

Interviewer: Emily McDaniel

Narrators: Sam and Rena Prak

This interview contains information on the perceptions of the Pond and the neighborhood. Sam draws on his childhood memories, beginning from the time he moved into the home that he and his wife Rena live in today. From this interview, the rumors, folklore, and reputation of Mashapaug Pond can be gathered and several histories of specific locations including Popeye's, JT Owens, car dealerships, and Asian markets.

This interview was held in the home of the Prak family on Alvin Street, Providence, RI 02912, on April 13, 2013 at 10:00am.

Emily McDaniel: I'm Emily. I'm at the home of Rena and Sam Prak, and I'll be interviewing them today – it's April, what, 13th?

Rena Prak: 13. 13, yeah.

Sam Prak: 13th.

Emily: It's like 10am. So could you guys just start by just saying your names?

Rena: Ok – Alright. You go first.

Sam: Go ahead. Go ahead.

Rena: Ok, hi my name is Rena Prak.

Sam: Hi I'm Sam Prak.

Emily: And how are you guys connected to Mashapaug Pond and the neighborhood?

Sam: I grew up since, I believe, '86, '87. Came – Moved here, went to school down the street at Reservoir Ave. I started there in third grade. I didn't know the Pond existed until I started wandering around with friends. Sure enough you see the pond. So.

Rena: I just remember driving to work, back and forth and I see the Pond. I think it's Crescent Street – and that's it. So I don't know much about it. And it looked polluted so I didn't really...

Emily: Why did you guys - Did the fact that it was polluted at all bother you at any point? Or, when did you find out about that?

Sam: It being polluted? When we decided as a kid to maybe test the waters – like literally. Going in there, just looking, getting a close-up view of it and you see all the algae and rust and shopping carts, all the stuffed tires, could just base it on that. Just looking at that it was, yeah it was pretty dirty. But then, you know, they always sail. There's other parts of the Pond that were much better looking [2:00] on the other side where the current Ocean State Job Lot plaza is now. Behind there, we went there. I guess it's a walking park now. Prior to that it was just a forest. When we went there, it was pretty neat. It was– nothing – it was untouched, just little trails here and there. It wasn't –there wasn't a lot of trash or anything like that. I believe the neighbors or the neighborhood around that area took care of it. They took care of it at the time.

Emily: Did you ever walk around the Pond then? Did you try to?

Sam: We tried to. As kids, we were like, as people see in the movies, kids walking around even though there's no trails. We've actually had... Paths there aren't legitimate paths. You can see walking paths there. And we just took a walk. We were curious, me and my friends were, as kids we decided to walk around and that's how we figured out there was a pond there.

Emily: So you didn't actually ever go in the Pond?

Sam: No, other people have. I've seen other people have but no, not me.

Rena: Did they have their skin on when they come out of the water?

Sam: You know when I take a look and saw broken glass and broken bottles and stuff, I thought this was not a place to swim other kids went in there. But I guess other kids didn't care. They'd go in there. I've never actually had the guts to go in the water.

Rena: I don't really have much to say about the pond because when I met my husband 15 years ago, we'd come here all the time. But I didn't think about moving here. Then I moved here and figured, maybe in a year or two we'll move out. Ten years later I'm still here. I don't really have any interest in it. Because I don't really get the chance to walk around this neighborhood too much. It's sad. It's scary sometimes.

Emily: In what way?

Rena: I don't know. There's always new people moving in and out all the time around our neighborhood. I mean, the people seem nice and some of them are friendly, but they keep to themselves most of the time. I try to talk to people, but I guess some people just don't want to be bothered so I don't bother. But our neighbor that just moved in last year are very nice. He just moved next door last year. They're very nice so I talk to them and I talk to May across the street. And there are a few people that we know around this neighborhood. That's it. But people just kind of keep to themselves. I don't really have a chance to really go [5:00] and say hi to anyone, so I work all the time.

Emily: Are there any neighborhood activities or anything where you actually meet these people?

Rena: There is. The church people.

Sam: Yeah, there's a church.

Rena: And they're always sending out flyers all the time.

Sam: Yes, there's a church group in the plaza currently. And every so often they'll put a flyer in the mail. There's other things too. In the past, where they've done where little meetings over at the school. That elementary school here.

Rena: I think it's Adelaide.

Sam: No, no the elementary school. In the past. They haven't done it recently. But I used to get pamphlets.

Rena: We get fliers all the time but it's always during when I'm working. So it's like on a Tuesday night, like 6-9. I can never make it though. I think they have another one coming up

soon with the church group. It's in the plaza so if you pass by there, I think they'd be more than willing to help you, if you have any questions. I think they're trying to save Reservoir Triangle or I don't know what they're trying to do. They're very nice.

Emily: Is it the church by Alvarez?

Rena: I think so, yes. It's in the plaza. There was a Stop & Shop, but that didn't do so well. So now it's a Wow Gym and I don't know what else is over there. There's a school back there, we just found out a few years ago. They built that school. It was quick. It was a mill, you said it was?

Sam: Mhm.

Rena: Yeah and now it's a school back there. And now it's a high school? Is it a high school?

Sam: I think so.

Rena: Yeah, a high school.

Emily: Do you guys know anyone that goes there?

Sam & Rena: No.

Rena: The church people?

Emily: The school.

Rena: No. No, I don't know anyone that goes to that school because I'm from Cranston. My husband's here so we only know the people around here, that's it. I wish I get to know the people but they don't really... I talk to my neighbors and I say hi to them. Like our neighbor next door – there's always new people all the time so we don't know who's living in there now. It's always for sale. Now it's been permanent for awhile. And then people across the street don't really say much.

Emily: Are there any people from when you were growing up that are still around?

Rena: Yes.

Sam: No.

Rena: Savanna?

Sam: They all moved out.

Rena: [inaudible]

Sam: Well, [inaudible] moved. He recently moved back.

Rena: Sila?

Sam: Sila, yeah.

Rena: I asked him. He didn't respond to my text. I said do you want to help? I didn't hear anything.

Sam: As far as the people I grew up with, no there's not much anymore. Everyone else moved out.

Rena: The parents are still here.

Sam: The parents are still here.

