

This is Neil Flindall interviewing Mrs. Reta Honey, in her home at the Senior Citizen's Building, on Albany Road, Fort Erie, May 29, 1985.

N.F: Mrs. Honey, when did you first arrive in Fort Erie?

R.H: We arrived in Canada, from Scotland on August 11, 1925.

N.F: That is a little bit of time ago.

R.H: It will soon be sixty years, yes.

N.F: Did you stay in this area, Fort Erie?

R.H: Yes I've always lived here.

N.F: What did you think when you first arrived?

R.H: I was more or less shocked, because I had come from a city, you know, and coming here at that time they were just paving the boulevard and there were no other paved streets.

N.F: And you took the "Ferry" across?

R.H: Yes, oh yes.

N.F: Was it well operated and well run?

R.H: Oh, yes, it was great, there was no problem at all. And then you just walk up to Niagara Street, in Buffalo, and take the bus, no, the streetcar then.

N.F: They had full transportation over there that you could use?

R.H: Oh, yes sure, and I worked in Buffalo from October 1925 till 1929.

N.F: Did you have any problems crossing the bridge, because you were an American Citizen?

R.H: Not at that time, but in, I think it was 1927...I'm not too sure, they started fussing a bit. You had to...go, to make a "Formal Entry", and pay a head tax.

N.F: A head tax?

R.H: Yes a ten dollar head tax, and then they gave you a card with your picture on it, and the information, and we carried that with us all the time.

N.F: How much would a head tax be?

R.H: Ten dollars, just for, just the one time.

N.F: Then that was a one time payment, and after it was done?

R.H: And then after...when people were going over there, I think still they pay a head tax. "a tax on every head".

N.F: That is an interesting idea. Were there always the same people who worked for Customs and Immigration that you would get to know?

R.H: Yes we did get to know the Custom and Immigration Officers then.

N.F: I can imagine there would be a difference; I would think they'd be more relaxed in their job then in comparision to now.

R.H: Yes, that's right, and one reason I think was, there weren't that many stores here, you couldn't shop here really,for anything...there was a furniture store here, Atwood's on Jarvis Street...and grocery stores, but there wasn't much in the way of clothing stores. So we shopped quite a bit in Buffalo in those days, and so, they didn't mind, you know, they seemed to understand. Everyone didn't have a car and it wasn't easy to go to Hamilton or someplace.

N.F: Who were the major storekeepers in Fort Erie, like Fort Erie South?

R.H: Well...Rubels had a grocery store...and I presume it was their nephew had the Rubel's Store in Ridgeway just recently, yes, they had a store where...oh there is a restraunt there now, but it used to be Camm's Drug Store, on the east side of Niagara Boulevard, that was a double store, you know, a door in the centre and enter both ways. And John Charles had a clothing store where the 'Salvation Army' is now. Oh, and then Scotty Miller had a little paper store, about where, let's see, where the Dutch Shop is now, in there somewhere. He was the father of John Miller, who plays the bagpipes in the Scotch Band, and those are the same bagpipes his father had at the time you know, way back then, and he used to...when he closed his store late at night, he would play the bagpipes ...walk up and down the riverside playing his bagpipes. Well this was lovely because it was far enough away...out of doors...so it was very nice. And John...the Pipe Band...was here playing for us a year or so ago...and John told me that those were his father's pipes.

N.F: Did you travel to Bridgeburg?

R.H: Oh, yes.

N.F: By the International Bridge.

R.H: You mean across? No the International Bridge went across to Black Rock.

N.F: Yes I mean did you go up and shop in that area.

R.H: Yes, sometimes we went to the North End, but well by the time I wasn't working in Buffalo anymore, we had a car then and we'd drive down.

N.F: Was there more shopping---or larger stores?

R.H: Let's see now...there was a man had a tailor shop up there but he did tailoring, you know, he used to make suits for my father. There was an old Dominion Store there run by, did you remember, Wilfred Kline--his mother --it was just a small store, you know, but it was a Dominion Store. Mrs Kline ran that, Wilfred used to help her, they didn't have any other help, so you can imagine the size of it, the store. Let's see now, there was the Gas Company, and...the Chinese Restruant was where, Rossman's was until recently, thats where it was...I can't remember the Chinaman's name.

N.F: Would that have been "Skippy"?

R.H: I believe it was, yes and then he moved across the street, yes and then lots came down to this end.

N.F: Do you remember a sign of his place?

R.H: There was a sign I'm sure, but I don't really remember.

N.F: Where did you live in Fort Erie?

R.H: We lived right opposite the Peace Bridge entrance, in fact we watched the Peace Bridge go up. You know, up on the hill, Agnew's store was down on Goderich Street, and we lived up above that. In a house right on the hill, it was a lovely place, but they took that property all away, took that hill down when they put the "Queen E" through.

N.F: Oh, that's right yes.

