

This is Shelley Richer interviewing Mr. Erle Cornell in his home at 222 Phipps Street on August 21, 1985.

S.R: Hello Mr. Cornell and how are you today?

E.C: Oh, I'm fine right now, just great.

S.R: What is your date of birth?

E.C: January 23, 1902.

E.C: And where were you born?

E.C: In Norwich, Ontario.

S.R: When did you move to Fort Erie?

E.C: In 1920.

S.R: And you've lived here every since?

E.C: Yes.

S.R: So then, you didn't take any schooling around here right? You did all your schooling and that in Norwich.

E.C: Yes, in Norwich.

S.R: Are you, or have you been, a member of a church?

E.C: Yes, the Methodist Church in Norwich.

S.R: What about here?

E.C: And here the United Church now. It was Methodist but it's United now.

S.R: It was Methodist when you started attending?

E.C: Yes.

S.R: The Methodist what?

E.C: Just Methodist Church.

S.R: Where is that?

E.C: Well, that's in Fort Erie. Before the United was...before it was formed into the United.

S.R: On the corner of Dufferin and Central, that church?

E.C: Yes, that's the same church.

S.R: Would you know any of the history of the church at all?

E.C: Well, yes quite a bit. In that one sheet I had, I think you read or had it written out.

S.R: But everything has to be said on the tape. Anything that you can remember.

E.C: Yes, well, the foundation was laid in 1913 of the present church.

Before that it was an old wooden frame church on the same locality.

Now it's the United Church on that corner, rebuilt in 1913, the cornerstone.

S.R: Have there been any changes since?

E.C: Well, just in...yes, the Sunday School room auditorium was put on after, in 1934.

S.R: Would you recall any special events that the church had to offer for the family?

E.C: Well, we have celebrated our 100th anniversary of the original church way back in the 1800s. Ministers of course have been changed from well, periods of years.

S.R: Do you recall the names?

E.C: Yes, there's, when I came Reverend Foreman. And then after that was, oh who was that man, Rev. Perry, Rev. McCuaig, Rev. Hislop, Rev. ...the one that married us...Hancock, then Rev. Slade, then Rev. Russ, Rev. Hudson, and now Rev. Pocklington.

S.R: And Rev. Pocklington is the present-day minister?

E.C: Present, yes.

S.R: So then, Rev. Foreman was there when you started going in 1920?

E.C: Yes.

S.R: Do you remember any prominent members of the church, like somebody that has really done a lot to help in organizations, or just helping the people?

E.C: Some of the older members were L. Wenz and family and Rev. Learn, choirmaster.

S.R: Could you give a couple examples of what the Wenz family did?

E.C: Well, the Wenz family, he was the contractor and built the church. there's more there if you want it. Rev. Fowler and family, Hall, J. Hall, John Hall and family, and L. C. McMurtry and family, W. R. Mannick and family.

S.R: Could you give me some examples of things they may have done?

E.C: In the church?

S.R: Yeah...that makes them special.

E.C: They've all been workers and they have...it was some of those that backed when...

S.R: The funding?

E.C: ...the members when they built the new addition to the church in 1934.

There's more yet. I...oh yes, five boys out of the church were ordained as ministers.

S.R: What's that mean? Oh, they became ministers.

E.C: They became ministers from our church here.

S.R: Who was the first political representative that you can remember?

E.C: W. M. German, Welland.

S.R: Did he have anything to do with Fort Erie?

E.C: Yes, it was...Fort Erie was in his territory here and oh, he went down here often speaking at meetings and so forth.

S.R: Can you recall anything that he may...something good that he may have accomplished?

E.C: Well, he was in for, I don't know, at least two different terms, but I don't know.

S.R: Were they four year terms?

E.C: Very well liked before, and I guess after I came here. Very well liked. Pettit was another one from Welland. I forget what his name is. Pettit, he was another one. He was either before German or after him, I'm not sure.

S.R: Would you recall the Reeve at the time?

E.C: The Reeve of Fort Erie?

S.R: Wouldn't it be the Reeve of Bridgeburg?

E.C: Yes, it would be Bridgeburg in those days. I don't recall.

S.R: Some of the changes that have taken place around here...when you moved to Fort Erie did you always live here at 222 Phipps Street?

E.C: No, I built this home in 1945.

S.R: Where did you live when you came?

E.C: Over the store at 208 Jarvis.

S.R: Could you describe Jarvis Street the way it was back then?

E.C: It was a muddy lane, and I mean muddy. There wasn't any road...paved roads. There was...sidewalks were very scarce.

S.R: Were the sidewalks cement sidewalks?

E.C: Well, there were a few. They were pretty old and needed...most of them have been replaced since. But it was in very bad shape. The stores were, well, quite dilapidated. They weren't kept up like they are today. We had quite a number of stores on the front street but they weren't elaborate at all. They were just mostly wooden

frame buildings.

S.R.: Would you recall the stores names or who owned them or if there was any popular hangouts for the kids?

E.C.: No there wasn't in those days. We weren't bothered that way. But, Valvo...what was his name? Leo, Leo Valvo was the shoemaker. He was Italian. He was a shoemaker here. And there was Charter's Bakery, John T. James General Store, VaHey's Grocery Store. VaHey's could go in there with the former members too. They were all members.

S.R.: In the church?

E.C.: Yes, and the Atwood's Furniture Store and Funeral Home. And, let's see, there was the Review Company.

S.R.: Like the Time's Review?

E.C.: Oh yes, A. W. Johnson was the owner of the Review Company.

S.R.: It wasn't called the Time's Review then?

E.C.: Well, it was changed sometime around there but it could be called the Time's Review anyways.

S.R.: With the newspaper, do you remember any star reporters or the editor, anything like that about it?

E.C.: Yes, Albert Ray was the reporter for...well, I would say the Niagara Falls paper and also our Fort Erie paper.

S.R.: Do you recall any of the other history of the Time's Review, any other interesting things at all?

