

This is Neil Flindall in the apartment of Pauline Cheffin in the Albany Apartment Building, and it's June Seventeenth; Nineteen Eighty-Five.

**N.F:** What is your full name?

**P.C:** My name is Pauline Cheffins, I was born Pauline Barnhardt, and I was married a second time...a first time, my name was Heckman and now my name is Cheffins.

**N.F:** And you were born in Fort Erie?

**P.C:** Yes, I was born on Queen Street and when I was nine months old we moved to Walnut Street, and the houses were all moved before the Bridge was built, and I can remember going down Queen Street, and our house...we lived in it...and we came home from school and we couldn't find the house...and it was down the 'baby hole', we spent the night there, and then they moved it on to...

**N.F:** You were still living there when they moved the house?

**P.C:** Yes, yes, in the evening the whole thing was moving...and then that's the first house on Princess Street.

**N.F:** Is that right the first house on Princess Street there.

**P.C:** Behind the Bank of Commerce.

**N.F:** Who were your neighbours there, on Walnut Street?

**P.C:** Mr. and Mrs. Mann, Richard and Dorthea; Mr. and Mrs. Wilbur; Steimans; McGlauchlands, and then there was Naylor's, and Vales, and Kerricks; that's all the way down the street, and then across the street were Uncles, family most of them.

**N.F:** When everything was moved, did it stay within the area. or did it move out of the area?

**P.C:** No, most of them moved in their houses I think some of them moved out, but most just stayed. Yes some houses were moved just on Walnut Street, and then years later they went up the hill.

**N.F:** That's amazing.

**P.C:** Isn't that something. But we saw the Peace Bridge built and it was a big day when it was opened.

**N.F:** It was a big ceremony?

**P.C:** Yes, oh yes, the Prince of Wales was here, all the big dignitaries and stuff. There was pictures of us sitting along, watching it.

**N.F:** What school did you attend?

**P.C:** I went to one over on Bertie Street, when we just started school, and one on the alley, John's Street, there was a building there we went...there was no kindergarden, I didn't start to school till I was seven years old...and I went to Douglas School, and from there I went to High School.

**N.F:** Would that be when Douglas was first opened?

**P.C:** No it was opened in the eighteen-somethings, I think.

**N.F:** The school behind Princess Street there, was there a name for that, do you remember a name on it?

**P.C:** I don't think so, not that I can remember, no I don't think...it was just like a building, we just went to school there. And then there was one on Bertie Street, over there where the Legion Hall was later, and the library at one time. But it was, you know...all the streets were dirt roads, you know, and stuff like that, and we always would you know, if you had a birthday in winter time, you always had a...there was always snow, and they never carried the snow away, we had snow all winter, and really snow, they don't know what it is like now.

**N.F:** It has changed.

**P.C:** Oh, yes we really had a lot of snow, but we used to have ah...milk brought around in a milk wagon you know, we used to have to go out with a pitcher for the milk, it wasn't always clean.

**N.F:** Maybe it's not now.

**P.C:** Outside toilets of course, we all had outside toilets, knocked them down on Halloween.

**N.F:** Did you keep chickens?

**P.C:** Oh, yes we had a lot of chickens.

**N.F:** Wasn't that really common then?

**P.C:** Oh, yes, well my Dad had a lot, but I mean everybody didn't have them, but we had a great big garden...you had to. And that's how Doctor Douglas got paid, with a couple of chickens and some vegetables, he never got any money from us, it was all from the Americans; up here around Waverly Beach, and Erie Beach.

**N.F:** He was a very good Doctor I hear.

**P.C:** Oh, yes he was a good Doctor, I can remember him you know, well

I was about twelve or thirteen when he died...maybe he died later, you know, but he brought us all into the world...and never got paid for it.

**N.F:** His office was in the South End; his home was his office.

**P.C:** Yes, a beautiful white home on the corner of...where the Bank of Montreal is now, Bertie and Niagara Boulevard. There it had a white picket fence.

**N.F:** And there was no hospital?

**P.C:** No, no, the hospital was built around nineteen thirty-two I think, my nephew was one of the first hundred that was born there.

**N.F:** Oh, really. What would you do if you needed an operation, or a bone set?

**P.C:** Well they had to go to Niagara Falls, because the one time we had a big accident, with our Sunday School Picnic...a truck turned over and they thought my arm was broken, but they just kept me home for about ten days.

**N.F:** Was it a 'hay-ride'?

**P.C:** No it was two trucks, and my uncle went to pass the other truck, and caught the wheels...and my mother was pregnant with my sister, and the thing went over and she went right over the back as there was three of us kids in there.

**N.F:** Everything turned out all right?

**P.C:** Oh yes, it was fine.

**N.F:** How about businesses in the South End?

**P.C:** Well, W. J. Hawley had a store...my father worked in there; and Frank Cole had a butcher shop; and ah, there wasn't too many I don't think...and the King Edward Hotel was there, and the Anglo American, and the King Edward was quite a popular hotel then and the people would come over on the ferry you see...and there was no Peace Bridge at that time, and that's where they stayed, it was a real popular hotel then. It has deteriorated but it was a real nice hotel. And Hunts had the Anglo American and then there was the Queens Hotel, of course that was a coach stop at one time, you see, it was old. I can remember that when it was a private home Coyne's lived in there, see she was a Hawkins and they owned all

that property around that corner...and Jessie Coyne lived in there and her son had a birthday party there, and it was just a private home then. And that's like where the Erie Lane is now, you know Grammy's, is a...was a private home, Roses lived in there, yes Arthur Rose and his family, and that was a private home at one time. Everything has changed.

