

Beverly Branton interviewing Mr. Harry Bush at High Street Apartments.

It's May 22, 1985. (Mrs. Bush is also present.)

B.B.: Hello, Mr. Bush.

H.B.: Hi.

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

H.B.: Why sure, August 21st, 1913.

B.B.: And your place of birth?

H.B.: Oh, lucky. London, England.

B.B.: And your occupation?

H.B.: Retired.

B.B.: Before you were retired?

H.B.: I worked on the Canadian National Railway as an administration clerk, at the end. You called it going up the ladder, you started out as a call boy and you end up not knowing what you are doing.

B.B.: Okay, your place of birth was in London, Ont, or London, England you said.

H.B.: Oh, yes.

B.B.: When did you come to Fort Erie?

H.B.: I think it would be 1923. I think I was seven years old at the time.

B.B.: What brought you to Fort Erie?

H.B.: Probably the economic insecurity of my parents in London, in England. I think that was the reason, it was quite common in those days.

B.B.: What type of work did he receive, did he get in Fort Erie?

H.B.: Well, he was a, he worked on the New York Central Railroad as an engineer and then he went to the Canadian National as a..well not an engineer, I shouldn't have said that..a fireman, he started out as a fireman, and that was when he went over to the Canadian National and that was it.

B.B.: And when you moved to Fort Erie, where was your first home?

H.B.: On Crook Street, 75 Crook Street.

B.B.: Was Rio Vista Golf Course there then?

H.B.: Not in those days then. That was years later. That was built by Harry Oakes, the big shot wheel.

B.B.: Tell me about that.

H.B.: Well, I don't know that much about it except it use to be a cow pasture where the Erie, the Rio Vista is now. When we were kids we use to get a nickel for lead driving the cows from Bowen, from the corner of Crook and Bowen, and driving them through the town over to

the corner of Emerick Avenue and Central Avenue, where a fella named Clark use to live. And the cows use to go in there and they would be milked. And the next day the milk was distributed from a huge milk can and a dipper. And you left your utensil out on the veranda and they would spoon out the milk from the can and plop it in the container left by the customer. And I understand the milk got pretty watery by the, one-third down the bottom of the can, up from the bottom. And you use to get a nickel for going down and getting the cows and that. They use to go home by themselves. You'd just open the gate really and then they would go home. And then later on the pasture was abandoned as with the cattle and ..

B.B.: Do you know who owned that property?

H.B.: No, I wouldn't know. But I know it ended up in the, I think it was called Welland Security's which I think was headed by Harry Oakes. And it was converted into a golf course. And then it was more or less abandoned. The golf course originally started, it was on both sides of Bowen Road. They had so many holes on one side of Bowen Road and then so many on the other. You'd have to walk through the bush to get to the other section of the golf course. There was a little path that you could follow out to the course. And I don't think anybody ever caddied there. They had a tournament from Buffalo one time and we were rounded up to be caddies but we didn't know any more about the course then..they lose so many balls because the grass was so long. And I don't think, it never was a success until it was taken over by, I think by service clubs in Fort Erie. I think so, and maybe the, I don't know, anyway that's how it happened.

B.B.: Sir Harry Oakes, did he own the other property behind it?

H.B.: Well, you never really know who owns this property. It goes on mon..., behind the scenes I suppose. I think it was called Harry Oakes Park at one time on, then eventually he wanted that property that faced on to Niagara River. The way I understand it he made a trade of property where the Oakes Park is now on Central and Gilmore and also ten thousand dollars to put a fence around it. I'm not sure of any of this because we just read it in the papers and that's the way it sticks with me up to now.

B.B.: Did he ever live in Fort Erie?

H.B.: No, no. He lived in Niagara Falls. He had a big home down there,

the Oakes Estate.

B.B.: So he didn't have a summer home in Fort Erie?

H.B.: Well, I, not in Fort Erie, I always thought he did in Niagara Falls.

B.B.: So then from Crook Street, where did you move?

H.B.: To Brock Street, 308 Brock Street and that's where we, my brother and my sister and my parents lived forever, until we were married and moved out. And the house is still there of course.

B.B.: You must have seen that area change quite a bit.

H.B.: No, not a great deal. In fact, you can run down and a lot of the kids are still around who lived there. There was Mary Vye, who's now Mary Vye, she was Mary Baine then. And Margaret Gull, who was Margaret Baine then; they lived next to us and they are both alive. And then there was Ruth and Ross Hoffman and Ruth Hoffman is still, her name is Sinclair, she still lives in Fort Erie. And there was Charlie and Theodore Collier lived next to them, and Charlie just died fairly recently, in the last three or four years. I don't know about Theda, that was his sister. And then there was Bert Cunliffe and his brother Benny who was killed in the war. And Courtland who is still alive as far as I know. And then there was Elizabeth. I understand that they are all alive as far as I, outside of Benny their all alive. And let's see, who else lived on the street..the Bernettes, I think, let's see, Ethel just died and Jessie is still alive, Jessie I don'tknow what her married name is, she's been married a couple of times. And there are quite a few other ones still alive, that lived on, just on little Brock Street.

