Collective
MEMORIES

I'm going to tell your mother:
An oral history of childhood's hidden worlds.

Edited by Dale Jarvis & Terra Barrett

Collective Memories Series #04

I'M GOING TO TELL YOUR MOTHER:

AN ORAL HISTORY OF CHILDHOOD'S HIDDEN WORLDS.

Edited by Dale Jarvis & Terra Barrett

Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador
Intangible Cultural Heritage Office
St. John's, NL, Canada

Layout / design by Jessie Meyer

2017

Introduction

BY DALE JARVIS

Over a series of sometimes snowy Monday nights in January 2017, a dozen participants gathered at the Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador's office in St. John's to learn the basics of oral history.

Class participants practise their interviewing skills. Photo by Terra Barrett.

This extended oral history course was a first for HFNL, and was open to anyone with an interest in local history, culture, and folklore, and who wished to learn more about safeguarding our cultural heritage through the medium of oral histories. We had students and experienced cultural workers, retirees, former journalists, and people passionate about archives and family history.

The course gave participants a background on conducting research interviews, and creating, designing, and executing effective oral history research projects. One of the goals of the course was to have participants work collaboratively to create a finished oral history project. We talked about the importance of focussing a project, and after discussion, we agreed to conduct oral histories on the hidden and secret worlds of young lives, and to collect some of those stories you might not have wanted your parents to know at the time.

The topic led to some fun group storytelling, including conversations around imaginary worlds, pop culture influences on our childhood, banned places (or places for illicit activities), make-out spots, tales about things one should never play with (but which we did), treasure hunting, and a variety of dangerous games like "Chicken" and "Stretch," tossing knives between feet, and copying on ice pans.

Armed with some of these stories, our researchers went out and conducted their own interviews, prepared biographies of their storytellers, and selected memories for publication. This booklet is a result of their work. Read on, remember, and whatever you do, don't tell mom.

— St. John's, February 2017

ABOUT OUR STORYTELLERS

NATHAN BARRETT was born in St. John's in 1958. He grew up on Blackmarsh Road in a family of twelve, including his parents, four brothers and five sisters. The area on Blackmarsh Road where Nathan grew up was far from downtown St. John's and was mostly farmland, gullies, and dense woods. There were a number of large families in the area. Between siblings and neighbours he didn't have to look far for someone to play with. After high school, Nathan went to Memorial University where he completed his Bachelor of Commerce. He worked with the Provincial Government for nine years, and has recently retired from a twenty five year stint with the City of St. John's. Nathan was interviewed by Terra Barrett.

ROBERT "BOB" CHAYTOR was born in September of 1930. He was born in the home he grew up in, on Fowler's Road in Conception Bay South. He grew up with his seven sisters and brother, helping out on their family farm and getting into tomfoolery, some of which he describes here. Bob worked as a freight-rate adviser officer with the CN railway station in St. John's for over 40 years. Bob has enjoyed his senior years on the farmland he has always known. Bob was interviewed by his grandson, Daniel Rees.

TONY FLYNN was born in 1941 and is a native of Colliers, Newfoundland and Labrador. Tony worked in the construction

trades as a welder around the province and other parts of Canada for the majority of his career, but also had a period in the late 1970s and early 1980s where he performed similar work on drill ships and oil rigs in Europe and off of Africa. He is naturally very quiet, modest, and reserved so would be loathe for me to mention that he is an excellent and inventive self-taught wood carver who makes his own tools if needed and is one of those people who could turn their hand to most anything. More than that he has many of the funniest, scariest, and ultimately inspiring stories his son has heard, if and when he is not too shy to share them. He was interviewed by his son, Dennis Flynn.

RUTH NOSEWORTHY GREEN was born in 1948 in St. John's. She was raised by her grandparents on the Southside Road which was then a more rural area of town. She has fond memories of childhood activities in a neighbourhood where she was surrounded by a number of aunts, uncles and cousins. She had lengthy visits with family in Mount Pearl, Harbour Grace, Bryant's Cove and other parts of St. John's which contributed to her rich and varied childhood experiences. Ruth left the Southside shortly after marriage in 1971 and has lived in Portugal Cove ever since. A mother and grandmother, she has had a diverse working life and is now an artist practicing and teaching traditional mat making. Ruth was interviewed by Gary Green.

ABOUT OUR STORYTELLERS

HANNA-MAIJA KUHN was born in 1981 in Oulu, Finland. She grew up playing with friends and cousins, mostly outdoors - but sometimes indoors with board games and card games (when a certain grandmother wasn't around that is!). As a youth she became interested in other places when she had a few international pen pals, and began travelling abroad to Switzerland and Canada with her choir. At university Kuhn studied French Language & Literature, European Studies & Political Sciences. About two years ago she moved to St. John's with her husband and daughter, and recently welcomed their new son into the family here in Newfoundland. Kuhn's childhood memories stir up games of imagination - something her extremely creative daughter has definitely picked up on! Hanna-Maija was interviewed by Lauren Shepherd.

JULIA PEDDLE was born in 1991 in Carbonear, and grew up there before coming to St. John's at age eighteen to attend Memorial University of Newfoundland. She spent a happy, rough-and-tumble childhood with her father, mother, younger brother, and stubborn pet dog. As a kid in the 1990s, her adventures included a lot of running around outside with other neighborhood children, building igloos from snowbanks and pillow forts in the living room, racing cars in PlayStation games, chasing after her family's chicks when they hatched, and playing pranks on teachers at school. "It was a strange childhood," she admits, "but I think every childhood is strange in its own way." Julia was interviewed by Grace Dow.

ABOUT OUR STORYTELLERS

JEFF PETTEN was born in St. John's in 1958 and lived most of his life in the Conception Bay area. He came from a farming family, learned a great deal about it from his grandfather, and pursued a career in farming, eventually earning a Master's degree in animal genetics. When Jeff wasn't working on the family farm that overlooked the ocean in Kelligrews, he was roaming the beaches, rivers, ponds and woods that surrounded the community. He has colourful memories of childhood mischief, risky misadventures and even ghostly encounters. Jeff was interviewed by Geoff Meeker

LORI PRETTY was born in Toronto in 1968 but returned with her parents and sister to their beloved Newfoundland at the age of six months. She spent her entire childhood on the beaches of Placentia and has fond memories of playing with the many children in her neighbourhood. She briefly moved to St. John's to attend university and upon graduation returned to Placentia to teach, marry and raise a family. As an adult, she has taken great pleasure in watching her two boys run around and play on the same streets of her youth. Lori was keen to tell her story of making beachrock houses and is interested in finding out if children in other Newfoundland coastal towns built similar structures. Lori was interviewed by her husband Christopher Newhook.

