

Bette-Claire Colman Weiner

Interviewee: Bette-Claire Colman Weiner
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Interviewed By: Barry Kessler
Transcribed By: Donna Williams, February 23, 2007

Qt: "This is Barry Kessler. Today is January 5, 2007, and I am taping an interview for the Shady Side Rural Heritage Society."

BC: "I'm Betty-Claire Colman Weiner. Eva and Louis Colman were my parents. As a child, from the time I was born until I was 16, I spent a lot of time at Shady Side, Maryland. My husband, Larry Weiner, came after Shady Side years. I have three (3) children, and that would be Julie, Laurie and Craig and two grandchildren belonging to Laurie and her husband... Kevin, Taylor, and Dillon. And my memories of Shady Side go way, way, way back. I have pictures when I was first born down there, the first year, but I actually remember from the time I was a few years old. My memories, for many years, it was very primitive down at the Club. My cousin, Evelyn, and I spent a lot of time together. We were very close in age and Evelyn a year and a half older, even though in youth, I once told my children when we were young, just the opposite. [Missing??]

When we first went down to the Club, it was a long, communal kitchen. Everybody had an icebox. So on the way down, you stopped and you got a block of ice. In the middle of the kitchen there was a pump; that was our only running water. The women traded recipes. The men caught the fish, they caught the crabs, they caught eels. Eels were wonderful, but we were only allowed to eat the big ones. The small ones were kept for crab bait. You went to the bathroom outside. And I can remember as a very young child, six, seven years old, putting towels over my head so the bats wouldn't get me. And the downstairs was for everybody and the members, our parents, played a lot of cards. They had a lot of fun. And upstairs were the bedrooms. There was a woman's dormitory upstairs, the children's dormitory; the guys slept downstairs. That dormitory was downstairs. And the members' rooms ... which had walls but no tops, so you heard whatever they said to each other, plus the tinkling in the pots at night 'cause nobody went outside at night.

We also, in the morning when you would get up, somebody would be downstairs and it really was very communal living. If your parents weren't around, somebody else's were. There weren't a lot of children down there ... more my sister's age. My sister, Shirley, was 13 years older. Evelyn and I and Eddie Goldberg, who I remember as a teenager, and he was not in the first realm. We were in the first realm of people - my father, and my grandfather and my Uncle Bill, his brother. And his sister was married to Sylvan Powdermaker, who was also an original member, and then my mother's brother, Leonard Vineberg. They were five of ... and my Grandfather. They were a good portion of the

original twelve; and they all belonged to Washington Hebrew Congregation, which I find very interesting.

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They had a very good time. They started out ... which I just discovered ... that they started out in Gainesville ... or is it Galesville, because I found two old letters from my father. And the first one was where they obviously rented before they bought. I recently went down to Shady Side ... and well, actually, quite a few years ago, I went down after my husband died, I went down there and saw that it was a boating community. I couldn't believe this was where I grew up. More recently I was down and was amazed to see what they have done with the Club, which holds a lot of memories for us. We used to play with the Dunn boys next door – their house still is there.

Evelyn and I went blackberry picking once and have these scars from the hornets to show it, when we were 11, 12 years old. People didn't worry the same then. We would walk, which would be a good couple miles. It was a little country store, and we'd get four scoops of ice cream on our way home. We'd also walk around there for carnivals and everybody was friendly. Nobody worried. The local people mixed right in with the Club people. We played horseshoes, we played badminton, we played volleyball. We went crabbing, the men went fishing. I can remember skinning an eel, and that's holding the head with a cloth so it doesn't bite you, and somebody takes pliers and skins it.

We also ... the shower was outside ...very cold. In the beginning we did not have any hot water. We spent time on the swings. A lot of times, we played Monopoly, and on either side we had neighbors, and we talked to them. The waterfront changed quite a bit from when I came down. It seems like the property has shrunk a little. In the beginning, the rocks were there, the pier, lots of seaweed, the duck blinds. And my cousin, Evelyn and I and our little rowboat, would row out past the seaweed. I actually learned to swim at the beach. I never went to Camp because I was there all summer.

And when my sister got married, her husband, then the second wave of members being able to bring in people that weren't Masons. My brother-in-law joined, and I spent a couple summers down there when my nieces, Linda and Nancy, were just born, they were like a year or two years old. At that point, my mother wanted to stay home with my father. And, basically, there weren't a lot of people that stayed during the week. My parents would come on the weekends. During the week, we pretty much had it to ourself. It was a wonderful way to grow up, and I have lots and lots of memories. And looking through pictures and finding pictures of my ...both of my grandmothers and my grandfather. And I never knew them, and my grandfather ... I was about seven when he passed away but my two grandmothers I never knew. And seeing my parents when they were young, and the bathing suits...it's been...going into old pictures has been wonderful but this was a very important thing to the people. They developed friendships from it. My parents vacationed with original members other than their family. And it just was a great way to grow up. Is there anything else I can tell you that I haven't thought of?"

