

James H. Dane

interview by Dan Rothman

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in the New Boston Historical Society building

Jim Dane is a Historical Society volunteer who has lived in New Boston for all of his 90 years. He served in the U.S. Navy during World War II, raised a family with his wife Wilma, served on the School Board and the Finance Committee, and chaired the building committee for the New Boston Baptist Church.

When were you born?

I was born May 19, 1927.

Were you born at home or in hospital?

I was born... I don't know what you call 'em... a woman that takes care of mothers when they're ready to get rid of the kids. A midwife!

Who was this midwife?

I don't know.

Was she in New Boston?

No, that was in Goffstown. So I wasn't born in New Boston. Everybody else in my family, except my sister, my sister and I, the two boys ahead of us were born in New Boston, but that's before me.

Your parents were?

My father was James W. Dane.

My mother was Flossie M. Felch.

Where was James W. Dane from? Was he born in New Boston?

Yes, New Boston.

Do you happen to know the year he was born?

1886. It must have been August. My grandparents were Moses Atwood Dane and I believe it was Mary Alice Dane. Or Alice Mary, I'm not sure, but I think it was Mary Alice Todd.

Were they New Boston born as well?

Yes.

Goes way back. James W. Dane was a farmer?

Yes. He was a farmer.

At the time you were born, was the family farm on Clark Hill Road?

Yes.

Your mother was Flossie M. Felch... do you know her parents' names?

Her father was Charles, I don't recall what the mother's name was. I used to know. They came from Hopkinton or Henniker, that area.

I wonder how James and Flossie met, all those years ago.

Well, she was working for the Atwood girls, and going to the church over here, not this one but the other one.

The Baptist Church?

Yeah, they were Baptists. She would go with them. Anyway, in town here they got to know one another. I know that the Danes were affiliated with the church that was here... Presbyterian! All the way from the first Danes that were here, all the way down through my father. I went to church here when I was small, well not when I was small... after I got married we went to

church here until it turned into too much of a peace thing, in the 60s and 70s and I got sick of that and I wouldn't have anything to do with it. And that was the time when Nonah and David Poole moved to town and David's brother Robert was a Baptist missionary living in Maine at the time. They convinced him to come to New Boston and try to start a church here. That's how it all happened. We got a Baptist church here.

You eventually built that one on Lyndeborough Road, but before then did you meet in someone's house?

We were down at the [Railroad] Depot for quite a long while. We met there pretty much until we started to build up here, until we could have our services in the building that we were building.

That was 50 years ago!

Did you help build that?

Yeah, I had quite a lot to do with it. I worked for a building materials place in Milford, and they [the church people] knew what I did and they figured I'd know more about it than anyone else, and so I was Building Chairman. It worked out very well, I think. I've always felt that the Lord had something for me I should do.

It's still standing.

It's still standing. The congregation ain't very big but it's still there.

Let me go back to 1927... in your household there were James and Flossie... how many brothers and sisters had you?

I had two brothers and one sister. The brothers were Robert and Charles and the sister was Marion. I was the fourth one, I was the youngest one.

What do you remember of your house?

Well of course there was a kitchen range, that was in the ell of the main house, the kitchen was, and there was, where they warmed water, for when they were slaughtering beef or pigs, they had hot water. I was just little; I don't remember too much about it, but I know it was there, and of course Mother always did her cooking on the wood range, in the kitchen. The main house, what I remember of it, had quite a lot done to it, quite a lot of changes. When it was first built it had a center chimney with fireplaces all around, a big fireplace here and the bedrooms had a small fireplace, both ground floor and second floor. But somebody, one of the Danes, was a carpenter – now I don't know the year it was done – but they took that center chimney out and they put a circular stairway to go up, all the way to the attic. And then sometime there was an addition put on with another room, both downstairs and upstairs, so it changed the building considerably.

Do you remember electricity? Plumbing?

Well there was no plumbing; there was a back house out at the end of the ell. Two holer. In the living room was a stove, pretty good size, you could heat with wood, and of course I had to bring in wood for that and split wood and that sort of thing. That was it as far as heat and plumbing was concerned.

Was that a Dane homestead for many generations?

Yes it was. I don't know for sure what year the house was built, but it was somewhere around 1800. They came there in 1780, and there was something there at that time. When they bought the farm there was some building there, evidently, because they moved from Ipswich or Londonderry whatever. I never heard too much about it. I understood the barn was built in 1840. I assume the house might have been built around the same time, maybe a little before. Or maybe a little after – which would you build first, a house or a barn? I can't tell you.

You said the house burned?

The house burned, year after I left. My brother was living in the house next door. It was another house where the main house had been taken down and the ell changed into a living space. When I left, they moved into the house with my mother, into the big house, and that winter they burned it down. Chimney fire.

What year would that have been?

1952, I think. Maybe '53. Anyway, it was in March. Cold, windy, the coldest day all winter. Everything froze, fire trucks, there was a lot of snow on the ground, the roads were terrible, so there wasn't much chance.

But everyone got out OK?