MATTHEW ROBERTS was born March 14th 1984 in St. John's, Newfoundland. In his early years, his family moved around a number of times, living in St. John's, Mount Pearl,

St. Philips, Corner Brook, and settling back in St. Philips, where he spent most of his childhood. They built a home on his maternal grandmother King's farmland. Matthew spent his childhood playing outside, building toys and structures with his hands, and had a great love of winter. His childhood interests and activities are reflected in his adult life, working as an engineer. He continues to have a great love of winter and the outdoors. *Matthew was interviewed by Kelly Drover.*

BRIDGET RODGERS (nee Whelan) was born in 1939 in Riverhead, St. Mary's Bay, Newfoundland. The oldest of six children, she was the daughter of a fisherman and a teacher. Following her father's passing, she moved to St. John's at the age of 13, where her mother became the office manager at the Grace General Hospital. Bridget attended Memorial University at the age of 16 and became a schoolteacher one year later. In 1962, she married Randy Rodgers of Murphy Square, St. John's. Together, they raised five children. She retired from teaching in 1994. She and Randy still live in the house where they raised their children. They enjoy camping in their RV, walking the trails of St. John's, and reading novels to each other. Bridget was interviewed by Wendy Rodgers

ANIMALS

Jeff Petten. Photo courtesy Geoff Meeker.

I started with Pop when I was just a boy, probably six or eight years old. He used to have livestock auctions and I would go with him to those. He would buy and sell livestock. He bought me a crate of eight pigs down at the auction at Villa Nova, for me to raise myself. It was my responsibility to take care of them and raise them… but it was also a way to get me to do the other chores in the barn too. We used to get feed from Central Dairies – outdated milk – and feed that to the pigs. I raised them up and sold them and whatever cent I made off that, he just gave it to me. He didn't charge me for buying the pigs or for the feed. Me and him spent an awful lot of time together. I loved the agricultural thing, and this was old Newfoundland agriculture.

JEFF PETTEN

My dad used to keep chickens. He had them at both our house in Carbonear and in later days at the cabin at Bristol's Hope which is now my parents' house. My brother and I would go out every day to check to see if they'd hatched. It was at this time my dad decided he wanted a bunch of little chicks, so what we did — we

gave one to every kid in the neighborhood. [Laughs] And within an hour or so they all came back, 'cause you weren't allowed to keep them. I guess you could say that was another game that we had. We would just play with the farm animals, which there weren't very many at the time, don't get me wrong. There was just chickens at that point. In later years we would go on to raise pigs, but that didn't last very long. But yeah, all the kids in the neighborhood would come to our house because my dad was the weird guy with the chickens, and, you know, you got to play with the chickens. And when they would get out, all the kids in the neighborhood would come down like, 'Ahhh! We're gonna catch chickens today!' It was kind of funny. So I guess that was kind of a game that we all played together. My mother was terrified of them. She would try to shake a broom at them, because she wouldn't actually pick them up. She was alright with the little ones. It was the bigger ones that freaked her out.

JULIA PEDDLE

GAMES & PASTIMES

Santa with a young Ruth Noseworthy Green at Bowring's, circa 1952-53. Photo courtesy Ruth Noseworthy Green

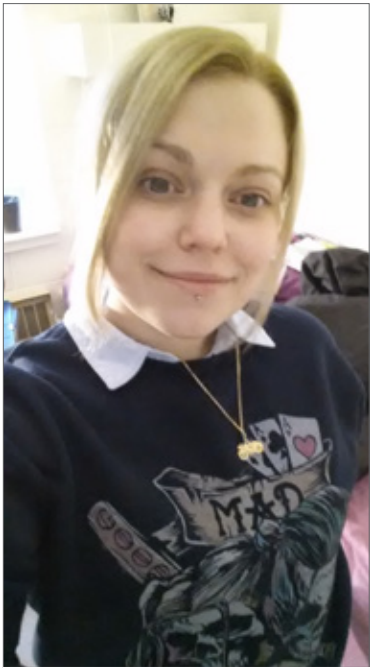
My uncle Hans had the grocery store on the south side and had games with the kids. One of them was stilts, walking on stilts. My cousin Gail was a master. Man, she was good on those stilts; the higher, the better. She had no fear. He would go down to the river and you had to walk across the river on stilts. That was a challenge. I never did it because I was clumsy like that. But, anyway, the guys used to have a ball doing that. Sometimes if you had a penny or a nickel, you put it on the train tracks so when the train went over it, it would flatten it out. I probably have a couple here still. His house was two stories and he would open the front middle window [on the second floor] in the house and the bathroom window at the back and they were exactly lined up. Whoever could throw the ball through the front window and have it come out the back would get a prize. I don't say my aunt liked that very much but that was the kind of foolishness he would do. He always liked to have games with the kids.

RUTH NOSEWORTHY GREEN

The first one that comes to mind was a game that we would play with all of the kids from the neighborhood. You would have kids ranging anywhere from twelve right down to six. It was a big group in terms of different age groups. The thing that got me

laughing when I was trying to think of things last night was that there were no rules to this game. There was no structure to this game. Nobody really knew how it started...On the backs of a lot of houses in Carbonear there would be a lot of woodsy backyards. There'd be a lot of trees, be a lot of different places you could hide. Rocks in weird places. Like, these big boulders. I know that the park that was right behind my house in Carbonear was on a crossroads. It had three gigantic boulders, a metal fence, and then behind that fence was my uncle's yard, and there was this little stream that kind of came down behind all of the houses. So that was basically where we would go. We would start out in the park and then we would move on out into the backyards and by the stream. But there was never a name for this game. And no one ever really said 'go' and we started to play. We would just do that, and we would run around like savages screaming and hitting each other with sticks.

