

Beverly Branton interviewing Mr. Frank LeJuene in his home at 429 Windmill Point Road. The date is June 15th, 1985.

B.B.: Hello Mr. LeJuene.

F.L.: Good morning.

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

F.L.: May 20, 1909.

B.B.: And your place of birth?

F.L.: Windmill Point.

B.B.: And your occupation?

F.L.: Retired.

B.B.: What did you do before you were retired?

F.L.: School board administrator.

B.B.: So you've always lived in this area..in the Greater Fort Erie area?

F.L.: I've lived in this place since 1914.

B.B.: Did your family build this home?

F.L.: No.

B.B.: Was it your family that moved in or...?

F.L.: No we bought it, my father bought it. They lived about a half a mile down where the Indian thing is now. I don't know if the house is there or not.

B.B.: But it's been in the Windmill Point area?

F.L.: All my life ya. I moved away a little bit when I got married. I was down in Fort Erie.

B.B.: Which part of Fort Erie?

F.L.: Up in, let's see..is it Harmony Camp. Do you know where that is? That's where we lived, 2 or 3 years and then we came back here.

B.B.: The Windmill Point area..was this mostly farming area?

F.L.: Nearly all farming.

B.B.: What else was in this area?

F.L.: Well I guess when I was..it was just farming.

B.B.: When did the quarries come in?

F.L.: Well they've been here a long time. What do they call the one over here?

B.B.: Windmill Point?

F.L.: Park is it?

B.B.: Yes, Windmill Point.

F.L.: Ya, that's been here a long time. They got stone out of there, all houses built down the road down there, Stonemill Road. There's about twenty houses down there, still find the stone in the basement.

I should go down and dig some stone out, I collect antiques.

B.B.: You collect antiques?

Has this area grown a lot then since you've been here, say since 1914?

F.L.: Not a lot but some. There's been a lot of houses..cleared the bushes.. there's a lot of houses.

B.B.: Now you lived in the Fort Erie area for awhile.

F.L.: Ya, a little bit.

B.B.: Has that changed much?

F.L.: Quite a bit.

B.B.: In what way?

F.L.: Well there's more subdivisions in Fort Erie now.

B.B.: Do you remember when the Peace Bridge was constructed?

F.L.: Oh, ya.

B.B.: Were you living down in that area at that time?

F.L.: No, I was living here.

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

F.L.: Well I was parked at the top of the hill in a Model T Ford when the Prince of Wales was there.

B.B.: Were you?

F.L.: Ya, there was a big ESSO sign there. I parked on top of the hill and took a picture of that. And just across the road there was a nightclub and Scotty Miller was walking up and down the upstairs ramp playing the bagpipes.

B.B.: What hotel would this have been, do you remember?

F.L.: It was just like a restaurant.

B.B.: Do you remember the name of it? Do you remember who owned it?

F.L.: No, it's gone now.

B.B.: And that was located where?

F.L.: Right down, the foot of Main Street.

B.B.: Main Street..which one was Main Street?

F.L.: Well it's the Queen E. down there by the Bridge. As you went down it'd be on the right hand side. I forget what they called that. It was a restaurant, nightclub and right across there was a big Esso sign and station. ..was \$6.25.

B.B.: What was \$6.00?

F.L.: Tires.

B.B.: Tires!

F.L.: But they only lasted about 5,000 miles. Gas was 19¢ a gallon. That's hard to believe isn't it?

B.B.: Yes it is, yes it is. You were a school board administrator.

F.L.: Yes for about twenty-five years.

B.B.: When did you start? What year would it have been?

F.L.: '55 I guess.

B.B.: Could you tell me about that?

F.L.: Well back then it was all one room schools. The schools were divided into school sections. I remember 2 and 10 and 5 and 7. They called East Bertie District Schools. Then after that I was in the High School board, Bertie District High School board.

B.B.: How many high schools were there at that point?

F.L.: Two..Fort Erie and Ridgeway.

B.B.: What were some of your goals back then for the schools?

F.L.: We were building all the time.

B.B.: To build onto the one room idea?

F.L.: Well no, Fort Erie was more than a one room school. It had a swimming pool in it..that was built in 1927. We had to scrape flies from the swimming pool and the gym. No the gym was on the top..oh, no the swimming pool and then the gym and then the auditorium on the third floor. Have you been in the school?

B.B.: Yes I have.

F.L.: Built on in the south end one time and then we built out west and then built more on after that. It turned into a technical school. I was talking to my brother one time, went up to Toronto to the Board of Higher Education and they said gee why don't to run a technical school and we'll pay for it. So I said okay. Came back home and the chairman of the board and told them they'd pay for it. He said who the hell told you to do this. The technical school, the first part cost them \$60,000, oh boy..... Ridgeway school has been built on three or four times..not much like the original school, that big entrance . Fort Erie had only twelve rooms I think, originally.

B.B.: How many rooms?

F.L.: Twelve.....

B.B.: Who else was on the school board at that point?

F.L.: Dell Tanner. Do you know him? He was an accountant. He was

also president of the Liberal Association. Harry Wilkenson was one of them. That's in Fort Erie, that's the Bertie District.