Oh yeah, everyone moved out. In fact, my wife was up there, and took them in the car over to my in-laws' place and they stayed there for a few days, until they got so they could move back to where Charlie lived before. He had to work some on that so they could.

That's all I can tell you about that. I kept myself away from that as much as I could; I just gave it all to them and I left. Matter of fact I already owned half of it. I couldn't see my way doing anything with it. So that's that.

What kind of farmer was your father?

It was a dairy actually, but it was more of a subsistence farm after I was born; that was the beginning of the Depression, that was 1929, '30, that was after Whipple had left, so he wasn't selling milk any more, so it kind of went boom.

What do remember from when you were a small boy?

Of course I had a certain amount of work to do. The year I was nine years old they gave me a bull rake to rake scatters, when they were haying, you know, you rake it with a horse rake, you had windrows, you load a hayrack, and as they did that I had to pick up the scatters, that was my chore during the haying season. Otherwise I was expected to work in the barn, clean the cows and so forth, one thing and another. Everything had to be done, that's all. We had a garden, I was supposed to pull the garden weeds. I had to make sure that the woodbox for the kitchen stove was full. And in cold weather I had to make sure I had wood in the front room for the heater there. This is just things kids had to do.

I wasn't much of a kid, I wasn't very good. In fact I heard afterward that someone told my mother that she would never raise me, I'd never amount to anything, I'd die before adolescence. [Jim laughs.] I didn't grow very fast, and I didn't have much strength. The year I went to school, first grade to school down at Todd's Corner, my father had to bring us to the school, and a lot of time we just walked, down cross-lots. Wasn't very far, half mile or so, but I remember some cold mornings, I'm telling you, walking across the field in the snow [Jim laughs] you get down into the woods where the wind isn't blowing so bad. But that's part of it all. What the heck – that was years ago – it's all gone.

How many years did you go to that school [one of the last one-room schoolhouses]?

Just one year.

A single teacher for how many kids?

Somewhere over twenty, 'cause there was 5, 6 grades. I don't think there was only one or two in the 6th grade, or 8th grade, 8th grade perhaps. I remember 3rd grade was "Pappy" Daniels and a couple others. Two or three girls. In 5th grade was Johnny Colburn, John Daniels and John Lovell and probably some girls mixed in. And might have been another boy or two, I don't remember, but I remember those three Johns.

Do you remember the teacher's name?

Anderson. I'm pretty sure. Quite sure. Bob [Todd] could tell you. She probably was a first year teacher or something like that. She wouldn't have been any more than twenty-two or three.

After that one year you went to the Village School?

Went to the Village School. That's right.

Where you went all the way through high school?

Yeah.

Was your mother a good cook? What do you remember about growing up in that farmhouse on Clark Hill?

Not a whole lot that I can recall. We always had plenty on the table to eat, I know that. We always made a big garden and she did a lot of canning, Mother did. That was before we did freezing, of course. She put up a lot of stuff in Mason jars, vegetables and fruit, one thing and another. Actually I remember more from when I was having a family [of my own]. I remember for school I had to walk part way to the bus and go with it all around town to the schoolhouse. I had to walk home if I didn't want to take the bus. I don't remember much up to Junior High. I wasn't old enough to remember much.

We've seen a picture of a school bus. Would it go up Clark Hill Road?

I had to walk to the top of the next hill to catch the bus. That was in 7th and 8th grade. We didn't have buses in high school, so we got to school the best way you could, and the best way I could was on a bicycle or walk. So there you go.

Quite a hill to bike up!

But it didn't hurt me any! I used to go... instead of going Clark Hill and all the hills, I could go back of the barn and right through the field there and there was a wood road down to the next road by Brooks... Pine Road, I guess they call it now. That wasn't too steep, so I could ride down that and get on the state road down by Todd's and zip right on downtown. And there weren't no hill only Cidermill Hill to go up to go home. I did ride my bike almost all the way; couple of times had to get off and push it. If I was in a real hurry, well I belonged to the Boy Scouts. Clem Lyon talked me into joining the Boy Scouts. I was in High School by then, probably 14 years old. I was riding a bike. Of course you had blackouts [for World War II] so you knew what you were supposed to do... fire alarm would go off you had to come. Then I would ride my bike down Clark Hill. I only had one hill I had to walk up and the rest of it was down hill fast. [Jim laughs.] It was dark at night and the road was nothing great. But you get used to it; you can see the road, you know where you are. There was one place though that was pretty steep. And it was rough; it was not a good road to ride a bicycle on. Something happened and it stopped and I kept going. [Jim laughs.] Dark in the ditches! Anyway, I wasn't hurt any so I started looking around for my bicycle, so I finally found that. And it was still all right so I kept on going. The Boys Scouts were supposed to be messengers for anybody that needed to go from here to there, from one person to another and things like that, so that's what we were supposed to do. Well, that was one of the bad times. [Jim laughs.]

How did your mother and father get into town?

My father had a Model T, that he drove, when I was small. And up until... I don't remember when it was... but anyway, he met a drunk, all over the road, and he got out of the way, just barely enough to let the guy go by, and he was clipping the rails so as not to go off. It was right on a place where there was an overpass of a train tracks, and of course that was it. If you just went off there, the whole family would have been gone. No doubt. I think when he got home that night, he put the Model T away and never drove it again. So after that it was horse and wagon.