B.B.: Where did you attend public school?

H.B.: At Phipp, Rose Seaton. I think in those days they called it Phipp Street Public School.

B.B.: How has that changed?

H.B.: Well, of course it's knocked down to oblivion now. Somewhere I have a post card of the old original school but I'll never find it unless we..And it's all changed, there was a great built while I was there. And I think my name was put in the cornerstone among with everybody others, else others. When they knocked the place down we were suppose to retrieve these names and see how successful we had been and the impact we had on the world. But I never knew what did happen to them, maybe..they were stuck away in the corner, all the pupils in the school at the time of the renovation are suppose to be put in the cornerstone we were told and we would wait until

we could tell each other how we set the world on fire. We have a couple of pyromaniacs in the community, they set the world on fire in their own way.

B.B.: So what was the school system like at that time?

H.B.: Well, it was heavy, it was heavy on discipline. And some idiot built a sled or rather a slide behind the school, which you could walk up these steps, steep steps carrying your sleigh and then you'd belly-flop down the incline. And then someone said the women, the girls were to use it in the morning recess and the boys were to use it in the afternoon recess. But a lot of the boys use to cheat and got, you use to get a licking right out on the, on the slide. Miss Seaton use to come out and wag this blasted strap around and cross everyone in reach. And that was because you were invading the girls rights by going on the slide when they were suppose to be using it. And I even got hit by Miss Dunn, Geneveve Dunn because I didn't write very well and I thought that was, after seeing doctors write, I thought that was a desired accomplishment. Well, anyway they were very heavy on discipline. They use to, teachers would grab you by the ear and twist it around. I don't know how they did it because nobodies ear ever went off. You know if you did it to your own kids you'd have the world on your back. Anyway it was fun, we survived.

B.B.: What did you do for entertainment in the north end?

H.B.: What we did was our own. We had our own ball teams, football teams and we use to play lacrosse. That was a good game because if didn't like anybody you could pretend you're reaching for the ball and you'd crack them on the head with this lacrosse stick. And it was a very primitive game, I think some Indians from Brantford introduced it. And it didn't last very long, they just ran out of players, you know, everybody ended up a victim.

B.B.: Where would you play it?

H.B.: On the school yard, everything was on the school yard in those days. That was the central point, we use to play out there 'til dark. The adventerous ones whose parents were too lenient they played into the dark, just like they do now I think.

B.B.: Were there any other parks at that time in the north end?

H.B.: Sure, there was one down on, oh, they were all over the place. I mean like primitive park where you just went out in the field and

hit a ball around or kicked a ball in football. There was one at the corner of Crook Street and Brock Street. And then there was one right behind the school, McTavish's use to live there. Oh, by the way Doc McTavish was the only person I know of in Fort Erie that became a professional boxer. I saw him fighting in Buffalo once, he fought a guy named Tony Sceleno..I think he was Irish, Mediterranean. And ah, everybody, somebody always went in sports and now a days hockey sports and then there were ah, let's see, we didn't have any real big baseball players. Isn't that funny, I was just going to tell you about somebody that was in sports but it's gone now..okay.

B.B.: Do you remember a park being on Phipps Street for lawn bowling?

H.B.: Oh, yes that what the old Patterson Estate, I guess, at least that's what we called it. It's that place where they have dolls now, inanament dolls.

G.B.: They had a huge green at the side and oh, for years they lawn bowled.

H.B.: Ya, that was quite the thing. We use to go down and watch them play.

G.B.: The so called professionals, like the doctors and elderly people.

H.B.: Well, they were elderly people who use to throw^w these balls up and down the lawn.

B.B.: Were there tennis courts in that area?

H.B.: Yes, there were some tennis courts came in right behind that, on Phipps Street. That was another block up, not another block but another residence and there were tennis courts put up there. But I think these were all private, these were all private they weren't community property.

G.B.: I think they were community Harry, but you had to be somebody to get in.

H.B.: I don't know. I mean they were financed by people themselves, you didn't get grants that I ever heard of in those days. You know you wore, your brothers and you wore the same skates, ice skates, roller skates, baseball gloves, bats, whatever, you..if there was five kids, five kids used it. If you were the only kid like there was a few kids that were the only ones so we use to..Billy Mencke use to be a good source of getting athletic equipment. And he was more affluent then the rest of us so if you needed a football or a baseball or something, we use to get after him to get to his dad to buy it for him. So he'd get it and he never played himself and he'd let us use his purchased

He was a very good kid, he was the most popular kid we had.

B.B.: The place where the lawn bowling is, you called that Patterson's?

