

This is Shelley Richer interviewing Mr. Maxwell Jacobs in his home at 276 North Street on August 2, 1985.

S.R: Hello Mr. Jacobs and how are you ?

M.J: Fine thank you.

S.R: What is your date of birth?

M.J: September the 6th, 1916.

S.R: Where were you born?

M.J: I was born in Buffalo, from Canadian parents who were temporarily living over in Buffalo..

S.R: What year did you come to Fort Erie then?

M.J: We arrived by ferry boat to Fort Erie in 1918.

S.R: And you've lived in the area since then?

M.J: I've lived here for sixty-seven years.

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

M.J: I attended Douglas Street School and Fort Erie High School in Fort Erie.

S.R: And both schools are in the same place that they are in now?

M.J: Yes.

S.R: Could you tell me any changes in the schools?

M.J: Yes, the Douglas Street School was closed in '84. The high school has some additions to it, but it's basically the same location as when I attended.

S.R: Would you remember any of the teachers names?

M.J: In the Douglas Street School we had a terrific teacher in Roy Sexsmith, who was probably one of the best teachers I ever attended. Others that returned to the Fort Erie get-together in '84 were Miss Learn and Miss Van Patter. And others that I recall were Miss Wahn, Miss Shisler and the other names escape me at the moment. In high school, probably the two names I remember most were John Bell and Orval Weaver and Miss Byers were the famous names I recall.

S.R: You have an interesting story to tell about one of your teachers?

M.J: Yeah, I'll never forget old John Bell who taught botany and physics and PT. Every new class, one of the first, early classes he would tell everybody that if they didn't behave in his class he would bodily pick them up and throw them out the window. We all knew that he was a tough old farmer and used to throwing bales of hay and

straw around, so we believed him. And he had discipline. He had the best discipline of anybody I ever saw at that high school.

S.R: Are there any other stories that you can remember from your school days?

M.J: The...yes, the athletic activities and social affairs at the high school will always be remembered. The football teams, basketball teams, track teams, they were all very good in those days. Especially because students would seem to stay at school, high school, longer into the eighteen, nineteen, twenty year old ages, and the results were mature adults gave us some great teams in high school in those days.

S.R: So they were very competitive then, with the other schools?

M.J: Yeah, they were very competitive. Fort Erie was always very competitive, yeah. It was truly a great life in high school in those days.

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

M.J: My wife and I attend the Central Avenue Methodist Church, United Church.

S.R: What church did you attend before that?

M.J: When I was growing up I attended the St. Paul's Anglican Church.

S.R: Have there been any changes in the church from the time you used to go?

M.J: The St. Paul's Church is basically the same until they put the big hall addition on the north side in 1984.

S.R: Who is the first political representative that you remember, and what were his duties and his name?

M.J: The name I recall most was Billy Willson from Ridgeway, who was MPP for this riding for many years...a personal friend.

S.R: Could you recall any interesting stories that he would have from his political days?

M.J: I wouldn't dare repeat them.

S.R: What are some of the changes in Fort Erie? Before it was Fort Erie, it was Fort Erie, Bridgeburg and Amigari. Would you know the reasons why it all went to Fort Erie and any opinions on it?

M.J: Well, Fort Erie evolved out of the horse and buggy days from several little villages, namely Erie Beach, Amigari, Fort Erie South, Bridgeburg and they amalgamated into one town, which was a good thing. It gave them one political effort to manage the whole town. It was good for the towns. Of course these little towns more or less existed

on spurs of the different railroads that headed into Bridgeburg. It was...it became a lot more manageable, the roads, and sewers and so forth, at that time.

S.R: Where did you live when you were growing up...what street?

M.J: I lived on Lavinia and Douglas, or on Bertie Street in the south end.

S.R: Could you describe the neighbours and what the area was like there?

M.J: Bertie Street, from Central Avenue west was mostly farm land owned by Jonas Sherk and Miss Harvey. After the advent of Jonas Sherk selling the property to the Douglas Memorial Hospital, the street grew up in a hurry and the surrounding area.

S.R: I've heard that the Douglas Hospital was supposed to be on the Boulevard someplace.

M.J: It may have been, but not to my knowledge. It was considered a good spot, and I think it is, right on Bertie Street...centrally located.

