



Oral History and Folklife Research, Inc.

AN INTERVIEW WITH VICKI SCHAD

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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AUGUSTA, ME
SEPTEMBER 9, 2019

TRANSCRIBER: KEITH LUDDEN

FINAL

Keith Ludden: We are in Vassalboro with Vicki Schad and it is September 9th, 2019, and we're talking about her brother Bobby. Tell me a little bit about what it was like at home when you and Bobby were small.

Vicki Schad: Bobby was my older brother by five years. I had a younger sister by five years and beneath her was a younger brother who was six years younger, so we were spread out as far as birth order was concerned and Bobby, being the oldest was just part of our lives. We knew he was difference; we knew he was special. We loved him, of course. We took our cue from our parents and they believed—and we do too—my sister and my brother and I—Bobby's gone now. He passed as you may know, in 2011 and he was sixty-eight at the time. Considering that the doctors had only given him just a few years to live when young, a little toddler, that was quite an amazing thing that he lived that long, and lived a very happy life. He seemed very contented, very happy except for that difficult period of time at Pownal, right after.

So he was almost always outside. He loved the outdoors. Winter was tough on him, in fact often he'd go out, even in the cold weather. And his favorite thing to do was to stand at the end of the lane, the driveway, right on the edge of the road, edgy enough so that it really made my mother really nervous and he would watch the cars way—and Route 189, we could see way—from the end of that driveway we could see way to the top of the hill toward West Lubec and then down toward the village of Lubec and he just loved standing there. And he had a degree of autism, I think, the kind that would make him wave his arms and jump up and down sometimes when he got excited. [If] he saw a car that was one he recognized he would do that. It was his joyful, favorite place to be. I called—In the book I called it his ministry to stand there and later on he got the unofficial title of the greeter of Lubec.

So at home, inside, when we were all just being ourselves, Bobby, he would sit and listen to conversations. As you know, he wasn't verbal. He had a voice, but the connection between his brain and his vocal chords just did not work predictably. So he was just quiet and we talked around him and walked around him. I do remember when we all drove in the car. There were six of us, the four kids and our parents and usually the youngest sat in the front seat between Mom and Dad and Bobby sat in the back seat and he just kind of sprawled, and we just found some room around him, you know. In those days you didn't have to wear seat belts and the cars that we were driving didn't have them, so it was—going for a trip, no matter how short was a challenge, but our grandparents, all four grandparents and our great grandmother all lived right in Lubec. So there was a good support system and actually we had three sets of aunts and uncles also that also lived in Lubec. One lived in—No, at that time all three lived in the Lubec area. One lived in Machias. It was a wonderful childhood. Wonderful.

KJL: How did the neighbors respond to Bobby?

VS: Some of them were a little nervous around him as he got bigger and older. I think they felt just sad for him, like he as a child, a little child. He was handsome, [a] very sweet disposition, but obviously they would say flawed, you know, there was obviously a problem. There was a period of time when Bobby would set out on his own and go for a walk, which of course made my mother just crazy, because she always needed to know where he was. Clearly if he got into a car with somebody—and he would, he was friendly, you know, somebody came along and opened the car door, he'd climb in, and that would be the end of him because he couldn't tell anybody where he lived, he couldn't call on the phone, there was nothing he could do, nothing we could do to try to find him, so she kept pretty close tabs on him. And when he started going for a walk, the neighbors would pay attention and they'd call and they'd say, well, "Bobby just walked by, and and I don't think he's supposed to be." "Oh, no!" she'd say, "He must have taken off. I just checked him ten minutes ago and I knew right where he was." He didn't walk far, down to my grandmother's house, down to our grandmother's house, which was maybe a quarter of a mile, but it was a busy road and he didn't like walking through the woods. There was a path through the woods to it, but he preferred the road, the wide open spaces and seeing the cars, of course. So he would sometimes end up down there. There was one little incident where—I wrote about in the book—where he took my, our baby brother for a walk in his carriage down the road and my brother, our brother was—well, he was in a carriage so I know he was under a year old and my grandmother called my mom, she said, "Are you missing anyone?" and Mom said, "Oh, no!" She looked out and of course Bobby wasn't there. She said, "Do you know where he is?" She said, "Yeah, he's right here, he left the carriage out—" Mom said, "He's got the baby too?" Mom had put the baby out for his nap and Bobby thought, "This looks like fun." He was curious and interested in things and with his limitations he made do. He found things that were interesting to do. It was endlessly entertaining for the rest of us. We kids thought it was fun, but Mom was not convinced.

KJL: Were there any tensions with the neighbors over Bobby?

