

This is Rose Hearn interviewing Mr. Ira Nigh in his home at Ridgemount Road, Ridgeway, Ontario, and the date is August 6, 1985.

**R.H:** Good afternoon Ira.

**I.N:** How do you do, glad to meet you.

**R.H:** I'm very happy to meet you to. Could you please tell me when you were born?

**I.N:** I was born in 1907, September 1907.

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

**I.N:** Well I was born in the old Bowen Road. Now the old road right at Miller's wrecking yard went straight down, and it came out on Thompson Road and the old Riselay Farm.

**R.H:** Riselay Farm?

**I.N:** Riselay Farm, my father worked that farm for nine years on a fifty fifty basis.

**R.H:** So he worked for this Mr. Riselay?

**I.N:** Yes.

**R.H:** Oh I see, and you all were born there?

**I.N:** I was born there.

**R.H:** Do you remember what it was like there?

**I.N:** No we moved away when I was two years old.

**R.H:** So you were quite young when you moved away?

**I.N:** That's right, but the house that I was born in was moved down to Phipps Street, and it's right next to Lloyd McIntyre's house.

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

**I.N:** It's still there on Phipps Street. It's been redone of course but it's still there. What year it was moved down there I don't know, but we left there in 1909.

**R.H:** And then you went to...?

**I.N:** We moved to House Road right across from Fred House's, (which should be familiar to the people nowadays) and we lived there from 1909 to 1917.

**R.H:** Can you remember anything about that area?

**I.N:** Very much so. I started school at No. 13 school across from the Cherry Hill Clubhouse, and incidently our oldest son has built a home right there now too.

**R.H:** Is the schoolhouse still there?

**I.N:** The schoolhouse is still there. It has been made into a residence,

but it's still there. They added an addition on the west end of it but that schoolhouse is still there, and during that period of time that we lived there my older brother died in 1914. It was quite upsetting, he was sixteen years old, and it was rather tragic, and he had appendicitis, and in those days you had to go to Stevensville by horse and democrat wagon, be put on a train, and go to Buffalo to the hospital.

**R.H:** You took him to Buffalo as there was no hospital in those days?

**I.N:** No no, and he passed away then, and then we sold that farm in 1917, and moved here where we live now.

**R.H:** Do you remember anything about the farm, growing up there?

**I.N:** Well yes I remember quite a bit about it, I mean it was a very good neighbourhood, and we had very wonderful neighbours there, and of course in those days it was horse and buggy days. In the wintertime we were sleigh-riding down the hills, and fishing in the creek you know. I remember quite a bit about, and I remember one time I was quite young yet and my parents thought I was lost, and they thought I was in the creek, and...cried nobody's ever been drowned in that creek before and he's just not in there, but my parents were frantic you know, so not too long after they saw me coming up across the field you know, and my dad had been down in the bush making wood, and I had wandered down there, and he wasn't there so I came back home.

**R.H:** I see, so you weren't lost after all, and did you skate on this creek in the wintertime?

**I.N:** Oh yes the people did, they skated. I skated a wee bit, but of course I was quite young then. I was just nine years old when we moved away from there.

**R.H:** Oh yes, but you skated on the ice, the pond?

**I.N:** Oh yeah, well there was a creek that went right down through there. It's pretty well filled in now.

**R.H:** And were the roads just dirt?

**I.N:** Oh, just all dirt roads, Garrison Road was stoned at that time, but I don't remember just when it was stoned, but it was stoned.

**R.H:** What about Concession Road, was that...?

**I.N:** Yes, well that was oncession 13 then up there, and this is oncession 7 here now up to the Niagara River.

**R.H:** I see, so they were mostly dirt roads then?

**I.N:** Yes, just the main roads like the Garrison Road, and the Bowen Road, and of course the Stevensville Road. You see Gorham Road stopped at Nigh Road, and it wasn't open till the Bertie Road was put through there. I'm not too sure of it, but it was not too many years ago that was opened through, and they called it the Gorham Road.

**R.H:** I see, and where did you go from there then?

**I.N:** Well we moved here then.

**R.H:** You moved right here, and you've been here ever since?

**I.N:** Yes since 1917.

**R.H:** Since 1917, and what was it like here, what was this house like then?

**I.N:** Well this house was pretty much the same with exception that we have the veranda on the front, and the sunporch on the side, but the main structure is exactly the same. We have a shed at the back there where we put the plumbing in and the cistern and the water supplies.

