

This is Rose Hearn interviewing Mr. Carlton (George) Miller in his home at 1787 Stevensville Road, Stevensville, Ontario, and the date is August 20, 1985.

**R.H:** Good morning George.

**G.M:** Good morning.

**R.H:** Could you give me the date of your birth?

**G.M:** November 30th., 1918.

**R.H:** And where were you born?

**G.M:** On the Niagara Boulevard in Bertie Township.

**R.H:** Where exactly on Niagara Boulevard, could you give me an idea of the location?

**G.M:** Well north of Niagara College about three houses south of the north boundary of Bertie Township.

**R.H:** And what areas did Bertie Township take in at that time, like what were the areas that were under that title, Bertie Township?

**G.M:** Well pretty much the same as now other than Douglas Town, there was no Douglas Town of course, and the others were smaller areas, but pretty much I think generally the same as they are now.

**R.H:** So it was Stevensville...?

**G.M:** Yeah Stevensville, and in fact I think New Germany would have been more active towns then than they are now (villages rather) if...

**R.H:** If what?

**G.M:** Well there was more businesses then than there are now. Of course now there is bigger businesses in Stevensville, but New Germany hasn't changed too much, (Snyder) New Germany.

**R.H:** When you say businesses do you mean more industries?

**G.M:** Yeah, they tell me in New Germany there's two hotels, tailor shop, chopping mill, cider mill, garage, maybe one or two stores, and of course Stevensville the last couple of years has gone down more than it was in those days, pretty near.

**R.H:** It was quite a busy area, wasn't it?

**G.M:** Yeah, see now we don't have the funeral home, we don't have the planing mill which was an awful loss to the community really.

**R.H:** Now was that because it was burned down, or...?

**G.M:** Burned down.

**R.H:** Yeah I know it was burned down, but was it bad before then, was it...?

**G.M:** Oh no, it was a really active place, and in fact I just said yesterday that they had got into quite a line of hardware. There's no hardware store in Stevensville, and they used to have maybe two hardware stores and the Mill then of course kept that place and... oh, it was a flourishing business. Mr. House done a lot of business.

**R.H:** Why didn't he rebuild, do you know the reason why it wasn't rebuilt?

**G.M:** Well, I think he was getting along in years, and the one nephew, I don't think his health was number one. Of course maybe he figures the older work hard and make the money, and the younger ones spend it. They say "I got enough now". I say today with benefits, and pensions, and all the rest of it they are all set, while the older ones they had to look after themselves.

**R.H:** Well, the younger generation can get welfare, and unemployment, and I don't think they had a lot of these benefits then, did they?

**G.M:** No, not really. No, no way.

**R.H:** So I guess Main Street was the business area in Stevensville, was that very busy?

**G.M:** Well, yes. I think there was two blacksmith shops, and the smaller businesses, people seemed to... Well, you come to Stevensville, and now maybe a lot of small businesses were at their place of residence, and were maybe closer to you out in the country. You can get welding done some place else, and you don't need to come in to town. There isn't that much going for you.

**R.H:** Do you know anything about the Stevensville Hotel? I heard it was a meeting place or something.

**G.M:** Oh definitely.

**R.H:** What kind of meeting place was it?

**G.M:** Oh, it was get togethers. I think the same as now, you know. It was the same with the barbershops too, the barbershop and the poolroom.

**R.H:** These were the meeting places, and of course they were all for the men, right?

**G.M:** Yeah, yeah I suppose. I guess maybe the drinking people went to the Stevensville Hotel, but to go to the barbershop, the barbershop was open nights of course and that was...

**R.H:** Who owned the barbershop then?

**G.M:** Art Otterman. There was two barbershops in Stevensville, Art Otterman,

he was on West Main Street, and Lapp was on Victoria.

**R.H:** You said there was a poolroom there?

**G.M:** Yeah, that was in the barbershop.

**R.H:** It was in the barbershop?

**G.M:** Yeah, and Ted Bushell was after Art Otterman. Haircuts were 25 cents.

**R.H:** How old were you when these haircuts were 25 cents?

**G.M:** I was close to, oh, close to... It was in the '40s at least, and some of the '50s, the early '50s before the price went to about 35 cents.

**R.H:** Getting back to where you were raised, what was your neighbourhood like? What was the area like? Was there many houses there for instance?

**G.M:** Well, from Cozy Dell to the Shipyards, in fact, where we lived there wouldn't be ten houses.

**R.H:** Did the Glenny's live in that area?

**G.M:** I think Glenny's lived back in the country off of Ridgemount Road. The Atwood's lived on the Boulevard.

**R.H:** They were the people that owned the funeral home, right?

**G.M:** Yeah, the Atwood's lived on the Boulevard, and they owned the funeral home.

**R.H:** He was one of your neighbours then?

**G.M:** Yeah, we'd go by his place going to school.

**R.H:** What school did you go to?

**G.M:** Number one Black Creek, Willoughby.

**R.H:** Oh, that was in Willoughby, did you walk to school?

**G.M:** Oh yeah, most of the time. One time between Christmas and Easter the roads and the weather was so bad that so few got to school, so they had to make a sort of a contest. There was four of us, and one day we went and the teacher wasn't there. We had two and a half miles one way to walk, five miles a day through a storm and nasty roads. So anyway, at Easter they'd give us our present. It was a five cent O'Henry bar, but that was a chocolate bar, a five center.

**R.H:** It was quite a big one, was it, and that's what you got for going to school in the winter storms?

**G.M:** Oh boy, that was a treat then.

**R.H:** Who was your teacher, can you remember ?

**G.M:** Yeah, I had one teacher. I started with her, finished with her, and a lot of the kids did, I think. You know, you wait 'til it's too late to give the woman credit, but it was quite a name for a schoolteacher. It was Helen Goodfriend.

**R.H:** Helen Goodfriend! And you had her all through school?

**G.M:** Yeah, and so did some of my older sisters and younger brother. Well, she had gone before my younger brother finished school, but she was there, I really don't know how long.

**R.H:** Was she a good teacher?

**G.M:** Oh, definitely.

**R.H:** What about the school itself, was it a one room schoolhouse?

**G.M:** One room, and we had running water. When we wanted water we'd run over to the river and chop the ice and come back... we crossed the Boulevard right to the river and...

**R.H:** You did this when you were in school, was it during recess or lunch?

**G.M:** No. It was during the school hours or any time. If you wanted a pail of water... The kids would go to the woodshed and get a stick of wood for the stove.

**R.H:** And they also chopped the ice? Was the stove in the middle of the classroom?

**G.M:** Yeah, we had a stove in the classroom, but it wasn't in the... it was more to the east end of the school. It was at the front part of the Boulevard. It was quite a big stove and the teacher was... it was on the girls side of the room. The girls cloakroom and that was to the northeast corner, and the stove was just on the side of their partition.

