



Collective
MEMORIES



Stories from the Portugal Cove- St. Philip's Memory Mug Up

Edited by Dale Jarvis and Terra Barrett, & the
students of FOLK 6740: Public Folklore

Collective Memories Series #06

STORIES FROM THE
PORTUGAL COVE-
ST. PHILIP'S MEMORY
MUG UP

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Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador
Intangible Cultural Heritage Office
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Introduction

BY DALE JARVIS


In February of 2017, I headed off to Portugal Cove-St. Philip's with three carloads of graduate folklore students enrolled in FOLK 6740: Public Folklore at Memorial University. We were heading there to host a Memory Mug Up, organized with the help of Julie Pomeroy, the town's heritage officer.

A Memory Mug Up is an informal story sharing session for seniors, where people gather, have a cup of tea, and share memories. The goal of the program is to help participants share and preserve their stories.

Julie had spoken to the class before the event, talking about the town's work to conserve its tangible and intangible heritage. She was interested in information about place names, cemeteries, names of local ponds, fishing history and families, a 1978 plane crash, Bell Island connections, and ghost stories. On that first meeting, we sat around with cups of coffee and tea, studied maps of the community, and shared stories about all those things and more.



Background: Student Marissa Farahbod talks with Diane Morris. Foreground: Students Cassandra Colman and Ema Kirbirkstis talk with Mr. Mercer. Photo by Nataliya Bezborodova.



A few weeks later, we were back, doing one-on-one interviews with the participants. The students recorded the interviews, created indexes of the subject matter discussed, wrote up short biographies for their participants, and transcribed portions of the interviews. The master copies of the interviews have been placed online as part of Memorial University's Digital Archives Initiative; the work you will read here is that of the students.

The tales herein are all from residents of Portugal Cove-St. Philip's, and represent the breadth of their experiences and personal histories. Some of the stories are from long-time residents, some of the stories are from people newer to the community, reflecting the change and growth of the town itself.

A special thanks to all our student researchers and writers: Nataliya Bezborodova, Cassandra Colman, Marissa Farahbod, Jill Jablonski, Ema Kibirkstis, Emma Lang, Monique McGrath, Tanyan Ye, and Jordan Zalis. A huge thank you to Julie Pomeroy for her work in organizing the event and wrangling participants, and to Kelly Drover for her work curating photographs.

— *St. John's, June 2017*

RUTH BUGDEN

INTERVIEWED BY TANYAN YE



Ruth Bugden. Photo by Tanyan Ye.

Born in 1944, Ruth Bugden has been living in Portugal Cove all her life. She grew up here, got married, and now her whole family, including three children and five grandchildren, are all living in this area. Her maiden name was Allen. Her father was born a Harding but raised by the Allens, and her mother had a similar story—she was born a Squires but raised by Piccos and then married to an Allen. That is because in the past adoption was more common and less regulated, as Ruth said, “Back then, you didn’t have to

RUTH BUGDEN

go through any red tape. If a child needed to be looked after, somebody took it and that is the end of it.”

Though she grew up in Portugal Cove, she went to school in St. John's. This explains why she does not have the accent of the community, for which she felt a little regretful. When she was three years old her whole family moved to Windsor Heights for a while where her father worked on a farm. That is why she went to school in the city instead of in Portugal Cove. When she was about ten her family moved to where they are living now, but she did not want to change schools. Besides, if she continued going to the school in the city she could take the bus but she would have to walk if she changed to the school in the community. Therefore, she finished her school in St. John's.

During the interview she shared many interesting supernatural stories, some of which were what she herself or her mother experienced. When asked why her mother and herself tended to be more sensitive toward those things, she told us her mother used to be a healer, who was believed to be able to cure small diseases, or as she put it, “keep the warts away.” She also explained why she was able to cure people: “One of the things they say, if you never saw your mother...My mother never saw her mother. She was born and taken right away.” She herself was a caulbearer which mean she was born with amniotic membrane covering her face. As she said, there are a lot of superstition about caulbearers. “[It makes you] safe at sea, and you will do great things. So, I don't know what great things

RUTH BUGDEN

I have done. And other superstitions too about having special powers, whatever," she said, laughing and teasing that she believed she had special power.

"There were ghosts around Goat Cove which is in the area of Beachy Cove School. At some point at around 12 in the night you aren't supposed to be able to get through over that way but my dad came, you know, courting my mother, said he purposely walked that way at 12 but he never did see anything. However, I have a mother that's been very, very sensitive toward these things and had a few experiences. She at one time visited Granny Talker, and I wish now I knew exactly where it was but she went to stay at Granny Talker's house, and when she got into the bed, and they closed the door, God these hands came out at her throat and she screamed. The old lady came back in, talked to her for a moment and said, 'Don't worry my dear it is not coming for you.' She found out after that somebody had died there or got murdered there or whatever. So there were a few things like that. There were a few little things."

"I have had a couple of experiences with tokens, tokens of death. Just to let you know I was wide awake when this happened. My husband was a collection officer, and he had to go to work at 12 o'clock in the night so I was wide awake about 11 in the night, waiting to call him up to get him to go to work. I was sitting down knitting and my backdoor started to rattle, and I tried that after, my backdoor would not rattle. I could not get a rattle out of it. But there was rattle, rattle, rattle, rattle, rattle. I went out, and there

RUTH BUGDEN

was nobody there. So my mum lived next door because we built our home in the family property. So I called over to her, and I said, 'Mum, did you hear anything or see anything?' And my uncle Will that I was very close to was in the hospital at the time, and she said, 'Don't worry my dear.' She said, 'That was just Uncle Will coming to say goodbye.' She said, 'He just walked around this house.' And I thought 'Okay.' But within minutes the phone rang and it was Uncle Will's daughter saying her dad had just passed away. At the same time, he had a sister in New Brunswick, and she was walking up the stairs, and met him coming down the stairs. So, a lot of stories like that."



Memorial Day Service by in Portugal Cove, July 1st 1962. Photograph courtesy of the Portugal Cove-St. Philip's Archives (028.03.160).

