

Angus Boutilier

Interviewed by Jennifer Whalen, Oct. 18, 2000



Q. O.k, we'll start by getting your full name.

A. Angus Gidney Boutilier.

Q. And who were your parents?

A. My parents is Alfred Thomas Boutilier was my father and Francis Crosby Gidney is my mother.

Q. When were you born?

A. 1919

Q. And where were you born?

A. Centerville.

Q. How large was your family?

A. It was just a brother and I, immediate family and there was three, four half brothers. One sister, half sister.

Q. And where did you fit in the family?

A. I was the youngest.

Q. How did you feel being the youngest child?

A. Well all right because there wasn't much difference between my brother and I. It was only, my brother's birthday was the twenty-third of December and mine was November the thirtieth of December. For a little while there we were the same age. (Laughter)

Q. What did your father do for a living?

A. My father he managed to build the fishplant in Centerville, canning plant and he run the steamer to Saint John and to Centerville, to Westport and to Weymoth I think.

Q. What do you remember about your mother's workday?

A. Well she'd, my mother after I was born she, of course she retired from business. My father died when I was just a baby and she gave up the business and took care of us. That's about it I guess but she worked as his secretary for years. They run a general store and in fact he was the community in those days. He was the main store but that was before my time. He died when I was just a baby so all I know about him is what I've been told.

Q. What happened to your father?

A. He had an aneurysm I suppose you'd call it. He went down to put the men to work in the morning and he come back to the house with a headache and he died.

Q. What was a typical school day like for you?

A. I wasn't a very good student to tell you the truth. (Laughter) It was just a necessity with me. (Laughter)

Q. Why was it that you didn't like school?

A. I don't know. I was more of an outdoor boy I guess but I left school when I was fourteen and took on the old farm, worked at that. Didn't have a very exciting life. (Laughter) I took care of my mother and grandmother and my uncle and I took care of them until they moved on.

Q. Who was your best friend at school?

A. I don't know if I had any. They were all close friends but I don't know of a best friend. I never thought of it that way.

Q. What types of things would you do with your friends?

A. We used to play ball at school and things like that. Play baseball. In those days we used to walk all the way to the Lake here and skate on the Lake in the wintertime.

Q. Which Lake would that be?

A. Lake Midway.

Q. What is your least favorite memory of school?

A. Oh, I don't know. Going I guess.

Q. What subjects were you taught in school?

A. Oh regular.

Q. How were you disciplined at school?

A. She didn't spare the strap any in most cases. (Laughter)

Q. Were you ever strapped?

A. Oh several times, yeah.

Q. And how did that make you feel?

A. Not bad. (Laughter) I was always afraid that mother would find out and then we'd be worse off. (Laughter)

Q. And how would you be disciplined at home?

A. I don't know. Usually the hairbrush, I believe. I was younger. (Laughter)

Q. Were you disciplined at home many times?

A. Oh yes. We were taught to behave in those days but we were never hurt any as far as that goes. It would hurt your feelings for a little while but I don't think it hurt any. It likely done us a lot of good.

Q. What would your daily chores be like at home?

A. Well I took over, I don't remember just how old I was when I took over the barn but I milked the cows, feed the livestock, feed the pigs, feed the chickens and those things before I walked a mile to school so I had quite a morning and when I got home at night I had chores to do over again and that meant carrying in the wood and cutting kindling and doing the barn work again.

Q. What would it be like to do all that barn work in the morning and then have to walk to school?

A. Well we didn't know any difference so we didn't mind. We thought that was just part of the day. Then, I think what injured my education more than anything, it made me so I didn't like school was the fact that mother in the winter time, we had a house in Yarmouth, in the town and I left the school in Centerville or Weymouth a few months in the fall and then I went Yarmouth and went to the school in Yarmouth and then I come back home and went to school again and between the two, it just ruined me. I just learned to not like it at all. I just felt I was behind the others. Different ways of teaching and things and it just bothered me and bothered my education. My brother, he got a better education. He went to high school in Yarmouth but he stayed right down there but he for some reason was a little bit quicker at school than I was and I was the one that did the work. (Laughter)

Other. Inaudible audio

Q. Where is the house that was in Centerville?

A. It's the old Ward property, an old brick house up the in there and you most likely have heard of it.

Other. Inaudible audio

Q. Oh, the red brick one.

A. The red brick one yeah. The barns gone now.

Q. After your chores were done what would you do with your free time?

A. What free time? (Laughter)

Q. No free time at all?

A. Oh yes we used to play games, have cards, have friends in and we always had a next door neighbor and his boy was eighteen and home a lot. Then there were several musicals and they used to come and play their mouth organs, guitars, and accordions and I'd spend an evening that way. That was Victor Titus and Carl Dimock was the minister's son, he used play guitar and Victor played accordion and the Robichaud boy, I can't remember his name but he used to play the mouth organ so the three of them together. (Laughter) It was good entertainment and we had the old battery radio when the batteries were good.

Q. How would that battery radio look different than the ones from today?

A. Oh, the last one we had was pretty good. The first radio we had, if you could hear it across the room that was excellent. If you was right up to it you could hear it. The only station we could get was W E E I.