Qt: "Sure, sure. Tell me about your ...the Masonic connection, your father and your uncles."

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BC: "Yes. My father was very, very proud of being a Mason. All his life he wore his lifetime Masonic ring; and when he passed away, he was buried with that Masonic ring. My Uncle Bill, who was my father's younger brother and his brother-in-law, because his sister was the oldest and she was married at the time. My Uncle Leonard, at the time being single, also belonged to this lodge, and my grandfather. And so they were five of the original twelve members. Samuel Gompers started it. Now I heard stories about that. I did see when I was down, the corner stone that was laid there, but this...all five of these men were also members of Washington Hebrew, which is one of the...I think it is the oldest Reformed Congregation on the whole East coast; and my grandfather Harry was one of the original members that laid the cornerstone for Washington Hebrew. So this was definitely an affiliation that went into the Masonic club; and this was a requirement of these original twelve members were all members. And it was only as they aged, and their children were still members; but as the older men aged and passed away that they then took in family members that didn't have to be Masons. Is there anything else about that era?"

Qt: "Well, did your father tell you any stories about the Masons or what was it like to be a Mason for him?"

BC: "It was like as a teenager when I joined a club and later sorority, it was like a fraternity. But we know there aren't as many fraternities today as when I was growing up. But it was a fraternity of men that liked to be together. And with my father, it just ... the whole thing evolved into the Club. When he joined the Fishing Club, he was single. He hadn't met my mother. My Uncle Bill was single, my Uncle Leonard was single and they used to have some grand times. He convinced my mother to marry him and give up Atlantic City. And in their youth, they all went down there and they partied. My sister was born into this, and I wish she could remember some of it; but they were down there all the time and the women all stayed down, and there were, obviously, more children at that point down. And the men came down on the weekends.

But before that, they had the original members of this club...they were single men, such as my father, my Uncle Bill and my Uncle Leonard, and they really lived it up. And I believe, as my memory serves me, that the Dunns were very close. And one of the Dunns may have been an original member and they're still down there. They just had a grand time. After I was born, at that point my mother still went down there. And it wasn't till I became a teenager that she wanted to stay home with my father. But I do remember wild parties, being talked about. I can't say my memory. And I believe they went down ...it wasn't winterized, but I know from pictures that they did go down in the spring and they did go down in the fall. And because of the family relationships, with my family, that was even closer. And I have found pictures that showed that my parents actually vacationed with the Danheisers, and this was before my time, but I've seen pictures with

my sister. And it was just a wonderful way...but I think the interesting thing is that I don't believe a lot of Jewish men joined the Masons; but the lodge that my father

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belonged to, I believe it was primarily, or at least 50%, but I think even more, Jewish and this was how the original Fishing Club came to be."

Qt: "Tell me more about your family's Jewish affiliation because this does seem to be such an important aspect of things. You mentioned that they were connected to Washington Hebrew. What did that mean in terms of their daily life or involvement?"

BC: "Well, it means that my family were ... we were all Reformed Jews from 'Day 1'. As I said, my grandfather, Harry Colman, and his wife, Ida, were original, way back, when Washington Hebrew first started. And my sister taught Sunday school there; and I can remember the 'to do' when my cousin, Evelyn, didn't want to call her 'Miss Colman', she wanted to call her 'Shirley'. So we really go way back. Evelyn and I took these old-time streetcars to go down and, again, it shows how things have changed because today you wouldn't let your 10 or 11 year old get on a streetcar, but we did. And I guess what it means to me, is I was quite a bit older before I realized that my father being a Mason ...and being so proud of being a Mason, had nothing to do with it being Jewish. It had to do with his upbringing. My father and my Uncle Bill and my grand father...my grandfather started a hardware store at 7th and "O", which was across from the "O" Street Market. And I can remember as a child going down there. And then Uncle Bill, that's Evelyn and Harry's father, and my father, took it over. Now my father tells me when he was a kid, he made deliveries in a horse and buggy. Fortunately, my daughter, Laurie's, father-in-law interviewed Uncle Bill and I'm hoping some of the early years are on the tape. My father's memories, really, as he told me, you know, before cars, horse and buggy, that sort of thing, and some of the cars that I've seen in pictures were amazing.

And he grew up...and he was born... my father was born in Washington, DC as were all his siblings. My mother was born in Albany, New York but moved to Washington when she was only seven years old. So my family goes back a lot and I grew up in Washington. I went to all ... elementary, junior high and high school in Washington and then out to University of Maryland. When I was first married, my husband went to Georgetown so we lived in Glover Park, so I'm a real native Washingtonian. And my affiliation with Washington Hebrew, I got confirmed there, and I was in the first confirmation class in Washington Hebrew after they moved from downtown out to Massachusetts and McComb. And we were confirmed in October instead of the normal May time.

