

## **Randy Clark**

Fri, 03/15 14:53PM · 80mins

Okay, it's Thursday, November 2nd, 2023 and I'm sitting with Randy Clark, Judy Boardman and we're going to do some just chatting and talking about Randy's life in Underhill and his life in general for the Underhill Historical Society.

So let's just get going Randy and tell us about the beginning.

the beginning. That was a long time ago. Well, I actually wasn't born in Underhill. I was born, of course, at the Fannie Allen, by Dr. Towne, the new doctor in Underhill, I was the first baby that he delivered at the Fannie Allen Hospital.

Wow. And then my mother and father brought me home, and we lived in the last house in the town of Jericho, right next to the town of Underhill town line, which is where my father's business was, which was the Underhill garage.

And we lived on the Jericho side of the Underhill garage. And I don't remember a whole lot about growing up, but it was a good time. I remember a lot of the kids I grew up with, and one of the kids was my wife.

Her name was Kitty. Well, her nickname was Kitty. Her real name was Kathleen Blakey. And we kind of grew up together. She originally was born up on Poker Hill, and she was one of five children and a baby of five children.

And her father died when she was 11 months old. But her mother, not to get into them very much, but just wanting to share this, is that they were very devoted Catholics, St. Thomas Church and Underhill Center.

And after their father died, her mother never drove a car, and they would start walking to church on Sunday, and someone would stop and pick them up. And I believe that she is the oldest baptized St.

Thomas Catholic that still goes to church at St. Thomas. There are other older people that go there, but they were not baptized there. But anyhow, then they moved, eventually moved down next to the fire station on Route 15 in Archie Kirby's house, in May Kirby's house.

Archie had a farm there, and he lived there. And she grew up with a friend of hers, Beverly Risley, who lived just down the street. And another friend, Adrienne Pouliot, who was Irene Pouliot's daughter.

And so in our first grade class, it was only three girls. And I think it was, let's see, was there seven or eight boys?

Were you at the ID school?

Yes, we were at the ID school and what I wanted to share about this is that I drew her name for Christmas. When we were in the first grade, sorry to get emotional, but I that's all right old-time things. And so we were good friends through school. And our first teacher was Betty McDowell. Betty Leonard and then she got married and she became Betty McDowell. She taught the in the ID school it was first and second grade and then second and third grade.

They were all had one teacher So First and second grade had one teacher had the same teacher Second third had the same teacher fourth and fifth had the same teacher and fifth and sixth Seventh and eighth.

Yeah all the way up through so the teacher was Mrs. McDowell And she got married And So she didn't come back when we were in the second grade. She also she only taught the first grade And then we had I believe Ann Howard and Aldrich Howard She was married to Monty Howard and he'd lost his wife early on She married her and they moved on to Elle.

They lived across from the Episcopal Church Jericho side of Underhill And then they I Think then we had Second teacher we had was Lois Jacobs And then we had I believe Marjorie Littner And our last teacher in the eighth grade was Maggie Davis

That's amazing that you remember it.

That's amazing. Don't ask me what I did yesterday, because I probably won't be able to tell you. But anyway, so this, we had a very good eight grades. Maggie Davis was really nice, and we had a graduation at the GAR Hall.

Well, actually, our graduation was in the park in Underhill, but we had a big party at the GAR Hall. I think it was maybe before our graduation. That was kind of fun. Remember, we had a stage. We had to walk up on a stage.

It was about maybe a foot and a half high. It wasn't very high, but just so we could be up there. That was pretty cool. And then I went to Essex Junction High School, and my wife went to Cathedral, which later turned into Rice.

I never really felt a part of Essex Junction High School, because I was like an outsider. I rode to school the first year with Christian Walker, Sonny I used to call him The second year I rode with his brother Buddy Walker.

We called him Curly. Then I got my license, and so I drove, and different people ride with me, like Phil Cook. Let's see, no, Larry Cook rode with me. I think maybe Bartlett might have ridden with me a little bit.

Um, yeah.

think of the others right now but anyway so we went to Essex Junction but as I said I didn't play any sports you know those are the Essex Junction kids and we were minorities you might say and so we just did our classes and came home

What class did you like best? If any.

I don't recall any particular one that was above average or whatever. I don't know if you want me to share anything about the class reunion we did fifty years later, but I can do that later. Okay, okay.

But anyway, we had a good education, and then I graduated in 1959, and just previous to that, I believe the— let's see, was it the war in Vietnam, maybe, that time frame? They were starting to draft young eighteen -year -old boys, and my father didn't want me to be drafted, and so he suggested maybe I join up with the Army Reserve, which was like the National Guard is today.

And so I—he knew the first sergeant that was in charge of—it was at Fort Ethan Allen, and so I went down to sign up for the Army Reserves, and you couldn't sign up because they were trying to draft people.