Q. Where was that?

A. That was in the states. I forget now just where in the states and that one had earphones and it had the loud speakers and the loud speaker never worked too good. You couldn't hear it very far and we'd all sit around the table and put the earphones in a glass bowl and you could listen to it that way sometimes. (Laughter)

Q. What was your favorite holiday when you were a child?

A. Oh, Christmas was always the best for me.

Q. And why did you like Christmas so much?

A. Oh, Santa Clause always filled our stockings.

Q. What was your favorite tot as a young child?

A. I don't remember if I ever had a favorite. We always got one toy at Christmas but I don't know. We used to have kit cars, we liked those, and then we got tricycles when we got older and then we graduated to bicycles but it was a long while yet to bicycles because I had to save my money for it. I think it took three or four years to save up twenty dollars for a bike in those days. (Laughter)

Q. What was it like at your house when the catalog arrived?

A. The what?

Q. The catalog, the Eaton's catalog?

A. Oh, yes. We used to look some but we didn't do much more than look.

Q. Where else would you get the things that you needed?

A. Well I don't know. Most of our clothes were, when I was a younger person, leggins' we used to have, stockins' and sweaters and grandmother knit all those. She used to knit all the time and other clothes, I guess they came from the Eaton's.

Q. How much spending would you have as a young child?

A. We never thought of spending money in those days. We never spent money. We never had an allowance I don't think either.

Other. Inaudible audio

Q. Did your mother remarry?

A. No. No she spent her life bringing us up.

Q. So how would your family make the money that you needed?

A. Well, we had a little farm and we had pretty near everything we needed as far as eating goes. We were a lot better off, the farmers were a lot better off than the fishermen through the thirties and the depression. We had so much of our own that we didn't need too much cash. We got by on very, very little. You could always take a dozen eggs and go to the store for some groceries and a few things like that and we kept our own beef, our own pork, our own chicken and our own eggs. We had our milk and our butter and our vegetables and in those days we didn't need much more. Today everything is money. You can't get by without it but in those days it was different and the fishermen had it real hard because they depended on the fish to, for their livelihood and the prices were way down and they'd really fallen back and they had, fishing families had big families. Boys it was nothing to have ten twelve kids in the family or more.

Q. Why was that?

A. I don't know. There was a spell there that they all raised big families. It was, the Morehouse's they were farmers, he was a farmer up there and he never had much money and they had a big family but family was, you'd get the young ones and they'd work together that way and I can remember them coming to church. They said they had shoes and they would carry their shoes 'till they got to the village and then they'd put their shoes on. They wanted to save the leather. They would live very close and that's what most people did. I used to work a little on the highway and drove a team of oxen for years and I used to work a little on the highway, wharf construction and worked my team on those and I only had one team of oxen in my life and I drove them for ten, twelve years and they could pretty near talk so then they were out every day.

Q. What was that like?

A. Pardon?

Q. What was that like?

A. What's that?

Q. With the ox?

A. Well I was fifteen when I got the team. I paid, I bought 'em from Emery Morehouse, paid eighty-five dollars for six-foot cattle, they were six-foot cattle and I had to train 'em myself and that's quite a problem. You used to get the cattle to correspond with you and work with you and they think the way you do after a while but over a period of time they would respond to my call and I could, well for one instance Wayne Gidney was helping build, fix the old barn up there. We were siding out poles for studs instead of buying two by fours we just cut poles and sided one side and Wayne was doing the siding and Paul so I went back into the woods to cut 'em and I'd cut a few poles and put 'em on the chain and tell the cattle to go home. Take them home and they'd go, Wayne would hear them coming and he would speak to 'em, and they'd come down. He'd take the poles off and send 'em back and they did that all day. That's they way, that's because they were used to working for me.

Other. Inaudible audio

Q. What were their names?

A. I don't know if I ever named them. I don't think I ever did.

Other. What do you mean by six-foot cattle?

A. Well that was their girth. Around them.

Other. Their girth? Wow

A. Yeah. (Laughter)

Other. Inaudible audio

A. Well that, they always, nigh oxen, nigh off oxen. Spark and bright was an old name that most of 'em used but I don't know if I ever used names much. I spoke to 'em and they had to both hear me and they both would do what I want. If I wanted them to jeer or haul they'd know which way to turn and he'd go out, he'd go out on the picture fore and I'd stay on the cart and I'd just tell 'em to jeer or haul around and they'd back around and go back.

Other. And what would nigh and nigh off ox mean? Inaudible audio

A. Well you see your nigh ox would be your one on your right and the off one would be the one on the left. Wait, I got that backwards. The right ox would be the off one 'cause you stand on the right hand side but I rarely ever teamed from the front. I taught my team to, of course I was alone so I couldn't, I didn't have a teamster. If I wanted to plow, I had to teach my cattle to go for themselves. Follow the farm and then turn and go back in it.

Q. What was your religion?

A. I don't belong to any church. I went to the Methodist Church in Centerville and the United Church as a kid. I went to Sunday school there. Attended both churches, the Baptist Church when I was a young fella 'cause the United Church closed up so we went to the Baptist Church. In the late years, I haven't gone to any of it.