So I can't say that I'm connecting Washington Hebrew other than where the men came from, but that is a part of the background, too. And they all came from the Washington area, so, that's another thing. How they picked Shady Side, I have no idea. Or this wonderful beach...well, not beach front but this ... there were beaches when my Aunt

Cora and Uncle Sylvan bought maybe half a block down the road, they had a little beach. There was never a beach at Shady Side; it was always the pier into the water and the rocks to keep the land from eroding.”

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Qt: “What about the fishing aspect? What did your ...in terms of your father and uncles and grandfather; what was their interest in fishing and boating?”

BC: “Their interest was more in the fishing than in the boating. They all were fishermen. They loved to go out and catch their fish. And they did have...they put crab lines in that you... you know ...I forget what they’re called, but where you have buoys on either end and you keep pulling them up. We had wonderful crab feasts down at the beach. And Uncle Bill continued that at home; in fact, when I met my husband, I invited him to a crab feast right after we got engaged and he showed up in a suit! He didn’t know what a crab feast was! And that first time, he got me to open crabs for him, but never after. But Uncle Bill continued having the crab feasts at his house for many, many years. And I can remember as a newly wed fixing them in my backyard, getting crabs and putting them in the grill.

So the crabbing and the fishing were very important. The men would go out really early. They’d come back, they’d clean the fish, the eels, if they were big enough. And the women would all...it was a very social thing because...because I can still picture this long, narrow kitchen and each family had their part. And we were at one end and you know ...our...when I say ‘our family, Aunt Bea and Uncle Bill, Evelyn’s father later remarried...and that was ... he married Bernice; and Aunt Bea and Uncle Bill. And then Harry was born, and Evelyn, and my parents, and myself, and my sister when she got married. We had our own corner, our own icebox. And it wasn’t until the last few years that they actually...and that was a big thing...when they put a refrigerator in. We had dropped out of the Club before there was indoor plumbing, which is pretty much an important thing. Lots of ... in addition to the card playing, I think they would sit around and sing. And just generally having a good time, always ending up on the porch in these rocking chairs, or out on the swings. And then down by the water there were benches. The flag ceremony was very important. When someone was down there, that flag was raised every day and taken down every evening with ceremony.”

Qt: “Can you describe the ceremony?”

BC: “The only thing I can really remember is that it was always a member and it was always one of men when the men were down, and just raising it and everybody that was around would go out and see it and take it down. I’d have to say the words that were said, I don’t really remember them, but the flag was always flying, and that’s how you knew somebody was down there. And they did have some parties that I remember, especially as I got older. When I say ‘parties’, where a lot of people were invited to come down that weren’t members...and took advantage of enjoyment. All connected, you know, to a member.”

Qt: “Can you tell something about what would one of those parties be? What would it be like?”

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BC: “Usually a crab feast or, you know, fish and crabs, sometimes fried chicken, you know, and the women would make the potato salad and the cole slaw ... more picnic-type of outdoor parties. And then because they only had ... the members had the rooms, and where the girls and boys dormitories were for the kids, I can remember sometimes, when adults were invited down, the husbands would sleep downstairs, because there weren't any guest rooms; and people were able to bring their friends down. It wasn't like you had to have a pass or anything. And it wasn't until right before we dropped out of the Club that I remember them having some parties that actually the groups paid to use the facilities, but that was really in later years. Early years it was strictly for the members, and their families and their friends. “

Qt: “I want to go back to the fishing a little bit. What would it be like if your father went out fishing? What do you think he was fishing for? What would be the whole, sort of, sequence of events?”

BC: “They used to call them croakers. But they would leave very, very early in the morning, and nothing would be planned for dinner except fish. And they always caught fish. They would go out really into the Chesapeake. And there were very little rivers they could go out, but they went out where the water was deeper. And I remember Sam Goldberg had the original...not the original boat for fishing, but that I remember; because before I was born, I'd seen pictures of other boats. But these were fishing and crabbing boats. This was a big thing. The men would come down, and, you know, today they play tennis and they play golf. Then, they fished ... or crabbed, and ate what they caught. And it was really... they'd go out early, early in the morning because the best fishing was in the morning. Sometimes you could catch fish in the evening, but they didn't go out much in the evening.

They'd go out in the morning and everybody would be getting up when they'd come back and everybody would run down to the pier to see what they caught. And Evelyn and I would always complain that we were NOT allowed to go out. No women allowed! Women have come a long way, and that's why we got our little rowboat, so that we could at least crab. We used to catch crabs off the pier also. We also used to go, when we were, I guess I must have been about 8 or 9 when it started. We'd go along the shore and we'd go for shrimp, little tiny shrimp, with nets. We'd have to be really careful because there were some hooks and things around, but we would go along the shore line, walking down, just to catch these little shrimp and all. But basically, it was catching fish, catching crabs and eating them. They were part of your meal.”

Qt: “Tell about when the men came in from fishing a little bit more. What would they do? What were they carrying? How would they appear?”

