Nancy and Connell Gallagher

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So I'm here today with Connie and Nancy Gallagher. It is

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Tuesday, April 21

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2026 and we're just going to talk for a little while about their lives, where they started out, and how they ended up in Underhill, and what they like or maybe don't like about Underhill, mostly what they like.

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So which one of you would like to talk first.

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Ok, so, Connie, where were you born? Where did you grow up? Born in Brooklyn, New York, 1944,

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my parents were from Ireland, and

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they went. My father wanted to go back and live in Ireland. My mother liked it in America, but he convinced her to move the family back to Ireland. When I was two years old, we went back to Ireland and lived there for two years. My mother hated it, so we came back. Where in Ireland were you? Did you go back to County Donegal? Oh, really. And lived on a little farm. And the problem was my mother had

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no means of transportation. She was stuck on this little farm with three kids. My father was off in the town, you know, doing stuff. He liked it. She liked it. He loved going to the bars and all that kind of stuff. Do you remember it? I don't. People have told me things about it. That makes me think I remember it, but I don't remember that too much. You were young. I was two, two years old.

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But then he convinced her again, and we moved back in the early 50s, maybe 51-52 something like that, to Dublin. He figured she'd probably like Dublin city. She also had a sister there, yeah. So, so we live, we live with my mother's sister, Kathleen, and

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We were going to own a shop like Kathleen did, and be shop people and stuff. I went to school. I learned Gaelic, and my sisters were in a convent school, and we were there. We were there for only six months because my mother found out that my my dad stayed in America. He was trying to put money away, work overtime and everything, so he could bring as much money as he could to Ireland. While he was drinking, and he had withdrawn money from the bank, and he was going around, he had piles of money in his pockets and stuff. So an aunt in New York called my mother and said, You better come

home. Yeah, so we packed up and went home. And that was, that was the end of the Irish. It was the end of the Irish thing. But this sort of an important background. I didn't realize you had been there that much. Yeah? No, no, it is when that when Nancy we I met Nancy brought it. I brought her to Brooklyn to meet me. She always thought I was a New Yorker. After meeting the family, she said, You're not a New Yorker. You're Irish. Connie Gallagher, wow, that's a good Irish name. Yeah, absolutely.

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So then you grew up in Brooklyn, going to school in Brooklyn, and all Catholic schools. Catholic grade school, I went to powerful Memorial Academy. High School, it was in midtown Manhattan, Irish Christian brothers. And then I went to St John's University for a year when I thought I wanted to be a chemist, but I was no good at chemistry, so I worked for a while, then I went back to college. I went to Pace College. Then now it's Pace University, and majored in English, and

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I got a fellowship at the University of Wisconsin to work on the PhD. SoI packed off and went to Madison, Wisconsin, and what was your PhD in? Well, I never finished it. It was going to be in English. I have a master's in English from Wisconsin, but I never finished a PhD. While I was there, I took a part time job at the Wisconsin Historical Society, and that's where I learned about archives and manuscripts, and I kind of fell in love with that work and met Nancy and Wisconsin, Wisconsin, okay, and we decided to get married. So I needed to find a job to support a wife and yourself and me.

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So my boss dropped this.

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Letter on my desk one morning. It's an ad for a manuscript librarian position at the University of Vermont. He says, Gallagher, apply for it. So I applied for it, and I got it. And we got married in June of, this is 1970 June of 1970

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and our honeymoon was driving from Madison, Wisconsin to Burlington. We went through Canada, and we stopped at the the

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Stratford Festival for a couple of days, saw a couple of Shakespeare plays, and

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went to the Capitol, and had dinner there one night, and then spent a couple of days in Montreal, and then we drove down on the New York side and came into Vermont on the ferry. What a wonderful lake, what a wonderful way to come and to see it. You hadn't even seen it. I had never seen it. Never been to Vermont, but to see Burlington sitting there, you know, right on the edge of the lake, and then you could see the mountains in the back. Was just we were just so excited to come. Great story. Yeah, so then you came to Burlington. Did you find a place to live right away?

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We looked for a furnished apartment. There were only two, and we took this one in South Burlington. It was behind the airport and back where The National Guard was,,

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and it was a it was a big old house. They had four apartments there. The landlord lived on the first floor, and we lived there for about a year and a half. Maybe the landlord died, and

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a real estate place took over, and they were bad landlords. So we decided to get out of there. And we got a furnished apartment, an unfurnished apartment on South Prospect Street. So he moved in there with no furniture, and ate dinner off suitcases and stuff and but, but slowly, we bought a bed, and then we got some unfinished furniture at that unfinished furniture place in Burlington, Nancy finished it and sanded it all up and stuff. So we got a table and two chairs. That was a good location. perfect, because I could walk to work. Yeah, and Nancy, by that time, had gotten a master's degree in education, and she got a job at BFA in St Albans. Nancy was your master's in English, history, education, education?

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No, I was at Wisconsin. I majored in biochemistry. Oh, so when you two met, you were just finishing that up, right? Okay, so I graduated. You graduated. Then came to Burlington, right already with your degree, yeah, yeah. And I worked in med, micro, doing

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tissue culture stuff. I got a part time or a full time job, but it was soft money, and I always wanted to teach. So I was at the UVM med school. My parents said you get a degree in a subject first. You can always pick up the education credits later, but you knew all along you wanted to teach? Well, I always liked working with young people. Yeah, I was camp counselor, a Girl Scout leader, and I

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I always wanted and I loved education.

