

This is Shelley Richer interviewing Mrs. Esther Kent in her home at 115 Lavinia Street, on September 20, 1985.

S.R: Hello Mrs. Kent and how are you?

E.K: Oh, I'm quite well thank you.

S.R: What is your date of birth?

E.K: September the 18th, 1899.

S.R: Where were you born?

E.K: In Fort Erie, Amigari as it was called then, where I was born.

S.R: Where in Amigari?

E.K: On the corner of Catherine and Concession.

S.R: Have you lived in the area all your life?

E.K: All my life, within a mile of that place.

S.R: Could you tell me what school you attended and where it is located?

E.K: Well, first it was a little Amigari schoolhouse. Then when I was 10 years old, I went down to what was Phipps Street School at that time, later called Rose Seaton School.

S.R: Where was the Amigari Schoolhouse?

E.K: On the... what did I say... on the Gilmore. When you cross over the railroad track it was a little short distance from there, about six places. There was the hotel, and then the little store, and a couple houses, a store, and then three little houses, and the schoolhouse. That was the end until you got a ways out into the country.

S.R: Is that building still there now?

E.K: No, they moved that down near the Horton Steel, and they used it for an annex for the school at one time, and then later for a Boy Scout hall, but it's gone now. I wish I had a picture of it.

S.R: Do you remember your teacher?

E.K: Yes, I remember my first teacher when I went to school. Her name was Miss Mossip, and I liked her, and I think everybody did.

S.R: Do you know when that school closed?

E.K: Well now, really I don't know that. Oh, it must have been... I imagine '25 anyway, 1925 or maybe later, because they used it for a little annex school for the Wintemute School.

S.R: What's an annex school?

E.K: Oh, just a... they moved it down there, this little Amigari schoolhouse,

and they used it for the overflow, like.

S.R: Then you went to Phipps Street School?

E.K: Yeah.

S.R: Do you recall who your teacher or principal was there?

E.K: Yes, when I first went it was Mr. Hansel.

S.R: That was the principal?

E.K: That was the principal, but he also taught, you know.

S.R: Could you describe... starting with the first school, could you describe what it looked like?

E.K: Who?

S.R: The Amigari School.

E.K: Oh, one room, one room for all the classes.

S.R: What did you do for heat and water and stuff?

E.K: Well, there was a sink in one corner. It was just a sink with a tap on it, just cold water, you know. Heat did you say?

S.R: Yes.

E.K: It was a gas stove. There were two, one in... like, this way, you know, one in the front there, and one in the back there. It was gas heaters.

S.R: Coal for gas, or natural gas or...?

E.K: Natural gas. I can't remember coal in the stove really. It might have been.

S.R: What about desks and things like that? Was it benches or did you have little desks?

E.K: Oh, they were nice little desks, you know, joined like they used to be years ago. They were all in a row, you know, your desk and your seat, and then the desk was on the back, and all the rows. There was about... I imagine there were five rows in that, because they were all grades, you know.

S.R: How many children were at that school?

E.K: Gee, I don't know. I'll bet there were 30 in there.

S.R: All for one teacher to handle?

E.K: Yes.

S.R: No wonder it only went up to age 10. Then at the Phipps Street School, could you describe to me what that school was like?

E.K: Well, that was a... we thought that was wonderful, you know, then.

Let's see, there must have been... there was two, four, three... there was six rooms in it, six big rooms.

S.R: Is that the way it was originally, would you know?

E.K: When I went there it was like that, but it hadn't been enlarged, well, maybe a few years before I went.

S.R: Do you recall what it was like before you went then, before it was enlarged?

E.K: Well, there was four rooms, but then they put one... it was, two like here, and then one in the back, and then it was the same way below, up and down, up and down.

S.R: Oh, so there was an upstairs and a downstairs?

E.K: Yes, and a basement where you played when it was raining.

S.R: Did the school have very many sports?

E.K: Only what you made yourself. No one came in and guided us, you know, just what you... played ball. Maybe some teacher would be interested enough to go out and play with you and instruct you, like that, you know. Ball seemed to be the most common thing.

S.R: Do you recall any funny stories or things that happened during your school days?

E.K: Oh gee, I don't know. I couldn't tell you that offhand. I bet there were lots though.

S.R: Was Mr. Hansel your only teacher at Phipps Street School, or did you have others?

E.K: There was a teacher for every room. Each room had a teacher.

S.R: Do you recall any of their names?

E.K: Oh golly, yes I would. Let's see, the first teacher I had when I went down there was Miss Anthes. Oh, there was a Miss... I don't know, a Miss... I can't remember the different names. I can't... you know, I would, but just asking me now I wouldn't. Through the years I often thought of the different teachers. Miss Seaton, Miss Seaton, oh yes, Miss Seaton, and two Miss Gerrards, Jane Gerrard and Helen Gerrard. Gosh, you know, these are all our own ages. These were all old women to us kids, but they couldn't have been. Miss Mossip finally went down there, but I had gone by that time. I had left school, you know... Miss Mossip, she went down there teaching.

S.R: Did you go to the high school here?

E.K: This school that is here now? No, it wasn't there when I went.

S.R: No, but did you continue your education after Phipps Street School?

