

# Transcript

00:01

This is Jean Archibald, I'm meeting with Lois Nassau today. It is Thursday, November 21st, 2024. And we're in Lois' beautiful home on Stevensville Road. And she's going to tell us something about her life, beginning with her early days.

00:24

Well, I was born in Scranton, Pennsylvania. July 30th, 1926. I've been having to give that date quite frequently these days. And then people say, look at me. Good for you, good for you. I was an only child.

00:49

And we moved to various places. We started out in a nice big old house that my grandparents were on the second floor. It was not an apartment, it was one big house. And it was just lovely. I have pictures of me as a child.

01:13

And luckily, we'd been able to reproduce cinema. And they're on one of those things that will repeat the pictures. Yes, it rotates them and so forth. And I went through all of elementary school and high school.

01:41

Did you live in a neighborhood where you had little friends? Yes, I did. And one of my good friends was two doors down on the corner. Her dad was the local doctor. And across the street was another. In fact, I was over there playing with my friend across the street when I noticed the fire engines had moved up, and my house was on fire.

02:12

They were replacing the roof, and I think they think maybe somebody was smoking and shouldn't have been up on the roof, you know. But anyway— So you were lucky you weren't there. I know. And my parents stayed there that night, but my grandparents, my father's parents, came and got me and took me up to their house, but I always remember that.

02:47

And I can see I'm sitting there, and I'm looking, and up comes the fire engines, and my goodness. that was a little bit frightening yes about how old were you then were you in school oh yeah in elementary school some at some level yeah and we had the schoolhouse was you walked you know they were in the neighborhood yeah you walked nice way we didn't have a car my grandparents did but we we didn't um anyway um and you went to school in in Scranton yes right through high school right through high school and then i went to what is now junior college in the area um and we this this was wartime it's 1942 and um jobs were very scarce at the time and this is when we moved to Connecticut from my father was not a professional person so we we moved to uh so Hartford Connecticut area and where he had found a good job so that that was a big change in my life do you remember having to do without anything because it was wartime like gas for gas or food well you only remember i i grew up in the middle of the great depression right so there were many times that people didn't have yeah jobs and all kinds of things but i i never felt it because my parents saw to it i didn't know that that kind of thing yeah Anyway,

04:58

we came to Connecticut, and I got a job. I thought, I'm going to do this now, interrupt what I was doing. At about age seven, I started piano. Most of my life has been involved with music education. So anyway, it must have been about 1946, we moved in 1944.

05:32

I got a job as Secretary of the United Aircraft Corporation, and in the meantime, I met Jim. So by this time you were finished with a junior college. Yes. So then there was the job and you met Jim and got the job the same year Well, probably yes, it will I met Jim and That's already Is that your phone it must be But it it stopped.

06:08

Let it go It stopped. It's okay. Let it go um um We became involved with a church when we moved to to Hartford and we had a young adult group Of a high school and college kids in the area and uh, I met jim at that group But did he have a job in Hartford also?

06:33

Oh, yes. Well he had uh, I'll get into that when I tell you how we got started to come to Vermont. Okay Yes, he did he was a Young engineer and so he must have been a bit older than you Actually five years older.

06:52

Okay. Yeah, okay. Yeah so that that was the beginning of our relationship and and As I say this were in the late 40s, and we were married in December in May 1952 and Very luckily we Built a house in a suburb near Hartford and Just moved right in when What town near Hartford?

07:23

What town were you in Glastonbury? Oh, yes. I'm on the east side of the river. Yep, and a lot of people who worked at The aircraft engine works on were lived on the east side of the river So That was fine Oh We had some real nice friends, where there were a group of four of us that carried on right through whether we moved away or not, and there were only two of us left, so out of eight people there were two of us left,

08:05

so I'm the oldest. Was that four couples? Yes. Very close. Yeah. And we raised our children at about the same time. Very important. We had three children. My daughter Susan was first, and then our son Jason, and finally Laura.

