

This is Rose Hearn interviewing A.J. Coulthurst in his home at 50 Princess Street, Fort Erie, Ontario, and the date is July 11, 1985.

R.H: Good Morning Alf.

A.C: Well I'm here, yeah I'm here.

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

A.C: 1900, April 22nd. We're both married 60 years. (Mr. Coulthurst is referring to his wife who is with him at the interview)

R.H: Where were you born?

A.C: Amigari.

R.H: What streets would that be?

A.C: Gilmore Road. 234 now but in them days we didn't have no numbers.

R.H: Do you remember the school you went to when you were a little boy? Do you remember the name of the school?

A.C: Oh I went to Amigari school, and I'll tell you how Amigari got it's name. There was a man named Gari Bowen, and he was an engineer on the Grand Trunk, (that's where I started) and Pete Bowen was his brother. So he was over at Black Rock one day so I was told, and he got off the B&G (that's the Buffalo and Goderich train that used to run from River Street) and he got off at Amigari, and he'd had a few beers, and he met some people there (Amigari was burned down one morning about 4 oclock) anyway Gari got off the the B&G passenger train that run from Buffalo to Goderich, and the first thing he said (well I can't impersonate him) but he said "Am I Gari" (his name was Gari Bowen...Garrick, but they called him Gari) and he was so inebriated that he says "Am I Gari or Am I Pete", and Pete says "no I'm Pete and you're Gari", and that's how Amigari got it's name.

R.H: I see, so that's the legend is it?

A.C: Yeah, Amigari...so they named it Amigari.

R.H: What was his name?

A.C: Gari Bowen. That's just a joke, but that's how (according to my estimation) that's how Amigari got its name.

R.H: Do you remember any of the stores around that area?

A.C: Oh yeah there was old Peanuts Seaton...Ed Seaton owned Frank Jackson's store at the corner of Gilmore and Concession Road. Abby Hurrell run the store across the tracks.

R.H: He owned a store did he?

A.C: He owned a store on the west of the Grand Trunk...the tavern or hotel. Bill Seaton he was an old man.

R.H: Was Peanuts his nickname?

A.C: No that wasn't Peanuts...it was old Bill Seaton, he owned a store at the corner of Concession and Gilmore Road, and Archie Poole owned the Grand Trunk.

R.H: Archie Poole?

A.C: Archie Poole...Archibald, but we called him Archie. That's going away back. My grandfather, he played for Queen Victoria's coronation... my father's father.

R.H: Did he play an instrument?

A.C: He was a coronet player. I had his ...my father was a musician too, my uncle was a musician, and I turned out to be a musician. I took his coronet...I had my grandfather's coronet. I lost it, and I don't know where it is now.

R.H: And then you played the drums?

A.C: I played the drums. I took lessons over the river.

R.H: Did you play for the legion?

A.C: I played one season with Harry Webb's orchestra up at Erie Beach, but that's a mere trifle.

R.H: Can you tell me about Erie Beach?

A.C: Oh Erie Beach was a going concern in those days.

R.H: What was it like?

A.C: Well they used to run...wait to see if I've got a picture...oh these are Grand Trunk engines. We had this engine up...see Erie Beach, that's a sign at the back of this, and this is right down at the ferry docks. (Mr. Coulthurst showed me some photographs of the Sandfly with the Erie Beach sign in the background).

R.H: Did the Sandfly go to Erie Beach?

A.C: Oh yeah, it went to Erie Beach and back, engine 18272. They had a sign right up in front of the old fort, and they had this train engine go from Fort Erie to Erie Beach. It had the right of way, so the conductor Harry McLure...it only had two drivers and a pair of engine-truck wheels under the tender. It only carried about half a ton of coal, (a small tank) and the 272 would leave Erie Beach, and at the same time this one would leave Fort Erie, but anyway coming from Erie Beach to Fort Erie at the old fort the 272 would pull in at the siding

and this fellow had the right of way, and the conductor (I don't know the conductor) but the 271 done all the work, It only had one train a day.

R.H: Did it carry passengers?

A.C: Oh yeah, they had ten cars. Each engine would pull five coaches. They were small coaches about four times as long as the engine, They could hit...well they could only go about forty miles an hour underneath the Peace Bridge before the Peace Bridge was ever built, and he had the right of way, and he'd keep on going right up to...well he'd stop at Albert Street, he'd stop at the Old Fort, and he'd stop...he didn't stop till he'd get to ...well he wouldn't stop at all, he'd run right through to Erie Beach, but the other fellow, the 272 would come down to Fort Erie. This here track runs right alongside the river, all the way in front of the English church, right up to Niagara Junction.

