

This is Shelley Richer interviewing Mr. Jesse Sider in his home at 3626 Bowen Road on August 12, 1985.

**S.R:** Hellow Mr. Sider and how are you?

**J.S:** Oh, I'm fine.

**S.R:** What is your date of birth?

**J.S:** January the 7th, 1909.

**S.R:** Where were you born?

**J.S:** I was born in Bertie Township, east of Stevensville.

**S.R:** And what would the street be?

**J.S:** It would be on Acadia now, where my brothers still live, on the Sider farm.

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

**J.S:** Yes. As I have told you previously, I was fifteen months old when I went to live with my grandmother who was on a farm west of Stevensville. That farm was bought in 1834, and was in the family, the same family until I sold it in 1972. So it was in the family for all those years and it was bought for a hundred and twenty-five pounds. Apparently we had...we didn't have dollars in those days.

**S.R:** Would you know how much a hundred and twenty-five pounds was?

**J.S:** Well, we used to say when I was a boy, about five dollars a pound, but it isn't that much now. But I think that's what we used to figure, five dollars a pound.

**S.R:** Would you know who your family bought it from?

**J.S:** From a Haun. His name was Haun. Someone had got it from the Crown and had cleared eleven acres and that gave him the right to have the title to it. You could get land from the Crown and you had to improve it, every year clear so much, for two or three years and then you could get a deed for it. As soon as he got his deed, then he wanted to sell it. He sold it to my great, great grandfather, who bought it for my great grandfather. There were no buildings on it and just eleven acres cleared. The rest was all bush.

**S.R:** How large was it?

**J.S:** The original one was a hundred acres. About two years later they bought another ten acres, and a few years later another twenty-five. So that made it up to about a hundred and thirty-five acres. And

then some years later another ten acres was bought. That was my uncle that bought that.

**S.R:** What kind of farming was done on it?

**J.S:** Oh, we had mixed farming, wheat and hay and cattle. We had some cows, made butter, and had a route in Fort Erie and sold...we had about three hundred hens usually, and sold eggs, and sold butter. We had some sheep, and we'd slaughter the lambs in the fall and sell them on the route in Fort Erie, and we had some pigs. We had a little bit of everything.

**S.R:** What about the sheep, did you make your own wool?

**J.S:** They used to. Later on, one time I had three hundred sheep myself, and we sold the wool. As far back as I can remember most of the wool was sold, but there would be some saved for...to take away and get carded and what not, to use either for ourselves or the neighbours. But, by in large...we used to wash the sheep before we clipped them. We used to take them into a pond and...it was quite an ordeal. We would go in the pond and the sheep were forced into the water, and then they worked the wool with their hands and washed it and got it clean. Then it would take about a week for the wool to dry, right on the sheeps back, before you clipped them. Then you got rid of a lot of the dirt and chaff and stuff from the wool. When we started selling it to...we usually sold it to the Wool Growers. We never washed it or anything, just throw it in. They bought it as raw wool, just the way it was clipped off the sheep.

**S.R:** Was it a family project or, for things like that, and when it came plowing time, or harvesting time, did you have to hire people in?

**J.S:** Well, my uncle wasn't a very strong man. He only weighed about 110, 125-30 pounds and he would...until I was old enough, he would sometimes have a Bernardo Boy and sometimes he would hire neighbour, young fellows who were...when they were eighteen, to come and plow for him or something, with the horses, until I was old enough to do it myself. Then, we didn't keep...sometimes we had a hired man anyway, but not as a rule. I usually done the plowing with the horses...

**S.R:** What kind of equipment was there?

**J.S:** Oh, a binder, and the hay we cut with a mower, raked it and had

a hay loader. We'd throw it into the barn...loose, took it off the wagon with a hay fork, then put it in the mow, off the ground. The wheat, we would usually haul it in in machines and put it in the mow, and we'd get a threshing machine in and thresh it out in the barn. We had a big shed in the back of the barn and you could throw it inside. With the oats we would do the same.

S.R: What do you mean by threshing?

J.S: Well, we got an old steam engine and one of these big threshing machines. We'd set that up in the barn running on a pulley...

S.R: I don't know what threshing is.

J.S: You don't know what threshing is. Oh, separating the wheat from the, the grain from the straw. The grain came out of the spout. You pitched it in at the front of the machine and then the straw would come out the back and the grain come out an elevator at the side...

S.R: Do you remember who operated this threshing machine?

J.S: Oh yeah, there was different ones. We used to get, there was a Mr. Cable we used to get sometimes, a Mr. Barnhart, Ethan Barnhart and later Leroy Winger took it over from him. Then Leroy Minor had a machine. He threshed a few years for us. Mr. Montegue threshed for us for a number of years. There were several others around.