Would you drive the horse and wagon when you were bigger?

I could; never did much. Had pretty good pair of horses, to do the farm work. I didn't have much to do with them. I knew how, but I didn't need to.

Were your brothers quite a bit older?

Yeah. Let's see, Charlie was probably 11 years older than me and Robert a couple years older than that. My sister was three years older than me.

You mentioned a fire alarm. What was that?

Same thing you got now. It's a whistle, I guess, or a blower.

What else do you remember about World War II? Do you remember the airplanes?

Oh boy oh boy – do I ever! When they got the bombing range going here, and that was of course in '42-3, and so forth, there was airplanes going all the time. There was a while I could remember particularly, one spell a month and a half, two months, it seemed like it anyway, may not have been, seemed like it, there was B-17s flying around and dropping bombs over there, all day, B-24s going around all night. And some times you'd hear fighters going that same time. That set everybody right on edge! I remember that particularly. I know I was out back of the farm one day, and this plane went over, one of the fighters, the crazy pilot, he was going round and round [Jim makes a rolling gesture] headed for Grenier Field. Straight across, I watched it go out of sight. He was just rolling, rolling over and over and over. I thought that was pretty funny. Never forgot it. Never, never. That was probably in 1943 or 4, I don't know when it was. We knew the bombing range was there. There were airmen from Grenier Field – that's Manchester Airport now – and there was Navy planes coming out of Rhode Island I think it was; they were coming up and strafing and dropping bombs and dropping bags of flour so they'd know where it landed. And I guess they dropped a lot of bombs too, 'cause I know a few years ago they had Bob Todd survey it, and Bennie [Jim's son] and Jason were working for Bob at the time. They were criss-crossing [the bombing range] and any other way. They were finding all the bombs and so forth that were there that didn't go off, some of them were duds. And there was one or two planes that crashed over there. And Ben said as he was working over there, he was standing on the wing of one of them. And they'd find out where the bombs were, and they'd get them together and blow them up. I guess they had quite a time of it! And that was only, what, three or four years ago.

What do you remember about New Boston stores and businesses?

When I was old enough to go out and work some... this store over here I worked one summer [pointing at the Northeast Café], Marshall's Market, I was putting up stuff, putting things away and so forth and waiting on trade. I liked that 'cause I could talk to some of the girls that came to town. And then one summer I was working for Walt Kirsch, the mill he had over here [on the river near New Boston Pizza]. I was putting apple boxes together. Somebody else was running the "merry-go-round" that cut the stuff [sending one piece of wood through the saws multiple times to be cut] so I had the pieces, I just ran the nailing gun that put them together. And I was doing that for quite a while, most of the summer. I remember a thundershower come up and I know that the fire alarm went off, that was when lightning struck a barn up on Bedford Road. The guy that owned it was working there at the mill, and of course away he went to go home, to see what was going on. There wasn't much they could do about it... it burned flat. Since then, Eiermann lived there for several years, and then she sold it.

I think the year I was a Senior, in the fall, was when we were picking apples for Fred Cann, up here... where the houses are now. It was a nice apple orchard there, small trees, young stuff, so you didn't have to do much climbing. We did pretty well. There was three of us, picking a hundred boxes a day, every day for about three weeks. We made pretty good money, compared to what you could do usually, I mean what the heck, ten cents a box, hundred boxes, what's that – ten dollars? Ten dollars a day, five days a week, six days a week. And we got that apple orchard picked, and the other two guys, I think they went up where Anderson now lives [Beard Road], that orchard, and they had me stay at Pitman's place. Big apple trees, tall ones, loaded, and you put a 25-foot ladder up there, and you go up there and you pick 5 or 6 boxes before you move the ladder. [Jim laughs.] I was still picking a hundred boxes a day.

What were you wearing, to put the apples in?

It was like a bag, you could let it out. You had to be careful, especially on a ladder, not to lean against it and spoil the apples, so Fred was watching me pretty closely. I let it right out and when I had it full I'd come down and it would fill a box. That was fairly heavy! It was a pretty good deal though, but I'm telling you, you put that ladder up there, you just be careful when you put it up there and did it so you could pick both sides, far as you could reach. Go like a son-of-a-gun.

This was Fred Cann?

Yes, he lived right up here, and his sister was Mrs. Pitman, Pitman Farms. Fred was taking care of the whole thing for her, and besides that they had hen houses and he was doing eggs. That was that year, particularly. And the next year I was gone, anyway, I was in the Navy. When I got out he wanted me to come back and pick apples, and I didn't want any more to do with it. Nope. I don't want to pick apples! 'Cause I know he'd expect me to pick a hundred boxes a day and I didn't think I probably could any more.

But anyway, we did pretty well. I had money in my pocket. I could get what I needed for myself and still have a good time.

What did you do for a good time?