However, my father knew this first sergeant, I'm trying to think of his name, Ralph, Ralph something, but anyway. But he said, I'll make an exception because I know your father and I like your father, so I will make an exception and we will accept you.

So I joined in, I went to Fort Dix, New Jersey for six months of active duty, and after active duty, usually you go in for eight weeks of basic training, which is really pretty complex, and they said, if you don't go home after basic training, we will let you out on Operation Santa Claus and you will be home in time for Christmas.

Well, I had never really been away from home, so I wanted to be home for Christmas, so I went to see my first sergeant, and because my mother had found out there was a man that lived next to Mount Mansfield High School by the name of Aldinger, Mr.

Aldinger, and he worked in New York City. Rudy Oldinger.

could be. It was. And so she found out that if I could get a ride to Port Authority, take the bus up to Port Authority, that Mr. Aldinger would pick me up on a Friday afternoon and bring me home for the weekend, and then I could go back.

And so I went and saw my first sergeant and asked him if I could do that. And he says, no, the farthest you can go is 50 miles, and that's the visit of sick relative. So you can't do that. I want to back up on this story a little bit, because in 1939, before I was born, my mother was driving by where our business was down on the corner of Brown Street in Route 15, where there was a three and a half year old son in the back seat of the car.

And that was back when the car's rear door opened from the front, so to speak, and called it the so -called suicide doors. And he was in the back seat by himself, my brother Ronnie. And he opened the back door and the wind caught it and pulled him out, and the car behind her ran over my brother.

Hmm, that's sad.

So when I was born in 41, my mother couldn't deal with a new baby. So she hired a woman by the name of Ruth Hale to help raise me. Ruth was 18 and she just graduated from the I .D. school. She lived up on Brown's Trace.

And so she would come to our house and she would kind of help raise me. Well, now fast forward back to 1959, she was now working in Bloomfield, New Jersey. So I wrote to her because, of course, there was no cell phones and things like this.

I wrote to her and I said, Ruth, if my first sergeant should call you next weekend, where are my sister, just get out of the hospital and I'm there visiting you, but I'm not there right at the moment.

But you will get word to me so that I will not be AWOL and I can get back to the base. So I did that and I came home for the weekend. I told my first sergeant that's where I was going was to visit my sister who had just got out of the hospital because that was within 50 miles of Fort Dix where she was.

And then from there you hitched up with Rudy all day for the ride.

I took the bus to Port Authority and he picked me up and I remember coming home with him. He never stopped at a red light. He would look ahead and see that the light is going to be changing red and he would just slow away down and just gradually go and then as soon as the light changed, all the traffic started to move and he would go along with the traffic.

We had a good time and then I was home in time for Christmas. And we... Then I went to Champlain College, started in January of 1960, if that would be. It was kind of in the middle of the year, so I really wasn't with the class.

It started in September, so again, I didn't really feel a part of the class because there was only a few of us that joined that started in January. But I went there for two years, took a business administration course, which was very good, and my father had always said, after you graduate from college, I want you to go to work for someone else.

I don't want you to work here because you need that experience of working for someone other than your parents. Mm -hmm

So he had it set up with a fellow by the name of Bert Maynard, who owned and operated Maynard Auto Supply, and I was going to go to work for him in about two weeks before I graduated from college in May of 1962.

My father said, I've been thinking, I think I'd like to have you come to work for me. So I don't want you to go to work for Maynard and really like it and not come to work for me. So I went to work for my father.

I never went to work for Maynard Auto Supply. What was your father's name, Randy?

My father's name was Elwood.

Elwood Clark.

okay.

He had a nickname, didn't he? Not that I'm aware of. Just Elwood, the whole name.

and let me just briefly insert Elwood here a little bit because Elwood was born in the yellow house next to the Jolley store right over here.

That was Mills.

Yeah. There you go. That's what you were trying to think of, right? Yeah. Yeah. Bert and Grace Mills lived thereafter, but that's where my father was born. He went to the Jericho High School over in Jericho Center, and then after high school he went to work for Burrell Cross.

Had the little gas station right here. And he was eighteen years old, and he got upset at Mr. Cross, and so he walked up to what was the Underhill Garage, which is, by the way, is on the town line. Half of the building is in Underhill, and the other half is in Jericho, and we pay taxes on both towns for the building.

And he asked the people at Underhill Garage if they could use any help, and they said yes they could. He said, Would you pay me fifteen dollars and one cent a week? He said, Well, why the one cent? Elwood.

So I can tell that darned Earl Cross was making more money up here than I was down there. And three years later, when he was twenty -one years old, he bought the business.

That was the beginning.

That was the beginning of my father owning the business. which was in 1927, when he started, when he bought it, was 1927. We'll be right back.

You were not born yet. I wasn't born yet. What year were you born?

1941.

Okay.

So it was, so I went to work for my father, which was really good. He sold, actually back to my father for a moment, he took on the International truck franchise in 1939. And so International sold big trucks and they sold pickup trucks.

