

This is Charlotte Nielsen interviewing Miss Everingham at two sixteen High Street, Fort Erie, April twenty-third, nineteen eighty-five.

C.N. Tell me your full name.

A.E. Augusta Louise Everingham.

C.N. When were you born?

A.E. October the twenty-eighth, nineteen hundred.

C.N. Tell me about your family's business.

A.E. When I was very small my family had a grocery store down on Niagara Street.

C.N. Whereabouts on Niagara Street?

A.E. At the corner of Niagara and Forsythe Street. The building is still there but it has been remodelled.

C.N. Could you describe this store?

A.E. Well, I was a very little person and I can't remember too much about it except it was a grocery store and vegetables. And the other half my mother had a millinery shop with all the supplies that you would use in making hats .

C.N. Did your mother make hats?

A.E. Yes. She made hats for different people in town and had the supplies there: material for making hats; some flowers and birds that they used in those days; ribbons.

C.N. What kind of hats did she make?

A.E. Well, most of them were made on a buckram frame as I remember. A buckram frame was sort of a foundation on which to sew the material.

C.N. What is buckram?

A.E. Well it was a stiffened material, almost, I would imagine, some type of cotton. It was stiffened some way. I don't know. But she bought the frame: the buckram hats: the frames. And I guess people chose the style they wanted .

C.N. Do you remember any of her customers?

A.E. No, I just remember ... I don't remember any of her customers. No, I wouldn't at that time. But in later years a lady had shown me a hat that was made for her mother that was tied on her head with a ribbon under her chin as the elderly women wore them in those days.

C.N. And what about your father's business? Do you remember the grocery store?

A.E. Yes. I just vaguely remember the grocery store.

C.N. What kinds of things did your father sell?

A.E. Canned goods and smoked meats and cheeses, crackers and biscuits and I guess bread and buns and things like that that they had in those days.

C.N. Do you remember how much any of these items cost?

A.E. No. I've no idea.

C.N. Were they sold loose or by the package.

A.E. Mostly things were loose. Not very many were packaged in those days.

C.N. Did your father have any kind of delivery service?

A.E. Yes. I think that he had a horse and wagon. And I believe that for people who were out of town away he would drive and get their orders. And then the next day they'd be delivered.

C.N. Who would deliver them?

A.E. I guess he would. Or else maybe somebody ... I don't remember if he had anybody working for him or not.

C.N. Now where was your mother's business?

A.E. The other side of the store.

C.N. Did she help your father with his business?

A.E. Oh I think so. I think so.

C.N. So it was a joint family enterprise.

A.E. Yes, I believe so.

C.N. Now your father had another store later on. How did this come about?

A.E. Well. He sold this store and we moved to Toronto where he worked with my uncle who was in the ... had a bakery. And we lived there I think, for maybe three or four years. I can't remember. And then there was an opening in Fort Erie of a bakery for sale. And so my father ... We moved back, bought the bakery. We moved back to two forty-five, High street where the bakery was on the back of the home. We lived in the house. The shop was in the back.

C.N. What kinds of things did your father sell in the bakery?

A.E. Well, bread, buns, loaves, cakes, and pies, and cookies.

C.N. How much did these things cost?

A.E. Well. I think bread was ten cents a loaf at that time. And I think maybe the buns were probably twelve cents a dozen. And the cakes I can't

remember too much. I think maybe pies were twenty-five or thirty cents. Probably a cake was fifty cents because it had eggs and things in it and icing. That would make it more expensive. The things were baked at two forty-five High Street and then we had a store down on Niagara Street: a confectionery store where the baked goods were sold. There was an ice cream parlor there and candy.

C.N. So he would be baking in one place and selling in another?

A.E. Yes.

C.N. Did he ever deliver anything?

A.E. Oh yes. There were two wagons went out every day to deliver. And I think twice a week ... I think they went up around Erie Beach and Crescent Beach with the wagon load of such. And the people came out to the wagon to buy what they wanted.

C.N. You mentioned Erie Beach. Did he sell to the amusement park or just to residents in the area?

A.E. No. I think he sold rolls to the ... rolls and finger rolls: Parker House they were called in those days, to the different concessions that used them.

C.N. Did you ever go with him when he was delivering things?

A.E. Oh, maybe once or twice but I can't remember very much about that.

C.N. You say he sold to the residents along Crescent Beach. Would he go along the beach or was there a road?