R.H: And there was a restraunt built there about the time that they were building the Peace Bridge, it was built by a man in Buffalo, it was a big brick building that finally the Artillery used it, after a while, do you remember that?

N.F: That is what they started to use for the Militia.

R.H: Yes,

N.F: That stood for a long time.

R.H: Yes, it was there for a long time. It was interesting here then, it was a small town, but we had access to Buffalo, and you know, that made it...Buffalo was a nice city then we were able to go over to shows, and things like that.

N.F: Would most of your recreation or entertainment come from Buffalo instead of the local area?

R.H: I believe at one time, not in my memory, no it was at the North End. They did have one there, but I don't think they held anyone there...more than twenty-four hours, and then they were sent to Welland.

N.F: Was the Police Office located in that building, or what was there for a Police Station?

R.H: Yes, I remember...I don't remember where the Police Station was at that time, I remember it as always being on Jarvis Street, but I don't remember where it was...that was a long time ago. I remember the Chief of Police, Andy Griffin, yes he was the Chief that I remember. That's a long time ago too, it wasn't long after I came here that they started paving, after they finished with the Boulevard, they paved Bertie Street, I remember them doing that, I remember them paving Queen Street, gradually, you know, they got the streets all paved...but of course up to that point there wasn't that much traffic, the milkman came with his horse and cart, and the baker came, with a horse and buggy...and I remember a Miss McKenna, she had beautiful stuff, and she used to come around once a week, you know, with her vegetables. She had the best strawberries I've ever been able to get, any like them since, I think the soil up around that area in Fonhill is very good and they grow good things up there. The little church on Queen Street was very active in those days, too, you know, we had a good congregation, lots of things going on, young people's groups, Oh, there was something for everyone.

N.F: Where would their outings go?

R.H: We had picnics at the Old Fort, even then, and that was before it was fixed over, even then they did quite a bit of work up there, it didn't look like the picture I showed you. Then when they did have the place all done over to what it was like originally, I'm sure it wasn't like it is now, but that's what they say anyway. Yes that's where we had all our Picnics at that time, later on when people began to get cars, then we went to Queenston sometimes, you know,

for our Picnics, we had some of our Picnics down there. That was a long way to go in those days. Yes I remember starting out to go to Toronto, and even with a car then, I don't think we drove more than thirty miles an hour. And you can imagine how long it took to go to Toronto.

N.F: Would you "travel" often?

R.H: We went quite often, yes we had relatives my husband had relatives in Toronto, you know, so we went up there.

N.F: And that was not by the Q.E.W.?

R.H: Oh, no, you had to go the Boulevard, and then up the old highway, the "Queen E" was built to the Falls quite a long time ago, my husband was in hospital in Toronto in 1936, and the "Queen E" was open then to the Falls, and then they opened one lane to Fort Erie, and it was years before they finally put the second lane in, you know. But there wasn't the same amount of traffic you know. I can remember the first time I drove on the "Queen E", when my husband was in hospital up there in Toronto, and that was in 1936.

N.F: Quite a trip.

R.H: Yes it was. We used to go up to the Bruce Peninsula, in the summertime and I often wonder now how we ever got up those hills, they have up there, in those old cars, you know. Somehow we made it. They have cut them down now.

N.F: And the cars are that much more powerful now too.

R.H: Yes they are. Yes it's a different world now. It's funny how we got to go into different things here, and enjoyed it and we never had any notion of moving anywhere else. We always enjoyed it here. My father worked at the high school you know, he worked there for twenty-seven years I think it was.

N.F: When was the High School built?

R.H: That school was built, lets see...about the same time the Peace Bridge opened, in around those years. I think they used to use Wintemute part of Wintemute Public School, they used until the new High School. I don't remember, I didn't have any connection with the High School, you know, at that time...no I'm not sure when the High School was built.

N.F: And there were other Public School in different areas.

R.H: Yes, well there was Douglas School in this area (Queen Street), all the kids went there, and then Mather School was built...lets see now when would that be...they had their fiftieth anniversary about

ten years ago so that would be about sixty years ago, and now they've torn that down now, that's a shame because that was a good building. My eldest daughter went to Mather School for a couple of years. It was a nice school. And then there was Rose Seaton School, of course, it was just Phipps Street School, in those days, but then after Miss Seaton became principal they named it after her.

N.F: Did children walk to school?

R.H: Oh, everyone walked to school, and my children walked to High School too, well they rode their bicycles in the good weather, you never thought of doing anything else.

N.F: Do you remember worse weather than we have now?

R.H: I do yes, but I don't think the weather was really worse, I think we didn't have the equipment to clear it up, you know. When we were living on that hill right opposite the Peace Bridge there...just plowing down with snow right up to here, to get down to go to work in the morning. It was really something, but, you see it took them ages to go around, with the plows, they had then. nothing like they have now. I think that's why we remember it, it seemed a lot of snow, and it just had to stay till it melted mostly. They cleared off the main street and that was all.

