

Speaker: Pete Currier
Interviewers: Matthew Gunby and Linda Hough.
Location: Meredith Public Library
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PC: [Looking at 1968 Bicentennial Photographic Album] These names and so many of these people, I haven't seen these people since then. Linden. Linden. That's a male right? Not Linda.

LH: Yeah

PC: Linden Grad. The only Grads I know [Indecipherable] down at Meredith Neck those are the people that own the store down there. The clothing store. Grad's Clothing.

This looks like Butch. Something he'd pull. [Looking through photographs]. The ball game? I don't think we had anything to do with the ball game. The Brothers of the Brush, it was theirs. I don't know who they are either.

[Indecipherable].

[Laughter]. Take them out.

Nope. Jim Rideout. Jack's brother. Younger. Ten or twelve maybe. Ray. Ray Montana. Bob's son. All grown up. He's living up in Maine now, last I heard. The other, what's the other girl who [decipher] piece of Bob's old land there? Reed Miller.

Margaret Currier: Lynn.

PC: Lynn. Yeah, she's married to the other guy. Guy who led the Model-T. Ray took the Model-T back up to Maine you know, Margaret.

Grad. Will Grad. Back here that's better. [Looking at photograph of two actors mocking a duel from Bob Montana's film *Meredith: The First 200 Years*] If it's a duel, I think it's a little close don't you? Six inches. [decipher] Allen. Dever. Nope [Indecipherable]. Donald, that was the younger boy. Donald. I remember when he came along, that was a surprise. They were getting older. [Coughs] Mom and dad.

It's too bad you couldn't try to get a hold of some of these other people. One who would know a lot, would be Bob Beede. He was related to Butch, who was in charge of our group. But, I was under Butch. We sort of ran the gig.

Margaret: That was Jack Dever.

PC: Higher up the ladder. You kidding? Sleep in the woods with us? No Way. Might come down

and shoot at us.

LH: What was Butch's rank in the Militia?

PC: The what?

LH: What was Butch's rank in the Milita?

PC: Who's?

LH: Butch's.

PC: He was I'll call it head sergeant. He was our commander of the militia. He always called us 'Scouts.'

PC: What have we got here? [Looking at photographs] Some kind of a – oh sound crew. They had somebody who came in and played sounds for the movie probably. [Referencing *Meredith: The First 200* by Bob Montana]. Ernie Lavallee. Lived down on Meredith Neck. Worked at the power company all of his life. He was a character, let me tell you. Lived right down by the swamp by where you turn to go out Powers Road. The house almost in the woods there. How he ever got a septic, I don't know. We didn't worry about those things too much in those days.

No. No mention of us bums. Hey we were there for a good time, and we had one.

'Bicentennial Gala Week' [Sounds of turning pages].

[Laughter] Told you I built one! There she is – blew her guts. I built a cannon. Highly illegal. I was pretty good at that. Black powder play with nut there's another one. [Referring to photograph in album] No. That wouldn't be ours. Too close to the people. Too dangerous. I was already afraid of blowing up. If that is ours it was over in Bristol. There's no way of telling, but that's what it looked like. We liked a lot of smoke. You can never get black powder now. I've been trying to find some. You can get Pyrodex, which is the same power and safe to use in your old guns, but don't smoke good. I want smoke.

LH: Did you use the cannon a lot at the events?

PC: Did we? It was only a mortar. Sat upright. Built three or four of them. A center out of a wagon wheel hub – don't show the kids how to do this – it's cone shaped. Narrow on one end, fat on the other end with two big ribs on it that you notch out and drive it into the wood. We put a plate – of course it's cast iron – we tried to weld the plate on the bottom with marble. Of course it don't work so good because it cracks and it lasted quite a while. That day it blew up in Bristol, I said, "Everybody back." Flying back that thing could have gone half a mile and killed some kid or something, you know. We knew better, but. Butch would say with us, "Lets go over to Cumberland Farms and get some more grog." [Laughter]. He said, "They won't bother us, we're armed!" Oh, it was fun. We marched good and we did everything the way you're supposed to.

Oh yes. This is the goofy stuff that you did. The things you remember. I wish he was here. God. I worked ten years ago in the cemetery. Every time I mowed by Butch's grave, all I'd think of was this. I remember him and I talking right here [in front of the Meredith Library] as we were each trying to touch the – as they put the cover down – each trying to touch it [the time capsule]. It was down about that far [Motions with his hands]. I jammed my hand in and touched it last. I was proud of that. "Oh, damn you!" Well, he said "Neither one of us is going to live long enough to be here for this day." Live to be seventy years old?" He was actually a little older than I was. Cause he could buy beer. Twenty-one. He said, "Whichever one of us makes it, you gotta go over there." On the edge of that lawn over there, there were four elm trees. Not very big. [Decipher] the last of Dutch elm disease. He said the second one or the third one. You gotta stand there with your gun, fire a round, and drink – we'll say a can of beer ok, for the thing. Yeah. And you'd go to jail. [Laughter]. They didn't bother us with that stuff in those days. We knew the Chief of Police. I used to pump his septic tank.

