

## Interview with Walter Lewis Kirsch & family at the New Boston Historical Society 9/29/2021

### 2021 INTERVIEW ATTENDEES

*Kirsch family:* Walter Lewis Kirsch, Walter's wife Dorothy, and some of their children: Sarah, Rebecca, Walter Frederick, and ? [Transcriber's note: I couldn't tell which Kirsch daughter was talking so I've labeled them all "Daughter", but Rebecca was the most talkative.]

*Historical Society:* Mary Atai, Lisa and Dan Rothman, Sylvia Chancey, Don and Pattie Grosso

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*Moderator Lee Nyquist with Walter Kirsch, June 2014*

**Background:** In June of 2014, the Historical Society had an event in the Community Church titled "Old Timers' Tales - Memories of New Boston" with 11 invited guests. During the Q&A, a 12<sup>th</sup> old timer stood up and introduced himself as Walter Kirsch. He'd brought with him a photo of the old Kirsch box mill that his father had run. The Historical Society resolved then and there that we'd better sit down with Walter and record his stories. It took us only seven years to do so.

Who were the Kirsches of New Boston? They're descendants of Herman Karl Kirsch (1845-1927) who emigrated with his wife Theresa and their children from Germany to Lawrence MA

c.1879. In the 1920 census, Herman and Theresa were living in New Boston with their sons Robert and Fred and their wives and children – 12 people in the same household. The Kirsch brothers Robert and Fred were described as “farmers”; we believe that they lived in the Summit Farm House at the top of Clark Hill Road, which they operated as a summer boarding house. Fred (1880-1949) and his wife Gertrude had a son Walter Otto Kirsch (1905-1991) who married Ruth Evelyn Ramsey (1908-2000). Walter and Ruth had a son Walter (whom we interviewed) and daughters Nancy and Donna. Donna’s daughter Jen Brown still lives in New Boston, where she is a selectperson. Walter O. Kirsch was a New Boston selectman from 1968-1973.



Where did the Kirsches live? If you drive south from the village down the Mont Vernon Rd (Route 13), just past the entrance to the new Post Office and Library is a large house on your left, near New Boston Pizza. This is described in the interview as the Paul Allen house; Walter Oscar rented this for his wife and children. W. O. Kirsch worked in the Sutherland mill that was across the street, and eventually bought the mill from Sutherland. All that remains of the mill today is its foundation, just north of the river. If you cross the bridge going south, the first house on the right was built by Walter using lumber from his mill. His next-door neighbor was Will Dodge, who lived in a house that was torn down only a few years ago. Fred and Gertrude left the Summit Farm House and lived in the village.

Mary Atai: Your father, who was the selectman and all that? He's Walter Otto? Yes. Okay. And then you're Walter Lewis.

Walter Kirsch: I'm Walter Lewis.

Mary: L E W I S. And your son is Walter Frederick? Yes. Is there another Walter?

Walter: No, no, no, no.

Dan Rothman: Okay. By way of introduction, Mary Atai is the vice-president here, and she and I write a newspaper column. So the real reason you're here is we need to come up with a story, once a month; one of us has to write something. We have to come up with a story for the senior newsletter, too. Most important is that when the school kids come to the Historical Society, they would rather that we tell them stories than boring history. So your memories are just so valuable!

Walter: [continuing a previous discussion] About the Bartlett house... My mother and father and I went up there one day. Ernest Bartlett was working in the lumber mill and Dad wanted to see a new television. Nobody had had a television, you know, so we went up there. My father was nuts about getting a television, from Derby's [Department Store] over in Peterborough. In fact, I just saw something about Derby just recently; the store there was off the main street over by the Guernsey hall [Professional building]. Um, Derby said that he could guarantee that we would get television because he didn't know that we're in a bowl here, which...

Mary: Derby was the man who owned the business?

Walter: Derby was the store. Oh yeah. It was a big store in Peterborough. In fact, I think it's still there.

Daughter: And I think when we were there in Peterborough last year, I think you pointed it out .

Mary: So it had TVs or appliances too, or...

Daughter: It was a department store.

Walter: I don't remember, but he got it. Derby was going to make sure that Dad got his television, which very few people, I don't know if any people in town had television but Dad wanted it. And we had been up to see Ernest Bartlett's television, with the little tube.

Daughter: I wonder what that cost.

Walter: And so he tried it. Of course you got nothing except static.

Mary: When did you say this was, in the forties or the early 50s?



Walter: The early, mid forties. 46, 47.

Mary: What did your dad want to see so badly on the TV?

Walter: What was it? It wasn't much back in those days.

Mary: So it wasn't anything specific.

Walter: I saw it up there [at Bartlett's] and you could make out things on it. I can't remember, you know...

Mary: Milton Berle or something.

Walter: I don't think he was on yet.

Daughter: Do you remember what you watched?

Walter: I have no idea. So he [Derby] came over and he set up the television on a place and there was nothing, nothing at all. Just snow, snow, snow. I don't know if you remember back in the old days when snow was the most prevalent thing on TV.

Walter: But this one [antenna] was going to be, after it didn't come in, in our house. Somebody said, well, if we can run an antenna and bring it down to the house, we can probably get a little more reception than what we have now. And I can't remember if what Rebecca said, we ran an antenna past Will Dodge's old house up on the mountain on the right hand side of Mont Vernon road, going up Hogback there and brought it down over Will's house, down to our place. At first, he put an antenna up on top of the saw mill, the lumber mill.



Walter: That was a Marden saw mill. And that was the O. A. Sutherland saw mill and my father bought it from Sutherland's widow after Sutherland died. I don't know if he bought it, but I think Mrs. Sutherland just gave it to him and it ran across the river. {looking at an old photo} Here's the Piscataquog River right here. Right across the river over, we had a tennis court down here and up onto a place and got hooked up to the TV.

Mary: You lived at Tingley's, right? [First house south of the river on the Mont Vernon Road.] Yes. Okay. Yeah. But now when you, when you were a little boy, where did you, where did your dad live?

Walter: Right across the street. On the other side. It was Paul Allen's, the house.