S.R: People that grew up and lived in the north end used to shop on Jarvis Street. Where did you do your shopping in the south end?

M.J: Well, in the south end, the Niagara Boulevard had several grocery stores, and butcher stores, and a hardware store, and as well as a lot of things like, take the ferry boat to Buffalo and do some shopping on Ferry Street and Grant Street in Buffalo. But grocery stores in Fort Erie South have got most of the action.

S.R: Could you recall the names of the stores?

M.J: A. T. Elliot Drugs, Merv Camm Drugs, John Charles Dry Goods, John Hapgood's Groceries, Rubel's Groceries, Frank Coal Butcher, and Agrette's Fruits, a hardware store was W. J. Hawley Hardware, all of the area on the Niagara Boulevard, the south end.

S.R: How did the Depression affect the town and the family?

M.J: Fort Erie was hard hit like so many areas in the whole world I believe. There seemed to be two classes of people, the haves and the have-nots. The people who worked on the customs and the railroad had steady incomes when most other people, including builders, were hard up because the money just wasn't around. Needless to say, a lot of people were close to starvation in those days from lack of money. And very...well half the population I guess, was on relief.

S.R: What did you do for relief?

M.J: Relief was supplied by the municipality and it only allowed you enough to buy your food, that's all.

S.R: Did you have to work for it at all?

M.J: No. Well, I believe that some of the adults had to do road duty and maintenance work if they were capable, you know. Those were hard days. The young people today have no idea how difficult it was. Irregardless, the people didn't hesitate in those days, they had to grow gardens to put food on the table you know.

S.R: Were the properties big enough?

M.J: Well, they found ground somewhere. They found ground somewhere. Let's hope we never see that again.

S.R: What...when you were a kid, when you were growing up, what was there to do if you wanted to earn a dollar?

M.J: Oh, ah, kids had a difficult time of earning a few quarters because the money wasn't available. But most young lads in this town worked as caddies, helped out on farms, for nickles you might say. You could spend a whole day at the golf course and you were lucky if you made a dollar. Money was really scarce. A lot of Americans came over here because of the booze conditions of those days. They hadn't appealed the Eighteenth Ammendment in the States so the States was dry. They used to come over to do their drinking. That brought a lot of Americans over who did spend money.

S.R: Could you tell me a bit about the days of rum-running?

M.J: Well, as a young lad, I'll never forget walking along the river bank with all the boats tied to the various docks, loaded with sacks of booze to go to the States. The biggest laugh in those days was, every one of those loads would have to get clearance papers to be legal in Canada. A lot of the rowboats, naturally they were just going across the river, would be destined for Cuba. A lot of these craft were so loaded, they were so close to the gunnels, a lot of them would swamp going across the river and they would dump their load at the bottom of the river. For which many local residents were happy because they, in the summer, they would go along and do their scuba-diving along the bottom of the river and come up with a lot of free booze. For years these, because of this bootlegging, booze was found down in the riverbed.

S.R: Are there any other stories that you can remember about smuggling?

M.J: Oh, yeah, and due to the fact that it was, there was a train and

what not, the suppliers for these that were along the shore would usually load up at night. They bring in a truck load at night and ...out on the back roads there would be many hijackings every day. Every day you'd always...did you hear about the one last night? They hijacked a load out near Stevensville, or out near Ridgeway, the gun fire, somebody got shot...quite a turmoil because they'd have a whole truck load of liquor which is worth quite a bit of money.

S.R: Was there a lot of violence normally involved?

M.J: Ah, in the Fort Erie area there wasn't too much violence but you'd hear of people getting shot at going across the river in the different types of boats. But there wasn't too much, too many casualties.

S.R: You had mentioned something about gun-boats.

M.J: Oh yeah. Out on the lake, the loads going out from places like Port Colborne and places like that, the U.S. gun-boats would chase them on the lake. Quite often they'd go across at the Ferry Street Bridge, over to the Erie Canal which there would be a couple of US gun-boats with a cannon on the bow. So they...the U.S. was really fussy about chasing them down.

S.R: Did they ever use these cannons?

M.J: I guess they did. They must have.

S.R: What did the area have to offer in sports?

