

Dr. Ernest V. Reynolds  
Barre, Vermont  
March 24, 1988

Mary Kasamatsu  
Interviewer

- MK I'm with Dr. Ernest Reynolds in Barre. This is the 24th of March and this is an interview for the Green Mountain Chronicles. Let's start at the beginning. Are you a Barre native, Dr. Reynolds?
- ER No, I was born in Stonington, Maine. That was in 1907. And that's an island off the coast of Rockland, Maine and it's in the Penobscot Bay. But I, we lived there for about two years and then we moved to Barre. And of course the family has been associated with the granite industry. My father was originally a stonecutter and then eventually he went into the manufacturing side of it there. But that, on his family side, the family has been in the stone cutting trade for a good many years. In fact, my grandfather came from England because of the granite business there and he went to Vinalhaven. It was another island off the coast of Maine in Penobscot Bay. And, so my father and mother were both born on this island in Vinalhaven. And then in order to follow the granite trade as my father got older, they moved to Stonington because that was another granite producing place and then after about, well I think it was about, I was born in Stonington of course and then when I was two years old the family moved to Northfield which was still in the granite business but then they rapidly came to Barre because that was the so called granite center of the world. That is, that is where most of the granite, at least that's the title it goes by anyway and so that and from then on I mean I've been in Barre, went to grade school, went to high school, and came back to practice in 1937. So that's more or less the well the route that we went there from Stonington, Maine to Barre and I've been here ever since except for three and a half years in the service.
- MK Ah. Now you say you came back to practice in 1937. Where were you going to school?
- ER Well I was in, I came to practice in '37. I went to Williams College in Williamstown, Mass. and then I went to Cornell University Medical School. This was in New York City. And then I interned in the Bronx in New York for three years and then in 19, and I got through my internship in 1937 and then came to Barre to practice. And then I left here in 1942 for three and a half years to the service and then came back to pick up where I left off there in 1946, '47 actually.
- MK How did you find Barre changed by the Depression when you came back?

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ER Well as far as I could see, there wasn't very much change here from what it was when I left. Everything, I picked up just about where I left off and I couldn't see too much change from the 1937 to 1942 and from 1947 on when I came back from the service. So I...

MK When you came back in '37...

ER I came here originally in '37. Then I went in to, I was here for about five years and then in '42 I went to the, into the service.

MK Uh huh.

ER And then in 1947, I came back to practice again. Picked up the same practice that I was in before.

MK What, how was Barre doing um, when you came in 1937, when you came from school to set up your practice. What kind of a town was it as far as how the Depression was...

ER Well I think it a, the Depression I think had was about, I couldn't see too much difference. I didn't think that the Depression affected this area. Of course this was in 1937 and most of my time during the Depression from 1926 until 1937 which was at my college experience and my hospital experience in the medical schools and so forth, so that most of the Depression that I saw was pretty well, well more or less under control. Of course at that time, there was no question but they were still having the CC people up here. They were building dams, flood control, so forth there. But on the whole I didn't see too much from the standpoint of the Depression like I saw in New York where there were bread lines, and soup lines and so forth there and where a lot of people were in real bad shape. So that as far as the, the so called "Great Depression" there with the Black Tuesday and the crash in '29 and so forth, I think it probably, at least when I got back here, I couldn't see that it had affected it too much of course. At that time, we didn't have the medical government, government in medicine that we had before and of course there was, we did a lot of, as far as medical practice is concerned, did a lot of charity work. In fact I was the, when I came here I was the city physician and milk inspector for \$60.00 a month. That was a combination with \$60.00. Well it was yea, \$60.00 a month. And so that I did a lot of charity work and there was quite a few people on the so-called charity group. There was even a poor farm so-called here where there was people who were destitute that stayed there. Of course that eventually dissolved. I'm not sure just when that went out of star.

But in the process of it I took care of a lot of patients that were on the city roles and the city paid me this \$60.00 a month for taking care of whatever number came in there and then of course there were others that I took care of without charge because they couldn't pay even though they weren't even on the city's role. So that was probably the big difference and medically speaking a big difference of course at that time was the government. There was no Medicare. There was no Medicaid and so forth so that there was a lot more charity work done at that time.

MK What I was thinking about was that, well this was a period of time when there had not yet been a lot of safety restrictions in the granite industry or they were just coming in, so there had been, there had been a history of some men who worked in the granite industry dying fairly young and families left to hold their incomes together however they could. I was wondering whether, whether you observed in your practice, whether you observed people who were already maybe in a difficult situation were having even a harder time of it?

ER Well, it's hard to say. I don't, don't think I was impressed too much with the, with the effects. Of course, there's no question during that period that the monumental business that the city was dependant upon was in a slump, but on the other hand as I say, the sheds were still working and people were. I didn't notice a great change in people moving out of the town or changing residence because of the work here and as far as I could see, the granite sheds certainly were, never did get back to what they were originally there. I mean in the, when I was a young fellow there, at noon time and at 4 o'clock and at 7 o'clock in the morning at noon and at 4 o'clock in the afternoon these whistles, stone shed whistles would be all over the place. And a good many of those businesses probably did fold up under the circumstances, but as I say to notice any difference, I didn't notice too much of a change as far, as far as I was concerned and of course being restricted in the medical field there it was a little hard to evaluate what was going on as far as the rest of it goes except but there were a lot of people on the city, but as far as I can see that's almost that same group. A good many of them never did get off that, they went onto to Medicaid when the government moved in there.