R.H: Where did you go to get the train, where did you pick it up?

A.C: You'd get the train down at the ferry docks.

R.H: Niagara Blvd.?

A.C: Right down the end of...well this was Elliott's drugstore.

R.H: Did you go on the ferry-boats?

A.C: Oh yeah the ferry-boats...let me see...there was the old Hope, boy she's around here somewhere.

R.H: Was it called the Hope?

A.C: Yeah the Hope. On the Grand Trunk, one of his engines broke down so they got a Grand Trunk crew to run this tank engine all the way from the roundhouse, down the track, and it was coupled up. Well anyway they took the two rails out later on, and they took a piece of this and hooked it on the train here and away up here at the end of this train here there was a switch, and they hooked on to the five cars. It was bigger than these engines. It had three drivers, and it only had one tender on him longer...(therewas one much longer than that made. It was about eight feet longer). Erie Beach wanted to buy the engine, but the Grand Trunk wouldn't sell it.

R.H: Did you work at the Fort Erie Racetrack?

A.C: No I worked on the Grand Trunk. I was engine-inspector, and I took the job as store-keeper.

R.H: Engine-inspector?

A.C: No store-keeper. I bought all the fuses, and bought all the equipment for locomotives, and cabooses and...They tore this building down about last summer, 1984.

R.H: Do you remember when the Peace Bridge opened?

A.C: Oh yeah that was 1927.

R.H: What was it like that day when it opened?

A.C: Oh jeeze we were living on Idylwyde Street then.

R.H: Where did you live?

A.C: Idylwyde Street. (Mr. Coulthurst points to various objects in a photograph he has of a train engine, and begins to describe them). See that little light there, that big electric light there, well that shined on all the people. People used to stand along on the roadway here, (a black topper roadway) and they used to go...why there used to be hundreds of people waiting for these trains to come down. All them flatcars would be loaded, and the seats were on the side of the coach, and the people...they were standing up there. Old Harry McLure got his brakeman to...they took half the time collecting the tickets.

R.H: Did you own a car?

A.C: Oh an old Model T Ford.

R.H: What colour was it, do you remember?

A.C: I didn't own it till...it was 19...wait a minute...I only bought it I think in 1933 or 1930, and I sold it in 1941.

R.H: Do you remember the Bertie Fair?

A.C: Bertie Fair? oh yes sure. We used to play in a band up there, the Fort Erie Legion Band. That's years ago.

R.H: And what was it like there?

A.C: Oh everybody in Amagari and Bertie Township was all up there. There was more people there than there was...there was pretty well as many people there as there was when the races were around.

R.H: Did they have contests up there?

A.C: Oh yeah they had beauty contests, and track races, and they had pretty near everything you could think of.

R.H: And you didn't work at the racetrack?

A.C: No I didn't work there. I used to ride the horses over here on the loading yard, over on Broad Street, not Broad but Wood Street.

R.H: So you used to ride then?

A.C: We used to bring the racehorses in when I come from Hamilton. They got races at Fort Erie.

R.H: Do you remember any of the horses names?

A.C: Well one fellow from Amagari, Barnhart, he bought one sorrel horse and we tamed her. We used to take turns running up and down Gilmore Road, around down to Jennet Street, and down to Horton Steel, and around the corner, making a regular racetrack. But we just done that to exercise the horse.

R.H: Did you see the Prince of Wales when he came?

A.C: Oh yeah he came here when the Peace Bridge was built...Edward...yeah I was living up in Gilmore Road then.

R.H: Where did you go get a haircut when you were a kid?

A.C: Oh we used to go to Joe Halavin, and old man Neill. He run a barbershop down near...next door to Clements...Clements store, that was a barbershop.

R.H: Do you remember how much you paid for a haircut?

A.C: Oh it was only 35 cents then, I forget what year it was.

R.H: Do you know anything about the gambling casino that was supposed to open?

A.C: No. Oh they used to gamble, and they had more boot-legging joints around here...

R.H: Do you know anything about the boot-legging?

A.C: Old Ed Mckay had a...don't put that...jeeze I wouldn't want to advertise that.

R.H: Do you know anything about the Chinese smuggling?

A.C: Well I've heard about it, but I've never seen it. I was only about ten years old then.

R.H: What did you hear?

