



Demarest Lloyd Macdonald

Interviewer:

There we go.

Lloyd Macdonald:

Hey. I am Lloyd Macdonald. I'm 79 years old, this being the year of 2023. I was born in St. Luke's Hospital in New Bedford in 1944 and grew up in Dartmouth, on a farm in the south part of town. But New Bedford was the big city for us as kids growing up. My parents were concerned about how remote the farm was that we were growing up on. And when our next door neighbors, who had three kids, moved to Illinois in the middle 1950s or early 1950s, my mother and stepfather concluded that we needed to get closer to where other people lived, since there were no other kids in our neighborhood in Dartmouth. And we moved to Padanaram. In the wintertime, we rented a house at the end of Ricketsons Point, and were there typically from November to May, when we would then move back out to the farm for the latter part of the spring and the summer.

During those years of a growing up in Padanaram, I had a lot of friends. And New Bedford was a really important connection for us. There was bus service at the time, from Padanaram to New Bedford that ran regularly. And New Bedford was the place that we went to on Saturdays to go to the movies. And amazing to think at this point in time, but there were three major movie theaters in the city, the New Bedford Theater, which was on Union Street, right by Sixth Street. And then there was the Olympia, and I can't remember exactly where it was, but it was in the downtown area. And then the flagship movie theater was the State Theater, which is now the Zeiterion.

And almost every Saturday, a group of us would come to town on the bus and go to the movies. And the movies were almost all cowboy movies. But we also loved, or I'd say I did, and I think my friends did, is that important part of every movie that was shown were the news reels that preceded the movies, with basically current events that were happening, disasters, wars, political contests and things of that sort. And that was our way of getting up to date, if you will, on things that were happening not only in the country, but around the world.

And then there was another theater in the North End, and I think it was called The Center Theater, I could be wrong on that. But the important part of the Center Theater was that it was the first place that a Brigitte Bardot racy French movie, that came out in the late fifties or early 1960s, it was kind of scandalous, but somehow... She was a sex goddess internationally and made big news and Life magazine and other places about how popular she was in France and in Europe. And it was big news when her first movies came to the United States.

And I remember me and three or four friends going to the Center Theater. And I don't know if there was an age restriction on it, but we all kind of dressed up, I think totally unconvincingly, but we wanted to look like we were older than we were. And I remember wearing a straw hat into the movie. In any event, New Bedford, typically on Saturdays, was where we grew up. And the movie theater is where the center of our attention.

The city was also kind of a social location for me in those years. And that my parents had a lot of friends who lived in the city, even though we didn't live in the city, as I indicated. That my parents did have friends living on Hawthorn Street, Orchard Street, County Street, Moreland Terrace. And holiday parties were a regular event for me and my brother and sisters, at these various homes in New Bedford that belonged to friends of my parents. And also birthdays. So getting into the city and driving down Hawthorn Street and whatever is just an indelible memory in my mind.

And I even came to New Bedford to take guitar lessons, back when I was either 12 or 13. My mother was concerned that I wasn't very social, and she was convinced that if I learned how to play the guitar, then I would



have more friends or feel more comfortable. It's not that I didn't have friends, I think she was concerned that I wasn't that comfortable in social settings. So I can honestly say that I was probably the least talented person ever who took guitar lessons. And I took them for a couple of years and never really mastered the chords. And since I didn't have any kind of a singing voice, it didn't make any difference anyway. But regularly, either once or twice a week, it must've been once a week, I had guitar lessons, just off of Union Street. And I remember the name of the teacher, Tony Pacheco, and he was very encouraging of me in spite of the fact that I had absolutely no talent. And I remember it vividly. I can even feel the pain in my fingertips from practicing.

Any event, the other memories that I have of the city circulate around what used to be called the New Bedford Hotel on Pleasant Street. And it was the hotel in the city and kind of a fancy place, at least at the time, a fancy place for those of us who lived around here. There wasn't any other hotel that was like it. It had a restaurant on the first floor or in the basement, and I can't remember its name. It might've been the Spouter Inn, borrowing from Moby Dick.