MK Did people function still to a certain degree on a kind of barter system? Would people offer to trade you things for medical services?

ER Uh, no, that, I think that \_\_\_\_\_ either never existed or it was over exaggerated. They didn't bring in two dozen eggs and a chicken there or anything like that. No it amounted to just they usually paid or we treated them for nothing. And it wasn't a matter of bartering you give me this and I'll give you that there so that there was really, I think that may be true in some places but I don't think we're quite small enough for that. On the other hand as I say, I think that has been exaggerated over the period of time. But the main thing was that if they couldn't pay, we didn't charge them. We didn't even try to collect from them. And most of them you know did the best they could and we knew the people. It was small enough town so we knew the people and knew those that could pay and those that couldn't and we didn't force them. And as I say, the city took care of the real ~~paupers~~ the city took care of at a very, very reduced rate of course, but I mean it was at least another form of charity which we would have got the same amount or less if we hadn't got the \$60.00 a month stipend. It was actually \$60.00 for the medical part and \$40.00 for the milk inspector there. He was the same fella. Get up 5 o'clock in the morning to check the milk bottles on these delivery wagons. They had to make sure that they tested. We sent it to the laboratory to make sure they tested alright. And but...

MK How often would you do that, every day?

ER Well, no the, of course the medical part, we, which we'd see patients a number of patients every day on the sick list. But as far as the milk inspection, about twice a month we'd go around and we'd send these samples into the State lab and then if the, what we, if we found any resistance to give us the samples, we just told them we would have to publish the bacterial count and the report from the State in the paper if they didn't cooperate. And what we tried to do was to correct the situation without making a big publicity to put it into the paper and make a big deal in the media would make everybody unhappy and make them unnecessarily worry because in this way we could get them to correct it because we'd tell the individual milkman that what his count was that he'd have to correct it or something else would have to be done and he would and that way we didn't put his name on the headlines in the local paper that he was selling poor milk and that saved a lot of wear and tear and kept the media from exploiting the situation.

MK So go back now before the depression to the time when you were growing up in Barre.

ER Yup.

MK One thing that I've been interested in is the era of the trolley car. Did you take the trolley a lot as you were growing up?

ER Oh yes I did. I've got a picture here which geographically shows the trolley car, the trolley car situation. And this is, this is exactly the way the city looked when I was a young fellow when we had mostly horses and wagons and so forth. Now let's see. Now here's a couple of pictures here that you can look at, but that isn't what we were talking about. There's a, there's a picture of the square down there where the big monument in the park that you came up Washington Street. And this, this is the electric car that went both up Washington Street and up South Main Street. And then they'd come back down and we'd go down to Montpelier. And this was a typical picture there with the horses and water. That watering trough stayed there for a good many, good many years before it was taken down, even after the horse and buggies were, but that is just about the picture when I came to town.

MK It says it's a peaceful scene. It was a peaceful scene wasn't it?

ER Yea, well that is, but this is the and the city, I mean the situation is just, the situation is just about the way it was before for quite a long time. And the street was paved with paving blocks. Of course this being a granite city and this granite industry started pretty much with paving blocks to begin with, just these little like bricks and of course it was kind of rough going but that whole street all the way down with the street car tracks going down the middle of the street there was all paving blocks.

MK How much did it cost to ride the street car in those days?

ER Oh, I don't recall. I would think it probably was around 10 cents. I would think that would be about right.

MK Could you go from Barre to Montpelier for a dime?

ER Well I didn't go very often, but I mean you could go all the way down to Montpelier. You could get on anywhere along the line. They'd stop at certain places and they had little sort of a platform that you stepped up on to get into the thing. In the summertime, these cars were open. In the wintertime, they were, they were closed, but

they had this overhead electric line there which gave them electricity to run the, run it.

MK How far to the east did the trolley run?

ER Well it would, it would go up to the end of Washington Street which was about three-quarters of a mile and they'd go up the end of South Main Street which is about another half, three-quarters of a mile, so it really, the extension, then of course from there it went six miles down the line to Montpelier. And that was, that went on for a long time. Of course as I say it was I think the first time that any doctor in town had a car was in 1915. So then before that and I can remember very well the doctors going around with the horse and buggy or sleigh in the wintertime making their house calls and it was only 1915 that the first doctor had a car. Then within another year or two most of them had bought cars there and the Model T or one of the old fashion models. But anyway at least it got them around a little bit better.

MK Interesting. I had read some place that doctors were often among the first people in the communities to buy a car.