H.B.: Well Frank Patterson, who was what they call a collector of customs and he lived in that big red house as far as I know. It's where the dolls are now.

G.B.: And that's where the thing comes underneath, into the river, where they use to bring the slaves up from the States into Canada for freedom. It really is, you've seen that haven't you?

B.B.: Do you remember any stories about that?

H.B.: No. You mean about smuggling? Nope I don't, that was before my time.

B.B.: Did that use to be called Bertie Hall?

H.B.: I think so yes, yes it did. I don't know why but...

B.B.: Jarvis Street, how has that changed?

H.B.: It hasn't changed that much except. Except, no it hasn't changed very much. It's very neat from the Boulevard right up to Crook Street, I would say that Jarvis Street hasn't changed that much.. same houses, same buildings. Oh, different people. Oh sure, there're different stores owned by different people but I think the buildings, the main ones.

G.B.: What about the fires, Rossburg's, down that end. Old Mrs. Tracey and her fire, they, I mean they have changed.

B.B.: What fires are these?

H.B.: Well, Rossmans store burnt down and what use to be a Chinese Restaurant there and, it's just about the same, different people, different stores.

B.B.: What about the roadways?

H.B.: Well they use to be cinder railroads, ah, cinder roads in those days. And I don't know how we managed it because most of use to run around in bare feet in the summertime, summer holidays. And we usually got what we called a pair of running shoes and they would last the summer. And you got one haircut after you got out of school and they use to take off all your hair, and then when you went back to school you got another hair cut and another pair of shoes..and you trotted off to school thinking you knew what you were up to.

B.B.: Do you remember who the barber was at that point?

H.B.: Well, yes it use to be Bill Heckman, was the barber in those days and a guy named T. Butler. And you use to go in there for the news and who won the races, and who won the prize fight. It was all

sports interest in those days, on a betting basis. People would bet quarters and fifty cents and there'd be followers of you know certain players. That's how it went. They use to have ball teams, you'd follow big leagues. You'd go down, buy the Courier Express, and sit there and read the race results, who raced that day and how the ball game went the previous day. We depended a lot on newspapers for news in those days. Radio was fairly primitive and of course no T.V., fortunately.

B.B.: You use to write stories for some newspapers.

H.B.: Well, I did correspondence work, yes. Usually what they call columns, human interest columns. You wrote about people. Like to me, news is something that has happened to somebody. By the way, in case you didn't know there's only three reasons for writing: to entertain, to inform and to influence. You've got to have one of those for a motive or any of those three...What else did you ask me?

B.B.: You worked for the Fort Erie Times Review?

H.B.: When you say worked, I wasn't, I submitted material on a weekly basis, like I was always published and I use to write and go around and do interviews, pick up news stories, human interest material. And then I would submit it and it would come out under my by-line, and I would be creator I guess I would be creator..

B.B.: Can you recall any stories off hand that might give us some insight into the history of Fort Erie.

H.B.: No, but I could probably research it 'cause you've got a lot of files still on hand of the material that I, ah...No, there's most, well not most but many of the people that I wrote about are still alive. In fact, Norma, Norma Ryan, is a tenant here, I did a story on her, she was after a singing career at Kleinhan's Music Hall. And I did a story on her and I still have a copy of it, we were talking about it not long ago. She lives in this building, she just lives down the hall. That, I can't remember any thing that would be outstanding. It was at the time because it involved people that were here and part of it.

B.B.: Do you see where the Fort Erie Times Review has gone through a lot of changes?

H.B.: Oh, sure it's I think more now, isn't it just a, well I suppose they carry ads primarily, while they use to carry news primarily. I would

suspect that was one difference. And they use to have a reporter, and an editor and of course all the press group, and they did public relations work and they were pretty active. There wasn't much money in the game but there never, wasn't much money anywhere.

B.B.: Who were the owners of the paper at that time?

H.B.: Johnson. George, Ed Johnson was the last publisher and editor and this, by this time they didn't have a, I don't think they had a regular reporter. George, their son, and Ted, their son use to do the stories and the editing, dividing the reporting work. But basically it was just a small town newspaper which had high ethics grammatically. Ed Johnson was a well known publisher, had a fetish on language and you couldn't squeeze anything through that was ungrammatical. At least it would be very unlikely that you would. He was, and it was good course beyond, it was helpful.

B.B.: Where were they located?

H.B.: I think, Reno's, is there a place called Reno's on Jarvis Street, just across the street from where Rossmans use to be. Is that Reno's? Ya, well it is. I think it's right about where Renos is now.

B.B.: Did you ever go swimming down at the river?

H.B.: My mother wouldn't let me go in the water until I learned to swim and I never learned. Bu the rest of the family, and my family, all swim like ducks, not me.

B.B.: Do you remember when you first started at the C.N. Railroad?