S.R: Montegue. Yeah. He's still living. He has a home down in St. Catharines someplace. Leroy...is still living. Leroy Winger's still living too, I guess.

S.R: You mentioned these other machines, were they hand powered, horse powered, steam powered?

J.S: The binder was when I was a boy...was pulled by horses.

S.R: What did the binder do?

J.S: Cuts the grain and ties it in sheaves...then later we got a new one and we used the tractor and pulled it with the tractor. It was driven by the pullwheel of the binder on the ground. It drove the machine and you just pulled it.

S.R: What years did tractors come in?

J.S: What years? Oh, I think I got my first one in the late '30s sometime. I'm not sure which.

S.R: You mentioned about the plow. Did you have to use the hand plow?

J.S: I used a one furrow walking plow...two horses to it.

S.R: A one furrow walking plow?

J.S: Yes, with the handles so you could go and walk behind.

S.R: The ones that are shaped like a V, like a wishbone?

J.S: Yeah, a one furrow plow. I started when I was 15, plowing. We farmed, I thought, quite a bit for those days. I used to figure on plowing at least 40 or 50 acres every fall.

S.R: How long did it take to do an acre?

J.S: Well, I figured if I didn't, wasn't in too big of a hurry, I usually did about an acre a day.

S.R: So it took a month and a half or so?

J.S: To do the plowing, yeah. Then in the spring we'd put most of that to oats and maybe have a field for corn.

S.R: So, did you have your own feed then, for your animals?

J.S: Pretty much, we tried to. We had to sometimes buy some extra to supplant it, but by in large we had our own.

S.R: Where would you have got the extra?

J.S: Oh, from different places. The Maple Leaf Milling Company, Mr. Cooper run that in Welland. He used to bring it if you'd buy a three ton load, over right to your farm, of course. But, every once in a while we'd get a little bit in, but mostly we got it from the mills in town. It was Chester Beam at that time and his son, we just called him Daddy. I don't know really what his name was, It was always Daddy Beam. We usually worked through him. We never bought too much from Morningstar. They come in a little later.

S.R: Who did you sell your produce, your meat, your wool too?

J.S: Well, the wool went to Canadian Coöperative Wool Growers in my day. Our other produce we sold retail.

S.R: That means straight to the people?

J.S: Yes...meat, eggs, butter...we never sold cream to the creamery. Later on then we started selling milk. We sold milk to Lichtenberger's Dairy in Fort Erie, but in their home up until that time. When the Second World War came along and they demanded coupons to buy your meat and your...your butter maybe too. That kind of bothered us a little. We kind of give up the meat business at that time.

**S.R:** Why would coupons bother you?

**J.S:** Well, you could only have so much, it was rationed, and they'd give you coupon books and we'd have to collect the coupons for the produce we sold. You could do it but we didn't like that, so we quit. Then Roy Fretz bought our beef, Girve's father. Before that we used to sell... our beef, it was mostly pork and lamb and chicken that we sold on the route, and we had many beef. We usually sold it to the butcher. It used to be Harve Fretz and then Roy Fretz, they were brothers. Harve, when he quit he sold it to Roy, and later when Noyse took it over we sold to him too... Noyse, Reuben Noyse. Harve Fretz was there first, then when he quit he went into car sales, in the selling business in Port Colborne, and his brother Roy took it over. Then when Roy quit Reuben Noyse took it over. It was all the same shop.

**S.R:** Where was this?

**J.S:** Up the road here about a mile. He had trucks... he would sell it then, off to the people. He'd run around through Stevensville and Fort Erie, and sell off of the back of the truck.

**S.R:** You had mentioned Lichtenberger's Dairy, where was that?

**J.S:** Well, it started on the farm on Sunset Drive. Then later they built that on Jarvis Street, that dairy. Then I guess that closed up.

**S.R:** What effects did the Depression have on the farm and the family?

**J.S:** Well, I was married in '31, just the beginning of the Depression. Since it was a family farm, and... I started... after I quit school I worked for my uncle for wages. I guess you'd call it wages. I got \$200 a year for the first... that's seven years. Then when I got married, we farmed on a half and half basis. We worked together and divided everything half and half. Then a little later I got two thirds, then finally when he was ready to quit, I took over. That made it that I didn't have... never got in debt for the farm. I didn't make much money but we always had... we always got along.

**S.R:** So you never found it that difficult during the Depression years?

**J.S:** Well, it was rough, but it was... like I say, it was a man that had debts was the ones that were in trouble. Since we didn't have any interest to pay, we never had much money but we had our own produce and did well with what we had.

