



William E. Savoy – New Boston High School

Bill Savoy of Milford, NH, lived in New Boston from the 1940s until he enlisted in the US Air Force in 1962. Bill counts 10 generations of ancestors in the New Boston cemetery. He is a past president of the New Boston Historical Society, and with his daughter Lisa Johnston he compiled a comprehensive database of New Boston gravestones and vital statistics.

Bill sat for an interview in the Historical Society museum with volunteers Dan Rothman, Jim Dane, Sylvia Chancey, and Jay Marden.

Dan: It's June 13th of 2019. Where does your story of New Boston begin?

Bill: Well, let's start with where it says: "Were you born in New Boston?" [Bill referred to a list of questions we use for our Oral History project.] Well actually no, I was born in Grasmere at the hospital. At the hospital, which is now gone. It's a car dealership now.

Dan: Did you come back home to New Boston? I mean as soon as your mom got out of hospital, did she bring you home?

Bill: I don't think so because at the time my father was in the war and I believe she had an apartment in Goffstown. She was living in Goffstown at the time.

Dan: This is 1943. And who were your parents?

Bill: Jean Leland and Clayton Savoy.

Dan: So Jean was obviously from New Boston. Your grandfather was Willie Leland, right? Was Clayton was a Goffstown man?

Bill: No, his father lived here on, ... the same place where I'm staying now. I want to say Cochran Hill. That's what it is. So my grandfather, George Savoy, he lived there and that's the reason that my father and my uncle Bob and their sister Marjorie [Savoy] Bose, that's how they ended up in New Boston.

Now, my grandfather was a chef, and he was the chef for Mrs. Wason. Who at the time lived in Francestown.

Sylvia: At the Hundred Acres wasn't it?

Bill: That I couldn't tell you. I thought she lived in downtown Francestown so... I could be wrong. That's where I thought we went there once.

Sylvia: because there was a fancy restaurant out at Hundred Acres

Bill: No, no, I don't think, aw maybe. But anyway, I can remember going into Mrs. Wason's house because they were looking for money to extend the cemetery up there on the hill [in New Boston] and she donated the money to put in the road for the upper section. And that's where they got the money. I remember going there and then that's what they talked about and she gave him a donation.

Dan: So there was a Senator Wason who lived up at Hundred Acres and maybe she was related to him somehow.

Bill: They were actually related. They lived up here in the hill to that big house on Joe English Road.

Dan: So [George Savoy] was a chef.

Bill: He was. Actually he was quite a famous chef. He taught in Rhode Island and he would travel back in Florida and to Vermont to different places. So he was the head chef wherever he went,

Dan: Is the house still there on Cochran Hill?

Bill: I think it is. And I'm not sure which one it is. I don't know if it's the older one on the right or the one on the left. There's two houses there that are fairly old and I'm not sure which one it was 'cause I never went there when he was there. So, but from the stories I heard, that's where they were.

Now, he was just renting, he didn't own it, he just rented.

Dan: So we have grandfather George Savoy up on Cochran Hill, with Clayton, Marjorie and...

Bill: Bob. Robert Savoy. Yeah, I'm pretty sure they're on the stone out there on the common [the New Boston War Memorial] 'cause both my father and my uncle went in the war and they volunteered from here, so. Their names should be on the stone out there.

Dan: Do you know where your father served?

Bill: My father served in the navy and he was all over the place. He went into the Mediterranean and he went to Italy and all those places. And my uncle Robert, he was actually on a ship that got torpedoed and he had to be rescued, but he survived it.

Dan: Now – Robert and Marjorie – they all went to New Boston schools?

Bill: I believe so, yes.

Dan: I wonder where. They would have gone through in the 1930s. Are any of these names, the Savoys, familiar to you, Jim? They would have been, uh, quite a bit older than you.

Jim: I don't know anything about 'em.

Bill: Marjorie married Robert Bose. I don't think my father graduated from school, I'm pretty sure he didn't graduate.

Jim: You had a younger brother.

Bill: No, I'm the youngest. I had, I had an older brother, Clayt.

Jim: Okay. I remember the name, but I don't place him.

Dan: That would be Clayton Junior?

Bill: No, he wasn't really a junior. They had a different name. My father's name was actually Paul Clayton, but they didn't call him Paul because his grandfather was a Paul, so in order not to confuse them they called him Clayton and then when my brother came along they called them Big Claytie and Little Claytie. That's how we differentiated between them.

Dan: What did your father do after the war?

Bill: Well, let's see, he delivered chickens for Mr. Upton. Baby chicks. They would put them in a van and they'd take them off and deliver them to whoever. Sometimes they had to bring them to the post office and ship them. I guess they shipped a lot of chickens back then. I guess they still do it today. I don't know.

Then when the Korean War came along, my father went back into the Air Force and was stationed in Manchester, at Grenier field.

Dan: Are there other things we should know about Jean and Clayton? Jean is interesting.

Bill: She was the oldest sister at the Lelands and of course all four of the girls were telephone operators. They would do it during the day. My grandfather would run the office in the, at night He had a bedroom in the back room and the phone rang, he'd get up and go transfer the call.

Jim: Who was your sister?

Dan: Jim, your classmate was Jean's sister Virginia or Ginger?

Bill: Yeah, she's the youngest.