E.K: Well, when we were in Phipps Street School, they had what they called a high school, but it was really only a continuation of the public school, but it was considered a high school, you know. Oh, it was Anderson, his name was. There was another teacher Miss Johns, and Mr. Huey Henderson. You see how they come back to me? Yeah, Henderson was the principal when I left. I was like, in the second grade of high school, the second form. They called them forms at that time, first form, second form, you know. It would be like, what is it, 10, 11, 12... 9, 10, 11, 12 now, isn't it? Well, that would have been, like, 9 would have been the first grade of high school, the first form of high school.

S.R: When did the high school come? The Wintemute School, was that just a regular school too, or did that have a high school in it?

E.K: I... that must have been... well, first it was up where the school is now, they built a nice Wintemute School there. Then they tore it all down and put that one up. But, I never got to that one. That was just built when I went over to Buffalo to school and took a business course.

S.R: Oh, so if you wanted to continue your education you had to go out of town then.

E.K: Unless you finished, like, the forms in high school, you know, if you wanted to go on for a teacher, or something like that, you know.

S.R: But you would still have to go out of town to get any kind of degree though, right?

E.K: Oh yeah.

S.R: Where would you go? Would most people go to Buffalo?

E.K: No, they went to Hamilton from here, mostly I think. But Buffalo, I just... that was a separate school like, you know, business college.

S.R: Oh, and since your mother was American, it was easy for you to go over there then?

E.K: No, no, everybody just had to pay the same.

S.R: What about church? Have you been a member of a church?

E.K: Always.

S.R: Could you tell me where you started out going to church?

E.K: St. Pauls... when I started?

S.R: Yes, when you started going to church, could you tell me where you went?

E.K: I always went.

S.R: Okay, when you were little, where did you go to church first?

E.K: That was it. There, we went to Sunday school in the morning, and church after.

S.R: Where was the Methodist Church that you had mentioned to me before?

E.K: Well, this little Methodist one was up in the west end and we only went there when we were children. Then it petered out, you know.

S.R: It was like a Sunday school church?

E.K: Yeah, but they were good. They were very good to us.

S.R: Do you know where in the west end?

E.K: Yeah, it's on the Gilmore Road. People by the name of James own it now, and they turned it into a lovely home on the corner of... oh, I don't know. That would be the corner of what? I could tell you what street that would be on, on the corner. It isn't Ellen.

S.R: There's Torrence.

E.K: Kingsmill would it be?

S.R: Kingsmill is the dead-end street.

E.K: Is it?

S.R: It's a little dead-end street.

E.K: I'll look in the telephone directory I suppose, and that will tell you where James is. [279 Gilmore Road]

S.R: You said you went to St. Pauls Church, and where's St. Pauls Church?

E.K: Down the Boulevard there.

S.R: Oh, the church that they just did an addition to a while ago?

E.K: Yes.

S.R: Has that changed much?

E.K: Oh yes.

S.R: And how has it changed then?

E.K: Oh, that big new addition was just put on a year ago, you know.

S.R: What about before then, from...?

E.K: Well, it was like that ever since I can remember. I was baptized, and confirmed, and married there, and my grandparents were all

buried there, and my family and all. It's part of my life.

S.R: Do you know what year it was built, or the approximate year?

E.K: The church?

S.R: Yeah.

E.K: You know, I have all that in books here.

S.R: Off the top of your head, was it built before 1900, do you know?

E.K: When my mother came here to live, she was married in 1893, and she said when she came here they were just... well, that was rebuilding it because it had been burnt down. Well, it was burnt, I won't say it was burned down, because it was all stone, but they rebuilt.

S.R: Oh, so it burned before 1900 then?

E.K: Oh yeah. There was a little one in the back first.

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

E.K: I suppose my own wedding was the most important one, wasn't it? My aunt was married there, but she was married before it was rebuilt, my father's sister. You know, I have a whole portfolio of church, and I have another one of town that I have saved through the years. I was a great one to save that stuff, and I suppose I kind of enjoyed it myself. This is stuff I love looking through, old stuff, but I haven't it here.

S.R: Did they have any special group meetings, or...?

E.K: What, the church?

S.R: Yeah. What kind of events did they have that people could go to and enjoy themselves, as an outing?

E.K: When we... before we were married, and even after, they had what they called the A.Y.P.A., and that was the young people's group, the Anglican Young People's Association, that we all took a wonderful interest in.

S.R: What did they do?

E.K: Oh, they had parties and dances, and everything like that, you know.

S.R: Then what was there for when you got older?

E.K: Well, I suppose then you got your family and they went to Sunday school and you got interested in the Sunday school work, you know, and the church work. I don't do a great deal of it anymore, now

I just belong to the church group, the A.C.W.

S.R: What does A.C.W. mean?

E.K: Anglican Church Women. They are all Anglicans, my father's people. My cousin, well my cousin's husband said that you had to be an Anglican to get in that family. That's the way he put it when he married my cousin who was an Anglican.

S.R: Do you remember any prominent people of the church or somebody that really did a lot to help people out, or anything like that?

