

Renée Magriel: This tape recording is the property of Tales of Cape Cod and may not be reproduced in any manner without written permission from Tales of Cape Cod. November 17th, 1977. I'm on my way to see Mrs. Eleanor Small in Chatham. [Recording Paused]

RM: Want to ask you about most of your family [inaudible] from Harwich. Can you tell me something about your ancestry as you are aware of it?

Eleanor Small: Yes. Well, the family home was down – (Leslie Nickerson?). I don't really know (Leslie Nickerson?) [inaudible], his home was the family home. Then they built the one next to it, and then they built the one down in (Lower?) Bay. My grandfather—and they owned all the land beach side right down to the water, that sort of thing. And (Grandpa Bennett?) was one of those coastal ones, you know, walking down the side of the thing. And my grandmother, (Nancy Phillips?) came from Florida [inaudible]. And her name was Nancy (Cabasovich?). And her father was one of those second or third sons that don't get anything, so he came over. Yeah, he was (Louis Cabasovich?), and he said he came from Hungary, but I don't know where. So that takes care of that side. And then as I said, it went back up—my grandmother, father (Braddock Phillips?). There was another Braddock and John, and I don't know – well, came before that.

RM: So it was (Phillips?), right?

ES: Yes.

RM: That are the Harwich?

ES: On my mother's side.

RM: On your mother's side. And what about your father?

ES: That was (Chase?) in West Harwich. And (Altamira?) [inaudible] cousin because my daughter wanted to, and she said they came – (Lot Chase?) was the first one, and she knows (the Phillips?) from there. And then my grandfather was Captain Benjamin (Phillips?). He was a real sea captain, and he was lost on the voyage around the Cape of Good (Hope?).

RM: Do you know anything else about him? Did you ever meet him?

ES: No, no. It was long before – when the boys were little.

RM: Oh, I see.

ES: She had three boys. Or she had six children, like most people. She just had three living, like my other grandmother, same story. And she had a house over in West Harwich [inaudible]. The street that goes down – see, what is that street? One after river the other goes down in the middle of West Harwich. I [inaudible] that.

RM: Right. What was her name?

ES: Altamira.

RM: Altamira.

ES: But we just called Alta, mostly. And my cousin Alta stayed there, of course, and my cousin Benjamin stayed because grandfather Benjamin stayed. And there were several Benjamins, I think, according to her, in the family. And then there were a number of brothers and sisters, like my Aunt Mary and Uncle Aiden were there. And then there was Eleanor and Theodore lived over – they were in West Harwich. There were a number. But I (do?) think she came from Plymouth, and we always had Jonathon Walker in the family background somewhere. I think he was a relative of family Chase, married this Indian woman, and then he went down to Florida to help the slaves. And he was the man with the branded hand that started out (in Michigan?). So, she has his whole will, Alta. It is the most fascinating thing. He was way ahead of his time, because he left his sons in his will, but it was – if he should leave a half share to his sons but a full share to his daughters because—he had four sons and five daughters—because he thought that women had been shortchanged and they hadn't been given a fair shake, and he wanted to do more for them. And then he has this diatribe which was (unusual?) for the day against tobacco. He said if his sons gave up tobacco for a full year and planned to keep on, they could have a full share. And he goes on about the ills of tobacco at great length and—

RM: Who has this will?

ES: My cousin, (Alta Chase?). It's the most fascinating – it's written down and just signed by Jonathon Walker.

RM: Do you think I could see it sometime?

ES: You could ask her. She has it.

RM: Yes? Is the phone listed under her name, (Alta Chase?)

ES: Yes, it is. (Alta V. Chase?), yes. But she has an interesting thing because a lot of hers were over in – her mother was (brought over from Hong Kong?) and it kind of branches out from there.

RM: Wow.

ES: So she has most of the [inaudible]. I guess my cousin (Benjamin Chase?), he has a lot of [inaudible]. I don't know whether they've left or not; they are leaving very soon, though.

RM: For Florida? How old is your cousin Alta?

ES: She is two years older than I am.

RM: So, she's seventy?

ES: I guess so. Yes. And then she (has three sisters?).

RM: So what was the name of this (Benjamin Chase?) who had the branded hand?

ES: No, that was Jonathon Walker.

RM: Oh, Jonathon Walker. How did he get a branded hand?