**N.F:** Did you ride the 'ferry'?

**P.C:** Oh yes, many times, yes.

**N.F:** It was well run?

**P.C:** Oh, yes but when the ice was running you know, why it took it right down to the International Bridge one time...took the top off the boat. Yes they were lucky they could catch it in those days. Oh, we used to have ice across that river, it was frozen solid some times.

**N.F:** Without the ice boom.

**P.C:** Oh yes, the ice boom was another thing.

**N.F:** Did you go to Erie Beach?

**P.C:** Yes, many many, times. First of all there was always farmer's picnic and my mother and dad are both Pennsylvania Dutch, and we went and met all our farmer relatives, you know that we never saw any other time. And my brother used to work on the ponies...and one of them knocked him out one time. My sister used to work where the soft ice cream was...at that time it was really something, oh yes those were beautiful days. We used to go swimming and that was the largest outdoor swimming pool in the world. That was at the end up there on the one side by Waverly Beach. And then I had beautiful pictures of my Mother...my sister has them in California, taken at the old...used to be a hotel there, and they were really bathing beauties, when she was young, my mother just died last year at ninety-six, you see, so that would be eighty years ago now, but oh those were good times, we used to go up on the...if we had a birthday party we'd go as far as the Old Fort on the ferry, on the train rather, we'd get off at the Old Fort you know...it was really something.

**N.F:** What was it like inside?

**P.C:** At Erie Beach very, well I suppose to us it was beautiful, they had

a stadium there, I can remember running and getting a gold medal for...they had track meets, and ah, it was ah, oh I can remember they had a horse there jumped in the water...it's nothing now... but it was certainly something then you know, it was a beautiful...it was a shame about it. But then Crystal Beach opened up then... everybody got cars. That was something I think when the Peace Bridge came and the cars, then the people didn't use the boats... the boats used to run all the time...oh and that was beautiful that dock that was out there. And that ballroom, you know was just that dancehall was beautiful. It really was. And they had the lockers downstairs where you changed your for water and everything.

**N.F:** Lots of dancing there too.

**P.C:** Yes, Crystal Beach got it all...it was a shame really.

**N.F:** Did you go to Crystal Beach also?

**P.C:** No...there wasn't too much there when...I don't remember too much of it at all. I don't think they had any rides, I think they had most of the rides at Erie Beach you see, they bought that.

(At Erie Beach did they have special events)

**P.C:** Well they had...I can't remember too many of them, but I mean every week they had something different, and it was special...I can't as I say about Crystal Beach, because no one ever went to Crystal Beach that I know of unless to swim. (Erie Beach) had 'bump the bumps' I can remember going there for the day one time and the police were looking all over for us two girls, because they saw us and we were out there before school started, and then when we were in school you know, we could hear the train coming up, you know we all knew the beach was going to open...that was really something. But it was really, you could go there and everything was so different and safe...and they had a big zoo...I can remember the camels, camels you know, they didn't smell so good...but they had peacocks, you know, we'd never seen anything like that before you see. I had my picture taken at Crystal Beach sitting on a zebra, or Erie Beach rather. August the First they celebrated, you see, they didn't celebrate July the First at that time, and the Fourth of July of course, that's my birthday...but we always celebrated

because we were so close to the Americans...but there was no First of July then, August the First we celebrated...that was like...a Civic Holiday now, but it was always 'Farmer's Picnic' then, that's what it was then.

**N.F:** What do you remember about the building of the Peace Bridge?  
Any incidents that happened?

**P.C:** Oh I remember there was a mill race and then of course they built that up and then they built the piers, and then...what changed all our lives you know that lived around there or anything...it took about two years to build, I can remember that...anyway there was a lot of , they had houses for the men that worked on there. Oh yes and then they ripped those down years later...like where they had to feed the men and everything, see it was a big project...especially with the river going so fast...you know, it was really a...something. I can remember the day it opened August the twelfth I think, nineteen twenty-seven, and it was really, you know, beautiful...they had the Prince of Wales here and I think his brother George if I remember right, and they were entertained royally, and then we had a big 'Street Dance', and my sister won seven dollars doing the Charleston, that was something for us. Then I remember there used to be a place they called it the 'Barn', right on the corner Garrison and Goderich Street, there and I can remember watching them when I was too young to go in and they used to have dances and everything.

**N.F:** That was an American who owned that?

**P.C:** Was it, yes, I couldn't remember who owned it but I can remember my sister was old enough to go and we used to go and watch.

**N.F:** That was really popular.

**P.C:** Yes it was very popular, yes. But when I can remember before the Peace Bridge was there we used to have peonies in our garden, and people used to have to line up...they wouldn't go home till two, three, four o'clock in the morning coming down from Crystal Beach...now there were people coming from Crystal Beach then...and we used to sell them peonies...every time a boat went through there was a whole new load there along the road...we didn't have much money in those days. I can't tell you too much about the Bridge and that

it certainly made a big difference in this town.

**N.F:** A lot of jobs?

**P.C:** Oh, yes, Customs and Immigration...and the maintenance men and stuff like that, you know it was really something.

**N.F:** Did you do much shopping in Bridgeburg?

**P.C:** Did I...at that time...no I don't think so...we had a shoe store here, you know, and stuff like that. See there was never any way to get there, you know what I mean, and the people in Bridgeburg used to go over on a 'dummy' like to the American side, but I can remember my mother and father going over all the way down...they used to go over once in a while to a dance apparently, and we'd have a baby sitter, and they'd bring ice cream back in the snow in the middle of winter...and they would come across the International Bridge, and then walk from Bridgeburg up...there were no taxi or anything, and they would walk that distance just to dance and stuff...get home about two o'clock in the morning...make us all a bowl of ice cream... isn't that something?