You never really knew who you're running away from, or why, or what the point of it was. But you would climb over rocks and jump over the stream and knock your buddy down and steal his stick and then go hit somebody else with that. Sometimes you'd pick one or two people like, 'Oh, they're the bad guys.' And you run from the bad guys. But most of the time, it was probably a pack of fifteen to twenty kids just running around with sticks beating the crap out of each other. And that's what we called a game... I remember that you could get caught up in it and you could do that for an entire afternoon and not know where the day went. Just running around, jumping through people's backyards. You'd probably torment somebody's dog chained up in the backyard. You might poke the dog in the butt with a stick and then run. Or you might imagine all of the sudden that the dog is a coyote



Julia Peddle. Photo courtesy Julia Peddle.

and that would just add to the fun. Sometimes we'd separate into tribes. I don't remember if we had anything to really make us distinct tribes from another, but I do remember a day when I had four people in my tribe—[laughs]—and we're all trying to hide behind this too small rock because there was a couple of kids who were a lot taller than us, and if you got hit with a stick by them, it hurt. You know, it wasn't just annoying like it was with someone my size... If someone of consequence hit you, that hurt.

JULIA PEDDLE

On rainy days I read a lot of books. In those days if you saved up 25, or was it 5, Scotties Chip bags and sent them off to Scotties you got a free book. My free books are still here in the house. It was a big thing to save up your chip bags and get a free book in the mail. We all did it. Scotties had this offer on. Return the empty bags to them, 5 or 25 whatever it was, and mailed it off to them and you got your book of choice in the mail. One I got was "What Katie Did Next". It was a little childhood mystery book. Then I got "Treasure Island" and I still have them. Reading was a big thing in our house and my grandfather always bought books for me. Always. He used to read the Telegram to me every Saturday because they had a murder mystery in the

Scotties 5 cent foil bag. Photo by Joad Henry (CC BY-ND 2.0).

Telegram every Saturday and if it was not too gruesome he would read that to me. There was always a murder mystery in the second half of the paper before the comics, before the sports.

RUTH NOSEWORTHY GREEN

We played what we called boggers in the evening where you would challenge someone to do something and see who could do the stupidest - or not necessarily the stupidest, but sometimes

they were pretty stupid things. Sort of a game of challenge to see who could jump the highest or jump off the highest thing or walk a beam that they shouldn't be walking on, things of that sort.

NATHAN BARRETT

Everything was a stage, unless we were playing house. And that would be more of a girl thing. The boys would scatter off and play softball or whatever they wanted to do then. Or have a catch or play basketball. But if it was just the girls, quite often, as little girls do, you play house. We wouldn't have our dolls outside; that would be saved for a rainy day indoors. But if we were playing house outside we always managed to find somewhere. It was just dramatization, just as little girls, I'm sure, still do now. I don't have little girls, but I'm assuming they still play house.

LORI PRETTY

At times like Christmas I might get a store-bought toy gun from the States when my older sisters would send me one, maybe a "Hopalong Cassidy" [a fictional cowboy hero created in 1904 by writer Clarence Milford] gun, but they didn't last for some reason and they weren't very serviceable. I used to make my own and carve them out of wood and paint them silver and so on. Usually I got the ideas from comic books since there were pretty detailed plans of weapons in comic books at that time [the late 1940's and early 1950s]. I used to have six guns [cowboy style hand gun that held six bullets] from the Westerns and then there were a lot of war comics so I carved up Lugers [German semi-automatic military handgun popular during WW II] which were nice-looking guns. I suppose I was eight or ten years old but even at that age I was able to carve out things. At those times if you never had something you never just gave up, you had to make it. Everyone else was

GAMES & PASTIMES

A young Tony Flynn. Photo courtesy Dennis Flynn.

making stuff so you didn't have much choice. My father would tell me a scattered thing on how to do stuff but I was watching him all the time. He was a pretty handy fellow. He used to make all the mouldings for the doors and windows in the old house and, matter of fact that, not only that but he would also make the hand plane that was needed to make the mouldings. Usually he would make the hand plane cutting blade out of a blade from something else or a file which he would heat in the fire to soften it [and then shape it to what was needed]. He would make chisels and everything out of files.

TONY FLYNN

Tony took the childhood pastimes of carving toy guns and the informal inspiration from his father on crafting specialized tools into adulthood. Tony made his own chisel handles from wood chazel (local Colliers variant name of witch hazel or the yellow birch known for incredibly dense hard wood) and several types of custom carving planes and knives from discarded files. He carved a number of items while away for long stretches on construction camp jobs over the years including a Scottish Highland Foot Soldier, an impressive eagle and a number of comical dioramas and figures based on imaginative worlds and plays upon common phrases.

I still carve a little bit. This one is made of local pine from the Tilton Barrens area near Harbour Grace. This is a playful one of a gentleman sitting in a chair and he sees a knot in the wall in the shape of a face. We seen lots of that growing up and that was a favourite past time looking at knots and imagining what they were, it was the forerunner of the television. Behind the wall is a fellow who is responsible for the face and he is probably not of this world. The man in the chair doesn't realize what is behind the wall,

but he never gets tired of looking at the face. It is about 10 inches by 7 inches by 7 inches overall.

The other two are crane signalmen on a job site with one being "Boom Up" [an upraised thumb] and the other "Boom Down" [a downturned thumb] and they are about 7 inches tall. I saw lots of fellows doing that type of work on job sites and the visual signals are still used today even with all the modern communications. So they are caricatures of nobody in particular, but they do sort of look like things and people I encountered. Just for fun.

TONY FLYNN

Tony Flynn at work carving. Photo by Dennis Flynn.

GAMES & PASTIMES

I was really into Indiana Jones when I was a kid, and I always wanted to do something like that, you never know what you are going to find buried. I always really liked antiques, my uncle was really into them, I found it very interesting getting the explanation of what this particular tool was used for, and so I used to just like, scrounge around and there was a lot of old barns up behind the house. You find some very interesting stuff. I found an old sickle and things like that. And old tools, thumb wrenches, lock sets, you know with skeleton keys. It's always pretty interesting but I think My favorite find ever was I found one of those old diving mask, the frog man style, with the perfect oval glass and it still worked perfectly. I used to go swimming with it all the time. I have it in the room in there actually.