B.B.: When did it change from the Bertie District?

F.L.: To Welland South you mean? Oh, not too long ago. About '69 I guess.

But the old public schools, Public School Section 5 here..originally it was a log school then it was a clapboard school and then what it is present. The old clapboard school was ours from the pig pen... so some of the old guys got their education in a pig pen..that's right.

B.B.: Where exactly is Number 5 located?

F.L.: It's located on Dominion Road, it's the District Board House now. That's one of the schools..my father went there.

B.B.: Was your father born in this area also?

F.L.: Ya, on the next road about a half a mile down.

B.B.: Do you know how your family came to this area?

F.L.: Well I understand they came over with Champlain.

B.B.: Right to Canada?

F.L.: Ya, that's where all the LeJuenes, right over here..there's father LeJuene....

B.B.: How did they come to the Fort Erie area?

F.L.: Well they settled in Williamsville, in Cheektowaga. Then they came over here.

B.B.: Did they settle right in the Windmill Point area,.do you know?

F.L.: Ya down there, you know where the Indian camp is. I don't know if the house is still there or not. That's where I was born, right in the middle of the house. Dr. Douglas rode all the way from Fort Erie. You remember Dr. Douglas?

B.B.: Yes I do. What do you remember of Dr. Douglas?

F.L.: Well he was kind of a short guy..rough guy. I was sick one time and he come up here and it was snowing, blowing snow and he parked his horse back in the barn and he wouldn't leave..he was out there out of the wind. I guess it was over there..Dr. Douglas' place because we removed the bottom of it after he died and he left his house. It was right down there by the Royal Bank in there in Fort Erie.

B.B.: In the north end?

F.L.: South end.

B.B.: Where the Bank of Montreal is?

F.L.: Well the..then, the parking lot is right in there..the house.

B.B.: How has the south end changed?

F.L.: It's changed quite a bit, lot of China men down there. There's a lot of restaurants. Years ago there was only one.

B.B.: Do you remember the name of the first Chinese Restaurant?

F.L.: No, I don't. A relation to Skippy I think. Skippy had his restaurant in the north end. He use to have the best Boston Cream Pie.

B.B.: With you living in Harmony Camp, that's right on the Niagara Boulevard ..do you remember when the breakwalls were put in and the land filled in down in that area?

F.L.: Yes, the river use to go right down..do you know where those trees are under the bridge? Inside there use to be a mill run, there use to be a mill.

B.B.: A mill. Do you remember the mill?

F.L.: No, I couldn't remember. Use to catch fish out of there..in behind those trees. There was a lot of trees in the water and you'd go in behind them. That's where the bridge is now. And that was all mud and we use to catch crabs.

B.B.: Why did they decide to put the breakwalls in?

F.L.: To keep the water, the high water, keep it from on the road. It use to wash the track out from the train...

B.B.: Do you remember the Dummy?

F.L.: Oh, ya. That was in the north end. That ran from here to Black Rock. You'd get out and get a street car to go downtown.

B.B.: Were there railroad track right across from you at Harmony Camp?

F.L.: At one time there was a little train that running to Erie Beach. It wasn't there when I was there.

B.B.: Were you ever to Erie Beach?

F.L.: Oh, ya. Lots of times.

B.B.: Tell me about that.

F.L.: Well I'd go down so many times on my bicycle and I'd come home through Graham's Bush and scared to death.

B.B.: Why?

F.L.: Well you'd hear a lot of stories about it being rotten down there.

B.B.: Down where?

F.L.: Graham's Bush.

B.B.: Where is Graham's Bush?

F.L.: You know where the show is now, the outdoor theatre..it's just south of there.

B.B.: That was noted for...?

F.L.: Well, use to tell a lot of stories..I don't know if anybody got robbed or not.

B.B.: How old were you when you use to go to Erie Beach? Did you go as a teenager or..?

F.L.: Ya, I was about sixteen..I was eighteen when I got my first car and I drove down. You couldn't go down..if you wanted to go down you'd have to walk the track because there was no straight road up ...then there was a road that would go through a bush..

B.B.: That winding road back there?

F.L.: Ya, you'd go down Nigh Road and you'd turn down Phillips Street.

B.B.: And then from Phillips where would you go?

F.L.: We go Cresent Beach Road. We'd go down Cresent Beach Road and walk the railroad.. There was a lot of American houses there ...

B.B.: What do you remember of the Erie Beach? What are some of your memories?

F.L.: Well they had a nice dance hall. Big swimming pool. They use to have band concerts on Sundays. We use to house down lumber. With Ellis, he had ice truck..

B.B.: You were with...?

F.L.: Ellis.

B.B.: Ellis. And what did Ellis have?

F.L.: Well an ice truck, Ellis and LeJuene. We use to move the instruments down from the bands in Erie Beach. They'd get off at the crossing at Helena Street and we'd go over into the park with all their stuff. We had to have a big insurance policy tomove them.

B.B.: They use to come in by train to Helena Street..is that it?

F.L.: Ya.