VS: No, I didn't believe so, not that I ever heard about. Now, there were people who—in the book I've referred to it, alluded to it—people who wondered what would become of him; wondered if he would ever be violent, because he was very strong; wondered if he perhaps even might do something to my little sister and me, because we were a lot younger than him. He never, ever did anything that was the least bit inappropriate. Even after that awful Pownal experience which I suppose exposed him to far more than he should have been exposed to, but no, he was a wonderful brother. He laughed, he would get giggling sometimes and [he was] a great big hunk of a man and he would giggle with this high pitched giggle and it was quite funny

He started going to church probably when he was about ten years old, maybe a little bit older. My parents hadn't been particularly interested in church until I was about four or five and my sister had been born. So, of course that church experience just opened up his life socially. He became the greeter there, too and shook hands with people and smiled and he was the darling of the church. So in circles in which we moved he was very well accepted. Not always given much credit for knowing much, you know, he didn't speak, and he couldn't write, and he couldn't read, but he was appreciated for who he was and for what he could do. And if neighbors were unhappy with his nearness or if they were concerned or worried we didn't hear much about it—a few people, perhaps, maybe my parents protected me and my sister, I'm not sure.

KJL: Were there efforts at education at all when he was young?

VS: My mom taught him words, not to read, but to recognize a picture in a magazine, say, and he got quite adept at a few words like “horsey” and “kit kat” for a kitten and he had funny little pet names that he called some people. I was “Giggi.” It was pretty close to Vicky, really, you know, not bad. Got the vowels right anyway. As far as formal education I would have to say no. Of course, going to church he was exposed to the sermons and heard Sunday School lessons and all that, but I don't know how much of that really sank in. Then when he was twelve, as you may remember from reading what you did in the book, his behavior became—I can't say—almost any young man reaching puberty, he wanted to spread his wings a little bit and he tended to run away more often, he'd wet his bed, which he hadn't done for years and my mom and dad, they didn't know, “What's happening here?”

He was twelve, would have been—well, my sister would have been a toddler. My other brother wasn't yet born, so I don't know what it was that triggered that behavior unless it was just puberty and his coming of age and feeling like he wanted to see more and do more and be more. We often sang and I played the piano in our family, you know, we'd sing. My grandmother started it. She was a piano player and people would come from all over the neighborhood down at the ridge and they'd come up to the farmhouse and gather in the music room, ocean down here, out the window, you know, and just a lovely idyllic kind of setting and we'd all sing. Some of the kids would sit on the stairway looking down into the room and so as time went on that tradition just kind of carried over into our house, too, but not with all the neighbors. The neighbors by that time were looking more inwardly at their televisions and whatnot, but they—our little nuclear family did sing and my sister would cry because she would watch Bobby and she knew that he wanted to sing and he just couldn't do it. There was nothing that would enable him. The voice was not there, the words were not there, but I believe he's singing now.

KJL: He could understand language—

VS: Yes, very much.

KJL: —if someone was speaking to him.

VS: Yes. You couldn't give him a string of things to do. You needed to keep it rather simple. You couldn't say, "Oh, Bobby would you go help set the table, get the spoons and forks out of the drawer and get cups down and set them around." because he'd get all frustrated and lost and wouldn't be able to follow through with it, but if you say, "Bob, would you bring me some spoons?" He'd do it, run right over to do it. He was always eager to help, unless it involved really heavy work, then he balked.

KJL: Now, was it your mother that mostly cared for Bobby?

VS: Yeah. My father worked a lot of hours, and yes, I would definitely say she had the care of him. She worked part time at the town office. Part time and temporary help at the town office and the light office, and the weeks that she worked, Bobby would stay with her mother up at North Lubec, mother and father and sometimes even when he was younger he would stay with my great grandmother, her grandmother and that was—he was always with family until that one year.

KJL: What were your favorite things to do with Bobby?

VS: I loved sitting down with him on the couch and opening a magazine and pointing to different things and, "What's that? What's that?" And he always would point to words that he knew, right, so he'd say it. He had a really nice voice, a deep, resonant, kind of radio voice, you know? And his—as he got older, it's really interesting, he was still learning, even at his age he was still learning, and when he and Mom were up at the assisted living place at Dennysville there was a dog there. He always loved animals and dogs in particular. We almost always had one and the dog's name was Blue and he taught himself to say the word "blue," just as clearly as anybody could. He didn't always use it at the right time, but he could speak it.

Then when Mom and he came to the house back and the Greens were their caregivers they were having a conversation one night and Bobby was there listening. It got so that you just didn't think about it. He was there. He was kind of like the wallpaper because he didn't make noise, but he would take in so much. So they were talking about it would be kind of neat if they could get some rabbits and a cow, you know, for milk—rabbits for meat, and a cow for milk (inaudible) (laughs). So the next day he started saying, "And a cow," just as clearly as anything, so after that I'd go out and sit with him on the picnic table. As he got older he didn't stand by the side of the

road so much. They brought the picnic table over and he could sit there and it wasn't such a strain on his legs. I think he was arthritic, although we never could determine that for sure. Some days he'd just wake up and be kind of limping and then he'd work his way out of it. Anyway, I'd go over on the picnic table and say, "Hey, why don't you say that 'and a cow thing. I really love it when you talk like that,'" and he'd look at me—look down at me, because he was tall—look down and grin and he'd say, "And a cow." (laughs) with great drama and a wonderful voice and I thought the world's missed out on a great deal but he gave as much as he could of himself and I loved him for it. He was a good fella, a good brother.

KJL: What do you mean by, "He gave as much as he could of himself?"