**N.F:** What a difference. What would you do for entertainment, besides like Erie Beach, on a weekend?

**P.C:** Well, I went swimming when I was younger, but there was no entertainment no shows, there was a theatre at the North End as I got older, but to go down...we had to walk you see, a long way down to Dufferin Street...back again, if we had the fifteen cents, but ah, that's what it was, but there were no shows at the Fort Erie South End, and there was Scotty Miller's old store where you could go and get an ice cream, and there was the 'baby hole', but there was no entertainment really...I don't even think there were band concerts at that time, that I remember there was just...as I say we used to go swimming but that was about all...we'd go to the Old Fort for picnics, you see, church picnics, yes. Ih, the church used to have it down at Queen Victoria Park until we had that accident, then they cut that out. There was just no entertainment.

**N.F:** Who is the first representative of the Town that you remember, a Reeve or Mayor?

**P.C:** I would say Lou Douglas, I think, I know he was like the Reeve, and he's the first one that I remember.

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**N.F:** But that would be Fort Erie South?

**P.C:** Yes, Fort Erie South.

**N.F:** Do you remember the Amalgamation?

**P.C:** Yes, yes, I lived on, I had moved to the North End then, and I lived on Dufferin Street, that was nineteen thirty I think, wasn't it, I was fifteen years old, and I can remember that...I think it was a good thing. I wish now that the whole town was one whole town instead of Ridgeway and Stevensville, people still think it's Fort Erie North and South...but I don't think it ever will be.

**N.F:** No I don't think so either.

**P.C:** Well you know just like Toronto and those places, they still have Etobicoke and all those places that are part of Toronto I guess. There was different people.

**N.F:** Yes.

**P.C:** Different, you know, I went to Queen Street United Church and stuff like that...we used to have picnics you know, in the summer and stuff like that and sales and all that stuff, then I went to the North End and went to High School, played basketball...everything I could play.

**N.F:** That's the same High School we have now?

**P.C:** Yes, because there was one...that was new then because my first husband Harold Heckman he had gone to the other one, and my sister there was...up on Wintermute, you see there was a High School there before this one was opened. Yes where it used to be...then it was Wintermute Public School, but at first it was a High School and that's where it was and then by the time I got to High School it had just changed...maybe it was the Amalgamation Year I don't know, what year it changed.

**N.F:** Did they have a 'ceremony' for the Amalgamation, and the new Mayor?

**P.C:** Yes but I can't remember...I can't tell you who the Mayor was...of Amalgamation. It was a big event, there was a lot that didn't want it.

**N.F:** That was depression years at that time; did that really have an



effect on the area?

**P.C:** Oh, yes...I think the South End we just never had too much activity or too many jobs and stuff like that anyway. My father worked at Pratt and Lambert, at one time but he used to...he was unemployed a lot he used to fish, you know, ice fish things like that but he never he was a painter he was a real good painter, and you know that was just partial jobs like, my father used to say 'lots of them paint every year instead of house cleaning'.

**N.F:** Do you remember the prohibition years?

**P.C:** Yes.

**N.F:** And rum running?

**P.C:** Oh my goodness yes, and then in later years I heard my dad used to run cheese over there. Oh, yes. Yes I can remember hearing about the rum runners and how they used to bring the Chinese over in bags, you know, and if the Coast Guard came along they'd drown them you know...just threw them over the side.

**N.F:** Which direction were they going?

**P.C:** Well they used to be up around towards Erie Beach there, I can remember where some of them used to live...and take them over and it was above the Fort a lot of them, they used to take them over see because of the current...and then the boats would go down you see and land over there in Buffalo someplace...because apparently the Chinese weren't let into the States that much, they came into Canada you know to build that railroad out west...and that's when the Chinese wanted to get over the border you see. They said there used to be guns and shooting and stuff like that...and it was really something.

**N.F:** Would it seem like it was organized, or was it just people doing it on their own?

**P.C:** Oh it must have been organized, to a certain extent for them to know where to take the Chinese...and to let them off...and for someone to pick them up, you know, but then, the Coast Guard was on to them too, you know and I mean the rum runners too they used to run.

**N.F:** There was a lot of rum running out of Fort Erie?

**P.C:** Oh yes, yes, yes.

**N.F:** Any individuals or just anyone.

**P.C:** Well I think it was just individuals because I mean they made the money, you know.

**N.F:** Not many got 'caught'.

**P.C:** No, no.

**N.F:** Do you remember any incidents that happened?

**P.C:** No, not too many...I think some of it was a little bit before I was old enough to remember, I think, I can remember hearing about it but...and I think it was going on when I was younger but they used to keep that stuff quiet, you know...they used to talk about it 'not in front of the kids'...and the kids tried to know everything.

**N.F:** That's the truth too.

**P.C:** I can remember you know, it was just horses no cars...my father got a car from Mr. Hawley one time and took us down the boulevard and we had a flat tire...we were all set for a picnic. But...you just didn't have any money for cars or anything like that then, it was just that. He had worked when he met my mother he was working in Elliot's Drug Store, and they wanted him to go through for, you know like a pharmacist...but they got married and the family started so that was it...but then he worked for Hawley for years...I can remember going down to Hawley's Saturday night they, my dad got paid and paid the bill, I suppose for the week, and we always got a bag of candy...of course I was always the first one in line...but my sister she would never say 'thank you'...so she never got the candy. They were tough times, I'll tell you. Later my mother went to work in Buffalo, she was an American anyway, got her papers out and went back to work.

**N.F:** A lot of people from Fort Erie must have done that.

**P.C:** Yes, well then she was...she worked as a waitress till she was seventy and then she just died last year, at ninety-six. Beautiful lady, really beautiful. My dad was remembered for his fishing you know, he could go out on that river and...I used to love to go with him...and he could catch fish, there would be boats all around him and they'd never catch a fish. But he was a character.

