

Oral History Interview - Ted Hoskins

Isle au Haut Historical Society

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Location: Isle au Haut parsonage

Interviewer: Kristen Carlson-Lewis, summer resident

Written transcription: Kristen Carlson-Lewis

Kris: This is Kris Carlson-Lewis and I am with the Isle au Haut Historical Society. I am here with Ted Hoskins and it is August 22, 2012 and we are just getting together to do a little oral history on Ted. I thought we would just go ahead and get started. Ted, I wanted to know where and when were you born?

Ted: I was born very near my mother at the time.

Kris: You were, were you?

Ted: August 4, 1933 in Bridgeport, Connecticut.

Kris: Not too far from Westport.

Ted: Visible up on the hill as you go down the turnpike even to this day. The old, old building I think is still there. None of the new buildings were there then.

Kris: Are you talking about the Bridgeport Hospital?

Ted: Yeah

Kris: I never had the occasion to go there. Even having lived close by but I think Paul was in one of the hospitals there at one time.

Ted: St. Vincent's maybe?

Kris: Yeah, I think that might have been it. I wanted to ask you also about your parents. How did they meet?

Ted: I don't know how they met. But my mother, Alice and my dad, Fred; Fred grew up on a farm in Allenville, Illinois. You have to slow down to even discover that it exists. You'll be by it and long gone in a blink.

Mother was further down south. Dad grew up on a farm, as I say, with three brothers and a sister. Mother was down south in Benton and her father was a coal farmer. Her mother died shortly when she

was a child so she was raised by aunts and uncles. Granddad died with the lung disease that the coal miners get. Although I did meet him, I mean, he did come out to visit us.

We used to love to go out to the farm after, you know, my brother and I. My sister who was a number of years younger than we are didn't play a part in that early part just because she wasn't there and then she was too young to pay any attention to.

We used to love to go out to the farm. That was back in the days when they used teams of horses and mowed the hay or scythed it and then put it up and then ran it up into the hay mow and all that. It was just a wonderful summertime to go out and visit with the grandparents.

Kris: That was what you used to do in your summers when you were younger?

Ted: Yup, yup. When we were kids growing up.

Kris: What a great memory it must be, huh!

Ted: Super! Getting the chickens and always going out before we go to church we would get a chicken or two. Dad would wring its neck or throw it off after he took its head off, all those things you grow up with... fixing the pigs, the piglets, butchering and all that stuff and then working in the fields, going out early in the morning and feeding the cattle...they were a little ways away. Just a lot of stuff that was really neat. I loved that part of my life.

Kris: That's great. I used to spend time on my aunt and uncle's farm in Massachusetts in the summer until I got old enough that I would want to be doing other things. So, you had one brother and one sister?

Ted: Yup, one older brother, Bob who is about a year and a half older than I am. Then, a sister who is about 10 years younger. She lives over outside of Athens, Greece in Capezia. She has married a Greek. She has one daughter who is there with them now. She was over here and gotten a couple of degrees with all these fancy names that she can't do anything in the world with...you know.

Dad grew up on the farm and went to Illinois College. Here, now it connects. As did my mother went to Illinois College in Jacksonville, Illinois. I guess that's where they met. He then went on to Yale Divinity School. They got married after college and moved out to Bridgeport. He went to Yale and he worked at the United Church in Bridgeport, corner of Park and State, still there. Stayed there quite a while until we moved out to Des Moines. Somewhere along in there, Bob and I came along. I guess Mary Ellen came before we moved out West.

Kris: Okay. You moved out west for awhile?

Ted: Moved out to Des Moines. From Des Moines, where did they go? It was when we were in Des Moines, I came back east for school, I guess.

Kris: Did you start elementary school in Bridgeport?

Ted: Yes, I went to Lincoln School in Bridgeport which I don't think it probably exists anymore.

Kris: Probably not.

Ted: That's where I started and Bob too. Then, we went to Des Moines. Of course, in the east there, I remember was kind of weird. We always kind of dressed up; we wore shirts and ties to school as kids. We went out to Des Moines as an 8th grader or whatever and starting going to school with a shirt and tie. The guys are all "What's wrong with you?" and all that kind of stuff. We soon learned it was a much more relaxed world out there in the Midwest. Then, I came back to school at Mt. Herman Prep school in Massachusetts for the last couple of years.