Well, they used to have dances here, couple times a month, or more than that, in the Town Hall. 'Course you just go to a dance, let it out and raise hell, get a girl to dance and whatever. The thing was, there wasn't a whole lot to do, anyway, and I wasn't too... well, we used to go – Howard Woodbury was my buddy, in high school – and of course his folks had a big hen business, egg business, and he had wheels to drive. We were doing things together, like that, and double-dating some times, whatever. When we got out [of the service, after the War] at that time, if you couldn't find a job, and in most places it was pretty hard to find a job, especially by then, 'cause most of the guys were home by the time I got out [1946]. They had what they called the Fifty-two Twenty Club. You get 20 bucks a week for 52 weeks, until you found yourself a job. Well I know Howard was working for his father and he didn't need it but he was still getting it. I needed it! We'd go to Manchester and sign up for it, get the twenty bucks and come home, get a six-pack of beer and raise hell.

What kind of music at the dances?

Za Za Ludwig ["Za Za Ludwig and his Vaudeville Boys" played New Hampshire dance halls from the 1920s to the 1940s] it was... whatever popular at the time in the 1940s and 50s. You don't get that kind of music any more. Slow waltzes and so forth, things like that, and once in a while you get a quick one. Something you could enjoy. I know a lot of guys, of course they would – I didn't do it, because I give up, I told Howard he could keep on getting his beer, but I didn't want to any more. I didn't need it any more. I got sick and tired of that, and I didn't do it!

That's all. Of course I was having a lot more fun with the girls, 'cause some of them, they're leery of you if you're drinking. Lot of them. Whatever. [Jim laughs.]

What do you remember about high school?

It was pretty easy for me. I didn't have to work very hard to keep my marks up. You had to keep it up if you're going to work out. During high school when the guys were all in the Army and the farmers needed some help, they'd come to the high school see if anybody wanted to work. Well, Jim Dane always wanted to work, no matter what it was. And some of the time it wasn't very nice, but it was something to do, something to make a little money with. So if you kept your marks up, you could go. Well, I was always where I could go. That's the way it was, and I didn't have to work very hard to keep my marks up. I was fortunate in that, except one semester, I got a zero I guess in English one semester, because, book reports were the worst thing in the world, as far as I was concerned. I couldn't read a book report; I didn't want nothing to do with them! Consequently I lost it, that one quarter. But that didn't do it – hell, I was still third in the class when we graduated!

How many of you graduated that year?

Well, there was only ten of us. [Jim laughs.] There was four boys and six girls. Two boys from New Boston, one from Francestown, one from Lyndeborough. Let's see, the girls, there was two girls from Francestown, the rest of them were New Boston, so, that's the way it was.

Howard Towne, who's older than you, remembers the voc-ed at New Boston High School; welding, carpentry.

Oh there was a lot of that. We were working on motors, somebody's truck wasn't running too good, they needed something done to it, they'd bring it down to the shop, and we were taught what to do. That was one of the things. Woodwork, some woodwork but not a whole lot. It was mostly technical. Some of the guys were pretty good at it; I don't know if I was. I got by; that's all I can say. Of course there was agriculture too, you know, dairy and poultry, and there was an apple orchard up there that we took care of, for several years. Picked apples; I suppose we got some money for it for the school. Anyway I don't remember working too hard at it either, except I had to help spray it a couple times. I didn't think too much of that, I'd just as soon not. [Jim laughs.] I don't know, high school went by me pretty easy.

Did you get a good education?

I felt as good as I could get, in New Boston, yeah I think so. I could have gone on; I'm sure I had good enough marks and everything. I could have gone on, if I wanted to, with the G.I. Bill, and I should have! But I didn't.

When did you go into the Navy?

I wanted to join at 17, but my folks wouldn't let me get anything until I graduated high school. So in April, before I was 18, I went to the recruiters and I wanted to join the Navy. Of course they weren't taking to many then because the war was nearly over. This was April of 1945. Best I could get and be in the Navy was Navy reserve, "Victory and six months". In other words, I was in until the war was over, no matter what, "Victory", and six months [after that]. They bombed Japan with atomic bombs and they quit in August 1945 and I was still in boot camp at the time. After that, the boots, I was shipped to Treasure Island in San Francisco Bay, between Oakland and San Francisco. I was there, waiting for a draft to go out, and finally one came through, and it was a darned old tub, that wasn't good for nothing. We went the northern route, we never went anywhere near Hawaii, we went up like this and down into the Philippines. We

come in and all the guys come in and were looking for a ship out to head home. We were taking the place of some of them guys.

It was a ship repair unit. There was a drydock there but we didn't have nothing to do with that. We were taking small boats out and bringing them in for repair and then put them back in the water. I did a lot of security, watch, at first, for quite a while. I had a security watch on a dynamite dump, and someone was selling dynamite to the [Filipinos]. They thought the [Filipinos] were getting in and stealing it; well they weren't. Anyway they doubled up the security, so instead of one guy there was another one with me, and they did that until they found out what happened. Somehow they found out these two guys were selling dynamite to the Filipinos and they'd take it out and set it off and the fish would come up belly-up and they could get all the fish they'd be eating; easy to get and everything and they was making money on it, well, anyway they caught them two guys. They ended up twenty years in Portsmouth. That word got around, I'll tell you! Everybody knew what happened and who did it.