Jim: Yeah. Jean was the eldest. And then Dottie then Barbara then Ginger?

Bill: Yep. Right.

Dan: Willie's wife was...?

Bill: Ethel, and they lived as far as I know, they lived always in that house [on High Street], I don't know of any other place that they lived. They may have, when they first got married, they may have lived somewhere else. I don't know. All the time that I ever knew they were in that house.

Dan: With the telephone office. You described a front porch.

Bill: There was a front porch on it, which is now long gone. I think there is a short porch now on that house. The porch used to all go out in the front. And I can remember – of course after my grandfather died, we lived in that house – so the thing is that porch used to have a tin roof. And when it rained, I used to love it, because you can hear the rain hitting that tin roof and the porch used to have a glider swing on it. And we used to go sit there and watch. In the summertime, like on a warm day, the rain would come through and there'd always be a big rainbow over the valley and they could sit on that porch and you could see it looking down the valley. Yeah. Yeah. And those are some of the things I remember about that house.

We lived there until I went in the service [in 1961]. And then when I came back, my folks had already sold that property and they live down on River Road. They had, they had a trailer they put in down there.

Of course, the trailer's gone now.

Dan: You were born in 1943 and you remember as a child living on Old Coach Road.

Bill: The thing is, I remember... my first memories were living on Old Coach Road. I guess it's the third house up [8 Old Coach Road]. I don't know who lives there now. Gus Andrews used to live there. My folks rented that house for a little while and I can always remember Mother saying that when they first moved there, she walked up on the porch and fell through the porch, so they had to re-do the boards on the porch. And then we moved further up Old Coach Road [18 Old Coach Road]. My folks bought the house up there, just before the Dodge's house. I'm not sure which one it was, but people used to say that Dr. Weaver used to live in one of those houses. And talking about Dr. Weaver, I remember that when Willie's mother – she was a Warren – they had like 15 children and the last one was named Dora and when she was delivered, Dr. Weaver offered to adopt her and they said "no". The doctor offered because they had so many children. They used to live in that little house... it used to be Joe Thompson lived in it for awhile... I don't know who owns it now, but it was a very small house on River Road.

Aunt Dora, I asked her about [the house], you know, because it was so small. I said, where did everybody sleep? And she said, well at the time I was born, she said a lot of the older ones were gone, but we had a bedroom where there was nothing but mattresses on the floor, which I had to step over to get to my bed. I had to walk over the other kids' beds to get to mine.

Sylvia: Where Mert and Linda used to live?

Bill: No, I thought they bought the Yost place, Dean Yost's house. They lived in, they live up the hill a little bit on the hill. [Discussion with Sylvia: No, they live in the Joe Thompson was, oh, maybe Merton lived on the other one. Yeah. Okay. That's what it is. All right. So they did own that one. Yeah. But that was a very small house. It was, there was two rooms downstairs and I think there was a bathroom in it and there was like, no, the bathroom was upstairs and it was like two small rooms upstairs. Yeah. Very small. Yeah. That was it. And then there was a shed on the back. When Joe got it, he added on to it. But it was small, yeah. But they lived in that house and I think there was either 13 or 15 children. [Bill laughs.] I couldn't imagine living in that with that many kids.

My grandfather, great grandfather married, um, Ethel Humphrey; she was a Humphrey. [Great-grandfather Willie Leland 1863-1917 married Emma Marshall Warren 1863-1945. Grandfather Willie Leland 1894-1957 married Ethel Humphrey 1902-1949.] Mrs. Warren... Mrs. Holt, she was his second marriage. He married my great grandmother. They both had the same names [Willie], they never referred to them as junior, but they're both in the cemetery. Now they're both up there. [Confusion about genealogy.] Nope, nope. Nope. Willie the First, he was married to a Warren.

Dan: Ethel was Grandpa Willie's wife.

Bill: She was a Humphrey. Now, my great-aunt, she was a sister to my grandmother. She married into money and then I guess he died or they divorced or something. And then she, she owned the house across the street [across High Street] for quite a few years. And then she met Mr. Armour of Armour Meat Company in Chicago and she married him.

Sylvia: More money.

Dan: A lot of your childhood was in houses on Old Coach Road.

Bill: There's two and I may have been 10 years old and we moved from there to my grandfather's house [on High Street].

Dan: You were telling me [in a conversation the previous week] you used to go to school here in the village? From your house on Old Coach.

Bill: Right. Get up five minutes to eight and run to school. When I lived on Old Coach I used to sled down the hill to the bottom, 'til you got to the main road. And then I put my sled up on the snow bank and go to school and I'd collect it when I came back.

Dan: Was it was a dirt road at that time?

Bill: No, that was one of the few roads that were actually tar up until you got to the top of the first hill, the big hill, you go past the houses, 'cause that was all tarred in front of those houses. And then you went around the curve and you went up the hill and it stopped at the top of that hill and there on, it was dirt when I was a kid.

Dan: So you had your house there; did you say there was no plumbing?

