

## Julia 1

🕒 Fri, 03/15 13:23PM · 23mins

00:03

This is Jean Archibald speaking, the Underhill Historical Society. I'm talking today on April 26, 2023, and I'm talking with Julia Smith Northrop. She lives in Underhill on the Irish Settlement road, and she was born in 1928.

00:32

So, here we go. So, Julia, you were born in Burlington, I understand, right? Yes. What I would love to have you tell me about being in Burlington as you grew up was what it was like. What was it like growing up in Burlington in those days?

00:59

Oh, it was great. We lived in Burlington on Spruce Street. That was off Willard, and one brought one house down. And that's where I was born. I was the youngest of four. And I grew up there, and it was just a block away from my grandparents' house, which was on the corner of Maple and Willard.

01:27

And so I had to go by there quite often.

01:34

Did you ride your bike on, did you ride your bike on Willard Street?

01:38

Yes.

01:39

Yes, you could ride your bike between the houses probably.

01:43

Yes, I could ride my bike on Willard. I couldn't ride it on Spruce Street. It was too steep.

01:50

Yeah. How old were you when you left that home in Burlington?

02:04

Grace's dog just arrived. Hi baby dog. My mother and father bought a house at Apple Tree Point and that was at the end of the Staniford Road on a dirt road. It was a dirt road. It had three street lights on it and I used to have to take the bus because this was during the war.

02:30

They moved out there in 1940. How about 40?

02:37

so you were a teenager. Let's go back to those early days in Burlington. The streets you're naming are up at the top of the hill in Burlington. Could you see the lake from there?

02:53

No, not from our house, not from your house.

02:55

You're out.

02:56

I guess you could over the top a little bit. You could see it way down.

03:03

Was there sort of a freedom to go wherever you wanted to and just hang out with neighbor kids and things like that?

03:13

Yeah, I only had one neighbor that had a child, Nancy Pearson, and we were best friends and she lived across the street just up from us and we were the only two little kids and we were the same. She was just a little bit younger than I.

03:31

I remember during the hurricane in 1938, that was a while from that. There was no warning. They didn't know what was happening if you read about the hurricane in 1938.

03:52

Tell me about what it was like for you when it was happening, that hurricane.

03:58

Well, I was, my mother and father were on their trip to Wellesley, Mass, to take my older sister, Grace, to Wellesley and they were, so they were on their, they were in, they were in a car, and I was at home with my big sister, Dot, Dot Hannah, and she had, she knew that the hurricane, it was pretty bad.

04:30

It was so windy and raining so hard. And Nancy was at my house, Nancy Pearson, from across the road. And Dot drove her home across the street.

04:43

across the street because it was so wild, big wind.

04:47

It was so wild that she didn't get to Nancy's home by herself. And she wasn't about to take off and take her home because she was in charge of me. And when my sister was in charge of somebody, she was in charge.

05:06

What was the difference in age between Grace and you?

05:10

Grace was six, let's see, that was nine years, Grace was seven years older than I.

05:17

Okay, so she was in her teens and you were just 9, 10, 28, 38, pretty young to be all by yourself.

05:32

Chas was at home. Chas was the other sibling. I had a brother named Chas, and I have a son named Chas, and he was killed in the war in 1945. But he was one of them.

05:56

Was he the oldest in the family?

05:59

Oh no, Dot was the oldest.

06:02

the office and then Chas.

06:04

That's him. That's great chat.

06:07

Yeah.

06:09

Yeah.

06:09

and you were the baby.

06:10

I was a baby and I was six years younger than Chas.

06:14

Aha!

06:15

was really the baby. And my father used to say she was not spoiled, she was indulged. I was his baby.

06:30

So when you're in Burlington these days, contemporary, the 21st century, does it seem different up there where you lived? Does it seem more crowded or what's it like now compared to what it was then?

06:50

It is crowded, but there wasn't any place for new houses. All the houses were there, and they're there still. And I don't go up Spruce Street. It's just block. It goes below Union Street. It goes down to St.

07:11

Paul. But we lived in the upper block. It was just from Union Street to Willard Street. That was my world. That was my world.

07:26

And which school did you go to?

07:28

Oh, I went to Adam's school. We walked to school, down through the street, and over unions until he came to Adam's school, which is now an office building, I think. Thank you.

07:46

Was it a big school or were there lots of students?

07:50

Yeah, it was. It was. And my mother.

07:57

Thank you.

