

Remembering Hjalmer Ray

An Interview by
Linda Brayton and David Masters

400 STORIES PROJECT

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EDITOR'S NOTE

We're pleased to introduce you to a wonderful audio, featuring the late Hjalmer Ray, a man of Finnish descent who grew up in the Lanesville section of Gloucester, MA. So as not to confuse the reader/listener, Hjalmer is his first name and is pronounced "Yal-mer".

TOWARD AN ORAL HISTORY OF CAPE ANN: HJALMER A. RAY

<https://digitalheritage.noblenet.org/gloucester/items/show/1215>

The audio comes to us from a 1978 project from the Gloucester Arts & Humanities Program, titled "Toward an Oral History of Cape Ann." We would be remiss not to include at least a few of these audios in our Gloucester400+ Stories Collection, as our missions are/were the same: to hear the stories of a cross-section of Gloucester's people.

The hosts of the interview are David Masters and Linda Brayton, daughter of Hjalmer Ray. In 1978 Linda and David were hired as two of a group of eighteen artists, musicians, and historians to work in the newly formed Gloucester Arts and Humanities program. She and David were tasked with recording oral history interviews to be donated to the Sawyer Free Library in Gloucester. Over the course of the year, the collection grew to nearly 100 meetings with fascinating local citizens. Recorded on cassette tapes, the fully indexed interviews have since been digitally preserved on CDs and are now available on the Library's website. Linda suggested her Dad as the first subject, believing him to be both tolerant and a good storyteller. And so, Hjalmer Ray, a first generation American, became Oral History #1.

Now, nearly 50 years later, we are happy to shine a light on this storytelling tradition and include a selection of the oral histories in our Gloucester400+ Stories Collection. Thank you Linda Brayton, David Masters, and all who worked on this project. And, thank you to the Sawyer Free Library for your commitment to preserve these stories.

ABOUT HJALMER RAY BY LINDA BRAYTON

Hjalmer was born on February 20, 1908, in a Lanesville midwife's home. His parents were Finnish immigrants who, along with many others, settled in this Gloucester village at the turn of the century. Even though his father was a quarry worker all his life, the family had big dreams. One by one, Hjalmer and his five siblings helped each other through college. Every one of them, even the youngest, the only girl, graduated. Hjalmer labored for seven years in the quarries until it was his turn. He graduated from Tufts University in Mechanical Engineering and made this his life-long career. In this oral history, he recounts those early days in Lanesville.

ABOUT THE COVER PHOTO

Hjalmer Ray demonstrating his quarrying tools, 1978. Photo by Roger Ward, Gloucester Arts and Humanities.

LINK TO COLLECTION

TOWARD AN ORAL HISTORY OF CAPE ANN

<https://digitalheritage.noblenet.org/gloucester/collections/show/1>