ES: Because he was captured. And I have the little book, and I can't find it now. It was a book. [inaudible] And he was branded because he was captured for aiding slaves to escape. And somebody—a friend of his—is interesting, (Jenny Harlan?). She went out to Michigan out to see the tombstone—and this Jonathon Walker's is out in Michigan—and it has a little circle in the [inaudible] with a branded hand on it. Very weird but [inaudible]. But Grandma Chase always said he wasn't very nice to [inaudible] with nine children. But I do not know. That is just [inaudible] Chase saying about it.

RM: Right. His thinking seemed to have been very progressive.

ES: He would be amazing. You would think of something was printed in the newspaper recently. I mean, it's [inaudible] to think that he was on for women's lib way back then, more equal rights for them. I guess that's what it was.

RM: That's really amazing.

ES: Yes, because I had never heard it before. Right, it's four-page thing, you see. (If you believe the?) size.

RM: That's incredible.

ES: Yes. And she knows all the fascinating characters that used to live in West Harwich.

RM: She sounds like she—

ES: And they could imitate people. There used to be a dry goods store called (Zibaylis Smalls?), and he and his wife were absolute characters, and she would tell stories about – and they have a daughter who's sort of a free-swinging type, and it is so funny to hear them [inaudible], they had a little store and they were brother and sister [inaudible] all their lives. And their father was a sea captain. Everybody went down there and [inaudible]. They hear about them. There is ever so many fascinating characters like [inaudible]. And then they had the great Dennis Port fire. That was a big excitement of the (century?).

RM: When was that?

ES: I can't remember, twenty something? I do not know when it was, in the twenties or when. They had a whole block there at Dennis Port. (Dr. Ginns'?) block. You heard of (Dr. Ginns?)

RM: Yes.

ES: Oh, he was (very busy?) and that wonderful house of his that's still there. He was really a great aid to all the women of the cape. You didn't have to have an abortion [inaudible]. It was fine.

RM: Why?

ES: Because he took care of you.

RM: He took care of you?

ES: Oh, but he was a big man. Everybody, he inspired great, you know trust in—

RM: Was everyone very fond of him?

ES: Yes. And then had the—and that burned down in like, Harwich Port. When I was a child, they had the big blacksmith shop. (Ernie Cole?) used to be the blacksmith in Harwich. He looked exactly like Longfellow's poem. He took – made for it. You know, the big apron, the bear arms. You looked in the door and it was all dark except the fire down low. Oh, it was a fascinating place to go see horses shod.

RM: What was his name?

ES: (Ernie Cole?).

RM: (Ernie Cole?)?

ES: Yes. And he was a marvelous – except he liked Jamaica gins a lot. Outside of that, he was a marvelous man. And you'd go over there, and you'd see him, and I think it was a breeze to [inaudible]. Anyway, it was a whole picture. Anyway, at one time, they caught fire and burned down. Oh, it was so sad. The church bell, you know, everything besides the church bell, beautiful thing. And, well, the little Catholic church burned in Harwich Center. The fire department got there. They got the hose fixed up to this pond down there. Oh just (loads?) of mud dropped out. That was another blow, but this was very exciting because the paint shop was behind the [inaudible] paint shop.

RM: Would just go, yes. Where was this?

ES: It was right by [inaudible] store. Where was the [inaudible] store? It was right in the middle part – you know, where the (Kimo?) Lodge is, the street that goes there. It was right down that street.

RM: Near the [inaudible] shop, where that is now and the photography place?

ES: Yes. Because (Eldridge's?) grocery store used to be there, right there. And (J. Oscar Holtz?), he was fabulous. He had the grocery store up there. Oh, he was really something. We had an (ugly?) start, but that's the [inaudible] a very late start. It is so funny about New Year's Eve, involving J. Oscar and his wife. Well, it seems that this man from Chatham – let's see, what was the Hamilton? Hamilton, (Reggie Hamilton?) was a very old man, just died recently. And they were having a New Year's Eve party at somebody we knew, and we were both there at the house. And suddenly, he looked exactly like father time, he decided to (draw?) something like father time, so he pulled his Long John's down and he had a bathrobe—those old-fashioned bathrobes under the sides. And he went out to walk up and down the street to wish [inaudible]. And what aggravated him, the people next door were from Hawaii and they set off fireworks on New Year's Eve, which wasn't heard of down here. And so (Oscar Holtz?) and his wife [inaudible] and they saw him. And he says – oh, Oscar said to him, "Go home. You're drunk. Get off the streets. You're drunk." No, "Get off the street," and he was like, "Don't talk to him, Oscar. The man's drunk. Don't talk to him." And there was a little bit of chit chat, and Reggie said, "If you don't stop, I'm going to cut your legs up near the side there." So with that, they went in the house and called the police. And so, police came down, and we were all spoken to about cutting Oscar's legs off. It was very funny. And he couldn't be apple cheeks, he was an old Nova Scotia man, you know like that—like the proverbial storekeeper. He had marvelous stew, and the sausage [inaudible]. All the barrels of things he had, and the penny candy, and the case they had and everything, and the meats. Always cut his meat and stuff in the back, which it smelled a little bad. But however that may be, the sanitation wasn't all it was—

RM: Wasn't all it was cracked up to be.