Bill: When we moved in, there was no plumbing, okay. And there was an outhouse downstairs in the basement. In the back of the house. Yes. Just big enough to get in and turn around and sit down. That was it! It had one little window in it so you could see, but that's where it started out. And my father eventually put a bathroom upstairs in what used to be a big closet and actually there was under the eaves of the roof, and the tub went in the lower section and the john went further over and there was a sink on this wall here. My father installed all that. Back then when you didn't have money, you had to do with what you have. In that house there was actually an oil stove and it was actually where we consider the dining room. There was actually three rooms [on the first floor]. You went into the hall and the stairs went straight up and you went down a hallway. And then that was the kitchen. And this room was the dining room and this room was the living room. And of course they were pretty small and it was a wall, my father removed that wall and opened it up. So it made that living room a little bigger and that's where the phone used to be. So, but it was an oil furnace and it was in the floor. So we were warm, and then the kitchen stove was a gas stove – I guess they don't make them like that now. The sink was a cast iron sink and it was probably about, I don't know, three or four feet long, a couple of feet wide. On Saturday night, that's where we had a bath. I remember that.

Jim: [Laughing] That's familiar!

Dan: What was unusual about a gas stove? Was it propane?

Bill: It was, it was propane back then. It had the old knobs and it looked like it was a skeleton. You know, I don't know how else to describe it, I mean, really old, but that's what was in that house. And my father cemented the floor down in the basement; of course I don't know what it looks like now. And in that house the well was in the south. I remember there used to be a bin in there and that's where we used to keep the potatoes. We'd go get potatoes, I think. I'm pretty sure it was up to Mr. Colburn's farm we'd get potatoes and that was for the year usually, and for milk we used to go to the Colburn's farm and got milk. We probably went maybe twice a week. It seems to me maybe we had these buckets that we use to put it in, bring it home, put it in the fridge.

Dan: So your dad had a car?

Bill: Yeah, he always had a car. Yeah. I don't remember too many of them when we were younger, but...

Dan: What did you do for entertainment? The radio?

Bill: Radio, that was big for us. And then once we moved in there, I guess we were still living there. I guess television came along and we were the first ones to get television on that street. And all the neighbor kids used to come and they would have, they would have movies or they would have cartoons on Saturday morning and the kids from the neighborhood would come and we'd sit and watch TV! Of course that was a big deal back then. Of course it was black and white. It wasn't color at that time. Yeah. And I'm pretty sure, I think my father used to know Tommy Hall down in Goffstown and that's where we got the TV.

Dan: Tommy Hall opposite Sully's?

Bill: Yep, that was Tommy Hall's place.

Dan: So what'd you do for fun?

Bill: During the summer we used to come to the playground. All the neighborhood kids, mostly from town. Not too many of the kids from outside of town came in, but on good days we would all play baseball and we'd do schoolyard pick [taking turns to choose teams; everyone played]. And it didn't matter how old you were, everybody, they came, we'd play. Boys and girls, it didn't matter. And like I said, we used to do the schoolyard pick and we'd do one in the morning and we played until lunchtime. And then everybody would go home and have lunch and then come back in the afternoon and we'd play again. And new people would pick and play in the game. The game was never, you know, "who won?" the game was, "we played!" And the little ones of course, I don't know if some of them are probably as young as five or six even before they were school age. And they got a turn at bat and usually they got a turn until they hit the ball. So everybody had a good time. Yep. And that was one of the things. And then, uh, one of the other things that when it got dark, I remember we used to play kick the can. We used to do it on the common. And of course everybody would run. We had the whole town, everybody would run and go hide. And of course the, whoever, whoever was "it" had to go try to find people. And if you found some, you brought them back to the can, then you went to look for somebody else, but if somebody else could go in and tag them before you got back, they'd be free again and they'd go hide again. That was the day and we'd spend hours doing that, and when it got too dark, of course parents would be hollering out, "Hey, time to go home!" During the school year, we used to play basketball and baseball and of course we had, we had movies usually on Saturday night and they were either on the playground in the summertime or they were in the town hall in the wintertime

Dan: On the playground, they'd hang up a big sheet or something?

Bill: They used to have a big screen, I guess it was a metal contraption that they could pull down. They'd pull it down and that would be the screen. So it was a fairly good size. I would say it was probably eight by eight or something like that.

Dan: Do you remember any of the movies? Titles?

Bill: No, I remember there was always a serial type thing in their front and you know, just show you a short clip of something and sometimes then there was a news reel type thing and then it's the main movie. And like I said, I don't remember. I don't think I remember going to, some of them was scary but you know other than that.

We used to sit on the grandstand with the projector and you know the screen was out on the field and they would project out onto the field. Of course the projector was underneath in case it rained. Yeah.

My father did it [ran the projector] a lot. I guess Bill Hooper did it quite a bit. There was probably a couple of others but I don't remember who.

So you know, we had the ideal childhood as far as I was concerned because we were free to go wherever we wanted to go. Nobody said "you can't go there, we're afraid of somebody" like today.

Dan: Did you have bicycles to get around?

Bill: We had bicycles and I remember my brother had a bicycle. I didn't have one. We lived up on Old Coach Road, but it was a big bike for me 'cause he was four years older than me. So in order for me to ride it, I used to have to put my legs through the bars. But I managed to do it after awhile after several times being dumped over. But, and then once we moved up the High Street I eventually got a bike of my own. But that was the transportation. Most of the time we just walked wherever we went. You know, bicycle was not the big thing. It was just going somewhere, being with friends.