H.B.: Oh, sure, sure. Of course, you always remember that. I think it was on the fifth of August that I started and I was sixteen on the twenty-first of August, the same year. And I worked a couple of years and then we were all laid off. Nobody worked. My first job at that time was typing. I don't know where I learned typing, I guess in high school. I guess that would be where I learned. And I was doing typing and I was on the midnight to eight shift and I had never stayed up after nine-thirty in my life. And it was really weird working all night you know, sounds are different, everything is different, different people are out. But you could walk around Fort Erie at that time, any, anytime at the night and you'd find railroaders going to work, coming home from work. And it was a terrific business in those days. And the affluent people of those days were the engineers and the conductors of the railroad. They had more money than anybody. And it seems to me that the people who had the most

money had the biggest families, so there must be some association here somewhere. That's how it was.

B.B.: So, Fort Erie was, or Bridgeburg at that time...

H.B.: Well there some research can be done here. It wasn't always Bridge.., Fort Erie, and it wasn't always Bridgeburg, it use to be Victoria. And there's another name in there that I can't think of. I have it somewhere but I haven't got it now. But if you reach somebody older than me might be able to tell you what the name was.

B.B.: When you moved here what was the name?

H.B.: Bridgeburg.

B.B.: And you would remember when it was am algamated?

H.B.: Oh, sure.

B.B.: Why do you think they amalgamated?

H.B.: I don't really know. That would have been a topic that would be of no interest whatever at the time, I 'd be too young to be concerned, itwas all after that. But I remember the deciding vote to be the first mayor of the combination Fort Erie/Bridgeburg was decided by Bill Tait who was the Town Clerk. You're really supposte to say Town Clark but you sound defective if you do that. And the two who were, I think it was Holly, W.J. Holly, who was a merchant on Niagara Boulevard and Harry Hall who was an active politician in the Fort Erie Senior, he worked on the customs. And he and Holly, I think the votes for the mayor were even and Bill Tait threw in his vote for Holly. That was, Hall always said he was the first mayor of Fort Erie/Bridgeburg combination because he was the mayor of Bridgeburg at the time which was before the actual mayor took over, office,a month later. But the first really elected mayor was Holly. There was always a little contention about who actually was the first mayor. I don't think very many people would care much about it today.

B.B.: What about Amigari?

H.B.: I didn't know too much about Amigari, that was an isolated section, that had it's own ethnic group. And you saw them, and they were around but they were, some of them are still alive, I mean the same group. It was over near the railroad, you know where it is. But it just seemed to be a group by itself. The only time you met anybody from another group was if you went to a ballgame and everybody was there and

other than that you kept to your own area fairly well.

B.B.: What parks would the ballgames be held at?

H.B.: Well, the first ball games that I was interested in were played up on Phipps Street, I think it was Phipps Street, on the corner of Phipps Street and Crook on the south side. And there was a soccer field, baseball field, wait a minute, before..the first baseball field that I remember was at the corner of Phipps Street and Robinson Street. Then they sort of developed the upper end toward Crook Street as an all round sport complex, I suppose they'd call it today. Then they had a football field, a soccer field and a baseball field. And then they also had ball diamonds on the Boulevard, at the base of Central Avenue and Bowen Road facing, the ball field use to face us, Bowen Road and the back of the ball park was towards the river. And then again they came up with the ball diamonds on the, behind the Michigan Central, New York Central Station on Courtwright Street. There was ball diamonds going up there just behind the station. And I think that's all, well then of course Oaks Park, the current one on Gilmore Road, is the one I can remember quickly was the last time, baseball diamond. I keep talking baseball here but that's about the only sport in those days. And everybody indulged and there were a few isolates who played tennis or went bowling or fishing and that rubbish but baseball was primarily the general sport I think.

B.B.: What about hockey, winter sports?

H.B.: Well hockey came along after the arena was built and Buffalo use to play there. And there was sort of an encroachment, if that's the word, but the younger groups who worked in arenas, they use to call you rink rats in those days if you hung around the arena. And you'd be allowed in, and you'd sneak in..it was a great art in those days sneaking into ball games or the hockey games. And I remember when some of the hockey players, like there use to be Syracuse, and London, Hamilton, Windsor, Rochester. They use to have hockey teams that played in Fort Erie. And the hockey players use to open up the windows, the dressing room door, window rather and reach on and pull us into the arena. And we end up in the visitors dressing room and then we'd sneak out under the seats and watch the hockey game. We use to be shag by ushers and that, we weren't too energetic. We knew who they were and they were

buddies of ours but they had to put on an effort to keep us from invading the arena. I know couples, fellows, I don't think I'll mention their names, they use to take a lunch up to the arena in the afternoon of the game, crawl under, they had a bandstand in those days, the band use to play before the game and they use to play the National Anthem..and sneak under the bandstand and eating the sandwich and stay there until the game was over, or starting rather, which might be three, four, five hours since they went under and then they would watch the game. In other words he pitted wits against the authorities you know. It was fun. If you got caught you got fired out and you'd just try to get back in the window again. The other window we use to climb in was the rest room, sneaking in and out of the arena. And we use to do the same with the race track. There use to be a hole in the corner of the fence. Where were we, oh ya we were watching these sports events. Okay what's the next subject?