VS: He was always friendly and loving to people. I shouldn't say always, because sometimes there were people who were of perhaps questionable character, people who around town were known as loan sharks or shysters, or whatever you want to call them and if he was inside and any one of those people came to the door, he would go out. He knew, he just had—it wasn't that we talked about them, it was just that he knew. He had an intuitive knowledge that, "This is not somebody that I need to know," and he'd find somewhere else to be within the options that he had. As far as giving of himself if someone came to the house, and people were coming to the house all the time. My parents had an open door policy that was just incredible. They lived right on the road into town and anybody from Whiting or Machias, or West Lubec who was going that direction went right by the house and quite often would stop in and he—I write that he was tall—and he would come over and he would lean his face down so that you could kiss him on the cheek and that was his approval. If you got that, you were okay, you know, and many, many people had that privilege. Otherwise with a gentleman that came, he'd put his cheek down sometimes, but more often, he'd give them a good, hearty handshake that would bring any of the ladies to their knees, so we had to teach him the difference. Shake hands with the guys, but put your cheek down so the ladies can kiss you.

KJL: How did people respond to that?

VS: When he shook hands with him?

KJL: Or when he asked for a kiss.

VS: Oh, just—of course, there were no words exchanged. And a few people missed it because they didn't know what he was doing, but he would just kind of lean down a little bit. If they turned away and did something else he would just let it go. That was his benediction on their being there. I would say that they were all fine with it, with the exception of some of when the women—he shook hands with the women and some of them were arthritic, or whatever, but he

was not shunned by any means. Once people got to know him, if they took the time to know him, they loved him, and it was lovely to see because it's not always the case I realize.

KJL: Now he was—forgive me—about ten when he went to Pownal?

VS: Twelve.

KJL: Twelve, okay, I'm sorry. Tell me how that came about

VS: Well, as I said, his behavior was getting difficult in the sense that Mom felt she couldn't really control him and she was so afraid of him being abducted or something. She just felt that she couldn't guarantee his safety. I think that was the way she would—and she also wondered—she and Dad both—what happens when something happens to us? Do the girls have to take him in? That's going to be tough you know. They'll have lives of their own by that time, we hope. So they started looking for a place, and Mom went to a couple of doctors to ask their opinions and the eye doctor that she went to in Calais said, well there's a place in Pownal that might be right for him. He might be able to learn to do things, maybe even live on his own someday. (inaudible)

Anyway, they did the research. They looked into the literature, they went to Pownal, which was no small matter with three children—four at the point—nope, three, sorry. My grandmother came and stayed with us, Bobby and Judy and me a whole big long day and they wanted to know what the school could do for him, what they should expect. It was an encouraging interview, obviously, or they wouldn't have pursued it. They told them—just trying to think—they had a policy that if a person was judged to be a candidate for Pownal—they called it the State School for the Feebleminded at that point. That didn't go over too well, but my mom was always his cheerleader, you know. She would fight for him because he couldn't fight for himself and she would take umbrage, that's for sure. So anyway, they did the research and they felt that on the basis of what the headmaster had said, and other people had said, they felt that it was probably the best thing for Bobby to go to that school for a while and see if they could help him. And one of the big rules, a huge stumbling block for them and later on in our particular circumstance for all of us, a stumbling block was that they could not see him for six weeks. He had to be there to try to acclimate, I guess. You know, on paper it sounds all right, but I was seven and I was old enough to figure out “How are they going to know what he wants?” My mother can anticipate—any of us can anticipate everything he needs or wants. How come we're going to let him go for six weeks and he won't be able to say anything to anybody? How are they going to know? How are they going to know what he wants; that he likes to—needs to have his meat all cut up before he can try to eat it. Are they going to let him stand out by the road and watch the cars? If they don't, he's going to be really unhappy.

He was so precious to us and remains that way, but that was my concern and Mom and Dad kept trying to think beyond that to, “Okay, this is going to be good for him, because he really should not be dependent on someone else all of his life if he can have any measure of independence. So they took him up there and I don’t know how much of the book you’ve read, but it was a mistake, I guess you’d have to say, but children of all ages are resilient and Bobby was not an exception to that and after time he was able to experience the joy again. He was very, very edgy, very nervous, fearful when he first came back and we really were afraid for years that the people from Pownal were going to come and take him away again, because they reserved the right to do that. My mother was a guardian and you know she—if possible, if possible she watched him even more closely after he got back from Pownal because she didn’t know if that might happen.

KJL: Do you remember the day they left to take him to Pownal?

VS: I don’t remember it clearly, I was in school I believe. I don’t remember it clearly, but I do know that it affected me greatly. My teacher called my mom to the school and she said, “Look at this.” and she put the math paper down on the desk for my mother, and I had done the entire page of math, which was supposed to be copied from the chalkboard and problems solved. I had done it all in about a two and a half or three inch square up in the corner. Apparently that was my way of dealing with it, trying to become invisible or something so that—I don’t know, I just didn’t know how to deal with it and in those days parents, even as good as our parents were, they did not share much with young children because they didn’t think we could handle it. I personally think I could have handled it a lot better than to not know it, because the questions I had were bigger than I could deal with myself.

KJL: So you knew what was happening.