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So there are the two of you having arrived in Burlington, you had your job, yeah, which is your forever job? That's right, yeah, forever job, yeah, and you get a teaching job right off. Or, well, the first job I could find, because in 1970 jobs were scarce. It was a recession and

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and I tried to apply for teaching, but most schools wanted a basketball coach, I remember those days, yeah, and I didn't have any teaching credentials, and UVM had a program, but I would have had to

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pay for student teaching, take courses and which I had to pay for. And St Michael's had a master's program for people like me where they found you an internship. I remember that, and in a year, you'd have a master's. It was a lot of work because you were going to school night and

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weekend and in the classroom during the day. Yeah, high school, yeah, I taught, actually, I taught algebra at South Burlington. They couldn't find a science spot for me. But what happened with me is, after that,

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They were looking for biology, chemistry.

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Teacher at St Albans fellows Free Academy, and it was at the last minute, somebody quit, and it was perfect for me. So that's where I went, and I was the little sister of an all male department, and they were so good at mentoring me. How long did you teach there? For

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five years, and then Connie took a sabbatical at the University of Illinois,

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and I had a choice of either not going with him or leaving my job, which I did. Good choice. Yeah, it turned out to be perfect. So

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that was my background

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While we're talking with you about that, go back to where you were in your early days. Were yYou always in Wisconsin or did you go all over? Okay? I was born in Santa Monica, California. Oh, okay. My mother was Californian. She grew up in Carmel, California. Her father was a builder of houses there. And my grandparents got divorced, so my grandmother and her and my uncle went down, who was only four, went down to Los Angeles so she could get work in the aircraft factories. It was during World War Two. Yeah, it was in the early 40s, and she met my father, who was he was actually born and raised in Winnipeg, went to the University of Minnesota, and when war broke out,

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because he was Canadian, they wouldn't

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enlist him in the Seabees, which he wanted to do. So he and a friend in the same boat went out and worked for North American Aviation, designing airplanes.

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So he had a whole career in aero, in aircraft design, and my parents met at a church there, and I was born there, and when we were six, when I was six, my father was transferred to Columbus, Ohio, oh, they had a North American Aviation So you went from California to Ohio, where at age Six, yeah, and then I went through school there,

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and that's kind of where I think of growing up, although I remember a lot about California and we,

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let's see, I wanted to go away to school, everyone in my family left Ohio and went somewhere interesting. So I was very outdoorsy, like my parents were, and the University of Wisconsin was right on three lakes. And my passion was downhill skiing and canoeing and that sort of thing. And I knew I wanted to go into the life sciences, and they had an excellent curriculum there for that. So I started as a freshman in 1966

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as a

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zoology major, but I found I loved chemistry as much, so I switched to biochemistry. Connie thought he wanted chemistry and rejected it. And you actually did get into the sciences. Our relationship was like

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the two cultures. . Our first date was

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discussing which had more of the truth, how you could reach the truth better? Mine through the sciences, his through literature and sort of thing. It was quite entertaining. It's the debate of the century, actually, yes, it was, yeah, yeah. So, what was the year that you met in Wisconsin? 1969,

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69 Yeah, and, and you headed for Burlington in 70 then, yeah, right quick, 70, just like that. You married and came to Burlington. Yeah, and was there anybody else working in the archival department of UVM when you came? Were you working with somebody, or did you do it all by yourself? What happened was they had this fellow. His name was Tom Bassett, who was a historian, and he was a specialist in Vermont history, and he had grown up in Burlington, so he knew a lot of people who said he loved going out, visiting people. So he acquired lots of people's papers, boxes and boxes and boxes, 100 boxes of stuff, probably over a period of quite a few years. Was his job officially as the archivist, or was he teaching history or something else? He was in the halftime history and halftime libraries. His title at the library was curator of the Wilbur collection. The.

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Wilbur collection was Vermont history, and so that was in the basement of the live basement. I remember that, yeah, so that's where you went to work immediately, yeah, in that location. And they hired, they had no description of any of these boxes, so they hired me to catalog them, really, to do something called inventories, and that's something I learned to do at the Wisconsin Historical Society, was to go through boxes of papers, create an inventory of contents, and then pipe it up and and you can send it out to researchers. But my boss used to take my inventories and he would copy them and send them to the History Department. And the historians started coming over, because then they would know that those documents were at UVM. Yeah, exactly. Otherwise, they wouldn't know. That's right,

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at that early date. Did you have people from the public coming or just relating to the UVM faculty? I'd say was primarily

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college students and UVM faculty, but there were members of the public, because we had a great Vermont History Collection there, and people knew about that. So historians from other places, local historians, people from historical societies, would come and use those kinds of things. And over the years, Tom retired, and you ended up in charge. Well, yeah, Tom retired. He retired. I discovered it, but after working in that library for a while, I had a master's degree in English. In order to stay in university libraries, you really needed to have a library degree.

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. So if you wanted to get any place, you had to have that library degree. So I had a sabbatical coming up, and I decided to go to the University of Illinois and get my master's degree in library science.