BC: “ Well, they would put the fish in the water on lines that...there was something that you put through the fish’s mouths to keep them alive so that they were healthy to eat; and when they caught crabs, they caught them in bushel baskets because you can’t fix

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them once they’re dead. So they would have them strung on long... I mean they would come back, I can remember, with 40 fish... 40, 50 fish, because, don’t forget, you know, maybe five families were in that boat and they were catching fish. And they would pack them in ice for, you know, they wouldn’t go out, like during the week, the men weren’t down there during the week. But every weekend they’d usually come down on a Friday night, and Saturday morning and Sunday morning, unless it was raining, they’d be in those boats. And when they were coming back, somebody would see them, and everybody would run down to see what they caught. And they would be extremely proud of that. And the men, also, were very athletic, not athletic like we think of athletes, but horseshoes, volleyball games. Badminton was really for the kids. The men would play volleyball and they would also do horseshoes. But the fishing was definitely their main reason, they all were fishermen, and they loved it.

And the crabs, you know, you don’t call people crabmen but they literally loved crabbing, too; because, if they didn’t catch enough crabs, they’d walk around to Capt. Bast who was, you know, a mile and a half... and they’d buy crabs from him. And there was a woman also. So if they didn’t catch crabs... I remember, in my youth, having crab feasts every weekend. If they weren’t caught, they were bought. But the fish were always caught. I don’t think any of them ever, ever... that they ever bought fish, but they did pack them in ice, because I can remember having fish at home. And meanwhile you have to remember, there were only iceboxes down there, but the men were only going home every Sunday night or Monday morning.”

Qt: “When did they clean the fish?”

BC: “As soon as they brought them back because if they’re dead, you don’t eat them. So they would ... they had tables out in the back where the shower, where the old shower is now, they had some tables. And they’d all ... whoever went fishing, cleaned. And then they got divided. It wasn’t a case of ‘you caught this and I caught this’. Every fish that was caught was put on a string, they came back, whoever went out, they were divided equally between whichever people went out fishing. And then the rest of the day was just spent relaxing. I don’t think people get the chance to do that, but I remember Saturdays and Sundays just, you know, the fathers were there with the kids. Everybody was relaxing. Everybody was having a good time enjoying each other’s company. And a lot of the early members all intermingled. You know, it wasn’t a case of these people staying together in these. Everybody liked everybody. No animosity, no little things going on, it was just like a big happy family.”

Qt: “Can you tell me more about cooking the fish?”

BC: “That was up to the wives, and you know, they would get the fish all cleaned, and their portion. And everybody, I guess like my family, loved eels. And I remember my

mother saying ‘now make sure’ an eel was a very sweet fish, and, I’ve been told, it’s something like a catfish and it has a center bone. And my mother would bread the fish, and they cooked in the middle of the kitchen, but everybody cooked their own. And they

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didn’t have stoves, like we ...remember, they had burners. So the women would share recipes, but they would have their own cast iron frying pan and do their own cooking. Where you know my mother would do her cooking and, you know, my sister would help her. I can remember because there’s 13 years difference between us. And then I can remember Aunt Bea, Evelyn’s mother, you know, we would eat together. But each family would eat together and they would do their own cooking. And you know ... the interesting thing was...an important part was that you stopped and you got this big block of ice that went in your ice box.

And then occasionally, and certainly not every weekend, but I do remember going out to dinner occasionally. There was one restaurant. And there was nothing ... the kids were there and the Dads would be at the slot machines and we’d be watching and that was... you know It was only one restaurant at that time. Shady Side changed tremendously, because this was a very poor community. And the people that lived down there year round, they were the river men, the riverboat men. They caught fish and sold them. They caught crabs and they sold them. Where our fathers, that was their enjoyment. They went down there and there was no such thing as all these kids going to camp. I said I never went to camp. Evelyn, as a teenager, did go some, but I never went to camp. And in my sister’s time, I mean that was almost like an unheard of thing. So this was their way of getting away from it all. The men that originally belonged, this was their country club, instead of local country clubs that started in the area.”

Qt: “Anything else about what your mother cooked, like things she brought with her or...?”

BC: “I don’t think she brought anything with her there and grocery stores down there weren’t the same. Like I said, crab soup was a staple. It was made all the time because you didn’t need to catch a lot of crabs, and not like we’d make crab soup today. The fresh vegetables would get thrown in. You know, the crabs would be cleaned. They got soft shells...usually bought the soft shells, occasionally would catch them and fix those. So that was ... you know, I remember having crab soup all the time. I remember having fish all the time, fried chicken. People didn’t worry about cholesterol. There was, like I said, there was a grocery, like an old-time market. Nothing came down because they were afraid of spoilage. They would go around to the market, and I can remember when I was younger and my mother was down there, my father had one car, so before he left, she’d get him things from the market. But a lot of chicken was fixed, a lot of hamburgers and this was bought at the local markets. But the staples were the crabs and the fish, including at the right time of the year, the soft shells. And my parents used to buy shrimp, and they used to buy a lot of seafood.”