Rena: I asked them. They're afraid. I said they're not going to hurt you. They just want to ask. I remember because I used to live in Attleboro when I was really young and the Popeye's over here [8:00] it used to be a I think a Subaru dealer and then it became an Asian Market but we still call it Subaru Market. So we used to –because there's no Asian Market in Attleboro we had to come to Providence to do some grocery shopping. So we used to go there all the time, but this is when I don't know my husband yet. When I was little, I was 6 or 7 years old but I didn't know there was a Pond or anything back there. They'd just go to the market and then leaving. That was it. It was different back then. It seemed like everyone else used to know each other from the neighborhood. There are some Asian people on the other side of the street too. But they don't talk.

Sam: They're all recent.

Rena: They're all recent?

Sam: Yes, they're not a lot of...

Rena: Original?

Sam: Yes I guess you could say original.

Emily: So, why was the Asian market here?

Rena: It was a while back when they knocked it down and now they made it into Popeye's. So it's been a while.

Emily: I mean, was there a big Asian population here?

Rena: Yes, there is. There's another one over here on Reservoir. Sunny Market? That's an Asian market. If you go on Reservoir you go out and you take a right. There's an Asian Market that's very popular. Everyone from Massachusetts goes there. We have family in Attleboro that still goes there. And they just opened another one.. Narragansett – what is - Parkway?

Sam: Narragansett Ave.

Rena: Narragansett Ave. And they – it's a Vietnamese market. And they have a big community. There's a few Asians here. You can tell - in the summer because they all play their music. That's how you can tell there's a lot of minorities here. There's Spanish music going.

Emily: Spanish Music?

Rena: Spanish across the street. They blast their radio. Then you have the African people over here. They blast their music and Asians across the street. They always blast their music. So in the summer it's loud. It's very loud.

Emily: So when you say Asian people, what do you mean?

Rena: There's Cambodian people.

Sam: There used to be a Laotian... [10:00] a group of Laotians around here too. Not around here, but further up toward Cranston. But I don't think they're around anymore.

Rena: But here's a few Cambodian people here but I don't know any of them. I can't tell them apart sometimes. I just say the Asians. I don't know if they're from Laos, Vietnamese so I just say Asians. There's some Cambodians. They're a few on the street. We only know Silar and I think there's a Cambodian family that lives near him too. Can talk to them too. I don't know them, so...

Emily: Were there any Cambodian events?

Sam: Not around here.

Rena: There is. There's Cambodian New Year going on now at the temple.

Sam: You're talking specifically around this area or just in general?

Emily: I mean, just considering there seems to be population of you guys if there are any specifically cultural...

Rena: Yeah, here's Cambodian New year [inaudible] that's October

Sam: That happens twice that I know of - twice a year. There's usually one in the Fall and one in the Spring.

Emily: Where does that happen?

Rena: The temple. I think there's temples now. There's one in Hanover... [inaudible] you know your temples. Where's the temple? You don't know? Her family's involved a lot with that stuff - her dad's side. Her mom's my sister. They're very involved in the Cambodian community. So they always have things going on all the time. Right now there's a Cambodian New Year going

on so they're doing something at the temple. Last week there was... actually [inaudible] thought I was going to be at the party. There's a Cambodian thing on Rhodes on the Pawtuxet last week. So she was there. She told me about it and asked, Am I going to see you there? And I said no, I don't go there. But they went to the party that night. But there is stuff going on. It was in the paper.

Sam: That happens twice a year. And there's one big one every year that happens not here but in Lowell, Massachusetts [12:00] called a boat fest that usually around the summertime.

Rena: That's huge, the Boat Fest. It's really huge. I've never been. They're just too many people.

Sam: As far as cultural festivals, that's the bigger one where everybody flocks to. It's the one in Lowell, Massachusetts. Everything else is kind of doing their own thing.

Rena: There's Cambodians and a big group of Asians here.

Emily: I know that there was – at the boat house – there used to be dragon boats. I don't know if they're still doing that, maybe.

Rena: I remember what you're talking about.

Emily: Have you ever seen that and is that at all related?

Sam: No, I've never gone to any of those festivals. I've heard about it.

Rena: We're so out of the loop. I work so much I'm out of the loop. I usually hear it from my friends and stuff like that that post stuff on Facebook and that's how I know stuff. I have a friend who's Cape Verdean who goes to the Cambodian meetings. I don't want to go there. My friend [inaudible] is involved in it and my friend [inaudible] she goes too. They have meetings about stuff they want to plan and do. So there's stuff going on at the - is it the INS over here on Elmwood?

Emily: INS?

Rena: I think it's INS?

Sam: No.

Rena: What is it?

Sam: An international something.

Rena: International something. I don't know. There's a building there. They have their meetings there. That's all I know. So there's a lot of going on. We're just not involved in it. We're like... bad.

Emily: Ok wait - so someone Cape Verdean is telling you about...

Rena: Yeah, my friend is Cape Verdean and she says she's like going to a Cambodian meeting. I'm like, Cambodian meeting on what? Oh, we're talking about the New Year's stuff. I'm like, why are you involved? She's like, [inaudible] is involved, my friend [inaudible]. Cambodians and she invited her over but I guess she didn't invite me because I guess I never go to that kind of stuff. So my friend [inaudible] knows more about it. She was at the Cambodian New Year and I couldn't even go. She likes the culture so she wants to know more about it so she went.

Emily: Do a lot of different people get involved?

Rena: Yes.

Sam: Yes. It depends on interest. [14:00] People are curious and interested and as long as you sell it enough. If you get... explain how the culture is, people get interested and then they go.

Rena: Actually there's something in New York right now called the Season of Cambodia. It's huge. They're doing it for the whole month of March and April. It's just the arts and the music and all the stuff that's going on in the Cambodian culture and they're doing a whole thing of it New York right now. My friend is involved in it. It's pretty interesting to have all these artists and stuff like that are from Cambodia. Musicians and all that stuff they're doing a huge thing in New York about it. It's pretty cool. I keep seeing it on Facebook. I want to go, but they have all different stuff going on. It's just is too much. You have to know what you want to go see and stuff. Like the cultures and stuff like that. It is a big thing now, so I think they want to know... I think ever since Angelina Jolie adopted that Cambodian kid it became big. There's something called Cambodian, you know? She made it big.

Emily: So ok - what would make it more interesting for you guys to attend these events?

