

Bob Doxsee Jr.: So, these are all self-explanatory. These are all ten through eighteen. These are all taken up on Ocean Boulevard. If you want, we can ride over there later, and I'll show you the exact location. About where the pavilion is, the thing with the A-frame, it's about right around there.

Nancy Solomon: What storm was this?

BD: I think this was 1952.

NS: What do you remember about that particular storm?

BD: Just a nor'easter. Well, here, you can see, it's right up to the sidewalk. See here? Just a nor'easter. So, with nor'easters, they stay around a long time. A hurricane will go through pretty quickly.

NS: You took all of those photographs?

BD: I took these, yes. That was numbers ten through eighteen. As you probably know, the sea can remain wild after the storm has passed by. So, these pictures were probably taken on a sunny day.

NS: Was anybody living in these homes at the time?

BD: I don't remember. I don't think so.

NS: Were these all homes or were any of these businesses?

BD: Yes, it's just shacks. This house was eventually demolished, this big house.

NS: In number ten?

BD: Yes, number ten.

NS: That background house.

BD: Yes.

NS: What about this house that says, "Keep off?" Was that a store of some kind?

BD: No, it was just a summer cottage. Just summer cottages. The town took over all this land. It's all part of the beach now.

NS: Of Point Lookout?

BD: Yes. Now, number nineteen, this is directly behind this house that I told you – that the town bought the property –

NS: Behind number ten.

BD: – and demolished the house. That's number nineteen. These are kind of mixed up. This number twenty-two – well, let's go to number twenty-three.

NS: Let us do them in order. What is number twenty?

BD: So, now you're back to the Jones Inlet again, and these are my father's clam shells that you can see here.

NS: Was that where the business was at that point?

BD: No, no. This is on the Inlet. What happened was that the Point Lookout was washing away at a very, very, very rapid rate. I have that video. I think I've shown it to you. If not, I'll give you a copy of it someday. So, the Town of Hempstead put all these rocks on the sand at low tide. So, what happened was it kept – this was before the Jones Beach Jetty, of course, which would have protected it from the east. So, it kept washing away and washed under the rocks, and the rocks would fall into the deep water and disappear.

NS: Who put those rocks there? The town?

BD: Yes.

NS: When was that picture taken?

BD: [19]39 and [19]40. But then there was some state help there too. So, you understand what I'm saying? Here's the rocks, north to south. Here's the inlet. The waves would come crashing in like this, go under the rocks, and the rocks would fall in. So, it went deep, [imitates sound] take down. God, they're huge. Huge boulders. Really huge boulders. So, that could get expensive. So, this went on for quite a while. Eventually, in 1944, my father and my uncle stopped fishing, and they went into the clam business. We were doing a lot of business then because (smoked canning?) up in Maine was taking all we could give them, which was quite a lot. So, we had dump trucks, and we would dump the shells over the rocks into the water. As you can see here, it built up a reef. See this number twenty-four? Built up a reef. In number twenty-seven, there's a pack of cigarettes there that shows a little bit of comparison. The shells that went through the water motion would make them shells leaf together like this – see my hand with my fingers interlocked? They would form this pattern where they would leaf together. It was a very, very sturdy reef. Not only that, it was porous. So, when the waves hit, the reef would just suck the wave into it, and it would dissipate the power. So, they're all buried now with sand, but all those shells are still there. I think you got a pretty good idea of what it looked like here.

NS: Did he plan to use those shells as kind of a reef?

BD: Oh, yes. My father was very forward-thinking and forward-looking. He and A. Holly

Patterson – you might have heard of him, the Patterson home and all that. He was the presiding supervisor of the town of Hampstead. He and my father were very tight, and they worked together on this project and on the Jones business project – the Jones Beach Jetty as well. This was all approved by the U.S. Army engineers and everything. It was all part of a big plan. But it worked. It really worked.

NS: How long did that project continue?

BD: Almost the whole time we were in the clam business up until – well, Dick Murphy started building the Jones Beach Jetty around [19]52 or [19]53, and then all our shells went over there until that job was done. So, where are we now? We're back here on Ocean Boulevard.

NS: So, number twenty-two.

BD: Number twenty-two. Number twenty-three is in front of the house that was demolished. We call that house –

NS: Now what is happening in number twenty-three?