"The Anglican church has moved now, but where the old church was, you have to come down the lane and go over the bridge, the bridge by the monument. Anybody living down in that area if

RUTH BUGDEN

they were coming from the United Church, they would also have to come and go over the bridge. Some mornings - rarely, it didn't happen on a regular basis - the congregations would get out of church at the same time, and they would meet on the bridge. Every time that you met on the bridge, somebody died during the week. It happened. And you know, well, it doesn't happen now but right up until the time that the church moved, it was still happening. It did. Because every time somebody would mark it, 'Okay, we are gonna have a death before the week is out.' And it always did."

She also shared her memories of the old days, such as dinner theaters. She was a leader of the girls' group in the community, and they used to play a lot of those theaters. When she was a teenager, the girls group was very active; they did a lot of volunteer work, organized parties for the seniors, etc. She also talked about the transportation, family life, and school life back then. As someone who has lived in the community for her whole life, she is familiar with the stories circulating there as well. She willingly shared these stories with us as well, such as the love story of Fanny Goff. From her memories and stories, we can see how much the life in the community has changed; yet, the lovely parts of the old days remain, at least in our memories.

"Fanny Goff, Pheeny Goff, her name was Tryphena, and she was called Fanny, and she was also called Pheeny. But that was really interesting and it really happened. I did a lot of research on that

RUTH BUGDEN

because I worked with a teenage girls group down to the church. Our group is actually over 50 years old and, I hate to admit it, but I have been with it since it started. I was only a teenager, thanks. But we actually, we searched it and wrote a play and did it as a, almost like a little dinner theater. We do dinner theaters all the time down there now, our girls group. But, yeah, she was about to be married and it was this man from Brigus. I guess, Portugal Cove was kind of the hub back then because it had the first road that came from St. John's, and with Bell Island and the boats and everything, the ferry, the bay, so I guess people were here for various reasons. I don't know how they met, but they planned to be married. So the day that was back in, I think it was 1823, so he was coming in a couple of days before [the wedding] and she got really ill, and I guess there was no way to get in touch with him at that point as we didn't have telephones. He was coming through, and stopped at his friend's in St. Philip's, on the way down, a man named Bill Squires, only to be told that she had just died."

KEITH HILLIER

INTERVIEWED BY EMMA LANG



Julie Pomeroy, Heritage Programs and Services Coordinator with PCSP, and Keith Hillier. Photo by Emma Lang.

Keith Hillier was born in 1953 and grew up in Campbellton, Notre Dame Bay. Today he is retired from Fisheries and Oceans, and lives in Portugal Cove-St Phillips. His mother, Violet Melina—known as Lena—was from Shoal Harbour and his father, Wesley George Hillier—George—was from Campbellton. They met when Lena came to Campbellton to teach school. Her family was fairly well off with

KEITH HILLIER

her father serving as the Roadmaster for the Bonavista Branch of the Newfoundland Railway. This afforded Lena the chance to attend Normal School for Teachers, in St. John's for three years to train as a teacher, more training than many teachers in Newfoundland and Labrador received during those times. George Hillier was a carpenter originally working in the lumber industry mostly building camps and later in the building of public buildings in Central Newfoundland.

KEITH: Father was a—well, when he was younger he worked in the lumber woods, and then he, I guess he was recognized in the lumber woods, while at building camps, saw mills buildings, and what not, as being a very good carpenter, so eventually he wound up being a carpenter and being foreman of a crew of carpenters, building hospitals schools, churches, apartment buildings and whatever, in the Central area. He [George Hiller] didn't work home during most of my childhood. He worked in Buchans most of his life, which now is probably a two hour drive from Campbellton, but back then when there were gravel roads, it was probably a three hours drive, or more, from Campbellton.... He didn't come home every weekend. He only came home sometimes and as infrequent as once a month. He didn't own a car so he had to depend on others for a ride. I kind of think, that way back, when he first started work he may have been away as long as six months at a time. That was not uncommon around Newfoundland—you left the place you were living at, to work.

KEITH HILLIER

EMMA: So what was that like growing up with him gone?

KEITH: Well you know if you grow up without something, you really don't know what it would be like with it. You don't miss what you didn't have.

Like his father, Keith Hillier was interested in hands-on work.

KEITH: No, I didn't [like school] I couldn't stand it! [laughs]

EMMA: Any particular reason?

KEITH: I don't know what the reason would be. I was too hyper to be sitting in a seat for hours. It wasn't interesting. I mean, the subjects that were taught in school, I can't say that any of them interested me that much. Geography and math were perhaps my most interesting subjects. English and French, and history, because they required reading, I wasn't that interested in them.

EMMA: What would you have rather been doing?

KEITH: Well I've always been a person that's been hands on and I've been very involved in a lot of things that require the use of your hands, the more creative type things. What would I have been doing?... Well, for example, I was always fascinated, when I was growing up, where the woman across the road used to sew and she had a foot sewing machine. It was one of those where

KEITH HILLIER

you put your feet on a foot peddle which once started, your feet drives a wheel which drives the sewing machine. There was a thing on the sewing machine itself which would go up and down driving the needle up and down to form a stitch, as the machine sewed, and pulled the fabric through. I was just fascinated with the thing on the sewing machine bobbing up and down. I would sit on the corner of her daybed, with her sewing and could watch for what seemed as a boy, for hours. However, I was just a young kid, but anyway, I became interested in sewing.

Mr. Hillier attributes his interest in sewing and cooking, and to other interests to his own natural creative interests and to exposure to these crafts he received while spending time as a child with his grandmother and mother.

"I had a grandmother who lived next door to me. She was always into the, we'll say the traditionally, women's stuff, like crocheting, sewing, knitting, and my father was nearly always away, so I didn't get much exposure from him to the back then, more stereotypically, manly stuff. But even if I did, I perhaps wouldn't have been interested in it anyway, because you know, I just have more of an interest in arts and crafts types things, things that are more hands on. Then later, woodworking became a major interest, once I got older, where I could have tools, buy the wood, and what not. So I also, became interested in carpentry work and I've been interested in it more so perhaps, than anything else for the best part of my life. I've been involved in renovating houses, building

KEITH HILLIER

houses, and that type of thing. But when I was a kid, I was more involved, and I was interested in cooking and being in the kitchen and I'm still interested in all that."