However, in 1961, they came out with the International Scout, which was a four -wheel -drive vehicle. And the only other four -wheel -drive at that point was Jeep. There wasn't Broncos and Blazers and all these other cars that came out with four - wheel -drive.

So that became very popular because a lot of people didn't want to buy a Jeep, they wanted something else. So we became one of the largest international Scout dealers in Vermont. And actually, over the years, we won a lot of trips because we sold a lot of International Scouts.

And that's where I got into that business was because I like to sell things and rather than work in the parts room or work in the shop or, you know, I didn't like changing oil and things like that, I like to keep my hands clean.

I used to pump gas at our old gas station, I remember the Shattucks coming down to buy gas and one of the fellas that worked at the garage, his name was Harold Irish, and he and I pumped the gas.

All of this is still at the Underhill Garage, right? I remember stopping there to get gas.

But the thing that the Shattucks did is they would tip us, because, of course, back then when you pumped gas or someone, you would check their oil, check their windshield wipers, and you would wash their windshield, and the Shattucks would always give us a tip.

Mrs. Shattuck would give us 15 cents, and Mr. Shattuck would give us 25 cents. So when we looked over on Park Street and we saw one of the Shattucks coming, usually with their Cadillac, we would run out to the gas pumps and wait for them to get there, so we could do their service for them.

Of course, that's back when gasoline was probably about 25, 26 cents a gallon as well. But anyway, I remember selling a small international truck to Waldo Siple, who lived over on the Cambridge side of Irish settlement road.

Oh, I think he was almost the last house in the town of Underhill. I sold him a truck, and it was a good time. And then, let's see, maybe we can fast -forward a little bit here to—we won't fast -forward too much.

Let's go just talk about 1962. After I got out of high school and after I got out of the Army, I started dating this woman by the name of Kitty Blakey, who I had gone to school with and had drawn her name in the first grade for Christmas.

And so we dated, and she actually, at that point, she had lived in the so -called brick house, which is across the road from our house. Only it's in the town of Underhill, but that was also owned by the Kirby's.

At that point, just she and her mother were there, and again, they still never had a car. They always rode with somebody somewhere or whatever. Her mother used to clean houses for people and take care of things.

And then later on, she got a job at the post office and worked at the post office, so that was good. So Kitty, in 1962, thought she was going to get an engagement ring for Christmas. And I gave her an electric blanket because her apartment was very cold, and I wanted her to keep warm.

Well, I don't know what you ladies think about this, but she didn't think that was very appropriate to give her an electric blanket. And she got a little on the upset side, and she said, at the end of January, at my birthday, she said, well, if you think we're going to go steady the rest of our lives, you better think something else, because I'm going to find somebody else.

So on February 14th, when I was going to my Army Reserve meeting, weekly meeting, I was in the Army Reserves after the six months of basic training. I had to go to meetings for six years, and then I had two years of standbys.

It was a total of eight years. And so she would ride down to Burlington with me because where we went to our meeting place was in the old post office in Burlington on Main Street. And so her sister lived down in Burlington, so Kitty would ride down with me because the meetings were three hours long, and she would go visit with her sister. Well on February 14th, we turned and we went up Church Street up to Fremeaux's and we bought an engagement ring. And then August 17th, we got married.

What year was that then, August? Sixty -three, okay.

And I did have a brother, his name was Bob, and he was eight years older than I am, and he was quite a prankster. And what he would normally do when people got married, of course, back then they all got married at the church, and most of them did, and they would run out and jump in their car and, you know, take off, well, what he would do is he would jack up the rear wheel about an inch off the ground, and so when they jumped in their car to take off, it would just sit there and spin, it wouldn't go anywhere.

So we thought maybe he was going to do that to our car, because we were married at St. Thomas Church, but that didn't happen. So we drove around town first, and everybody blows their horn, and congratulations, everybody is waving to us.

Also back then, you were not supposed to spend your honeymoon in the same state that you lived in. You were supposed to go to either New York or New Hampshire or someplace. So we made reservations at the Lancaster Motel, because that was about as far away as we could get, or as close as we could get without, and not be in Vermont.

So we headed up there, and I'm looking in my rear -view mirror, and my brother is following us. I get up to Cambridge, and my brother is following us. I get up to Morrisville, and he's still following us.

I get in St. Johnsbury, and he's still following us. And we pull into the Lancaster Motel, and who pulls in but my brother. And he has his brother -in -law with him, who was Bugger Garrupy, who was Charlie Geerbe's son, who was the same age as my brother.

And he had his younger brother -in -law with him, Tommy Owens, which was Bob's wife's Peggy's brother, but he was only about twelve years old. So naturally we were kind of anxious, because we wanted to spend some time at the hotel room, but my wife says, we're not going to be doing anything with your brother sitting out there in the yard, so we decided to go down to the restaurant and have something to eat.