VS: I knew that he was going away for a while, he was going to school, and I liked school a lot. I was pretty good at it, you know. Then they said he was going to be living there. “What? Living there? Well that’s an interesting thought.” And then they just fed me little bits, you know until I finally realized “This is going to be hard for Bobby—and of course for my parents, for all of us.” Judy, my little sister was only two at the time and she really—she doesn’t remember any of it, but she and Mom had a huge conversation—several conversations about this and I got a lot of my detailed information from her, because I didn’t dare ask about it because Mom would cry.

So it was kind of a hodgepodge of emotions, but the end result was good. As I said, he was resilient and eventually began to trust people again and they learned—and I helped teach them this, I believe—They learned that Bobby understood far more than we realized of language and of actions and if you told him what to expect, he was good with it. Of course he never would

have expected what actually happened there with the abuse and all that. That would never be anything that would have exposed him to if we'd known. But when he came back home I believe there was a time when Mom and Dad talked to him, not knowing really if he understood, but just telling him that "We didn't know. We didn't know what was happening, we didn't know how sad you were. We didn't know what was going on and we will never, ever send you away again." And he just began—I think at that point he began to heal. When you are totally vulnerable, totally dependent on other people for everything from fixing you breakfast to pouring your coffee to pulling up your pants after you go to the bathroom; that kind of dependence is a fearsome thing to somebody who can think, and Bobby really could think. I know he probably couldn't think as well as other people could, but he could think. He could reason things out much more than we realize for many years. Once he knew that he was never going to—never, ever go back there, then he started to get better.

KJL: What happened at Pownal?

VS: I don't know, have you read any of the magazine articles?

KJL: A little bit, yeah.

VS: Well, there was a—the Director of Education, I believe it was his title and I won't even mention his name because the court case took place and he served jail time and the whole business and he's gone now, but I wouldn't want it to hurt the family or anybody like that but he was kind to my parents. He spoke to them about how—before Bobby got there—about how he would be in with a group of kids that were learning to sweep floors and do tasks that they might even be able to get paid for and therefore help to pay their own way—not to Pownal, but through life, and they might live a life that was more independent than what Bobby seemed to be headed for. There was an abduction of a young lad just about Bobby's age. His name was Danny Wood. He was abducted around Gray, Maine and there was a horrible, just a wild search for him. After eight days they found his body floating in the Little Androscoggin River. You can imagine the frenetic attempt to locate this boy and rescue him if he needed rescuing. Who knows, by this time he might be in California. In the course of the interviews the police heard about two young men who had escaped from Pownal. I use that term deliberately. They had left and went off and they thought maybe they had something to do with Danny's abduction. So they called them in and interviewed them, spoke to them at length. And they said, "You shouldn't be interviewing us, you should be interviewing Mr. So-and-So." And they said, "What do you mean?" and the boys, the young men said, "If you talk to him, if you can get truth out of him, you'll know what we mean."

So they called him in. They had like, I think it was a nine-hour interview with him, or interrogation is probably a better word and he admitted that for twenty-six years he had been abusing the children and adults that were there, particularly the ones who could not report any misbehavior, ones that were vulnerable and dependent and innocent and could not resist his advances. He had organized a Boy Scout troop that was right in the town. It was very highly respected in the community, but obviously this was a bomb that went off in the community. He was absolved of any involvement in Danny's abduction or murder but in the course of that investigation the other details came out that he had been abusing his power there at Pownal.

You know, just consider a handsome young man, just entering puberty and—we don't know, Bobby couldn't tell us, of course, but we assume, especially because of actions that he did. He just became very fearful and edgy is the word I keep going back to. Sometimes he would just bite the back of his hand until it would bleed, as if he needed to—I don't know, to release that tension or whatever. He was there for almost the six weeks. Actually I think he was there just about the six weeks and so during that time we don't know exactly what happened, but logic and the ability to face—you know, you can just be in denial and say, "Oh, no, I don't think anything happened to him, but it was much more healing for Bobby for us to acknowledge what had happened and promise him that we would never ever expose him to that again and we didn't know. I said "we," my parents really were the ones doing the talking. And I didn't know. I didn't know anything about sex or anything ... You know I had such a great life as a kid. I never would have thought people would hurt people like Bobby. It just never would have occurred to me, so my parents didn't really talk it over with me until many, many years later, but Bobby needed to be reassured of that and they did reassure him.

KJL: How long did it take Bobby to recover from that—or did he?

VS: Oh, he did, yes. I would say he was well into his teens, maybe into his twenties before he was completely at ease with people. If someone would come to the house that he didn't know he would kind of stay in the shadows. I don't remember it clearly enough, I should not even speak that definitively about it because I was a seven-year-old happy go lucky kid, you know and didn't know what had happened to him or what probably happened to him and there fore my powers of observation were not very finely tuned at that point. I read a lot and I played a lot and I was learning piano at that point. It was a different kind of life and I wasn't paying attention to it because I didn't realize how profound the injury was. By injury I mean psychological injury to Bobby, so I don't know, and my sister doesn't either, I'm pretty sure.

KJL: What was Bobby like as a young man—later?

