



Berkshire Historical Society at Herman Melville's Arrowhead
780 Holmes Rd, Pittsfield, MA 01201 | berkshirehistory.org

Invisible Community Project
in partnership with
Housatonic Heritage Oral History

Edythe Reid
Recorded: February 24, 1998
0:00:00 to 0:30:25

- Elaine Gunn:** This is Elaine Gunn and I'm at the home of Mrs. Edythe Reid in Pittsfield, Massachusetts on West Street. Today's date is February 24, 1998. Mrs. Reid has kindly consented to be part of our oral history project for the Invisible Community Project that we are working on. Thank you, Edythe, for allowing me to interview you this afternoon.
- Edythe Reid:** Good afternoon.
- Elaine Gunn:** I'm going to start with asking you your full name.
- Edythe Reid:** Edythe Hope Persip Reid.
- Elaine Gunn:** Would you tell me where you were born, Edythe?
- Edythe Reid:** Here in Pittsfield.
- Elaine Gunn:** And your parents' names?
- Edythe Reid:** My father was John Persip and my mother was Estella Grant Persip. She was born in Lenox, Mass.
- Elaine Gunn:** Where was your father born?
- Edythe Reid:** Here in Pittsfield.
- 0:01:00
- Elaine Gunn:** You've been a resident then of Pittsfield all of your life.
- Edythe Reid:** Yes.
- Elaine Gunn:** Have you been married?
- Edythe Reid:** Yes. Mm-hmm.
- Elaine Gunn:** Are you now a...
- Edythe Reid:** Widow.
- Elaine Gunn:** You're a widow. How many children do you have?

Edythe Reid: One.

Elaine Gunn: His name is...

Edythe Reid: [??]

Elaine Gunn: Guy...

Edythe Reid: Guy Alan[sp] Reid.

Elaine Gunn: Guy Alan[sp] Reid. He lives here in Pittsfield...

Edythe Reid: Yes.

Elaine Gunn: With you or...

Edythe Reid: No.

Elaine Gunn: Is he married?

Edythe Reid: No.

Elaine Gunn: What is your church affiliation if you have a church affiliation?

Edythe Reid: I belong to one of the chapters. I belong to the women's club.

Elaine Gunn: You belong to the women's league.

Edythe Reid: Yeah.

Elaine Gunn: Are you also a member of the First Baptist Church?

Edythe Reid: Yeah.

Elaine Gunn: Can you tell me a little bit about your church activities?

Edythe Reid: Back here in December they had a gospel group.

0:01:59

Edythe Reid: It was very good. The women's league meets just about every month. In fact we're meeting [0:02:13] and we're inviting the women from the Berkshire [0:02:19] which is across the street. We'll have a dinner for 'em like that.

Elaine Gunn: Now your family has always been members of the First Baptist Church.

Edythe Reid: Oh, yeah. Mm-hmm.

Elaine Gunn: You remember anything about your church activities when you were growing up, for instance?

Edythe Reid: I probably was [0:02:40] then.

Elaine Gunn: At the Baptist Church?

Edythe Reid: At the Baptist Church. Yes.

Elaine Gunn: What did your children do as far as the...what were the fun things that churches did for children?

Edythe Reid: The church picnic. Went to those all the time.

Elaine Gunn: You and your brothers and sisters? How many brothers and sisters do you have?

0:03:03

Edythe Reid: I have four brothers and four sisters.

Elaine Gunn: And they all lived or still live in Pittsfield?

Edythe Reid: Well, Roland lived in Williamstown. The rest lived in Pittsfield.

Elaine Gunn: How many of survive now?

Edythe Reid: Three.

Elaine Gunn: Three. Three of...girls?

Edythe Reid: Girls. Yes.

Elaine Gunn: Three girls. And all of you live in this community?

Edythe Reid: Right.

Elaine Gunn: What other organizations did you belong to growing up or belong to now? Remember?

Edythe Reid: American Legion Auxiliary. I've been a member for 52 years. I've been a member of the Eastern Star since 1970.

Elaine Gunn: You know, would you tell me a little bit about the American Legion and your family. There is a connection there if I'm not mistaken.

Edythe Reid: Oh, yeah. My brothers were all and of course, my uncle was. I think they called him Uncle Charlie. [0:04:07].

0:04:07

Elaine Gunn: Is he the one who had the American Legion named for him?

Edythe Reid: Yes.

Elaine Gunn: When did that happen? Do you remember when that happened?

Edythe Reid: Back in the '80s. About '82, '83.

Elaine Gunn: Now there must've been a special celebration.

Edythe Reid: Oh, yes. We had a big celebration. We had a dinner that night.

Elaine Gunn: Now he was in...which war was he in?

Edythe Reid: He was in World War I.

Elaine Gunn: World War I. OK. That was quite a long time ago. Now he had a family also?

Edythe Reid: No. He never married.

Elaine Gunn: He was involved with the American Legion all that time?

Edythe Reid: Oh, yeah. That was his life.

Elaine Gunn: What was his title?

Edythe Reid: Oh. He was a commander. He was sergeant at arms for 60 somethin' years. [laugh] A long time.

0:05:06

Elaine Gunn: Did you ever work, Edythe?

Edythe Reid: Yeah.

Elaine Gunn: What kind of job did you...

Edythe Reid: I do domestic work.

Elaine Gunn: You did?

Edythe Reid: Yeah. Mm-hmm. I worked for the Davis family. Churchill Davis family. I also worked for the Daniel Williams family.

Elaine Gunn: But you're retired now.