Rena: I think for me it's timing. I would love to go to the meetings. It's always when I'm working and I really can't take time out of work. If they have one on the weekend I would love to go because I am interested in what's going on. You know, what's going on here. I feel like I don't know what's going on. It's always something - construction going on, also they're building something. I didn't know there was a school back there until I had to go vote. I'm like, There's a school back there? Then I keep seeing kids in and out. I'm like, what are the kids doing back there? I didn't know there was a school back there. So that's how bad it is. I just want to know what's going on. [16:00] But I'm not sure what they're doing - what they're planning to do with the Pond? Do you know what they're planning to do with the Pond?

Emily: They're trying. It's going to take a couple of million dollars before it's totally cleaned up. I mean, they still have the kids doing baseball there.

Sam: Oh, yeah. On the other side where there's a tennis court - and I think a car rental place, right?

Emily: I don't know about that.

Rena: How big is the Pond?

Sam: So where are they doing baseball?

Emily: J.T. Owens.

Sam: On the other side of the Pond, right?

Emily: Right by Industrial Park.

Rena: Oh, I know what you're talking about.

Sam: There's a FoodBank there.

Rena: All the way back there?

Sam: That's the only park baseball or softball field that I know of, and there's a tennis court right across the street. It's near the bowling.

Rena: There's a bowling alley. Yeah, that's probably where it is. I didn't know it was all the way over there. I thought it was in our area

Sam: I can hear the kids when they play. You can hear it all the way here when they scream, when they're cheering and stuff.

Rena: I can hear the train at night when I can't sleep. I can hear the train going. I didn't know the train station was still working. I was like, there's a train station that's still working around here? He's like, yeah.

Sam: No - train tracks. There's still a train station

Rena: I didn't know it still works though. The other night I swear I heard trains but I hope I'm not hearing things, but I guess it still works.

Emily: When does it go by? Is it all day?

Rena: It was like 2 in the morning when I heard it.

Sam: No, it's consistent. Is it Amtrak, or?

Rena: I have no idea.

Sam: Well, I think both rails run right through here all the way down to wherever it goes. I've seen it - I've seen the train tracks.

Emily: Going back to the baseball field, did you ever use it?

Sam: Did I use it? No. [18:00] I mean I know it's there. I see kids play over there. I've played in the tennis court before. I guess if I could still hear kids cheering they still use it.

Rena: They do still use it. I passed by there. The FoodBank - there used to be a Ro-Jacks. There used to be a - there's a FoodBank next to that baseball place. It used to be a Ro-Jacks. Now it's a - I don't know what happened. A lot of the places... It's abandoned over there. Really, it's sad.

Emily: So what else did you do when you were a kid? All I have so far is tennis.

Sam: We just, I mean, around the Pond area? We were just curious kids. Basically we were all curious kids. We just explored a lot, walked around there. We had nothing else better to do. We'd just walk around and see what's going on over there. We discovered things and hear stories here and there.

Emily: Like what?

Sam: Just like childish stories of... some to scare and some to... some I think even made up. It's just kids making up stuff. One was - it was pretty obvious. They said there's a monster in there - in the Pond. There's a radioactive turtle or something biting people and you've got to be careful. It was just to scare people away - scare kids away from there which I understand.

Emily: Do you think parents made those up?

Sam: No, I think older generations - [20:00] I know when I grew up they had older teenagers - when I was younger - scaring us away from there. They just wanted to tease us or scare us or whatever. And they would come up with all these stories. You know, Did you know there was a school bus accident in there and that place is haunted with kids. And stuff like that. Don't walk there in the middle of the night between midnight and 3am, or something.

Rena: You know who would be good? [inaudible]. His older brother used to live here and his friend [inaudible]

Sam: Yeah, it's him and his group used to live over here and they...

Rena: We see them once in a while at the supermarket and they used to live around the neighborhood. But they've all moved on now. They could tell you about the stories around here.

Sam: But that's all it is - just stories. But other than that, I don't know if you're familiar with the Goonies. [21:00] It's sort of like - it's more towards what's the latest one that's similar to that? It's that J.J. Abrams alien movie.

Rena: Super 8.

Sam: Super 8. It's a bunch of kids filming stories. It's similar to that - it's just a group of kids hanging out and wanting to explore. Just curious. And that's what we did. 5th, 6th grade, middle school. Explore the area when you have nothing else to do, parents at work. And I don't want to

stay home. Just take a walk. And this was even before the Ocean State Job Lot. That wasn't here. I actually remember that place was just [22:00] trees. That's how long ago it was.

Rena: I remember Ocean State Job Lot so I was here afterwards--

Sam: I remember that whole place was just trees and forest and dirt piles before it was ever a plaza. That's when we'd all just walk around.

Emily: How about the houses behind it - Are those new?

Rena: There's a house over there, it's...

Sam: The houses behind?

Emily: Job Lot. As you go toward the pond, I know the boat house is there. There's a few houses on like...

Sam: Inside, a few houses like way in?

Emily: Yes.

Sam: Yes, they've been there forever. I think originally there prior the whole to everything else. I think they've been there for a long time.

Rena: If you go on Crescent Street there's a house on your right. It's near the water - it has a porch - wrap around porch. It's a hexagon house in the shape of a hexagon. If you pass by, it's a light green, is it? I talked to someone a while back who said it's a rare house. They don't really make those anymore. There's one in Providence, maybe two or 3 you might see around. You can imagine what it is inside. It's on your right hand side. It's pretty cool. It's right, all the way in the water. There's a house in front of it over here and it's pretty cool. I was going to check it out to see what it looks like but I think that's one of the older houses that's around there. Did you interview anyone over there? They probably have better stories.

Emily: I'm just assigned people to contact, so I don't quite know everything about the Pond yet. Do you know why your parents chose to move here?

Sam: Not really. I know they wanted a multifamily house at that time. They looked around with my uncle and they found this place and moved here. They just wanted to move away from the inner-city area. They heard this area this was a good neighborhood at the time - the whole Reservoir area - so they decided to come here.

Emily: Did you guys feel like it was pretty safe?

Sam: Yes. I mean, it has its ups and downs as with any place, but yeah it's a pretty safe place. Over time, people moved. People moved out people moved in. But when we originally came

here it was quiet for a long time. When we moved here, me and my brother were the only kids around at the time. And then people moved out and people moved in.