Mary: Okay. This is the mill. Okay. So you're over here where Don [Grosso] owns all the property now where the post office is all about. Okay. So you ask where you grew up and your dad, uh, where's Lisa right here, you know, Will O. Dodge.

Lisa: This is Don Grosso and Pattie Grosso [who now own the Allen/Kirsch/Whynall house]. They just happened to be walking by. And they're like, why are you all here on a Wednesday? The cars? He knew your father. And he has a story about your father.

Walter: Now what's your last name?

Don Grosso: Grosso. Your father and Billy Barss one night came up to the house. So anyway, uh, one night, uh, Walter and Billy, but they had some libations [inaudible]

Walter: I do believe that

Daughter: There are some good, there's some really good stories and stories that I'm used to with drinking. I mean, Grammie and I got pretty close after Grandpa died. We got pretty close talking about...

Walter: Yeah, they used to... I'd hear them talking about Wonderland Races [a greyhound track in Beverly MA?] You must've thought all they did was go to the races! My father talking about he and Cecil Marshall who lived right next door to the store [Marshall's on Mill Street]. They went down to Wonderland and, uh, they got on the other side of Manchester and the scotch had given out. So they stopped at a, um, Dr. Green's, you know, Dr. Green's? Dr. Green's is what now is the New Hampshire liquor store. It was Dr. Green's because they wrap every, if you bought a bottle, they wrapped it up in a little green paper, wrapped it up. And I guess the, uh, I guess the scotch was gone by the time they get down to Wonderland. [laughter]

Walter: And I can remember that was the day that they really hit it big. Yeah. Coming back, they got into a wreck and the car was brought up to Lawson Smith's garage and parked down there. And it was there for some time before anybody got into it. And either Dad or Lawson got into the backseat and was pulling the backseat out and dollar bills, \$10 and \$20 bills just kept flying out – they had so much money. They had hit something down at Wonderland that night; they were playing progressive.

Talking about the Paul Allen house, that was probably 35, 40 acres, all the way down to where the new library is now. Yeah. We paid \$12 a month for it. Yeah. And that was one week's pay. And my dad, and back in the forties, that's what you got, \$12 for the 48 hours of work. And that was what Mr. Sutherland's wage was at that time, \$12 a month. I've liked some of the old days, but I don't think about \$12 a month...

Mary: So, they call it Kirsch's Mill. Did Sutherland own it? And your dad worked for him and then your dad bought it? What happened to it?

Walter: Well, that's a question here, you know, it's so interesting. I loved the mill. I worked there.

Lisa: [shows Walter a postcard] You may not be able to see that Mr. Kirsch, but this was made into postcard. It says "W. O. Kirsch, Saw Mill, New Boston."

Walter: That's nice. I wish you had the picture on this side of "The safest place on this side of Boston" – used to be a big sign, probably 10 by 20, posted right there. It was drawn for Babson. ["If World War III comes, property here should sell for 3 times present prices" was a typical sign posted by Roger Babson's real estate agent E.A. Beals.]

Mary: We never knew where it was located.

Walter: So kind of over in front of our house... And the sign got mysteriously, uh, I don't know, uprooted at some time. And, I guess my father did not like what Babson was doing here – who was the realtor here, did he have buying up all the houses?

Speaker 7: Beals.

Walter: Beals? Is that right? Yeah. Dad didn't like that.

Dan: So what did you make in the mill?

Walter: Actually at the end of the last 8, 10, 12 years of the mill's operation, it was a box factory. Yeah. Up in the upper floor, we used to have a nailer. And, in the fall and late summer fall, we started making apple boxes for, you know, back then there were probably 8, 10, 12 places around here. Of course Fred Cann was the biggest one around here. He [Walter O.] would make these boxes in the fall and sell them. And, uh, I remember they bought either 15 to 20 cents for the boxes and I see them at auctions now, and they're asking five, eight, ten dollars for a box! [Laughs.]

Walter: I look on them sometimes to see if that might be one that I nailed! Before that it was just the lumber mill. They did the people to bring in to stuff. They would cut it and plane it and do whatever they wanted to do. He had novelty siding machines and there he had three or four different bandsaws in there. The mill was just beautiful.

Dan: Did you use water power or electric?

Walter: Well, at the end it was all powered by the 3<sup>rd</sup> New Hampshire dam. The 1<sup>st</sup> New Hampshire dam was right here [near the museum]. The second dam was up in back of where the library is now. I never saw that because that was gone before I, and then going up the Piscataquog River, they had this third dam and I, on the way down, I said to my daughters, I said, before I go to Florida, which is in three weeks, I want to walk up the walk up the canal way. It's all dry of course now. And see if the dam still looks the same. There's a concrete dam up there. Yes. The 3<sup>rd</sup> New Hampshire. That's what I used to know it as.

Don G.: There's not much left of the second one [by the new library].

Walter: You can see where it was. And that canal, there was a canal that came right through the field. Well, it was probably in progress where the library is now. And you know,

Don G.: That was stone the whole way.

Walter: I don't remember. I investigated quite a bit while I was young, probably 8, 10, 12.

Mary: So your, your grandfather lived on Molly Stark Lane. I believe he's the one that sold it to Jeannie McCreary.

Daughter: I remember when they moved from that house that they had that auction.

Mary: Was it, do we know who they sold it to?

Daughter: I remember being at the auction. I remember sitting in the front yard and they were auctioning off all the stuff in the house.

Mary: The house on Molly Stark Lane.



Daughter: Yes. The original where he [her dad] grew up. And I got something out of it [the auction]. I remember you said we could, we could get something. And I remember I had

this wooden thing with the numbers, with the little beads and stuff. Yeah. And I remember getting...

Mary: That had belonged to your grandfather?

Walter: [About the dam:] If it's still doing the same, if it's still backing up water, like it was when I went there probably 5, 6, 8 years ago, we walked up the canal. At the end of the work day, somebody would walk up a half mile. We'd walk up there and shut down the water. So the water would back up, you know, and have enough water for the next day.

Dan: When were you living in New Boston? Were you born here?