Then went to Oberlin and from Oberlin went on out to Illinois College again. After my freshman year, I was up here. Of course, I was working lobstering with Charlie Turner and we were purse seining with the guys over on the east side. And chasing girls in between, I guess it was too much for my system. I got sick and ended up pretty nearly dead, and they hauled me up to...sick with something they never figured out...up to the hospital. Lo and behold, I survived. I can tell you that now.

Kris: I can see.

Ted: And then went to Illinois College because they were on a trimester basis and Oberlin was on a semester basis. So if I missed a whole semester, then I'd be behind when I graduated. Back in those days, you worried about graduating with your class. I don't know why you worried about it. You were supposed to start here and end there. I knew I couldn't make it up in one summer.

So, I went to Illinois College and my brother was already out there in that school. And uh, that was interesting. I worked first at Ray Shrimp's shoe store selling shoes. Then, I got a job bussing and waiting tables at Elm City Café, Floyd Searles Elm City Cafe in downtown Jacksonville.

Kris: Was this to supplement your tuition?

Ted: Oh yeah. Basically, back then tuition was about \$400 per year. You could earn that. I remember I ended up after school graduating with \$1,000 in the bank. I paid all my expenses. Of course, you used to hitchhike home. You didn't spend anything and didn't have cars. You couldn't drink that much beer. You ended up okay.

Kris: So you worked and you studied?

Ted: Always worked...one thing I remember Dad saying as I was going off to school probably to Oberlin or Illinois, "Well Ted, you may not be very smart but you know how to work, so work hard." So, that's what I did. I've always liked to work. I just remember him saying that. So, that was Illinois College and then Yale which was relatively easy. I worked down in Westport.

Kris: So, you went right from college to divinity school?

Ted: Yup.

Kris: You started in Westport?

Ted: Well, I was working as a student when I was at Yale. I worked all four years there. I worked 40, 50, 60 hours a week. As I say, school was not that difficult and then just stayed on. Then, I left for a few years and then came back as senior minister in Westport.

Kris: You were there for what, 25 years? Something like that?

Ted: More than that. I was there from '55 to...I got married to Carina. Carina I met at Illinois College and we got married just as we graduated or I graduated. She had a little bit to go. We moved out to New Haven together. Put everything we owned in the back of the car and off we went. That was our first car as a matter of fact. Back then, ordinary people didn't have cars. Families just had one if they were lucky. It was a whole different world. But anyway, her folks helped us out and we got a car, an old Ford.

We drove east and got an apartment out in Woodmont. The next year, we got an apartment over a bar in downtown New Haven right where the train made a turn as it came in from the east. When the trains came through, the whole apartment would just shake. And you'd hang onto yourself and make sure it got by. In the morning, you'd go down and push the drunks out of the stairwell to get out to the street. It was a great life. The latter years we had an apartment up in the divinity school. They built apartments for the graduate students.

Kris: So, is divinity school four years?

Ted: Well, It's supposed to take three years but it took me four years 'cause I was working so much. I didn't have time to take too many classes.

Kris: That will make a difference.

Ted: Yup. That's when Dan was born in '58. So, that would have been the third year when we moved into the apartments. That's when we had Dan.

Kris: Hopefully, you all got to be good sleepers with the train and the bar.

Ted: By then, you see, we had moved up to the apartments.

Kris: Oh, okay. That would have been much better.

Ted: Kids usually get used to whatever is regular and don't pay any attention to it.

Kris: You mentioned you had actually been up here before you started college? How did you get introduced to Isle au Haut?

Ted: Oh dear, Interesting. It was 70 years ago this summer that I came to Isle au Haut and came to this house [parsonage].

Kris: This house?

Ted: This house. 70 years ago. That's when the war started in '41. As I said, we used to go out to Illinois. With that war, you had gas rationing and stuff like that. So, you couldn't just take trips. So, Dad had to find someplace else to go and ministers had long vacations and short salaries. So, you had to find a place where you could go and stay and practice your trade. And have a place for a change for vacation. This was perfect and so Dad started coming up here. He was minister here for either three or four years, I think.

Kris: During the war time?

Ted: Yup. Then after that, he bought the house over on the east side.

Kris: Is that the log cabin?