Rena: You want to know about the shooting that happened here, huh?

Emily: Oh. [25:00] I didn't know about that.

Rena: Yes. There was a shooting at a house a few blocks down when I first moved from. What? I forget what year that was.

Sam: Well, usually things just carry over whoever moves there. It's not specifically from here, just things carry over.

Rena: I think the mother passed away, so the father passed away and the son took over. And they were hanging with the wrong crowd. And they'd always have - It used to be different cars coming here all the time. They moved out now - they're no longer here, thank God. But you know it was just trouble. That's when I felt it was not safe. I used to get scared all the time. And one day there was a shooting and I heard the gunshot and then there were police everywhere. And it was on the news. You can probably have to look it up to find it. But it was on the news so there was a gang-related story. Yes, it was a few houses down. And they ended up selling the house and they moved out. I think everyone was glad because no one could stand them because they were just young kids who were basically - you know - It was their parents house. Their parents passed away and they just took over. They had all these people living there. They had too many young kids hanging around there that shouldn't be hanging around there. That's how I feel about it and I'm glad they aren't there anymore because I think they made the neighborhood, just kind of unpleasant.

Emily: Was there a gang from around here?

Rena: I think the guy that was living there was in jail for awhile but then he came out. It's just kids who think they're cool by doing all these bad things. I think there was a drive-by shooting and I think it just kind of put people on edge. People got scared and ever since then people started to keep to themselves. Because you don't know who your neighbors are. We know them, [27:00] but we didn't know it was that bad. When I get out of work, I'd always see there were always cars there. They had their music blasting and stuff like that. But they're no longer here. I think they moved out a few years back.

Emily: How do you feel about it now?

Rena: It's not too bad. It's quiet.

Sam: All that stuff - They moved out. And like I said, it never came from here. It was just brought from the outside. People bring their baggage. Growing up there were groups - I wouldn't necessarily call them gangs - there were just groups of teenagers just hanging around with all the neighborhoods. They weren't officially gangs or anything. But there were just kids just hanging around.

Rena: A lot of people are walking their dogs and stuff. You see a lot of that so I guess it's not too bad but I'm not - I want to be able to just walk the street and feel – I'm not sure how to say it. If I walk with someone I'm fine, but if I'm by myself I'm not sure how safe I feel. I don't know. Because it's funny how just across the bridge is a bad section of Providence and you come here and it's not too bad. On the other side, though, that's why I'm - that's why I walk with someone I'm fine. I just feel I don't know who my neighbors are. That's why. That's the problem. If I know my neighbors I think I'd be fine. I know a few of them and when I drive I just wave to them and they're nice. But some other people – I just don't know them or I don't feel safe. But one of our friends is a mom and she's always walking the street I guess she feels safe enough to walk the street. And she does it very morning at 7. You'll see her walking. But she's lived here for a long time so she's comfortable.

Emily: I don't know if either of you might remember this, but there were some stories after Gorham shut down and there were just like empty buildings there and just like a homeless population and something about vandalism and stuff like that. Do you remember that?

Sam: Vandalism in the...?

Emily: Just like graffiti. Just around.

Sam: Around the neighborhood or just specifically around Gorham?

Emily: I mean anywhere that you can think of.

Sam: As far as graffiti I see it everywhere. I still see it everywhere. So I don't know. And I do remember the factory - Gorham factory building that was here. I don't know of any – I didn't hear stories of homeless stuff – or a homeless population or people but that's actually the first I've heard of homeless people being around the Gorham building.

Emily: I mean, it was kind of funny. They said there was a tour group or something going through and there were these people on top of the buildings [30:00] throwing stuff at them because it was like their area.

Sam: From the building?

Emily: From the top of the buildings at the tour groups.

Sam: You know what? Now that –this is way back right? This is when...

Emily: I'm pretty bad with years.

Sam: I'm guessing this was when the building existed. It makes kind of sense now that – you know how I told you of stories that the older kids would always tell us stories to scare us. They would say you know, that place – that Gorham Factory. Don't ever go in there. It's haunted and stuff like that. I would never believe that stuff because I don't believe in that stuff anyways. But

sometimes I'll pass by and you hear people talking and stuff. So I'm thinking it's haunted, so now that you mention the whole homeless thing...

Rena: It all makes sense now.

Sam: It all makes sense now.

Emily: Mystery solved.

Rena: Yes. He's thinking it's haunted all those years.

Sam: Appreciate it.

Rena: I don't remember that building. I don't remember it [31:00]

Sam: No, I remember it. I remember up until the very last, I did see - I don't know when it officially shut down but I do remember cars going in and out of there. A little bit after I moved in here, they still had something going on but after that it quickly shut down and there was nothing there. But on occasion I'll see cars going in there. And every so often after that I'll see patrol cars – police cars go in there just to check.

Emily: Still?

Sam: No, when it was Gorham, back then.

Rena: I didn't know there was a name for it.

Emily: Yes, it was a big silver manufacturing company.

Rena: Yes, I just asked him the other day what did they do there? He's like, silverware. I'm like, Really?

Sam: It was big.

Emily: I think there were some presidents who ordered their silverware from there.

Sam: Yes. I believe Roosevelt did.

Rena: Wow. So it was big then.

Emily: I think it was the biggest in the world.

Rena: Wow. That's cool. I'll have to look it up.

Sam: The whole area in Rhode Island itself is known for that because prior to that the Lowes and Stop & Shop plaza that's on the other side of the Pond also before that even went up there was –

it used to be a winery or glass place that made wine glasses a long time ago. See I remember because it because I remember a tall, structure with a like a plaque or a big picture of a wine glass I think they so. So it was between this wine factory and that one which was like huge.

Rena: The car lot is big too. Older folks I know and the others mentioned car lot. Like in the 90s, 80s/90s they mentioned car lot. [33:00] They used to do artificial flowers and stuff like California – artificial something. It was huge. Now it's like nothing because now people are into the real plant. But back then when fake plants were so, they were huge on that. And that was right on reservoir over here.

Sam: The tower – Carlart tower over here right across from Job Lot plaza. Right before the route 10 overpass.

Rena: It's pretty – yes –

Sam: Yes – someone told me about that too.

