

Beverly Branton interviewing Mrs. Moira Park, in her home at 845 Edgemere. The date is May 24th, 1985.

B.B.: Hello Mrs. Parks.

M.P.: Hi, Beverly.

B.B.: Could you give me your date of birth please?

M.P.: Yes, August 12, 1915.

B.B.: And your place of birth?

M.P.: Buffalo.

B.B.: And your occupation?

M.P.: Before I was married, even after I was married, I was a teacher, at Amherst Central High School.

B.B.: What subjects did you teach?

M.P.: History, world history.

B.B.: What brought you to Fort Erie?

M.P.: Well I told you, I showed you the picture, that my father and mother bought this place, I think in 1920. Because he was doctor and in that time they were living in a double flat and it was in a busy section, and I guess he wanted to get us out of his hair and he thought it would be good for us too. They both liked the water considerably. So the first year we couldn't get in here because it had already been rented but I think we were here from 1921 on. And in fact my younger two brothers were, they were born after mother and father bought this place.

B.B.: Did you live here all year 'round?

M.P.: No, no dear, no. Nobody did. Because the water situation..there was no way to get water in the winter. All the pipes were on the surface and they use to take them up in the fall and put them down in the spring. And they were all by Ellis, Mr. Ellis.

B.B.: Who..was he a Fort Erie resident?

M.P.: Oh yes and you can still see the pump house that's at the beginning of Waverly Beach and that's how they pumped the water from the lake. But none of these, it's only recently that they've had a water system here. It isn't, I mean it isn't too long ago. But I don't know what year they started but I know, and that they put water in first and then sewers in. Which of course you had to get peoples consent to join and to pay.

B.B.: Was there the same amount of people, of homes, as say there are now a days?

M.P.: Well they're pretty, most of these houses go back to, at least to, there's a section up here that were, belonged to the Jews. Mr. Maisel from Buffalo bought Rose farm, now Rose is a common name along there, and then subdivided it among his friends. And those houses were a lot newer than the ones here.

B.B.: Do you know who your father bought this house off of?

M.P.: Yes, Webster. But she was not a Canadian. She lived in Hamburg, New York. You know that's just outside of Buffalo.

B.B.: Do you know if she had originally built this house, or had this house built?

M.P.: She might have. I don't know. It was pretty old as you can see. It was even more dilapidated than that because it was stucco and stucco along here does not stand up. You know it's too damp. But she was a nice..her husband, was he a minister, or an organist?..but whatever he was he ran away with somebody from the choir of St. Pauls, now not the one St. Paul's in the village but the St. Pauls in Buffalo, the one that's downtown. So that was the, he left her, Mrs. Webster with two daughters to raise.

B.B.: Were most of the homes, even at that time, owned by American citizens?

M.P.: Yes, I think they were. Because you know what they use for transportation either the Dummy, of course it's no longer in existence and that was the only way, or they drove. They used the ferry. You've heard of the ferry?

B.B.: Where would you pick up the ferry?

M.P.: At the foot of Ferry Street.

B.B.: And where would it drop you off?

M.P.: At, right at, you know where Agrettes parking is, or where it was? There's another store going in there now I heard. That's where you landed. And there's a lift bridge in Buffalo across the canal and, I think it's where the rowing club is over there, and that's where you took the ferry.

B.B.: What time of year is it that would come over here?

M.P.: Well, I think around this time or a little later but we wouldn't stay. We might come weekends.

B.B.: Would you stay continuously during the week?

M.P.: But then we'd stay for the summer but then we had to go to school.

And, oh nobody..well I don't think we'd be welcome in the Fort Erie schools. You know there weren't that many people in Fort Erie then, either.

B.B.: Tell me what you remember Fort Erie to be like..your first recollections of coming here to your new summer home.

M.P.: I think I was six so I can't remember too well. But we really never went to Fort Erie much except to get haircuts for my brothers and to market. They had an A&P down, on Jarvis Street, that mother liked to go to. And we had a good store up here at the corner, Heatherington.