E.C.: Well, they were the main printing company and did the...Carroll's Grocery Store, and then there was John A. Yeo & Company, a men's store. And another is C. Jackson, a men's store, Robin's Shoe Store, Gibson's Jewellers Store.

S.R.: Gibson's is one place that's there still then.

E.C.: Yeah.

S.R.: Could you tell me anything about the amalgamation of the three villages?

E.C.: That's Fort Erie and Amigari and Bridgeburg. Well, Amigari was a little settlement up in the west end, up there just around where the Horton Steel is, up just west of that. Fort Erie of course was the other end of town, and this was the north end of town. And they were amalgamated two different times. Amigari came first

I believe and then Fort Erie...or Bridgeburg joined in 1930...I think '33.

S.R: So Amigari went to Fort Erie and then Bridgeburg went to Fort Erie?

E.C: Well, yes.

S.R: Or did Amigari come to Bridgeburg?

E.C: They kind of joined both of us and then Bridgeburg went in with Fort Erie in 1933.

S.R: Would you know the reasons why? What political figure was behind it or...just any of the reasons why they decided to amalgamate it?

E.C: Gilmore Road was the dividing line. It was just duplication on that side and this side. When we got the bridge built, the Peace Bridge, why then we began to amalgamate ourselves. There was a Fire Department in the other end of town and a Fire Department here, and it was all duplicated. It still is as far as that goes, but we just simply joined together and worked together from then on as one council. And now of course it's Regional.

S.R: Were there any politics involved?

E.C: I would say so, no, not as far as joining goes.

S.R: Would you recall any special things that Amigari had to offer?

E.C: No, it was just a settlement of itself up there. It had a church...it came in with us...I don't know, part of Central Avenue anyway. But it was just a little church up there in the Sunday afternoons for that section of people. Queen Street Church amalgamated with us too. They closed up their church and amalgamated with Central Avenue United Church because it was a United Church. And Rev. Russ had the doings of that.

S.R: Did Amigari have any type of factory or any kind of work?

E.C: Well yes, the Grand Trunk Hotel up there. It hasn't got a very good name right now. But anyway it was up there, and Hart & Cooley.

S.R: Is that where the railroad was located, their offices, in the Amigari area?

E.C: What was it?

S.R: The C.N.R.?

E.C: Oh the C.N.R., no they had their station in Fort Erie down at the railway tracks just coming up across the river on the railway bridge.

It was a railway station in there. On one side was the Grand Trunk and on this side was the New York Central. They were both there together because they all come across the bridge you see and went their separate ways.

S.R: Do you recall any of the industries in the area...I know the ones that are in here now, but there must have been some that came and either left during the Depression or left for different reasons?

E.C: The Arner Company was one, and that's just the other side of the railroad bridge. And it's now an apartment building, but that was where the Arner Company was. They manufactured drugs. And there was...the Jello Company was in previous to that even. That's where the Jello started, in Ontario, Canada. Some others were the Mentholatum Company, yeah, that's there.

S.R: And where was that?

E.C: It's right behind the Arner Company on Lewis Street.

S.R: Oh, that long big building there.

E.C: I think they have closed up now and gone back to their home-point in Buffalo. But they used to be in there. The Pierce & Stevens is up there now in Amigari. And the Pierce Favourite Prescription and all that was made over there on Courtwright. I remember it when it was just the Pierce Medical Company I guess. And then the Trico Company was in there too. The Trico Company, a branch from Buffalo. The Wildroot Company was in there. Well, that was closed out and went back to Buffalo.

S.R: And where were these?

E.C: On Courtwright Street down there. Where Custom Pharmaceuticals is. The hotel is down there, the Barnea House. Pratt & Lambert, yeah, the paint manufacturer. That's at the top end of Courtwright Street.

S.R: How did the Depression affect the town and the family?

E.C: Very badly. We had from 25 - 30% men out of work.

S.R: Was there any help, any relief from the government or anything?

E.C: Very little if any. I know, I took over my business in 1928.

S.R: So right before the Depression then.

E.C: The Depression started in '29.

S.R: Well, was it a hard time keeping your business going then?

E.C: You bet your life it was. Any business, because quite a few went out of business at that time. There was...nobody had any money. A few...those that were on relief...I'd say 25 - 30%, they had to work for the town sawing wood, digging ditches for so many days a week to get their relief money.

S.R: Would you remember how much that was?

E.C: I don't know. It wasn't good,I know that,because I was in business then.

S.R: Do you recall any stories of things that happened during the Depression?

E.C: Not much except what I've already spoken of. It was very depressing I'm telling you.

S.R: What did Fort Erie have to offer in the line of sports?

E.C: Everything. They are well organized in sports, have been for years. The Mentholatum ball team in 1925, '26 and '27, sponsored by the Mentholatum hardball team, they went on in 1925 - '26 'till the very last game to get the Ontario championship. They didn't make it. They lost in the last game. Those fellows are all gone now. I used to know them personally. They're all gone. They were a great bunch. They were all Fort Erie fellas. That was the nicest part of it.

S.R: Did the town have...where did they play the All-Ontarios? Was it in Fort Erie or someplace else?

E.C: No, they...you see, we had a district here, Port Colborne, Niagara Falls, Welland and Fort Erie. The four teams from each of the four localities played. You'd go there one time and they'd come here, you'd go down to the Falls and they'd come here.

S.R: What about when it came time for the All-Ontario Championship?

E.C: Well, that's when you had to meet somebody from another territory. I remember once going to Bowmanville, down east of Toronto, to play a game down t here. We went to Brantford to play a game up there.

S.R: You used to play for them?

E.C: No, I didn't play for them. I just went and hollered.

S.R: So how did you get to all these places? Were there cars around?

E.C: Yeah, there were cars available to take you places. Then we went to St. Thomas once to play a game up there. We went by train up there.