**S.R:** Did many people lose their farms?

**J.S:** I don't know as too many of them lost their farms in those days. They didn't... they farmed different than now. Like I said, today if a man wants to farm he has to borrow probably \$100,000 to \$150,000 or \$200,000 to start. Well, then he's got interest overhead, and if he don't make it he loses it. But we worked on a cash system. We got along with what we had, and if we had money to buy then we bought it and if we didn't then we didn't buy it.

**S.R:** Do you remember the prices of your produce?

**J.S:** Yes, they varied down through the years.

**S.R:** The youngest you can remember, like when you were 10, around there.

**J.S:** Well, my grandfather, I think my grandfather always used to say, if he could have wheat in the bin and kept it 'til spring, he figured he could get a dollar a bushel for it, for wheat. That was years and years ago. I think there was a time when you couldn't get a dollar a bushel for it, but then again, it would get up to over two dollars a bushel. The thing that helped us through the Depression as much as anything was that we sold our produce to the retail trade. If... that was quite a bit better than selling it to a wholesaler.

**S.R:** Or bartering with it at a store?

**J.S:** Yeah. It helped us during this Depression that we got the retail price for our produce that we sold.

**S.R:** Do you remember the price of milk, eggs, butter, say during the Depression or before?

**J.S:** Eggs were, lots of times 40¢ a dozen, and butter the same. I used to say if eggs got up to 70¢ a dozen, that was too dear and people wouldn't buy them.

**S.R:** Now it's twice that.

**J.S:** If we... I had a neighbour who in later years sold his, sold their eggs to consumers for 50¢ a dozen year 'round, it never changed. But we changed. We sometimes would have to borrow a few eggs to meet our customers needs. So we tried to stay pretty much with the market price. But like I say, if it got up to 80¢, I usually stopped at about 70¢. Then if it got down to 30¢, I kept them maybe up 5 or 10¢ a dozen. I just knocked the highest off and the lowest



off occasionally. I don't know how cheap butter was. It was around 40¢ I remember quite right.

**S.R:** You had mentioned Bernardo Boys, could you explain what a Bernardo Boy is?

**J.S:** Well, they were... the Bernardo Home is in England. They picked up boys off the street, or boys whose parents weren't capable of providing for them, or... a lot of them seemed to be from a mother whose husband died and she remarried. A lot of them were drinking men, the second ones, and they didn't want them around, and Dr. Bernardo would take these boys in and then he brought them out to Canada by the boatload. They were treated quite pathetic with some of them and if they got in a good home it wasn't so bad. If they got in with a man that abused them it was terrible.

**S.R:** Some people might want them just for the labour, right?

**J.S:** Yes, that's what they were. They had to work three years for \$100. They would come when they were, oh, eight or ten years old. You had to send them to school for a certain number of months out of the year. Uncle Andrew used to get them and... One was Fred Massey who died just a few years ago in Port Colborne. He was at our farm awhile, and he left awhile, and he came back again. Then they had... Alfred Davis was there for one year and an Arthur Beaumont, whose still living, was there for one year. And I was quite a small boy, I just... I remember them. Alfred Davis was there in 1915, and I think maybe Arthur Beaumont was there in, say '17, and maybe Davis in between. They weren't paid a lot of money but they had a home and they... if the people treated them nice, why-it wasn't so bad, but some of them got pretty bad beatings I understand.

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

**J.S:** I went to No. 8 Bertie.

**S.R:** Where is that?

**J.S:** The corner of our farm up there, the corner of Fox Road and Point Abino.

**S.R:** Is it still there?

**J.S:** Yes, it's not used as a school of course. The building was sold and there's someone living in it now.

**S.R:** Would you know approximately when it was built and when it was sold, or closed?

**J.S:** Well, it, it, I can't... I think the date was on the school.

**S.R:** Did your father or grandfather go to that school?

**J.S:** My grandfather went there what little he went. He didn't go very much. My mother went there, and my children went there.

**S.R:** About what year did it close? Would you know that?

**J.S:** In the '50s I suppose. Abby (his wife) was there in the '40s.

**S.R:** So, most likely it was in the '50s then?

**J.S:** Yeah, I suppose in the late '50s maybe.

**S.R:** Would you know who bought it?

**J.S:** Oh, Howard Bertran had it for awhile. I guess he sold it again. I don't know whose got it now.

**S.R:** Could you describe your school, from your earliest recollections, what it was like, and were there any changes made into it, or...?

**J.S:** No, the school was much the same as long as I can remember. It was a one room brick, red brick school, and about... when I went there was between 20 and 30 students, grades 1-8, and all in one room with one teacher. It was heated with natural gas most of the time. There was an arrangement I understand between the Provincial Gas Company and the... when they came in there and started drilling for gas, that they would supply the school houses with gas free... until the gas got a little scarce, they then kind of made it sometimes that you could hardly get enough to keep it warm. But, as a whole they done pretty good. We had free gas. We didn't have very good heaters. We just had log burners and box stove type of things.

