

This is Shelley Richer interviewing Miss Loretta Willick in her home at 3255 Stevensville Road on August 22, 1985.

**S.R:** Hello Miss Willick, and how are you?

**L.W:** Well, pretty good for a lady of 81.

**S.R:** So you were born in 1904 then. Were you born in the Stevensville area?

**L.W:** Buffalo.

**S.R:** When did you come to Fort Erie then?

**L.W:** We moved into Snyder the next year, 1905.

**S.R:** And you've stayed living in the area all your life?

**L.W:** I've lived in three houses in this area.

**S.R:** Could you tell me what school you attended and where it was located?

**L.W:** S. S. # 5 on Sodom Road.

**S.R:** How far from your home would that be?

**L.W:** One mile, and I walked it.

**S.R:** How was it through the wintertime?

**L.W:** Well, my father used to once in a while take the sleigh or horses and turn us over and turn in the snowbank and laugh.

**S.R:** Could you describe your school, the way it was and any changes that might have taken place? Is it still there?

**L.W:** Oh, it's all changed. It's made into a beautiful home. It had been sold and made into a home. But it was the old fashioned desks with the ink-wells in the front of them. And they had the big, the big bellied wood stoves. I don't know what you called them, and the outhouses, no water, and that was about all. It was a one room school and it accomodated eight grades.

**S.R:** How many students were there?

**L.W:** Oh, it could, sometimes it would go up to fifty.

**S.R:** One teacher for fifty students?

**L.W:** One teacher, one teacher.

**S.R:** Would you remember your teachers name?

**L.W:** Well, the last teacher we had was Cathleen Swinton. In fact, she was there a number of years.

**S.R:** Was that the only teacher you had?

**L.W:** I don't remember who it was before that. I think that Cathleen

Swinton was there the whole eight years.

**S.R:** Is there any interesting stories that you can remember from the school days?

**L.W:** Well, I can go back quite a few days. There was a woods right next door, right behind us and I know we used to go in the bush and hide, and play Hide And Seek in the bush. We had the old pump in the yard. We used to get our drinking water there. We used to play, we used to have happy days at school...very few fights, they were happy days. I don't know too much else. Not too much went on. We were pretty busy but we used to...I don't think we attended the fairs then. But when she went to school (her younger sister) we attended the fairs.

**S.R:** The Bertie Fair?

**L.W:** Yes, I always went to the Bertie Fair.

**S.R:** Could you tell me what the Bertie Fair was like and where it was?

**L.W:** Up at the race track.

**S.R:** At the race track on Gilmore? And what did they do at the Bertie Fair, what attractions?

**L.W:** Well, there was horse races...because my father owned horse racers, and I at nine, I used to drive the horses on a surrey.

**S.R:** Was it just regular wagons that the horses used to pull?

**L.W:** Yeah, like that with a top on it (pointing to a picture), a carriage. We used to call it carriages in those days. I used to drive. My father used to get two race horses, and the one he would drive with his sulky, and go ahead, and I would follow him with the carriage and my mother and family and take any of the kids around town with us to get in. Of course at the fair, well, we were interested in the races. And of course they used to have hot dogs in booths for sale. They used to have displays of fruits and vegetables, and prizes were given for those things.

**S.R:** Are you or have you been a member of a church?

**L.W:** Of the church? All my life.

**S.R:** What church is that?

**L.W:** St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church.

**S.R:** Where is it located?

**L.W:** On Netherby Road, Netherby and Snyder Road there, right across

from us.

**S.R:** Did you always attend that same church?

**L.W:** Always.

**S.R:** Could you tell me a little of it's history, the building itself?

**L.W:** Yes, it's a...it's over a hundred years...we celebrated our hundred and twenty-fifth...I think it was 1847, and we've celebrated our hundredth and our hundred and twenty-fifth. I think last year it was a hundred and thirty-five years old.

**S.R:** Has there been any changes in the church since it's original structure?

**L.W:** Well not...it's been renovated, and yes there has been some changes, but I mean there's been new pews. There's been new lights put in and things like that.

**S.R:** There was no additions to the church?

**L.W:** Not to the church, but there has been a rectory built since.

**S.R:** What's a rectory?

**L.W:** Where the priest lives right next door.

**S.R:** So the church built that then for the priest to stay in?

**L.W:** Yes.

**S.R:** What about the church grounds itself? Did there used to be stables for the horses or anything like that for the horses in the wintertime?

**L.W:** There used to be long sheds for the horses. But they've been removed and there's been a parking space put in where they use it for cars. The sheds have been removed, and there's a cememtery right next door. A huge cememtery.

**S.R:** Do you recall any special events that the church has had?

**L.W:** Many of them. We have a carnival each year. And I ran the carnivals for fifty years. I did all the purchasing and the planning.