MATTHEW ROBERTS

ADVENTURES ON THE WATER

We went on ice pans, my brother and I and some friends, jumping from pan to pan. And seeing the water down in between: it was thrilling, but we were punished for it. We weren't allowed to go across the road. We had to cross the road to go to the water, and we weren't allowed to go across the road for weeks after. … There was a danger that I would not get my birthday present if I went across the road, and my birthday was in April, and my birthday present was a lamb that was born in April. A little lamb. I just cuddled it for a while and visited it in the stable. I guess eventually it was dinner, but when baby lambs were born, they were important. I think I called it April because it was April and because my birthday was in April.

BRIDGET RODGERS

Jeff Petten and his friend Pete had an adventure on the waters of Conception Bay, when they and two girls left Manuels in a 12-foot boat to row to Kelly's Island.

It was a beautiful day. We explored Kelly's Island, crawled around like rabbits and ran through the brush. When we came back down to the cove, well, what a different day it was. The lop was up. We started off across the bay, water coming over the side of the boat and we bailing. The girls were screaming and bawling and we were laughing. When we got to the yacht club all these big boats surrounded us. Someone had seen us take the boat and go on and when we didn't show up, they formed a flotilla to go look for us.

It was a brush with death, but not his first. As a small child, his sister was often expected to "mind" him during the day – a job the teenaged girl sometimes resented.

ADVENTURES ON THE WATER

Bridget Rodgers in 1952. Photo courtesy Wendy Rodgers.

We were at the beach in March month, when the ice was in. I was jumping up and down on a pan of ice, and her and her friend shoved it off out into the bay! The way the tide was, after she realized what she had done she kind of panicked, but I was too far out. As it happened, between the winds and the tide I ended up coming back into shore.

Another time, Jeff was ice hopping or "copying" to see how far out in the bay he could get.

The ice was moving all the time. I jumped onto one ice pan – I was probably early teens then – and went right on down into the water... I had to go down underneath the water and come up between an opening in the ice pans. I couldn't find my way back up where I went through, but saw a light further away and went for that. Well, I was never so cold in my life. There was someone parked there in a car who saw what was going on, and they took me in the car to get me warm... And that was when that hobby ended.

JEFF PETTEN

The time we put my brother in a carton, a cardboard box and pushed him out into the water. The water was very near our house. My sister was a baby, and my mother was feeding the baby, and didn't see us. But a man on the road saw us, and got my brother, who was about 3, in out of the box out of the water. ... We were playing at low tide, so you could go out a distance and still only be to your knees. But we discovered – that was learning by discovery – we discovered that cardboard does not float very well. And after many lectures, we were sorry, genuinely sorry. We could have drowned him. But we didn't realize it. When you're young, you don't have fear or danger of water, so we were not really afraid of the water.

BRIDGET RODGERS

The other thing we would do was skating on the Waterford River. But when I was a child, for some reason the authorities changed the course of the river. It used to flow closer to Waterford Bridge Road and then they changed to closer to the Southside Road. Before they changed the river, there was a big boggy area. So we would put our skates on and walk down across the train tracks and down to the boggy area and skate. The boys were always playing hockey down there. There were several frozen boggy areas so us younger kids would take the smaller area and let the older guys have the bigger piece of ice. Then my cousins and I would go home after skating with frozen feet. My grandmother would put the oven door down and put a pillow across the oven door. My cousins and I, three of us, would sit with our skates off and our feet in the oven to thaw. That was a good memory… [We] laughed a lot over foolishness. There were times when the river froze and that was really interesting to skate on that because sometimes it would freeze clear. So you would think it was water but it was just clear ice. Just beautiful.

RUTH NOSEWORTHY GREEN

I remember winters very well, because Northern Finland you will have long winters, so I remember going sliding a lot. No matter the weather, and the kind of day, but I just remember being outside. And that's also, not only with my Grandmother, but also at home we lived very close to a hill, like sliding hill. It was not a hill as such, but it was a pile of snow from a skating rink — so they would pile all the snow over there, and then you could go sliding every day basically on this huge, huge hill. And, in Finland they do this tradition, it's kind of related to Shrove Tuesday, which is basically a celebration of midwinter, and so it's National Sliding Day. So, [laughter] everyone will, everyone will go sliding, and that's

something that I remember very — and, it's from a house where we moved away from when I was four years old, so I must have a very strong memory of that. And it's a day when you, you go sliding, you drink hot chocolate, you eat split pea soup — it's split peas and ham — and then pancakes. And that's somehow very strong memory for me, do that with my cousins.

I would have three different things — I have no idea what it would be called in English — but a plastic, flat, I guess it looks a bit like a big pan? But it's basically fixed to the size of your bum, and then you, it has a small handle in between your legs that you hold onto, and then you slide down on that. Or then you have something bigger, like uhm a plastic sled or so, where you sit completely in it —it's also a bigger bucket if you may— that you slide down on. Or then they have Snow Racers. And my daughter actually has an exact copy of the one that I had as a kid. So it has a proper wheel in the front, and it has brakes, uhm, and that was of course the best of the best — but I think I only had that a little bit later in life. Those would be the ones so no—nothing like you think about of the wooden sleds or Central Europe, the Alps — we didn't have any of those, but plastic. Yep.

HANNA-MAIJA KUHN

We would also go in to Short's on the Southside Road by the [railway] car shop. The Americans had put a ski run in there with a tow rope and they used to operate the tow rope. We used to go in there and go sliding and tobogganing. One day, my cousin was tobogganing in there and he went out of control and couldn't stop. There was a train on the train tracks and he went through the wheels and came out the other side in the ditch. He sort of laid there frightened to death, counting his body parts making

WINTER PLAY

Hanna-Maija Kuhn at age three, 1984. Photo courtesy Hanna-Maija Kuhn.

sure he still had everything. The train was just shunting. It was not travelling very fast. But he got an awful fright.