N.F: Did the "Ferry" operate in the winter?

R.H: Yes, but they had some rough times, I was on it once when it started down the river, the ice was coming down, the spring was the worst time, when the ice was coming down, and they had to get a tug, you know, the tug boat came and rescued us, and pulled us out of the way of the ice. Quite often I had to stay over in Buffalo overnight because of the ice on the river. In the winter they didn't have trouble it was clear in the winter time. The ferries were very good, they ran very regularly and I can remember on a Sunday night in the summertime and the traffic, would be from the ferry right along the Front Street and up Walnut, and right way up Garrison Road, for several miles, they were lined up and they just had to wait till the ferry was...and in the summer time they usually had two ferries running. The ferries held quite a few cars, you know, but Crystal Beach was such a nice place then and they went up along the lake

you know, a lot of people came over from the States.

N.F: Did you go to Crystal Beach?

R.H: Yes, we used to go to Erie Beach though, you know.. Erie Beach up here was open then, there was a little train, which you probably remember, a little train, no you wouldn;t remember that...ran from the ferry right up to...along the front there... up to Erie Beach, it was great. I've got a picture of it somewhere.

N.F: What was it called?

R.H: I don't remember what it was called, I think they called it the "Dinky" or something, something like that, didn't have a "real" name. I don't think it had an "offical" name. Mr. Barnhardt, Harry Barnhardt's father, his name was, I can't remember his first name...anyway he was the engineer, and Harry was the fireman, and old Harry McLure was the conductor, he used to take the tickets, you know, Harry McLure. He lived up on the corner of Albert Street and Lakeshore, in that house that's still there, he boarded with the lady who owned it, that house, he was never married, he worked that job for years and years.

N.F: How far did the train go; did it enter the Erie Beach grounds?

R.H: No, just right up to the entrance, where they've built that house now. Did you notice that new house that was just built?

N.F: Yes.

R.H: Well right up in there the train went.

N.F: Did you go to the dances in Erie Beach?

R.H: Oh, yes, we did all the time, in fact when I was working in Buffalo we used to on Saturday night, if there was a good band on up there we'd get on this little train when we got off the ferry, you know, and ride up, and Lobby's, Old Spain Restraunt, they had a cafetaria up there, wonderful food. And we used to have our dinner there and then go to the dance. It was lovely there then.

N.F: They had large attendances there?

R.H: Oh, yes they were always crowded.

N.F: How was Erie Beach layed out?

R.H: I have two pictures, I don't have them here, I had to give them to my son when I moved in here, I didn't have a place to hang them, two old pictures, they're long, about that long, Lou has them in his family room if you'd like to stop there sometime and see them. And there of two views, of Erie Beach. It was very well laid out, and it was a lovely place. I don't know why decided to close that and keep Crystal Beach running.

N.F: Where there rides at Erie Beach?

R.H: Oh yes good rides, the cyclone, it was one, they called the cyclone. Oh yes they had all kinds of rides. All kinds of side shows, selling things, you know, all sorts of stuff to eat, 'junk food' as we call it now.

N.F: When Crystal Beach opened was it much the same idea as Erie Beach?

R.H: Yes, Crystal Beach was there before we came, so it must have been there, and Erie Beach was too, it was here when we first came here.

N.F: Did they both operate at the same time?

R.H: Yes they both operated, yes, and I don't remember when, perhaps it was the beginning of the Second World War, wasn't it that they decided that they couldn't make money at both places. But things were not so good then, you know, finances and everything.

N.F: Would that still be in the depression era?

R.H: Yes, in the late thirties, I'm not sure if that's when they closed, but I know it was a long time ago. Although it may not be that long, because...let me see...no I don't really remember, it seems a long time since they closed up. You don't remember it being open?

N.F: No. And you enjoyed Crystal Beach also?

R.H: Yes, we used to go up there occasionally, but not that often, because I think we liked Erie Beach better, really.

N.F: Did they have the same type of entertainment that Crystal Beach has now?

R.H: Pretty well, yes pretty well, they had other things like roller skating and bowling too, things like that. They're trying to bring Crystal Beach back, did you notice trying?

N.F: Yes.

N.F: Did you go to shows in Fort Erie?

R.H: Oh, yes we went to the Ballard Theatre on Dufferin Street. The Ziff's ran that; Mr. Ziff he took tickets at the door, Mrs. Ziff sat in the booth and sold the tickets, one of the other boys did the odd jobs around they were always around you know, and then the two girls showed you to your seats, with a flashlight you know, and then the oldest girl the one who married a man from England--She has lived in England for years--she played the piano. Right in the beginning when I came here there were no, there was no sound, they played a piano. Yes that was really something. Stop in at the Chinese Restraunt and have...that, pie they used to make, you know the cream, what did they call that pie and coffee. Either that or a milkshake, I remember having the milkshakes.