**S.R:** What other kind of events did the church have for the family?

**L.W:** Oh, they have family gatherings. They have a Holy Name Society, they have a Catholic Women's League and they have a...oh, they have another committee. They have several committees you might say.

**S.R:** I know you've been very active in the church. Do you recall any other people that have really had a lot to contribute to the church, a certain Priest that's really been exceptional or...?

**L.W:** Oh yes. We had the Carmelite Priest for thirty-five years...for

sixty-five years. Carmelite Fathers and we've had Diocesan Priests and we've had...oh, what do you call them. I can't think what his name was now. The Diocesan, sixty-five and then there was a Diocesan, and then we had the...um, there was another one in there. I can't think of what it is. And now we have the Holy Cross Fathers. There's another one that should go in there. He was here five years.

**S.R:** Why are they different?

**L.W:** Well...

**S.R:** Is it a different grading?

**L.W:** Well, some of them are like an order Priest, like the Carmelites and the Holy Cross, they're order Priests. They have their own seminaries. The Holy Cross Fathers, they teach in the whole community and all our children from St. Joseph's School attend the...after the eighth grade, they go to Notre Dame School, and they used to go to Loretta Academy. Of course Loretta Academy is no longer a school. Our priest here now is...would you like his name?

**S.R:** Sure.

**L.W:** It's Father Joseph Ingroa and he also serves the Redemptress Nuns at the convent on the Niagara Boulevard.

**S.R:** Where would that be?

**L.W:** The Niagara Boulevard, right down by the Christian College.

**S.R:** Oh that's where it is, down by the college?

**L.W:** Yeah. He also serves there every day. He goes there every day.

**S.R:** You mentioned this Loretta School, where and what was that?

**L.W:** Loretta Academy, well that was the...the nuns have been there...that's over a hundred years old and the nuns used to have high school there. In fact, they used to have elementary too, but then they just had the high school.

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

**L.W:** Niagara Falls. And then there's Mount Carmel College right next door to it where the Carmelite Fathers reside.

**S.R:** Could you...I know you have been involved in many things the church has had, could you tell me what some of them are? The different organizations that you've been involved with.

**L.W:** Well, I've...I was the founder of the Catholic Women's League there, I was organist for twenty-five years, I assisted the Sacristan and

organized many social events. They used to have dances, and bingos and card parties.

**S.R:** What other organizations have you been involved with?

**L.W:** Daughters of Isabella.

**S.R:** What is that?

**L.W:** That is a Catholic Women's Organization affiliated with the Knight's of Columbus.

**S.R:** What does the organization do?

**L.W:** They do, like...oh they get...I don't know how to say it now...missionary work and give donations in the area to help out in the community. They have Meals On Wheels.

**S.R:** The Daughters of Isabella, how long has that been operating?

**L.W:** I couldn't tell you but that's been for years, many years, in Niagara Falls here. It's been for thirty-four years in Niagara Falls, but it has been operating in different communities much longer than that.

**S.R:** Is it in the Stevensville - Fort Erie area at all?

**L.W:** Well, there's just four people from Fort Erie and there's no Catholics in the Stevensville area. Niagara Falls is the headquarters for that.

**S.R:** What other organizations?

**L.W:** What have I told you?

**S.R:** Okay, you said the Catholic Women's League, you were an organist, and the Sacristan, and Daughters of Isabella.

**L.W:** And, well I guess for the church that's probably...

**S.R:** Other than the church now. What organizations outside of the church have you been involved in?

**L.W:** Children's Aid for twenty-five years. I was on the board of the Children's Aid, and I organized an auxiliary, clothing auxiliary. We had a depot in Welland, and I used to have all the women from the community come and sew and give the clothes to the Children's Aid so they wouldn't have to buy new clothes. I organized this auxiliary to the Children's Board, affiliated with the boards I guess, or however you want to place it. I can't put it just right.

**S.R:** What other activities were the Children's Aid involved in?

**L.W:** Well, placing children.

**S.R:** Oh, was it an adoption facility?

**L.W:** Adoption, oh yes. I conducted an adoption campaign in the whole

diocese, where I called on 37 parishes and put on a film and an adoption program for adoptions.

**S.R:** Is this located in Niagara Falls too?

**L.W:** It was associated with the St. Catharines Children's Aid Society.

**S.R:** I know for adoption now, it's really hard to get children. What was it like before? Was it very hard to get a child?

**L.W:** There were times when it was easy, but it has the last few years ...of course I haven't been too active, but it has been harder to get a child.

**S.R:** What about separate schools? I heard you were involved in something to do with separate schools.

**L.W:** Well, we have a school right here at St. Joseph's. And then I was with the retarded, the secretary-treasurer. I was on the board of the Elsie English School for the retarded, and I was secretary-treasurer there.