Ted: Yes, we bought that from Dr. Solly and during the war years, things were slim here. You never saw boats in the harbor here. Nobody came through. Just because nobody was...you didn't do that. War was very different then than it is now.

Now, you would never know there was a war on. Except for the families who have kids in the service. Everything seems to go on just normal which is just asinine and stupid. Just because you are at war and you're not paying any attention to it. If you don't read the papers, you don't know what's going on. We used to watch that line every day in the Times. Or something there would be pictures and maps of where the battle grounds were. What was going on and who was getting killed and all that stuff. Now, it's not very much front page stuff.

Anyway, I remember when we first came here, we had three services. Dad had three services: one Sunday morning, one Sunday evening and one Wednesday evening. The Wednesday evening one was here in the parsonage and it was just prayer and hymns and scripture maybe. But the two services, you know we've got two hymnals up there. Well, the one hymnal with all the reformation 'square' hymns was the one they sang in the mornings, the Episcopalians and the Congregants...all the normal denominations usually now would have. But the evening we had the hymn book that everybody loves with 'We come to the garden alone' and all that kind of stuff. But, that was the evening hymn.

The summer people came in the morning and the islanders came in the evening and that's just the way it was. The islanders would come to the Wednesday prayer and scripture meeting here. I started to tell you one of the Sunday evenings. Of course, there wasn't any electricity. We had a big Aladdin lamp that stood next to the pulpit so you could see at night and the chandelier too. He was preaching and talking and the lamp began to flicker and everything began to shake a little bit. And after the second time that happened, he stops and says 'What's going on?' What it was was the battleships were doing target practice out on Seal Island. Well you know how far away Seal Island is? It was the target practice out at Seal Island. Well, you know how far away Seal Island was.

They were blasting that with their 16-inch guns and it was shaking the church up here on this side of Isle au Haut. It used to shake dishes off the wall, the racks down in Head harbor 'cause that was so much closer. They used to pound the living daylight out of that. I still have pieces of shrapnel and stuff in the

study there. We would go out after the war was over and pick up stuff. They'd also get live ammunition once in awhile that hadn't exploded.

Kris: That was pretty dangerous but kids don't care. What was your first impression of Isle au Haut as a child?

Ted: Gee whiz. I remember, of course things were so different. We had a wood stove right here with the kerosene burner over here and out in the hallway, there was a real icebox where you put the ice in and some cool air would get down a little bit. Of course, there wasn't anything in the store that Liam Barter ran that wouldn't keep at least 2 winters. That's just the way it was. Nothing fresh, no meats. Well, we did have meat. We had Dinty Moore stew or corn beef hash in a can and that was about it.

Kris: So what did you eat? Did you grow a garden?

Ted: We would send in an order to Webb's Market in Stonington if you needed something. Mother of course was worried about milk. I don't know where Mary Ellen was then. She wanted us to have milk. She worked it out with Dennis who had a cow over on the East side. You know Dennis Eaton? You should know of him. Anyway, Dennis was always the farmer on the island. You saw the guys cleaning the Kennedy's field for the wedding. You saw them with their weed whackers and mowers and all that stuff. He used to do that with a hand scythe. He did it so he could have hay for his ox and for his cow. And then he had this big old cart, a 2-wheel cart, handmade and he would load that up with hay. And then hitch up the ox to it and when the ox got too hot, he'd let the ox walk alongside and he would pull it. He was one husky man, great guy...it'd take a week to talk all about this. Dennis was over on the east side, and there was a field there, kept sheep there. One time, of course, you could tie up your ram so you could use him when the sheep are ready to be impregnated. They'd wind up on the stake they were on. He was out there one time unwinding his ram's rope. He'd back off, back off and he got just so far and he came charging right at Dennis. Dennis was leaning over like this and whacked sent him 'ass over teakettle' flying. Dennis got up and turned around and said, "By God, if I hadn't had that cap on, that ram woulda' killed me."

Kris: He sounds like a character.

Ted: They were all characters back then. I don't know what Harold has in his book but...

Kris: I am looking forward to reading it.

Ted: I am too. All the characters down to Head Harbor; Gooden...

Kris: Gooden Grant.

Ted: Burt Nevills and Ulysses Grant and the whole crew that was down there. We fished with them for awhile. Anyway, I don't know where I was...