E.K: Oh, there's been lots of them through the years I think though, but... yeah, I can remember when I was a kid, Mr. Hurrell. He had the little store in Amigari there, right where you lived [on Dunlop Street], but he was a great church worker. They're all buried in the church yard there. He was one of the supporters of the church really. Oh yeah, there was... who was I just going to say? You know, I'm not as good at thinking of names quick enough anymore. Who was it I was going to... Elliott, Mr. Elliot, he was a good church worker. Oh, there was lots of them, Land and... I can think of a dozen any other time. The Hersheys and the Curtis' and the Ricelys and... I don't know who did any more help than my own grandparents did, and their name was Bown. That was my grandparents, you know, that was my grandparents.

S.R: Well, speaking of your grandparents, could you tell me a little bit of their history and what brought them to Fort Erie?

E.K: The railroad. They came to Canada, my grandfather did, the railroad sent him over here to work... not to Fort Erie. He came from London, England to London, Canada, and then he went to, after that he went to Brantford, because my father was born there, and then they sent him down here.

S.R: Did he ever tell any stories about the way things used to be around here, like when he came, or anything that happened?

E.K: He lived in Fort Erie then, and then they moved up to Amigari, later you know, they built a home up there. That was, I suppose, near the shops. You know, my father worked seven nights a week. He worked nights most of the time, always as far as I could remember, and seven nights a week, and he worked 13 hours a night.

S.R: Was it a very good paying job for all those hours?

E.K: A dollar a day. That's what he used to... I can remember him getting a dollar a day.

S.R: Why so many hours?

E.K: Well, I don't know that.

S.R: And all the days? Or is that just before unions and different things started coming in and they started going fairer to the employees?

E.K: Yeah, but that was in 1900, you know, when my father was working like that. My father was an engineer on the railroad, a locomotive engineer.

S.R: Was he often gone overnight then?

E.K: Well no, not then, but if he was on the road, when he was on the road he would be. My husband was too. He'd be gone... he was gone a week sometimes.

S.R: Where did the trains go to?

E.K: Well, I don't... I couldn't tell you. Stratford was, I know, always a place where they were going. Sarnia, oh gosh... yes, they could tell stories on the railroad. All I got was railroad all my life.

S.R: Yes, between your husband, and your grandfather, and your father.

E.K: Yeah, but my son worked for the railroad like that too, but then my husband went on the police and he never... then they called him back on the railroad when they picked up, you know, but he was on the police and he stayed there. It was better, you know, the hours were better. The hours weren't much better but he was in town all the time.

S.R: What Police Force did he go into? Was there a Fort Erie, or a Bridgeburg, or were they all one?

E.K: No, it was all one when he went, I guess, because it was Fort Erie. But they didn't amalgamate 'til after he was on the Police Force. What year did they amalgamate? I don't remember.

S.R: So there could have been Fort Erie for Fort Erie South and Bridgeburg for Fort Erie North?

E.K: I think it was all together though, the police, because he went to the same station, at the North End. The Police Station was at the North End, so it was.

S.R: The same place where they just moved it from?

E.K: On Jarvis Street? That's where it was then.

S.R: It was on Jarvis and not Central?

E.K: Jarvis and Central, the corner of Jarvis and Central.

S.R: Do you remember what it was like then, what the building was like?

E.K: Gee, I can remember when it was a little building when I was a kid, you know, because a friend of mine, her grandfather was, he worked for the Town and he used to take us in and show us the jails, you know, down there. We thought it was terrible, you know. We were little kids 10-12 years old.

S.R: Where was the Town Hall then?

E.K: That was right there.

S.R: All the same building?

E.K: Well, it isn't the same building, because it was only a little one then, see. It's a nice one, well, it's a nice looking one now, I mean, but it was just a little one then.

S.R: What was the Bertie Hall? It's now the doll house.

E.K: Oh there.

S.R: What was that for?

E.K: People by the name of Patterson, they were great church workers too, when you asked before... Pattersons lived there, a man and a woman. I can't remember before, anyone before them, but I had heard there was people before them, you know. There was just a man and a woman, they had no family when they lived there.

S.R: So why was it called the Bertie Hall then?

E.K: I don't know.

S.R: Could you tell me any changes, anything you remember your husband talking about about the Police Department, and the changes that occurred?

E.K: Well, it was quite different. It was just the Town when he was there then. After then it was... what do you call it?

S.R: Regional?

E.K: Regional, I couldn't get it out of me. It was Regional after that. It wasn't Regional 'til after he retired.

S.R: What years did he work for the Police Force?

E.K: Was it 27 years, I guess... from '33.

S.R: From 1933 then 'til...

E.K: What did I say, 27 years.

S.R: ... 'til 1960.

E.K: He had worked 'til 1960, yeah.

S.R: So that's 27 years, yes.

S.R: What about Fire Departments, do you recall the Fire Departments at all?

E.K: Yeah, he was in the Fire Department too. But when he was on the Fire Department he couldn't be on the Police Department, so he had to give the Fire Department up. He didn't get paid on the Fire Department, you know, but you got paid on the Police Department, so he had to go to that. You know, when he went on the Police Department to work, he made \$100 a month. Gee, we thought that was wonderful, a \$100 a month. When he quit... then he got a \$100 a year increase. He was making, I don't know how it worked now, he was making \$3,700 when he retired at 60, and now they start at \$37,000 a year.