A.E. No. There'd be a road behind the beach.

C.N. Were these people dependent on his service?

A.E. Well, most of them were American people that came over from Buffalo by ferry. And if they didn't bring their food with them they would depend upon buying from my father.

C.N. You say they came over on the ferry. Would they come over without transportation? Would they be on foot?

A.E. Well, some of them might have had horse and buggy in the earlier days. Then I think when cars became more prevalent they came by car.

C.N. Did they bring the horse and buggy on the ferry?

A.E. I think so.

C.N. Did you ever go on this ferry yourself?

A.E. Oh yes, quite often. It was the only way to get across the river: by ferry.

C.N. Could you describe this ferry?

A.E. Well, there several of them. There was ... The first one that I remember was the Hope, I think. And then there was the Newton. I've kind of forgotten some of them.

C.N. What were they like?

A.E. Just a ferry boat that ran back and forth across the river. You went on board. It took about ... probably about ten minutes to cross by the time you got on the ferry and got going. And it went up and then down a bit to the dock on the other side

C.N. Were these large ferry boats?

A.E. Oh yes.

C.N. Would you stand up when you got on? Would there be places to sit?

A.E. Oh yes and an upstairs in them. There'd be an upstairs in them. Sometimes when we were little we'd be allowed to go up in the captain's place.

C.N. What was that like?

A.E. Well it was ... It's where the wheel was, I guess: the steering wheel. My uncle was the captain on one of the boats.

C.N. Do you remember which one?

A.E. On the Hope.

C.N. Do you know very much about his job? Did he work long hours? Was it difficult?

A.E. I don't know. He was a marine engineer and captain. I don't know what to ... I think the boat would run ... I don't know how many hours he would work. But it would leave quite early in the morning because quite a few of the Fort Erie people worked in Buffalo. And they came ... went across and up the ferry hill and by streetcar to wherever they were going to work.

C.N. This ferry hill ... Was that on the American side?

A.E. Yes.

C.N. Were there any lineups to get on the ferry? Was it crowded?

A.E. Well ... There would be lineups after automobiles became prevalent. And during the races ... At the race track in Fort Erie ... There were a lot of people that came by ferry to the race track. There wasn't anyway of getting across the river at that time. And I think returning there would be lineups. And also later in years there would be lineups

along Niagara Street, waiting to get on the ferry. Sometimes in the summer there'd be two ferries running: one going across and one returning to take care of the traffic. And I imagine that's what come out of the idea of building a bridge across the river, hence the present Peace Bridge.

C.N. Now you were telling me that there was a bridge built before the Peace Bridge was built. Could you tell me something about that?

A.E. Well, it was just a skeleton bridge. I can't tell you too much about it. But it was across from the King Edward Hotel to the entrance to the ferry dock. And there were tags ... We had a tag day. And I was one of the taggers and I was very lucky. I happened to approach a car belonging to Daniel Good who was a wealthy American and lived up along Crescent Beach. And he put five dollars in my container and I was quite thrilled with that. Usually I got ten cents or a quarter maybe, if you were lucky. I don't know what they used the money for afterwards. I don't remember anything about that.

C.N. Was this skeleton bridge ever used?

A.E. Oh no. No, no. It wasn't. It was just ... It was just a make believe bridge that was put up for a promotion. I can't remember ...

C.N. Do you remember the opening of the Peace Bridge?

A.E. Yes. The Peace Bridge was opened in August of nineteen twenty-seven. And my brother was on the customs then ... came and said that they were selling seats in front of the speaker's stand and if we'd come right away we'd have a place to sit. So I had a lot of company, of course, for the event. And we were having lunch but we left everything and hurried down the hill and got a front seat. And it was very interesting because The Prince of Wales and his brother, The Duke of Kent, Prince George were there with the Prime Minister Baldwin from England and some of the dignitaries on this side, a Mr. German, I think, who was part instigator on this side of organizing the bridge, and the Reeve, Mr. Douglas. And of course, the soldiers were lined up. And I believe The Prince of Wales inspected the unit. I think, it was from the Lincoln Welland Regiment.

C.N. Who was The Prince of Wales?

A.E. He was the oldest son of The King George and Queen Elizabeth, Queen Mary.