**R.H:** Were the girls separated from the boys in the class?

**G.M:** Only the cloakroom, and outside. They had about 32, I think was the number of pupils in the school, and that was all the grades. It was... I think the year I tried my entrance, there was seven in the class and everyone passed. Yeah, everyone passed their entrance.

**R.H:** What street was this school on?

**G.M:** Niagara Boulevard.

**R.H:** It was right on the Boulevard?

**G.M:** Yeah, but it's been torn down now.

**R.H:** What did your father do for a living?

**G.M:** He worked for the Shipyards.

**R.H:** So he worked at the Shipyards, do you know what his job was there?

**G.M:** I think... well, sort of maintenance. He run the pumps and... He was there after the Shipyards closed down. He was about the last one there.

**R.H:** Do you know when they closed down?

**G.M:** Well, she opened and closed several times. They had built... I think it was the E.B. Osler, I think that was the name of the boat and that was before the war then, and when the war started they built two smaller boats. They were the Americana, and the Canadiana. I don't know why it never went. It really should have went. You know, they had a good place for docks and all that but... There was several places that had put options on it. One of them was General Electric, and one was Allis Chalmers Company, but it never materialized, really.

**R.H:** Did your father work at Erie Beach?

**G.M:** Yeah, and of course that was after the Shipyards had closed. That was when... I think about, well, maybe around '29 or '30, and the Shipyards of course closed down in the early '20s. It was not too long after the War.

**R.H:** The First World War?

**G.M:** Yeah.

**R.H:** So then he went to work at Erie Beach, did you go to Erie Beach with him?

**G.M:** Oh yeah, Thompson Road was part stone and part mud, and out to Helena Street, out through there...

**R.H:** How did you travel out to Erie Beach?

**G.M:** Oh, by car most of the time, and if my dad had gone to work in the morning, like after school, we hitchhiked to Fort Erie and rode the little Dummy train up along to the Beach.

**R.H:** What ride did he operate?

**G.M:** The Funhouse.

**R.H:** The Funhouse? What other rides were there at that time?

**G.M:** The Wildcat, that was a high, steep hill ride. The Bluestreak, there wasn't quite as steep a hill on that. It was there before the Wildcat, and there was the Lindy Loop which was circular baskets that went in a circle that would... I think when you were riding it, if you pulled on the brake hard enough... the more you wanted to roll, the harder

you pulled the brake, and held it on, and then you'd roll. The Caterpillar was another one. The cover would come right over after we'd get going and the Dodgems... what else? There was the Dangler, that was the swings.

**R.H:** Which was the one that went out over the water?

**G.M:** The one that was closest to the water? It was the Bluestreak.

**R.H:** What about the Old Mill, was that like a boat?

**G.M:** Yeah, it went around in sort of a closed-in tunnel like thing, and then came up this big hill and came down and splashed the water.

**R.H:** So your father worked there, how long did he work there? Was it until the Beach closed?

**G.M:** Yeah, It was 'til they closed, I'm pretty sure.

**R.H:** What was your father's first name?

**G.M:** Carl.

**R.H:** It was the Bardol's that owned Erie Beach, did you or your father know anything about them?

**G.M:** No, I wouldn't know them. I remember there was this girl, Annie Hunt, who is some relation to somebody in Fort Erie that... I don't know whether they lived around the Anglo American or not, but anyways, I think it was an uncle of hers who had something to do with the Beach. They were to have this big picnic this day, and all the kids used to run up the long slide instead of going up and sliding down, so they said to Annie Hunt and myself, "We should not let the kids go up there". "How are we going to keep them down?" we said. "Well, just tell them to stay down, and get a stick and swat them one". So we go up to the carpenter's shop which was on the Helena Street end of the Beach, and we'd get these here slats to keep the kids down. We thought we were big shots 'cause we could swat some of the kids and make them stay down.

**R.H:** Did you work at the Beach then?

**G.M:** No, not really. We didn't get paid, just helping.

**R.H:** Did you see a lot that was going on though?

**G.M:** Oh yeah, you know, for attractions really, they had darn things there at the Beach... All kinds of aerial stunts, Collangers Crazy Cars, and they had, I remember, the rider went up this thing on a horse, got up there and they lit the fire, and the horse and the

guy went down in the water tank you know. That was back in the '20s, '28, around there.

**R.H:** It was a big attraction, they drew a lot of people, didn't they?

**G.M:** Yeah, there was quite a big area there where these stunt cars were, and they'd shoot the men out of the cannon, and that's quite a while back. They had good crowds, the boat would bring the people, and there was a real good sandy beach at Erie Beach.

**R.H:** Didn't they have a nice Dance Hall too?

**G.M:** Oh yeah.

**R.H:** What about Crystal Beach, did you ever go there?

**G.M:** Yeah. Well, my grandfather in Crystal Beach... I helped him peddle pop once. He had the pop factory. He made the pop, Northern Springs pop.

**R.H:** Northern Springs was the name of the factory, and he owned that, did you help him?

**G.M:** Yeah, he had a team of horses, and we went and took the pop to the stands.

**R.H:** Was it bottled?

**G.M:** Yeah, it was bottled. He sold cream soda, and sasparrilla. I never forgot it, whenever we'd go to grandma's she'd go down in the... Of course it wasn't refrigerated, well, I guess the pop was cold maybe over at the pop factory, but this was more after the Beach was closed. There was still some pop around. She'd go down in the cold basement and bring up sasparrilla and cream soda.

**R.H:** So you helped to sell pop at Crystal Beach, right?

**G.M:** Well, my grandfather did. I was just out there for a day and went along for the ride.

**R.H:** What was your grandfather's name?

**G.M:** Walter Brackbill. There's still some of the fellers living that worked in the pop factory. Andy King, he's down around the Old Fort, down in there near Radford Avenue. He worked in my grandfather's pop factory.

**R.H:** When did you get your first job, was Miller's Dairy your first job?

**G.M:** No, that's where they got my nickname George. It was at George Miller's, and that was on Ridgemount Road. It would have been about 1934, and I worked there until...

**R.H:** At George Miller's?

**G.M:** At George Miller's.

**R.H:** Was that a farm?

**G.M:** No, George Miller's was the Hillcrest Dairy.

**R.H:** Oh, that was the Hillcrest Dairy, was it?

**G.M:** That was the Hillcrest Dairy and they were just small operators. Well, then pasturization and all this come in, so rather than have all the small dairies, they quit, and Maple Grove, they were the bigger dairy, so they were bought out, or anyways they bought the milk and took it to Fort Erie, Maple Grove. I worked at George Miller's until the War, and I got called for training so I didn't go back to the farm, I worked at the Fleet.

**R.H:** Oh, you worked at Fleet?

**G.M:** Yeah, I worked at the Fleet. I got called again for the... the first time was like the thirty days, I put in my thirty days, and then I worked at Fleet, then I got called again to the army, and I got rejected. So Fred Miller who had Maple Grove Dairy, he wanted somebody that wasn't going to be getting called for the army, to peddle milk. So... well I guess it was a mistake, I should've went back to Fleet, because I would have had my job if I had gone back, but I didn't. I went to work for Maple Grove Dairy, and I peddled milk in Fort Erie.