BD: Well, number nineteen, there's a storm going on right here.

NS: Do you have any idea when...

BD: This house here that I told you was demolished, we call it (Sonny Knapp's?) house because he had a restaurant there. That was the last use that that house was put to before the town bought it. So, when I refer to Sonny Knapp's house, it's this house in number twenty-five that the town took over the property, made it part of the Town Park District, and tore the house down.

NS: Now, what is actually happening in number twenty-three?

BD: In number twenty-three, the town's putting rocks along this bulkhead, see? Can you see them?

NS: Yes.

BD: Number twenty-six, you can – from Sonny Knapp's house, this is looking seaward. You can see this bulkhead here. So, at one time, this was land after this bulkhead. This was far out from where this picture was taken out the water's edge. See this bulkhead?

NS: Yes.

BD: It's all water there now. So, that's all erosion.

NS: What is this contraption?

BD: Sonny Knapp must have put that there. He had a restaurant there. It was just some...

NS: It is like a sign?

BD: I don't know what it was. It was just something that Sonny put there. Almost looks like a tire, but it probably isn't. It was just an artifact of some kind. I don't know.

NS: Number twenty-five, where is this? Where is that?

BD: This is Sonny Knapp's house, and it's right about at the foot of Cedarhurst Avenue, which is this street here. If you want, we can ride down there later. I'll show you. Number twenty-eight, this is part of Park District. It's further over to the east towards the Inlet.

NS: What exactly is this...

BD: That's a board wooden bulkhead. This is sand – it must be low tide – and that's a wooden bulkhead.

NS: That is a big bulkhead.

BD: Oh, no. Wait a minute. This is looking east. That's what this is. I can't quite make this out. But it's down on the beach. Twenty-nine is – here, again, this is Sonny Knapp's house. There's the town putting sand here. See all the sand?

NS: Yes.

BD: They're putting sand there. This bulkhead is extending seaward. This is the bulkhead, probably. I don't know. It's a long time ago. But there's a lot of erosion going on here, a lot.

NS: That would have been in fifty-two?

BD: Fifty-two, yes.

NS: Thirty, we do not have to talk about that. That is just maps.

BD: Yes, this is a compilation of the changes in Jones Inlet. Thirty-one, that's Sonny Knapp's house again. Same thing, as we saw.

NS: Are they building a bulkhead there?

BD: No, this is an old bulkhead that's being washed away. Thirty-two, this is a park. This bulkhead here in thirty-two is right up against the sidewalk. I can even show it to you if you want later on. You had to jump – there was a step that you would step down to get onto the beach. A lot of erosion going on on the south side of Point Lookout. Before, we were talking about the east side of Point Lookout where they've already put down all the rocks. This is the south side. This is the town Brighton Beach here. Thirty-three, this goes back to Ocean Boulevard where the houses are being washed away.

NS: These are all in 1952?

BD: Fifty-two, yes.

NS: You took all of these pictures?

BD: I took all of these, yes. I didn't take this one, but I took all these others. So, these are all the same. This is our dump truck that we put – this is number thirty-six. This is an old Army truck that we got, and we put this scissor lift on it.

NS: Your family business had that truck?

BD: Yes, my company. It had this scissor lift to get the dump body elevated, and then had this extension on the tailboard so that the shells could be dumped seaward, far out over into the water. That's how we got that reef going out. This was probably taken around 1950, maybe. Time was around 1950, number thirty-six.

NS: Now, I know you have talked about number thirty-seven at length, but if you could kind of give me some background of what that is that we are looking at.

BD: Well, that's Mrs. Scott, Mary Scott. You have that article from the Long Island Forum, correct?

NS: Well, pretend I do not.

BD: Well, I told you before, Meadow Island was part of this actual seashore. You might want to research this because it's pretty interesting. There were a lot of shipwrecks in those days. Smith, was it? Who's the guy they named the rec center after, the recreation center? The famous life saver.

NS: That guy, (Lombardo?)

BD: Huh? No, no, let's go back to the nineteenth century.

NS: Anyway, that is not...

BD: Well, anyway, he was given the land as a reward for the lives he saved.

NS: Well, we do not have to go into the whole history of Meadow Island. If you can just talk about what we are looking at.