07:59

It was a one through six, and the funny thing was that when I started teaching music in Burlington, I was in charge of all the elementary school music programs. I taught at Union at Adams School.

08:20

Adam's school. That must have been strange. There you went there and then you became a teacher there.

08:27

It was fun. Did you get...

08:28

What got you interested in music, Julia?

08:33

I always was musical.

08:37

Could you play the piano early on? Yes.

08:41

Grace took piano lessons and I took them with her. I drove her crazy, I'm sure, because I would sit on the piano bench and we had a bench. We didn't have a seat. And I would sit there and I would play about, you know, pretend that I was a grown-up like her.

09:06

And she had her lessons and I took my lessons with her.

09:13

So you really sort of, it was like piggybacking on her. She took the lessons and then you learned what she learned.

09:21

Exactly.

09:21

You sat whether imitated, that's a good way to learn. By the time you were a teenager, you must have been pretty competent at the piano.

09:31

I had swapped over when I was in Adam's school, they had a school teacher, a piano teacher who came in after school and she had paper keyboards and she spread them out and we pretended that we were playing and she was playing, her name was Mrs.

09:55

Thurston, Teresa Tuck Thurston and she was from Maine and she came to Burlington. I don't know why she came to Burlington, she had two children that were grown up and she taught piano and we all took piano lessons from her at school.

10:16

And then I started taking piano when I got out of elementary school. No, I must have changed, I must have changed all before then because when I got to junior high I was pretty competent at the piano.

10:34

Until you're next.

10:38

What?

10:39

It came to you naturally.

10:41

Yes. Sounds like...

10:42

And you loved it, you loved it too. Did you sing? Did you also sing Julia or was it mostly piano?

10:49

All right. Most of us staying in.

10:52

We have lots of articles about her when she was a kid. Okay, good. We do. I'd like to see them. We do. We do. We do. We do. We do. We do. We do.

11:07

We're singing tonight at, I'm over there now, but we haven't.

11:17

So then you were Judy more than Julia then, right?

11:23

Yes, because I had to, Aunt Julia's.

11:26

Ah, so they had to differentiate.

11:29

I have something to say.

11:30

Go ahead.

11:32

My father's older sister was Julia. And she started the women's, well, the Burlington 50 nurse. She was Julia Smith. And then my uncle Levi married a woman named Julia. And my father used to say Aunt Julia is the only one that's real Julia.

12:00

That was my, you're not Aunt Julia Smith's granddaughter.

12:07

Then everybody thought it was probably better to use Judy and Julia so they could figure out who you were. Did you go to Burlington High School?

12:17

Oh, yes.

12:20

Did you do music there? Did you do anything with musicals?

12:24

Yeah, I did any musical going, and there's a picture of me someplace with me and Dick Hankins and I singing at the Memorial Auditorium. When they say the Memorial Auditorium, boy, I've performed there lots and lots of times because I was a twirler.

12:47

A twirler?

12:48

Yep, that's what they were called.

12:51

Tell me about that.

12:53

Well, you had annual tryouts and if you were chosen, there were four chosen every year, two that were regulars and two that came along the next year. So there were six of us marching all the time.

13:14

with the school band.

13:16

Yeah.

13:17

We were big. I hope there's some pictures of that. That must have been something, didn't you really? That was your all four years of high school, you did that?

13:26

No, only for junior and senior year. Or you didn't get to be a twirler. You got to be chosen. If you were chosen as a regular, you were chosen at the end of your sophomore year. So you marched your junior year and senior year.

13:40

And if you were the other two, then you didn't twirl until your senior year. There were six of us marching.

13:49

That one's cool.

13:51

it was a big band and it was band was big big thing singing you remember

13:58

Other than music in high school, do you remember any other subjects or things that you were interested in? What were your favorite subjects in high school? Music and music!

14:16

Yeah, everything was music as far as I was concerned. Miss Reynolds taught English, and I loved that because she was a sweet lady. And I had Uncle Putt, Mr. Puttney, thought I can't remember, he must have taught science.

14:35

And there weren't many men teachers, Mr. Lambert and Mr. Puttney. And he was an uncle of a friend of mine, and so we called him Uncle Putt always. And a friend, you know, Burlington was small. And we all knew him.

15:00

Everything was like a family, it sounds like.

15:03

Yeah, it was.

15:04

Good for you Julia with your memory of names, good for you, I'm really impressed.

