

This is Charlotte Nielsen interviewing Mr. Truckenbrodt at 88 Lincoln Road in Crystal Beach, April 23rd 1985.

**C.N.** Mr. Truckenbrodt, could you tell me your full name?

**F.T.** Frederick Alfred Truckenbrodt.

**C.N.** And when were you born?

**F.T.** June the fourth 1919.

**C.N.** Where were you born?

**F.T.** I was born in the house I'm living in with my mother right now:  
3925 Alexandra Road, Crystal Beach.

**C.N.** Could you tell me something about your family?

**F.T.** Well, I'll tell you something about my grandfather first. My grandmother's family go back so far in America that we don't really trace them that far. They were Climenhages and they came up from Pennsylvania and they were U. E. [United Empire] Loyalists like everybody else. But my grandfather came to escape the Franco Prussian War and he was in Germany of course and as far as we know Alsace Lorraine at that time which was in Germany. And his parents were Quakers just as my grandmother's people were too so we know all these years that they were people who didn't go to war. And so his family spirited him out to Holland and got him on a boat for America. And his uncle was Mr. Schmidt, who was postmaster general of Buffalo at the time. So my grandfather came to Buffalo. He had been apprenticed as a painter in Germany and as you know, in those days they were really intensive courses that these people took so my grandfather was a very knowledgeable painter all his life and taught his two sons to be the same. And so when he got to Buffalo the big push for painting was on the shipping and so he used to go on the boats from March until the fall and would go from Buffalo because it was the queen of the lakes for the grain industry. They would go to Prince Arthur: Fort William, Fort Arthur which is now Thunder Bay and Duluth. Then they would come back again. And my grandfather used to tell ... My father told me about his grandfather telling about the Indians because the Indians would load the ships ... The men would just arrive with the boat and then the Indians would carry the bags of grain on the ship. It wasn't like today where they have self loaders. And they paid the Indians in whiskey. You know, you think of how ... You think of the Indians

as being drinkers but we almost made them so. And so what they had to do ... They would wait until they got all the grain on the ship and they would pull off the shore and they would then send the whiskey back on a boat because if they didn't the Indians would be drunk so fast that they would have trouble getting the boat away. So, anyway, usually he would then come back to Buffalo and spend the winter there. And at this point he was nineteen. But one winter Mr. Le Jeune which was also a very common name in this area, a great many Le Jeunes, said Fred, "Why don't you come?" because his name was Frederick too. "Why don't you come to Port Colborne? We're going to put the boat up there. Come there this winter instead of going back to Buffalo and I'll get you work all winter." So, he came, and of course, being a young man, they travelled around. In either that year or the next year, he got to Ridgeway, somehow, on a job and they went into the hotel in Ridgeway where my grandmother and her family had a dining room and so he asked, not my grandmother but her sister if she would go buggy riding with him on Sunday. This is a story from Aunt Jenny, of course, and so her mother said, "Well only if you take Janette along as a chaperon." Now my grandmother was born with a club foot, which in those days they couldn't do anything about so she wore a heavy sole about four inches on the one foot all her life. And so she hadn't been considered marriageable so she was sent along as a chaperon. Well, the following Sunday, my grandfather called Janette and said, "Would you go buggy riding with me?" And so her sister had to go along as the chaperon and the two sisters practically never spoke to each other for the first ten years because it wasn't long after that, that my grandfather got it into his head that he wanted to be married and my grandmother said, "Yes." And they were married. As you can see from their marriage licence here: they were married in Ridgeway in eighteen seventy-five. So, my uncle, my grandfather would have come about eighteen fifty, fifty-one because they said that he was thirty-nine when he was married and he was nineteen when he came. So in the meantime, there's quite a period of time that's gone through. So my grandmother was considerably younger than my grandfather, therefore she lived on quite a long time after he died.

**C.N.** And was she originally the chaperon?

**F.T.** Yes.

**C.N.** He preferred the chaperon?

**F.T.** Yep, ha, ha. Can you imagine what the other sister went through?

**C.N.** Yes.

**F.T.** She got the date and then her sister takes the boyfriend away.

**C.N.** Could you tell me something about this hotel in Ridgeway?

**F.T.** No I really can't. Until Aunt Jenny told me that story I didn't really know that they even had a public place there. I can't tell you anything about that.

**C.N.** You don't know whether it's still there or anything?

**F.T.** No, no. I can't go back on my grandmother's side past ... that sort of thing. Now my grandfather's relatives lived in Stevensville and still do and the Climenhages moved into the Wright family. And there were a great many Wrights around Stevensville and these were all my first cousins. I visited my aunt Mary Wright during the war. She was in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. And that was my grandmother's first cousin. And nobody had seen a Truckenbrodt out there. Aunt Mary hadn't seen any of her family in something like fifty-five years so what a royal treatment I got to be able to tell them the family back here. They'd written all the years but that was all. Now, we'd better get on from there. At any rate. Then they [Fred Truckenbrodt and Janette Climenhage who are Fred Truckenbrodt's grandparents] married and settled down on Disher Street in Ridgeway and the children started right away. And the children all went to the school which is just on the very corner of Disher Street and Ridge Road right next to what is now Bickel's Store and is also the Masonic Temple to this day. But that was where my father and all the children went to school.

**C.N.** What was the name of this school?

**F.T.** I don't know, Ridgeway ... It's probably on the front, Ridgeway Public School Number Two or something. It's long since stopped being a public school. A very interesting story there because my ... until this point, perhaps ... No that's not right because the marriage licence says Truckenbrodt, the pocoliptic story in the family is my Aunt Grace came tearfully from school, my Aunt Grace was

the third daughter and was crying because she would not go back to school. And my grandfather said, "Well, why not?" And she said, "Because they are teasing me about my name." And at that point they were Drybreads. My grandfather had anglo-saxonized his name and he was Fred Drybread. Everybody in the community knew him as Fred Drybread. So he said, "Well, Grace, if they are going to do that sort of thing, we'll just change your name back to what it should be. He said, "If you go upstairs, in the trunk in the attic, you'll see my trunk with my name on it and that's going to be your name henceforth. Aunty Grace said she had such a terrible time for three days trying to learn Truckenbrodt cause it was so difficult compared to Drybread. And the trunk we still have up in my barn at home: an old leather trunk with wall paper lining. It's really quite interesting. At any rate, so then ...

**C.N.** I don't understand where the name Drybread came from.

**F.T.** As I said, it's the anglo-saxon translation for Truckenbrodt.

**C.N.** Oh!

**F.T.** Trucken is dry and brodt is bread.

**C.N.** Oh!

**F.T.** We've often tried to figure out, you know, like, if you're Goldsmith or you're Blacksmith, you know, all your name has come from somewhere, like my Japanese friend, Tanaka, is ricefield. So we always thought, what were our parents? Were they terrible bakers that they had dry bread so we ... And then when I was in Germany, they have Roastenbrodt and Rougenbrodt and Toastenbrodt and all kinds of things so we decided that they were probably the kinds of rusks that the German ... that the Dutch people have that you know that they're drybread that you sell as dry bread but it turns out that's wrong, that ... There is a tradition in Europe, and a Dutch gentleman told me this, that if you have a bakery where you do not bake the bread there but it's a bake shop where bread comes from ... you know, you buy like from three different bakeries and you have the store, that that's called a dry bakery as opposed to a regular bakery where they cook there. So apparently ... many thousands of years ago the Truckenbrodt ran a dry bakery. So, I'm getting off the track here ... So they were living on Disher Street where most of the family, in fact, all of the family were born there. Because in the picture of Disher Street the whole

family is there right down to Jenny who is the baby. And then somewhere in the vicinity of eighteen ninety-nine to nineteen hundred because Aunt Ida's diary starts eighteen ninety-eight in Ridgeway and ends up in what is, they call the Berlin Farm which was a surprise to me, which is at Windmill Point, on the Windmill Point Road directly across from where the quarries are now and ... At some period while they were on the farm they took boarders from the men, among the men who dug the quarries, Laurs quarries at Windmill Point, because we have pictures of them at the house. Aunt Jenny used to say that was the first time they ever got into that sort of a boarding business. And it was a big old red brick farm. It's still there and Mr. Le Jeune owns it today. And there are any number of other houses on the property now because it was developed but ... I know my mother and father courted on the farm because whenever we used to go by as a child my mother would say. "There's the six mile creek where your father and I used to go down and spoon at night from the farm. We'd walk out and say we were going to look at the creek and then we'd go down and romance on the bank of the creek." And of course, all the family came home to that farm because there was a Windmill Point Station on the train. So all the girls who had gone to Buffalo would come home with their husbands or their boyfriends on the weekend and the farmhouse just used to be bursting. My cousin Ethel has said that on Sunday, you know, there'd be sometimes twenty-five, thirty people would sit down and she said it was always to white linen tablecloth, white linen napkins, the best china and sterling silver. She said it was always a joy to go to the farm because it was always the way it should be. So this would of course, been in the summertime. In the wintertime they would be gone. And I know my mother has said that sometimes they'd miss the train so they'd just walk up the railroad track. Now can you imagine walking from the Bridgeburg Bridge to the Windmill Point and think nothing of it as a girl?