Qt: “Tell me. How did your mother make crab soup?”

BC: “My mother cut up vegetables, all fresh vegetables. She’d put water in the pot and, I guess, tomatoes. I mean it was crab soup from scratch. When she did soft shell crabs, 9.

they were sautéed in a pan. Fried chicken...she had a cast iron skillet. The fish were fried, they were dipped in egg and batter and fried, as were the... actually, some of the soft shells were often fixed that way, too. My mother also used to fry crabs. I can remember having fried crabs. The crabs used to go, when they were steamed, when you caught them, you put them live, into a pot; and like I said they had burners there. And when they bought them already done, whatever wasn’t eaten, the shells would be taken off and the claws maybe thrown into this big pot of soup. And it was like a homemade vegetable soup with crab flavor. And I don’t remember ‘Old Bay’ but maybe it did exist then. It might’ve just been, you know, this was cooking from scratch, and this was before people were into the health, so a lot of things were fried. Easy type food, again, no dish washers, so you were eating everything and washing them in a big communal sink, not together. But people would take turns and I remember this big pump in the middle of the kitchen, and this was pumped into bottles and put in the refrigerator for water, you know. They didn’t have sinks down there when I was young. That came later.”

Qt: “Were there any side dishes that your mother was known for that you particularly enjoyed?”

BC: “Well, my mother was known for things that she didn’t take, like her Matzo ball soup, which she didn’t take down there. But my mother was a very good cook, and she could make anything and, which I found unusual, again, we were Reformed Jews. My mother made a lot of seafood, and she was famous for her fried chicken and gravy, which was a gravy with ..you scraped from the skin and you’d add butter, and you’d add cream and it was a real creamy... and she used to make biscuits. So my mother did a lot of cooking, but I would say from Shady Side, what she did the most of was making seafood, except for fried chicken and biscuits and gravy. She also made a lot of potato salad, a lot of cole slaw, as against today, we eat a lot of salads. I remember from my youth, it was always cole slaw and potato salad . Those are my memories of, and everything always smelled good, you know, and I would be playing and called in. And again this was from the time I started remembering at 3, 4 years old into when I was a teenager when I was called to help; and by the time I was a teenager, they had running water. We still had the burners, and we still had the outhouses. We never got indoor plumbing, but they did have running water. We had fans, no air conditioning, very, very hot, very ‘bug-gey’, and lots and lots and lots of sea nettles.”

Qt: “What were some ways that people tried to beat the heat?”

BC: “Dress...you know, I’ve seen early pictures; but, of course, the bathing suits and just dressed cool, and fans that were there. I don’t remember fans in the beginning. But in the end, you know, my later years there, there were a lot of fans there. And in the evening, everybody would sit on the porch, which was all screened in, and they’d sit and

they'd talk in the rocking chairs. People just didn't ... they didn't complain like they do today. Today, if it's hot 'Ah, people are dying'. People just got used to it, you know. And today we go down to the beach, you get stung by a sea nettle, you put mud on it. It

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was just accepted that you got stung. It was different down there. A lot of, I think, old home type remedies. You know, you're hot, you just don't run around. But I don't think the heat bothered people they way ... we had a lot of shade at Shady Side. I know that sounds, ... but there were a lot of trees, and a lot of shade and we'd sit outside on the swings, or even down by the water. And in the evening, there used to be a little breeze from down by the water.

It was really hot! It just...you accepted it just like you accepted when you were home, you had a bathroom. And when you were down there, you went outside. When you were home, you had plenty of hot water. When you were down there, you traded to go down there and have fun. It was a totally different kind of experience because you had some creature comforts when you were at home; but down there, you really didn't. You did have a radio, but you really didn't have the comfort of home, and nobody missed it. Everybody just had a good time.

And I learned to ride a bicycle down there. I rode it into the fence, but I can remember very clearly being very angry with my cousin Evelyn and Eddie Goldberg, who taught me to ride a bicycle. I never rode a bike. Back then, you had to ride them in the street and my mother at home wouldn't let me. They ...Evelyn and Eddie also taught me to smoke, and my parents were very smart. They didn't tell me not to. I was 15 years old, I didn't like it, and it lasted two or three weeks; and I decided this was a habit I didn't need.

But the three of us, when we were teenagers were the only teenagers that really were down there. And like I said, from pictures and all, I think with my sister ...I think my sister was one of the younger ones, but there was a group of them. And then even though my Uncle Sylvan bought down the road, he was there a lot; and he had two children and they were there. And it was a community, so it wasn't like we thought of in later years. But it was definitely a community of people that liked each other and those in the Washington area did see each other other than at the Club."

Qt: "Were there people who were not from the Washington area?"