S.R: Somebody mentioned something about signs on the store windows. Bec ause it was so popular people would say, closed 'til after baseball games.

E.C: Yes, well they used to have signs put up, closed and gone to the ball game. Now the ball games used to be played here down on the ball diamond down on the Bowen Road, by the river. There was a park down there and they used to play down there. It was nothing for a thousand people to be showing up for a game.

S.R: Did they have things different then they have right now? Right now there is only a couple little benches and I wouldn't know where you'd put a thousand people.

E.C: Well, there was grandstands down there then. Two grandstands that would hold about, oh I'd say three or four hundred people in each. They used to play and knock the ball up the Bowen Road. That's where the home runs would go, the Bowen Road there, yeah.

S.R: Did they ever have lights put in there, or no, that was just at Oaks Park?

E.C: No, that's before lights. No, we just played in the afternoon.

S.R: What about the arena, do you know what it used to be called? Was it always just the Fort Erie Arena?

E.C: Always the Fort Erie Arena wasn't it? Yes. The Buffalo Bisons, when they started up in the International League, they didn't have an arena in Buffalo. They came over to Fort Erie and played in our arena.

S.R: Is that who the Sabres are now? They used to be the Bisons.

E.C: No, they weren't called Sabres then. They were just called the Buffalo Bisons Hockey Team.

S.R: Do you recall anything about the cave-in?

E.C: The what?

S.R: The roof collapsing at the arena.

E.C: Oh the roof, yes. The roof caved in in a heavy snow storm in about 1930 something, 1932. We had a terrific snow storm here. Now outside of my store we had a snowpile ten feet high that I had shovelled up away from the store. The arena had all that snow on it. It just simply caved in. There was nobody in the arena at the time to get hurt or anything but it just ruined the whole arena. They had

to rebuild the whole place after that. It's on the same locality now, but that's what happened.

S.R: That big snow, was that like the blizzard we had before in '77 and the one last year?

E.C: Well, it was one like that but only it would be worse.

S.R: Do you recall anything about it?

E.C: Oh, except it tied up the town for two or three, three or four days. You were just blocked right in, that's all.

S.R: Did they have much snow removal equipment?

E.C: Oh, not as much as they have now. They had some but you just had to really wait and get it cleared away, and then clear out another street and so forth. But it was bad.

S.R: What did they use for emergencies and stuff? Now they use snowmobiles.

E.C: Snowmobiles? They didn't have any emergencies at all.

S.R: No?

E.C: None that I recall. Everybody helped one another more.

S.R: Did Fort Erie raise any big sports stars either for hockey or baseball?

E.C: Yes. Who was the fellow that played for the Chicago Black Hawks? Pierre Pilote. He was a local hockey player and went on through the St. Catharines bunch he played for and then went to Chicago and played on. He's now retired of course. He was one and there's a Rombough isn't there? A younger fellow in later years was called Rombough. There's a golfer fella by the name of...Brent Tape's son. Now I can't...he was a golfer. He used to play with the big shots in the golf.

S.R: Like Jack Nicklaus and all them?

E.C: He started in the junior around here and he got to be a pro. I don't think he plays anymore. And there's...

S.R: Do you remember who the captain of the Mentholatum team was?

E.C: Well, I guess you'd call it Bill Houck. He was a member of Parliament. No, this is Jack Houck. He wasn't a member of Parliament. He was the one that got the team together and was the boss.

S.R: The captain?

E.C: The captain. He was awfully good to work with and work for. The fellows just adored him.

S.R: What do you remember about the old Fire Halls?

E.C: Well I showed you a picture of that. I think you had it the other day.

S.R: Could you please tell the location and describe it a little bit?

E.C: Well, it's where the present Town Hall is, only it faced Central Avenue just on the alley that goes up there between our church and the present Town Hall. It was situated right there and your library was right next to it. A small building right next to it.

S.R: Could you describe the Fire Department? Was it just the Fire Department then or were there other things in it?

E.C: Well yes, the jail was in behind it and the Town Council chamber was upstairs in the old rickety building. Yes it was, and then the fire bell was up on top. You had to pull it and ring the fire bell with a rope.

S.R: Oh, and that was the alarm?

E.C: To bring the firemen over. It was just a voluntary group, horses and a steam engine.

S.R: Do you recall any of the people who ran it?

E.C: Well, there was Frank Benner. He had the team of horses and the engine was in the Fire Hall of course. They had to keep steam up there in case there was a fire. He'd have to get his horses, harness them, bring them up to the Fire Hall to get the thing and go out to fight the fire.

S.R: Was Frank...Frank Benner was in charge of the horses so he wasn't the fire chief then?

E.C: No, he wasn't the fire chief.

S.R: Would you recall who the fire chief was?

E.C: Well, let's see, no. Since then there's been several. E.C. Butler was one of the late years. Oh I know, way back there before that was Ezra Shull. He was a fire chief way back.

S.R: About how many people were on their volunteer force?

E.C: Oh, I'd say twelve, twelve or so, maybe fourteen.

S.R: So there's more now than there was then?

E.C: Oh yes, there's more now.

S.R: Do you recall any big fires?

E.C: Yeah, the Horton Steel Works burned down in 1922.

S.R: Would you know why?

E.C: No, I don't know why. I don't know if they ever found out why or not. It just simply, it was a frame building then and just burnt to the ground. Yeah, the Liquid Veneer people.

S.R: Where was that?

E.C: The Liquid Veneer Company, it burned three different times in different locations.

S.R: That must have been getting a little bit suspicious then eh?

E.C: Well, it was that type. Liquid Veneer polish and remover, you know.

S.R: Oh a combustible chemical?

E.C: A chemical that it was made out of. They weren't careful enough. They weren't careful enough. I guess that was about the size of it.

S.R: Was anybody hurt in any of these fires?

E.C: No, nobody was hurt, thank goodness. It was mostly at night when they weren't working. Hart & Cooley burned down once too, way back in the 1940s I guess, Hart & Cooley.