A.C: They used to have these cops from Toronto, and the Queen's Own Rifles come down here along the blvd., along the river here, right as far as the Old Fort, then they'd catch these...they used to smuggle whiskey over from Canada to the United States, and I know one time they caught a couple of smugglers in rowboats...I can't remember now, but it hurts to go way back.

R.H: So this engine you're showing me. Is that the one that's out at the park, 6218? (Mr. Coulthurst started showing me photographs of different engines).

A.C: There's the engine my brother used to run.

R.H: What was that called?

A.C: That's a tank-car, that's what you call a tank-engine. The water was in here, the coal was here, the cold water was in here, and by the time it got in there...

R.H: Is that what you call a steam-engine?

A.C: That's a steam-engine, 7100. They had four of them, but they only had three of them in the roundhouse, and this one was on the road from Fort Erie here, across the International Bridge, up along the river up to River Street. You see the Grand Trunk had a...and this here is the barnyard...that's a passenger, and they turned it into a...it had 63 inch drivers.

R.H: Was it your brother who ran this one?

A.C: My brother run this one, 7100 from River Street.

R.H: What was his name?

A.C: Well his name was the same as mine only he was my half-brother, but he died in 1941, he was 54. The more I look at these the more I can...he was a runner, he was a classified engineer.

R.H: (Who Spike Webb)?

A.C: He was a classified engineer. He run a Parrot Junction turnaround to Fort Erie to take a load of cars up there. Old Spike was going through Ridgeway with the engine...he passed the Ridgeway Station so fast that people got off in front of the station.

R.H: That's the Ridgeway Station? (pointing to photograph)

A.C: That's the Ridgeway Station. That station's over there, and this one is over here. (Mr. Coulthurst means the Railroad Museum on Central Avenue).

R.H: Do you know how old the Telegraph Office is?

A.C: 1873. These photographs all have different dates on them.

R.H: So this is called the Dummy? (Mr. Coulthurst shows me a photograph of the engine they call the Dummy)

A.C: That's the Dummy. Here is the Michigan Central Station, and here was the Bridgeburg Station over here, and the Grand Trunk, and The Great Western...see the corner thing, that's the bridge Dummy. They named this thing after that bridge here, after the International Bridge up there.

R.H: Where did the Dummy run?

A.C: It run from Bridgeburg over to Black Rock, right across the bridge. They demolished that station too, oh about 1940 or 1950.

R.H: What was the driver's name of the Dummy?

A.C: Bowen, Theodore Bowen. This is the B&G track, and the Grand Trunk, and the next track is the westbound, connects up in here, and the switch connects this track to the mainline. (Mr. Coulthurst describes photographs).

R.H: So you worked on the railroad?

A.C: Yeah I worked on the railroad.

R.H: And you said you worked afternoons?

A.C: Well I ended up working days. I started at the roundhouse six in the morning till six at night.

R.H: Where was the roundhouse?

A.C: The roundhouse was over here. Over there on Ward Street, and Lewis Street, but you can't see the office anymore, and when things got busy they put three storemen on, and then I bid the job in as a...well there some crooked business going on so Gari Bowen, this fellows son (Mr. Coulthurst points to photo of Theodore Bowen) was an engineer on the Dummy too after he (Theodore) died.

R.H: He was your boss?

A.C: Well he was an engineer, and then he was night foreman over there, and we had a call boy, and I was night-dispatcher on four to twelve when they put the three shifts on, and eight hours went in to effect. Old Peanuts Seaton, he run a store, but he retired, and he got a job as a storeman.

R.H: What kind store did he have?

A.C: Oh this was before I got hold of the job. He used to send all the stuff out, the fuses but the store-clerk...in other words they got a store-keeper and a storage-clerk but the store-keeper didn't have nothing to do down here, and it cost too much money to keep a store-keeper, and I was doing as much work as the store-keeper was. I was buying all the fuses and stuff for the old terminal for Fort Erie.

R.H: So this Peanuts, did he own a store?

A.C: Old Peanuts Seaton that was his son Ed Seaton, he was...that's Gari Bowen's father (Mr. Coulthurst points to a photo of Theodore Bowen) but old Peanuts Seaton he was a grocer down near right across where Stanley Joe's restuarant is. He was a customs-broker like that guy who's a customs-broker down here now...what's that customs-brokers

name?

R.H: Freeland?

A.C: Yes Freeland, he's a customs-broker, and now they are trying to make this street here...but Del Davidson's got all our names on... (a petition) and if we have to move I'm gonna raise this place up to about forty-five thousand dollars, and I only paid five thousand for it, or forty-five hundred.

