



Donald S. Rice

Don Rice:

Came to the South Coast in 1964. I met my wife, then girlfriend, actually 60 some years ago today, or tomorrow, actually. It was the day after President Kennedy was assassinated. I was going to a Harvard Law School class, driving through Harvard Square. I saw this attractive girl out of the corner of my eye, in a friend's car, who I knew was engaged. So, I went up to the back of the classroom. In those days, it's hard to believe we had Saturday classes. I had Saturday classes in high school, in college, and in law school. From here, we go to see our grandson who's at Babson, who has no Friday classes anymore. They get Thanksgiving week, largely, off, and all kinds of other...

Anyhow, I met her on November 23rd, 1964. It was '63. We continued to go out and were seeing a lot of each other. That summer of 1964, when I graduated law school, that was my first exposure to Mattapoisett. It's a wonderful community, which I thought was wonderful at that time. We got married in '66. We've been coming here ever since, every summer since 1966. We lived in New York City and still have an apartment in New York City. So, I commuted up here, weekends, to New Bedford from the, whatever they call the marine terminal at LaGuardia. We went through Air New England first. Actually, it was Northeast Air originally. Then, it was Air New England. Then, it was later PBA, and so forth.

It was a struggle getting up here Fridays in summer because there would be thunderstorms, and there would be this and there would be that. I got to know a lot of very nice people, coming up on those planes, but they were all weekenders. So, our exposure to the South Coast from, in my case, 1964 on was really summer weekends.

My wife's family bought a place in Mattapoisett in 1947, which was built in 1864. I'm sorry. 1884. Had a pier built in 1890. It was owned by a woman from Chicago. She had a very nice barn, which is a place now called The Stalls, that our neighbors own. They put beds in the horse stalls, and so forth. That was by the old house.

The house that my in-laws bought, they called a cottage. It had 16 bedrooms, including a number for the help, which would've been a number of people in 1884. There were five kids in that family. My wife had four siblings. The parents gave the house to the kids in 1970, or so. My wife and I and her sister and her husband bought the three brothers out. So, we shared the house. When the parents died, we built a little place there that they could stay, called The Pad. Jeanie's father died, I guess in '97. The mother died in 2000. She wanted to live into the millennium, and she did. Then, she died. At that point, my wife and I and her sister and her husband... By the way, they have three boys and we have two daughters, which is the same lineup of kids in our generation as they'd had in the prior generation. We decided to take the house down, with some misgivings. There was really no way you could insulate it to live in during the year, and so forth. We built two all year round houses, there on Ned's point.

That was started in 2002 and was finished in '04. So from '04 on, we had an all year round place. We were continuing to live in New York City, but we began to spend more time up here. Having an all year round house, we would come up and spend times during the year and some holidays, and so forth.

I retired in 2010 and closed my office in New York. I'd been a lawyer in New York and had some business activities. The lease came up in my business at that time, at the end of 2010. We decided, I was 70 years old then, that we would become residents up here and spend more of our time up here. That really got us quite reoriented. Prior to that time, I had gotten interested in the community. I knew we would be ultimately settling up here.

Roger Cheever, a friend in Mattapoisett, a development officer at Harvard and a trustee at the Whaling Museum, spoke to me about whether I might be interested in becoming a board member of the Whaling Museum. I said that that would be interesting. Having served on other boards of directors and having been a lawyer for years, I



was interested in the financial condition. This was the early 1990s, the financial condition, concerning. "As a trustee, would this be a place that was ultimately going to succeed? Now, why was I interested in being a trustee?" I was interested in being a trustee because I felt this was an extremely important cultural institution. It had been important to us, summers when we were bringing the kids here.

I was interested in the history of New Bedford. My mother, at one point, had told me about Hetty Green. I read Hetty's book, or not Hetty's book. It was a book about Hetty, called *The Day They Shook the Plum Tree*. It was an amazing story. As a lawyer, I was also interested, and actually, I worked one summer when I was at law school, interning at a firm called Millbank Tweed.