I got sick of that security watch. One time we were watching a beer barge – imagine that! [Jim laughs.] Here's a beer barge, tied up to the wharf, right beside some of the ships there, and so at night we'd be watching a movie on the ship over there instead of paying attention to the beer barge, the heck with it. But we were right there, so if anyone comes... the only ones coming were the Chief Bosun Mate or something like that, a Chief or a Lieutenant coming for a couple of cartons of beer, taking to a party that night. This guy come in, I don't know what the hell he was, he was an officer or something or other, told me, "Go down to the other end of the wharf for a little while." Hey, all I am is a seaman; I'll do anything they tell me. What a farce that was! I got sick of that. I told the guy was in charge of security, "You get me off of this damn thing 'cause I don't want any more of it." [Jim laughs.] But I was watching movies on the other ship every night.

Before you went into the Navy, how far had you been from New Boston?

Manchester. [Jim laughs.] Probably that was the furthest I ever went, was to Manchester, to go shopping, for whatever reason, I don't know. Summertime, I went to a dentist, they did a tooth pull. But that's all. I don't remember going anywhere. Yeah, the class trip! They always have a senior class trip. We went to New York, with a couple of teachers. We couldn't do anything we weren't supposed to, and that's just as well. What'd we see? I forget now, a couple of shows, I know one was The Rockettes. I don't remember a whole lot of it. But we were about a week I guess, between going, being there and coming back. Went by train. You went the whole group together... what do you do? I wouldn't do anything, because I didn't know where the hell I was or what I could do... I'd better behave myself so as not get lost!

A couple of days after I graduated, I was headed out. Went to Manchester to pick up the train to Boston, headed out directly to the middle of New York where we had boot camp there, it was in the Finger Lakes [probably the Naval Training Center at Sampson NY]. Geneva was the nearest town.

You came back to New Boston after the Navy, after your "Victory plus 6 months".

I was active duty in the Navy from the time I was in boot camp, and that was in June 1945. And I was home on boot leave for Labor Day that year. Then we went to Treasure Island, and I went to the Philippines and I was there until around the 1st of June of '46. We got on a troop transport and went to Manila, picked up 500 [Filipinos] that had joined up, they were going to be Navy stewards, then we went back across, didn't stop until we got back to Treasure Island, and didn't stop anywhere along the way. Just one time, we sighted a mine out there, and went circling

around that, and they were shooting at it until they finally hit it and blew it up. What a circus that was! I'll tell you. Darn fools. Of course they have a military detachment on those ships, and they were Marines, and the darn fools were out there with their rifles, shooting at it, a quarter of a mile, weren't coming anywhere near it. Finally they got going with the 20 millimeters and they finally hit it. What a circus! That took half a day just circling around until they blew it up. We kept on going, came in to T.I.

And then I was there waiting for discharge. It was time to get out. Well, I got on a draft to a ship they were putting in mothballs, the north end of the San Francisco Bay. Vallejo, the town of Vallejo. That's where I met up with the U.S.O. [United Service Organizations]. I'd heard about it of course, because they were doing lots. The movie stars were going to the bases, overseas and everywhere else.

We were putting this cruiser in mothballs, working eight hours a day. You had your supper, then you had your evening off, every day. [Jim laughs.] You just don't get that in the Navy! That town was something else. The main street come right down to the wharf. You get off the ship, you want to go up this side of the street, go ahead! Go for it! All it is, is bars and so forth. And I didn't want no part of that! The other side of the street is just the civic part of the town. Town hall, banks, and so on and so forth. The there was a sign out there, that said "U.S.O." I think it was a half a mile walk, or maybe more. I'd heard a lot about it and I thought I'd try it. In the States it was a big house; the girls were coming to entertain the guys when they come. You go in there, and there was music, if you wanted some music, and there was dancing if you wanted to dance. And papers and magazines to read, or you could just sit and watch or whatever. That was our R&R. It was nice!

The girls weren't there every night; they only were there one or two nights a week. There was enough of them so that there was always somebody new. After I'd been there a while, two or three of them I'd seen quite a lot, one of them particularly I got to know her pretty good. That's what it was; it was a place where you could go and enjoy yourself. Everyone was happy. They had to close up 11:30 or twelve o'clock at night, you had to get out of there so you'd head back to the ship. You were supposed to be back to the ship anyways at midnight. So, next morning, chow, back to work, and then you get to chow hall at night, and then you're at liberty every night. Imagine that – liberty every night! I couldn't imagine it, but it happened. Of course, I was waiting all the time to see my name up on the thing there, going back to Treasure Island and picking up a ship or a train headed east. Finally it did. Coming back we went sunny southern California – haha you can have it – and down through New Mexico, Arizona. We were following a river, 'bout like this one here, it looked like good fishing anyway. I got on the mess duty, and I liked it! It was in a box car, the doors were open, so you set up everything, and then the guys come and eat, you picked up and you do it again, and then you was all done. Then somebody else took over but I said, "I like this; I'll stick with it," I told the guy in charge, and I did that all the way back to New York. Set there in front of that open door and just see what was going by. What a time!