Nice touring car. Model-T open. Oh, Bobby Lawton. Linden Grad. Okay. That would be [Sounds of Peter tapping on table, trying to recall]. His father. I'm trying to think of the – down on Meredith Neck. The house. You know, Grad.

Margaret: Gordon Grad's father.

PC: Gordon. Gordon Grad's father. I remember he had a Bentley. That's not it, no. But he drove all when we were kids in school up here we went to Humiston. We would see him around in that Bentley. Boy, cool. Bentley was made by Rolls.

PC: [Looking at photographic album] July 28, the antique car parade. What was I into at that point? Old guns. I hadn't even gotten into antique motorcycles. Been through them all. Still got the antique cars. Want to restore antique cars with me? I got more stuff than I'll ever be around to do. Tool shop. Every tool in the world. Hundred of years of knowledge – I have the knowledge. I got the arthritis too and everything else. I was telling Margaret the other day. I get under her car sometimes and she has to come out and help me up. I can't get up off the floor. When I do, I scream. It just hurts so bad. Sucks. I'm not used to that. To do an average job that anybody would have taken half an hour? Yeah, two and a half hours. Some days I just lay there on the creeper like a dead dog. The biggest trick is to remember to bring all the things you need under the vehicle with you, all within reaching distance, so you don't have help getting up and down. Very important. If I just need a bolt or something, that means I gotta go down and go through all that getting up and going to my cabinets pull the drawers.

PC: Look at this. These pictures are something else. [Referencing the 1968 Meredith Bicentennial Photographic Album]. They really are.

PC: That's right, they had a concert on the Mount. Yeah, Mary must have done this. I would definitely say this is her work. She always did nice work.

PC: Yeah, there were some guys with grey beards and stuff that mixed in with us sometimes, but they weren't part of the gang.

We camped out at the Sandwich Fair up there. Stayed up all night. Raising hell. Running around shooting off our muzzle loaders. They were glad to see us go. Not near the horses, no. We had a spot over in the back. We had Bob Montana's station wagon – that was our base camp. Ha.

Meredith Food Store. You want a pizza in Meredith? That's where you went. That's it. He made good pizza and he'd fix you up with preparations so you could make your own at home too.

What was his name? I can't think of him. Patty Dunn married his son, over there, and they were divorced – didn't last long. Young. They did a big business. Groceries and everything. Well you had that and across the street over here on the sidewalk by Samaha's where the park is now, that was the IGA. International Grocery Association. And down by [sigh] next to NAPA. First National. That's it. Nope, one little store on this end of Main Street on this end up here on South Main. Best place for meat. My dad would always go there, the guy would give us some good pieces. He'd cut them for you right there. He didn't keep anything pre-cut at all. I can't remember the name of it. That was it. Of course you had Brevalis's down by the corner of the lake there. Nice guy. Used to make us some sandwiches. 99 cents. Submarine, that long. All kinds of stuff. I'd like one right now [Laughter].

LH: Sounds really good.

PC: Then of course the other place turned into [sighs] Anderson's Bakery down here. They used to give us half decent sandwich. Nothing fancy, but good.

PC: [Looking down at photographs] No, that's not us guys. That's all girls. Jack Rideout. Jack Rideout. His dad passed away. I buried him. I know where he is, unless somebody got him. Jack's father. Bob Fournier, don't he look young. Bob just passed away last year. He was in the Fire Department for a lot of years. I did thirty with him. No, I never saw this. They did a nice job putting it together, very nice.

PC: You know where that is? [Referring to the Town Pound].

MG: I have a vague idea. We had George Locke come in and interview and he mentioned a little bit about the takeover of WLNH and he gave a basic idea of where it was located.

PC: It's right across from the cemetery where WLNH was on Parade Road – on the opposite side. That was the Pound. That's where people brought their animals who got loose. If they were running around, you could pick them up there. We were camped on the other side of the Street, behind the cemetery for that night. Part of the Police come, we were stopping vehicles and arresting people. [Laughter] We were having fun. Just barely teens – we were late teenagers.

PC: I can't believe I didn't buy any of them. The Bicentennial coins. Chett Brickett! He took photos. Richard Kempton. [Sound of turning pages]. Firemans – they call it a float.