Kris: I was asking you what your first impressions were when your first came here.

Ted: We didn't have any drinking water then. There are two cisterns down underneath this parsonage.

Kris: Oh, are there?

Ted: Just for rainwater. That's not really that good for drinking water. Mother used to send us up town with gallon jugs and there was a good well right across from where the store is now at Liam's place. We were supposed to get water there. So, we would go down, my brother and I and we would each have a few gallon jugs of water and bring them back up here. It's amazing how little water you use when you lug it. Very, very different.

Well, even before that, I remember my mother sent us down to the store to get some stuff. And we went down and walked through town, we walked back. We looked there again and back again. We didn't see any store. Of course, it was there but we didn't see any sign. Anybody that was here knew where it is. So, you didn't need to have a sign on the store. So, we told her there wasn't any. We got back of course and found out what was what. It was a very different world back then. Ole Liam, he would leave the store open and...

Kris: And just go off?

Ted: He was fishing. Any real person was a fisherman and anything else, what you did on the side. He did the store on the side. He went out fishing. He had a couple of fingers missing on one hand. Once in awhile if you pushed him a little bit, he would tell you what happened. The second one he lost showing how he lost the first one.

Kris: Oh, no...

Ted: He was quite a guy. He'd get his glasses. He had a green visor. In the evening, he would try to do all the book keeping with all the coupons and tokens for rationing. During the War, do you know about rationing?

Kris: Yes.

Ted: We had rationing back then in WW II. He had red tokens for meat and food, all the different things and gas. You were just allotted just so much. He had to keep track of it. He hated that with a passion. His stubby fingers could hardly separate these different things that he was doing. On the counter where he had his penny candy underneath the counter, the counter had a railing around it just like any ship does so it couldn't roll off. They built the same thing in there. Well, he couldn't get the money off of that. His fingers wouldn't pick up any nickels, dimes or quarters. We would go in and watch him try to find a corner somehow to get the money up off the counter so he could count it.

He was a good guy. He used to pick me up on Parson's Point and take me fishing. He'd come in and put me/lug me on his shoulders out to the boat and we would go out fishing. Of course, back then they didn't have those metal traps. They just had the wooden traps that brought up everything. There weren't any escape vents or anything like that. The washboard was just alive after you brought up a trap: little eels, little fish, shrimp, lump fish and every other thing would come up with the traps because the water was also much more alive than it is now. That was a wonderful time. I used to love going out fishing.

Kris: When you brought up all that stuff up, did you keep it to eat? Was it allowed then?

Ted: Oh, no...you mean eat the lobsters?

Kris: I meant like if you caught crab or shrimp.

Ted: No, no. People way back then didn't even keep crabs. There were so many of them. Even when I was fishing later on with Charlie [who], we would slap the crabs just to kill them 'cause there were so many of them and throw them overboard. Later on, they developed a market for it and people keep them and pick crabmeat now. People would pick crabmeat once in a while, but it wasn't the same thing. Same thing with, nobody ever ate mussels. The place was loaded with mussels. Nobody ever thought to eat them. And that came along after awhile. After summer people said they're not bad eaten.

Kris: So when you first came, it was primarily lobster at that point in time as well. I know they had the weirs in the harbors.

Ted: Well, they didn't have the weirs yet. They had the ones down to Moore's Harbor. They didn't have the ones in here yet. These are fairly late. These came with Blaisdell, Greg and some others. Devereaux had one too for awhile.

Kris: So it was primarily just lobster fishing that was going on?

Ted: Yup, Skeet, call him and say "What are you doing?" "Changing the water in the poverty traps" he'd say. Back then, if you got one count to a trap, you were doing pretty well.

Kris: Back during the war, I heard from a few people that hardly any summer people actually came out here during the war.

Ted: Nobody in the harbor, nobody in the houses, same reason we didn't go out to Illinois. You didn't travel.

Kris: Because of the rationing.

Ted: It was very different. We kids used to go look in the windows and see what was in there. At Aunt Mary Ellen's house which is now...

Kris: Barbara Browns?

Ted: We would peek in there, she used to feed people... she had what we know call breakfast. The tables all set for 10-15 people and all. And the big factory was still down there...the lobster factory was still there.

Kris: Was it still open back then? Was it still there?