N.F: Remember where the fire companies were; was there a fire company for what was called Fort Erie South?

R.H: Yes, they each (area) had a fire company, yes I think they've always had, because it was the Fort Erie one, and the Bridgeburg, you know. I was amazed that our place here (Albany Apartments), we have to call the Fire Company the one up on Dominion Road. Were out of the juristicition of the Fort Erie Unit.

N.F: Yes, your just over the edge.

R.H: Yes, I guess so. Yes I'm trying to think where the local one was (Fort Erie, South), where it is now is a new building, on Bertie Street isn't that funny I can't remember where that fire, no I don't remember, where the old fire, maybe it was on the same property, I don't think so, I think it was somewhere else, and yet I can't remember. You'd think you'd remember those things--I believe that it was down on near the Town Hall, there on Queen Street. I think it was down there--when we first came here. Yes. In those days you could call the operator and ask her where the fire was, and she'd tell you. And everyone ran to the fire, you know. It was an occasion when there was a fire.

N.F: Do you remember any "big" fires?

R.H: No, nothing really spectatular, no I don't remember anything different. Houses burned, but I don't remember any big fires. They had lots

of fires in houses then, because most people had the old stoves, you know, they had lots of trouble with those.

N.F: Did you heat by coal?

R.H: Yes. We used wood in the spring and fall, and coal any other time. I often sort of worry about people with those stoves now, and using wood, you know, I don't think they have proper chimneys on them, of course I think they have to have them inspected now, because of insurance. But I often think, you know, that they are not too safe...especially the wood.

N.F: Who was the Mayor, or Reeve, when you first came?

R.H: I think it was Peter Gordon, his daughter-in-law lives in this building Marion Gordon, her father was Mr. Wright, who worked on the Peace Bridge, and they had a house on Albert Street, that's where she just moved from, she gave that house to her son and moved up here... she's a very nice person.

N.F: Back in that time, would you "know" the people who were running the Town, representing the Town?

R.H: After I got married, I did because my husband was the Town Solicitor, before that yes, we knew them pretty well, you know, everyone, it was small enough then that "you got to know everyone". There was a time when you could hardly go down the street, but, we knew everybody...its not like that anymore.

N.F: No it doesn't seem like that at all.

R.H: No, it was a quiet place, and there was a lot of fishing then along the river, you know, all those fishing places that they've just taken down, well there were a lot more of those then, than there were recently. A lot of fishing went on down there.

N.F: If you went out to eat, where would you go?

R.H: There was nothing much in those days other than the Chinese restrants, that was about it...then the hotel was built on the Garrison Road, the Fort Erie Hotel, it was right there on the corner; it burned didn't it? But that's not so long ago, yes I remember going there often. But there really wasn't much in the way of restrants. But people didn't go out to eat so much then. Not nearly as much as they do now; but when we used to go over to Shea's Buffalo, to see a movie, we would go to Lobby's Old Spain, for dinner first. Of course the Queen's

Hotel was, and the Hotel at the corner of Jarvis, the Royal Hotel you could go there, but they were, more places to drink, than to eat you know, so we didn't go there much.

N.F: Fort Erie has always had a number of Hotels.

R.H: Oh, yes, it's a changed place, that's for sure, but we have always enjoyed it here, and we've had a good life here.

N.F: It has been friendly?

R.H: Yes oh, yes in those days Doctor Douglas was the only Doctor, when we came here, the man who gave them the money to build the Hospital, you know, and his house is down on the Front Street right next to the building that's a bowling alley, now, used to be a movie theatre, he had a lovely little white house, oh, beautiful lines, with dormers, you know, just a lovely little house. When they took that down I was so provoked...that should have been left there.

N.F: For all that he did for the town.

R.H: Yes, that's right...I remember my Mother taking me in there for some reason, I don't remember what was wrong with me, but he had a big rolltop desk, a huge one, I don't think I've ever seen one so big, it had all little drawers...he had everything on that desk... it was open and it was full... and he gave me some pills...and I remember wondering if he really knew what he was doing, you know, he was a smart man apparently and he did know all right. But this desk was just full of all kinds of medications, you know, it was really strange.

N.F: When was the hospital begun?

R.H: Well my daughter was born in 1930, my oldest daughter, 1930, when she was about seven months old, she was born in October, that would be in 1931 the Hospital was opened. Because I can remember going to the opening of it, and I had her, you know, she was just a baby.

N.F: Was that a big ceremony?

R.H: Yes, oh yes, the whole Town went, and trooped through the Hospital, you know, and it was wonderful to have that because up to that point we had to go either to the Falls or to Buffalo.

N.F: How big was the building when it was first opened?

R.H: Well it... there's a picture of it in one of those books...almost the length that it is now, it's been added to but not the length, just the front part.

N.F: There was just one floor then?