Q. So as a young child, what was Sundays like at your house?

A. Well we always looked the same as usual I guess, not too much activity. We used to go to Sunday school, come home and I don't know if we did too much. Later on we used to, we took tourists later on. Mother took borders, several borders and we called the place The Way Over Inn and we used to take tourists and in those days tourists came and stayed all summer and we did that for quite a few years until the war started but the same tourists would come year after year and stay all summer 'cause they had no cars and cars were scarce and today when you see a fella today, they're gone. (Laughter)

Q. What did you think about having all the tourists stay with you?

A. We used to get along fine with them. We used to try to keep them happy and have wiener roasts and different things like that and as I say, our musical ***** used to come and play and when it was foggy we'd play, I remember one year we had eight days we didn't see the sun. It was foggy every day and it was pretty hard. I think the highest number we had was around twenty tourists at one time. Some of them had to stay out to our neighbors across the ***** and then come in to eat and then we built a tennis court and we played tennis there. We used to do those things.

Q. Where was the Inn located?

A. Pardon?

Q. Where was the Inn.....?

A. Oh, it was the old brick house in, it was the old Ward house in Centerville.

Other. Inaudible audio

Q. O.K. Where would the tourists come from?

A. Pardon?

Q. Where would the tourists come from?

A. Oh, they came from New York, Boston and different parts of the states. I don't remember where they all came from but they came from around everywhere's. Quite a few. Some from Florida even. Some were just young people. I know once a couple of girls came and stayed all summer. They worked in the railway in the states and they got free passes, saved up their time and took a trip to Nova Scotia and they spent the whole summer there. We played tennis, walked to the lake here, swam.

Q. Who would prepare the meals for everybody?

A. Mother did all the cooking.

Q. And what sorts of things would she make?

A. Oh, my. That was quite a menu she used to put out. She loved to cook. She was a great cook and we hired girls, local girls to help with it and take care of things. Do the housework and.....

Q. How did you keep up with what was going on in the outside world?

A. Mostly with the paper. We always took a daily paper and we had the radio and that was about it I guess.

Q. How much of what you needed did you make yourself?

A. Oh dear. What do you mean?

Q. Like furniture, or....

A. No, No. We bought everything we needed furniture wise.

Q. What things would you barter for?

A. Oh that would be just for a few groceries and things we had a surplus of. We'd sell a few little things. We'd sell some of the farm items. If you had more potatoes that you needed, we sold those and if you had more butter then we sold that.

Q. How did electricity change things for you?

A. We didn't get electricity 'till way late. They had it down through the village quite a while before we got it 'cause we lived off the road and had to supply the poles and wire and rope, so we didn't get it. Most of the neighborhood got it before we did. Although my father had electricity long before that. My father had electricity back in the nineteen hundreds 'cause he ran the fish plants and he had a boiler running all night and day so he bought a dynamo and generated his own electricity and he had electricity in the fish plant, electricity up to the house and store and everybody else could have had it that wanted it but nobody could afford the wires. In those days money was, so then there was a period after he died that we didn't have electricity when the plant went.

Other. Inaudible audio

A. Oh, in the early nineteen hundreds. It would be before my time. A little before my time. He was the community and all of a sudden Centerville died when he died 'cause he used to hire a lot of people and on the neck everybody worked. Even the farmers, in those days everything was moved with oxen and fish from Whale Cove, their teams would bring them up and they'd have the team in the night. You couldn't bring them in the day time, they'd spoil because the ox team traveled so slow and Winnie Gidney used to tell me stories. His father had two teams and he and Con would team at night. They'd take the teams and go to Whale Cove, get a load of fish and bring 'em to Centerville and then unload their load and then go back home. They used to bring hay with them and on their way, after they got unloaded the team started for home. Of course the team would go home and they'd go to sleep in the carts and when they'd get to their home, they'd wake up or the father would wake them when they got there and that was how they slept. They used to do the same, old Mr. Costco, the old, Henry's father. There was a sprint block out there and that was a steam engine that run a threshing machine and they told me that in the morning, in fall when it was threshing time, the grain would be, the teams would be lined up at the foot of the lake to way up past the head of the lake waitin' to be threshed in the morning. (continued on next page)

To be grain threshed they'd have to wait all day some of them for their turn to come and their father would send them up, Con and Winnie with loads of grain but he'd send them up in the evening and they'd sleep in the oats and grain all night and, so they'd be up early and get the steam engines started and the boilers warmed up so old Mr. Costco was ready to thresh, well they would be first and they'd get home first. So, he had the team for the rest of the day to work the farm. (Laughter)

Other. Where's the cement block that you're talking about?

A. Yeah there's one right over there. The old boiler tubes were still there when I was a kid, I can remember seeing them in the light and then they all went to pieces.

Q. When did you get running water?

A. Our water came in by gravity. The well was higher than the house and it run by gravity so we always had running water.

Q. How did you take care of your teeth?

A. I didn't. Take care of my teeth you say?

Q. Yes.

A. Well I was supposed to brush 'em but I've got false teeth now so I didn't take good care of 'em. (Laughter)

Q. Did you have everything that you would have needed?

A. Oh, yeah.

Q. How often would you see a dentist?

A. If you needed to get a tooth pulled I suppose you would see a dentist. You'd hope you wouldn't see him but it always came around.