Walter: Yes. In 1932. And I stayed in that house on the left-hand side, going out, uh, the Allen house until 41 to 42. My father built the other house right at the start of World War II. So probably I, in fact, I think that was the first new house built in New Boston in so many years. And I can remember he was in the mill business and he, so he was getting lumber for it. I know he always told me he built a house for under \$2,000. He had eight rooms with the lathing on it, and then plastered over it. A hundred dollars for doing eight rooms.

Mary: Now, which house is this?

Walter: Yeah, that's the Tingley house. [Mont Vernon Rd just south of the bridge]

Dan: Walter, when did you leave New Boston?

Walter: I went to the University of New Hampshire for two years. 1950-51. Then I got into the Mass College of Pharmacy in Longwood Avenue, Boston from 53, 54, 55, 56. And I was still coming back until 53, 54. And then we met, I met a lady down in Boston. By the time I got out of school, we already had two children.

Mrs. K: He said he wanted to keep out of the war. So we just kept having children.

Walter: Yeah, I know Telfa[?] kept sending me, you've got to update your W2 or whatever they call it. And I said, well, I got another one. They said, well, okay, we'll see you next year.

Speaker 9: [inaudible]

Dan: After 1950 is the point. I mean, Walter will visit it in the fifties, but he was no longer living in New Boston.

Walter: And during that time, the mill suddenly disappeared. It was such a part of my life. And hold on. Why I never inquired from Dad? Why, whatever happened, that's a history that I would like to find out. [inaudible]

Mrs. K: Somehow they thought maybe he wasn't interested in the mill. He never discussed it with us. And all of a sudden...



Walter: I mean, that was a lot of mill to tear it down and get rid of all that.

Daughter: Kind of obsessed with the story. [laughs]

Walter: With these horse sheds right over here behind the Baptist church [the church next to the Town Hall was taken down in 1944]... Dad bought them and brought them over here [to the mill] and put them up there and look at it. They look so nice. Boxes, boxes, boxes, market boxes. See, we had them stored down there to dry and for the people to come up there, it was market boxes. Cornetta had a place down in the Boston waterfront. And they used to drive up in a big rig and load up market boxes and they'd take them back to Boston.

Lisa: I'm going to give this to you. [A photo]

Walter: Boy. I appreciate that.

Lisa: It says here, let's see. "Walter Kirsch became the owner in 1939 and was the last person to operate this mill, which ceased in the early 1950s. Ted Fiske worked for Kirsch in the mill and lived in the house by the mill. The mill operated on water power. However, Kirsch had diesel engine when he needed the extra power. The old horse sheds behind the old Baptist church, removed to the riverbank and used for drying sheds. At the upper dam was the old swimming hole where Red Cross lessons were held in this summer. This is now where John Piper built and calls it Jomer pond.

Walter: Everything true.

Lisa: The old mill stood empty until it was taken down by Piper in 1975.

Daughter: It was that Piper. Laurie Piper's husband. Yeah. His wife is still there. I think Laurie Piper is still alive.

Walter: Now you're saying things that I have no recollection.

Lisa: So somebody named Piper. Hmm.

Daughter: Well you found out who took it down.

Walter: It was 75, 75. Wow. Geez. You know, we were building a family of nine...

Lisa: You have nine children. Oh, did you get that on tape?

Mary: I got, they were very busy!

Walter: Now, what did you say about the swimming hole?

Lisa: Uh, let's see. At the upper dam was the old swimming hole where Red Cross lessons were held.

Walter: Um, but we had Red Cross lessons right here. Right by the big ice house. In fact, I learned to swim right there in the river. Yeah, of course it was backed up. It was a nice, nice dam there [by the Red Mill]. At one time we had a wharf built out into the river, probably 12, 15 feet. And I can remember Zeb Matheson. Oh yes. And he would dive into that river and swim across and come out on the other side. And I said, wow, look at that. How the hell could he do that? So I learned to dive and I can remember I dove down and I hit, hit my head on the bottom.

Dan: So Frederick Kirsch was the first in your family to live in New Boston. Where did he come from?

Walter: Lawrence. Lawrence/Methuen. Uh, yeah, I think he came, you know, during that the epidemic, you know, the... what's the 1918. Yeah. I can remember him telling me people down in Lawrence, they weren't going out at nighttime. They didn't do anything at nighttime. They came out and picked up the bodies off the houses, set them out. They picked up the bodies and took them to the undertakers or whatever they did. And yeah, that was how bad the problem was at that time.

Dan: So he wanted to escape the flu. What did he do when he got to New Boston?

Walter: Oh, he built the place up on the hill up there – did we discover it was Summit Farm?

Lisa: Yes. This is must be the place at the end of Clark Hill Road. Right before you get to Francestown.

Walter: It was up past the Danes. It was up past the Danes and god – it's way at the top of the hill.

Dan: I wonder, so somewhere up at the top of Clark hill is where Frederick Kirsch built a house or bought a house, the Summit House?

Daughter: Summit House that they've taken away the whole, most of the house. When you drive up there, you see a little bit of red house with the little panes of window.

Walter: It's all that's left. So we walked in a few years ago.

Dan: I'd be afraid to.



Walter: I know, I know. And I'm sure I wouldn't right now, but that was just a piece of the old house. Yes. It was a big barn there on the left.

Daughter: The window was still in good condition when we went to it. But just when we saw it real recent, they broke it. Somebody had smashed the window. It was such a beautiful, beautiful home.

Walter: And in the summertime, the, uh, so many people would come up from the Lawrence / Methuen area and stay there for the summertime back in those days. A lot of the farms, that's what they did. Yeah. They took in boarders right from the city.

Daughter: And a lot of them were just family. It's the wife and the children.

Walter: Then the husbands that come up in the, out on the weekends, come up on the train. My father used to take the wagon down, pick them up at the station, down there and bring them back up. Yeah. In fact,

Lisa: The Summit Farm. That just a little part of it remains.

Walter: Yeah. Yeah. That's all we see. And uh, well they took this house down and put it up in Woods Hole, Massachusetts. I used to say, geez, I'd like to go down to Woods Hole. And actually I'd never recognize it of course. I never saw it. That was taken down. Before probably right at the time I was born. [With this new information from Walter, in 2022 the Historical Society was able to locate the old Summit Farm house in its current location in Woods Hole.]

