

Jan Whitney – Notebook memories written ~2004

I may have a few more memories of Don! But I think I'll attempt to write some this I remember growing up and growing old. Time does fly.

After my parents were married (both from Saco Maine), they moved to Buffalo N.Y. where Daddy had a job in a shoe store. He sold 'Buster Brown' shoes. We live on a circle they called Chateau Terrace. Buffalo was a friendly place and my first friend lived next door- "Buddy". Daddy's mother was "expecting" and my Mom gave her a baby shower. The presents were in my baby carriage. That summer we drove to Fortunes Rocks. When we returned, we found she had "lost" the baby. That was the first time I saw Mom cry. We had many happy times there though!

When the 1929 financial crash came we had to go to live with "Nana" and "Bapa" in Saco, Maine. They had a big lovely house and helped us for 3 years. They were great. We lived on the third floor of the house along with their 2 maids Yvonne and Juliet. My Grandpa didn't seem to be hurt by the crash. I made friends and one was Susan Dearing. Guess that is one reason I liked to use that name for our Susan!. Don liked it because a good friend, Marcel Benjamin, has a Susan. Our daughter Susan was born on May 16, 1948. Dick came along on August 11, 1951.

Now I think I will describe Fortunes Rocks. It is between Biddeford Pool and Kennebunkport. Nana moved many necessary things from Saco to the Beach. Yvonne and Juliet (the maids) came too. My mother was a Stillman and the Blakes and their families visited too. Close by were more relatives – the Moores. Ruth and Roger, Bobby (6 months younger than my Auntie Grace who was a lovely person) along with Ruth's Mom lived there. We had a tennis court and the Moore family were all great at it. It was fun to watch them. I was no good at it for I am not talented at sports. Oh well.

I have a picture of the Blakes, the Stillmans, and the Moores. You can see we were a great family. We had such fun together. On the steps in the photo, I fell as a girl. I was in a rocking chair waiting for Uncle Ed, who was a talented artist. I was near the steps and I fell and broke my arm.

Even though we loved the "Rocks", my parents thought I should go to a camp for girls. I went to camp "Laughing Loon" – a Y.W.C.A. camp. It was nice. We lived in tents. I remember one night a skunk came to visit. Luckily, no one was sprayed! ☺

My Dad had 2 close friends from Bates College he attended and graduated from. One was Ray Blaisdell and the other was Gene O'Donnell. Ray Blaisdell and his first wife ran a swanky girls camp called Camp Moy-Mo-Da-Yo! They had activities for girls. One was horseback riding. One day during "lessons" a laundry truck came barreling down the woody road. There were 7 horses and I was on the end. I could see an accident coming. I thought if I relaxed I would be O.K. I fell and after landing got up and did not feel any pain. Three hours later in "modern dancing" class I suddenly was in excruciating pain. They drove me to Portland Maine General Hospital. My Dad's other friend was a head Dr. there! It turns out that I had 3

broken vertebrae. This involved a year of recovery. I had 2 body casts and 1 corset. My Grandparents (Nana and Bapa) treated me to a nurse for a while. I was in the 9th grade. Oh My!

High School followed. There were 14 in all and I attended Newton High. We moved at that time to 33 Whitney Road which was near the High School. Newton High had a great scholastic standing.

My best friend at that time was Barbie Brickett. She was great. Also at that time, my Nana Blake was struggling with Colon Cancer and Bapa died in June 1938. My parents went to Saco to visit her quite often. Barbie Brickett stayed with me. She and I both liked the same boy, Jimmy Young. Barbie and Jim were both gifted in the ability to draw characters. They were cute.

My Senior Year at Newton High School presented another problem. I was in a deep depression and the school told my parents to keep me home that year. It turns out that I have Manic Depression. I saw doctors but no way to help much at that time. That was my senior year and my parents found it hard to care for me. Also, at that time my brother was in the Army and went to England, France and Germany in World War II. It was kind of tough for them, Don Stillman and me.