We went pretty much anywhere right up until I left to go into the service [1961] and of course, as I got older, I spent a lot of time parked on Dodge's porch. And of course if you wanted to see somebody, you know, everybody went through town eventually. So you could get to see people and sometimes if they had a car and you could get a ride and go somewhere.

Dan: What was Dodge's Store like inside?

Bill: Pretty much the same as it is now. But back then we used to be able to use the upstairs hall. There was some dances up there. Yeah. And if I remember right, they had graduation up there. They had graduation exercises. I think it was my Aunt Dot, was one of the ones that were up there.

My graduation was in the town hall

Dan: So you went all the way through the Village School.

Bill: All the way through. All the way through up all, well I say four rooms, but then there was a couple of rooms. There was one upstairs. The Home Ec room was way upstairs. And then the shop was out back.

Lisa: Excuse the interruption – do either of you want coffee or coffeecake made by Sylvia Chancey, New Boston's best cook?

Bill: Yeah, I was going to say, oh, I have a small piece of that.

Dan: Um, so you went to the school, were you a shop student?

Bill: I believe it was a Mister Kittridge was the shop teacher. Yes.

What sticks out in your memory of your 12 years in that school?

Bill: My first memory wasn't too good. The first day of school, it was the next day after Labor Day, and on Labor Day I had just learned how to whistle, and I was a happy kid 'cause I could whistle. So I was the first one to go through the door into this school on that Monday morning. So I went into the first grade room and as you went through the doors, it was on the left, and the teacher was Mrs. Colburn and she was actually a cousin of mine, if you go back far enough. Anyway, I went in and of course I introduced myself. She asked me who I was and I told her who I was. She was over at the far end [of the classroom], she was in the closet doing something and getting ready for classes, I guess. Now, I went over to the one of the far windows and I'm sitting there and I'm whistling away and I heard her say something, but it didn't register to me. I of course being a boy, I tuned it right out. So anyway, she came over and she turned around and slapped me on the face because she thought I was being disrespectful. So I remember that. We will remember that until the day I die. [Laughter.]

So that was my first experience. But uh, I wasn't a very good student and I think probably that was a little part of the reason. So the first four years were spent in that room, you know, the first four years was, well, first two years were spent in that room, next two years were spent in the next room and then from there we went, well you go into different areas upstairs. Upstairs you used to switch rooms. Downstairs, you didn't. You got a seat. That was it. You were there for the day.

The thing is, it was the first and second grade were in the same room. The teacher had first and second. [Jim adds "it was like, and then four, five and six and then another time.

Right? Yeah. So then in seven, eight upstairs, yeah."] Seven, eight all the way up to 12 was upstairs.

Dan: Did they teach you music? Would it be your classroom teacher who taught music and art and everything? Or was there someone else?

Bill: A teacher would come and matter of fact, the teacher was Mrs. Bartlett from Goffstown. Yeah. And she used to come I think once a week and you'd stay in the classroom and you would learn music from her. Later on, I guess when I was in high school, a music teacher actually came and taught instruments. I can't remember his name now.

Dan: Did you learn an instrument?

Bill: I did. I took up the clarinet so, and the thing is, when the music teacher came, we used to go over to the town hall and we'd be upstairs. That's where we would practice and learn the music upstairs on the instruments because it would be too disruptive.

Dan: What about lunch? Did you go home for that?

Bill: I used to go, well most of the time I went home. Once in a while, I don't know whether it was mother was working or whatever happened, I would eat hot lunch and that was over at the town hall. And then I remember when I was in high school they needed kitchen help. So I used to volunteer to go over and do the dishes at the lunch room, with the lunch ladies. And I'm trying to think of, I think my aunt was one of the cooks.

Of course, cause the classes weren't very large. And actually I was in one of the largest, I think there was like, 15 or 16 of us? They had a year they had no, no seniors, nobody graduated. They didn't have one. And I remember one year, um, it was a Hunter girl, Elizabeth Hunter. She was the only senior to graduate, and they went through the exercise just for her, but they did it. So she was the only graduate.

Dan: If we look through the yearbook, did you graduate in 1961 or 60?

Bill: I graduated actually in 62. Yeah, I should have graduated in 61 but I stayed back a year. I decided I didn't like the teachers, but I found out they were still there the next year and so was I. [Laughter.] It didn't work too good. So then I buckled down and I started getting better grades and I moved on.

Dan: That was school. Let's see. Dodge's store – there was a barber shop upstairs?

Bill: Oh, yes. Probably once every two weeks we'd go up there and I think when at the start, it was like 75 cents and I remember when it went to a dollar, everybody screamed.

Jim: Who was the barber when you were there?

Bill: There was a couple of different ones and I think they came up from Goffstown, I would say. We used to go upstairs, go upstairs and it was in that room on the left of debt and that's where we used to go up there to get our hair cut.

Dan: You mentioned a doctor, was he Dr. Weaver?

Bill: I don't remember Doctor Weaver – that was long before me. Dr. Fraser was the doctor that I knew.

Dan: And was he in that house at the bottom?

Bill: No, no, he was at the corner here. Yeah. Right at the corner.

Dan: The gray house that you drive into if you come down Old Coach?

