

Contributed to Maine Memory Network by Swans Island Historical Society

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Date: Interview recorded in 2010 about events ca. 1945 and 1960s

Description: Interview with Swans Islander Marion Stinson about life on the island, ca. 1945 and 1960s

Interview with Marion Stinson "Jill of all trades" about life on the island around 1945 and 1960s when baiting trawling hooks

My name is Marion Stinson, and my mum came from Stonington. You know, she was just a housewife. For a while, till my dad got sick, then she took in washings. She took in eleven washings a week for a dollar and a half a basket. I'd go with her and we'd go clean summer people's houses. We'd have to walk, no car, no nothing. And I remember they had always had canned soups there. It was a treat, 'cause we could have a can of soup, you know, for dinner. When in fact, we'd snatch it. My mum and I, we'd be gone all day, and we'd go home and she'd have to find something for supper. I've had more potato soups than a cat had kittens. Just potatoes, and pork fat, and onions and water. But we survived.

But anyway we used to go berrying; blueberrying and raspberrying and my aunt would put it up, you know, she'd make the jelly and the jams and everything. My uncle had a big garden, and we always would go to the garden and, you know, get anything we wanted: potatoes, peas, carrots, and anything like that and she always would put it up. And we have it for the winter. And I know my mum used to put up eggs. We did about everything there was to do. As I grew up, I baited trawls, and I think there was about eight hundred or nine hundred hooks we'd have to bait. We'd get a dollar for them. And we'd do this all day long. I've been clamming. I went clamming for two years, night and day, to keep the family going. So it's been kind of a... (laughter) well a funny poor place you know, for me. I go on the shore and I gather different things to eat from the shore, like goose grass greens and sea spinach, which is excellent. It looks like an oak leaf, sort of. And it's grey on the back and green, and you just break it off and cook it, or you put it in salads or anything, and it's, it's delicious. It really is delicious. I have it all summer long. I like to go, I like to do that. I just like to find things, you know, like that.

And of course periwinkles... You can cook periwinkles. And they're delicious. But you have to sit there and pick for hours. I don't know, my life hasn't been as pleasant in older years as it was when I was a child. But I've managed. A lot of times if I didn't have anything in the house I'd, as I say, I'd go clamming. But I think that's why my back bothers me today (laughing). I really can't kick too much. Here I am, seventy-six. Though life has been hard it's been, it's showed me a lot of things. It's give me an incentive to help people. And I like that.