- C.N.** And that would be?
- A.E.** Who was later the Duke of Windsor.
- C.N.** Do you remember what they did at this opening besides inspect the troops? Did they cut a ribbon or anything like that?
- A.E.** Yes, they went across the bridge and met with the U.S. group and cut the ribbon in the middle of the bridge. And then I believe there was another ceremony over there.
- C.N.** How did the first world war affect your family?
- A.E.** Well, I was fourteen, of course, when the war broke out. And I can't remember too much about it excepting that we were rationed. And we had to have coupons for that. Now my father's business ... He had to have a permit to buy sugar and shortening. And the flour, I believe was a low grade flour and it didn't make the best bread. But we all lived through it. In nineteen seventeen my brother joined the expeditionary force and was sent to Siberia to Valadostok. He was stationed in New West Minister in British Columbia. And they were shipped overseas. He said it was a filthy place to be in. But they were there until quite awhile after the war. And he had his twenty-first birthday coming back ... ship. And I was at normal school when he returned to Fort Erie. And so I came home to help in the celebration. The returned men were given gold watches by the town of Fort Erie, with his name on it and the insignia which ... I think, the watch is still useable.
- C.N.** Do you remember the celebration?
- A.E.** No. I can't remember very much about what went on. I just don't remember about that.
- C.N.** How did you feel when the war was over?
- A.E.** A great relief thinking that it was going to be the end of wars. But of course, we found out that it wasn't.
- C.N.** Did the rationing stop as soon as the war ended?
- A.E.** Can't remember too much about that but we were given booklets with stamps in. And you could have just so much butter and so much sugar a month.
- C.N.** Do you remember whether you had enough or were you missing these things.
- A.E.** No. I think we had sufficient. And I think we learned to manage very well. And we've all survived. So I guess ... I guess it wasn't too difficult.

C.N. And after you finished normal school?

A.E. After I finished normal school I accepted a position at the Wintemute Street School. It has since been torn down and the senior elementary school was built. I taught three grades the first year I taught. And then I took a summer course in kindergarten and primary work for two summers. And kindergarten, primary was part kindergarten and part primary work. And in those days the children had to be five by the end of September. So they were ready for quite a bit of primary work. And we taught them their numbers and number facts and very easy addition questions. And we taught them reading, word recognition, phonics, phonograms. And they were ... The better of ... I shouldn't say better. But the more mature ones went on into a senior grade one. And the others were in a junior grade one and needed more extra work.

C.N. When you talk about senior grade one and junior grade one are you talking about what they did the following year?

A.E. Yes.

C.N. Did you feel the children were in any way better prepared for school back then than they are today?

A.E. Yes. Well they were five by the end of the year, by the end of September. And they were much more mature than children who were taken in who won't be five until up in December. It makes quite a difference in their ability to learn.

C.N. So you're saying the children spent more time at home before starting school.

A.E. Yes.

C.N. You speak of going back to get further qualifications. Did you change schools after you got your kindergarten qualifications?

A.E. No. I was at Wintemute Street for about twelve years and then there was an opening in the Douglas School which was next door to where we lived which was much easier for me because my mother had passed away in nineteen twenty-seven.

C.N. What was her name?

A.E. Harriet. And my father ... It was easier for me to get ... to spend more time in the home because I was nearer of course.

C.N. Could you describe Douglas School?

A.E. Douglas School. It's a brick building. There's ten rooms in it. And it sits on the brow of a hill with a terraced front, with steps to get up and down. And some of the children came from the lower part of Fort Erie. A large number came from those who live on top of the hill. Now I guess ... When I came to the kindergarten room in Douglas School I was asked to arrange for a class of thirty for supplies. But on opening day I had forty-seven register. And it was quite a problem trying to find out how to work with forty-seven little children who had never been in a building and disciplined before. I had thirty chairs and seats at the tables for just the thirty. And the seventeen ... I had to figure out what could be done with them. So I had them work at the blackboard with chalk. And I gave seatwork to the ones at the table. And then I would have to change, alternating three different shifts. And after a short time you'd find out the ones who could go faster and divided them in groups one, two and three. But after a week of figuring that out, I tested the older ones and they were moved into a junior grade one. And then the rest of us were settled down to our routines.

C.N. Do you have any idea why the predicted number of children that year was so far out?

A.E. I have no idea. In later years I made the suggestion that children should be brought in the ... in the spring and brought into the classroom to witness what was going on and to see the teacher, get used to coming in a big brick building and then they should be registered at that time. So that gave us an idea in later years to know how many to expect and to arrange for supplies and such. And at first it was turned down by one of the principals in town but then she finally came around to my way of thinking. And since that it has carried on that children are registered in the spring which is much better really. They know who they're going to see when they get there. And they know what's going to happen, what the others enjoy ... watching the other children.