B.B.: And then you would unload them and take them over...

F.L.: To the Beach...Usually the trains went up and down every hour and a half you know. A lot of these American people would come out to these stations, get on the train and go to work. There were stations in Cresent Beach, Rosehill, Windmill Point right up here and then up in Thunder Bay, Ridgeway and ever so far all the way up..Sherkston and all the way was stations. We use to have square dances in the stations.

B.B.: In the station. Which station?

F.L.: Well, the only one I was in was Windmill Point Station. There was one side was wide open and they'd have a square dances.

B.B.: Quite a few people would go to them?

F.L.: Oh, ya.

B.B.: Back to Erie Beach..what rides do you remember?

F.L.: Well there was the Wildcat and the Roller Coaster, and the Bumpity-Bump Slide, the train..electric train. My cousin use to drive it and we use to hitch it and pull the electric engine and we'd pull that thing around and go on down the track. And there was a fun house there too. I worked in that for one summer.

B.B.: Oh, did you. Tell us about that.

F.L.: Well I worked on the air and had a big..to blow the air.

B.B.: And you'd press a button or..?

F.L.: Ya, when they wore skirts but they don't wear skirts anymore.

B.B.: Where were you situated? Were you underneath or..?

F.L.: Up above..quite high..higher than anyone could get to you..on the top. They'd get mad you know..they'd want to punch you in the head.

B.B.: No..did you ever have anybody come after you?

F.L.: Oh, ya but I got them before they got me.

B.B.: Was there many people that came into the Fun House?

F.L.: Oh, ya. A boat ran over to the dock over there, down at the end of Bardol Street, a real nice boat..it came over ever so often. Then they had marathons down there you know, driving cars and those flag pole sitters.

B.B.: What is that?

F.L.: Well a guy would sit up on top of a flag pole for a week or two.

B.B.: Who ever could sit up there for the longest..is that how it goes?

F.L.: Well just one guy use to sit on it. It was back behind the grandstand there..there was a big grandstand and I think about a half mile track. It was much better than Crystal Beach at the time.

B.B.: What other entertainment did they have there?

F.L.: Well outside of that there was not much besides the zoo. We moved all the animals over to Sunnyside in Toronto, my cousin and I.

B.B.: In the winter months?

F.L.: No in the summer.

B.B.: Why would you move them up to Toronto?

F.L.: That's when Erie Beach closed.

B.B.: Oh, once it closed you were the one that moved the animals up there.

F.L.: Ya, we took the job.

B.B.: And they all went to Sunnyside. Where did some of the rides go..do you know or some of the other...?

F.L.: Ya, some went to, down in Pennsylvania, I forget the place. Because that was back in the time when there was a great Depression and down in Fort Erie there was a place where you could get people to help. Use to go down and get 25 guys in a hurry.

B.B.: Is that right.

F.L.: So we'd take them down piece by piece and shipped them I think it was to Pennsylvania. Some of them went to the South Park in Hamilton. I took some out of there..I run one for three years.

B.B.: Which one was that?

F.L.: I forget what it was called, it was a thing that went flying around and you sat on a chair at the end of it.

B.B.: How did that thing work? Is that the one..the wooden circle?

F.L.: Well it was on an edge and you'd go around in circles..cars would tip out... I always would go and hang out around the weekend.

B.B.: You liked it then?

F.L.: Well my cousins were all down there, my aunt lived right down there.

B.B.: She lived right down by the beach?

F.L.: Ya, right on Helena Street. And that store there, that's been there for years, you know the store on the corner.... And Bardols owned the Beach.

B.B.: Did you ever meet Mr. Bardol?

F.L.: Oh, ya. He spanked me once.

B.B.: Why?

F.L.: Well we were back behind the Fun House smoking and he come around and gave us all a whaling.

B.B.: Is that right.

F.L.: Mrs. Bardol was a real cook.

B.B.: This place..you said during the Depression you use to be able to go and get quite a few men to work right away..where was that located?

F.L.: Scotty Miller in the south end, in there where that fish & chip place is. They'd call and say they wanted 20 men and they'd be there.

B.B.: What was it?

F.L.: It was an employment office or something.

I had to go down to Georges brothers you know they had the store down there. Do you know where they have the stores down there. Do you know where Georges Store was? On Jarvis Street.....

B.B.: What was Georges Store?

F.L.: Grocery store and meat. I remember I was bringing a cheque down and his name was George so I asked him George what?

B.B.: His name was Mr. George.

Has Jarvis Street changed much?

F.L.: Oh ya. There was no business up west of Central.

B.B.: Do you remember when the area amalgamated?

F.L.: Oh, ya.

B.B.: What was the feeling during that time of the people?

F.L.: It was okay I guess. Billy Hawley was the first mayor. He use to live out here in Windmill Point a summer home. I think they still got it. His daughters got it now. I took my first driving lesson from Billy Hawley. Ya, I drove him home. He was stranded. He had a store down there, right on the Niagara Boulevard. I don't know what's there now. His sister was there at the time. So I drove him up to the house....I had my first lesson in '37.....