But the important event at the New Bedford Hotel that was significant for my childhood is that's where dancing school was. And on Friday, late afternoons, beginning from I think I was five or six, that my mother would take me and my older brother into the New Bedford Hotel to go to dancing school. And I remember the name of the teacher, Mrs. Wilcox, and she was very strict. And we had to dress up. And boys wore white gloves and all the girls were dressed up in their velvet dresses. And that's where I learned how to foxtrot and waltz and things like that.

And that was also a setting for the generations to get together because my mother would typically take us there, and then she'd sit up in the balcony and watch what was going on. And she had a bunch of friends who were the mothers, and sometimes dads came in too, to look at their awkward children or their children awkwardly trying to learn how to dance and be sociable with the opposite sex.

And the New Bedford Hotel also was a place, the ballroom at the top of the hotel was where fancy events were held. I remember that the Attorney General Elliot Richardson and the former Governor Endicott Peabody holding some kind of political gathering there, fundraising gathering there. And I also remember that my grandmother hosted a debutante party there for my cousin when we were both 18. And my cousin had grown up in Connecticut and had gone to a boarding school. So the New Bed Hotel ballroom had all these Boston and New York socialite types that were part of the party, and that's a very vivid memory.

My time in the city was interrupted by the circumstance that I went away to boarding school at age 14. So Saturdays getting on the bus and going into town, going to the movies, going to events at people's houses and stuff got interrupted. I came back at vacations, but it just was not the same. And it wasn't not the same because of anything that was less appealing about the city, it was just that when you come back for two weeks after being away for 13 weeks, you tend to just kind of hang out.

And at the time, and now let's say I'm in my late teens and eventually twenties, and I went away to college, we'd come back on vacations to our house in Dartmouth. But I didn't know at the time that the city was in decline. When you're a kid and you're growing up and you're having fun and riding the bus and going to the movies and whatever, that you're not... You pay your 5 cents to pay the fare for the bus, but you're not really tied into the local economy.

And that the reality, however, was that the city was, as I was growing up and having such a good time, was in a steady decline. Such that, and this is a vivid memory, that when I was in law school after college, living in New York, the New York Times had a special article on the state of old cities and with a focus on New England, but not just New England, but the northeast cities, the old industrial cities. And New Bedford was the poster child of that, or the centerpiece, not poster child, was the centerpiece of that story. And it documented the departure of almost every significant mill for the south that had occurred, and that the downtown area essentially had become vacant, the economic downtown. Now, that also corresponded with the appearance of suburban malls. I can't remember exactly when the Dartmouth Mall came in. I think it was in the mid-1960s. And that was really the death knell for downtown New Bedford's shopping establishments.



Before that time, that if I needed to get a jacket or a nice pair of trousers or something like that, my mother would take me and my brother to Marty Sullivan's that was located, I think it was on Williams Street, and it was like a Brooks Brothers of New Bedford. But Marty Sullivan moved his establishments in the late sixties out of New Bedford and relocated to Padanaram. And that was emblematic of what was happening on a much larger scale in the city.

And the biggest event of my childhood that related to the city was the premier of Moby Dick, the movie. And it was a big deal. I can't remember the year, but 1957, 1958, something like that. And Gregory Peck was the star, and he was one of the most important or most successful, or whatever you would call it, movie star of the day, and he was the star of Moby Dick. He played the dark captain. And he came to the premiere, and the premiere was held at the State Theater.

As I indicated before, the State was the flagship of the theaters owned by the Zytes family. And what was his name? The producer, the director, everybody that was associated with the movie came to the premiere. And I believe there was a parade and the life of the city stopped in celebration of the Moby Dick movie premiere. I didn't get to go to the premiere, but me and my friends went probably the next day. And we thought it was such a big deal being there at the State Theater and where Gregory Peck and his colleagues had been only days before.

So that's a bit of an outline of my memories of the city. That the end of the story, or jumping ahead in time, as I did come back. Started to be spending much significant time in the city beginning in 2004, when I was appointed to by Governor Romney to the Superior Court of Massachusetts. I'm a lawyer, and he appointed me to the Superior Court.

And in short order, although the first years I was sitting mostly in Suffolk County, which is Boston and Middlesex County, which includes Cambridge, that as I became more senior on the court, that my preferences were given more significance in where I was assigned, for purposes of what, which is every three months superior court judges rotate from one courthouse to another. And I indicated a preference for sitting in Bristol County and New Bedford in particular.