**S.R:** Where is that?

**L.W:** That's right down in Fort Erie there...Elsie English School.

**S.R:** Would you know what street?

**L.W:** Um...I used to go all the time but I can't tell ya.

**S.R:** Whereabouts...what's it close to?

**L.W:** Pretty near into Fort Erie. On...the Elsie English School, anybody could tell you where that is. I don't know if it's in the book or not.

**S.R:** What does this Elsie English School do?

**L.W:** I beg your pardon.

**S.R:** What does the Elsie English...is it a girls school, is it a school for the retarded?

**L.W:** It's for the retarded, for both boys and girls.

**S.R:** And you were involved with it, or involved in setting it up?

**L.W:** I was secretary-treasurer.

**S.R:** Do you know when the school came about?

**L.W:** No, I can't tell you dates.

**S.R:** Has it been for a long time?

**L.W:** Oh yes, it's been for a long time. Well you could find that...I'm sure there'd be some history on that in your library, something about the Elsie English School. I'm sure there would be. Buffalo Road, Buffalo Road wasn't it.



**S.R:** That's in Crescent Park.

**L.W:** Yeah, it's the Crescent Park area.

**S.R:** Have you been involved in anything else?

**L.W:** Did you put down that I was a graduate of the Lewis Hotel Training Course?

**S.R:** No.

**L.W:** I graduated from the Lewis Hotel Training School in Washington D.C., and I've been on the Hotel Association. I was secretary-treasurer for the local Hotel Association and I always attended all conventions in Toronto, New York and many other places. Any time there was a convention, I always went to the convention.

**S.R:** This Hotel Association, your parents owned the Commercial Hotel. Is that what it was called then? It didn't have any other name, it was just the Commercial Hotel?

**L.W:** Commercial Hotel yeah. Willicks...it was called mostly Willicks.

**S.R:** When did your parents purchase it and who did they buy it from?

**L.W:** From Joseph Bauer in 1910.

**S.R:** Could you please tell me a little of the history of the hotel?

**L.W:** Well that...I did mention about the...when we went in, there was a beer license, but in 1916, as a war measure, they closed up, they didn't let us sell beer any longer. But my mother would serve meals all the time, and we took care of people such as Bell Telephone or anybody like that that had groups of men that had to have dinner, you know, they had to have food. Then in 1916 when she closed, she still continued giving rooms and giving the meals at the hotel. Then we got the hotel back in 1934.

**S.R:** The license?

**L.W:** The license came back then in 1934 and we opened... Well in the meantime we put in a grocery store. And my father took a meat route. He started out with horses and then he wound up with a little truck. But he delivered meat along the Niagara Boulevard and all the way into Fort Erie, well almost to Fort Erie, around... and then he'd come back this way. Well see, he started out with the horses and then he went into a car, he went into a truck. A meat truck he called it. And he had the meat route, and we put a grocery store in where the hotel was. But then we continued

on with the grocery store as well as the hotel when the license was returned to us in 1934.

**S.R:** So then even after it was used as a hotel again the grocery store was still in the building itself?

**L.W:** We took our kitchen and made a store out of it. My mother says, they took our license away from us once and I'm not going to be without another business. She put a store in the back and put a kitchen on the back and still continued the hotel and we still accomodated you know. And we used to have everybody coming, like members of Parliament, and we used to have policemen from Buffalo, anybody going to and from the Fort Erie Race Track. Many horse owners were in there. E.P.Taylor, plenty of them, many of them. I...what else was I going to say now? Well I don't know. Of course, we sold...we didn't get to the part yet where we sold then did we?

**S.R:** No.

**L.W:** What else did you want to ask me?

**S.R:** We're still in the hotel part of it. In the 30's when they gave your license back, then your mother put a store into it and she built a new kitchen onto it, and then what happened next?

**L.W:** Well then, and then I mentioned the prominent people that used to call on us, such as Humphrey Mitchell and who else did I say. We used to have people such as Humphrey Mitchell and who was...I was trying to get the Conservative member on there too.

**S.R:** You had a little story about, something about the elections. You used to be involved in the elections.

**L.W:** I worked on the elections from the time I had a vote for fifty years. I was either D.R.O. or clerk.

**S.R:** What was D.R.O.?

**L.W:** Deputy Returning Officer. I was always for enumeration, whether I say, whether it was on a local election, provincial or federal, or whatever the election was, I was always called because I like doing it. And then when I, after fifty years I refused to go on any longer and they told me that my records, when they would open my box, my records were always in order.

**S.R:** That was a very good compliment then, right?

**L.W:** Well, I thought maybe that was worth putting on. And then also



that I took part when the Peace Bridge was opened that the Prince, when the Prince of Wales was here, myself and two of my cousins danced in wooden shoes and sang a German song.

**S.R:** For the Prince of Wales?

**L.W:** For the Prince of Wales, Eddy.

**S.R:** I'd like to talk more about the Peace Bridge opening a little bit later. When did you get rid...when did you sell the Commercial Hotel and why?