08:33

Worst thing that can happen to a parent happened to us when Susan died at age 56. I remember that. It's hard to explain. Very hard. Very hard for parents. Yes, it's not supposed to be that way. No, it isn't at all.

08:59

Well, we were involved in the town a bit, but mostly through church, even in Glastonbury. So, what happened now? Were you there in Glastonbury for quite a while? Laura was in college when we moved from Glastonbury.

09:30

The children grew up there and through the school system in Glastonbury, which had a very good school system, and the kids started in, I think, grade 3 learning conversation in a foreign language. It was amazing.

09:52

Oh, wow. So, what job was Jim doing during all those years? He was an engineer on staff designing and building jet engines, both for the Air Force and the various companies. Was that Pratt & Whitney?

10:13

Yeah, he was at Pratt & Whitney. Right, and that was his whole career there. His whole career was there. Yes, it was. And then when Laura was in college, was your move to Vermont? Yeah, we did. It came about, well, I'll back up a little.

10:34

Back up a little, yeah. Jim came to Pratt & Whitney in December of 1940. I knew I'd forget this, because I was 42, I think it was, he graduated—it was wartime. So he graduated six months early from college, and he immediately got this job.

11:05

And one other person did the same thing from a different school, and they both went to Pratt & Whitney at the same day, and that was Ed Moore. Ed Moore, yep, and they became friends. Well, Jim came from Case Western in Cleveland, his dad was a professor there, and Ed came from RPI, I think it was, engineering school.

11:39

So that was the beginning of a new band in our lives. Definitely. And Jim stayed at Brentwood in his entire working career. Ed moved around a lot, but we always were very closely into him touch. When Ed got married, Jim was best man.

12:07

And I remember, I remember being there. We had, we were engaged at the time and they got married in December and we got married in May. And that was of the following year. So then things went on and Ed decided, oh, there's a very important

12:42

While they were both still bachelors, Granny Moore had purchased some land on Steven's Hill Road. And who was Granny Moore? Ed's mother. Ed's mother. Okay. She had that little house down across from the church in the village right here.

13:04

I don't know the name of the house, but she was there, was living there herself. There was a barn on that property, just as you go in the driveway. And Jim helped Ed tear down that barn. And they took the boards to someplace over in Jonesville, I guess it was.

13:30

And they worked on the boards and they began. That was the beginning of Ed building his cabin on Stevensville Road on this land. It's still there now. It's there now. Yeah, but it's greatly expanded.

13:48

And so Jim helped him with that effort and from the very beginning. And various people around helped build this cabin, it's 24 by 24, which ended up being the living room and dining room of their house.

14:17

He I guess was having thoughts about leaving his job. He was working I think for Curtis Wright in New Jersey and then he wanted out of that kind of work. He wanted to come to Vermont. He wanted to come to Vermont.

14:38

Betty was working at IBM, down near where they lived in New York State, right over across the river from his job. And they talked it over, and they decided to come up. And so he quit, and Betty transferred to IBM, and as it got done, it worked out.

15:04

And by then, the boys were well along in school. Tom and John. I think Tom might have been starting high school, I don't know, but it was— When they permanently moved here. Yeah, when they moved here permanently.

15:28

They would always come up for the summer, and we'd make a trip up from Connecticut to visit them here in Vermont in the summer. So time went on, and one day, Ed was down in the Hartford area for some reason.

15:49

That doesn't matter. But I was stopped to see us in State of the Year in Glastonbury. And he said to Jim, you know, have you ever thought of coming up to Vermont? He said that there are many things you and I, with our training and expertise, could do to have help in northern Vermont.

16:16

And Jim said, oh, yeah. And we thought about it. He said, well, I don't want to go to Cleveland where I come from. I don't want to go back there. I don't want to go here or there and in different places.

