

MAINE SOUND AND STORY IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE FIRST COAST

AN INTERVIEW WITH RAY BEAL FOR THE FIRST COAST JONESPORT/BEALS  
COLLECTION

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY GALEN KOCH

BEALS ISLAND, MAINE, OCTOBER 2018

TRANSCRIPT BY ELLE GILCHRIST

Interviewee Name: Ray Beal

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Interviewer(s) Name(s) and Affiliation: Galen Koch (The First Coast)

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Interview Description: In this interview with Ray Beal, he shows us some old photographs of his family and the area. He also recalls stories of Tall Barney and a boat his father built for him. At the beginning of the recording his [wife] shows us her pet parrots.

Key Words: Tall Barney, boats, parrots, Potato Point

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Transcribed By: Elle Gilchrist

GK: Galen Koch

GR: Greta R

RB: Ray Beal

[0:31:03.0]

START OF RAYBEAL\_JONESPORT\_TFC\_AUDIO

[00:00:00.00]

GK: Alright, okay, so Ray I may have to come, I may have to come back in December I may have to take a separate trip up here. (RB: Ok) because Greta is going to take some photos if you don't mind.

RB: Uhh I haven't shampooed my hair.

GR: That's all right. (laughter)

GK: You look great-Neither have I- oh my god.

GR: We are living (laughter) in a little bullet trailer.

GK: We are quite dirty right now. (beeping) because I have to today we are bouncing around a lot so we don't have-

RB: Yea because I thought you'd probably be here later I didn't think you'd be well until the afternoon (GK: Sorry, I know I know. GR: Day's moving fast.) Oh yea.

GK: But I just, in case it feels like I am stopping you short it's because we don't have a ton of time.

GR: Hi, Hey!

GK: Hey!

GR: Greta. Nice to see you. (side conversation as someone enters)

(side conversations)

GK: She's really good. She's really good.

[side conversation and some walking]

RB: You didn't go to Salt, did you ?

GK: I did.

GR: Galen did.

RB: You did. Maybe I read that in that waterfront article. I don't know you was doing the photography, you might have gone to-

GR: I went to University of Montana. I didn't even know about Salt until later. (RB: Ohh) Although, I would have maybe gone if I knew about it.

RB: Yea. yea.

GK: She was already a professional when she moved to Portland?

Person in other room: Is it still rainy?

GK: Yea. It's pretty dreary out there.

RB: Did you go to Maine Media, Maine Photographic workshops?

GR: I didn't, but I have friends that teach there. It's really cool. Really really cool.

RB: I took the two year program in 1989 (GR: Oh my gosh cool.) and finished up in '91.

GR: Wow

RB: It's a two year thing in conjunction with the University of Maine in Augusta.

[0:02:05.2]

GR: Oh, that's a really cool program.

RB: So anyway I got an associates degree in photography.

GK: Oh cool Ray.

GR: Wow.

RB: Oh let me just. Just a minute. I want to bring it down. We don't have to talk about it but (screech) I'll bring it down and you could.. That would mean something else...

GR: (laugh)

GK: Sounds good! The birds!

GR: Do you want me to close that door for you?

GK: Well, yea I guess.

GR: I'm on it. (thud)

GK: And that darn cricket thing.

GR: Oh yea what is that?

GK: (imitating) t t t t t t t t

GR: Are you picking it up?

GK: Oh yea. (thud/movement)

GR: I think it's the radiators.

GK: No, I think it's something in that (moving sounds). In there.

GR: Oh there's a machine right here.

GK: Here's ask first.

GR: Yep. (thudding, moving around sounds)

[0:02:59.8]

GK: Oh that's it?

GR: Want to ask him?

GK: Yea. (Moving sounds, something wobbles)

GR: Sh\*t

GK: Greta (laugh)

GR: Everything is fine.

GK: Everything is fine.

(thud, doors closing)

GK: Ray? Do you mind if unplug that little thing? It sounds like a cricket.

GR: (inaudible- over talking)

RB: Absolutely.

GR: What is it? (moving sounds)

RB: It's supposedly helping to keep out rodents and mites and stuff.

GR: Oh that's cool. Interesting.

RB: I don't know where the cat is but I am opening up the door so she can get to the pan.

GK: Alright

GR: Oh that's a good idea.

GK: Alright so you've got tons of stuff here. (crinkling sound)

RB: Yea.

GK: First can you tell me your first and last name so I have it on the beginning of my tape.