So we walked down to the restaurant, which wasn't too far, and who comes in the restaurant but my brother, and Bugger, and Tommy. And they said, well look at this, look who's here, my goodness. Well we won't bother you, we'll just get an ice cream cone and we'll leave.

So they got an ice cream cone, and the two older ones went out in the car and left the twelve -year -old with us. So what are you going to do with a twelve -year -old kid on your honeymoon?

That's part of the prank.

So we decide, of course, this is before cell phones and everything. So we decided, I guess we got to take him home. Dear, but that's going to be two hours, one way. You know, it's going to be four hours before we get back here.

But anyway, so just as we got ready to leave, we looked up and here comes my brother pulling in the parking lot and he comes in. Tommy, what are you doing in here? Come with us.

You don't stay here. You left. And then when we got back from our honeymoon, we spent three days and oh, yeah, three days. Cause I always had to be back for fire meeting. And, um, so we spent three days in New Hampshire and got back for Tuesday night meeting and we went to bed Tuesday night and our bed was full of rice.

Back then you didn't lock your doors and my brother come in and filled the bed full of rice, so we had to clean the bed down before we can move back. Anyway, so speaking of that, um, I almost forgot part of this, but in 1957, even prior to 1957, I turned, that's when I turned 16 was in 1957.

Um, when I was 14, we lived across the street, the fire station, the Underhill Jericho Fire Station was almost across the road from our house. It was, it was right next to the, what was it? It was the Methodist church, which is now, I don't know what that guy's business is there that sells plants.

Yeah. So that's where the fire station was. And my father was on the fire department, so I was always interested in the fires. And we had a man in town that was used to start fires. And, um, so the fire department was pretty active and he would start fires and break up buildings.

And, um, so I got very interested in the fire department anyway. And, and I would go to the, if the fires were close, I would go as a 14 year old boy and I would help the fire department do whatever I could.

And, but they wouldn't accept you until you're 18 years old. Well, they knew how active I was. So when I turned 16, they had a meeting and they changed their bylaws to accept people when they were 16 years old to become a member of the fire department.

So I was the first 16 year old member to ever join the Underhill Jericho Fire Department. many how many were on the staff I'm gonna say

maybe around 15. There were that many, though. We didn't have a lot of calls back then, with the exception of this guy setting the fires, which made a few more calls. But of course, there was no fire alarms or anything.

It was when you had a fire, you had a fire. And it was a big fire because it took a lot of time to get there in order for the people to be notified that there was a fire. Somebody had to listen for the siren on top of the fire station.

If they couldn't hear the siren, they had to be called up. So if you didn't live very close to the fire station, you had to be called on the phone. And that was all part of my generation of doing. We did that.

Oh.

As a matter of fact, after Kitty and I got married, that was kind of our duty was to, or her duty was to call firemen that didn't live close by, that you couldn't hear the siren. So I'm trying to think what year we put the siren on top of the station, because before that, that's how everybody got notified.

As a matter of fact, just a little bit of information, when I was probably 13, 14 years old, when I wanted to be involved in fires, I thought I would burn a little grass down the back of our house, just to green it up a little bit.

And a fellow by the name of Ted Weatherby, who was Merwin, his name was Merwin, or Will Weatherby. Will Weatherby lived up on Route 15, and his son Ted lived two houses below where we lived, right in the village just below the garage.

He lived the third house below the garage. He lived the first house. And Mrs. Metcalf lived next to us, Grace Metcalf. And so I was burning a little grass down back there, and it burned pretty good, and it had a little brook down there.

So I decided to burn some on the other side of the little brook, because on my side of the brook, it did well. Well, a little gust of wind came up. Headed up towards Weatherby's house. So I ran up to the house, and I told my mother, call the fire department.

There's a fire down back of Weatherby's. Back then, what they would do is they would call the operator. One of the operators was Mrs. King, because the telephone operator was in her building, her house on Park Street.

Wherever the woman that was there, the operator, I'm trying to think who her name was. But anyway, my mother calls and says, call out the fire department. There's a fire behind Weatherby's. Well, she didn't think my mother sounded very excited like most people sound when they call in a fire.

So she calls Will Weatherby that lived up on Route 15 and said, Mr. Weatherby, is there a fire behind your house? Well, I don't think so, but let me go take a look. So he comes back in a couple of minutes and, no, there's no fire here.

So this woman never calls the fire department. Meanwhile, this fire that I had set is headed up the hill towards the Weatherby's barn, which was connected to their house. And down on Palmer Lane is where the Woolies lived.

And Ma Woolie was sitting there looking out the window and she hollers over to her son, Everett. She says, Everett, you better get up there. There's a fire up there. Take the broom and go see if you can help him put it out. So he comes up cross lots and he and I put the fire out about three feet from the back of that house. Ooh.