Lisa: This is what always confuses us, Mr. Kirsch. On this 1938 map, this is the very top of Clark hill, right? At the end. It says Kirsch brothers, but maybe it doesn't go with that square. It goes with that square, which is right opposite. What's called McLaughlin lane that William O Dodge owned and they're always visiting each other. We have like a guest book and the Kirsches and the Dodges are always getting together.

Walter: That looks like Summit House.

Lisa: Okay. Now that solves that mystery.

Walter: Uh, but they were known as the Kirsch Brothers Construction 'cause Fred Kirsch had multiple brothers.

Lisa: I always thought it went with that house. Now you've made it clear! Thank you!

Walter: Then the house going up there is that where Elsie Warren used to live. That was very close to town on a Clark Hill Road. She's the first white cape on the right hand side going up. Yeah, it was going up there. I knew it would be another mile and a half to our place.

Lisa: I know you're helping me a lot with the things I've been wondering about. Um, recently we were, uh, the Dodge-Lewis family gave us a lot of things related to William O Dodge who owned land up there? I think it was the old Langdell place.

Walter: There was a, there was a little lane going down through here and it used to be called the Honeymoon Cottage.

Lisa: Do you recognize that? Yes, these are the guest books from the Honeymoon Cottage.

Walter: I didn't think anybody would ever know the Honeymoon Cottage.

Lisa: These are the guest books from it; the Kirsches are there a lot. But have you seen the Honeymoon Cottage?

Walter: I did. I do. I thought it would be into the ground.

Lisa: Did you say it was just a little cottage? We're trying to figure if it was a log cabin, what it might've looked like. We're trying to any, have you any memories other than there was one?

Walter: No.

Lisa: Jim Dane who passed away, Jim Dane, who also grew up on the top of...

Walter: We mentioned him already. Yeah. And in fact, last time I was here, I saw him. I talked to him. Yeah. It was so nice, and then a half year later, a year later I saw his obituary. Yeah.

Lisa: We were very sad. He was a big part of this [historical society]. He remembers it being like a little chicken coop up there.

Walter: Well, I don't think it was much of a place. Okay. That's not a very good description. Not much of a place, but uh, oh my God. Look at this New Boston... [Lisa keeps bringing Walter old photos.]

Lisa: Do you know why they called it Honeymoon Cottage?

Walter: No.

Mary: Sometimes they called it Lamb's cottage.

Lisa: I think William O. Dodge kept a lot of lambs up there. I can't find that picture. Um, excuse me. As I run around, we have a little picture. It's actually a postcard. Okay. Does this ring a bell to you at all? This says this is a postcard. [of a cabin or cottage]

Walter: I see something like that. I would have said. Yeah, that would, that would be what I would have thought that yeah. Very small.

Lisa: Okay. It says log cabins built to order by D A Sutherland company.

Walter: Oscar, Oscar Alexander Sutherland. Yeah. [Another of Walt's daughters arrives.] Oh my God. Hi.

Lisa: Yeah, apparently this is, this is another,

Walter: That's my daughter. Whenever I go up to the, uh, up to the cemetery, I always take a flower down to Sutherland's lot there; it's right beside my grandfathers and my mother

and father's lots. I always leave a flower there because, I can remember he used to take me fishing once in a while; he was a big outdoors man, Oscar. Uh, that would be what I would consider the place [the cottage]. There was. I only, I probably only saw it once or twice. It was back then. It's all wooded up. You can't see down there. I don't think anymore from the road. Well, see, as soon as she showed me, I said, that would be what I would remember.

Mary: This was a little kit kind of a thing.

Lisa: Can we just finish with this three of these? This is what got us going about Honeymoon cottage, because we got these two guest books and then, from the same family, they sent us all these pictures of this cottage. And we have no idea could it be your Honeymoon Cottage.

Dan: Yeah. I guess it was built by Sutherland.

Walter: I just looked at the rustic siding on the one you showed me a while ago and that's what, yeah, that's what it looked like, but having a chimney like that. I have no idea. Really.

Lisa: We talk about, and we have many diaries from this family about building a chimney and going up to see the chimney at Honeymoon Cottage. Well, thank you.



Dan: So Fred is at Summit House and he's running it as a boarding house. Did he have other, was he farming and supplementing his income with boarding or...

Walter: Yeah. Yes. I don't remember. I know at the end of his career, he was a loom fixer. Frederick was a loom fixer up in Hillsborough, uh, at a whatever kind of mill they had there. He would, took care of breakdowns of the...



Dan: So we can guess that he worked probably in the mills in Methuen before coming to New Boston.

Walter: I would think so. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Dan: And he had many children, including your father or

Mrs. K: Was there a big family?

Walter: Oh yeah. We used to have the reunions right here at the town hall. That was,

Mrs. K: Those were your father's brothers.

Walter: Yeah. That was my mother's side you're talking about. Yeah. Herman, Herman. Oh gosh. We used to know all the names,

Dan: But enough of them to have a reunion at the town hall.

Walter: Yeah. We'd have the reunion right at the town hall. Ladies would be over there. In fact, we had it out in back. You had an old tennis court right beside the ball field, which had deteriorated by the time I started growing up and, and in the back there we used to, it was a nice little, um, backyard they used to have there. We would have the reunions there. And we were going to the town hall to have, uh, they have dinner or lunch or whatever, but that was my grandfather's side of the family.

Dan: So your father grew up in town, went to school. Did he mention school days or what do you remember? I'm interested your school days and your father's. Where would you have gone to school?

Walter: I would've said he [Fred] moved here around the middle, uh, towards the end of World War One. Yeah. He was born in 1906, I think.

Mrs. K: 1905, I believe. I think he was a year before my father

Dan: So this would have been your father [in some photo]

Walter: In this? Yeah, right in back of the ball boy here. Great.

Walter: Last time we were there [Summit House]. Don't recognize anybody there except my dad and my grandmother and my grandfather. And that shows what, the amount of people they had up here in the summer. What a pretty house.

Daughter: What about the train coming from Boston?

Walter: I said, Dad would come down on, pick them up and bring them up. And then the people on Sunday night, they'd have to go back to the train, to go back to the station.