[0:04:00.2]

RB: Ray N. Beal. (crinkling sound - laugh) We'll let whoever might listen to that, which is probably nobody, Well let them guess what that 'N' stands for.

Mrs. Beal? Other person: (bird screech) Before I leave, would you like to see our birds?

GR: I would.

GK: Yes, please. Ok we are going to see the birds first.

RB: Alright. (bird screech, moving, walking)

GK: G, Are you going to take photos of the birds?

GR: Do you want me to?

GK: Yea.

Mrs. Beal: This is Suzzee. She is an African grey. (chirp) This is a sun conure and this is a cockatiel. They just get along so great so they are in the cage together.

GR: Aww

(Warning! Really loud bird screech)

Mrs. Beal: Then I thought they were doing so good together I put the baby. This one here is one of my oldest parrots. (birds tweet). There was one before him but she passed away (screech). That was his mate and they had that baby. Well I put this one up there thinking they will all get along great and they just about killed her. So her beak keeps growing out. I have to keep getting it trimmed off because they damaged her beak so badly. But she's a good girl (chirp). It's almost time to have our beak trimmed again. (chirp). This is a beautiful one right there.

GK: What kind of bird is that?

Mrs. Beal: It's an African Grey.

GK: Wow

(chirp)

Mrs. Beal: Actually, I can take her out if you want to get a really nice picture. (chirp, other cage sounds). She says, 'I take great pictures let me tell you'.

GK/GR: (gasp)

GK: Hi cutie! What a pose! (birds screeching)

Mrs. Beal: Oh yeah. She says, "I'm a ham!"

GK: When did you get into the birds?

Mrs. Beal: Oh years ago because, at least 20 years ago, because the one that passed away was about in her 20's. This one is actually quite young. She's about 18, but they live to be very old if everything goes well. They can live to be 50 odd years old. She's been given to my son when I pass away. It's a good chance she will out live me.

[0:06:11.9]

GK: Wow

Mrs. Beal: And these all can live-like I said I had just a little cockatiel and she was the oldest and she had to have been about 20 (GK: Oh my gosh) when she passed away and they are all getting up there in age. They live to be 20-25 years. (GK: My god). They are long lived critters. The good part about birds, I mean they tell you to take them and see the vet every year. These birds haven't seen a vet in- They don't need medications, they don't need flea powder, you know? But they are messing.

GR: Will you put him on your finger again?

Mrs. Beal: Very messing.

GR: What's his name again?

Mrs. Beal: It's a girl. Suzze. S-U-Z-Z-E-E. Suzzee. And I have three Susies in my family. My oldest boy married a Susie. She spells it S-U-S-I-E. My middle child married a S-U- Oh I am sorry other way around. The first one is the oldest boy's, S-U-S-I. Then my middle child is S-U-S-I-E. (Screech). Then when I got her from the store she was already named Suzzee. (GK: Wow). So I just spell is S-U-Z-Z-E-E, because we go (sings) Suzzee. (bird chirps) Suzzee.

GR: I would love to photograph her on your hand just against the green. Almost like, hold it right there.

GK: So pretty

Mrs. Beal: Oh so pretty, pretty pretty. What a pretty girl, right Suzzee? You are going to be famous, Suzzee.

GK: Suzzee. (camera clicking) (bird calls) I love the colors of this house.

[0:07:53.2]

Mrs.Beal: Thank you. (bird chirping) I appreciate that. I know that some people think I am a little wild but Ray and I both love the red (GK: Yea, mmhmm). I took that all the way through. We just work with it. Now, (GK: So nice) I am trying to get upstairs, get things done. I won't even take you upstairs because it is a mess!

GK: You are doing a lot of work.

GR: Lots of projects.

GK: Yea. Thank you. (walking) Ok, Ray what've you got over here?

RB: Walked away.



GK:What is this?

RB: My father began being a caretaker for the lady that's mentioned here, (bird chirps) Precila [Defora] Williams in 1954. We went out there as a family just as soon as school got out in June. We'd pack up and go to head harbor where there's a caretaker camp. This photograph was taken in that caretaker camp.

Gk: Wow

RB: This is my daughter. She is now 43. In this picture I think she is about three. This is my nephew, Dana [Clern]. That's my brother Dana LaRoy.

GK: Are these photos you took?

RB: Yes and this is my grandmother, Martha Crowley Alley. Her maiden name was Crowley. She married name is Alley. She married my grandfather [Idmond]. That's my father cleaning the bottom of the boat that he designed and built, the excalibur. He was a boat builder, and he did care taking and he lobster fished.