Mr. Hillier taught himself how to sew, he said with a big laugh, "my mother couldn't sew on a button, right! She was more of a cook and baker. That was more of her thing and that was what she enjoyed doing most." But she was willing, with some prodding, to help him pursue his interests.

"...we didn't live in a place where there were many stores. It was a small town. There were stores, but you'd order a lot of things from catalogues. I'd want her to be ordering fabric from a catalogue so that I could make curtains, say, drapes for a bedroom, and if I kept on enough, [laughs] and nagged enough [laughs] it just might happen."

But being a boy interested in sewing and cooking wasn't always clear sailing.

"Both my grandmother, who lived close, and my mother, were supportive I suppose, I don't know if they encouraged it, but they certainly didn't discourage it. Now my father was less interested in seeing me trying to hook a mat for instance, because I saw my grandmother doing it. So, if he were home and he was up in our, I'll call it our workshop, but we called it our barn, (we called it our barn only because at one point in time dad had a horse that he kept there), but later it became a workshop. If he was up in

KEITH HILLIER

the workshop he'd want me to be up there with him... and I'd go up just to get him off my back, but the minute that his back was turned I'd be hopping down to the house again to carry on with what I most enjoyed doing."

Today he takes the teasing he put up with in stride.

"They [mom and granny] were supportive and a lot of other people were also. The only people who actually, did 'poke fun' ... tried to shame me, they were people who were, I guess they were less diversified themselves and less able to comprehend that perhaps being diversified is a good thing. ...there were lots of people who didn't have an issue with that and there were other people who will die thinking that a man should have a shovel in his hand and not a needle."

Today Mr. Hillier lives in a house where he is primarily responsible for the interior finishing of, with drapes he made himself, and he continues to make many things by hand.

PALMA MERCER

INTERVIEWED BY JORDAN ZALIS



Palma Mercer. Photo by Jordan Zalis.

Palma Mercer was eager to get started at the Portugal Cove-St. Philips Memory Mug-up at the recreation centre. She was the first to arrive and had her hands full with old photos and a book of happenings that she found among her late father's things. "Unfortunately, two pages are gone," she said of the book from the 19th Century. "Events of Newfoundland" was full of community news-stories that had Palma smiling while I read it out loud. She

PALMA MERCER

takes pride in being born and raised in the seaside community, saying “I’m from Portugal Cove and never left – the only way I leave now is when I die.”

Life on ‘The Cove’ has been good for Palma (née Harding), who grew up on Harding’s Hill, an area of the community that has hosted her family since 1750 when the first Harding arrived in Newfoundland. As the family grew, so did their homestead, though they all remained close by. Palma, born in 1950, remembers the long conversations she used to have with her great-grandmother and how her father built their house himself.



“Taken on the top of Somerton’s land, Portugal Cove looking towards Harding’s Hill and Western Point.” c.1950. Courtesy of the Portugal Cove-St. Philip’s Archives (014.01.01).

PALMA MERCER

Through our morning together, Palma shared some amazing memories that demonstrate the strong ties her family has to Portugal Cove and a certain historical richness she feels through them in the area.

“We never suffered hardships. My father always went to town and whenever he’d come back, he always brought me back a new dress...and I’d wait for him. He did this quite a lot.”

About her father, she says, “he was a very interesting man – he could tell some stuff too.” He worked construction down at the American military base and later drove a cement truck. About ‘The Cove’, she says, “he could go way back!”. “Oh yeah,” Palma’s husband agreed. They came to the Mug-up together, but he wanted her to be the focus.

“There were good wages back then,” she said of her father’s work and in turn, her upbringing. One advantage that Palma had growing up was that her father always had a car -- and always had a nice car. But needing a car can be another story altogether. Palma, an engaging storyteller, tells it like this:

“The house just up from me was a small bungalow. There was still a lot of snow left on the ground. So, me [and] my brothers, somehow managed to get up on the roof of the porch and were jumping into the snow for fun, right? So, I had to jump -- and break my leg. Yeah, I got my fear of heights that day, that’s where it comes from. But anyway, I had to wait all day for my dad to take me to the hospital. I had to wait the whole day, I never forgot that.

PALMA MERCER

My leg on a chair...I was screaming in pain. Anyway, back then you were put in the hospital. I was put in the hospital for two weeks for that...I had two brothers so [my mom] couldn't stay with me, so they had an orderly sit by my bed every night...a cast on and a big old slipper on that foot...I got a terrible fear of heights."

We found out then, that Palma had, in fact, left 'The Cove' at least once, and she laughs about it now, but this was 1958 and she explains "there were no taxis...I had to wait for my father to come home." This was also during a great storm where much of the area was without power for two weeks – but they had a generator.

Palma's father played into her stories a lot and him having a good job in town afforded her and her younger brothers other luxuries that were rare at the time. "We were one of the first with a television...one of the first."

Summertime made for different fun growing up on Harding's Hill on 'The Cove'. It was "the spot."

"We used to go [up the hill] and explore. We'd be gone all day...and go get some money and get some candies...then mom would call us for supper."

She reflects warmly:

"We'd pile-up on Harding's Hill, that's where I grew up, it's named after my family, and we'd play everything over there because

PALMA MERCER

there wasn't much traffic going up and down. If there was we'd just move to the side and the cars would go back and forth. We'd play hopscotch and ball...softball...baseball. I'd be the only girl... and there would be six of us and my two brothers, and basically I'd be looking out for them too."

But "looking out" did not necessarily mean keeping them, and herself, out of mischief:

"My [neighbour] was a fisherman, so at that time he had flakes there, they were called. He'd lay the fish out to dry in the sun... someone...anyway decided we'd take a few fish...and at that time in the backyard was a big old garage with old batteries and whatever. And we were trying to figure out how to set a fire to roast the fish. Anyway we set fire to the battery...we got matches from somebody...somebody was a smoker or whatever...all to roast a fish, right?"

