven't been since. But you know, if I get sick and I'm driving or if I'm with my friends, they'll bring me home.

Q: What kind of grants do they have, that they're getting in Rumford?

A: I'm not sure what they're called, but they're some kind of – I know that I read in the paper, I think we're getting two hundred thousand dollars for getting things started. It always amazes me what it costs just for seed money, you know, and I'm not sure now what it is and I can't remember. I know they've got places down in what's called the old bag mill down on Canal Street. They've got things in that building, they're trying to renovate the building so they can use it for other things. And I don't know if that's part of that or what, I'm not sure.

Q: Okay, right. I don't know if you've followed any of the events going on with Androscoggin lately, sort of with the clean up of the river?

A: Yeah, I've been reading about it.

Q: What do you think about that, have you seen any change go on?

A: Well, I thought they had cleaned it up pretty well, you know, but according to some people they haven't. But we have a boat launch up here in East Rumford and I know that a lot of people go boating. Of course you can go boating on a river without it being clean, but I thought that it was cleaner than what they're claiming to be, that's all. I don't know too much about it.

Q: What do you think the relationship is with the mill and the river, how has that changed?

A: Well, that I don't know either because, you know, it's changed hands so many times, and it seemed to go bang, bang, bang. We had the Oxford Paper Company for so many years, and then must be at least four other companies have bought it. And now it's not even a paper company, it's an investment company that (*unintelligible*) the paper mill. So I don't think they're that interested in paper, they just want to make sure they make money on their investment, which I suppose every

business wants to do. But as far as anything else, I don't really know.

Q: With this investment company that now owns it, where do you see the future of the mill going?

A: Downhill. I'm surprised it's still going, because I know they're having a rough time, because from what I understand it's the overseas paper companies that are – well, it's like everything, we don't have anything made in this country anymore. I was reading a letter to the editor in the paper recently, and this person is saying, well, buy American. Well, where are you going to go to buy American? The only thing I ever saw that's still being made in this country are towels. You look at everything you pick up and it's made overseas, so how can you buy American when they're not making American? They're taking their business overseas, their projects, and they're making the stuff over there and then they're shipping it back or whatever. I don't know exactly how it works, but it's not being made here. So if it's not being made here, we're back to, what, we're back to a service country, where there's just services and no production.

Look at the car companies. They're going down the tubes, and I don't know why. You'd think they would be able to see that whatever they're doing is wrong, and I don't know what it is. One of the things of course is the cost of gas. They think they should be having more economical running cars. Well that may be, but I suppose they probably think it's too expensive to make them or too expensive for people to

buy them. I don't know. Gas is over three dollars a gallon, you know. To us, to my generation, that's horrible. I used to have my father's car and we'd take three or four girls, probably more like five, and we'd each put in ten cents worth of gas, and we'd go all day with that.

Q: Yeah, not today.

A: No, we could go on a trip. And you could buy, sometimes gas would go on sale for five gallons for a dollar. Can you believe it?

Q: No, I can't. I have no idea.

A: So that alone is hurting the economy, your price of fuel, your heating oil. And people nowadays, they very seldom can walk to work. They've got to drive, so it costs a lot just to get to work. I was in Hannaford the other day in line waiting to go through the checkout, and this guy was complaining about the cost of groceries. He said, you know, I just went and filled up my truck with gas, it cost me sixty-five dollars. I said, oh my God. And you know, that would have fed my family of six for probably two months when we were – well, of course I didn't have six all at once. Of course I realize the wages were lower in those days too, but still, it's got to be a big contrast now.

Q: Right. Would you like to see manufacturing stay in the area?

A: Well yes, I think we should get a lot back in. I think they should start making things in this country again. But they're not. You know, all the steel companies went down the tubes. I can't remember what else, but I'm sure there are plenty of other things too. I just don't know, I can't quote them, that's all. But I don't think we have any steel companies open anymore.

There was a time that (*unintelligible*) Ohio, they used to have those plants, and you know, the cars aren't being made. They lost a lot there. And if they don't get the business, they can't pay the helpers. That's another thing too. The workers get a lot more money for their hourly wage than they do overseas. That's the reason why they're making stuff overseas. It's a tough situation. I think it's almost as bad as when we were going through the Depression, only kind of a reverse situation.