**C.N.** No, I can't. I'm not sure where this is.

**F.T.** That would be like six and a half to seven miles. They would just do it without even thinking about it. Of course, that's the way life was then.

**C.N.** What train was this?

**F.T.** Well, Canadian National. The track is still there. And of course, you see, it was also ... It would also carry rock from the quarry, as well as they took rock out to the lake and carried it on boats from there too but that was ... Now they ran the farm as a farm. My grandfather farmed and I know my Aunt Jenny has told stories of my Uncle Jim ploughing and she would sit up in the tree as a little girl and watch him go back and forth with the horse until it came her turn. Both she and my father ... I'm talking about Aunt Jenny now again. She and my father would, would work out on the farm together. They were, they were, they were just ... do alot of things there. And they both had horses. Then in the evening they would go out and play Bill Coty games bareback on their horses out in the field. Aunt Jenny used to say my father could do like Bill Coty, go right underneath the horse while it was riding and come back the other side or you know, go down off the tail and turn a handspring and get back up on the horse again. And so they used to play all kinds of cowboy and Indian games off their horses. And Aunt Jenny always tells interesting stories of going just across, through the fields to go to her school which was the Windmill Point School when it was ... They could have thrown a stone off the front porch and hit the school. It was that close. So we think of people in the country, you know, going miles to school but it wasn't so in her case. And then during that time, of course, all the girls got married. Do you wish me to tell the girls, who the family was because it started with ... The oldest girl was Abbie and then Florence and then Grace and then my Uncle Jim and then my Aunt Ida and the my Aunt Louise and then my father Charlie and then Aunt Jenny was the baby. Now Charlie and Jenny were one year apart and they were like a second family. There was seven years between them and the rest of the children. So it was quite a large family, all in all. On the farm, they had quite a good time. But by the time I hear stories from Aunt Jenny and my father all of the older girls had moved out to work and were in Buffalo and had jobs and some of them were already married.

**C.N.** I think I'd like to hear about the ones that ended up in the hotel business.

**F.T.** O.K. So that was Aunt Abbie and she would come home from Buffalo on the train. My Uncle Ed, at that point, was the conductor on the train, so again it was like my grandfather's story. Aunty Louise made up to Uncle Ed and brought him home and when he saw Aunt Abbie, he didn't want anything more to do with Aunty Louise so he started taking after Aunt Abbie. and they finally fell in love and wanted to be married. But my grandfather, a typical foreigner father was having none of this and so they got married secretly in Buffalo and eventually came home and told the family with great problems. So Aunt Abbie and Uncle Ed then decided that they would go to California. Now you can see, in 1901, that's just very close to the gold rush in California ... We can't imagine it: maybe we can because people still go to California. As I said, in those days, that was a real exciting thing to do and it was right off into the wilderness. But there was a train and they took Aunt Ida along with them. Aunt Jenny was asked to go but her parents thought she was too young. And they had meant to actually go there and stay. They had not intended to come back. But after two years there, they really felt that they weren't going to get anymore progress there than they would at home so they came back. And then, at that point, when they came back, they opened a laundry in Ridgeway. And there was a barber shop in conjunction with it too. My Uncle Ed was very versatile. He could do all kinds of things. But he would barber and he'd also help with the laundry. And that was at the location where the Canadian Legion building is in Ridgeway now, right across from the Ridgeway Library.

**C.N.** Which one? The laundry or the barber shop?

**F.T.** Well, they were both in conjunction with one another. And so in the summer time they would come out and have ... The first time... It was just a tent one summer with the barber pole out in front. And then the next summer they had kind of a little shanty. And Uncle Ed had his barber shop on the corner of where the main entrance to the Crystal Beach Park is now on Erie Road and Ridge Road. And that kind of got started ... That was just when Crystal Beach was beginning to boom and so they sort of could see that there was a future here. And they bought property. And they would go back to their business in Ridgeway in the winter and then out

to here for the summer in Crystal Beach. But after a few years that was just quickly done and around 1904 or five they bought the property for the Lincoln Hotel. Well then ...

**C.N.** Sorry, I'm unclear here. You talk about a business in Crystal Beach ...

**F.T.** Well, that was Aunt Abbie and Uncle Ed Buck. They started with the laundry in Ridgeway and then they sort of had a branch business out here in the summer, you see, and then when the summer was over they'd go back to their Ridgeway place. But then very soon they decided they'd just leave Ridgeway and they'd come out here and make a permanent home because Crystal Beach was just opening up at that point. So they bought the hotel. Well it wasn't too long after that, around nineteen seven or eight my grandfather and grandmother Truckenbrodt sold the farm at Windmill Point and they moved to Crystal Beach too. And they bought property. They owned all of the property on Erie Road from the corner of Ridgeway Road out halfway to Derby. And until oh ten years, twelve years ago Aunt Jenny owned three houses there on Erie Road. And ...

**C.N.** How much property would that be? In terms of ...

**F.T.** Well, it was like about seven lots, I suppose. Sixty foot lots. It would be about four hundred and twenty feet, something like that. And they moved to the home there and my grandfather died there in what we call the New Yorker. That was the name of the cottage. And he died there in nineteen seventeen. Now, my father and mother, Charlie and Helen were married in nineteen fourteen so they lived in a little cottage behind the New Yorker, down in that area, until they bought our present home on Alexandra Road in nineteen seventeen. And that was just after my grandfather died. My grandfather died in nineteen seventeen. Now, the hotel then is what you're really interested in. So you see my Aunt Abbie and Uncle Ed came to the hotel and they built this building and it was everything. The first time they opened up it was a general store. But it was a general store with a laundry behind and a barber shop on the side and a dining room on one side so you could go in and have sandwiches and tea. It was sort of a general all purpose building. At that point, they were really one of the few places in Crystal Beach that was there all winter. In the summer, just like now, there were all kinds



of businesses but there wasn't any place for provisions there in the winter at all.

**C.N.** Now where was this hotel?

**F.T.** This was at one fifty-six Lincoln Road which was just off Derby in the downtown section of Crystal Beach. And so this was how my father got to know my mother. My mother was from Buffalo and she went to work for some wealthy people at Point Abino. And these people ... They were the Chesters. They came to the general store to get all their food. Well they would of course phone down and order. My father would take the horse and buggy and deliver it. And he also would take the laundry from that house and bring it down. When it was washed three days later he would deliver the laundry. So of course, this very pretty upstairs maid ... My father started making eyes and pretty soon there was a romance going on between the delivery boy and the upstairs maid. Then, of course, Crystal Beach got to be of the nature where there were a few a people living around so they needed a post office. And so my Aunt Ida Truckenbrodt became the post mistress for Crystal Beach and there was a little counter on the side of the general store, just like you see in the movies for Crystal Beach ... and little enamel signs saying post office, where they sold stamps and where the mail was dropped. Now Aunt Jenny and my father would take the mail in a bag in the horse and buggy and take it to the train in Ridgeway every day. That was one of their jobs. Aunt Jenny always had such a good time.

**C.N.** Which train?

**F.T.** The Ridgeway train going through ... Canadain National. It would go to Fort Erie and then be dispersed from there. That train would go from Fort Erie through Ridgeway to Port Colborne and on all the way to Detroit. It was a through train all along the lakeshore. So that they would diperse the mail from there. But every day that was their job to take the horse and buggy and go to the mail. And you know, I never knew any of this but I heard them tell ... Aunt Jenny always had the fun things to do. She always got to deliver the mail or go to the bank if Uncle Ed needed some money or something of that sort. And then my Uncle Ed became the treasurer

of Crystal Beach when it was incorporated [became a village] and that would have been in the nineteen twenties. I think Crystal Beach was incorporated in nineteen twenty-five. I'm not quite sure there. And he was treasurer from the day it was started until he died. And so this was quite a centre for the whole village because everything was happening there on top of which, my Uncle Ed became a justice of the peace and so he tried all the courts with the policemen. Now the police when they built the municipal building which is now the Fort Erie Library here ... It was a fire hall and a municipal building so all of the council meetings and everything ... It was the centre of all the business. but my Uncle Ed kept his treasurer's office in his own building. But you see it was only three steps over to the other building. They had a jail there. The first jail in Crystal Beach is this old stone building on the circle over here. But then very soon after that the municipal building was built and they had ... Now there were I think three cells in the jail and nothing serious ever happened. But Crystal Beach later on in the late nineteen twenties and the early thirties, you know, there would be a hundred thousand people here on a weekend and so there was always a drunk or two or somebody would get disorderly and the policemen would bring people up on charges in front of my uncle because he was always there. It was like also in the movies, you know, where people get married at two o'clock in the morning. They get the justice of the ... My uncle often would be got out of bed at two o'clock in the morning to declare this man drunk and disorderly and the police chief would take him over and lock him up. Another interesting story because these folks at the hotel were into everything. From the first day they always supplied the meals for the prisoners. And Aunt Jenny got to deliver them with her dog and I'd often be coming home from school and I'd bump into Aunt Jenny with a basket over her arm. And she was going over to feed one of the prisoners. And they got pretty special meals mind you: homemade bread and homemade apple pie and a thermos of tea. And they probably ate better in the prison than they did at home. But all these things were going on so that the hotel was really quite a fantastic