**S.R:** So then the fire just kept the logs burning then?

**J.S:** A log burner is a pipe, about that long these were, with holes that... little holes all along, and you turned it on outside and lit it and it would burn out those holes. They were not used in later years, but they used to use them. They had one of these on each side of the stove. Well, I don't think it was very economical. They didn't get the full benefit of the gas I don't think.

**S.R:** Would you remember your teachers?

**J.S:** Yes. I don't have much recollection of the first one. There was



Miss Ball. I don't know what her first name was. I had a Miss Swenton. Mr. McNiece was the inspector. The one that really was... I think I had this one for, in grade 5 and 6, a Miss Brown. She was really a wonderful teacher. As far as I know she is living yet. She married a Mr. Webber. The last I knew she lived up near Kitchener, Waterloo. But, she was a very good teacher. Then I had Miss Staples after her.

S.R: What made Miss Brown so special?

J.S: Well, she was just a good teacher.

S.R: What kinds of things did they use for dicipline?

J.S: Discipline? It depended on the teacher.

S.R: Some examples.

J.S: The strap was always available.

S.R: And the parents condoned it then?

J.S: Yeah, sure. I was told at home that if I got the strap at school then I'd get another one when I got home.

S.R: If you got the strap you never told your parents then, right?

J.S: Yeah. I tried to keep it from them. Now, a strap should always be in the schools.

S.R: What kinds of things were taught in the schools?

J.S: 'Reading and 'riting and 'rithmetic, grammar, hygiene. I guess that's... spelling, which I didn't appreciate.

S.R: You were never a good speller?

J.S: No... history, geography. We had a full line I think.

S.R: So more or less what's.taught today?

J.S: Yeah, more or less. Not quite... It was junior and senior at that time, you didn't stay... you had primer first, and junior first, and senior first and junior second and senior second, junior third and senior third, junior fourth and senior fourth. That's what they were called when I went to school. Coming back to these teachers, some of them kept good order and some of them didn't. This Miss Brown, she always had good order in the schoolroom and never used the strap very much. I wouldn't say she never did, but very rarely. But, she knew how to motivate the kids and they all liked her.

S.R: Can you remember any interesting stories from when you went to school? Something that might have happened at school with you and your classmates or something... most people have a few

stories that they can remember from their school days.

**J.S:** I can tell you a better one from when my children went there.

**S.R:** Like what?

**J.S:** They hung a boy one day.

**S.R:** And he died?

**J.S:** No, he didn't die, but they had him off the ground up in a tree.

**S.R:** What was the reasoning for this?

**J.S:** Oh, he was a tartar and he was bugging the kids all of the time and they ganged up on him and they strung him up.

**S.R:** But he was okay?

**J.S:** Well, the teacher found out quick enough and got him down, it didn't kill him, but he... I don't suppose they'd have left him die either. They had him hung up. No, I never liked school very good myself.

**S.R:** So you only went as far as that school, you never went to high school?

**J.S:** I went to Messiah College for six months after I was through school here.

**S.R:** Then that was enough?

**J.S:** Yep.

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

**J.S:** Yes, I'm a member since I was a boy, and still am.

**S.R:** What church would that be?

**J.S:** Brethren in Christ.

**S.R:** Which Brethren in Christ?

**J.S:** Bertie, the one on the Church Road.

**S.R:** Would you know any of the history of the church or any changes in the actual building itself and property?

**J.S:** That church is 110 years old, the building. It was built in 1875. We have no pictures of the original church. In 1911 there was a wing put on each side, out. We have pictures that were taken after the new wings were put on, but we don't have any pictures of the original. We have had an artist use her imagination and how part of the church was not changed at that time, but the wings were put on. Some think that this isn't a good, that it isn't the way it was, but I think it is pretty much. Some said, "There had to be a chimney on it though", and it probably did. I don't know where it was. At 1911 there was a wing put on each side, and then several

times we've made... they built on the back, and they've built on the front. There is plans I guess in the shaping now to again do some remodelling and changing on the building. First it was designed for horses and carriages, the first one, and the platform along the church was high enough that people could step into the buildings from the platform on the front porch or the side porch. There were porches on the side, narrow ones about four feet wide, and all across the front.

**S.R:** Were there any other buildings around the church, like for the horses?

**J.S:** There were sheds. They had a row of sheds that went on three sides of the church all the way around. Those were for horses. They of course are all torn down now for the parking lot there. But they had mangers in them and the horses could be tied up and be blanketed and fed there.