BD: Well, the point I'm trying to bring out is that the Town of Hempstead did not own Meadow Island. Meadow Island was privately owned. You know that, right?

NS: Yes.

BD: Senator Smith had a hotel and a restaurant there facing south. The daughter married Scott, and she became Mary Scott. So, she was good friends with my father, and evidently, she was quite a formidable person. She had these plans drawn up to develop Meadow Island.

NS: When?

BD: Pardon me?

NS: When was this happening?

BD: I guess it was in the twentieth century. Maybe 1910, somewhere around there. But she had this son who I remember very well. General McClellan Scott, his name was. His son, who was a throwback, he was mentally challenged. Georgie, he was George McClellan Scott. So, that's about all I can tell you. This General's path is on here and a couple of references to General McClellan.

NS: What happened to the plan?

BD: No idea. Depression, probably. She had a land on the Indian River in Florida that she couldn't pay the taxes, and she wanted to give it to my father. He couldn't pay back taxes either. So, she lost that. She had a store in Freeport on Church Street, some kind of a clothing or something, I'm not sure. Maybe a tailor shop or something. That's all I can tell you on that. This is by Mineola Avenue. These are houses –

NS: Number thirty-eight?

BD: Number thirty-eight. These are on Mineola Avenue looking south towards the ocean. These are those last two houses on Mineola that are still there, which I can show you if you want. The inlet is on the far side of the rocks. This is the rock jetty that the town built. This is the inside. This is low tide. The water would come right up to the sidewalk. It would, of course, come right through the rocks. The rocks were porous. The water would come right up to the sidewalk.

NS: Did you take that picture?

BD: No.

NS: When was that picture taken, do you think?

BD: This could have been any time up into the [19]50s, late [19]40s. Late [19]40s, I guess.

NS: We saw this picture before.

BD: Thirty-nine. This is back on Ocean Boulevard again where they were putting rocks on this side of this bulkhead. Number forty, that's another...

NS: The maps, we do not have to talk about.

BD: – map. It's self-explanatory. This is the old wooden bulkhead before they put the sandbags there. Number forty-one, the last two houses on Mineola Avenue. This is after the last house was removed. So, it's now on Parkside Avenue.

NS: Any idea when that picture was taken?

BD: Thirty-eight, thirty-nine.

NS: So, right around the hurricane.

BD: Forty-two, that's the same thing back on Ocean Boulevard. This is very old. Number forty-four, this is very old. This is one of the oldest pictures of Point Lookout.

NS: Any idea how old?

BD: No. It's pretty old. All the cars are parked on the boulevard. That means there's no paving on the side streets. So, this would have been the early thirties, very early thirties. The rest of these are all the same thing again.

NS: What is number forty-five?

BD: This is after the town put the rock jetty in.

NS: That is where?

BD: This is the last two houses on Mineola Avenue on the east side of Point Lookout. This is looking north towards the drawbridge. I'll make you a copy of that DVD someday if you want. These are all up on Ocean Boulevard. These are all the same thing, number forty-six through number forty-nine.

NS: Do you think your father took these pictures or did you take it?

BD: I think I did. Well, you can see the people on the sidewalks, see? The water's running up to the sidewalk.

NS: When did you take these pictures?

BD: Fifty-two.

NS: Now, the people who lived right up there on Ocean Boulevard, were they always getting flooded and damaged? Because it looks like that this is –

BD: You mean here on the streets?

NS: Yes.

BD: No. Point Lookout is pretty high. In Sandy, only the bayside got it. The northeast side on the inlet got it because it's lower. The ocean side is higher. People by the ocean got no water in the streets. A lot of sand, but no water.

NS: That is pretty interesting.

BD: Well, maybe Ocean Boulevard got some, but that would be about it – from the waves coming over. The waves were so big.

NS: Now, you mentioned the sandbags, the shells that you put on the bulkheading. Were there other things that people or that the town did to help protect...

BD: In regards to what?

NS: To help protect against storms and hurricanes.

BD: There was a lot.

NS: I know. But I am just wondering if there was anything else that they did.

BD: Like what?

NS: I do not know. I am asking.