ER Yea, that's right. I imagine he was one of the first ones. I think the family, my own family I think didn't have a car until oh probably about four or five years later, probably around 1920. But of course when I, when the family came to town, we were still using wood stoves for heat and lamps for, no telephone, lamps for, this would be in 19, well about 1909. And the physicians as I say were at that time had been, most of them that had been in practice perhaps a few years anyway. There was one or two older ones than that, but they weren't, this was back around 1910 and they had about oh, five or six physicians at that time. At that time, most of them were general practitioners. They did, did everything. Jack of all trades then. This business of specialties there from ten different specialties for one individual wasn't there at the time. In fact it was pretty late, it was about 19, as I remember it, it was about 195., well, the only specialists we had at that time and they was two nose and throat men. They were ear, eye, nose and throat at that time and there was two physicians then, a Dr. Jarvis and a Dr. Sprague and they were the only two specialists in town outside of the rest of us who were general practitioners and as I say we did everything and we thought we did it pretty well. I mean we delivered the babies and we took care of the kids and we did the surgery, the appendectomies and the gall bladders, the hernias and so forth and anything but brain

surgery, why we did locally and anything that was more complicated there, why we'd send to Burlington. That was the closest place. But under those circumstances, this I'm talking still in terms of 1937 when I came, when I came to town and as I say I've continued as a general practitioner ever since, except until I retired which was about a little over a year ago. My main reason for retiring was I just didn't feel that after, over 50 years in practice that I needed to have the government tell me just how I should do it and when I should do it and what I should charge. And so that made a big difference and that's the main reason, even, see I'm 80 years old now and as far as I could have continued on for another two, three years as far as I'm concerned because I still think I have all my marbles anyway and I thought after a mind funded with 50 years of medical knowledge that I didn't need some bird from Burlington coming over there and telling me this is the way we do it and you've got to do it the same way. So I mean that's just, that's one of the main reasons, although as I say it probably after that number of years in practice it's probably time to change anyway. But I mean I think I would have stayed in practice a little longer if it hadn't been for the, probably at least a couple more years anyway, as long as, I always told myself that if I ever got to the point where I felt I wasn't doing good work and wasn't capable of doing it, I'd quit on my own. But when they started to tell me that I should do it their way and after I'd been doing it well for 50 years, I didn't feel that I wanted to have that kind of, work under those restrictions that's all and I think it was unfortunate that the government did step in, and particularly two things I feel has happened there. You get double talk from this group there. They say don't admit them until they're real bad, and then get them out of there as soon as you can. In the meantime the patient is sicker than what they were before and you would have had to keep them longer because you left them out. Then of course I feel they were also sort of playing some sort of a Russian roulette with these people, that is, I mean you hold a patient out and you've lost probably, that you think should be admitted, you've lost some very valuable time because that patient if he was admitted a day or two earlier could probably get out earlier and it would have taken less chance of something happening to him. And I feel you are certainly dealing with a serious problem when you are dealing with patients lives. I mean if I feel that I'm seeing a patient and feel they need to be hospitalized and somebody that never saw the patient, never talked to me, never talked to the relatives comes over from 50 miles away and says that patient didn't need to be admitted, or that patient stayed too long, they

don't even see the patient. I mean that's the type of background that we were working against. I just figured well I don't have to do that and I don't intend to, so that, but that's probably off the subject a little bit, but anyway it's...

MK But it is a major change.

ER It's a change that's taken place here and it's continued, I mean it's just an over kill to begin with and as I say double talk from the standpoint of don't admit them unless you absolutely have to and get them out as soon as you can possibly can. That isn't the way to practice medicine.

MK Do you remember, this would have been of course during your childhood, but do you remember the 1918 flu epidemic?

ER Oh yes, yea. Well that is very clear in my mind. I lived in the, in an area, looking out of my bedroom window, Beckley Hill, you could see Beckley Hill very clearly. And during that epidemic, it was day after day after day, this was when they were still having the horse drawn hearses and the carriages there. These, they had the Catholic cemetery was only about a quarter of a mile up this hill and day after day during that epidemic you'd see these, this funeral procedure, all horses, black horses and black hearses and so forth going by there and sometimes three or four funerals a day and even in the neighborhood now, our family had the flu. We were all, this was '17, '18, we were all sick with the flu, and as I say, being sick in bed and doing nothing else but looking out the window there, why you got quite an impression when you saw all these people. That was the end of the road when they was going up there in that black hearse and so that at that time there was nothing, nothing to do. We lost a lot of stonecutters because of course the flu developed into a pneumonia complications and the, most of the stonecutters who'd been in the business for anymore than ten or twenty years, this was before dust control, most of those individuals had silicosis and in the meantime it developed tuberculosis. So there was a very in fact, we have a sanitorium which has now been converted over into some kind of a monks' establishment there. Of course, tuberculosis has been pretty well controlled with the new medicines we have. But during that flu epidemic, there was a lot of stonecutters that died. But, well in the neighborhood there where I lived there, we had one family there, they had twelve children and the father died of the, of the flu and I think one or two of the children died. You know that's pretty close by when they're just across the road from you there. And of course there was,