RUTH NOSEWORTHY GREEN

One year, we all got together with help from parents, and we actually built a proper igloo with the snow bricks… It was as close as we could get…I don't know if it was frozen chunks of ice to a certain point and then they formed bricks with their hands, with the snow. I know that we froze so much stuff, so it might have started with a foundation of ice and then just built on little square bricks of packed-in snow. We would do something like that all the time—which was probably dangerous now that I think about it. But we would dig into the side of a snowbank and carve it out, you know. And I can remember times when people would be in it and someone would run up over it and it would collapse. The more I'm thinking about it now, I'm like, we're lucky we weren't killed. We weren't. We were all fine as far as I know. I don't think any of us suffered brain damage, surprisingly.

One thing that we would do that none of us were allowed to do—right across from my house was the trade school, and it had a big fence, and that's where a lot of the snow plows would push a lot of the snow. You used to be able to climb up so high that you could almost touch the power lines. And we were not allowed to play on that embankment of snow. None of us, ever. And how many times did somebody's mom or dad drive by and we'd have to duck down and try to hide. And, you know, subsequently we'd all go home and get yelled at because we were told not to be there, but for some reason just the fact that we weren't supposed to be there made it all the more—we just really wanted to be there. That's where we built a lot of those little snow caves and had to dig each

other out more than once because someone would get stuck. You'd get four or five people in there and then you'd get one bigger kid who'd just be a total jerk and run up over it and it would all start to fall in and then everyone would be bailing out… Then you'd have to dig it all again, and someone would run over it again.

JULIA PEDDLE

Wintertime we did a lot of sliding. An awful lot of sliding. At that point and time, I was only telling your mother the other night, at that point Gerald Gulliver's house was the farm with the house on the hill as opposed to the one that was down on the flatland. Gerald's was on a knob and we used to start sliding up at Gerald's front step basically and slide all the way down through a couple of big fields in the back. We used to slide right out our driveway if you got it right. So wintertime we would spend time building snowforts, snowball fights. What else did we do in the wintertime? One of everybody's favourite pastimes if you happened to be on a bus route, I think it was route 7 at the time used to come up that way, of course for small kids well not necessarily small kids, a good thing to do at that time because there wasn't much traffic would be to grab hold to the back bumper of the bus and go for a little spin down the road on the back of the bus. Not necessarily the wisest move to make. But as I say back in those days there was very little traffic anyway so you usually weren't going to have a car coming the other way.

What did you use for sliding?

A lot of us didn't have anything so a bonnet of a car - because you know up in that neighbourhood at that time there was generally a few scrap cars because everybody was a back door mechanic

Nathan Barrett. Photo by Terra Barrett.

and that type of thing so there was always vehicles around. So if you didn't happen to have a slide there was always the bonnet of a car or if you knew somebody who had a torch, and there generally were some of those around for cutting through metal and whatever, it was probably the roof of a car because that way you could get six or eight people on the roof of a car or three or four on the bonnet of a car. It was much more fun than sliding by yourself. Now thinking back on it, the roof of the car particularly was probably not the safest because generally once you cut the roof off the car you've got some jagged metal edges sticking out on the four corners so that wasn't necessarily the wisest thing.

NATHAN BARRETT

I liked jumping off of high fences and stuff and just cannonballing into the snow when I was a kid. But dad wouldn't let me get on top of the roof of the shed. So while he wasn't watching, I was making out like I was building a snowman, I was rolling the big balls, but instead of trying to rolling it all sides to make it round, I would roll it one way to make a cylinder. And I would roll one and put it behind the shed, and roll another one and put that behind the shed. And then I started stacking them. And so I was making a staircase on the 'dark side' of the shed where dad could not see. So then I would climb up this staircase, now it was every bit the normal height of a regular room. And I got onto the roof and jumped off, 'Oh, that was awesome!' I got stuck but it worked out.

MATTHEW ROBERTS

UP TO MISCHIEF

One particular thing you wouldn't want your parents to know about, was in the fall of the year when fruit trees would be ripe, three or four young-fellas, my buddies, and we would go, shall I say, raid the trees. The big place was Sir Edgar Bowring's down on Metcalfe's Road, they had all kinds of apples and pears and plums. Sir Edgar Bowring's they had a caretaker, Mr. Hibbs, and one night four of us were down filling our pockets with apples and fruits, and the caretaker came. And he used to have a sort of a daybed to lie on, but it was wooden, one that he was after making himself. So I was shaking the tree, and when the boys sung out 'Someone's coming!'. I only had time to drop to the ground and crawl under his settle, I'll call it, and he came and sat on it.

He sat on his daybed thing, and the boys was out, a 100 feet or so, and they ran out and climbed over the fence on the road. And they were out laughing, and they were laughing so much 'cause they knew where I was to. And he got up to go out and see what the commotion was, and then I was able to get up and run. So that was one.

Robert Chaytor. Photo courtesy Daniel Rees.

We'd keep 'em for when we went to school, and then when we got to school the next day we'd share 'em. You wouldn't dare bring 'em home, 'cause we always had three or four trees of our own. You'd just hide them around your own place until you went to school the next day.

ROBERT CHAYTOR

UP TO MISCHIEF

We went on a sting one time. Do you know what a sting is? A sting is when you steal apples or fruit from someone's tree. We went to a neighbour's and they had an apple tree there. My two cousins were up in the tree and I was the guard. The lady came out and caught us. She didn't physically catch us. She saw us and when she said "I know who you are I'm going to tell your mother.", I said "Don't worry girls she does not know who we are." Because, I wasn't making fun, but my mom died when I was a baby so, you know, she could not call my mom so I knew she didn't know who we were. It was just getting dark. I know there was another gentleman in the road from us who had a lovely apple tree and the boys took on the challenge of getting over his fence even when he had the dog tied to the tree. Just to get the apples. Just for the heck of it. And that poor man, I am sure the boys drove him crazy. I won't name him. They were light footed and they would get over the fence so fast. It was a game. There was no vandalism. All the guys wanted to do was get his goat and get an apple.