BC: "You know, the truth is, I can't remember all of the twelve people. They would've had to be from the Washington area because the Gompers lodge was in the Washington area. But some of them were my grandfather's age, some of them were the children. I remember the Diamonds because the Diamonds had ... there was a son who was the age of my father. Danheiser, also the age of my father. But of the twelve people, probably like, maybe four of them were my grandfather's age. I don't remember them at all. But I do have pictures of ... I can't remember his first name ... I have pictures of the Diamond

family and the Danheiser family with my family at the ocean. So obviously the younger people, which would have been my father and Evelyn's father and all, they kept up with each other in the winter when they were at home. And there was a friendship that

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evolved there. I just ...I was the baby and so I really don't remember. I see myself in pictures, but I was too little to remember."

Qt: "Tell me about the games that you and your cousin played, you know, just out there in the yard. What would you be doing during the course of the day while your father was out fishing?"

BC: "Well now, remember, the fishermen were back by 10:30, 11 in the morning. But Evelyn and I used to play badminton, we used to do horseshoes. We were BIG players of Monopoly. I mean Monopoly games ... and I can remember there like there were houses on either side of the Club property. And I can remember we did do things with some of the kids that came down there. But we would have Monopoly games that would go on for hours. We took a lot of walks. We used to pick blackberries. We did get chased by hornets once; Evelyn and I still have the scars from that. Daily we would walk around, you know, no body would worry about what they ate, and daily we would walk to the country store, and this was from the time that we were, like I said, much younger than you'd let your children today walk around there. And we'd take our allowance and we'd buy ice cream, and we'd stop along, you know, it would evolve ... that would be a couple hours out of our day, going and doing that.

And you know sometimes we would just ... I'm sure we took other games and things down there, but we also... a part of every day that the weather was good, we were in the water. The seaweed didn't bother us, right ... swimming, and I was learning to swim, right in the midst of this horrible gookey seaweed. And then when we were a little older, we had our boat, and we'd row that out and we'd go crabbing. And when we were younger, we would crab right off of the pier and we actually, with crab nets, we would pull up the crabs, and we'd be very, very excited and very upset, you know, if our mothers would come down, or our fathers and say 'that's too small...throw it back'. And elated when we would occasionally ... right time of the year ... we would catch some soft shells, we would be elated with that.

And then, too, you know, our fathers as well as our mothers did things with us because they were there, and so it could be anything. But we were outside most of the day during the day. And we would come in at dusk because it was very, very buggy. Lots of mosquitoes and ...we were always inside in the evening. And most of their outside, you know like if they had picnics or crab...those were during the day or they'd have them inside."

Qt: "Now was there any insect repellent?"

BC: "Not that I remember. That doesn't mean it wasn't there, but I really don't remember insect repellent. I remember ear infections. Because, like I said, I learned to

swim there and going under water and remember coming home many times and going to...not to my general doctor but to the ear doctor with ear infections.”

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Qt: “Tell me about how you and Evelyn got your boat.”

BC: “A lot of complaining to our parents that it wasn’t fair that we never ... and as I remember it, Eddie Goldberg got to go fishing, and he was my age. Lots and lots of complaining; and, of course, our fathers used to say ... my father would say: ‘Well, I don’t own the boat...that’s the rule.’ Easy way out. But we complained so long, we were told, you know, to save our allowance, and then our parents did pay for most of it. And we found this rowboat. And that was really because our mothers and fathers felt we had a complaint, and we spent a lot of time in that little rowboat and had a lot of fun. And you know, once we had the rowboat, you know, my father showed me how to use the oars, and Evelyn’s father showed her. And just about every day, we would go out, and that would be like our thing. The men were going fishing on the weekend, so on the weekend we were going out and crabbing. I don’t think anybody thought too much about the fact that, we were out in pretty...I mean ... water over our head. And Evelyn was a better swimmer than I was because she had gone to camp. But I don’t think ... they didn’t think ... you know our parents were very conscientious, but people weren’t safety conscious to the same point. And we were, as I remember it, we were only allowed to take the boat out to that duck blind when the fathers were down, and that meant there was a boat if we got into trouble or something like that. Otherwise, we could use it but we had to stay within a certain ... you know ...where we could have gotten out of the boat and pulled it back. We didn’t have that boat either until we were maybe 12 ...you know, maybe a little younger...I might have been around ... Evelyn might have been 12 and I might’ve been 10. But it really was given to us because we were there all summer.”

Qt: “When you say you found the boat?”

BC: “No we ... oh, we bought it. I mean we bought it ... our fathers bought it and I don’t know whether this is my memory, but it seems to me for some reason, \$30 sticks in my mind. And I don’t know whether that was \$30 that Uncle Bill put in and \$30 that my father put in, but, you know, keep in mind that I’m 68 years old, and I was probably about ten at the time. So it might have been \$30 for the whole boat. It was strictly a little, tiny rowboat and it was bought down in Shady Side, you know, from one of the fishermen or, you know, there weren’t stores like you’d think of now. It was probably bought second-hand from somebody. But it was really just, you know, two sets of parents loving their daughters.