R.H: How long have you lived in this house?

A.C: Oh since 1953.

R.H: 1953?

A.C: 53 or 54. I think it was 53.

R.H: You lived on Idylwyde before?

A.C: Oh yeah, we lived on Idylwyde, Murray North, Jarvis Street, Queen Street. 50 Queen Street to 50 Princess Street.

R.H: When you first came here was the Southend very busy?

A.C: Oh no. She was born in Verdun, Quebec. (Mr. Coulthurst misunderstood the question and was talking about his wife). Our anniversary is the 15th of August, 60 years this year. I don't think we'll ever see 75 years.

R.H: So you are having a big celebration, are you?

A.C: No just friends. My brother died, mother died, and my father died, and they are all buried out in Greenwood.

R.H: (Mr. Coulthurst showed me his father's pocket watch). Did he get that for so many years on the railroad?

A.C: This belonged to my father, and my father gave it to my brother, and when my brother died I took it over.

R.H: And you worked 42 years on the railroad?

A.C: I worked 42 years at the Roundhouse, and then in the year 1915 I was out in the yard calling.

R.H: Where?

A.C: Over in the yard office. I was junior call boy.

R.H: What did a call boy do?

A.C: I just went out all hours in the morning. I'd walk from the Roundhouse way up the racetrack street, and Catherine Street, calling these crews, and there was a crew we used to call Lousy Street. The Wabash used to run from...they'd get his cars on the Wabash track over in Black Rock, and her worked up in Exchange Street, Buffalo.

R.H: Why were you named a call boy, what did you do?

A.C: They had no phones, so we had to go to the door and knock on the door and we had to get the two-hour call.

R.H: So you woke them to go to work?

A.C: I woke them up, and their wives came to the door in their nightgowns, and I'd tell the Fort Erie is going to Mimico, or going on a short run we'd say, 11:40 and 12 o'clock will be about 6:40 and 7 o'clock. They give us 7 o'clock to Mimico. Sometimes they'd give us Paris Junction, and they'd say to us "tell Bill he's ordered for 8 o'clock on the turnaround at the Paris Junction return".

R.H: How many streets did you do?

A.C: Oh we was all over the place. I used to come down with a call boy from the Roundhouse, and I was working at the other office, then I went from there...I quit there and went to Horton Steel, and from Horton Steel I went to the depots, and from the depot I went to the Roundhouse.

R.H: Did you work there as a ticket-agent? (Mr. Coulthurst reply was cut off by background noise).

A.C: I had a Model T Ford, and it was only a...it didn't have a body on it then. I put the body on it and bought it off Charlie in 1936 or 1933 before six of us took a trip to Montreal...no five of us, her mother, my brother-in-law and his wife, yeah there was two couples and her mother. Anyway we was going along down the blvd. just for a ride, and the Orleans came up the river, and the ice was... oh jeeze it was terrible. They don't have the winters round here now like they did then. There was big cakes of ice bigger than this room, and the Orleans was coming up, and she run right up on top of a cake of ice about halfway up to Ferry Street. She hit this cake of ice and he tried to back up and get off the cake of ice, and the bottom end of the boat was on the ice and the tail end was about a foot from the top of the water, and it went right through the International Bridge before this side. He was trying to steer the boat over to the Canadian side to get off this cake of ice and the rear end of the boat was north and she was facing south. He'd come from Austin Street via Buffalo and Fort Erie, and he hit the bridge on the fourth span this side of the swing span. The bridge used to swing...oh this was a going concern at one time. We'd have steam-boats going down

and we had International Tug located up in Ferry Street right straight across the river from here. The Orleans hit the span slides up to the International Bridge, and when she went through the bridge she was tipped over this way and it knocked all the top deck, the captain's deck...and he only had the engineer, the captain, two deckhands, four or five men on there...when he came out the other side of the International Bridge the boat turned right side up and the conductor went up there to get a hold of the wheel. The wheel was there yet, but the building, and the cupulo was still on top of the steering wheel. It went right in the river and I bet it's still down at the bottom of the river now. There was people all along the blvd., oh about a hundred people at that time in the morning and it was about 9 oclock in the morning. It was on a Sunday I think. He started turning the wheel till he got down to Austin Street down by the bridge at Amherst and Norton Street where he started out in the first place. Everybody had their hearts in their mouth.

R.H: Was anybody hurt?