M.J: Fort Erie, just like every other town has had a good background in sports over the years. There has been some good teams in Fort Erie. The Mentholatum Team is of course quite famous. And later a really good soft...fastball team won the Ontario A. title, featuring such excellent pitchers as right handed Heber Lake, and left handed Eddie Alsasser. The final game when they won the championship was played here in Fort Erie at the Oakes Park on the Central Avenue and they had over two thousand people in attendance that day to see Fort Erie win it, the Ontario title. Of course there were a lot of other good teams through the years. A famous sports team in Fort Erie was the Buffalo Bisons. They played in the Fort Erie Peace Bridge Arena. They played there for several years until the building collapsed under a freak snow storm. Several people were lucky to get out that day with their lives. Also in the Peace Bridge Arena the Chicago Black Hawks played several games one winter.

The local people were privileged to see those famous players such as Lionel Connicker, Mush March, Charlie Gardener and King Clancey, Orel Joliet, all the stars of that era. They played, I guess the Hawks, in the old Peace Bridge Arena. And of course the Fort Erie Race Track has always been a great attraction to the people from Fort Erie. It was on each night I think when they originally built it. The horses when Maddigan operated it, the horses used to come to town in pullman cars, the big horse pullmans and that was a chance for the kids to make a few quarters helping move their gear...the horses over to the track from the railroad. Of course they usually just have two, seven day meets I believe it was in those days and they were always on the go.

S.R: Speaking about the race track, the Bertie Fair used to be held there. Would you remember about the fair?

M.J: Well, the Bertie Fair in Fort Erie was just like the circus coming to town. They had all the usual shows that a fair has, such as animal showings and produce showings and fish ponds and all that sort of thing. I believe one year they even had trotting races there...and, plus the grand stand show. It was just like the...in those days it was just like the circus coming to town. Everyone, especially all the young folks, really enjoyed it. That was before television and all that sort of thing. It was very, very popular.

S.R: Would you remember who ran it?

M.J: I don't remember who ran it no.

S.R: Did you ever visit Erie Beach?

M.J: Erie Beach was a very, very popular area, place, during the horse and buggy days, you might say here in Fort Erie. The Sand Fly Express, a small means locomotive, would meet the Fort Erie - Buffalo ferry and transport most of the people up the lake shore to Erie Beach. Some of the old levers are still partly there. Also, two steamers used to run from the foot of Main Street over to the Erie Beach Park. It was a small but well attended place. They had a midway, they had a zoo, they had a wonderful swimming pool with high-boards and all that, and a wading pool on the other side for the little kids. They had a ball-room. Every Sunday they would have concerts in the park. It was a really nice place to go. As a kid I enjoyed riding

this old Sand Fly Express. The engineer was an old friend of mine, Jake Barnhart. I liked to be up right near the engines and the old soot would fly and blow right in our faces. But we were kids and we didn't care. We liked the noise and the action from the train that chugged it's way up the lake shore. As I say, it was in the horse and buggy days so you weren't driving around in automobiles much in those days, just a few Jitneys around in those days.

S.R: What about the dance hall?

M.J: Dance hall? It was a fair sized ballroom with the big balls I recall ...very popular. The promenade between the dance hall and the landing pier, where the steamers came in, was a nice wide promenade with fancy lights on it. It was quite a show to see the people coming in on the boats to go dancing for the evening. They were all dressed up very, very neat... It was a well kept park, it was run by the Bardols.

S.R: It also had a track and field on it. Would you know what took place there?

M.J: Yes they had, they had a soccer field there where they had ball games, football games, et cetera. Famous names like and big named bands. When that park closed up then Crystal Beach really expanded. Of course the automobile era was coming on now and they could get there pretty easy by auto and of course the big steamers, the Canadiana and the Americana. The Americana was a big boat. That became the park there and I understand they bought out the Erie Beach ownership and that helped Crystal Beach expand too. I believe the understanding was to close it up for a hundred years.

S.R: Oh, Erie Beach.

M.J: Yep, and it has too.

S.R: Could you describe the Canadiana and the Americana at all?

M.J: A famous Buffalo band Harold Austin. He used to play in the evening going up to the beach and of course play going back for dancing on the Canadiana. And then when he was at the beach he'd play unless there was a big-name band brought in for the night you know. They usually come in for a one night stand there, the big bands and all the big ones of the day played there.

S.R: Such as?