**L.W:** In 1948. Well, because as I say, my mother was seventy-five and I didn't think that she should carry on working any longer. Then I remodelled an old place which was a hotel...did you put in the part where there was three hotels here?

**S.R:** No, you haven't said that part yet.

**L.W:** Well, I remodelled one place, it was an old hotel, and made living quarters, and my mother wasn't satisfied to just sit and sew and knit. She wanted to be working. So we put in the store. And up until '59 when she passed away, the night before, she was in there serving pop. She got old folks pneumonia and she was in the hospital for one week, and I used to go down and sit with her every night. I'd be in the store here in the daytime and I used to go and sit with her every night 'til she passed away. That was in '59.

**S.R:** And how old was she?

**L.W:** 84.

**S.R:** Who did you sell the hotel to then?

**L.W:** To Andrew Zuba.

**S.R:** You had mentioned there were three hotels.

**L.W:** There were three hotels. This was a hotel, that hotel and the one where the parking lot is, where the parking lot is burnt down. But there were three churches and three hotels, but the two churches survived, and two of the hotels are gone. Of course the new hotel has been remodelled, which you saw the picture of there. And then there have been four generations of Andrews in the hotel. Andrew Bauer, Andrew Willick, Andrew Zuba, and Andrew...oh what's their name...Warbuck. Four...it just seems kind of odd, but Andrew Bauer was one of the oldest sons and he was home working in the hotel, and then my father was Andrew, and then there was Andrew Zuba

and Andrew War...you know, that's a coincidence.

**S.R:** Do you recall the other two hotel's names.?

**L.W:** No, I don't, no I don't.

**S.R:** The churches...?

**L.W:** St. Josephs Roman Catholic Church, and St. Johns Lutheran Church and this was St. Johns Presbyterian. Of course they are united now. They switched to, the United and Presbyterians are United Church, but the Lutheran is still St. Johns Lutheran Church.

**S.R:** The house you're living in right now on Snyder Road used to be a hotel, and then there was the Commercial Hotel and then...?

**L.W:** I don't know the name of the other ones.

**S.R:** The other one...what is it that Nigh's Sweet Shop used to be?

**L.W:** Oh, no that, that was, that used to be the old Critz home. The family that...then they built this house right next door here. But then Mr. Critz died, Joseph Critz died years and years ago, but then it was just a home and then Mr. John Willick...no Nicholas Critz had the first post office there and a grocery store. They had a grocery store. He had a grocery store and the post office and Mr. John Willick used to carry the mail every morning at six o'clock. He'd meet the train, the T.H.&B. Train [Toronto, Hamilton and Buffalo], and carry the mail back and put it in the post office, then people would go to the post office. When I was a little girl...I don't know whether you'd want this to go on there or not...when I was a little girl, I had two Great Dane dogs, and I was just so I could see over the dogs, and I used to walk from there up to the post office and get the mail. I've always been a lover of dogs. You can see I've got one out there now. But I mean, that doesn't have to go on there, it's just another part of my life. But I can just see...I can still remember, what I mean, I used to walk with these two Great Danes, hang on by the collars, and go down the road with them. As I say, I've had dogs and horses every since.

**S.R:** Speaking of horses, you said your dad had race horses and things, he also...it would be a chauffeur now, but there was a different name for it then when he used to drive people around.

**L.W:** Hackman. That's what my father was on that picture.

**S.R:** Could you please...you said he had a big experience one time when

he was a hackman. Could you please tell about it?

**L.W:** Well, in 1901, when the Pan American Exposition was in Buffalo, President McKinley and the Shelcoff Family owned these horses that my father was hackman for. He had just driven Mrs. McKinley to the exposition, and let her out of the carriage when a young man came along and went to shake hands with the President, and pulled his hand out from under his coat and shot him right there. Then they took this man and...people were going to tear him limb from limb, so my father and a couple policemen got him into this hack and drove him down to the police station. And then he went over to the railroad station and met Teddy Roosevelt who at the time was Vice President, and my father saw Teddy Roosevelt installed as President of the United States.

**S.R:** What was this man's family, what the man's name that murdered the President?

**L.W:** Saulgaush.

**S.R:** Are there any other stories that you can remember your father telling you, pertaining to history?

**L.W:** I don't, I forget what we've covered. We've talked about a lot of things but I don't know just what's on there. About the Beach, about us dancing at the Beach. Have you got that on?

**S.R:** No, I haven't asked those questions yet. Is there anything you can remember that your father used to tell you, like from before you were born, that has to do with history, any stories?

**L.W:** Not especially. He worked in Buffalo. My mother was from Ohio. Her name was Rose Friedman if that's of any interest. And we were Alsace Lorraine, we weren't Jewish. Not that it makes any difference.

**S.R:** You were Alsace Lorraine?

**L.W:** Well yeah. In the time period of the French or the Germans, I'm not sure which. I think maybe it was moreso Germans rather than...