VS: As he got bigger and older my parents would be more careful where they took him. He did not eat out in a restaurant. He was a messy eater. I'll tell you that, okay? My dad used to laugh and say, "Bobby, you eat just like a nuthatch!" Those are birds that they scatter the seed all around. I'm sure you know what I'm talking about. At first Bobby was a little offended, you know and Dad says, "Oh, I'm just kiddin'. That's a cute little bird, you know" Bobby just, you know he would just dig in if he had a plate full of baked beans he would dive right into it and shovel the food onto his spoon with his left hand. So basically, eating in a restaurant just didn't seem like a good idea. But after I was married and Bobby would have been probably thirty-five or so they came up here to visit. They came many times anyway, but this one particular time I said, "I've got a plan, Mom and Dad." I said "I think Bobby would love—" he got restaurant food. We would go to a restaurant and do take out and bring it home or eat it in the car. One of his favorite things was fish and chips and we'd love that. Sometimes we would eat at a picnic table in front of the restaurant, you know, but there again, you kind of had to be careful. You know, people don't want to see food flying when they're in a restaurant and eating, so—and we tried to teach him better and it didn't take. But anyway, I said, "I think Bobby would enjoy eating at McDonald's." They said, "Really, do you think so?" I said, "Yeah." At that point he was still a little nervous around people, you know, so I said, "You guys go in this door. I'll go order and I'll bring the food over to the table." And so that's what I did and my goodness after that you couldn't get him past a McDonald's without him—he would go "Mi mi mi mi," make a funny little noise. He wanted to stop because he did love restaurant food and after that first couple of times we took him to a lot of restaurants and he really, really loved it, especially if they served a good pie.

KJL: There's a restaurant in Machias that he particularly liked, wasn't there?

VS: The Bluebird. He loved the Bluebird and the Bluebird loved him. All the waitresses. When they saw us coming, if it was a little slow, and usually my folks went when it was a little slow, not at the rush hour, you know, and so maybe one-thirty or two in the afternoon they would come in and the waitresses would see him coming and they'd have the coffee out on the table when they got him through the door and it was just a good relationship. My dad was a good tipper, so that helped, but he knew that they had a lot of mess to clean up after they left, so he made sure that he paid them adequately through the tip. Yep, he did enjoy his restaurant food and felt quite proud to be the one that introduced him to it. It cost them a lot of money through the years, but that's all right, it gave them a lot of joy too. I don't know if I've answered your question. I kind of lost track of what it was now.

I think of what he was like as a young adult. Is that what you were—okay. His smile was infectious, and the giggle too. He would shake hands, as I said, put his face down for a little kiss, or he would just ignore you completely. If he had his mind on other things, he would just often, you know, wander through the house, or go outside. When he wanted to go outside it didn't matter how hot it was, he would go to the hall closet and get a jacket and gloves and a hat.

And Mom would say, “You don’t need gloves and a hat. I’ll put the jacket on you, but you don’t need a hat and gloves. Its a beautiful day out. It’s hot. You’ll roast.” He would just stand there and look at her and grin. She’d say, “Okay, okay.” So she’d put the gloves on him and the hat on him and he wore them all the time he was out there.

One of his favorite things to do and I think it released a lot of nervous energy for him, you know. Somebody that was as smart—and I contend that he was smart in his own way—someone that smart who had so many limitations had to have a relief and he would take little pebbles. probably about that big—I’m indicating about an inch and a half, roundish—smooth edges and he would just—he called it juggling. It wasn’t juggling. It wasn’t easy. I tried to do it a few times and I dropped them every time. He would hold them up against his belly and rattle them around—probably two or three at a time and invariably the gloves and the jacket would get holes in them within a very short time. Dad would buy him leather gloves, you know, like working gloves and it didn’t make a bit of difference. He would go right through those just as quickly as he went through the ones that were kind of fleece like. But he did that and he also would sometimes put one of the rocks in his mouth and click it with another one, which of course destroyed his teeth. It was awful. Mom tried to stop him from doing that, we all did, but once he had really done damage to his teeth, they had to have them removed and false teeth or dentures were certainly out of the question, but he was happy, much more happy. His teeth didn’t hurt him. Sometimes he would just—he would touch his cheek or his chin or jawbone, like “Oh, can’t you do something,” you know. So we finally figured to it was his teeth that were troubling him so that’s the only way we knew to take care of him. That was tough. When he was in, I would say early teens he would go out to—they had a big fuel tank out behind the house and he would sit on it and kick it with his feet and the sound would reverberate through the whole neighborhood, it was wonderful, and he’d do it as long as Mom would let him, and she’d say, “Robert, that’s enough.” (Laughs) and he’d stop.

KJL: One thing I forgot earlier.

VS: Yes.

KJL: Do you remember the day Bobby came home from Pineland?

VS: Not specifically, no. I know I’ve written it as if I did, but I just took the clues from my sister’s talk and the interview she had with Mom, the discussion she had with Mom and the logic of a seven year old. I don’t remember specifically. I really think I blocked out a lot of it, because I remember other things from first and second grade, but I don’t remember—certainly don’t remember the tiny little math paper or any of the quirky behavior that I might have encountered, and I don’t remember specifically, I think it was just—it was just all blocked.