C.N. Now I believe they closed this school: Douglas School.

A.E. Yes. They closed one of the schools a couple of years ago: the Mather School. Douglas School was to be closed in June nineteen eighty-four. And they had an open house. And a great many of the teacher's ... Not a lot of them but quite a few of them that were available returned for the reunion.

C.N. Who were these teacher's?

A.E. Well, I'll try and remember some of them. There was Miss Rose who was Mrs. Smeall and she was from Mississauga. There was Mrs. Frame who was Candice Shisler from Welland. There was Lotta McNeil who was Mrs. Fretz from Port Colborne; and Helen Batt who was Mrs. Logan from Hamilton; Pat Hughes who ... at least Pat Kane who was Mrs. Hughes from up near Burlington area; and Mrs. Hastings from up near Ridgeville who was Miss Van Patter. And there was Miss Sumner who is now Mrs. McDonald from Waterloo; Mrs. Yelenik who was Olga Suderman from St. Catharines.

C.N. Did you ever take your students on school trips?

A.E. Before the second war The Queen Elizabeth and King George were coming to Canada. And it was arranged that the schools in both Fort Erie ... all the schools in Fort Erie would be taken by train to Niagara Falls. It was quite a chore. We got to the falls and paraded down the hill. And it was arranged that we line up in the park area near where the Oneida Silver place is. And we got all these children lined up and waiting patiently for the tour to come by. Then the authorities lined all the soldiers up in front of the children guarding the route so they couldn't see anything. All they could see ... All I could see, and I was an adult, was the top of her beautiful blue hat. And finally The King and Queen came out on a balcony, up quite a few flights at the General Brock and all you could see ... and all the children saw ... by pointing to them, after standing all this time, was her blue hat. It was badly arranged. It seemed as though there were streets where these children could have been lined along the route and had a first hand glance at the beautiful Queen Elizabeth, The Queen Mother. However, coming home on the train they ran out of water. So you could imagine the problems with children. It was a bit of a nightmare. But anyhow ...

C.N. Did you ever take the children anywhere else: smaller trips, perhaps the library?

A.E. No. They didn't have those trips. They didn't arrange trips like that in those days. We probably had a little ... Some of the teachers, I think, took them on picnics up to the old fort but my children were too young. We had usually at the end of the year ... We had a little get together on the lawn and had an ice cream cone which made a good picnic.

- C.N.** Did you ever go to the Erie Beach Amusement Park yourself?
- A.E.** Oh yes, quite often even as a little girl. There was a train. We called it the dummy. Some people called it the Snake Hill Pacific. It ran all along the lakeshore up to Erie Beach. And that was of course, before the Peace Bridge was built and opened. And it would meet the ferry and the people would come across from Buffalo on the ferry and ride the train up to Erie Beach and whatever ... It was quite an amusement park. And there was a beautiful dance pavilion there.
- C.N.** Was this little train used for transportation or for amusement?
- A.E.** It was for transportation to get to the amusement park.
- C.N.** Did you have to pay to go on it?
- A.E.** Oh yes. I can't remember what it cost.
- C.N.** Were there any rides at the park?
- A.E.** Oh yes. It was quite a busy summer resort.
- C.N.** Did you go on any of these rides.
- A.E.** Oh. I imagine I did. I can't remember anything about that.
- C.N.** What did you do there?
- A.E.** Wandered around the park, I guess and bought an ice cream cone which was really something in those days; probably took a ... maybe took a lunch and something to eat. I just don't remember.
- C.N.** Did you ever go to the dance hall?
- A.E.** Yes, as I grew older.
- C.N.** What was that like?
- A.E.** Beautiful place ... just a beautiful place. But when the sandflies were bad which Fort Erie's noted for it was terrible. When the lights were on the sandflies were terrible. The next morning I guess they just swept them up in droves. They only lived twenty-four hours.
- C.N.** So, were these sandflies inside a building or outside?
- A.E.** Oh, wherever there was a light. The pavilion was open you see ... the windows ... So, it was a beautiful dance hall. And they had lighting and a lovely floor. But that building has since been torn down.
- C.N.** Did they feature live bands?
- A.E.** Oh yes.
- C.N.** Do you remember any of these?
- A.E.** No. I can't remember.