Edythe Reid: Oh, yeah. Mm-hmm.

Elaine Gunn: Tell me about your school growing up and going to school here in Pittsfield.

Edythe Reid: I just went to my 50th class reunion in Pittsfield High School.

Elaine Gunn: So did I. [laugh]

Edythe Reid: [laugh]

- Elaine Gunn:** You 'member anything that was fun or difficult or unusual about going to school here in Pittsfield?
- Edythe Reid:** Oh, no.
- Elaine Gunn:** Which school or schools—because [0:05:59].
- 0:06:00
- Edythe Reid:** I went to Tucker. I went to Mercer, Central Junior High, and then Pittsfield High.
- Elaine Gunn:** Now this was before there was...you went to Pittsfield High before Taconic was built.
- Edythe Reid:** Yeah.
- Elaine Gunn:** Did you have any special friends at school?
- Edythe Reid:** Yeah. In fact, she's still my friend. She lives in Springfield. Her name was Evelyn Worth[sp] and then once Evelyn married her name is now Evelyn Wilson. She comes up to all the fairs they have. In fact, they have a luncheon every three or four months. She comes up for it.
- Elaine Gunn:** Now you mentioned the very schools that you went to. Where did you live when you were going to these schools?
- Edythe Reid:** On Robbins Avenue. On the corner of Robbins and Danforth.
- Elaine Gunn:** Is that where you grew up mostly?
- Edythe Reid:** Mm-hmm. Robbins. Mm-hmm.
- Elaine Gunn:** Tucker School, which isn't...that's not any school any longer is it?
- 0:07:00
- Edythe Reid:** I went there for three years. Then I transferred to Mercer.
- Elaine Gunn:** Did you walk or did you...
- Edythe Reid:** Yeah. I walked.
- Elaine Gunn:** Now when you were going to Taconic...you went to Tucker and then to Mercer and...
- Edythe Reid:** Central Junior High.
- Elaine Gunn:** ...Central Junior High and then...
- Edythe Reid:** Pittsfield High.

Elaine Gunn: ...and then Pittsfield High. So, you had to walk the distances from Robbins Avenue to all of those other schools.

Edythe Reid: And that school was kind of [0:07:30]

Elaine Gunn: Yeah. Who did you walk with?

Edythe Reid: Beatrice Walker. She lives in New York now. I used to go with Dolores Harrington[sp] who happens to live in [0:07:44] now.

Elaine Gunn: What kinds of school activities...were you involved in anything...school activities?

Edythe Reid: No.

Elaine Gunn: After school what did you girls do when you let out?

Edythe Reid: Most of 'em worked.

0:08:00

Elaine Gunn: But when you were younger? When you were little.

Edythe Reid: I used to go babysit.

Elaine Gunn: And you didn't play games or anything after school?

Edythe Reid: No. Nothing like that.

Elaine Gunn: Did you have chores to do at home when you were...

Edythe Reid: No.

Elaine Gunn: So, you could just play?

Edythe Reid: Mm-hmm.

Elaine Gunn: Your mother was a homemaker wasn't she?

Edythe Reid: No. She worked.

Elaine Gunn: She stayed...she worked mostly?

Edythe Reid: Mm-hmm.

Elaine Gunn: And your dad...you said he was a janitor, but did he do something else later on?

Edythe Reid: Then he went in the catering business.

Elaine Gunn: I thought so. I remember those times...your house...your dad was always preparing food for the people who were...can you tell me a little bit about that? People coming and going.

Edythe Reid: People used to come a lot. They had to have their cup of coffee at our house on Robbins Avenue.

Elaine Gunn: It seems to me your mother entertained just about everybody after dances.

0:09:04

Edythe Reid: Oh, yes. Mm-hmm.

Elaine Gunn: Do you know why?

Edythe Reid: She just loved people.

Elaine Gunn: Your family had a wide variety of friends.

Edythe Reid: Oh, yeah.

Elaine Gunn: Where did some of these people come from?

Edythe Reid: Albany and Springfield. Connecticut. New York City. Brooklyn.

Elaine Gunn: And sometimes they would just spend nights or weeks or whatever?

Edythe Reid: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Elaine Gunn: Did you have anybody living with you when you were growing up other than just your immediate family?

Edythe Reid: My cousin George Persip. He lived with us. He joined...went in the service.

Elaine Gunn: What was that like? He was just like another brother or sister?

Edythe Reid: Yeah. Mm-hmm.

0:10:00

Elaine Gunn: Did you all have any fights and just children...[laugh]

Edythe Reid: I mean, my brother Roland and me.

Elaine Gunn: You and your brother. Was Roland next to you?

Edythe Reid: I was next to Roland.

Elaine Gunn: You were next to Roland. OK. And you and he used to get into arguments like most brothers and sisters do?

Edythe Reid: Yeah.

Elaine Gunn: Who would win? [laugh]

Edythe Reid: He would, of course.

Elaine Gunn: Now Roland is no longer...

Edythe Reid: No.

Elaine Gunn: What did you fight about? Do you remember?

Edythe Reid: Dishes.

Elaine Gunn: Oh. Who was going to do the dishes? So, you had special chores then?

Edythe Reid: Yeah.

Elaine Gunn: How did that work?

Edythe Reid: See, I was a baby so I didn't...do too much.

Elaine Gunn: Yes. You were probably...you were spoiled?

Edythe Reid: Yes. Yeah. I was.

0:11:00

Elaine Gunn: So, you didn't have to do the chores like the others did?