A.C: No he didn't have no cars on it, just light coal down in the lower boat. Now that boat is down...I think she is down in the shipyards there or I think she's sunk, and the Old Hope was sunk down here and another Ferry-boat sunk down at the foot of Dufferin Street, and the old Hope is sunk down here by Elliott's Drugstore.

R.H: How did it sink, do you know?

A.C: Who the Hope? Oh no they salvaged everything out, everything they wanted off the boat, and they just sank the whole doggone boat. She was an old side-wheeler, oh she was a long boat, from here to right across the street. She was a side-wheeler, but that was before my time. I remember my father telling me about it.

R.H: And you got a free pass for you wife when you worked on the railroad?

A.C: Oh yeah I got my red pass, and you could travel anywhere on the Canadian National. If you wanted to travel out west or the States I got to just apply for a pass. The railroad's very good to their people, especially the C.N. This is down at the ferry docks. (Mr. Coulthurst shows more photographs) They sunk another one down at the foot of Dufferin Street, and there's two or three boats sunk down at the shipyards cause the water is 20 to 25 feet deep right down where they used to build the ships.

R.H: Did you go over to Erie Beach on the Ferry-boats?

A.C: No Erie Beach is on this side. There's an Erie Beach over in the United States on the other side of Lake Erie. There's two Erie Beaches, but I'm talking about Erie Beach in Ontario. That's where these engines went (Mr. Coulthurst points to photographs of more engines).

R.H: Where was Grant Street?

A.C: Grant Street's over the river. You take the ferryboat down here, the Orleans or the Newtown, or the City of Toledo. Sometimes they took a lot of them boats over to...Ferry Street. You go right out to Ferry Street, and Grant Street runs north and south of it.

R.H: How much did it cost to get on the ferryboats?

A.C: It only cost a nickel on the ferryboats in them days.

R.H: Do you know anybody that was a skipper?

A.C: Oh I knew Captain O Connor. We used to do tricks on him. I remember I was telling Del Davidson when my father was working in the car department and they had the Grand Trunk Pacific. The Grand Trunk in them days used to borrow engines out the Pennsylvania, New York Central...they'd lease them. I had Pennsylvania Engines, New York Engines, Grand Trunk Pacific Engines which is now the Canadian National. The Canadian National took over the Grand Trunk, and the Grand Trunk Pacific, and this engine was coming from Sarnia...they had one car of cattle on there next to the engine, and it had two smaller engines...they were small consolidated engines twenty and twenty five hundred, and they were going out on a load of coal with double header engines and they were going out through Amagari, and taking through to Sarnia...no they were going to take them up to Port Colborne, and cross over to Welland Junction, over to Merritt and St. Catharines and take them to Toronto. Well this train was coming down from Sarnia with a load of about 30 cars, and these two little dinkies...engines out of Fort Erie, hit that Grand Trunk Pacific Engine right in front of the Ridgeway Station. That was in March 1913, and I was thirteen years old then. It was snowing, March 1, 1913.

R.H: Was anybody hurt in that one?

A.C: No, the engineers...the lead engine on the two engines, he had the control of the air, but the other engineer put the brake on, but it wouldn't work, and the first engineer on these engines going west,

and the engineer, he thought he had visions and he just seen it once...seen them engines before the two dinky engines...he could see their engines coming so he soaked her, and the train went. They killed two cows, and the people around there dragged the dead cows out, and then they had to send the engine out with an old lady's auxiliary hook, pull the three engines, separate the train at the cars, leave the one train on the main line, and then move the other train in the side up near Ridgeway. Everybody got the cattle, butchers up there, and farmers.

R.H: So they had a lot of meat?

A.C: Well the cows were all right. They cut their milk-bags out and they...

R.H: Have you ever heard of the Peanut Express?

A.C: Yeah the seats were...they had no seats like an ordinary coach. You get about twenty five or thirty people on both sides of the coach. (I wish I had a picture of that coach) But the seats were just like that rocking chair out there, (points to a floral rocking chair out in the porch) and that's the kind of seats...

R.H: And they used to eat peanuts on there, and drop the peanut shells all over it?

A.C: Oh yeah, all over the floor.

R.H: Is that why they called it the Peanut Express?

A.C: Yeah that was the Peanut Railroad, but if you go with the original name it was the Snakehill & Pacific, and that's the Peanut Train.

R.H: (Tell me about the Canadiana)?

