

Contributed to Maine Memory Network by Swans Island Historical Society

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Date: Interview recorded in 2010 about events from ca. 1930-1960

Description: Interview with Swans Islanders about their childhood growing up on the island

Interview with Swans Islanders about growing up on the island, 1930-1960

We entertained ourselves. Cold as it was, we always played outdoors.

In the winter we used to build forts, snow forts.

Oh, we went ice skating.

We call it sledding today, we called it sliding, but it's all the same thing.

When we were kids, we lived dangerously. In the wintertime, we used to take sleds and start at the top of that hill, and we'd post someone down on the road to stop traffic, if we weren't able to stop in time. And we would go down that hill, going about ninety miles an hour, and we would hit the banking like that, and fly almost completely over the road and land on the other side (laughter).

There used to be ball games. And we'd go up there and play until dark, and you couldn't see the ball half the time. You were just hoping it wasn't going to hit you on the head somewhere.

We just, we were outside so much.

We played hopscotch by the hour.

We loved to play horseshoe.

And hula hoop.

Just hours upon hours.

Just rowing, drifting or hauling what traps that I had. Or hiking the shores, being out in the woods. That was my favorite things. Every single Sunday we would get into a boat, thirteen foot skiff, we'd go out and have a picnic somewhere. When you went out on a picnic, it was a Sunday, you probably went to church first, you got in the boat, you'd dig clams or something, have a big clam chowder, a big fire, kids would go swimming, and someone would cut their foot on a shell and cry.

One thing I used to love to do, that was I went swimming in the ocean in the summer, of course. Every single day, as long as it was high tide I was down there swimming. But I used to love it in there, once you got in, and just swim and swim and swim.

Used to have a good time, all get together, be five, six of us hanging out together.

All the kids in the neighborhood was my friend.

We used to go on these ungodly long hikes down on the back shore and walking for the fun of it to see what we could see and so forth.

We were just like brothers. And we'd call up each other, 'let's go down to the shore and play boats,' 'let's go skating,' something like that. And we were together all the time.

We lived next door to each other. We spent every waking moment together when we weren't in school, you know. Play paper dolls for hours and hours, days and days. Everything we did, just together all the time.

We'd just get together and walk the roads, and there was a woman that had a plum tree, and we'd wait to after dark to see if we could sneak in and get a plum. We'd crawl. But the minute we got near that tree and our hands would go up she'd knock on that window, 'Boys, boys, don't touch my plums.' We'd get up and run.

We were devils, I must say we were.

We had to make our own fun.

We would build brush camps. Our horses were nothing but a lathe with a piece of rope tied around it. And we'd just ride them around the range forever, down in the back woods and on the back shores of the island here. And that's where we played.

I'd go from tree to tree making a little playhouse. And that was like carrying cardboard boxes or crates and leaning them up against a tree and making cupboards and turning things into tables, playing on the ledges and gathering things, and you know, setting my dolls up and cooking and making believe all that stuff.

Our cousin Jerry Orcutt came along one time when we were playing house and he said he was going to make some rabbit turd tea (laughter). He went around the ledges, picked up these little dried up rabbit poops and put them in a cup of water. (laughter) He let them sit in the sun until they'd get warm, and he actually drank some of it. (laughter) I thought we were going to choke to death.

I did grow up enjoying using my imagination and making do with what I had. You know, we didn't have much to do. We made our own fun.