And we took a lot of pride in that boat, and I would say that was an every-day thing, because life was very, very simple. You know. There’s no pressure to do anything. We’d sleep in the morning, we’d stay up as late as our parents would let us stay up. And mine were usually pretty lenient. My sister being thirteen years older had kind of trained them, so I did get away with a lot, I have to say. I do remember later years when I got married I was so mad at Evelyn ‘cause she told my husband-to-be, right before we got

married that the Colmans spoiled their women and I was spoiled. She was a Colman but she didn't say anything and she was married at the time. But I can remember her saying that. And I will say that the men, you know, they did take care of their wives. There was

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nothing equal, you know, women's rights or Lib anything. The women were taken care of and protected and I was my father's little girl and my sister broke both my parents in, so I don't really remember ever getting sent up to bed early and I was always a night person and I'd sleep in the morning. And so my day wouldn't start until the fishermen were coming in." [Sound of telephone ringing in background.]

Qt: "What would it be like in the girl's dorm? Who would be there? What would happen once you got up there?"

BC: "Well, often it was just Evelyn and myself, and you know we would... depending on our age, as we got older, and we were teenagers and we would giggle and we would, you know, wonder about Eddie being downstairs...[Slight pause in interview.]

Qt: "So what was it like up in the dorm room?"

BC: "Well, we would, again, depending on our age, but we grew up around the corner from each other, so we were very close. So often we would be, as we got older, we would be giggling about things that happened at home. As we were younger, we would complain about 'this was unfair' or 'that was unfair' and, you know, 'why couldn't we do this'... 'why couldn't we do that?', but it was just sort of like a rehashing. And then we would try to, you know, our door would be open because it was hot, and so, if we were still up, which often we were, when the members came up, we tried to eavesdrop and hear what they were saying. Of course, we knew which room our parents were in, but we also knew who were in the other rooms. And then we would get hysterical when people would go to the bathroom. And you know, we often would stay up and listen to these things; so I can't say, you know, we enjoyed it and everybody had a ... I had a bed by the window, and Evelyn had a bed by the window. My sister, when I was younger, when Evelyn and I were younger, my sister slept in there, too. And Florence Jean slept in there, and if Doris Goldberg came down, she slept in there; and I do remember, sometimes on the weekend, when couples came down, there would be somebody older sleeping in there. As I remember the dormitory, there were about twelve beds in there, but most of the time, most of them were empty. And the members' rooms were their own, and you know, they were furnished themselves and each member had their own room. And I don't remember, but I think there probably were just twelve rooms up there because I know there were no facilities when you invited somebody down for the weekend."

Qt: "I'd also like to hear a little bit more about the trip, if you can kind of take me through the process of starting from your family's home in Washington and then the trip..."

BC: “Well it was a totally different way to go. We used to go through Peace Cross, you know, which is gosh, I don’t even remember how. But, you know, now you can get down to Shady Side...it’s an easy hour drive. It took longer to get down then, and you

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always went through Peace Cross, which I ...vaguely, I don’t know how to say where that is, but the way of going down was totally different.

And we’d go down with a full car when we were ‘gonna stay and, like I said, we didn’t have a car down there during the week. So when my father left, my mother had what she needed; and when I was older and my sister stayed down, same thing. But definitely, growing up, when Evelyn and I were young, there were many more people down there during the week than when we were teenagers and would go down and stay down. But it was a very relaxed, fun way of life. And I can’t ... very unpressured, and it was nothing we had to do. We didn’t have to take homework down there. We didn’t have ... I remember we used to get comic books. We would still get our allowance and we’d go around to the store and ‘hem and haw’ on what we’d spend it on; but it was just so different from today. My granddaughter at eight and my grandson at five ... their time is structured. They do a lot. Our time was totally ... we were free. We got out of school, we went down to Shady Side and we did whatever it was that we felt like doing. If we wasted the whole day, it didn’t matter. If we got up, and we had breakfast and then we decided just to go outside, and walk down to the water and do a little crabbing or maybe take our boat out when we were older ... If we wanted to spend all afternoon playing Monopoly, which we often did, that’s what we would do. There was never a schedule. You had your breakfast, you had your lunch and you had your dinner. Other than that, there was no schedule at all, and it was a wonderful way to grow up, I think.”

Qt: “Tell me about how your family eventually decided not to renew your membership, or how did the Shady Side experience end for you and your family.”

BC: “Well, it ended because after my sister got married, my...[Slight pause.]

Qt: “How did the Shady Side experience end?”

BC: “Shirley and Bob used to come down, and then the Club started taking in family members and it wasn’t ... didn’t have to be close. And my sister then and her husband joined even though they were coming down. And the older members like my grandfather had all died. And the members like my Dad... my Uncle Sylvan had dropped out. And my Uncle Leonard had dropped...he had gotten divorced and he had dropped out. And of the original five from my family, there were two left: my father and my uncle and my brother-in-law joined them.