You know, the Depression was awful. People were losing money, but they were losing it in the stock market. They hadn't brought it on themselves. It wouldn't have happened. But now, I think that the (*unintelligible*), when they passed that way back when Clinton was in. I'm not saying it was one or the other, but I know that everybody, not everybody, but (*unintelligible*), I don't think they should have done that. Now all the companies know they can go overseas, and they have this free trade thing so that makes it difficult for anybody to start a business here and expect

to make anything. Because our wages are so much higher, the benefits are higher. Another thing too that a lot of companies are doing is cutting back on their pension plans. People are losing them. So you work all your life with the idea you're going to be able to retire, and then when you get there, they take away your pension plan. That's not very nice.

Q: Right. Do you feel like this area has been affected particularly because of that?

A: I think so. I think that the fact the paper company is losing, you know. What can we tell by the population. It's under seven thousand and I remember, when I was probably very, very young, it was around twelve thousand people here. The town was buzzing. It isn't anymore. You go downtown, and except for certain days, you can find any place on Congress Street to park and there are no stores to go in to shop.

Q: Do you think that Rumford will be able to recover?

A: I don't think they'll ever recover the way they were at one time. They may get a little better, but I don't think they'll ever come back the way it was.

Q: What do you think about – I've heard a little bit about the development of possible tourism in the area?

A: I don't know about that. They say that will be good. They said that could happen, but I'm not sure about that. Well, I don't think people are going to come up here and buy these things, buy these condos up on (*Unintelligible*) where they want to put them. I understand that there's five hundred. Do you know how many they're talking about?

Q: No, I don't. Could you explain a little bit about this project?

A: Oh, you didn't mean this?

Q: Well, I don't know what this is. Yeah, I do mean that, but I don't know what it is.

A: Well, they want to put in I don't know how many condos up on the road to Black Mountain. They think that the skiing is going to be a draw for people who want to go skiing at a fairly cheap rate, and they'll buy these condos. Of course, you know, a lot of people do own big, beautiful homes in here, and they're seasonal homes in Maine, and they only come up for the winter sports or the summer. So that could be what – I don't know, I think that's really stretching it to think that will draw people in. And of course if it does, what's going to happen to the houses in town that people want to sell? Probably won't sell them because they'll be buying up

there, so I don't know. But that's one thing they want to do. That's about the tourism, when you said that it reminded me of that project.

Q: Yes, I know, that's a great example. I hadn't heard of that one yet.

A: So I don't know. I think it's still in the planning stage, and I don't know if anything will come of it.

Q: It seems like you feel pretty strongly about the free trade and (*unintelligible*). Where does that come from, do you think?

A: Well, you know, you get tired of going downtown and going shopping and I wish I could pick up something. Everything you got, it's made out of this country.

Q: Where's that one from?

A: China. I know mostly everything is made in China. You know, I got these two from nice gift shops. And you have to get them, I mean that's all they're selling. Or other places overseas. They're not making them here, and that's that. But it's too late for me. I'm over the hump now and I don't think I'll see the change. It will be too long before it happens, if it does happen. Another thing too, I think things lasted in those days. You didn't have to keep replacing them.

Q: (*Unintelligible*) connected to the mill and the manufacturing?

A: Not any more.

Q: Not any more? Okay, but you did at one point?

A: Well, yeah, it was a family business. It really was when it first opened. We used to get our paper – they cut them probably eight by twelve or eight by ten, like a notebook paper, and you could go down and get a big package free. You could get paper for the kids to use for their studies, you know their homework and whatever. They would give chickens and stuff like that at Thanksgiving? They were very town oriented.

But then of course, each company that came in didn't start from here, and they want the same thing. Although Boise, I thought Boise was pretty good, which has been changed to Office Max. That's where I get my pension from. But I had to laugh, because I've been getting some notices from Office Max. I said ,what in the heck is this, you know how it's junk mail, I thought it was junk mail. I looked at it and I read it and I said, for heaven's sake, Boise had merged or been bought by Office Max. They're not Boise anymore.

Q: But Boise was pretty good at being connected?

A: They were good I thought. But my husband did okay with them. That might be why I was happy with them, with the benefits and everything, health insurance and a pension, and those IRA things, savings plans and things like that. I can't say about any others because that's who was in business when Tom retired, so that's all I know. I know my father worked for Oxford Paper Company and he got a pension, but it was very, very little compared to what my husband got.

Q: Does that refer to the pension and IRA accounts, or were there other sources of activities that were *(unintelligible)*?

A: What was the last thing you asked me?

Q: Well, when you were talking about being involved with the community, what does that mean exactly? Was that referring to the pension plan?

A: Well, no. I don't know, it might have been the fact that we were at the age where we met a lot with the people who were working with Tom and they were all in management, you know, and we went to a lot of different parties and things and they seemed to be, I don't know, I didn't pay that much attention. All I knew was that things were okay when Tom retired, because he was figuring it out and he says well, I think that we'll be able to retire and be okay. We just won't be able to save any

money. Well, I saved a lot of money since then, so that wasn't true either.