place. And there wasn't anybody hardly in Crystal Beach who wasn't expected at sometime during the day to drop in for a cup of tea or a glass of milk or a pancake or whatever was available and there was always ... And, I told you my aunt baked homemade bread: at least twelve loaves a day, and always six pies and whether they be elderberry or apple or pear or peach whatever ... They would always be ... She had pie racks always sitting there with these pies ... And you know, it's interesting because so many people who have now moved on into being influential in the community ... When they were young people either delivering mail or delivering papers or working on the customs at the dock ... They would always go up to the hotel for a cup of tea and a piece of pie and it was always free just for the taking. So it was like open house all the time. And it was really quite an interesting place. As you were asking me before, they had twelve bedrooms upstairs and a large dining room and a very large kitchen and of course, they had their own living quarters with my uncle's office off to the side. And in the early days they were general store but then it began to be time that they have roomers so they became a hotel. And in the summer always they had the same people come back like people still do today. I mean there would be ... Dr. Calihan who was a dentist in Buffalo ... And I can remember he and his family would always come for the first two weeks in July and that was just all booked forever because they would always come. Then there were any number of families of that sort and they just ... That was where they were coming for the holidays. But in the winter of course there wouldn't be any roomers. But it was interesting that they carried on the tradition of having the Windmill Point quarry men ... When they built Crystal Beach Ballroom in nineteen twenty-five ... At that point it was the biggest ballroom in the world ... They had, oh, you know, I suppose about a hundred men who worked there for a period of two years so half of these men stayed at the hotel so you know, they heard all stories ... And Aunt Jenny and Ida would go down with their dog each day and see the steel go up and see when they washed the water. They took a great hose and washed all the sandhills down before they could build the

ballroom. So they went down and watched them do that and you know, they were in on the whole thing. We have some funny old pictures of them down there too.

**C.N.** Do you know how they went about building this ballroom then?

**F.T.** Well, only that I've seen pictures of it going up. It was steel construction. And you see, it was quite a thing in those days. Now today we go to Niagara Falls Convention Centre or the Memorial Auditorium or the Maple Leaf Gardens and they have these giant structures with no posts but to have a giant ballroom floor without any posts ... Now there was a very large ballroom in Cleveland but every twenty feet there was a post and people would be dancing and bang into the post. So this was considered quite a fine architectural achievement to be able to have this giant ballroom floor which was almost, I think, an acre and a half of bare floor with not any columns on it at all. So it was really quite a ... They used to advertise ... it was a quarter million dollar ballroom. Well of course in nineteen twenty-five, that's a lot of money. And of course, interestingly, like the boat, I've been involved in the ballroom all my life because I went to work in the ballroom when I was twelve taking tickets and we used to say working on the ropes because it used to be five cents a dance, later on ten cents a dance like the song says. But you'd pay five cents for a ticket and then we would go out with the ropes. we had long long ropes and we would then sweep the people off the back of the floor, you see, at the end of the dance. The new people with the new five cents would come on in the front and dance their ... There was ... I think three minutes was a dance ... After the first two minutes we would begin to work out with the ropes and push the people off and then we'd have to see that everybody got off because they had to pay their next ten cents before they could get on again.

**C.N.** So you worked at this Crystal Beach Ballroom as a child.

**F.T.** Yes, yes. Well, I worked there from twelve until I was twenty.

**C.N.** Could you describe it? Tell me about the bands, the people ...

**F.T.** Well, it was unbelievable. As I said, when you try to tell about Crystal Beach you can't. YOU can't make people believe how wonderful it was because there were two bands that played: A Canadian band

and an American band. and they were what we knew as, in those days, as the bands, right. And in my time essentially it was Bert Niosi, who I watched on television two years ago, when he had his fiftieth anniversary at the Palais Royale in Toronto. He used to play the Palais in the winter and Crystal Beach in the summer. And I knew all the Niosis Johnny and Joe and Burt and my sister used to babysit Burt's children when she was a little girl. Joe Niosi was in the airforce with me so we used to see each other in Ottawa. He was the number one airforce band during the war. But at any rate ... And Harold Austin was the orchestra that came over on the boat. and you see with union rules, they had to have a Canadian band or the American couldn't play. So the Canadian band started at eight o'clock and the boat came in at nine fifteen and at nine thirty Harold Austin played. And Harold Austin played from nine thirty until eleven and then Burt Niosi and his band would come on at eleven and play through till twelve. Now can you imagine what a joy this was, because Harold Austin left Buffalo at eight o'clock every night, seven days a week from Decoration Day till Labour Day and all the people of Buffalo would come out at eight o'clock, you know, people who had worked during the day, and they'd dance to this eighteen piece orchestra all the way across on this beautiful maple dance floor on the back deck of the Canadiana on a hot summer's night, moon over the water, and land at Crystal Beach and walk just over to the ballroom and then dance away the night at the ballroom and then get back on the boat and dance their way back to Buffalo till twelve fifteen at night. I can remember seeing still the Harold Austin orchestra coming down the covered walk from the bridge with their bass fiddles and their saxaphones. They looked like the Buffalo Symphony Orchestra coming out after a concert. And then at eleven o'clock you'd see them all packed up with their bags going down to get on the boat again. Well, can you think what excitement this is with the boat and the dance hall and all this sort of thing.

**C.N.** No, I don't quite understand.

**F.T.** And you see, the whole village, the whole place in the summer turned around the boat, because it was like Martha's vineyard or

Nantucket. In the early days, everybody came on the boat because they didn't have cars particularly during the depression in the early nineteen twenties. People might have had a car but they didn't take it to Crystal Beach. But everybody in Buffalo could take the streetcar down to the dock at the end of Commercial Street and take the hour ride to Crystal Beach and be there for the day or for the evening and have their swim and go back. But it was always a different crowd, an adult crowd, that came on the late boat at night, eight o'clock, and then go back and dance there.

**C.N.** Are you saying the band played both on this boat, the Canadiana and at the ballroom at Crystal Beach? But you were in the ballroom working?

**F.T.** Yes, and in the ballroom. Taking tickets, yes.

**C.N.** You said, "Everybody could do this." These weren't rich people? They were everyday people?

**F.T.** Oh yes! Sure.

**C.N.** Oh!

**F.T.** And young people. Marvelous young people. We had such great gangs of people here. And we all went to the ballroom at night. Everybody did. And we all went to the beach in the afternoon. You know, it was just a wonderful time. And then of course, we began to have the name bands at the ballroom too as the big bands became famous. And we would have ... Almost all summer, Saturday night there'd be a big band. And my favourite orchestra was Jimmy Dorsey. And I was absolutely in love with Helen O'Connell. And I had all the records, you know, my old poor old seventy-eights on this scratchy Victrola that I played all these things. And then suddenly Jimmy Dorsey was coming. Can you imagine the excitement? So I met Helen O'Connell and Bob Everly and got their autographs on my poster. I was just so thrilled. And we had Benny Goodman and Tommy Dorsey. Oh, it's so hard to do it all at once. But there was hardly a name band that we didn't have. Larry Clinton. You name me some and they were probably here. And I can't tell you the name of the orchestra. I just remember the girl singer was Louise King who I was terribly proud of. And then we had a terrible, terrible time one Labour Day. And I was working on the door

and Artie Shaw was coming. Well that was after ... Like each year one of the big bands would become the band of the year. We had Jimmy Dorsey and Tommy Dorsey with Frank Sinatra and Benny Goodman and Glenn Miller of course, and then suddenly there was Artie Shaw playing Frenitzzy. And I can remember saying to the girl I was going with ... She was standing beside me at the door. She'd just come from work. And I said, "Can you imagine? What a way to finish this summer! Artie Shaw! And we were just so thrilled. Well, Artie Shaw didn't get there. Poor old Bert Niosi was playing away and playing away. And something like ten after ten Artie shaw arrived. And apparently he was extremely eccentric and had trouble wherever he went. But apparently he talked back to one of the customs officers and they held them up at the bridge. They wouldn't let him come across. So at any rate these people had paid ten dollars a person to get in to see Artie Shaw and he arrives at ten o'clock. Well then union rules say at eleven o'clock he takes a break. So at eleven o'clock he went off the stand until eleven thirty and Burt Niosi went back. Well the people went wild. And you can't ... You have to be in this kind of a thing to understand. But they just had had enough. And he was upstairs actually getting his money at the office. And they were having a fight upstairs because they weren't going to pay him for the first hour that he was supposed to be there. And in the meantime, everybody downstairs started to riot and they tore all the microphones off the stand and they threw all the instruments all over the floor and they started breaking windows. They broke three thousand windows out of that place that night. It was a terror. And so then Artie Shaw wouldn't come down because he wasn't going to move into this sort of thing. So they had him marooned upstairs in the ... It was a disaster. On top of which, this was Labour Day, the biggest day of the year, and the office upstairs had all the money in the safe. And the officials ... My father stood on the steps with a machine gun because they were afraid they were going to attack and take all the money because they must have had half a million

dollars upstairs in the safe. And there was just no way they were going to let this mob tear up the stairs.