Bill: I never saw that happen, but I'm surprised it didn't, to tell you the truth. You had a restaurant there for awhile, didn't you? [Sylvia ran Carter's Place.] I believe you did. Yeah, but I think that was after me though. I think I was gone at the time. Oh yeah. But I remember Dr Fraser and I remember, um, I remember we had a, we had a ceremony for him just before, I guess he gave up the practice or when he was going to give up the practice. And they, at the time there used to be a story on TV called "This Is Your Life."

Well, the people in town got together and that's what they did. They assembled all the information about him. And then when we got there, we made him the guest of honor and we presented him with his life story and people he knew and the families and I guess he had a sister and it was a couple of other people that I remember. I was fairly small, but still I remember, you know, they made a pretty big deal about Doc Fraser and him leaving, which you know, hey, it was the only doctor and he was pretty important as far as the town was concerned. The town hall was full! Oh my God.

Dan: Was there a local man to replace him or did you have to go to Goffstown?

Bill: I think we started going to Goffstown, if I remember right. Dr Snay was it? I remember going to Dr. Snay. I remember when I was up on Old Coach Road, we used to have a little table saw downstairs and I used to make all kinds of things. Well, one day my thumb got slipped and went down into the saw hard. It's hanging over like this. So my father was sitting upstairs in the, in the living room watching TV, and I think I made it from the saw up to the top of the stairs before he got out of the chair. So we had to go see Doctor Snay and stitched it back on and putting it back together hurt worse than when it got hurt. Oh God. That hurt. But yeah, unfortunately that was a mistake that I made, that I learned from.

Dan: Your thumb looks good now.

Bill: I'm missing the tip of it because the tip actually came off.

Dan: You were telling me the other day, Doc Fraser made house calls.

Bill: He did. Oh yes. Like I said, when he went somewhere, if you went to somebody's house, he ring the phone office. Tell one of the girls on the switchboards they had, "I'm going to be at so and so's house, so if somebody is looking for me, that's where I'm going to be." Everybody knew where he was if they were looking for him. That's right. And of course everybody knew what was going on with everybody else. [Laughter.] So you know, you being your, your business wasn't too private back then.

Dan: Um, the Leland sisters, they didn't ever listen in on the phone calls by any chance?

Bill: Legally, no. [Laughter.] That was against, you know, all telephone rules. I am actually, I think it was a law of some kind that you weren't supposed to do this. So no, they didn't.

Sylvia: All along the line, because you had party lines, you know.

Bill: You had so many rings, right. Party line and usually you was up there for four different people, per line. You had one ring, or it was a short ring and a long ring [to identify who was being called].

Dan: So every phone on that line rings at the same time.

Bill: Right. And that was cheaper, but if you had a private line, that cost more money, and of course there was only so many lines that they could put up. So they actually needed people to be on party lines because there's just so many lines on the, on the, in the wires that we put up back then. Of course, nowadays, that's all gone now. Matter of fact, even the phone's going to be gone here pretty soon.

Sylvia: That was way before television. That was the entertainment back then, you know, listening in.

Dan: What other businesses in the village can you remember?

Bill: The apple orchard. I picked "drop" apples, after school in the fall. In September. We used to get on a tractor with a trailer and we'd go out to MapADot.

Jim: Pitman farm, MapADot over on Beard Road, I picked apples for him, last year of my high school, there was three of us, Robert St. John, Howard Woodbury and I, we picked a hundred boxes a day, for two weeks, 10 cents a box. That was damn good money for those days.

Bill: I remember we used to pick up the drops and I think we got, we got 5 cents for drops. There used to be an orchard at the top of Meetinghouse Hill on the right. Used to be one up in there. They had the golden delicious apples in there.

We came on Saturday morning, we used to get paid. So all us pickers, we's gather out front, over there at the Apple Barn. And of course I was one of the younger ones and all the guys were there, the older ones were saying, you know, we're not getting paid enough. We should be paid more. You know, he's getting \$2 a bushel for these things and we're getting a nickel so we should get more. Well, I was the first one to go in and get my pay. Right. So, so the older boys as well, see if you can get him to pay a little more money. So I went in and of course, me, I asked him, I said to him, I said, could we get, you know, can we get a little more money for picking these drops? And he told the guy that was giving out the money. He says "Give him his money" and he says, "We don't need you any more." [Laughter.]

That was the end of my apple picking days. I went out and I told the boys, "Mmm-hmm...don't ask!"

I used to hang around on Dodge's porch in the summertime, especially around this time, a lot of the farmers would be out doing their haying. They'd be looking for somebody to help them hay. So they'd come down and "Hey, would you help us out?" and we said, oh yeah, we'd go off and we'd pick up bales of hay out in the field and bring them back to the barns.

Jim: How much they pay you for that?

Bill: None. I didn't get nothing. I was a volunteer. Yeah. I volunteered. Yeah. I remember doing it for George Daniels and I remember doing it for Mr Towne, Howard's father, Fred, and I always remember him because he couldn't do anything, at that time he was pretty old, so, and we used to go up and get into the loft and when we were done throwing the bales up there, we jumped down. "Oh my God," he'd say, "if I did that, I break both legs." {Laughter.]