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So while I was away at Illinois, Tom Bassett retired. His wife got a job down in North Carolina. Elizabeth was her name, yeah, his first wife was a doctor. I can't remember her name. She got a job in North Carolina a

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year in Illinois or longer. We were in Illinois for one year, and it was a very fun year. We had a good time out there.

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Nancy joined me. She was still teaching. I had to be out there in June, so she was still teaching. So she stayed here for the summer and came out in the fall, and when she arrived, she had a puppy

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and a rabbit and a rabbit in a car you drove, yeah,

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and we were in married student housing, and you were not allowed to have any animals, so you hid them. Well, it's hard to hide them. Every every little kid around knew about the puppy

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and walk the rabbit. Walk the rabbit too. The kids loved them, yeah? But the university didn't care, I don't think Yeah. So we lasted the year out there, so I came back with, then a second master's degree in library science, and Bassett had retired. So what

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the dean of life the library decided to do, he decided that they wanted, that they hired somebody to replace Tom Bassett, somebody with a Vermont background to replace Tom. Bassett, So when I came back, he told me that I was now the university archivist and the curator of manuscripts. So they doubled my job, pretty much. They double your salary.? No, I didn't get a penny more

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and

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and then I had been working off a little table in the back room all through the 70s, because there were two offices. Bassett had one, and John Beaker, who was the head of the department and the rare book library had the other one. Well, when they hired this young fellow. His name was Kevin Graffinino. He moved into Bassett's office, and then they expected me to go back to my table. I said, No way. I'm not buying. I'm making my office over at the University Archives, which was in the Waterman building. Oh, if you want, if you want me, call me or I'll be over there. Now that didn't go over well with the boss, so what he decided to do is he put the second desk in that office. So Kevin and I shared an office, but Kevin was a youngster. He had just finished giving you the office. Yeah, to begin with, yeah.
20:00 He was now the curator. He was now the curator of the Wilbur collection.

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So,

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So then you were sharing the office and that, and did your work change?

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Yeah, the work yeah, the work changed. I was processing collections beforehand, and well, after going to library school, they drummed into me public service, public service, public service. So when I came back, I was filled with that. So I was really focused on trying to get more people use the collections and

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and so I created a an archives practicum, which was a course,

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and that was teaching graduate students to do archives No, right? And because a lot of them, they didn't want to teach, but they loved history, so this was, this was an opportunity, and I trained a number of archivists that moved around the state and and then I gave, I gave talks on all these collections,

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and I got involved in the rare book collection slowly. And I gave talks about that. Did you get called out to other towns, small towns? Yeah, I gave a number of talks. The first one was the Rutland Historical Society had me come, and they wanted me to talk about court records. I didn't know that much about him, but he was the only archivist in the state of Vermont, yeah. And they wanted to tap into my knowledge about archives. That's really cool. Yeah. So you worked at that job up until when was your retirement? What year was retired in 2006

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2000 that made 36 years? Yeah, yeah. But I got very interested in political papers, because they had the Senator Warren Austin papers there, and my boss was always after me to process those. It was a big collection. It took me a year to process. It was so big, but that gave me a real interest in politics, modern politics, and so I had an eye on

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Senator Stafford is getting near retirement, so I

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so I, so I decided to be involved in the Society of American Archivists. I helped to create something called the Congressional Papers Roundtable, where we had all the archivists who were working on congressional papers. We used to meet annually and discuss the issues and stuff. And we came up with the idea of trying to place an archivist in a senator's office so you could teach them what they needed to save and how they should save it, to make it easier for when they deposited their papers, so there wouldn't be this mess of stuff.

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So I had another sabbatical coming, so I went to Washington and I visited Leahy's office, Jefford’s office and Stafford's office

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I told him about this opportunity, that I would be willing to work for them and take care of their papers. They were all interested, but Stafford grabbed it because he was retiring. He was close , and nobody in his office wanted to go up to that attic mess around with all that dusty stuff. So somebody was going to do it for them. And so, I was full of energy and stuff those days.

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And I went up to the they brought me up to the attic and opened the gate, and I went into this place. It was boxes stacked to the ceiling, little narrow aisles around them, hundreds of boxes in there. Some of them had labels on them. Some of them didn't have papers in all the boxes. And I went that night, when I went to bed, I said to myself, What did I do? Did I end up in this?

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But I went back the next day, and you start with the first box. And I've told many young archivists this about big collections, you start with the first box, take a look, see what's in there. Maybe write a couple of notes, maybe put a kind of a label on the front, and you go to the next when you get to box five, hey, it's a lot like box one. So you put those two together. Yes, keep doing that, and eventually you get through the whole process, yeah, to process, but it takes diligence and patience, exactly all those things, yeah, just not, not getting bored with it. What do you find? Oh, it's very interesting. I loved it. I love doing archives and manuscripts, yeah? But the other thing you did.

