

# THE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT SERIES

## ALLAN MANUEL, LONGTIME POINT RESIDENT

by Nancy Abbinanti

The Newport Point Association History and Archives Committee continue to record a collection of oral histories with longtime Point residents to learn about their experiences in the neighborhood. On February 11th, 2016, John Ward spoke with Allan Manuel about growing up on the Point, including the hurricane of 1938, the shops on the Point, his summer job at the Torpedo Factory, and the building of America's Cup and the Claiborne Pell Newport Bridge.

The Manuel family had the privilege of several generations living on the Point along with ownership and management of the Manuel Brother's Moving Company. The warehouse building was located at One Cherry Street. Allan's grandfather founded the moving company and its main office of business included the Gum Factory. The Manuel Brother's Moving Company had an exclusive contract with the Navy and when the Navy presence in Newport was downsized the moving company suffered and eventually went bankrupt. Allan recalls especially during WWII the large number of sailors who would walk past his home on the way to the training station. He recalls that the reduced Navy presence in later years had quite a negative impact on Newport.

Allan Manuel describes a rich childhood experience growing up on the Point. His house was located on Walnut Street and was adjacent to the railroad bridge and the cemetery. His memories of fun times include roller-skating, sledding and swimming, especially having the water so close to home. His grandfather built a one-room house in the yard for him and his sister to play in. It had a porch with windows on the side. Play appliances were made out of cardboard and Allan would sleep out in the house during the summer. He enjoyed walking to the various stores that were available on the Point with shopping lists from his mother. There were several grocery and variety stores located on the Point all in walking distance including Mott Brothers, Katzman's Grocery Store and Pete's Canteen. All eventually disappeared replaced by large supermarkets as the small stores couldn't compete.

Allan also enjoyed being able to walk to school and go home for lunch each day from the local grammar schools he attended, the Callander and Potter Schools. There were lots of children growing up on the Point and both schools were used for early education. The children's age determined which school they attended each year.

He recalls that the train arrived once a day and would slowly roll into the station. The train was originally steam type but a new diesel train was introduced. He and his father rode the new diesel train up to Boston and he remembers that it came to a sudden stop. They discovered that the train had hit and killed a cow. The train eventually made it to the destination. One day he was in the kitchen with his mother and the plates began to rattle. His mother blamed the vibration on the train but Allan knew the trains moved slowly into the station and wouldn't have been the cause. It was later discovered that an earthquake had occurred at a coal mine in Portsmouth.

Allan Manuel also spoke about experiencing the hurricane of 1938 on the Point. He recalled walking down to Battery Park with his mother to see the impact that the storm was having on the neighborhood. The waves were coming up to the gravel sidewalk and eventually the water reached Third Street. A tree crashed onto a gravestone and broke it to pieces. Water covered the Walnut Street train tracks and the JT Lumber Yard was seen floating by the Walnut Street Bridge. His family had no damage to their house but the house on the north side of Battery Park wound up with a big yacht in their yard.

Allan Manuel spoke about a summer job he held at the Torpedo Factory. He took over for a woman who turned out to be his future wife's aunt. His job included bringing food around to the different sections of the factory where the body of the torpedoes were being built. He enjoyed delivering sandwiches, soup and soda to the workers but he knew they missed having a young woman doing the deliveries. The torpedo factory took up most of the north side of Goat Island. He would travel there by ferry either from Mott Street

or Governor's Pier.

In the 1960s the building of The Claiborne Pell Bridge and America's Cup Avenue had quite an impact on the neighborhood. Besides the loud banging and building disruption, both projects split blocks in half and several houses were removed and lost. On a positive note, Allan's father was instrumental in saving the Pitts Tavern now located on Bridge Street. The tavern was slated to be torn down and he was able to have it moved. His father was offered the house for a dollar if he could move it. The tavern continues to be a valued landmark on the Point.



Allan's father enjoyed photography and also collecting books and military items and uniforms. He maintained a museum book store in their basement and had many regular customers despite the fact that he couldn't advertise in a residential neighborhood. His father's pho-

tography was studio based and he had his own darkroom. Allan, influenced by his father, also developed a love of photography and had the advantage of a portable camera. He took pictures of Newport events, boats visible off Battery Park and points of interest in the neighborhood. He accumulated quite a collection that is being shared with the Point Association History and Archives Committee by his son Paul. The photography collection is giving a rich visual history of the unique neighborhood of the Point and Newport as a whole. The History and Archive Committee greatly appreciates the Manual Family for sharing the photograph collections.

The Newport Point Association History and Archive Committee are thankful to Allan Manuel for participating in this oral history interview. We appreciate Allan sharing memories of time spent living on the Point for many years. We encourage readers to listen to the complete interview that is available on the Point Association Website.



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