And beginning in maybe 2006, I began to increasingly sit in New Bedford and in Fall River and also in Taunton, which together comprised the Superior Court courthouses that business was conducted in, that I presided over. And I couldn't have been happier being down here. I remember driving, the first time I drove to work to go to court, I drove on the very road that I used to go to grade school on and drove on the very road that I was taking to dancing school on.

And I loved sitting in New Bedford at the beginning of my 10 years on the court at the New Bedford Courthouses where the criminal cases were tried. The civil cases were tried in Fall River. But then a new courthouse in Fall River was built, that the criminal business of the county was to be conducted in. So in the later years of maybe 2010 on to 2014, that I would sit on the criminal side in Fall River.

But then the New Bedford Courthouse, which is where Lizzie Borden was tried, that had been the location of the criminal business being conducted, was converted into a courthouse for the civil side. And so, I sat on civil cases in the New Bedford Courthouse and loved that opportunity. And eventually, I became the so-called administrative judge for Bristol County of the Superior Court. So I became very much reconnected to the business, at least the legal business of the county and the city. And that brings us to today.

Interviewer:

That's great. Can I ask you some questions though?

Lloyd Macdonald:

Sure.



Interviewer:

So I have a series of questions in my mind from some of the things you talked about, and I'll work backward if I can. So from your time on the Superior Court, particularly after you gained more appointments sitting in Bristol County, were there things that you noticed about the stories and experiences of others or the cases that you heard or patterns that told you about the shape of the county in a way that maybe you hadn't been aware of or that you became increasingly aware of?

Lloyd Macdonald:

Well, one of the things that it confirmed was how challenged the economy of, not just of the city, but of the region was. That I sat on the criminal side and the civil side. And that there was a lot of crime in Fall River and New Bedford in particular, not way out of line with what I had been exposed to in my early years. Although I was in Boston, I made my early legal career in Boston, and I had been in the District Attorney's office up there and the United States Attorney's office. So I was exposed to criminal business for many years before coming down here.

But that I was struck by what appeared to be the much more limited economic strengths and resources of New Bedford, Fall River, the whole county, the whole south coast area. And on the civil side, that many of the cases were negligence cases, medical malpractice cases, and whatever. There was a marked difference between what I had been exposed to before in Suffolk County and in Middlesex County, and the relative affluence, if you will, of the people and the businesses that comprise the docket of the Superior Court.

Interviewer:

Thanks for that. So then moving back to your, I think before that, talking about your time as a teenager, where did you go to boarding school?

Lloyd Macdonald:

I went to St. Paul's School in New Hampshire. And it was a big change, a big change from what I had been accustomed to. It's now, the school has changed significantly, but believe it or not, my first year there, which was, we call them forms, my first year was in the ninth grade, and that was called the third form. And we had no Thanksgiving vacation and no weekends away from school for the entire year, other than the two weeks or so of Christmas vacation and two weeks or so from spring vacation. So it literally took me right out of circulation from everything that I had known before. And that was a very challenging personal experience for me, but ended up all right, but it was a major change.

Interviewer:

You mentioned a brother. Did you have siblings that also went away to school?

Lloyd Macdonald:

Yep, my older brother went away to school. He went to a different school in New Hampshire, where our dad had gone, called Holderness School. It was one or two stops beyond Concord, New Hampshire, which is where St. Paul's was located, on what used to be called the Boston and Maine Railroad Line. So it was not uncommon for us to take the same train at the conclusion of our respective vacations. And I got off, as I said, one or two stops before he did.

Interviewer:

So you'd pack up your trunk and your parents would take you to the New Bedford train station and put you on? Or was there a train station-



Lloyd Macdonald:

No, by the time I went to boarding school, the New Bedford Train service I think had stopped, for all practical purposes, it stopped. I should have mentioned this before, that I did have quite a bit of early experience on the train from New Bedford to Boston. Because at age either eight or nine, with my mother having gotten very concerned and with me getting very concerned about my crooked teeth and with my mother believing that there was nobody in New Bedford that was worthy, no orthodontist in New Bedford that was worthy of her son's teeth, is that she found an orthodontist in Boston, located on Beacon Street. I even remember the address, 230 Beacon Street.