R.H: No there were two floors, yes because they had the nurse's residence upstairs too. See, girls in those days didn't have apartments and things

you know, girls lived in residence there, and the one end of the upstairs was the nurses residence...my sister-in-law was the night supervisor there then. And the other end was obstetrics, that's where my other three children were born, but since then it has been extended, it was just the one corridor and there was a men's ward at one end, and a women's ward at the other end, and then the private rooms in between, you know, and the offices in the front there... that was it. But of course at that time it was adequate.

N.F: Do you remember the effect that the Second World War had on the community?

R.H: Yes. I think... you know they had a lot of girls come in from all over to work at Fleet, and they had...where the Catholic Church is now they had places for them, temporary buildings they put up, where they lived and they served meals to the^m, that was something different but those were all taken down when the Catholic School, when they took over that property. See when we first came here they had a Catholic Church on Gilmore Road, and one up on Highway Three where it is now, by the mall, that's where that was, and there was a little one at the foot of Gilmore Road. That property where the Catholic Church is now is where they had all these...it was frame buildings...temporary things, you know, that they put up to house those girls. And a lot of those girls have stayed here, you know, there is quite a few of them that I knew who married and stayed here.

N.F: It (World War Two) must have helped the town in some ways.

R.H: I think it did, yes. And then they built...all the war time houses, were built at that time too. This old Mr. King that I spoke about he was an architect...he was the one who worked...was the architect on those. Yes, he worked there for quite a long time, he was English really a very nice person. He came to our house every Thursday night for years until he died. We played cards on Thursday.

N.F: A lot of people played cards then.

R.H: Yes that was one of the...we haven't the time to play cards now we never sit down long enough.

N.F: What kind of cards would they be?

R.H: Bridge, we played bridge. Those houses they were supposed to be demolished too after the war, but they never were, they are still all there.

N.F: Yes they are.

R.H: Because that was all vacant property, where those houses are, that did make quite an impact.

N.F: Fort Erie has filled in quite a bit.

R.H: Yes oh yes. Well those were more for people working at Fleet. I don't remember how many employees they had but it was a goodly number in those days.

N.F: And the Peace Bridge helped the town too?

R.H: Well I think to a certain extent, you know, but the population has never increased all that much, you know, I think it was, it was only three or four thousand I think when we came here, gradually it came up to about seven thousand, and now when they include all the surrounding areas...twenty-four thousand now I guess. Now it goes all the way out to Ridgeway and Stebensville.

N.F: Did you ever do any shopping in Ridgeway, or the outside areas?

R.H: Yes, yes we used to go up to Ridgeway occasionally, you know, not that much, you know, they always had that nice China Shop, the China Shop that's still there, but we had a nice one here until they took that property down, you know, for the highway. But Agnew's China Store was a lovely place way back. I don't know what else I can tell you about the Town back then.

N.F: Did the Town have before a "bus" service?

R.H: There was nothing way back...there was a little help with the busses... when the Peace Bridge opened, and they started running the busses to Buffalo, then you could take the bus to the North End, or back, you know, because those busses ran more regularly then than they do now. Because people drive now, and yes we used to take the bus to the North End, or back, we could do that. But no they didn't have a local bus service at all.

N.F: Did you ever go to the Fort Erie Race Track?

R.H: I've been there a few times, usually on Fort Erie Day, we always got an invitation to go on that day, when my Husband was alive.

N.F: It's grown a lot too.

R.H: Oh it's lovely now yes, one of the nicest Race Tracks I've been to I think the Canadian Race Tracks are really, they keep them so nice...I've been to...one year...before my Husband died we were in Florida, and we went to Florida Downs, and that was really just a dumpy looking place, you know compared to our tracks, oh yes that was just about...sixteen, seventeen years ago, you know, that we were down there. And I thought how much nicer our track was.

N.F: Did the Track itself bring in a lot of people to Fort Erie?

R.H: Oh, yes, it used to more than now I think, and in those days a lot of people came and stayed, it was good for...a lot of people rented rooms and things just for the races, they'd come in for a week or something like that. But now days they just drive in and drive out.

N.F: They certainly do, yes. Durring the Centennial Year 1957, what did the Town do to celebrate?

R.H: Well, they had a... a sort of a...pageant day up at the Old Fort when they had...well it was a pageant like of the former times, you know, and then they had a parade, I remember watching the parade, they went right past our house, you know, on Queen Street, and things like that. Yes it was quite an event, but we had another affair here when this townhad, you mean Centennial Year, for the whole country, (No, for the Town), yes that's what I'm talking about too...the two things were sort of the same, they did the same sort of things, you know for both.

N.F: Do you remember when Bridgeburg and Fort Erie, everything, was amalgamated into one; was there a special ceremonies at that time?

R.H: Yes, they had a thing down at the North End...when they were sworn in, the officials, you know, see my husband was the Solicitor for the South End of Fort Erie. Yes there was a ceremony at the North End, I don't remember it in detail, but I know there was something.