**S.R:** Do you remember any little tricks you had in keeping warm in the horse and buggy in the wintertime?

**J.S:** Oh yeah, take bricks along, heat bricks in the oven, and put them in the sleigh box with straw on the bottom of the box. Only in the winters of course because summers you didn't need any heat to keep warm. Then you could... if you got cold riding you could jump off and run along behind. You'd get warm.

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

**J.S:** Oh, your annual Evangelistic meetings which run for two weeks and sometimes longer. On one occasion I think it went for six weeks. It has a service every night.

**S.R:** Were people able to attend that every night?

**J.S:** Yeah, they packed the place out.

**S.R:** That's surprising considering the distance and the farming and all that kind of stuff.

**J.S:** Well, in winters you didnt' have all...

**S.R:** Oh, they were only in the wintertime?

**J.S:** Yeah, we always had them in the winter, and the young fellows in the home, they would come there for a place to go and something to do. There wouldn't be all these other things to do. The young fellows would line the inside braces here. They didn't want to come

in and hear the service too much, but they wanted to be there and they'd peek in the windows here.

**S.R:** Why would they want to be there? Was there food served afterward or to meet girls or...?

**J.S:** No, no, no... well probably. One fellow said they could always take their girls there and there was no charge. It was entertainment to take their girls there. If they wanted to take their girls out someplace they'd go to revival meetings.

**S.R:** Would you remember any prominent members of the church or past pastors?

**J.S:** Yeah, I can remember all of them from my time.

**S.R:** Could you tell me their names?

**J.S:** The oldest one I can remember was Asa Bearss and Nicholas Michael. Then following them was Asa's son Girvin who was elected to the ministry, and he is grandfather of Ross Bearss. Do you know him in Ridgeway, and Leo? Then Albert Riegle, he run the feedmill. They weren't salaried, they had another occupation which they did along with their preaching. Then Warren Winger, Jess Winger, Alvin Winger, and Will Charleton later on then, James Sider. Bert Sherk come in after Girvin Bearss. Him and Girvin were together.

**S.R:** Could you tell me some changes in the Brethren in Christ that have happened over the years? I heard at one time you weren't even allowed to wear a tie because it was considered an unnecessary adornment. You didn't need it to keep warm, or you didn't need it to hold your clothes up or anything like that, it was just there for decoration.

**J.S:** I never wore a tie in my life. I am not happy with all the changes that have come, but they have come. We now... our ministers are no longer elected by ballot vote. If we have a young fellow who feels he wants to become a minister he then goes to school and studies for the ministry.

**S.R:** How would he become a minister of that church?

**J.S:** Well, he's then out on the market and he's available for... anyone can offer them a position, and if they take it why... if the congregation accepts them for five years... They used to be in for life, but now it's... at the end of five years the congregation has the privilege

of if they wanted his services continued or not. If we want to change a minister then we invite a minister that we think we would like and then it's up to him if he accepts or rejects. If he is satisfied where he is and doesn't want to change, you just say, no he's not interested. If he is interested then he has to turn in his resignation where he is and then he can work out a suitable deal.

**S.R:** Is there anything more you'd like to add about your church?

**J.S:** No, I think I'm very healthy with my church. I mean, the church has a lot to offer people. The changes have come which have come I suppose in every church, maybe not as markedly as in ours, but there has been changes in all forms of life and institutions. Over the last 50, 60 or 70 years there has been quite a drastic change. It's affecting the church. I think the church is still my life.

**S.R:** So there is nothing else you would like to mention on tape then about the church before I go onto another topic?

**J.S:** I don't think so?

**S.R:** Who is the first political representative that you remember?

**J.S:** German... a lawyer in Welland by the name of German, that's all I know. He's the Dominion man for as far back as I can remember.

**S.R:** What did a Dominion man do?

**J.S:** Well, he was in Ottawa.

**S.R:** Oh, representing the area here?

**J.S:** Yeah. We didn't have as many representatives at that time I suppose as they do now.

**S.R:** What about reeves?

**J.S:** Charlie Berger was the Deputy Reeve. Gorham was Reeve for a long time. I don't know how long ago that is, time gets away from me. Sometimes you don't even know what time it is. But here again this comes in. Our church in the early days did not vote. I have never voted in my life, not to this day.

**S.R:** Just because of religion?

**J.S:** Yeah.

**S.R:** Why would that be?

**J.S:** Our forefathers came to this country for religious reasons. One reason was that they didn't want to take up arms. We were always told in the early days that that was part of the deal. You did

have exemption notice of military service as long as you didn't vote. The young fellows say now that that isn't right, and they still have exemption of military service even if they do vote. I'm from the school that thinks that if we don't want to fight for our government, we shouldn't have any part of it. I would lean towards the Liberals but it doesn't make any difference to me if it's Conservative or Liberal or what it is that's in power, I'm just as happy with one as the other.