Q. Do you ever remember visiting the dentist?

A. Oh yes. I can remember getting teeth filled. You used to go to Digby to old Dr. McGreggor and he filled my teeth once and he filled 'em down on the nerve and when I got home it bothered me something terrible and they ulcerated. I had to go back to Digby and in those days they didn't freeze your tooth. They, in a bad case they would give you what they call sleeping gas. They were out of gas the day I was there and they gave me ether and they took these teeth out. You can remember that, that was the last time I went to a dentist (Laughter) for a long while. I was sick for a long time. I can remember it, but before that, before my time, there always used to be somebody in the neighborhood that would pull your first teeth. He wasn't a dentist but he had a pair of forceps and he'd grab hold of them and pull 'em out and that was it but then we had vaudeville shows, old Dr. Carmen used to come around and he'd pull teeth and sell patent medicine that was colored water with a little alcohol in it I guess to make it more saleable and they used to put on shows. Vaudeville shows on stage and he'd show a movie. He had a movie camera, the old wind up films. He'd show one of those. They'd come around, I think it cost ten cents for a kid to go. I never had to pay 'cause they boarded home at the hotel and I got a free pass so I was a lucky kid. (Laughter)

Q. What sorts of shows would they play?

A. Oh, they were Western Shows and Cowboys and Indians and then there was, once it took bus students to Centerville and I know it was Sea Stories. They used to put a movie on the old square rigged vessel, Shang hai, and Fu's and so forth and so on, so those were the kinds of movies we had.

Q. How often would they come?

A. Oh, usually once a year. They'd come and they'd stay about a week or more and they'd put on shows for a week or more before they'd go and then there'd be maybe another one come. There was another one the Dunkin's. They came first with Dr. Harmond and then they put on a show of their own and came around for a couple years and old Mrs. Dunkin, she used to sing and they'd have stage plays they'd put on. I can remember one, how did that go? They got my brother up there, he went up on the stage and they had a slight of hand artist, oh what do they call him, a magician and he was good and he would juggle eight, or ten balls at once. He'd have a perfect circle going and he was excellent. So they had my brother up one time and he was, my brother had stole a loaf of bread and he was arrested and the judge was, the magician was the judge and they had the loaf of bread there for evidence, so the magician kept breaking off pieces of bread, then juggled them in the air and then eat one but before the case was over the evidence was gone. (Laughter)

Q. What sorts of costumes would they wear?

A. Oh, they, I can't remember. They dressed pretty good. The Blue family when they were young girls, they used to dance in the play, they wore skimpy outfits but the rest looked pretty good but it was something for the village and everybody looked forward to 'em when they came.

Other. When they left here, where would they go then, to the islands?

A. Oh, they could have gone to the islands, gone different places. They were all through the country, everywhere's they played. Oh, there was different ones. There was one that was around that played just one play. Uncle Tom's Cabin and they used to play that and that was all they'd play. They'd put on that play for a night.

Other. They'd have to have someone in black face then, I suppose?

A. Oh, they had a black man then for Uncle Tom. He wasn't like that, there was a black man and I can remember they had the organ that you cranked. The old crank organ, you cranked it and it played itself. They had one of those with them.

Q. When somebody in the community died, how would the funeral be handled?

A. Well, we had the undertaker from Digby, usually looked after the funeral arrangements and the poor, the municipality had a local man that looked after the funeral arrangements. It was done by the municipality.

Q. How long would the funeral and the wake go on for?

A. Oh, it didn't last too long. An hour, I suppose.

Q. What were some home remedies that would have been common when you were growing up?

A. Medical remedies? Well I don't know. We had castrated oil. You used to rub kerosene on your chest to break up a cold. Remedies were scarce and we always made our own ointments for cuts and bruises we use to mutton tallow and iodine. Mix the two together and they'd be great at healing. Cover a wound up with that and in a few days it would heal and then there was always the store bought ointments you could get and if you wanted, you could buy Dr. Hermen's remedies. (Laughter) They didn't do you much good although later when we used to, when the flu was around real bad, we didn't have too much combat to break the fever. The fever was terrible in those days. I remember mother and grandmother both having it at the same time and I was taking care of them, stoking wood fires and Dr. Rice was in Sandy Cove and he come out but he didn't have too much to combat with. They used to suffer a lot. They'd sweat, you'd have to sweat it out and it was pretty hard on old people. A lot of them I don't think made it through those years but then later they brought in the sulfa drug and they done away with that and that used to break the fever. I don't 'now. They went into other things after that but Old Dr. Rice, he'd come and if you were real sick he'd come with a horse and sleigh in the Winter and horse and buggy and he'd stay 'till you were better. Some people, he'd stay overnight, but he run for years. I can't remember any other doctor except for old Dr. Sutherland in the late years but he was about the last of the family doctors I guess after that the, cars came in and people went to town.

Q. How often would you leave this town?

A. What was that again?

Q. How often would you leave here?

A. How often would I?

Q. Leave to go elsewhere?

A. Oh, well I did. We went to Yarmouth and lived the Winters there but we used to go to town to the movies in the late years when I was a teenager and when the cars would go we would, one fella would have a car and he'd take a car load and go and the bus would take you in town to a movie and back and that would be usually about once a week, that was every Saturday night or Friday. I remember one time when Lee Westcott, I went with him, come up a snow storm while we was in the movies and we started to come home and we got as far as Seawall and we had to walk the rest of the way home. (Laughter) That was quite a little jaunt especially after you worked in the woods all day.