Dan: So how did your dad fetch people? What kind of vehicle did he have to get people at the train station?

Walter: Horse and buggy. Yeah. Yeah.

Dan: He'd bring them up. And we assume your mom did the cooking or who?

Walter: My grandma, my grandmother Kirsch. Gertrude Kirsch. Yeah. I assume.

Lisa: Here's some visitors to Honeymoon: Dorothy Kirsch, Gertrude R. Kirsch.

Walter: That's my father's sister, she died two or three months before I was born in 1932. She was one of the, she went to the University of New Hampshire and then she came down with [inaudible], what's the name of the disease my aunt had? - but she had to take some time off. And then she died [of consumption?]

Walter: I used to, I used to, when I was in pharmacy school, my wife and I would drive up to, I'm trying to think of the town up there in Massachusetts. One of Fred's brothers was there, Robert, Robert and Ella.

Lisa: They were right across the street, kind of. I knew they go there a lot and I knew you were talking about the Allens. Yeah. See, they said "the first time I'd seen the fireplace."

Walter: Carolyn Dodge, Carolyn and Ruth.

Lisa: What do you remember about Carolyn and Ruth?

Walter: I used to go up and wake them up. Upstairs. I'd just go to the backstairs...

Dan: Why were you waking up the Dodges?

Walter: I used to be up to the barn all the time, up to Will Dodge's barn, you know, he had cows there, maybe a horse or two. And I used to go up there all the time. I'd go into the grain barrel there and taste it. [laughs] And I was always visiting up there and be there in the morning. And Carolyn, Ruth still upstairs sleeping. So I'd go up and wake them up.

Mary: So they were your friends?

Walter: No, they were older than I was

Lisa: You lived next door.

Walter: Yeah. Right up the hill. Just three or four hundred feet away.

Lisa: You remember Grammy Dodge that lived there with Will? Um, Ruth and Carolyn's grandmother lived there for a while?

Walter: No, no, it was Will. And Cora.

Lisa: And before that, Ellen.

Walter: How do you remember all these things? You don't look that old! [laughter]

Lisa: The Will Dodge family. They've given us all of Ellen O. Lamson Dodge's diaries, and she kept them for 35 years. We have now Cora and Will's diaries. So if I come across your name I'm going to copy it and email it to you. I'm going to say if Cora says that Walt Kirsch junior came over this morning, woke up the girls.

Walter: Well, who was the Lewis up on Lewis Road?

Dan: Reverend George. Had a couple of boys.

Lisa: Yeah. The two boys married, Carol and Ruth Dodge married two Lewis brothers. How about that? And that's the family who have sent us all these diaries.

Mary: Walt, did you go to this school right here? The whole time? Or where did you start?

Walter: Second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth. And then all they had was agricultural college here. And, and, uh, my folks sent me down to Central High School. I graduated from Central in Manchester, 1950.

Mary: Do you remember any of the kids that you went to school with?

Walter: Let's see, there's Harold Strong. I don't see George here. Why wouldn't George be there? Francis Allen, Henry Frederick, Stub Rogers, John Surette. Who? Walter. God, I look a little [inaudible]. Fred Moss, David Young.

Lisa: What year did you graduate?

Walter: Well then 1950, but it wasn't from here, but this was a baseball team we had. That was, that would be 1946, 47. When Winston Daniels came back from, from his war adventures, Winston was one of my best friends. And, uh, he started a baseball team. And this was probably one of his first teams right here. I was playing for the high school team. I was in the 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

Mary: Did you know that Winston's children put a book together of his writings, that Pappy Daniel's children, daughters put a book together of his writings? Did you know that?

Walter: No, I didn't. No, I didn't. And I'll say that newspaper columns when Pappy did it was wonderful. I always looked forward to that. Yeah. He wrote such interesting articles.

Dan: So you went to the village school. How did you get to school? And I wonder how you got to Central High School [in Manchester].

Walter: Do you want to know the stuff I had to go through, snow, sleet, rain?

Daughter: Usually barefoot, where you would have breakfast with the Indians? [laughter]

Lisa: Let's see. I thought you might get a kick out of seeing one of the New Boston baseball shirts that said... [W. O. Kirsch was a sponsor]

Walter: Oh my God.

Walter: Wow. Wow.

Lisa: We don't have any boxes, but we've got this shirt. This was Bobby Kennedy's shirt.

Walter: Wow. Yeah. I want to show you that Bobby and Richard, and the Daniels, Vic younger and Vic older and Leon [inaudible].

Lisa: Tell us about that ski tow.

Walter: Back when my father turned the mill into a box factory, instead of just a lumber mill, he didn't have anything to do in the winter time. And for the first few years, he would go out into the woods and cut the woods and bring them down and pile them up along the wall, down to the mill. Then he said he got a bright idea. I don't know where it came from of getting a ski tow. And he went down to Pinball, Pinball hill and I don't know who owned all that vast land up there, but he rented it for, I guess, for the winter time and made it into a three-slope ski tow, nice rope ski tow, big Ford motor up there on top of the hill.

Walter: And who was the person that used that old tractor? Ted Fiske. Ted was such a great guy. And I just see in here that he died in 1954. I couldn't believe it. I just saw it here on the desk. And, I can see him on the side of that hill. And the hill was, it looked to me like this, you know, [indicates a steep hill] but it was probably like this. And he cleared off the entire trees from the side of the hill. And we ran that for several years, ran it very successfully. We had a warming hut at the bottom. My mother and Donna helped, uh, uh, we had a place down there to serve hot dogs and hot chocolate and I think coffee, and, uh, they would take care of that.

Walter: Warming hut down to the bottom. They had to sell tickets. Most of the people tried to come in without, uh, getting tickets, but that was another story. And that went along for several years. And as we had snow, it was very, very, very successful because I think it was a dollar or so to buy a pass then. That's back when you used to go up to the hill and go down, and maybe they have one hand in back and one hand to go up the rope tow. And we had night skiing. That's attractive. We did have night skiing up on our main slope where they installed some lights ...

Daughter: Yeah, we still have your old skis, Dad .