GK: What was his name?

RB: Clinton.

GK: Clinton. I have interviewed so many people my arm is starting to get tired here. (microphone moving). These are beautiful.

[0:09:53.6]

RB: That's his boat afloat with his traps putting on. This is Dawn at what it says, the 'cowyard'.

GK: Wow

RB: That's this body of water here. That's some islands and (beeping). This is what we call potato point. This is Peabody and off in the distance is Steel Harbor.

GK: Is this looking at...?

RB: This is looking almost directly South

GK: Ok

RB: That one right there is, right out through. The next, after you go out through here, the next body of land once you head south is South America.

GK: Yea. Right. (laugh) Amazing.

RB: Yup. If you think about it that way. These are some of the things I wrote.

GK: Oh wonderful!

RB: I wanted her to [?]

GK: Oh beautiful.

RB: These are all Head harbor photographs. This is the camp we stayed in. That's our camp. This was taken from the roof of the main camp on Potato Point.

GK: Was your family caretakers? Or why did you go out there?

RB: Why did we go out? Yea yea. He was the caretaker for this Percilia Williams. He was the caretaker for here from 1954. She passed away in 2006. December the tenth I believe it was. No, December the eleventh 2006 and father passed away March the tenth 2007.

GK: Wow

RB: This is the bow of the excalibur. This is the float looking south. This is also looking south off that ledge on Potato Point. (bird screeching continues).

GK: Wow

[Mrs. Beal: I'll see you guys have fun!]

RB: This is from the float looking East. There's a full moon. (beeping)

[0:12:06.9]

GK: Cool. These are great.

RB: That's one of the camps. I just wanted to show at the end of the season. We put the blinds up.

GK: Over the window.

RB: Yup.

GK: Yup.

RB: That's over Potato Point. This is a sunset photo of a sailboat coming in. The sailboat is going into the cow's yard. See this water here is Head Harbor and then the cow's yard is inside where she's headed toward. The last thing is this one here. My mother, cleaning the [lamps] in the camp.

GK: I love these black and white ones inside. That one and the one on the front. They are so great.

RB: Yea. Thank you. Well anyway. I wanted to see that.

GK: Yea I am really glad to see that. What do you have in there?

RB: More photographs.

GK: Oh cool. (shuffling sounds)

RB: But I don't know mainly [the car].

GK: Oh nice. These are so nice. Here put them down like this (moving sounds) on the front.

RB: (cough)

GK: Where's that one? These are all in Head Harbor?

RB: Yea, thats-

Mrs. Beal: Hi! You have my keys?

RB: No?

Mrs. Beal: I don't know where they are. Can I have yours? (laugh) I'll find them.

GK: Oh! am I blocking you in?

Mrs. Beal: No, I don't think so. I'll let you know if you are.

GK: Ok

[0:13:59.9]

RB: That's looking. This is Man island. There are two of them: inner and outer. (beeping). And that, off in the distance, is Mistake island and there's a lighthouse on Mistake Island. But it's hazy so its hard to see and this is Black Head. What Head Harbor gets its name for. I am standing on Black Head looking Southwest, approximately, Southwest. This was looking North, Northwest, something like that. There was a wharf right her looking out towards the creek.

GK: Yea, well, these are great.

RB: That's the boat from below Head Harbor.

GK: Yea. Its a good idea to turn them into cards too.

RB: Well, anyway, these are all related to...

GK: These are wonderful. So when did you start photographing? Was that in the 80's or were you doing it before that?

RB: I got my first 35 millimeter camera in 19...(mumbles: my daughter) '76 I think. I think '76. Montgomery Ward. (Laugh) I ordered a cheap 35 millimeter camera (laugh) from Montgomery Ward with two lenses. 55 millimeter lens and 125 millimeter lens.

GK: Ray, can you tell me a little bit about these Tall Barney Books? Everybody has mentioned Tall Barney, but when did this start? He's like sort of a legend, right?

[0:16:01.9]

RB: Yup. yea he is. There's stories about him. (beeping)

GK: What's that beeping?

RB: Oh, that's to let me know my water is hot.

GK: Ohhh

RB: Because, while you were busy I was going to make myself some coffee.

GK: Got it. Just got to keep an eye on the time here.

RB: Oh don't worry about the coffee. I don't need it. What do you want to know?