C.N. Where else did you go for entertainment besides Erie Beach?

A.E. Well, we went to Buffalo, to the theatre. It was a live theatre and moving pictures theatres there.

C.N. Whereabouts?

A.E. Down on Main Street: the Teck Theatre there. And then there were ... There was a Victoria Movie House up on Ferry Street that you could walk from the ferry up there in those days. And then later the Ziff family opened the Bellard Movie Pictures on Dufferin Street in Fort Erie, Bridgeburg at the time. And we sometimes went down there. And then later on they built the one on Niagara Street opposite the ferry dock called the Parkway. And they had good pictures. We went there quite often.

C.N. What kind of movies would you see at the Ziff's Movie House?

A.E. Well, the up to date movie pictures, I think.

C.N. I'm sorry. I don't know what time period we're talking about.

A.E. I don't know. I can't either. It would be along in the thirties, I think.

C.N. Were you watching silent movies at the Ziff's Theatre or talkies.

A.E. I think, they were talkies. And one of the daughters played the piano. And I think, Mrs. Ziff sold the tickets.

C.N. I thought they just played the piano at the silent movies. Am I mistaken?

A.E. Now I could be wrong. Yes, maybe some of them were silent. I really can't remember. Oh dear!

C.N. You mentioned a second movie house in Fort Erie. Where was that?

A.E. On Niagara Street, opposite the ferry dock.

C.N. What kind of movies did you watch there?

A.E. They showed all the up to date movies as they were available.

C.N. Do you know when this second movie house was opened?

A.E. No. I really can't remember.

C.N. You have a picture here of a rhythm band. This is one of your classes?

A.E. Yes.

C.N. Do you remember about what year this would be?

A.E. I think that was ... Does it say nineteen forty on the back?

C.N. Oh. Nineteen forty, forty-one.

A.E. Yes.

C.N. Could you tell me something about this rhythm band?

A.E. Well, part of a curriculum in later years ... we taught rhythm work to the children. And the music teacher helped me to get started. And we started the rhythm band. And it included a drum and sticks, bells, clappers, triangles and sometimes we used ghords. The dried seeds help make a sound. And we practised sort of once a week. And then at the end of the year when time was dragging for all classes we put on a concert and invited the other classes to come and enjoy it. Now the home and school made capes of blue and yellow material for my class. And I made the little blue hats out of construction paper. And it was very colourful. And we built up sort of a platform with tables and chairs. And maybe took two or three days and invited the different classes in to come in and enjoy them ... the rhythm band.

C.N. The children look as though they took it quite seriously.

A.E. Oh yes. They were all very serious about it. It was alot of work but it was a lot ... It was worth it.

C.N. Was the home and school active in those days?

A.E. Yes, in those days we had a very good home and school association. But then I don't know what happened. It just seemed to die out.

C.N. What kinds of things did home and school do?

A.E. Well, I think they had speakers, very good speakers, come in at every meeting. And they would arrange ... The teachers, that was one of the things that they arranged too ... that you would be in your classroom and parents could come in and interview you and see how their children were doing. And any work or and help that they could do ... Well you would explain what you would like to have them do. And quite often they would have ... I was trying to think ... some kind of special, special events. And I think they had pamphlets and they really co-operated in every way they could.

C.N. What were the community standards like when you were teaching?

A.E. As far as I can say I think they were average.

C.N. Were the standards in Fort Erie affected at all by prohibition or by the war?

A.E. I guess I don't know too much about that.

C.N. As a teacher were you expected to live a certain sort of life. Were you expected for example to go to church regularly.

A.E. I don't think there were any restrictions on things like that. But when I first started out teaching I know that a couple of teachers on our staff were accused of smoking when they were out somewhere and it wasn't the teachers at all. It was somebody else that had kind of reddish hair like hers.

C.N. Are you saying that teachers were not supposed to smoke in public?

A.E. No. Yes that's right. You wouldn't be seen going into a beer parlor.

C.N. What other things were teachers not allowed to do?

A.E. Well, you were sort of looked up to in those days. And you were expected to set a model for your children.

C.N. Was this difficult?

A.E. No. I don't think so because morally, I think, most of us were from good backgrounds and respected the position that we held in town.

C.N. Is there anything else you'd like to talk about?

A.E. I can't think of anything more.