

Rachel Dwinell Rose
April 17, 1987

Interviewer
Mary Kasamatsu

- MK I am with Mrs. Rachel Rose in Barre. This is the 17th of April. Now for some background. Tell me when and where you were born?
- RR I was born in East Calais, Vermont on June 1, 1907.
- MK Did your family farm in Calais?
- RR No, my father owned a sawmill and feedmill and we had some property. We always had a cow and three horses and a pig or two and chickens. So we had some of the elements of farming, but they were kind of scattered around. It wasn't right around our house. The barn was over near the mill and we had our chickens over in back of the house. The others were in the barn across the pond, across the river rather.
- MK Was the sawmill right in the village?
- RR Yes, it has changed somewhat now because the people who bought the property, the present owners, are using the power of the mill to generate electricity and have their own little electric plant. The yard which used to have logs piled high all over it, now has a house on it. Then across the stream, the feedmill part, has been used by people who run the Blue Seal concession and that still holds I think.
- MK I had wondered whether it was maybe part of that ??? in the Blue Seal?
- RR Yes, that is right. They are the present owners.
- MK How many were in your family?
- RR There were six children. Split over a wide range of 17 years and I am the youngest and the only remaining one. My older sister was a second mother in a way. My mother was ill in my teenage years and passed away when I was 18. Then I went on to college, but my father remarried. That lasted about 10 years. A very happy situation for the family in general. Then she passed away and he married the third time. So I have had two stepmothers, but I was away at school and then got married and so forth. We were glad Dad could remain in his own house that he built until he passed away.
- MK Did he work almost right up to the time of his death?
- RR No, he retired I would say the last 5 years probably. He was 87 when he passed away.

MK But up until then, he had always been in the sawmill.

RR The sawmill, not so much in later years. He did run the feedmill though. But even that was because people were able to go to bigger centers. They had their cars and trucks and could get their feed elsewhere. The whole thing kind of disappeared altogether.

MK Let's talk about your memories of Chataguas.

RR I was telling somebody the other night that my first taste of really classical entertainment was through Chataqua. They had the Ben Gweet players who played Shakespeare and other plays by other people. And Gilbert and Sullivan. They would have a different one every summer so I got to know Pinafore, Gondoliers and things of that kind. Then of course, they had soloists, a musical vocal and so forth. They had people who gave readings and there was an afternoon program and an evening program. Then the morning was more for children, although they would have a program for, a single program, for grown-ups. But they had a special childrens session all morning during the week. I can't remember how many years that we went, but at least three, I am sure. Dad would buy a season ticket. If anybody in the family didn't want to go, we would always pick up a neighbor or somebody to go with us. It was a huge big tent of course. My brother and sister went up one evening and there was a bad storm and the tent collapsed. So that was fairly exciting. I think somebody probably ripped it open to get out, rather than smothering inside. The thing that I do remember is coming home late at night through Hardwick Gulf. It was foggy. It is just a memory that stayed with me. Going up sometimes during the point, we went to day sessions. The railroad up above on the right side as you go up the gulf from the Woodbury Quarries into Hardwick, there is a railroad that went along up there and we would see the freight cars, you know the open cars with granite and so forth, I remember that.

MK That is not there anymore is it?

RR No, well if it is, it is not used. It maybe, but I am sure it is overgrown by now.

MK I used to live in South Woodbury.

RR What was your name?

MK It was just within the last few years. Did you go mostly to the Hardwick... ?

RR Yes, it wasn't the same week. It would be before or after Montpelier. But Hardwick was about 11 miles and Montpelier was 13 or 14 miles, a little further. It always seemed simpler to go up to Hardwick. Although, we went to Montpelier for everything else. I don't know just how we happened to choose. Also cars enter into it. This didn't happen of course until we got a car and I can't remember just when. It was during World War I, I think, that we picked up our first car.

MK What was that like after not having ever had a car?