Or, there was the time she left her brothers while they got into it a little deeper at another neighbour's house:

"The father used to have a backroom that he had all his old beer bottles in...I'm going to get in trouble for this one but my cousin Doug and my two brothers decided they were going to take the bottles and there was a snack store just down the hill, Cec King's Store. So they went in...I don't how much they got for them...They sold all of his bottles! Well I'll say they were in trouble that night. I don't know if they gave the money back to the man...I mean back

PALMA MERCER

then, that was a lot of money. For some reason, I didn't want to get involved...mischief, right?"

Palma had so much to share, and really enjoyed telling stories about her family, and food, and all the fun she had growing up in the area. Her tales are rich with imagery, full of real history, and reflect a beautiful life held with warm memories. "It's a nice time, right?"



Four unidentified children in front of Broad Cove, St. Philip's. 1962. Photograph courtesy of the Portugal Cove-St. Philip's Archives (028.03.193).

CLARENCE (MAC) MILLER

INTERVIEWED BY NATALIYA BEZBORODOVA



Clarence (Mac) Miller. Photo by Nataliya Bezborodova.

CLARENCE (MAC) MILLER

Clarence (Mac) Miller is a lifelong resident of Portugal Cove–St. Philips, NL. He was born September 19, 1943. Mac Miller is the only son in a family of five children. As a child, he often accompanied his father who worked as a truck driver supplying goods to boats for Bell Island. He married in 1968, having growing up in the same community as his wife. He has two daughters and is “waiting for grandchildren, still waiting.” Mac Miller worked in public utilities for 35 years, and is now retired. His interest in history and geography started as a schoolchild, and he began his own research in his family genealogy which led him to become a local Heritage Committee member.

“Saturdays when there would be no school, myself and another friend of mine, we used to go with my father to Bell Island to help deliver the produce. We would be in the back of the truck. Now of course, at that time everything was sort of in, not cardboard boxes but in small wooden crates. I can remember, we would be in the back of the truck, we would be passing the stuff out to my father and he would be bringing it in but from going to one place to another if we were hungry we would open a box and have a banana, an orange, or an apple or anything. Flick the peels out of the truck so my father wouldn’t see as he was driving. We were in the back of the truck with a big tarpaulin over the truck. So, we never did go hungry on Saturdays. All the rest of the week we were hungry, waiting for Saturdays, and get paid a dollar for doing that too.”

CLARENCE (MAC) MILLER

Mac described the work associated with growing up in a family of girls:

“Otherwise there wasn’t much time for entertainment so to speak, because when my father worked on Bell Island, I had to come home from school and get all the supplies for the night, I had to get splits, small pieces of kindling for lighting the fire in the morning. I never had too much time for sports. When I did, that was mostly at school, playing baseball, soccer. Some Saturdays when my father wouldn’t be at home, when he would go to Bell Island on a Monday and wouldn’t be back until Friday night, and I being the only boy, I had to do all the work. Sometimes coming home from school I used to have to go in the woods, which was about a mile hike cut a few sticks of wood, haul them back, physically haul them back to the house about another mile, and cut them up for a day. Some Saturdays we had to cut up enough wood for the fire for the whole week, which didn’t leave much time for anything else: stealing vegetables out of the gardens or anything else like that, right? That’s about it for me.”

MAC: “I didn’t like my siblings, they were all girls. They didn’t like me either!

NATALIYA: You had a hard time!

MAC: I did have hard time! [laughter] They got away from everything. That is why I had to do all this hard work, go to get firewood, and so on. Girls didn’t do that stuff. They would be stuck

CLARENCE (MAC) MILLER

inside the house, while I was outside in the cold at everything else. Well, my five sisters, we all went to school here in Portugal Cove. Finished high school there. I was the only one who did, as they say, post-education. I had one year at the University, but I didn't like that. And at about nineteen years old I went to work, and I stayed at that job for 35 years until I retired."

Although there was a lot of hard work Mac also recalled some of the games and activities he would play as a child:

"In summer when we had holidays, we used to play soccer, we played baseball a lot. We used to grow our own vegetables too, fish every now and then. We weren't a fishing family but every now and then you would get out with someone in a boat, jig a few codfish for the week. We used to play some games. One game we used to play is tiddly. Different places you go in Newfoundland, they call it by a different name, right. We called it tiddly; we played with a couple of sticks. I actually had a real ball to play soccer with. Can you believe that? A real ball. We went swimming. We would walk over hills from Portugal Cove about a mile hike to go swimming in the ponds. [...] So, we used to hike over hills almost every day in summer or on our holidays. Go for a swim, then come back home again. We used to spend a lot of time around the rocks, we used to call them rocks, or a shoreline. Jigging connors, sometimes you would get a small codfish that used to be in around the rocks, fry that on the rocks. One thing I remember that we used to do. Do you know what conk is? Seashell

CLARENCE (MAC) MILLER

that grows on a rock. We call them conk, right. They are males and females. We used to go down on the shoreline and pick those off the rocks. Pick the male ones off the rocks, because the male ones are bigger and fatter. We put them in an old tin can, and make a little fire. We boiled them and ate them. They were lovely! They were actually really lovely!"

"My friend had a horse. Of course late in spring of the year and late in fall of the year you had to cut a grass, let it dry, put it to a barn for the horse in the winter. That used to be good because once we got the barn full of hay we started jumping in the hay. If you were warm at all, if you were sweating at all, you itch like anything. It was fun, but at the end of it you almost wanted to walk another $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile to the pond to go for a swim. We used to swim in the salt water too. Saltwater is a lot better to swim in because saltwater is heavy and fresh water is not. We used to get in saltwater, and just float. We get on our backs and float. Saltwater will keep you up. In fresh water you have to move your hands and feet just to keep in that same position. I remember one place called Claire's beach. It used to be a beach of a family Claire's that lived there. I remember myself and this other guy were swimming once and we were out twenty feet in the water, and we saw this tail come up in the air, out of the water. It was a shark about thirty feet from us. That was closer than I've ever been in all the time I spent swimming in saltwater to something chasing us so to speak. Here was this shark. We got out of water pretty fast."