B.B.: Let's go back to when you were working at the C.N.; Railroad was a big employment.

H.B.: It sure was. Yes sir, not only was it a big employment but it was the best pay. Yes sir, in those days teachers and doctors and lawyers were starving to death but if you worked on the railroad you were a big wheel. That was the people who had the cars on the street. Nobody went anywhere you know you didn't, nobody went to Europe for vacation or anything like that . So what you did you spent within the area fairly well with what you earned. And it use to be very prosperous in those days.

B.B.: When did that start to change?

H.B.: Well I think probably when trucks came into being and started competing with railroads. And the war came in. There was an acceleration of new transport modes and I think that's where the turning point was and railroads down hill. Anyways it was the best jobs in town I'm sure.

B.B.: What other employment was there in Fort Erie?

H.B.: Well there was the civil servants, customs.

Harry, where was that job you made \$15.00 per week?

H.B.: Oh, I wouldn't tell them about that. That wasn't a job that was penance. Ya, in those days, you could work, I worked in a factory in Fort Erie and you got \$8.35 for six and a half days, you use to work

Saturday mornings. But that wasn't a job, that was penance. Okay...

B.B.: What type of industries were there in Fort Erie?

H.B.: Well, there was Pratt & Lamberts and mostly it was the civil servants, and the teachers and the professionals and the store keepers, Horton Steele, I don't think they pay much more than they do now. And Mentholateum, oh, there probably was others.

B.B.: Did there seem to be a difference between Bridgeburg and Fort Erie?

H.B.: Yes, always, always, among the kids anyway.

B.B.: In what way?

H.B.: Well, as I say, you had your own entity in those days. If you lived in Bridgeburg, that was it, you were a Bridgeburger. If you lived in Fort Erie, you were a Fort Eriean and if you were from Amigari, you were an Amigarian. And there was no set rules, there were some, it seems to me that was how the pie was sliced and that was.. there was no animosities, it was just oh, he's from Amigari, or I live in Fort Erie, or I live in Bridgeburg and you always identified yourself, if it came to that, by saying where you lived.

B.B.: What was the feeling then when they amalgamated?

H.B.: Well, as far as I was concerned there was no feeling, it was probably disinterest, I don't know there might have been some concerns that involved people but didn't concern a mass of people. I don't remember any active or definite dividings or emergings or anything. Actually if you hadn't read the paper you probably wouldn't know it had emerged.

B.B.: What about the Depression, how did that affect this area?

H.B.: Well, it devastated it. Because most of the factories..you could get a job and starve to death in those days. You could have employment and work your butt off and when you got your pay check you didn't have enough to pay the food and rent bill and the fuel bill. And it was, they really took advantage of, you know when I say they, the employers whoever 'they' might be. And they took advantage I'm sure of the situations and it was hard times. And I suppose there were clothes hand downs and shoe hand downs and things like that in families, big families, and that was accepted. I don't remember any being any line between the big shots and the little guys in those days. Everybody was more or less tainted with the same brush, if tainted is the word. Your just, you're part of the game.

B.B.: Did you ever go to Erie Beach?

H.B.: Oh sure. There use to be a train run from ah, well you know where Gene Agrettes store is, right across from, there use to be a little space in there and the ferry use to run between Buffalo and Fort Erie in those days. And then there use to be a little train that use to, it was a coal train, that use to run from Erie Beach. I don't think anybody ever paid on it from the way I hear because you use to jump on the train while it was going by. It didn't travel very fast, you just use to tremble along. And the guy would probably sell fifteen or twenty tickets and there would be four hundred on the train and you'd have a hellof a job handling that, I mean as far as discipline was concerned, or control.

B.B.: What was Erie Beach like?

H.B.: It was suppose to be the, the biggest beach. They had a zoo there and they use to put on a little performance of, ponies use to run around and dog their heads and things like that. And it was handier than Crystal Beach for Fort Erie. People would from Buffalo, it was handier I guess to go to Crystal Beach because they took a boat from Buffalo right to Crystal Beach dock. Well there was no service from Buffalo to the Erie Beach, you would have to come to Fort Erie and then you'd get your self on to Erie Beach. But they had a big dance hall at Erie Beach, progressive. And I think they probably went into too much, I don't know. Yes it was, lovely swimming pools, they just over went you know, they couldn't maintain.

B.B.: Describe it yourself..you're going, taking the day there.