**S.R:** What are some of the changes that have taken place around Stevensville?

**J.S:** The roads are the most changed I think, of anything.

**S.R:** Please explain.

**J.S:** When I was a boy, when we wanted to attend our, to run our route in Fort Erie, I remember when we put chains on our cars and from our place went north to the Netherby Road, through the mud. You'd get out there and then take the chains off. From there there was a stone road. Now, my uncle could tell the time when that wasn't stoned... because all I can remember is that Netherby Road was stone, Stevensville and New Germany were stone. But I remember when these other roads were mud. The farmers had the privilege of working off their road tax. We would take our team of horses with a dump wagon, dump box on the wagon, and go down to, with the horses, go down to one of the stone quarries, which were in the same place practically as they are now. We would make about two trips a day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, and bring a load of stone and dump it on the road. We had, they'd maybe have, oh, 15 or 18 or 20 teams hauling stone and a couple men there levelling it. They'd try to dump it so they didn't have to shovel it much. We made a narrow road just wide enough for one car down the center. We put coarse stone on the bottom, and they'd level that, and then put a little finer stone on top of that, and then a little finer yet, then dust, we called it, on top. Building these country roads... that was the way they were stoned first. We all, most farmers I think, tried to draw enough to pay their taxes. They were given so much road tax and they could work it off with their horses, take their horses and draw stone so many days to pay your road tax. As a boy I drew stone for the roads up and down the street from the quarry down on Ridge there. I made two trips a day, one in



the morning and one in the afternoon.

**S.R:** Were there any newspapers in Stevensville or Ridgeway?

**J.S:** Yeah, when I was a boy of course we had the telephone, the Welland County Telephone, and we either took the Welland paper which was once a week, I think, the Welland Tribune, we had the Rural Mail. We took farm papers too, the Farmers Advocate, and we had the Canadian Countryman, and several of them like that. The Family Herald was a little later one that hung on a little longer, but most of them died out.

**S.R:** There were no papers produced in Stevensville or Ridgeway?

**J.S:** Not to my knowledge.

**S.R:** What about the Times Review, did it come this far?

**J.S:** I don't even know whether it was issued then or not, I don't think so.

**S.R:** I think it started in the early 1900s I think.

**J.S:** Well no, we never got that, we got the Welland paper. There may have been one down there then apparently. There may have been down there, but we never took it.

**S.R:** Would you remember some of the changes in the stores? When you had to buy clothes where did you go, or staples for the house?

**J.S:** The store in Stevensville was Pat Robinson. He was right on the corner in the building that the bank is in now. The bank was there then, it was the Sterling Bank at that time. The rest of the store, which is now a restaurant, was Pat Robinson's Store. He sold... you could buy a suit of clothes there, ladies, I guess, could buy dresses there. I don't know what they had... the yard goods and groceries and, you name it.

**S.R:** Were there insurances back then?

**J.S:** Yeah, yeah.

**S.R:** Could you get them through Stevensville, or did you have to go elsewhere?

**J.S:** We had one that was called the Bertie and Willoughby Fire Insurance Company. I don't know the particulars on where they were. Later we joined in with the church insurance, the Mennonite Mutual Aid, which is what we carry yet today. This house is insured through that. You have to be a member of the Brethren in Christ Mennonite

Church in order to get it. It is an insurance but they don't call it an insurance, they call it mutual aid. It's supposed to be a bit more brotherly than the insurance companies.

**S.R:** Have you ever had to use it?

**J.S:** Oh yeah. That's what's good about it. They're very... in some cases they'll pay things that aren't even covered. They'll pay...

**S.R:** Necessities?

**J.S:** Yeah, if it was from a brotherly viewpoint. I... our... I had a tractor that burnt at one time and they paid...

**S.R:** Were there many sports in Stevensville?

**J.S:** I didn't participate in any sports...

**S.R:** How old were you when you remember your first car, either yours, your parents or your grandparents, or uncle?

**J.S:** My grandparents never had a car. My uncle bought one, I think in 1918. That was the first car that we had on the farm. I done pretty good, when I was 17 and I wanted a car I got one, so...