**N.F:** He lived on the boulevard there?

**N.F:** There were a lot of boat houses down there.

**P.C:** Well the railroad...there was the railroad used to come and bring lumber you see...and then that was railroad property, and they used to just let them...they paid just a small sum each year and that's why they lived there you see...and then the railroad closed it out and the Niagara Parks, you see, yes they made them all move out.

**N.F:** That's a shame, it was nice down there.

**P.C:** Yes, yes it was, people had nice homes down there, but I guess that's progress...with the Niagara Parks of Canada.

**N.F:** You can't argue with them.

**P.C:** No, they keep such beautiful...you know I mean they really...they've done such a beautiful job along that boulevard. It's really beautiful. And the forts and everything I can remember when the Old Fort was just a crumbled ruins we used to go up...one time I remember the Americans used to roll down the hills...they were the only ones who had money you know...and then one time we were there and I found a quarter, fifty cents and stuff like that...everybody else went home and I stayed and kept collecting money and I got about a dollar and a quarter and I knew I was going to 'get the devil' so I went down to the 'back road' we called it...and I went down to Elliot's Drug Store and got a box of chocolates for my mother but oh, oh what a whomping I got when I got home...forget the chocolates but that's what we used to do for entertainment...you asked what did we do for entertainment.

**N.F:** You 'make' it.

**P.C:** Well that's what we used to do on a Sunday, go to the Old Fort and then I don't think there were concerts then...there may have been but I don't remember...but no I don't think so...we just went up there and they rebuilt it you know, it's all different now, oh, it's beautiful. I love that you know, read the history of the Fort you know and of course the Americans ...they say they won every war...and I always say 'if they did then we'd be American wouldn't we'. So I always figured that this is one war they lost. Like there's Doug Crook that lives in the building here and he says he can remember planting some of those trees out there you see...this road that comes

here you see was Albany Road, and then the Lakeshore, and there was houses you see...and businesses...and everything has changed so...this is a beautiful place here...they keep this park up I love it...I would never want to leave now I had a brother and two sisters and they all went to California to live and I'm the only one here... dad died in fifty-seven.

**N.F:** Where did you used to work?

**P.C:** Well I...when I was younger and single there wasn't too many jobs but I did work at the Arner Company and then I got married...so I didn't work for a few years...then nineteen-forty forty-one I went to work at Irvin Airchute, for a year that was war time, and then I...my husband went in the service so I stayed home with the two kids, and then I worked there for five years at the Arner Company, I went back to work, that was it when he went in the service, I went back to the Arner Company...and then after that I had another baby, after the war and then I went to the Irvin Airshute...I worked there and then I worked at the hospital for eleven years, I was a nurse's aid...and then I worked in the library, worked in the library for three and a half years...and I've had quite a few different jobs. But I loved the nursing and as I got older I did some home nursing for about five years, and I enjoyed that. Then I retired.

**N.F:** Sounds like a very good idea.

**P.C:** Yes.

**N.F:** What was Arner making when you worked for them?

**P.C:** False teeth I remember, yes because we had a false teeth room we had...yes there were quite a few girls in there. Yes and they made for 'Upjohn', they made salts and stuff like that, that had to be controlled, in controlled rooms you knowthey had to keep them cold, then they used to make like vitamins and stuff and they had to be kept cold, certain vitamins they had...oh, it was beautiful to see the pills all made and everything, they had big vats you know, and they used to put the colours in...it was really a big outfit it was a shame, you know, that it closed.

**N.F:** It must have employed quite a few people.

**P.C:** Yes it did, a lot of people were in there a good many years, most of their lives you see.

**N.F:** Did you have annual picnics or parties?

**P.C:** Well they had some Christmas Parties that I never went to, but I guess they used to have some good times there, but never any picnics. I enjoyed my work at the hospital, I had always wanted to be a nurse my mother talked me out of it...there were too many nurses out of work which wasn't really true, you know...I don't think nurses are ever out of work. I enjoyed my work...and I used to work in O. B. and stuff like that I had different ones say 'Oh you were there when I had my baby', so you see a lot of people you know...so many people remember you, you try to do the best you can. But I liked the work at Irvin Air Chute too, it was interesting.

**N.F:** Were they just producing one thing?

**P.C:** Yes, parachutes...you know it was really a big thing in nineteen-forty forty-one you know...see because I was on final inspection and we had Sir Fredrick Banting, you know, he had these, like accidents the parachutes would come back for repairs, and you see Fort Erie was...there was one in Sorrell Quebec, I think but Fort Erie was the only one in Canada that I remember.

**N.F:** Is that right?

**P.C:** Yes, it was an American firm, you see, and then we got all the government contracts and then we had to keep track of all the ones that were...'dropped tested', they used to drop test them at Fleet and then we had to keep track of the ones that were drop tested and then they sent some out that weren't drop tested, you see, and the ones that were drop tested were naturally more, and then they used to go in the weeds and everything you know, and then there would be holes in the chutes and then we'd have to go over them all and mark them and have them repaired you see and it was a lot a lot of work, but Sir Fredrick Bantings whatever they had when they went down, was all covered with this silver stuff, they never did tell what they carried on that flight...and we used to have to bring it out and show it to inspectors, and stuff like that, you know we had to for a long time there.

**N.F:** That's really interesting.

**P.C:** It was very interesting...then we had the Norwegians come over

here and trained, I think out west and then they came to see how the parachutes were made, and everything I can remember them and they couldn't speak any English...and we were trying to tell them what we were doing, you know, but it was very interesting... and then they used to cut, you know...George Baum...who used to be the Mayor here at one time...I wonder if he was the Mayor when we amalgamated, nineteen-forty, no he wouldn't be I don't think, but he was Mayor here for quite a few years...and he was Mayor at this time...and how they used to cut the materials out and everything it was really fabulous, you know, all the canvas for the packs and everything, you know they'd lay it all out, mark it all, and then put holes in it and everything...and then the girls would sew them, you know, and my sister worked there, they had zig-zag machines and everything...it was really an experience.