**C.N.** What was your father's position?

**F.T.** My father was actually the painting contractor for the Crystal Beach Company in later years. He and his brother were painting contractors, the Truckenbrodt Brothers. And my Uncle Jim remained an independent one all his life but my father separated from him and went to work for the Crystal Beach Company.

**C.N.** But what was he doing at the dance hall?

**F.T.** But what they did on Decoration Day, Fourth of July and Labour Day, they would ask their men to come and be there as watchmen.

**C.N.** Oh!

**F.T.** So he was actually ... He was only just there on the stairs on a chair watching. But then when this all happened the police came with a gun and gave him the gun and he was standing at the head of the stairs with this machine gun. And he was told to shoot too.

**C.N.** By the police?

**F.T.** Yep. Warn first and if they make an attack shoot. So it was ... I mean you can't believe this ... So that just ruined ... We could hardly think of all the wonderful things of the summer.

**C.N.** How many police were called in?

**F.T.** Oh, I can't recall. But it really didn't turn out that these people were ... even knew that there was money upstairs. They were just rioting because Artie Shaw had given them a dirty deal. They'd come to dance and they hadn't got what they paid for. So then the Crystal Beach Company ... You see, they closed that day so they announced over the radio that they would give everybody their money back at the Buffalo Office if they'd go in so ...

**C.N.** How much did it cost to get into the ballroom?

**F.T.** As I said, ten dollars it was for Artie Shaw for one person. I don't know ...

**C.N.** And how much normally?



**F.T.** And Artie Shaw would have been there in nineteen forty-two, I guess, forty-one, I guess.

**C.N.** Where did most of these names bands that you've mentioned come from?

**F.T.** Well, from all over the United States: essentially New York, of course. But they would all play there. They would tour the country. You've certainly heard of Glenn Miller. Mind you, it used to be the same thing. We would all go to Shea's Buffalo in the winter and they would have the orchestras there. I saw Harry James at Sheas' Buffalo and any number of other ... I saw Glenn Miller there twice too. So in the winter time that was more where they went. But the wonderful thing about Crystal Beach ... When you went to the theatre you just listened: when you went to Crystal Beach you danced to them and that was always wonderful. And you see this is what's wonderful: one of the summer's after Bert Nosi went we had Maynard Ferguson. I don't know if you know who Maynard Ferguson is or not.

**C.N.** No.

**F.T.** Maynard Ferguson played the trumpet at the Olympics in Montreal.

And Maynard Ferguson has one of the finest big jazz bands in the world today. Maynard Ferguson at that point was seventeen. His mother came with him. She used to sit in the back of the bandstand and chaperon him. But he was here all summer. My sister used to go out with him a few times because she was young like he was. But Maynard Ferguson is coming back to Crystal Beach this summer to play a benefit for the Canadiana on Decoration Day, the thirty-first of May. And so Maynard Ferguson played one summer. I don't know why I started to tell you that. But, because there was a big band came that year too.

**C.N.** Well I wondered about this other person: Bert Noisy.

**F.T.** Niosi

**C.N.** Niosi.

**F.T.** N-I-O-S-I

**F.T.** He was like Guy Lombardo. They both started in London. They were both of a caliber ... Bert Niosi could play something like nineteen instruments. He was a trumpet player essentially. But he was the big band of Canada: southern Ontario.

**C.N.** Did he play there as a regular?

**F.T.** Yes. You know, for maybe seven or eight years because there were other orchestras too. In my time there was always Bert Niosi.

**C.N.** So would he be there as a back up so that if these bands were late he could play?

**F.T.** Yes. Well, you see that was again because these big bands came from the United States and they were union too and the union demands in Canada were that a Canadian orchestra of a comparable size always had to be hired before the American orchestra could play. So Bert Niosi was the resident band. So he would be paid that night to play the introductions, sort of, and then the finale. O.K. Now let me tell you a little more about the Canadiana. Because, in the beginning, there were the Canadiana and the Americana: the two ships that came from Buffalo. But the Americana was sold out of Crystal Beach before I was old enough to really ... I mean I've been on the Americana but I couldn't really remember very much about it. I told Tom a week ago that I was in New York one time and saw the Americana going up the Hudson because it became ... It was sold and went down the Saint Lawrence River and down the Hudson River into New York. And it used to take excursions from New York to Rye New York up the Hudson on a Sunday. That's like it used to the excursions at Crystal Beach. Well then as time went on they didn't need so many people because people had cars so then only the Canadiana came back and forth. But what a sight in June! This beautiful white ship coming up the lake with three thousand people on it! You could hear the orchestra playing. And as I said the whole village tuned in around the boat because it came every two hours. The first boat of the morning was eleven o'clock, and then one fifteen and then three thirty and then six fifteen, eight fifteen and eleven o'clock. And when the boat would come, after they'd tied it up before anybody got off the boat or anybody was allowed to go on they'd toot the horn. You know, this rrrrr would go. And we could hear it all over

Crystal Beach. So you could almost hear everybody say, "Oh, the boat's in it's eleven o'clock." You know, we'd ... Our whole life during the summer tied around the boat. And what everybody did at nine o'clock ... They always would walk down the boardwalk to watch the nine o'clock boat come in and it was great fun to see all the people come off. And also, just like any kind of boat leaving. All our family from Buffalo ... My mother had also six sisters and brothers from Buffalo and they used to come and visit her all summer on the boat. And then we would go down to the boat to see them off. Well there isn't anything more heartwrenching in the world than to wave away somebody you love on a boat, even if it's Crystal Beach because I wouldn't be seeing my aunt till next year, you know, when they would come and so ... I can remember waving up on the top deck as a little boy and just crying my eyes out because my aunt was going away on the boat. So, as I said, our life tied around that boat.

**C.N.** Now this is the boat the band played on.

**F.T.** Yes.

**C.N.** Did it play all the time or just at night?

**F.T.** Just at night.

**C.N.** This would be the eight fifteen one or ... What time did it leave?

**F.T.** Yes, it left ... I've got it a little wrong. It got into Crystal Beach at nine thirty. It left Buffalo at eight. You can see, it was approximately an hour over and an hour back. And sometimes they would lay over an hour in Buffalo like the one fifteen ... It left here ... It would then come back at three thirty so there would be a little lay over there.

**C.N.** How big was this boat?

**F.T.** Well, as I said, it would take three thousand passengers. Mind you, it's being reconstructed again and it sits in the harbour in Buffalo now so we're all going to see it again. I'm going to work on it ... help scrape paint and repaint it any day now. Now what happened then in the four years I was at college ... I caught the ropes on the boat. And this was because in order for me to go to college I had to work two jobs. I worked the ballroom and I worked the dock. Now what was included in the dock job was that I cleaned the beach, because I was really quite a beachcomber at Crystal Beach in my time. I got up at four o'clock in the morning and

of course, it was daylight by then in the summer, daylight saving time and I picked every single piece of paper and any kind of garbage, whatever, that was on that beach from Bay Beach all the way to the dock. And that would take me three to four hours and then I went up on the dock. And my job was to sweep the dock and get it cleaned completely before the boat came in at eleven o'clock. Well, at eleven o'clock I went out and they threw me the ropes. If you've ever watched a boat come in, there's a little tiny guide rope that they throw that's just a quarter of an inch thick and then you haul the giant two inch cable up on that and put it over the buttons on the dock. And so I met every boat until six thirty. Well, the night watchman took the night watch. So, my last job there during the day was at six thirty, to take the six thirty boat. And I'd go home and have dinner and I'd report to the ballroom at eight o'clock for the opening of the ... And I'd work through to twelve o'clock at night, get home as best I could and be up at four the next morning. And that was seven days a week, except the ballroom didn't dance on Sunday night. The boat did but the ballroom ...

