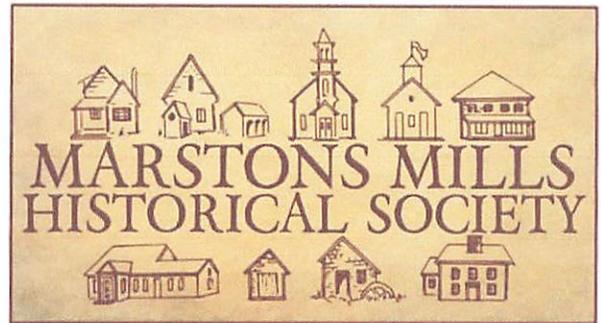


Marstons Mills Historical Society
Interview with Charles Thifault
(by James Gould & David Martin)
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I was born 11 June 1944 in the house at 130 River Road. My mother told me that it happened between the bedroom and the bathroom—I was a “premie”. There were 5 children—3 boys and 2 girls, and I was the youngest, the “spoiled” baby. The next youngest was my sister, who was 11 years older than I. My older sister and her husband built a house next to ours on land which my father gave to them.

I went to school in the old Marstons Mills School, which is now on Route 28 as the Lawrence Funeral Home. Mr. Naylor was the principal when I was in the first and second grade, and then Mrs. Moore took over as Principal for the rest of my years in the school. She had a friend, Ruth Rusher, who had an amphibious car which she brought to show us at our school.

It seems as though back in the 1950’s the days lasted forever. We would go fishing, play ball, swim, and play soccer. I went to Barnstable High for grades 7 and 8 at the old high school on School Street in Hyannis where the Catholic High School is now. Then I went to the new High School located where it is now on West Main St.

My mother grew up on a farm in Westford, MA—100 acres with four brothers and four sisters. They named the road after the family (Griffin Road). Her eldest brother moved to Cape Cod in the 1920’s, and then a few more came. Her brothers, A.G. Griffin and Edward O. Griffin, started their own businesses—masonry and landscaping. At a young age I worked for E.O. Griffin during the summers, landscaping; it was good healthy work. My father worked for both of these brothers, but largely on masonry for A.G. Griffin.

My father was a tough old Frenchman—a tough cookie—whom they called “Tarzan”. He came from Lowell, MA. A. G. Griffin left his business to Wilbur Cushing, who was his stepson. Wilbur learned the masonry trade, but I think his interest was in other things. However, he did a good job of keeping the boys in the village busy. Jim Barry was a mason in the Mills for whom I worked. I helped to build a block museum in back of the monument, which is still there today.

Now some information about village “characters”. I worked at the Cash Market where everyone gathered. There was a small shack out in the back which they called the Tin Building, when I was in grammar school—sorting the bottles into boxes and stacking them. Junior Jones and Frank McCluskey ran the store. That place was THE SPOT—the center of town. Everything started from there. The ladies in the store tried to find and pass along the local gossip. Ruth Gifford wrote a column for the Patriot paper for a long time. There was also Mrs. Coleman, the census-taker, who had a gift for the gab. Her brother Allie Coleman used to plow gardens with a horse and buggy. Warren Hallet was a permanent fixture at the kerosene stove in the center of the Cash Market. Tiger Watson was a guy who lived in a boat behind the Hayden’s—he was a homeless man who looked like a long-haired hippie. Charlie Eldredge, a land owner, tried to run him out of town; someone set his boat on fire.

I loved fishing and hunting, and spent a lot of time in the Mills River, fishing for trout and herring, for eating the herring roe. As children at night we would go ‘coon hunting with dogs for excitement. I

spent a lot of time down at Prince Cove, fishing for striped bass, bluefish, snapper, blue crabs, shell-fishing, eeling, oyster-catching, clam-digging, and getting scallops—you name it, I did it. What happened to all of the shellfish and other refuse? My theory is that the plume from the landfill and houses led to closing the Cove to fishing.

Campbell Childs said that the Mills River began in Long Pond. When I was a boy, you could see the spring bubbling up at the bog where River Road meets Newtown Road.

Harold Gifford and my brother Fred were one of the first to fly solo at the Mills Flying School.

On hunting places, the state had a pheasant farm at Scorton Creek that stocked pheasants at different places—Mystic Farm, the airport, the duck farm, Conarts Fields, Whitcomb Farm, and the Fairgrounds.

When I was 15 years old, I got involved in hunting in Maine with Trafton Hinckley. We went to Otis Field with John Walo, the local shellfisherman. In my first year of hunting, I shot a deer; I was so excited, but I could not find him. So I went back to where I had shot from, aimed again to pick out a spot, and went to the spot; there he was. I will remember that day in 1959 forever. Then we went to Caratunk, Maine where the rest of the group was--some of the Mills boys (town fathers)—a good bunch of guys.