S.R: That's a big difference.

E.K: It is, it's really funny. I don't know what he would think if he was here.

S.R: Where was the Fire Department when your husband was a member?

E.K: It used to be down on Queen Street, the old Town Hall. Do you know which is the old Town Hall? It's the Legion Hall now. Do you know which is the Legion on Queen Street? It's a big old building, but they keep it nice.

S.R: Oh, and that was the major Fire Department?

E.K: That was the Fire Department, that there. No, they had a little one next to it, but it was right... isn't that... I don't know if that's there or not anymore. I never go down the street anymore. It was just... it can't be there anymore, no, because they have the nice one up here now.

S.R: On Bertie Street?

E.K: Yeah.

S.R: What about the Amigari Fire Department?

E.K: That?

S.R: Yes, you had mentioned before about it. Could you tell me where that is?

E.K: Well, that was on... what did I say, Russell... no that's not Russell.

S.R: There's Russell and Jennet.

E.K: Russell, then it's Russell, isn't it. I get twisted now with the streets. I have to... in my mind, you know.

S.R: Did it have any special name or was it just the Amigari Fire Department?

E.K: Yes, the Amigari Fire Department.

S.R: Did they have the uniforms?

E.K: No, they didn't have the uniforms.

S.R: They didn't have the hats...?

E.K: They wore the rubber boots.

S.R: Just the rubber boots. Do you recall your husband going to any big fires?

E.K: Ah, I remember one time when he went and it was all night. I thought that was a big one. That was on Lewis Street nearly down to the river, up a little ways. What was it? Laclead I think it was there that burnt.

S.R: What was Laclead?

E.K: It was something to do... I don't know just what it was, what they did there. It was something about paint. Or was it...? I don't really know what it was.

S.R: Was it any of the Liquid Veneer fires?

E.K: Golly yes. He was to that one to. I remember my husband went to that one.

S.R: There was a church too at the bottom of Courtwright Street, and that church burned down.

E.K: That was the Presbyterian Church, and the Oddfellows Hall was beside it. Which burnt, the church or the hall? No the Oddfellows Hall... did the church burn or the Oddfellows Hall, or both?

S.R: I've just heard about a church burning.

E.K: Just the church was it. I don't remember. I remember the fire, yes, but I don't remember...?

S.R: Was your husband involved in that one at all, or would that have been the Bridgeburg Fire Department?

E.K: No, they would have been there too maybe. I don't remember the year or that. It seems to me that I was still in school when that burnt. So he would have been, my husband wouldn't have been here then. He didn't come to Fort Erie 'til about 1917 I don't think, and he came to the Shipyard to work.

S.R: Is that how you met him then, at the Shipyards?

E.K: Yeah, that picture there that I showed you, the one man was his father, and he was the electrical engineer, and he brought my husband down to work with him there because he was a boy and he didn't want to go to school anymore, so he brought him down to work.

S.R: You and your husband met at the Shipyards, what year would that have been?

E.K: 1917, I think. Let's see... 1918, because I went to work in '17 down there.

S.R: You both worked at the Shipyards then. Could you tell me what you did there? What was your job?

E.K: I was in the office, a stenographer, bookkeeper. I did everything in the beginning, but then when they got busier they had to get more in, you know.

S.R: Could you tell me anything about the Shipyards, what they did, peoples names that you can remember that worked there...?

E.K: Well, all those men there [in this picture], I can remember all of them.

S.R: Were they just the workers or were they the bosses?

E.K: Oh, they were the bosses. I think my husband has on the back here the different ones... bookkeeper, storekeeper, superintendent, office manager, like that, he has put them down. He had charge of it at that time, Mr. Lovejoy, when they opened up. Bigger ones came in then after that, you know, but he was the general superintendent.

S.R: Could you tell me who operated it or owned it?

E.K: Well, they called it the Allis Chalmers, Canadian Allis Chalmers.

S.R: And they operated it and owned it?

E.K: Well, I don't know, I suppose... I don't know if you would say owned it, but operated it. It was quite a big concern. You know who Allis Chalmers is, even today.

S.R: Do you recall the boats that were built there?

E.K: I sure do. I watched the christening of all of them.

S.R: Do you remember their names?

E.K: Yep, War Magic, War Vixen... I did. I can't recall the other two of them right off hand now. I was looking through it Sunday and I did. I have the christenings of them here. [Then she shows me

the picture of the Amigari Station where the trains stopped] Imagine, it wasn't any bigger than this room, I don't suppose. But the trains stopped there because they brought the mail and dropped off the mail, you know, from the store, from Malcolm's Store... Mr. Hurrell, it was in the first place. He'd bring the bag of mail to the station for the train when it was time for it to come in you see, and then he'd take the one off.

S.R: So, then the post office was right in the store?

E.K: Yeah. Later years it was moved over to the other store, at the corner of Gilmore and Concession, but in early years that's where it was.

S.R: Is there anything else that you can remember about your days at the Shipyards? Did you ever visit the community that they had there?