and the bad part of it was, well I can remember this Dr. Lamb who was one of the old-timers that was here and they called, I think the folks called him once and he left a handful of headache powders and that was the treatment for the flu. We had another grocery man that worked in a grocery store who went around and his treatment, any of his friends, he went around with a bottle of booze and some aspirin and he, and that was, he gave them the booze and let them take the aspirin if they wanted to and he thought he was doing it, but at least he was going around, and if people were in real bad shape, at least he was able to help them. But that was a real, real bad time and there was no, there was no treatment for it. There was, of course, no vaccine at that time and there was no antibiotics at that time. See the first antibiotic that we had was a sulfur in 1935 and we didn't get penicillin in until around 1940, so that the antibiotics, this is in fact, most of my training in both the medical school and in the hospital we treated the patients symptomatically, but of course in 1935, we started using the sulfurs and then of course by the time penicillin came in I was in private practice with it and that was a great help. We did, we were able to do quite a lot, but every winter we lost a lot of stonecutters with pneumonia even without the flu epidemic. Of course we always had about every year you get a little flu epidemic anyway, but the big epidemic of 1918 when they lost a lot of them, but a lot of these stonecutters would die with just the ordinary colds developing into a pneumonia because of their poor resistance in their lungs. And that goes back to the last of dust control see these stone, if you went into, I used to work in the, in the sheds just in spare time, what they call grouting, picking up the pieces of grout and so forth and wheeled them up and dumping them over the into the grout pile there so that these people with, these stonecutters, would knock off you know pieces of granite to make a monument and they'd leave a lot of that these chips and so forth around, so that was one of the job and even then while they were working, the air was pretty well full of that stone dust. And of course working in that atmosphere for years, they developed this, this silicosis which is just a reaction, it's a dust reaction to the silic. in the stone dust reacted to the lung tissue there and developed this silicosis and then of course with no resistance against infection, why then they would develop tuberculosis which would set in and they weren't able, weren't able to throw it off. But starting in about 1939, either '38 or '39, they got this dust control in there and according to the statistics that we have, there is very questionably whether, questionable whether anybody that went into the stone cutting business after dust

control come in, whether any, very few if any ever developed this silicosis because dust control they had these suction things that sucked up the dust there and kept the air pretty clear. But of course under these circumstances of course we saw a lot of tuberculosis with the young people. The strange part of it is with all, in this stone business was all this tuberculosis around, a lot of children, the father had tuberculosis and a lot of the children developed tuberculosis and that's why the sanitorium was built. We had a lot of young people in the sanitorium there with tuberculosis and then after dust control and after the medications for the control of tuberculosis came in, they were able to close that sanitorium down and that just sets up on the top of this Beckley Hill which is about three blocks above the cemetery that I was talking about. That was the Catholic cemetery. Well you can imagine, all I was looking out the window were just the Catholic people that were being buried in the Catholic cemetery, well you can just figure what was going on around the city. There are four or five other cemeteries around so that it was a really a real tragic time. Fortunately, nobody in the, in our family succumbed to it at least, but I guess the headache powder did the trick, I don't know. But that was his treatment, headache powder. I think we saw, we saw the doctor once and we figured well we can take our own headache powder and if that's all they can do, well I guess that's all they can do. And the fellow with the bottle didn't, didn't come down to our house, so we didn't have to worry about that.

MK How did people treat something like a major flu epidemic other than headache powders and what kind of home remedies, home treatments did people *resort* to?

ER You mean, before antibiotics or now?

MK Yea, during that...

ER During that time, the only thing to do is put them to bed and give them aspirin if they, if they had a high fever and plenty of liquids and just sweat it out, that's all. There was no treatment, I mean just ordinary keep warm and plenty of liquids and aspirin if you felt you needed it and hope for the best. Probably a few prayers at night there would help *anybody* out a lot more than the headache powders anyway.

MK An epidemic like that, would it have, did it basically take the bulk of the winter for it to be over or...

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ER Oh yes, it, well yea, I think the epidemic started around well probably around October or November. And then it didn't let up until probably around April or May, a long winter here. So that, but it did, it lasted most of the winter there. And as I say the death rate at that time because it was a new bug with no previous resistance to it, no antibiotics to control it, so that it just ended up with a lot of high mortality there. Of course it was a high mortality even in places that didn't have the silicosis problem there, but even higher I think here because of the number of people that, adult males anyway that had tuberculosis and the strange thing about it is that in spite of the fact that the wives of these stonecutters lived with them, slept with them and everything there, very seldom did you see a wife who would develop the tuberculosis. But the children had no resistance against it but what apparently happened is that these, these women when they were getting gradually exposed to the TB germ and were building up a resistance, an antibody resistance to it so that they didn't develop it. A few of them did, but most of them didn't. Time and time again, a husband would die of tuberculosis and you might have one child with the TB and you didn't, the wife was alright. And of course even at that time, it was just beginning when I went into practice we were still finding a little *bovine* tuberculosis there, but that was rapidly eradicated when they started vaccinating the cows and pasteurizing the milk, so that, that made a big difference. But that *bovine* tuberculosis was quite prevalent in the early, early days there.

MK Tuberculosis passed from the milk?