Then I took a train from New York to Boston. Discharged in Boston. You got your ruptured duck and put it on your uniform [an eagle pin indicating honorable discharge] and away you went. All done. Go home.

That was that. It's nice to remember, some of it. Some of the good times we had; some of the times weren't so good.

What did you do when you came back to New Boston?

I tried to help Father with the farming. And that wasn't working out too good. Sometimes the guy running the roads [the Road Agent] he'd need help sometimes. And I let him know that I was available any time he needed so a lot of times I'm helping him shovel sand into a truck and then going sanding the roads. Something I could do; something I could make a little money at, not much but a little.

It got to the point it wasn't any good at the farm, and I walked out and left it. I was working for a guy in a saw mill and the house burned down and I didn't go back there and then I got a job in a feed store in Goffstown. George Strong, he was working there, and he was drafted, Korean War, so I applied for the job that he had to leave, and I got it, that was in March. That was helping deliver grain and delivering coal. They had grain and fuel. There was a coal and oil and feed store. Mostly I was helping with the coal, delivering coal. Then in the summer we got away from the fuel and just helping with the feed. They weren't doing too much but the store over in North Londonderry did a lot of feed. They had a lot of hen business and broilers. They needed more help over there. That was work! I was handling hundred pound bags of grain every day. We'd put ten ton of feed on two trucks and five ton on a third one. The three of us would take off to this farm in Auburn, it was a poultry farm. All three of us would work until we'd get the easy one done, the 5 ton, and then he'd take the truck and go back to the store. The other two of us would stay there and unload the other two trucks. Half went upstairs and half down. Somebody's up there – that's me – throwing the bag of feed up on the second floor and the other guy's up there with a hand truck throwing them on piles and that's the way it went. I don't want to think about it any more, but I did lot of it!

But I stayed there quite a while. We rented a place and moved into it, so I wasn't driving from New Boston to North Londonderry every day. I wasn't there six months when this place up on Pine Echo Road come up for sale. And we thought that would be a nice place to have. As soon as Wilma found out about that she took right off to tell the people we wanted it!

I missed the part where you met and married Wilma.

Oh, that was soon after I got home from service. I met her and we did a lot of things together. Actually, she got a job back where she was when she was right out of high school, in Claremont at the Joy Manufacturing, she worked for a guy. He told her that if she ever wanted to come back the job was there for her. And I guess she figured that would be a good idea, that maybe we were getting too close, and she'd better get away from me! [Jim laughs.] I chased her anyway. And after a while we got married, and she stayed there for a while and I was working on getting a house, something we could live in. Anyway, she came home [to the Dane farm] and we tried to do it but that's when I decided we'd best do something else, never mind the farm. My brother wanted it... take it! It didn't work out.

Tell me about Wilma. Her maiden name was?

LeBaron.

Where was she born, and when?

She was born in Claremont, and she was only three months older than me, so she was born in February in 1927. I was born in May 1927.

Where did you meet?

Here, in New Boston. They had moved – this was during the wartime, usually a guy was working in a machine shop, he couldn't get away, but somehow her father, well her mother had got pregnant, and she had a couple of miscarriages. She knew about a doctor who was pretty good with this sort of thing in Fitchburg. They moved to Fitchburg. He got a job there, same thing he

was doing in Claremont. They were there when Gardiner was born, but they always wanted to live on a farm. This one came up for sale, and he was trying to find something in southern New Hampshire, and anyway they got ahold of it somehow. Don Byam was the guy that was selling it. Anyway, when this happened I didn't know anything about it; I was off overseas. They moved into New Boston in the fall of 1945. Where Dan MacDonald lives on Tucker Mill. That's just around the corner from the place we bought, afterward. I was still in the service. When I came home, my buddy Howard Woodbury, he got out of the Navy before I did, he knew what was going on in town. He was gonna see this other girl, and the sister, he wanted me... well anyway it worked out. But he was going with a younger girl; she was still in high school. But anyway, that's what happened. That's how I got to know her. We hit it off, pretty good.

What year did you get married?

1948. January. We tried to live on the farm, and things fell apart. And we left there and went to live with the in-laws. I was working for Worthmore then, and that's when we bought the house on Pine Echo. We moved in there, must have been December '52.

Do you remember what the house cost, in 1952?

I had a thousand dollars, and I got a G.I. loan for seven, so it cost us \$8,000. House and barn, chicken house and 25 acres. Imagine that.

October 19, 2017 – Part Two

You worked in the ice house (by the Mill Pond) for one day.

Henry Friedrich was doing the ice. I never knew a whole lot about delivering the ice.

You don't remember him coming to your house?

No, because we had our own. We did our own, get the ice out.

How'd you do that?

Well, there was a little pond over next door [by the Dane farm]. We kept the snow off it, so it would freeze; pretty much clear ice. And we cut it by hand, and we hauled it home with a horse and the scoop, and put it in the ice house we had. Always had the ice house there on the farm. Got a lot of sawdust to keep it, cover the ice and keep it during the summer. That's the way we did for ice.

We were talking about one of the World War I veterans; you remembered when he delivered the mail.