But all of these people were replaced and the people that replaced them were wonderful people, but they had the big boats, and they had more money than our family had. And that’s when they started renting the Club out because the Club, as the years went on, became more expensive; because the newer members wanted to modernize. They wanted

to put a swimming pool in. They wanted indoor plumbing. They wanted air conditioning ... all things that were very expensive. And my father and my uncle, they owned a

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hardware store. And my brother-in-law at that time, I believe, he was selling insurance. They just couldn't afford what they saw as the new dues structure, so they dropped out. And at that point, I have to say, with my father and Evelyn's father, I think they had had ...you know, I think they were of an age, then, that they weren't really into the fishing or anything like that. Again, like I said, you know, my father at the time, he was not a young man, and our age today was considered old then. So when he dropped ... when Uncle Bill and my Dad dropped out, they were ready, I think, also. And, of course, Shirley and Bob, my sister, they wouldn't have stayed in if we didn't.

But the main turning point was the Club was taking a different direction, and one that they, you know, already had evolved that my parents didn't come down as much. And I really believe that was the reason...that, you know, they had all these wonderful memories. And although Shirley and Bob didn't belong that long, they still had their memories from before Bob belonged...they came down. And I do believe there were three distinct...you know, the original members, and then the second group, and then the Museum. They were very distinctly different."

Qt: "How did you feel when you realized that your family wouldn't be coming down any more?"

BC: "I think I was ready because I had turned 16. I was very into what was going on at home with my friends and with boys. And, you know, Evelyn, too. Evelyn was a year and a half older than me. So I think as far as we were concerned, we were ready. We weren't interested, at that point, in spending the whole summer down there and leaving our friends. And our parents had had it. And my father wasn't that interested in getting up every morning and going out and fishing, nor was Uncle Bill. You know, they had their lives at home and their friends also were older and not as interested in coming down. So I think it was pretty ... a natural thing; and I think had the flavor not changed, it probably wouldn't have been long, you know.

There was a period that they had a hard time getting enough members in, and that's when, you know, the rules got a little less lax. And like I said, the people that came in had a wonderful time; but their boats were very much ... and they must have, in some way, improved on the dock and everything else. And they did put in a swimming pool after we left, like I said, and indoor plumbing and all of this. But I think my family, they were ready to come home. It had served its purpose. You know, in my parents' case, they had raised two daughters going down there in the summer. [Long pause] Anything else?"

Qt: “That really covers just about everything I can think of. I’m just wondering if, just to sum up, if there’s some way you could just summarize the whole experience. What did, in retrospect, what did Shady Side mean to you?”

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BC: “Shady Side meant family. It meant a lot of my mother’s time, a lot of my father’s time. It meant a very un-pressured, relaxed way of growing up. And I think, in my way, I try to give that to my children in that we bought a place in Ocean City, Maryland, when my kids were young. And we spent a lot of time down there in the summer. And I think in a way that was sort of like a ‘rub off’ because, you know, at that point, it was a different life style but we... my children have wonderful memories of Ocean City. You know, we later ...when I try to think of it, I do believe it was because I had an extremely happy childhood, and as I was happy at home, I loved the fact that I took off and went down the beach.

I loved the fact I was raised like an only child. My sister’s thirteen years older. But Evelyn was like a sister. You know, Evelyn had a brother, Harry, but Harry was a lot younger. I mean Harry was not much older than my niece ... my two nieces, my nephew being younger, he never knew the Club House, but ...so I think, you know, my summers ... I saw a lot of Evelyn at home, but in the summers, it was like I had a sister. And it was just my parents were very easy with me. It was like being able to do whatever I wanted ... none of the things put on you today. And so to me, I think, going down to the club, growing up down there in the summer, to me, it was very family oriented. And it was a gift from my parents who ... I don’t remember, growing up, probably very ... it was unrealistic, but I don’t remember ever hearing my parents raise their voice. I don’t remember ever hearing them argue and this was open, but it was a different time, because my father took care of my mother, he took care of my sister, and he took care of me.

And when my sister got married, Bob became someone. When I got married, my husband lived out in Virginia and he’d spend the night ... we were engaged. My father would get up at night when we were all sleeping, and I remember Larry saying, ‘I know I went to bed without covers, and I woke up with covers.’ Well, that was the way men were back then. And I think that’s what the Club ... you know, it was a very family thing with my father sort of taking care of my mother and my sister and me, and Aunt Bea and Uncle Bill, and Evelyn and Baby Harry and then when my sister had it. But that’s...it was a family thing, with lots of friends. Friends are still important, but I don’t remember any bickering or any arguing ... unless it was Evelyn and I complaining that we couldn’t go fishing.”

Qt: “Bette-Claire, thank you so much. I’ve really enjoyed speaking with you and hearing your memories of Shady Side.”

[Interview ends. Tape ends.]