E.K: Well, across the road there was a building... oh, a lot of... well, there were big buildings where they stayed, the workers from the Shipyard... boarding houses and rooms. I could go over there any time and eat but I didn't like to go because I was only a girl. I used to take my lunch to work with me. But I went over... I had been over different times if I just didn't happen to have my lunch, or maybe they'd want me to work in the evening, you know, and I'd go over and have my supper there before I could work in the evening.

S.R: Did they have a store or anything there?

E.K: Yes they did. They had a store... who had the store? I can't remember now the name offhand who had the store. This was the first book I ever had. It is pretty well in pieces. Here is a picture of the first police car at that time.

S.R: Do you know who was driving it?

E.K: Well, that was my husband there. There was only the chief and Walter [her husband Walter Kent]. There was Andy Griffen and Walter and Howie, Mr. Howie was one of them, and Sam Brown. Well, there were four of them before... then, you know, they had one and then another one... and Chirp Matthews, he was made chief.

S.R: When your husband started was it just Mr. Griffen?

E.K: Yep. There's the launching of one of the boats, [showing a picture in her album] at the Shipyard. That's when she splashed into the

water, and I was standing over there watching it.

S.R: Was that something really special for all the people?

E.K: Oh yeah, it sure was. Shipyard 1919, I didn't have marked down which boat that was though [reading the back of one of the launching pictures].

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

E.K: I'd be... oh, gee wiz, I'm a poor Canadian. I'd be better telling you the first President of the United States.

S.R: Do you know your first reeve?

E.K: I wonder who was? You know, I never thought of that. I don't know. I don't know just who I'd say. [looking at more Shipyard pictures] You know there's a little train that used to run down. What did they call it?... the Paddy Miles. It used to run from the Bridgeburg Station down to the Shipyard and take them into work.

S.R: Did people travel from other places like Niagara Falls?

E.K: I imagine they came from Niagara Falls too. They came from Welland and all around to work. There were cars by that time.

S.R: Could you tell me some changes that have taken place in the Town, like with the amalgamation of the three villages, or other things that you can think of from the areas?

E.K: No, I don't know. I know, like now, when we came up here to live, we came up here in '24, the 24th of May, 1924 to live in this house, and we've lived here every since. There was no sewer, and they were only mud roads. In the next year, the fall of '25, they put the sewer through, and that was a big improvement. That was really something, you can imagine.

S.R: Was it outhouses before then?

E.K: Yes, when we come up here, yes, unless you had a septic tank, yeah. The house next door had a septic tank, my brother lived next door, and that was something.

S.R: Oh, so that was very rare then, having a septic tank.

E.K: Yes. So, we knew the sewer was coming through...

S.R: So you just had to wait instead of putting in a septic tank.

E.K: Yeah. They said it was coming through then anyway, you know. That was... I think that was, maybe the biggest... well, it was nice to have these roads too. First they put this one through. Well,

then they put the one on High through. We had lights... they had electric lights when we came here.

S.R: Were you young when you got your first telephone, or was it...?

E.K: Oh, we had... no, my mother and father, they lived on Wintemute Street, my father and mother did. They lived up in the West End there, on the corner as I say, on Catherine and Concession, and before I was married... in 1921... in 1923 they moved down on Wintemute Street and they built that home a couple of doors from the funeral home, going towards the river. I lived there a year with them after we were married, then we bought this one here. That was in '24, we come up here then. That was in '24, we come up here then, got married in '23 and come up here in '24.

S.R: You started out living in Amigari, other than the railroad, did Amigari have any other kind of jobs available?

E.K: Just the railroad.

S.R: It was just the railroad in Amigari and then the two stores?

E.K: That's what most everyone worked at. A few may have... now, I know our next door neighbour, he went to Buffalo to work, but that was unusual. There wasn't many that did that, you know, you had to walk. That's like from the Racetrack, you know, then down to the ferry, either there and go across the boat. ~~Remember...~~ you don't remember, but I mean, hearing about it, the ferry boats they had. Or else you went down to the station. There's no station now, but where it was. I guess the one station was Michigan Central, was there yet, going across on the International Bridge on what they called the little Dummy.

S.R: Could you describe it for me?

E.K: The little Dummy? Well, it was just like one coach with the engine room, or whatever you call it, would be in one end of it, you know, and it went back and forth on schedule.

S.R: Was that the swing bridge? Did the International Bridge used to swing or lift then?

E.K: Not that one... well, that one does, yes, but then there was another little one going over the canal, you know. It went as far as the island, and then there was another bridge going... well, it was all a continuation really, and then that went over the canal to Black

Rock.

S.R: So, then the International Bridge doesn't swing, just the other one does?

E.K: Oh, yes it did.

S.R: It did? That's how they got the lakers through that they built at the bottom of... Queen Street was it, that Horton built boats?

E.K: Oh yeah, just one.

S.R: Just one, and then they had to use the swing bridge, or the lift bridge, to get it through?

E.K: Well, it didn't have to go through there because it went right into the lake from the... where they built it there, you know. But when they built the ships at the Shipyards they had to come up. I had a picture of the International Bridge here a minute ago. There's another of the boats. I wonder what one that one was. Oh, what was the name of the other two. The War Magic and War Vixen... it seemed to me that they were going to call them something and then they changed it to North America and South America. Gee, I should know that. I did all the bookwork then. See, there's the two other boats there and there, at the Shipyard. Oh, I used to take lots of the pictures. My husband did too, down there. We were pretty dedicated to the Shipyard. When they closed I stayed... I was there after they closed, and they wanted me to go to Toronto and work, but I didn't want to go away from home.