**C.N.** When you say you caught the ropes, you mean you actually stood on the dock and caught the ropes.

**F.T.** Yes, that's right. It was a little ... The boat sometimes ... You would never come right to the dock. It would come close. Then they would throw a very fine rope, about a quarter of an inch wide, a huge coil. And the man would throw this over and I would catch it. I only missed it once. One time they had to rethrow it. But then there would be a great huge three inch cable come out and I would put that over the button on the bridge. And then I would run to the back of the boat and get the back one. In the meantime the captain would be pulling the motor in to pull it to the back. But then they would winch it in. They would run a mechanical winch on the boat and that would then pull the boat up to the side of the dock. Now mind you there were some terrible storms. The boat in my time, I think only didn't come one day. The worst storms, the boat would still come. And mind you, Lake Erie being a shallow lake, there can be terrible storms come up in just two minutes, giant eight, ten foot waves and so I can remember

sometimes, that boat just ... The captain couldn't possibly get close. He would just ram it with the front of the boat. He would just drive it straight into the dock and they'd throw the rope to me off the front of the boat. And oh, it would make such a noise. You'd think, how can that boat stand it? I used to have nightmares of the boat not stopping and going on up on the beach, because I had seen a picture of one of the earlier boats that had actually beached in a storm. And it used to be one of the nightmares that I'd have sometimes. I'd wake up in the middle of the night and think ... I would be on the boat. I would see it and I would think it would my fault because I didn't catch the rope. And then another terrible story because I told you how hard I worked from four o'clock in the morning until twelve o'clock at night. So the only time during the day that I had a chance to do anything was from the one thirty till the three thirty boat because I'd go home for lunch and then I'd have a nap. And all my family were working. My mother sold tickets at the park, my father was painting, my sister was working. And so, stupid me, being young, I never used to set the alarm, I'd just lie down and have a little nap. Well, one day I woke up when the boat tooted at three thirty. And talk about panic! Oh! There I was on the bed and the boat was coming in and nobody there to catch the ropes. I thought, oh , I'm going to be fired. I'm going to be charged ... the police ... Oh, I was just ... You know, I never faced what was going to happen. Nobody ever thought you wouldn't be there. So, well, fortunately, it was a very, very calm day. And they told me after, the first mate just jumped off when they touched down. He jumped off and pulled the rope out ... And he said, "We didn't tell anybody, Fred, because we didn't want you to get caught." And they teased me the rest of the summer because they teased me that I was out getting drunk and hadn't been able to get there. But you see then I had wonderful times because on Sunday when I didn't have to go to the ballroom, I would jump on the boat at six thirty after I threw the rope on and I would go to Buffalo. And the captain would let me drive the boat all the way to Buffalo. And for some reason the captain had a real shine to me. He had a son too. And I was going to college at that point so he used to say, you know, we're so proud of you making something of yourself

and not just sitting around here. And he said, "We're proud of you to come." So he said, "I want you to come up with me on the deck." And so it was wonderful to be up on the top deck and see Buffalo with all the lights coming up in the fall. Then I would eat my dinner down in the sailor's mess. And then I'd get back at nine thirty. And mind you, like in August ... In June, of course, it wasn't dark until ten o'clock at night. But in August when you're coming back on the nine o'clock boat, Crystal Beach was all dark. And it was ... Well, the purser one night said, "Come and see it from my place." And he asked me to go in where he could get the view from the side of the ship. And it was the most beautiful thing because you see the roller coasters all had lights, all around the circles. The ballroom was all lit up: the domes were all lit up. And at that point they had a tower right beside the dock which had neon tubes on it, which was about eighty feet in the air. And so Crystal Beach from the water was just gorgeous with all these lights: coloured lights and the circles of the rides and things and you could see the rides going with all their lights on. So it really was quite a picture from the water at night: on a still night. They used to ...

**C.N.** Could you describe these rides: You said the roller coasters. How many were there?

**F.T.** Two. Mind you there'd been four at one time. At other times three and two. Now you've heard many times of the cyclone which was ... There were three cyclones, I think, in all of America: one in Chicago; one at Coney Island and one at Crystal Beach. And it was a desperate ride! It did figure eights and loop the loops and all kinds of things. And it went sixty miles an hour and hair pin turns. And it used to be on the east side of the dance hall. It made such a racket, we most of the time had to keep the doors closed. You see, the ballroom could be opened up so all the air could just sweep through it in the summertime. So that, we had to keep some of those doors closed because the cyclone made such a noise that we couldn't hear the orchestra play.

**C.N.** What is the cyclone?

**F.T.** It was a roller coaster. But it was really vicious. You had to be a real daredevil to go on it. Mind you three people were killed on it.

**C.N.** How?

**F.T.** Well, they sat up in the chair instead of staying down. They sat up on the back of the seat instead of sitting in where the guardrail was. They weren't aware of how dangerous it was. And as they'd go up over this very sharp turn, they just kept on going and didn't turn. There was a friend of mine: my father's, Ray Sherk. And we saw pictures the other night of all the people coming off the boat with their white straw boaters which was quite the thing in the nineteen twenties. Everybody wore a boater. We ... Ray Sherk is from Silver Creek, New York and he came. And my father said, "Come on you're so big and brave. We'll see if you go on the cyclone." So they went down. And they always had a place for you to leave your hats when you went up on the place. But he was too proud. He said, "This hat came from New York and it cost way too much for me to leave laying on a dock in Crystal Beach. So he took his hat. Well, of course, he couldn't wear it because of the speed so he held it in his hand. And when he got through ... My father always joked about this ... He just had popcorn in his hands. The hat was crushed to bits from squeezing when he went around these hairpin turns. So what we used to do ... There were eight of us worked in the ballroom. And we always had uniforms: grey flannel pants and navy blue blazers and shirt and tie and white bucks were the uniform shoes at that point. And so at quarter to eight we used to all go on the cyclone and they would let us ride free. And they always used to say, "Here come the dance hall boys." And we'd all trail up the ramp and we'd sit in the front two by two by two: three, four seats. And I did that every night for about two summers. So the cyclone I knew very well. And it never lost its interest because it was such an exciting ride. And we were always pleased to go. The other interesting thing is: they used to line us up at the ballroom like the army. And at eight o'clock the drummajorette who was Mr. Dumont ... Frank Dumont lived at Crystal Beach for years. And he would say alright, "Quick march." And we would step just like the army: left, right, left, right. And we would parade right down ... It was like the changing of the guard. We'd parade from the front of the bandstand right down through the ballroom and then we'd circle around and drop each person off at their station

like they were ... We had boxes with a crusher in it to put the tickets in. And there were like eight gates so you could get onto the dance floor. And so we would all drop these people off. And on busy days there would be like five, six, hundred people watching us do this because they would all be around the outside waiting for the dancing to start.

**C.N.** Did you collect the tickets as well?

**F.T.** Oh yes. Well, I mean, I didn't collect them now. But I mean ... When the couple came through ... It was just like going into the theatre. There were iron channels: pipe channels for you to go in with: then with the red velvet rope like they have at the theatres too. We had those at the start. Like you'd line up in the bank these days. And so the people would all be lined up in these channels and you'd take tickets with both hands. And the couple would come through. And these had ... You know in the theatre they used to rip them in half and give you the stub. Well, we had to crush them with our hands. It took quite awhile to learn. But you had to learn to break these things in two and then drop them in the box. Well then you had like a ship's wheel on the front of the box. And if you'd stolen one and put it on the wall people would have thought it was a ship's wheel. And when you cranked that ... There was a grinder in the bottom of the box and that crushed all the tickets all up into like confetti. In fact we used to use it as confetti on the carnival night. And we'd have buckets of this stuff in a basket up on the top and let it come down over the people.

**C.N.** What was carnival night?

**F.T.** Well, you see, during the depression they did all kinds of things to try and keep people coming and on Tuesday night was carnival night. And I used to in the afternoons blow three thousand balloons and hang them on the ceiling. There were four of us. In those days you didn't have helium tanks. We blew them by hand and then tied them and then hung them up. And then we had confetti and you know what I call serpentine, the paper streamers that they throw off of boats when they go away ... Everybody that came through for the first dance got a roll of serpentine and then some people got confetti later on. Then of course, in the balloons there



were prize tickets. Like there would be a floor lamp or a folding chair or a little pocket radio or something of that sort, that you'd get if you won the ... if you found the ticket inside the balloon. So of course, that meant everybody ... It was great fun when the balloons came down because everybody went chasing around and of course, everybody was breaking them to see if they had the ticket in it. It was kind of fun. But it was just something to ... a gimmick to get people to come. And then we also had spot dances on Thursday night which they'd darken the whole ballroom. And I used to run the spot a good bit of the time. We had just a single white spot and then you'd keep putting this on the people as they danced and whoever the spotlight was on at the end of the dance ... They won the prize. And they were usually nice prizes, like a chest of silver or a set of dishes or something like that.

**C.N.** That doesn't sound very fair. You picked who ...

**F.T.** Oh no. I didn't know the people from Adam. And I wouldn't know when the music ... It was like musical chairs. I never knew when the music was going to stop. But I just slowly ... I put on the couple long enough that you could see that that's the couple in red and over here that's the lady with the blue dress. And you know, it would just be maybe thirty seconds on each ... But you kept moving it around and of course, for the people watching it was great fun because they would only see the dancers when the spot came up. Cause the rest of the time the ballroom was in the dark.

**C.N.** And you didn't know when the band was going to stop playing?

**F.T.** No, so I never knew who I had it on or what. So it was just whoever it happened to be at the time. They'd win the prize.

**C.N.** And the band didn't pay any attention to what you were doing?

**F.T.** No. Well, I don't know. I can't remember all that much but the boss was standing on the bandstand and he gave away the prize so all I did was run the spotlight and it never had anything to do with who it was or ... I just kept going till the music stopped ... Had a lot of fun.