ES: But it was what you would call typical, (was in practice?). And [inaudible] was very thin, because onetime after he died, she got terribly ill [inaudible]. One time the nurse went out. She got hold of a pot of baked beans and she ate all she wanted that day. She was fine. You see, being at Cape Cod she wanted to do what she wanted to do.

RM: You think that's the trade?

ES: Yes. Yes, I do. But, oh, there were ever so many people all up and down the street. And we had our characters, too. (Lonzo Jordan?), which you have heard.

RM: No.

ES: You have never heard of (Lonzo Jordan?)?

RM: No.

ES: He was our chief character in town. We had a little (storage?) shop in Harwich Port, and he always used to bring his whole wagon of cut flowers down and sell them in front of our shop. And he was a faith healer. He came in once, grabbed his back, and he said, "You got a terrible pain in your back." [inaudible] what. But anyway, he said, "I take on pain," you know—he was a faith healer, so he took on the pain. Everybody knew him. I mean, that's the way people were then. They were your own characters, your own town, and you accepted them and [inaudible].

RM: Right. Was there sort of a real separation between Harwich Port and Harwich Center?

ES: Yes. [inaudible] They had a cannon. And first, the Harwich Port were people would take it out there, and then [inaudible] would bring it back there. And there was a big deal of feeling about that cannon. I don't know the ins and outs of it.

RM: And people would keep kind of taking it from one town to the other.

ES: Yes. Between Harwich and Chatham, there was a great – of course you heard the story of the ship that was in great distress right off the coast?

RM: No.

ES: Oh, they thought nobody found it, so they rowed in in a little boat and they saw somebody trying to hail them. He said, "What town it is?" And they said, "It's Chatham." So they rowed right back because they were Harwich people [inaudible]. [laughter] Rather be lost at sea than—

RM: [laughter] Really?

ES: Well, they thought the fate was less—

RM: Oh, right.

ES: We even felt it when we came down here.

RM: You mean to Chatham?

ES: Yes. Because we were Harwichers. And this is much later than that.

RM: Yes. So, did you feel ostracized?

ES: A little.

RM: Really? Chatham has always had a very bad reputation for...

ES: It is very...

RM: It is very insulated.

ES: Yes. Because you knew a great school, between Chatham and Harwich, they were going to have the regional. And then they made this great speech in town meeting. I have never – "You people, children have been born and brought up in Chatham. You want your children to go to school on foreign soil?" That [inaudible] the Harwichers so much because it was about – well, it was six miles one way or the other between the two towns, the foreign soil deal.

RM: [laughter]

ES: Just like Harwich bought the jackrabbits at one time. They were going to stock them for shooting, as though we did not have enough [inaudible]. And they said in the paper that Harwich had to put little blue jackets and would go [inaudible] the Chathamers wouldn't get their rabbits, see?

RM: So the Chatham people would not shoot them, you mean?

ES: Yes. Wouldn't get them.

RM: [laughter] Who suggested that?

ES: That is another thing on the same thing. Governor (Dedon?) was going to build a tunnel through to the end of P-town to South Boston so that people could come down the cape, go straight through in the tunnel, and back to South Boston. Wouldn't bother us at all. Wasn't that lovely?

RM: [laughter] Yes. What are your earliest memories of Harwich Port? When did you—

ES: Going to the station on the barge. You know what a barge is, do you?

RM: It is a cart, right?

ES: A cart. You sit on two sides of it. There was a line in the center to keep it. Going to Boston on the barge. And then you stayed at the Adam's House. That was every Cape Cod. Always stayed at the Adam's House in Boston.

RM: In Boston?

ES: Because one of the sons came out of here was a minister from Harwich Port and all the relatives. He had the Gideon Bible. They had the round leather things in the lobby and the lace curtains, you know the whole deal. Very lovely.

RM: So you weren't born here—when did you first—?

ES: Well, my grandparents were here and, well, my father was a surveyor, went around here and there. Sometimes we were here with my grandmother instead of being out there.

RM: Oh, I see. So your family actually lived off cape, your father and mother?

ES: No, I mean sometimes they did. Sometimes they were back here.