16:36

He said, of all the places, I would like to go probably would be up in Vermont. So we decided to do it. Laura was by then away in college. So you were empty nesters when you came? Well, sort of. Sort of, yeah.

17:00

So what was Susan doing? Hmm. Oh, when she graduated from Mount Holyoke, she went to Bell Labs in New Jersey. She was working at Bell Labs. Jason was far behind. Well, anyway, when he finished Glastonbury High School, he went for a year at the Manchester College in Manchester, Vermont.

17:37

Manchester, Connecticut, right in the next town. And then was decided maybe this wasn't the right direction for him to be going. Well, he said, I'd like to go up to Vermont and work on building our house.

17:56

So he came up, lived with Ed and Betty for a while then he found a room down in the village and came up. And the first thing

he did was go up on the roof. And so anyway, that was, we moved up here in the end of May in 1978.

18:28

And as I say, Laura was away at school. She had gone on a trip down to Central America. One of her college friends was from there. And she, sorry, sit down. She, we took her to New York. She got on the plane and went down there.

19:01

And to visit Carla. And when she got back, she lived up here instead of in Connecticut. So she became a Vermonter too. While she was away, we moved. And then they, both of the, both Jay and Laura worked in the summertime over on Lake George.

19:32

We, Jim was very active in the YMCA. And, and in Hartford, you know, but the YMCA's conference center is at Silver Bay, New York. And all the college kids are on staff in the summertime. And so they went up the end of June and they would then be back by the 1st of September.

19:59

So they were gone then in the summer. So did Jim work with Ed on projects? Yes. They started to work together. I remember how they thought it was such a lark. They'd do some surveying and they'd go to work in the woods.

20:24

You know, instead of a building with them, they had a very fine time. Ed, in the meantime, had decided he had to do something. So he'd been into the building business, and so Jim helped him with that, and then later on he helped Tom.

20:48

Go ahead, it's all right. And Jason then worked— Tom also went into the building business, so was it—did he come on in and—so the work—Jim, Ed, and Tom were all working together? No, it was— Tom was later.

21:10

Well, Tom was—well, he was working—so was John for a while, but yeah, but Tom more or less took over the business when Ed got very interested in computers, and I remember that he undertook the job of putting the town's records all on computers.

21:40

I remember that, yes. Yes, you do, yeah. So then Jim worked with Ed when they built Sue Kusserow's house. I think this house— The big house? Yes. The first house. No, that Sue Kusserow had, or was it the next one after her first house?

22:06

She was in an old farmhouse at first. He didn't build that house. No, it was that house after that, yeah. The land near there is where the big house was built. And so they had a very fine time of working together.

22:23

They were such good friends. They were different, as we all are from the other—but that held. So did Jim get into— the computer type stuff that Ed did too, or is that more Ed's thing? To a degree, yes, and I think it was written down somewhere, and I forget now what it was, where I could find it, but I think Jim transferred the properties in the town, I think he transferred those onto a computer when he was working with Ed.

23:02

I think that there's a great feeling of the legacy of Ed and Jim to the town of Underhill. Yeah, I think that was it. Lots of things they did for the town, right? And then Tom carried on, you know, with the business, and he would film over, and if he was going to build a house for somebody, Jim would go over a lot of other things.

23:30

Especially engineering-wise. Engineering. Did Jim and you build this house that you're in? Yeah, Ed's employees built this house, and Jason came up as I said before we moved. We made a lot of trips up that year when the house was being built, and Ed would call us every decision he had to make that he wanted to have another opinion on.

24:02

Yep, so the end of May of 1978, it was ready for us and up we came. So you've been here almost fifty years in this house?

24:21

So this is a lot longer here. Yes, it is. So over the years you've seen a lot of come-and-go people on Stevensville Road. Have you known your neighbors on Stevensville, some more than others? Really, just the, well, you know who they are.