One of the interesting stories about Millbank Tweed was that Harrison Tweed, a senior partner, had been the lawyer for Hetty Green's estate in the United States Supreme Court, which determined between New Jersey and New York, and maybe there was a third state, where Hetty Green lived and what inheritance laws might be applicable, and so forth.

So, that was one little sidelight story about New Bedford. It was an interesting story about someone who was the richest woman in the world, I believe, in 1907 or eight, or whatever, and actually appeared at the New York Federal Reserve Bank with JP Morgan and others. She wrote a check to help save New York City, which was kind of an irony. I did a lot of work with a man named Richard Ravitch who was a client of mine, who came up with the plan to save New York City. We didn't have Hetty Green to help.

Anyhow, I was interested in the museum as a place that represented both the past and the future of New Bedford, I felt, and offered huge potential. I'm so glad I did join the board because a huge amount was accomplished in the, I think 12 years or so, that I served on the board. I was able to avoid term limits because they made me an officer so that way they could extend the term. I was very much involved with the fundraising with two wonderful people, Irwin Jacobs and Gurdon Wattles. It was an exciting time and we accomplished a lot in that period of time, first under Ann Brigham's administration, and then under James Russell. This was all before Amanda's time. We had some wonderful leadership on the philanthropic side and some wonderful leadership in the management of the museum, and wonderful volunteers on the board, and people serving in the treasury, and so forth. Managed to greatly enhance the physical plant here and revitalize, I think, the programming opportunities and the ability to do things with Christina Cumming and others.

A lot happened, and we also made a lot of progress, I thought, in what today would be called diversity, equity, and inclusion. When I came on the board, it was largely the old Dartmouth Historic Society community that ran the board. In the early years that I was involved and since, there's been a very strong addition of people from the community. We accomplished here, I think, what was a tall order back in the late '80s and early '90s, to really get the community involved. I do feel, now, that the community is really involved. It's a much more representative institution. As a result, I think there's more community activity. I think what Gurdon Wattles did with the Apprentice program is unbelievable. He had a sense of vision. He had done something like that in Newark, where he had been involved for years and really had an idea about how to do it. What Irwin Jacobs and Joan have done for the students is fantastic. It brings people together. It is a very joyful experience, I think, for everyone involved.

So now at age 83, having been involved with this now for almost 30 years, I really have a very, very good positive feeling about what has happened here, and where it is in the community, and where the community is going. It's a far cry from in the late '60s, when they were going to tear down many of the buildings right around here. Actually my son-in-law, Mark Perkins' father was a lawyer in town. He was very instrumental in opposing that, and in saving and preventing the destruction of all kinds of buildings all around here. All to the purpose, I guess, of expediting the flow of traffic to the docks, or whatever. I don't know. That was the '60s, and it was urban renewal. I'm just very glad we had farsighted people here in New Bedford who didn't let that happen. So, I have, really, very positive feelings today about what the museum has become, and what it is, and where it's going.

I told you, Naomi, how excited I was to go to your exhibit on seaweed, before you came and gave that talk about it. It's so representative of things that go on here and so wonderful and so creative and so important. So, I'm open to any questions you may have. I want you and anyone else who hears this to understand what a positive



force the Whaling Museum has been in the community. It's shown us so many different ways of doing things and how to get everyone involved. It's been a hugely successful experiment.

Interviewer:

Thank you. Thank you for sharing that. That synopsis is sort of this period of major development for the museum and sort of what you've witnessed as the museum has changed. I wonder if we can go back. If you can describe, if you remember, the first time you came to the South Coast. Did you need to visit family? Was it the summer? When you were dating, what was your first trip to this area? Do you recall?