N.F: Did it really change Fort Erie, a great deal to have everything brought into one.

R.H: I think it has been better, yes, although the Town is so spread out it has never sort of got together, has it.

N.F: No it hasn't.

R.H: It really hasn't. Because it's about four-and-a-half-miles from one end to the other and that's quite a bit really for a small Town. I

think it probably helped in some ways you know, sort of consolidated all the work, that had to be done, like there was a duplication, you know, you had to have two clerks, and two of everything. Yes I can remember when we first bought that house on Queen Street the taxes were eighty dollars a year, eighty dollars, yes, I can just barely imagine what they are now.

N.F: Was there a water bill then?

R.H: Oh, yes, but a very small one, very small, paid it every three months seems to me it was just four dollars, or so for three months. We have always been very fortunate here, we have never had the water bills like they have in other places.

N.F: This is true.

R.H: And it's the same with our electricity, the people who are on Hydro, pay much more than we do on Niagara Power.

N.F: There was hydro already in homes when you came to Fort Erie?

R.H: Yes.

N.F: And street lights?

R.H: Yes, just on the main street, not many no not many street lights it was dark as all get out. I remember walking when we lived in that house up on the hill, before the Peace Bridge was built...walking down there, going down to our Church, it wasn't that far, but there was woods, trees, all the way. Right down to the Power Company you know, across from the Power Company, it was all woods.

N.F: Was the 'mill race' in place when you first came here?

R.H: I don't think so, I can't remember. I think it probably was here then. There were houses all along the riverside there, you know, where the Peace Bridge is, where the entrance is. There were quite a few houses moved from there, up onto Walnut Street, in fact most of those houses that were on the south side of Walnut Street were from the river front there, but they were all taken down for the Peace Bridge parking, you know, they didn't have that when the Peace Bridge was first opened. No there have been a lot of changes in the last ten years even. I have a daughter who lives out west, she notices, well she's been out there about fourteen

years, and she notices so many different things when she comes home, you know. But it was a very small town, but I think before we came here there were a lot of things that went on here, that had sort of slowed up like smuggling the Chinese into the States; in boats and things like that, that happened a bit before we came here...but we heard lots of stories.

N.F: I imagine you did.

R.H: Another thing that brought a lot of people here was when they had prohibition, in the States, and we had 'bootleggers' all over the place here.

N.F: Would they be in private homes?

R.H: Yes, oh absolutely yes and I knew one lady who had a place up on the Garrison there, and do you remember...what was his name... his name was Claire Burger, and he had an orchestra and long before that he was just a young chap, in High School when this 'bootlegging' was going on, and this lady hired him every night to play the piano at her house all evening while these people were coming, and she served them meals and drinks, of course.

N.F: Meals and drinks?

R.H: Meals and drinks, yes, she's still alive, I know her...and he played the piano for two dollars, he got two dollars, that was pretty good then, you know, yes. And he often used to laugh, he's dead now Claire, he used to laugh so hard, he said he could tell you lots of things that went on in that place, but that was something that happened. There was another one down at the foot of Murray Street, there a lady who had a place where she served drinks there, the cars were lined up there all the time, it was really something.

N.F: Canadians and Americans would go in?

R.H: Well mostly Americans, because they provided it here you know, people came over in droves then.

N.F: Did you ever notice them moving, they called it "rum running".

R.H: Oh, yes there was quite a bit of that went on too, yes. They did that in the middle of the night...because they were afraid of the... they had the rum running boats that chased them, you know, if they found them...but...yes there was a lot of that.

N.F: How long did that last?

It wasn't very long, well it might have been...let's see now...I really don't know how long it did last, but I can't remember how long they had prohibition over there it wasn't that long, because I think just the next election they voted it out. Couldn't have been very long I don't think.

N.F: Was it a pretty common topic of discussion on the street.

R.H: Yes, oh yes.

N.F: Do you ever remember anyone being hurt or getting in serious trouble over this?

R.H: No, not really, I think the police sort of closed their eyes to that... most of the time.

N.F: Would there have been anyone local that made money from it or was really that well involved?

R.H: Well this lady that I know has oodles of money and I'm sure that's where she made it because she never worked any other place that I know of, and she must have made a lot of money off it.

N.F: It must have been very convenient to be a border town at that time.

R.H: Of course you were taking a chance, you know, because your not supposed to do it, it went on...and oh when we were first married in nineteen twenty-nine it was on then...because we lived in the Riverview Apartments, when we were first married, and there were several people in there who did that too.

N.F: Were they organized?

R.H: Oh no it was just a private thing, you know, if you had one person come over and then they would tell their friends the next night you would have six and then it would grow, you know.

N.F: It must have been very interesting.