RR Well, it was exciting. I remember I think that it wasn't a brand new one. It was a second hand one. It was a buick, touring car. You had a top that folded down. You had the side curtains tucked away that you got out in a sudden shower and put up with Eisen Glass windows. The windshield was operated with a hand crank to clear the windshield. That was always exciting.

MK Were you able to use the car in the winter too?

RR Not then. Not that early. No, it was only when they began to plow the roads. You see, they used to roll the roads. We kids would try to see if we could walk on the track without sinking in. It would be hard and so forth. No, we didn't. There was a problem starting it in cold weather. Later on when the roads were plowed, we would use it. But, for the first few years, no. We always, up to that time usually had what we called a driving horse. Sometimes it was a jack of all trades. As I said earlier, a driving horse, because the horse was used to deliver sawdust and slab wood to people. The big team went to Plainfield every day and would take down lumber and bring back feed. At the railroad down in Plainfield. So I didn't learn to drive of course right away. I remember learning. My brother who was five years older was a very gentle person, ordinarily. I can remember screamed at me to get in the right gear or something. Maybe it was the brake I don't remember. So I stopped. I got my thoughts collected. It surprised me to have him yell at me. But I had a license when I was 18 and I have been driving since.

MK It is interesting how the automobile comes into a lot of peoples stories at certain times.

RR Right.

MK Let's go back to, if you can, to your very first memory of Chataqua. You would have been about how old?

RR At least 10. I would think maybe I was in later teens. 12 or 13 along in there. In 1920, I would have been 13. It was before I went to the seminary, I am sure. I can't tell you of my very first experience. It has all kind of melted together into one memory of things that used to happen and I was always, I felt quite grown up because the entertainment was at 8:00 p.m. and you wouldn't get home until 11:00 p.m. maybe going on midnight and so forth. I remember my father loved music. So all the musical things he just enjoyed tremendously. He didn't hesitate. He would decide how many season tickets to get. Then we could always get, I don't know, I can't remember whether the seats were reserved or everybody would get what was there when they got there. I think you could get single admission tickets so if we had more than we had tickets for we would get them at the gate so to speak.

MK Is there anything comparable to the Chataqua now in terms of what you look forward to in the summer?

RR Of course, you do have travelling groups like the Mozart Festival, the Onion River Arts Council and the continuing things going on. The Barre Opera House and Montpelier has a couple of programs. When my husband first retired in 1962, we lived in South Barre and I just went to everything that there was you know, which wasn't very much. I am interested in all those cultural things. Then I joined what is now the Choraliers. It was then a Barre area group sponsored by the Ministers Association. Then they finally became independent and called themselves the Choraliers. I have had a special loyalty for them and then my niece in Northfield and her husband moved up, don't ask me to name the year, and she is a Chelast. They both taught in school and she taught public school music both instrumental and choral. She joined the Philharmonic right away that had started at that time and has played in it ever since as a Chelast. So I have always been interested in that group. Now there are just too many things to go to. I can't possibly take them all in and at my age, I don't like to be out more than a couple evenings through the week, if that much. So I just have to let them go. Then there are many things in Burlington that would

be fun to go to, but that is just too far away. Then there are many informal things, like the Garage. What was it I saw today about the Shoe String Theater or something like that. I think that technology and the growth of the population and advancements of all kinds have filled the need that used to be filled with Chataqua. The Bread Pass Chataqua was the one that we went to. They were a week long. I have tried ever since Jean first spoke to me, you remember there was the three day Chataqua that used to come to Plainfield. Much the same type of program, but of course limited because of time. I don't think we ever went to that as I recall. Probably didn't feel we could afford it after. It usually came later in the season. I have always wanted to go to Chataqua, New York. From whence these emanated I think. I guess they have similar type of programs through the summer there now, but I have never been able to go.

MK Do you remember any religious programs in connection with the Chataquas that you attended?