Just the two of you. Just the two of us. Fire department never came. But the other thing about that, that's how I kind of got my experiences in the fire services. Because next to the old garage, or next to our garage, Underhill Garage, where the parking lot is now, there was a place called Effie's Lunch there.

And a good friend of mine, his name was Walt Godfrey. He was born four days after I was, so we grew up together. He lived over on Park Street, almost across from the post office over there, but anyway.

We used to like to play with matches. In order to get matches, they were about two and a half, three inches there, and they came in a box, and you would get them, they kept them under the counter, Effie kept them under the counter.

So I would go over to get some candy, and Effie and I would go in where the candy was and on the shelves there, and she had some glass showcase there, and she was very short, so she'd have to climb up there to get the candy bar, and she would pick out, or I would pick out like a three musketeers, so she would go in there and get the candy bar, and meanwhile Walt, little Walt would call them, he would go in by the cash register and he would take some matches while I'm getting the candy bar, and just before she ran over there, I would go over there, I would, no, I decided I don't want a three musketeers, give me a Hershey bar, so she'd have to put that back and get the Hershey bar, and I'd give her a nickel for the candy bar, because that's how much they were, and Walt had the matches, and he'd put them in his pocket or whatever, and we would go down back, we had a little shack down back of our house there, and my brother kept his dogs in one corner, a little four - foot wall, and we would crawl in, in order to get in that little shack, we would crawl in through the dog hole and up over the wall where the dogs were in that area, and we would play with our matches, and we would write light paper on fire, you know, and then we found out if we'd take one of those bread boxes and fold it up, because it was a store right across the street, Parker Rice ran a store over there, and he used the delivery of the bread in the morning early in the morning, and then he would take the box that he'd got the bread in, and then he would fold it up and put it on the porch outside, and the next morning when the bread guy came, he would pick up the empty box and leave a full box, so we took one of those bread boxes, because we found out that when we got a fire going, if we put this bread box down on top of it, it would put the fire out, it would smother it.

Well, we got this good -sized fire going, we put this big flat cardboard box on it, but the fire was going too much, and it caught that big cardboard box on fire, so we climbed up over the wall and out through the dog hall and ran up to the—on the old garage and said, fire, fire, the shack's on fire, so the boys that worked in the garage came down with the old acid fire extinguishers there, and sold on acid fire extinguishers and put it out.

It burned the shed, but it kept it from going to the garage, which was fortunate for me. I never got a spanking, I got a good talking to him, but little Walt, he couldn't sit down for quite a while.

He got a really good spanking fire from his father. So that's how I got my fire experience, you see, to get into that, but anyway, then we— Say we got through the sixties in the 60s So my father says When we got married My father and mother had just built a new house up on our road The old house her house If you'd like to live there he says I'll rent it to you for \$75 a month Which is pretty reasonable because everywhere else in town it was \$150 \$200 a month And he said the house is appraised for \$14 ,000 And when you paid in the fourteen thousand dollars, I'll give you a deed to the house and oh By the way, I'm gonna raise your pay \$75 a month

That worked out.

We moved in in August 1963, and I want to get ahead of myself here, but in 1974 my dad passed away and in 1977 we're settling as a state and the house is now appraised for \$45 ,000 and my mother says so would you like to buy the house it's \$45 ,000 I said I think we just about own it because we paid in like \$11 ,000 and I

told her about the deal that dad told me nothing she knew anything about so she said if you want to buy it it's \$45 ,000 so we decide if we're going to buy a house for \$45 ,000 let's look around so we looked around at various houses and we went up on Homestead Acres up on Sugar Hill and we found this house it was seven years old had a brand new in -ground pool and we had four boys at that time that were our pool age and they wanted \$75 ,000 so we said we're going to spend money for our house let's buy that one so we bought that one and that's where we still that's where you are now and my father always said everything happens for a reason we just don't know the reason why that happens but give it a year to almost say oh that's why that happened

Thank you.

I found that to be very very true over the years so otherwise guess where we would still live next to the old garage on Route 15 so that was a good move anyway so back to see the 60s they said they changed the rules there on the fire department let me joined the fire department when i was 16 was involved there enjoyed that very much still a member of the fire department on my 67th year i don't go to fires well the fires that i go to now i just put out emergency scene ahead signs i don't fight fires but i'm still involved go to the meetings every week and so forth

Has the training changed over the years?

Yeah, the training is—well, again, there's not many fires now. It's CO alarms and CO and a lot of different things like that. I blame my wife a lot for that because she taught fire prevention when she was in the fire department because she joined as a dispatcher.

She would go to the fire station and run the radio, and then she taught fire prevention, and she would teach it in the schools. So these kids that are all adults now, they learned what they should and shouldn't do.

But anyway, I think it's the same everywhere. It's not just an unknown. But there's a lot of less fire—just overall, it's more fire prevention than there used to be years ago. But anyway, so back to, let's see, in the—yeah, 70.