24:47

They were closest. This really isn't a neighborhood. You know, houses are far apart. Long driveways. Yep, this is five hundred feet. You're very quiet and peaceful back there. Yeah, you knew and we knew Louise McClellan very well.

25:07

Louise. We knew and she lived in her little house there right near bed in Betty. So that was Louise McClellan. Yeah. I don't remember her husband's name, but they had a son, yes. Steve, yep. So that little house was McClellan and then Steve McClellan's house, the son's.

25:36

Yeah, and that's the one just before Trask. Oh, across the road. Trask has crossed the road. Yes. Did you know Fred Trask? Oh, yeah. We knew Fred and Marmee. What do you remember about them? Anything.

25:51

Well, I mean, what I've heard is that he was very interested in keeping open land and that he bought farms up the valley, up Pleasant Valley. Yes, and I know which one they're thinking about up there.

26:10

It's near where the people had the garden places, near there. Yes, he bought that land, I'm sure. He was not full-time. He only came sometimes. Summer, or? Or did he live here permanently? Year-round, I mean.

26:35

I guess he didn't live here, you're on up there, but I'm not too clear on that, because it was always summertime, and we saw them anyway, or we were in the visits to Fred and Marmee. Marmee. We knew that was what they called her.

26:56

And did they have children? Yes. Who were here, also. Yes, and they would come. Did they have parties there, or gatherings? Did they have neighborhood parties? Not really. Not really, no. But I think they owned some other houses up the road, and there's a little log house just just up from where the main house is right now, up the street, I don't know, I think.

27:35

On the same side of the road? Yeah, on the same side. But it wasn't a place where neighborhoods got together. It's a distance between places. Now, I know my neighbors next door now, they're just a lovely young couple, and I've watched their children, their daughters grow up.

28:02

That's between you and the Moore's house, or the other direction? This direction. Oh, that direction. The one that built our fireplace. Who would that be? Matt Parisi. Matt Parisi. He built a house there, and that was Matt Parisi's house, and that's where our friend lived.

28:24

Oh, so he lived on Stevensville for a while. I don't know whether he lived there or not, but he built it. So now there's a young family there? They're from various families, but not that, you know, you could go from year to year and not see your neighbor.

28:44

You know, it's not, the area itself is really not what you'd call a neighborhood. Some, maybe if they're younger people, maybe they get together, and I know John and John have friends that lived up beyond them.

29:03

On up, on up, on up, but. It's a beautiful area. It's a beautiful area, I mean, Vermont is beautiful. It's a lovely area. It's an area where you have to, you have to get in your car and go to have services.

29:22

Right. You know, stores and a drug store and all kinds of things. Did you ever have some road troubles getting up to your house, no storms? Or did you always get plowed on, you always get it? Well, at one time, Jason had inherited one from Ed that had a plow on it, and so he plowed.

29:46

But we get it automatically, you know, from—what's his name that lived off of French? John French. John French, John French, and his sons still do it. We actually didn't have four-wheel drive until we started having these Honda CRVs in our later life.

30:15

But we never seemed to—I think just once we had trouble. And it's when Jay had that car with the plow on it, and he got us halfway up the hill and tied up some bills on this road. Up we came. But it wasn't a real problem.

30:36

And they took care of the roads quite well. They still do. Well, this part of Underhill is beautiful recreationally, and it's—you know, we've always had the mountain and the skiing and the ski ball. Your children were too older by the time you moved here, but all the young children spent a lot of time at the ski ball.

31:01

Well, when we first moved up here, and Jason moved in the house, and he put his skis on in the driveway at the top of the garage, and would go down the driveway, turn left, and then go down the ski ball.

31:21

Why not? Why not? He didn't have to pay for a ticket, I think. Well, you know, it's not something he did. He wanted to be where, you know, he started to go off to— Of course, he could go right there.