**R.H:** When you say peddled, did you take it in to Fort Erie and sell it, or did you have regular customers?

**G.M:** Yeah, and delivered house to house, seven days a week.

**R.H:** Seven days a week, and was it bottled milk?

**G.M:** Yeah, bottled.

**R.H:** Did you deliver it in trucks?

**G.M:** Yeah.

**R.H:** Didn't you deliver it sometimes with horse and wagon?

**G.M:** Oh, in the wintertime when all the roads are plugged.

**R.H:** Didn't you deliver the milk with the horse and buggy too at one time?

**G.M:** No.

**R.H:** It was all truck delivery?

**G.M:** Of course years before that, it was all horses. Fort Erie Dairy still had horses on their route in Fort Erie, but in Fort Erie there was Maple Grove, Hillcrest, Silverwoods, Fort Erie, Lichtenberger's, and Everett's. There was all those dairies in Fort Erie.

**R.H:** How long were you with Maple Grove Dairy?



**G.M:** Maple Grove Dairy? Until we got married in 1948.

**R.H:** Did it close down?

**G.M:** No, it was...how long after that? Then Ridge Dairy took over Maple Grove. I forget, I don't know how long it was after that.

**R.H:** You didn't stay with them though?

**G.M:** No, not after I got married. There wasn't enough money in it. I said to the boss, "I think I'm going to have to get a different job". I was making \$22.50 a week, and married. I said, "I can hardly make a go of it". This was in November, and he said "Well, there's not much you can do now, it's a bad time". So anyways, I went and looked around and I went up to John Deere. You had to give seven days notice, so anyways when I got up to John Deere, they said, "Are you working", "Yes, I am working". "Well, you don't want a job". I told them what the situation was. They said "Quit your job, and then look for a job". I said "I don't want to be out of work". So anyways, I gave my notice in to Miller's and I peddled my route in the morning. I went over to John Deere's after dinner, and they said "What time do you want to start". They said, "There's a night shift here", I said "Well, I'll have to go back home and come back". So I started work that night, I worked nights.

**R.H:** Where is John Deere?

**G.M:** Dane City. It was a good place to work. I worked there 'til 1952, and I made a mistake, I've made lots of them, I made a mistake there, I quit. You see they got down to working four days a week. Well, that's all right, but then they cut to three days a week, and I thought, gee, we are getting less hours all the time, how are things ever going to go. So you start... the wheels are a turning in my head, which was... now they want shorter hours, and less days, and I had it then and didn't realize it. I should have stayed with it. Anyways, I cut grass, and monkeyed around, and I should have taken landscaping and went into a business on my own out along the lake, because I had all kinds of work. So I monkeyed around at that and finally when it was three days, I left there, and went to work for Roy Beam, building houses. Then the father-in-law... my wife's cousin... my father-in-law raised him, he was here, and of course he figured, I shouldn't be away and him here, so he left the father-in-law. Well, I wouldn't see him stuck because he was good to me, so I stayed

home. Well, then it finally got, you either had to get bigger or forget it. At his age he didn't want to increase the business as far as delivering eggs, and cheese, which he done. I said, "Well, it's either go bigger or forget about it". So I went to work for the Town, and I worked there 'til I retired. I worked for the Township of Bertie, and then when it went into Fort Erie, well, I worked for Fort Erie.

**R.H:** What kind of work did you do for the Town?

**G.M:** I drove machines, all the trucks. I ploughed the snow, and run the grader, and ran the sweeper. The last day I worked I ran the sweeper.

**R.H:** You've heard of the '77 snowstorm, do think there were any storms that were worse than that?

**G.M:** I don't think for snow piled, I don't think there was anytime that it was much worse than that, but for snow on the level, yes. Last winter there was more snow on the level, but we didn't get the wind to pile it up.

**R.H:** You mentioned that you had walked on the Niagara River when it was covered with ice, tell me about that?

**G.M:** It was quite an experience. It must have been awful cold that winter. I kind of forget what the temperature was, but anyways the ice from Beaver Island up in there towards Thompson Road, kept building up there. It was between the east and west river, I always call it, that goes down through there. Anyways, this ice kept building up, and building up, and of course nobody was paying any attention to it. Well, dad and I was out to the bush, that's the back of the school bush, we cut wood back there. That was my dad's uncle's, and when we came in at noon, Uncle Bill came up, and he says to dad, "What do you think of that?", and dad says, "What?". "Well", he says, "What do you think of that out there?". He never noticed. He says, "Why, Niagara river is stopped, you never saw that before". My uncle says, "Are you going across?". "No", dad says, "I'm not crazy enough". My uncle says, "Well, I guess I'm crazy, I've just been over and back". Dad says, "Well, I can understand that". They were brothers you know, and dad was the oldest boy, and Bill was the youngest one. So Uncle Bill turned again and says "Are you going?". "No", I said. I didn't think it was anything great. So we went down to the townline, and the mailman was there. Oh, there was different ones had saw this, so Vere Beam, he said, "Come on, let's go", so he and I went

over and... so we went over, and when that cake of ice to lodge it...the ice on the shore, on both shores must have piled up... well, I'm not sure, but I would say 7' or something to hold that thing in there. This was the danger, because like my uncle, he says "The water, you could just see it go down on the north side, and, you see then, building up on the south side would lift that thing and throw it out of there". Well, when we got over there, by this time, the Border Patrol had come down, I don't know whether from Buffalo or... that I couldn't say. They were stationed on Grand Island, but of course as soon as you come to the original ice why-that was the American side, and then they chased us back. That cake of ice stayed in there, it went in before noon, I couldn't exactly say what time.

**R.H:** How old were you at that time?

**G.M:** I would say that was around '33, '34, but I don't know exactly. That cake of ice went out during the night. Dad and Uncle used to say "That the odd time before abutments was in for some of the bridge, a big chunk of ice from maybe out of the lake would go down, but never from the river". You see, now it would all get broke up with the abutments and all this, and it wouldn't get through. This formed in the river, and of course at the marsh there, that is narrower, that jammed it, and held it. That was a solid piece of ice. Niagara River, usually you'd never go over from the ice freezing in the Niagara River, 'cause normally it never will.

**R.H:** Did you ever hear any stories about the rum smuggling during Prohibition? You mentioned something about a shooting or something, did you hear something about that?

**G.M:** Yeah, we used to... as I say, going back and forth to school there.., they were awful good to us. They patrolled that Boulevard...

**R.H:** Who did?

**G.M:** I don't know who they were, I supposed they'd be like Mounties, but we used to call them the Border Patrol.

**R.H:** You called them the Border Patrol, but they were Mounties?

**G.M:** I don't know whether they were Mounties or what branch they'd be...

**R.H:** So when you were going to school, you'd see them patrolling along the Boulevard, did you?

**G.M:** Oh yeah, and they knew we had so far to walk, and they used to

be good to us, give us a ride back and forth to school.