S.R: Do you recall anything about the Police Departments?

E.C: Police, well, I think when I came here Bridgeburg had one policeman.

S.R: Do you remember who he was?

E.C: I can't recall. He's been gone for some years.

S.R: Was he located in the Fire Hall building, the old Town Hall?

E.C: Yeah he was, that's about the only place there was.

S.R: And that was back when it was horses?

E.C: Yes, it would be.

S.R: Before there were telephones how did you get in contact with this guy? Did very much ever happen?

E.C: With getting the firemen out?

S.R: No, police.

E.C: The police?

S.R: Did you have to go down and tell them? Was that the only way, there was no alarm system for him at all?

E.C: I don't recall that there was. When they built the new Town Hall in '22 there was a police office in there. Of course the Fire Department was in there too. They were new quarters and up-to-date quarters then until they got their separate Fire Departments.

S.R: Do you recall when the Fire Department moved across the street

then?

E.C: From the office from the Town Hall?

S.R: From the Town Hall.

E.C: Well, that would be about, oh, about 15 years ago, something like that.

S.R: Oh, so it hasn't been that long then?

E.C: No, it hasn't, no. It is more or less a new building. They got crowded out of the Town Hall because they wanted their space, you see.

S.R: Would you recall any big criminal happenings that the police had to take care of, or did anything that exciting happen in Fort Erie?

E.C: Well, they broke into my drugstore. They got in through an upper window, smashed the glass and got in. They stole all the prescription drugs off the shelves. They broke into where I kept the narcotics and took all of them, heroin, morphine, cocaine, all of them that I had in there, tablets and powder both, to the amount of over \$600. They went around the shelves in the prescription department and picked out Nembutol capsules, Seconal capsules, sleeping capsules of all descriptions, depressant tablets and all that, just picked out by the bottle.

S.R: Were they ever caught?

E.C: No.

S.R: Do you recall when this was?

E.C: The Police Station then was just next door, right kitty-corner to my back corner of my store, right across the alley.

S.R: Your store was right beside the Town Hall, right? On Jarvis Street?

E.C: I was always beside the Town Hall, yes. Oh, way back when my predecessor came in 1896, he had a small store down Jarvis Street, down, about halfway down to the river. And he was burnt out there when the Liquid Veneer Company, they were upstairs, and they had a fire up there and it come down into the drugstore. And that's in 1912 when they built the present drugstore building.

S.R: Speaking about the drugstore, when you moved to Fort Erie, that was your first job then?

E.C: Yes, that's what I came for. That job was open and I knew. I got to know of it through a salesman, because I had worked one summer before I came down here in a store at home because the druggist

up there knew that I wanted to go through for a druggist. He knew that the space was vacant here. Mr. Land, my predecessor here, he wanted a druggist apprentice you see, to go through for a druggist. You had to spend four years in a drugstore, and then after that, go to college for a year to get your certificate. That's what I had to do, a five year session.

S.R: Then, when did you take over the store?

E.C: I took over the store in 1928. I graduated in '25.

S.R: What was it called before?

E.C: Just Land's Drugstore.

S.R: And then you called it...?

E.C: I called it Cornell's Pharmacy.

S.R: Do you recall any of the history of the building at all, or did Land have it built?

E.C: He had it built. He and a doctor who lived next door, he built his half of that building, and Mr. Land built his half of that building towards the Town Hall, brick for brick. Dr. Mencke, he was the doctor next door, and Dr. Douglas was the oldest doctor in Fort Erie. Not now, but at that time, because he was at the other end of town.

S.R: Oh, for the Fort Erie area.

E.C: Yeah, Dr. Mencke looked after this end.

S.R: What is in the drugstore now, so I would know the exact location? Is the building still there?

E.C: Oh, the building is there because the Town wanted it. They came to me in 1974 and wanted to know if I wanted to sell out because they got...Regional Government come in. Here's the offices from Crystal Beach, and Ridgeway, and Stevensville, all came down to Fort Erie, you see, the Regional Government. Well, that crammed them full. They didn't have room for another desk or chair.

S.R: Is that the building that's got all the glass on the front of it that's ...like the water and stuff like that? The Treasury Department?

E.C: That was my drugstore, that part of it.

S.R: Is there anything else you'd like to talk about, about the drugstore?

E.C: Well, I was robbed again once by some, a couple of crooks. They come in and took the attention of the girl, and wanted a certain

ointment that his brother had gotten here, he said, a few weeks before, but he couldn't remember the name of it, but he wanted it. So the girl went over in the drawer on the other side looking through to see if she could find it. He was with her and another fellow was wandering around over here. Well, they couldn't find what they were after, and then they called me over. Well, like a darn fool I went over. In the meantime, that guy that was over here, come in the back, and grabbed the deposit I had all made up for the bank, \$450.

S.R: And when was that?

E.C: Oh, that's...

S.R: So, the first time the store was robbed was around '65.

E.C: Yes, that's when the thieves took all the drugs.

S.R: And then the second time was...?

E.C: The second time was when the two thugs were in there and took the deposit I had made up.

S.R: Do you recall the Bertie Fair?

E.C: Yes, that was held at the Race Track. They had booths and everybody... the farmers brought their produce in, pumpkins, squash and all that stuff, apples. And it would be judged and they'd get prizes for it, prize money for all this. They used to bring their sheep, cattle, pigs, horses, big Clydesdale horses, they'd have displays, give prizes for the best cared-for one and so forth. Cattle, calves, all the animals and things were included in it, and then the vegetables. But, it used to be a good farming country around here in those days. Now, it has been changed because, well, there aren't the good farmers around anymore. They didn't have stuff to display to have a showing at all. So they had to quit that fair, it wasn't paying, and went off altogether. As you know, there's a lot of farms around here now that aren't used as farms. They're just simply wasted land, and being built on, homes and other smaller manufacturing places. For instance, like the lumber place out here on the Bowen Road. They've got that all scraped out and they're going to make a lumberyard out of it.

