

**Wilmot Historical Society, Kearsarge Valley Road, Box 97, Wilmot, New Hampshire**

**Judith Walker interviews Marjorie Joyce Tilton**

**This is an oral history interview taped on March 11, 1993 for the Wilmot Historical Society and I'm talking again with Marjorie Joyce Tilton. And before we start, I want to correct something I said on the previous tape when we were talking about 'tramp houses.' I said that Martin Morey took tramps and lived in the house where Dave Lorden lives now. That is not true. It's a house next door to Dave's where Sally Caterine now lives.**

**Now Marjorie, when we left you, you were just about to get married and you had to go up to Mrs. Campbell's.**

And after, we went up to Mrs. Campbell's and Bill and I went up together, and I don't remember, but coming back, I think it was a little bit stormy that night, and we had to walk up for some reason; and the heel came off of one of my shoes. And we got up there anyway and got the marriage license and came back down to the house and I don't remember whether we hurriedly fixed the shoe, I don't recall, but I wore my mother-in-law's wedding dress. We got married in the parlor. Reverend Block, David Block, was the minister that performed the ceremony. And his wife played the organ and there were a few close relatives on my husband's side that came over from Tilton for the ceremony.

**When you say, "the parsonage," let's locate that. That's the building directly across from the First Congregational Church, is that right? At the Center?**

Yeah, but that wasn't connected to my wedding—the parsonage.

**Oh.**

The parlor at our house.

**Oh, at your house, okay.**

We had to walk back down the hill.

**Oh, well, with no heel!**

And, the ceremony went on anyhow, and we had a small lunch. It was a very small affair. And then we had to go back over to East Weare. My husband's mother was with us. And that was when it all happened.

**Okay. Now, you lived down there in Weare for awhile?**

We stayed down there for, oh, I can't remember. We had Billy, and I don't remember just how old Billy was when we came over to stay with my mother after my father passed away. He might have been over a year old. He might not even have been a year old—just a baby, anyhow.

**So, you lived there for awhile, with your mother?**

Yeah, we lived there right through to, uh, right along. And she passed away in 1948. She actually passed away of a tuberculosis condition. At that time, there was a sanatorium in Pembroke, and that's where she had been taken. And my Dad, of course, had died; passed on quite awhile before that.

**So then, did you stay on there at the house for a while?**

We stayed right there, until, well I don't remember, eventually, I sold the place, but I don't remember what year it was. I'd have to look it up.

**Do you remember who you sold it to?**

Yes, I sold it to some people by the name of Land. They came up from Massachusetts and they were people that were fairly well along in years when they came to Wilmot to live. And Mr. Matthews, at that time, he was the one that did the selling.

**Was that Pierre or Ed?**

That was Ed Matthews.

**Then where did you live?**

Then we went up to on Cross Hill that Jean Farnum used to own. It really wasn't big enough for me and my family, but we did move up there because the . . .well, I actually didn't have to pay very much for the place. And that had a lot to do with going up there to live. And eventually, we made it a little bit bigger, but, we didn't really have the means to do it up really great. But we spent a lot of years up there.

**And the, when did Bill die, do you remember?**

He died in 1974.

**And you stayed on then at that house?**

I wasn't there when he died. That's a . . .

**That's a different tale.**

Yeah.

**Alright. Well, let's go back a little bit now to your childhood because you had mentioned to me about going to Vacation Bible School. Could you tell a little bit about that?**

Well, I think, I remember, at least two years that this bible school went on, and not having any vestry at that time in the church, we used the public school—the grammar school—and I don't

know that we went a full day. It probably wasn't as long as a school day. But one day in particular—I don't remember the teachers, where they came from, they weren't local people—and one of those years, the teachers had us put our heads on the desk in the schoolhouse, and we were supposed to repent of our sins and never sin again, I guess, but we did what she told us to do; and several of us kids got to crying. And I cried terrible, and I was never gonna be naughty again. (warm chuckling from Judith) But, now when I think about it, it seems that that was a (slight pause) crazy thing to do to us kids. (more laughter) To get us to crying.

**If any teacher did that nowadays, they'd certainly hear about it very shortly.**

The parents would be there—it would be an abuse situation.

**Were you just in the schoolhouse or were you just out in the woods and so forth.**

Well, we played outside. A lot of these memories are quite vague, too. I think we played just on the grounds out around there. I don't remember what we had any . . . we probably had like a picnic day on the grounds after the bible school sessions were over and they lasted about two weeks. But a lot of those memories are still quite vague about that, but I do remember.

**Now, you said that you can remember going to prayer meetings with your parents.**

Yeah, I remember going up to the parsonage to prayer meetings. And I'm trying to remember if any prayer meetings were held in different homes, or even down at our house, and I can't. My sharpest memory is of going with my parents up to the parsonage. It could be quite boring. I don't remember a whole lot of people being there. It was a whole lot of people that didn't come out to church. The congregation seemed small to me and small attendance at these prayer meetings. But I don't remember any other children being at these prayer meetings. And, I'm trying hard to remember.