RR Not as such. I don't remember. There were lectures. Usually the musical and dramatic things and things of that kind came in the evening. Either mid-morning or afternoon were the single things. There might be somebody like Cornella Otis Skinner. Then there might be soloists. I don't recall any religious program as such or speakers or evangelists and so forth. They were another breed of cats. My father was a great evangelist follower and they wrote some of them. Rhoda Hebert was the name of one. He got familiar with the names and they wrote hymns which we would have in our hymn book and things that he liked particularly. My mother, I think, could be classed as a fundamentalist. I am not sure born again would fit her. But my father had different, I mean there was no problem between them, but he followed her lead pretty much, but he could be enticed into a wider range of activity than was permitted at the time. We had travelling ministers that came. They would be there for a few months and go up and down the valley from Woodbury down to Calais and so forth. We would often be entertained in our home. My father was the backbone of the church and the Sunday school at that time. He did it for years. Even when we had no minister, he would go down and we would have Sunday school anyway. So it was very much a part of our lives. I wouldn't want to say that there weren't religious speakers or programs, but I don't recall any other than the Chataqua.

MK Did the Chataquas persist beyond the time that you went to them or did you stop going because they stopped coming.

RR I think that was the main reason and I don't remember any sharp cut-off and chat about well we missed the Chataqua and so forth. It is just that I don't recall. Let me see, my mother died in 1925. In 1922 I started at the seminary and as I say I kept my house for my father through those years, because I was at the seminary. We didn't have any Chataqua then. But I don't remember a definite cut-off time. So I can't give you much detail. I don't think I am a very rich source of comment about the Chataqua.

MK I find it very interesting. The reason I had asked you whether there was anything comparable now. I was trying to imagine if I lived on a farm, in the Central Vermont area and knew for one week out of the summer something cultural was coming to the area, it would have been really exciting.

RR Yes, well we found it so. It is one thing; we are not people of a lot of means but when Dad got it in his head to do something that was okay and beneficial, why there was no hesitation. Ocassionally we might miss a program for some reason or another and I think we would try to catch it in Montpelier in a single performance or something.

MK Did you always go in the evening? Or, did he ever close the mill for a day and go?

RR I think he used to take in an afternoon program. Of course, my brother was home, so we had other drivers than my father. He went to all the evening programs. So we were sure of that.

MK I know for my children, in the summer, they look forward to the fair. We usually take them to the Champlain Valley Fair. Not at all for the entertainment, but for the animals mostly.

RR Sure.

MK For a chance to climb on the tractors.

RR We used to have a very good fair in East Calais sponsored by the Grange I think as much as anything. It was really very well organized, but then you know bigger things took place elsewhere. We had cars, people were mobile. So that died out also.

- MK I wonder how much mobility ~~by~~ ~~by~~ car might have contributed to the demise of the Chataquas really in terms of people being able to travel further ???.
- RR Yes, I don't recall that they were in existence in the rural, of course, Hardwick isn't exactly rural and it was livelier then, because the quarries were open and there was more business there. I can't tell you when it began. My feeling is that there were three or four summers when we were involved with it. My sister was home one summer and my next older brother was usually home and it seems to me that the timing would be right around the 1920's, 1920, 1921 somewhere along in there. I don't remember much detail. As a matter of fact it bothers me, because there seems to be whole blocks of time that nothing stands out. I can't remember anything special. Just little snatches of things here and there that come to me and I don't know whether it is coming at my end of the family. I had so much more. I was well nurtured by my siblings and especially when mother got ill and so forth. So I don't have any sharp memories of so many things. The things that impressed me more was the fact that I was getting to see plays, musicals and things like that. Of course we had local talent, local shows going on. Plays that were put on about every year. There would be one with the town characters in it and so forth. My brother used to participate more in that than I did. I was in one or two. We were a very restricted family in a way, because my mother's standards did not permit dancing. We couldn't play cards. Of course, a circus we never went to. We could go down to Montpelier and watch the parade from my uncle's front porch, but it wasn't until I was grown and out on my own that I got to go to a circus. I think that is one reason why the Chataqua program were so enticing because I didn't get to do many of the other things.
- MK Those were things that your mother did feel were appropriate?
- RR I don't remember my mother. She was sick for three years before she died. She died in 1925. This bothers me a little because I do not recall the time I would be going, I don't remember mother being involved in the situation. Of course it was way before my dad married again. I remember my sister Esther, who is 10 years older than I and my brother Ralph and my father. I have no picture of my mother in it, but

it seems to me she must have gone if it is at the time when I mentioned. It is very strange.