**R.H:** Were they on horseback?

**G.M:** No, touring cars. Yeah, they had touring cars. One time my dad was coming out of the Shipyards, he was coming out at the back. There was the gate back there and the time office, and just as he came to Miller's Creek at the end... that was of course, the Boulevard coming around that way. It didn't go through the Shipyards. Well, it was in the Fall, it was raining, and he saw a man laying by the fence. He didn't pay any attention, well, he paid attention, but the longer he thought about it, he decided it wasn't right, so he took the car and went back and he got there, and he saw that this fellow was in trouble. He had blood on him, but anyways, the fellow wanted to go to Buffalo, and dad says "Well, take him to Buffalo, take him up to the ferry". They put him on the ferry and several days after, they had found the boat. He was, I suppose, smuggling his load one way, or the other, and I think taking it from Canada to the States, and when he got over they told him to "Come ashore", and he took off, and they fired at him, and hit him. He had managed to get the boat back to the Canadian side, because they found the boat and you could tell that somebody had been lugging the boat. Anyway, he got out and walked and crawled, and that's as far as he got. It must have been pretty near two miles down the Boulevard where the boat was, the shore where they found his boat. After he got over to Buffalo, they examined him, and removed the bullet from some place, but he didn't make it.

**R.H:** They had to take him to Buffalo, didn't they? They didn't have any hospital here at that time, right?

**G.M:** No, not really. In them days, it was funny, you could have a different boat every day if you wanted one.

**R.H:** Is that right, is that because they were just abandoned?

**G.M:** Yeah, you see they'd load them up over here on this shore, and when the wind was right, they'd give them a push and they'd catch them over on the other side, nobody in them, they couldn't do nothing. Well, maybe they'd get the boats back. We used to take them and put a chain and a lock on them, and heck, they'd just saw them chains off and take them away. They didn't belong to us anyway so...

**R.H:** Did you ever go on the ferryboats?

**G.M:** Oh yeah, to Buffalo? Oh yeah. They used to have the Jamaica, the Newtown, and that was one of the bigger ones, and the New Orleans was the other one. You've heard those names, have you? Then you know I'm not stringing you.

**R.H:** I've heard that they took the cars across of course, right?

**G.M:** Yeah.

**R.H:** What did you pay to get on the ferryboats?

**G.M:** Oh, I wouldn't have a clue.

**R.H:** What about movie theatres, did you go to any movie theatres when you were a kid?

**G.M:** Oh, the Bellard on Dufferin Street, in Fort Erie.

**R.H:** Was there one in Ridgeway? Do you know anything about that?

**G.M:** No, I don't know. No, I'm sure there wasn't.

**R.H:** Do you know anything about the South End, the business's for instance?

**G.M:** Not really. The South End never seemed to change very much.

**R.H:** So I guess your family did most of their shopping in Stevensville?

**G.M:** No, it was in Fort Erie. You see, on the Boulevard we had good roads, and the Boulevard was the travelled road, that was. My cousin who is living in the States, he'll be eighty now, this Fall, and he was telling about when they were stoning the Boulevard. The best road to go down to Fort Erie was the Boulevard. There was only a wood bridge at Frenchman's Creek, so they went down the Bowen Road, and out Thompson Road. They stoned both ways from there, to gather the stone, because of the wooden bridge. It was a mud road through Thompson Road.

**R.H:** Wasn't Jarvis Street a mud road too then?

**G.M:** Oh yeah, but I don't remember that of course. My dad's two sisters lived on Jarvis Street. My dad's older sister was married to George Briggs, you know the Briggs Building.

**R.H:** Yeah, and didn't they have a store, a hardware store, or a paint and wallpaper store?

**G.M:** Yeah, and they had the Imperial Gas pump on Jarvis Street. It was right in front of the store. I never forgot it. They all went away, they very seldom all went away, but I don't know, there was something special on. My aunt that was there, they used to think she was Briggs' wife, but she wasn't, 'cause Mrs. Briggs would be looking after the three boys. They had three boys, so my aunt would be more down

at the store. She would go out there and pump the gas pump.

**R.H:** Oh, this gas pump was right in front of the store?

**G.M:** Yeah, right on Jarvis Street.

**R.H:** And what was it called again?

**G.M:** Imperial. Imperial Gas on Jarvis Street. It was right in front of Briggs store, the old store. They all went away one Sunday and my dad was looking after the gas pumps for her. There was a car this way to the pumps, and one had backed up. They got the one car filled, and as they went to leave Jarvis Street, there was quite a hill there then, but anyways, the guy banged the back of the other old car there. My dad just jumped out of the way. He was just going to help them on a Sunday, and he came so close to getting in a mess. They were gas tanks, Imperial, and they were the hand pump were you pump, and the glass showed up in the old fashioned pump.

**R.H:** Who was it that owned that?

**G.M:** Dad's two sisters. George Briggs's...

**R.H:** George Briggs was your uncle, and he owned that business. Have you any idea who started the telephone in Fort Erie?

**G.M:** Well, the wife's grandfather had a lot to do with it, Sid Tripp. Of course I never knew them but...

**R.H:** You said you worked at Fleet, what did you do there? Was it during the War or just before the War you worked at Fleet?

**G.M:** Yeah, it was when they had those Fairey Battles down there, and we were fixing them up for trainer planes.

**R.H:** What is Fairey Battles, is that a type of plane?

**G.M:** Yeah, wasn't that an English plane? They had those big boxes that they used to bring in with the fuselages in the lower ones, they were about 8' high. The wings in the other one were maybe about 12' high. We used to unload them down there on the siding behind the Grand Trunk Hotel, out in there.

**R.H:** Is that the job you did there?

**G.M:** Yeah, we used to pile snow on the runway, keep the runway open, and then **they done a lot of moving stuff** to London, some place in London.

**R.H:** Are you talking about London, Ontario?

**G.M:** Yeah, we used to go up there to London and take stuff up there.

We'd come back the same day. We'd take a load and load it one day down at the Fleet. We'd start out at maybe 7 o'clock in the morning and get back home at 7 or 8 o'clock at night. You'd have to unload, and then come back home from it.

**R.H:** They hired a lot of people, didn't they? especially during that time, right?

**G.M:** Oh yeah.

**R.H:** Was it good money?

**G.M:** It was. Of course it's nothing like now.

**R.H:** Of course at that time it was good money, wasn't it?

**G.M:** Oh yeah, and a dollar went a long way. You got pretty near 99 cents for it.

**R.H:** Were the working conditions good there?

**G.M:** Yeah, they really were...

**R.H:** How long did you work there?

**G.M:** I think only about four years, or something like that.

**R.H:** Were times bad here during the War? Did you find it hard with the rations and things like that?

**G.M:** No, not really.

**R.H:** But a lot of things were rationed, weren't they?

**G.M:** I don't know, I don't think there was ever anything scarce. You got tickets, and the thing was... like Mrs. Moon who had the store in Stevensville at one time. She said, "You know, if you've got something you can't get rid of, all you do is put a sign on the item, one to a customer, and they will all want two or three". I believe that's right.