31:34

up there to the mountain, you know. But that was... So did he do quite a bit of cross-country skiing up on the mountain? Did he go on up, Stevensville? No. Well, he did downhill up at Smuggler's Notch, yeah. And I think Jim had some cross-countries, but he did mostly downhill, but not in recent years.

32:00

Yeah. The time he worked with Tom and Ed, actually, for 30 years, and... In the early years, did Ed and Jim ski? Or... Ed and Jim... Yes. Not a lot, but they did. They had equipment. They were busy. But...

32:26

I don't know when... Jason, as I said, worked 30 years for... from time we came up in 1978 and then you got to the point where you're getting older and you're not climbing around on roofs and doing a bunch of things.

32:45

Tom himself doesn't do that anymore. But tell me a little bit about your life with music. Well, as I say, I started about seven and we had a piano and mother's cousin was a very good piano teacher and so she would come over and start giving me lessons.

33:12

In fact, she used our house for anybody else in that area of Scranton that wanted to, you know, they would come to our house and she'd have lessons on our piano. It was very nice. And I started singing as a child but I remember the first time, I don't remember it actually but I'm told that I was on children's day, I was five years old and I stood up in front of Westminster Presbyterian Church and I sang a little ditty when I was five years old.

34:03

So I remember, I don't remember the tune but I remember what the little thing said. But anyway, so that went on and I was involved with church music always starting with children's choir and going on all the way up through.

34:25

When I was in high school, I think I used to sit on the organ bench during church. on Sunday didn't turn the music for the organist. I was gonna ask you if you played the organ. No, that's another idea altogether.

34:44

Very, you hardly touch the keys and they're going to. Very different from the piano. Very different from the piano. But I never did, but I was involved in that always. And when I got to be the beginning of teenage, I started studying voice.

35:05

The idea was that you wait until you mature enough that you're not getting a little child sound. And so that was in Pennsylvania. I spent a year at the New England Conservatory in Boston studying voice.

35:27

So that goes on and on. My children were little, but growing up, they were— Have you joined choruses? Oh, yes. Yes. Well, we had the church choir, which were really good ones. I was part of a—we were married at Asylum Hill Congregational Church in Hartford.

36:00

And this is about the best you get in music in that area. And aside from their Sunday choir, they had this marvelous group. They were all either professionals or students of voice. And that was a great experience.

36:25

I just loved it. I missed it when we moved away. Was that four-part? Oh, yes. So almost all that you've done with singing has been four-part. I mean, you've been in choral groups. I've been in choral groups.

36:39

No, but I was also—I was also a soloist. Soprano. Yeah. And it just—Laura is an excellent pianist. She has not done it recently because she doesn't have time. She has a job— She's also—has she been in the choral society?

37:07

Or she's been singing— Oh, she's been singing at church. At church. But any Burlington groups? She was in Bella Voce for quite a while. Yeah. And then, you know, she has a job that asks a lot of her.

37:27

Only so much time to do anything. And there is—right. She just became, she just had her 65th birthday. I can't believe it. So she's getting thoughts in the back of her head. So I'm sure she'll pick it up again when she has more time.

37:51

But yeah, so she's been active the whole time and a good friend of ours who moved away not too long ago, but her husband, he's already retired now, but he lived out in Oregon. But she was a soloist and usually Laura was her accompanist.

38:15

She was good at accompanying people too. But she's very knowledgeable. I know the two of you go to concerts. Oh yeah. There's so much good music now that you can go in here. Yeah. But she has this. series of the Vermont Symphony.

38:35

She goes over the years, became a friend of one moment Sylvia Robison. Oh yeah. Yeah and she's a good good friend of Sylvia. Then they did a lot of traveling in England together. Cool. Sylvia's good deal older than Laura but they shared a lot of the same interests.

39:14

Have you traveled much? Have you had a chance to travel in your life? Yes. I did. I had a very marvelous experience. Dr. Nassau, Jim's father, sent his two daughters-in-law on a three-week trip to Europe.