GK: I just wanted to know a little bit about- (RB: Tall Barney) if you could tell me a little bit about him.

RB: Well, because he died long before I was ever born. I tell you in that book it will tell you exactly what year he died. I think it was 1901, 1900, or 1899 or something.

[0:16:47.7]

GK: But, what are some of the stories that people talk about?

RB: Well, he was big. He was supposedly 7 feet tall and as it shows on this drawing here he could carry barrels of fish or whatever was in the barrel. Maybe it was rum for all I know. (laugh) Probably they might weigh 100 lbs a piece, I don't know. Supposedly (laugh) He was physically large and he was strong in addition to being physically large. So they have stories about these episodes of strength he had. He was known all along the coast of Maine as being a big strong man you wouldn't want to cross. Supposedly, in a bar in Portland, I guess he got into an argument with a fellow and I don't know if the other guy took a swing at him or what but anyway he hit the guy and he hit him right in the chest. He hit him so hard that it broke ribs and punctured his lung. Anyway the guy died. This is supposed to be a true story (laugh) (GK: We'll never know.) And! Tall Barney said, the police aren't going to be taking me so he went back to his boat. But the guy before he died, told the authorities that it was his fault and not to do anything to Tall Barney. He was never prosecuted from Murder. Apparently, it was a brawl. (GK: Brawl gone wrong). And the guy that he hit died. Whether that was true or not (laugh). If my father was telling the story he'd tell you it was true. (laugh) He was my grandfather's grandfather and my grandfather, Georgey, George Franklin Beal, was ill one time and Tall Barney and Tall Barney's wife, my grandfather's grandparents, stayed there overnight to watch him and give his parents a break or whatever. So he was nine years old, my grandfather was nine years old when Tall Barney died. So that gives you an idea of when he died because my grandfather was born in 1893. My grandfather, George, was born in 1883. So he died in 189(GK:2). Yea. anyway. He was supposed to be 9 years old when he died.

GK: It doesn't matter really.

RB: Anyway, he said that his arms were as big as an ordinary man's leg and he remembered his grandfather and said his arms were as big as an ordinary man's leg.

[0:20:30.2]

GK: Wow. and there were so many stories so probably some of it is true.

RB: Some of it is probably based on truth. My favorite story involved a boat. A fellow from the west, Rockland, Portland, or something comes to the area and of course he heard of Tall Barney because of course people talked about him along the coastline. (clears throat) There was big anchor that came off a schooner, how much it weighed who knows, but he apparently lifted it before. This guy was saying he didn't believe he could lift it. Well, Tall Barney told this man that he didn't want to do it because it would ruin his boots, his soles would pop, the

stitching would pop in the soles of his boot if he lifted the anchor. And so, the guy said I'll buy you a pair of boots (laugh) so Tall Barney lifts the anchor and then the guy remits on his promise and so Tall Barney lifts the anchor again and walks over to the side of the wharf and lets the anchor go. Anchor goes right through the guy's boat and the guy's boat sinks at the wharf. (laugh). Now that's my favorite story.

[0:22:12.8]

(laugh)

GK: That's a good one. That's a really good one.

RB: Because you better fulfill your promises or you might get an anchor through the bottom of your boat.

GR: It seems like he had a lot of descendants.

RB: Oh he did. (laugh)

GK: Was he popular with the ladies?

RB: Well, he had one wife. Was it Phoebe?

GK: Phoebe. I saw that.

RB: Phoebe was less than 5-feet tall and he was over 7 feet supposedly.

GK: Of course she was.

RB: This is the photograph the cardboard thing at the historical society is based on. This is Tall Barney and this is his youngest son or one of his youngest son, Napoleon. He is standing on that chair to give you an idea of how tall he is.

[0:23:18.3]

GK: Wish I could get one of these books. I need to look for them.

RB: You probably could. I don't know. If I let you borrow one, you have to return it.

GK: That's the thing I could photocopy it at least.

RB: Well I don't know. [] Peabody is the author.

GK: Is he alive?

RB: Yea, but he lives in Missouri. I don't know if this press still exists. (mumble)

GR: (mumble) Is there any Paul Bunion-

RB: Paul Bunion! Don't you say that around here! He was born in Cutler! He was born in Cutler

(over talking)

GR: He was?

GK: Michigan-

RB: Michigan, Michigan claims him but he was born in Maine.

GR: That's why we have that statue up in

RB: Bangor.

GR: Alright.

GK: She's from Idaho.

GR: I am from Idaho.