Q: Well, that's great.

A: Well, when you only have two compared to six kids growing up, when the kids go, your expenses are not quite – compared to that. But you know, I don't know if you want to know expressly about the mill, but stores like Hannaford, they're great at community affairs. I go to church things like beano's, and we have lunches and they give out all your paper stuff, the napkins and your plates. I think they're very good about that in the town, and that helps. That helps relations, and I like that store. Actually it's the only store – well, that's not true, I like Bartash's. Those are the only two stores I go to, Bartash's and Hannaford. Of course I go to Walmart because I have no place else to go if I need something.

Q: What's Bartash's?

A: That's the gift shop on Congress Street. You've probably been there?

Q: I haven't been in, but I've seen it I think.

A: They've got several different sections there and they sell all kinds of stuff, mostly gifts, books. They do sell Rumford paraphernalia, you know, the logo shirts

and that kind of stuff. I hope they don't close.

Q: Me too. So how do you feel about the community in Rumford nowadays?

A: I accept it. It isn't what I would like it to be, but probably it wouldn't make any difference at my age anyway. I'm not one to go out and socialize a lot. I think I can entertain myself with a lot of stuff I like to do, and my own friends. We're having a hard enough time being able to see each other if we have free time. We all have families that are constantly visiting us or having us be with them, so sometimes it's hard. We used to meet every birthday, but now they've been trying, putting a couple together. Of course I've been sick this year. Been sick for almost a whole year, so I haven't been able to go to those lunches. We have one coming up. She isn't far from the coast, so her birthday is in July, so we have to attend to her pretty soon (*unintelligible*) together. But the thing is, I'm not a person who would join like a senior citizens thing. They had one on Congress Street there. That doesn't interest me. I don't have to be with old people.

Q: You're with your friends.

A: No, I feel that with the free time I've got, I'd just as soon spend it with my friends than go down and just to be going, you know? I don't eat well, so I don't care about going out to eat. I'm happy with the way it is.

Q: Do your kids come back here often?

A: They do when they can. Like I said, they all came back this year, and I see them at least every couple of years. This will be the second time I've seen Patty this year. I was at her house for three weeks, from January into February. Sherry was here. She's the one in Indianapolis. I haven't been to her house in a couple of years, but I couldn't travel either because I was too sick. So she came here. So yes, I'm able to see them a lot and they are always emailing or calling so we're up to date all the time.

Q: That's great. When they come back up here, do they say anything about how the town has changed?

A: Well, they don't really go out. I mean we're busy doing family things. I know that my daughter Andrea, the oldest, she's an artist and they have the art gallery downtown. So there was only going to be Maine artists. Well, she went in to talk with them and said really, I am from Maine, was born in Rumford. She wanted to put some of her paintings and her postcards, notepaper, in there. They took them and she sold quite a few of them. But now they've gone into a co-op thing so you've got to pay and do some volunteering. Well, she can't do that because she lives too far away, so she had to drop out of it. So she liked that part of it, and every time she comes home, even though the art gallery is not open the way it was, you can still go

in and buy what they've got. It's run by volunteers now, and they have that scrapbook thing in the back, you know, where you can buy anything imaginable to do your artwork with. My husband has painted and he sold a lot of paintings.

I've got a granddaughter and her husband who both went to grad school, they have scholarships, the two of them, and living expenses to Amherst in western Massachusetts. They were both in an art program. So they're out of school now, just finished in the spring, and she's been at shows. She sold a lot of her things, got a lot of awards. And I have another grandson who does painting. He only does it on the side, he doesn't show anything yet. And my daughter Andrea has sold quite a few, too. They enjoy it. My husband used to set up his stuff in the kitchen every night when he was home and paint.

Q: Great.

A: Oh, I think it's great because I can't draw a straight line. I can't imagine, you know, putting anything like that on paper, whatever it is.

(Telephone interruption.)

I've got my name in this place called Hazel Dove, down in Alfred, Maine. It's senior housing and it's very nice and I want to go there because it's only ten minutes from

my daughter. She was calling to let me know there's been no changes, which is good because – did I tell you this already? Because sometimes I repeat myself. It's good, because there's nobody dying or going into a nursing home. But I do want to get down there, because if I do I got a lot of changes to make. I'm not looking forward to that, but I would like to be nearer my girls.

Q: Would you sell this place then?

