

Contributed to Maine Memory Network by Swans Island Historical Society

MMN #

Date: Interview recorded in 2010 about events ca. 1978

Description: Interview with Swans Islander Kevin Staples about softball on Swans Island

My name is Kevin Staples and I have been a resident of Swan's Island, lived here all my life so far. I love it here and never think of living anywhere else.

The island started up a softball team and we started out we was kids playing in a back field with make shift bases and the worst of equipment that you could imagine, but it turned into something. We used to go to Stonington on the weekends and we'd have pick-up games with the teams from Stonington. We did that for a couple of years and then we started getting invited to some tournaments there, they were having on the mainland and we thought we were the most awesome team there was around. And no one had ever heard of Swan's Island and we ended up placing in the tournament. I think we came in like third in the tournament. Then we got involved in a league up in Ellsworth and that inquired getting on the ferry boat, renting a van, putting the whole team in it and going to Ellsworth, playing a night game at 7 or 8 o'clock, getting in the van and coming back, getting on a lobster boat and driving back to Swan's Island.

We did this at least twice a week and we lost a lot of time and a lot of money in the fishing business because softball came about the same time that lobstering was really good. We used to have tournaments on the island and teams from the mainland would come on and they would tent out or stay at people's houses and the island people would show up we had as many as three hundred people at the ball games. And people would set up on the hill with the ball field and watch the games. It was just such a family oriented lifestyle. We did everything as a family, all the ball players and their wives and the kids. We would go to a tournament somewhere and have picnics together.

Probably the best fans that we ever had, there were four people that really stand out as Sheldon Carlson and Betty, of course, the other two was Georgie Tainter and his wife Lena. They use to travel with us. They got a camper and would put it on the back of their truck and they went everywhere with us. Never missed a game. They liked going with us and traveling with us and just setting down and enjoying a meal with us. They loved being around people.

Georgie, one time we were going to Vermont to play in a tournament (laugh) and Georgie missed, old George missed a turn on the highway. So instead of turning around he decided to go backwards and he was going backwards to get back to the lane, he was doing about 60 miles an hour (laugh) and he got pulled over by a cop. First ticket he's ever had in his life and all the state trooper could say to Georgie was "Who are you trying to kill?" and (laugh) but we all got a really good kick out of that cause Georgie just was such a kind of dry humor type guy but it didn't bother him. But we always use to see Georgie and always asked him if had gotten picked

up lately by the cops. That was some funny times. We had some memorable things that happen that probably I shouldn't talk about (big laugh) so I won't but.....

Sonny Sprague was the pitcher on our team and I think I have the most respect for Sonny of anybody that ever played on the softball team. He was big 'grizzle' bear, standing on the mound. And I saw Sonny one time we had to play five or six games back to back and Sonny pitched. They had to actually put an ice bag on top of his head with his hat on top of it he was so hot, it was like 90 degrees and Sonny pitch every game. Sonny was an amazing, amazing athlete for his age and his size but he had such a desire to compete. He was very competitive. And I think on his leg if he ever will ever show you, he still got an indent on one of his legs where he got hit with a softball one time. And that's the truth. He showed it to me last year and it's still there but I told him it's a good reminder. (laugh) We ended going to the state championships and we came in third in the state one year. We should have won it, and we all said we should have won it. Then the next year we won another division championship and we went and played in the New England championships which was held in NH. We came in third in the New England's. And we ended on that note after playing about 20 years of playing softball. Everybody got older and got married but the memories you can't imagine the memories that we had. I don't remember the money I lost the day I played ball, but I'll always remember the memories. I miss it. I do. It was so much fun.