A.C: The Canadiana she's over at Commercial Street. They bought her back, and oh she was a great big boat the Canadiana, oh she was a wonderful boat. The Americana was her sister ship, but she was built over at Rye Beach over on the other side of Lake Erie. She was the sister ship to the Canadiana, but they bought this Canadiana off the firm they sold it to, and were contemplating running it to Erie Beach again. Either that or Crystal Beach.

R.H: (Tell me about the Southend)

A.C: What's the name of that street down there?...Bertie Street isn't it?

R.H: Was that a pill factory at the corner?

A.C: Yeah that was an old pill factory they used to have over here, and that building is still there down yet.

R.H: What was it called, do you remember?

A.C: It used to be a pill factory at the end of Bertie...not Bertie, but Murray Street. That brick building down there.

R.H: (As a boy, did you have a hair-raising experience)

A.C: Oh yeah, but we got saved though. We went down as far as Black Creek. Old Davis was the caretaker at the English church down here, St. Paul's Anglican Church, and he had a car, and he had a rowboat, and he'd keep the rowboat in his front yard. He lived down near where they built that big apartment house down beside the English church. That church wasn't there all the time. That was only put up there in 1940 I think...no 1950. But there was nine of us on this cake of ice, and we'd got one of the Thomas brothers flat-bottom boats, and rowed out to the cake of ice to see the ice coming down. And we got on the cake of ice and the boat...the last one out, he jumped trying to get on that cake of ice...he didn't go in the river cause we got him on the cake of ice, and away we went down the river.

R.H: You were on the ice?

A.C: On the ice, the cake of ice. Old Davis came down with his horse and buggy, and he had the horse going like the devil, and he had the boat on the back of the buggy. He was pulling the buggy and this horse, he was a powerful horse, and there was snow on the ground and...well that made it easier going, and he got down near Thomas brothers and he stopped then and said to himself "I can't" but something told him to keep on going so he went down along underneath the International Bridge here by the B1 Station, and down along the blvd...he went away down past Bowen Road and he went looking for an opening, so he unhooked the horse, and tied her up to a post, and took the rope off the buggy and pulled the boat out on the river down the bank and he had the...well he took us off just opposite... well he went down the river between Cozy Dell and the Bowen Road. He went out there and rowed out and took four of us in, four at a time, four boys and he run them up to the shore where there was no rocks and he said "hurry up get on there, stay there, and wait there. You see my horse is tied down about a quarter or half

a mile down". He rowed all the way down the river, and he took the last five of us off.

R.H: How old were you then?

A.C: I was only nine years old. Old man Davis he'd be dead...

R.H: Do you remember who was with you that day?

A.C: No there's none of the boys around here outside Joe Stevenson who's in Gary, Indiana and Ross Poole who lives in Buffalo.

R.H: (Do you know anything about the railroad workers strike that happened in around 1910)?

A.C: I was only ten years old then when we all went up to the railroad station and they had burned the station down, Amagari Station. One guy crawled under Smith Street just up from Concession Road, (It's the shortest street in Fort Erie, and it runs from the railroad tracks to Concession Road. They call it Smith Street and only three families live on it) and anyway this one guy, he was a strikebreaker, and he was trying to bust up the strikers so he went and crawled under the barn, and one of my boys went and told his wife that he was under the barn hiding cause the strikers were looking for him. Another guy ran from Amagari Station all the way to Fort Erie, and he caught a ferry-boat, and went over the river.

R.H: Why were they on strike?

A.C: Oh jeeze I forgot now...it was money and conditions.

R.H: So did this all happen in Amagari?

A.C: Oh yeah, well they were striking over in the yard office, and striking in different cities and towns, and all over the Grand Trunk. That's when the Grand Trunk had the railroad. That's before Del Davidson was born. Yeah that was all over the...There was a train come from Sarnia and he had a compound engine 684, and he only had about twelve cars behind him, and he was pulling in to Amagari and he had an engineer...firemen were alright but they shouldn't have been running the engine. All the engineers were firemen. They had to take over on account of the union. Bridgeburg got formed of course after Amagari Station burned down. They burned Amagari Station down about 4 o'clock in the morning, the next morning.

R.H: Was this in 1910?

A.C: Yeah, it was in 1910, and the station was all burned down. This

train came running at about...oh he only had about ten or fifteen cars, and he had four or five cars of cattle on, (he was what you call a scab you know) and he got up there in the tank and laid on the coals till he got by these strikers. Gee whiz I laughed.

R.H: You know the Dummy, do you know why they called it the Dummy?