H.B.: Well, okay. You'd take, like throwing darts and oh, I have to tell you this.., they use to have a board, I mean this dart game and on i t were long, different colored ribbons. You would stand back and fire your darts and if you hit the same ribbons twice or three times you would get various prizes. So, I had never seen a dart in my life that I know of, so I gave my nickel or ticket and fired three darts at the board and I hit this same bloody ribbon three times. So that meant I could have anything I wanted in the stand. There was silver trays and rolling rugs, not very big rugs, just little scatter rugs. So I took this silver tray and I would say fifty, sixty years later my mother still had this tray. She thought that was wonderful.. my major success in my early life. I had conquered Erie Beach and won a prize. But it was lovely up there.

B.B.: Did they have other games like that?

H.B.: Oh sure, we use to go on, we use to sit on a mat, there use to be a long slide, and you'd sit on this mat and slide down. The reason we went on that first was because it was only a nickel and we could play it, ride it, as long as we wanted. Then you'd ride it 'til you got pooped or fairly fed up and then you'd have to go into more exotic, if that's the word, areas and pay more money to use them. But you got your full of the little one first, conditioned as it were.

B.B.: What other type of rides did they have?

H.B.: Well, they use to always have this little steam engine that would pull you around the park and you sat on that and go around the park. And then you had a ferris wheel, I don't think it was any higher than a six foot man but you thought you were in a cage. They caged you in, in those days where you couldn't fall out. And then they had games, you use to fish in ponds and all that sort of stuff. But that was about it. There wasn't that much except they had a beautiful park, that is where you can go and have your lunch and things like that. Well they had a..well, that was what it was, not so much games as recreation.

B.B.: There was walkways?

H.B.: We use to go once a year to the, the Sunday School use to go to the..another one of the big picnics at Erie Beach was the farmers picnic..and then there was the church, the churches use to have their picnics up there. And in those days it didn't matter whether you attended the church or not, you could go to the churches picnics and have a ball. We use to have ice cream that use to melt. We use to have, what was that..salt, salt they use to soak into this ice... they use to have these cans of ice cream that would be all melted by the time the picnic was ready to serve it. But anyways it was fun.

B.B.: Where was the farmers picnic?

H.B.: At Erie Beach.

B.B.: What was it?

H.B.: Well the farmers of the area use to go there with their huge baskets of food, cider and all that sort of bit. From the whole area. They use to come in, farmers use to come in every week into town. They use to bring there fruit, like apples and pears and plums and also they use to bring butter in a crock. You use to buy a crock, two

crocks you use to have and your farmer came around on Saturday morning and he left your crock of butter and took your empty crock then he would reverse it and bring it back the next week. You had these two crocks going back and forth between the customer and the farmer. And if you wanted a fowl, they would bring you a duck or a goose or a chicken, on one side you'd want a duck or whatever from it. By the way, it only had to be a very big occasion that you had a duck or a chicken or a turkey or a goose, during the year. And then we use, a horse and wagon were predominant in those days. You use to have, the milkman use to come around five o'clock in the morning and meat..and breadman and the farmer. These were horses and they use to foul up the road. And my dad use to give me a nickel if, I had a pail and I use to dash out, in competition with other kids, and see if you could pick up this mess and put it in your can. He used it on his flowers or whatever. And you were in competition with the other kids, their fathers had told them, if you see anything go out and get it. We had a pail sitting by the side with a shovel and this horse came by I'd charge out there and get there first.

B.B.: Did you ever go to Crystal Beach?

H.B.: Oh, sure but that was kind of a long way out. You had to go by car and it wasn't the same as Erie Beach. People from Ridgeway and Crystal Beach area, like the residential area, they use to go to Crystal Beach and of course Buffalo use to have a real big trade in Crystal Beach.

B.B.: Do you remember a yacht club on the Niagara River?

H.B.: I do but I didn't pay any attention to it. I remember they use to have it.

B.B.: Where was it located?

H.B.: I don't know, I'm not really sure. I don't know. I had no interest, I think a few people who socialized

B.B.: What about the shipyards?

H.B.: Oh, the shipyards were abandoned when we moved here in 192..., well, I guess they were abadoned, they didn't do any work out there. They still call it the shipyards, that's where that yacht group is now.

G.B.: Wasn't it the war that took that?

H.B.: Oh, yes...

G.B.: That would be the first war..1918.

H.B.: 1918, ya. No I don't know anything about that except where it was. But there was no people working there in my time.

B.B.: What about the south end, the business area in the south end, how has that changed?

H.B.: I would say the south end right now, except these couple of modern buildings like banks, there's the Commerce and Montreal, and the Chinese have built it up. Basically though it's the same that it ever was. I'm sure there are buildings there that were there a hundred years ago.

B.B.: What type of businesses use to be in there.

H.B.: Little grocery stores, stationary stores. There use to be little stores that use to sell tobacco and newspapers and racing forms, drug store like Aspens and things like that. And then of course there was the hardware store across the street called Hollys and then there were HapGoods who ran a grocery store right next to it. And ah, there was a bank down there, I think it was called the Molsons Bank. It was right next to...that big red building that's across from Happy Jacks, I think that was...