**C.N.** Tell me about the other rides. You mentioned one. Did you go on the others?

**F.T.** Oh, as young people we rode all of them. And they would change as the years went on. Now what I was interested in the other night is that we had the old mill: the boat, you know, that went around in the canal. And it was always supposed to be so you could make love in the dark. You went around in it. But it was kind of fun. And that had come up from Erie Beach. I didn't know that but there was ... Until quite recently ... It was only, I think, four years ago, they stopped having it. Now in most amusement parks when you'd go on the old mill you went around this canal all through the dark and then at the end you would come down the shoot into the water. They now have a new ride where you shoot the shoots in the boat but they don't have the canal that you go round. And then there were all kinds of scary things like a ghost would jump out at you or a skeleton would come down from the ceiling and hit you in the face. And then they also had scenes that were very pretty like the Disney Land things you know, where you're in the jungle land. There would be a crocodile and a palm tree and ... sitting in the water and interesting things like that.

**C.N.** Did they get a lot of their rides from Erie Beach?

**F.T.** Not a lot but some. Now you remember me telling you about the neon tower that was over by the dock. Well that originally was the airplane ride and there were four giant airplanes that would seat about eight people that were on chains and these ... The motor would run around and then these airplanes would go way out and swing around on the ends of the chains. Now that had come up from Erie Beach. And if you've ever been to Erie Beach you can see the cement abutments out in the water that used to be over the water down there. But here it was on the shore so you could look as if you were over the water but you weren't: you were over the shore. And then when that broke down and got too old they just sold the airplanes off and then they just put neon on the tower and built a garden down below. And it was sort of just a pretty place to go and sit. So ... No but there were tumblebugs and heyday and what we called the waterscooters which they still have: the little boats with rubber bumpers in the water and you go round bumping everybody with them. It's kind of fun. And then they also have the auto scooters which are the little cars

that you go round and bump with. And the fun house used to be the great thing. They don't have it anymore. It's just a penny arcade anymore. But it had great huge tower slides like you'd go up to the third floor and circle down in a figure eight and you'd come way flying down till you got into the bowl at the bottom. Ed said the other day it was called the sugar bowl. I used to just call it the bowl. But when you got into this bowl ... The bowl was about nine feet high and about the size of this room [fourteen feet by fourteen feet]. And it was all waxed see like a slide. It was all oak: fine oak boards. And you couldn't get out of this thing. You had to ... You know, you had to keep running and pushing until you could get yourself up the side of this thing to get out. So it was great fun. It was like a trap. You had to learn to get yourself out. Mind you, there was an attendant and if you were new at the game and you couldn't manage they'd throw a rope down and pull you out. But they would let you fool around for awhile. And at one point the lad ... The slide as you came down was actually outside the funhouse. So you'd come sliding down ... you'd go shooting outside and you could see all over the park and the trees and you'd come back in again. And then they had always the crazy mirrors, you know, like they always have in the funhouse. They had twenty or thirty of those things where you'd get either fat or skinny or wobbly or any number of things. And there was also a barrel. And that was like a slippery floor. And it was a complete barrel. And it kept rolling. And of course, if you got in and sat down it would roll you up half a side and then you'd slide down and it would roll you up half ... And of course, the idea was that you could get in and climb up on it. And you could spend an hour in there as a kid. Adults, I suppose would spend two or three minutes. But for children it was like that thing at Ontario Place. You know they've got the great big air mattress where the kids just all get in and bounce. It was like that. You'd have sometimes fifty people in this barrel all going round. It was kind of fun. But as the depression came we'd ... I was telling Janette the other day: our friends were the Whitlingers from Buffalo. And their son was named Fred too. He was thirteen. I was twelve. And we would be on the beach all day swimming and then at night we were given a dime. And that either went for the funhouse. one

night and the next night for roller skating. We could go roller skating all night for ten cents. So we would go and roller skate one night. The next night we would go in the funhouse. Then if we got a little tempted and bought a waffle or some ice cream or something and we didn't have any money then we'd go and sit up in the balcony and watch people dance till nine o'clock. Then we'd have to go ... But every single night ...

**C.N.** How much did the other rides cost?

**F.T.** They were all a nickle in the early days. And then they got to be ten cents. And then you got to buy tickets, three for a quarter. But, you know, in the later days it got even more than that. Like, I think, the comet coaster today is almost a dollar. And it went up in the fifties to twenty-five cents. And we thought that was horendous. But they always still had lineups. We had the wild mouse too which I loved for awhile but it's gone again too. Like a little roller coaster ... Were you ever on it? They had one at EXPO 67. They've got one at the exhibition but ... Now Mr. ... I can't get his name. But he does all the concessions at the exhibition. Mr.Compton or something like that. But he had ... He was like an independent man. He paid a percentage. And he ran the kiddie land. And he brought all those rides down and set them up. And then he ran them with his help. And then he took a percentage of it. Oh, we used to love the little roller coaster. It was, you know, for kids two and three years old but ... Did you ever see it: the little roller coaster?

**C.N.** No. Are you saying he brought the rides from the ex?

**F.T.** The highest hill was like eight feet and then it ... These little kids would get on and ride around. It was such fun. And they had little motor boats and little merry-go-rounds.

**C.N.** Are you saying he brought rides from the C.N.E.

**F.T.** I don't think so. He has ...

**C.N.** Where did he get them?

**F.T.** He was like a concessionaire for all kinds of carnivals. I think like when you have a lions carnival in Beamsville or a lions carnival ... I think he would be one of the people who'd bring these things down on a truck: in the old days on a train.

**C.N.** So, how long would he leave them there?

**F.T.** Well, these he would leave all summer. I think his name was Pattie Compton. He was a friend of my father's and I used to always hear about him. My father would say, "Well, Pattie was down today." But when you go by the exhibition, the next time on the go train, he'd got an old train sitting on the track there which are his quarters to live in. When he's at the exhibition you'll see them. I don't think he's alive anymore. I think he died two years ago. But this is the sort of thing ... We used to think the Crystal Beach Company owned the whole park. But they sometimes would have ... Now they did have concessionaires because Mr. Hall who owned the company in the latter years ... Mr. Hall came over from Buffalo on the boat with a peanut wagon just like the old fashioned Italian people would go around and sell peanuts on the street corner, you know. And he came over and he sold peanuts and popcorn. And he'd come over on the boat, sell on the boat and walk around the park and then go home on the last boat. Well then he made enough money that he built a permanent candy concession at the park. And he made Hall's Candy Suckers. Well, then he made a little bit more money. And he made another candy shop in the corner and it was called Hall's Candy Kisses which were toffee kisses. And then he branched into the popcorn and he had a popcorn concession. Well, when the Crystal Beach Company went broke in the depression, nineteen thirty, thirty-one, somewhere there ... The people who owned it went broke. And then it went into receivership with the bank where they'd gotten loan money. So the Crystal Beach Company was sold for practically nothing. And Mr. Hall had had enough money socked away from his candy concessions that he was able to buy the park. And he bought the Crystal Beach boat for twenty-five thousand dollars and the dock in Buffalo. That was twenty-five thousand dollars. And I don't know what he paid for the park. But it was like, you know, two hundred thousand dollars, he paid for the whole park. But at that point nobody had a cent so he was able to do it. And so then the Hall's became single family owner of the whole thing.

**C.N.** And how long did they own it for?

**F.T.** Now later on it became an incorporated company and I think people took stock in the company. But it was always a family company until they lost it what: four or five years ago?

**C.N.** You said he bought the Crystal Beach Boat? What was that?

**F.T.** That was the Canadiana.

**C.N.** Oh!

**F.T.** It was always called the Crystal Beach Line. And we called it the Crystal Beach Boat. It was never called the Canadiana except once every ten years. It was called the Crystal Beach Boat. So that the dock at the foot of Commercial Street and the boat ... That's where it stayed in the winter: all winter. It was docked in Buffalo in the harbour. And so he bought that. And then he bought the beach because that was a separate company. So he bought that separately from the park.

**C.N.** How did Crystal Beach get started in the first place. You mentioned a company owned it. How did they ...

**F.T.** Well, in the very beginning ... And Jay E. Rebstock who founded the village of Crystal Beach started the park too. And it was what ... If you have heard the word ... We now have the original chautauqua at James Town. But after they'd started them there, this became the thing. Everybody had chautauquas all over the country. We had a television programme last winter. I don't know whether you saw it or not. The CBC did it for two hours. It was called Chautauqua. And it was about the chautauquas that would go through the west: through Saskatchewan. And it was a tent city that would arise and it was essentially a religious operation. The preachers came and there would be ten or twelve preachers. And they preached right around the clock: all day and during the night. And they would come, like for two weeks and then there would be a chautauqua. Well, everybody was ... really a social occasion because people brought their picnics for the morning and for their lunch and for their dinner. And there was band music because you can't listen to preachers all the time. And they listened to band concerts and they sang hymns and they walked around the beautiful ... because they were always in a beautiful park by the water and people would go swimming but they they'd come back and hear the sermons again. So the essential thing was religious. There was a chautauqua: a permanent chautauqua at Grimsby Beach. And the boat from Toronto used to come over there every Sunday and people would come over and sit and listen to the sermon, like they go to Niagara-on-the-Lake or to the theatre today.