MK But they were seen as educational?

RR Yes.

MK Excuse me. Is that your refrigerator or furnace?

RR Furnace. Does that bother?

MK It does come through. It probably won't run very long.

RR So I am afraid I am not providing you with very much information.

MK That is okay. It is certainly more than I would have had on my own. That is for sure. One thing that I am asking a lot of people which is not on the subject of Chataquas at all, but in terms of the depression, we are interested in looking at how the experience of the depression differed for people who were in a small urban area vs. a rural area. I wondered where you were living?

RR I was living in East Calais, except that I graduated in 1930 from college. I graduated from Elmira College. I couldn't have chosen a place harder to get to from Vermont. I had a four hour wait in Albany going and coming, but I got used to it. So I didn't mind it, but it was a long track. I wouldn't say that it affected our home situation too much, because we didn't have much to begin with. We certainly weren't involved in the stock market. Nothing failed, stores didn't close. The mill ran on. I started working in the mountains up at Saranac Inn in the Adirondacks every summer to help put myself through school. We all, the six of us, graduated from college and put our own selves through. My father wasn't able to do anything. Of course, it was a little easier to do that then. Inasmuch as when I got through, I had a debt of couple of thousand dollars and thought that was tremendous, how was I ever going to get it paid back you know. It wouldn't get me through a semester now. I graduated with a Social Studies major, not to teach. I didn't want to teach, but in order to continue in a Social work field, I would have had to take another year to specialize and so I couldn't afford to do that and I turned my hand to whatever I could do. Of course the effect of it lasted on through 1930's for some time. I stayed at the college in a part-time job

for a couple of years. Then I got into waiting on tables, working in a dress shop and so on. I managed to be independent. My father didn't have to support me in any way. I couldn't get into my profession. The main thing is, that I have always enjoyed people in whatever circumstance I have been in. I don't think, other than having a field open to other jobs, I wouldn't say I was affected too much by it. I think my older brothers and sisters were more, because they got married and had children. So that was one reason that Dwinell Homestead came into existence. My uncle passed away, left the property to my father and he could not afford to maintain it so it was up for auction and being the depression, there weren't too many offers. I wasn't there at the time, but five of my brothers and sisters got together and got a small mortgage and bought it for a song. We have had it ever since for 50 years. So in that way, it was quite a ~~boom~~. boom.

MK Where is the homestead?

RR It is in East Calais. If you go up Route 14, you go by it. It is up across from the Mill by the stone wall in front of a white house up on the hill. We can't keep it open during the wintertime, because insulation would cost a fortune. We haven't been able to swing that. In Mid-May, people come up. There is work weekend scheduled for cleaning up and so forth. The young people will get there. Considering my generation, the first generation, although it is limited to my father's decedents. I mean there are other Dwinell's around. There were six of us. The older ones had families. They would come up there. They couldn't afford to go away to the shore or anything like that so they would come up and spend weeks and a month at a time. Now it is down into the third generation. More ??? easier ways of life are vastly different. They are not married and settled and have families. There is only one or two. We now have 21 stockholders as against the 6 that started it. They are second and third cousins. It is like people. Some you like, some you don't. I like them all. But I have an advantage there. There are little cracks in the calm of the organization a little bit. My hope is that they just don't grow wider. That is how that came about. I don't go up there and spend much time because at this stage, I like my own bed. It is only 20 minutes away. We had a big to-do last summer because it was our 50th anniversary. We do gather. That is when we have our business. It is a family corporation that is incorporated and we go through all the motions. At

least the clerk does go through all the motions that General Motors does, as far as a corporation is concerned. We have to keep in touch with the Secretary of State and so on.