**R.H:** So you didn't have plumbing, did you grow up without plumbing?

**I.N:** No, heavens no, we grew up without plumbing, we grew up without electricity, and I did my homework with a kerosene light.

**R.H:** Kerosene, you had kerosene lamps?

**I.N:** Yeah, coal oil lights, kerosene lights, yeah.

**R.H:** And you had coal for the stove?

**I.N:** Wood and coal.

**R.H:** Was the coal delivered?

**I.N:** Well sometimes we'd go to town, and get a load of coal and most times when we went, we went into Ridgeway and got a load of coal.

**R.H:** Where did you go to get it?

**I.N:** Ridgeway.

**R.H:** Yeah, but do you remember the place?

**I.N:** Well Young's had coal, and Ridgeway Milling Company had coal at that time. It was a flour mill but dealt in coal, and it later became Disher Flour and Feed.

**R.H:** Did you have an ice-box?

**I.N:** No, we just used the cellar, the cold cellar then.

**R.H:** So you didn't have that luxury?

**I.N:** No we didn't have an ice-box till after we were married here, after 1931.

**R.H:** Did your family have a telephone?

**I.N:** Oh yes, I can't remember when we didn't have a telephone.

**R.H:** Oh you always had a telephone?

**I.N:** Yes, I don't really remember but I know...I'm not sure when, (though of course I couldn't quite remember when we left the Riselay Farm at two years old) but I know up at House Road we always had the telephone. It was then the old what they called the Welland County Telephone Company.

**R.H:** And it was the crank and the operator?

**I.N:** Yes that's right, and you had to crank it up and the operator would answer, and you'd say "give me John Bowen".

**R.H:** Did you know who the operator was?

**I.N:** Oh yes. Well the one here in Ridgeway was Maud Kraft.

**R.H:** Maud Kraft, is she any relation to thee Kraft?

**I.N:** Oh yes definitely, oh yes she was related.

**R.H:** To J.L. Kraft?

**I.N:** Yes. I'm not sure, I wouldn't want to be quoted that she was his sister or not, but I believe she might have been.

**R.H:** So she was related to him, and do you know anything about him at all?

**I.N:** No, not really.

**R.H:** Where did you go to school from here?

**I.N:** Well I started at No. 13, then I moved over here to No. 6, and then I passed my entrance No. 6, and then I went to Ridgeway to the continuation school.

**R.H:** Do you remember the teachers you had when you were there?

**I.N:** Do you know my first teacher is still living, and she married my first cousin up at No. 13. She quit teaching...I started at easter time, and she quit in June and married my first cousin and went homesteading out in Saskatchewan. She's still living and she's down at Oakwood Home now. She's crowding the hundred mark.

**R.H:** What was her name?

**I.N:** Elma Sider, that was her maiden name. She married my first cousin Joram Nigh, my dad's oldest brother's son.

**R.H:** Joram? that's quite an unusual name, and her name was Elma?

**I.N:** Sider.

**R.H:** That's quite a famous name too?

**I.N:** Yes it is, and also there was a teacher up there by the name of Merle

Zavitz, and down here we had a Mrs. Sherk for a long time, and her maiden name was Olive Atwell, and she married Earl Sherk, and she just recently died too. I think her husband is still living in Port Colborne as far as I know. She was here quite some time, and so help me I can't remember the teacher when I tried my entrance exam.

**R.H:** Were they strict?

**I.N:** I would say so.

**R.H:** Did you get the strap?

**I.N:** No, fortunately I didn't, but oh yes you'd better believe it they didn't spare the rod believe you me, no, no.

**R.H:** And you walked to school of course?

**I.N:** Oh definitely, we walked and at the time when the roads were snowy they'd come and get us with a team of horses and sleighs.

**R.H:** Did they really?

**I.N:** Oh yeah the neighbours would do that. They would take you in the morning if it was nasty, and come and get you in the evening at four oclock. We had neighbours right across the road here that would...a girl over here went to school the same time as I did, she was a bit older, but we went to school together. They'd change, my dad would generally take us in the morning and they would get us at night. But of course if it was nice weather we walked.