CLARENCE (MAC) MILLER

"I live more in the past than in the future or the present. I always did. When I was going to school, history and geography were my two passions. Especially history. For some reason, I don't know why you get hooked on something [...] I think it was just about how the things were back that then, what they did and so on. [...] I don't know, just an interest I had... why someone becomes a hockey player, what made you become a soccer player. It was just something I was interested in, it was just in me for some reason. Then I just kept at it, and at it, and at it, it just got more and more challenging. Then I got into family history, and it was fine, doing genealogy. Not even one thing in particular, but the overall thing, history, how did this come about."



St. Philip's Pond, June 30th 1962. Photograph courtesy of the Portugal Cove-St. Philip's Archives (028.03.155).

KATHERINE MILLER

INTERVIEWED BY MARISSA FARAHBOD



Katherine Miller. Photo by
Marissa Farahbod.

Although she was born in Toronto and travelled to different parts of Canada after she got married, Katherine Miller grew up in Portugal Cove. She explains that her father, her grandfather and her great-grandfather were all born and raised in Portugal Cove. She knows the place well and

remembers many stories her parents and grandparents have told her about the Cove.

Katherine, who is known as Kathy to local people, is now doing a genealogy of people in Portugal Cove, and has therefore a wealth of knowledge about the names and markers in the area. Her stories about the life of residents in the past in Portugal Cove are fascinating, and the personal story she shared with me, tragic.

Kathy tells several interesting stories about her father's childhood in the Cove. As a child, her father, Archibald Miller Jr., had witnessed the sinking of two German U-boats and had seen the Hindenburg pass over during the Second World War:

"My dad actually saw missiles go through the water and strike the boats. He was a small boy. He lived down on what was known as North Point and he was actually either on his way to the wharf or down on the wharf when he saw the torpedoes. I guess however

KATHERINE MILLER

he saw them, maybe he was just leaving his home to go down because it's a little further up, but he actually saw the explosions and saw the boats go down. Another story that he told me was that he was, I guess, fortunate enough to be outside the day that the Hindenburg went overhead. So he was a small boy again, because in the night time they used to keep their windows closed afraid of the light, afraid of the, you know, ships and what not, seeing them would strike, but he actually did see the Hindenburg go over Portugal Cove”.

Kathy also knows the story behind the names of some places and markers in the Cove. She relays the story that her father told her about Cross Pond, as follows:

“He also told me of a story about ponds known as Blast Hole Ponds. One of them he had thought was renamed Cross Pond because of the drowning death of a man who had gone up there to cut wood. I don't know if he had a horse and sleigh or a dog and sleigh to pull his wood out. He got down to get a drink of water from the little brook or trickle of water that was coming out of the pond and the dog or the horse moved and the sleigh pinned him underneath and was like a, according to my dad they said that the water was only an inch and a half, two inches deep, but because of the position of the sleigh he couldn't get up and drowned in this small trickle of water. And to my knowledge, he is the first person to be buried in St. Peter's Cemetery, up on Cemetery Road. He would be the oldest grave up there. But like I say, he always thought one of the ponds had been referred to then, from then

KATHERINE MILLER

on as Cross Pond. To mark the death of him they had put a cross or something up there, I guess over the years now it has decayed because it was only a wooden cross”.

According to Kathy, her grandfather, Archibald Miller Snr., is the reason why there are rainbow trout in Blast Hole Ponds:

“My grandfather walked from North Point, where he lived, into Murray’s Pond with two buckets and he took two buckets of rainbow trout and deposited them in Blast Hole Ponds. So, anybody today who catches a trout, a rainbow trout, out of Blast Hole Ponds is because my grandfather was responsible for putting them in those ponds”.

Remembering her childhood in Portugal Cove, Kathy describes going to school in St. Lawrence and being a quiet individual. She recalls being a member of GA (Girls’ Auxiliary) and JA (Junior Auxiliary) and taking part in community or religious activities such as making palm crosses for parish members on Palm Sundays.

Kathy remembers having a quiet and “uneventful” life up until 9th August, 1985. On this tragic day remembered by community members at the Cove, Kathy’s children, who were in her car, drove off the cliff. She describes the heart-breaking events of this day in detail: Her shock, the one ambulance, the rushing paramedics, the complications and so on. She explains how her life changed after that day because of her daughter’s condition, and how she later lost her in 1998. Kathy finds it difficult to talk about the day,

KATHERINE MILLER

nevertheless she does not want the day to be forgotten as she believes it is a part of the history of Portugal Cove.

Kathy is interested in gathering the stories in Portugal Cove and working on its genealogy. She wants to find more relations and roots. She wants to discover and put to the test some myths and legends about the Cove. For instance, she wants to discover if rumours about the existence of bats in Portugal Cove are true. She also wants to know the origin of local legends about a plane crash, which were in existence before the plane crash that occurred in 1978.

“There was supposed to have been a plane that crashed up there but not the one... apparently there was the one that crashed in 1978. Not that one. This one would have been older. But they could never find it, because the trees never really, they were so dense down there that they could never find this plane that went down. So it might be interesting once, now that the track has been made, the trail from the Geeze down to Bauline. If people start going off into the woods and search on whatever, maybe the rumour or the myth of this plane will always be there. It may come to, you know, an end. I don't know. I have to do a little research.”

Kathy does not live in Portugal Cove anymore. But she is eager to reconnect to a place she grew up in and is attached to. She describes how happy she is that her other family members, like her nephew, are becoming more and more interested in the stories of the Cove. She believes that by gathering and sharing these stories, Portugal Cove's fascinating rich community history can be better preserved.

DELORES SUSAN MITCHELL

INTERVIEWED BY EMA KIBIRKSTIS



Delores Mitchell. Photo by Ema Kibirkstis.

DELORES SUSAN MITCHELL

Delores Susan Mitchell, nee Greeley, was born January 3rd, 1957, and has lived her entire life in Portugal Cove. Her mother, Annie Violet Roberts, was a “townie” from St. John’s and took care of the home and family, and her father, Leonard Greeley, was a labourer for Stokes. She lived with her grandparents Archibald and Suzy, nee Churchill, in North Point until the age of nine, when her parents built and moved to a new home further down the road. Mitchell fondly remembers her heavily tattooed grandfather that had a story for every mark and was in charge of local grave digging, and her grandmother who would always favour her as the only girl and often treat her when making a trip to “town.”