**N.F:** It must have been a lot of equipment.

**P.C:** Oh, yes there was.

**N.F:** And a lot of people worked there too?

**P.C:** Yes, there were a lot of people who worked there they had two... in fact they had the factory where it is now, and over on Jarvis Street up above some of the buildings there...where Kirkland used to be in there it was called..Stratton Building I think...and they used to have Irvin up there too...another...not like a regular factory, but they did work up there too.

**N.F:** That was busy.

**P.C:** It was, it was really busy...well as I say...the only place that made parachutes.

**N.F:** Yes. The war had a lot of effect on the area?

**P.C:** Oh, yes. I often think Bill Prow, he went overseas and was killed... I see where one of his sons just died...he never saw his second son... and his father had gone to the First World War and was killed and never saw this Bill Prow...and then it just seemed like a coincidence that Bill Prow, he couldn't get a job at Fleet, you know, they wouldn't employ Fort Erie people...oh, no way...you could say you were from Stevensville, Ridgeway, all the west people came to here...a lot of people from the west who live here now came here to work at

Fleet...and they wouldn't take a Fort Erie boy on, a few got in but not too many...and he applied for Fleet, and he couldn't...and he went in the army and they had one son and they were expecting the second one when he was killed, and his mother worked at the Arner Company, when I did during the war, and they had to bring the news to her there. But I always thought it was such a coincidence that his father had never seen him and he never saw his youngest son. We had a lot go we had three brothers... Anderson boys, that went all at one time, you know, because in nineteen thirty-nine they went in...we had a Militia here you see, my husband used to be in the Militia...and a lot of them that were in the Militia went right away...cause they had some training. Oh yes we used to have an armory here, it was on Main Street and it wound up out at Fleet then they just went out of here all together. And the Legion has always been...both my husbands were veterans and I'm a Life Member of the Legion Auxiliary for thirty-nine years.

**N.F:** When did they first open a Post in Fort Erie or a Branch here?

**P.C:** Well some of them were here...I know it was on durring the war I think they started just after the war about nineteen twenty-seven, that was when the Legion come in although some of them were in the Great War Veterans before that you see because I know my second husband lived in Montreal and he belonged to them up there so I mean now...this is the Sixtieth Anniversary, right this year of the Legion. The Diamond Jubilee, and a fellow from Fort Erie won ten thousand dollars...Eddie Ballah. It was a real active place on Bertie Street, that's where it first opened, and then it was the Library after that...and then it was small, and around all the people and everything...and then the Town gave them the Old Town Hall, right where it is now...for a dollar a year for a hundred years...that was the Old Town Hall, I can remember it had a jail in the basement and everything down on Queen Street where the Legion is right now, and there was a Library in there and the jail downstairs... isn't that funny...and then I can remember upstairs it was a condemned building when the Legion got it...so they had to steel...Mr Babbit from the Power Company helped he was a veteran...and they had

to put steel beams up, oh yes...when they had a dance the whole floor would 'go like this', and I can remember when...well there was something for entertainment...they had some kind of Follies that came here and I can remember this Joe Ward was in it, and they had swings on the stage...upstairs at the Legion, where the stage is now...and they had these swings built with the girls on them with big hats, you know, I think Carol Hawley was one of the girls, I can't remember them all...but I can remember that was fabulous, beautiful, it was, I'm sure people came from out of town...with the outfits and everything. And it was I thought they called a Minstrel Show, but it might not have been...but then you know the Lions Club used to have Minstrel Shows, do you remember that...they were beautiful. Jack Teal was always, you know sany 'Mammy' and everything. I wish he was still our Mayor.

**N.F:** He was a very good Mayor?

**P.C:** Oh, he was a good Mayor, he really was, he was in fifteen years, and I keep trying to talk him into coming back and he doesn't want to. He was a good Mayor.

**N.F:** We've had a lot of Mayors.

**P.C:** Yes, we have.

**N.F:** The early Mayors, first we had Fort Erie South, Bridgeburg, and then after it Amalgamated. At that time was politics a very popular thing to talk about--were people really involved in politics?

**P.C:** Not as much as they are now, no...oh I guess they did too, but see we would have a Reeve, you see and I suppose Bridgeburg would have a Reeve too, see they weren't as big...and then Lou Douglas, I can remember him he was always active in Politics ever since I can remember and he lived there on Archange Street, that lovely big house and he was always a, you know a good man...he seemed to be and there was Duncan, Bill Duncan, and there was just a few of them you see that sat on those boards and stuff, probably ran the Town the way they wanted to.

**N.F:** But you would 'know them'.

**P.C:** Oh, yes, I knew them well.

**N.F:** Do you still have that feeling today? Do you still know the people



who run the town?

**P.C:** Yes, oh yes. In fact I ran a couple of years ago myself. My daughter says it's a good thing I didn't win. Hah, hah. I thought I'd lived here all my life and I just thought maybe I could contribute something to it.

**N.F:** What was the Fire Department like in the South End?

**P.C:** Well I can remember Art Nolan, and my Uncle, Jonas Nye, and Charles Willick, and that's some of the men, Lou Douglas he was on the Fire Department and it was really something...that little building next to where the Legion is now, see the Legion was the Town Hall, and that was where the Fire Department was...and I'll tell you it was excitement when the fire whistle used to blow, you know, off up on the tower, and everybody would run over to the station to see where they were going you know, but it was really you know exciting in those days.