**S.R:** Were they expensive?

**J.S:** Oh, I got one about a year old and it cost \$675.

**S.R:** So that was over three years work then?

**J.S:** Yeah, if that's the way you figure.

**S.R:** Well, you said that at that time you got \$200 a year.

**J.S:** Yeah, I got \$200 a year, but I had a good grandmother that... you know.

**S.R:** This car that your uncle bought in 1918, what kind of car would it have been?

**J.S:** It was a 490 Chev. It was a second-hand one.

**S.R:** Would you know about how much he had to pay for it?

**J.S:** I think \$400.

**S.R:** How second-hand was it then?

**J.S:** Oh, I don't know how old it was. But he kept that a few years, and then he got a car you've probably never heard of, a Baby Grand Chevrolet. It was a big Chev., and that, I know at that time was \$1,600. I think at that time the ordinary Chev. was \$1,200.

**S.R:** About what year would this be, with the Baby Grand Chevrolet?

**J.S:** Oh, about '24.

**S.R:** What was so different about it that it was more money, and it had

such an elaborate name?

**J.S:** Oh, it was big for a Chev. It was a pretty good sized car, bigger than the ordinary Chev., quite a bit bigger. I don't know why they quit making them, but they quit making them I know.

**S.R:** Did you travel by ferry very often?

**J.S:** Well, we didn't go to Buffalo very often but that's the way you went if you went to Buffalo.

**S.R:** Why would you want to go to Buffalo?

**J.S:** This time I'm telling you about, there was no hospital in Fort Erie. If anybody got sick the doctor took them to the hospital in Buffalo. If... I had a few friends in Buffalo. We used to go over there to the dentist some. Some things like that.

**S.R:** There weren't any dentists around here?

**J.S:** Well, I surmise there was one. I never went to a dentist in Buffalo, but they did in my day, some people. I went to Welland first to the dentist, then went to Fort Erie.

**S.R:** Would you remember the first dentist in the area?

**J.S:** Well, the first one that I ever knew of was a Beam. My grandparents went to him. He made dentures, pulled your teeth out and made dentures. For about \$15 or \$20 you could get a new set of teeth. You'd get your old ones out and new ones in. You didn't need any anesthetic in your teeth, you just pulled them out.

**S.R:** Nobody passed out from the pain or anything?

**J.S:** Oh no, not... my mother-in-law said that that was better than freezing it. Freezing it, you have all the trouble afterwards when the freezing comes out. She didn't have any trouble, she had them pulled out just as they were. That's not me, I wanted them froze.

**S.R:** Did you ever use the Dummy?

**J.S:** Yeah.

**S.R:** Could you describe what you knew about that?

**J.S:** The Dummy was more like a streetcar actually. It was... you could get that back at Netherby I told you, just a mile from our house. It would stop, if you went back there and pulled the board up.

**S.R:** Oh, you're talking about the Dummy. It came up all the way back here?

**J.S:** Oh yeah, it went from...

**S.R:** I thought that the Dummy just crossed the International Bridge.

**J.S:** Oh, that was when it was petering out. It used to go right on up, took you up to Wainfleet. In the later years it just went across the river there. It used to go right on up to... it would go up in the morning and come back at night.

**S.R:** Could you remember any other railroad activities?

**J.S:** Well, the passenger service was so nice in Stevensville. That was one thing that... in those days you could get a train from Stevensville, you didn't have to go to Fort Erie or Welland to get a train, you'd just go to Stevensville. Some of them would stop regardless, and some you would have to pull the board up. There was a station master there, and he'd, he'd lift the board for you. Up at Netherby there wasn't, you had to pull the board yourself.

**S.R:** Did you know J.L. Kraft? He was raised in Stevensville.

**J.S:** No. I didn't know him. It was a little before my time, I guess. He may have been here when I was a boy, but I mean, when I got big enough to come to know these fellows he would have been gone.

**S.R:** Were there any big accidents in Stevensville, big fires, anything that would have really hit the papers, that you can remember?

**J.S:** Well, the one outstanding one was when the Fretz family was killed. This Fretz family lived about a mile from our farm, and they decided to go to Colorado. They just left their house sit, closed it up, and left. This man lived in Colorado and he had a wife and four children I believe, and he decided that he'd bring them back to see the old place that they came from. Jim Baker, you would know all about him I suppose. Jim was... he lived right around the railroad track, north of, around by Graces, across the railroad tracks, that big square brick house right along the railroad track.

**S.R:** On Main Street East?

**J.S:** Yeah, well they lived off East. Their lane came in right beside the railway track from the east. Mrs. Fretz, I think, was a sister of either Mr. Baker or Mr. Baker's wife, I'm not sure which. They came in to visit, they came into the Bakers and Mrs. Baker went with them, and Thelma. Thelma is... she's married to Claudus Sherk. She was a little girl, and her mother went, her and her mother went with this Fretz family. They drove out the lane and drove right

in the front of one of these passenger trains. Everybody was killed, but this little girl, she's alive. So there were five, I believe, caskets. They had the funeral in our church up there, for the Fretz's. They never sent them back home. They're buried in our cemetery. The father and the mother and the three children. They had one big grave, and they all went right beside each other in the caskets. Of course Mrs. Baker was killed too, but she had a separate funeral. They had a funeral in some other church. But that was some funeral. People from miles around came to that.