Q. How would you and your family get to Yarmouth?

A. We went by train. We always went by train when the train was running. I used to like the old trains. We used to go on them all the time. I used to go up to the Agriculture College in Truro on, I used to take the train and go up there, take short courses. They were only short courses 'cause I couldn't stay away too long.

Q. How old would you have been when you took those courses?

A. Oh, I'd a been sixteen I suppose. I left school when I was fourteen, I think I went 'till I was fifteen, sixteen, seventeen.

Q. What courses did you take?

A. Oh different courses. Blacksmith work, regular farm courses, vegetable relations, some were poultry courses, and relation to poultry and there were sheep courses, shearing sheep, and how to take care of those. I used to take those 'cause see I had no father. My father, I couldn't see those things weren't handed to me because I started from nothing (Laughter) as far as the farm went.

Q. How did you enjoy those courses?

A. Oh, I used to liked them quite a bit.

Q. What were the roads like back then?

A. Well I didn't have a truck until I was twenty something and it used to take about two hours to go to Digby most of the time because of all of the potholes and bad spots. You couldn't make very good time.

Q. Who would maintain the roads?

A. That was done by the provincial government who may've appointed a man in the community to look after certain districts and he would get a little money and he'd hire a few men to pick and shovel and keep the ditches clean and they'd do the best they could with what little they had.

Q. Who were your screen idols as a teen?

A. Pardon?

Q. Who were your screen idols as a teen?

A. Oh gosh. It's been a long time ago, It's hard to remember. There was a Western movie, I've forgotten their names now, it's been so long.

Q. What sort of music did you like?

A. Oh we always liked Western music.

Q. What do you remember about dating?

A. About skating?

Q. Dating?

A. Yeah, oh we used to walk down here and skate. We used to like it but I was never an expert skater or anything.

Q. What did you expect to do when you grew up?

A. What I did.

Other. Inaudible audio

When did you move up here to Lake Midway from Centerville?

A. I don't know if I remember the years, I can't remember the years. It must have been in the seventies, I think.

Other. We made a mistake, I made a mistake. I said up here from Centerville, its not. It's down from Centerville. (Laughter)

A. Down, that's right. We came down, I can't remember the exact year. The dates kind of confuse me now.

Q. What would your typical workday be like?

A. Now, it's not very long. (Laughter) It's getting shorter all the time but I still raise the garden but I don't keep any animals anymore and I keep the fire going of course living alone you've got your housework to do and your outside work so I keep busy that way. Put a few things out to the road and you'll have some of it gone. (Laughter)

Q. Were you ever married?

A. Yeah, I was married for fifteen years.

Q. And what was your wife's full name?

A. She was from Centerville originally. She was Marion Titus and she married up the country to a Walker and her husband died and she came back down here and we were married.

Q. What was your wedding like?

A. Ah, it was a rainy day and I think they had to go get some witnesses, I think we just went the two of us , got married and that was it. (Laughter)

Other. Inaudible audio

Q. Tell me about the Ward House?

A. Well the Ward House is a very, very old place. The bricks were made on the property there. An old Englishmen and he had his own stove. Clay was dug out and he baked his own brick. He built the brick part. Now the brick part, I think is a lot older than the other part because they were built different. The brick part when I put the roof on, I took the shingles off the back roof and put 'em on. I found the boards were up and down and the boards reached the whole length and they were sawed out and they would be twelve inches wide at one end and six inches wide at the top end and they reversed them. They'd put one on and then they'd put a wide one at the top to keep them combined and those were strapped, they were chinked with clay and strapped. The first boards on that, that's how, the boards were even weathered and worn. You could see how they were worn where the cloud posts was higher where the straps was on, it was higher and even remnants of the old clay was still there. I could find it when I took it apart to shingle it but the other side, it of course was so it got to be two different periods. They can't be the same but the old place had, it has three or four fireplaces, three downstairs and one upstairs.

Other. Three what?

A. Fireplaces. Manning Gasch opened them all up. We had them all closed up but one and he opened them all up and tried to put it back somewhere's near what it was but the Saxby Gale, the old cables was still up in the attic where they cabled the roof down to keep it from blowing off. The Saxby Gale, that's the one that made the marsh at the head of Saint Mary's Bay. It flowed up through there and killed back a lot of the vegetation, so a lot of that was from that big storm.

Other. What year was that?

A. I can't remember. It'd be back in the eighteen hundreds but I can't remember the exact date of the Saxby. Mother took it over originally, of course I was very small. She took care of the old folks. We had to. We had an agreement made with my father, old Mr. Ward he wanted my father to look after him when he got older and he gave him the place to do it and that's how we came by it and I can remember old Mrs. Ward. She was still living but I was just a little boy but I can still remember her and she suffered a lot with arthritis I can remember, but the old man he died before my time. He was quite a character. He was awful hard on his boys and his boys all left him so that's the reason he had, they all went to the states and different places.

Q. What else do you remember about Mrs. Ward?

A. Well not too much. I was just a very small but I can remember the funeral. I can remember 'em coming in, the ladies all dressed in black. I remember that she suffered a lot but she told stories of a shipwreck off of Centerville there and the bodies were brought in. It was in January and they laid seven of them I think in the attic and then they had to stay there until the ground thawed in the spring so they could bury them and they were buried up in the orchard but I never could tell just exactly where. They were never marked. I always wanted to find them but I never could 'cause I doubt if they even use coffins in those days. They would probably just bury them in a shroud or something.

