

SHARING OUR STORIES

VOLUME V

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

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Photo by Barbara Connors



JANET BOODY

Janet arrived in Windsor in 1975 after marrying her husband Gary, who was born and raised here. Over the years, she has worn many hats in town: from decades working at Estes' Store (now Sangar's), to a long stint as town clerk. Together, she and Gary have served as dog officers, and members of the planning board and conservation and cemetery commissions. Janet shares a few gems from those busy days.

A Saving Grace and a Bracing Wind
“I worked at Estes' for about 23 years. It was wonderful. I watched young people grow up who are now married and have children of their own. It was sort of my saving grace, I got to know a lot of people. But there were days when you'd have to come out the door and head towards Cummington to get to the gas pumps because the wind would be so strong.”

The Ultimate Home Office/Lost Pet Menagerie

“Back then the town clerk's office was in our house. The school was the school (The current Town Office building was originally Crane Community School, from 1921 to 1990), so everything had to be done here: birth certificates, marriages, death certificates, information on the town, the cemeteries or whatever. Years ago, for elections, we used to have a caucus. It was the town clerk's job to set up the ballots and handle nomination papers. You were open all the time, especially in hunting season. Fellows would show up for their license as late as 10 o'clock at night, you never knew.”

“Gary and I were dog officers for a while, too. One Christmas we had 25-30 dogs. We had 'em outside in the kennel, we had 'em in the barn, we had 'em in the cellar, and we had 'em in the house.

We'd get a goat every once in a while, you name it . . . a chicken, a duck, a goose. The kids used to come up from school, every year that was one of their trips to walk here and see all the critters.”

This Little Piggy

“Peggy and Hughie [Ferry] had this little runt piggy that wasn't going to make it, so Hughie said, 'Here, you take 'em. If he lives, fine. If he doesn't, it's okay.' With the town clerk's business, we were always getting visits from the Secretary of State's [office] in Boston. [One time,] they had an appointment to look at the books or something, but came an hour early. When the doorbell rang and I went to the door, I had a blanket over my shoulder and a baby bottle in my hand. I said to the young fellow, 'You're an hour early, I was just getting ready to feed the baby.' And he goes, 'Well, don't let me interfere. Go right ahead.' So, I said, 'Huey, where



Huey the piglet, photo courtesy Janet and Gary Boody.

are you?' And this piggy comes running across the living room rug, 'oink, oink, oink, oink,' going ballistic, having a ball. If you could have seen the look on [the fellow's] face. For the next month and a half we had somebody from Boston in the living room every week. You never knew what you were going to find in our house.”

The Celebrated Allis-Chalmers

“The winter plow: she was a big, square box. You could hear her coming for at least a mile . . . very, very slow. I'm sure



“Big Alice” - Purchased in 1941 for \$7,390; sold in 2004. [Photo, 2004, courtesy of Windsor Historical collection].

she ate up a lot of gas. I would go out and wait to watch her coming down the road. That was probably '75-76. You knew you had a winter when Allis had to open the roads—like East Windsor Road, our road [Peru Rd], North Street. Sometimes that was the only way cars were going to come and go. We used to have snow that was 6-7 feet.”



Photo by Barbara Connors

GARY BOODY

Gary, born in 1952, was raised in Windsor, where he attended Crane Community School. He and his wife, Janet, have lived together in town since their marriage in 1975. Ever since, they've inspired in each other a call to civic engagement. Among his many roles—including police officer, dog officer, assistant town clerk, constable, assessor, and member of the planning board, conservation and cemetery commissions—Gary shares some thoughts on the years he served on Windsor's select board.

Civic Involvement: The Way it Was
 “After being a [Windsor] police officer, assessor, dog officer, and on the planning board and conservation commission, I knew how the town runs. So, it wasn't really a big stepping stone to go on to the select board. One of them was stepping down and I put in for it. I won by 220 votes versus 120. This was in the '80s. I was on [the board] for six years.”

“Being Selectman was a big responsibility. You knew what you could spend . . . and you didn't spend what you didn't need. Like the year we decided that instead of buying a new town truck, we were going to look for a good second-hand one. I'm talking about being conservative. We used to sit down, end of February/March, and work out the budget. We'd know from the assessors how much we could raise. You had a cap you couldn't go over. Today the cap is probably 20-25 times higher than it was back then.”

“I did enjoy helping out different people with different problems. It could be neighbor against neighbor . . . you don't really side with anybody, you just try to work it out. Like when I was a police officer and caught a kid doing something he shouldn't, I got him home and talked with the parents and said, ‘This is what's going on, I would like it taken care of. Not me, you take care of it.’ And

it would work. I had kids come up to me back then and thanked me: ‘You kept me out of trouble.’ That's the way it was.”

King Henry & The Plow

Gary remembers the Bicentennial Parade in '71, when he graduated from high school

“Henry Estes, who was king of the town at that time, was sitting in a chair on top of Allis Chalmers as she was being towed on a trailer through town.”

A Gathering Place

Together Gary and Janet reminisce about the old days at Estes Store

Gary: “Back when Henry [Estes] owned the store, most of the town business was done right there—between George Sturtevant, Henry...”

Janet: “. . . Wilt Kendall, Elmer Snow . . .”

Gary: “Elmer used to sit there with Henry . . . didn't say much, but once he got to knowing you and liked you, he told you everything.”

Janet: “Elmer was our sexton. He was



[from Windsor Historical Museum's Bicentennial collection]

the grave digger and did all the digging by hand. Born and raised here on East Windsor Rd. He and his brother grew up pretty much alone, the father was gone . . . looking for work. I remember Elmer saying that if there was one pork chop, whoever got there first got it, the other one went without. When Elmer got older, his house wasn't suitable for him, so until we could find him housing we had him come and stay with us.”



Elmer Snow [circa 1981, photo by Ed Kohn]

Gary: “The post office was there, Henry had that little thing in the corner where people sat and talked. Every day they'd stop in, especially in fall and winter when a lot of them were on layoff. It was a gathering place.”

Janet: “Ralph Peck, Ralph Kendall...”

Gary: “Johnny Mattis.”

Janet: “The older people that we are now is what they were to us then. Estes' was kind of the center. If everybody wanted to know what was going on, they'd go to the store.”