Walter: You still have my skis. Yeah. And I stopped skiing as soon as I got into pharmacy. As soon as I became a pharmacist, as I said, I break my leg, I'm out of business. So I never skied again. That's the warming house.

Mary: Yeah. Jen Brown is, so she's your cousin, right? [Jen was Walter's niece.] Okay. She's historically active and I believe she was asked, this was maybe two years ago, they were trying to track down what happened to, or where did this building come from? [in Goffstown]

Dan: It became the electric shop next to the covered bridge, from the Kirsch ski tow and the warming hut. It's a private home now in Goffstown. Right by the Pumpkin Regatta.

Walter: Oh, I didn't remember using this slope over here very much. I see people there, we had a little jump off of it. I don't see that. And over here, Walter, over here, we had one that went through the woods and came around and came back down. So those three different slopes.

Dan: I went to the top of the hill trying to figure out where it was. I can't see more than a foot away. There's so many trees.

Walter: I know. When I drive down the river road, I look up to it, it's oh my God

Lisa: I have that letter right here [about the ski tow]. You wrote to Bill Brendle of the Historical Society. You were down in Estero, Florida.

Walter: Which I still am. I've been 35 years.

Lisa: He asked you for your memories and you wrote a five page letter to him. And that's a copy of it. Because he did a talk for the historical study on skiing in New Boston, and you wrote Bill, "Please excuse my printing and several cross outs". So we have that letter you wrote back in 2002. And I realize now it talks about a lot of the things you've talked about, how you lived in the so-called Woodbury home, which is now the house close by the pizza shop, you know? So a lot of changes.

Walter: Listen, one of the first things I wanted to ask you, and when I was getting the New Boston Bulletin, I had it mailed to me and in Florida every year, six months in Florida and six months here, and every edition, it'd be something about Howard and Frances town. Now, Howard has died ?

Lisa: Last year.

Walter: How long ago? Just last year. It's always been stories about him.

Mary: You lived here, you lived in New Boston during the war?

Walter: Yes.



Mary: Okay. Can you tell us, enlighten us on anything that was really different during the war?

Walter: No, it sure was. Yeah, it was. The house on top of the hill and the "whistling post" is what we used to call it. I was in it, but you know, I was too young to be there with an observer post.

Mary: Yeah. Okay. The observation posts.

Walter: Yeah, right on top of the playground hill.

Mary: How did, how did school change for you during the war? Did they let you out sometimes or?

Walter: Jeez, I don't know, but I can remember on the playground, we used to have four or five or six different... playground wasn't being used at that time. And then around the perimeter of the playground down towards Boulter's barn there, they had different, uh, exercise type things. So a rope thing that you slid across and a jumping thing. And I can't remember if it was four or five different things like that for training. What I don't know, but, uh, you know, talking about Grenier Field of course, was real active at that time. And you know, you'd get out in the morning and you'd see those planes starting up, but they, you know, where I was, I could see them coming and they would go past the sand bank on the other side of the hill and go down. And then probably a minute, two minutes later you get [bombing noises] and you'd hear that all day long, all day long, of course that had to do with the, what I called the whistling post, the watching post, whatever that was up there. And top of the hill...

Walter: They had to report all these planes that came up. They had of course a telephone there and they're all day, hundreds of planes are coming every day, I think. And it never stopped, day after day.

Walter: Is that place still closed off over there where the old bombing range was it closed? Because there must be so much stuff over there then.

Sylvia: No they've been going over it the past few years. Square by square.

Walter: Looking for a bomb. I can imagine.

Lisa: Um, and then there's this letter was found in Katie Kachavos's house. Katie Kachavos who lived on Clark hill. That letter was written in 1928. And it was written by Evelyn G Kirsch to her sister, Dorothy E Kirsch. And in the letter, Evelyn would have been about 13 years old and her sister Dorothy would have been about 16 and they talk about a "Gert". And I'm wondering if that's their aunt Gertrude, who was married to their uncle, Fred Kirsch. Talks about boys.

Dan: Okay. So Katie lived in, what's a Dodge farm on Clark Hill Road. A big white farm on your right, has a green metal roof now, but the road has been moved away from the house.

There's a little barn set in front of it on your way up. So I don't know the connection with the family or why that letter was there.

Lisa: Yeah. So that was just kind of neat. Another thing related to your family

Mary: And that it didn't have anything to do with the Berries [who lived there before Katie].

Mary: Did your family shop at Dodge's store?

Walter: Yes.

Mary: Okay. Do you remember how it was then?

Walter: I knew Oliver.

Mary: He was the mailman?

Walter: No, no, he worked in the store probably every day, every minute the store was open and he was always there.

Sylvia: He could add up the items better than a cash register.

Walter: You know, I don't know how to say it, but Oliver probably wasn't all there,

Sylvia: He was different.

Daughter: And there's Dad wearing his New Boston uniform.

Walter: Yeah. The town team was the bane of my existence down here. Why is that? Just loved it. I loved baseball. "Bane" probably has two meanings.

[Crosstalk, and some discussion about smallpox vaccines.]

Dan: So you go to Doc Frasier, but you went to Doctor Backus ...

Walter: Well, Doc Fraser... My sister Nancy was born two years after I. In 1938 she came down with pneumonia and all he [Dr. Fraser] gave her was sugar pills. And so, you know, and she died from it. We've got Dr. Backus and she was failing, failing, failing. And he came, uh, he came ripping up through. He had an old car. He come up here like a hundred miles an hour to see her many times, before she died, but he just, they probably had three or 400 units of penicillin. They were just getting penicillin, you know. Now they have 800,000 units of penicillin. So there was just a few units they were making. And he tried to save her, but she died. Yeah. Yeah. Died when I was in the first grade. So Dr. Frasier was never, no, we won't talk about the whole...

Walter: Of course Ernest Hagland over here, he went to the Philadelphia pharmacy school.

Dan: What can you tell us about Ernest as a, as a pharmacist yourself? What do you remember of him, or in the store? 'Cause he sounded like quite the character.

Walter: Yeah. I can remember going in there and I can almost remember taking a Three Musketeers, 5 cents, but I didn't pay for it. Don't write that down. [laughter]

Daughter: That's the kind of thing they want! Probably the only time you did that!