Ted: It wasn't running then but it was still there. We used to look in the windows of some of the houses, seeing all the stuff sitting and waiting for the war to be over.

Kris: So your parents really liked it here if they bought a house?

Ted: Yes, they did.

Kris: And that's what brought you back?

Ted: Well, I used to love being with the kids. Russell, and Billy and Bobby and Jack. Of course, Jack and Belle came along a little bit later. You've seen the house they were in down by Bernadine's? That old shack, you ought to see it. You go down by Billy and Bernadine's house, on the right hand side is this old building falling apart. That's where they lived at first.

Kris: She told me they had a really small cabin but I was thinking it was up here.

Ted: Nope, it was down there. Anyway, you would go off fishing and you didn't have to go off very far. You'd go right out here and get all you'd ever want. We'd sit there as kids. You'd look down and hold your bait up off the bottom until you saw the right size fish come and then put it down. 'Cause what you really wanted to get were flounder. You didn't want little flounder, you only wanted big flounder. You would wait and put it down and you'd get a big flounder. You had to get a good weight on it to get past the pollock and the other fish who were mid-water. So, it would go down near the bottom. The guys had a very good system. When they fished, they had these smaller hand-knit bait bags. But even so there was some left; they would slide it into a bucket or barrel. At the end of the day, they would dump it on their mooring. That told the fish that they'd come and rework the bait that they'd brought in. It makes all kinds of sense and why they ever stopped it...I don't know. But they did because it was too much trouble. They began using more bait and didn't know what to do with it. That was wonderful because we could fish and bring home all this fish.

Then, you had to learn how to skin them. I remember trying to learn, or my Dad trying to learn how to skin a flounder 'cause that's not easy. You had to do it just the right way and all that stuff. They dried the cod and the pollock. Everyone had dried pollock and cod on their clotheslines. You'd eat that in the winter or anytime. It was good chewing on salty fish, good salty fish.

Sometimes on a Sunday afternoon you'd go off cod fishing. You'd lay off right outside the harbor there. You'd get all the codfish, good big codfish you ever wanted in the world. And that would set you up for quite a while. Now, you have to go miles out there and you get that little junk.

Kris: That must be where some of your interest in bringing fishing back.

Ted: That comes somewhere in there.

Kris: How plentiful it was here! Did you just come back for vacations for quite some time? How did you start becoming the summer minister here?

Ted: Somewhere in there, we started going out to Colorado in high school somewhere, maybe college. I can't remember what years it was. I think I was chasing the girls out there. I don't remember what age we were. Went out to Colorado to Green Mountain Falls and I worked out there. Very important jobs,

washing dishes, digging ditches and stacking lumber and stuff like that...any job you could get. Enjoyed that, summers out there in Colorado.

Now, I am getting the years because I remember thinking, "Do I want to come back east or not?" That's when I came to my junior year of high school out here. That sort of defines that. Then after that, I guess I came back. I can't remember all the dates and stuff. Anyway, came back here and worked with Charlie Turner fishing, lobstering and purse seining on the East side. And then went into divinity school. I guess...No, by that time, I was married so life was different. So we'd come here as a couple with Dan. Then, of course, I was working in the church, and Dad was not working in this church. At that time, a bunch of other ministers were coming and going. Somewhere in there, I started with one month and then moved to 2 months and just stayed...it got kind of habitual.

Kris: So, for most of your career you were in Westport during the year and then here in the summer?

Ted: I had moved very little during my professional career was in Westport, ten years in South Glastonbury, and then ten years with the Maine Seacoast Mission. That's it. I really have not moved around at all. I think there are advantages to long-term pastorates and there are probably some disadvantages too. But it is a pretty good way to go.

Kris: I think it's great when you can have a long-term relationship with a community.

Ted: Well, I was burying the children of the people I had baptized by the time I left Westport, I think. That stretches out pretty well. Actually, Westport had a rule in their bylaws that you had to retire at age of 60 or 65 or something like that. So, I was going to beat that out. They said they would change it and they were in the process. I didn't say anything but I got wind of this job and they had all sorts of plans as Westport would. They were going to send us around the world and bring us back and get us a home and all that stuff. That didn't sound really too good to me...it was too good. So, I came up here and took a job. I was getting, I don't know what it was, say \$100,000 and then when I got here and I was making \$10,000 a year. It was kind of a cut in salary.