**N.F:** What was the equipment that they had?

**P.C:** Oh, just a...like now I didn't know the...I wasn't there when the horses were...well they just had...I think it's at the Race Track now, I think their first fire engine. Yes it was just a little one, you know they don't have them like they do now. My son's a fireman now, and they certainly you know for a Volunteer Fire Department, those fellows really work...they deserve a lot of credit, they really do. But that was excitement if there was a fire.

**N.F:** Would everybody go to the fires?

**P.C:** Yes, we would go, and no cars or anything, going way up on Lavinia or Murray Street, there was somebody hung themselves in their that time...and I can remember we used to go and stand outside, and it's so crazy, you know, the fire was out and everything. By the time you got there the fire was out. But I can't remember any big fires, I don't think. You know now they have much better equipment and that.

**N.F:** When did they close that down, and move to Bertie Street?

**P.C:** I can't remember...the Legion came to that building in Forty-Six, they went there then and it was before that.

**N.F:** It was before that.

**P.C:** Yes, a fireman could probably tell you but I don't remember when. It certainly is a big improvement. I think the best thing they ever got, was that new fire engine, you know, with the 'hook and ladder' this is the tallest building in Fort Erie, you know, and I mean even then it wouldn't reach the top but it certainly would help, when they got that...but we don't have that many tall buildings...but we could sure use it. Then there's the Fireman's Parades...and then they have that beautiful Jamboree every year.

**N.F:** How long have they been doing that; it's quite a while now.

**P.C:** Oh, yes.

**N.F:** Was that before Fort Erie's Centennial; in Nineteen Fifty-Seven?

**P.C:** I would say yes. I can remember Fort Erie's Centennial. Oh, yes. We went all over, we had Centennial Gowns and everything, you know, my daughter and I, and we had good times, went to Boston, New York, oh yes, we were real active, we had groups, you know, the Fort Erie Hotel was here then, and I was President of...oh, I can't even remember the name...you know we had Centennial Bells and everything...we had different organizations around town. Oh, yes and we had meetings every week and we went to all these parades...we dressed in all these clothes in the hot summer...you know, those long gowns, the hats, the purse and the gloves...and then we went all over the States and everything...and Boston was a sesquicentennial, because I had a little umbrellas from there, we had little cowbells and everything, yes we were real active.

**N.F:** They had...was it a week long celebration in Nineteen Fifty-Seven?

**P.C:** Oh, it lasted a whole year, we celebrated that whole summer, I mean we had just one great year, but we went all over and we had things...events and everything the whole summer...we really celebrated... then to go back to the racetrack which we weren't talking about I can remember, you know, it's been here a long time and it was the Bertie Fair you know, that's what it was called years ago...the racetrack's been here a long time you know, it goes way back for a hundred years...it was one of the first racetracks in Canada I understand...that's why I would hate to ever see it close up. But anyway we had Bertie Fair and that was you know...everybody took

vegetables and everything there and I can remember even walking up from the North End when my kids were little, pushing them in the buggy...still had it then and my son is fifty and my daughter is forty-nine, but when we were when I was in school we celebrated the twenty-fourth of May more...we really never heard too much of the First of July, and we celebrated the twenty-fourth of May and we had white blouses, you know with a pretty blue collar, and a little black tie and navy blue skirt and we used to do drills...and the Maple Leaf Forever, and stuff like that, I sing that to my grandchildren you know, a lot of people don't know it, and I said, rose and twine that was Scotland, England and Ireland you see, the Maple Leaf Forever, but there's no Fleur de Lis, and I think that's the reason they don't sing it, but you know, the police have a 'Tattoo', and have you ever been to that...that is beautiful and if you want to hear the Maple Leaf Forever...there is about three bands that played it there just about two weeks ago...on a Sunday, and it's...I love it it's beautiful...to me that's the Canadian song...it should be... my grandchildren write to me a lot and we used to go in the swimming pool and I used to sing this to them...and they say I don't know the words to the Maple Leaf Forever...because no one sings it anymore, it's a shame, it really is.

(Can you tell me about the racetrack?)

**P.C:** Well I've worked at the Racetrack different times, yes it's quite a job, you know, everybody's impatient to get waited on and stuff like that...I've worked in the stands I've never worked...that is such a beautiful place, you know, they have really, that's where everybody should take their company to see that racetrack you know, it's beautiful.

**N.F:** Has it always been as large as it is now?

**P.C:** No, no they've built on...just not too many years ago, I guess it's been quite a while...that all used to be open...that was all old stands and everything...they have really done a beautiful job through the years and spent a lot of money on it you know. And I have been to Santa Anita in California and it's dirty and I've seen pictures of it that look beautiful...in the movies and that...but it can't compare

when they say that this is one of the most beautiful tracks in North America, they are right because it certainly is much prettier than Santa Anita and they say that there is one in Florida that compares to it...but they have spent a lot of work and I would hate to ever see it close...but then they have other things here you know...Guy Lombardo was here one time and everything at the racetrack...but as I say...we used to have these drills and everything you know, we'd practice them at school and everything and oh, that was a big day when we got to the Bertie Fair...on the Twenty-Fourth of May, and did all our drills, and you know, everybody used to go ...I don't know how we got there I guess we walked, yes and that was the...we sang all the patriotic songs, you know, well now they leave the Queen out of everything.