A.C: I couldn't tell you but I've got a picture of it here. There's the Dummy up there, but that's all I can tell you.

R.H: Did you go to St. Paul's Church?

A.C: Yeah, I sang in the choir there. My uncle and I, my father's brother he was a bass singer. I was first tenor, and Fred Woollem (he was a big buddy, I was the only one who took to him) he was a regular musician. He could sing first and second tenor, and then he taught me how to sing bass, but I had such a high voice I couldn't get down to bass.

R.H: What was the church like?

A.C: They got the church built up down there now. You know that building on the northside, that wasn't on there when I was going to church.

R.H: Do you remember who the minister was?

A.C: Oh yeah old Mackintosh was there. He was an old Scotchman. He was the greatest old...him and my father used to hang around the King Edward Hotel every Saturday, him and old Francis Teal, but they're all dead now. The Niagara Hotel was down at the corner of Catherine Street, and you go around the curve, down the Blvd. there, and it sat there right on the corner.

R.H: What was the name of it?

A.C: The Commercial Hotel.

R.H: The Commercial?

A.C: Yeah.

R.H: Oh it's gone now?

A.C: Then there was a boarding house right next door. What did they call that?...I forget now, but it was run by Chinamen. It was a boarding house first, and then this Chinaman came along and bought it, That was a boarding house though, a great big building.

R.H: Where was that?

A.C: That was right across from the...you know when you go around the curve, down past Catherine Street then Lavinia, well it's right

on the corner of Lavinia and the Blvd. This was a notorious town in them days.

R.H: How notorious was it, did you hear any stories?

A.C: (Mr. Coulthurst misunderstood the question) How many stories? Oh the hotel and the Chinaman's place that was...the Commercial Hotel was I guess, two stories high. It was a big building. They slept upstairs and it had an attic, and the building next door on Lavinia Street was (before the Chinamen bought it) Kern's Boarding House, but the Chinamen they held the name there for a while, and they were all two stories high. They doubled upstairs, and of course the Commercial had the attic, but they didn't hardly use it except maybe for storing things. It was up there about 1913.

R.H: Did you go the Bellard Theatre?

A.C: Where was that, in Fort Erie? I never heard of it. Oh the theatre on Dufferin Street, oh yeah everybody used to go there. That was the only theatre in town. What was the name of that theatre?

R.H: The Bellard.

A.C: Oh yeah the Bellard, how did you ever find that name out?

R.H: Was it bad in Fort Erie during the Depression?

A.C: Oh yes that was 1929. I started work in 1918. I quit school when I had to quit school at fifteen. I was cutting grass for a year up near where Jones the doctor from Buffalo was, and then I got a job with the Chicago Bridge and Iron Works, best known as Horton Steel. My father was working out of the car department but he quit and he got a job out at Chicago Bridge. Old Chris Gregory he married an old neighbour of mine. Old Doc Street was a friend of mine, he was a young doctor. I don't know when he died, but he was a railroad doctor too.

R.H: Did Dr. Street look after the railroad workers?

A.C: He lived in town here, but he was the doctor for all the employees who took sick that worked at the railroad.

R.H: Where did he live?

A.C: Right on the corner of Phipps Street, and Central Avenue. He was an old batchelor.

R.H: Did your home have electricity when you were a kid?

A.C: No it was gas. All gas in all of them. Bridgeburg had electricity,

I don't know about Fort Erie, but Amagari had no lights. I remember when they electricified my mother's house and why we were the only ones in Amagari that had a telephone, telephone number 77 that's all.

R.H: Was that your telephone number?

A.C: Everybody used to come in and use that telephone, holy smoke.

R.H: So you were the only ones with a telephone?

A.C: It was the only one I know outside the grocery stores up on Concession Road, and Gilmore Road and Abby Hurrell's store on the other side of the railroad tracks past the Grand Trunk Hotel.

R.H: When you dialed the phone, did you have to dial the operator?

A.C: We had a crank, an old crank. You just gave her one ring and if she didn't come on we'd turn it again. Then she put the plug in.

R.H: You had to wait for the operator?

A.C: Yeah.

R.H: And you gave her the number?

A.C: I'd give her the number, and she'd ring the number then.

R.H: Do you remember the rations during the war?