Aunt Connie (my Moms sister in law) was a dear. She and her husband and 3 kids lived in Bethlehem Pennsylvania. She opened up her house and heart to me. The family was great too. I will always be grateful to her.

The next year I completed my Senior Year. By then I found myself in a "high". I got good marks and graduated. When in a high due to manic depression, it is common to use poor judgment. It is usually shown in different ways for all that were in it. Bad News. I had a very unfortunate time just before graduation. I was raped near the Perkins Institute for the Blind in Waltham. He let me go (I was a virgin). An elderly couple in their car picked me up. My parents were in Fortunes Rocks. They returned after getting a call from "Aunt Rachel" as I let her know.

After graduation they put me in the Institute of Living in Hartford, Ct. It was a high class place but I stayed in it for 6 months. If I had not been in a high it probably would not have happened. The rape was a "learning experience". They released me from the Institute of Living in December after being there for 6 months.

Shortly after returning to 33 Whitney Road, our Church (Newton Congregational) had a church supper. As I was going downstairs to the meal, I met Don Whitney. I was impressed with his good manners as he opened up a door for me. I had known him for years but he had never noticed me. He was not a people person as I am. We sat at different tables. He asked his mom who that girl was at the other table. A few weeks later I gave a party for about 6 old friends and included Don. He and Nancy Wedger played the piano while most of us did the dishes. However, Don called me and asked me out to the Totem Pole which was a very popular Dance place for Big Bands. It had many sofas to sit on. I was a very popular place. Pretty soon we were going steady.

Don had a little more at Harvard to complete and I had a year at Leeland Powers school of radio and theatre. He picked me up every day. On our way home we usually had an ice cream cone at Howard Johnsons.

What I have written covers many pages, although I think I will write a little more. I was thinking there are several couples and families we were closet to. I will try to cover stories about them. Bob and Ann Haynses were our closest friends. They had 3 children, Merilyn, Sara and Bobbie.; sadly Bobbie drown at the age of 18 in 1972. Bob and Don worked at AO and they both enjoyed being Ham Radio operators. They stayed in contact on a daily basis which kept us close, until Don's passing in 1998. I still talk to them frequently as they live in Daytona Beach Fl.

Bob and Marion Crist were special friends also. He was a Baptist Minister and she helped him as she was very smart. You are lucky if you have friends like them. I guess I will just mention the special friends we had as it will take pages more. They were Bob and Rita Baker, Ed and Gert Mahoney (our Best Man), my cousin Bob Moore and his wife Paulette, and Bill and Marilyn Cass. We were lucky to have them as friends.

I guess know I will get on with the Southbridge Churches and our experiences with them. When we came to town and decided on a church, we went to Elm Street Congregational Church. We came from a Congregational Church in Newtonville. We married there too. We met people and were at home there so to speak. Later, when we met and became close friends with Bob and Marion Crist. Since he was minister at the Baptist Church we transferred from Elm St. to there.

When Dick was born on August 11, 1951- they both were a big help. They had no children at that time, but later adopted 2 children. Bob and Marion later moved to Worcester and then Maine where he continued as a minster.

Eventually we moved back to Elm St Church. Lately (after Dons passing 6 years ago) I have not attended very well. I can no longer drive my car due to medications and health reasons. After all, I am pushing 80!

My family (Dick and Sue), friends, and Taxi are now my way for transportation. However, the taxi is not always very good. You have to wait and wait.

This April 12th I went to the memorial service for Barbara Taylor. She was younger than me and both she and her husband sang in the Church choir at Elm Street for years. They did a good job and were faithful to it. Instead of receiving flowers, they asked money to be sent to Elm St Church. The service was beautiful.

Six years ago at the same church, Dick, Peg, Sue, Scott, Samantha and Rico all gave their thoughts about Don. I was so proud ☺ Others were impressed too!