[Indecipherable]. Used to keep it in my barn.

PC: See, all these things were mostly done at the high school. We could think of better things to do. We couldn't bring our guns and shoot them – this was no fun. Lets face it. And march in the parade. Butch running around with his sword out and everything. We looked pretty good.

PC: [Indecipherable] ceremonies. Looks like Leavitt Park. No, that's down there at the Bay. Starting to recognize stuff a little bit. Bicentennial report. Oh, Ray Roux. Had a place down on Meredith Neck there. Jack Rideout, his father was master of ceremonies. Plaque. I don't know where that is. Probably down by the lake. I was just going to say, I thought it was by the Old Oak. [Taps on photograph] There it is. Course that's gone now. Should have at least left the stump. Is that still there?

LH: I'm not sure.

PC: I got the shakes. Father had the same thing before he croaked. Bob Valliere. Barbara Sanderson. Meredith Village Savings. [Indecipherable] Chairman. Jack Rideout Sr. Peg Montana. Isabelle Russell and Raymond Roux, again. Not Rox. Roux. When I was a kid it took a long time to straighten that out. Helped me to remember. I think I had some of those cards. Gone. Should have held on to that stuff. Well, I've been through a lot since those days. Lost a lot of stuff during the divorce. Things were taken. Got other things on my mind. A lot of stuff. I was just watching the guys on the show this morning, what they get for those Beatles albums and stuff – some in the original jackets and stuff. I had them in stacks. Gone. Dummy! I wouldn't know where to sell them anyway.

So, what are we doing now?

MG: We have a few questions to see if they prompted any thoughts. We talked a little bit about the takeover of WLNH, was there anything else that you remember?

PC: Well, we went down and pitched tents behind the cemetery on Parade Rd, where the old WLNH was – right beside the cemetery there. Not beside it but behind it. We had a very sleepless night. Yep. Everybody screwing around with guns, everybody shooting up, shooting out through our tent holes, blowing the ropes off, and burning the tents fell in. We didn't make very good soldiers, but we had a lot of fun. And we marched to Laconia in the morning. While it was still dark. Get 'em by surprise. 'Course we went by Mered—nope. Service Station wasn't there. It's not built yet! They're down underneath the old wood turning place. Alan Rogers. Where the big tower used to be, said 'Car Company' on it.

I think we were ready, we went over there and got in and of course there's a big stairwell that goes upstairs so of course everybody wanted to get their gun in there and give it a big blast. The place was so full of smoke you couldn't see. It was great. Red Dunne showed up [check name], I remember that. Old Red and his red Lincoln Continental. We went out and dragged him out and

put him under arrest. Yep. He was always getting involved in local – the one with the flags on the front. Then we got through with that, we got a hold of the microphone. Oh yeah. Notified everyone that Laconia had been taken. We were under control. Meredith Militia and the scouts were at the radio station. We were now proceeding to the fire department to take that. Andy got into a scrap and broke his father's gun. They were pulling and tugging and broke the stock.

MC: Andy Pole.

PC: Yeah, he was a good friend all my life. We hung out together.

PC: We went down to the bridge. It was appropriate too, because that was the old town line. Meredith Bridge, right. Right in the middle of Laconia there. At least we were told that. We didn't march back. Or did we? We were big on marching in those days. At that age, we wanted to display our victory. Oh yeah, crazy. We had the girls with us. Anybody get wounded? I don't know. Somebody had a bum finger with a thing on it. Mary and them they had their repair kit with them. With those prison white hats like a nurse would wear, yeah. They made some real nice outfits. Some of them did. Some of us did. I wasn't too bad. My mother worked on it the best with what we had. We didn't have a lot of money in those days. I had one of the best guns though. I already had that for many years. .69 caliber that's, yeah, 1848, right, right, right. Man, we had a ball. A lot of the guys didn't have muzzle loading rifles. Had a brother-in-law at the time who ran a gun shop. So, I made a 12 gauge and he dumped everything he had in it out of it and we put in black powder. No projectiles, just cardboard, some toilet paper. Pack it into them tight. Quick good bang. Of course the new shells have that plastic thing inside of them it's like a little piston in there. They'll give you good pressure. You gotta have pressure. Still don't want to shoot it near anybody. No, no, no, no. That thing could take an eye out of your head real fast, but we did a lot of that stuff. Sandwich Fair. Bristol – we went to Bristol. Yep, they had a big parade over there. Must have been the Fourth of July or something. We went over there -- got over there and that's where we shot the cannon off. Blew the bottom out of it. Thank God it wasn't up this way. The barrel went up in the air a little ways but the plate stayed there. Just cracked the well. Just went straight up and fell back down. No shrapnel, but it could have been. I was sweating. Said, "Boy, I'll be in prison the rest of my life." Doing this.