RM: Oh, I see.

ES: See? They moved around so much. They usually stayed with nana, my grandmother, but

my nana has passed.

RM: Oh, I see. What were your parents' names?

ES: Henry (Nova?) Chase and (Agnes Marion Chase?). And (Marion Phillips?) of [inaudible]

RM: And so they lived on and off...

ES: Yes, different places. We lived in Plymouth for a while when he was working on the [inaudible]. And they were fixing it up and there's a seminary there and making a new cage for Plymouth Rock and so forth and so on. And I stayed on there after they went back to finish high school [inaudible].

RM: When did you move on to the cape permanently? Do you remember?

ES: No, I have no idea of dates. (Alta?) would know, she knows everything like that, you know?

RM: Do you ever see her?

ES: Of course, I do. She lives in West Harwich.

RM: Oh. [laughter]

ES: [inaudible] Roberta doesn't live there, but [inaudible] live there. There are three daughters who...

RM: And she has a sister?

ES: Yes.

RM: What's her sister's name? (Dot?)?

ES: (Dorcas?) Chase [inaudible].

RM: (Dorcas?) Chase [inaudible]. And Antony remarried?

ES: No. But (Dorcas?) was the head of the diabetic team at the hospital for a long time. She was a nurse. And they can imitate that dialogue. They can tell you. And it is so funny, you would just die.

RM: Do you think they would be willing to talk to me?

ES: Oh, I'm sure. They both like to talk.

RM: Yes, a lot of people do.



ES: Yes. Some don't admit it but.

RM: Yes. So, before you were married, were you living on the cape?

ES: I went to art school in Boston. Well, then I worked in Boston, Boston jobs. And then I guess I got married, then we went to Chicago. And then we came back. I guess I have lived on the cape more or less ever since.

RM: Yes. Is your husband from the cape?

ES: He is. He was born in Chatham, I believe, although they are really Harwichers. Always kept the [inaudible] the cape guard – no.

RM: The, what, Coast Guard?

ES: Coast guard, yes. National guard, really. And so they were down in Harwich town, up in Boston, different places, moving around there.

RM: When did you come to the cape? When did you settle? I mean, you've had this business for quite a while.

ES: Well, we first lived with my mother, and then we bought the little house in the corner where The travel [inaudible] is.

RM: With who?

ES: Darling old house. I adore old houses. But other than what, I go for little (covered bridges?) when I'm down here – I go for the old houses and windmills.

RM: I like windmills.

ES: Windmills are like lighthouses. I adore lighthouses. One of [inaudible] is adorable [inaudible]. Because that's the nearest thing to heaven we've got around here— anywhere—is Monomoy.

RM: Well, tell me about Monomoy.

ES: Oh, it is just the fact that it's wonderful. Nothing about it except that it is just like it always has been. Now they're not letting anybody build anymore out there, so as the old houses go, there is nothing more [inaudible]. I was having [inaudible] the great big thing and it was an inlet to a [inaudible]. Now it is dried up. It's just happenstance.

RM: Do you sail there?

Unknown Male Speaker: We go in the motorboat.

RM: Oh, the motorboat.

ES: Yes. Sure quicker than sailing. But of course, you do have to watch your days, because it can be terribly rough going out there because it is very (shoal?) out here. But in the point is lovely. That is where the seagulls rested in the point. But they are not as bad as the terns. Up at North Beach the terns would just dive bomb you when you're over there at nesting season. They're just vicious.

RM: Really?

ES: But the seagulls – but you want to be careful walking through to not step on a baby, because they are (round and fuzzy?) and you try to take a wide berth around them babies. Oh, but it's just so wonderful out there. It is as though you were there at the beginning of the world. I mean, it's the way it always has been, nothing to bother it.

RM: There are very few places on the cape like that.

ES: Oh, I guess there are quite a few. We went down to [inaudible] beach in Wellesley. I think That's a beautiful beach. And if you come back the old way, that is fantastic because it's older.

RM: Little narrower, yes.

ES: And no [inaudible]. And they can move another car, you have to have a helicopter lift you up or something. I don't know what you do. But we come back three times that way, and we would just drive on and on and on and on in the wilderness. It could never go out.

RM: That is nice.

ES: I love that. I like Brewster. Love Brewster. That car just (beats?) there. The huge stones and all the sea. And early in the morning, when the sun is just coming up, and these (rims?) were set, and you think sea monsters coming right out at you.

RM: [laughter]

ES: It's the only place that has huge rocks like that.

RM: Right. I mean, it looks completely different from the South Shore.