KJL: Now, was Bobby able to have a job later as an adult?

VS: No, he was completely dependent. I tried on more than one occasion to introduce him to the idea of sweatpants or windbreaker pants and he did not like them one tiny bit. He wanted to be belted and snapped and zipped and yet he couldn't do it. He could not manage it. His dexterity—he could juggle rocks, but his dexterity wasn't as good as it might have been, so no, he was never able to live on his own. But I believe that God provided people all along the way, even after my parents became less well. My dad had cancer for over twenty-five years and Mom took care of him, took care of her boys, and it was quite an amazing thing and then Mom got dementia, so we were all watching this happen. I wasn't watching it, my siblings in the south were, but I was needed down there so more than once I basically closed the studio and drove down and spent some good time there. By good time I mean lots of it. But there was always someone to take care of him.

I remember one night when Dad and Mom were both unwell and Bobby used to go in—he'd get up in the night and pee and then he'd go—the rooms were arranged like the hallways and at the end was the bathroom. Here was Bob's room and here was my mom and dad's. It was all very close. He would get up and go into the bathroom, pull his jammies up. But he always needed help pulling the covers over him. He couldn't manage that. So he would go and stand in the doorway of my parents room. Dad was hard of hearing and so Mom would eventually—not too long, but after a while, she would wake up and she'd say, "Oh, Robert, you going again?"

You know I figured out if neither one of them woke up at that point he would take something and rub it against the wall of the bedroom until it woke them up. That's right, he was smart. I think he was checking up on them. I really do. I think he was making sure that they were okay. Of course Mom was taking care of both of them and Dad was taking care of both of them. It was like a triangle of cards, just fragile, fragile, but okay as long as it lasted. I remember one night during that really hard time—this is back in 2006 and '07 and Dad was getting a lot sicker and we were becoming more aware that he had been covering for Mom with the dementia for quite some time. Of course Bobby was Bobby and he just acted nervous again like he had years before and I went in and sat on his bed one night. He loved to have people tuck him in. You'd tickle him, he loved it, he would giggle and laugh (Inaudible. He was there juggling and worried and I just sensed he was worried. We all were, of course. I remember I talked to him, we prayed together and I said, "I know Mom and Dad are not doing good. They're getting sick, aren't they?" And I looked at his eyes which often were—he would look around with the autism he had I think just a little bit of that and he was just locked into my eyes and I had sense enough to look right back and not look away because it was quite a moment. I will never forget it I don't believe. I said, "You're worried that somebody won't be here to take care of you." I said, "Bobby I promise you I will make sure that there's always someone to take care of you." and

that's all I said. "I said, "Jesus will help us to get through this." And he just—he kept looking at me and I went over and I kissed him on the forehead and I turned out the lights and you know, it made a difference. He was enough of a child to take that very literally. Of course at that time I had no idea how I was going to do that, but I knew it had to be said and that he had to know that there would always be someone. If it wasn't me, I would find somebody nice to take care of him; somebody who wasn't me who was good.

KJL: So who made his medical decisions and so forth—his financial decisions after your folks were no longer able to?

VS: I know the answer to it but there's a little—gotta have a little background. When Dad became so ill that he could not be at home we placed him down at—I think he went voluntarily. He was a smart fellow and he knew that he had to get strong. It was to get stronger so he could go back home because he still was taking care of them he felt. And Mom felt she was taking care of them and Bobby felt (inaudible). So he went down to the Ocean View which is a really nice nursing home and Dad could get pretty good care there and and he did get stronger, but now we've got Mom and Bobby home alone. We found out it very short order that this wasn't going to work. Mom would doze in her chair and forget to have supper with him and so Bobby—Bobby who was dependent completely now had no one really to depend on because Dad was down there. It didn't last long, you know it was a very brief situation, but urgent enough so that we knew that it had to change.

So I went down to the nursing home and talked to a Mrs. Brown, Margaret Brown who is a lovely lady and she was the owner. Her son Nathan was the administrator and I talked to Margaret and I said, "Do you have room for Mom and Bobby? Do you have a place that's appropriate for them?" She said, "Well, I have a place that would be appropriate. They would be on the second floor but they would be able to come down whenever they wanted to." But she said, "I don't have any openings right now." I said, "Well, we're kind of in a bind." I said, "Do you have any recommendations?" and she said, "Well, there's Carrie, who works here also is opening an assisted living place in Dennysville." So I went up there—called in hospice in fact to stay with Mom and Dad while I was—lovely lady down there who's—Suzanne is her name—a very sweet lady, who's and she was compassionate. So she stayed with Mom and Bob while I made the trek twenty-six miles to Dennysville and within a very short time they were admitted up there.

That was not an easy day, I assure you. Bobby loved Carrie, she's pretty. He appreciated a pretty lady. She was the one that got them into the car. She said to Bobby, she said—we were down—my dad was still at the nursing home and it was an awful day, but anyway they walked out, Mom and Bob, and I'm going, "What happens now, what do we do?" By that time Carrie and her husband drove in in their little car and Carrie came over and she—and I was just—I'm sure I was looking like a lost lamb or something. I had spent hours working with them and

talking with them. Anyway, she came over and she shook hands with Bobby and she said, “You must be Bobby.” She said, “I have fish chowder for supper. Do you want some? Do you like fish chowder?” And he went right over and got in the car. My mother went right behind him and got in the other side and they stayed at Carrie’s.