S.R: Were you married yet?

E.K: No, we went together, my husband and I, four years before we were married.

S.R: At the Fort Erie Racetrack, they used to hold the Bertie Fair there, how many days was it opened every year?

E.K: It was just two days I think. Yeah, I think it was two days, like all these country fairs, you know.

S.R: Could you tell me a little bit about the Bertie Fair, what your memories are about that?

E.K: Well, we went to them when we were kids, but they were really an attraction. Well, what did they have? They did have a baby show, always. I know, because we'd have our... when we got married and had babies, we'd have them in the baby show.

But as a kid... I don't know, it just seemed to me that we went for a good time. There was nothing like there is today, you know.

S.R: Oh, entertainment?

E.K: No. I always took an interest in seeing the animals at it, you know, and the fancy work and all that stuff. My daughter who had been with me this week, she just left before you came, she lives north of Toronto, up near Barrie at a place called Tottenham, and their fair is on. That's why she had to go home, because their fair is on just now, and they have a business, a nursery business, and he has one of the stalls there. We got a kick out of that.

S.R: Did they have anything else other than just the exhibitions?

E.K: No.

S.R: Do you remember any races or anything there, horse races?

E.K: Oh, the horse races, oh, at the racetrack, yes, I should say so. From the time I was a kid I can remember it, yeah, because we lived right there. You had to go up our street to it when we lived on the corner there. Buses used to go up with the people. They'd meet them at the boat, you know, coming across.

S.R: Were there car buses then?

E.K: No, horse and bus.

S.R: What were they like?

E.K: Well, it was a big bus. I imagine it would seat about 12 each time... oh no, it must have been more than that, 14 maybe, seven could sit on each side of it, you know. Two horses it would have usually, you know.

S.R: Was it like a hay wagon type of bus?

E.K: No, they had tops on them and they were nice. They were really nice buses. Then they charged so much... I can't remember what they charged, maybe a quarter, you know. I imagine it would have been to come up the track, you know.

S.R: Where it was only a nickel or something for the ferry, and they charged you a quarter for the bus. What was it for the ferry, do you remember?

E.K: No, I really don't... the ferry?... a nickel. Unless you bought tickets, then you'd buy a lot of tickets and then you'd have them. I imagine we bought them cheaper then.

S.R: It cost a nickel to use the ferry and a quarter to use the bus?

E.K: Oh, maybe... I don't know, maybe it wasn't a quarter on the bus, because I... we didn't have any horses and carriages for that. Different ones had them. Sherks and Shislars had them, and... hmm, somebody else I'm trying to think of and I can't think of the name now. They owned a lot of property around here too. Yeah, but Sherks and Shislars had, because we used to love to get a ride. You know, the roads were all mud roads then, and you can imagine how dusty they got in the summer. I can remember the dust that used to come, and we used to have to get the hose and water down the streets, you know, so we wouldn't get so much dust in our house.

S.R: Then what did you do in the wintertime, in the slushy time?

E.K: Oh, that was nice. That was the big sleighs you know, the farmers would come in with their big sleigh and we'd hitch a ride with our little sleighs on the back of those. They'd let us hang onto it, you know, hook onto rather, and hitch a ride. It was lots of fun when they used to take you out into the country and you had to get back though, because they weren't coming back at that time of night, you had to walk back. No, I think we had lots of fun for kids, you know, without all the things they have today to entertain them, where ours was just like that.

S.R: Erie Beach and Crystal Beach, did you visit either of them?

E.K: Oh yes, yeah we did that Erie Beach a lot.

S.R: Could you describe Erie Beach for me then?

E.K: Erie Beach was an... I always thought Erie Beach was a nice place. It was a quieter place than Crystal Beach. They had a wonderful Dance Hall, they had bowling downstairs, you know, and they had lots of amusements, of course, the Merry-Go-Round, Ferris Wheels... what was the other one I'm trying to think of?... Roller Coaster and things like that, you know.

S.R: Did you ever go swimming in the pool there?

E.K: Yes, we did. We didn't have the swimsuits as they have today though.

S.R: Were they the kind that went down to your knees, those type of bathing suits?

E.K: Gee, I think it did.

S.R: Could you describe the pool for me?

E.K: Well, it seemed big to me, but I suppose it wasn't, you know. It seemed awfully big when you're little like that, but I suppose it would be... Erie Beach had a lovely one. I don't remember a swimming pool at Crystal Beach, it was all nice sandy, white beach there.

S.R: So they probably didn't need a swimming pool then?

E.K: They didn't need it. They had a nice big pier where the boats came in. Crystal Beach was nice, well they were both nice.

S.R: What about the athletic field at Erie Beach, did you ever go on picnics there?

E.K: Oh yeah, the Sunday school picnics would always go, and we had family picnics, and we had group picnics.

S.R: Everybody held their things at Erie Beach, like they do now at the Old Fort?

E.K: No, Erie Beach.

S.R: No, now people have family picnics at the Old Fort.