Q. Do you remember what ship it was?

A. No. No

Q. And were you living in the house at the time that the bodies were.....?

A. No, oh no. It was long before my time. That was happening back in the sail ship days. That would have been way back in the early eighteen hundreds I would imagine.

Q. What do you remember about Wartime?

A. My brother went in the army and he went overseas but I stayed home on the farm and took care of things here. I didn't go. In fact I've never been out of Nova Scotia in my life.

Q. What effects did the war have on your community?

A. Well I don't know.

Q. What about the depression? What do you remember about the depression?

A. Well as I spoke of it, The Depression, we got by it very easily because we had everything ever owned on the farm but other people, fisherman because the fish went bad and they did suffer a lot through the depression. The kids didn't have much and I remember that one boy told me that he got money to go, ten cents to go to the show, one of the vaudeville shows and he said that had to last him the year. That was his allotment for the year. Then there were other families that, several of them, a bag of flour would just last a week. You would bake it up. With me, we got by very easily during the depression. We didn't have much but then it didn't take much. We got by.

Q. How did you plan for hard times or retirement?

A. I never planned to retire. I haven't retired yet. I'm still working a little, so we never made any great arrangements for that 'cause I never had any big income to make arrangements for.

Q. What do you remember about the Poor Farm?

A. I went to the Poor Farm once for supper with, Mr. Thomas was runnin' it at that time and Mr. Commissioner Cossaboom was councilor and we were into an agriculture meeting and Mr. Thomas was there and he invited us down, Henry was a councilor so he invited us down and I went with him and had supper at the Poor Farm. Of course we weren't with the inmates, we were with the family but Thomas was a good operator and the Poor Farm actually made money. It was the only time it ever did. He was a wonderful man with the help and men would do most anything for him. They had their own dairy and their garden. They had a farm, they run the farm and for years that he was there, he was the last operator I think there was but he actually made it go. I think he was the only one. I can't remember taking about any other one that did.

Q. At what point would somebody go to the Poor Farm?

A. Well, when they were absolutely in destitute. Usually beyond help from the community. The community used to, if a person were having it hard, they would take up collections for 'em and do different things but when they got beyond that then they would go to the Poor Farm. There were a lot of people that went to the Poor Farm that were well up in the community in their eyes but when they got old they had no one to take care of them, no immediate family to take care of them and they had no place to go. I can remember one, I think it was five black people from the island and he was a well-known man all his life and that's where he wound up. I'm pretty sure it was Blackbird, you most likely have heard Bye Bye Blackbird. You most likely have heard of him. Yeah, yeah 'cause I know Win Gidney spoke, it was awful sad seeing them.

Q. What do you remember about elections?

A. I was in politics all my life. My grandfather Angus Gidney, he was a Member of Parliament for years. I forget just how many elections he run but he was never defeated. He retired and in those days when you retired from politics, you didn't get a gold plated pension. You got a little job. I think his was custom jobs in Digby for a few years and, so I was stepped in politics and grandmother and of course I can remember, my grandfather died, I can remember him but I was only five, four or five years old when he died you see but there's memory as a kid growing up and everybody knew him and they always told me that.

Q. What do you remember about the first time you voted?

A. Gosh, I don't know if there was much too it. I voted in Centerville and I don't know who I voted for, I don't know who the member was in those days. There was a liberal no doubt and I was liberal at that time. (Laughter)

Q. What ghost stories do you remember from your younger years?

A. What....?

Q. Ghost stories?

A. Oh we used to have ghost stories and I know a lot of people said there was a ghost up in the old house there but I don't think there was but there was always a few stories going around but I don't remember just how they went. I used to make 'em up sometimes to scare the kids. (Laughter)

Other. When you were younger, do you remember any of the older people who might have known Jerome?

A. Yes, Mrs. Adelaide Morton. She was, that would be Charlie Morton's and Sarah, well that would be her, his great, great grandmother. She was a kid when they took care of Jerome. That was in, I think they lived in Sandy Cove and they took care of him and had him in the house for a number of years and she said he never spoke but if the kids got in devilry, he would laugh. He got a great kick out of the kids when they did something they shouldn't (Laughter) but outside of that, I don't know.

Q. What about superstitions?

A. Oh there were some people who were very superstitious, some older people but I never was or our family never was superstitious in any way. We weren't afraid of black cats crossing our path or anything like that. When we were kids they used to talk about those things. You'd have bad luck for this, bad luck for that. (Laughter)

Q. What organizations were you involved in, in your community?

A. I don't think I was involved to this community. I was in the federation of agriculture but of course that was for the whole county. Digby County and we had our own society in the community and we kept purebred bull to help keep up the breeding stock and the live stock. In those days there was, I think over a hundred cows in Centerville and we kept records of use of the bull and there was over a hundred and now I don't know. Darrow's got a few up there I guess and he might be the only one. (Laughter)

Other. Would these have been dairy cows then Angus?

A. Ah, we used to keep 'em a cross between dairy and beef. We used to sell our cream. The Mackenzie cream truck came every two weeks I think for the cream and in those days it was jersey cream and today, it would scare people to death. (Laughter)

Other. Because it's so rich?