**R.H:** How far would it be?

**I.N:** It was just a little under the mile.

**R.H:** Just under the mile, that's a good walk isn't it?

**I.N:** Oh yeah.

**R.H:** Did you think the winters were harsher, and do you remember any bad storms?

**I.N:** Well yes I remember bad storms when it would blow for three days you know and we were sort of locked in, but we always had fuel, and we had our own butter, eggs, milk, and we had no problem, and with fuel to keep warm why that was all that was necessary.

**R.H:** Did you have to do chores too before you went to school?

**I.N:** Oh I did chores...I...

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

**I.N:** Oh feed the horses and the cows, and the chickens and one thing or another. Yeah we had our work to do.

**R.H:** Did you get any pay?



**I.N:** Well we got our spending money. My dad was a very kind man, and my mother too and they were always good to me as far as that's concerned and all through my life. When I started going out they never questioned where I was going you know, and they had every confidence that I was a good boy. They knew where I was going pretty well, and I would tell them. I don't think they ever worried about me really.

**R.H:** So you got a little pocket money that way. What other entertainment did you have, was there anything other than...?

**I.N:** No, not really...well after you got a bit older and you were in your teens, there was parties in the wintertime, square-dances...

**R.H:** You went square-dancing?

**I.N:** Oh sure, I loved it.

**R.H:** Who did the calling, do you know anyone who did the calling?

**I.N:** Oh sure the former Reeve of Bertie township Ernie Gorham, he did a lot of the calling. There was another...let's see there was one here locally...I just can't think of who it was now...I think maybe Morris Godson.

**R.H:** Where did you get your music from, was it local people?

**I.N:** Oh just local fiddlers, yeah local fiddlers just came in and there would be somebody that would play and chord the piano and away we'd go.

**R.H:** Where did they hold them?

**I.N:** Oh in the different homes.

**R.H:** So was it who ever had the biggest place?

**I.N:** Yeah who ever had the room, and they would clear the furniture out of a couple of rooms and...

**R.H:** And were the kids sort of in on it?

**I.N:** Oh sure. As soon as they were able to start out a little bit, they'd watch and then they'd get dancing themselves.

**R.H:** Did you have refreshments?

**I.N:** Oh sure, we had tea and coffee, and sandwiches and cakes, and so on. It was a real good time, and oh they'd go till three or four o'clock in the morning.

**R.H:** What were the names of some of the dances?

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**R.H:** Where did your parents do their shopping?

**I.N:** Well they mostly shopped in Ridgeway for groceries and so on and for the clothing they pretty well went to Buffalo.

**R.H:** Did they? at that time, and did they go on the ferry-boats?

**I.N:** Yes, oh definitely they went on the ferry-boats.

**R.H:** And you went with them I imagine?

**I.N:** Well quite often, and I remember after we lived here and if I needed a pair of overalls well my dad and I would drive the horse to Fort Erie and leave them up there and go across on the ferry and walk out to the corner of Grant Street and Ferry Street, and buy overalls.

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

**I.N:** It was at the corner of Grant and Ferry. It wasn't Grants was it? I think maybe it was, I think that was the name of the store.

**R.H:** Did you have to go and declare everything?

**I.N:** Well sometimes, but no, we'd buy our suits over there, and my first suit with long pants I bought over there.

**R.H:** When you say your suit with long pants, did you have a suit with short pants?

**I.N:** Sure, oh sure you had to be thirteen or fourteen before you got the long pants.

**R.H:** So you were about thirteen or fourteen before you got your...?

**I.N:** Yeah, I think I was...yeah I was fourteen.

**R.H:** Well you said you went to Ridgeway, was it for meat and things like that?

**I.N:** Well all the groceries like butter...well not butter as we had our own butter and eggs, but flour and cereals and so on like that, why we always went to Ridgeway. That was our shopping...after we moved away from...now of course my dad down on the Riselay Farm, Fort Erie, he went to market down there and took butter and eggs.

**R.H:** He sold these, and did he take them to Jarvis Street?

**I.N:** Yes, oh yes it was the old Jarvis Street there, and Nicky White had the butcher shop there on Jarvis Street, and...oh on Courtwright the Barnea House was there, then called the Barnea House.