RUTH NOSEWORTHY GREEN

I wasn't allowed to have a knife. All the boys had pocket knives. While my father was building the verandah on our house … I was probably 4 … and I was helping him build the verandah. He turned around to pick up something and anyway, I got the saw and cut my hand with the saw. [She shows a 3-inch long scar on her right wrist.] After my mother fixed that up and got it straightened up, I went back to helping him, and the next time he turned around, I had the axe, and I cut my hand with the axe. See how straight it is? [She shows a 1-inch long scar on her left wrist.] On the same day. The axe and the saw.

BRIDGET RODGERS

UP TO MISCHIEF

Peter's Dad had an old antique truck and that was his pride and joy. It was purple and he had it done up and polished to the nines. Pete come down one day and said, 'Come on up, I shows you what I can do.' He was after learning how to drive, so I said alright, and then he drove around the garage faster… and then a little bit faster… and then a little bit faster, until he lost control of the truck and we ended up in the house. A great big post came through the window and went right by my head. It was all woods right across the street and I saw Pete over there, waving at me. He come running back and said, 'If you're not out of there before Father gets out of the house, you're dead!' So we went up and lived in the woods for a week or so.

JEFF PETTEN

When we were in elementary school, maybe we were in the fifth grade, maybe not…We all got in trouble for gambling. [Laughs] We used to bring these Pokemon chips. They looked like little casino chips but they had Pokemon on them…They were poker cards, but they were round and shaped like Pokeballs with different Pokemon for each thing… Anyway, somebody got it into their head that we would gamble and play poker and card games, but it would be for junk. So you'd go through your desk and you'd find, like, maybe half an eraser that you don't want anymore, or a pen that's out of ink, or a lead pencil, or—no, because there wouldn't have been lead pencils back then, they would have all been traditional pencils. Alright, so maybe like the nub of a 'good for you' pencil that you got for reading week or something. And we'd throw all our junk in a pile and then we'd play cards and whoever won, won the junk. And it was never anything good. I don't remember it being anything good. I remember it being just a lot of junk. So anyway, we got in trouble and we were told that we

UP TO MISCHIEF

Nathan Barrett, early 1960s. Photo courtesy Nathan Barrett.

weren't supposed to do that anymore. So then I think people just started playing it in the bathroom. [Laughs] We were degenerates. We're awful degenerates. Yeah, I remember that.

JULIA PEDDLE

My oldest brother Ed who is six or seven, seven or eight years older, him and Kevin French liked to tinker with toys or whatever. So when I was probably twelve or so, they had an old Volkswagen beetle that they decided to repair and then strip the fenders off and this that and whatever. So we'd be up driving that around in the back fields when it was probably not the safest to be bouncing around old farmland.

NATHAN BARRETT

Maintenance of hand-made wooden wheels in the 1940s and 1950s was an ongoing concern as if they were left neglected the outer iron bands protecting the wood may slip off and damage the felloes [the circular outer rim pieces of wood making up the edge of the wheel and mortised by spokes back to the central hub]. There were no nails or screws holding these in place and it all depended upon very precise and tidy wood work and blacksmithing to get and keep a tight fit.

My father's dray wheels [horse-drawn flat cart] had a big steel axle that was square and about 2 inches by 2 inches and at least four feet long. It was all very heavy with the wheels and iron fittings added the whole apparatus was at least four hundred pounds when dry. The circular iron bands on the wheels would get loose out in the sun or in the barn over the winter [as the wood dried and contracted]. My father would take his wheels on the axles in the spring of the year and roll them out in the salt water down on

UP TO MISCHIEF

Flynn's beach overnight to plim up (the water would cause the wood to expand tight to the iron bands again). It was an ideal spot as the beach slopes out and he would run his wheels out on the axles at low tide [until they were completely submerged] and then tie a rope on them off to his fence about a hundred feet away. The next day he would go and collect them. This particular day Dave Brown [one of the next door neighbours] was with him as it was a sizeable job to get the wheels back in since they got much heavier overnight soaking up the water. When father hauled the rope in there was nothing there only air. The wheels were gone. Obviously some youngsters untied his rope for a trick and the wheels rolled a long way out underwater. They weren't particular about what the outcome of the trick would be as it was a big loss to lose your wheels.

Dave was quite a swimmer and he swam out and he could see them in ten or fifteen feet of water. The wheels were after rolling almost out to the cow and the calf [local names for two rocks visible only at low tide] which was probably an extra 40 or 50 feet out [from where they had been originally]. Dave wasn't up to par on retrieving them. He wasn't near strong enough to lift them up off the bottom. Now Dave had a brother Jim Brown who was as strong as an ox and built like the devil and could swim like a fish. He used to use wheels like that on his own meadow for weightlifting for fun. Jim heard all the commotion and came down on the beach and he said to Dave as he was going into the water "Never send a boy to do a man's job". Jim went out and he was gone underwater that long everyone got so worried that Dave was going to go out and look for him in case Jim had gotten tangled up or had trouble in the cold water. Next thing we knew Jim broke out of the water in a big splash and he was pushing the wheels. He shoved the wheels all the way in underwater and broke out

running and took the wheels right up to the road over all those beach rocks. He was a very nice man and he was proud of his strength so would have shoved the wheels up if it killed him. In the meantime he was able to do it.

Another time Jim was up to my mother's house in the fall of the year when she had a delivery of three sacks of flour each weighing 100 pounds came over from Laracy's store by truck and he offered to bring them in. My mother wasn't worried as she knew Jim could easily handle a sack of flower. The next thing she looked and Jim came in tap dancing across the kitchen floor. He had all three sacks at once. He had a hundred pound sack of flour under each arm and one in his teeth. So he tap danced in with 300 pounds and it was no load on him. He was a naturally gifted athlete and if there was another sack he would have found a way to get that one aboard to. My mother used to say of him, "What comes by nature costs no money" meaning that what your are born with can be embellished a bit, but if you are born with that gift [of strength in Jim's case] it is a lot easier.

TONY FLYNN

UP TO MISCHIEF

Tony Flynn on Flynn's Point, Colliers, January 20, 2007. Photo by Dennis Flynn.

AUTHORITY FIGURES

Was there any police presence in your town then, as a kid in the 1940s?

Oh yes, right up where the Irving Oil is now. Sgt. Churchill was his name. He was the type that you wouldn't want to run across.