A. Yeah. It'd be half cream and you'd take half a court of milk and let it set and the cream would be half way down the bottle.

Q. How much would you sell that for?

A. Oh I forget the prices of them. It went by butterfat. When it was real rich you got more for it but I can't remember now just what.

Q. How does this place look now compared to when you were younger?

A. Well I don't know. Centerville's gone down grade terrible. The fishing industry is gone, practically all the governments don't keep up the breakwaters anymore. We have a few lobster boats left in Centerville and outside of that, I don't know what they live on outside of pensions and the big downturn in the fishery. The time Centerville was booming was just before my time and that's when my father was running the canning factory. He employed two or three hundred people in the summer and he run year round and besides the other people like farmers that used their teams and things like that, it wasn't counted as labor in those days and he had the steamer going to Saint John once bringing freight in and everything traveled that way.

Other. What was the name of that steamer?

A. Pardon?

Other. What was the name of that steamer?

A. The last steamer was named after my mother, the Francis. She was launched I think in nineteen-eighteen, nineteen-seventeen or nineteen-eighteen, I forget which. She was built right there in Centerville and she was, I had the papers to it but now I lost them. I don't know where they went. She was registered for, she had one state room and she carried three or four passengers and I forget how many tones she would coast for freight but she'd take the fish over and the canned fish over and she'd bring back things from Saint John for the store and people. If you wanted to build a house she'd bring the whole house back from Saint John. Those square houses up there in Centerville, I think they cost about eight hundred dollars. The one down the lane there, the brick house and there's a square one down the lane, Jimmy Ridaux built that one. I think they said it cost him eight hundred dollars for the material.

Other. Would they have a set plan then to build that house?

A. Pardon?

Other. Would they buy a plan?

A. Well, there were several houses built at the same time and they all moved back to the same. You can pick 'em out but there was two, Hubb Titus one, and Jimmy Ridaux's place. They were practically built the same time. They were built practically the same way.

Other. Inaudible audio

Q. How long did the canning fish operation last for?

A. What was that?

Q. The canning fish, the factory?

A. Oh the factory. My father first started, he was in partnership with Arnie Morehouse in Sandy Cove and they run a while. My father kept wanting to expand and it was too much for Arnie so he got out of it and left and my father took over the whole thing and I don't remember just how many years it run but I have one of the latest documents. You look behind that thing, and there's a book there. It's one of the last store books. It might be interesting. Some people like to go through it and see the ledger. That's seventeen, nineteen-seventeen, nineteen-eighteen, I think most of it.

Other. This is wonderful. The price of figs and oranges. What a treasure. We may have to come back and get a photograph of this Angus. It's beautiful. Everybody's name at the top.

A. Yes, each account.

Other. That's a wonderful thing to have.

A. That's about the only thing I had but the first steamer my father had was the old Centerville but I don't know too much about her and she got too old to run and he built a new one in nineteen-seventeen, nineteen-eighteen but his brother set up the factory and he set up and made his, had the machinery to make his own cans. He made all his own cans and did all the canning himself, the machinery with the different sealers and different makes and he had all of that machinery there and he was good at that kind of work, in fact he set up several of them down there, I believe one in Whale Cove, one in Little River, he set up for different people that wanted them set up.

Q. What types of fish would they can?

A. Oh, they canned about everything in those days. I know they used to can finnan haddies and smoked fish, and I wouldn't know but the used to can herring, they used to can lobsters, they used to can anything in season, about anything that was caught, I guess you'd can. See that was before refrigeration.

Other. Did your father run a company store? Is that what this is?

A. Oh yes that's what that's for. Oh yes he run the whole, he had a big dry goods, he had everything. Everything you wanted, you got at the company store.

Q. How would you compare family values today, with those of days gone by?

A. Well, I don't know. Of course we were close, families were closer in those days than they are now. Today well as soon as they get teenage they're away and away they go and in those days they either took up fishing with their parents or fished with their fathers and some boys I know went fishing when they were thirteen, fourteen they started going fishing. They'd have to have somebody to help button up their oil clothes. I can remember Arnold telling me when he first went, he didn't have any oil clothes and one of the ladies made him a suit of oil clothes out of flour bags and treated them with oil so they wouldn't leak and that was the suit of oil clothes that he had.

Other. Who was that?

A. Arnold Nesbit and he, they were a very big family and through the depression, they was very hard up at times. I think Alice Hersey made him his first oil clothes.

Other. I'm interested Angus, if your father owned the company store, and he employed up to three hundred people in the summer, would they be paid with wages or would they be paid with goods from the store?

A. Well a lot of it was when they didn't have money they went to the store, run an account and through the winters I suppose they would run shy, well the store kept 'em 'till things opened up in the spring and they'd have to pay off their bills and carry on.

Other. Where was the store?

A. The store, there's a small store still there. It closed, if you go down through Centerville. The store that my father built was two story and he kept about everything there and what he didn't get you ordered it and it come across on the boat, come across on the steamer so if you wanted furniture or something, you would order it and he would bring it across from Saint John.

Other. And you've never went to Saint John?

A. No, I nevered, no, no. That was brought across on the Francis.

Other. Where was the canning factory?