**N.F:** I don't remember ever hearing anything about the Bertie Fair.

**P.C:** Don't you? Oh that was...it was...it goes way back to like 1900 anyway I guess or before and they used to...even when the racetrack, like the summers you know, it was the racetrack, but this was September...yes, for the harvest time...and that was... and they had like animals and everything you know, like the Royal Winter Fair, is...they had horses and animals and everything there. It was a big fair, it was a beautiful fair...I can remember all the stands and everything...and I can still remember them having the Bertie Fair and I took my kids in the buggy so it must have been like...about forty-five years ago...and they still were having it, maybe somebody else could tell you more about it. But it was beautiful and as I say it was...I can remember coming, walking up from the North End to see it, and that was just about...I think the last year they had it...so it's been ever just about that many years. When you said what do you do for entertainment and stuff like that you see I suppose there were things like that I've forgotten...and we always had fireworks on the Fourth of July, you see, now, never the First, now I can't remember when the First of July came in as Dominion Day, you call it or Canada Day, but as I say we had the Twenty-Fourth of May, we never had the First of July at that time, so that's been later. We never had too much to do but we had good times, you

just had to...well we played 'hop scotch', which the kids don't do now because it's too slow for them...they've got 'star wars' and everything else. They can't sit still now, and we had too, just sitting on the steps all the kids gathered, and this Florecnce Barlow, she was Florence Near, that lived down our street, she used to 'Toe Dance' you know, and get on the porch and that would be some entertainment for us and stuff like that...and we had swings on our porch. It was a quiet time, it was a better time for us, you know.

**N.F:** It would be much more relaxed.

**P.C:** Oh, yes it was. But, we saw a lot of buildings come and go, Douglas Hill, you know, they terraced it at one time, it was just hills.

**N.F:** It was just hills?

**P.C:** Originally just hills and then they terraced it, I think when I was still going to school they terraced it...oh we used to ride the sleighs right down straight, you know, right on to the road, well there were no cars...we used to do the same, what we called the Bertie Hill, you see, where that big house is now you know...Douglas Hill we used to call it too...right there where I told you Lou Douglas used to live, well that used to be a hill there with no houses on it, and I can remember Mrs. Morrin was a school teacher and she had ski's and she used to let us...she let me get on the ski's and go down the hill...oh, that was a thrill...we used to come right down there onto the road, you see, there wasn't the cars around there then, there wasn't the danger, and it was beautiful, we went over every night with our old bag or something to sit on, you know, we didn't have fancy slide things...well everybody went there every night and we didn't have the nylon clothes we had just stockings...it was something how they ever dried them for the next morning, because we didn't have all that many outfits...and stockings...I remember I had the mumps and the other kids had to go to Grandma's, and the mumps they told me I had to eat a pickle...we had no doctors in those days you never went to the doctor, you just had the mumps. And I can remember these outside toilets...well we still had outside toilets when they moved our houses for the bridge...outside toilets went with us...oh yea, there they were building the Peace Bridge and we

still had outside toilets...not too many in town, but we still had them. But they didn't have the sewers and the plumbing I guess in those days, and the people, that was on Walnut Street, and people right across the street had inside toilets and everything, the people next door I think, but we just...those houses were just up on 'logs' like you know, they weren't finished underneath...in the winter time we had to put straw underneath you know, to keep the wind out... and then they finally put basements underneath them, you see. But that was called the old, the old back road that went up like Erie Street...Erie Street, yea, and that used to be a big hill up there and this Mary Schmitt, she could tell you, well she moved to Buffalo too but, she is Mary Field now, she's seventy-six...and she drives cancer patients to Toronto all the time or Hamilton maybe, but she lived here and worked because she lived over there by the back road. But then coming down like from Albany here it was Helivan's on the corner, a great big house, he was a barber in town...and there was Nolans, and then Laperry's, and then there was this big...Wally Shishler had this big field there and a big garden, and his wagon used to sit there in the bush all the time...that's what we used to do, we used to go out and sit on his wagon and that, it was something that was a big deal, or something different. But we never got into any trouble that I can remember you know.

**N.F:** Times have changed.

**P.C:** I'll tell you...we got the strap that was all, but we just had fun, we had a big Collie dog, you know, everybody had dogs and cats and stuff like that they still do...and the races were here all summer, they would come and you know, solid they came the Fourth of July and right through September you know, a lot of employment for the town you know, and then everybody came to the races, you know, now they don't come like they used to, I don't think, and it was always good for us, as I say I would hate to ever see it close.

**N.F:** Do you remember when the betting was different?

**P.C:** Before the pari-mutuals, oh, yes.

**N.F:** That must have been interesting.

**P.C:** Oh, yes, but, things have sure changed...that's like where the Garrison

was, that's where the 'Barn' was you see, in the back of that building there, LaPerries used to live in there, you see a lot of changes...all up there...there was all houses, remember Agnew-Surpass...they had their store there, and then those houses way up on the hill...that was beautiful, oh, yes it really was. I used to peddle papers all up around in there, oh, in the middle of winter, and I'd get up there by the Catholic...it seemed miles away there, right across from that old Catholic Church still is, and the people used to take me in, it was so cold...and it didn't until now dawn on me, it was my brother's and I was helping him, he had Princess Street and all the little roads, and I up here. And they never plowed you see, and there wouldn't be cars, so it would just be where wagons went.

**N.F:** And they usually got around quite well.

**P.C:** Yes. But we had as I said they used to deliver our milk for us.

**N.F:** When did they start paving the roads; would that be about the same time as the Peace Bridge?

**P.C:** I bet it was after the Peace Bridge, yes because they were, I don't ever think they were paved before then, they had to pave them then you see, pave all there where you come off the Bridge. Now there was some paving because when they had, when they opened the Peace Bridge they had a 'Street Dance', up there and I can remember there was a dividing highway up there then, oh, it's still divided you see, they've changed the Bridge so much it used to be straight up off the Bridge and that was just the highway you see, and that was Main Street, and now it's Walden...and then when they built the 'Queen E' you see, you went a different way yes, that street is still there where they had the Street Dance and everything and that's where the Armories was and that, on that street everything too you see, and that was the only way you came off the Peace Bridge you went straight up.