The only time ever I had an interaction with him, there was, shall I say, a sort of a Summer-time hotel up on Chamberlains Hill, operated by a Ms. Berg. And of course, during the War, I was around 15 or 16. And when the Americans and Canadians started coming around in the summer-time, the dance-hall would be opened up. Anyways, one evening after supper me and a couple of friends were looking in and, anyway, there was a dance going, and anyway it seemed like it was going pretty good. But it got a bit rough, so the lady operating the place, Ms. Berg, she phoned for the policeman and Sgt. Churchill came on the scene. He took over, and he was pretty rough in the way he handled the three or four American servicemen.

They were a bit loud and that, and the type of music that was played at the dance-hall was juke-box, and the young-fellas dancing would plug in fast tunes and that, and they were dancing fast, and things like that, and the lady thought things were getting out of hand. But the policeman, he thought so too, so he got his billy going and hit a couple of the fellas on the head with it. They just got out of there fast. Things quieted down, once the policeman came by - that was it.

Did the dance end?

No, but it was very quiet.

ROBERT CHAYTOR

SECRET PLACES

From when I was six, we've lived in the same house, well my parents have, and they still live there — and it's next to a brook, if you say — this body of water that flows behind the house, it's about two metres wide — it's not deep but every now and then there's a lot of water, and we were not allowed across that water. And of course we did go across that water — [laughter] — like you would. That would have been then when I was a bit older — so, 10, 11, 12 — and we would get pieces of wood that had fallen in the forest and we would put them across the water, and then make kind of a bridge of our own. And then we would try to find a cute place somewhere. And we'd build huts in the forest. I remember with one of my friends we had a very secret hut over there, and we'd, you know, bring whatever candy we had saved or, like we tried to build it into our home, in a way. And we thought nobody knew where it was. [laughter] Until one day my grandfather showed up, and he's like "Oh, it's dinner time you should come home now" — I'm like, "HOW did you find us?". We thought we were so far away from home, and you know no-one will ever find us. And he said "We can hear you all the way to our backyard — we knew exactly where you were the whole time". I talked to my mother about that as well, recently, and she said she had no idea that we had gone across the water because it was secret secret, you know, not allowed, but we were still safe all the time.

HANNA-MAIJA KUHN

Down in the woods we would build forts. I guess we built some out of what you would call normal lumber that we could scavenge but there wasn't a hell of a lot of that around. Generally where we were there wasn't a lot of wastage. Most things got used. So if there was a piece of wood around you weren't getting it to go down and build a fort unless you took it without someone's permission. But

SECRET PLACES

Hannah-Maija Kuhn, 2016. Photo courtesy Hannah-Maija Kuhn.

the woods were fairly tight down in the back. We would build what we called bow-forts where we would weave the bows in among the trees and actually create a sort of fort with the actual tree branches and that type of thing. Then you know there was a couple of those burnt out because of course you would end up in there with your candles doing things you shouldn't be doing and the next thing you know something would spark something and there it'd go. The different groups would go in, and actually some of the farmers too, I think. We always said it was the farmers anyway maybe it was just somebody else who was pissed off with us at the time or who knows. But you would have a fort and next thing you know you would hear someone down in the backwoods banging and knocking and you would go down and find your fort destroyed. Of course if you came across somebody else's fort you would generally destroy their fort because I guess it was who was claiming the land.

NATHAN BARRETT

Right across from my parent's house, this entire area was beach. It was covered in beach rock but the definition of beach rock depends upon which part of the province you're from because some beaches have these lovely little pebbles and some beaches are all sand or elongated as I've seen in Trinity Bay [long narrow shale-like rocks]. Ours were large, round beach rocks, probably four inches in diameter average: four to six inches. So there were these big chunky rocks…Everywhere! So that entire area across from my parent's house, [which now houses the Lion's Club etc], is where we would spend a lot of our time. It was flat, completely covered in these beach rocks. I guess when you build structures to play in, you use what you have. And that, as you can see, is the only resource we had to work with. If you look at any old pictures of Placentia from the 1960s and '70s you would see that there was very little grass,

there were no trees for us to climb or build tree houses in so we used what we had...beach rocks. I'm not sure, it's been a question of mine, who taught us to do this or where it originated, I don't know. But what we did basically, we didn't really build rock houses. We dug holes that we eventually climbed into and played. What we called them? I'm not sure. Cubby holes or cubby houses? But it was all structured around building a home. Basically, it was a place to play house in. In my memory or in my own experience. People older than me (or younger than me), might have had totally different experiences altogether for the function of these things. In my memory, it was just to build a place to play and a great way to spend our time. Sometimes we'd play house, but other times we'd just hang out and chat with our friends.

We would just decide how big our house was going to be. Generally it would probably be, I don't know, five by five, six by six. We would just take rocks and lay would them on the surface of the beach. So you'd have rocks on rocks. A frame is probably a better way to put it. Then we would get inside there; sometimes I'd just be alone doing this...and I loved it! If there was nobody around, I just loved digging holes. So I'd build my little frame and get in there and start tossing out rocks. I'd just toss them and toss them until I was sitting in this little hole. It would take a long time too and then somebody else might come along and we'd decide if we needed extra rooms in our house now because of course, you never started simple. You were going to have a mansion. So we would continue to layer our rocks on the surface and then we'd say "where's this room gonna connect to that one?" Then we'd lift out some rocks.

We might say we want a little bathroom over here. That was the fun of it, deciding, laying out your blueprint, your plan for your

extravagant home that you were going to have. So this might go on for hours, just laying out the foundation and then the hard work began when we started digging out those holes. We would quickly realize that maybe we were shooting too high.

What we would do is start with a hole. I would probably sit in one room, and even if my friend was helping me, I would dig my hole. She would probably sit in the next room and start digging there. We were basically just tossing out the rocks. We weren't piling up the walls. No, we were just tossing them out of the way, as fast we could. It was pretty labour intensive. Our little hands, just tossing these rocks one after another. Eventually, we would get to the point where we were sitting in these holes but we couldn't see each other very well any more. Now I thought they were huge, but realistically they probably went down two to three feet, at the most. You would be sitting in this hole and the surface, [the foundation] would be over your head, basically, so that you couldn't see. That was the best, when you couldn't see anything around you…and my mom couldn't see us anymore. But they really weren't all that deep because eventually you knew you had dug too far when you reached water. You wouldn't actually reach water, but the rocks would be wet and we didn't want that. We didn't want to be sitting on wet rocks so that's basically when we'd stop.