Sandwich Fair. Of course, "Let's all camp overnight." Oh yeah. We were in the parade the next day. Got to be in the parade! Made sure we got plenty of powder. We all reload together. Those that could keep up. I could do three a minute. That's extremely dangerous. Just think of it. You just fired a round out of a muzzle loading rifle, you dump some loose powder down the barrel, ram down a ball in it and fired it. What's the odds of having a little piece of powder down there still, a little spark. Here you come with a powder horn -- about that big -- and stick it in there in the barrel. Ha. Goodbye. Never thought of that until the other day. When we started this. Then I had a flask too that had an automatic measure on it with a spring thing. You put your finger on the end and go dunk and get exactly forty grams. That worked pretty nice. You have a lot of -- I had them stuck in my shirt, so I'd just grab them and stick it in and ram it home. Don't put the

rammer back in the gun, no no no no. Stick it in your pants if you have to. Because you're gonna need it a second later again. I got to thinking and I thought of that and said 'Boy,' I'd never do that again. Even talking about some of the meets now, they make them swab them out because it's so dangerous.

I remember when I got that gun. Down in Hooksett. I didn't pay much. I don't know what it was. Forty-five dollars or something. It was a lot of money then. I took it home and put it in the vice in the garage. I wanted to get the nipple out, you know where you put the percussion cap on. Muzzle loaders in the old days – everybody kept them loaded. Of course. Takes time. What if the Indians are coming. Say, 'Okay, stop the film now, we gotta load all the guns!' No. I'll warm it up with a torch, let that right out of there. Right through the wall. [Makes explosion noise with his mouth] Just missed my father's mustang! A new one too. A sixty five. Oh my God. Nice. Good thing Kevin Clement was with me. God bless him. He was standing at my side and staring. I said, 'Kevin don't.' We were smart enough. You know. I didn't have a ram rod, I used a piece – I should have measured down, marked it, then slid it down and see if it – see if there was something down in there. If there's something in there you get – well, I got the ball back it was all pretty well deteriorated. It was all white, looked like salt, you know and a little wedge in the middle. Yep. Still went off though. I guess.

LH: Did everyone bring their own weapons to the militia? And their own clothes.

PC: Oh yeah. Made their own – except for some of these officers. Think they went to Hollywood. I don't know. We look better here than we did in real life.

MG: You had mentioned the black powder rifle, I guess there was a Turkey Shoot that you took part in, is that true?

PC: I won. I won it.

MG: Great.

PC: Yep. Should have brought the cannon with me. And, it was so funny. We're at the ball park, and there was only three people that showed up to shoot it. We went from where the sewage treatment plant was at the time over by the brook, whole length of it, about a hundred yards. And we had some four by four targets. Pretty big. Placed about four feet apart, space. There was good banking behind it. Good safe place. No kids out there hiding in the woods. Thought of that afterwards too! You know, we could have killed somebody. Well, we didn't. Matter of fact, I was first off with the first round – that's good because it leaves me for last. I was first. My target was over here. I hit the second target. Low. Just in the paper, but I knew where it went. So, when my turn came again [makes a shooting noise with his mouth, twice]. Bang. Right through the black, right in the center. Yeah. Got me one. [Rubbing hands together]. Went right there. Yep. I was amazed. Amazed. I won a Hopkins & Allen muzzle loading, underhammer. Weirdest thing you've ever seen. Didn't have like this on the side, no. It's underneath. Pull the thing down, like

something belonged over in England. They were making them down here in Farmington where they were making – they were making some nice pieces, but -- I traded with my brother-in-law. He was into muzzle loading like that muzzle loader nut. Something he had that I wanted, so we made the deal. .44 caliber. Yep.

You could go on all day with things like this that we did. Little things. The people – there was so many people. Look at these people. Everybody's got a hat. A lot of these people at the time I didn't even know. No. Just a few of us. Jack Rideout, Butch Beede, you know. Bob Beede. There was probably a couple others there. A few, but that's fifty years ago. I haven't seen most of them since. I was thinking Dave Bennett, but I can't remember.

There's a lot of stuff I can't remember because I had a stroke. A few years ago. Some days I'm sharp as a tack, other day's I'm meh. A little lazy. They say no but no, you'll never be who you were. I was in a motorcycle accident, I got an eight inch crack on the side of my head. I got a five-inch crack here, that was from the sidewalk plow.

PC: Lets get the hell out of here.