S.R: Is that the place right beside the Queen Elizabeth, right beside the bridge?

E.C: Yeah, yeah, the other side there. That's what's going in there. There is also the helicopter place. That's going up there someplace. I don't know where they plan to build the buildings, but that's all going up. Fleet has been enlarged, and enlarged, and enlarged, 'til now it covers in the whole area of ground there.

S.R: And that used to be farmland?

E.C: Before they started there there wasn't any. There was no building there at all before they started. Well, that's about all I can say about the Fair.

S.R: Talking then about Crystal Beach and Erie Beach...?

E.C: Oh yes, well, Erie Beach was the nicer of the two. Well, maybe I shouldn't say nicer, but it was nicer to us because it was closer and it was, it seemed to be cleaner, you know what I mean. The Buffalo crowd came over more to Crystal Beach than they did for Erie Beach. They took to that more because of the boats.

S.R: Because they had the Americana and the Canadiana?

E.C: Yeah, and they had a boat ride from Buffalo right clean up to the Beach you see. There used to be Customs Officers there and all.

S.R: Were those the two boats though, or was it a different boat that took you to Crystal Beach? Was it the Americana and the Canadiana that took you to Crystal Beach?

E.C: Yes, and there used to be the two boats. And I think they used to cross at halfway, one come up and one come back.

S.R: How did you get to Erie Beach then?

E.C: Well, from the ferry from Ferry Street over to Agrette's Store,. Then they'd...by ferry...that was a separate ferry. Then they'd unload there and go on up to the Beach with this rail train. Steam train it was. Snakehill & Pacific Railway they used to call it. It had a regular engineer. It was one of these narrow gauge tracks, you know. They used to go up there. It had two or three coaches on the thing.

S.R: Do you recall the engineer or any of the people who ran it?

E.C: Well, I wouldn't want to say because that's been so long ago, I have forgotten. But they used to have this dance hall, and it was a lovely dance hall with a big gallery upstairs . You could go up and watch the people down below dancing, spend an evening there, or dance

yourself. They used to have big bands. Crystal Beach was the same. They had a big Dance Hall with a big gallery around on the second floor. You could go and watch them dance or dance yourself. I was dancing up there one night. It was a hot night and I didn't have a jacket on. I got told I'd have to go off the floor and put on a jacket.

S.R: Oh, they like you well dressed then?

E.C: Yes. So I went and put on a jacket. But I mean, that is what it was you see. They kept it pretty good, pretty clean. But I don't know...the last few years since they discontinued the boats they haven't got the riffraff coming over. There used to be quite a bit of trouble on the boat because they'd come over here and get a few drinks then they'd start fighting, quarrelling, trouble. When the boats quit, why-that quit too. And it had all kinds of...the Hall people owned it and owned all the rides in there, and then Hall's themselves had a great big booth where they made and sold their homemade suckers on sticks. They were a nickle a piece then. I guess they'd be a quarter now.

S.R: Oh, they're still there then are they?

E.C: Yes, they were really good tasty candy too. And then all around that section was a whole bunch of stores, both across that corner there...this was the entrance coming in. The stores were there just in the summer, spring and summer, not for late fall or winter.

S.R: Oh, around where the roller rink is now?

E.C: Yeah, the warm weather stores. That's where I know the big, big bands were. They used to come down here and they'd play for...oh, maybe a weekend at a time, Saturday and Sunday night. I'm not too sure just who they would be though, but they could be...Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey, yeah, Dorsey's Orchestra. I don't know whether...

S.R: So you don't know whether Guy Lombardo played there or not?

E.C: I don't know whether his band was there or not. He was very popular you know.

S.R: At Crystal Beach they had all the beach to swim, but Erie Beach didn't have a natural beach.

E.C: Well, they had a pool for small children. Well they had...oh, and I believe it was a homemade one, sand they brought in. It was a small beach, if there was. I think there was a small beach, but they

brought in more sand and made it enlarged. They made a pool for children, and that...

S.R: Didn't they have the largest pool in the world at one time? There was a big pool and a little pool?

E.C: Yes, it was too...the water was too swift flowing because the current going by there made it quite difficult for swimmers on the river itself and that part of the lake. The whole Lake Erie just comes into the river.

S.R: What about the athletic field? Do you know what events went on there?

E.C: Oh, its...I don't know what's there now. They used to have an athletic field and there used to be a grandstand there too, because I can remember being up there for a game of lacrosse. A couple teams were there putting on a display.

S.R: Were they big named teams that went there or was it basically...?

E.C: I think they were big named teams like, maybe Buffalo, maybe one from St. Catharines or something like that. They used to have a good lacrosse team in St. Catharines.

S.R: Are there any other interesting stories that you can remember about Erie Beach or Crystal Beach?

E.C: No, I can't recall anything that's different than what I said.

S.R: You had mentioned the ferry landing on the bottom of Bertie Street, was that the only one there was?

E.C: The only ferry crossing. That was from the foot of Porter...Ferry Street, right across the river to...

S.R: Well, that serviced the Fort Erie area, what serviced the Bridgeburg area then?

E.C: That was...well, that was the only one for Fort Erie, for our end of town, and Fort Erie. If we wanted to go up there, which I have, I walked up there on a day off and walked across, went on a boat, and went across up Ferry Street, even up to Main Street in Buffalo.

S.R: There wasn't any other way of getting across?

E.C: Not across the river, there was no...oh, the Dummy. Yeah, the Dummy, the railway bridge. We didn't speak about that yet did we?

S.R: No, we haven't.