B.B.: Do you remember Sullivan's Fish and Chips.

H.B.: Oh, sure. That was..it use to be twenty-five cents, the cheapest I remember. He's sharp, he's got a good memory.

G.B.: ...he's a fixture in Fort Erie...

H.B.: And another thing that use to go on in Fort Erie, so many nicknames. People had nicknames, you never knew their real name. And even to this day when a few of us are sitting around, we try to say, 'Now who is so and so'. Like there was a guy named Zoo and the Chirp, Duck. And if you were very tall they called you Shorty and even if you very small they called you Shorty, so that one didn't define too well, but it was predominant. And let's see who were they..Dutch and anyway there was a whole lot of nicknames. I never heard my first name all through school, I was called Bushy. I was quite surprised when I grew up and someone called me Harry and I said, 'oh, that's my name', so...

B.B.: Do you remember when the race track came in?

H.B.: Oh, not came, no, that was there long before I came here. But I remember the race track in the old days, sure. We use to sneak in and walk through the stables to get to the in..what do you call the inside of the track? Anyway they had the most vicious dogs,

I never know to this day how we got through those days alive. Because they had their own guard, they had belonged..I think they use to still from each other like crazy according to rumour. And they had these beautiful big dogs, with big jaws like alligators. ...I think he would be the first who actually became a professional jockey at the track. [Passero] When we were kids, we were always going to run away from home and be jockeys. These jockeys use to walk around with these sharp suits on and these big felt hats and talk their language, you know their colloquialisms. And we were sitting right along side the starting gate when Johnny was on his horse, it was pouring with rain and he won the first race that he was ever in and he won the second race that he was in. He became at one time Canadas leading trainer for horses. But he's the only one I can think of off hand at that time who went in as an actual jockey. There was others that were interested in horses. I think there was somebody who came after as a jockey but Johnny Passero was it.

B.B.: Was the race track a popular place for people to go to?

H.B.: Oh, sure and not only that it was a good source of employment. Oh, sure it was very good. And there was like, parking cars, and let see, the various places that they sold foods and souvenirs, not souvenirs, programs. You know it was very active. And the Times Review would get back to that and make the programs, you use to have to ruffle them up just before the game, the races started, for that days races. That was another project. Well, it was very active, very beneficial, the race track.

B.B.: Well can you think of anything else as you look back over Fort Erie and some of the changes you have seen it go through?

H.B.: Well, I haven't detected the changes so much.

G.B.: I would say one thing was they built a new hospital here and they built a new, all these buildings are new.

H.B.: Ya, well that goes back a long ways you see. It goes back nearly fifty years, so that's not really..

G.B.: It's more than fifty years.

H.B.: Ya, but I mean the hospital was there, I think it was built about what, 19..

G.B.: 30 or 29.

H.B.: Doug Fraser was the first person born in Douglas Memorial Hospital. Do you know Doug by any chance? He lived on Bowen Road just

at the bottom and Doctor Streets was the doctor. And Doug, I think he got a hundred bucks or something on his 21st birthday as a reward for being the first one born in Douglas Memorial Hospital.

G.B.: Twenty-one years later that was an awful lot, I mean was very little but at the time was ...

H.B.: He works on the customs..Ithink, he left and went somewhere else though. Anyway we watched him grow up. He was one of the kids in our neighbourhood.

B.B.: Before the hospital was here where would you go?

H.B.: Either Buffalo or Niagara Falls. There was all kinds of people in those days who had, I think they called it dual citizenship. They Fort Erie residents and Canadians but when the baby was born the handiest place to go was to the Buffalo Hospital. And they would be born of Canadian parents in the United States. And I think there was problems, just where did you belong, were you American or were you Canadian and you had to declare I think it was final status. That's where you went was the Buffalo Hospital.

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

H.B.: Oh, sure. We were kids and the Prince Wales was coming to open the Peace Bridge. He had us on stands at the base of Bowen Road and Niagara Boulevard and they had us sing God Save the King a half a dozen times. ..Let me see where were we..

B.B.: You were singing God Save the Queen.

H.B.: King.

B.B.: King.

H.B.: We were taken from school and we had these stands erected up at the Niagara Boulevard at the base of Bowen Road, which was the entrance to Fort Erie. And when the Prince of Wales come, was to come by, in his entourage, we were to all sing God Save the King. And we waited and waited and waited and all of sudden we saw some motorcycles flashing down the Bowen Road, so they'd arrive on the Niagara Bouldevard from the Falls. And the teachers alerted us, and we were already to sing and he went by us at about a fifty miles an hour. I don't think we even saw him. And the motorcycles would run, very exciting but it wasn't very helpful as discerning what was going on.