A.C: Oh yeah we had a book. It was a green book. It was about the size of that, (Mr. Coulthurst showed me a book approximately 3x4) and it had stamps in it and we'd give that to the grocery store and he'd tear out what he wanted, but you had to watch him cause he'd tear out more...he tore out two pages of mine and my mother went up there and she was gonna hit him on the head with a...I don't know what she was gonna hit him on the head with but she got the tickets back. Oh she wasn't the only one, four or five of them went up there, but that was the time of the ration days.

R.H: Was it pretty rough during the war?

A.C: Oh no it was kind of quiet but...

R.H: Have you ever heard of the Village of Victoria?

A.C: Yeah, that's the Michigan Central, formerly the Canada Southern Railroad and then the Michigan Central took it over, then New York Central took over the Michigan Central, then the Conrail took over the New York Central. That's what you called Victoria Yards.

R.H: So that was like Phipps Street, the International Bridge, that area?

A.C: Yes it run right across the International Bridge, but Phipps Street...well Courtwright Street's near the Victoria Yards, and all the way down from the west it runs right in to the International Bridge. All the C.N. and the Grank Trunk engines ran under the International Bridge.

R.H: Did you go to Crystal Beach?

A.C: Oh yeah and Erie Beach.

R.H: Did you play at Crystal Beach?

A.C: Oh I played up there one time with a fourteen piece orchestra. Harry Webb was a coronet player, and I played up there with him. I played second coronet, and I didn't want to play first coronet cause he was the leader. I switched off and played first coronet, and I played two summers with him. I lost my father's trumpet, he was a coronet player too, and so was my grandfather.

R.H: Did you play then in the Crystal Ballroom?

A.C: Oh yeah, and we played Erie Beach Ballroom too. I played up there with...I forget who the Sam Hill that orchestra was. No, Harry Webb was at Erie Beach, and the other one was a Yankee orchestra...I don't know the name, but that was a Yankee orchestra up at Crystal Beach. There was more Jews come up there to Crystal Beach than there was white people.

R.H: What kind of dances did they do?

A.C: Oh a one-step, foxtrot, and waltzes. They'd play a square-dance for some of the old timers, then the young people got into the swing of it. I played the drums there for the square-dances. Those were the good old days.

R.H: What area was Amagari?

A.C: Gilmore Road, and Russel Street...Russel and Jennet Street, and Middletown was...between the Horton Steel, and the C.N. That was the Middletown, and it only had Rule Street and Warren Street. They only had about ten houses, ten or twelve houses, and that's what they called Middletown. It started at Chicago Bridge and it ended up at that great big tree out there. (Mr. Coulthurst pointed to a tree at the corner of Goderich and Princess Street) That's what they called Middletown. I got a friend of mine, I haven't seen him for quite a while and I don't know whether he's dead or not, but he was born in Middletown. I delivered the Buffalo Evening

News from 1910 to 1914, and then I went in the army, in the cadets at Niagara-On-The-Lake.

R.H: Were you in the first World War?

A.C: Yeah the first World War. We had over twelve thousand boys down there. All boys thirteen, fourteen, and fifteen and then they had regular army fellows. I had a principal at Phipps Street School...we called it Phipps Street School, but it was Rose Seaton School. Rose Seaton was my school teacher too, and my uncle, my father's brother married Mary Gerrard and Mary was a sister to Jane. They had a frisky side to them. She said "I don't care if you are my brother-in-laws nephew I'll strap you just the same as any other child".

R.H: She was the teacher then?

A.C: She was the teacher, old Jane. She was the sister of Mary. My father's brother he was a good living man he didn't drink...he worked on the Q.E. My father he was an old booze-hound.

R.H: So you were in the war?

A.C: I ended up in the American Army.

R.H: Oh you were in the American Army?

A.C: I joined up. I went over there and they asked me "Can you play any musical instruments" I said "yes, I was a bugler down at Niagara-On-The-Lake for the Canadian Cadets". They had about twenty thousand cadets down there, all over Ontario. That's a big camping ground down there on Niagara-On-The-Lake. They gave me a uniform with a cowboy hat on it, and they gave me a brand new bugle and they had an instructor there and he knew how to do the calls and I had to take them home and practice them.

R.H: Is that where that song came from, the Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy from Company B. Have you heard that song?

A.C: I've heard it, but that was the American version.

R.H: So you became a bugle boy for the American Bugle Corps?

A.C: Oh I was only in there about a couple of weeks, but after a couple of years I never got no sleep. We were down at Camp Upton way down south, (beautiful country down there) but they had similiar calls to the Canadian Army.

R.H: Thankyou for the wonderful interview Mr. Coulthurst, it was great, thankyou.