Edythe Reid: No.

Elaine Gunn: You 'member when you first started babysitting?

Edythe Reid: Back in '46.

Elaine Gunn: Some children when they first—in those days—started going off to work and they would come home with their money they sometime would offer money to their mother or...did you ever think about doing that?

Edythe Reid: No. [laugh]

Elaine Gunn: [laugh] What did you do with your earnings?

Edythe Reid: I put it in the bank.

Elaine Gunn: Oh! Gee. That was unusual. [laugh]

Edythe Reid: [laugh]

Elaine Gunn: You didn't go out and buy something that...the newest fad or whatever?

Edythe Reid: No.

Elaine Gunn: When did you start going to parties and dances?

Edythe Reid: Not until after I was out of high school.

Elaine Gunn: Can you tell me about some of the parties and dances that they used to have here in Pittsfield in those days?

0:11:59

Edythe Reid: I used to go to all the Eastern Star and Mason dances.

Elaine Gunn: They had special dances didn't they? On various occasions?

Edythe Reid: Yeah.

Elaine Gunn: What about the bands that they used to have?

Edythe Reid: A lot of the bands came from Springfield.

Elaine Gunn: But there were a couple of...who were those bands...

Edythe Reid: Oh, local?

Elaine Gunn: Local.

Edythe Reid: The Dixie Serenaders.

Elaine Gunn: OK.

Edythe Reid: And what was that other one?

Elaine Gunn: Are any of those people still alive?

Edythe Reid: There was only two Dixie Serenaders. Charlie Logan and Jimmy [0:12:37]. And whatever [0:12:40].

Elaine Gunn: OK. Here in Pittsfield?

Edythe Reid: Yes.

Elaine Gunn: Now did he play for some of the organizations like the Masons or the Eastern Star?

Edythe Reid: He played for my mother and father's 40th anniversary.

Elaine Gunn: Oh! Well, then tell me a little bit about that. It must've been special.

0:13:03

Edythe Reid: Yeah. It was back in '47.

Elaine Gunn: Where was that held?

Edythe Reid: Just out there on West Street.

Elaine Gunn: And people came from where?

Edythe Reid: In a hall on West Street. I can't think of the name of it now.

Elaine Gunn: Mm-hmm. And where did people come from?

Edythe Reid: Oh, God. They came from all...

Elaine Gunn: [laugh] So, that wide range of folks that your parents knew?

Edythe Reid: Yeah.

Elaine Gunn: Your mother died fairly young, didn't she?

Edythe Reid: Yes.

Elaine Gunn: Yes. Was she sick a long time?

Edythe Reid: Eight years.

Elaine Gunn: Eight years. Oh. That's a long time. I remember your father was quite elderly.

Edythe Reid: Yeah. He was 96.

Elaine Gunn: Isn't that wonderful? But he had a special pastime, a passion, because I used to see him wear a baseball cap all the time. Can you tell me about that? [laugh]

0:14:07

Edythe Reid: He loved to go to the baseball games.

Elaine Gunn: He loved to go to the baseball games, but didn't he also...

Edythe Reid: And he used to bowl.

Elaine Gunn: OK. But didn't he—

Edythe Reid: In fact, I am bowling with his bowling ball.

Elaine Gunn: You are bowling with your father's bowling ball?

Edythe Reid: Yes.

Elaine Gunn: Wow. Wow. Isn't that something?

Edythe Reid: Yeah.

Elaine Gunn: It must be very special to you. But he was very active if I remember correctly.

Edythe Reid: Oh, yeah.

Elaine Gunn: Didn't he also umpire?

Edythe Reid: What?

Elaine Gunn: Umpire at baseball games.

Edythe Reid: Yes. Oh, yeah.

Elaine Gunn: I remember when there were many games. What was the name of that park where kids used to gather for various occasions? Picnics or whatever.

Edythe Reid: Oh. The Clapp Park.

Elaine Gunn: Was it the Clapp Park? OK. You 'member any of those things that went on there?

Edythe Reid: The [0:14:56] used to play there.

Elaine Gunn: OK.

0:14:59

Edythe Reid: I used to go to basketball games. Remember the [0:15:04]?

Elaine Gunn: Yes. OK. People used to come from...seems to me other teams would come from various places.

Edythe Reid: Yeah. From [0:15:16]. Somethin' like that.

Elaine Gunn: Yes. To play. I remember your dad...didn't he umpire some of those games?

Edythe Reid: Mm-hmm.

Elaine Gunn: Very special. Did you play basketball?

Edythe Reid: No. I haven't.

Elaine Gunn: Who played?

Edythe Reid: Alma.

Elaine Gunn: Oh. Yes. I remember Alma played. What were some other...did you play any games at all growing up?

Edythe Reid: Mm-mm.

Elaine Gunn: What was your favorite thing to do?

Edythe Reid: Dancin'.

Elaine Gunn: You liked dancin'. Were you involved in any crafts? Did you knit, sew, crochet?

Edythe Reid: I sewed.

Elaine Gunn: You did sew.

Edythe Reid: I used to make all my clothes.

Elaine Gunn: Wow! Was that something that you learned in school?

Edythe Reid: Yes.

0:16:00

Elaine Gunn: Cause I remember they used to have those home ec classes.

Edythe Reid: Yes.

Elaine Gunn: OK. You carried that further by sewing at home. Did you make any clothes for any other members of your family?

Edythe Reid: I used to make clothes for my brother's kids all the time.

Elaine Gunn: Wow. Do you still do that, Edythe?