Kris: I would say.

Ted: I wasn't sure we would survive or not but we did.

Kris: Paul met you up here when he worked up here back in the 70's. I guess he painted the church and he remembered you. When we actually moved to Westport and found you there...it was just a small world. So, you had 2 children. You had Dan?

Ted: Dan and Robin. Robin was adopted. I don't know. This was when I was in Glastonbury. There was a woman who came to church. I baptized this new baby, etc. The guy that was the father of course wasn't her husband and she had a bunch of children, all of which had been taken away for one reason or another. So, she asked if I'd like to...

Oh, I know what it was...she said "Would you take care of Robin for a weekend or a week because I have to do this, that or the other thing?" So, I asked Carina or 'Corky' I used to call her, and we said sure. We

took her for the weekend. But the mother didn't come back so we had her for a week, and the mother didn't come back. We had her for two or three weeks. Then the mother said, "Would you like to keep her a little longer?" This went on and then she said "Would you like to adopt her?" Well, you know... 'Sure, I guess so.' The story is beginning to come back to me now. So, we went to the state. The state of Connecticut said "Well, yes, what you need to do is sign all these papers and she has to sign all these papers and then you give it to the state. We come make an investigation and see whether or not you can have this child or another child." I said, "No, no, no. We don't want another child. If we are going to adopt, we want this child."

It was so crazy and insane. Someone must have direct adoption. So, I called up here. And sure enough, Maine allows for direct adoption. So, I thought, "What I am going to do?" Literally, within a day, I get a phone call from the island here saying they needed a teacher for the school here on the island, "How would you like to come teach school for a year?"

And I said "I think you've got a teacher." So, I took a leave of absence from the church in South Glastonbury and we came up here and lived here in what was then Russell McDonald's house. He had moved down to Connecticut and I had helped him get settled down there. But, we used his house. It used to be Grandma Bridge's house, Steve Bridge's house. Right next to where Noyes and Isabel lived...which is where Benny now lives. Anyway, that was something else...moved up there. Of course, there was no running water or electricity. We got electricity into the house. Then, there was a nice well. I thought no reason I can't put a pipe in and all you have to do is put it three feet deep. We wandered around these big boulders and brought it up by the steps in the house. There it came, the pump, it was fine. I thought it was dandy but all the guys they'd start saying "We'll see, we'll see." What they meant was, it could get in the house but there was no insulation and it froze after it got into the house. On a good day when it was warm, you could get slush out of the thing. Other than that, it froze up and you'd lug water just the way you always did.

Kris: Your wife must have been a saint to put up with that?

Ted: Well, she was.

Kris: So, how many kids did you have in school that year?

Ted: About 8...one in about every grade. Dan was one of them and I think Ben was in the same grade Dan was in. I had Lisa and Payson and all these kids that now are grown up.

Kris: ...and now have kids of their own.

Ted: Who have kids of their own who have kids of their own. That was interesting. I knew nothing about teaching. But, preaching basically is teaching. That's what ministry is. That was a good year for me. I enjoyed it. I didn't know how to put together a day. I asked, "When do we start? When do we stop?" Nobody really knew so I set up the hours. I never met the administrator until about April or May. I had to ask, "How long do we go? When do we stop?" They had an odd assortment of books and I noticed in the math they didn't have any answer books. So, I had to do all the math to do the homework for the

answers. I wanted Dan to go on at least if not the others. So, I wanted to do a good job with the kids. It was a great year...I loved it.

Kris: I am sure they benefited from it.

Ted: We had a great time. I can remember when I used to come to teach with a shirt and tie on and stuff like that. Talk about a stupid person from away. It helped just in the demeanor... teachers before and after had trouble with the kids. I had no trouble with the kids. I knew them all from the time they were born. I knew their parents and it was no trouble. Discipline has never been a problem for me anyway with kids.

I remember so many things. I remember Dan who back then was a skinny little rail. He would sit there at different desks around. He would squish like this right down onto the floor and he'd go around on the floor. Pretty soon, his head would pop up here like a periscope and he would look around and go down and go on the floor. As if you couldn't see him, as a teacher you can't miss that stuff. It was a good year. We used to make kites and fly them at lunch time.

