



Lida Cavanaugh

Interviewer:

Okay. So this is Emily Reinl, and I am here with a storyteller who is going to tell us a lovely story. So go ahead.

Lida Cavanaugh:

Well, to give it some perspective, I'll have to tell you how it all occurred. My husband and I met and married in April of 1967. There was 15 years difference between our ages. We met at St. Michaels, which is on the Eastern Shore, at a sailboat regatta. He owned a sailboat and he loved to sail. We had two children born, one born in '68 and the other in '72. We knew that his being 57 when we first got married, that he was going to retire before our children were grown, so therefore we were going to have to prepare for retirement as well as finish raising the initial aspect of our children.

He worked in DC and I lived and worked nearby. My parents were from Concord, Mass., and he had grown up in Watertown. And because my parents were from Concord, we used to go up for the 19th of April and celebrate Concord's beginning of the Revolutionary War. And in 1973, that April, Fred had been interested in finding a retirement in Mattapoisett. We had vacationed a week or so in Marion, and had visited Mattapoisett, and we thought it might be a rather relaxed place where the children could go to school and he could enjoy his sailing.

So we came up, we went to Concord, and he brought some information with him, and then he looked in the local paper. And there was a house advertised in Mattapoisett. So he gave the number a call, and he spoke to the gentleman and said, "You advertised a house in Mattapoisett." And the gentleman said, "Yes, I do have a house in Mattapoisett, and it's such and such a place." But he said, "How did you reach me? The phone number in the paper is wrong." And Fred had misdialed and he doesn't even know how he misdialed.

So we got the address, and we came here to look at it at Brant Beach which is an area of Mattapoisett. And we drove to the address, and the house was nice, but it was not something that was going to work for us. And as we turn around and drove back down the road, we noticed a "For Sale" sign on a lot. There's nothing built on it. And it was a paper cardboard with a handwritten "For Sale." So we went, pulled in next door to the sign. Fred knocked on the door and said, "Do you know who owns this?" And the man said, "Yes, we do."

So he invited us in, and as we sat and talked to him about it, Fred happened to look outside to the water, and he noticed somebody taking their skiff to their anchored sailboat, getting into their sailboat and sailing in mid-April. Well, this would be done on Chesapeake Bay, but he didn't think it would be possible up in this... So his ears were already perked.

So we said that we wanted to... It was a whole piece of property and that we would be interested in building our house and also a cottage for my parents who were about to retire. And after some discussion we said, "We'll go out for a couple hours and come back." So we drove to New Bedford and went into, at that point I believe it was the Bedford's Institute of Savings. And my husband talked to the gentleman about property, and asked him if he knew the property. And the man said, "Oh yes, I know that piece of property." And Fred said, "Well, what would happen in a hurricane?" And he said, "Well, you might get your feet wet, but that's about all."

So we returned and we signed a sales and agreement on the property with the making sure that sewer and water could be taken care of on the property and that we could build a small cottage for my parents. And with that we left and returned the next day. We didn't have \$500 in our savings account, so we borrowed \$500 from my parents and paid them the \$500 necessary for the down payment. The property had been for sale for three years. The properties at this time down here were very, very, very reasonable. A property that was next to the community beach was selling for \$5,000. So we-



Interviewer:

Do you remember what year or around what year this was?

Lida Cavanaugh:

This was 1974.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Lida Cavanaugh:

No, no, it wasn't. The actual sale of the property went through on May 29th, 1973.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Lida Cavanaugh:

We started building this cottage in '74 because my parents wanted to be in Concord over the 75th. And my father retired. He had worked for the Concord Water and Sewer Department all of his life, and he needed to put some distance. Either that or he was going to be trying to run it from being retired. So then we would come up for vacation and visit them here until we retired.

And we started to build our house which was right next door, that would accommodate the four of us, my husband and two children, in 1981. And we moved in in June of 1982. And my husband's sailboat, which was a 30-foot boat, or maybe it was 32-feet, that doesn't really matter, but it had to be brought up from Annapolis. So in July of '82, we sailed up and went by the Statue of Liberty on my youngest daughter's 10th birthday. That was a date to remember.

This area has been a community of many longtime residents. In 1915 all the property inside a given area was broken up into lots. They were 30 by 60, and before that had been just farmland and people used it as they wanted. Then the lots began to be sold, and they were sold in different numbers, partially dependent upon what the town would allow, to how many feet you had to have to build a house.

So there were many people who came and built summer houses that were really... Some of them have had major problems since then because they weren't particular about the substructures. A lot of them are dirt basements and have had to have major renovations. People have continued to buy houses in this area for summer use as well as for retirement. Many people have lived here for many, many years. I have lived here, I think 40 years now, and we've had three people in the last month who've passed on who have been in their eighties. Two of them have lived here pretty much last 10, 15, 20 years. One would go to Florida in the winter.

The other thing that has changed in this area is the economics, which the people next door that we bought the house from, in 1995 they sold their house for \$360,000 and moved to Florida. Five years later, the people who bought it from them sold the house for \$598,000 to a family who had it from 2000 to 2022 and put a second floor on it. And they sold it for \$2,600,000. So the problem this presents to me is that when we moved here, you could have described this community as a clam chowder community. But with the current prices, it's gotten to be a champagne community. Whether this is good or bad, I don't know, but in some respects I'm sorry to see the prices go so high because it makes it harder for people to purchase and to change.

With the people who've just passed on, it's hard to know whether they're going to put their houses on the market or whether the families are going to use them. I've another friend down here too who has aged. She's in her nineties and she's had to go live in a facility near her daughters in North Carolina. And that's what's beginning to



happen to many of us who are aging. I will be 89 this year. And my daughter moved in during Covid. Right now she's a big help. We'll just have to see what happens in the future.

But it's been a beautiful area to live. The weather, we've occasional storms. And the winters, sometimes we'll have a foot and sometimes we'll have a couple inches of snow. I hope to be around another few years, but we'll have to see. Thank you very much.

Interviewer:

Yeah, thank you.

Lida Cavanaugh:

Is there any questions that you have?

Interviewer:

No, I think you've told that story very thoroughly, unless there's any last thoughts that you have.

Lida Cavanaugh:

Let me see. I'd just like this area to be available to people who want to live here and to take care of it, and hate to see the prices go quite so high.

Interviewer:

Yeah, that makes sense.

Lida Cavanaugh:

But that's life, I guess.

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm.

Lida Cavanaugh:

And they could come down tomorrow, I guess.

Interviewer:

Yeah, they could.

Lida Cavanaugh:

But I doubt it.

Interviewer:

Well, thank you very much for talking about your home and your neighborhood.

Lida Cavanaugh:

Right.