**Well, you also said that you remembered going blueberrying. Could you talk a little about that?**

Well, there was lovely high bush blueberries up there on old Route 4A up the pike. I think it was, I don't remember if it was still in the township of Wilmot or in Springfield, but it was quite a ways up there. And of course, it was dirt road in those days. And my parents and also other people around the community would take big pails and the horse, the wagons, go up there and pick blueberries all day—take a picnic lunch. And also, there was another place that my parents used to go blueberrying, and they were high bush—beautiful blueberries—over at Mr. Stanley Stiller's(?) house - property over on Seamans Road in New London. And he would call (and I'm always saying "call" but we didn't have telephones back then) but he was wanting for my folks to bring the dog because on his property there was a lot of wood chucks. And well, my folks picked berries and I ran around with the dog probably—maybe I picked a few berries—but the

dog would hunt woodchucks. Because I had to go to all these places because they didn't have anybody to leave him with.

**When I was talking to Frank Langley about this, he and Walter's mother, too, said they remembered going up on 4A and they called it "noise country." Does that ring a bell with you—the name "noise"?**

It does a little bit.

**I know now there is a road up there and there's a sign that says "Noise Road," and as you say, some of it may be over into Springfield. It was way up. Did you pick other berries? I mean, did you make day long expeditions for other types or was it just a blueberry picking?**

No, that was all blueberrying, because I used to go out and help mother pick strawberries up in fields.

**Wild strawberries?**

Wild strawberries, and the shortcakes were delicious with the farm cream that we'd get. Oh boy!

**Full of fat?**

Oh, I'll say. We had cultivated blackberries and cultivated raspberries at our house. We had a grape vine—purple Concord grapes. And we had two apple trees. I can remember taking apples up to . . . my mother would say, take these bags of apples up to Sue Briggs, our next-door neighbor. So I did, and when I got up there, I don't know what they did to my head, but I must have felt like stirring up a little excitement, and I said well, "Mama sent me up and said, "they're republican apples"; and Sue said, "Well, now they're here, they're democrat apples." And I said, well, they came off of a republican tree."

**What possessed you?**

I know, she got pretty kind of disgusted with me for keeping this thing going, but that was one of my things that I thought would be fun to do. (Laughter) And they had a dog named "Bethie" and I loved their dog, and I used to go up there and their dog would pull me around on a burlap bag—grab her teeth in and pull me around the lawn and so forth on that bag.

**It must have been a rather large dog then.**

Well, she was a pretty good-sized dog.

**Well, your mother must have put up quite a lot of . . .**

Well, she did. She canned and made preserves—jellies and jams, and everything you had to do in those days. And then put stuff in the cellar.

**Did your father do any butchering or have any done?**

Well, he butchered pigs.

**Were you not allowed to watch that?**

I couldn't watch at the beginning when the thing was "stuck" as they used to do, but after the thing got hung up and the work began with scalding, I'd have to stand back, stand on the piazza or something. This would be done in the front of the big barn door and there would be pulley blocks holding the pig way up in the air over the . . . the pig would be scalded first, and then that loosens up the bristles and then the men folk take those tools to get those bristles off of them, off the pig, and then it hangs there for a while.

**Do you remember who would help your father?**

I don't seem to remember, but there had to be others. And of course, that was put down. After it was cut up, Dad, and my mother, too, could cut up the parts. The pork was put down in brine and I don't remember how, of course some of us were cool in those days—you could keep; but there must have been other things done to keep the meat—like pork roasts. I don't remember that much about it.

**They didn't hang them out in the shed so they would freeze and then be brought in?**

I don't remember what my folks did about that. I know we had a cold room called "the milk room," and the fresh milk from the cows would be put out in this special room to set in these great big milk pans. And some of the milk was separated, but the milk that was set in milk pans, after a couple of days, it seems like a quarter of an inch would just lift up and peel that cream right back, and that's what was used for strawberry shortcakes and other goodies. And of course, mother, would make butter with the old wooden churn.

**Did she have butter molds?**

Yes, she did.

**Did she have a special design?**

Well, she had just one butter mold that I remember, and it was square and then in each quarter there was lines and there'd be a different design in each corner of the 4 corners of that pound of butter.

**Did she sell any of it or was it all for your own use?**

Well, I think most of it was for our own use. I don't remember her selling any. She probably gave away some once in a while.