Let's go a lot fast. 1971, my father calls me in the office, and there's a man there from International Harvester, and he says to my father, well, Mr. Clark, the company has sent me here because there's 11 international truck dealers in Vermont.

That's too many. He says, you're doing a good job selling a pickup truck, doing a really good job selling the scalp, but the heavy -duty truck just aren't cutting it. So I'm here to pick up the heavy -duty franchise.

Well, I'm 30 years old and still a little wet behind the ears, and standing right next to the file cabinet. So I reach over and I open up the file cabinet, and I reach in, and I grab all three contracts, and I look over my father, and he's shaking his head no and saying,

Mmhmm.

Take the three contracts and I hand them to the man from international harvester, and I said here take them all Well oh no, I can't do that. They only sent me after the heavy -duty. I said it's all or nothing Why I don't know what I'm supposed to do of course again.

This is before cell phones and all this stuff, so he's I Gotta go back to the factory and ask him, but I can't take all all three contracts So he leaves and my father says, thank you. I wanted to do that, but I didn't dare do that

Another thing that happened in 1971 is In 1970 The fire chief at that time was Bob King really good fire chief and And Bill Meade Who lived just down the road from the fire station?

He was the assistant fire chief and I was elected to the Second assistant fire chief position. We didn't have captains and lieutenants and everything back then And Came election time in 1971 and And Bob called Bill and I over to the fire station met with us.

He says I Don't want to be the fire chief next year, so don't Don't vote me in because what they used to do is you know somebody would nominate somebody and somebody second it Somebody closed nominations and all in favor of and that would be yeah That time there was probably 20 to 25 members So January came at the elections and somebody nominated Bob her chief Somebody seconded it and somebody closed nominations and somebody about it.

We all voted for Bob Well the next week he calls up Bill and I and he says I Told you guys I didn't want to be the chief I'm resigning tonight Bob you can't resign I'm resigning tonight so bill You will be the chief Randy you will be the first assistant in the next meeting.

We'll elect a second assistant Well We had a fire Up in on Poker Hill but Floyd McCollins barn fire Bill and I are I'm like 29 years old 30 years old yeah Bill isn't too much older This barn is fully involved, and it's attached to a shed which is attached to the house.

Oh boy.

And we said, what are we going to do? We said, we don't know. What are we going to do? Where's Bob? Well, here's Bob over there on a hose line, squirting water. He said, Bob, what should we do? He said, don't worry about the barn.

Write that off. We've got to save the house. Stop it right here at the shed. Well, we decided after that that the man that was the great chief should be an honorary chief. He shouldn't be on a hose line.

He should be there to help the new chiefs do what their job was, because they don't know too much about the job. And that's how we developed the honorary chief's position after that. However, that summer, I was at the beginning of the summer.

And then maybe I got a year ahead of myself. Yeah, I think so. This must have been in sight. We must have been elected in 69. Bob got done. But anyway, back then, the fire department had a resuscitator to help people breathe if they had an attack.

We didn't talk about giving them a shock to get their heart going or anything like that. I was just giving them air. And Bill and I got a phone call at about 3 o'clock in the morning that way Dr. Allen was there and he needed the resuscitator at Bob King's house.

Bob King had had a heart attack. Oh.

So we went with the resuscitator to his house, but we didn't save him. That's why he got done as chief, because he knew he had this heart problem.

and didn't tell you.

Yeah, yeah So then the following year 1971 Bill Mead Is right. He used like to ride horses. He had a couple of horses and he rode his horses And they just put a water system in the town of underdell New hydrants and new water system Jerrif on the old water department And cleaned up all the all the stuff from that And when they When I say the gravel and stones and all that and cleaned up and bill was riding his horse in front of the old ID school on knockdown side and the horse reared up and bill fell off and Fractured his skull hit his head on a big rock there Of course back then there was no ambulances or anything.

The only ambulances there were the undertakers put a red light on the hearse and Come and transport people The local one would have been gifford funeral home and And richmond So doctown called me Because I had a international travel law Which was like a chevrolet suburban And he says we need to take bill mead to the hospital So why don't you come up with your Travel All?

Ahem.

So I drove up, and Terry Root came with me. Terry Root was our new second assistant chief, and he worked at the garage. We went over to the ID school, and we got the mattress that they had. When a kid got sick at school, they had a little bed for him there in the hallway to lay on.

We took that mattress and put it in the back of my travel wall and put Bill Mead in there. And I had a small red light on my red light that Bill Mead or Bob King used to have on his car. And he had a siren that I had bought from his mother after he passed away.

And we took him to the hospital, and we made it to the Mary Fletcher Hospital in 20 minutes. But he died that night. So I became the fire chief, 1971, July. I said, I'm too young to be the fire chief.