**S.R:** Talking more about the community, could you take me down a little memory walk down the main street in Stevensville, telling the stores that were on it, and how things have changed, any prominent people, things like that?

**L.W:** Well, to tell you the truth, things have changed in Stevensville so

much I don't know. And do you know, there used to be, in this town, there used to be a cider mill owned by Mr. John Morningstar, and there used to be a saw mill where he used to saw lumber. And there used to be a butcher shop owned by Willick brothers, many, many long years ago. That was before my time but I've heard of it. Now speaking of the post office there, I did make a little mistake. Mr. Johnny Willick used to have a little post office on his own residence and he lived on Sodom Road. Then the post office was moved up to the Critz Store.

**S.R:** That is now Nigh's Sweet Shop?

**L.W:** Yeah.

**S.R:** And then it moved...?

**L.W:** It moved from the Sodom Road, from there up. It was between the church and that road here. And of course the change was made here, this was just a few years ago. This was just since we've been here. This road used to be, that road didn't used to be in there, that's Stevensville Road. This was all Stevensville Road and they came here and came to the cemetery and turned. This road has just been in, oh, maybe ten years.

**S.R:** Oh, so you had, you always had a little right-hand turn here on Stevensville Road instead of going straight.

**L.W:** Yeah.

**S.R:** Are there very many industries in Stevensville, were there?

**L.W:** Really not. The saw mill that's burnt down, and there was...the grist mill is still there, and the feed mill, and there's two or three garages, the bank, the hotel, and I don't know how many churches...two or three churches, and the United and Brethren, and then there's the United, and I don't know, I guess maybe that's all the churches. And then Brethren in Christ, of course that's further on up the road.

**S.R:** Fire Departments?

**L.W:** Well now, I couldn't tell you very much about them. They had a fire hall just right across the railroad track in Stevensville. I'm sure somebody in Stevensville could tell you more about that.

**S.R:** Who was the earliest fire chief that you can recall?

**L.W:** I wouldn't want to say that I'm exactly correct, but I know of Edgar Heximer, but there could have been somebody else ahead of him,

I wouldn't be too sure. He's passed away, Edgar Heximer has. Oh and then Frank Shear used to have a seed mill in Stevensville.

**S.R:** Frank Shear?

**L.W:** Yes, he used to have a seed mill where he sep rated seed and sold it and one thing and another. I may be missing something. Oh, there used to be a printer in Stevensville. Oh, there still is a print shop in Stevensville, but you know, I wouldn't want to be...and there used to be a shoe maker, Mr. Schwartz. But I mean, now they have changed. There's things out there that I don't even know about. There's hair dressers out there. There's the bank, restaurants, the hotel right on that corner, and there's the plumbers, an insurance agency...what I mean, there might be some other little things, I wouldn't want to be quoted on this Stevensville.

**S.R:** It's the way you remember things in stuff like that. Nothing, everything that's said isn't always necessarily fact because a lot of things were so long ago that it's hard to remember things as actual fact. So it's the way you remember things.

**L.W:** Yeah, well that's the things that were. As I say, if I'm missing somebody why, it's something new.

**S.R:** Were you ever around any major fires to see...before there were fire hydrants and things like that, how did they put the fires out?

**L.W:** They used to haul the water in trucks and just spray...

**S.R:** Oh then, with the pump?

**L.W:** Pump like yeah.

**S.R:** And where did they get the water?

**L.W:** Well they had to go around to the creek and get it. Either Black Creek , the creek in Stevensville, the nearest water facility that there was I guess. I know when the water came in, they were only going to bring it to Stevensville and I was on my high-horse then. I went down to the council and I went around to everybody and I took up a petition that we would get the water in this area. We were only half a mile, or a mile from Stevensville and they were bringing the water out there and weren't going to bring it out here. Well, and we should have sewers now. If I were capable I'd go up there now and raise Cain and we'd have sewers in this town instead of just...we're using septic tanks. But I took up a petition in order

to get the water into this area.

**S.R:** Did you have to use cisterns before that?

**L.W:** Yes.

**S.R:** Buying water by the truckload?

**L.W:** You'd buy it by the truckload and what came off the roof.

**S.R:** Oh, from eavetroughs.

**L.W:** Rain water. But I took up a petition to have the water brought into Snyder. I didn't think about that.

**S.R:** Would you recall the major effects of the Depression time on your family or in the area, or were you better off because you had the hotel and store? Did that really help?

**L.W:** We personally didn't feel the Depression too much.

**S.R:** You had what your needs were and things like that. And I recall you saying that your dad had a meat route, did you have a farm?

**L.W:** No, he used to kill his own cattle. He had a slaughter house in back.

**S.R:** Oh, so he had to buy cows from people, full grown cows from people.

**L.W:** He'd buy the cattle and slaughter them. And many's a night that I'd go out with him and hold the lantern while he was killing a calf or a lamb or something. I was kind of hard hearted. Chickens, he used to kill chickens. I used to help clean chickens...pulled the feathers off.