B.B.: Which corner is that?

M.P.: Well the one that has the taco place that's now out of business or for sale. Nobody has really done very well on that place since it was not a store. You know since they abandoned the store I think.

B.B.: How long had it been a store business?

M.P.: Oh, well as I say, before it was Heatherington's it was Rungs.

B.B.: What did they sell at it?

M.P.: Well you know food products 'cause a lot of people were stuck here once they landed here for the summer. There weren't that many cars and the husband usually took the car to work. They also could take a train over. There was a railroad station at Rosehill by they could catch this train and then, I guess it ran the next morning, and took them into, below the International Bridge and then downtown. Ya, there really wasn't that feeling against Americans over here, when we first came. And we use to play with all the..there was no distinction made. You know my brothers would play baseball or football and they'd have Canadians on the team with them or play against a Canadian team. So there wasn't the feeling. I, could be that the second World War started up that feeling.

B.B.: You sense that there is a 'feeling' now, is that what you mean?

M.P.: Oh, I think so. Some of the things that they did next to my other brother, see I had three brothers but the one died, um they lived, these people lived the end of Buffalo Road. And of course, I think the lady is making a mistake because she stands out there and yells, 'get off my property', well you're asking for trouble if you do that. So, anyways they have ways..that they put a rock through their window. And nobody knew of course who did it, they didn't find anybody. And the police hands are tied, they can't arrest anybody. They don't know who did it. And they've done that at Crescent too. You know in the winter time they break in. So that's why I say I

know there's 'feeling'.

B.B.: Has the Waverly Beach area...is that what you call this...

M.P.: Ya, this is Waverly.

B.B.: Has it grown much since you were a child?

M.P.: No, no. The only part that has grown, because it can't grow out in the lake is in the, behind this Edgemere Road.

B.B.: Has it gone through a lot of changes?

M.P.: No but there have been, ah, for example opposite Burton's farm, they built quite a few new houses.

B.B.: Where is Burton's farm?

M.P.: Well that's on Kraft Road. But other, and then every once in awhile they put up a new house. They've done that on the Dominion.

B.B.: Have many of the families, say when you and your family first came over, are many of the same families still here? Have the homes been passed down?

M.P.: Some of them have yes. And that's the reason there's not that much change. But many of them haven't been passed down too. If they die out or if the people move away from the Buffalo area then they're not interested anymore. And maybe their children aren't. But usually the children are interested in staying here. Like our family, because I was the girl, I got the house, but my brother built a place up off Buffalo Road, and the other one bought May's estate. Do you know the May? Oh, he was head of Pierce Arrow. And there were a couple of estates here. One was May and the other was ah, Good. And Garrett Reid had that house. You know him and Niagara View. Now Garrett has sold his property and I hear he's building a house, or re-doing a house on Niagara Boulevard, right. And I just found out he was a cousin of Gar..who was the man who owns the recovering place, the reupholstering place, do you know who I mean? Davidson, ya I never knew that. And he is the cousin of..but he's done very well. Of course he's not in the Real..he probably is a silent partner but he has a marvelous position making these kits for students in Science and he got a job, well through selling his property to this Mr. Echol and therefore he had to move to Rochester, outside of Rochester. But someone said he may have another, he may have a different position now, a different job. Because he's evidently an excellent sales person. Right.

B.B.: Yes he is.

M.P.: And his wife I think, is she American or Canadian?

B.B.: I don't know.

M.P.: Well she may be American. I know she went to D'Youville for nursing school but it may have been after they were married.

B.B.: Do you remember if the Depression affected this area?

M.P.: Oh, yes. Sure it did.

B.B.: How did it affect it?

M.P.: Well you couldn't do much to your house even if it were falling down.

B.B.: Did many people lose their homes in this area or..?

M.P.: Well they never paid much for them.

B.B.: So there was a lot of homes bought at that time?