**R.H:** [Did they have women working at Fleet during the War?]

**G.M:** Didn't they have girls come down here from the west?

**R.H:** From out west?

**G.M:** Wasn't it western girls that came down here?

**R.H:** Didn't they stay at some hostel I believe, in Fort Erie, didn't they?

**G.M:** Yeah, it was there on the east side of Central Avenue. It was over by the church. It was like a sort of boarding house.

**R.H:** Did you find the women good workers?

**G.M:** Well, I think they were. Yeah, I'm pretty sure. I know one especially who came down here to work, Charles Spear's wife came down and worked at Fleet.

**R.H:** They did about everything too, didn't they?

**G.M:** Oh, I think so, yeah. There was a bus service... Was it Jackson that had the bus service in Fort Erie? It was during the war for the Fleet.

**R.H:** Was there a bus service run by Jackson during the war?

**G.M:** Yeah, I know one in particular, it was like a tractor trailer, something like these horse trailers.

**R.H:** You mean the bus was?

**G.M:** Yeah, and they'd load the thing at the back, the trailer... It was like a tractor trailer, one of these trucks, and that's what they took the passengers on, Fleet did.

**R.H:** So that's how they picked up all the people?

**G.M:** Yeah. Well, that's how you saved your gas. They could get gas for war workers and that.

**R.H:** Of course gas was rationed?

**G.M:** Yeah, and it was still economical to where they were going. If transportation is convenient, why, mass numbers will use it.

**R.H:** But that was Jackson's own business, wasn't it? It had nothing to do with Fleet, did it?

**G.M:** Yeah, I don't know if there was somebody that would take tickets or money in the back trailer, or how they managed that. Now they say that's new in Niagara Falls, people mover, but that's old...

**R.H:** Did Jackson just have the one bus?

**G.M:** I'm not too sure of that. You know you don't need too many when everybody is going at the same time. If some were going at 1 o'clock, 2 o'clock, 3 o'clock and all this, then you got to have more to catch all of that.

**R.H:** So there was only one shift, didn't they have shifts at Fleet?

**G.M:** Yeah, but like I say, they were all going in, and they were all going out at the same time. It works out.

**R.H:** Do you know if Bertie Township ever had its own newspaper?

**G.M:** Not that I recall.

**R.H:** What about the Town Hall, was that in Ridgeway?

**G.M:** Yeah.

**R.H:** Who was the mayor when you were growing up?

**G.M:** Reeve. Deputy reeve, and three councilmen it used to be. Of course the last one in Bertie was Bruce Finch. There was a lot of names, Herb Gorham, Alfred Hershey, and... well, there's Fretz,



Chester Fretz, and some of the relatives of my dad's uncle down there. It was two brothers, Ed and John. They say Ed got in on his merits, and John got in through being his brother. John only lasted a year.

**R.H:** Did you ever hear of a sports competition between Ridgeway and Stevensville that was held on May 24th, Queen Victoria day?

**G.M:** What? Was it baseball?

**R.H:** I don't know, I just got some information on that and I wanted to find out more about it. Do you know anything about it?

**G.M:** There used to be a rivalry going on with softball, Ridgeway and Stevensville, but I wouldn't know if there was always a set date or...

**R.H:** Do you know anything about the fire at the planing mill?

**G.M:** I don't know too much about that, but I'll tell you... One time back on the Townline, the Townline was a mud road from New Germany to Black Creek Road, and then it was stoned over to the Switch Road and out to the Boulevard. I was back at my aunt's and the mailman came along there and had come in to the Switch Road, I don't know whether that was the first telephone, but anyways, the house on the Boulevard, where... it was Martin Wales house at the time. It was a big place, and it was on fire, and they wanted to call the Fire Department. Stevensville had a homemade fire truck. Edgar Heximer had made that fire truck. They had volunteers, whoever could get on the truck, They went down the Sodom Road to Baker Road and up the Boulevard, threw the hose in the river, and put that fire out, and they're living in that house today. The house never burnt down.

**R.H:** It never burnt down...?

**G.M:** It never burned down. People with pails and everything were throwing water...

**R.H:** Was this the bucket brigade throwing water before the hose got there?

**G.M:** They took the homemade fire truck and they couldn't even... on account of the mud road. They went to the Baker Road, down to Sodom, out on the Boulevard and up the Boulevard and put the fire out. It started in the chimney, it burnt some, but the house never burned down, he stayed in the house. They had lots of water. They

put the hose in Niagara River and pumped it from the homemade truck.

**R.H:** When did they finally get decent equipment, do you know?

**G.M:** Well, it kept sort of getting better of course, after the Ridgeway fire.

**R.H:** Is that the fire where all of the downtown area of Ridgeway was burned down?

**G.M:** Yeah. They kept getting better improvements, and all the rest of it.

**R.H:** I don't suppose these guys had uniforms then?

**G.M:** Oh no.

**R.H:** They just went as they were dressed at that time?

**G.M:** Yeah, well, I don't know... I haven't got a clue where they kept their firetrucks even. I guess they didn't have too many, but... where they kept them, I don't know. That homemade truck that Heximer made, whether they kept it in the Stevensville Garage or somebody's barn...

**R.H:** How did they get these guys, did they go and pick them up as they drove along? I'm talking about the volunteers.

**G.M:** Oh, I suppose. Maybe when they were going by, I don't know how they got them.

**R.H:** I imagine not too many of them had telephones at that time, did they?

**G.M:** Well, I doubt it very much. I don't know about the sirens, whether the bell... I don't know, but when you think of it, how far they went and they saved the house. Look at all the equipment they got today and they can't save anything but the lot.

**R.H:** Ridgeway was burned to the ground, was it?

**G.M:** Oh no, just on the main street, mostly on the west side. I think there was about four businesses or so.

**R.H:** They didn't have good equipment then to put the fire out?

**G.M:** Well, no water. You see they used the water there for the trains. They run the trains, you know, with the tank on the engine, steamers. They had a big water supply for their steam engine. The tender, they'd put water in them and pull them into Ridgeway.

**R.H:** Is that what they used to put the fire out? Was it the water from the train?

**G.M:** Yeah. I'm not too sure if they went from Fort Erie and Port Colborne both, but I think they had two engines, and I don't think they would have come from the same place. I think one of them come east and west.