M.J: Oh, Harry James, Glenn Miller, Tommy Dorsey, Jimmy Dorsey

and on and on. That was a great dance hall too. It looks like they're rejuvenating it this year and trying to bring back the big-name dance hall. I think they're shadows of the former bands which were so good. Like Glenn Miller, et cetera, some of those, they're bringing those back. But it was, Crystal Beach Dance Hall was Canada wide, famous over Canada wide...very good.

S.R: You mentioned about getting the Sand Fly Express at the station. Where is the station?

M.J: Oh, oh. The ferry landing for the ferry boat from Buffalo was right behind Agrette's Supermarket which is all closed up, out in front of the King Edward Hotel. The terminal of the Sand Fly Express was right at the ferry landing. It was for people...the people would walk off the ferry boat and they'd walk right onto the Sand Fly Express to Erie Beach. That was a busy spot there.

S.R: Were there any other ways to get over to Buffalo?

M.J: That was before the Peace Bridge. Anyone in Fort Erie either took the ferry boat or the Dummy across the International Bridge, railroad bridge.

S.R: Do you remember how much it was to take the ferry boat and the Dummy?

M.J: I think it was a nickle to cross there. In my earliest days I think it was a nickle to cross on the ferry boat.

S.R: Do you remember on the Dummy?

M.J: No, being on the south end we always travelled on the south end ferry.

S.R: Oh, the Dummy was from Bridgeburg.

M.J: Yeah, from Bridgeburg.

S.R: How old were you when you got your first car?

M.J: Eighteen. A Model T, a Model T Ford.

S.R: And what year was the car?

M.J: Well, let's see, the year of the car was '25. I think it was '25. I know I bought it for twenty bucks anyhow.

S.R: And it was in running condition?

M.J: Sure. Later on I had to change the bands. No mechanic has ever had a more ticklish job than changing the bands on a Model T Ford. You had to stand on your head, you needed three arms, oh, that was a job.

S.R: And you did it?

M.J: I did it and she ran good too. Oh yeah, the old Model T ran good.

S.R: Do you remember how much the price of gas was then?

M.J: I believe it was twenty-five cents a gallon.

S.R: And how far would twenty-five cents a gallon get you...miles per gallon?

M.J: Oh, we got pretty good mileage on those old four cylinder cars you know. You got pretty good mileage. It was so good that we didn't worry about it like they do today. Today that's a big item. You're trying to get a car that will give you the best mileage.

S.R: Do you recall the speed limits?

M.J: Thirty miles an hour. In those days thirty miles an hour was the speed limit.

S.R: And that was everywhere? Were there any difference, or wouldn't the cars go any faster?

M.J: The cars wouldn't go much faster than that unless it was down hill.

S.R: When we were talking about crossing, when the Peace Bridge was built they had a big affair type thing?

M.J: Oh yeah, I remember that. The Prince of Wales appeared down here at the south end when they had the ribbon cutting at the end of the Peace Bridge. I think the Governor of New York State was there too. But the main thing was...the main attraction was the Prince of Wales and he was a very popular individual at the time. He had a farm out in Calgary and he was world famous. That was a very important day when he opened that Peace Bridge. I remember it well when they built it because they started out from both sides. I was about twelve or thirteen and I thought, oh heck, how are those guys going to get that thing to jive up out in the middle. But they did. They started at the American side and the Canadian side and went right across the river right on.

S.R: And they never had any problems making it like that?

M.J: Oh, they lost a few guys. I remember one day I was down fishing in the river in my own plywood boat on a Saturday morning and all of a sudden the tug boats, which were over tied at the American side, they started blowing their horns. People were out in the middle of the river because some guy had fallen off the bridge and they

were trying to get the body, but I don't think they ever did. They were all tooting. That's what they, the tug boats, were supposed to do. If anybody fell off they were supposed to pick them up. There wasn't any little runabouts in the river like there is today. When you go down that Niagara River today there's hundreds of boats, but that was before they made the outboard motor.

S.R: Oh, it was all the big propellor and stuff underneath?