Rena: I have a lot of older friends who have in the 80s and 90s who mentioned a lot about the area but they don't live here anymore. I have one friend I think she's 90, 92 now and she was talking about – she – her sister used to own a house on Sibley over here and they used to live around that area. I think her sister passed away – she was probably about 100-something. And she remembered the area because I told her I live around here and she said she remembered Calart and the pond and stuff like that. So a lot of people move out, go to Warwick or whatever. But there used to be – I guess a big place for a lot of people. What's her name – Molly's grandmother. Her sister owned a house around here and she had asked me how is it right now. I don't think it's the same but it's pretty. They have a lot of interesting stuff. And the cemetery over here – I didn't know it was a cemetery until someone pointed it out – right across from Carlart. Right? That area over here? It's one of the old cemeteries. You go off of route 1-0 and take a right on Reservoir toward Cranston. You take a left, you come to Providence. You stop, the bushes and everything – behind, there's a cemetery. Yes, you can't tell but it's old.

Emily: Cool.

Rena: [35:00] If you want to do some night investigations, you can go in there.

Emily: No, I took a whole bunch of cemetery classes.

Rena: Yes, that one is pretty old.

Emily: So I have... this. Oh! I don't know if you might remember this. Here's a better picture. This is the Carriage House.

Rena: What's the Carriage house?

Sam: That's haunted also considered haunted from growing up. They'd say, Oh, don't go in there it's haunted. It looks like a church, right. Is it a church?

Emily: I actually don't know what it used to be.

Sam: Yes, somebody told me I used to be a church and this is just regular stories.

Rena: That's so cool.

Sam: But they used to tell me that's a church. And I remember being curious about it, asking around why that was there and people used to say it was a church for people who would get hurt or die working in the silver mill and then they would have their service there. Don't go in there, it's haunted. [36:00]

Rena: I can't believe...

Sam: Yes, before there was that Walgreens over here, there was a Star supermarket. And right from the parking lot you can actually look across and see that building. Right across the railway from the parking lot, why is that there? Oh, that's a church. That's where people die and they have services there. Right on the spot right after they...yes.

Emily: They were trying to turn it into a firefighters' museum or something like that.

Sam: I didn't know exactly what it was

Emily: But I mean, it burned down, ironically.

Rena: Oh, I think I remember that.

Sam: I remember that.

Rena: I think I remember that. That's so sad.

Emily: Do you remember there being a lot of policemen or firefighters in the area?

Sam: Around this – or around the neighborhood?

Emily: Just – I don't know why they'd decide to build a museum over here as opposed to...

Rena: There's an old station here – there's firestation over here. It's wicked old.

Sam: Been a training as long as I can remember there's been a firefighter's training station there. No, I...

Rena: this is pretty cool.

Sam: I just remember not a lot of police and fire, but I'd see a lot of, like I said, patrol police going in and out just to check on the area. [38:00]

Emily: So, let's see... There was a really old picture I had of the Pond. I put it somewhere...

Rena: This is the neighborhood?

Emily: So this one! I thought you might find this pretty interesting. This is the Pond in 1895 and then they actually filled this part in. This just shows the parcels and how they... I don't know if you guys heard how they're doing the cleanup or why certain people are responsible for different areas.

Rena: No.

Emily: Well, basically it's like...

Rena: Well, how can you clean it out?

Sam: I was always wondering why would they even turn it into a school, but because of the manufacturing building. I'm kind of familiar with the whole industrial era being how they used all different chemicals and stuff like that. Usually, as long as I can remember most industrial places – there's always some kind of river or bed of water next to it and everything is usually flowing in there. Growing up, I wasn't surprised that the pond was polluted as I saw it was because I'm seeing an old mill, manufacturing building so I [40:00] kind of put two and two together. The other kids didn't catch on. They'd just take a swim because it was hot.

Emily: There were some people who said they saw the canisters and junk coming out or they saw people dumping stuff in the pond.

Sam: I never saw that, but I saw other stuff. Like I said, shopping carts, old tires, things like that. I remember Adelaide Ave, right here... Can I see this for a second? You can see it better here...

Rena: Adelaide right here, and then Alvarez.

Sam: Growing up, there used to be a footpath, like a bridge that cuts across here. You can still see... The map still shows it as... There used to be a bridge that comes across here. This is a walking bridge, but before Popeye's and all that was there, even during when the Subaru dealer was there, you could see a curb that at one point maybe was a bridge for cars to go back and forth. And if you go down to this area, which is over here, you'll see a curb also going into the water. So I guess they had plans – I'm just think here that something's going on here because I was curious with that sort of stuff – maybe at one point they wanted to actually have a bridge to come across here so you won't have to go all the way around this way. Because when you go onto the other side there's also a little curb. And I asked around about it as a kid. I'm like, Did you think there was a bridge here at one point? And obviously these older kids were like, yeah they put a bridge there one time a long time ago and that's when the school bus fell into the pond with a bunch of kids and they decided not to do it anymore because it's so dangerous.

Rena: Kids are so awful. Scaring kids.

Sam: So there used to be Albert Street. They changed it. It used to be Albert. They changed it. It used to be Alvin and there used to be – and where Algonquin is – it used to be called Elmwood. They changed that to Algonquin now. And there's two more streets behind us – I guess they knocked that down. It used to be Lorton and Chin-a-something that – right here.

Emily: This is the 1895 map?

Rena: See, right here – Yes 1895, see that? If you look it at there used to be a. So they knocked this down.

Sam: The main manufacturing building...

Rena: Was right here, see? And there used to be two more streets and they knocked those down. We used to be Albert and they changed it to Alvin. And this was Algonquin – [43:00] it was Elmwood and they changed it to Algonquin. So Elmwood is - They cut it off. That's pretty cool. See I learned something new. I can go show off to [inaudible]

Sam: See, I think at one point they did this - they wanted to have a bridge that would extend across because it just comes all the way over here. It made sense, and I looked at the curb. It looked like a street curb but there was a footbridge going across. For some reason they decided not to go through with it.

Emily: That would have been nice.

Sam: For us, well for me at the time, I would have to walk or drive around to get to the other side

Rena: So this is,.. the rest is right here.

Sam: That's the baseball field.

Rena: That's the baseball field. And that's...