I remember one 4th of July just before, I guess it was like the 3rd, I was sitting there and I forget who it was, I think it was Bill Mason came by and said, hey, we need some help getting some

slabs for the bonfire. I remember we went up to I think at one of Page's mills somewhere. I don't remember where it was. It was out in the woods somewhere. Well anyway we loaded this truck with slabs and it was hot that day and we came back down and, and of course we assembled the whole thing like a teepee like thing, but that was a long day. But he did get me a drink.

Jim: You know who put the gasoline on that one that blew up? [4th of July bonfire]

Bill: I don't know. I wasn't here for that one. No, I was gone.

Dan: Where was 4th of July?

Bill: Well it was always at the playground when I was younger. Then of course my father always did the fireworks. He would, he would order the fireworks and my uncles were all the ones at that night would go out and put the shells down in. One of my jobs was I went, we used to have to dig the holes to put the mortars and they actually put them in the ground. And they had to be tipped to the east just a little bit. And I don't know the exact reason. But anyway, I guess they didn't want them right over the top. So when they would shoot off, they would go into a little bit of an angle. Also from the playground area, it was right in the playground, right behind, you know, the field actually turned into grass.

There used to be ground displays and they were put up on the bank. We used to have to go dig holes and put those in. I remember that was part of my job, which I didn't get paid.

Dan: What about the 4th of July parade?

Bill: I was always in the parade. I didn't want to be a bystander. I was always in the parade, somehow. Some float or on a bicycle that was all decorated should be in the parade.

Dan: What about food for 4th of July?

Bill: They had the concession stand and I just, I think it was the playground association that made the hamburgers and hot dogs and all that stuff.

To get back to the fireworks. I remember the last year my father did it and my uncles, somebody accidentally put up a small shell into big mortar, 'cause they came in different sizes. There was, I think it was, it was like three different sizes and somebody accidentally put a small shell in a big mortar. What happened was it went maybe six or eight feet in the ground and went off. I remember one of my uncles got burned really bad on his arm and because my other ones were, they were walking around and they had them [fireworks] in their arms like this, you know, several of them walking around. Well after that they decided this is too damn dangerous. So they gave it up. They didn't do it after that. And of course, shortly after that, then they went down to the fairgrounds.

Dan: Now, you were telling me, do you remember the rope tow for the skiers [at the fairground]?

Bill: Yes, I do. Leon Daniels used to have it. Of course Pinball Hill was, it was nothing like it looks now, now it's all trees. But back then it was, it was open, it was bare and the rope went up the hill and they had, they had an old motor sitting up there, some kind of Model A, I think it was

a Model A motor with a shiv on it [sheave: a pulley with a grooved wheel] so they could engage when you wanted to go up the hill, then ski down.

Dan: Did you do that?

Bill: I did not do that. [Jim thought it was Charlie French and Leon Daniels ran the ski tow.] Was it Charlie French? I only remember Leon Daniels. But anyway, of course there was a fee to do it. But yeah, I didn't have any skis so I didn't do it. But eventually as I got older, I remember there was an old pair of skis in my great grandmother's barn down on River Road, Mrs. Holt. And she gave them to me and of course they were ancient, just leather straps. But I used to go up into the orchard because at that time I lived up on High Street at the telephone office. And we used to go out, I used to go up on the hill and ski down from the Apple Orchard back down towards the house. Because there was a group of trees between our house and there, you had to be real careful because I got down in there once and I got my ski caught; my ankle was swollen for about a week.

But anyway, back then the skis didn't have any edges to them at all. But I remember Merrill Todd used to live across the street and he saw me out there trying to, I used to take the skis off and trudge up the hill and we skied down. I tried to ski down through the snow. Well, he had a good pair of skis, so he came over and he showed me how to, how to put the skis on and to pack it down. Oh yeah, yeah. They go up the hill. So after that, boy, it was fast.

Dan: You said your great grandmother was a Holt.

Bill: Yes. And that was the second marriage, I believe. [Arthur Holt? Was he the funeral director?] Yes. Among other things. Yes. I remember I used to go there about every other day after school cause my grandmother, great grandmother used to make cookies and I would go down and get cookies. So I got to see her quite a bit. Yup. 'Cause I don't know if you want to record this but I can tell you something about that down there. But anyway, he was the undertaker, right? And of course in that house the well used to be in the basement and the cellar, it wasn't a basement, they were cellars and just about everybody on that street had wells in the cellar.

Of course he used to do the bloodletting. He used to collect the blood and he used to have this pit out back and he dumped the blood in there. Well after a few years, I guess it started showing up in the wells, so they had to put a stop to that. [Laughter.] That's kind of gruesome. Yeah. And I don't know if it's true or not, but I remember seeing that they, I guess they had an epidemic of some kind and it was a lot of people that died and they ended up bringing them up and buried in the cemetery. I guess one of them, there was some lady, they were bringing up there and come to discover she wasn't dead, so, so this was a story, I don't know if it was true or not, but anyway, I guess they went back and dug up a couple of 'em, just to make sure that they were really dead. [Laughter.] I guess that was before they started doing the embalming.

Of course, that was one of the stories that came down through, because he was the undertaker. But how much of it was true? I don't know. But that always scared me. I didn't want to be buried if I wasn't dead.

Dan: So the gravity research foundation must've been active back then.