And so Crystal Beach originally ... There was just a small little boat and it was a picnic ground and a beach and they would set up the tents for two weeks or three weeks in the summer. And then gradually, you see, it began to be a little longer. People wanted to stay a little longer so people would come and live in tents for a little while. Then there got to be a hotel up on the hill so people could stay in the hotel. And there were always very quickly, like my Uncle arrives with his barber shop. There were people very quickly got on to the idea that they came with a hot dog stand and a popcorn stand and the salt water toffee stand. And they could make money and sell postcards. And so it all started as these sort of little peripheral businesses that came around. Well, then of course it became fairly respectable for children to ride on a merry-go-round, you know, even though it was ...

**C.N.** You mean it wasn't at one time?

**F.T.** No, but even though it was a church camp it wasn't too irreligious to have your children ride on a merry-go-round. I mean to go on a roller coaster is something else again if you're going to a religious meeting. But gradually you see the little sort of minor concessions and the little rides: the carousal and the water boat and the canoes and this sort of thing started. Until, after awhile the concessions got to be the important thing and nobody preached anymore. And so they had the place and the location and the concession stand so it just gradually evolved into an amusement park. And of course, it developed as a complete village very quickly. J. E. Rebstock's farm is now what is the central part of Crystal Beach . Then Charlie Haune owned what was the orchard and the other whole piece up here. And then the Bradville Farm was from where Saint George's Church is right to the lake: great huge farm. And then over the years they sold off lots and developed and developed and then gradually it moved into a village. And my mother and father bought their home in nineteen seventeen on Alexandra Road. And they were the first house there. And we've got pictures of just a dirt road and a wooden sidewalk. First of all a dirt sidewalk and, you know, just a path at the side of the road and then it became a wood sidewalk. And then Mr. and Mrs. Skerret bought the house at the other end of the street. And we have pictures of their house from our house and there's nothing there but just a track. And gradually, gradually

people sold lots and like Aunt Jenny when she came here there was ... She had a one room little shed here. And she rented that, with a pump in front of it so they could get water. And that's what she rented for the summer. And then gradually she put on a bedroom and then she put on bathroom and she gradually made a house and then as renting that she then had enough money to buy the lot next door. And she put another house on and gradually expanded like that. So that Crystal Beach just suddenly in the ... From nineteen seventeen till nineteen thirty really, really was when most people came. And of course, it was all to be near the beach. And you know, if you go today ... Like my cousin took me to the beach in California. They live in Los Angeles. But we went out to the beach for the day. Back from that beach in California there are five blocks of houses just like Crystal Beach is, you see, where people go and rent a cottage for the summer. Well you go to Honolulu and if you want a cottage you can't get one on the shore ... You go back three blocks and you walk out to the beach. Well, that's the way Crystal Beach used to be. Everybody here went to the beach in the afternoon. There was just, you know ... There wasn't anybody in their houses at all. Another interesting thing that people forget about ... My father used to cut ice in the winter up at the canoe club and the Teal brothers had a great huge ice house down here and it's still there. And they still sell ice to a small extent but not ... You see there was no electrical refrigeration. Well, you think, if there were a hundred thousand people from Fort Erie to Point Abino and they had ice, they sold ... And I've worked on the ice truck as a kid. They sold twenty-five pounds and fifty pounds and we went around on the ice truck with this stuff all in sawdust and put it in people's iceboxes out in their ... in the back part of the kitchen, all over the place. And they had a fantastic business. And in the winter they sold coal to keep us warm.

**C.N.** Where did they get the ice?

**F.T.** Out of Lake Erie. And as I said we have pictures if I could ever find them of my father you know, with the saw, sawing the blocks of ice out in the bay near the canoe club. And mind you, all the people, all along Point Abino ... That's what the men would do in the winter. They all had icehouses of their own which are still there. They now



have a sleeping loft in the top and a little bar down below in some of these winter ... old homes along Point Abino. But those were all icehouses and they would cut the ice during the winter: January and February. And put it in the icehouse and cover it with sawdust and of course, it was insulated and so then all summer long they could just go out and bring a block of ice in and they had their refrigeration until electric refrigeration came in. See electric refrigeration didn't come till the forties really to any extent. So that the ice business was a great big business at Crystal Beach because everybody had their Canadian beer and their high balls and they needed some ice for it in addition to keeping your food and your milk. And of course, we forget, you know, cause there was a bakery man came and delivered bread to everyone at the houses. There was a milkman who delivered milk and cream and even ice cream and butter and eggs to the house. There were a lot of farmers who had an egg run. Our member of parliament, Girve Fretz ... His mother used to bake pies and bring them out and sell them to all the restaurants during the depression. And Girve and his brother used to bring the pies around. Everybody was trying to make a buck.

**C.N.** Are you saying people didn't have to go out for groceries?

**F.T.** Oh yes they did.

**C.N.** They did go out then?

**F.T.** But I'm saying that in your icebox you had your milk and your cream and all of these things came to your door and your bread too. Your staples came. You only had to go out for meat and ... even vegetable people came by. There were wonderful vegetable trucks that would come by and bring all kinds of wonderful things. Another story which is not very nice but a very interesting one cause poor old Honey's dead now but Honey Teal just died last year. Honey Teal and his father used to run what they called the honey wagon. And Aunt Jenny was really such a character and she loved everybody and everybody loved her. Till the day Honey died every Christmas he brought her a jar of prune juice. That was their joke. And she took him a dozen oranges and a dozen bananas. But Honey ... the Teal boys were all great big husky people because they worked on the ice truck and they also worked on the honey wagon. And so he went by one day when Aunt Jenny was

renting a cottage to some girls and she said, "Hello there Honey." I can hear her ... That's the way Aunt Jenny ... "Hello there Honey". And Honey went, "Hello there Jenny. How are you?" And the girls said, "Oh. Is that your boyfriend?" And she said, "What do you mean? My boyfriend!" "Well, you called him Honey." "Oh that's his nickname because he runs the honey wagon." Well the honey wagon was, you know ... Everybody had outdoor toilets and you had tin cans in them and you did your job in there for the week. And like the garbage, two nights a week you put the pails out in front and Honey came along and put them in the honey wagon and took them to the farm and dumped them. That was your sewage. Now can you imagine what a sweet smelling job that was? And so Honey was a real good nickname for the fellow who drove ... But Honey was a wonderful fellow. And of course, that very quickly passed out. I think it was nineteen twenty-seven when they paved all the streets at Crystal Beach and put sewer systems in. We had one of the first sewer systems in Southern Ontario. And you know what's stupid, like Ridgeway got sewers in ... when we went into Fort Erie. Fort Erie had to build sewers at Ridgeway because Crystal Beach and Fort Erie had them and they didn't. And now it's regional government so they had to have sewers. And the same with the water system. It really is a tragedy that they took the Crystal Beach water supply away and supposedly combined it with Fort Erie because they've gone down to MacDonald Drive there where there's mud and they've got terrible water. Crystal Beach went out here almost nine miles on white sand and our water was gorgeous. And there was nothing wrong with the system. We still could have run and Fort Erie could have supplied Ridgeway but they decided they'd have a municipal system. And that's why all of us are now paying seventy dollar water bills. We used to pay ten dollars for the year. That's no never mind. That's just carping.

**C.N.** Tell me about this hotel that your family had. Did they build the hotel?

**F.T.** Yes. My father and my uncle were very handy. Being painting contractors they could paint but they were also builders and they were also electricians. So that as they would need more space ... Why they 'd call Jim and Charlie and they'd get at it and build whatever they needed. So that the hotel went up in pieces. The central part that I can't find the picture

of was fairly like any store in any downtown section but then they gradually built out on top and built up and they built up and they built rooms, built up around it. And it was always in a state of flux because my uncle Ed closed the hotel which was in nineteen sixty four. He was in the process of becoming the first cocktail lounge in Crystal Beach. That was just when all the cocktail lounges came in. In order to be a cocktail lounge you had to be something special. You couldn't just have, you know, chairs and tables and a linoleum floor. You had to have carpeting and you had to have chesterfields to sit on and you had to have proper cocktail tables and indirect lighting. There were any number of these ... And so my uncle was in the process. He already had the contract and the drawings ... having the front ladies beverage room turned into a cocktail lounge. What happened, my aunt developed cancer: very severe cancer. She suddenly couldn't function in the hotel anymore. And there was great discussion about what should happen because they owned the three houses over by the roller coaster there on Erie Road. And so everybody said well why don't you just sell the hotel, you know, and go over to the house. It's too bad they didn't because they had marvelous offers because there were only at that point two beer licences in Crystal Beach. And you know, anybody who had a licence ... You could sell it for a fortune. And my Uncle Ed said, "Well, this had been our home all our lives and we've lived here sixty years: as a married couple sixty years. Why should we move away. This is our home." So they just closed the barroom. Well that was very tough on Aunt Ida and Aunt Jenny because then they didn't have a job in the barroom anymore. But they were glad of the quiet because then they didn't have to work so hard. But the still had their thirteen houses to run. So they were pretty busy. And they were getting older too at that time. So my Aunt Jenny ... My Aunt Abby died at seventy-one of the cancer. My Aunt Jenny then nursed my Uncle Ed and took care of him until he was ninety-four. And so she had her hands full running the hotel and all her houses and taking care of him too. But it really was too bad because then she was left at the end with this great big hotel with all the stuff and it wasn't a functioning hotel any longer. She took boarders until about nineteen sixty-nine. She had roomers but she never had the dining room open. And then of course, when