- E.C:** The Dummy on the railway bridge. It used to run every hour from here over to Black Rock and come back. People used to go across there if they wanted to do shopping in Buffalo, or go to a concert, or a show or something, why, they had to go to Buffalo, before there was a show over here.
- S.R:** Do you know when the show came over here?
- E.C:** The show started here...first it was the Hanes Brothers. They had a picture show theatre. And then it was taken over by the Ziff family.
- S.R:** Oh, that's when it was the Bellard?
- E.C:** Yeah, the Bellard Theatre. They took it over, put up a big building, a larger building, and made a good go of it.
- S.R:** Where was that located?
- E.C:** That was down where Don Dean has one of his parking lots down there, where he's got his new Oldsmobiles. This side of that, there's three houses down on that side of the street, well, it was just this side of the...
- S.R:** So the corner of Dufferin and Central...the corner, in that area?
- E.C:** No, between that house that's now, the first one there, and the grocery store that's on the corner. It was in there.
- S.R:** Why did people go to Buffalo so much?
- E.C:** Well, they had big stores in Buffalo and more articles for sale, more variety of different things, especially, I suppose clothing, dressing, dresses, and all that.
- S.R:** Were things cheaper over there?
- E.C:** Yeah, they were cheaper over there at that time. And they used to go over, and they could...when they come back they were supposed to declare them, but some people tried to smuggle things in if they could, in their purse or something. But anyway, that's why they went really. To go to a show for one thing...that seven o'clock Dummy going over to Black Rock, that's across at the other end, it would be crowded, just crowded, and maybe standing up...people going to the show. At nine o'clock they'd come back, or ten if they wanted to see part of the first show again.
- S.R:** What about the...now, we're giving the Americans an exchange rate,

did they used to give us an exchange rate, or were things just equal then? Was there any difference in the money back then?

E.C: No, there was no, not an exchange rate like there is now. Oh, that has fluctuated in the years past...and the up and down. But at that particular time when the Dummy was going, it was all on the same basis.

S.R: How old were you when you got your first car?

E.C: 1949. I had to learn to drive.

S.R: Oh, so you were getting pretty old to start? You weren't 16?

E.C: I was 47 years old.

S.R: Was it because you lived centrally located that you just didn't need a car before then?

E.C: No, it wasn't that. But I bought the business in 1928. Mr. Land gave it up then. Mr. Land, my predecessor, was asked to take over and be the vendor of the liquor store. They were starting a liquor store here, and the government wouldn't allow him to have the drugstore and run the liquor store as well. So, I took over then. Well, I had only graduated in '25 and got married the first time in 1926. I didn't have any money and I had to borrow to make a down payment on the stock that I was buying you see, for the drugstore. Alright, I had to pay that off. I no sooner got that paid off and a man came to me one day and he says, "Wouldn't you like to buy this building now?". I said, "Well, I would like to but I haven't got the money to do it". I had got through paying off the stock. And he says, "Well, I know this is for sale and I know a man that wants to buy it but I don't want to see him get it. You're here and established and I'd like to see you stay here". So he says, "I can arrange that part, if you want to, and the price is so and so". Well, I talked it over with my wife and she says, "Well, if you think you can do it like you did before, why-then good". So I took it on. Then I had to get that paid off you see. So, when I got them all straightened around and paid off, why-I found that I had nothing else to go forward to right then, so I took on this project and...

S.R: Getting a car?

E.C: Getting a car. I said, "Well, I may as well have a little enjoyment with a car". I never had one but I had to learn to drive. So, I learned

to drive and I've been going every since.

S.R: When cars first started coming out, did people have to take a driving test and did you have to have a license?

E.C: I had to take a driving test when I first learned. The fellas, and relatives, and the fellas from Spears Store who had the agency for the General Motors, it was Spears then, and one of the workers in there coached me along and drove. Inside of a week, why-I was tested.

S.R: You were already for your test then?

E.C: Yes.

S.R: There were a lot of different men's groups around...?

E.C: Men's groups, yes. Well, I wrote a few things down here this morning.

S.R: You were involved in the Masons?

E.C: Yes, I joined the Masonic Lodge, Palmer Masonic Lodge in town.

S.R: Could you take me through a little bit of the history of the lodge?

E.C: Yes, I wrote a history because we celebrated our 100th anniversary in 1978 and I was the General Chairman of the whole thing. We have a...well, I don't know if it means anything but there's all that I...different offices that I hold and have held.

S.R: You started in the Lodge on April 19th, 1927?

E.C: That's right.

S.R: And you're still a member now?

E.C: Yes, 58 years.

S.R: (reading his history with the Masonic Lodge from a booklet) And you were the Worshipful Master, Assistant Treasurer, the Treasurer, an Elected Honorary Member, District Deputy Grand Master...is that like being a President?

E.C: Well, it's more than that, it's your representative for our district. There's 14 lodges in our district...District Deputy.

S.R: I don't know what the rest of these things stand for...and then after you were District Deputy Grand Master, you went to the Algin Lodge of Perfection in Niagara Falls and the Hamilton Chapter Rose Croix?

E.C: Yes, I belonged to the Hamilton Lodge of Perfection and the Rose Croix in Hamilton.

S.R: And the More Sovereign Consistory in Hamilton, and the Supreme Council for Dominion of Canada-33rd Degree?

E.C: That's the 33rd Degree.

S.R: The Rameses Temple in Toronto-Shrine Degree, Thrice Pousant Grand Master-Algin Lodge of Perfection again?

E.C: Yes.

S.R: And the Grand Almoner-Algin Lodge of Perfection since 1964?

E.C: And still am.

S.R: And Charter Member of Niagara Chapter Rose Croix?

E.C: Yes.

S.R: All these things have different degrees too, because then it's Director 7th Degree-Algin Lodge of Perfection, and Director 16th Degree-Niagara Chapter Rose Croix?

E.C: Yes.

S.R: And then in 1981 you were appointed Historian for the Grand Lodge?

E.C: Yes.

S.R: And all these things I said then were different degrees of getting higher up?

E.C: Yes, this is a Scottish Rite. It's all Masonary, the whole thing. Here's your first, second, and third degree in the Fort Erie Lodge. And then you go...branch up, and then the higher degrees. They call them higher degrees but this is the basics of all Masonary.