“I remember my first cup of tea I had as a child. My grandmother poured some in a saucer because it was hot, and I would blow on it to cool it down, and drink it from the saucer so I wouldn’t burn my lips. Loved it and I still drink tea today. She got me hooked on tea.”

North Point, or “The Geeze,” was isolated compared to the rest of Portugal Cove, and so they were often left “off to themselves”. Most of her memories growing up a tomboy, living with four brothers, or playing with some of her closest friends, Joselyn Churchill and Sylvia Greeley.

“One Christmas, Santa had left me a beautiful walking doll. Let me tell you, she was a big doll and she looked real. She was beautiful. Well, the boys got their hands on it and glued her eyes shut. It broke my heart. I could never get her eyes open again – I was devastated. I kept her, of course. I could never have anything. I

DELORES SUSAN MITCHELL

had a stroller, a doll, child's stroller, and they took the wheels off of that to make a buggy for themselves, oh my... But no, I couldn't have anything. Everything I had they destroyed."

When not in school, Mitchell recalls spending most of her time outdoors and "making their own fun." During the warmer months, she recalls playing softball, skip rope, hopscotch, hide-and-seek, and spotlight. In the winter, they would go sledding in the meadow behind her house, and if there was freezing rain, skate down the hill. Everyone would get around by biking or walking, and if they were to go to "town", St. John's, they would have to take the bus.

"When we had a lot of freezing rain and it was really cold, we would put on our skates and we could skate down the mountain. And I remember one year, I lost total control coming down over the mountain, and I went through my neighbour's fence. I was hurt, nothing broken thank god, but I did get hurt. I was in bed for a while. But we had no fear."

Mitchell recalls holidays and special events amongst family and friends dearly. During Christmas time, she remembers her father and members of the community mummering, and on Christmas Day many people constantly stopping by. What was particularly exciting for her, was when Santa Claus visited on Old Christmas Day (January 6th). On New Year's Eve, her family would wait in front of the television together until midnight struck, and her father and grandfather would go outside to shoot their guns with the rest of "the cove". Amongst her friends, Halloween and Valentine's

DELORES SUSAN MITCHELL

Day were the most exciting. During the latter, children would leave anonymous valentines at each other's doors. Amongst her family, Pancake Day (Shrove Tuesday) was particularly fun because her mother would hide coins, nails, needles, buttons, or her own wedding ring in the cakes, each granting their own prediction for the future.

"They do Valentine's different now. We used to make out our valentines, and most of the time we wouldn't sign our name, we'd say, "Guess who?" If I would send one to you, I would write your name and then I would say, "Guess who?" And what we did, we would put them underneath your door, or by your door, and we'd knock and run away. Whatever child was home inside that house was anxious, listening for the door or a knock on the door so that they can go get their valentine. It was fun... We would try to guess who it was, and that was all part of it trying to guess, "Who was that one from?" And trying to catch someone trying to leave a valentine at your door to find out exactly who did it, that was fun too."

In the neighbourhood, she recalls there being a woman who read tea leaves and could ward off warts, a man who could stop blood, and the "cat man" who lived alone amongst an abundant amount of felines.

"He lived down from me. He loved cats. Nat Pond was his name, that's what we used to call him. He loved cats. One of my brother's and a neighbour's child went down there one day and drowned one his cats in his well. Oh, he was devastated... They were young, and you know them boys, up to their antics. So anyway, he came

DELORES SUSAN MITCHELL

up to my parents and the parents next door, and of course my brother and my neighbour's son were chastised, most definitely. There were cats everywhere. He loved cats. And he lived by himself – don't know if he was ever married, he could have been, but when I was old enough to understand, he was on his own. And he loved cats, he just loved them."

Just up the road from her were two grocers, Hibbs' and Churchill's. For every other need, they would have to catch the bus to St. John's.

"There were two stores: Churchill owned one, and Hibbs owned one. Two stores next door to each other. My mom always had an account. People had accounts at Hibbs', and as they get paid - like my father got paid he'd pay so much on his account... They had bologna, tinned food, salt meat, and whatever, right? And of course, she [Mrs. Hibbs] would have her little book with my parents name on it, and she would write down everything that they put on their account. And then of course when they paid their bill, it would be marked paid. Then it would start again."

DIANE MORRIS

INTERVIEWED BY CASSANDRA COLMAN



Diane Morris. Photo by Cassandra Colman.

DIANE MORRIS

It was a windy day in Portugal Cove-St. Philip's when Terra Barrett and I interviewed Diane Morris at the local community center. Diane was born in Twillingate, Newfoundland in 1948, and has been a resident of Portugal Cove since 1986. Diane moved to Portugal Cove in order to pursue a career with Newfoundland Hydro, from which she retired in 2002. Diane and her husband still live in the same house they moved into when they first settled in Portugal Cove-St. Philip's just over thirty years ago. When asked what drew her to Portugal Cove, Diane stated:

"We were planning on buying a house anyway, so we came down, went down to the gas bar down at the service station – I saw a picture of the house in the paper. So then we had a look. I wasn't planning on buying it at the time, but we did... it was the first one we looked at, it was a good buy. It's nice down here... it's very quiet. You are close to everything, the scenery is nice. You have a perfect view of Bell Island... And the neighbours... it is nice here."

In addition to the tight-knit community, quiet atmosphere, and beautiful scenery, Diane enjoys the opportunities that Portugal Cove-St. Philip's has for her to fulfill her more athletic inclinations. She is an avid hiker, and enjoys taking to the local trails around Portugal Cove-St. Philip's with her hiking group. Diane's favourite trails are located around an area known as Rainbow Gully, where she hikes and snowshoes fairly regularly:

"There's a lovely hike out in Bay Roberts, but I like them all actually, because we do different ones. We do a bunch around here... we did

DIANE MORRIS

some of the East Coast Trail as well, right? But the one over behind here [Rainbow Gully], that's a really nice trail. It's not one I would do on my own because I think I would get lost, because of the different, you know, little, different off-shoots from that."