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Yeah, was you went to

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meetings. That's right, I went to find out how Congress worked. Yeah, no, that helps too, yeah, he asked to go to Stafford as the chair of the Education Committee and he was, he was, he was in Chair of Environment and Public Works. So I asked if I could go to meetings with him. So he said, fine. So I went with a couple of his staff members, and I watched how he worked as the chair, and have one of his staff members who was a specialist in that area, would stand behind him, and they had a big notebook they put out in front of him, and I watched the whole process of how a congressional or Senatorial Committee worked, and then, and then I interviewed everybody on the staff to find out what they did and what what papers they created, and how they and now they did it. So I had a really good understanding of what a congressional office was like by doing that. And then while I was there, Leahy heard about me, and

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he sent his secretary over to have lunch with Stafford secretary. And then they decided to have it. He wanted me to come over, so he invited me over. I spent about an hour with him, which is a lot of time with a senator, Patrick

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He gave me some of his diary that he had, but he gave me a diary on the Bork hearing that he had, he took to read over and see if I thought it was good. So I keep a diary always, yeah, yeah, yeah. So did you do his paper too? Yeah. He invited me to come the next semester and spend that with his staff, even though he wasn't near retirement, but talk to the staff, try to make sure that they were saving the right things and that sort of stuff. Are you? Are you content with what those senators have done in the end with their papers? I mean, have they got them in public? Stafford has a public place somewhere where his

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His memoirs are. Stafford, yeah, UVM, yeah, at UVM and Lehigh. Where are all his papers? At UVM, they all, UVM, yeah, in the library, yeah. Okay, yeah, yeah, they pretty much

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were convinced to do that, because they got to know me, and they trusted the place to be, yeah, and then UVM was the biggest place in the state, and we had Aiken, and we have, we had all, we had all

the senators already, so they wanted their papers to be. Why did everybody want their papers to be next to Aiken's papers? Have you done anybody since Leahy? Yeah,

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I spent some time in Jefford''s office too, but Leahy was there for a long time, and after I retired, he called me up himself and asked me if I would come, think of coming back down to work on the Judiciary Committee, because in Washington, he was chair of, Oh, were you tempted? I did. Oh, you did go. I did. I didn't know that, but I said, I can only, I can only go for one semester, and I'll give you, I'll give you about eight weeks, because what I used to do when I worked for him is I would go down for two weeks and work on his papers, and then come back to Vermont for two weeks. Nancy had the house and dogs and everything else. We were by this time in the house in Underhill. Oh yeah. They were happy to let me, let me do, do what I wanted, pretty much like I had a free reign. So where did they put you up? I got a desk in the main office, in Stafford's office in Washington, and in the Senate Office Building,

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right there. Yeah. And the same with Leahy. I got,

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I got a desk, and then when I, when I went down to work on judiciary, he had created a little office. He had hired an archivist, at my recommendation, full time archivist, to work with his stuff, but she couldn't do the judiciary. It was just too much

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a lot of work. So he had me come down, so I was in the little office with her then, and I did a judiciary from one corner, and she did the rest of the archives from the other corner. But it was exciting to be working in Washington, I bet, to have a Senate badge with Leahy's name on it or Stafford's name on it, you could get in anywhere. Library of Congress, any, and you were important . I mean, it was important. He recognized the importance of what he was doing and he needed you. Yeah, he's gonna do that himself. That's right. Yeah. No, weren't you the first?

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Was the first to do this kind of work with anybody, yeah. And so the senators, and other Congress people, thought that was a good idea. Yeah. One day, I was with Stafford. I was in the Senator's elevator, just Stafford and I, we were going to a meeting, and door opens and

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the leader

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of the Senate comes on, Bob Dole, who was, was the head of the Senate at the time he came in. And they said, morning, Bob, morning, Bob. And then Stafford says, Bob, I'd like you to meet my archivist. This is Connie Gallagher, so I shook hands and stuff.

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And I heard later from archivists that Dole went back to his office, and he said to his chief of staff, "What is this, Stafford's got an archivist?" I'm the majority leader, and I don't have an archivist. So he hired an archivist. Everybody wanted one.

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They were the word was, they were afraid of archivists, because if an archivist arrived, there was a sign you were going to retire. So they didn't want any archivist coming around, because there was a sign you got to give you

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were all the memories, the records was everything, something that they wanted out. I mean, everything that you discovered about these men was fine to be published for other people to know.

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Yeah, things have changed a bit. Yeah, yeah, eventually, because those papers were closed initially, yeah, I worked on them, but, but they were not open to the public until, until after the senator retired. But somebody could go back in and look and say, Oh, I thought he was such and such, yeah, it looks like he didn't do that. He did this instead, exactly, oh yeah, yeah, not exactly the same history that had been public. Yeah, right, yeah. I mean, it's all there. All the papers are there. Do you remember a lot of what you found, or once you've documented it, then do you go on and, I mean, if somebody asked you about a date in Patrick Leahy's time in Washington. Could you remember that? Probably, probably not from so much, maybe some things. But yeah, yeah, it's,

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I'd be able to direct them to where, where they can find that in the papers, right? And then I do an inventory, which tells, tells them where they can find just about everything. But yeah, doing archives, you can't read a lot of stuff because you've got too much stuff to go through. You have to spot it. Yeah, exactly right. Yeah. You look, you look at a few things that are great. That's a judiciary committee. And you look, okay, no, that's the Commerce Committee, you know, you and then you get all the Commerce Committee stuff together, well, a judiciary and then you try to put it in some kind of, maybe chronological, roughly chronological order. And then you make a list of what's there that's really, what you're really documenting. It's like an index. It's like an index, exactly, yeah. And when Leahy retired, he sent something like, oh, $5 million dollars, or maybe even more than that, to UVM to process his papers. So UVM hired three archivists to work on those, to do your job. Yeah. I mean, the amount was enormous. It was over 2000 boxes