M.P.: Ya, but I don't think people, I'm trying to think..I don't think they lost them. I'm trying to think who might have lost their..but I don't think there was anyone. Because don't forget they had two homes. They had a home in the States and this one. And these houses were not expensive.

B.B.: Do you think that was one of the reasons why it might have become a resort area, a summer home?

M.P.: Oh, yes. 'Cause they weren't expensive but they weren't awfully well built either. You know, like I weatherized this you know. And David my husband put a cellar under which is a big mistake 'cause this is not the area for cellars at all.

B.B.: Did you classify this place as a summer resort, Fort Erie?

M.P.: Yes, this area here and Cresent Beach 'cause there was just summer residence there.

B.B.: Do you think there is still that feeling or is that changing?

M.P.: No because it would only be in Fort Erie itself that there might be 'feeling', if they found out that you were just a summer resident.

B.B.: Twenty-fourth of May weekend is your, American Memorial Day weekend.

M.P.: Ya, ya.

B.B.: That was the same weekend that Erie Beach use to open. Is that true?

M.P.: Ya, that's right.

B.B.: What do you know about Erie Beach? What are your first recollections of Erie Beach?

M.P.: Well, they had a big dance hall. And the people use to walk along

here and as kids we were awful, we use pelt them with weeds that had sand on them you know. And you know, they weren't doing anybody any harm. And they had a beautiful, later they had a beautiful swimming pool. And of course they were Americans who owned it, Erie Beach..the Bardols.

B.B.: Right. Who did he buy the property off of?..Mr. Bardol.

M.P.: Oh, he bought it off of, at the, he bought it from a Fred Weber, who was in the uniform business in Buffalo. And why he sold the beach I don't know. But of course, Bardol made a lot of money on it.

B.B.: Do you know what gave Mr. Bardol the idea to open up an amusement park or was that his first idea?

M.P.: Well, I think that Fred Weber was his idea to have an amusement park, dear. And then...

B.B.: Did he start one, Mr. Weber?

M.P.: I think so ya. He started Erie Beach, cause I just read that someplace, um, I did have a book on it, this area. But anyways one of the Bardol's widows lives down there, at the end of Lakeshore Road you know, that green, it's a big place, only she married somebody else, Irmisch.

B.B.: Was that Mr., what relation was that to Mr. Bardol who ran Erie Beach?

M.P.: Oh, oh he would be much older I think. It would be like his daughter-in-law. The wife survived for quite awhile, Bardol's wife. And you know that yellow house on the corner opposite the store, well that was the Bardol house.

B.B.: When did he live in that house?

M.P.: Well, when he had the Beach, Fort Erie Beach. See he didn't, it was much later that they built the house along the, at the junction of the river, that green house.

B.B.: The Irmisch house...

M.P.: Ya.

B.B.: ...use to be where Mr. Bardol also use to live.

M.P.: No, no no, they were dead by that time, the old man and his wife. Soon as..it was really tragic..their, one of the boys committed suicide, I think it was Franklin Bardol, they really had tragic lives. They all died, Bob, Edgar.

B.B.: When Mr. Bardol first bought the property was there any park?

M.P.: Now that I don't know because that was bought about 1912, just

before I was born or before we were here. And when we came here it was already doing well as an amusement park.

B.B.: Do you remember your first time that you...?

M.P.: Oh, I remember going there. But we were really pretty young to be going to an amusement park. And we weren't encouraged at all to go up there.

B.B.: Why was that?

M.P.: Well, you didn't always have such savouring characters and my mother didn't want the children, her children, to be hanging around an amusement park, unless somebody took us up.

B.B.: When you got to be, say in your teenage years, would you be more apt to go there and go on the rides and...?

M.P.: Oh, once in a blue moon.

B.B.: But even living this close you didn't frequent it that often?

M.P.: No, we were not that old to do..you know it closed in '32. I think it was '32.

B.B.: What do you remember of the park though? If you could describe it to me, as you see it in your mind. I've never seen it so...