R.H: Yes, there was a man who was quite high up in the Government in New York State, he had an apartment there and he just used it for that; he'd come over and bring his friends, you know, and they'd go and get their liquor and so on. He wasn't exactly bootlegging, but that's why he had that apartment, you know...I remember that Kelly was his name. He had a...I forget what he was...I don't remember what position, he was in the New York State Government anyway... that went on all over town.

N.F: When you say all over town; a lot of people were involved?

R.H: Oh, yes a lot of people were doing...well you can imagine one person with a house, you couldn't have too many, you know, so there were a lot of people doing it.

N.F: It must have helped the economy in some ways?

R.H: Oh, I supposed it did. Talking about a fire when we lived in the Riverview Apartments there was a fire in there, hah, hah...but it didn't do too much damage, you know, just one apartment but you know how the smoke got all over...it travels. Well I can't really remember any other outstanding thing, you know, that happened here, but I think the smuggling of people over was very prevalent then, you know, they did a lot of that. And there are thousands of people in the States now who are not supposed to be there...they never registered, and they give them a chance to do that every once in a while, you know, but it just amazes me when I hear them tell that...and I know there were people went over the Peace Bridge who were working on the Peace Bridge but they just disappeared into the night, you know, and didn't go through the normal channels to get over. But living where we did we watched the Peace Bridge from...right well they started it at each end, you know, and we always...well it was a sort of a joke...we hoped that they'd meet--when they got to the centre of the river, you know.

N.F: Did it take a long time?

R.H: About two years, I think it was.

N.F: Did a lot of people come in from out of the area to work on the project?

R.H: Yes, yes there were a lot of people...a lot of men boarded around... there weren't places to live so much just one hotel, you know, but they'd boarded around at different places you know. Quite a lot of men, in those days there wasn't the machinery there is now, you know they hired more men...yes that did something for the area too I suppose. Yes I remember the day it opened when Baldwin was it...Prime Minister he was here from Britian you know, and well the present Queen's Father, he was Prince George (it tells in one of those books), it was...yes I remember all of them; somebody

wrote a poem entitled "Bridge of Peace" for the back of the Program. Frank Baird was the President of the Bridge Company, you remember he was the man from Buffalo. Here's the people who were present the Right Honourable Prime Minister of Canada, that was Mackenzie King at that time; and the Premier of Ontario; the Secretary of State for the United States and the Right Honourable Prime Minister of Britain, he was Stanley Baldwin; His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales will be present and speak; and the Vice-President of the United States--doesn't give his name, isn't that funny you'd think they would--must be here somewhere...they had thousands of people there for the opening...it was quite an event.

N.F: I hear the local school children took part in that also.

R.H: Yes. Oh, and Mayor Schwab, Charles M. Schwab, the head of the Bethlehem Steel Company in Buffalo, he wasn't the Mayor then but he was appointed Mayor after that...you know those things that we used to have on the road in Buffalo, those round things...dividing, they were terrible things...they called them 'Schwab's Boils', he was the one who started that, you know, so I think of that. Yes and Alfred Smith was the Governor of the State of New York, he was another one from the States; and the Vice-President of the United States and Mrs. Dawes...must have been Henry Dawes; the Secretary of State and Mrs. Kellogg; there were quite a lot of really important people. Yes Schwab was the Mayor then, the Mayor of Buffalo and Mrs. Schwab, yes I'll always remember Schwab's Boils. Yes it was an interesting time.

N.F: The Peace Bridge opened just before the 'Depression' really hit; did the depression really affect the town that much.

R.H: Yes, nineteen twenty-seven it was opened it was twenty-five to twenty-seven they started working, clearing the land and so on just after we came here, and it opened in twenty-seven... Sunday afternoon August the Seventh, Nineteen Twenty-Seven. And they had the ceremony on this side and then they...it was like a procession...the cars with all these dignitaries went ahead and then, the people followed walking...and they had another ceremony on the other side.

N.F: It was very, very nice.

R.H: Well apparently there are more cars pass over here coming from the United States than any other place in Canada.

N.F: And a lot of truck freight too.

R.H: Yes, oh there's a lot of trucks. I thought perhaps Windsor and Detroit would have a larger volume but apparently not, I was surprised to read that in the paper that this was...had the most traffic here, but I don't think we have the traffic that we used to have on the Peace Bridge do we...no.

N.F: And it's more updated to hold the traffic.

R.H: Yes, that's true.

N.F: When was the Fort re-done, and the Parks put in, was that all done at one time?