Bill: It was active back then. Of course, they had the bottom floor in the old Dodge's store, that was the first Dodge's store. I don't know if you know that the brick house that used to be Dodge's store, the first one, and of course the bottom floor, the Gravity Research Center took that over and he used to have seminars and things in there. And of course then they owned the research place, which is now the tavern. And of course when I was a kid, there was one room in there, it was a bird museum.

Dan: Did you visit that?

Bill: I did. I did. I got to see that. It was fantastic. It was like, you know, as far as I'm concerned, it was impressive. It was in one of the downstairs rooms. Matter of fact, I think it's where the dining room is now, but a lower level. And, uh, I remember John, John Locke used to work there and he used to have to go around with a feather and clean all the birds. It's just that part didn't impress me that much. I didn't want to do that job.

Dan: That's was John Locke of the Lockes up by the cemetery?

Bill: Yeah. He was a student. He was a couple of years ahead of me. But to me, it was fascinating to go in there and see the birds and for years all the different classes from the schools would go over and visit.

Dan: How were they displayed?

Bill: They were in cases. Glass cases. But there was a lot of them, from what I understand that unfortunately though, I guess they all ended up in the dump. Yeah, unfortunately, I guess whoever took it over after they ended up going through I guess a couple of different hands. They didn't want the birds so, they couldn't find anybody else to take them. So that's where they went.

Dan: What other businesses, what other stores might there be in town?

Bill: Well of course there was Marshall's Market and I, my father worked for him part time, he worked in the meat department. Mr. Saltmarsh used to do the railway express; there used to be a little shed right next to Marshall's Market [Jim: on the other side of the street]. He used to go down I guess to Manchester and he would pick up the packages or boxes or whatever it was and he would bring it back there and then you would pick it up over there. Of course he lived in the house across the street.

Then there was the grain mill. It was actually running back then. I remember going in there several times. And my uncle Robert Bose, he used to work in and of course I believe it was Merrimack Farmers Exchange at the time that, that had it. And then they one in Goffstown and when they close this one, my uncle had to go to Goffstown. He used to make deliveries and chicken grain mostly a lot of it was, and I guess cow grain.

Dan: Was the mill noisy?

Bill: No, no, it was not noisy at all. Nope. No. You could hear the water wheel working. But other than that, there wasn't a whole lot of noise. It was pretty quiet. Of course the stones were,

you know, they were just, just a certain amount apart. They really didn't make a lot of noise and when they worked, they were pretty slow. They weren't fast. They went around pretty slow, but they used to pour the grain in and eventually it would work its way out to the edge. And of course they had a trough that they used to collect it.

Jay: Did you complete all of the cemetery studies, with your daughter? [Bill Savoy and Lisa Johnston made a list of almost all the gravestones in New Boston cemeteries.]

Bill: Did I complete them all? I don't consider them complete. There's probably still stuff we don't know. Like I was asking Jim about the poor farm. It may have been Dan I was asking, about the poor farm, whether he thought they might've been a cemetery up there 'cause there's no mention of it anywhere. But I know a lot of the old poor farms, when somebody died, they didn't bother bringing them to the cemetery. They were planted somewhere out back or in a field somewhere.

Dan: You went into the service, which branch?

Bill: I went into the Air Force. I didn't want to be a grunt. My father always said if you're going to go in and you want to be in the navy or the air force since they got the best chow. Well that sounds good!

Dan: How'd you become interested in history?

Bill: I think because of the family history I wanted to learn. Yeah. Which like I said, I had 10 generations in the cemetery, which I'd never even realized when I was growing up. So I started getting into the genealogical part of it.

I don't know if it's still here and up, but I donated my class ring. There again was one of those things that I said, you know, my children won't want it. Do they want to see it? They can go over to the historical society, look at it. [Lisa gets the ring from the display case.] That's my high school ring. And I had one of the few, most of them had a stone, but I didn't like the stone. I wanted the silver background. So it's a little different than a lot of the other ones.

Bill: I remember my Grandpa, he used to be a policeman. Willie was for awhile and... Charlie Murdo, lived in that house over here in the Mill Street. He a police officer. And I remember John Grant and I used to put on some dances at the town hall and we have to get – at the time you had to have a police to come be there present. We'd get Charlie Murdo to come over at the dances and it was just, we were only teenagers, but we raised money for Crotched Mountain and uh, we did that a couple of times. And then of course St. John was the chief of police at the time... Charlie Davis was one of the officers.

Dan: So you were arranging dances. Did you meet your wife in New Boston?

Bill: I did. Well of course we, we knew each other in high school and then they were having, it was going to be a birthday party for one of the girls in town and it was going to be at the, at the train station because at the time you, I guess you could rent the hall. At the time it wasn't being used for a school or a police station or apartments. But anyway, I was friends with her brother

and he was supposed to go off on a date with a girl he had met in Nashua. So he didn't want to bring his sister down. So I agreed to go get her. So I brought her down, and of course while we were there, we danced because they played a record player and we danced. And that's how we met.

Dan: Your wife's name is Rachel?

Bill: Yes. Rachel was a Barlow. And they lived at the Wason house up on Joe English Hill. My wife and her family lived there; they didn't own it. A fellow from Nashua owned it. He was in business with my father in law, Leo [Leo Barlow 1911-1995]. They picked the property up and then they, he logged the whole area off. And that's what he did at that time. He would, he'd go around and buy woodlots. And at the time, he was working for the ice cream making outfit, White Mountain Freezer.