ER From the milk yea. The cows would have tuberculosis. The *bovine* type, not the human type, but there again people developed it from milk and you get a lot of swollen glands and so forth there, but that never reached too high proportions when I came into practice because of the pasteurization and the, after awhile the testing of whole herds, even the pasteurized milk, there was some of it, there was a lot of it was still raw milk that was going through there. Finally the law caught up with them there and they had to have it all pasteurized.

MK One other thing that a couple of people have mentioned in their memories of the earlier days in Barre I wanted to ask you about. Do you recall the *Chautauques* coming through Barre?

ER Oh yea.

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MK Ah!

ER Yea, they used to, yea they used to be every year there used to be a ~~Chautauqua~~ came and we, there was, this was at the time they had horse racing too. So they had a trotting park up where the new Spaulding High School is. They've got a new school built probably well 15 - 20 years ago. We call it the new school because the old one is still standing. But anyway the, this trotting park was a favorite place for them, but they would set up in most any place. Now another place was this trotting park. I mean the trotting park was in Barre. Then there was the ball Intercity Ball park they called it and that was halfway between Barre and Montpelier and of course that's been taken over by, well right now there is a motel down there. It's no longer there, it's been just converted, but that was a big ball park. So what used to happen every Saturday afternoon, you'd pay your 10 cents for car fare and go down on the electric car down to Intercity Park and watch a ball game and then get back on the trolley car and come back up. It used to run about, well I think it used to run about every hour or something like that, so there wasn't much of a problem. But all that area there has been converted into garages and motels and well even these like Zayres and other places, Ames, plazas and so forth there, just commercialized that's what happened there.

MK And that's the stretch that the trolley tracks used to run right along.

ER Yea, it went right by. See the trolley car went right by this, in fact the trolley tracks were here and the bleachers and the ball park was you could throw, you could throw a stone out the side of the car there and hit the ball park, that was the staging there so that it was and that was one of the big entertainments there along with the 10 cent movies that you used to see there. I mean they had them, they had a Magnet theater there that used to have these well Pearl White, well no you're too young to know about Pearl White, but anyway. Pearl White was one of these cliff-hangers you know. Every Saturday you had to go back and find out how Pearl got off that plane or how she got down that cliff or whatever happens. She was hanging there when you left and you had to come back and find out what and that was 10 cents a, I think it was 10 cents at that time. And that was the main movie theater. The Magnet was the new one what they called the Bijou or the Bijou. We used to call it Bijou which was a smaller one which was wood structured. But when the Magnet came in, you know, that was pretty fancy. And then the new one after that by you know that was big stuff you

know. Before it was just, it was just a sort of like a meeting house that had been converted. But at least they had a screen and you could see it was black and white people running around the stage there, the screen.

MK And this would have been something that you could have taken the trolley to the theater as well or was it so close you didn't need to?

ER I didn't get you what you said.

MK Would you take the trolley to get to the movie theaters too?

ER Oh no, they were in town. You didn't have to take the trolley there. In fact, we never took the trolley except to go, go out of town. That is, I mean nobody in their right mind would think of getting on a trolley to go up to the top of Washington Street, you just walked and of course this old Spaulding school, see I lived or we lived in the north end of the city and my father was at that time was working in the, one of the big stone sheds, Jones Brothers which is subsequently closed, but he was working down there so this was only about a half of mile from where we lived to where he worked. But the Spaulding High School of course the school, the grad, the grade school was just probably just a half of block away from where we lived, so there was no problem there. But when we went to high school that was up at this end, [blank spot in tape] we'd take these, just walk to school every morning. It was about a mile and a half, rain or shine, whether a snow storm or whatever. It's very seldom now they close the school if you get a little snow on the ground, at that time you just waded through it and got there in time and came home, so that, but at that time it was we used to walk as I say it was, I suppose some people used to take the, the adults, but I mean as far as kids are concerned why we never took it except when it was to go down to the Intercity park. Or seldom did we go to Montpelier. I mean it was, that was about as far down as you went, down to the ball park and then back. And then as I say, as far as the ~~Chautau~~ Chautauquas are concerned, they'd come every fall and they'd set up most anywhere, sometimes in the old ball park, sometimes in this trotting park that I was talking about there and that's when they had the horse races right in that place. That's pretty much limited to fairs now, but I mean at that time we used to have a number of times that they'd have horse races up there. And of course that's all gone by along with the watering trough, watering trough and the electric cars and all the rest of it. They are pretty well gone by the board.

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MK So the ~~Chautauquas~~ would come in, they'd have the horse races going at the same time as the ~~Chautauquas~~?