Oh, that was Frank Wilson. He was mailman for years and years and years. When he gave up... I don't know when it changed but I know I applied for... I took a test to do it [Jim laughs] but somebody else beat me out; he got more points than I did.

Where was the post office?

In the store. [Dodge's Store.]

You described how Frank delivered the mail in the wintertime.

Oh yeah. He had some kind of old Model A, put skis on the front instead of wheels, and had tracks on the back. I remember him going by a few times when there was a lot of snow. It might have been a day before the plows came around, or it might have been right after.

Did they plow your road or was it rolled?

I never saw any roads rolled. That was before me. They plowed the roads with a... Dick Moody's got one; it was a cleat track with a wood plow, a V-plow with wings, so they'd have

three guys: one guy driving and one guy on each wing to hold the wing down. [Jim laughs.] that must have been fun! Cold!

Who were the doctors in town?

The only doctor I had anything to do with was Dr. Fraser, right up there on the corner [Mont Vernon Road at the bottom of Old Coach Road]. I don't remember when he either died, or whatever, the end of it. He was the doctor that I remember when I was just a little kid. When I was going to school we had to see him sometimes.

A good man?

I guess so! Thought so. Seems so, anyway. I never heard anybody say he wasn't.

What other townspeople do you remember?

I remember when Will Dodge over here when he was Selectman. Fred Cann was Moderator for quite a long time. I worked for him picking apples.

How about police or fire department?

Well, I had nothing much to do with them. Willie Leland, he was Town Constable for quite a few years; he didn't have much to do. Wasn't nobody doing anything they hadn't ought to, much.

Of course, Ben Dodge ran the store, and Homer, his son, afterward. Those were the ones you'd see every day if you come to town.

What was the store like, inside?

It was open pretty much like it is, set up quite a bit different. He had some hardware, along with all the groceries of course, and a few clothes, and some ammunition; rifles and ammunition and shotguns he sold; I know Homer had some pretty good 'uns.

But no, wasn't very much, just a country store – everything was there. One thing I remember particularly was they always had a big round wheel of cheese. That was excellent cheese, boy I'll tell ya. It was expensive but that was good cheese. I think it was Cabot's. I think so. Cabot sharp or extra sharp. Whatever. Yeah, it was good.

What was upstairs in the store?

I didn't ever have nothing much to do with it.

You didn't go there for a haircut?

I did for a haircut, yeah. There was Old Man Church, he run the barbershop there when I was in high school. I used to go there and get my shampoo and get my hair cut, once in a while.

Shampoo?

Yeah, if I was going on a date, special occasion, whatever. [Jim laughs.] I was probably a little vain about it.

Last time we talked, you come back to town after the war and started a family. Bob Todd said you signed his diploma?

Yeah, I was mixed up with the school for a while there. I had one term of School Board, and that was at the time when that happened [when Bob Todd graduated]. I was appointed one of the members of the committee to get this new school going when we needed additional space and they decided to go ahead and build a new building. That's when we first built that school over there [now New Boston Central School]. The first section of it, let's see, was Clarence Boulter, Bibb Elliott was on the committee. Of course, Clarence knew a lot more about what was going on then I did anyway. He knew a good architect, could build what we needed, at a certain

amount of money that we should spend on it. I mean, we had to keep it down as much as we could. The first building we built there was what, I think only six rooms, maybe four. [That was the section nearest Town Hall, onto which the kindergarten classrooms were added many years later.] We had quite a time but we finally got it voted in, and got it built, and I guess everybody was pretty satisfied with it.

Then at that time we were talking about the high school; doing away with that [closing New Boston High School] and sending the kids out of town. That was when we got mixed up with Goffstown; let's see, Goffstown and New Boston and Dunbarton, formed a thingamajig. I don't know; there was a lot of people didn't want it, of course, and it just didn't seem... I felt like we should do it, and I was on the committee and I was on the board for that three years. There was an awful lot of bickering back and forth. The town was pretty well pulled apart; half and half, pretty near. To get that squared away and get things going. Of course, some of the kids were in the agricultural department in the high school, but they were able to go to Weare which had the same thing and we could pay their tuition. There was quite a lot of controversy at the time, considerable, more than you hear about even today. [New Boston High School graduated its last class in 1965.]

Where were Town meeting and School Meeting?

In the Town Hall. The lower Town Hall. What I remember of Town Meeting and School Meeting, it was all one day; it was a day time things, and Town Meeting was usually the first half of the day and that'd get squared away, then we'd have the school district meeting after that. I don't remember too much until I was finally old enough to vote. You had to be twenty-one then. [Jim served in the Navy when he was 18-19 years old.] That's when you start doing things, and I got involved, leastways I was able to vote then, so I was going to Town Meeting to see what it was like and everything, then sit there and stand there and laugh, whatever. [Jim laughs.] Well, it was just a small town meeting, that's what it was, like it used to be, years ago. The first ones I went to, well it was nothing very great, nothing controversial. Usually someone in the back of the room was making a joke about something.

They kept a pretty good meeting. Then, if you wanted to get up and talk, you just stood up and said "Mr. Moderator" and then he would recognize you. Now, for crying out loud you have to sit there and get your hand up, and – baloney with that, I don't bother with all that. That's no good.