E.K: Yeah we did. We had them for a long time. We had the family picnic here for years, in my own home here. Since they all died off we didn't have them anymore.

S.R: Could you tell me about Crystal Beach?

E.K: Well, Crystal Beach as I say, was on a larger scale than Erie Beach. It was sunny and sandy and nice, you know, nice white sand. They had all the same amusements but a bigger scale. They had a big Dance Hall there, they had roller skating. That's what I liked, was roller skating.

S.R: Oh, and Erie Beach didn't have roller skating?

E.K: I don't remember it if they did. I don't think they had.

S.R: Did Fort Erie have roller skating at all?

E.K: Not that I know of.

S.R: Oh, so the only place you could roller skate then was to either go to Erie Beach or probably Buffalo?

E.K: You did it on the street. We did it on the street always, yeah... the sidewalks.

S.R: Were the sidewalks cement sidewalks?

E.K: Yes, well they... I can remember when they had just wooden planks, but then they... I remember them... maybe when I was about 10 years old, they were... well, before I was 10, they put the concrete

ones down, because I remember I was roller skating then, and we had the nice roads.

S.R: Nice sidewalks.

E.K: Nice sidewalks, not roads.

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

E.K: Erie Beach, we walked down to the ferry, what we called the ferry, and then we took this little train up to Erie Beach. I imagine it would take about 15-20 minutes, it didn't go very fast. There was an engine and then there were, maybe three or four little coaches, you know, onto it.

S.R: Is that the Peanut or the...?

E.K: Yeah.

S.R: It was that one?

E.K: Or they called it... what did I say before? Well, they called it the Peanut too, I remember that.

S.R: The Snakehill & Pacific?

E.K: Yeah, something like that. Snakehill... I don't remember.

S.R: How did you get to Crystal Beach?

E.K: Crystal Beach I had to... someone had to take us, unless we went to Buffalo. We had to go to Buffalo and then we had to take the streetcars then, up town, then go to the dock where you'd have to... what's the ferry? I don't think many people did it. See, I only did it when I went to stay with my cousins in Buffalo, and they would go over on the Americana or the Canadiana.

S.R: Could you describe the Americana and the Canadiana?

E.K: Oh, they were big boats. They seemed awfully big to me then. But, they were big boats, yes. They were lovely too. When you come home at night, when I was young, they had music on them, you know. That was a treat.

S.R: Was it someplace where you would take your dates and stuff like that?

E.K: To Erie Beach mostly. Then we used to walk down and get the train, as I say, to get there. That was a mile from my home down to the train anyway, and then you'd take the train and go up there. We did it lots though.

S.R: You were just used to walking and never thought anything of that

part of it, right?

E.K: No. As I say, I would walk so fast, and... actually, I had to walk fast because you had to walk fast if you wanted to get there, where you were going, you know.

S.R: Did you use the ferries much, or the Dummy?

E.K: Yes, an awful lot, yeah.

S.R: Do you recall any of them?

E.K: I went to Buffalo an awful lot because my mother came from there and she came from a large family, and we went over a lot, so I've often went over three times in one day. You wouldn't think anything of it. That was in later years though.

S.R: Was that still when you had to use the ferry, or the Peace Bridge?

E.K: Well, more so after we had the car, we went over on the Peace Bridge. One of my sons would say, "Come on ma, let's go over to Buffalo and do some shopping, grocery shopping". In the afternoon the other son would say, "Come on, let's go over and do a little grocery shopping". And maybe in the evening we would go over, my husband and I, with somebody, or we would go over to see someone, our cousins or something.

S.R: The Peace Bridge, do you recall anything about the building or the opening of the Peace Bridge?

E.K: Well, yes I do. Edwin was a... or, Gary was a baby then, so that was in... '29 was it that the Peace Bridge opened?

S.R: I think it was opened in 1927. You had told me before that your worked on the Peace Bridge, when they were building it?

E.K: Yes he did. He had been laid off of the railroad, and it was between times, when he went on the Police Force, and he'd do anything to get a job so we had a little something coming in.

S.R: What did he do building the Peace Bridge?

E.K: I don't remember anymore in construction work. He worked at the hospital too, I know, when they were building that, because that was at the same time.

S.R: Were you at the Peace Bridge Opening?

E.K: No more than to go down to see the parade.

S.R: Oh, right along the Boulevard?

E.K: Yes, when they came along the Boulevard, because we waited and

waited and waited. I had three little youngsters, and I waited. They were so tired, you know, because it didn't mean anything to them. And then it just went through like that (a snap of the finger). We didn't know who was who, it went through so fast, but I remember that. I can remember it all though, you know.

S.R: You said your husband also worked at building the hospital?

E.K: He did, yeah.

S.R: Do you remember anything about that?

E.K: Oh yeah, because he wasn't working at that time, you see, and I had rented my rooms to men working up there, you know. So he had no work and they said come on up. One of them had him working for him and he worked... well, I don't know what his job was. It was the construction of it, you know, inside.

S.R: Carpentry work?

E.K: Yeah, like that and the plastering and all that. I can remember him telling about the plastering, and all that work, you know.

S.R: Yeah, that's carpentry.