Kris: Learn a little about physics.

Ted: Well, physics wasn't even heard of back then. They tried to start new math. They thought that was a good thing to start with the kids and when they had homework, the parents didn't have a clue what was going on. So I asked, "What do you want me to do?" "Teach them the way we used to learn." So, we got out the old multiplication cards and all that stuff and went through – we had a good time.

Kris: That sounds interesting and different. You always seem to have some great stories about Gooden Grant and a few other people like that. Do you have any that come to mind?

Ted: How many weeks do you have?

Kris: I don't have weeks. I have to go back to work. Have you done all the trails on the island?

Ted: Too many times. I mean, I have done trails that are no longer on there. Yeah, I've gone everywhere walked the whole shore all way around the island, probably a dozen times.

Kris: Did you go to any of the other islands?

Ted: Oh yeah. To which?

Kris: Like when you first came out here as a child and hanging out with Bobby and Billy.

Ted: Not at first I didn't go. Travel was very different then. I mean...

Kris: You didn't go to Merchants or any of those?

Ted: I'd go to Merchants, York, Fog and what have you. I knew all those pretty well but not as a tiny little kid. We used to go on picnics all the time, the couples used to go. We used to go every Sunday afternoons to a different island: Bobby and Jerri [Turner], Maybelle and Gordon [Chapin], Jack and Bel

[MacDonald], Carina and I, Billy and Bernie [Barter]. We'd go off to a different island and have picnics in the afternoon. It was great. We'd go as far as Seal and some of the others for that, Saddleback whatever, Brimstone.

Kris: Did couples get together a lot back then to do different things like card games?

Ted: It was very different then, yeah. Before much electricity came in, your radio was on a battery which were expensive and turned out weren't good batteries like we have now. You didn't have anything coming in from outside. You'd go callin.' You didn't check out ahead, you'd go around and would stop by somebody's house and bring the kids in. The kids would play together and go to sleep on the floor. Then, you would talk or play cards or whatever. A lot of musicals...every week or two they'd be a musical down at Ralphs or Vannie Chapins. Everybody played. Noyes would play, Maybelle played and Bernie played. They'd all bring their instruments and you would sit around and listen to music, a lot of old songs and talk. But that was just what happened. It was wonderful. And the women were always working on the church fair. They were sewing during the summer getting ready for the church fair which came in August. They were cutting fir.

Kris: Fur?

Ted: Cutting fir, yup. The guys would go out and get lots of fir and the women would bind up their fingers, get an old pair of scissors and snip fir and then make fir pillows. They were absolutely wonderful. I'm sure I've got some around somewhere. I know I do up in my house in Blue Hill. I don't know whether I do here or not. But just a little pillow. Sometimes, they would sew something on it or sometimes get a pattern from and they would be anywhere from that size up to that size.

You'd scrunch it anytime through the whole year, or five years later and it's just like walking out through the pine...the fir forest. You'd get it the most delicious odor you ever can imagine.

Kris: They kept?

Ted: The odor kept in those fir pillows.

Kris: Did they?

Ted: They still sell them on the mainland and everywhere. They probably sell them here.

Kris: I think I have a few of the ones Galen [Davis] does.

Ted: She does fir pillows? And there's fir in it?

Kris: There's some kind of ...yes!

Ted: It's fir and not material?

Kris: I'm pretty sure...you're talking about f-i-r with the smell. Yeah!

Ted: She does beautiful pillows.

Kris: Oh, aren't they gorgeous?

Ted: The women would get together and sew and do that all winter long and then they'd have stuff for the fair. We'd have all the stuff they worked on all winter for sale. That's how the church kept viable among other offerings.

Kris: Some of us don't have the time to do all those talents that they used to.

Ted: It's a matter of what takes our time that's what it is...of course. That went out everywhere. We used to do that in Westport. We used to have the women sewing but that stopped. Everybody got too busy with time-saving devices.

Kris: That's true and then a lot more women started working.

Ted: Back to work...yup, yup.

Kris: When did you see the most significant changes here on Isle au Haut over the years? Was it when the electricity came? Or telephone?