**R.H:** The Barnea was still the Barnea, and was Spain's Hotel around there?

**I.N:** Yes the Spain's Hotel, yeah...

**R.H:** So you went to Jarvis Street and sold produce, and did you just park on Jarvis Street?

**I.N:** Oh no he delivered to customers.



**R.H:** Oh he had customers he delivered to. Oh I see, and like maybe the grocery stores?

**I.N:** Well yes, and even private homes, oh yes at the time.

**R.H:** And he delivered what?

**I.N:** Well mostly butter and eggs, but during the fruit season they had a lot of cherries and apples on the Riselay Farm and he would do that to.

**R.H:** You went with him to help him?

**I.N:** No I was too young, but my older brother probably did.

**R.H:** Was there a lot of stores in Ridgeway?

**I.N:** No there wasn't too many, but for a small town it was quite a centre really, Ridgeway was you know. There was a Flour Mill, and the Saw Mill you know, and they had quite a little town there right from the beginning really. There was harness making, wagon making and so on, it was all there.

**R.H:** And the grocery stores, do you remember any of the names?

**I.N:** Well yes there was as I remember it Hardison, and Mark Smith wasin there just as long as I can remember in meat, and Harry Hughback, he had a store there, and then his son Harry carried on until it folded up. There was three drugstores, there was Swartz's there and Brodie's, and Brodie's is still going by that name, and Swartz's, that's where the I.D.A is there now, and his name is still up there in black out in front.

**R.H:** Was Beeshy's there?

**I.N:** Beeshy's was there, Sherk's Hardware, and I remember when Camarata's first came to Ridgeway.

**R.H:** What was Camarata's?

**I.N:** Well that was a fruit and vegetable...they had a store then where the supermarket is now. They had a little store right on the corner of Wilson and Ridge Road. They sold banana's and what have you...They had a large family, and they are still in Ridgeway the Camarata family. Very good citizens, very good, and as a matter of fact Tony Camarata is managing Stuart's in Ridgeway right now.

**R.H:** So Ridgeway was quite a busy little town?

**I.N:** Oh yes, always has been, and of course it was the centre of the township, municipal headquarters you know.

**R.H:** Wasn't that the Townhall where the museum is now?

**I.N:** Yeah that's right, and that was built in 1873 I guess, somewhere's

along then.

**R.H:** So you had a hundred years celebration?

**I.N:** Yes we had, that's right.

**R.H:** And you were in Council?

**I.N:** I was in Council from 1936 till 41, just a Councilman.

**R.H:** Who was the Mayor at that time?

**I.N:** Well when I first started Alfred Hershey was Reeve, and then Chester Fretz, and then Ern Gorham.

**R.H:** So Chester Fretz was Mayor?

**I.N:** Well Reeve they called them at that time, and at first when I went in there in 1936 Alfred Hershey was Reeve for one year, and there was an election and Chester Fretz was elected, and he was three years I guess it was and then Ern Gorham was Mayor. He was here till I resigned from Council. I started working in Ridgeway at Disher's there and I couldn't spare the time so I resigned in 1941.

**R.H:** Did you always farm?

**I.N:** No, I've been in and out of farming all my life actually. When we were married I was farming, and that was in 31, and I farmed straight right through until 1944 I guess it was.

**R.H:** How did you survive in the Depression?

**I.N:** Well like I say we had our own food pretty well, and we didn't have to buy that much and we had sixty five acres here and my dad and mother, we lived off of it and we sold milk. The price of milk at that time I remember was a dollar and thirty seven cents a hundred weight but we got by. We didn't have very much but we had plenty to eat and drink and keep warm and that's all.

**R.H:** There was no luxuries at all?

**I.N:** No, not really just more or less the necessities of survival, and as I say we were healthy and the kids were healthy, and we had no setbacks that ways, which means a lot.

**R.H:** Did you ever get people that came to your place at all, people that were in need?

**I.N:** No but in the olden days even before we were married, we always had the transient that would stop in for a sandwich or something like that, but we weren't bothered that much being a little bit off the main highway. You didn't get it as much as the people on the main highways. But even during the Depression I mean even when

I was in Council I wasn't molested very much.

