

SHARING OUR STORIES

VOLUME IV

Excerpts from Conversations with Some of Windsor's Long-Time Residents

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Photo by Barbara Connors



MAME WHELIHAN

Mame Whelihan, born in Hadley during the Depression, came to Windsor as a young mother of three children. Life took her to Wilmington, North Carolina for 33 years, then brought her back to the very same house in 2012.

Heaven, with ghosts . . .

"I was born in South Hadley, but eventually I ended up in Windsor, which I feel is as close to heaven as you can get, even in winter. I purchased the Shaw residence. That was in 1971. The house we bought was the original stagecoach stop."

"The house has a lot of history. I swear there's a resident ghost in it still. The basement is a real-old-time basement, lots of huge boulders, and we kept hearing a strange noise down there. We knew it was an animal but not quite what it was."

"One day I went to check, and it was a bobcat! Somehow he had gotten in through the foundation. He was not a huge bobcat, but he was not a friendly bobcat. He would sit on the ledge and I would sit on the stairs watching him. He was really wild but he stayed a long time and I got quite fond of him."

"We had a party one night and we were all sitting in the living room and he came out from under the table, walked through the living room, into the kitchen, and down the stairs. And not one person said a word. I think they all thought that they had each had enough to drink."

It's not heaven without horses. . .

"It was a wonderful place to raise kids, because of course we had the horses and all of their friends would come . . .

At the time you could ride on the (Notchview) Reservation and that was wonderful. (Later) the hikers didn't want horses on the trails, I have no idea why. They said they didn't want to step in anything, but the bears are there!"

"We started out with two Shetlands and went from there. They each got their own horses. The kids started out just riding Western but then we signed them up for riding lessons at Aspinwall in Lenox, and that was the start of it. My youngest, Ken, is an R-rated horse show judge and Ray is head of the equestrian program at Cobleskill . . . If it hadn't been for being here in Windsor, you know, their lives would have been completely different. Windsor's their roots."



Mame on Clippy, South Hadley, MA.

A 33-year detour . . .

"I was going through a miserable divorce, so I put the house up for sale, reluctantly. But I always said I would be back. We bought a farm in Charlemont and I remember coming out of the barn and slipping on the ice, and I'm lying on my back and

thinking, 'Why am I staying here?' So we took off for the South . . . Wilmington, North Carolina. We were there for a long time. I wouldn't do it again. Thirty-three years, and it seems like, why did I do that? In 2012, we came back to Windsor, my daughter Madeline and I. Back into the same house . . . It was interesting moving back because everything was familiar. I



Ken, Madeline and Ray (front to back order on toboggan), 1973

knew exactly where the piano was going to go . . . It didn't take long before I felt that I had never been away. We just stepped right back into where we should have been all along."

Reflections . . .

"I write 'Reflections from Mame' for [Windsor Now & Then] every month since I started in 2013. Now I get people saying, ' . . . the only thing I read is your column.' That scares me because I realize that somebody's listening to me. But I love to write. My writing is kind of free-range, things that happened in the past, human nature stuff." ❧



Photo by: Kate Ewald

MARJORIE ESTES LIMBURG

Born in Windsor in 1930, Marjorie Estes Limburg now lives just down the hill in Dalton. But that doesn't mean she hasn't seen the U.S.A.

Remembering a strict but beloved teacher . . .

"I started school in 1936. I remember vividly going to Crane Community School. At that time, you started school in August and then we would go right up until Christmas, and the last day of school would be the day they had the Christmas event here in Town Hall . . . At the end of the program Santa Claus came and he gave every child a little cardboard box with a little handle and in it would be ribbon candy and an orange."

"Then school didn't start again until the roads got plowed. Probably late March. Then we'd go into June."

"I loved school, I was so happy, I had playmates and Miss Bates was the schoolteacher. We loved her. She was very very strict . . . Some of the boys were little rascally and she would say, 'All right.' Then she'd take them downstairs and she'd have this little stick in her hands. We never heard what happened down there. The boys wouldn't talk about whether she had actually slapped their hands with it or just talked to them."

Visits to the poor house . . .

"I'd go with my grandfather (William) Estes, he was a Selectman and he was in charge of going to the Poor House, he had to check on them once a week . . . It seems to me I remember that one man hung himself there. They were usually just single men, I think there were two

rooms. I can remember some of the different men who were there. But my grandfather wouldn't let me go in, I had to stay outside."



New Windsor Poorhouse Gives Individual Home To Inmates

"Windsor, a town of individuals rather than groups and rigid systems, has invented its own variety of poorhouse. Each man, under Windsor's system (there are two) has his own half of a double house, cooks his own food, cuts his own wood, tends his own cat, and hires out to Windsor farmers for day labor . . . The Windsor system is altogether unique among those of neighboring towns, where poorhouses are run on a communal system."

. . . from the Oct. 19, 1935 *Berkshire Evening Eagle*

General Electric . . .

"(After high school) I went to work in Pittsfield at General Electric. Name-plate drafting, the little metal plate that goes on the back of your refrigerator or whatever, with all the numbers on it. It was all hand done, you wrote with ink and every once in a while you'd smear it and then you're back to the drawing board again."

"Two years later I got married. We were married here in Windsor, we lived here for a while, in the other side of my grandparents' house. Then we moved to

Becket, bought a house over there, and then we moved to Pittsfield. We had three children."

"Well, then I divorced my husband and moved back in with my parents with the three children, so two of them started school here in Windsor in the 1950's. And then I remarried and moved to Dalton. My daughter was in maybe 4th grade and my son in 2nd grade here in Windsor, the youngest hadn't started school."

California years . . .

"I did live in California for nine years. Los Angeles. The traffic, the smog! Some days your eyes would run."

"But I did work out there, temporary services. I loved it. You signed up with an agency and they'd put where you'd fit. I did a lot at the movie studios, the jobs were all different and it was great fun."

"We kept the house in Dalton and we would spend the summers here, winters in L.A. We traveled in a motor home. We would leave Dalton the first of November to drive to California, then we would leave California the first of April to drive here. And we went to all the states, but we didn't go to Hawaii in the motor home, of course, and we didn't take the motor home when we went to Alaska. We went on a cruise up there."

"But I always loved this area. It was home. I like Dalton better than Windsor, because of the wind." ❧

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