M.J: Yeah, it was all inboard motors,yeah. Well, that opened up Fort Erie then after that. I think we kids were more disappointed about one thing because the big ferry boats that used to ply back and forth across there...in the summer time there would be two and they both leave the different shores at the same time. They'd give a toot and one would leave the Yankee side and one would leave the Canadian side and they'd pass in the river like this you see. But as they crossed the river they would throw great big rollers down the river and it would be nothing to see anywhere from a dozen to two dozen kids sometimes, go out on the boat...especially the Canadian side, dive overboard and take the rollers down the river and then swim into shore see. Oh that was beautiful. When they finally took the boats off the river why, the kids was...

S.R: Another place on the river was the shipyards, it is now the Niagara Parks Marina.

M.J: Yeah. Well, the shipyards...I think it was during the First World War when they built a lot of the lake boats there. Then later on it closed up. The old slips where they used to roll the boats out into the river were still there and there's still signs of them there today. The dockage,and timbers,and what not,had melted away somewhere and a lot of cables and stuff like that are still there. They're kind of eye sores. We used to...my dad and another man who had a motor boat, an old one cylinder puttsy-puttsy motor boat. We'd quite often go down there on a Saturday and Sunday to fish. There was good fishing in those days. I'll never forget one day. Do you want to hear an authentic fish story? One day I was down there up on the old dock fishing and I caught seventeen fish on one hook. Now you say, how can that happen? I said, well it happened. I got a bite and went to raise my line but it wouldn't come up. I

did this several times and it wouldn't come up so I hollered for my dad. He brought the boat around and he...I had a stout line and he'd pull, and he noticed a steel cable go slack every time he pulled up. So he said, hey, you're hooked onto a cable or something so he says, I'm going to pull this cable. And he pulled up the cable and there was seventeen fish on my line in a fish cage. The fish cage was made out of chicken wire and the fish could get in but they couldn't get out. And here was seventeen fish in there. It was illegal of course but it didn't belong to us. It just so happens when we had it out in the boat there, why all the fish fell out in the boat. So we threw it back in again. We didn't want to get caught with that because it was against the law.

S.R: Oh, you weren't allowed to net fish or trap them?

M.J: Oh no, you couldn't use a trap like that. But my line had gone through the chicken wire and the fish inside there bit because I felt the bite and tried to pull it up. Of course the other hook was trapped in the wire and I caught seventeen fish on one hook.

S.R: Yes, that's a big fish story.

S.R: Were there any famous people that you can remember at all. Even people that came through, stars, or did Fort Erie raise any famous people as far as sports are concerned?

M.J: Well, there have been famous names. One lad, Fort Erie lad, that made the big leagues was Pierre Pilote, who also made the Hall of Fame, the Hockey Hall of Fame. And my own personal experience with him...I started him as a minor in our industrial league. And Pierre's still a good friend of mine. He's one name that's famous. Of course there was the Relab, he made it in the big league. McMann and Lynn Zimmerman who made it to the Houston Astros in the W. H. A. playing with Gordie Howe. Those were the major hockey names.

S.R: And they were all from the area?

M.J: All from...all Fort Erie kids yeah. There must have been other good...my memory is not working right now.

S.R: What was your occupation?

M.J: I started in the aviation business in 1935 and worked for the Fleet Corporation for forty-six years.

S.R: Could you start at the beginning of Fleet to it's present day?

M.J: When I started, when I started at Fleet it was, there was just one small section parallel with the Gilmore Road. During the time I was employed there they had several additions. I saw several additions go on there and it gradually expanded over the years into what we call Unit 1, Unit 2, Unit 3, Unit 4, Unit 5 and then the latest addition was the big metal bonding facility that was just built on three years ago...three or four years ago. I, as an eighteen year old lad, I started there and it was my privilege to have met Major Fleet, the original owner and builder of the company. At that time he was also the President and General Manager of Consolidated Air Craft in Buffalo, which later moved to California and became known as Con Vair. Today there are many Con Vair airplanes, passenger and baggage airplanes flying in the world today. This Major Fleet was an exceptional man. Of course at that time he was a millionaire but he would stop and talk to most menial or ordinary type person and he never forgot a name. In fact, the way he got involved in Canada was, he was flying from Detroit to Buffalo one time and he got into a violent storm over London and he landed in London, Ontario and he cracked up. He went to the hospital and there he met a fellow by the name of Jack Sanderson who was the President of the London Flying Club. He became a good friend of Jack Sanderson and he told him that he was interested in establishing a plant, a branch plant in Canada. But he didn't want...London was too far away. He wanted it closer. So he compromised and built the original little plant on Gilmore Road in Fort Erie, and Jack Sanderson became the Manager. Now Jack was a great flyer. People in that era remember him, the stunt flying over Fort Erie. He knew the loops and rolls and everything else in our Fleet Biplanes, which we were building in those days, which Fleet was building. Anyhow, when I was hired in '35 by Jack Sanderson, a short time after I was there a fellow by the name of Mac McCracken, who was the Manager, brought Major Fleet through the plant. He went out of his way to come over to the bench where I was working building ailerons and he said, Major, I want you to meet Charlie Jacobs boy and his name is Max. He shook my hand and said I'm glad to know you Max.