"They come from everywhere, but the two people that set [the hiking group] up were from St. Philip's. I got involved because they had a meeting over here regarding it. I guess it has been going on for five or six years or more now, but as time went by people came from everywhere – you know, St. John's, some from the cove, some from CBS – wherever... everybody's welcome. It's a great time. We started off with five or six people there every Saturday, and now you might get twenty five or thirty... And then sometimes we go to somebody's house for a bit of coffee and a little snack after – not every one, but we do that sometimes, which is kind of nice."

Diane also spent several years rowing in Regatta boating competitions – a style of fixed-seat rowing in which a coxswain steers a boat and a team of rowers on an established racing course. Though she primarily participated in Regatta rowing in St. John's, Diane also talked a little bit about the Regatta competition held annually in Portugal Cove.

"They have like a mini-Regatta [in Portugal Cove], because I mean they have all these little wheel-spins, and darts, and everything like that, and food, and stuff like that. It's usually about a whole day, you know, down by the ferry, down that area, right? It's like, I

DIANE MORRIS

guess, like a mini-Regatta as compared to St. John's, which is much bigger, but it's like a mini-Regatta, which is kind of nice."

Diane also had a great deal to tell us about her childhood in Twillingate. She grew up in Twillingate with her younger sister, her two younger brothers, and her parents. Diane's mother was an operating room nurse at the local hospital, and her father was in the merchant navy, and later worked in the Department of Veteran's Affairs and as a stationary engineer in Twillingate's local hospital. Her father was born in Northern Bay but grew up in Twillingate, and her mother was from Salmon Bay. Of her childhood in Twillingate, Diane had this to say:

"It was better times, it was – I think it was, when I was growing up. It was not as hectic, you know? And stuff like that. It was good."

"[We would play] Cowboys and Indians, we used to play that. We used to play baseball and softball. We'd swim and we'd skate. We'd have a dance party at the school, something like that, we'd go to that. And we'd meet our friends at a little restaurant, something like that. When the weather was good, we were always outdoors... we used to slide in the winter time. It was enjoyable."

"We would play hopscotch, and jumping rope... We were always busy. We were never bored, I can say that."

In wrapping up our interview, Terra asked Diane if there was anything someone who had never visited Portugal Cove-St. Philip's

DIANE MORRIS

should know. Diane reiterated all her favourite parts of living in Portugal Cove, and concluded her statement with this:

“I have no plans on moving anytime soon – my age will probably force me later on, but I like it here. My husband likes it here too... It’s just a nice community, you know? It’s very nice, it’s very quiet. I think if anybody, you know, who didn’t live here and came here to live, I think they would enjoy it. It’s nice. I didn’t know where we would have bought a house when we bought it, we just happened to see it down here. It’s close to everything... it’s a nice place.”



Garden Party July 12th 1962. Photograph courtesy of the Portugal Cove-St. Philip's Archives (028.03.185)

WALLY PYNN

INTERVIEWED BY JILL JABLONSKI



Jill Jablonski interviewing Wally Pynn. Photo by Nataliya Bezborodova.

It was in Fox Point, Newfoundland in 1953 that Wally Pynn was born to a Principal Lighthouse Keeper and a family of musicians. Wally's family began to value music in the twentieth century after tragedy struck. It was in 1910 when Wally's grandmother's childhood home burned in a fire. The children, with no father and no house, garnered the concern of Dr. Wilfred Grenfell, a man who came to Newfoundland and Labrador in the 1880s to provide services to people of the province. Dr. Grenfell took the children to an orphanage in St. Anthony where they were provided with shelter, food and an education in music, which Dr. Grenfell personally

WALLY PYNN

fostered. “In fact, he sent two of my relatives to somewhere in Kentucky to study music for a couple of years. And they came back, and anyways, they’re known for playing the organ and piano in St. Anthony”, Wally recalls, proud of that heritage.

Wally, who has played a tune or two during church services in Portugal Cove, learned to play the piano and pipe organ when he was a child growing up in a lighthouse with his mother, father, and four siblings. With four siblings and five cousins, who lived close by, Wally never was in want for entertainment. There were games to play, music to learn, and chores to do. One of those chores was berry picking:

“I didn’t like picking berries so much. My mother was an avid berry picker, and my uncle’s wife who lived on the lighthouse as well, they loved berry picking. We used to have to go berry picking with them in the fall. I used to hate that. But I love berry picking now. It’s interesting, yeah. We’d go over on the Cape, which was just on the other side of the lighthouse. Lots of bakeapples used to grow there. . . It’s a marsh berry. I like them, and my goodness we’d go away on the Cape, and oh in a day I suppose, we’d pick three, four, five gallons of bakeapples. It was just a lot.. And I don’t know, lunches were always molasses bread it seems. Butter and molasses bread, and come time to take a break, we’d all sit down by this little brook. I don’t think the brook was running. It was just a bog, and we’d scoop our cups down into the water. We wouldn’t have milk or pop, or anything like that, we’d

WALLY PYNN

just have an old glass of cool water, and we would scoop up the water, and have it with molasses bread. It just seemed like the best snack in the world. If we were lucky, though, Mom probably, probably would bring along a box of cracker jacks, or chips, or something like that. But we just loved cold water and molasses bread."