Have you ever tried putting roofs on them?

We, oddly enough, if my mom would allow it, some days, yes we would. She would loan us an old blanket or a sleeping bag and if our hole wasn't too big, we could cover it and we would use our rocks from our foundation as anchors.

Lori Pretty demonstrates the layout of a rock house. Photo by Christopher Newhook.

So you would lay your blanket over the top and then somebody would have to get out and lay the rocks over it because it was always windy. It seemed to me the weather was harsher back then, and maybe that's why we dug holes to get in out of the wind. We weren't allowed inside to play as much so we just wanted to have a break from the wind. Especially there where I grew up on that street, obviously. It's the North Atlantic blowing right down on you...literally, down that street. Always! So it was a welcome little break from the wind. Sometimes we would spend a couple of

days working on these things. If we dug a nice deep hole, and we were happy with it, then we'd go up to the beach itself, up by the water, and collect driftwood. There were always bits and pieces of driftwood up there. If we found a nice little flat piece we'd bring it back for a table. You would have some furniture in there, just based on things that you found. You might find a little stump to sit on for a chair or a couch. But, for the most part, yes, they were pretty crude.

I'm not so sure how "secret" they were, but I have the fondest memories of building them!

LORI PRETTY

Lori Pretty amidst the rocks, Placentia. Photo by Christopher Newhook.

SECRET PLACES

When I was a kid I used to spend a lot of time outside, in winter. I prefer winter over summer, I always did. And Christmas time 'What do you want for Christmas?' 'You know I could really use a square top shovel for cutting out bricks for my snow forts.' So I would get like a hatchet and a shovel for Christmas, because that's what I wanted. I would get home from school, what was it, like 3 o'clock in elementary school? I would stay out from 3 o'clock to about 9:30 at night just building snow forts.

I remember I built this one, it was fantastic. I did it almost like an igloo, a ring of snow blocks, but I dug it out rather than constructed it. And then in the center of this cylindrical room, I had a column that I made out of blocks that I had cut out of snow. Then with my hatchet I went to this one area that had a lot of slush built up and I cut out these big blocks of ice, probably about three feet by one feet, and then maybe about six inches thick, and then I would get a saw and would start sawing them down the middle, like you were sawing off slices of a loaf of bread. So I had these slices of ice that were about one foot by three feet by maybe two or three inches thick and then I laid them across the roof from the wall to the center column and overlapped them like scales so I had an ice roof on my snow fort. And my friends would be like 'Oh my God.' So I would do ones like that. You would have tunnels that would go for miles until they collapsed and you would almost asphyxiate. We had all sorts of crazy forts and stuff.

I had one, one time I had built it into a snow drift against one of the barns that were up behind the house, these old abandoned barns. The snow drift was maybe twelve, thirteen feet tall or more. And I had dug out this big room that was probably about the size

Matthew Roberts family property in St. Philips, and the woods where he played.
Photo by Kelly Drover.

of most people's porches, It was a nice big space inside. When I was digging, I hit the sheet metal siding of the barn and it vibrated and the whole thing collapsed on top of me. But what I ended up with was almost like a perfect tunnel that went from the base, about 10 feet out from the base of the barn up in this big curving slope and it exited right near the roofline of the barn, but it was like this overhang of snow on the whole thing. So we used to climb up on top of the barn and slide down the sheet metal roof and down into this tunnel and you would shoot out the end into the driveway. It was almost like a waterslide but the winter. I used to do a lot of stuff like that. I still do actually.

MATTHEW ROBERTS

Matthew Roberts looking over the land he played on as a child. Photo by Kelly Drover.

GHOST STORIES

Jeff Petten recalled a ghostly encounter when he and a friend, Andy, were canoeing on the Hodgewater Gullies. They were camped for the night at the side of a small brook, near a portage route between two ponds.

> In the night, we were sitting in the tent and saw this light, every now and again. We got out of the tent and there was a lantern – like a railway man's kerosene lantern – going back and forth, swinging, like someone was walking. But there was nobody there. There was only the lantern. It kept going back and forth, up and down, from one pond to the other, one pond to the other. Andy, the guy with me, was freaking right out. I don't know what good it was going to do… but he took the axe out of the stump and slept on it that night. I thought it was [a person] at first, I called out hello… but no response. I didn't feel threatened by it but poor Andy, he never went off canoeing with me after.

Perhaps his most memorable supernatural experience happened close to home, in the house that formerly belonged to his grandparents, which he bought after they died and occupied himself.

> People say the house is haunted and enough people have been there feel that way. But to me, it's the safest place on earth. Sometimes you just feel a presence, or you'll hear movement when there's nobody around, like a door opening and closing. Or you'll hear someone on the stairs. But to me it's never been a threatening thing. … When the kids were small, they were quite aware of it, and I didn't want to freak them out so I'd dismiss it. It was more of a positive energy than a negative one. I still have the house to this day and whenever life is stressful, that's where I would go.
>
> **JEFF PETTEN**

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About the Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador

The Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador is a nonprofit organization which was established in 1984 to stimulate an understanding of and an appreciation for the architectural heritage of the province. The Foundation, an invaluable source of information for historic restoration, supports and contributes to the preservation and restoration of buildings of architectural or historical significance. The Heritage Foundation also has an educational role and undertakes or sponsors events, publications and other projects designed to promote the value of our built heritage. The Heritage Foundation is also involved in work designed to safeguard and sustain the intangible cultural heritage of Newfoundland and Labrador for present and future generations everywhere, as a vital part of the identities of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and as a valuable collection of unique knowledge and customs. This is achieved through policies that celebrate, record, disseminate, and promote our living heritage.

The Collective Memories Project is an initiative of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Office of the Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador, with funding provided by the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

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2016 • ISBN 978-0-9937456-5-2