Edythe Reid: No.

Elaine Gunn: Well, cause they're all grown now I suppose anyhow. Are you still sewing?

Edythe Reid: Mm-mm.

Elaine Gunn: Why did you stop?

Edythe Reid: I had enough.

Elaine Gunn: You had enough. [laugh]

Edythe Reid: Probably I was too busy with [0:16:29].

Elaine Gunn: Oh, yes. Yeah. Uh-huh. So, that's your favorite pastime now?

Edythe Reid: Yeah.

Elaine Gunn: But sewing is special. I guess they don't do that much anymore. You don't hear of young girls doing much sewing anymore.

Edythe Reid: No.

Elaine Gunn: I don't know whether they still have it in schools.

Edythe Reid: And now they think we're too old. Yes. When I was president there some of the young girls said they were gonna join. They never did.

Elaine Gunn: They never did. Did you crochet or knit?

Edythe Reid: No.

0:16:59

Elaine Gunn: Did your mother sew?

Edythe Reid: Oh, yes.

Elaine Gunn: Your mother sewed. Uh-huh.

Edythe Reid: Mm-hmm.

Elaine Gunn: You probably picked it up from her too.

Edythe Reid: Oh, yeah.

Elaine Gunn: It seems to me in years gone by people used to make their graduation dresses.

Edythe Reid: Oh, yeah.

Elaine Gunn: Did you ever graduate from eighth grade or...

Edythe Reid: Oh, yeah.

Elaine Gunn: You did? Did your sisters?

Edythe Reid: Yeah. Mildred sews and Frances.

Elaine Gunn: Oh. OK. I didn't know if Frances stayed still long enough.
[laugh]

Edythe Reid: [laugh]

Elaine Gunn: Still that's great. Do you like to travel?

Edythe Reid: I love it.

Elaine Gunn: Tell me about some of the places you've been.

Edythe Reid: Three years ago I went to California by myself.

Elaine Gunn: Wow. How did you go?

Edythe Reid: Flying.

Elaine Gunn: OK.

Edythe Reid: Flying to see Isaac and Grace Jackson.

Elaine Gunn: Now I don't remember...

Edythe Reid: Yeah. They used to live in Great Barrington.

Elaine Gunn: Grace Jackson...

Edythe Reid: Yeah.

0:18:00

Elaine Gunn: They lived in Sheffield didn't they?

Edythe Reid: Yes.

Elaine Gunn: Somebody was a chef.

Edythe Reid: Yes. Isaac was a chef.

Elaine Gunn: OK.

Edythe Reid: And his father was.

Elaine Gunn: OK. Alright. Oh, yes. I remember them. Now he's dead. Am I...

Edythe Reid: Isaac is dead. Yes.

Elaine Gunn: But she's...

Edythe Reid: He's got children.

Elaine Gunn: Oh. But...young Isaac. And he's still living?

Edythe Reid: Young Isaac, but Big Isaac's dead.

Elaine Gunn: He died. Yes. I thought he died. And the mother is still...

Edythe Reid: She's still living.

Elaine Gunn: OK. Tell me about your trip to California.

Edythe Reid: I can show you some pictures.

Elaine Gunn: You have pictures?

Edythe Reid: Yeah. While I was there I went to a wedding.

Elaine Gunn: You know you have failed to mention one very important thing, Edythe. You know what that is?

Edythe Reid: Yes.

Elaine Gunn: You're an amateur photographer.

Edythe Reid: Yes.

Elaine Gunn: [laugh] Tell how did you get interested in photography?

0:19:00

Edythe Reid: I love it.

Elaine Gunn: I know. How long have you been involved in photography?

Edythe Reid: Oh, gosh.

Elaine Gunn: A long time.

Edythe Reid: Yes.

Elaine Gunn: What do you do? Now when you take pictures what do you do with the pictures that you take of people and events and things?

Edythe Reid: I generally keep 'em.

Elaine Gunn: That's a wonderful something to do to help people remember what things were like and who was who and identifying people who lived 15, 20, 30, 40 years ago. You must have quite a collection.

Edythe Reid: I do.

Elaine Gunn: They're all in albums?

Edythe Reid: No, but they should be.

Elaine Gunn: They should be. Uh-huh. Let's get back to California. What about going to California? You said you went to California and you...

Edythe Reid: I went to California. We went to a wedding. It's funny I [0:19:56] started taking pictures. I said, "Gee. That looks just like Chris." But no, it wouldn't be him. When the wedding was over [0:20:04]—

0:20:04

Elaine Gunn: Chris...

Edythe Reid: —from [0:20:06] New York.

Elaine Gunn: Somebody that you knew when?

Edythe Reid: Somebody we met through Roland.

Elaine Gunn: A long time ago? How long ago was that you suppose?

Edythe Reid: My father's 90th birthday.

Elaine Gunn: Wow! Isn't that something? What was he doing in California?

Edythe Reid: He was a guest. Him and his wife.

Elaine Gunn: At the same wedding.

Edythe Reid: Him and his wife.

Elaine Gunn: You know they say it's a small world.

Edythe Reid: It sure is.

Elaine Gunn: You never know who you're going to meet. Isn't that something? So what else did you do—was that your first trip to California?

Edythe Reid: Mm-hmm.

Elaine Gunn: What part of California was...

Edythe Reid: I went to Sacramento. That's where Grace and Isaac are. The wedding was in Walla Creek. That's part of the DuVal family.

Elaine Gunn: Oh really? OK. Who got married?