M.P.: Well it was much like Crystal Beach. They had, they did have a hotel there too. It burnt down. It was a very nice hotel.

B.B.: Where was the hotel?

M.P.: Um, well just inside the gate here.

B.B.: Okay where was the gate located?

M.P.: The gate would be at the end of the sidewalks here. You know at the end of Helena Street.

B.B.: Did you have to pay to get in through the gate?

M.P.: No, no. You didn't have to but you had to pay for the rides.

B.B.: So you would enter through the gate and there was a hotel just inside?

M.P.: On the left, ya.

B.B.: On the left hand side.

M.P.: On the left ya. And it had verandas, you know the typical hotel, summer hotel. And you know when the reason you see, that Erie Beach failed was that two amusement parks so close together couldn't make a go of it. Now this is the story, so Crystal Beach paid Bardol to close down his amusement park. That would be Hall you know who owns it and he could probably tell you more about it. But that was the story that they were paid to close down. And I can see why. There wouldn't be, they were both drawing from the same area,

from Buffalo.

B.B.: Let's go back to describing what the park actually looked like. You'd go in and the hotel is on your left.

M.P.: Ya, and the dance hall was down below a little bit and the swimming pool on your right.

B.B.: Was there a large walkway, cement walkway?

M.P.: Ya and then there was also beyond the dancehall...

B.B.: How many floors was the dancehall?

M.P.: Oh, about three or four. You know they just knocked it down a few years ago. It was so well built that it wouldn't fall.

B.B.: Do you remember what was on each floor?

M.P.: No, see it was only the one floor really, but it had balconys around but it was not ah...

B.B.: Was there a bowling alley?

M.P.: In the bottom. Right, there was bowling alleys and the toilets.

B.B.: Did you ever go bowling there?

M.P.: No, I was only six or so, so I wouldn't be going bowling.

B.B.: Okay then, from the dancehall...

M.P.: Well, then they had a ferris wheel. And then they had..now the Comet is at Crystal Beach isn't it..but I can't think of the name. They had the Blue Streak and then for a couple of years they had this great big ah, well like the Blue Streak only it was, I wonder what, I can't remember now what it was called but they had that only for a couple of years.

B.B.: What did it look like?

M.P.: It looked like the Blue Streak. They must have pictures of these in the library, haven't they?

B.B.: Yes they do, some.

M.P.: Ya, and then there was an area where they told your fortune you know. I guess they had a band concert too on Sundays. And then of course they had places to eat, they sold food in there.

B.B.: What type of food stands?

M.P.: Well there would be like, would it be spun candy?

B.B.: Cotton candy?

M.P.: Ya, but I'm not sure I can't remember. And I don't want to mixed up with Crystal Beach.

B.B.: Was there restaurants?

M.P.: Only in the hotel did they have dining room, a restaurant.

B.B.: Do you know the cement triangle that's in the water right now, it looks like a base of old rides?

M.P.: Well I think that's the one that I told you they had the ferris wheel.

B.B.: Do you remember the name of it or was it just called the ferris wheel?

M.P.: No, 'cause it was next to the dance hall. Now, maybe I haven't been there, I wouldn't even go down there because it's over grown and they say they're smoking pot down there and everything, so I don't know.

B.B.: Can you think of any other attractions they use to have?

M.P.: No, that's what I'm trying to think of dear but I really didn't go there very much.

B.B.: What would you do for entertainment?

M.P.: Well for one thing I had to look after my brothers, they were younger than I. And we went swimming. And my brothers had a boat, you know a motorboat. That was the extent of our good times. We had our good times at home.

B.B.: Were you close to your neighbours, other friends say your own age?

M.P.: Ya, well we were much closer than we were to anyone in town, in Buffalo. 'Cause of course you had your good times here, right.

B.B.: Did you ever hear of a restaurant called Rockemans around this area?

M.P.: No, where did you get that name from?

B.B.: Someone else who..someone was speaking to about Erie Beach said that there was a restaurant named Rockemans that might have been the restaurant in the Old Dance Hall, but I'm not sure.