Also filling his time was school, which was located on the other side of a graveyard from his lighthouse. He never saw any ghosts in the cemetery, and he never felt as if the lighthouse he called home, was really haunted. Instead, it was a warm place that overlooked the water that his grandparents made their money from, as they ferried people to and from their destinations on their deck boat:

"My grandparents, they owned what we called a deck boat, it wasn't a yacht, but it was along those lines. It was a big deck boat, and because there were, no roads that connected the communities on the Northern Peninsula, until the mid-sixties or something, my grandfather and my grandmother used to ride people around, take people around, to various communities, like the doctor, the nurse, the dentist, social worker, and all those people. Each trip, say the social worker had some work to do in Main Brook, which was sixty miles away, or whatever, they would pay my grandfather twenty dollars to take them around. So he did that, my grandfather and grandmother did that in retirement, and would take the rangers around, the policemen, used to call them rangers back in the day. So I remember I would be sitting on

WALLY PYNN

the cliff, or standing on the cliff. Me and my cousins, you know, waving at the deck boat, Grandmother and Grandfather going by, because we knew we would get a quarter later at the end of the day. They would come into the wharf, and we would go down to meet them and stuff. My grandmother was the most wonderful person in the world. Just the sweetest darling, and guaranteed, whenever we saw Grandmother, she would have this big purse full of change for her grandchildren, and we would get a quarter. But anyway, just to see, I can hear the boat too, just passing by the lighthouse, "oh there's Grandfather and Grandmother coming in today" and "they're leaving now". But they would have those people, those people that were required, for whatever reason, in other communities, it was the only way to get there take them by boat. Because there were no roads, or anything that used vehicles. Because I think the road didn't go through the Northern Peninsula until 1966, and so yeah, that's what they did in their retirement."

"Just to go onboard the deck boat was so nice. Grandmother had a nice little stove on there, and she would make little pies and little buns, that kind of stuff. The boat would be tied to the wharf, and we would play cards together, and read stories, and go down and visit them, and that's all nice. That's certainly my best childhood memory."

Others thought Wally's home was lovely too. One man even stopped near the Pynn's hen house, and began painting a picture of the lighthouse. This man's painting inspired Wally, who as soon as he found some cardboard and paint, copied the artist as well as he

WALLY PYNN

could, and painted the lighthouse too. Painting is not only a skill to Wally but a comfort, just as his wood carving and writing is. One might ask where he gets his inspiration from. The answer is a combination of past and present. Memories of the graveyard, of berry picking, his love of family, and music, they have shaped and inspired him. But the quiet serenity of Portugal Cove, the rolling hills, greenery, the lap of the water, and Beachy Cove they are his current sources of inspiration.



Portugal Cove, 1954. Photograph courtesy of the Portugal Cove-St. Philip's Archives (028.03.018)

MAYOR MOSES TUCKER

INTERVIEWED BY MONIQUE MCGRATH



Standing L to R: Ema Kibirkstis, Cassandra Colman, Tanyan Ye, Nataliya Bezborodova, Jill Jablonski, Emma Lang, Dale Jarvis. Sitting L to R: Marissa Farahbod, Jordan Zalis, Mayor Moses Tucker, Julie Pomeroy, Monique McGrath, Terra Barrett. Photo by Kelly Drover.

Born and raised in St. Philip's, Moses Tucker is a staple member in the community of Portugal Cove-St. Philip's. Following his first run as mayor in 1978, he spent 15 years working various positions on the City Council board. After some time away from politics due to other work responsibilities, Mr. Tucker was encouraged by members of the community to run for mayor a second time, which he gladly agreed to do. With deep roots going back several generations, Mr. Tucker carries with him a strong sense of dedication and loyalty for the people of Portugal Cove-St. Philip's.

MAYOR MOSES TUCKER

Mr. Tucker has a passion for waterways: he loves to know where water comes from and where it goes. A retired civil engineering technologist, he is a local expert on ponds, lakes and rivers on the Avalon Peninsula. In 1968 he helped install one of the main water lines running along Portugal Cove Road, which is still used to this day. Mr. Tucker knows how the community's drinking water is treated, which pond it comes from, and where it is flowing.

"Our water right here comes from Bay Bulls. All of Portugal Cove and St. Philip's, Paradise and Conception Bay South, our water supply comes from Bay Bulls Big Pond which is on the way down Southern Shore. It's great water, actually super water! This is a development that was a necessity because of the growth of St. John's. Windsor Lake couldn't supply all the water that was needed for the growth of the city."

Mr. Tucker's interest in lakes and ponds goes beyond the scope of drinking water; he knows where all the best fishing spots. Good luck trying to get that information out of him! What he is openly willing to share, however, is how rainbow trout found its way in most of the ponds and rivers in the Portugal Cove-St. Philip's community.

"I fished all these ponds, winter and summer. Some of these ponds have been actually seeded with rainbow trout that were brought in from Ontario back in the eighteen hundreds. Little tiny things, there are thousands out there. They're aggressive too, they eat on local worms. But once you catch them, you put them in the

MAYOR MOSES TUCKER

boat, they die quickly. But the trouts that are native, what we call speckle trout, they don't fight as much as the rainbow trout. But when you bring them into the boat, one can be there for up to an hour before he dies."

Mr. Tucker carries with him countless memories of growing up and building his life on the Avalon Peninsula, from going to school, to skating in the winter, and swimming in the summer. In closing this interview he shares a memory from his first time serving as Mayor of Portugal Cove-St. Philip's, when he was required to create a prayer:

"When you do incorporation you have to create a prayer. You have to write a prayer to the lieutenant governor in council, and that still exists to this day. In order to petition something from the Queen or the Queen's representative, it has to be done in the form of a prayer. That was probably one of the most difficult things I've ever had to do, because I've been involved with the church and the church choir since I'm 15 years old. And one of the clergymen we had back then was a strict man as far as what you could and couldn't do. Kids weren't allowed to bow. Girls curtsied and boys had to salute. You could only bow to one, he said, to God. Now for me to create a prayer to somebody that wasn't God, that was way beyond what I was taught. It was a struggle to do it. When it was explained to me that this is a format that has nothing to do with prayers and God, I said alright, I can do it."

MAYOR MOSES TUCKER

When asked about the future of the Portugal Cove-St. Philip's community, Mayor Tucker is very optimistic that the town will maintain its rural character all thanks to one very important geographical element in this area:

"I think it's going to maintain a lot of the rural character. We have so much coastline, and we have this wonderful thing called



MAYOR MOSES TUCKER

Windsor Lake which creates a marvelous buffer from the city of St. John's. We're 10 minutes from the biggest shopping center in Newfoundland Labrador – the Avalon Mall, but the city will not come in and build and occupy around Windsor Lake. That's the watershed, that's the water supply. That gives us the opportunity here to lay back, and take it easy!"



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