**R.H:** Did you go to Crystal Beach when you were an adult?

**G.M:** Oh yeah.

**R.H:** Did you go to the Crystal Beach Ballroom?

**G.M:** Well, more roller skating than anything.

**R.H:** Where was the roller skating, was that right in the Beach?

**G.M:** Yeah, they had the roller skating at the Beach.

**R.H:** That wasn't at the Dance Hall was it?

**G.M:** Yeah, they would do both there. Yeah, they'd roller skate on certain nights I guess and dance... They had good orchestras and good bands.

**R.H:** Do you know who any of the bands were?

**G.M:** Oh, I forget.

**R.H:** So the roller rink, was that the same floor that you danced on?

**G.M:** Yeah.

**R.H:** I wonder how they worked that, wouldn't it get damaged?

**G.M:** No, I don't think so.

**R.H:** And it was nice there, did they play music when you roller skated?

**G.M:** Yeah, oh yeah.

**R.H:** Was there live bands for that?

**G.M:** Oh no.

**R.H:** Well, what did they use for music? You know how they've got tapes and all this stuff...

**G.M:** Gee, I guess I'm not too sure. Gosh, I forget, but it was always better when it was in the park then when the roller rink got outside. It was a lot better inside than outside.

**R.H:** Do you know how much you paid to get in?

**G.M:** I wouldn't have a clue. It wasn't very much I imagine. Oh, it might have been a dollar, I don't know.

**R.H:** Did you rent the skates too then?

**G.M:** Yeah.

**R.H:** Do you remember anything else about Crystal Beach?

**G.M:** No, not really.

**R.H:** Do you know anything about the Bertie Fair?

**G.M:** The Bertie Fair? Yeah, that was at the Racetrack.

**R.H:** And that was all competitions or something, wasn't it?

**G.M:** Oh yeah, they used to have the trotting races. My uncle had horses that they used to trot.

**R.H:** Was that the horses with the buggies at the back?

**G.M:** Yeah, a sulky. Yeah, a sulky.

**R.H:** They used to have the sulkys at the Bertie Fair?

**G.M:** Yeah.

**R.H:** And it was all prize-winning competitions there?

**G.M:** Yeah, it was an agricultural fair. Yeah, it was mostly agriculture. There was drawing matches with the horses.

**R.H:** Do you know anything about the Racetrack?

**G.M:** No, not too much.

**R.H:** When did the Bertie Fair disappear, do you know?

**G.M:** Gosh, that would have been in the '30s, I think. I don't think it was there... would it ever have got to the '40s? Gee, that I wouldn't say.

**R.H:** You know Niagara Christian College, did you ever hear about that being a gambling casino?

**G.M:** Yeah, my dad was working there.

**R.H:** Was he building it?

**G.M:** No, when they raided it.

**R.H:** What did he do?

**G.M:** He was firing the boiler there.

**R.H:** He was what?

**G.M:** That was another job he had.

**R.H:** What was he doing there?

**G.M:** Firing the boiler, looking after the boiler. I helped put the waterline out there after the ice had taken up... when it sat there so long. This gang hired a bunch of us and we put the waterline out there. I remember when they dug the basement for it. Orrie Storm dug that basement.

**R.H:** What's his name?

**G.M:** Orrie Storm, Mike Storm's father. He had a little bit of a shovel, and the trucks, I think they were international, but hand cranks were the devil... That was about 1929.

**R.H:** What did your dad tell you about the raid, what happened when they raided the place? I guess the police were there, were they?

**G.M:** Oh yeah. You see, they got it all fixed up and started it, and... Well, how my dad got there mostly was when it sat there by itself... well, he sort of, well, his uncle was up there in years, and dad always kept the key as he was the watchman there. So when they built the parking lot and all the rest of it, why-he started working there. Anyways, they opened up and if they had...Montana was in the taxi business and the bus business with Van Dyke over there, and if they had smartened up and taken a lot of those people in the busses, loaded the busses and come over here... Anyways, they opened this thing up and the cars would come across the Peace Bridge one right after another, and they thought, "What's going on here" so the cops followed them. They went down on the parking lot, and they walked in there, and here they had this big billboard up there, and dad was down in the basement at the pumps. They had a guy on the ladder going across. I never forgot him, he was one of the guys that was working, Alf Carrick and his son, and this Bud Willson. His dad was, I think, quite a gambler, C.I. Willson was his dad. Anyways, this young Bud, he was on this ladder, on this...when they raided the place. The police walked in, somebody took off, and dad was coming up the stairs out of the basement, and a bunch of them was going down. He didn't have nothing to do with it, but he walked right up there amongst them, where they were grabbing everybody. But like I day, if they had taken busses or something, nobody would think anything of a bus load of people going, but all those cars. Oh, the cars just came down...

**R.H:** It was mostly gambling in there, right?

**G.M:** Oh yeah.

**R.H:** Were they raided because of the booze or the gambling?

**G.M:** Because of the gambling.

**R.H:** So that was illegal here in Canada at that time?

**G.M:** Yeah, evidently. Yeah, bookies, they'd book them for... They had quite a setup I guess, I don't know.

**R.H:** Did your dad ever tell you who owned the place, was it the syndicate?

**G.M:** Well, you see, they went around and sold shares in it. An awful lot of people got hooked for it. Anyways, they had all this money. That place was supposed to be three times as big as it was. There was a false end in the north side. You can ask the people at the

church, but that was only a temporary thing. There was one window and maybe a door where the fire escape was when they finished it there. It was supposed to go one more section to the north and one to the west. Everybody put all this money into it and they said, "Where's our money, you got our money", so after they put the pressure to them they thought, well, we'd better show, we'd better have something to show where their money went. So, they built that. Their money was spent, and I don't know where it went, but they were broke and it folded up. Well, my uncle and his sister, they owned it. It came back to them. They foreclosed the mortgage on it and owned it.

**R.H:** Your uncle?

**G.M:** Yeah. Dad's uncle, Charlie, C.A. Miller.

**R.H:** He owned the place?

**G.M:** Yeah, he foreclosed on it and got it back.

**R.H:** Then of course they sold it to the school, right?

**G.M:** Niagara Christian College. Yeah, this Van Dyke or... I forget who... I remember one time we were in the parlour there, all us kids got in the parlour, and this Pettit and Darby, the lawyers in Fort Erie down there, they were handling the business end of it for Uncle Charlie, and anyways, they had this gang making this offer and they opened up the suitcase. I never saw so much money. He said, "Charlie, you'd better take it". Uncle Charlie, he always had to clear his throat, he said, "I guess I'd better see my lawyer". Boy, I'd grabbed it.

**R.H:** That was quite a big thing, that casino. What did they do with the people when they raided it?

**G.M:** I don't know, I think they just kind of... I don't know about Willson, the guy that was posting whatever the price was paying...

**R.H:** Is that what he was doing up on the ladder?

**G.M:** On this here board.

**R.H:** Yeah, with the horse betting?

**G.M:** Yeah. He was probably at the wickets. I think there was so many that they just ducked out and got away.

**R.H:** They just closed it down then?

**G.M:** I don't think it was open a week. They had spent some money on it, they really had. They stoned that parking lot and fixed the waterlines.

up, and it sat there quite a little while.