15:14

I don't remember all the names today. I remembered names. I'll be at four.

15:23

Did you go to college or did you decide not to?

15:27

You know, my father picked my college. I went to Pine Manor Junior College because he wanted me in Boston. If I had to go away, I had to be close to home. And I wasn't going to go to UVM because they didn't have that much music.

15:46

And he wanted me to go to a school that had a lot of music.

15:50

Did you like Pine Manor, was it a good place with music, was it good?

15:56

It was good with music and I was their star pupil. Pine Manor was a small junior college related to Dana Hall.

16:09

It's been two years since it was a two year.

16:12

Yeah, it was two years, and then they hired me for the music department, and so I could live in Boston or live in Wellesley. I lived on the corner of Grove Street in my third year. I had a room, you know, because I was working at Pine Manor in the music department.

16:35

And so that was kind of both being a student and working for them at the same time.

16:42

Yeah, and I went to the Longy School of Music in Cambridge, which is now and still is, and I studied with Madame Severino there, and that was why I was down there, was so that I could start singing with Madame Severino.

17:03

It was wonderful, wonderful, wonderful, and that's the year I sang with the symphony.

17:12

Do you have a question, Symphony?

17:14

I made my debut with Vermont State Symphony at the Burlington Auditorium.

17:23

Wow, the one they're just debating now what to do with it, the other time.

17:31

Everything happened there. It was just Kitty Corner across the street from the high school. The high school was on the corner of Main and Union, and we just crossed Kitty Corner to the auditorium. For anything that we did, we twirled there and we sang there.

17:55

That's what is Edmunds now, right?

17:59

At school is Edmonds now, it was Edmonds.

18:02

That was the high school right across from the other time. But tell me something more about making your debut singing with the symphony. Did you mean in a choral group or by yourself?

18:14

by myself.

18:15

Wow. What did you sing? What did you sing?

18:19

I sang some Handel and some Mozart, I sang four songs, I think, and, you know, with a long dress on and all those alls to sing.

18:35

for that.

18:36

Very exciting. And my sister, Dot, she was on the board. I think that's probably why I sang with the symphony. Alan Carter was the conductor of the symphony then. He was, in fact, I guess he started the symphony.

18:56

Do you remember being really nervous?

18:59

Oh yeah.

19:00

Yeah. Family and friends were there. That's a big, big room. I mean, I've been in there.

19:09

I've sung there lots of times. I've sung there before.

19:13

Yeah, so it was familiar to you, but you had to prepare all those songs that you were doing.

19:20

It's a pair of diamonds down in Long Beach School of Music and Cambridge Mass.

19:26

So, was this debut with the symphony while you were still at Pine Manor or before?

19:37

Your third year. You know, the third year that I worked in the music department and I had a room and I had my car.

19:50

So you go back and forth between Boston and Burlington and still doing music.

19:55

Yup.

19:56

And when you finally, when you did graduate and went to work, you then got into the music system in the city of Burlington teaching, right?

20:08

Yeah, well, I was very active in my church, the first congo on Winooski Avenue in Burlington. Oh, yeah. And I was, I conducted, I grew up in, you know, there was no time that I didn't sing in some choir there.

20:27

And then when I was married, I was married and they hired me, Mr. Jones, hired me, let's see, the director of the junior choir moved away and she was wonderful, Hazel Sessions, and she was marvelous.

20:47

And the junior choir sang every Sunday and there were 75 or 80 kids in it and they all sang and they all sang every Sunday and Mr. Jones was smart. This was between you and me. If your child was in the junior choir, you went to church.

21:13

That is pretty clever. That's how he built his congregation. And we sang and he said, I don't care what you sing, it can be a hymn. And you don't have to have any special, special thing but the children.

21:31

And we practiced every Friday afternoon at rehearsal and he was always at the rehearsal and I had choir mothers and I had five or six ladies who volunteered and they passed out juice and crackers after school and then we had practice and they kept those kids in line and on Sunday morning he dressed us.

22:02

The choir mothers dressed everybody. They had white pinafores with bows and they marched.

22:11

Sounds wonderful.

22:13

Thank you.

22:15

Yeah, good way to grow up. When you sang as a soloist, were there other students also doing their solos? Were there several different, you were the only one?

22:30

It's me.

22:31

with the symphony, that was a big event.

22:38

That was a really good, oh yes, she was a good dog, it was a wonderful...

22:44



So that brings us right up to teaching in elementary school.