ER No they usually were separate events there. These ~~Chautauquas~~ and we used to have circuses come in here. The Ringling group there would come in I suppose one section of it would come here. They'd set up here. And of course, we had quite a few carnivals. That was another group that would come in with all their side shows there, the hoochie coochies and the, all these well these different rides, that is the ferris wheel, and the merry-go-round and all these other whip the whip or whatever they call it there. A number of different rides that you could get on. All for maybe 10 cents or a nickel or something like that. And of course the ferris wheel and the merry-go-round were the two main things. Then they always had a high diver. Somebody got up on a ladder, way up probably well 75 feet up and they'd dive off this thing into a tub of water down below. That was always one of the big... They'd do that about twice a day in order to get the crowds down there and then they'd sort of milk you with your dimes there to try to knock the baby dolls off the shelf there and all the rest of it. A real old-fashioned carnival. Of course, every once in awhile they have a little carnival now, but it's nothing like what it used to be. One ferris wheel, maybe a merry-go-round and that's all, but it's, but those were big times too when they had the circuses and the ~~Chautauquas~~, the circuses, the carnivals and the horse races was most of the entertainment besides the 10 cent movies. I mean that's about the about the size of it. Of course they always had these dances. I mean they, that they had and of course at that time the churches used to put on a lot of little \_\_\_\_\_ . It's quite a different thing. You go to church there. It's a little different thing. Trying to make a nickel on knocking a doll off a shelf. But anyway they used to have these socials in (phone ringing) one of the old, in, right next to the fire station. The very next house to the fire station and that's been converted now into a...

MK Council on Aging or is that...

ER Well, this is one of the housing projects. They took this, very nice house that they tore down and put up this housing project there where they've got a it's called the, well it's called a Tilden House. That's was the name of the people that owned the house and I rented the office upstairs from this old lady that lived there and I had the office upstairs. But when I came back in 1947 and I

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bought this place here and I've been here ever since as far as that goes.

MK It's a wonderful spot. A little park right out in front.

ER Yea, it was quite a, see that, at that, when I was a young fella of course this fire station was always a place that my father used to take myself and two brothers up to the fire station to see the horses. And of course they had the, it was all horse drawn material there. I mean and they had about six or eight horses and when the alarm rang these horses would, the doors would open and these horses would come right out and stand right under the, the harnesses were held up like this. They'd drop the harnesses on them and just hitch them up and away they went. And that was quite a sight to see those horses charging down the street there. And they did it very quickly. That is I mean we, I saw a number of times there when the alarm would ring, these horses, these doors would open, these horses would come right out and stand right under those harnesses. They'd just pull a string and the harness would drop down on them and they'd just you know hitch up the to hold the harness on there and away they went. So it was quite a sight there. Now of course they, everything is motorized there. I think they still have, I haven't been in the fire station for a long time, but I think they still have this pole where they, of course the living quarters of the firemen is upstairs and they have to have so many in the building at the time and I think that pole is still there where they, there's a hole up there and they just jump into their clothes and go down, slide right down this pole. They wouldn't go down the stairs and they are aboard about as soon as the horses were ready so. They did a good job there but that was quite a sight. That was quite a few years that, that went on and of course that just goes along with the horse and buggy business there that we are dealing with.

MK Now you mentioned when you first moved to Barre as a child you had a wood stove and did you say oil lamps or kerosene lamps?

ER Yea, oh yea that's right. Kerosene lamps.

MK You didn't have electricity then when you were living here at that point?

ER Well you had electricity but I think a good many of the houses didn't have it and the telephones I think were available at that time but I'm not sure just when they came in. But there was a number of years that we used

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kerosene lamps in the house there. Just when the houses were electrified, I'm not sure. But at that time, there was no electricity in that area there.

MK So the downtown area would have had electricity?

ER Well yea, they would have because as I say the electricity was in town because even the electric cars were going and I think the people that were well to do probably had electricity, but most of us like the stonecutters and people like that in that area there most of us didn't have electric facilities and it was quite some time before the telephone was installed in the house. Now I'm not sure just when telephones became available but at least we didn't have a telephone for a number of years there. But of course that was in 1909 and it probably was around 1915 or '16 before we, before we put had the telephone put in and at that time we were sort of a middle class people. That is not too low and certainly not too high, but I mean at least we were in a position where we still had wood stoves and kerosene lamps and things like that. And the telephones I say did come in eventually along with the lights there. Just when that was, but electricity was available but to give you an idea of the farms around, it was a long time before. I worked for summers for a farmer for a long time and long after electricity became available in the city they were still using the lamps and milking by hand. There's no, didn't have the milking machines there. So this is all in the early 19, well say 1909 to along way along until it was quite awhile before most of them got milking machines and put in electric lights and so forth, so that, but I did a lot of work on farms for a good many years at \$30.00 a month, that is as a young fellow. In the summertime you'd just stay right on the farm, go home weekends and you'd just work all week and get a dollar a day, your board and room, and that was pretty good. That was in those days. I mean you could save a little bit.

MK How, were you still working on any<sup>of</sup> those farms when they did get electricity?