0:21:00

Edythe Reid: Dottie[sp]. She was a Smith. Her mother was a DuVal. Her daughter got married.

Elaine Gunn: Was Fran's...

Edythe Reid: Fran's niece.

Elaine Gunn: Fran's niece. OK. Frances DuVal's niece. How long were you out there?

Edythe Reid: A week.

Elaine Gunn: Nice. Very nice. Yeah. Did you do any other sightseeing while you were there?

Edythe Reid: We went around to a couple places. Of course, Isaac was not feeling good. He only went I think a couple times.

Elaine Gunn: About how old is he now? Was he the oldest son?

Edythe Reid: He must be about 65.

Elaine Gunn: Is he [0:21:42]?

Edythe Reid: Yeah.

Elaine Gunn: And his mother must be dead.

Edythe Reid: And I talked to her while I was out there.

Elaine Gunn: I remember—

Edythe Reid: She was a pretty woman.

Elaine Gunn: —a pretty woman who liked to dance, had studied dancing at the [0:21:58] in New York. I remember that. I remember the family.

0:22:02

Edythe Reid: And I've been out to Tennessee.

Elaine Gunn: OK.

Edythe Reid: You remember Pete Washington.

Elaine Gunn: No!

Edythe Reid: You don't remember Pete Washington from Pittsfield?

Elaine Gunn: I don't remember him. Is there something...did he go to all the dances and parties that we did?

Edythe Reid: Yeah. I just visited Pete's daughter and her husband and her mother's husband there. The daughter taught school out there until she retired a few years ago.

Elaine Gunn: I don't remember. Who was he related to? Anybody else in Pittsfield that I would know?

Edythe Reid: [0:22:35]

Elaine Gunn: The [0:22:37].

Edythe Reid: Yes.

Elaine Gunn: Sure.

- Edythe Reid:** It was always Pete watching his brothers.
- Elaine Gunn:** Oh. OK. Yeah. I remember that. The whole thing. But no, I don't remember him.
- Edythe Reid:** Pete used to be at everything.
- Elaine Gunn:** So, you were out there for a week and you went to a wedding and did some other sightseeing. Did you ever get down to Southern California?
- 0:23:03
- Edythe Reid:** No. I just went to Sacramento and Walla Walla Creek to the wedding.
- Elaine Gunn:** Nice! Then you said you went to Tennessee, of course. Beside this Pete Washington—he's in Tennessee. Was he in Tennessee? Pete Washington, you say?
- Edythe Reid:** No. That was in Tennessee.
- Elaine Gunn:** Tennessee. Yeah. Pete Washington was in Tennessee. OK. Where else have you...do you ever go on day trips?
- Edythe Reid:** I go to Boston. I used to go to Boston all the time.
- Elaine Gunn:** Do you have relatives in Boston?
- Edythe Reid:** Yeah. I have a cousin.
- Elaine Gunn:** Is it somebody that I know in Boston?
- Edythe Reid:** Yeah. Her and her husband used to come up to the picnics all the time.
- Elaine Gunn:** OK. Tell me about your picnics. I understand your family reunion picnic—
- Edythe Reid:** I don't go to it.
- Elaine Gunn:** You don't go to them? Oh. But they still have them.
- Edythe Reid:** Oh, yeah.
- Elaine Gunn:** I understand they're quite large affairs here in Pittsfield. But you still have a lot of family around. Cousins and...
- 0:24:03
- Edythe Reid:** Oh, yeah.
- Elaine Gunn:** What else do you remember about growing up in particular?

- Edythe Reid:** [0:24:20].
- Elaine Gunn:** That you went to dances and parties. Did you belong to the girls club at all?
- Edythe Reid:** Oh. Once. I went there once.
- Elaine Gunn:** You didn't belong, but you went once.
- Edythe Reid:** I went once and a kid said that word.
- Elaine Gunn:** Oh, yeah.
- Edythe Reid:** And no more [0:24:35].
- Elaine Gunn:** That's what I wanted to ask you about. What was the atmosphere like? Cause I know there weren't that many African Americans going to school in Pittsfield at any one time. Not as many as there are—there were several schools. How did you...what were relations like between Blacks and whites? In elementary school, for instance.
- Edythe Reid:** Oh. There was no trouble. But when I went to Tucker a bunch of girls said that word.
- 0:25:03
- Edythe Reid:** And I got out of school. I thought I was out of the school district, but two went back to school and told about me fightin' her. That's when I transferred to Mercer.
- Elaine Gunn:** Yeah. Those were fighting words.
- Edythe Reid:** [0:25:18]. I couldn't take her.
- Elaine Gunn:** Well, yeah. That was...most of us had to endure that kind of thing, unfortunately. Was that the reason why you didn't become involved in different activities at school?
- Edythe Reid:** Mm-hmm.
- Elaine Gunn:** Because of that prejudice, discrimination. You thought the same thing at the girls club?
- Edythe Reid:** Yeah.
- Elaine Gunn:** You suppose it's changed now at all, Edythe?
- Edythe Reid:** Oh, yes. It has.
- Elaine Gunn:** I know my grandchildren spend a lot of time there. What's the other? It's the girls club and was there something else? It was the Y.