BD: Couldn't think of anything. I mean, how many trips my father in the past had made to Washington, D.C. and everything? A lot. But of course, the Jones Beach Jetty helped a tremendous amount.

NS: When was the Jones Inlet Jetty built?

BD: In the early [19]50s. [19]52, [19]53.

NS: Did things improve after that?

BD: Oh, yes, because it kept a lot of those high velocity seas from racing up inland. Sure.

NS: Do you have any memories of that jetty being built?

BD: Oh, sure.

NS: How long did it take?

BD: A couple years. Two, three years. Three years, maybe.



NS: Do you know where they got the materials from?

BD: The rock?

NS: Yes.

BD: From up the Hudson. There's a company called Trap Rock. They brought all the rock down in barges, put around the ocean up Jones Inlet. You know where the stone dock was at Short Beach, right?

NS: Yes.

BD: That's what that was built for, to bring the rock in. It was all unloaded off the barges and then put out on the jetty.

NS: Do you know people who worked on that project?

BD: Oh, sure.

NS: Are they still around?

BD: Oh, I don't think so. [laughter] That was over half a century ago. But Dick Murphy, he had the subcontract on (Jay Road stairs?). He and my father were very close.

NS: So, what were some of your memories of that being built?

BD: Well, like I said, all our shells went over there. They made roads and everything up on it. Of course, Dick Murphy, he was a character out of a book.

NS: Tell me about him.

BD: Oh, that would take hours. [laughter]

NS: Well, what is the first thing that comes to your mind?

BD: He was a drunk. But he got things done one way or the other. He took a lot of shortcuts. He was not somebody I would want to be involved in with business. But for some reason – well, he took our shells, and that was a big help to us. My father had a lot of dealings with Dick Murphy. Oh, God.

NS: What did he do?

BD: A lot of it wasn't legal. I got to be careful what I say. [laughter]

NS: Is he still alive?

BD: No.

NS: So, then tell us. He is not going to get in any trouble.

BD: Oh, my God. They had this thing called an Alligator. Pat and I lived in a house right here. This property, in the house we're sitting in, was a vacant lot. He had this Alligator parked right outside. Actually, what it was, it was this – you know what the tank is that they used in the war?

NS: Yes.

BD: Well, this was a seagoing tank. Instead of just having treads – it had caterpillar treads, but it had paddles on it, so it could swim in the water. He had this huge thing right outside. Then after the jetty was done, he did a lot of other contractor jobs. He went out in the surf with this Alligator and pulled out jetties out to the ocean and all kinds of crazy things. One time, he was going to – you ever heard of (Bowman?) Well Drilling?

NS: No.

BD: Was it Bowman or Lowman? They're from Bethpage. They wanted to drill wells on Fire Island Beach. It was a new community going up – Dunewood or something like that. So, Dick had this big barge, a hundred-foot barge named the *Flint*. It had this well drilling truck on it, which was heavy to begin with, and all this well drilling equipment. A big crane was on his barge, huge crane. It had the caterpillars. They had the treads – it was called caterpillar treads. They had them tied down with really heavy wire cable, tied down to the deck. So, Dick was still working on the jetty. He and my father on this little tugboat, the (*Fram?*) – small thing, but it was handy. It was steel. So, Dick wanted to get this barge towed to Fire Island Beach and the *Fram* to be back here to work in the morning, which was impossible. It was early in the spring. We were towing this thing out through the state channel. I'm not a bay guy, I was an ocean guy. We had one of our boats, the *Victory*, and the *Fram*. I was on the *Victory*, and a couple of the other guys were on the *Fram*. JC was on his barge, the *Flint*. So, first, we had the *Victory* behind trying to maybe keep everything in line. Then we decided to go ahead. So, we got through this bridge, then we got through the Wantagh Bridge, going on down through the state channel. It had been a tough winter. Some of the markers got pulled out of the bottom with the ice. You know how the ice does that. So, naturally, we run aground. The *Flint* drew less water than the other two boats. *Victory* drew a lot of water. *Victory* should have never been there. So, we're aground, and the *Flint's* coming down on top of us. The *Fram* turned sideways. The *Flint* had a counter – it wasn't a square bow. It has a sloping counter. It comes right over the top of the *Flint* just as Dick stepped out the pilothouse, takes (airborne?). He goes flying into the water. This was in April. The water's cold. So, somehow, [laughter] he – the *Flint* is a hundred-foot barge. God knows how many thousand tons it weight – starts drifting away. We had no line on him. [laughter] We had a skiff with an outboard that had a long line, and I tried to get to the *Flint*. JC's on the slide, waiting for me. I just got to the end of the line. I hand him the end of the line. [laughter] We keep running aground. You know the quadrant in the back of the boat that's attached to the rudder that steers the boat? The cables kept jumping off the quadrant. We had to go down and put the steering cables back. I thought we were going to leave the *Flint* at