it got too much for her to handle then that's when she decided ... She asked me to move her over here. My father and my Uncle Jim built this house for my Aunt Jenny as her home. That's why it's not as cottagey. This was to be her home because she never knew when she was going to have to move out of the hotel. On top of which she came close to getting married three times and then she and her husband were going to move over to her house. So that was all sort of ... you know, if you've got a little bit of money you plan ahead. She had a home ready for herself but until she was eighty-one she never got to live here. I've got off the track with the hotel but what is interesting too because as things opened up they always had a dining room. Well then it began to look like they could have beer and so what they got ... It was called four four beer which was just like water practically. The Americans just a year later got three two beer under Mr. Roosevelt. It's a very interesting thing that we thought ... You know, up until that time you could buy beer or liquor in a liquor store but you had to go home and drink it. There were no public outlets anywhere in Ontario to go and drink anything, not even ... Certainly, you know, we only got it with meals, I guess ten years ago or so. You couldn't have anything in the dining room until quite recently. So, they with all the Americans coming ... They were serving four four beer with their meals. Well boy, they had people lined up in the summer. Even with four four beer it was tasting pretty good.. It was very interesting because now we're back to light beer again and it's not even four four. But at any rate ... And then they got what they called the good beer: the strong stuff, they finally got. I can't tell you when. In nineteen thirty-three, thirty-four, somewhere in there. And they ... Because Alf Wilson, I told you, was our member of Parliament and a good friend of our family all the years ... They got the first licence in the whole Niagara District. Now mind you, the Queen's Hotel in Ridgeway got theirs about a week later. And of course Niagara Falls and Fort Erie came about a month later. But I guess because it was summer and Crystal Beach only had summer they saw to it that we got the licence first. But they had the first licence and I wish you could have been there. It was bedlam. Now mind you, at that stage I was what, eight years old or something? But I can remember the people were lined around the block like for a fantastic

movie to get in. And they had to limit them to four beers. Then they had to go out the other side so they'd get the rest of the people in.

It was just bedlam!

**C.N.** This was in nineteen thirty-four?

**F.T.** Somewhere there ... I can't ... I'm sure that the government ... You could trace that to when licences came out. Mind you we've got the licence somewhere in that draw if I ever ...

**C.N.** When did they start serving this four four beer?

**F.T.** Well, it was like a year before. They'd sort of done this to kind of get people, I guess lined up and sort of give them a chance to have dry runs and get things ready. But you see, this was what was wonderful because what happened at that point ... There were bottles but nobody drank bottles. There were kegs in the cellar and they were refrigerated. I mean, in spite of all the ice business those were electrically refrigerated kegs down in the cellar and there were taps. And there was draft beer. And oh did it taste good on a summer ... hot summer ... I'm not a drinker. I think I've had maybe eight glasses of beer in my whole life. But nevertheless on a hot summer's day when it's a hundred and ten, a glass of beer looks awfully good. And boy could they ever sell it! So as I said, there were a lot of historic things happened there. Like the first general store, the first post office, the first treasurer, the first justice of the peace, the first court, the first hard liquor, or hard beer, I should say. And all of these things were there.

**C.N.** How did your aunt get to be postmistress?

**F.T.** She applied. And I suppose it was through Alf Wilson being a member of parliament, I don't know. I just think there was a need for it. You see you'd have thought it would have been Uncle Ed but you see, he had the hotel. And he was already the treasurer at the point and he was in barbering and you know, he had enough things to do and I'm sure he thought, "Well Ida's staying here at the hotel with us and this will give her a little income. So we'll let Ida be the postmistress." So she applied. And it was you know ... The Rebstocks and the Truckenbrodts had been good friends for all these years and you know, there's never been a buff. But I think after three or four years and Aunt Ida had been a postmistress. Then ... You see, it was in a general store. They actually built a post office and George Rebstock was given the postmaster's

job. Well, Aunt Ida and George Rebstock didn't talk for about a year because Aunt Ida was so hurt that without any word of warning, it was just suddenly George Rebstock is now the postmaster. And Mr. Rebstock was the postmaster until they built the new post office on the circle here and Bobby Bruce became the new postmaster. But at that time Mr. Rebstock, I think, was sixty-five and pensioned off. That little booklet that I showed you, that's George Rebstock, the second postmaster of Crystal Beach. That's his little book of his life. It's very good too. It's very exciting. Now, I don't know what else I can tell you except ... Did I tell you about the fact that after we had the men from the ... that helped build the dance hall. Well then the Welland Canal was built: the new Welland Canal. And of course, that was a gigantic thing that went on for seven, nine years. And these people were brought from all over the world to work on that canal. And of course ... Where do you put all these extra people? Port Colborne didn't have room. Welland didn't have room. So they came on down the road to Crystal Beach. And they had ... For four years they had the people who worked on the Welland Canal. They had fifty boarders there. And it was wonderful as a young boy, having all these people around but it was tremendous work for them because they had to give them breakfast in the morning before they went to work. There were, I think, two buses that used to bring them down and take them back again. And they would pack lunches for them to eat on the job. When they got home at night, they had fifty men for dinner. Can you imagine the work for these four people? My Uncle Ed did the roast and the turkey. My aunts baked and they made potatoes. And then Aunt Ida and Aunt Jenny served table.

**C.N.** Did they all stay in the hotel?

**F.T.** Yes

**C.N.** How many rooms were in the hotel?

**F.T.** Well, there were only eighteen rooms. I don't know. They must have crowded three in a room. I don't know how they did it. But they were sure packed in. And you know, we always tell this story because the Faiazza brothers came from Italy to work on the canal. They were cement and stone masons. And they liked Crystal Beach so much that when the canal finished they bought a little house here and opened

a business, The Faiazza Brothers Cement Works. Now if you look on all the sidewalks of Crystal Beach except the ones that have recently been changed there's a little imprint on the corner that says "Faiazza Brothers Contractors Crystal Beach". And they built every sidewalk in the village of Crystal Beach. They also did any number of projects all over the place. But the interesting thing of that is, of course, if you've been here long enough, that Madeline Faiazza, Mr. Bert Faiazza's ... I think it's Bart Faiazza actually. His daughter Madeline was the mayor of Fort Erie for ... terms just the time before Mr. Como. So it's very interesting that this is how the Faiazza's came ... They came in from Italy to work on the canal. And mind you, Mrs. Faiazza, even after Mr. Faiazza died ... She was here at Aunt Jenny's all the time. And Aunt Jenny was over there. They were great friends. And their birthday's coincided so they always used to celebrate their birthdays together.

**C.N.** I wonder how she became so qualified to become mayor of Fort Erie?

**F.T.** Well, she went to Ridgeway High School and I went to school with Florence Faiazza. She won all the prizes from the day one. She was a brilliant girl. And Madeline was extremely bright too. And now Madeline was a Fort Erie councillor. I don't know what she was a Crystal Beach councillor before we went into regional government. But she certainly was in politics for quite awhile. And she was ... After she was the mayor she was our regional representative for Fort Erie at regional government in St. Catharines. So ... And Madeline's considerably younger than I am. She was one of the babies ... Mind you, I think they've got seven girls and one boy. They've lived here all their lives. Well I've run out of things for a minute. We talked about Mr. Rebstock becoming the second postmaster and you were asking me before. Mr. J. E. Rebstock founded Crystal Beach. And as a young boy I used to deliver the Toronto Star. And I used to deliver it to the J. E. Rebstock household. He had his second wife at that point: a very pretty younger woman who had been his nurse. But he lived to be a very good age about ninety-four or ninety-five, something like that. But I was there at the house for like three years. And Mrs. Rebstock was the kind of lovely lady who would always say, "Come in and have a glass of milk and a cookie." on a winter's night when you were taking your rounds with the papers.

And so I would see the old gentleman sitting in the corner by the fireplace with his robe over him. And so I always feel very privileged to think that, you know, that I know the man who founded Crystal Beach. Now he also founded Crystal Beach in Florida. And my mother's very best friend, Mrs. Butler ... Mr. and Mrs. Butler owned the miniature railway in Crystal Beach in the early days before it even was incorporated: when it was a chautauqua. And so we used to hear stories of them going back and forth because they also had property in Crystal Beach, Florida. And J. E. Rebstock and his wife had a housecar like the trailers ... Now you can't imagine this in nineteen twenty-five but they did. And then the Butler's had an old bus that was remodeled into a house. And I guess it took, what, like ten days to drive to Florida. And they would start out and drive day by day until they get to Florida. They lived in Crystal Beach, Florida all winter and then come back. Now then there was George Rebstock's brother Walter Rebstock ran the Bay Beach club where George now owns all the beach and ...