0:26:03

- Edythe Reid:** I taught school there. I'm trying to think. I'll never forget. Willie Wilks' grandson was in there.
- Elaine Gunn:** Willie who?
- Edythe Reid:** Willie Wilks' grandson was in the school when I was down there.
- Elaine Gunn:** Oh. Willie Wilks?
- Edythe Reid:** His grandson. One of Lisa's[sp] kids.
- Elaine Gunn:** Oh. OK. Yeah. [laugh]
- Edythe Reid:** It was bad out so we decided to take the kids and enjoy the games. Lisa's[sp] little boy looked up at me and he said, "What are we gonna do?" I said, "We're gonna play games because it's too bad to go outside." He said, "Well, I'm not playing those damn games." I says, "You don't talk like that in school." He said, "I do."
- Elaine Gunn:** [laugh] Oh dear! Oh dear!
- Edythe Reid:** He was only about five years old.
- Elaine Gunn:** I know.
- Edythe Reid:** Reggie his name was.
- 0:26:59
- Elaine Gunn:** OK. Yeah. I don't know them. Isn't that...[laugh] So this was your experience over at the girls club. Well, that wasn't too long ago.
- Edythe Reid:** I know.
- Elaine Gunn:** It's not funny, but I know children will...they're very different than they used to be. You were a recreation leader?
- Edythe Reid:** I was like a teacher's aide.
- Elaine Gunn:** Teacher's aide. OK.
- Edythe Reid:** I worked there. I worked down in Lenox. That's closed now. It was called Easy Street.
- Elaine Gunn:** OK.

- Edythe Reid:** The last job I had I worked at Dalton at Nessacus Middle School. There I worked in the cafeteria.
- Elaine Gunn:** Did you like that?
- Edythe Reid:** Yes.
- Elaine Gunn:** Yeah. I would think after [0:27:51]. But sometimes kids, they don't want this or they don't want that. [laugh] Did you ever work with your dad catering?
- Edythe Reid:** Oh yeah. I did. At the golf club and at churches and private parties.
- 0:28:04
- Elaine Gunn:** I know he did a lot of that. Did you prefer that kind of work to being a teacher's aide?
- Edythe Reid:** Yeah.
- Elaine Gunn:** I imagine you worked various special parties and weddings and things in Pittsfield?
- Edythe Reid:** Yeah. We served a few. I'll never forget. We served a wedding down in Alford. Alford, Mass.
- Elaine Gunn:** Oh, sure. Uh-huh.
- Edythe Reid:** The reception was gonna be out in the yard. We had the tables all set up. And the rain came.
- Elaine Gunn:** Oh! [laugh] So what did you do?
- Edythe Reid:** We had to take the tables to put in the garage. When the bride and her father come in, he said, "Get her all drunk and they won't know what the day was like."
- Elaine Gunn:** [laugh] That's great! That's great! Isn't that something? And it worked, I suppose?
- 0:29:02
- Edythe Reid:** Yeah.
- Elaine Gunn:** Isn't that funny? Do you remember whose wedding it was?
- Edythe Reid:** No, I don't.
- Elaine Gunn:** Oh, golly. That must've been funny. [laugh]
- Edythe Reid:** It was.

Elaine Gunn: Now besides you and Fran did your other siblings work with your dad as a caterer, when he was catering?

Edythe Reid: Mm-hmm. They all [0:29:21].

Elaine Gunn: They all did?

Edythe Reid: Yeah.

Elaine Gunn: I know Mildred did, I think. But she was the only one I remember.

Edythe Reid: Mattie and Alma.

Elaine Gunn: Who was it?

Edythe Reid: My sister Mattie and my sister Alma.

Elaine Gunn: I don't remember your sister Mattie?

Edythe Reid: You don't remember my sister Mattie?

Elaine Gunn: I don't remember Mattie.

Edythe Reid: She died in '68.

Elaine Gunn: She died very early.

Edythe Reid: Yeah.

Elaine Gunn: Very early. She was still pretty young.

Edythe Reid: Yeah. She was 53.

Elaine Gunn: Now I don't remember her at all. Mildred and Alma.

Edythe Reid: She was next to Mildred. She was between Mildred and Frances.

0:29:59

Elaine Gunn: OK. No. I don't remember her. I remember Alma. She's the one I don't remember. Isn't that funny? The others, of course, I remember Alma. She died pretty early too.

Edythe Reid: She was 49.

Elaine Gunn: Yeah. She was [0:30:13].

0:30:25

Recording ends

Edythe Reid
0:00:00 to 0:13:45

Housatonic Heritage Oral History

- Edythe Reid:** [0:00:06]
- Elaine Gunn:** Yes!
- Edythe Reid:** After Edward went in the service he didn't like eggs. One night Roland was down there and he stopped at a restaurant and had some eggs and bacon and walked out without paying.
- Elaine Gunn:** [laugh]
- Edythe Reid:** And Edward walked in the next night and the guy says, "You owe me for some eggs." And he said, "Not me. I don't eat no eggs!"
- Elaine Gunn:** Oh! That's great! How did that work out? [laugh]
- Edythe Reid:** Edward paid for it.
- Elaine Gunn:** Oh, that's great. Yeah. I remember that, that they did look quite a lot alike. But Roland used to come to Barrington a lot.
- Edythe Reid:** Yeah. Mm-hmm.
- Elaine Gunn:** Before he was married he liked to be around the girls. Sheffield and Barrington [0:00:56]. [laugh] Him and what's his name? Floyd.
- 0:01:03
- Edythe Reid:** He married Evelyn Shepherd.
- Elaine Gunn:** Yes, right. But Floyd.
- Edythe Reid:** Floyd. Yeah.
- Elaine Gunn:** Floyd and Roland used to come to Great Barrington. I see Evelyn—where did I—saw her not too long ago somewhere. Of course, I see her daughter down at the Dress Barn. She and her husband have a restaurant on North Street, don't they? Didn't they have one? Evelyn's daughter and her husband, didn't they have a little restaurant on North Street?
- Edythe Reid:** Yeah.