S.R: And that went as far as the District Deputy Grand Master?

E.C: Yes.

S.R: That was as far as the basics would take you?

E.C: Yes.

S.R: Could you go through and tell me a little bit of the history of the Masons themselves? I don't know what the Masonary is.

E.C: Well, it's a fraternal organization. They do good, and no one outside of Masonary knows really what good they do do, because they don't broadcast it. They are not like a service club. They broadcast everything that they do, you know, and how much money they make and everything. These people do a lot of philanthropic work and nobody knows who does it. Money is spent. I know when I was District Deputy Grand Master, I was on the Benevolence Committee, Grand Lodge. That year our budget for Grand Lodge alone was \$92,000. Every lodge that had somebody that needed attention and needed money for various reasons, were looked after through this Benevolence

Society from the individual lodge, besides the Grand Lodge. So, it's hard to tell just how much money was spent altogether in one year.

S.R: Everything used to be a big secret about it before, didn't it? I heard somebody mention before that their father was a Mason, and she didn't even know anything about it. Things were kept very secretive. Is it the Masonary?

E.C: It's worse...it shouldn't be all that secret. There's a lot of, a few things that are kept secret, where I wouldn't know or find out if this man is a Mason, and he would do the same for me. That tells them something. (he is showing me a ring with #33 on it) But there's certain signs and that, that we have, that let's other people know that I'm a Mason.

S.R: Your ring has #33 on it. Is that...?

E.C: That's the 33rd Degree Mason.

S.R: That's as high as you went then...?

E.C: That's as high as you can go anytime. That's the highest.

S.R: That's like, you know, if you serve 50 years someplace they give you a gold watch. That's the same thing as giving you your #33 ring is it?

E.C: No, not exactly. You're appointed. It's an honorary, 33 is an honorary. It's not any that you can just go and say, "I would like to join", through regular channels. You are appointed, picked out, selected, and then you're elected, and you go and get your degree.

S.R: Does that mean that not everybody can join the Masons?

E.C: Well, everybody can or can't, it just depends. They've got to be good people.

S.R: Oh, so they have to have...be voted in more or less then?

E.C: Yes they do. They have to be voted on. But they have to be up-to-date, good citizens.

S.R: Do you know how this organization came about?

E.C: Well, I can't say to that because it goes back to...as far as England is concerned...ours all comes from England, since 1616. I can't tell you just all about that.

S.R: That was too far away and long ago.

E.C: Kings even belonged. King Edward VII, he was a Mason, members

of Parliament were Masons, a lot of them.

- S.R:** Is there more that you would like to mention about the Masonic Lodge?
- E.C:** No. I think that's about all that I...
- S.R:** Were you involved in any other organizations?
- E.C:** Oh yes. Quite a lot, yeah. The Lions Club, in the 1940s, I belonged to it at that time, I don't anymore. In 1922, I joined the Independent Order of Oddfellows, the I.O.O.F.
- S.R:** What did they do?
- E.C:** They were just another fraternal organization, but they're...
- S.R:** Just around to help people out and give men things to do?
- E.C:** Almost defunct now. They're similar. There's a few of them still left. It used to be big. It used to be about...over 300 people belonged to the...men that belonged to the Oddfellows.
- S.R:** So, what it is now? It went from 300 to...?
- E.C:** I don't know, it's way down now. Now I doubt if there's 50 left.
- S.R:** There used to be 300?
- E.C:** Yes, there used to be. We've got...there's two Masonic Lodges in town here. There's our own, Palmer Lodge, and there's the Fort Erie Lodge at the other end, but we meet in the same Temple across from the Town Hall...then another one up at Ridgeway. Us three, we kind of work together there, and anything special going on, why-we...
- S.R:** Are there any other activities you've been involved in that you'd like to mention pertaining to history and what they do?
- E.C:** There was a Y.M.C.A. Railroad Board here in town. It used to take care of the fellows that come in on the railway, like from St. Thomas and that, and were staying overnight and going back the next day. They had a big boarding house and rooming house up there...you know where you go up Wintemute Street, well, you'll run right into it. It's a great big building up there before you have to turn to go up to Amigari. Well that's, that's where we used to meet, up there. That was the Railway Boarding House and Rooming House, for overnight fellows. Now it isn't that Y.M.C.A. The railroad part of it has dropped because they just simply come and go.
- S.R:** Isn't it on Lewis Street that they have an overnight spot for the mainline?

E.C: Well, that's it. That's Lewis Street.

S.R: Oh, you mentioned Wintemute Street.

E.C: Well, Wintemute Street runs into Lewis Street you see, up there at the top end.

S.R: Well...oh, you mean those apartments, that long building that's apartments now. But this is down at the bottom of Lewis Street, down near the Boulevard more, right against the railroad tracks, and it has...it's a hostel, or whatever it is, for men, overnighters to sleep. There's a building there now.

E.C: Well, that has nothing to do with the Y.M.C.A., whatever it is, I don't know.

S.R: Well, you're talking about...that building is where Lewis Street and Wintemute meet.

E.C: Yes, up there. That was the old hostel.

S.R: Would you know approximately what year that was?

E.C: Yes, a way back in the 1930s and '40s. It's been discontinued up there as a hostel now. And then, I was on that board, and I was on the Greenwood Cemetery Board as secretary-treasurer.

S.R: What did that do?

E.C: The Cemetery Board? It looks after all the burials, and plots where people are buried, keep track of the...it wasn't as big then, it wasn't as large as it is now. I wouldn't want it today. But anyway, I got out of that in the late 1930s, I guess. Then there's...in '74.

S.R: You retired in 1974?

E.C: Yeah, that's when I sold my property to the Town.

S.R: Were you at the building of the Peace Bridge, the Grand Opening Ceremony?