And they had a place in Milford that they used to make all the buckets, the wooden buckets, and he used to go out and get all the lumber and timber to bring to them to make buckets with. And of course he'd go out and buy the woodlots and even at that time he said he'd pay maybe a hundred dollars, \$200, for 20-30 acres of land. And of course now he always said that if I had to kept that, I'd be a millionaire today. But he sold them as soon as he logged it, he'd sell it. He says, I'd get \$10-\$15 for it. Can you imagine buying that land for \$15?

Dan: So you met at a dance in the [New Boston railroad] depot. Did you say you went to school there briefly?

Bill: No no. That was my brother, because I guess it was too crowded in the school over here. So they, they used that as a school house. And actually I guess if you went in there, I don't know if they if they sanded it [the floor] or not, but you used to be able to see where they bolted the desks and the chairs; you used to be able to see that. Of course I don't know what it looks like now.

[Dan: What do you remember?] Well I remember if you're go in through the door, it's a big room all the way to the other side and on the left hand side was the fireplace and then the stairs were a circular stairs that go in the round part.

You know, the turret? That's where the stairs were. The stairs went up and went to the second floor and it was like a balcony on that side until you got to the middle and then it was walled off and it was offices downstairs and then there was like a ticket office on the other side in the bathrooms downstairs. But there was a room upstairs and I don't know what they kept in there. Maybe stuff they were going to ship out the trains or supplies or something. That's what was upstairs.

Jay: Did you ever get involved with the Playground Association [which now owns the depot]?

Bill: No, they own it, but they got it from the railroad and actually it was the White Mountain Appalachian Club actually gave them a good portion of the money to buy it. One of the stipulations was they used to come and canoe down the river in the springtime and one of the conditions was they could come and stay there for the weekend when they come because they only did it like maybe one, one or two weekends. In the spring when the water was high. You couldn't see the rocks, but they would come and then uh, when they stopped using them for that, they used to actually let them stay in the town hall. [Jay: Big spaghetti dinner.] Yeah, I know.

That was a big deal when they came to town and you'd see, I don't know, 25, 30 of them. And of course they would start up here. Yeah. And they would go, shoot [down the river] to Goffstown. They picked it up before the bridge, Howe Bridge, in that area right there. But I remember that as a kid, seeing that, and of course my folks being part of the playground association, they used to put on the meals for them 'cause they actually would cook them a meal and the whole nine yards. So, that's how that got purchased. Because they donated the money and I'm pretty sure there's records of that somewhere and how I remember seeing them someplace in the memorabilia that's here somewhere.

Dan: You built a model [of the railroad depot] by eye, or did you take pictures?

Bill: Actually, I had some pictures, so that's what I built. But there was no exact dimensions. It's just a facsimile. I didn't put real windows in, I just put pieces in there and I painted them black. But the dimensions of it look pretty close. So like I say, it's not an exact model but a pretty good facsimile and I think you would recognize it if you saw it. You'd say, okay, I know what that is! But I was amazed that it was built by Gilbert or designed by Gilbert and he designed all these train stations all over the world.

Dan: I checked Bill's stories he told last week about how Gilbert brought the plans out to Chicago.

Bill: Yes, yes. 1893 Columbian Exposition. The world's fair featured the New Boston train station. And of course actually that's the second building, you know. It burned down, the first one. And if you look at the pictures, the chimney that they had was stone, like the rest of the outside, the first chimney they built with stone. And if you go look today they're not stone, they're brick, because that's where the fire started. So they didn't want that to repeat that process. So they made the chimney out of bricks the second time and that's why it's a brick one instead of a stone one.

Dan: What other stories have you? You're full of anecdotes and we've learned so much.

Bill: When I was a kid the Ice House used to be still over there [on Mill Street]. Yeah, we used to all play in there once in awhile. And then there was a little path up along the river. Past it. You walked through the woods and go along the river. We had a fishing, I mean a swimming hole up there. Of course we'd go skinny dipping, because you couldn't see it from anywhere. And that's where I learned how to swim because all my buddies, they knew how to swim, so they said, "Yeah, just jump in. You can stand up." Well, they lied. [Laughter.] "Okay. Paddle, paddle like you're a dog." And that's how I'm looking to get out. It was either that or sink. So that was an experience.

But the thing about swimming in the river, which we did a lot and we did it up – I don't know, the dam that's past where the box shop used to be. [Kirsch's mill.] Well, there's a dam further up. And of course there was sluice way all the way up to that dam, but we used to swim up there a lot. But the only part about swimming in the river was you got leeches. Well we learned real quick that we used to bring salt with us. We used to put salt on, they'd let go pretty quick. But if you try to pull them off, that was, oh my God!

And I remember the one thing about that swimming hole up there. The guys used to always bring sawdust and then it would float down to the bottom. So the bottom was all sawdust. It wasn't all mucky or rocky; it was all sawdust down there. So it kind of made it nice.



In July 2019, Bill presented to the Historical Society a model of the New Boston railroad depot. It is an excellent replica, which Bill made without having the architect's plans for the 1893 building. Bill made the hand-painted model 15 or 20 years ago, and he used real granite for the steps, and "one and a half coffee cans" for the depot's turret.