**R.H:** You said that you farmed off and on, so what did you do?

**I.N:** Yes in 1952 I had been working in Ridgeway for M.W. Disher and Son for eleven years from 41 till 52 and I came home in the spring of 52 and my dad was failing. I came home and spent the summer at home. He died in the fall of 52, and then in the spring of 53 I went out and got myself a job. In June of 53 I started working for Strong, Cobb and Arner and I worked there till I retired.

**R.H:** Where was that?

**I.N:** Strong, Cobb and Arner? In Fort Erie.

**R.H:** It's in Fort Erie?

**I.N:** Yeah at the corner of Lewis and Niagara Boulevard where those apartments is now. The pharmaceutical?

**R.H:** Was that a pill factory?

**I.N:** Yes, why sure. When I started there it was the Arner Company.

**R.H:** That's right, and that was down at the corner of the boulevard and Lewis Street, right?

**I.N:** Sure, that's right, and there is big apartments there now.

**R.H:** So when you started it was called the Arner Company?

**I.N:** The Arner Company, and then a few years later they merged with Strong, Cobb of Cleveland and then it was called Strong, Cobb and Arner, and then before I left it was International...I.C.M Strong, Cobb and Arner they called it, and that's what they went by till they folded here in Fort Erie. I retired in 1972 and it was pretty close to twenty years, I got a twenty year pin. Since then I've been home.

**R.H:** What did you do there?

**I.N:** Well I did very well there, I started out in manufacturing with the granulating company and I think I was there two years, and then I was foreman over shipping and receiving and stock. It was a very good job.

**R.H:** Did you enjoy working there?

**I.N:** I really enjoyed it, it was the best years of my life. I worked hard but it paid off you know. I worked hard, I always have, but I enjoy working.

**R.H:** So that was in the Southend, do you know anything about the Southend?

**I.N:** No, not too much.

**R.H:** Just that you went on the ferry-boats there?

**I.N:** That's right. the King Edward Hotel was there then of course, and I remember when we would go to Buffalo why we would put our horse...they had a livery stable at the back and we'd put our horse in there and a man by the name of Teddy Harris...

**R.H:** This was at the back of the King Edward?

**I.N:** At the back of the King Edward there was quite a barn back there, and I think they could keep ten or twelve horses there probably. You'd have to pay so much for them to take care of them during the day, and they'd feed them. You'd didn't have to take any feed along and they'd come and help you hitch up.

**R.H:** Who owned that, do you know?

**I.N:** Well it went with the hotel, but I don't know who...I couldn't tell you who was there at that time. Of course Dr. Douglas's house was right next door there on Bertie Street, and I remember that.

**R.H:** Who was your doctor?

**I.N:** Well I don't remember but a Dr. Mencke brought me into the world, I know that. Then of course when we moved up on House Road Dr. Buell was our doctor until my brother died. We then we went to Ridgeway and had Dr. Snyder, and then Dr. Macey, and Novak, and Thompson. We kept with the Ridgeway doctors.

**R.H:** Well Bertie Township, I don't know much about it, but what areas did it cover really?

**I.N:** Well Bertie Township covered the town limits of Fort Erie which was Concession Road 8, which you can probably follow in a straight line all the way out to the lake, and it took in all the lakefront up to the town line which is a half a mile on this side of Holloway Bay, then it went right straight across to Netherby Road, and then down to the river again. That was Bertie Township and at that time in the beginning, Crystal Beach was even in with Bertie Township, but then during my time Crystal Beach was a village. They had gone to a village before I was...but originally they were in Bertie Township.

**R.H:** Then they were out and they had their own Mayor and Council, and everything like that?

**I.N:** Yes that's right. Well that was Bertie Township.

**R.H:** So that would be Ridgeway, and Stevensville?

**I.N:** Ridgeway and Stevensville were the two towns in Bertie Township.

**R.H:** Was Stevensville as busy as Ridgeway?

**I.N:** No, no it wasn't, because the town centre, and the municipal building was in Ridgeway and they had some industry over there a bit too, but it wasn't the centre that Ridgeway was.