**N.F:** Isn't that different.

**P.C:** And then the Garrison, of course, was never four lane like it is now, it was just as I say just two way, and that's where everybody used to line up till two or three in the morning and try to get over the 'Ferry' from Crystal Beach. Crystal Beach must have been popular at that time but as I say it was more for swimming and everybody

came over and had parties, you see, because I'm sure they didn't go for rides and stuff like that I don't think, at that time...that would be about 1925...you see before they built the Bridge...when we still lived there.

**N.F:** It's amazing the changes that there have been. Tell me about your 'school days'.

**P.C:** Well, as I said, the first couple of years were spent in the other schools, and then we got into Douglas School...it was certainly different than it is now days...you know when I go and look at all the steps to that school...but, we had good teachers, really average rooms and you know, and it was junior first and senior first then, instead of the grades, and it was...we had recess like everyone else, and at Douglas School it was just about the same as it is now...well we used to have school meets and stuff like that...but nothing like the entertainment of the trips they take now, we had exams different than they do now...they came at the end of the year you know, and you never knew; especially if you were in the older grades, you didn't know for a long time into the summer, but now the kids know already if they passed (by the end of the year), but we didn't then, we had to wait into, oh, August, you wouldn't know if you passed until August anyway, if you went into High School...it was terrible...you had to wait all summer to hear, oh, and then it was such a time for the ones that didn't get through you know, just terrible. But you know, we didn't have swimming pools or anything like that there was no cooking classes or anything like that...for the majority of kids it's better now you know, well I have some old school pictures, really old ones...of classes and stuff like that...everything was much different.

**N.F:** You would always walk to school?

**P.C:** Oh yes, yes or are you kidding...no cars...and they came all the way from Erie Beach, and the Old Fort, and walked all that distance in the middle of winter...and it was bad...we didn't have the clothes that the kids have now, we just had stockings and stuff, long underwear...you had to wear it in those years...you'd freeze to death, but the Burl's and the Zimmerman's all them and the Ardells everything up there from Erie Beach...it was a long, long way...to walk to High



School, to Bridgeburg...I often felt sorry for them, they wouldn't get home till it was way dark, because I don't think we got out at three o'clock then, I think it was four when we were in High School, I don't ever remember us getting out early.

**N.F:** Would you have day's off because of the weather?

**P.C:** No, are you kidding?

**N.F:** You just kept on going?

**P.C:** Oh, yes, because the winter was like that all winter, they don't know what it was like now, but in High School then we had a cafeteria, you know so that was a little better. We had a lot of basketball and volleyball and stuff like that, I think we had more then than they do now, maybe they don't have as much now...but I was on the Junior Team, the Senior Team the volleyball and then we had...'field days', that I don't hear too much about now, we had the running broad jump, and the standing broad jump, and the high jump...and maybe they still have them, but we spent a lot of time at that, once the weather was nice.

**N.F:** Who would you compete with?

**P.C:** Ridgeway and Fonthill and Welland and then I can remember going to Crystal Beach one time, Burnett's had a car and took some of us up and we competed at Crystal Beach, you know in that old...it's still there, they still have a few things there, like a stadium...and we used to compete in there, that I can remember. Yes we would go from the High School, the ones who had cars would take the students then...and I don't think we ever had a bus...I think it was just individual cars...and that was a big time.

**N.F:** Did you win?

**P.C:** Yes, I was quite a runner in those days, and then as I say, I can remember going to Crystal Beach one time and I won a gold medal, and I can remember going to the High School, we went while we were still in public...and I'd get the medal in the auditorium and that was something.

**N.F:** I'll bet it was.

**P.C:** Things have changed a lot, those were activities we had. Well then we had the swimming pool in High School, or did we, yes I think we

did, so they probably put that in when they built the school I guess, the school hadn't been built too many years when I went there, because I know the ones who were a couple of years older went to Wintermute, to the High School there, my sister and she's just two years older...so we were...maybe at Amalgamation, but now I know it was there in 1930 because that's when I went to High School.

**N.F:** Did you play any baseball?

**P.C:** Yes, played for the Town Team.

**N.F:** For the Town Team?

**P.C:** Yes, well they have all kinds of teams now you know, and stuff like that, but I can remember when... 'white ducks' you know, we called them... slacks which was real daring in those days. Thelma Jackson, used to be Thelma Near, she used to be a great athlete, I used to try to keep up with her, she was a beautiful athlete, she was good. Yes we used to walk over every night to watch the ballgames at the Bowen Road Diamond, there wasn't any Oakes Park then, you see... no those were all just fields, oh, I can remember going to see, you remember those houses in the West End... those were 'War Time Houses', you see, so before that, that was just common... I can remember going to my aunt's on Idlewylde Street, when there was just nothing... you would go from Murray Street right across the commons there was no houses though, there at all... like on Catherine Street, or anyplace like that just the odd house, an old house may be sitting there, but nothing right up to... right over to Idlewylde Street... those are all war time houses in there... see that must have been about nineteen hundred and... well that must have been after forty they were built because in 1939 the war started... they were probably put in about 1940. Well that certainly made a lot of changes.

**N.F:** Those were houses for people who came into work in the area?

**P.C:** Oh yes.

**N.F:** It would make a big change in the area.

**P.C:** See there were thousands that worked at Fleet, and a lot of people from the west and everything... I lived on Catherine, and the guy next door had come from the west, you see they bought a house after the war, but before the war, and then he went to the war and come back,

his brother lived in Welland. But it certainly changed the town, built it up...extended it...oh, you know, the South End was very small, you know there was just...one area. We lost a lot of boys overseas too, you know...John Lisk, Gordon Barnhardt, and a lot of them, it was a shame. But that is the way it has to go.

**N.F:** I would like to thank you very much for the interview; and have a very good day.