**S.R:** Did you sell any of the stuff in the store or was it all on this meat route?

**L.W:** Well, if somebody wanted something in the store we'd sell it, you know.

**S.R:** What was there to do for entertainment when you were on a date back then?

**L.W:** Well, we used to have dances, and we used to have house parties and things like that...go from one another's house and have sandwiches and lunch and entertain. It would seem that we had better days then than we do now. And we used to, we used to have a lot more dances. We used to have a dance a week over here in this hall. But of course that's all petered out when the bigger places got going.

**S.R:** What about Erie Beach or Crystal Beach for entertainment?

**L.W:** Oh well, there used ...I don't know anything about the entertainment



out there, you know what I mean.

**S.R:** Entertainment is just going and doing things. Did you go to Erie Beach or Crystal Beach?

**L.W:** Oh, I used to love the...oh those horses that would go up...the Merry-Go-Round, and the...what do you call the, that high ride like what they have now. They're much higher these days.

**S.R:** The Roller Coaster?

**L.W:** The Roller Coaster and all those things. We got to Crystal Beach maybe twice a year or something like that. And we used to go to the beach and...we couldn't swim and my mother would let us wade into the water up to our knees. But they'd watch us. We didn't dare, we'd go into the water but didn't dare get wet.

**S.R:** Oh, there weren't places around for you to learn how to swim? Is that why?

**L.W:** Oh, she never would let us swim, anyway, some people used to swim but we didn't. We didn't get to the beach too much.

**S.R:** Did you ever visit the dance hall there, like the ballroom?

**L.W:** Oh yes, I've been to the dance hall there, yes. The roller skating rink. Yeah, the roller skating rink and the dance hall. That was about all that was there then. There wasn't...they've got so many new things now. All these new games and that, you know, that I wouldn't...

**S.R:** Do you recall any of the famous bands?

**L.W:** Bands?

**S.R:** In the ballroom.

**L.W:** George Hirsch, he used to live in Chippawa and he had a violin and he would play, play, play, play, and then...he used to play over here at the hall. And then we had Mrs. Finns Orchestra. That's at this hall, not at Crystal Beach. I don't know any of the names over there at Crystal Beach. Mrs. Finn, Mary Finn, she's still living in Niagara Falls. She's way up in her eighties, but she's...once in a while the senior citizens have a do and she's on the job.

**S.R:** How did you get to Crystal Beach, the Amusement Park, just by horse and buggy or were there any public transportations?

**L.W:** Well, there used to be, years and years ago there used to be a bus but we used to go as a family with our old surrey. Or else, after

we got to the cars naturally we had the car.

**S.R:** What about Erie Beach?

**L.W:** We didn't go to Erie Beach too much. We didn't get to Erie Beach too much. It was a little far off. I don't remember being at Erie Beach more than about three or four time in my life. I remember as I say, this night that we danced, and I think maybe once or twice we went up there. We had some friends from Buffalo that had a cottage there and we would visit her or something, you know.

**S.R:** What about doctors and dentists?

**L.W:** Well, we had dear old Dr. J.B.Buell in Stevensville 'til he passed away. And then my dentist was always Dr. Chapman in Fort Erie. He's gone. Then there were doctors in Ridgeway, Dr. Stewart and Dr. Stackhouse, but I never had anything to do with them. We had Dr. Buell here, he was...he was always here if you wanted. He'd come out all hours of the night to do anything for you.

**S.R:** What were the payments back then that you can remember?

**L.W:** Payments, like what?

**S.R:** Doctors bills. There wasn't any insurance was there? Was there any medical insurance?

**L.W:** No, there was no medical plan, no. But I couldn't tell you...

**S.R:** What about hospitals, were there any home hospitals, maternity hospitals, anything like that, do you remember, or did you have to go to Niagara Falls to the hospital?

**L.W:** Yes, Niagara Falls, or Fort Erie would be the closest hospital, Welland.

**S.R:** Before Douglas Memorial was built.

**L.W:** There was nothing that I know of. I remember when that was built. But there was nothing. I don't know if there was any buildings there before or not. But I remember when the Douglas Memorial was built.

**S.R:** Going back to when you owned the Commercial Hotel, there was a Mr. George House. It was his job to see that the hotel was run properly...

**L.W:** That it was properly licensed, and that the proper...they had regular prices for things those days...the prices was right, and they had hours that...I think that you'd have to close up at ten o'clock or something, and they weren't to be open on Sundays. But sometimes

they would, after church was out if the people would like a beer they'd go into the hotel and have a beer. And then when Mr. House was in Chippawa they used to always phone up and say George was on his way. And George would come up and he'd come in our back door. My mother would have a bunch of sandwiches there and she'd say, George do you want a sandwich and a cup of coffee. He'd visit with us, and I think I used to even sit on his lap.