So then after another couple of weeks my dad had used up all of his time at the nursing home; you know what I’m talking about, so they transferred him up to Carrie’s place and so for the last several weeks of his life they were all three in the same room —beautiful spacious old inn, looking down over the Dennys River, beautiful breeze, corner room. Mom and Dad said, “Would you push our beds together?” because they all had twin beds. “Would you push our beds together so we can hold hands at night?” So they did, of course. It was the best kind of circumstance we could have hoped for at that point in their lives. My father passed away there on June 7th of that year.

Then Mom and Bobby stayed there. Of course when my sister and brother living in North Carolina and Georgia respectively, they got up when they could, but of course that’s a lot, you know, that’s a lot to ask, so they got up to see them when they could and I went down fairly regularly. It’s four hours from here, so it’s a good hike. They were doing okay at Carrie’s. They seemed to be quite happy there. Of course there was Blue, the dog and Carrie was very good to them, I will say that. She was very good. My brother developed some problems with his colon and they had to do a—oh, I never can remember the word. They had to interrupt the bowel movement and he had a bag for that and he adapted. I would never have believed that he adapted beautifully to it. And he also developed heart problems during those few weeks. It was like he had been healthy and he never needed any medication of any kind; all of the sudden he’s falling apart, you know, so I’m sure it was the stress. I’m sure it was the stress.

We got a phone call after about—I think about a month and a half after Dad had passed—Oh, and I should say that their pastor and his wife and family would go up there every Sunday afternoon while dad and Mom and Bobby were there and they would have a service. They would sing together—wonderful voices they had—and of course, you know, they loved music—and they would spend time with them. They had been my parents’ pastor for almost twenty years at that point. So we got a phone call in July from them and Rob—Pastor Rob—said, “I would like to have a conference call with you and your siblings.” I said, “Okay. Not going to tell me what it’s about?” “Not yet,” he said. “I’ll tell you when we all are on the phone together.” So I wasn’t smart enough to arrange for that, but my brother is. So he got the conference call up and running, I think it was a week later and basically they were offering to bring Mom and Bobby back to their own home into their own bedrooms and they would move into the house with them. It would involve some renovations because they had four children at home at that time. They turned the basement into another bedroom and an office. And we said, “Well, we probably ought to think about it,” because it was just out of the blue like that, you know. And they didn’t have medical training of any kind, but they really wanted to do this and they felt that God had called

them to it I don't know how you feel about that, but I do believe he's involved in our lives on a daily basis. Anyway, we called them back the next Sunday and we said, "Yeah, this is not something we could refuse. This would be perfect for them. But by that time, Bob's heart problems were an issue and he had not yet had the surgery and so as time went on I kept asking them, "Now we've got this problem, do you still want to do this?" "Yes, we really feel it's the right thing to do." And sure enough they moved in September 15th I think it was they brought him back home, and we have pictures of Bobby sitting on his own bed in his own room. Meanwhile, we had forwarded them a lot of money, a fair amount of money from my folks' account that enabled them to fix up the house, you know, to put in new windows for example and to make the bedroom in the basement. It needed a new septic system and a number of pretty substantial and significant renovations to do. So they had this beautiful situation where they're back in their own rooms, which had been decorated to suit their particular needs. My mother's had a little border of pansies on the wall and stuff. Oh, I didn't mention—About the third day that she was at Carrie's house in the assisted living, she fell and broke her hip. [I was] horrified. I thought, "I've killed my mother." It was just horrible. But she recovered from it.

(Vicki's husband enters)

This is my husband coming in, I think. Probably. So in this photo she is in a wheelchair and she's in her bedroom with a moment of huge victory and she was home to stay at that point for a number of—probably, let me think now. That was in 2007. She was there for about three years, she and Bobby both.

(Short interruption)

You asked about how he lived as he got older and had more physical problems, but he—Bobby and Mom lived in their own home for another three years or so, and Mom had to go into the nursing home and they could no longer care for her. She couldn't swallow her pills, and you know the things that happen when you have dementia or Alzheimer's. And then Bobby, he started having more serious heart problems and even though Pastor Rob had seen to it that everybody in the church knew CPR, so they could help him if he collapsed and that was quite a thing. Never had to do it, but at least they knew how. So he was a child of the village, really. He was very happy there. He would go to Ocean View and then they'd send him home for a while and then he'd get sick—fluid would fill up his lungs and what not.

On Martin Luther King Junior day in 2011 I went down. We made a flying trip down, Jim and I got to see him and he was just coming home that day from a short stay at the nursing home and the children who were getting grown up by now—the Green children, Mrs. Rob and Bonnie

Green—These kids just loved Bobby and they just kind of took over a lot of his care, really. You know, the little day-to-day stuff. Anyway, that was the last time I saw him alive.