**R.H:** It's a beautiful spot, isn't it?

**G.M:** Yeah, boy, that was a nice building. That main road in there... that ceiling was beautiful.

**R.H:** Did you ever hear anything about the stadium fire in Crystal Beach?

**G.M:** No, not really.

**R.H:** Did you hear anything about the riot?

**G.M:** No, no. Well, you kind of wonder, and you stop and think, and time goes by. A lot of things, when they're happening, you pay no attention to them. Now, you take down in Fort Erie, different times I think... I'm driving around and not much to do... I'd just like to drive the old milk route. You come where you say... gosh, I used to go in there and back around and go, and here this street goes on through now. One time with horses on the milk route, we went down into Crook Street and at the north end of Crook Street, the snow was pretty near up to the necks of the horses. There was snow down in the corner from Bowen Road, coming down from the golf course, and it even drifted higher. So, Bruce Miller, he was delivering, him and I, and he took the carrier and I says, "We'll never get through here, that snow is deeper there than that it is here". Of course there was no houses. There was one big house, I think it was Ogilvies, and then there was quite a vacant lot, and I said, "I wonder if I can go on the far side of the house, instead of going by the road". He says, "I'll go on and take the milk in the house", he says, "Yeah, come on through here". So, I was standing up on the sleigh, and coming through there and pretty soon the horses went out of sight. Mr. Ogilvie hollered out "If I had a known you were going through there, I'd a told you there was a cellar hole in there". You know, during the Depression, people would let their land go for taxes, and maybe move the house off the land, sell it, somebody wanted it, but they didn't want it there, so they would move it. Well, that's what happened to this house. I thought, holy man!

**R.H:** So how did you get out of that?

**G.M:** I walked out on the tongue and unhooked the traces, took the horses apart, and I thought, gosh, if some of these guys like Alvin Wale, or Frank Benner were here and had some horses, we could... No towtruck, no nothing. While you are standing thinking, I guess the

horses kind of got their wind and they started to jump, and they jumped on up. We took them around, hooked them together, and I think it was Mr. Ogilvie that gave us a piece of rope, and we hooked it on the the end of the sleigh and went out of there. A few minutes before that, we didn't know what we were going to do.

**R.H:** So you just drove this in the winter, this sleigh?

**G.M:** Yeah.

**R.H:** Is that because it was better than using the truck in the winter?

**G.M:** You couldn't get the truck, the roads was just plugged.

**R.H:** So you had to used the sleigh with the horses? What kind of horses were they?

**G.M:** Plow horses.

**R.H:** Just the big plow horses?

**G.M:** Yeah, and you know, they'd get so used to it... I'd take the route were there wasn't as many to peddle. Bruce would take the milk carrier, he would take about eight quarts in a carrier. He'd take one side and I would go along on the lighter side with the horses. Anyways, Bruce got kind of behind so I started on and do you know, those horses started to follow me. They used to be in there following me. It doesn't take very long and they get used to it. Somebody needed some coal, and Curtis' went down with their team, and we all met at Turner's store, that's at the corner of Phipps and... there's an apartment building there now. I forget the name of the street that goes across there. Anyways. we all kind of congregated there, and what milk we had, we'd leave at the store. We'd put it in there, it may as well be in there as out there in the country. It was storming like anything. So, Curtis' horses wasn't used to the road, so he said, "We'll pile the milk crates up and we'll get behind the milk crates, and we'll leave your team behind and you get right in there with us". That's what we done. We just started our team up the road, no problem. When we got to the lower road why-Curtis went in his sleigh, and we watched for him to go off. After he got off, nothing, when we stopped, the horses were home in the yard. They had stopped at the barn.

**R.H:** Did your family have a refrigerator when you were a kid?

**G.M:** No, it was an icebox.

**R.H:** Did you have an iceman to deliver the ice?



**G.M:** Yeah.

**R.H:** Do you know his name?

**G.M:** Oh, there was several of them. It was mostly Vasey ice, yeah, he got it from the Fort Erie Arena.

**R.H:** He got the ice from the arena?

**G.M:** I think so. Yeah, I'm pretty sure he got it from the arena. You see the arena went down in... '37 was it? Didn't the arena...?

**R.H:** Collapse?

**G.M:** Yeah, wasn't it from the snow? Herb Gorham was another one who delivered ice. Frank LeJeune, I think Frank LeJeune delivered ice.

**R.H:** Did they get it from the river as well?

**G.M:** Yeah. Well, where Uncle Bill was, they had an ice house there. I worked for the Llenroc Farm down on Black Creek there.

**R.H:** What farm was that?

**G.M:** The Llenroc Farm. Do you know where A.C. Douglas lived? That was the Llenroc Farm.

**R.H:** Who is A.C. Douglas?

**G.M:** He used to be reeve of Willoughby.

**R.H:** Was he any relation to Dr. Douglas?

**G.M:** I don't think so. He run for parliament one time or something.

**R.H:** He was a politician?

**G.M:** Yeah, Jean Douglas, you've heard of Jean Douglas, that's his wife. He's passed away since. He was in the Dominican Republic. That's what Douglastown was named after, he started it. That was his farm.

**R.H:** The Llenroc Farm was his farm.

**G.M:** Yeah. You see them was the Houck Brothers. Bill, Chris, and Jack Houck. Bill was a member of Provincial Parliament. He lived back on Black Creek Road. The Gores lived in the house after Houck, and where Jim Sauer is with the trailer camp, that was Chris', and where Douglas is, that's Jack's. Those three boys went to Cornell College and I guess... Houcks had lots of money.

**R.H:** Is that the Sauer that was the town clerk?

**G.M:** Yeah. He's down on the Boulevard but that was Chris Houck's house. Anyway, Mr. Houck sent these boys up farming down there. Of course they weren't very good farmers, but that's where the farm

got its name, Cornell spelled backwards is Llenroc.

**R.H:** What about your house, did you have electricity when you were a kid?

**G.M:** I remember when they put it in, when they came down the Boulevard. I remember when the house was wired.

**R.H:** You don't remember what it was like before that?

**G.M:** Not too much.

**R.H:** You must of had gas, did you?

**G.M:** No, there wasn't any gas down the Boulevard. We had coal oil, yeah, coal oil lamps.

**R.H:** Did you have a telephone?

**G.M:** Yeah. I don't know when the telephone went along the Boulevard either but yeah, we had a telephone.

**R.H:** It was the crank, and you had to get the operator?

**G.M:** Yeah. I wouldn't be surprised you know, with dad working at the Shipyards and that, I wouldn't be surprised maybe if that was the reason we got the telephone. Well, out in the country with the kids, you know there were six of us, and I suppose... Well, did anyone tell you about the boat that burned in the Shipyards?