MK It can be quite elaborate then.

RR I think if we hadn't incorporated, it might have fallen apart. We had to work out a way of financing it and pay the taxes, keep the property up and so forth. We have been fortunate in finding local people that would help. Holton ~~Cate~~^{Cate} has been a stalwart bit of support as far as a source of information. If people up there had to know anything about it, why he would know what was going on. We have kept in touch with him. Of course he did all the electrical work that wasn't done by my nephews and brother-in-law and so forth. Now for the families about the depression, I think my sister may have had the hardest time. The one 10 years older. Because she stayed at home after my mother died for a year. This made it difficult. It wasn't after my mother died, it was when she was in the hospital. When she had left home to go to the hospital. She was a phys'd major and it made it more difficult to get back into the field and get recommendations and so on and things like that. Everybody else just worked hard and seemed to get along. I don't think it stymied their career really.

MK Because you were in the country, you had raised most of your own food?

RR Yes.

. . .

MK You said you have a very strong memory of coming home through Hardwick Gulf.

RR All the turns and curves and the fog would be settling in and we would have to go very slowly and they didn't have the white lines on the side of the roads that they have now.

MK That would have been a dirt road then or was it paved?

RR Dirt. I can recall when we got paved roads. It was an amusing experience. I can't tell you, I could look up in the record in our files and find the exact date, but it was when they put in the paved road and they had to widen it considerably. And where that wall is we sloped down to the side of the road and at that point, the people's sewer pipes ran right into the pond. We never thought anything about it of course. So

that meant we had to get a septic tank. But they sheared off the pipe before they put the wall up. So we got kidded about the colored toilet paper we used. Because it was hanging up on this pipe. That was the year we opened up the old three holer out in the barn. Then we had to put in a septic tank the following summer. That was when I think it proceeded right on up through to Hardwick of course.

MK When would that have been?

RR I was afraid you would ask that.

MK Just as a guess.

RR Maybe early 1940's or somewhere along in there. As I say I could find in checking the records, but it would take me awhile to find it right now. This is what facing me and what has become my hair shirt. I am not getting things done for the family that only I know about that I want to get done and organized. That means that I can't get out to see people I enjoy. It is very easy to get me pulled off into outside things rather than doing what I should do.

MK Would you say then, that your love for cultural activities began with the Chataquas?

RR The satisfaction of my interests. Of course, I was young enough not to realize that I would have a love for that kind of thing. But with my background, we girls all took piano from Sylvia Bliss. I don't know whether that name has crossed your ~~Ken~~^{Ken} or not, but she was a local, very fine character, but never married and she had a bad speech impediment. Things like (shebra)music ? orchestras and things like that I had not experienced until then. I think my knowledge about cultural things certainly began with that, but my feeling is that it was a treat or something that was needed the experience. That is where my first knowledge of things like that began. Might you have known Barbara ~~Here~~^{Here} in Woodbury. Second or third farm outside the village on the right toward North Calais.

MK That is where we lived.

RR Oh is it. Well that is interesting.

MK Yes, that was the old Tassy place.

RR One of our favorite rides, my father always took friends and guests on was to go up through South Woodbury Village

and turn right to go around Nelson Pond and then of course go back by Mirror Lake. Come back up by the Foster place. Colonel Foster's. Then as you start down the hill on the other side take a right turn, with Woodbury Lake down below you there, go down, you would come out near the bridge up above E. Calais there. That was one of our favorite drives. There are a lot of Maidenhair Fern on that road. I have never seen any place else. That is when you turn to see Woodbury down below you there. Right along there, keep a sharp eye and on the right hand side there is Maidenhair Fern.

MK I will have to look the next time I go out that road. Well thank you very much for taking the time this morning.

RR You're welcome. You know, you get a person my age to reminiscing, it may not be pertinent to the subject, but you can go on forever.