**S.R:** So you would get the phone call and then everybody would quick clear out, right?

**L.W:** And all the other hotels the same, you know. Well there weren't, we were the only hotel when we were there, we were the only one. This one was closed and so was the other one so there was just the one.

**S.R:** Do you remember any other stories involved in the hotel days?

**L.W:** Well, there was an awful lot of them, but I don't know what...anything that would be too interesting. I think I've told you most of it.

**S.R:** Were there any...was it always a nice quiet bunch in there or did you ever have problems where you had to call the police in?

**L.W:** Not really bad no. It wasn't like it is today. I think today they have more...it isn't always the drink that makes them what they are today. I think those days they had their little old beers and a drink of liquor if they wanted. But in those days I think beer was a great big super ten cents, and they used to have liquor. They'd give you the bottle and you could pour you own liquor and it was ten cents a shot or three shots for a quarter.

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**S.R:** A big difference from now.

**L.W:** Oh, I should say so. You'd pour your own. Things were much more peaceful and orderly.

**S.R:** Was it just a family project or did you have to hire somebody to help?

**L.W:** Well, we used to have to have some help. My mother was so fussy about her cooking that I'd see the help standing there and she'd be doing the work herself. We used to maybe employ one or two people, you know, and the family.

**S.R:** What about bartenders, did you have to be eighteen then to serve booze or twenty-one, or was there an age?

**L.W:** Yes, they had to be twenty-one to have a drink.

**S.R:** What about to serve alcohol, to be a barmaid?

**L.W:** It was the same thing.

**S.R:** You still had to be twenty-one then too?

**L.W:** Yep.

**S.R:** Do you recall any of your employees from back then?

**L.W:** To tell you the truth...well they're all passed on. They're all gone. Mrs. Morningstar that used to live next door here, Lucinda Morningstar, and of course my sisters husband. He used to tend bar.

**S.R:** What was your sisters husband's name?

**L.W:** Albert Sterry. Vincent Willick of course, he was my brother, he was a bartender. That was after '34, and before that of course there was my father, you know, Andrew Willick.

**S.R:** How did you get your liquor during Prohibition? Or were you very good and you didn't sell during Prohibition or anything like that? You know how a lot of the hotels, they have their stories.

**L.W:** To tell you the truth, I don't remember. They called it bootlegging in those days. But I don't remember where, I don't remember where dad used to get it. But we didn't sell too much during Prohibition. We didn't sell too much during Prohibition.

**S.R:** It was just to your really regular customers that used to come in. Or would you just sell a bottle of it instead.

**L.W:** Yes. It was...we didn't sell too much during Prohibition. Prohibition was like from '16 to '34.

**S.R:** Do you recall any stories from the bootlegging, rumrunning days?

**L.W:** Well, I know that down here at Black Creek there used to be plenty of it down there. What I mean is, they used to go across to the island in boats.

**S.R:** To Grand Island?

**L.W:** Yes. In boats, and there used to be quite a few of them. When they thought they were going to be caught they would just dump the whole thing right into the river. But what I mean, I knew several of them down there that did it.

**S.R:** Do you recall anything about hijacking? I heard that numerous times trucks that had the booze in it that were going to the boats, they were hijacked. Then somebody else could sell the booze across

to the States and they wouldn't have to buy it, they had stolen it from somebody else.

**L.W:** Yeah, well that could be. I remember the hijacking but I couldn't tell you anything definite on it. But I know right down here at Black Creek there was plenty of hijacking done, oh, and across the island there, you know. There was...I don't want to mention any names.

**S.R:** What kind of employment was there for the women that needed to work?

**L.W:** The women that what?

**S.R:** The women that needed to work. Say their husband died or something like that, or he was sick, and she had to support them. What kind of employment was there to do for those kind of women?

**L.W:** Nothing here in New Germany.

**S.R:** It was just men that worked?

**L.W:** Yeah. And most of them were farmers around, you know. Most of them worked on the farm. In those days everyone was farmers.

**S.R:** Back when you were younger, there's always been different men's groups like the Lions and the Masons and different groups, were there women's groups back then?

**L.W:** Oh yes, the Masons have somebody, and I guess there's the Lioness, I wouldn't know...there's a Lioness in Stevensville. I don't know whether they had them years back, I don't know how long they've been, you know. There aren't no Lions here in New Germany. You're probably going to be surveying somebody in Stevensville which will be able to tell you a little bit more about..will be able to tell you a little bit more about what's going on in Stevensville now because I don't know...a lot of the people that I used to work with like Mrs. Heximer and the different ones, they're not here anymore, you know. Other people have taken over so...I could tell you somebody's name and I might be wrong, you know.