I got to thinking, and the police chief in Essex Junction was 30 years old, and I said, oh gosh, I guess if he can be police chief in Essex Junction, where 5 ,000 people ought to be able to be the fire chief in Underhill and Jericho for probably got 3 ,000 people back then.

We only have like 12, 15 calls a year. So I was the chief from 1971 to 1987 when we built the truck center. I said, I got enough to do it now. I can't be the chief of the fire department anymore. I became the honorary chief.

But anyway.

That was a transition year, from fire department to the truck center, from you being involved with the—

No, no, I was still involved after that. As the honor, I was that guy standing in the back telling him what to do. You know, I still went to the calls that he, Underhill Garage always supported the fire department.

And I believe if it had not been for Underhill Garage, I don't know how the fire department would have ever survived because most of them were farmers. You know, a farmer guy here, a farmer guy there, or else they worked out of town or something.

Not all of our employees, but several of our employees were members of the fire department. And we always allowed them to go to a fire call, and we actually even paid them to go to a fire call. So we supported the fire department 100%.

Well the fire department sponsored the Boy Scouts too. Yes, I want to say that started in maybe 63.

Thank you.

Um, your husband Gael.

And their scout master was Bill Snyder. And they were Troop 7. And shortly after that, Bill Snyder was killed in a plane crash. I think he was the pilot of the plane, too. Just a small plane, one or two people in it or something.

I don't know if there was somebody else that was killed too, but I remember he was killed. But yes, the fire department has sponsored Boy Scouts ever since 1963. Matter of fact, they just started sponsoring the Cub Scouts this year.

Good.

So, um, that's good, I think. The, um, so, um, the, a little more on the Underhill Garage side. They said that man came to shut down the, take the franchise away from us. That was in 71 and then in 74, um, my dad passed away.

1975, International stopped making the pickup truck, which was 25% of our business. 1980, they stopped making the Scout, which is 50% of our business. So in six years, I lost my dad and 75% of the business and saying, what am I going to do?

Long came a fellow by the name of Dick Bullard, worked for interstate equipment down to Mount Hill here. This is Randy, worked for interstate equipment. We sell dump bodies and snow plows. Somebody come and look at my dump body, just sits there on the ground.

Can't raise it up, they can't see the underside. Can't make the tailgate work. Same with snow plows, just sits there. Why don't we get in bed together? Why don't we mount them on a truck? I'll drive that truck around and we'll sell it as a package.

That's how we got in the municipal business. Mm -hmm.

Our old building, Underhill Garage, had two 10 -foot doors and one 12 -foot door. Well, these snowplows, they started putting wings on them. You don't drive a truck with a wing plow in a 10 -foot door and barely in a 12 -foot door.

So, we needed to build a new place. So, we went to the Howard Bank, because my father had always done business at the Howard Bank at Five Corners National Junction, and we asked them if we could borrow the money.

They said, well, how much business are you doing a year? You're doing about 1 .5 million growth sales. Well, we need to have a financial study done to see if you can afford the payments. So, I had the P.F.

Jurgis and Company \$5 ,000 to do this 1 .5 -inch thick financial study to see if we could make the payments on the new building. They said, no, you can never make the payments, because you need to do \$5 to \$6 million a year.

You can never grow your business that fast, so they wouldn't give us the money. However, the Merchants Bank said we could, until they gave us the money. So, the first thing we had to do was switch banks.

Well, you're probably pretty aware of this, that Vermonters are long on tradition and short on change. They don't like switching things like that. So, that was our first difficult thing, was having to switch banks, but we did.

We moved in there August 1st, 1986. In 1987 and 1988, we did \$5 to \$6 million those two years. However, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, we did \$3 to \$4. That's when this turned gray.

Yeah, it was a tough time.

Six worst years of my life running 90 days past due at the bank We were 90 to 180 days past due with our suppliers International put us on COD And every day just to get our daily parts to let we had to go to the merchants bank get a cashiers check bring it Back and FedEx would pick it up I Said

That sounds like six years, seven years.

And every time I heard that front door coming, I thought it was the bank coming to lock it. And I really think that if we had been in the Burlington area, they would have, but what do we want an 18 ,000 square foot facility in Jericho, Vermont for?

What are we going to do? What's the bank going to do with it? So they didn't foreclose on us. Excuse me, the 18 ,000 is the building.

18 ,000 square feet.

square feet, I mean, but the land is

The land is, we own three acres there on that side. Yeah, okay. So, just to fast forward to complete this story here, 2018, my son Randy comes in my office and he says, dad, we just got our numbers from the state of Vermont for truck sales in 2017.

He says, you remember when there was 11 international truck dealers in Vermont? I said, I sure do. He says, there's a total of seven all brand truck dealers. Peterbilt, Kenworth, Freightliner, Mac, Western Star.

There's only two international dealers. He says, dad, we're number one. We sell more trucks than any truck dealer in the state of Vermont in 2017. So I told my son, I said, Rand, just keep doing what you're doing.