R.H: No it was always...from when we came it was always a nice park...they had all that property...but no they took over the part, you know that they have up on the Dominion farther, well that...they took that over not too long ago, but the other part it was all park land, you know, we used to go there for picnics all the time. But there weren't the buildings that were there now. But that monument there...it has been there for years. Yes they had a...yes they had a big affair when that was opened too, after they redid that, you know...bands and all sorts of things. I remember Marg Dougal, she was in the Pageant they had there and she used to tell about that. I miss her, you know, she was such a lively person, and she had lived here all her life, she was born here and she lived in the same house, she never lived anyplace else. She was eighty-seven when she died, she's been dead two years now...she was one of the 'old' residents here. And her Father I remember him so well, he was a tall tall man very thin about that wide, you know, very tall and he wore one of those...bowler hats, you know the black hard hats, he was a great old gentleman. I don't know that there is anything more that I can tell you.

N.F: Well you've told me quite a bit. And very nicely.

R.H: And there was nothing up this way in those days...this is all new.

N.F: It used to be scrub, with lots of anthills, huge anthills.

R.H: Yes, that's right, yes this was all filled in here, because this was ah, was like swamp land back here you know. But it's made a nice place for us, it's very comfortable here, very nice.

N.F: Has Central Avenue as it is now, has that always been a central part of the town?

R.H: Pretty well...although it was always...before they put that bridge up you know, it was always divided there at...you couldn't get across you had to go down to the boulevard to get up to Jarvis. Until they built that bridge, and that's not too long ago...yes there was always...but years ago we always crossed the tracks and went right over any way when you were walking, you know, and the kids always went across there to go to school, to Phipps Street School, you know.

N.F: Was there rationing here?

R.H: Durring the war, durring the Second World War.

N.F: What did that cover?

R.H: Let's see now, Sugar I remember and meat, you know I remember the rationing in the old country durring the First World War, yes I remember going with a book of stamps, when I'd shop for my Mother, you know, durring the First World War.

N.F: Is that what they used here too?

R.H: Yes, we had a book with stamps, so many for a week or whatever, you know, and they'd take them...when you got rid of your stamps you couldn't get any more for whenever it was...I think there were quite a few things rationed. We weren't badly off, in fact some of the rationing amounts were more than you would normally use... it wasn't really bad.

N.F: So it wasn't so strict then?

R.H: No, it wasn't really bad at all. But in the old country durring the First World War, that was another story, it was entirely different. A terrible time then...but here I don't know why they even had that, it was just to probably...have it more equally divided, you know the food. At first there was a shortage of men to work to run the farms and places where they grew it, that's probably what started it.

N.F: Did they have 'War Drives', and 'War Bonds'?

R.H: War Bonds yes, and they had...durring the Second World War they sold...what was it they called them ...War Savings Certificates to the kids at school, don't you remember that? No I guess you weren't

that old, no you wouldn't be. You're the same age as Kathy? Yes that's what I thought. No that was before then, my oldest daughter she, I remember her buying them, but she's up in her fifties now.

N.F: That would be important to get the children involved.

R.H: Yes.

N.F: And that would involve the whole family too.

R.H: We did a lot of work for the Red Cross...we had the main place where we did our sewing and knitting and everything on Jarvis Street upstairs over, you know where Dr. Chapman office was at one time there was a big room up there, that's where we had the Red Cross Rooms and then we had that back room in the place that's now the Legion on Queen Street, yes we took care of the South End, I looked after all the knitting and that...yes , we did a lot of work then, you know. It's the limit what people can do when they set their minds to it; when there's a specific thing like a war happening or something. We turned out a lot of stuff.

N.F: I bet you did, yes. Do you feel that the Town has changed greatly now?

R.H: Oh, yes, I think so.

N.F: Does it still seem as friendly as it was?

R.H: No, the older people are friendly, you know, and I have good friends here, but...the younger people now. there's a lot of...well I guess it's my idea the younger people are not the same, you know they do a lot of things that we know are not right.

N.F: When you first came from Buffalo and saw Fort Erie, actually came from a thriving city...

R.H: Oh, I didn't live in Buffalo, no.

N.F: Well what would you think now if you were in a major city and came into this area, would it seem like it was built up or would it just seem small.

R.H: No it would still seem small, in fact it's not as nice as it was, but durring the war, we had far more stores here...durring the war, didn't we and since then too, look at the places that have closed down, down on the front street, it looks dreadful there now, I'm

just sort of ashamed to have people drive through there it looks so bad...so many empty places...it's not in good shape at all really. But there weren't many when I first came here, but then they did build up, and there were quite a few nice...Jarvis Street had quite a few nice stores and that's beginning to go down too, it's too bad. You see a lot of young people walking around; not working and you know, that makes it worse.

N.F: When Fort Erie was a small place in the thirties or so I imagine it would have been easier at that time.

R.H: Yes, of course durring the war it was too. You know I think... in a way it's going down in general.

N.F: Well thank you very much for doing the interview for us.

R.H: You're very welcome.

N.F: I've enjoyed it very much.

R.H: If there's anything else I can help you with, or anything you think of to ask me, you know, I may not have just thought of everything; it's hard to remember just what went on. You can give me a call if you need to.

N.F: I will, and thank you very much.

R.H: You're very welcome.