M.P.: I don't think they had a..I'm trying to think where it would be, 'cause if I recall it was four storeys high, there was just like balconys around it, on the third and fourth storey.

B.B.: Maybe it was in the Hotel.

M.P.: I think it was in the Hotel. And I know they had a grand piano there but what happened to that..they probably wrecked like everything else you know, the vandals got in not long afterwards. You see they didn't care at that point because they were being paid to stay shut.

B.B.: Do you remember where some of the rides were being sold to or what was eventually done with them?

M.P.: No, no. They had a merry-go-round but what happened to it I don't

know. And they had a water..these boats, you know that go through a tunnel and all that, like a tunnel of love business. They had that. But you see they just let everything go once they made this agreement. And of course I can't really tell you anymore than that.

B.B.: Do you remember the Orchard, I believe they called it, or the Grove that would have been the picnic area?

M.P.: Yes, well see, it was all, it was called The Grove, old Erie Beach, so I think they did have an orchard. They had ponies and the stables, you know where the Waverly Hotel is, keep going on that road, then you could see where the stables were, where they kept the horses or the ponies. And of course they had...then, the Waverly use to be Dr. Pierces, it was a rest home, a rest hotel.

B.B.: Tell me about that.

M.P.: Well that's all I can tell you. Oh, you know it was an era of patent medicine and that's where he made his money. And it wasn't the Waverly then, but it was...it's an old place, if you go in you'll see the dual post and the stairway are magnificent, they're beautiful. And I guess he would bring his patients over for the air, to stay there like a hotel or a rest place.

B.B.: Do you know what the average amount of people would be staying there?

M.P.: No, because I just heard about this you know. So I really don't know, you'd have to get maybe somebody older than I. But there might be something in the tax office you know. 'Cause I'm sure it would show up in the deed of the Waverly Hotel. And then you know about the Dummy, right, that ran?

B.B.: Yes, but tell me about it. Tell me what you remember about it.

M.P.: Well, I remember that my grandfather use to come over every Sunday on it and go back. And it took you to the ferry and then the ferry took you across the river, you had to walk up the hill there and get a trolley car, 'cause he lived on Lafayette Avenue, so he would get a trolley car to Ferry or to Granton, Lafayette. But he loved it and he came, he didn't drive then, so he came over every Sunday. Because the people in those days they didn't run around so much. You had your families, especially on Sundays and you had a family dinner. And my poor mother, because you couldn't get help you know, because who would want to come over to this god-forsaken place, where there was no boyfriends, there was..so she couldn't

get anyone or rarely. And then there was something develop with them to come over here. Or even if she had somebody from here they usually were not very satisfactory. So, it didn't stop, the relatives still came, still came on Sunday. And you were expected to provide a dinner. Now I know, we have never had a big dinner on Sunday.

Do you people?

B.B.: Not anymore. We use to.

M.P.: Ya, we use to, but not anymore. We gave that up, at least one day to give them a little rest in the kitchen but I can remember you know when that was it.

B.B.: Do you remember..you would remember when the Peace Bridge opened.

M.P.: Yes, oh yes.

B.B.: That..how were your feelings about that at that time, although I imagine you weren't driving at the time.

M.P.: No I wasn't. I guess I learned to drive after that. But we were glad when it opened because you don't know what it was to stand, or to stand in line to take the ferry. You know there were all kinds, there was a long lineup of cars.

B.B.: Where would the lineup go, can you remember some of the days when it was extra heavy?

M.P.: Ya, well on holidays it was extra heavy and these ferries, we had one big one, maybe it was The City of Toledo. I know there was a brochure. You know where you should go, is to Buffalo Historical Society. Have you ever been there?

B.B.: No, but one of the girls is looking into that.

M.P.: Oh, yes you should. Because this was the biggest ferry. And it gave some relief then because you could get over.

B.B.: What was the name of the ferry?

M.P.: I think it was the City of Toledo.

B.B.: Were there any other ferries that use to come in?