Captree State Park. Somehow, we got through the drawbridge. I don't remember how we got through the drawbridge, but somehow, we did. It was still nighttime. I thought we were going to leave the *Flint* there, and he was, "No, we got to keep going." We didn't know the way across Fire Island Inlet or anything – pitch dark, how we ever got there – finally, we get to Dunewood, or whatever the name of this place was. The *Flint* was too wide to go through the channel. [laughter] Finally, we got it up to the pier or the dock or whatever the heck was there so long ago. It was back in the middle of [19]50s. Well, it was after I was married. It must have been [19]58 or something like that. Now, he wants to unload the well-drilling rig. It's a truck, and it's got all these pipes on it. God knows what it weighed. I wouldn't have the least idea what it weighed. Tons. It's got this big crane. I told you, the caterpillars were fastened down with wire cable, but they're not real tight. There's some slack in it. Then the crane kept bobbing like this. It bends the kingpin on the crane. [laughter] Somehow, we got it off. I don't know. We got it done. What a nightmare. Oh, Jesus. But when he went flying through the air, that was the best. [laughter] Oh, God. How we ever accomplished what we did, what we set out to do – but it was all so foolhardy. All foolhardy.

NS: How old were you at the time?

BD: Me?

NS: Yes.

BD: Twenty-seven, maybe. Twenty-eight. I was just a kid. [laughter] I should have refused to do it and just, "Pop, I don't care. I'm not going to do it." But my father told me to do it, I did it. Oh, God. We didn't have any liability insurance on our boat, the *Victory*. Anything could have happened. We did it anyway. But that's the kind of a guy Dick was. One of the guys we did business was George Streit. You might have heard of him.

NS: I knew him.

BD: Yes, had the *Mako*. He had the clam bottom, and he was one of our suppliers. So, George wasn't with us that night, lucky for him. During this period of time, this was where after my father's business had collapsed – not because there weren't any clams, it was because there were too many clams. The market was flooded with clams. So, we were grasping at straws then. So, George got involved with Dick, unfortunately for George. [laughter] Dick was one of these guys – he had a guy named Neil who worked for him. So, he says to Neil, "Go to U-Haul and rent a trailer under your name – not my name, your name." So, Neil does it, takes the license plate off the trailer, puts it on one of his trucks. [laughter] He didn't care how he jeopardized somebody else. It's the way he did business. Pat can tell you a lot of Dick Murphy stories.

NS: Were there other things that you remember either...

BD: Well, let me tell you this George Streit story. I mean, George Streit, he was straight as a string. That's just the way he was. So, he and Dick are in this big oversized trailer or whatever it is. [laughter] They were riding along, and they get stopped by the police. So, Dick gets outside the cab. George doesn't know what he said. The cop says, "What's your name?" "George

Streit." He gives up George's name. [laughter] "Let me see your license." "Oh, it's in my other pants." Prior to this, he had lost his license. He's using his son's license. Now, the son loses his license too, right? The son was a whole another story. Oh, jeez. Now, poor George, he's oblivious to all this, right? Next thing he knows, he's ordered to go to court. It was a whole big mess. Oh, my God. Oh, jeez.

NS: So, you worked on some of the jetty building projects and these bulkhead projects. Did other people in town also work on these projects?

BD: Yes, (McDowell?). Old man McDowell, he and my father were contemporaries. Because in those days, you could go up to town and go, "Oh, I want to see Mr. Patterson." "Oh, come on in. Sit down." Not like now. So, they worked very closely with town officials then, even county officials. It's a lot different than things are now.

NS: Do you recall whose idea was to do these projects? Was it people here in town that came up with these ideas, or was it people at town hall and the state?