**R.H:** Who took care of your horses, was there a veterinarian in the area?

**I.N:** Oh yes, oh sure.

**R.H:** Who would that be?

**I.N:** Well as long as I can remember Dr. Price was the Veterinarian for pretty well the whole area. The railroad Veterinarian who looked after the animals who would come in from the States and so on would make service calls, but he was not supposed to, but if he had some friends in the farmers he would make the odd service call, and his name was Dr. Phillips. Do you remember Marge Phillips? Well that was her father.

**R.H:** And did they have blacksmith's shops?

**I.N:** Oh yeah every town had its blacksmith shop.

**R.H:** To shoe the horses and...?

**I.N:** Oh yes, sure, Stevensville had a couple and Ridgeway had a couple of them.

**R.H:** Did you ever go to the blacksmith shop?

**I.N:** Oh heavens yes.

**R.H:** Who did the work?

**I.N:** Well the very prominent ones in Stevensville was Anger. There old Ben and young Ben they called them, father and son, and then there was a man by the name of Morningstar that was a blacksmith in Stevensville, and also Bertram was there for a long time and then in Ridgeway there was another Anger, Sam Anger, who was the brother of old Ben. They were blacksmiths you know, and then there was Benner down here on the corner of No. 3 highway and Helena Street. In that corner there was a blacksmith, Corty Benner. Oh sure I took the team many a time to the blacksmith shop and the horse was shod. Oh yeah even after I was farming and after we were married.

**R.H:** What about the Stevensville Hotel, do you know anything about that?

**I.N:** Well not much but the only thing that I know about the Stevensville Hotel was what my dad used to tell us quite often. My grandfather was a very stern powerful man, and when he spoke, he spoke with authority. He lived up Netherby Road a couple of miles and he



had moved from out here or his father did, and he always drove two horses to a democrat wagon and in those days there used to be quite a bit of brawling around the hotels, and anyway if they had some brawling around the hotels, and they seen Peter Nigh coming they'd say "boys we'd better break it up because he'd just go nuts on us boys". I have his picture and you can tell by the look of him that he was very stern. I never saw him as he was gone before I was born.

**R.H:** Was he born in this country?

**I.N:** Yes, right over here.

**R.H:** I just wondered because I had read somewhere that some people had come from Pennsylvania?

**I.N:** Well they did. I mean they came from the old country and we've just recently done a book on our history. It's quite fascinating, and there's one in the museum up in Ridgeway. Right now my oldest son had a book, and I've gone through it and it's quite interesting. It's a large volume book so thick, and it's right from the time they came from Germany. It was two brothers apparently came over from Germany and settled in...

**R.H:** This was your family of course?

**I.N:** Yes, yes.

**R.H:** And they went to Pennsylvania?

**I.N:** That's right, and some of them migrated over here in the late seventeen hundreds or the early eighteens.

**R.H:** And this was when the Crown Land was given out?

**I.N:** Yes in the late seventeen hundreds was the Crown Land.

**R.H:** Wasn't that the Empire Loyalists that received this Crown Land?

**I.N:** Yes that's right.

**R.H:** How did they get it, do you know anything about it?

**I.N:** No not really, but I think they applied for it and I don't know whether they had to do, I really don't know.

**R.H:** Was it free then this land?

**I.N:** Yes, oh yes it was free. I think they had to develop it but it was free, and it was theirs, and they had a Crown Deed. It was a Crown Deed they called it. You were given a deed to the property and you could do what you liked with it.

**R.H:** Do you remember anything about the Ridgeway fire?

**I.N:** I remember them talking about it, but I don't remember the...Well now there was two fires of course. There's was one in the early forties but that didn't do the damage that the earlier one had done.

**R.H:** When was that?

**I.N:** I would think along 1912, possibly, but I'm not sure about that, but that was quite a disaster.

**R.H:** I imagine it would be because the Fire Department wouldn't have any...?

**I.N:** Oh no, no, I don't even know if they had a Volunteer Fire Department then or not but in the other fire in the forties they had a volunteer.

**R.H:** Do you remember the Bertie Fair, did you ever go to the Bertie Fair?

**I.N:** Absolutely, I remember the Bertie Fair very well and as a matter of fact we showed horses down there in the Bertie Fair, and vegetables. I'm just trying to think what year that was...I would think about 19...wait a minute about 1921 or 1922. Yes we had three horses down there, and of course it was quite the fair.

