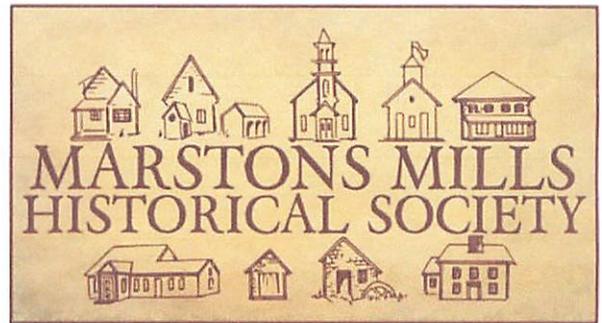


Marstons Mills Historical Society
Interview with Arthur Thifault
(James Gould, Claire Melix, David Martin)
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I was born Dec. 19, 1925 at Westford, Mass., “junior”, for my Father, Arthur Joseph Thifault. I was the oldest of five, next being “Tootsie”, Alice, born '26, died in 1987; then was Fred who was a selectman on Martha's Vineyard, drove buses, and was a mortician before that. Then there's “Cookie”, Ethel, and the last is Charles. He lives next to the old Thifault house that is falling down.

I first came to Marstons Mills from Waltham in June 1938 when I was 12. My father had a job with E.[Edward O.] Griffin, my mother, Ethel's brother. He was a landscaper, and later he worked for another uncle, Artemus Griffin.

We lived across the street [from the Arthur Marston/Dr. McCollum/Pierce house]. Old lady Backus, a widow, lived there. I didn't spend much time down on the river; there was no sign of the old fulling mill. But the herring were so thick you could dig them up with a net. We loved the roe. If you squeezed one and white stuff came out, it was male. If it was red, it was female. We saved the female ones, slit the belly, and saved the roe. My Father buried the fish in the garden.

Father had a vegetable garden out back. All I did was weeding. My father made dandelion wine [recipe attached]. Mother canned food. I had to go to Joe's Twin Villa to pick up Father. He was a professional wrestler. He could do push-ups with one hand, and stick a common pin into his arm, as well as lifting heavy railroad ties. In return for these feats, he was given beer. Later he did masonry in Marstons Mills, and laid concrete floors. He died in 1967.

Also, across the street was a house that's now gone. A family named Hallett lived there. An old lady, Miss Eva, and her daughter Edie. Edie had a son Albert Hallett. He was in World War II, and came back shell shocked. He was a “walker”, who walked the roads everywhere. He worked outside at the duck farm. (Edie had a brother Wallace, who was a painter, lived there too).

I didn't go to the school here, but started seventh grade at Barnstable High School, where the Catholic school now is. I don't remember any teachers I liked. The bus driver was Gus Burlingame from Osterville.

We'd swim in Run Pond. I remember the '38 hurricane when the fire burned the other side of the river. Liberty Hall would have minstrel shows in which I played harmonica. I played whist in Sandwich with my Mother. We'd skate with a couple of friends on the bogs off Prince Avenue. “We” is the Jones boys, Neal and Amos, who lived in the Prince House on Prince Ave. I spent many hours there in the barn which the Hewicks moved to Cotuit. Talking about barns, that barn on the Whitcomb farm has been fixed up by Jean Lowther, whose mother lives in Centerville.

After my sophomore year I worked at Clear Lake duck farm in the killing shop, with John Walo, who slit the ducks' throats, and let the blood drain before he passed them to me to feed the feathering machine. The business was run by Lloyd Hadley, who worked with “Mossie”, Herb Moss; Lloyd's father

George had retired. I remember going to the West Barnstable station to load those 100 pound sacks of feed onto the truck. Harold Weeks, Al Fuller's brother-in-law worked there, as did Rodney Shenett and my Dad.

When I was 16 I tried to enlist in the Marines in Boston, I had my mother's permission, but got turned down. So Clifton Cobb and I took a train west to Chicago, and another train to Amarillo, Texas, where he meet someone from the Bivans Estate, and worked on a farm, shocking feed. Then we went north 52 miles to the Oklahoma panhandle to work on a farm.

I came home in 1942 and joined the State Guard. They met at the brick building, the Mason's Lodge on Main St., Hyannis. The National Guard's 685th Anti-Aircraft unit was on Barnstable Road, at the USO, a very busy place during the war. It's now a condo where we played volleyball. The captain, Bill Merion put me in charge of the barracks at Camp Edwards. After the war he became vice-president of Cape Cod Bank & Trust, and had a big collection of rocks. I was staff sergeant when we were sent to Ft. Devens, and later to Camp Edwards.

I got married in 1946 to Phyllis Pierce, according to Claire "one of the nicest women to come out of this village". We were married at the church, by Rev. Palches, though we didn't go there much. We had four children, two boys and two girls: the oldest is Carol [Allison], now 64, lives on Wakeby Rd., works at the Daniel Webster laundry, and has a girl and a boy who live in Maine. Next is Kathryn, 62, a nurse who now works in the Waldorf, Maryland Post Office, and has two boys, twice divorced. Third is Timothy, 60, who runs a 14-wheel dump truck in Bradenton, Florida, married to Diane [Campbell] with two children, a girl and a boy. Last is Frederick, 59, who has never married, but cares for a paraplegic; he does computers in St. Pete, Florida, and is a minister who does weddings, baptisms and "last rights". We spent 23 winters in Florida, in a travel trailer. Phyllis died in 2008.

After the war I stayed in the Guard until Dec. 1951, when I was discharged as staff sergeant in 1952, during the Korean War they sent me to Ft. Riley, KS as an intelligence analyst, which I can't talk about. I took a math correspondence course at the Armed Forces Institute. From Jan. to March 1954 I went to the Police Academy in Quincy, then attended the Diocesan labor guild in Boston.

I applied here for the job of RFD postman and thanks to my points for military service beat Clair's father. I was rural postman from 1958 to 1978. It covered South Sandwich, Forestdale, Mashpee, Cotuit and Marstons Mills. 25 miles, 500 boxes, and three summer camps: Burgess, Lyndon, and Heyward. When I delivered the mail I used to pick up food at the store and deliver it to old people—You couldn't do that today!

Who were some of the characters I met? There was the guy who opened his wallet and moths flew out. There was Francis Ellis, they called "the Mayor", who would check the cemetery and tell his mother where the fresh flowers were, which she'd then take off the grave. She really loved her son, and he could do no wrong in her eyes. They had chickens running around in the house (on Old Falmouth Rd.). He never bathed, and summer and winter wore a big overcoat with big pockets where he'd put things he picked up.

Herbie Burlingame was a derelict like Hallett, and worked at Clear Lake duck farm. His grandmother, Mrs. Childs, made great pies. His younger brother Calvin became a major league pitcher, but that didn't

last long. The old Hallett house on River Rd. was torn down. There was also "Pealeg" Warren Hallett, the relief postman, who owned a lot of land off Mystic Lake.



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