ES: Yes.

RM: Well [inaudible]...

ES: Oh, I had a story about [inaudible]. This man came out [inaudible] and he said, "You know, I've seen something I never saw before in my life." I saw this man and this little baby, and she was a great big woman. She wore men's clothes long before, you know. Had her hair cut [inaudible], men's cap [inaudible]. But she had a number of children of a certain shade. But I

said, “Doesn't matter what color they are. They are all [inaudible].” I saw her nursing the baby. She worked with [inaudible], so they had a man on that side, I think.

RM: But she wore men's clothes. Her name was chew tobacco (Sue)?

ES: Yes, because she chewed tobacco.

RM: Oh.

ES: Which is a little bit unusual.

RM: Yes. What were the other names that you just told me?

ES: Oh, snake foot Charlie. He was just a poor unfortunate—

RM: Snake foot Charlie?

ES: Yes. And the history [inaudible] all them little children from the village used to come down and sell blueberries in blueberry season. You always got your blueberries that way. You brought a bowl out and they put [inaudible]. They used to sell (red?) flowers at the side of the road, too.

RM: Those are the Portuguese children?

ES: Yes. I have a relative who [inaudible] Portuguese [inaudible] call them Portuguese; you're supposed to call them (Cape Verde Islanders?). However, it is called Portuguese down here regardless of that fine distinction. Another thing that I think ought to be got [inaudible] was the fun of cranberry for the family. Every family had their own bog, and the whole family went together.

RM: Did you do it?

ES: Oh, sure. My mother made [inaudible] cotton finger stalls. That was the first thing you need to get ready, and knee pads, because otherwise those vines will just cut your hands to pieces. And it was done by scoops then, and hand-picking in some cases with the young (lads?). And then the children were allowed [inaudible] and you got paid for your measure. See, somebody kept tally. And then when it—oh, that smells the cranberry has when you eat your lunch in front of that. And hearing the screen of cranberries, they bounced along the screen, and the black snakes going across the bog, yellow (cow slips?). Oh, it is just endlessly fun for children, because they did not have to pick [inaudible].

RM: Right, right. They could just kind of just [inaudible].

ES: Yes. And (Lonzo?) used to entertain us [inaudible] at the cranberry bog at lunchtime.

RM: Where did your family have a bog?

ES: It was up off Hoyt Road. That's off Main Street.

RM: [inaudible]

ES: Yes, [inaudible] has them all now, I guess, but each piece and (grandma Chases?) had one up near the (tri-post?) in Bassett. Oh, yes, the (tri-post?) in Bassett House was one of the earlier houses they had there. And she said – I don't know which relative – she was six feet tall. And then here is this (tri-post?) Bassett built like a regular Cape Cod house. So, when [inaudible], the house at [inaudible], they built that. She had the ceilings built nine feet high downstairs and eight feet high upstairs.

RM: Why? Because she had some big relatives?

ES: No, because she was this woman that was so tall. She had it built that way. She said, "I am not going to hit my head anymore on things."

RM: [laughter] What was her name?

ES: Alta will tell you. I couldn't figure out just where she came in.

RM: Where she came in from?

ES: Yes. So when you see a house in Cape Cod with nine-foot ceilings, it is rather unusual unless it is one of those big mansion things.

RM: There's a house in South Harwich. It's a very large gothic kind of house on the righthand side of twenty-eight, across from what used to be the South Harwich post office, and they have really tall ceilings.

ES: Yes, a house like that would have—

RM: And that was a small house.

ES: Oh, it was?

RM: Yes.

ES: Oh, I thought you said this great big thing.

RM: Well, it was. It is a large – some friends of mine own it. It's a pottery place now.

ES: Oh, yes.

RM: The ceilings are really high, unusually high for a cape house.

ES: Yes. Because the house, usually seven—few inches over seven feet, usually, because we got

a beautiful, old Cape Cod house up there.

RM: Oh, you lived behind the church?

ES: Yes.

RM: Do you have any children?

ES: Yes, I have four children.

RM: Grandchildren?

ES: Five.

RM: Five.

ES: Yes. I just had a new one. My youngest daughter had a baby, so we were out there yesterday. We were up at (Chestnut Hill Mall?) to see how the other half lived.

RM: Yes. How they doing? [laughter]

ES: Good news. Well, you get three hundred and fifty dollars on a velveteen jacket, it's a little bit much. And the prices are fantastic, but this is [inaudible]. It is a kind above the Cape Cod Mall, let us put it that way. Now I have one daughter that's out in Washington state.

-----END OF INTERVIEW-----