BD: Well, like I said, my father and Holly Patterson were very close. They were very close. A lot of the town people complained because the shells had an odor. "Oh, we don't want those stinky shells." There was resistance to them, but they worked. Like I told you, they leafed together and formed a really tight barrier. But at the same time, they were porous. They absorbed the power of the water and the salt. That was deep right down there. I had one of those paper clipping mounted on a picture frame. I got it somewhere. If you ever want to see it, I can find it. But do you remember (Russ Redfield?)?

NS: No.

BD: Well, he was an old party boat skipper. He eventually got a job with the Conservation and Waterways. So, it has a picture of Russ Redfield and my father, (Collin McLaughlin?), the town engineer. They were doing an annual spring checkup of Jones Inlet. One of the big electronic devices in those days was a fathometer, which, of course, is nothing today, but that was a big deal in those days. So, going along the jetty, up on (Maher?) in this inlet was forty feet deep. Forty feet deep.

NS: I just had a question and I forgot it. On Meadow Island, were there things that you did to protect the houses and the workers' houses?

BD: No. The water level was a lot lower then.

NS: What about during a storm though? Did you do anything?

BD: No, I don't think so. I don't remember. I was a child...

NS: You were young.

BD: Not a child, I was an infant. But I remember though. As young as I was, I can remember.

But like I said, the water level was a lot lower then. See how much we've raised this? See the next door, it's like a foot and a half lower?

NS: Yes.

BD: We raised this all up that last winter. Water was that far from the back door and the front door. It was really high. I don't have tell you that. You know.

NS: Yes.

BD: So, anything else?

NS: What did it look like along here during Sandy?

BD: It was dark.

NS: What about the water? Did the water cover all of the docks?

BD: Oh, yes. It was right through the door here. I mean, not far from the sill. But the waves, the waves were unbelievable. The float overrode the poles. The float there, it overrode the poles. It wound up in a corner over there, hung up the back of the – it was turned around, and the back of the float was hung up on this dock. I remember I had a ten-by-ten-foot freezer on the dock over here. I saw it go by, but I thought it was my office trailer. But it wasn't. It was the ten-by-ten-foot freezer. I could hear it in the dock, "Bang, bang, bang." It had a lot of frozen clam chowder in there – you know, the pints?

NS: Yes.

BD: Hundreds of pints of clam chowder wound up in Island Park. If the float overrides the poles now, forget about it, because the poles are much, much – they're about eight foot higher than they were before. (Nugent?) came down with his barge and put the float over and – because the ramp and everything, it had to all be put back together. It cost me quite a bit of money. He did it as cheap as he could, but it still cost me quite a bit of money. But the lucky part was that the ten-by-ten-foot freezer had been demolished, but it was all stuck in a corner over here. He got it all up on the dock. Then I had a forty-foot trailer – you know those sea containers?

NS: Yes.

BD: That had knocked my shed off the foundation. Then that forty-foot container was all wrecked as well. So, I had a good friend of mine come down with a huge fork truck and got this forty-foot container up. It was real tight, because the shed was in the way, but he got it out of there and got rid of that container for me. But at the same time, got the remains of the ten-by-ten-foot freezer up on the sidewalk. The Town of Hempstead came with two big huge shovels, those yellow machines. The two shovels got it up and got it in the truck and I got rid of it. It cost me nothing. So, what I had to pay Nugent, I got back from them taking that crap away from me. So, that was lucky.

NS: Were there ever things that you remember doing before a storm hit that you thought were still something you should always do before a storm hits?

BD: Well, you try to secure things as best you could – throw lines on the boats, all kinds of things, sure.

NS: Are there certain things that you think everybody should do?

BD: Yes.

NS: What are some of the things that you think everybody should do before a storm if they live in an area like this?

BD: A lot of people put tape on their windows and stuff like that. I don't know. Have emergency lighting.

NS: Are there things that you have done that you think everybody should do?

BD: Hope for the best, I guess. [laughter]

NS: I was just thinking, because of all the time you have spent on the water that you have ways of protecting both your house and your boat.

BD: I, too, I lost two fork trucks and four vehicle. So, I didn't protect very well, did I? I'd never seen anything like that before.

NS: That is the end of this interview.

[end of transcript]