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still alive now, yeah, he is, yeah, yeah. He still is. He used to come to campus. I used to bmat him there we would chat and stuff,

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interesting. Man, nice to have gotten to know him absolutely. Yeah. The other thing I should mention with this is once

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the the

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knowledge of archivists to help with this. And this was the root of Leahy getting funding, not only for our state, but several others. They started at the Society of American Archivists. They started you and others. Started a Congressional Papers Roundtable. Connie mentioned that, yeah, so that's now in place. Oh, yeah. And there are a number of archivists working in Congress now. It's become the regular thing now for senators and congressmen to have archivists.

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That's a big thing. Anything else about archivists, before I go to Nancy's, what she was doing all this time? Well, I got it. I was a founder of the New England archivist. There was a Society of American Archivists. The New England people used to get together and have lunch or whatever, and we decided to create

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New England Archivist .

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Association in New England, and I was involved with that, and eventually I became president of that, and was involved in that for many, many years, hearing all this, I don't think most people know all this. So Nancy, meanwhile, you're teaching, and I want to hear something about how you started

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your interest in genetics, and I know that you wrote a book and you did research that was quite unique at the time, right? Well, I wasn't the only one, but Well, what happened is, after I came back with Connie from Illinois,

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I

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Because enrollment drops in the schools, I couldn't get the job back at Bellows Free Academy. So I was looking again, and it ended up they needed a biology teacher at Milton high school. So I took that job that fall. We came back and

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I taught there until

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1993 so it was from 1979

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or 78

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but what happened, I should mention,

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when we needed to find a house because we had a dog that was also contraband in our apartment on Prospect Street. We were seriously looking and skiing downhill was my big passion since I was a kid. And we also had acquired from another librarian, a sailboat. So we were sailing on Lake Champlain in the summers,

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which I loved, and

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we

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looked and looked, couldn't find anything that we wanted, and we were working with a realtor, and he said, I think I found the house for you.

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So we came just down the road from you, Jean, on River Road, and we had these gorgeous mountain views, and we had a brook at the back. We had the Browns River at the back of the property, and a cute little house and places for gardens, and it was set back from the road. Yes, that's a plus. It was. But when we moved there, everything was pitch black at night.

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Lehouillier's cows were our front yard, or his cornfield was our front yard. It was very quiet, except for the road. Well, the road was not well traveled that much. Then, if you recall, what year did you move there? 79

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I moved there in 73 Yeah, yeah. So the kids used to be able to walk on the road to school.

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There were horses. You know, people have horseback riding on the road.

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The the only time the there were serious speeders were at night, and the teenagers had marked a one mile strip on on

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River Road, and we're drag racing. I didn't know that. You didn't know that. You don't remember those two white stripes on the river road.

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I never knew that, I lived there for 15 years. I at that time I was teaching at Milton

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High School,

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and

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so I had a commute, and I eventually carpooled with a couple of people in Cambridge, and went that way.

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And I was teaching biology, but I wasn't one to just want to teach one subject all day. So I eventually got human anatomy, physiology, and I was very interested in outdoor education. So when I was at Illinois, I took physical education classes, including a ski class they held during the inter term, and Connie came with me. His cousin came out in Colorado, so

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I said I could coach a ski team, but that I'm not into basketball and all those sports. Well, they didn't have a ski team at Milton. I did end up coaching Junior High gymnastics because I had one gymnastics course,

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I was not the person to do it, but I did it. So

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I was back and forth to commuting to Milton,

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except in the summers, and then I could garden.

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So we developed gardens.

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And all that sort of thing.

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Our first neighbors were Stan and Cindy Hamlet,

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and when we first moved in,

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that's all right, they'd kind of let the

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boys, the Dowling sons, were living there. Their parents had moved from Underhill. The boys were kind of upset. because all their friends were still there, yeah. So they let the grass grow up this high. They thought there was a lot to do. So when we moved into that house, the power hadn't been turned on. We slept on the floor with our puppy,

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but she was one year old by then, and the first person and then Connie's parents said his mother called up the next morning, and he was kind of depressed. We said, what did we do?

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And she said Connie's mother was clairvoyant. She had some ESP. She said, I know when you first move into a place, you kind of wonder why you did it. It was our thoughts, exactly. And she said, It'll be all right. We'll come up and help.

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So we got our furniture delivered, which we had enough of then, and we

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and the first and they came up and helped us paint it. And Connie's father was an Irish farmer. The first thing we had to get was a rake and a scythe And he scythed all the long grass because he was used

to doing it ever since he was a child, and the front pasture and everything, and we built great big hay mounds the way they do with that. So he taught us a lot.

41:53
oh, the first person I met. It was the end of August, and here comes a small woman in a pickup truck comes up with a salad bowl and an aluminum pie plate,

42:09
and it's Ruth Sullivan Ruthie. Ruthie said, Well, we've got the barbecue coming up at the fireman's Labor Day barbecue. Do you want to make a salad or pie? I

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remember her doing that, yeah. Plus, she was always interested. Who are these new people? So I invited her in. I think your parents were there at the time. So she met his Irish brogue parents. They both had brogues and

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and I, of course, am a pie baker, so I said, I'll do the pie.