ER Yea, yea I was still working. Before I stopped working, of course after I, well I worked summers until um, I went to medical school. In fact, yea until I went to medical school. And by that time, see that was around 1930, they had the milking machines and they had electricity and so forth there because I can remember, well even as a young fellow there, I can remember hearing the milking machines from neighboring farms. Of course this man I worked for was a more or less a, well he<sup>was</sup> mostly crops. He did



strawberries and potatoes and beans and things like that, but he had two cows, but I mean and two horses, but I mean he didn't, but he still used horses up as long as I worked for him there, but he did have a tractor eventually. But that was all quite recent. But then as time went on, I was able to do a little bit better by working for a gravel man who he had a big gravel pit. And he had one truck and he and I ran this gravel business. He ran the gravel business, I worked for him but I was the salesman as well as the workman, because when we didn't get anymore orders I'd take the truck with the, loaded with gravel and go around to these construction places and ask them if they didn't need gravel and they'd take. We had a very good line of gravel, it was very good stuff. No dirt in it, just plain gravel and we picked up a lot of business that way. So we'd get a contract and it would keep us going for another two or three weeks and when that got through, we went somewhere else. It was just a one horse deal. But those were in the days we would shovel by hand. And now of course they have all these machinery, big shovels, mechanized shovels that they just load it up with probably three minutes you've got a load and you're off. That way it would take us about an hour to load the thing up, just one shovel, the two of us working in the gravel pit. But that was and then I finally ended up working in the, in the tire shop that is. That was about the last, the last, almost the last job. Then, oh getting back to the Depression times there, yea I couldn't get, I worked a number of years, several years for this, for this tire company, but then this when I came back one year business had slumped a lot and there was still part of the Depression of course and so I just went out on my own with another fellow here and I went around digging pipe lines and ditches and things like that so that there was a time when there wasn't too much work, but as I say as far as the actual Depression is concerned except for the CC people here that the government organized there, a lot of people worked for them. So there is no question, but you know it hit this area too and a lot of the flood control, as I said before, flood control worked dams and so forth which has been a great help as far as flooding is concerned were built by these people from the government. They hired both local people and also others came in from other areas there to get work because it went on for several years there. So, but as far as working is concerned, as far as I was concerned most of my time, my spare time in the summer was one job or another there because I had to feel, I had to have money to keep in school, as I say my father died in 1926 and that was when I was just graduating, I had just graduated from high school and just started college so that left the family,

you know, we were just middle class people to begin with and so that left the family kind of strapped so I figured that I if I was going to go to school, I'd have to go on my own so from then on I was able to with help with the scholarship there I was able to go to college and paid my way through medical school and got \$15.00 a month as an intern, so I mean that was big stuff you know. It wouldn't even buy cigarettes if you happened to be smoking. In fact the first year I was interning, they didn't pay anything and then they finally came to the conclusion that maybe they could pay \$15.00 a month, so you were putting in 18 - 20 - 22 hours a day as an intern, working all the time and getting \$15.00 a month and you were supposed to stand in line to collect this \$15.00. I told them if they couldn't send it upstairs forget it. It wasn't worth standing in line for an hour and trying to collect the \$15.00 which would be \$.50 a day I mean for a 20 hour day, 18 hour day.

MK About an hour.

ER Those, that again it shows that was the time of Depression because 19, well I went into the as an intern in 1934. And of course there were still bread lines and so forth there and the first year as I say they paid nothing and the second year I was there, \$15.00 a month, but that was as high as I was there three years and I never topped the \$15.00 a month. We always got the \$15.00.

MK Just one more thing to go back on the electricity just for a couple minutes. I wondered whether you had any special chores connected with the kerosene lamps when you were growing up?

ER Well no, of course kerosene was the, was the fuel that we used there. And you'd start the fires, see this if you were using a wood fire, coal and wood was the, was the heating unit and it was, you had a stove in the sitting room. One of these belly stoves there for heat. Then in the kitchen there was a stove for cooking. But you used coal, but you'd start it with wood you see. So you'd have to usually put a little kerosene on the wood to start with and then you'd get the fire started, then you put the coal in and of course in the wintertime we tried to keep, turn down the heat there and just try to keep it alive so that you could turn it up in the morning and the coal would be still hot there and you could put some more coal on. Of course then you were shoveling coal. And always had the coal man come up and fill the coal bin. You had the coal bin downstairs and they'd put a couple of tons of coal in there and then you'd every day you'd go down and fill the

coal, these little coal hods that you had on a handle there and you'd fill that up and bring it up and when that was empty you'd go down and get some more and always had the coal man come up once or twice during the wintertime. And of course even in the summertime you still, you still had to have heat for cooking. But it was, there was no, at that time at least we didn't at that time have gas heat and o.. Of course the gas business had been around for a long time but we didn't have gas heat there so the heat we had was coal and wood and mostly it was, it was coal. And so that worked out pretty well. But then of course what you did in order to be conservative there, there was a good many times that all of that coal wouldn't burn so that when you got the ashes you'd dump that out into an ash barrel, but before you did you'd sift the ashes and pick back up the coal that wasn't burned and take that back in and burn it, burn it over again. That is there was a certain amount of coal that wasn't burned so you always sifted the ashes. You didn't just throw, throw it out you see. But and that was a part of the business there. You'd have to clean the ashes out of the stove and bring them outside and sift the ashes and so forth and carry in the coal and all the rest of it was just part of the daily routine there that you went through. But that goes back quite a ways, but as I say the, when the, even when the electricity came in and the telephone and so forth, we still had coal and coal fires there. And the coal man, the so-called coal and ice man now is pretty well out of business. Now at that time, the coal man did, was in both coal and ice. So you'd see a person if they didn't know what was going on, see a sign there coal and ice, say what's the connection. But there was coal in the wintertime and ice in the summertime and these coal men would come around and they'd have a long metal chute and they'd just chute these, they'd put it down through the cellar window and chute this coal right down into the coal bin. And as far as the ice man is concerned, he used to come around at least two or three times a week and with his big cakes of ice and used to chop the ice and you'd go in and buy 10 cents or 15 cents or twenty cents worth of ice and he'd just chop off of a certain pound amount and put it on a scale, measure it and you'd take it in and put it in the ice box. No refrigerators at that time. If there were, at least we didn't know about them. But this, this was quite normal, because these ice men in the summertime did a big business and in the wintertime the coal men which is the same guy, doing a different business, did a good business with coal so it wasn't a matter of just a few people using it. Everybody was using it except probably the high, high price people which didn't need to bother with that. But I mean it was a