Don Rice:

I know we came here that summer. I'm interested in boating. I'm somewhat interested in fishing. I was curious to see what went on here. Whaling is a tremendous story, and I like marine museums. I loved the place up in Salem, when I was in college, and in law school for seven years at Harvard. I had a car, and we used to go out from junior year on. I'd go out with friends, up to Salem. I think we did come down here once. It was an adventure.

The model we have here of Lagoda is fantastic. I think it's the largest in the world. I've been to Sweden. Whenever I travel, I will go to the museum. I mean, I've always liked Mystic, for example. So, museums about the sea and boating are destinations for me, in general. This is a special one. It does it extremely well.

I mean, I just dropped by that international gallery for a minute, here. I hadn't been there for a couple of years. There's some new things in there. I mean, the story of the relationship between the United States and Japan in the mid-19th century is a tremendous story. The story of [inaudible 00:18:57]. What's the name of the guy? Manjiro.

Interviewer:

Yeah. Manjiro. Yeah.

Don Rice:

That's a great story. We were in Japan a couple of years ago. We took that book along to give to someone who we knew would like it. This is a Japanese gentleman who was fascinated in maps. Of course he knew the story, but he didn't have the book.

That's something that we can feature here in [inaudible 00:19:28]. This is about stories, and stories want to be heard and told. Oh, the other thing that I've really enjoyed doing here, which is in the last 15 years or so, is the Moby Dick readings. I first read Moby Dick in its entirety on the beach, actually, in Nantucket where we used to go summers when I was growing up, before my senior year in high school. I mean, that's a job, to read Moby Dick from cover to cover. When I read, the weekend after New Year's every year, I still have my Modern Library edition of Moby Dick. I'm glad that Modern Library, which published that originally, has redone it. Mine is kind of falling apart. Having read it on the beach, it took a certain amount of abuse.

So, that story informed me, years ago, of how interesting whales are. I sailed in Alaska, some years ago. It's really exciting, in a sailboat, to have whales breaching right beside you. Then, we took the family back, on a small boat that took about 10 couples. That was a powerboat. Everyone would just want to stay up all night long, or however long it takes to see whatever's going on beside you, and see humpbacks come up through the middle of making those bubble ring, and come up with all that krill on their cheeks, and so forth. It's simply amazing. So, that's something that we capture.

Michael Lapedes was just telling me that there's some way that you can, I guess, put an app in an iPad, or something, now and go and hold it up where we have the skeletons. You'll see the skeleton covered with skin and see the whales doing things. I mean, this is unique.



Interviewer:

Yeah.

Don Rice:

This is really special.

Interviewer:

Yeah. What do you think it was that sort of first crystallized your love of the sea?

Don Rice:

Well, I said my family summer in Nantucket for years. We used to go to the Whaling Museum there quite a bit, actually. I mean, it's a little bit ironic because I used to get seasick. In 1959, I came back from Europe on the Queen Elizabeth. I was feeling a little woozy a lot of the time, there. Marrying into a family of sailors, the first summer here, of '64 actually, my wife's family got a yawl shipped in from Sweden. We sailed it up from Stamford, Connecticut to Mattapoisett. There was very little wind. It was just rolling sea, being under power a lot. Really, kind of sickening. Plus, there was lots of fog, and there were no GPS. It was before any navigation equipment was available. My brothers-in-Law were terrific in dead reckoning navigation, which is tricky. The currents you get off Rhode Island, for example, you can be moved a quarter of a mile, one way or another, over a number of hours. We got every mark and every bell and whatnot, but sometimes we'd have to wait a little. I was sort of sick part of the time.

That was in '64. By the late '70s I was sailing on a regular basis. Then, we got our own sailboat, and I skippered my own boat for 34 years without seasickness. So, I've sort of gotten used to it.

Interviewer:

You grew your sea legs.

Don Rice:

I mean, the sea is enchanting. Well, I've been very lucky.