**R.H:** No, which boat was that?

**G.M:** The M.T. Green.

**R.H:** No, nobody told me about that. You can tell me about it though, will you?

**G.M:** Nobody told you about that? Well, you know the Boulevard lies right over where the stern end of that boat was.

**R.H:** The Niagara Boulevard you're talking about?

**G.M:** Yeah, that was in that, where the Marina is at the Shipyards. This guy from over the river, Stanley Jenkins, he used to have the Polly Anne up there by Thompson's. That's were he went after the M.T. Green burned. It was this big freighter, I guess it was condemned for out on the lake, and they brought it down, and they put it there in the Shipyards. The hatch covers, of course they were raised up, so anyways, they took that and made it level. They made a dance floor on there, on the old ship. Oh, they had parties in there...

**R.H:** Have you any idea when that was?

**G.M:** Well, I know, I've been on it lots of times. Dad watched on that. He watched the Shipyards and the M.T. Green. My uncle who lived

in the farmhouse where my dad was born, his mother was there, grandma was living then, and he went with Lureen Weaver. He married her, and their house was moved out on Sunset Drive. Lou Detenbeck lived in it. That's the house that Aunt Lureen lived in. Well, my uncle went to see her with the horse and cutter, and it would have been about five miles from our place. We went two and half miles to Black Creek School and we were still two and half miles up the Boulevard to Black Creek School, so it would have been five miles. He was down there, and I think it was Sunday night, anyways, he started home, I suppose 11:30 or something, and he saw a fire. He says, "Boy, that's got to be close to home". His mother was home, she was an old woman in her eighties, and he just took that horse and when he got that he could see it was at the Shipyards. the boat on fire... Dad was the night watch man there, and so anyways, dad wasn't on the boat. Of course my Uncle Russ thought because he wasn't home, my dad was on the boat. It was windy, it was nasty, and us kids were small and my mother says, "Gosh, that old boat will stay there by itself, do you have to go up there tonight?" So dad says, "I'll go up and I'll look around, and I'll come back". He went up and looked around and came back. Well, what they figured had started the boat fire, you know rats and everything from them old grain boats... They were going to paint that boat all in the Spring. There was a lot of paint stored down in the there, and whether the rats chewed... that was a real fire. Oh man! Fort Erie, and Bertie Township had an awful lot of problems with the Fire Department. They called Fire Departments from all over, but they didn't have a chance. Anyways, they went down, and there was two roadways going in to the Shipyards, and Fort Erie figured... They went in there and they smashed their firetruck and... The back-end of the boat burned, and sunk and the cabin was up closer, because it started at the back. That's where all the paint and the engine room was, naturally, at the back there. I think it was the next day... We had the rolltop desk that was in the captains quarters. This old fellow says, "If there is anything on there you can salvage, go and get it". I remember that was the desk of the M.T. Green. Oh, they had parties there. I remember the sports announcer on the radio, Graham McNamee, did you ever hear of Graham McNamee? He was there

at these parties.

**R.H:** How long did they have this going on?

**G.M:** How long was that boat in there? Oh gosh, I don't know, several years.

**R.H:** Have you any idea when it burned down?

**G.M:** It was the early '30s.

**R.H:** The early '30s it burned down?

**G.M:** Yeah, the early '30s. Well, the boiler and that, you know... I don't know, but it runs in my mind that it was the LeJeune brothers there that cut the boiler down even and they filled the front end of the... That's when the Boulevard went through.

**R.H:** So that was kind of a pleasure boat then? I believe the Canadiana and the Americana were the same, right?

**G.M:** Yeah, but this was a lake freighter you see that they condemned from the lake and they just bought it. It floated there and it was tied to the dock and used for parties, especially when the weather was nice and they could be out on that whole deck. They had those hatch covers all made up and they could dance and... I suppose a lot of the politicians had a good time there. You see, the road still went back around behind there. Nobody could come down the long driveway and get in there. It was private in there and it was quite a little ways to the front there from the Boulevard. Oh yeah, it was pretty private.

**R.H:** You mentioned the Colonial Club, what was that?

**G.M:** The Cotton girl that lives there has the camp or cabins...

**R.H:** Was this on the Boulevard?

**G.M:** That was the Colonial Club. It was the Speakman house, a big house. It burned and they had quite a big fire there. I remember the house and if I said "There was ten houses from Cozy Dell to the Shipyards", that would be one that I would name, the Speakman house. When there seemed to be a rash of those fires around... You see, the Orchard Inn up here at the Ridge on the side of No. 3, on the east side of Ridge Road going through there...

**R.H:** The Orchard Inn was in there?

**G.M:** Yeah. It was down the Garrison on the left hand side. They've kind of built in there... There was another one of these houses, and there seemed to be a rash of them that burned. It was all within a couple of years of one another. The Speakman house, the Orchard

Inn, and... I forget, I don't know the name of that one but it was between... west of Ridgemount Road. On the west side there, there is a brick house in there where this... and some old cabins just about falling down. You'll probably see the place there.

**R.H:** So this Colonial Club was once the Speakman house, what kind of club was it?

**G.M:** That I couldn't say, I really don't know. It was the Speakman house before it was the clubhouse. I don't know whether it was Americans, dinner parties, this kind of thing or what, I couldn't say.

**R.H:** Do you know anything about the Buffalo Canoe Club?

**G.M:** No, not really. This Speakman, he was Mayor of Fort Erie at one time. You've likely heard of him, Henry Speakman? I don't know if any of the family is around Fort Erie anymore or not.

**R.H:** So he was the mayor too then?

**G.M:** Yeah, he was the mayor.

**R.H:** The Orchard Inn, what kind of place was that? Do you know anything about that?

**G.M:** No, not really. I know they danced in the dining room at the Orchard Inn.

**R.H:** Do you know anything about the halfway houses?

**G.M:** I hear them talk, but I don't know much about them. There was two or three of them, wasn't there?

**R.H:** Yeah.

**G.M:** Well, you know the one down on the Bowen Road... Ridgemount Road, Bill Willick had the halfway house there.

**R.H:** Bill Willick?

**G.M:** Yeah, 'cause that was halfway between Stevensville and Fort Erie.

**R.H:** Wasn't that like a hotel?

**G.M:** Oh, that was a hotel, yeah. At one time they had the post office in there, Ridgemount.

**R.H:** Was it the Ridgemount Hotel?

**G.M:** Yeah.

**R.H:** And it was also the Ridgemount post office at one time?

**G.M:** Yeah.

**R.H:** Why did they call it the halfway house, was that a nickname?

**G.M:** I think so. They had mostly horses and that's why it was called halfway 'cause it would take pretty near till noon to get there

One is on Nigh Road, out Stonemill Road. It used to be at the corner of Nigh Road and Stonemill Road. That was a halfway house.

**R.H:** Did they stay overnight in these places when they were travelling, with the horse and buggy?

**G.M:** Yeah, I think so. They had stables. They could keep their horses there.

**R.H:** Thankyou for the interview Mr. Miller, I really appreciate it.