Elaine Gunn: Yeah. OK. They still have that there I see. Oh, they don't have it anymore? Oh. I thought that it was fairly new.

Edythe Reid: Somebody new has got it.

Elaine Gunn: Oh.

Edythe Reid: They got a sign out that it's supposed to open up soon.

Elaine Gunn: Uh-huh. I wonder how she—she must've been working all the time with it down there and the restaurant too.

0:02:01

Elaine Gunn: Anything else that you want to give me that sort of jogs your memory a little bit for anything that you used to remember? I know you've had a lot of experiences here and that you just...about this wedding for instance which must've been a real something out of [0:02:17].

Edythe Reid: I used to come to Great Barrington all the time to see Betty.

Elaine Gunn: Yes. OK. When you all were kids.

Edythe Reid: Yeah.

Elaine Gunn: Yeah.

Edythe Reid: I'll never forget I went to church with Betty and I didn't know her mother was sitting behind us. When they got to doin' that shoutin', I said, "Betty, let's get out of here."

Elaine Gunn: [laugh]

Edythe Reid: Her mother just tapped us on the shoulder, "You girls sit right where you are."

Elaine Gunn: Oh! That's great! [laugh]

Edythe Reid: See, I wasn't used to that [0:02:50]. Cause her [0:02:53] Mrs. Freeman.

Elaine Gunn: Yes!

Edythe Reid: Yes. She got up [0:02:56].

Elaine Gunn: Yes, yes.

Edythe Reid: You know, I had never seen nuthin' like that.

0:03:00

- Elaine Gunn:** [laugh] Well, there's a lot of that that goes on especially in southern churches. Anyhow, you don't see it a lot here. But Ms. Freeman, especially...well, there were two Mrs. Freemans. Mrs. Rachel Freeman and Mrs. Jenny Freeman.
- Edythe Reid:** They lived on Russell Street didn't they?
- Elaine Gunn:** One of them did.
- Edythe Reid:** That's the one it was.
- Elaine Gunn:** OK. Yes. The other one lived down on Cottage Street I believe. Yeah. Well, that's something. So you all had to sit there?
- Edythe Reid:** Yes. [laugh]
- Elaine Gunn:** [laugh] That must've been quite an experience.
- Edythe Reid:** It was.
- Elaine Gunn:** What did you and Betty do in Great Barrington besides go to church?
- Edythe Reid:** We played out in the street.
- Elaine Gunn:** There really wasn't a lot to do in those days. Unless somebody had a little party and you'd get some Kool-Aid and cookies.
- 0:04:02
- Edythe Reid:** [0:04:02] Mrs. Crawford's tea room, remember?
- Elaine Gunn:** I remember that well. Yes. I was telling somebody about that tea room not too long ago. There's somebody who's writing a history of Great Barrington. He called me and he asked me if Ms. Crawford had a tea room on the Main Street.
- Edythe Reid:** That tea room...
- Elaine Gunn:** That was something.
- Edythe Reid:** I remember when Eloise got married—Wilson.
- Elaine Gunn:** Oh, yes.
- Edythe Reid:** And Chuck, the youngest Crawford boy.
- Elaine Gunn:** Yeah.
- Edythe Reid:** He was only about five years old. He got lost and he'd come to me.
- Elaine Gunn:** No kidding? How did he get lost I wonder?

Edythe Reid: I don't know.

Elaine Gunn: Yeah. Isn't that—

Edythe Reid: “I can't find my mother.”

Elaine Gunn: [laugh] Isn't that something?

Edythe Reid: Mm-hmm.

Elaine Gunn: I saw Chuck recently. I guess it was at [0:04:59].

Edythe Reid: Chuckie got [0:05:00]. Yeah.

0:05:00

Elaine Gunn: Yes. I hadn't seen him for such a long time. Several years.

Edythe Reid: I see him once in a while.

Elaine Gunn: Do you see him once in a while? Yeah. He looks very distinguished now.

Edythe Reid: I think the other [0:05:14] looks like his father.

Elaine Gunn: Absolutely. I agree.

Edythe Reid: Just like Mr. Crawford.

Elaine Gunn: I agree. Absolutely. Well, we've had some, there were some fun times a long time ago growing up in this area. You sound like you've had a very busy life.

Edythe Reid: Oh, yeah.

Elaine Gunn: What are you doing now for entertainment and recreation?

Edythe Reid: I go to a lot of concerts over in Troy, Albany, Schenectady.

Elaine Gunn: They still have them over there.

Edythe Reid: Yeah. Of course, during the summertime.

Elaine Gunn: Yes.

Edythe Reid: I don't go too much in the winter. We go down to Amherst and Hadley. And Springfield. They have a Stanley Park. Oh, it's gorgeous.

0:06:06

Elaine Gunn: No kidding? What happens there at the park?