Interviewer:

Can you talk a little bit about what it was like once you started coming up in the summers from New York? The kids were here in Mattapoisett over the summertime. What did you do with them when you were up here for the summers, before you sort of settled up here full-time? What kind of activities-

Don Rice:

Well, when my kids-

Interviewer:

... were you doing in the summer?

Don Rice:

I got my first sailboat, I think it was about 1977, so Alice was nine and her sister was seven. That was a cruising boat, but then I got a bigger one three years later. So, yeah. We started taking them on a regular basis across Buzzards Bay, from Mattapoisett to the islands, but mostly around the Elizabeth Islands. Then, I would get some friends to help me take the boat up to Maine. Then, their daughters would come up to Maine, and we'd be up



there for a couple of weeks. Then, there were a couple of summers we rented a house in Southport, Connecticut. So, I'd take the boat down there. I could commute on the train out to Southport. We had the boat at the Pequot Yacht Club, which was right in front of our house there. We had a house that we rented, on the water, that Don Imus bought. Imus in the morning.

So, yeah. We were really using the boat all the time. Again, the point I would make about this whole area is that it was very confined to our neighborhood, doing things at the Mattapoisett Casino. We'd come Memorial weekend, and we would leave. That would just be for the weekend because the kids were still in school. Then when they're out of school, they would come up here and be here with my wife for the summer. I would be commuting. Then, I would take several weeks off to go on the cruises. By Columbus weekend, our little community, which was a summer community, was gone. So, there was no relationship with the broader community. It was only when I got involved with the Whaling Museum, really, that I began to relate to people who were in New Bedford, or in Nonquitt, or other places, and so forth.

In recent years that's changed tremendously because they built a golf club in Mattapoisett, the Bay Club. That has really made it possible for me to retire up here because there's a real community all year round, now. I mean, a lot of them are snowbirds. People are here certainly from Memorial Day through Thanksgiving. So, a bunch of people go away.

We actually like staying up here. We may go away for six weeks, or so, in February and March. We're in the heat the rest of the year. We're involved with a whole bunch of people who are involved in the community. I mean, a lot of them are retired. It's brought people in who you never would've seen whenever one was just seeing each other during the summer. That then results in a cultural life and a social life that embraces more stuff in New Bedford.

We've been active and enjoy the symphony. There's a chamber music group now, that we get involved with three times a year. There's just so much more going on here, Naomi, than there was in 1967. There's a much more crossover of the community. I mean, we see lots of people from Marion now, who we never would've seen if the Bay Club hadn't opened. I might've seen them because I sail with some of these people. There's many, many more people involved in many, many more things.

I've been involved with the hospital, helping them raise some money and build this new center at Toby. Both my wife and I have had some surgery up here, and cancer therapy, and whatnot. Friends of ours from New York or Boston say, "Whoa, whoa. Why aren't you in Boston, or New York? Really, where the best care is." I don't think that is where the best care is. I mean, there's very good care obviously. We've both gone to those places for second opinions. I feel South Coast has been able to attract top doctors who practice probably more in New England than elsewhere, but sometimes from New York and elsewhere, who for lifestyle reasons, have decided that this is a community they want to be involved in. That's much more true today, I think, than it would've been 30 years ago. So, the South Coast is thriving.

Interviewer:

That's a sort of interesting thing to think about. I think the professional growth of the South Coast and how you've seen that really change over time, the sort of appeal of this place and how it's evolved. Can you talk a little bit about your family, about your daughters? Are they here? How do they see this place, in terms of their sort of...

Don Rice:

Well, my older daughter has settled here. She lives in Marion, and I'm very proud of her. She, like me, felt, "If you're living here and involved and you can give something to the community, it's a good thing to see where you might add some value and be helpful." So, I think James Russell, when I stepped down from the board, recruited her. I think she brought some important points of view, and so forth, being of a different generation. I think she, like me, has very positive feelings about the institution. She also got involved at Toby, and she lives in Marion.