B.B.: Did you do any other feature stories on some prominent people that might have visited Fort Erie?

H.B.: No, not that I can think of. There wasn't much going on here then. I did a full story, a complete story on the history of the International Bridge. People that fell off and cars that went off it.

B.B.: Cars fell off it?

H.B.: Well, I meant railway cars. The bridge opened and the cars kept going, plummeting into the river. There was a ferry that use to carry passengers I understand between Buffalo and Fort Erie, Black Rock and Buffalo. The bridge opened up when it shouldn't have and the car went down into the river. And then there was a famous ball player Ed Dela-Honte, who he was supposed to have been drunk and got off the train and thought he was at the station and he was in the middle of the bridge and went flying into the water and we never saw him again. But I have that report in writing. What else...?

B.B.: Is there anything else you can think of as you look back.

H.B.: Everything was different, boy/girl relationship was different. In those days the boys weren't allowed to go over, like the school yard was divided, boys, girls, and God help you if you were caught by the teachers on the wrong one, these were the girls and the boys. And we never, girls couldn't play baseball or didn't ride bicycles and oh, all those kinds of social changes. Part of the times I guess, evolution or regression, it's your choice.

B.B.: What about the Queen Elizabeth Way? Do you remember when that came?

H.B.: Well, not too much. By that time I was old enough that it was just a road being built. But it went on for years before it was completed. You drove down it once when it was just...

G.B.: I drove down it when it was just one lane when I went to Alices wedding. And it was just one, it wasn't nearly completed. This chap that I went with he was a brother-in-law or something, he drove me home to Fort Erie. And he really went so fast on the one road I thought I was never going to get home.

H.B.: It wasn't any big deal, it was just a road they were building from Niagara Falls to Fort Erie.

G.B.: Then they changed it, every year I bet for twenty years, they always are repairing the Queen Elizabeth Way. Always.

B.B.: So access out of Fort Erie wasn't that different than before?

H.B.: Well, you went along the Boulevard.

G.B.: Well, we went along the Boulevard and we went around there but

it wasn't easy. You know, I mean it was a bad road.

B.B.: The Niagara Boulevard was a bad road?

G.B.: Well not a wide road.

H.B.: There was parking there at night if that was bad.

G.B.: Oh, parking. I don't think he ever did it but..

H.B.: Okay, carry on Beverly. Getting pooped?

B.B.: Nope. Is there anything else that...

H.B.: Outstanding.

B.B.: Outstanding.

H.B.: I'll think of lots of it when you go.

B.B.: Well, I thank you very much. You have done great.

H.B.: Oh, sure. It's been fun, eh.

B.B.: It has been, it has been. I appreciate it.

H.B.: Okay, I just thought of this one instance that I think is hilarious.

We were playing in the back yard with this kid and he went in the house for some reason or another and apparently got into conflict with his mother. By the way, this is when we were only about eight or nine, ten years old. And there was this big row inside the house and all of a sudden this kid comes charging out of the house with his mother right behind him. And she's got one of these screens that you use to put in the base of the window, you'd open the screen and fit the width of the window and pull the window down on the screen and then you had the air underneath. And she had this in her hand. And just as he was getting beyond reach she swung at him with this screen she was holding, and this screen opened up and went over his head. And he's running across the field with this blasted screen hanging around his neck and his mother still yelling at him to stop. And away he went. Oh, I can still visualize that.

Oh, another thing, my brother..My dad was very strict. He was in charge of our house. He never struck me, ever, but I always felt I was one step from annihilation when he got upset. So anyway, he's carrying, he had this lawn sprinkler on the back lawn, and the tap for the lawn sprinkler was at the back of the house. So he went and he turned off the water hose, the tap, picked up his sprinkler and walked around the house to put it on, to put the sprinkler on the front lawn. In the meantime my brother sneaked up behind

and I don't know why the hell he ever did this, he knew he'd get creamed. He turned the tap on and my dad's carrying the sprinkler and all of a sudden, he's walking around carrying the sprinkler and it jumps up alive, and water all over the place. So my dad came charging around the side of the house, my brother jumped, hurdled the fence and nobody could have come close to hurdling under normal incentive, and my dad after him. The last thing we saw he disappeared into the woods along side of Bowen Road and towards.., he got back safely though. But I don't know yet why he ever did that to that tap because it had to be disastrous.

Oh, ya, and Al Reid and I were playing catch one day in the back yard. In our back porch were four windows, crosses, and he threw the ball too high for me, when I ducked they couldn't get it, and the ball instead of getting one window and one pane and breaking it, it hit right in the centre of this four pane window and broke the whole bloody four of them. And out the door my dad came like a rocket. The minute anything was going on it was out of tune with the normal he was very alert and very aggressive. And he didn't ask any questions, you were just it. So away we went into the woods and we were a long time before we came back but we fixed it up. But at the time you think you are in imminent death throes.