- Edythe Reid:** They have concerts.
- Elaine Gunn:** They have a concert during the summer.
- Edythe Reid:** Yeah.
- Elaine Gunn:** We don't get there often. Joe, my brother-in-law, lives over there. Every once in a while something's going on, but they don't hear about much when it's going on.
- Edythe Reid:** What is Joe's wife's name?
- Elaine Gunn:** Evelyn.
- Edythe Reid:** Evelyn.
- Elaine Gunn:** Yeah. Evelyn.
- Edythe Reid:** I wanted to speak to her, but I couldn't think of it.
- Elaine Gunn:** Yes. [laugh] Think of your sister-in-law.
- Edythe Reid:** Yeah, but his first wife's name was Elizabeth.
- Elaine Gunn:** Elizabeth. Yes. She's deceased now. She died six, seven years ago, I guess. But she would still come over here once in a great while. Especially when Mrs. Gunn was still living. She died down in Virginia where she was from.
- 0:07:07
- Edythe Reid:** I thought Joe was gonna be my brother-in-law.
- Elaine Gunn:** Oh! I forgot! Yes! Cause he and Alma—
- Edythe Reid:** Him and my sister, Alma.
- Elaine Gunn:** Yes. I remember. Before I was even [0:07:21] when he was. Yeah. I remember that. Isn't that something how things work out? You never know. [laugh]
- Edythe Reid:** Right. [laugh]
- Elaine Gunn:** Well, anything else that you can think of about your family or growing up or what's happening?
- Edythe Reid:** No. I can't think of a thing.
- Elaine Gunn:** Kids in your neighborhood—are they still around?
- Edythe Reid:** Oh, yeah.
- Elaine Gunn:** Were you and Bill Birch in the same class?

0:08:00

Edythe Reid: Bill Birch? Yeah. Cubby. [0:08:02]

Elaine Gunn: Oh, yes.

Edythe Reid: And Rosemary.

Elaine Gunn: And Rosemary. OK. And Barbara? Was Barbara Gunn?

Edythe Reid: Barbara Gunn, yes.

Elaine Gunn: That must've been a very large class of Black folks.

Edythe Reid: I'd say it was Rosemary, Cubby, Barbara, [0:08:24].
Bernice[sp] Gardner was a member of the class, but she quit.
She came back the next year [0:08:30]. Napp and his sister
Dorothy. Emma Lewis.

Elaine Gunn: Nappy and Dorothy were in the same class?

Edythe Reid: Mm-hmm. See Napp was considered a member of the class of
'45, but he went in the service. Then he graduated in '47. I have
been to every reunion but the 40th.

0:08:59

Elaine Gunn: Wow! You must be practically the only one that goes every
year.

Edythe Reid: I missed the 40th. We have these luncheons like I told you every
three or four months and I've been to every one of them.

Elaine Gunn: Wonderful. Good. Does Barbara ever come up to the reunions?

Edythe Reid: No. She was supposed to come up for the 60th reunion. I don't
know what happened.

Elaine Gunn: I thought I heard that too. That's something. Tell me—I didn't
ask you anything about your husband, Nappy. Now when he
finished with the service and he came back and finished school
then he went—

Edythe Reid: New England. [0:09:37] school.

Elaine Gunn: OK. That was in Boston.

Edythe Reid: Yeah. He was supposed to get a job here in Pittsfield, but the
man died the week before he graduated.

Elaine Gunn: Which one was that? Which mortician was that?

Edythe Reid: It was on [0:09:55] Street. I can't remember the name.

0:09:59

Edythe Reid: Then he had a chance to go to Florida, but the first wife didn't want to go south.

Elaine Gunn: I remember. Yes.

Edythe Reid: That's why he took the job at [0:10:14].

Elaine Gunn: OK. He had those skills and he had the training and he was never able to use them. Isn't that sad?

Edythe Reid: Mm-hmm.

Elaine Gunn: That's very sad. To go so far. And no one else would hire him. Same old story, isn't it? What a shame. How long were you and Nappy married before he died?

Edythe Reid: 25 years.

Elaine Gunn: I know you had—you said you lived in your house for 30 some years. Very sad.

0:10:59

Elaine Gunn: Well, you have supplied us with a lot of information. You think of one thing and then something else pops up. [laugh] I wanted to ask you—so you have a lot of nieces and nephews around?

Edythe Reid: Oh, yeah.

Elaine Gunn: Many of them are still living here in Pittsfield. And Roland's family?

Edythe Reid: He's got a girl in North Adams married with two children. Then he's got this daughter in that house that I had. I don't know how long she's gonna be in there.

Elaine Gunn: So one of Roland's daughters lives in your—

Edythe Reid: In my house. But it was in the paper she's gonna lose it.

Elaine Gunn: Oh. Sorry. It's awfully hard.

Edythe Reid: She's got one boy.

Elaine Gunn: Very difficult.

Edythe Reid: She's a good girl. She just marries the wrong men.

0:12:01

Elaine Gunn: It happens. Is this the one who works in Lee at the Dress Barn? Oh. She's such a lovely...and she's supervising now, isn't she? She seems to have a supervisory job down there.

Edythe Reid: Yeah. She's got a good job.

Elaine Gunn: Yes. [0:12:27]. I always try to—if she's there, I'm chattin' with her.

Edythe Reid: Yeah.

Elaine Gunn: Yeah. Lovely young woman. Very ambitious. Very nice. Well, I thank you very much for helping me conduct this interview. If there's something on that paper that I can't remember I might call you to ask you. [laugh]

Edythe Reid: OK.

Elaine Gunn: Maybe even on the phone. Who knows? Maybe I'll come back another time. Do you drive, Edythe?

0:13:04

Edythe Reid: No.

Elaine Gunn: You don't drive. OK. Anyhow I appreciate this very much and I thank you.

Mrs. Edythe Reid, widow of Napoleon Reid, and a 1947 graduate of Pittsfield High School celebrated her 50th high school reunion in 1997.

0:13:45

Recording ends