She was helpful in fundraising for Toby. It was very nice that South Coast recognized my wife and Alice and her husband for our efforts in fundraising for the hospital system. So, I think we're all very positive, again, about the professional contribution that the South Coast hospital has done. I feel the same way about the Whaling Museum. I mean, you bring in people at the highest professional level.

Our other daughter, Jeannie, lives in The Hamptons, but has an apartment a block from us in New York City, actually. Her husband is very active in the insurance business in New York and really needs to be in New York. So, she can go back and forth somewhat, but she has a severely disabled son with a form of autism. He's just turned 11 and does not yet talk. So, she is on the board of directors at Mount Sinai Hospital, something called the Seaver Autism Institution, which just had its 30th anniversary and fundraiser the other night that we went to in New York. They are working on all kinds of different alternatives for helping people with autism become functional. My hope is that with artificial intelligence, and so on, that the opportunities for taking the research, which has gotten us this far, may just leapfrog. We desperately need that for our grandson.

She also has a daughter who's a very gifted actress, who's 13 years old. Well, five times in the last year, we've taken the ferry from New London to Orient Point, to then drive two more ferries across Shelter Island to go and see Charlotte in her plays. We're going down again weekend after next for a Christmas thing. That'll be the sixth this year. Then in January, she's doing Godspell. So, anyhow. It's been really nice, too. She has a son who's at Babson, who will be with us in about an hour for his Thanksgiving break. So, our older daughter does not have children.

Interviewer:

What is that like, introducing this third generation to the South Coast, I assume to sailing, to this place that has had a long generational impact on your wife's family and on your children's-

Don Rice:

Well, I think our younger daughter loves it. I mean, she comes up on the ferries, back and forth. It's hard for her to bring the autistic son. He requires 24/7 nannies. So, to coordinate bringing these people up, who they then want to go back to where they live the other times, and so forth. So, he doesn't get up here too much. She'll come up and stay for a few days here and there. She went to Tabor Academy.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Don Rice:

She'd like her daughter, I think, to go to either Tabor or St. George's, which would give her another reason to come up here. She's got the son at Babson, in Wellesley, so there's a reason to. She liked coming up to see us, so. Her husband's got a boat. He likes coming up and going around here, The Vineyard and whatnot.

So, no. I think there's a lot of natural affinity within our family to come to Mattapoisett. I have three brothers, and we love doing family reunions up here, and so on. My wife's sister lives right next door, and her brother's in Florida, in Naples. The winter, we're living in an assisted place. He's up here, and he's very athletic and involved in the community, and so forth, down there and up here. So, we have family. My wife's side up here, and I think my family who comes here at the drop of a hat. I have a brother in Duxbury. He loves coming over. So, this is going to be a go-to place. I mean, what you do with a big house in a place like this is always a story.

There's a wonderful story called the Big House, about a family over on Wing's Neck who had a house like the one we had, that Jeanie's parents had. It comes time people get older and there isn't enough money around to run a big house. The taxes are high, and this and that. So, some people put these things in a trust. Then, the trust runs out of money, and the family's fighting. We've avoided that so far. There is the question about what's going to happen with the house down the line, and who's going to get it, which families, and whether anyone can afford it.



I mean, this is a chronic problem on the South Coast, I would say, for people who have these big arks of houses. You've got it in Wareham, you've got it in Marion, you've got it in Mattapoisett, you've got it Nonquitt, Salters Point, and so forth.

Interviewer:

Yeah.

Don Rice:

I mean, they're all stories there.

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm. Yeah. That kind of Massachusetts summer story is a real way of life, which I think is challenged by all sorts of different conditions today.

Don Rice:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

Right. That's sort of a big question mark that hangs over, I think, a lot of families. Can you sustain that, and what does it look like? Yeah.