**R.H:** It was at the Racetrack?

**I.N:** Yes.

**R.H:** I imagine it was quite large then?

**I.N:** Yes it was. Bertie Agricultural Society they called it.

**R.H:** So they sold all their vegetables and everything?

**I.N:** No it was just exhibition, just prizes.

**R.H:** So it was all prize-winning?

**I.N:** Yeah it was all prize-winning.

**R.H:** And you got prizes for vegetables and things, and so it was mostly contests?

**I.N:** Yeah, and they had that quite a few years, and it was still going when we were married in 1931, but not too long after that it sort of petered out.

**R.H:** And that was once a year?

**I.N:** Yeah in the fall, September generally, sometime in September toward the latter part.

**R.H:** Was it a one day affair?

**I.N:** Yeah I think it was a one day affair.

**R.H:** Did you get to the opening of the Peace Bridge?

**I.N:** Oh definitely. We were up on top of Bertie Hill...not Bertie Hill

but up there by Walnut Street at the top there.

**R.H:** Did you see his Highness the Prince of Wales?

**I.N:** Oh yes, we weren't that close but we could see him and it was 1927. I went across the Peace Bridge before it was dedicated. I drove to Buffalo.

**R.H:** How did you do that?

**I.N:** Oh in a Model T Ford.

**R.H:** A Model T, was that your car?

**I.N:** Yes, yeah.

**R.H:** Was it secondhand or was it brand new?

**I.N:** Oh no it was brand new, and we bought that in 1921. It was our first car and my dad always said he wouldn't buy a car until he could buy a sedan and he didn't so in 1921, the spring of 1921 it was a Model T Ford Sedan.

**R.H:** What colour was it?

**I.N:** It was black, and there wasn't too much choice of colours then.

**R.H:** And so you went over the Peace Bridge before it was dedicated?

**I.N:** Before it was dedicated in the first part of August, yeah.

**R.H:** Where did you learn to drive?

**I.N:** W.J. Willson in Ridgeway had the Ford Agency and every salesman took you out driving and you didn't need a license then of course.

**R.H:** That's what I was going to ask you, did you need a license?

**I.N:** No, no. We just watched how they do it, and they told you and away we'd go.

**R.H:** Was it quite wild in those days for driving?

**I.N:** No, no, you see those cars they didn't go too fast.

**R.H:** Did you have to start it from the front?

**I.N:** No, you could start it if the battery would go dead, you could crank it. There was a crank with all of them but if the battery happened to go dead in the wintertime when it was cold, why you used the starter and cranked both to get them going sometimes.

**R.H:** Do you know anything at all, or have you heard anything about the shipyards?

**I.N:** Definitely, sure, I remember when the boat was launched there. We skipped school to see the boat launched there and that would have been in 19...that would have been in 1920. They built three boats there I think in 1920. I should remember them but I can't,

but I remember the Shipyards was going strong, and everybody worked there. If anybody wanted a job they'd go to the Shipyards during that time, and it was after the First World War.

**R.H:** When you say built three boats, was that ferry-boats?

**I.N:** No. I don't know what type of boats you would call them but they were not a passenger boat. They were a freighter in description.

**R.H:** Do you know anyone who lived around that area, didn't the Glennys live there?

**I.N:** No, not really.

**R.H:** Did you hear anything about the Biltmore Club, the Gambling Casino?

**I.N:** Yes, oh yeah that was quite the place you know, my goodness they did a lot of gambling there. I remember when they sold it to the Niagara Christian College, my first cousin John Nigh from Hagersville made a many a trip down here negotiating the deal.

**R.H:** He was doing the negotiating on the deal, and was he active in the church?

**I.N:** Yeah.

**R.H:** It didn't seem to last too long, the Gambling Casino, did it?

**I.N:** No, no.

**R.H:** Did he ever mention what it was like there at all?

**I.N:** No. I don't remember what went on there really, but I know it was a gambling joint for sure.

**R.H:** Did you hear any stories on the Rum-running, the smuggling?

**I.N:** Well we knew there was smuggling going on, but I don't know too much about that. A few people on the Boulevard got involved you know in it. Some of them got caught and some didn't.

**R.H:** What about Crystal Beach, do you know anything about that?

**I.N:** Well...the Amusement Park there, and I remember when the new dock was built, and the new ballroom, that's there now.