**S.R:** Did you know J.L.Kraft when he used to live in Stevensville?

**L.W:** I've heard of him but I don't know...he's connected with the Kraft Cheese people and he's related to the Sid Tripp family which aren't very many of them left anymore. And the Kraft Cheese people, they originated in Fort Erie.

**S.R:** But he went to school in Stevensville.

**L.W:** He may have, yes.

**S.R:** And that's why I was just curious if you knew about him. But oh, you went to school more outside of Stevensville because you never had a chance to go to high school.

**L.W:** Yeah, down here in Willoughby, yeah. My sisters and them went to Stevensville to the high school because that was the only high school...when I wanted to go to high school I was cheated out of the high school. I was...they had Bertie and Willoughby Township were separated, and at that time when it came up that if a teacher had more than I think 38 pupils or something, and I had had permission from the inspector and from three trustees, my father, that I could go to Stevensville and go to high school there. Miss Lawson was there at the time and she had more than her 38 pupils and she sent me home. And I remember crying. My father drove me out...I remember crying and walking in the ditch all the way home, and I didn't get to high school.

**S.R:** There was nothing you could do about changing it then?

**L.W:** Well after feeling like that I didn't even want to go. Well, then within the meantime things changed in the home and I had to take over there, being the eldest you see. My father passing away and one thing and another, so...

**S.R:** Is there anything you could think of that we haven't talked about that you would like to discuss?

**L.W:** I don't know, I don't think so. I think I've had a pretty full life. I can't at the moment think of anything that...we've talked about a lot of things. I don't know...I've done so many things that I don't even remember what I've told you. And as I say, I have quite a few of these awards from the Mental Health. I really enjoyed that very, very much. I met a lot of awfully nice people.



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

**L.W:** Well, they took people that weren't just up to par and they had a...oh what did they call her, Mrs. Strange, she...

**S.R:** Mrs. Strange?

**L.W:** Mrs. Joy Strange, yeah. Mrs. Arthur Strange from Niagara Falls. She was the supervisor there for a long time. And they had classes and tried to help these people if they weren't exactly retarded, but they were just a little bit, you know.

They just needed a little counselling. And then I always attended the meetings. I'd go down with, I used to go down with Garna Chapman...oh he was in Fort Erie. But he was one of the head chief dentists down there for years and years and years. There's a young man that has his office down there now. I can't think of what his name is, but, and somebody else. He's a great big tall man from Fort Erie that you might know. I know him and his brother...names seem to be getting away from me, I noticed that. That's one of my weaknesses now.

**S.R:** When did the...what's it called? When did the mentally retarded organization start? Do you know how long it's been around?

**L.W:** Oh, that's been around for a long time. You mean the one down in Fort Erie? Oh, that's...the Elsie English School, anybody could tell you that down there from Fort Erie. I'm sure you'd get that at the library. And the council appointed me...Bruce Finch at the time was Reeve of Bertie Township, and he called me up and he asked me if I'd go on the board of the mentally retarded. And they put me on as secretary-treasurer. I used to pay the teachers and you know, different things, take the minutes and one thing and another. Oh, I was on there for quite a few years. I'm trying to think of...names just seem to be passing away from me. I used to enjoy it. Meetings was my hobby. Others would be out having fun doing this or that and I'd be going to a meeting of some kind. They're always teasing me. And I had a hobby of wearing

hats. It was much easier because I was always on the heavy side which you can see, and I used to have a hobby...it was easier for me to go and buy a hat then it was a dress. And there's more people remember me by my hats. In fact, we had a Priest over here at the church who hadn't been here for about twenty years, and I was coming out to the door and he was saying good-bye to me, he said, well were's some of those beautiful hats you used to be wearing?

**S.R:** Hats used to really be in style then.

**L.W:** Yes. I spent an awful lot of money on hats. I used to go to Buffalo to that store right next door to the Statler Hotel, and I used to buy my clothes. They were expensive but I always had good clothes. I always felt well dressed. I used to get hats there, when I couldn't buy a dress I'd buy a hat. At a meeting one time a Priest said to the other Priest, well listen he says, why do you always have to get up there and make some silly remark? One day I had a beautiful big black hat on with a water lily, he said, Loretta, well when are you going to water your lily? So this other Priest said to him, I didn't hear it but he told me after, why do you always tease Loretta about her hats? He says, well, by the time I get through talking about her silly hats they don't care what I say. So, hats have always been my hobby. But of course, they're not wearing them now very much. But I think they're coming back. I think they're coming back.

**S.R:** Is there anything else you'd like to comment on before I close?

**L.W:** Well, there's nothing that I really can think of. I can't think of anything. We've discussed so much that I don't...I don't think I've had time to do much else.

**S.R:** It's been a very good interview Miss Willick.

**L.W:** Well, I'm glad that's you've enjoyed it.

**S.R:** Thank you very much for the interview.

**L.W:** Well, that's fine.