A: Not right off. I would wait to make sure I liked it in a small apartment there. I'm used to a bigger place, and I can move around here. I've been into one of the apartments, a lady was nice enough to show me, and I liked it. It was nice, the grounds are nice. It's a relatively small place and not that many people there, but it's not far from where my daughter in Maine lives.

Q: Wonderful. It seems like a lot of other people in the area are selling. That's how it is.

A: Well, I think probably a lot would like to move out of Maine. Although I read in the paper this week we're getting a lot of people from Massachusetts settling up here in Maine. And I know that for a fact, because my daughter lives on a lake in Limerick and all of her neighbors are from Massachusetts, they've got seasonal homes. They come up here and buy on the lake if they can afford it. It's very

expensive to buy waterfront property. And I guess they have more money than we Mainers do.

Q: Do you find it expensive to live up here?

A: Yeah, well another thing I read recently, we are the highest taxed state in the Union. I don't know how true that is. I've been told that before. Then you get a notice in the next paper that it's not true, because this one's just as bad and so forth. My son thought it was very expensive living in Florida, and he's lived in Maine all his life. He's the one that just moved there last August, and he says, I'm surprised at how expensive it is here. So I guess probably it's tough. But I like it here. I hate to go to another state, but who knows. I got to go where I got to go. I like it up in the mountains. That's where I was born and lived my life, and I prefer this to the ocean. To me this is prettier than the ocean, up in the hills.

Q: And we've got some water in there.

A: There are a lot of lakes, yeah. Small ones, but we got a lot of them.

Q: Do you (*unintelligible*) up in this area?

A: Yeah, up on my lake and the rest of, yes.

Q: How long have you had that camp, or cottage up there?

A: The past forty-two years.

Q: And do you go often?

A: It's gone. We sold it.

Q: Oh right, I forgot.

A: But we do go every year. We rent it every year, my daughter does, so they come up. And I don't sleep over, but I go up for the day and visit. So it's kind of nice to at least rent it.

Q: Is it just like a little place that you go to and enjoy the water?

A: Yes, we're right on the water. Got a little wharf and deck, and there are two bedrooms and a bath and shower, a kitchen and dining area, and the living room. We loved it up there. It was beautiful. And they called it Silver Lake, and when the sun hits that lake in the afternoon, the lake turns silver and you see it all sparkly and beautiful. I noticed that on one side of us up there, there were two teachers that taught in the Rumford system here, they had retired from teaching. This summer

they sold their house in Rumford and they're spending their time between Florida and camp.

So, a lot of them are doing that. They start out with three properties and they get rid of a house because they don't need it. So it's hard enough to have two places, because you've got stuff in both places, you know? What happened to this? Is this at camp, or, I better buy another one because I don't have it at camp. So you're always getting more than you need and bringing it up. Then of course when you move home in the fall, you got all that stuff to move home because you bought so much. It's easier to buy it while you're in town than to go back downtown and get it. So (*unintelligible*), we used to pack the car up as soon as school was out and head up there. It's up (*unintelligible*), there's a notch up there, Roxbury Notch. Have you ever been up there?

Q: No, I haven't.

A: If you ever have a free afternoon, you should take a ride up there. Anyway, you go up through the notches, and it's really steep, then you get way to the top and go down the other side. My kids used to ride their bikes up there in the summer time. If they go on their bikes, we weren't going to carry them in the car, (*unintelligible*)

Q: It seems like you guys spent a lot of time outdoors, enjoying the area.

A: We had a lot of friends who (*unintelligible*)

Q: I've learned that too, and I've only been in Maine for a little bit. Pretty unique to Maine, though.

A: I don't know. I think that it is because everywhere else you go they call them cottages. They call them cottages down on Cape Cod and they're big houses.

Q: I know. Well, I think that's probably all I have to ask, but is there anything else that –

A: I don't think so. I think we've covered quite a bit of ground. I don't know if it's going to help you any.

Q: Yes. Well actually, the thing that interests me a lot is when you were talking about the change from manufacturing to service type economy. I've been hearing a lot about that.

A: You have? I'm not the only one then.

Q: No, you're not the only one. Well, I think a lot of people – I mean I've been up to Berlin, New Hampshire as well – are kind of worried about what is going to come in to a place.

A: Yeah, because they've been having problems with their mill for many, many years. I had an aunt and uncle live in Berlin, and some cousins. And they started long before ours did, the problems I mean, so I don't know what's going on up there now. I don't even know if they have a mill running.

Q: Well, they have a paper mill, but not a pulp and paper mill.

A: Just the paper?

Q: Yup, so similarly, they are kind of dealing with what to do now.