And I would go up there every three weeks in the early years, that we would go on the train from New Bedford up there. Get off at the Back Bay station and then walk over to Beacon Street. Thing I remember most about that was as uncomfortable as it was, because my teeth rose killing me after the appointments, that she would take me to Schrafft's and that would get an ice cream. That's where I first had my first ice cream soda. But then the train service was interrupted, and thereafter, she would drive me up every three weeks to that. So I'm looking forward to South Coast Rail, supposedly, allegedly resuming in the foreseeable future.

Interviewer:

A return to being connected. You talked a little bit about what you would do on Saturdays when coming into the city. What were summers like on the farm in Dartmouth? What did you do there? Yeah.

Lloyd Macdonald:

Well, summers on the farm, we worked. And I'll tell you what the wage was, when I started and my brother and I started actually working on the farm, 25 cents an hour. Which it seemed like a lot of money to us at the time. In the early years of growing up, it was a functioning farm. My mother and stepfather had decided to, number one, locate on the farm, and number two, raise black Angus beef cattle.

And it was a fairly significant operation, there was a lot to do. I loved growing up on the farm and I loved the animals and particularly the cattle. Unfortunately, that a black Angus beef operation run from a farm in Dartmouth really couldn't compete with the big farms of the Midwest and even New York State, Pennsylvania and whatever. And although I was too young to know any of the details, that in effect, it was clear that they came to a decision that they had lost enough money in operating the farm.

And so my stepfather left, stopped running the farm, and he went to work in New Bedford actually, for the Palmer Scott Company that made constructed plastic fiberglass boats. And that was sort of an introduction to the maritime industry in New Bedford. And then he got involved in what, at the time, was called Pearson Coburn Shipyard, which is now Fairhaven Shipyard. And in my teen years up into early twenties, he ran the Pearson Coburn Shipyard. But he also lost money there and then he sold that out.

But my brother used to work, in summers, going back to your question, in summers of my teenage years, I would still work out at the farm because even though we didn't have a full-time operation, we continued to have chickens. And I'm not sure if we had a milk cow in my teenage years, but there was enough that was going on there. And I liked being on the farm and helping the person who was running the day-to-day aspect of the farm. So that was my summer job. My brother's summer job was at the shipyard at the Pearson Coburn Shipyard.

Interviewer:

That's a little bit about your stepfather. Can you tell me a little about your mother?

Lloyd Macdonald:

Yeah. Her name was Angelica Lloyd Russell. My stepfather was Bill Russell. She grew up in the wintertime in Washington DC. Her father was a journalist, Andy Yachtsman. And that she would come up with the rest of her



family. She was the oldest of three siblings. She had two siblings, so there were three kids in the family. And my grandfather, who died before I was born, so I never knew him personally.

They, in addition to their place in Washington, they had a house in Dartmouth, on Potomska Road. It was actually the house that belonged to Leander Plummer. And they were there. He was attracted to the area, having grown up in the summertime. He grew up in Chicago in the wintertime, but they would go to Seckonet in the summer. But he was a very serious sailor and he was impatient with how limited the Seckonet Harbor was for his purposes and was attracted to Padanaram Harbor and the New Bedford Yacht Club. And that was setting for his looking for real estate in the area, and he bought the Leander Plummer property at Potomska Point.

And my mother was also apparently a serious sailor, and imbued in us kids a love for the sea and sailing. But she was a housewife. It was sort of pre the time that many women were professionally engaged. She was very active in the community here, but did not have a professional job or activity. And my stepfather, after he sold the Pearson Coburn Shipyard, was in semi-retirement on the early side. And then my mother and stepfather got divorced. He had originally been from California and he returned to California and then unfortunately died from a heart attack in the late, want to say in 1976, 1977. I was very fond of him and it was a real loss.

Interviewer:

So you ostensibly landed in Dartmouth by way of Washington, DC and Chicago. And in some sort of chance it was due to boats, if I'm listening in that way.

Lloyd Macdonald:

Yep.

Interviewer:

You mentioned that your mother was a housewife, but was involved in some civic organizations. Do you think she would've had ambitions at a different time?