RB: Ok.

GR: We have some tall folks out there too.

GK: Do you? (laugh)

RB: Pankos Bill wasn't from Idaho

GR: No, we don't have anyone that famous, just regular people.

RB: Well that's good.

GK: Well I wonder if I should look for it or borrow one and then bring it back. Because I am coming back its 1 o' clock now so we have got too much to do before the light fades. So I wonder if you'll have a phone number here in the foreseeable future.

RB: I said it is supposed to be tomorrow

GK: Oh it is.

RB: The date is the fifteenth, I thought the fifteenth is tomorrow but the fifteenth is Thursday and they are coming thursday apparently to put it in (GK: Ok). you are leaving that day.

GK: I am leaving tomorrow. I need to come back because there's a lot of people.

RB: Unfinished

GK: I have unfinished business. But I would like to do, if maybe Greta could take a few photos and then we could do a longer interview about you and your wife and your family another time. I could bring this book back because I could photocopy. (RB: Yup) Does that make sense?

RB: Yup

GK: Do you trust me?

RB: I trust you.

[0:25:51.0]

GK: Shake on it.

GR: Is that your boat?

RB: I have Raynaud's.

GK: My dad has it too.

RB: If the temperature goes up and drops below 60 this hand gets really chill like an ice cube but this does help a little but the major problem is the fingertips feel like they get colder and the palm of the hand is warmer. You asked a question.

GR: Who's boat is out front in your yard here?

RB: That boat there. My father built that boat for me but I never used it so I gave it to my nephew when he got old enough. He used it for a number of years and lately he hasn't. He got another boat, fiberglass, bigger than that now. So that one has just been sitting out there, the reason that one has been sitting there nothing being done with it is because he has an offshore license connected with that boat (GK: mm). He's never fished offshore but the license is connected to the boat and he doesn't want to sell that boat or whatever because that boat has the offshore license with it.

GK: Interesting



[0:27:06.9]

RB: And apparently he hasn't made up his mind if he's going to fish off shore or not so the boat just sits there and rots away which is frustrating to me because father built it. He built it for me and I wasn't using it so I figured I'd let my nephew use it. Basically let him have it. It's his boat, I gave it to him.

GK: going into disrepair

RB: yea yea

GR: What's the name of it again?

RB: Little Darling

GK: Little Darling

RB: There's a story for that too.

GR: I figured there might be one!

RB: My grandfather, Edmond, my mother's father, Edmond Alley, Edmond Leroy Alley, he used to be very proud of that building, the red one down there. He was very proud of his son in law and his boats so he used to call the boats that came out of the boat shop 'little darlings' (laugh) so we basically named a boat for Grampy Edmond by naming it "Little Darling".

GR: Oh that's sweet.

GK: I like that.

[0:28:26.2]

RB: My grandfather was quite a character (laugh).

GK: Ray, will you just tell me what your phone number will be?

RB: Well, (sigh) Yes and no (laugh).

GR: what does that mean?

RB: The number is supposedly, is going to be 497-2070, which is the number we had when we were staying up in the [] with Sandy's sister. But I talked with my Daughter, and she was hoping the number would be the old number which my parents had which is, 497-2245.

GK: Well maybe I'll have to give you my number and you'll have to call me so I know what your phone number is! (laugh)

RB: I have a feeling i wont be able to get the 2245 so if I can't get the 2245 it will be 2070 so you better make sure you got that one on your thing because I don't know if I can get the 2245 because I haven't talked to anybody about doing it.

GK:Ok. Greta is going to take some photos

RB: She has, Sandy is taking care of it so it's possible I won't get the 2245.

GK: Well, I am going to leave you my number and Greta is going to take some photos, we are up against time right now.

RB: Yea

GR: What do you think about outside?

GK: Well it's pouring rain, what do you think about taking pictures outside?

RB: Want me to use some soap?

GR: Get a shower while you are at it.

GK: We want you to clean up (laugh)

GR: I think in the yard over by the boat or walking this way. I like that birch tree.

RB: Oh that one down there?

GR: Yea

RB: You got rubber boots ?

GR: I know. You got rubber boots too?

RB: Oh yea.

GR: As long as you're prepared.

RB: Let me get something on. I've got a raincoat I can put on.

GK: Ok

RB: (mumble- moving)

GK: I'll find it. I've got one.

RB: [inaudible mumble and moving]

[0:31:03.0]

END OF RAYBEAL\_JONESPORT\_TFC\_AUDIO