Sam: Is that the one you were talking about?

Emily: Yes.

Rena: I'm trying to figure out where that is. And that's the old Ro-Jacks's – is that what it is? Ok, I see it now. I remember that.

Sam: This is that propane place, I think – I believe.

Rena: I didn't realize it was that big.

Sam: No, that's something else.

Rena: I didn't realize it was that big.

Sam: We actually walked

Rena: I was thinking it was right here.

Sam: When we were kids we'd walk. These are just private neighborhoods and we'd come all the way to this side and just walk around here. Maybe until the end here.

Emily: That's the baseball field. So you guys never really went through the industrial parts?

Sam: No. Other kids have. I didn't. It was just too freaky. And they'd usually go at dawn or at night for some silly reason. Kids wanted to be brave but...

Emily: Did they ever run into anything or do anything? [45:00]

Sam: No, I don't know. They'd just come back with stories. Makeup stories or real stories.

Rena: I didn't know it was that big. I knew it was there, I just didn't think it was that big. I didn't think it was connected to all that stuff.

Sam: One interesting story, though, I don't know if you're familiar with old cartoons or shows but they have people who – the pound catching stray dogs and cats everywhere. One of the stories that I heard was there was a lot of that going on around here. Before the Job Lot plaza went up, like I said it was all just forest and dirt and stuff like that, somebody used to tell me that back then that what you used to see in the cartoons and shows and stuff like that used to be – I forgot the term – when they would go and catch stray cats and dogs and stuff like that and either take them to the pound or kill them. My brother, I guess, he heard this story where they would actually bring the stray cats and dogs and just kills them and just burn them in this brick building in the back. It was a small one behind the Job Lot plaza and it used to scare me. On the one day he was like, oh you don' believe me? Let's just go. I'll take you there. I'm just calling him out on that, saying there's no such thing. He took me there once. There's one just behind Job Lot and this is – I think he was like, 16 and I was like 12 and he was trying to scare me. He and his friend went over there. He said, let's go, there was such a thing. They brought me there [47:00] and he showed me the – I don't know whether they used it for that – but he showed me this brick building with a - I guess you could say it used to be like a chimney and there's an area to burn and stuff like that. He said, look, come look this is what they use to burn the dogs right here.

Rena: See there are stories like that you just pass along and they become like – is it true? Is it not true?

Sam And then...

Emily: I think I've heard that before though.

Rena: Really?

Emily: There's someone that I interviewed last week who was just saying there were dogs running around and you could walk around with pockets full of rocks just in case – all the time. There was some guy who actually said there was a dog crematory somewhere around here.

Sam: There you go!

Emily: So it might be true

Rena: There's a lot of dogs here. There used to be a lot of stray cats here. When I first moved here I tried to feed it and my husband said, no, don't feed the stray cats.

Sam: But no, this was back in the –

Rena: He used to get so mad at me because I used to feed stray cats.

Sam: Back when – early, late 80s, early 90s when I heard of this. And I didn't know any better and then I can't watch TV the same again anymore when I see Tom & Jerry. You see the dog catcher around.

Rena: That's a reason why I don't walk around the neighborhood. People will let their dog roam around the street without a leash. They kind of just do whatever. That's why I don't really walk on the street, because of that. [inaudible] They have this one dog that I call badass. I don't know his name. But he has one dog that sticks up and the other one sticks down and he just thinks he owns the street. I don't know who his owner is, but he just walks the street on a daily basis and you see him and you just kind of walk and then he'll just stop and stare at you. So if you're walking too, he'll start barking at you because he owns the street. I call him badass. I don't know his name. But there are a few that walk the street and [49:00] the owner just lets them go and I guess they know the neighborhood. They just walk and they just go back home and you don't know if they're going to bite you or not. So that's why I don't, I don't really bother walking the street because of that reason too. And they do – they walk. There used to be a lot of stray cats. I don't see them as much now, but I remember there used to be a lot and I would try to feed them and he said don't because they'd just keep coming back. So I stopped and they just disappeared, but there's a lot. But that's the reason why I don't want to walk off the street, because of that. There's too many animals – you don't know where they came from, so...

Emily: What else do you – I live by the water too – so it's...

Rena: You live by the water too?

Emily: Yes

Rena: On...

Emily: By Pawtuxet River, which is actually connected to the whole system. This is connected to Roger Williams water area which is connected to Pawtuxet River and all that stuff. But I'm guessing you remember you remember turtles if you had radioactive turtles.

Rena: I don't remember seeing any turtles.

Sam: Where, around here? [50:00]

Emily: Yes, anything you remember. Also – muskrats?

Sam: Yes, there's a lot of that. I see...

Rena: You know what I saw the other...? This was like, last year I think on the summer. It saw an opossum. They usually don't come out in the day and when they come out during the day something is wrong.

Sam: There was a lot of that.

Rena: It was during the day. It was an opossum. It was in my backyard and it freaked me out. I said it probably has rabies because those kind...

Sam: I see a lot of that. You have raccoons, opossums...

Rena: Bats. What about the bat in our backyard - in our garage that we can never get rid of? There's a bat in our garage. You can't get rid of it. I get scared before I try to go in here but it's just in there. So it's like...weird animals

Sam: Skunks, turtles. I saw a snapping turtle once. And I never looked at turtles the same. When you look as a kid, you see turtles, you see them a certain way, right? And when I saw a – again, my brother and his friends – my older brother and his friends were like, oh yeah, we've caught ourselves a snapping turtle because they, on occasion, would go fishing. I don't know why but they do. They go fishing for fun but they never keep the fish. So they snag a snapping turtle. So I'm thinking – turtles? Turtles? They have a certain look to them. So I finally saw a snapping turtle for the first time in person and thought, this is not a turtle. That explains...

Rena: Is it nasty looking?

Sam: No, snapping turtles in general, they're just ugly. Have you ever seen a snapping turtle?

Emily: I don't know. I've been to the zoo but I can't remember.

Sam: Snapping turtles are freaky looking. They have a beak on them. [52:00] Their neck extends probably a foot long from the shell so when I got there, I was like a turtle. Then all of a sudden I saw the neck literally extend almost a foot out of the shell and they retract in and the looks of it was just... yes. Google snapping turtles. They're ugly.