M.P.: Yes, The City of Orleans is another. I don't know other than..there might have been one more. But see they were usually brought down here by some other city.

B.B.: Would they dock in the same dock by Agrettes?

M.P.: Yes.

B.B.: There were no ferries that would come strictly, straight to Erie Beach?

M.P.: Yes they had the Canadiana, that's the one that ran. They had a ferry but it was not, it was just for people.

B.B.: Do you remember the name of that?

M.P.: No, I don't remember the name of that. See that went out of business when they closed the Beach, the Park. They certainly didn't need a ferry then. But they never carried cars. These others I'm mentioning were car ferries and of course they didn't run in the winter. I don't know what the people did. But they couldn't possibly run in the winter.

B.B.: There's some stories of them dodging in between the ice flows.

M.P.: Ya, well maybe they did. Maybe they just waited until it was okay.

B.B.: So it was a great relief to have the Peace Bridge come in then.

M.P.: Oh, yes.

B.B.: What do you recall of the opening of the Peace Bridge?

M.P.: Well, I was probably in school. I just remember about it, you know that the Prince of Wales came. And of course the people that were prominent in that were the Bairds. They still own the bonds and I'm sure there are people in Fort Erie that own bonds in it, right. I don't know who they are but I know the Bairds are the biggest stockholders in the States in the Peace Bridge. And that's of course why they don't want to pay it off. Imagine what would become of their income.

B.B.: What else can you think of as you look back when you first moved here?

M.P.: Look..Look!

B.B.: Oh, an airplane.

B.B.: Are there still the celebrations on the 24th of May like there use to be? Isn't that when you have the big bonfires?

M.P.: No, you're thinking of the 4th of July. Ya the 24th of May is Remembrance Day. Now your Remembrance Day is when, it's another..do you know?

B.B.: February? [November 11]

M.P.: I don't know.

B.B.: Can you think of any other memories...?

M.P.: No. I had one book and it may be on the Peace Bridge, it's a brochure....
.....Every summer we'd go up to Crystal Beach as a family to have pictures taken. That's where you went to have them taken.

B.B.: Who..do you remember the photographer?

M.P.: No, he was employed by the Grove. You see we weren't very old..up by Crystal Beach so that's where we went. 'Cause you see I gave all my pictures to my brother, 'cause I didn't have any children and I thought the children might like them.

B.B.: Were some of the homes too along Edgemere..the property did it sometimes go across the street of Edgemere?

M.P.: Oh, yes. Like Cresent Beach owned, they still own, from Kraft Road up to Cresent, all that property is on the other side of the creek or the other side of the railroad tracks is owned by the people in the front. But see now, that's a new development. Cresent Beach was never as developed as it is now. You know like, the park, what do you call it?

B.B.: Ferndale.

M.P.: Ya, like Ferndale and all those streets in there. Oh what they had some streets but nothing, they didn't have the development that you have now.

B.B.: You must have seen it go through a lot of changes.

M.P.: Oh yes that was one change and I think that was brought about by World War 11.

B.B.: Why the war, how would that have brought changes...?

M.P.: Well, when the young men came home that would have brought they wanted a place to live, Fleet aircraft developed. Now they're going to have a helicopter factory. That of course, somebody told me that won't be developed right away. But eventually it will. There's something else they're going to build.

B.B.: What were the roadways like around here?

M.P.: Terrible. You know the middle road, Helena Street? That was a base for a railroad. That was laid on a railroad base. That's why it's so high up.

B.B.: What railroad use to ...?

M.P.: Well the railroad took a different curve see. It was changed then, it changed. But oh, boy that was..the roads were not good.

B.B.: Have they improved?

M.P.: I don't know. I broke some springs on my car from the pot holes, so whether they have I don't know.

B.B.: Well, Mrs. Parks can you think of anything else that you remember?

M.P.: Darlin' no that's all.

B.B.: Well you've done really well and I appreciate the information you've given me.

M.P.: Okay.