Lloyd Macdonald:

She may have, but she was not, and she would be the first person to say this, she was not an intellectual. She struggled at school. But she was a very substantial presence and was very active in many organizations around here. And eventually, she became a member of the board of trustees of this memorable institution. She was very active in the Solimar Hospital, Friends Academy, the grade school that I and my brother and three sisters went to. She was always very, very involved in other organizations. And also, in later years, got involved actively in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, and in particular on the Boston Symphony.

Interviewer:

You've talked about having to come into New Bedford for dance classes. You have talked as well about coming into New Bedford for guitar lessons. It sounds like there were a number of activities that you partook in. Guitar seemed not maybe to be the one that stuck. Did you like dance classes? What was that like?

Lloyd Macdonald:

Yeah, it was fun. It was awkward, but it was also fun because you were there with your friends. There were people there that I didn't know but came to know. But there was a hardcore of people that I went to school with or otherwise had become friendly with.

I think it was Friday afternoons, early evenings. And we looked forward to it. Although at age 8, 9, 10, being told to go ask a girl to dance and then have to talk to her during the time, and as you're fumbling with your steps and keeping a wary eye on Mrs. Wilcox, who was a very strict teacher, was quite a challenge. But it was entertaining.



It was entertaining and definitely worthwhile and very memorable. In the ballroom of the New Bedford Hotel.

Interviewer:

Wonderful. Well, I think those are some of the questions that I had listening to you talk. Do you have anything else that's come up as we've been talking that you want to mention for the recording?

Lloyd Macdonald:

I don't think so, other than to reflect, again, that the opportunity to reconnect to the city, which I had by virtue of my appointment in 2004 to the Superior Court and the 10 years that I was on the court. And I would've preferred to have stayed on the court, but in Massachusetts that even though it's a lifetime appointment to the Superior Court, life is defined by the state constitution as 70 years old. So when I turned 70 in 2014, I was out.

But that event of my appointment to the court and having the opportunity to increasingly sit in Bristol County and most memorably in New Bedford, I saw as something where it was very gratifying. It kind of connected my later life to my earlier life. And walking the same streets that we got off the bus and walked all those years before. Of course, things had changed dramatically. There weren't three movie theaters in the city anymore. There was just one, and it wasn't even a movie theater. But the Zeiterion, thank God, has thrived. But very different from what it was when I was growing up.

Interviewer:

In many ways, full circle though, as you described.

Lloyd Macdonald:

Yeah, yeah. And that's gratifying.

Interviewer:

Yeah. Do you think you would've stayed in Boston, or even before that, New York, if you hadn't had those appointments?

Lloyd Macdonald:

No, I made a decision. I went to law school at Columbia, which is in New York. I had a summer job at a prestigious law firm, Sullivan & Cromwell, after my second year, and I had an offer from them. And it was a close call because I enjoyed living in New York.

But that my view at the time, and it was prescient, which was that while I might, in the near term, prefer to be in New York, that over the long term I wanted to be in Massachusetts. And Boston was an exciting place. Challenged as well, because it's incredible changes in Boston since 1970 when I came and started to work up there and now. And then, it was somewhat of a backwater for the big, notwithstanding its history, for a big city. But it's close enough that I could come down here and I still live on the farm, if you will. My older brother has the farmhouse that we grew up in. But my mother gave me and my other siblings some property, and I built a house in the mid 1980s. And when my children were growing up, we came here to Dartmouth and the farm almost every weekend. We were active in various institutions in Boston, but we came down here an awful lot.

And probably my first, the first revival of affirmative activity with any institution in the area, before I went on the court, was with this institution, the Whaling Museum. And that one of the former presidents, Anne Brengle, whom I consider to be a transformative leader from the perspective of what the museum has become, she asked me, and now my dates are going to be way off, but sometime in the 1990s to be in a long range planning committee here at the museum. And I really enjoyed that. And living in Boston and coming down on weekends and stuff. But I see that as the first significant event that reconnected me to any institution in the city. And it



preceded my going on the court. And I loved being part of that committee. It was great leadership and Anne was wonderful.