What was the Fourth of July like?

As I remember Fourth of July, when I was a kid, 'cause my aunt and grandmother lived in that house on the corner, the other side of the fire department, on one side of that house. They lived there for years, all the time I was growing up. That was Aunt Millen and my Grandmother Dane. Fourth of July we'd come down and sit on the porch all away round there, see what was going on, watch the parade. The parade would come down, go all the way around Mill Street, and end up in the back of the Town Hall, in the yard there. Usually they had a baseball game in the afternoon. Later on, this was after I was grown up, somebody was having a show in the evening, and you set on the grandstand, and they're out there on the grounds there, and I remember a lot of the times they had Wilma playing the piano for them, singing songs, and one thing and another. They always would have a bonfire, and one year, somebody did something, threw some diesel oil or fuel oil and gasoline, and the thing blew up, but that was – Patti was somewheres around 12 years old, she was out there with some of the others, stuff comes flying down around them – lucky they didn't get hit by it! Then they didn't have a bonfire for a few years. I think they finally did again. That would be in the 1960s.

I remember when they used to have the fair. Mostly it was in the Town Hall and in the ballpark. Animals and whatever. This was back in the 40s and 50s and a little later I can remember of. In fact it was in 1967 I was there representing the feed company that I worked for; there was bags of feed and stuff that you could show off.

Was that the Hillsborough County Agricultural Fair?

That was before the Hillsborough County. That was New Boston's fair. The Grange fair. That grew up into the county fair. They changed it to a county fair to include more people, more towns involved.

When did you start making your own maple syrup?

Go back about 35 years. I got involved with it and built the shack there [on Pine Echo Road] and bought a second-hand 2-by-6 evaporator and took to making maple syrup and enjoying everything. I did with buckets at first and get the trees up and down the road. I made quite a lot of syrup that way. Mostly I was doing it by myself and it got pretty old after a while doing it that way, so I gave it up. That was when I built the house by the side of the road [Francestown Road] and sold the one up on Pine Echo Road. I decided I was too far from the sugar house so I sold the evaporator and other stuff I had. Right after that, a few years, then Sam got interested. 'Cause we were doing some... he and the neighbor boys, Eddie Colburn and Jimmy(?) and Sam were making a little maple syrup. Sam was going to high school in Peterborough. He and the instructor up there were discussing who was making the best syrup [Jim laughs] because Sam won out on it, claimed he did anyway. That was part of the deal anyway, got Sam interested in making maple syrup. He got to the point that where he was working then he could take a little time and I could help out. He bought a second-hand evaporator, bigger than I'd had before, and we set it up in the sugar house. We went looking for more taps, more trees to tap, and that's where it's gone from there to where it is today. I was probably doing 35 to 40 taps with the buckets and now it's six or eight hundred taps on plastic lines. It's much different today. As you go along, you have to do something different because you're doing more. I've gone through different ways of straining the stuff, what is it?

You showed me Reverse Osmosis equipment in March.

Yeah, that come this year. Sam for a couple of years, he was taking sap up to what's his name in Francestown; he had an R.O. He'd take the sap up there and run it through his R.O. and bring it back and that was working out pretty good, but taking a lot longer than he wanted. So this past spring, he went over to this guy in Henniker, he's making R.O.'s. He talked him into doing a smaller one for him, so he could afford it. That makes a lot of difference.

[Note: Maple sap has 1-3% sugar content when it leaves the tree, and you must boil 40 gallons of sap (or more) to make a gallon of maple syrup. "Reverse Osmosis" equipment filters the sap through a permeable membrane, which leaves behind sap with five or ten times greater sugar content, reducing the time (and firewood!) needed for boiling.]

A lot of people use vacuum as well, to pull the sap out of the trees earlier. When you don't get normal weather for sap to run, if you've got the vacuum you can still get it. They get started earlier and they make it when they hadn't ought to, trying to make syrup with one percent or less sugar in the sap. And you know, it's a funny thing. Where we've been tapping trees for a long time now, some on the old farm, where I used to help my father, that place and where we call "Page's" where we've got most of our taps, and then we've got some from Anderson up on Beard Road, we have been running two, two and a half percent sap when it's coming out of the trees, or a little better. Between 2 ½ and 3 percent. And nobody else around town gets any kind

of sap like that. Anybody else is running with 1 ½ to 2 percent; 2 percent if they're lucky. Now why is that? Evidently it's something to do with the land the trees are growing on. It is, too. There's no doubt about it. There's a lot more water in that land, and it's rough, I mean there's rocks all over the place! You went up to the old farm there, you can almost walk all over the whole place, one rock to another!

A lot of people, everywhere, complaining about only 1 ½ percent sap, they're using the vacuum, they're trying to get it too early anyway. They can do what they want to – you don't get the sap that you should get until it's ready to run by itself. No matter what. And that's usually right into March. Still is. Even though they're tapping into January and they're making syrup in January and February. Give me a break – they're all making too light syrup that ain't no good. My father would never tap a tree before town meeting.