**R.H:** When was the new dock built, do you know?

**I.N:** No, no, not the date, but I remember when it was built. It was quite an accomplishment and the same with the new Dancehall. That was a beautiful building at the time.

**R.H:** That was the Crystal Beach Ballroom you're talking about, did you go there?

**I.N:** Yes, I danced there to Tommy Dorsey's Band.

**R.H:** Do you remember the bands?

**I.N:** Oh yeah, Tommy Dorsey, Guy Lombardo, both of them were there.  
That was in the twenties.

**R.H:** Do you remember Helen McConnell, did she sing there?

**I.N:** No I can't remember that, but as I say that was in the twenties and  
all the big bands were out there.

**R.H:** Did you ever hear Harry Webb?

**I.N:** Yes.

**R.H:** Did you know one of the local residents that played with him, Alf.  
Coulthurst that played drums with Harry Webb?

**I.N:** No.

**R.H:** I think they played up at Erie Beach, the Erie Beach Ballroom. So  
did you dance quite a bit then?

**I.N:** Like most young folk in those days. Mostly Saturday nights.

**R.H:** And it was a beautiful ballroom?

**I.N:** Oh beautiful, the one in Crystal Beach. I don't know what's out  
there now since they've reopened it, but during the twenties it was  
a beautiful ballroom.

**R.H:** When you went to dance, didn't you have to buy tickets?

**I.N:** Oh yes.

**R.H:** [Did you ever go to Erie Beach]?

**I.N:** I worked at Erie Beach when I was...oh I suppose I was around sixteen  
maybe seventeen in the spring of the year getting ready, and I worked  
down there for quite sometime. I helped build the swimming pool  
at Erie Beach, but I don't know what's there anymore, but I guess  
it's pretty well all deteriorated. The Dancehall was nice there then.

**R.H:** How old were you when you worked there?

**I.N:** Oh I think about sixteen. It was a job for the farmers sons in the  
Spring and the Fall. Spring to get ready and the Fall to put things  
away and so on.

**R.H:** Do you remember how much you made?

**I.N:** I think it was 35 cents an hour, and I helped build Cherry Hill Clubhouse  
from beginning to end. I worked for Albert Nigh, contractor in  
Fort Erie who was a relation of ours, and I worked there all winter  
long, and that was the winter of 1921 or 1922. I got 40 cents an  
hour then, and in the Spring we got raised to 45cents.

**R.H:** Did you do everything then, what kind of job?

**I.N:** I was with the masons, I mixed mortar, and carried stone and one



thing and another. The stone in those chimneys were blasted right out of there, they didn't buy any at all, it was all right from there. It was a good job you know, and they picked me up here right at the corner as I had no transportation or anything you know.

**R.H:** So they had to come and get you?

**I.N:** Well Albert and I went up, he was from Fort Erie, and he went up the highway and I just walked down there and we were away.

**R.H:** So that lasted all winter then?

**I.N:** Yeah, oh yeah.

**R.H:** And you worked at Erie Beach when you were sixteen, did you go there for entertainment too?

**I.N:** Oh we would go down there occasionally, but not maybe quite as much as Crystal Beach, but we'd go down there.

**R.H:** Do you remember any of the rides at all?

**I.N:** Well I remember the one down there they called The Blue Streak.

**R.H:** Was that the one that went over the water or something?

**I.N:** Yes, yeah it was a little bit higher I guess then than the one at Crystal Beach at that time, and faster, but now there's only Crystal Beach rides, but oh yeah I remember that.

**R.H:** What else did they have there besides rides?

**I.N:** Well it was just a midway you know, pretty well much the same as Crystal Beach really. The games and so on, different rides, and of course there was the boat that run from there over to Buffalo too, the same as at Crystal Beach.

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

**I.N:** No.

**R.H:** Have you heard of it?

**I.N:** Yes, but no I think that was out of business by the time I was going down there.

**R.H:** Have you ever heard of the Snakehill...?

**I.N:** Yeah, I've heard of that one too.

**R.H:** Well it has been a really interesting interview, and I thank you so much.

**I.N:** Well we shall see what comes of it.

**R.H:** Thankyou, I appreciate it.