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So we became friends after that, you know, Ruth and good neighbors. Yeah, she was wonderful. And

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so,

42:55
so we continued to become part of the Underhill community and enjoyed it all. Lois Nassau would play at Sue Kusserow and Bill Lewis's house for the Christmas parties, and we went Christmas caroling down in the center, and we just loved it. Besides, Stan and Cindy were downhill skiers, and we wanted to move either near the lake or the mountains. And I'm glad we chose the mountains, because we would all go skiing together, you know, the Hamlets and us, and it was too crowded. We'd come home and take the dogs and go cross country skiing. It was perfect for me, for both of us, we loved it. So never any regrets for where you moved. We were so glad.

43:49
No, none at all. And over the years, you've had dogs. Oh yeah, you've had almost or they have. They all were golden. Yes, golden is your dog? Yeah. Because then the following, let's see. We were 79,80

44:05
81 I decided to breed

44:09
my golden retriever to have puppies,

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and that was a lot of work. It was the last time,

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but it was fun. So over the years of being where you are now. How many dogs have you had? We're on number nine and 10. Yes, we've always had. Sadly, dogs' lifespans are not the same as ours. Yeah, especially Golden Retrievers had

44:36
two, and then the Hamlets had the horse, Penny's horse, and they had Cecilia ,Russell's pig

44:45
and the goat Wilbur, yeah. And, of course, I'm an animal lover anyway, so, and then Cindy had chickens and all that. Do you see changes? And we had sheep for 30 years? Oh, my goodness. Tom Niles sold us two sheep. Yeah.

45:00
Because everyone was doing sheep then, yeah, so we had sheep for 30 years in the front pasture, which inspired us to build a barn. We were using Hamlet's little barn that had a pig in a pig barn. And then my father, who had retired from it, was big into building things, so we built a barn. We built a deck with a screen and porch. My mother, Connie, and I did most of the work. That's great, yeah, but I couldn't hammer a nail until they came up. Do you think so? Do either of you see any extreme changes, or are things pretty much the same as when you came? How do you see different things? Oh, yeah, it's become more

45:48
the road, which is why you and the Hamlets moved off the road. Yes, I had to. And more traffic, more traffic, speedy drivers. Yeah, noise, light, pollution has changed. It was pitch dark. You could go out and on.

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We called it a Milky Way night.

46:12
Still a beautiful it is piece of land that valley, the valley between the flats and the center

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 I interviewed three of the Lehouiliers, and they remembered 13 farms on that road between the cemetery and Underhill Center, and you live in one of the houses that was built later. It was not a farm? No, it was the O'Day farm.

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That was your house, a farm? No, it was part of Hamlet's house. That was the main farm, and that's where

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Jane Dowling grew up, right? She was, she grew up in that farm, and her parents owned the was it was she in O'Day I think,

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then she and her husband must have built the house. Yes,

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They built it. They had partitioned, partitioned it off the land, yes. And there was Hamlet's house and about 10 acres or something. And then Jane and

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her husband, the Dowlings, kept a strip. And I think Bevens, before Hamlets moved in, the Bevins lived in, yeah, that kind of farm. And then the next farm up was Lehouillier, right?

47
47:41
And then

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I'm not sure where

47:47
Marian Fay

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47:51
was a Mead. And then Marian had the farm across was that a farm, it was a farm.

48:03
got the name. I can't remember the name. Yeah. It was a very active farm, yeah, yeah. So, yeah, this was the farm belt of Underhill

48:12
here, right? People said that where we live was the apple orchard, because we are right, there are so many apple trees on our property, right? The apple orchard for the days, had planted a big apple orchard where our land is and you have you kept do they? Do you produce apples? Yes,

48:32
We still have one. We still have three of the old ones from that time, but they all receded back between the low point back in the river area. So there are a lot of wild animals. The soil and the land is wonderful in that whole valley, and then you've got the river, the brook way back the edge, yeah, and then the mountain and hills going up on the other side. It's like a beautiful setting,

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beautiful place to live. Yeah, yeah,

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anything. I think we could talk about Underhill forever,

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the place you wanted to go back to. I wanted to go to your book at one point, but you could tell us only what you want to tell us about. Okay, well, being married to the quintessential humanist.

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Our conversations about science and history and literature and the humanities continued over our marriage.

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There were a number of my students who wanted an Advanced Biology course, and Milton didn't want it. They were always defeating school budgets. They did not want any new courses and all of that. So a friend of mine, Joey Cohen, who taught biology also,

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We decided to offer an evening division course.

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Course in Advanced Biology.

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And we decided to

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really kind of, instead of teaching Advanced Placement biology, where you just teach to their test, we decided to do some basic units, including, like, history of science and that sort of thing, which Connie got me interested in, and environmental things, and then we did a whole thing on DNA research.

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So

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the course that or Connie came and we did a course on history, or did a section on why did evolution and genetics

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arise when they did, and what did that have to do

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with history and literature and all that . So we did a cross disciplinary section on evolution and genetics.