If you're half as good as your dad you're alright. That really did something to me you know. So a year later he came through the plant again and he walked out of his way to shake hands with me again and he said, hi, how are you doing Max? He remembered my name. Boy, I never forgot that. And he was famous for that. He never forgot a face or a name, and I guess that's why he became a multi millionaire. Eventually he sold his interest in the Consolidated out in California for eight million dollars. Now when he come in in those days it was worth...about eighty million today. So that was the story of how Fleet started plus my own experience from me. Fleet has had several additions in it.

S.R: What was Fleet's maximum capacity...it's highest amount of employees it's had?

M.J: As I recall, I think twelve hundred was probably our largest roster.

S.R: And what is it today?

M.J: I think there's seven hundred there today.

S.R: Why would it have been twelve hundred before?

M.J: Well, at one time we were a major contributor to the war effort. Like building the Fleet Cornells. These Cornells were a trainer plane and they...the united effort of the Western World sent all their air trainees to Canada for training because it was out of the war zone, and they started a super program. A training on small planes and larger planes and whatever they had, whether they had it for bombers, or fighters or whatever. And this Fleet Cornell was one of the primary training planes. A single engine and we made twenty-five hundred.

S.R: And how long would that take?

M.J: How long would it take?

S.R: Yeah.

M.J: We were turning out, I think we were turning out ten a month.

S.R: Over quite a few years then.

M.J: Oh yeah, that lasted quite a while. But Fleet has...what started out in the building, the little biplanes of wood and fabric and bailing wires, have graduated into a major supplier of sheet metal, metal stressed aircraft, and now they're in the bonded components...sections of aircraft which are very modern. Over the last fifteen, twenty

years, the greatest commercial and military aircraft builders in North America such as Douglas, Boeing, Lockheed, Grumman, DeHavilland, Canada Air, and many others.

S.R: You mentioned bonding. What's that?

M.J: Oh, metal bonding and composite bonding has been developed at Fleet. I think they're one of the primary companies in Canada to get into this in the last twenty years. This consists of gluing metals together or composites together under high pressure with special adhesives. And it makes the finished component much stronger than those which are mechanically fastened together with rivets or bolts or whatever. And that's...it's much lighter too. Some of these are much lighter and weight is a big thing in airplanes. They must keep it down. Fleet should have a great future for many years to come if they keep up the high quality and the work output that they've had there for many, many years.

S.R: Did Fleet always have unions for the workers?

M.J: They started out with a...Fleet started out with a company union and eventually evolved into the machinist union as which they are now. Actually there has been very little labour trouble at Fleet over the years.

S.R: Have there been any accidents or anything like that happen there?

M.J: One accident that happened in the old repair days...Fleet was...when a fuel tank exploded a couple of nearby workers were hospitalized for a while. That's the closest we've had to any major accidents.

S.R: There's an airstrip in behind Fleet. Was that always there?