**S.R:** Do you remember approximately what year?

**J.S:** I think in the '20s, probably, in the '20s sometime.

**S.R:** I don't remember if it was in the '20s or the '30s, there was a blizzard like the blizzard we had in '77. There was a big snow blizzard. Would you remember anything about that, how it affected people out here?

**J.S:** I remember in '45.

**S.R:** It could have been in '45.

**J.S:** In 1945 we were blocked up, the back roads were blocked up all winter. My wife had been in the hospital for a number of years, psychiatric hospital. My wife's sister lived in Pennsylvania. She invited me to bring the children out, I had two girls. I left home on the day after Christmas. I got out with the car. I drove the car to Buffalo. Gasoline was rationed, so I decided to go down on the train. I drove my car, my sister lived in Buffalo, and I parked it at her house. Then I took the train from Buffalo to Harrisburg. I guess it was... I was down there for New Years, and the day after New Years I was coming home, and when we got to Buffalo, it was that bad. The train was supposed to be into Buffalo at 8 o'clock in the morning and when they changed crews... they changed train crews once, between... and Buffalo, and when they did, the conductor came on and he said, "I don't know how we're going to get into Buffalo, they're having a terrible storm up there". But, they hooked two passenger trains together, so we had an engine ahead and an engine in the middle and they put an engine behind. These are the steamers. They succeeded in getting down to the foot of Main. There was an old Lehigh Valley Station down there. They couldn't get up to

the new station. When they got in the station they advised us not to leave the station because of the conditions and the snow in the city. My sister lived down in Buffalo, so I left my girls in the station and I told them I was going out to see what I could do. So, I found there were some streetcars working and I took them and we went by the streetcar and I got to my sisters place alright. The next morning I took this Dummy you talked about, from Black Rock, Buffalo, to Stevensville, then I walked from Stevensville up home. We were selling milk at that time and it was quite urgent that I get home. I went home and my car was in Buffalo. After a week I succeeded in getting my car, and this road was opened and I got it to Stevensville here because I had a brother in Stevensville. I got it to his house. All winter then I would drive the horses to Stevensville and take the car from there to the market. I'd take the car from there and then bring it back and drive a horse and buggy. We were selling milk that winter and I drove to town every day, it was still, it was almost impossible for the horses to get through. There were certain roads you could get through and some places weren't cleared too good. Well, I delivered my milk to Stevensville and Lichtenberger's picked it up in Stevensville. They could get up here. So I waited, I didn't get my car home then until March. Boy it was rough.

**S.R:** From Christmas?

**J.S:** Yeah, you wouldn't believe how deep that snow was. They had it plowed out and the sides... you go up the top and you could touch the telephone wires, it was way up. Then in March it started to break up and they hired the men, farmers and others, that would work for one dollar an hour, to go ahead of the plow and they'd ram into the snowbank and they'd push it out. Then a man would come in and shovel it out, the pile out, while the trucks backed up again and took another run at it and got the movement required.

**S.R:** Do you remember any stories about things that happened that your parents or grandparents would have told you, pertaining to history?

**J.S:** Oh, I heard things but I guess it wasn't too much.

**S.R:** Is there anything else that you can think of that we haven't covered that you'd like to mention?



- J.S:** They, the people lived those days on the little that they had, and were happy. They didn't have to have so much money and they grew their produce for their living and they made a lot of their own clothes, and they seemed to get along as well without having as much money.
- S.R:** People didn't seem to have the money but most people owned their own homes, where now it's changed.
- J.S:** Yeah, you see, when our forefathers came here they got their farms almost for a song. The first home settlers got them free for clearing part of it for three years, or whatever it was, and like I said, the farms were only about 125 pounds, which would be about \$500, which was... and after all, wheat was a dollar a bushel under the best times then, maybe down to 50¢ sometimes. But, you see today... I don't even know what wheat's worth now. I think about the best I ever got was a little over two dollars a bushel. The price the farms are now, I don't know what you'd have to have wheat for now, for that many bushels to pay for a farm. My grandfather always thought you shouldn't buy cows, you should raise them. When they got a dollar they had it. Today they blow it and look for another one. My grandfather always had the theory that it didn't make any difference on what you made, it depends on what you save. That's different today. Today if you don't have enough to make ends meet you ask for more. Their theory was that you lived with what you got and if you didn't get enough you lived for less.
- S.R:** Is there anything else?
- J.S:** I don't think so.
- S.R:** Thank you for the interview Mr. Sider.