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And so I started reading avidly. And of course, these students were very bright. They remembered all their literature and

51:07
world history from the ninth grade. And so

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I really was less interested in history than I always liked. How do cells work? How do genes work, that sort of thing. And so that was the birth of my interest in cross-disciplinary work, trying to build bridges at the secondary level between science and math and history of social studies and all of that, and English literature and the arts. So I had this real interest in cross disciplinary work at the secondary level, and it was a real success. And I at that point, a man that worked in Special Collections, Kevin Dann, had written some articles on a couple of articles in Vermont history on Eugenics in Vermont, and eugenics was well known in other parts of the country, but not in Vermont. And was Kevin who had unearthed,

who had stored all the records from the eugenics survey, had unearthed them, and they got moved to the State Archive because they have been stored by Professor Henry Perkins, who was head of the Eugenics survey of Vermont, who was also the chairman of the UVM zoology department. And taught, as was typical during the early

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three decades of the century, they taught eugenics, or building better people from genetics, from

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the rebirth of Mendelian genetics in the first Oh, starting around after 1900 to 1910

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genetics became a Great big thing, Mendelian genetics, and they were using it in agriculture, but then they kind of transferred it to people. So I said, this is too good to

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pass up. So, you know, we dealt with the eugenics movement also, but I knew nothing about eugenics history, really. So that was kind of my education and

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what happened at that point in

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in my interest in the cross disciplinary things, I decided I was due for a sabbatical, and I wanted to take a sabbatical in interdisciplinary work between science and the humanities and history, looking at schools who have done some really interesting work in that department, and taking classes at UVM. So I took history classes where i i did papers that dealt with history of medicine and biology mostly, and I took history of science there,

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but at the end of my sabbatical,

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I had to go back and teach for at least two years.

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So I got convinced by the head of the History Department, oh, to take a master's in history. So I started that, and I wanted to go have time at Milton. And nobody at that time, Milton went through a real conservative period where they got a school board that was sort of the tip of the iceberg of what we're seeing with the Maga right now, where you're not allowed to teach reproduction, you're not allowed to teach evolution, you know they were and you're not allowed to let your students do journaling.

55:00
I'm writing across the curriculum. If I showed them a video on the migration of wildebeest, I wanted them to journal about their reactions. I wanted them to write as well.

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And

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so we weren't supposed to do that even so.

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And I couldn't get anyone to even read my big report from the administration.

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I couldn't get to the school board. I couldn't even get anyone to read my big report on the sabbatical, and I was on a K through 12 curriculum committee, and I was also one of the teachers who

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they hired a hatchet man who wanted to harass a little bit out of the position,

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just because they did not want to do any cross disciplinary stuff, because they were afraid something like evolution or reproduction would be snuck into the curriculum. In fact, they even

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vetoed the entire K through 12

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history and social studies because they had a course called global history, and that was communistic. So I said, Okay, I will. I want to go back to where it's saying. And I asked for a part time position. I said, I'll even take the afternoon classes that no one wants and continue my history degree in the morning.

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And on the last day of school, they denied me. They were going to give it to me, but they didn't. So I left, and I went back full time and I was a teaching assistant for Hank Steffens

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And I started working, and all my projects were bridging that gap between

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history and

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and the sciences. So you were a teaching assistant for Holocaust studies too. Yeah. So what happened is I was going to do a course on environmental history, and I did, Connie and history professor Sam Hand, they teamed on a lot of courses using

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archives and manuscripts from UVM.

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And so I did my project on the history of act 250

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and it was, it was supposed to be a bibliographic history from clear from wherever, and I got totally fascinated in how public policy and science affects our environmental history. Well, right in the middle of that is the eugenics survey of Vermont, yes, of course, and the Vermont commission on country life. So at that point I had, I had actually started a thesis on diseases in history, because I was also very

interested in epidemiology. But then I said, Oh, here's that whole archive. And I found I loved working with primary source material and government documents, because they reveal so much. So I decided to switch my topic to the history of the Eugenics survey at Vermont, which was, for me, was perfect because it dealt with special education. It dealt with the history of social work. It and it helped deal with all those students that you know schools and students who have handicaps learning English and all of that kind of thing, and so I figured, with my interest in

58:53
history and with how they were using science to try to

58:58
pass legislation that would prevent certain people from having children.

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And I said, this is a perfect subject for my background and for my coursework. And so you put it together in a book. Well, what happened is, when you're in your 40s and you go back and start researching, you don't do a 100 page chapter of a book, you do so I had a very giant thesis, yes, one of the biggest theses.