Ted: Electricity was important, telephones were important. We had quite a lot of discussion about telephones and about electricity. One thing, the summer people were worried it was going to spoil the island 'cause you'd have these lines all over. They didn't want to see the lines. So, a lot of them paid extra to go underground to their houses and that kind of stuff. We all had to chip in a certain amount of money to get on the power grid. Pat Tully and young Stan Dodge were key people in that.

Kris: I can remember coming up in the early 80's and neither one of those was, at least when we were staying at Staige's, the generator would go on in the evening for a few hours. That was it for the generator. There was no phone at that time, just the ship to shore.

Ted: Well, we didn't even have that. Somebody from Westport would call up about this crisis or something. It would come up to Buster [Aldrich]. Buster would maybe write it down and maybe bring it out the next day. Maybe find me and maybe not. And then of course, I couldn't answer until I went back some time. And you knew darn good and well that by the time you got onto the mainland to make a call back, whatever the crisis was, was handled one way or the other. That was a pretty good insulation. You were really able to get away from it all. And then telephones came. So, I think telephones and electricity were two major changes. Of course, after the war was a major change. People started coming back in greater numbers and then the boat company began to service people more. Stan used to run the mail boat, 25 cents you could go over. But, you didn't do it. I remember when we were first here, we wouldn't go over more than once a month to the mainland. Nothing there until the bridge got more use. When we first came there was a toll on the bridge.

Kris: The one near Sedgewick? Was there?

Ted: But, then that dropped out.

Kris: So, that didn't provide any incentive for people to go anywhere?

Ted: There was nothing in Stonington. There was Freedman's. There was...you'd go over and there was a barbershop and there was Webb's store. There was a garage there. Cousin's and Small garage, in where the Fisherman's Friend Restaurant is now down on the shore. And the blacksmith shops, I remember going to the blacksmith shops. There were two blacksmiths in town. Judkin's was right down near where Co-op Two is, on the same side as the Coop building. And we loved to watch him pounding out all kinds of things. That was a while ago.

Kris: Some of the occupations that were so big over the years you don't really see much anymore.

Ted: Nope, not much blacksmith work. Not that kind of blacksmith work. They had to work on drags and stuff like that, you know for scallops.

Kris: When did you first have a car out here?

Ted: Oh, I don't know. Miss Lizzie or Miss Ava [Rich], which was it had an old car and she would let Dad borrow it. It was an old A or a T, one or the other? Maybe once a month we might go down to the pond. The end of the pond wasn't as it is now that everyone swims down there. It was just junk then. We used to swim up at the head of the pond down below the farm. It was all mucky but nonetheless, that's where it was and that's where we went.

Somewhere after I was being minister, a bunch of us kids decided to bring sand down and build a beach down there. So after church, we'd get the town truck and go over to the sand pit or gravel pit and shovel a truck full of sand. And take it down and put it down. We did that time after time until we got all that sand down at the foot of the pond down there. That's where that came from.

Kris: That's why there's a beach there?

Ted: We lugged that all.

Kris: For all of your efforts...oh, wow!

Ted: A whole bunch of us guys, the same ones that run out and do stuff. Yup, and...

Kris: So, I know when you retired from the Westport [CT] church, you went with the Seacoast Mission. How did you find that change for you? Was that a positive because you really liked it along the coast?

Ted: Oh, yeah! I knew a lot of the guys and I had done enough fishing here so I could talk to the guys on other islands. I enjoyed being on the boat. I did that for about a decade, I guess. It was good. I loved it. Very, very good.

Kris: It was a great purpose, too. I just read...was it Eva Murray just wrote that book on Matinicus that I really enjoyed reading.

Ted: I remember when her kids were that big. Well, maybe a little bigger than that. They have grown up. My goodness, they are all adults now and off on their own probably.

Kris: Well, I'd love to talk you another time again about your fishing, your more contemporary things you are working on with the Penobscot East Resource Center and all your efforts in Belize at another time.

Ted: Yup.

Kris: Thank you for taking the time to share some of your life.

Ted: Glad to do it. We never got to the stories. I didn't tell you any stories about Gooden or Yanni Finn. There's good stories with Yanni.

Kris: Well, tell me a story about Yanni.

Ted: We'll do it another time.

Kris: I have a few more minutes.

Ted: I have told them all to Harold and he has probably put them in his book.

Kris: Well, maybe we better wait and see...

Written transcription by: Kristen Carlson-Lewis, IAH Historical Society member