E.C: Yes, the Opening Ceremonies were in September...I won't say the exact date...but 1927 anyway. The Prince of Wales at that time, and his brother, were over from England, and the President of the United States was supposed to be there but he couldn't. He sent his aide, and they opened the Peace Bridge. Now, there was a parade that came along the Boulevard from our end of town here, down, of Dragoons on horses. There must have been about, oh, I'd say 30 of them. They paraded along.

S.R: It says on this paper here that the Peace Bridge opened August 7, 1927, the official opening.

- E.C:** August then. They...behind them came, oh, a string of cars. There must have been, maybe eight or ten limousines, and they had the Prince of Wales and his brother in with them. Other dignitaries from the States and Canada, in government and so forth, were all in these cars, and they went by. You can see them lined up there on that photo. They had the welcoming down below, where you saw that picture. Then the Prince of Wales and his brother, and the aide from the President of the United States, went out to the centre of the Bridge where the flags are now...that's the border between the States and Canada...and they cut the ribbon. That was all there was to that ceremony. As far as thank-yous, and welcoming, and everything else afterwards, you know what goes on then. I can remember...I have a movie camera, and I took a movie of that. I got the Dragoons when they left, paraded off. There was a lot of foot soldiers besides, the Lincoln-Welland Regiment I guess, Lincoln-Welland Regiment foot soldiers, they moved off. I got a picture of that little train going, starting off going up to Erie Beach.
- S.R:** Oh, the Snakehill & Pacific. That was the...really the end.
- S.R:** Did they go any...the dignitaries and the Prince of Wales...was the ceremony over then or was there a big party or a do afterwards?
- E.C:** Big parties after that, welcoming and getting acquainted parties, and I think there was a dinner engagement...both sides of the river. They had one great big one in Buffalo because, the Peace Bridge you see, is represented by, I think it's five members from the States, Buffalo area or...and five from Canada here. Some of our fellows are on that representation board. But, there was big dos and...
- S.R:** Is there anything else you can think of in closing that you'd like to mention?
- E.C:** The Niagara Christian College, yes. It was built by some money men in Buffalo, possibly as a gambling casino...club. But it went...I don't know...it went bankrupt or whether...they disposed of it anyway, to the officials of the Canadian, Niagara Christian College. Now they've made a going concern of it in their church work, and school work and all. Other than that, I don't know.
- S.R:** They've also brought over a lot of Chinese to the area, having their foreign...

E.C: I think there's 10 Chinese restaurants here in the town.

S.R: They're very popular too, all of them, for such a small place like Fort Erie.

E.C: They sure are. There's a large Chinese population here in Fort Erie, but they're all good people. They're...they mind their own business and do what they have to do and...no trouble whatever.

S.R: Well, the ones that would come from there (Niagara Christian College), would be Christian people anyway.

E.C: Yes. When I first came, there was a lot of Italians here because they worked on the railway. There was a lot of Italians. They have gradually died out. There aren't as many.

S.R: They're in the Amigari area. There's quite a few Italians. There was something you remembered that you'd like to say in closing about the Central Avenue Bridge?

E.C: The Bridge was built when Mr. Howard...Mr. H.E. Thompson was Mayor of Fort Erie. He was...he had made a thruway between the river and the other end of Fort Erie, the south end of Fort Erie. He saw to it that it was a good thing for the town. It certainly was because that was a shortcut for all the school kids going to school in the area.

S.R: Oh, all the school kids used to have to cross the railroad tracks. Were there ever any accidents?

E.C: Well, there used to be accidents on there, people getting killed on the railway. But that's been a godsend.

S.R: When you had your car or horse and buggy, did you go over the railroad tracks there or how did you get from the North End to the South End?

E.C: Just by going around...before that bridge was built, by going around, either down Jarvis or down Courtwright and around underneath...

S.R: Oh, the boulevard under the International Bridge.

E.C: The boulevard, yeah. Go down to the boulevard and go underneath the railway bridge there. Before I forget, Mr. Thompson and a high school student, under the working of the Lions Club, they're the ones that sponsored this. They spent all, one or two summers on the river investigating, trying to find out why we have so many sandflies. They did find out to a degree. They sprayed a spray...had

a sprayer that would go up and down the streets of the Town, and that did a lot toward eradicating the sandflies. Today we haven't as many as we had back then, thanks to the Lions Club, and Mr. Thompson and his student helper.

S.R: Do they still do that at all, spray?

E.C: No, I don't think they spray anymore. The government won't let them use the spray powder, but there aren't as many as there used to be.

E.C: I might say that, Miss Rose Seaton, the Principal of Phipps Street School, was honoured by calling Phipps Street School, Rose Seaton School when she retired. That particular school was my school when I was on the School Board, to look after. They decided that it was too old to carry on as a school and the Board recently...well, in the last year, decided that we should have a new school. It was built behind the former Phipps Street School, Miss Rose Seaton School. They now have the new school built back there. They tore down the front, old school, landscaped the whole yard...you'd never know that there was a school ever there.

S.R: Why didn't they just build the new school there, in the same spot?

E.C: Well, they had...they owned the property and it was for this end of town you see, particularly. It was an old school and it was built in three parts. There was a centre part which was the oldest, and they built on one end because they needed more school rooms. They enlarged that and built on this end to make it bigger yet. Now...it was deteriorated to a degree where it wasn't worth rebuilding at all because the centre part was the one that was giving away. So that's what got a new school up here.

S.R: But they built it in a totally different spot of their grounds. They built it on Emerick Avenue instead of Phipps Street.

E.C: Yes, they did, because they had the room back there you see. Now, they've got room on this side so it's all landscaped. Douglas School has been closed, and is now, I understand, going to be a senior citizen's home. Mather School was torn down and Mayor Hummel purchased that. They tore it down and it's landscaped.

S.R: Thank-you very much for the interview Mr. Cornell.

E.C: Oh, you're welcome. I hope it's what you were after.

S.R: Yes, it's fine, thank-you.