Don Rice:

Well, I think every family has to sort of face that issue. The real estate has appreciated two levels. They make the real estate taxes so high. I mean, it's great for the town of Mattapoisett. Every few years, they increase the assessments and increases the taxes. They can do all kinds of things, but it's very difficult for families to plan. I think that they're just... Yeah. You're right. There are tons of New England stories about what you're going to do, or how, and so forth.

Interviewer:

Well, we've sort of landed in estate planning. Can we go back to the very beginning? I realize we kind of jumped in with you're first meeting in Cambridge on Harvard Square. Can you describe a little bit just where you were born, the beginning for you?

Don Rice:

I was born in Irvington, New York, which is on the Hudson River. It's called Irvington-on-Hudson. That's where General Irving lived. It's about 20 miles north of New York City. It is just below the Tappan Zee Bridge. It's a very easy commute to New York on the train. My dad was an investment banker. So, I grew up. I went to the Irvington Public School through 9th grade. Then, I went to the Hackley School in Tarrytown, now Sleepy Hollow. Then, I went on to college and law school. From there, I was very interested in railroads. I had a toy train set in my bedroom. I would say once or twice a month, maybe, we'd go up the river on the weekend to Croton-Harmon, where the electric engines from New York would change during those days to steam, or diesel. It was very easy, in those days, to go anywhere you wanted in the yard. The train people really liked people who are interested in trains, and so on. So, I got a big kick out of that.

I got my working papers when I was 14, and I worked in my dad's investment banking firm, which was called Spencer Trask and Company. I started working the cage at 14, which is where the securities are stored. Well, they're stored overnight in a huge vault, and then they're brought out by day. Then when securities are sold, they



reach into a file, and pull them out and send them. Then when you're bought, you come back, and so on. I really worked from the ground up, there, and ultimately did some research. I worked those summers there into college, which was really good training, and-

Interviewer:

The office was in New York City.

Don Rice:

What?

Interviewer:

The office was in New York City.

Don Rice:

The office was in New York City, at 25 Broad Street. When I moved to New York in 1967, after we were married. When we were first married, we lived in Washington where I was clerking for a Federal US Court of Appeals judge. My wife worked at the Smithsonian, and then we moved to New York. I ended up working down in Wall Street in the law firm for years.

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm. Okay. And then, you started commuting up here and you were commuting by plane?

Don Rice:

I was commuting just summer weekends-

Interviewer:

Yeah.

Don Rice:

... up to New Bedford.

Interviewer:

And, flying into the New Bedford Airport. Was it-

Don Rice:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

... where it was?

Don Rice:

It went into New Bedford Airport. It was fine, Monday mornings. We'd take a plane around 6:30 or 7:00 in the morning. There was no security, so you just get on the plane. You'd just arrive. Friday nights was something else, again, because LaGuardia is very busy. You get thunderstorms, and this and that. These little planes have no priority, and they're very hot. Summer, can be 95 degrees and you're in the plane, sitting at the end of the



runway. So, that was not a very pleasant way of commuting.

Interviewer:

You mentioned in the summers you would be out on the boats, you would come here to the museum. Are there other things that you remember doing at that time with-

Don Rice:

Well, I used to play tennis, and there was lots of swimming activity. We have a pier and a float. And, yeah. Also, people lived on the beach, the pier, the float, and would be playing tennis, but everything was right there.

Interviewer:

Yeah.

Don Rice:

You could walk to-

Interviewer:

Yeah.

Don Rice:

... the little tennis club. It was a very nice, peaceful way of spending the summer, reading and doing other stuff.

Interviewer:

Wonderful. I don't have any other questions, I think. Do you have anything else that you want to share as we're...

Don Rice:

Well, I just want to say thank you, actually-

Interviewer:

Oh, yeah.

Don Rice:

... to New Bedford and to the South Coast. It's been a wonderful place to live. Wonderful people up here. I don't know any place more beautiful to return to, whenever I've been away. I'm always happy to get back.

Interviewer:

Great. Wonderful.