M.J: No that was, the airstrip was built by Fleet and the government to test fly, to test the aircraft. During the war, many planes such as the Fairey Battle, and others were landed on that strip. In fact the Fairey Battles would come in all knocked down in boxes and Fleet would assemble them and test fly them. There's a very famous test pilot in those days by the name of Tommy Williams. He just died the other day. Tommy Williams was the test pilot for Fleet in those days. He used to test different types of aircrafts such as the Fairey Battles, and the Fleet Finches, and later the Fleet Canucks and so on, and he was really a famous, famous flyer. He fought in two wars and it was really something to watch him

take a couple of Irvin Airchute parachutes mounted on rubber dummies ...take them up to about nine hundred feet and eject them. And they'd, of course they'd float down on their parachutes. So he'd do his best to side sweep his Fleet 21M and get on the ground before they did. And many a time he did it. It's very encouraging to see the strides being made these days by the Fleet Company and also this new helicopter company which has arrived in town. It holds very well for the employment situation in Fort Erie. I'm very glad to see it. I've been privileged to meet a fine gentlemen by the name of Miller who was raised on the Niagara River in his youth. Before he died a few years back I was at a garden party and I asked him what he recalled about the fishing on the Niagara River in his early days. He says well, down on the farm we never bothered to fish with a pole or a rod and wheel, whatever. He said what we did, we set out night lines in the summer time when it wasn't too cold. And then in the morning we'd go out with our flat bottomed boat, and hand over hand along the night line, and take the fish off and throw them in a bushel basket. Se we never had...the fish were so plentiful that by the time we come in we very seldom had less than a bushel. We...there were different runs of fish down the river in those days. Sometimes you'd get all perch and sometimes you'd get blue and yellow walleyes. You'd get a certain amount of sturgeon. It would be quite a thing sometimes to take the boat up and out a ways and he'd try to pick up the line and the line just wouldn't come up. You'd get your grappling and maybe get it up part way and get it over the bow of your boat and it would almost want to sink your boat. And then we knew what had happened. We had maybe one or maybe two big sturgeon on it, on the night line. So we had to do it different. So we had to go out and try to separate them and get out one at a time. And these sturgeon, they'd weigh anywhere from fifty to one hundred and twenty pounds. They were so big you know.

S.R: And they're eating fish?

M.J: Oh yeah...sturgeon. So they didn't have much trouble getting the fish. In fact the fishing in the Niagara until approximately thirty years ago was extremely good. You'd go in Thompson's Hole or

out off Erie Beach or down around the shipyards and you'd get a real nice mess of fish in an hour. But fortunately it looks hopefully that they'll bar the commercial fisherman from stripping the lake of the good fish like they did on the American side. They won't allow commercial fishing on the American side now. They stopped it.

S.R: Oh, I didn't know there even was.

M.J: Oh yeah. If you go to Port Colborne you'll see five fish tugs in there right now.

S.R: Oh, it's the Canadians that are still doing it.

M.J: The Canadians are doing it yeah. They still do it. I didn't tell you about my dad, did I?

S.R: No.

M.J: How did I arrive in Fort Erie? My father was a journeyman cabinet maker and he came to Buffalo in 1914 or '13, around in there. He was in the piano making business. He made player pianos and grand pianos and so forth. And it was only natural for him to graduate to the airplane business. In that...in those days Buffalo was one of the headquarters in aircraft business...With Curtis, and Eberharts, and a couple other small outfits, building airplanes. Of course they built the Curtis Hawks during the First World War. And it was in this company that he met the likes of Larry Bell, later the head of Bell Air, Air Cobra and Air...or a Helicopters, and of course Major Fleet. So, in Consolid...when Major Fleet started Consolidated in Buffalo, my dad went to work for him and he got to know him pretty good. And eventually when Major Fleet started his branch at Fleet Aircraft in Fort Erie, my dad transferred with him over to the Canadian side, and he worked there for many years until his death. Later I was hired by Jack Sanderson at Fleet Aircraft and now I've got a son working there named Bruce. There was three generations worked there for Fleet.

S.R: Does Bruce have any sons yet?

M.J: No, but he thinks he's got one on the way. He's got two daughters and one on the way of course.

M.J: As regards living in Fort Erie, I find that in my travels it's one of the finest areas to live in, especially during the warm months,

of anyplace in North America that I've seen. And the winter, that's another story. But in the summertime the greenery, the water, the resort conditions, actually the traffic, and everything else, to me this is a very desirable place to live. And I'll always spend the few winter months in the south but we're always glad to get back to Ontario where the air is clean, the traffic isn't bad and actually is a great place to live in the Fort Erie or Niagara Peninsula area. I wouldn't trade it for Toronto, or the Kiawarthas, or North Country or the south in the summertime for Fort Erie.

S.R: Thank you very much for the interview Mr. Jacobs.

M.J: You're welcome.