great help when you got the oil furnaces in there and things like that. But that, those were the days as I say the ice man came around and the kids would always chase around behind him to catch little pieces of ice. While somebody was buying the ice, of course they'd keep chipping it off and these little pieces flying off and kids were grabbing them and putting them. And then of course they still do the old, the maple sugar business there. Of course maple candy is a big business still. But I can remember as a kid going around there. I didn't ever work in one of those places, but used to go around watching them boil the sap down, helping them collect the sap. Take them in these, at that time most of it was by foot. If the horse could get in there with a sleigh, one of these things, then you'd just pour the sap into the big tub that was on the sleigh and bring it back. Otherwise you brought the sap into the sugar house and of course that sap was very, very sweet. I mean, of course the kids used to get a lot kick out of going around and take a drink of sap there with just, it was real sweet stuff. But it was kind of a laxative, so that I mean if you drank too much of that you'd be lucky if you got home in time. But I never, as I say I never worked in that particular. But I did work cutting ice for awhile. As I say the different types of work, I just worked wherever there was they wanted to hire somebody that's all. I remember one, one winter there it was, we were cutting ice in a pond up here. Of course they don't do that too much now. In fact there is very, I don't know as you can buy ice I guess, but I mean it's, it isn't much of a business anymore. But at that time, we used to cut this, this pond would freeze over and then around Christmas time, was the time they would cut the ice because that was the time it was probably the best, as deep as it would be anyway. At the time you could get this extra school boy help there so I worked for these fellows there. What they'd do is mark the ponds, the pond off with a horse and a marker. And this horse would go up and down and make these marks. Then you'd go out with a saw and you'd just saw these, these cross marks so you'd get a square ice just like that. You'd just saw right, then you'd float it down to the ice house. Then they had a conveyor so that somebody down by the ice house would take the ice and get it up on the conveyor and that would go up into this building and it was stored there. And of course it was covered with straw afterwards so it would keep it cool anyway and in the summertime they'd peddle the ice. And, that was quite an experience there cutting ice with a great long saw that was probably about six feet long with a handle on it. You'd just keep sawing until you got across the thing and then chute the thing down, down the pond to the conveyor

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so that was quite interesting. But that's pretty well gone by the board now. You don't, they talk about it now, but I mean it's mostly now a sport, the competition, cutting ice is mostly for the sport of it, see who can cut so many cakes in so much time and so forth, so that...

MK <sup>It's pretty wet</sup> Work when you're doing it as a job, isn't it?

ER What?

MK It's pretty wet work when you are doing it?

ER No, not too bad, no. See the ice, you were on top of the ice all the time unless you made a mistake and fell in, but you were still on solid ice and these, this ice was this thick, so there wasn't much chance to go in. You wouldn't be cutting it if it wasn't good and thick because there would be no point to it. But no you kept pretty dry.

MK I guess I'm thinking in terms of trying to get it out.

ER Well of course, this is, see you didn't touch the ice yourself. All you did was kind of with a pole you just pushed it along and it floated down. This was, this pond had a current on it so that it of course, it had a dam there so the water was flowing all the time. So you just push it along and it would go down and these people down by the other thing, they'd just take the thing and this conveyor went right down into the water, so all they do is, so nobody got into the water. They didn't, you didn't have to handle the ice at all. You pushed it with a pole and got it floating down the pond. Because this pond you see was really a brook that had been dammed up so there was a current to float it down to the ice house and then these fellows just put it, directed it into the conveyor and of course this conveyor kept going all the time and these ice things would go up there and there was somebody up in the ice house there were kind of pushing it around so it wouldn't all pile up in one place there. So that, that was quite an experience there, but as I say just another part of the work that you did. Anything to make a buck there so you could keep going anyway.

MK Well I want to thank you for taking the time to talk with me this afternoon.

ER Well I'm glad to do anything I can to help. I think it's, it just gives a little background of what's going on and what has changed there over the period of time.

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MK Interesting.

ER I was happy to do it. Probably I talk too much, but  
anyway.

MK One other thing I'd like to do is just get a few seconds  
of just the sound of the room in case I need a little  
piece of clear space as I'm putting this together.