Number one, if somebody likes you, they will buy from you. If they don't like you, I don't care what you're selling or how much it is, they're not gonna buy it. That's just human nature. That's true.

Number two, you parts guys and service guys, sales guys, you may sell the first truck, but the parts and the service sell the second, the third, the fourth, and the fifth. So then two and a half years ago, we were in the process of buying out J &B International, the other international truck dealer in Vermont, because their owner had died.

Went to International Harvester and I said, can we have the international franchise? And you sure can, you're the number one dealer in Vermont. Okay, and then they had a big fire, J &B International down at Colchester.

The natural gas truck was in their shop and somebody had taken the fuel line off and it filled the shop full of natural gas. They went, kaboom.

Whoa

So we worked with them for a year, why they got their, with the insurance company and everything, rebuilt the building and we sold them parts for costs and sold them trucks for costs and everything we could to help them out, help them fix.

Two and a half years ago, about three years ago now, we heard they sold out to a company called Allegiance. I called up International, I said, who's this company called Allegiance? That just bought out J & B, you said we could have the franchise.

Well, their owner used to sit on the board of directors out here in Chicago and they're going to buy all 40 of the Northeast International Truck Dealers. I said, no, they're not, they're not going to buy this one.

And then, like I say, six months later, my son calls me in the office and he says, dad, I think we got to sell out to them. He sold them I said, Ran, we're not selling. Dad, this is just before COVID or just at the beginning of COVID.

He says, we have 105 new soul trucks on order. International is not making, or Bendix is not making breaks. Allison is not making transmissions. And we have no idea when those new trucks are coming. And we just got a conference call from International to all the dealers in the United States. We cannot order any more new trucks until after 2022. And this was in 20. Yeah.

Where do I sign? Yeah, you can't get parts and you can't get trucks. It was putting me right back into the early 90s We didn't we couldn't pay our bills. Yeah So Two years ago August 15th 21 We sold out to a company called Allegiance As of today They own 45 international truck dealers in the Northeast

Does your son still work there?

My son works there, he works there, he works at Plattsburgh, he works at Colchester, Hoosick Falls, New York, and Hudson, New York. He's the vice president of the district. He runs five locations and I only see him once or twice a week because he's at those other locations.

I bet you're proud of it. Yes.

I'm also proud of his daughter, Caitlin. She went to college, and she took a four -year course in three years, and she came back. She went to work for a company called Commandol, a woman's underwear company in Burlington.

And then she worked there about three years, and she went to work for Green Mountain Coffee, Keurig. And she was in charge of sales to Costco and Amazon. And here about three and a half years ago, she said to her father, Dad, do you have something I could do at the truck center?

She says, we just got married, and we want to have a couple of kids, and I don't want to be traveling to Dallas, Texas, and Seattle, Washington. She said, sure could, Caitlin. You can be our executive administrator.

So she was working for the company then, too, and she now works for the new company, and she's in charge of HR for eight locations. So she has to deal with a lot of people. She lived locally? She actually lives on Brown Straits right next to her father and mother on Browns Trace, across from where Mary Lang used to live.

Remember Mary Lang, right?

It's halfway between here and the high school about new houses.

fire on the right hand side, there's new houses across the tree up on the hill.

And the house, they must have redone there. Yeah, they are redone there. Yeah, I know where it is, yeah.

So back to the Randy Clark senior, he's not a senior, he's, my son has a different middle name. But we, Randy and Kitty had four boys. Randy, Brian, Tim, and Russ. And we had four boys before we found out what was causing it.

It's a toothpaste. We were using crests, we switched to AIM, we never had it anymore after that. My wife would tell you something else happened about the same time as a snip snip or something. She said, I should remember that very well, but I guess I forgot it.

But anyway, we're very proud of our boys. Our oldest son worked for the Allegiance Company. All four boys did work for Clark's Drug Center. And then even Kitty worked there. She mowed the lawn for over 20 years there at the truck center.

I remember that.

Yeah and Brian was in sales and then he went running the record and then Tim was in the service department and he says dad I gotta get done he says you can sell him a new truck for a hundred thousand dollars they pat you on the back shake your hand what a great guy you are and he says two months later they're just reaming me a new you know what because I don't know how to fix it I didn't know we sold it to him I'm supposed to know how to fix it and fix it right the first time and they just come out with new electronics and the trucks and he says I can go get a brand new part off the shelf and it's got the same problem as the part that's on the truck so I can't do this anymore so he now is in the old garage and he has two dump trucks and he's presently working for ECI construction does asphalt paving and they did they're doing all that work in Essex Junction there and everything but and then our youngest son Russ is now works for the town of Underhill he's the highway supervisor and he loves the job and we're very pleased with him doing that.

It's very interesting, it's been very interesting and I think we'll close it off now and thank you very much and maybe can do some more later.