Speaking of my family, I think that I will write about Dick and Sue when they were kids. Sue was a pretty young girl. She was a bit stubborn too. I wrote that in her baby book! She like clothes and especially black patton leather shoes. Both Sue and Dick we to West Street School, Mary Wells Jr. High and Southbridge High School. Sue was a majorette for the football games and was quite popular. Half way

through High School she fell for Ronnie Giovanello. They were married for 22 years and had two very special kids, Samantha and Enrico. We called him Rico later. Later she married C. Scott Koenig (an OBGYN Doctor). She works as a nurse on the maternity floor. Dick was "my idea" as I had to convince Don that I wanted 2 children instead of 1. Don was an only Child. It was one of my best decisions in every way. Sue and Dick got along well and we were a loving family. I was never so contented as when the kids were young. Guess I felt happy as a Mom. Of course I was happy as Don's wife too.

But, after Sue and Dick were in School, my manic depression popped up again. I had serious bouts of depression and I ended up having many shock treatments. Not much fun for the Whitneys ! Dr. Arnold was my Dr. and he was good. I hated the feeling when I was put to sleep for these treatments. You had a feeling of falling and it was a nasty feeling.

However, during the kids growing up we had many happy memories. Every Summer we visited Martha's Vineyard. First came Oak Bluffs and then later Edgartown. There was lots to do in both places. The Ocean was beautiful. In Oak Bluffs, every Sunday night there was a band concert at the Gazebo. On Wednesday nights, there was the community sing at the Tabernacle Methodist Camp Ground where there are many Gingerbread houses.

As for me, I had my happy memories of Maine. Don and I visited Ogunquit, Maine and stayed at the Riverside Hotel in Perkins Cove. Our dinners were at the Ogunquit Lobster Pound. The food was great and the atmosphere fun. We always visited Bob and Paulette Moore, my cousins. After Don passed away, I went there with friends and Dick and Peg. They have a beautiful home high on the ocean.

Soon, I think I will close- I don't want to make it too long. But before I do, Dick and the family want me to write some of the funny "sayings" I remember. Here goes! My brother Don would say – "What is that funny smell – fresh air". One I often say now is "Getting old aint for sissies", something which Mrs. Hazelton was fond of saying. Mr. Ohlwhiler (our neighbor) shouted in the car "total loss". Miss Glancy was in the seat next to me in the car and she was quite deaf and did not understand. She said "Where is the accident"? He replied – "Winter , a total loss" which now is another of my sayings. Another one I say is "Stop it, I love it". My family often would say "Hells, Bells and a bucket of Beer" , another of my sayings now. I heard the next one on a religious TV program - a happy family is eternal love before heaven. A saying that only my family would understand came from a time when I was a teenager. I was at the dining room table and my mind was wandering. I was looking at pipes in the road and said "When are they going to take ours away"? Since nobody understood what I was thinking, it soon became a family joke. Another saying of ours was "Its raining, its pouring, the old man is snoring, he went to bed and bumped his head and never got up in the morning". Also "the only perfect people are in the cemetery." My friend Jim has a saying, "Too soon old, to late smart." Another saying was "Hells Bells and a Bucket of Beer!"

A song which I like it "People", People who need people are the luckiest people in the world. Don never liked that song, however.

I think now I would like to write about Roms Restaurant in Sturbridge. I feel like it is a home away from home. All the waitresses have become good friends and I am lucky. They sit with me when they have a

chance. Some waitresses have become friends too. And – last but not least- I enjoy the women at the front desk too. John P used to be the head guy at Roms. He now runs with his partner a very popular coffee house in Southbridge. I highly recommend it. And now Margaret and Gabrielles daughter runs an excellent ice Cream Parlor.

I have not written much in the last few weeks, so I will pick up my pen now! My Son Dick was driving me recently. At the end of the short road to St. Hedwigs Church was my Don's "Mrs Baybutts Boarding house". He stayed there for the first 2 and ½ months before we were married. We both wrote daily. And—for the last 10 days before we were married he circled the last 10 days. It was fun.