E.K: Yeah, it would come under that I suppose.

S.R: Do you know why they built the hospital there, or any of the politics involved with the hospital?

E.K: Oh, that was Doc Douglas, he donated the property... well, he donated the property, but he didn't... I don't know... he donated at the top of the hill where that big house is, right over here on Bertie, yeah. Then it wasn't big enough... it wasn't big enough. You know, it's big enough for the hospital maybe, but not big enough for any parking or anything, so then they got that property up here. I don't know who owned that, or how they got that, but Doc Douglas... well, he was the instigator of it anyway, of the Douglas Hospital, so it's named after him of course. He ushered me into this world, Doc Douglas, and I had him, I remember I had him until my first baby was... before our first baby was born, then we didn't have him. He was getting pretty old and feeble.

S.R: Is there anything else good that Doc Douglas did for the Town that you can recall?

E.K: He was a good man all the way around, I don't know, I don't know... Douglas School, I wonder if he donated that land then. I imagine

he must have. I don't know how come he owned so much property.
He did a lot of good though.

S.R: He was just a good doctor. Was he the only doctor that Fort Erie had?

E.K: Yes, he was the only one they had for a long time, then Doc Mencke came, we had him.

S.R: What about Dr. Streets, when was that or was that years later?

E.K: That was years later when the hospital was built. He went to school when I did.

S.R: When you were younger you worked, you mentioned that you worked at the Shipyards...?

E.K: I worked from the time they opened... before they opened I was there, until they closed. I was there after they closed, that was three years. Then I went to the Shipyards... or the Horton Steel, and worked for two years before I was married.

S.R: Back then, after people were married did very many ladies work?

E.K: Not many.

S.R: Was it frowned upon?

E.K: Well it was, yes, because men should have the work then, you know. I think maybe that if they had some of that today they wouldn't have so much unemployment, would they? But I think it's a shame when a woman has a good... something, you know, she's gifted with something, which a good many are, to give it up... school teachers, or whatever it happens to be. I didn't work, but I don't frown on it. I have no objection to women working, whatever, I think it's wonderful.

S.R: When you look at the prices of housing and stuff like that, and what it is to raise a family now... .

E.K: And there isn't that much work to do at home like there was in those days. A woman needed to be home then to do that work. Now she presses a button for everything and here we are.

S.R: How were working women treated when they worked, with respect?

E.K: At work you mean, or at home... or otherwise?

S.R: Both.

E.K: Well, at work I think they were always respected very much, you know. I don't think they treated you as an equal, I think they treated

you as a... oh, what would I say. I don't know.

S.R: Like a little pet?

E.K: Yeah, I think that's what they did with me at the Shipyard, yeah.

S.R: What were the wages like?

E.K: Well, I started at \$15 a week, and that was good pay, that was really good pay, that was, in 1917.

S.R: Was it because it was the Shipyards that it paid so good, or were women just paid well?

E.K: Oh, I don't know. I really don't know that. I know from what others had said where they worked, I was getting more then they were.

S.R: I heard that different people went to the Shipyards because they were paying so good, the men's jobs, that was why I asked.

E.K: Gee, I worked on the payroll and I knew all their pays. That was one of my many jobs, at first.

S.R: Is there anything else that you could think of that you would like to talk about?

E.K: I don't know.

S.R: You have something more that you would like to say about the Racetrack?

E.K: Well, that's... you know with the houses there, and how we remember the races, and they'd go past with the buses, you know, all the people. The women were all dressed up so, you know.

S.R: You said you lived on the corner of Concession and Catherine, and there were how many houses there?

E.K: Nine.

S.R: And none of them are there anymore?

E.K: No, not a one. Some were moved and some torn down.

S.R: Could you explain why?

E.K: Only that they wanted the... the Racetrack bought all that property up, and behind it, you know, they did have that. It was Madigan, he was a... whatever he would have been on the Racetrack at the time, Mr. Madigan. He had a nice house up there, behind us then.

S.R: Then they needed that for parking space.

E.K: Oh, what have they there now. They have some kind of a house there yet, in there, but not on the row of houses where I'm at, you know, that was on Bertie. Then they used to bring the horses, some of the jockeys would bring the horses down to our yard to graze,

you know. Gee, I thought that was great when they'd bring them down.

S.R: What did you do at the Racetrack? What was there to see?

E.K: Horses, and more horses.

S.R: Now they have a beautiful grounds, they have the grandstand, and the restaurants and everything?

E.K: There wasn't all that there then. It burnt, and then they rebuilt it, you know. Well, they rebuilt it, but not like it is today. That's been done since again, you know, several times.

S.R: When did it burn?

E.K: Oh, it must have been around 1900, 19... they were rebuilding it in 1905 I know. I can remember that because a man, one of the bosses stayed with us, and his wife, and he had a little boy, and that's why I can remember them. It was a little boy about my own age, you know, and we would play. But that wasn't when the races were on, that was before the races were coming, and he was so anxious to get it done on time. That was the spring of 1905.

S.R: Is there anything else that you can remember about the Racetrack that you'd like to mention?

E.K: No, I don't really know.

S.R: Thank you for the interview Mrs. Kent.

E.K: It was very enjoyable.

S.R: Thank you.