Emily: Did they keep it?

Sam: No, they let it back, they let it go.

Rena: See, his brother would probably know these stories. He is probably the one who would go swimming in the Pond. He could probably tell you all kinds of crazy stories.

Emily: How much older is he?

Sam: 3 or 4 years.

Rena: Yes, his buddies, when they meet up, they always talk about Reservoir.

Sam: I've seen – this is way back, not recent - but I've seen people actually fish in there on their little boats in the water – actually fishing for these big bass or fresh water, these big fresh water fish. They're – I guess it's a sport thing. I've seen a lot of the sport-type fisherman boats. On rare occasions as a kid, as I walk through there and I would see a few fish jump out to get the dragonflies. And that's the first of anything I'd seen like that around Providence. And I'm sitting there waiting. Everytime I see a dragonfly go right around the water, just waiting waiting. I don't see anything. But out of the corner of my eye if I'm not looking I'll look up and see something jump up and just grab it. And again that turns into pond monsters.

Rena: So they want to clean up the Pond? So a group of people are trying to come together?

Emily: So Textron is trying to do it. Part of the problem with toxic waste sites, as soon as there's a development on it, it's no longer the city's problem anymore. So, that's kind of the issue with the school, which is that they've built a school there so they're not going to try to continue to clean it up there. The parts that are still owned by the city, they're supposed to take care of it – at some point. Whenever the city gets around to it.

Rena: When they have money to...

Sam: Why is then, specifically, is it just this one or is it the whole area, is it specifically this pond?

Rena: You have to clean the whole Pond. [55:00] You can't just clean part of it.

Sam: No, no. Is it specifically this Pond or just in general the whole city and state.

Emily: For..?

Rena: For pond cleaning.

Emily: Oh, that just applies to all toxic waste so anywhere.

Rena: It'd be nice though. It's probably not in our lifetime when they'll clean it up. It will probably take them forever to clean that up. If it's that big, there's no way.

Emily: A lot of the stuff has made it... I mean, building the Industrial Park just made it entirely runoff water. So everything in the street is just going straight in the Pond.

Rena: Reminds me of the Simpsons Movie when they have that pond and you see that – it's funny you have to watch it. They have a pond that everyone starts dumping stuff in there. And finally they have to contain Springfield because it was so polluted and there were three-eyed monsters or twenty-eyed monsters. It reminds me of the pond that no one's taking care of and it becomes so bad and then whatever rain and ... But the people who live on that street seem to like – it doesn't bother them.

Sam: It's a really nice setup. The houses are long here. They all have their own waterfront lookout. It's really nice.

Emily: Do you think they should be worried about their health at all?

Sam: No, they're not taking anything from the Pond, you know?

Rena: No, but still if it's rain and then if it rains and...

Sam: You think it goes into their systems? No, because they don't have ...

Rena: You never know.

Sam: Their septic system, I believe...

Rena: They don't have a septic, they have a sewer.

Sam: That's what I'm saying. Their system runs through the City. So they don't have any kind of runoff or anything like that.

Rena: Just don't drink the water.

Sam: Unless the Pond over-floods and is covering their house then they should have something to worry about... [57:00] some of the houses there....

Rena: We don't drink the water. We always tell them to take bottled water.

Sam: ...Especially the one not directly at the end of this street but over if you're going to the end the one right over to it has a nice... whoever owned it in the previous years they actually redid the backyard really nice to overlook the Pond. There's no trees in-between. They can stare right out at the Pond.

Rena: Yes, you can see it from there. When you drive, you can see the house.

Sam: Yes, they put a little deck back there. Some of those areas are pretty nice back there. Granted that if it doesn't flood or if they're not taking anything in from the Pond, like drinking or fishing and things like that you'll be fine.

Rena: This is sad, though, because when you pass by, it's like black. It's really nasty.

Sam: Yes, I mean, but it doesn't smell.

Rena: Yes, that's the thing. It doesn't smell. Usually you think of the smell but it doesn't smell. Like in the summer, he'd open the window just to smell.

Sam: I've heard of most or some other Ponds, just for the size itself people who live closer to ponds said sometimes when it heavy rains you can smell the odor.

Rena: You can smell it. You don't smell anything bad around that area.

Sam: The mosquitos, you would think, would be a lot around this area but there aren't much around here at all.

Rena: I never think about that, but yes, there aren't that much mosquitoes.

Sam: Most places that have a lot of water or wet areas are the mosquitoes. It could be because of the bat.

Rena: The bat. There you go. It could be the bat, it could be any of the other crazy animals back there. But I haven't spent enough time here. I'm always working. On the weekends we're always out doing stuff, so I don't really have the chance to walk the neighborhood.

Sam: This is the old Gorham?

Emily: Yes.

Sam: This is from the other side? The view from the other side I'm guessing? I don't remember this view.

Emily: That was 1906.

Rena: That's a long time ago. I'd bet you I know people who probably remember that because the lady that I know, her sister lives around here and she's in her 90s, so her sister – she'd probably remember that.

Emily: You think she'd want to be interviewed?

Rena: I don't think...She's in the nursing home now she's not really...But her husband is – when he was alive – he used to talk about it. And her sister who owned the house on Sibley, they passed away. And they would talk about it. [1:00:00]

Sam: Ok, I remember the street. If this is the front and that's the front, that's the street coming across, right? And that place is an open field... Yes I remember - see I don't remember that open field at all. They actually put buildings in front of that manufacturing building right in front. So you can't even see and if you look across the street, all you see is the buildings coming across. So this is actually really old. When I moved here it was never an open field. They must have put a set of buildings up afterwards. This is 1906. Even after that, maybe I'm guessing 60s, 40s,

Rena: Because I bet you a lot of people who around lived here have moved out already like the older, older generations.

Sam: Yes, I guess it became so big that they decided to put up more buildings to hire more people [1:01:00] to work there.

Emily: I don't know if you... any of those pictures. That was some school art project from Sophia Academy.

Sam: I don't remember that.

Emily: This...I don't know if that looks at all familiar to you but...

Rena: Where is that?

Sam: This is that recent? It must be recent.

Rena: It says update 2012. December 2012. From where though? This says Textron is in the first phase of... Where would that be?

Emily: I have no idea. I just Google imaged it.