Walter: Ernest used to live just two houses down here, past Dodges, on the left.

Walter: I still like Three Musketeers. Yeah. [laughter]

Dan: You'll get one on the way home. So you mentioned Dot's Shop – what was that? We're interested because a young lady just bought the Kirsch house at the bottom of Meetinghouse Hill.

Walter: It was my aunt Dorothy lived there. [Walter's grandmother Gertrude operated the Dot's Shop named after Walter's aunt Dorothy.]

Dan: And she and her husband...

Walter: No, she never was married. She's the one that died just a few weeks before I was born in 1932; had some cough. I'm trying to think of the disease, a type of tuberculosis.

Mary: So she had a shop in Farley's house [next to the Town Hall].

Walter: Yes. She was a very brilliant girl. She went over the university. She was probably one of the first New Boston people who went to the University of New Hampshire. And she was president of her class the very first year over there. Then she came down with this thing and she didn't go back two or three years and passed, passed away. And so she had a Dot shop. She didn't have one up here on this road going past Dr. Fraser's, but she had one down there on, by Artemus Boulter's, his place in that little house on this side of Art Boulter's house. And, uh, it was called the Dot shop. And then they moved up here and had a Dot shop here. And that was named after her daughter.

Mary: What did she sell?

Walter: I know she had an awful lot of candy, you don't remember that? Do you?

Mrs. K: No, but I remember you loved the candy. You were always eating well.

Walter: Yeah. You know, it's a wonder I never, I hadn't been, she was diabetic. My grandmother Gertrude was diabetic and uh, she would always have these candies for me, man. I grew up on so much candy since... still don't have any diabetes. Yeah. I had these little, probably a half inch wide, a half inch long chocolate, you know, one cent, one cent for a chocolate. Yeah.

Mary: So by 1950 or so you were really pretty much gone from New Boston because you're born in '32. You graduated in '50 from Manchester and then you went into pharmacy school.

Mrs. K: No, he went to UNH first and you were still living here in '53. You were commuting, right?

Walter: No, I lived over there. I only lived here 21, 22 years. And I, you know, as the kids can tell you all, it's talking about New Boston, New Boston. They all come down for Thanksgiving, for 4th of July. We sit over there now, where the monument used to be there.

Daughter: We used to slide down the hill. I think they stopped it now. We had a huge toboggan and almost our whole family could fit on it. Grampa had that wooden toboggan and we'd take it down that hill. And it would go down the hill right across from their house, when they lived on Molly Stark.

Walter: Okay. Yeah. I used to go down Meetinghouse on the toboggan. That was...

Daughter: I remember riding down there with you, the scariest thing in between these trees and somehow we made it!

Walter: Oh yeah. They used to shut off Depot Street over here on the winter time for sliding.

Dan: [to daughters and Dorothy] I'm wondering if there are any favorite New Boston stories you've heard that your dad should tell us, or your husband should.

Daughter: When the canoe capsized and he just left it – did he tell you that one? No? You should tell those stories. He remembers that story very well. He doesn't want to tell it.

Walter: Yeah. Jim, Jim Boulter was probably two years older than I was, a good athlete. Very good athlete. I used to say, geez, Jim, you should've gone to Central. You could have been really good down there. You could have been a quarterback, but that's besides the story.

In spring time, water was high and we had a canoe and my mother took us up. What's the road that goes out towards the Bose place, you know, up at the top of the hill. And the next road goes down to the Boses; there's a church up there now, what is the road that goes down, Lyndeboro Road and go off to the river out there. And we had the canoe and mother would drop us off. Jim and I, and we got into the water and he says, "Okay, I'll see you." {Walter's mother} said "I'll walk up to the dam to see you come down." So she comes back, walks up to the dam, nothing, nothing but water, just high water, you know, kind of dangerous. And all of a sudden she sees the canoe coming down, broken in half! Hung up on a rock and it split apart on us. I went for that shore and Jim went to this shore – we're on different sides. So I come walking down on the

other side of the, and Jim was on this side and she's watching before we came. She saw that the canoe come down. So what happened?

Daughter: Yeah. But didn't you go off and do something and just kind of, not even realized you forgot you were supposed to be meeting Grammy? Didn't you go off and have a drink or something?

Walter: Maybe I embellished it a little.

Daughter: [inaudible]

Walter: I'm not beyond that.

Daughter: Was I the only one went down the river with Dad in the canoe?

Another dau.: Yeah. You were the chosen one.

Mary: You were very young, but do you remember the floods of '36 or the hurricane of '38?

Walter: Very definitely. I can remember 36. You know, my sister Nancy, she was born in '36 and she was born during that flood. And so she and I were born in Peterborough hospital. And uh, she, my mother was over there and I woke up in the morning. The hurricane was coming and I looked out the window there, no bridge there. The bridge across there was gone. There was nothing there. And I went running into my father's room. I said, "Dad, Dad look out there! There's nothing! The bridge is gone!" He didn't believe me that the bridge was gone, but it was. In fact, when they rebuilt it, of course it couldn't have been gone too long, but they rebuilt it right away. And they had the road, the little side road came right down along the mill there across the wooden bridge. She'll probably have a picture of that. [Lisa brings him a photo.] Oh my God. Look at... just what I say

Daughter: Is that the bridge before?

Walter: Look at the Dodge place, the Dodge place is all gone now. Willl Dodge's [next to the Kirsch's house, later Tingley's]. It's all just a memory.

Lisa: The Dodge place was taken down just a few years ago. Just a couple of years ago.

Walter: They had to get that [replacement bridge] going right away after that flood, because I mean, look at the water. It's still kind of high there; that flood used to come over the dam up there and come down past the Dodges. No, not the farmhouse but the pasture all back there.

Mary: So your mom had to come home a different way with Nancy.

Walter: I don't remember that. Well, no that summer we were on the other side of the river back in '36. So we were all in the Paul Allen house at that time. So she didn't have to go



across. [looking at bridge photo] Yeah, that's great. Well, and so they put that across and just built logs across to it. I guess that must have been something, I don't think any heavy traffic would have ever gone over that.