39:37

How nice. And when my kids were fairly young. That must have been a pleasant surprise. Well it was lovely. It was really nice. But he and we we did it with an American Express tour. So that a lot of the things that if you go on your own that you're responsible for were taken care of for us.

39:59

And we just had a great time. We flew to, well Sherwood came, that's Jim's brother. He came east with their two kids and they stayed at our house. They took us down. And left the men to take care of the children.

40:24

Well yeah. That was fine. But we, you know, I know we flew back from there, but we didn't, I'm sure. We landed on the continent, the Netherlands or Belgium, one or the other, where we landed. And we were met by one of Dr.

41:10

Nassau's colleagues overseas, the astronomer from whatever country that was. So we were left there. And then we didn't join, we were a little late. So we didn't join the beginning of the tour, but we went back to England and visited for several days for friends of mine in England.

41:40

And then we went and joined the tour. So you were in France?

41:45

Yeah, in France, Germany, Italy, Austria, and then the little low countries, the small units, like Luxembourg and some of the others. Yeah.

42:09

It sounds like you went to almost all the countries in just Western Europe. Western Europe, yeah. And then we flew home from Paris, I guess. I have it all in pictures. Good. That's nice. That's nice.

42:29

That was fun. But that was a wonderful experience. That's great. I think we've sort of covered almost everything, unless you could think of something that you'd like to add about mostly anything about Underhill that you haven't mentioned?

42:48

Yeah, I was going to say, we've been here 50 years. There must be something. I did do the music for the church in Underhill for a number of years. Well, that's good. And you've been to all the, do you see a lot of change when you go out in the car with Laura or when you're in town?

43:14

There's a lot of building. What I see is change in the whole area. When we moved here, there was one stoplight, and it was in Essex Junction. The five corners. by the five corners, yeah. And now it's everywhere.

43:33

But when I went into Tilly Drive with the driver earlier in the week and some of the places we went, you could see just all of these great big places. It was condos or apartments, you know. Everything except for didn't see much affordable housing.

43:56

That was all of the- All the big stuff, you know. But you see that it's, they stick out, you know. There's so many of them. But there's always a lot of building. Underhill Center and Pleasant Valley still is- Pretty much the same.

44:15

Pretty much the same except some houses have been built, but it's a lovely area. There's some, I see if I'm going up to Cambridge. to the doctors. Off on the right there, at the end of a driveway there's been a new house back there.

44:34

But there again, they're not close enough together to be. I like being close to Cambridge and Jeffersonville. I think both those areas are nice. I do. Those stores and people and the that doctor's office has been a wonderful thing.

45:00

Dr. Miller has been probably taking care of me for 40 years. And they're all having trouble these days with shortage of help. They recently merged. Oh, I know. And they had to. Dr. Miller told me, I told him that I just hope it wouldn't change the atmosphere that has been at that place for so long.

45:30

And he said, well, he said, I don't think in the long and in the long run, he said, I think the patients are going to benefit by this kind of thing. So it's a lot of the things are different. Yep. You know, walking around, they had to go on to put their records on computer.

45:53

Yeah. Oh, yeah. That's always there. They're walking around with the laptop. And you don't have as relaxed a time. There's advantages to that. But there's also disadvantage. Right. Yeah. Right. And they did what they had to do.

46:14

Yeah. They've worked hard to make that a really lovely place. Well, Lois, thank you. I think we're going to end now and we'll keep on talking. I so appreciate you're doing this for us. Well, just one last thing.

46:32

Oh, we've got another thing. Good. Just remember, you know, life changes too when you lose your partner. Yes. Jim will have been gone 12 years this coming Friday, that's coming Sunday. You remember him every day.

46:53

He'll follow the next year. I remember that. And it's something to get used to, isn't it? Yeah. And I'm still here. Why? Yeah. There's a reason, there's a reason. Good for you. It's a wonderful place to be.

47:18

Well, Underhill's happy you're here.