A: Of course, down in Jay, too. What's the name of that paper company in Jay?

Q: International Paper Company?

A: Yes, they sold didn't they?

Q: Yes, yes.

A: And that's been there for years. In fact, I had a great uncle who worked there. He was a supervisor down there, so that was my father's uncle and he was there for years. Now it's, yeah, you lose it. And I think that's what's happening. We were complacent, and we thought things were going to be good forever and didn't see the changes coming in time. What do I know. I'm just an old lady.

Q: Yes, but it sounds like you've been keeping up on it.

A: Well, I try to, but then I'll get tired of it too after a while, of the controversy and the problems. Especially when I was sick and I didn't want to hear any bad news, so I had discontinued my paper, because I was gone all winter, and I cut off my Internet service because I wasn't here so I wasn't getting any of that, although my kids have it. But I wasn't getting the local news anyway. But gradually I'm feeling a little better, so I'm back into it again and I don't know if I like it. I don't know. It's so depressing sometimes that you think you might as well give up, because you're never going to fix it and nobody's ever going to fix it. (*Unintelligible*), and the price of oil and the big oil companies in Texas are gouging us with their (*unintelligible*) profits, and I don't know what they're doing with all of their money. Those things bother me, but one person can't do anything.

Q: Do you see any sparks of hope in the area?

A: No, not really. I don't think it's going to ever come back the way it was. You cannot live up to that "no child left behind." There's always going to be somebody left behind, and they're trying to eliminate that. That's ridiculous, you can't do it. They're fining the towns and the states because they're not doing what the federal government wants to do. Well the schools start out as local things, then the state gets involved with all their rules and regulations, and now it's the federal government's getting involved with all the rules and regulations. We were doing fine when we were on our own, but they take it away from them.

Q: One other thing I would ask is that I've heard the argument about the environment versus jobs.

A: But there could be a happy medium there. If the extremes could come together and not be so extreme on either side. At least if it started, but they won't. They won't give an inch, either side.

Q: Why do you think that is?

A: Stubbornness. Well, some people think that they've got to run everything. It's going to be their way, and if you are either left or right, you feel that way no matter what your beliefs are. But I think that each one side could give a little bit and

compromise so we could do something in this country. But they're fighting all the time in Washington and the minute somebody does something a little out of line, everybody's jumping down his back. I don't think that's the way to run a country. I think you should do what the people want, not what *(unintelligible)*.

Another thing, too, you say that our senator can just run so many terms. I don't know now if I'm getting this correct. I might be getting it mixed up with our state thing, but I think like a president can only do two terms. Okay, well anyway, we'll use that as an example *(unintelligible)* So people in my state, they control what senator to send, but I can't control what he's sending *(unintelligible)*. And that guy could be bringing all the pork home that he could imagine because people are going to vote for him, and I can't do a think about it. It's all government money. This is federal government, but it's people like – I'm not going to give any names because I can't remember them – but people like from different states, they get really up there for a long, long time and they know the ins and outs, and they are taking all this pork home. We can't get him out of office because we don't have a vote in that state, so the people keep voting him in because he's doing that. In other words, up here in Maine we don't get a lot of that stuff because we are too far out and we don't get it, and it's somebody who's got a lot of clout that's bringing it home. That, I don't like.

Q: You don't feel like Maine has much clout on a national level?

A: Not much. I think we're too far out of it. But we do have good people in our government, the state government. I mean we have two good senators and we have two good representatives, and I could say we could have a better governor, but that will happen because he's going to be out pretty soon anyway. Well, I don't know, he's got another term to go. But you know what I mean. Somebody in one state has really got a lot of clout and can bring home the pork. He's on the committees and he can tell where the money is going to go, that it's going to his state. I can't stop that because I have no word at all in what he does, and his people can keep voting him in and he can keep doing that.

Take a place like Alaska. They're getting all this money because they've got a senator or representative, whatever he is, that's making sure he gets all that stuff. I don't believe in that, but you can't do anything about that, because we're in Maine. I think we got some pretty honest people, but they're not taking a lot of money back that we should be having. (*Unintelligible*) that's not necessary. We do need a lot of money for our roads, though. Well, we got a lot of roads, but there are not many people.

Q: It's a huge state, huge.

A: Yes, and a lot of it's undeveloped. We have the most wooded state in the Union, more trees, and we take care of our teeth better than everybody else. They

always have these surveys. You have to laugh.

Q: Really? Best teeth in the Union? That's good. That's really funny.

A: Yes, we brush and floss more than the average state does. I get a kick out of those surveys. They really come up with some of these crazy things.

End of Interview

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