

# SHARING OUR STORIES

VOLUME VI

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

MARCH 2021

Photo by Barbara Connors



## MICHAEL TIRRELL

*Mike Tirrell, born in 1948, is a lifelong Windsor resident. His family's connection to Windsor dates back to the 1800s. Mike's maternal grandfather was the caretaker at Friendship Farm, owned by Elisabeth C.T. Miller on land that's now part of the Notch-view property, off Bates Road. All the farm buildings are gone, but Mike has vivid memories of one special person he met there.*

**A city girl comes to Windsor in 1944**  
"Thecla Haldane lived in New York City with her mother who worked for the War Information Center. When her parents were divorced, Thecla was sent from New York City to the Miller Farm in Windsor, or Friendship Farm as it was called, because her mother had a connection with Mrs. Miller. My grandfather was the caretaker there . . . He had his own house but he would go back and forth to the farm, so Thecla lived with my grandparents. She was probably ten years older than I was. She babysat for us kids . . . went skiing with us, all kinds of things. She graduated from Windsor School and Dalton High School, so she basically was a Windsor girl for the most part even though her mother was Dutch."

**Becomes a world-traveling photographer**  
"Thecla wanted to be an actress. When she went back to New York she knew Joan



Photojournalist Thecla Haldane, 1936-1979, spent her adolescent years in Windsor.

Crawford, Mary Martin, Sal Mineo. . . She ended becoming a photojournalist and traveled photographing President de Gaulle, Mamie Eisenhower, President Eisenhower, Roosevelt, Claudette Colbert . . . dignitaries from all over the world. She was freelance, so she worked for General Motors Corporation, Pepsi Cola, and *Life* and *Look* magazines. She traveled with the 101st Airborne . . . and was at the White House with Kennedy photographing State visits. . . . I have all her postcards from where she traveled."



### Thecla Haldane's signature stamp

"She became a photojournalist and traveled photographing . . . dignitaries from all over the world."

### Maintains her Windsor connection

"She came up from New York, especially in the winter, she loved to ski. . . . She would tell us stories of where she went and who she photographed. When they decommissioned the Queen Elizabeth she did the story and all of the photographs for *Life* or *Look*. She invited us to the World's Fair in New York in '64 and we were VIPs . . . We got to go up in the control room, and they had the Hall of Presidents – they were all animatronics and we got to run the controls."

"Her mother would come up and we'd all have Thanksgiving together . . . We all got a Pepsi Cola radio and cooler because


she worked for them. . . . General Motors thought so much of her they gave her a new car. One time she brought a 1962 Corvette up and we all drove around in it."



Windsor sugar eat, photographed by world-renowned photographer Thecla Haldane.

### Photographs Windsor events

"She photographed all the sugar-eats . . . and the firemen's dinners . . . When Joyce and I got married, the Pastor at the Methodist Church in Dalton did not want any photography of the ceremony and Thecla said 'Well, I do infrared flash, you won't even see anything.' And he said, 'What's that?' So she . . . took five pictures of him and, of course, there wasn't a flash and he said, 'Okay. I guess you can take photographs in the church' because it wasn't disruptive."

"She died quite young, unfortunately . . . She loved it up here. . . . But New York was where all her business was; she had to be there. And I think if she could have made a living up here she would have stayed here." 



## PETER MENARD

*Long-time resident Peter Menard, now 90 years old, was born at home on Ashuelot Street in Dalton. He's served as Selectman and on the Windsor Historical Commission, as well as Fire Department, Finance Committee, Council on Aging, and in his unelected position as all-round town handyman (who has probably crawled around in the basements and attics of more town buildings than anyone!). Peter shared some memories of his years of public service.*

### His first run for office

"The town was going through a little turmoil at that time. . . . Mae Hitchcock was from a family who lived here for years and years and she'd been on the School Committee. I don't even remember who approached and asked me to run against her. In the primary it just about a tie and I thought, 'Boy, this is great. I got a chance here.' But, she skunked me when she realized that there was somebody going against her. . . . After that. . . there was a special election because somebody left and I got on the Board and just stayed on. . . I enjoyed being a Selectman."

### 1960s Selectboard memories

"The Selectmen really ran everything at that time. . . . Over at Windsor Pond, Karem Ziter had a pavilion and they had dancing and music and all and it was always kind of a problem because, of course, the Selectmen are also the Liquor Board. . . . One time, Ziter was mad at us. He was at our Selectmen's meeting, pounding the table and yelling. . . . His dentures came flying out and he grabbed 'em like that and stuffed 'em in his pocket and never stopped yelling. He just kept going. . . . We didn't dare laugh; he would have punched us."

"Another time — back then they didn't have all the regulations to be an EMT. . . . we were at a meeting and I think it

was Ronnie Forgea and I. . . there were times when only two of us would serve. . . . Old Mr. Wood over on Shaw Road had to go to the hospital and they couldn't find anybody to run the ambulance. . . . so Ron drove the ambulance and he and I had to carry him in snow up to our knees with a stretcher."

"There was an elderly person that needed wood, so we got the wood and brought it in without any thought about it. . . . The Selectmen kept track of every single item and account and. . . they could tell you right to the penny what was in any particular account."

### Elected county commissioner

"I was Selectman for sixteen years and the reason I got off is that I was elected County Commissioner for the whole County of Berkshire. When I was County Commissioner, I also retired from General Electric. I retired early, I went



Pete Menard (3rd from left) with Ray Kerns, Richard Wells, and Jack Sobon, building the timber-frame shed in front of the historical museum, 1997.

out at 60, and the Town of Becket was looking for a Town Manager so. . . they hired me and I built their new town hall and a new fire station while I was there."

### On the Windsor Historical Commission

"I'm very interested in local history. I've served on the Historical Commission for a number of years, in fact that's the Board that I've enjoyed probably more than others, and working on the old



Peter and Susan Menard at Windsor's Bicentennial Ball, 1971.

church in East Windsor. . . . East Windsor had a lot of interesting history. . . . the Grange, they had a store, they had a gas station, they had a factory making all sorts of different items."

### Importance of Town Meeting

"People who move to Windsor or any other little town like this from some larger community don't realize the authority they have as a member at town meeting. . . . everybody has the right to stand up and speak." ❧