I remember one day when Mom was in the blackberry and raspberry patch, and I was playing up near the corner of the barn, what we call the 'barn run', and I fell down over the edge and I cut my lip very bad just about all the way through, and she came running from the berry patch, grabbed me up under her arm, went to the kitchen door. And we had a hen with a bunch of little chickens, and I guess the hen jumped up into the first shed with her chickens which went into the house, and I guess the hen thought she was going into the kitchen. One of the chickens . . . Mom went through the door and slammed the door and had rushed me to the sink, it slammed on one of those baby chicks and it killed the baby chick. Well of course, I guess it was quite minor compared to what was happening to me, but I never got to the doctor to get any sutures and I have the scar still today. It healed up well, but I had had sutures it would have not been as noticeable. But that's what happened.

**Well, in those days, you didn't get taken to the doctor for everything.**

No, you didn't have a way to get there, if the Daddy was away, working or whatever. My mother had no way to get me over there, so things had to get done the best way you could at home.

**You had to be pretty resourceful.**

**Well, let's fast forward here a little to when you were active in the 1<sup>st</sup> Congregational Church after you were married. You and I talked some about when the vestry was made. Could you take us through that process?**

Well, the three most active people, I think, was myself, Esther Farnum and Asa Call. I think that we sort of headed up the idea and the idea just grew and grew and became a reality.

**This would have been in the 1950s.**

I think so. I don't remember just what year. But we went out and rounded up all the volunteer help with this one and that one helping if we decided to go ahead with that. Well, the fence people volunteered to help, and Carl Brown who lived over on the road going to North Wilmot, he had, I don't remember if it was one or two mules, and he volunteered to come out to haul out big boulders that were embedded in the dirt under the church.

**It was all the underneath part of the church that was all dirt and boulders?**

All dirt and quite a few boulders of all different sizes. Of course, that was getting it ready. And then we got volunteer help from Wayne Atwood was one of the carpenters. I don't remember all the different ones that came.

**Did Bill Call help, too, young Bill?**

Oh yes, he was very active in that.

**What about Joe Farnum?**

Well, I think Joe did, I don't know whether he did much or whether he just did some heavy lifting. I don't remember. But I remember especially Wayne and Carl Brown.

**So, Carl Brown would hitch boulders?**

He would hitch his mule or mules, and I think there was . . . I don't remember whether the door in the church had to be made wider for one of those boulders to come out or not. I thought that they would just barely get through the door. But he got all those out. I don't know if it was done with just chains around the boulders or maybe he had some sort of a dray thing. Boulders were sometimes put on a dray and pulled along. I don't remember that part of it, but I know he was very instrumental in getting those boulders up and big rocks, so that was a big help.

**You don't remember anybody taking pictures of that process do you?**

I don't, I wish I did remember. There might be. Don't know whether Bill Call would have any pictures or not. Or Joe Farnum might have some pictures that Esther had taken, but I don't know.

**You had a purpose in wanting to transform this place under the church into rooms.**

Yes, we wanted to have a place where we could have church suppers and other functions going on. And, we had some very successful, very successful suppers; and Esther Farnum was great for planning and getting things going.

**She was a very hard worker, wasn't she?**

Yeah, and we had a lot of people attend and looking forward to our church suppers. And we had everything to do it with by that time—we had water in the kitchen and a great big range that, somewhere we got this great big range. We could put a lot of stuff in the oven. Different ones would bake beans at home and then you'd take them down there and put them in the oven down there.

**And that range was there until just a few years ago, now it's been taken out. Then, Sunday school was held down there, or no?**

I think that most Sunday schools have been held down there.

**Was it used for other functions like maybe wedding showers?**

Wedding receptions, yes. I don't know what else but, I think our main purpose was to have a lot of suppers.

**And the Ivy Guild would have their sales or rummage sale?**

Sales and fancy work. Their Christmas sales were held down there quite often in the winter. So, it's turned out to be a very useful project.

**I can remember when I first came into the church that was where we had our Christmas sales—I remember that well. Were any of your children married in the church?**

Yes, my eldest daughter, Joyce, was married in that church to Alan Rand who was a resident of Wilmot Flat. And then, Alf Jacobsen performed that ceremony. And then later, I was much surprised when Rebecca and her husband were married because her husband is Spanish and his folks, parents, couldn't speak very much English. And come to find out, Alf Jacobsen was fluent in Spanish, and I didn't know it until that day when he was talking very much with Rebecca's father- and mother-in-law.

**Well they must have been pleased at that.**

Yes, they were *very* pleased. It made it so much nicer for them, and I've thought of that very often.

**A so then, did they have their receptions downstairs?**

Yes, well, Joyce's reception when she married Alan was down in the vestry. But the reception for Rebecca and her husband was down here in Wilmot Flat at Joyce's house

**Marjorie, I want to thank you very much for sharing your memories. It's wonderful to have these for succeeding generations. I'm sure they'll be happy to know what happened in the so-called "old days," and we really appreciate you taking the time to do it.**

Well, I'm glad that you asked me to do it! And, I've remembered as much as I can, I think.  
(Chuckling)

**Well, that's a lot more than many people remember.**

And if I can remember any more, I will let you know.

**Fine.**

End of interview-