He was very happy to be home in a wheelchair at this point, and it was on the 22nd of February, so it was probably another—well, another four weeks later that I got a phone call and he'd been very distressed in the night with I think pain in his chest, or difficulty breathing or something. Hard to know because he couldn't tell us, but anyway they took him over to Machias hospital and Gary, the youngest of the Green children rode with him in the ambulance, because they were buddies, so he was with him when he passed away and Bobby looked up and he saw him and he grinned and then he looked up and he saw one of the pretty nurses and he grinned at her and then he died, just like that. They commented at the hospital how sweet it was to see someone who wasn't all drugged and you know, wasn't in a reduced state in that regard, just somebody that just passed away very peacefully and cognizant of something.

KJL: Did you and your family serve as advocates sometimes?

VS: You asked that question, that's right. My mother always thought she was Bobby's guardian. Logical, but it never had been done officially. So when I became the power of attorney for my mom I also started paperwork to be the guardian of Bobby and I had Rob Green, the pastor put on that guardianship contract also, so Rob and I together made the decisions together for Bobby. Before that it was basically Mom's responsibility, event though it wasn't official.

KJL: Were there occasions when you would advocate generally for people with disabilities?

VS: I don't understand your question.

KJL: At meetings, or something like that?

VS: Not specifically, no. I was pretty busy at the time.

KJL: What do you wish had been different?

VS: That's an interesting question. I wish he'd never gone to Pownal. It may sound audacious, but I think that's the only thing I would like to have different. I say that because I believe in God's sovereignty and I realize this is a personal thing but I believe that Bobby was exactly who he was meant to be and this was not even considering the fact that the doctor who delivered him had been drinking and he got measles when he was in the hospital as a newborn infant, so these

are all sort of ancillary problems. We don't know whether he would have—the delivery was very hard, he was a big baby, first child and his his head was misshapen, so I don't know what the exact cause was for his limitations, but I do believe the God allowed them for his own reasons and I'm sure that there are people who would think and may be listening or reading the transcript who think, “Well, how can you wish that on somebody?” I'm not. I'm not saying that I would have told God to do to or asked him to have Bobby be the way he was, but I think that every life—and the story about the children who died so young in Lubec in 1936—every life has significance, and it has meaning and of course now you know how I feel about a few of the political issues in the world today, but I just—I think that Bobby was a huge blessing to all of us.

My parents just thought he was the most amazing kid; called him a child or a boy all his life. We just accepted him as who he was. Once you do that, you don't wish for anything different if you accept him as he is, and love him as he is. Then there's no need for anything to be different. Of course I'm a great believer in eternity and life after death, so we know the best for all of us who are trusting in Christ—the best for us is yet to come too. If I can find it in here really quickly. He wrote a tribute. He tried and tried, Bobby's funeral was very stormy weather. People in Machias who were planning to come had to cancel because it was one of those ice storms, messy days, and so my brother who was trying to fly up from Atlanta couldn't get out. He stayed and tried and tried. My sister made it up . My brother sent a—ah, here it is—he sent a message which my husband read to the people who were at the funeral. It's not long; I'll read it for you if that's okay.

He said (this is my younger brother) Howard sent a message which Jim read to those gathered, “First, I want to say that I'm very sorry that I could not be there. I truly wanted to be. Second, how do I remember Bobby? As I grew up I learned that having Bobby in our family made us a more loving family. We were all a little less likely to fight or argue. We were more tolerant of each other's different opinions and his needs created in us a readiness and willingness to help others. I'm sure that Rob and Bonnie Green have realized this even in the short time he has been living with them, and I'm sure that their kids will be better adults because of their interaction with Bobby. So I guess it's safe to say that Bobby had a huge influence on me and while I'm happy and excited for him to be home now, I will miss his silent, watchful presence whenever I visit. I love you Bobby and will miss you, and I would not wish you back for anything” So that was how we all felt. It was a consensus of opinion that except for the Pownal experience he had a good life.

KJL: What do you think Bobby most wanted for himself?

VS: Pie. (Laughs) Well, maybe pie isn't the definitive, profound answer. I think he would have liked to have been able to sing. But that's just my trying to interpret. Of course, this whole book is me trying to interpret what his thoughts were. I know that he knew that he didn't think as

clearly as other people did, but I think he did the best he could with what he had, which is all any of us can do. What he would have wanted for himself would probably would have been to be what we would call normal—able to speak able to read, to learn things, to do a job, find a wife and marry, maybe have kids. But I'm not sure that he dwelt on it very long. I think that his choice was contentment, and we all would do better with that, I think.

KJL: I'm about out of questions here, but I do have one more.

VS: Yes.

KJL: I'd like to know if you've enjoyed this conversation.

VS: Yes, I have. I wasn't sure whether I would because as you know it's hard to review some of the more difficult parts of the past but it has reminded me of how much joy he brought to our lives and I'm glad that his story—I look at this book which is, you know a lot of people have been touched by it very much and now will be touched by Bobby's story even more and this is a guy that never spoke. Think about it, you know, It's a wonderful, wonderful thing, I think if he —If he could speak to us from where he is now, I think he would say, "No matter what you go through, it's worth it." It's worth it. Yeah.

KJL Well, thank you, you've been very generous with your time.

END OF INTERVIEW