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So I went to defend and then they also wanted me to work with Doris Bergen, who was head of Holocaust studies,

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as a teaching assistant. So I was a TA for the Holocaust class, they were doing eugenics in Germany. So that worked out, right? So that gave me a lot of insight there. And she became I asked her to be the head of my

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my committee for my thesis defense. But then my advisor was Donna Brown,

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She had been hired in history. She had done this whole history of New England, this longitudinal thing on Hill Farms and that sort of thing, which fit very well.
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She was my advisor, and she was great. She gave it to me for free. So my thesis committee said, You know what

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I said, which chapter out of this

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The thesis you want me to do? Because I wasn't going. We had no PhD program here in Vermont, I would have had to go to McGill or Massachusetts. And I said, I'm too old,

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and so I'm not too old, but I just didn't want to try. I didn't want to do that. Yeah. So they said, Okay, fix it up,

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get it bound and all that, and then try to get it published. Yeah. So that's what I did. And knew what the name of it was, the book was Breeding Better Vermonters, the Eugenics project in the Green Mountain State,.It came out in 1999 and of course, historians working on eugenics all over the country were shocked by eugenics in Vermont. We didn't think they were doing anything there, so kind of a splash with the Boston Globe. I started getting phone calls from all over the country. Well, now people still do talk about this as Yeah, something that we Yeah. And there is a young woman who's written a sequel kind of to it that deals more with sterilization. But I'd asked, well, how many people were sterilized, and I'd only have the published amount. And of course, the Abnaki community kind of claimed that history is only their history. And I so I got to know after that, I got to know many

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of them. I got to know a number of people who had been targeted by the eugenics survey, among them

1:02:1
Abnaki. People are still alive?. No, no, well, they're probably not. They were targeted then

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in that history realizes eugenics never went away. It just kind of changed form. Well, there's the controversy about Mead chapel at Middlebury, right? That's one of the things that happens is, and anyone, supposedly, they advocated for genetics and so, well he did there, yeah. And they're people, not supposedly, but there are people who want the chapel name changed, because, right? Well, they did that at UVM Bailey. He was

1:02:52
 was head of he also got all the grant funding for the eugenics survey through philanthropists at the time, Bailey of the Bailey Library. Yeah, she was very involved with the So, what's the name now? It's the Howe library now, which we think is funny. We said, Why didn't you take Howe off? Because Howe was

1:03:18
the editor of the Burlington Free Press. And he was all for eugenics. He published all these letters showing somebody more.

1:03:28
 just make it the UPM library, we're going to wind down, and again, it's going to be gone. Okay? So that was and then I continued from that, working with other people, looking more at Burlington neighborhoods and a woman named Judy Dow and I became great friends because she grew up in the north end of Burlington. So we had done lectures together and did a lot of work on eugenics history. I think both of you are examples of people in Underhill who don't know you, assume you're a couple that are living quietly on the River road, and they don't know you've both been doing all these things. This is wonderful.

1:04:15
 I want to give you both a chance if you feel like there's something you need to say to the Underhill Historical Society, or something about something we've left out of what you would have been talking about, anything you want to add. Well, we first moved to Underhill, there was a gasoline crisis going on. There was a shortage of gasoline. Gasoline prices were expensive. So there was a carpool, and the famous River road carpool, yeah, and it was Stan Hamlet. Peter Seybolt, Tom Niles, Larry Shelton, Dave Osborne.

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Rob Gordon and Uri Behun, and me and Michael McKnight, there were a number of people who just took a ride once in a while, you know, but I had this big Buick . One time I had eight people in the car.

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We always got my Dad's hand me down, and you all became friends, and we all became friends with them. So that's how we got into Underhill. So we used to have dinner with them, and then we'd go to parties. And, you know, an Underhill thing that carpool? Yeah, it was absolutely because it touched them. Every part of Underhill. Nancy, anything you want to add I do when we first when Tom Niles sold us a pregnant or two pregnant sheep,

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we were going to have to put in fence poles, or we were going to pasture them

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in the front pasture.

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And

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Gael Boardman came by, and he said, Oh, looks like you guys are putting in fencing.

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And I knew Gael Boardman because he was working on a guidance counseling degree or something,

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and he had observed one of my classes at Milton, he sat in

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for a week or so when I was teaching human reproduction,

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I remember,

1:06:32
and so we got to know each other. So when he found out it was me, he knew me, and he got to know Connie, and Connie's parents were there, and they were trying to set a fence and he said, You know what, I've got a fence post hole digger. I'll come and dig all the post holes. So he came down with his machine and did that. And then he said, You know, I've got a whole bunch of fence posts if you want to come up

1:07:02
and get them? And we said, Sure, or So Connie and his father went up, and we thought we were going to buy them for a few bucks a piece, or whatever. We went up to get fence posts. We drove up the

1:07:18
bumpy way ,lower English Settlement . Yes, the heart was in my mouth the whole time. Yeah, yeah. I know, I know that. Yeah. And he so we loaded up, helped load up the truck, and he wouldn't take anything. He wouldn't. He would not. He said, any money, I'll, I'll get a favor from you sometime, yeah?

And we said, oh my gosh, or what? Yeah, there was our introduction Underhill, right? Everyone helped each other. Craig Walker, who used to plow a driveway, he'd come down some days when there wasn't a lot of snow on the driveway, and he charged us half, or he wouldn't charge us anything. He'd send us a bill and say, $2

1:08:04
not much snow, because he only charges $5 a time. Yeah? Well, that changed. Inflation has changed

1:08:12
for not surprising. That was unreal. So that's how we got Crick Walker, not Craig Walker. Crick Walker, Craig's father, was so nice, and Dowlings had had him. And I think Craig Walker has recently become a senior citizen, senior.

1:08:31
Yes, he's a maple sugar super senior, So you both are super seniors. And thank you so much. This has been a wonderful interview, and I'm going to end it now.