And then I think I might've been on another two of those long range planning committees. I remember, I don't think it was the first one, but I think it was the second one, that we were having a meeting and it was up in the San Francisco room. It was a small group and Anne said, "Oh, I want to tell you there's been an exciting development that has just occurred that potentially offers a real opportunity for us. And that we've been approached by an institution called the Kendall Whaling Museum with what appears to be an offer to transfer its collection to the New Bedford Whaling Museum." And I said, "Anne, before you say anything else, I have to inform you of something. And that is that as a lawyer, I have represented the Kendall Whaling Museum in various litigation and in other matters. And so, I think that I ought to excuse myself from this meeting."

And thereafter, I was not involved from the museum side with the Kendall combination, as it happened, because I did represent the Kendall Whaling Museum. Not for all matters, but in a couple of litigation matters that I was asked to oversee the deal documents, if you will, from the Kendall Whaling Museum side, working with the lawyer at Robinson Gray, who represented the New Bedford Whaling Museum. But corporate practices, corporate issues, combinations and whatever were not anything that I knew about, so I transferred the responsibility for that to people in my law firm that actually did know, were familiar with corporate and philanthropic organization consolidations and things of that sort.

And then notwithstanding that, Anne asked me to join the board in either 2003 or 2004, and I enthusiastically accepted that. And that just serendipitously coincided with Governor Romney's appointment of me to the Superior Court. And as a result of that, for the reasons that I had earlier described, I became much more regularly involved in the life of New Bedford and of the south coast until the present day.

Interviewer:

You mentioned when you were living in Boston and you were practicing in Suffolk County, you would still come down to Dartmouth to the farm with your children and spend time down here.

Lloyd Macdonald:

Right.

Interviewer:

Do you think they have similar feelings about the farm and about Dartmouth and about this area? Do they have that connection?

Lloyd Macdonald:

Yeah, I think the answer to that is emphatically yes. My daughter and my son-in-law, and they're now in their fifties, which is amazing, they just built a house on the farm property. And they have two children, both in college. But the house just got completed this past year, so they're going to have their first Thanksgiving a week from now. What is today? Today's Thursday, a week from today.

Interviewer:

Yeah, yeah. Wow.

Lloyd Macdonald:

Amazing. They're going to have their first Thanksgiving there. My son has a similar affection for the farm and the area. And he has some, I've transferred some land to him. He's got plans to build, but he doesn't, at this point, has not built anything here. But they both, to answer your question, they both feel very similarly to me about the



place. And my son who lives in Boston, does come down on a regular basis here, and he's got two boys who love being here as well. So the Boston, Dartmouth, New Bedford corridor is one that I continue to travel very frequently.

Interviewer:

And your roots, the generations will have that same experience, it sounds like. That's great.

Lloyd Macdonald:

They will never have the depth of experience that I had in growing up here. They feel great affection and very meaningful for this part of the world to be, to them. This part of the world is very meaningful for them. But they did not have the experience of, in effect, growing up in New Bedford that I did. Even though I didn't live in New Bedford, it was a very important part of my upbringing that they simply don't have.

Frankly, whereas my parents had many friends who lived in the city of New Bedford, so they would socialize there and their kids, and if their friends had kids that were my age, that we would interact socially in New Bedford. I'm not sure if any of my children's friends' families live in New Bedford anymore. There was a migration out and primarily to Dartmouth. I'm just thinking of my law office at 115 Orchard Street. That's a house that a close friend of mine, I always wanted her to be my girlfriend, but she never reciprocated. But the Reed family, the John Reed family owned that house and they had four kids, maybe five. And they were New Bedford kids. And any number of other, the Sweetzer family had a similar number of kids. They lived in town and almost everybody lived in town.

The Jones-Rotch-Duff House, my first girlfriend when I was like six years old, Debbie Purse, her grandfather was John Duff. And that's where he lived. And everybody's moved out. All those families have moved out. The Sweetzers, the Reeds, the Duffs, everybody moved out, so that there's not that, in this generation at least, there's not that connection to the city that there was beforehand.

Now there's a whole new generation that's coming on that I simply don't, I'm not in that circle, but the city does appear to be doing very, very well, certainly in comparison to what was happening in the late 1960s and seventies and eighties. So there'll be more occasions for people to have, my children to have friends who actually live in New Bedford and right now they don't.

Interviewer:

Yeah. Wonderful. Good. Well, thank you. I'm going to stop our recording.

Lloyd Macdonald:

Yeah, great.