Rena: I can find that out I know someone who works in Textron. Yes, I do. So I could find out.

Sam: I'm guessing, looking at the shape of it, it could be – [1:02:00] maybe around this area? It could be around here.

Rena: I could find out about that because Deb worked for Textron. She has people that still work there. Someone I know – she has people that still work for her. So I could find out what it was. They laid-off a lot of people so I'm surprised they had the money to do that. That's what the money went to.

Sam: This area right here now – where is it? – yes this area...right here now used to be all grass and wooded area. And then people used to ride their dirt bikes everywhere. But now it's a walking path. I don't know if you've ever been around that area. I don't know who did it, but they took away the whole [1:03:00] dirt bike path and all that stuff and then they fixed it up pretty nice. It's a nice walking path. The last time I'd been there was a long time ago, but when I was there, that's a really good cleanup they did. They did a really good job. And they put in all

this gravel – it's a gravel path that runs around into the Pond and there's a little dock area. I don't know if it's still there anymore. I was pretty impressed.

Sam: I did move here at a time when there was an actual Subaru dealership here before it went away. I remember that's how I became interested in Subaru cars. I didn't know there...

Emily: Was that a big deal?

Sam: What?

Emily: The Subaru dealer?

Rena: I guess so because everyone knows what it is. My mom still calls it Subaru. [1:03:00]

Sam: It was a dealership, a car dealership, and...

Rena: For us it was a landmark.

Sam: No, It was... a couple of big car dealerships at the time. There was Subaru, then there was...it used to be a Jaguar dealer that moved. It used to be on Elmwood. It was huge Jaguar and Land Rover. They moved over to Elmwood. They were on Elmwood over here near the bus station and they moved to Elmwood and then they moved over to where it is now where Jake Kaplans' are in Warwick.

Rena: I remember that. Just to stay away from the City.

Sam: There was a Subaru dealer here and how it was there. [1:05:00] My family liked the place, or the neighborhood, because it was hidden. You can't just turn off a street to get into here. You have to go around and then curve right in. It's almost like how you're doing it now with the Popeye's being there. There used to be a street that runs right across straight from Reservoir into here and people would just – if you go from Providence to Cranston you just pass by it. You don't even notice that this neighborhood exists. My parents liked it because it was hidden away from places.

Rena: And then it became the Asian Market. That's all I remember. It was in the 80s when we used to come here food shopping.

Sam: It was the 90s.

Rena: Is it 90s? Because we moved... We started coming here and my mom said we had to go to the Subaru market. I guess they named it Subaru Market. It's an Asian market.

Sam: Everyone knows it for the Subaru dealership before and then they turned it into a market.

Rena: And now it's Popeye's. [1:06:00] Everything changed. Look at Cranston East. They changed that. When I was there, they were just building the gym. We were the first generation

when they started through 9th grade. It was only 10th, 11th, and 12th but we were the first generation to go there in 9th grade. It was very cool it was a long time ago. I think Bain and Park View, it was 7th, 8th, and 9th grade back then or something like that. When we would go to 9th grade, they would send us to Cranston East. And they'd just built that gym. They didn't have that gym before. So it was pretty cool. And they closed that - there used to be a street. They closed that. You guys have that new stuff. We had to look both ways or get hit by a car. It was bad - there was a street we had to cross the street. [1:07:00]

Emily: Between City Hall and the main building, right? Yes, they filled it in while I was there.

Rena: When we were there it was a street. Yes, we had to look both ways. They changed a lot.

Emily: What was there before there was a gym?

Rena: I don't know what it was. They just built that gym when I was there in '99, so I'm not sure what it was. That's the thing - That old man that I was telling you about, he graduated from Cranston East in 1939. There was one Black girl in his whole entire school. 1939 - I told him I graduated in '99. Mr. Smith. Ben Smith. I couldn't believe it. He showed me the picture. I don't know what it was. They just had the main building that was there. It used to be just Cranston High School because there was no Cranston West, back when. And now it's Cranston East and Cranston West. That's very cool. [1:08:00]

Sam: What they did here - the Elmwood Restoration Society or something like that - they did a pretty good job with the houses that are around there - around the Elmwood area. They had this thing where they were funding - they were giving owners money to restore their old houses into original form. And some of them did a pretty good job. So some of the houses, they converted them into apartments now, but some of those houses are just one, single-family houses, the ones over in the Elmwood area. There are really nice houses. And they restored them pretty good.

Rena: I think the church... I think they would pretty much help you. They're very involved with the community. I would think they're involved with the pond stuff too. We don't go to them... They're very nice people. I just didn't know there was a church back there. I know they're more the community group.

Sam: Yeah they do stuff here and there, like what's the latest thing they did? They have little movie screenings for the neighborhood. Anyone that wants to go, just come by, snack and popcorn.

Rena: They're very nice people. I think they have the interest in the area. They probably know a lot more than us. [inaudible]

Sam: One other little thing about the neighborhood, aside from the map see if I can find it here. Okay, this baseball field, this is right down the street.

Emily: Is this Reservoir?

Sam: Yes – this is where, this is actually Alvin Street. This is where we rare, right here. This is Reservoir going across. And if you go right across from Popeye's that Narragansett...I think I've actually read – and this is a fact. I read it somewhere – this area, this baseball field used to be a scrapyard, like a junkyard. It used to be junk, trash and all that stuff. I guess a group decided to just clean it up, clear it up. I don't know how long ago because it's been a landfill ever since and a park before that but some group did a cleanup and they turned it into a baseball field [1:11:00] and I guess they had this old-time baseball team, like a league/old-timer. People would dress up in their old baseball gear. And they would use that field as – I forgot the name of them but they used to travel all around. I guess recently, last year, they were using it for some historic thing and so they said - Rhode Island or the Rhodes or something like that. They played on that field years back. After they turned it into a baseball field, they used it as their home field to play on. I just found that out just looking at it. I was looking at it thinking, why is the old-timers baseball league doing around in my neighborhood and I looked it up and it was like that place used to be a trash place junkyard and they converted it into and then I've been on that field and I saw maybe two or three manhole sewer drains. What are they doing in the middle of the field? Someone could get hurt. But I found out why now. It used to be a scrapyard. So that's another history. So I guess things can be done to get cleaned up.

[End of Interview]