Daughter: You're talking about houses that sit empty and abandoned for years and years; there's Summit House. I mean, it just was amazing that it was still sitting there. You know, we went through it, um, a few years back and it's like, well, let's see if we can find anything. I mean, it was books and papers and stuff all over.

Dan: When we moved here in the '80s there was a big barn there.

Walter: Yeah. Right. That was a big, big, barn.

Daughters: Yeah. We saw a woman that day and she told us about the barn. She had, she, I don't know what her name was, but she was walking down the road – was she riding on a horse or something? She was on a horse. Yeah. And she told us about the barn, probably wondering what we were doing there and we started digging in a bottle dump in one of the corners and we found all kinds of stuff. It was a lot of fun.

Walter: The barn was big because as I say in the summertime, so many people, most of the men would sleep in the barn. There wasn't enough rooms in the house to accommodate everybody. So they'd sleep out in the barns.

Lisa: [pointing to photo] You can see a little corner of the barn in the distance. I don't know how good your eyes are, but it does look like a big barn!

Walter: It was, yeah. Not as big as that one across the New Boston line, going up towards Frankestown, remember that? Was it the Foote barn? Yeah. Yeah. That was an amazing place.

Mary: So how about the hurricane of '38? What were you up to and how did that go?

Walter: You know, I don't remember when, but I can remember coming down here and we would be standing on the bridge. The bridge was out there was nothing there and there was boats going through the downtown. And, uh, we were standing on the Tavern, the Tavern of course was still there. And the piazza went all the way around the tavern along the river there. And we were standing there and looking, yeah, that was pretty devastating.

Mary: Okay. And in 19 47, you would have been 15. So you could probably remember there was a big tractor trailer that went through the middle of town on this bridge right here. And it went through the bridge.

Walter: Yeah. I know. I've read about that. And I, I really can't. 1047. You know, I was probably living down in Grasmere with my aunt Mary and uncle Earl and commuting to Central High School my first year there. Yeah. And I was living there for a full year, I lived down there before I, but I didn't have a car at that time. I was 15, I guess. And didn't so I

commuted my, my uncle Earl was a minister; he was working at the JF McElwain shoe factory down there in west Manchester. And he would take me down in the morning and uh, I used to walk from the JF McElwain on the west side, across the river, up to Central. And those the mornings were so cold and I didn't have shoes... [laughter]

Walter: [looking at a letter from a doctor to his mother in the hospital] This is unbelievable. Peterborough, April 29th, 1932. "My dear Ruth, I so regret that I have been laid up all the time. You have been in the hospital, but I know that Dr. Morse has given you the best of care, which relieves me from a whole lot of anxiety about you, there is no doubt, but what you had a real flu pneumonia, which on top of the Cesarean was anything but a joke as you have recalled before this late day. The doctor tells me that your temperature became normal all day, which is certainly the finest news one could ask for. And there is little doubt, but what you will be gracing New Boston before many days and a little boy will be fishing in some near-hand brook.

Walter: "We all have our troubles. And if you had the Cesarean so have I, only, I have nothing to show for mine while I am told you have a" – listen to this – "Well, I am told you have a corking fine kiddo!"

Walter: "I sincerely hope that your recovery from now on will be rapid with all good wishes. Sincerely yours Frank B. Foster." And that was my so-called obstetrician or doctor or whatever. Can you imagine if a doctor writing like that today?

Daughter: You want to tell them about the knife in your back when you were born.

Walter: That's right. It was a Cesarean. Now the doctor dropped a knife in my back. I guess it's still like, I can see, you can almost still see it, but yeah. And, uh, as they're going, as she's leaving, she was in the hospital for 10, 12 days. And as they're going, the doctor said, Mrs. Kirsch, you may notice something on your son's back.

Daughters: It must've been really big because you have a very visible scar. He told me that it wasn't until she was leaving, getting you dressed to leave that she saw it. That had to be shocking. Dressing him to take him home.

Daughter: We always asked him, what's that scar on your back. And he always gave us stories about something, you know, a knife cut with a knife and we're like, okay, sure, dad. And it wasn't until we were adults that we found out, he really was cut with a knife. I never believed that he was cut open.

Mary: Really unconscionable actually. [Mary was a pediatric nurse.]

Daughter: It's a pretty nasty looking scar. So it must have been a good, pretty good cut.

Walter: Nowadays. It would have been a nasty suit, I guess

Daughter: Can you imagine Grammy, like seeing, what did you do to my baby? Oh, don't worry. That'll heal right over.

Walter: "He was just corking." Fine.

Mary: Do you think that they wrote to all parents then? I doubt it.

Daughter: They were making up for that scar.

[cross-talk]

Walter: Marian Boulter. That was another, they used to put on productions here on the 4th of July, on a little stage, right in front of the grandstand and what productions they used to have! And they would orchestrate the entire play that they had.

Mary: And then Henry Friedrich, you mentioned, I mean, he became, you know, really important in town. Yeah.

Walter: Henry was one of my good friends. He was probably a year older than I was. We used to go driving around. He had a big old Hudson that, and of course I never did it, but he used to hit some of the mailboxes on the side. I wasn't driving.

Mary: We're not holding you accountable.

Daughters: There's some old silver coins buried. Um, is there one, there's one in the tennis court, right? Remember the time you got one from in the garage on Molly Stark? That one never been dug up. Some men put cement down. He had a nice silver dollar in the cement where he built the garage. That was still there at the house up there on Molly Stark.

Lisa: Okay. Mr. Kirsch, here's your baseball picture back. Well, you've actually given us that baseball picture.

Walter: Well, maybe, maybe Dad did it. 'Cause Dad gave a lot of stuff.

Lisa: Walter Kirsch, you see either you or your dad back in 1977 gave us that. And on the back of it, they had the names I thought you might like...

Walter: Yeah, I know there was some odd names like "Cider" and things like that.

Lisa: You were, your dad had a nickname in there. Walt Kirsch, "Doggie." Oh no "Doggie" goes with Richards; you weren't Doggie.

Daughter: Well, I was told his name was "Curly" or "Cozy". I don't know if that was a story.

[Interview ends with comments about various photos]