A. That was right in Centerville. It's all gone now. There isn't anything there, I went down and there was nothing, absolutely nothing there now. It's completely gone. The brook, it straddled the brook there in Centerville.

Other. It's hard to believe that in eighty years it could totally disappear heh? Not a trace.

A. Not a trace. No, today there isn't one thing. I was never so surprised in my life. I went down there a few weeks ago and there wasn't, there wasn't a thing there. Absolutely gone. Even the wharf is pretty well gone now. Well it is gone from where my father, he, he had the job to get it built. He wanted a steamer, a boat to bring his steamer into and he wanted to go way out into deep water and, so he couldn't get it through one government and then the conservative government, they said they'd build it for him so he turned conservative, of course he figures they knew he'd turn, the village was every way he wanted and, so he got his wharf built and it was an agreement they say that he was supposed to sign over part of the business to some of the big party fellas in Digby and they had an agreement that in the assignment at the election he told them to ++++++. He got his wharf built (Laughter)

Q. Would the canning factory have been down near the water though?

A. Yeah, It's right down the hole, the hollow there. You go down to the last house and you look down over the bank and the whole canning factory was down in that hollow. I can remember the boilers were still there and remembrance of it was still there and Heckmen would have run, they run a fish plant there for years, Lunenberg Sea Products run a plant there for quite a while. That picture there, that's taken in nineteen hundreds.

Q. What is it?

A. That's Centerville there. That lower one there, nineteen hundreds. That one there, yeah.

Other. We'll have to get some photographs of this.

A. I don't know. I sent that to the paper one time to get it and they couldn't take it off. It's some type of, Mark and tourists took that. I guess it's the ox team and these are the fishing boats and there was no wharf's at all at that time, nineteen hundreds. See, there all on the beach and the fisherman built the first wharf out here and the other wharf built here and the long wharf was over further. Those old buildings were there right up until the big fire. They had a fire once that took them out.

Other. When would that have been? When you were still a boy?

A. Oh, no. I was grown up but that was quite some time ago, in fact there's a picture there. The same scene only the tide is in and the same buildings are still there and that picture was taken back in the early forties.

Other. I can come back with a camera and camera stand and I'd like to take some pictures of these.

A. Yeah, that was taken off the calendar.

Other. Was it? Ah ha. Did Derek ask you to get a story about the wreck of the Robert Cann?

Q. Yeah. What do you remember about the sinking of the Robert Cann?

A. Well, the night she sunk I was at a card party up to the Morehouse's. They lived up above Centerville and we walked home from that. When we got to the corner the wind struck us so hard that we could hardly walk. It was blowing so hard and we didn't know anything about the Cann boat 'till the next day and I think it was the next day or the day after, I think. Two days before she come to shore, before the bodies come in. They came into Riley's Cove here on land. The mate, Captain Ells, he was the only survivor and he come out to the house next door here, The Dimock's and that was the first word we got from it. The lifeboat come in with all the, well there was two of 'em alive when it come in but one started to go to Centerville, he wouldn't follow the Captain anymore and he froze to death. Part way up they found him alive but they couldn't do anything for him. When they got him to the hospital he died but the rest of them were froze in the lifeboat. They were just caked in ice.

Other. Did you see them?

A. No, I didn't go see them. I didn't go down.

Q. Where those mostly local men Angus?

A. No, they were, none of them from here. I think they were a crew made up in Saint John maybe some in Yarmouth between the two, she was the last of the Cann boats, the last of the coastal freighters pretty well. Keith Cann and Elizabeth Cann, I think that was the Elizabeth Cann that went down and that boat was very old. She left Saint John and got caught when that gale of wind struck. He turned and tried to go to , get in shelter but it was a North-West wind that was blowing and it must have took a plank off 'cause it went down suddenly. One woman on board, I think. One cook, she was.....

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Other. And the Captain ended up at Audry Walker's house up here?

A. The mate, he was mate. The Captain froze to death. He was a very old man, he died first, couldn't stand it and Tarp Nells, he was Captain after that and he was Captain of a boat in Saint John, a tugboat I think of some kind, the last I heard of him.

Other. But the survivor made it all the way to that house by himself?

A. Yeah. He walked out to there. Stripped the wood and walked right into there. There was a road.

Q. Were you living in this house?

A. No, I was living in Centerville at my old brick house. No, we didn't know anything about it, 'till it was all over 'cause they come over here, I think Henry had the phone. The other Dimock's didn't have a phone, they come over here and they called so we didn't know anything about it 'till way the next day, before we ever heard about it.

Other. And Dimock's own that house up on the hill?

A. Yeah. He was a retired Baptist Minister.

Other. What was your brother's name? You've mentioned your brother a few times.

A. He was named after my father, Alfred Thomas Boutilier.

Other. He's died now is he?

A. Yeah, he died down in Florida. He had a medical problem and he didn't take his medical records with him. He took sick down there and before they could get him, well he was gone. He was only seventy- two.

Other. So, it was your mother's mother that lived with you when you were a little boy?

A. Yeah, yeah.

Other. And were they from Yarmouth, was your mother from Yarmouth originally?

A. No. My mother was born in Mink Cove. The old house right off of Con Gidney's place there, the one that burnt down and they built a new one. That was the old homestead.

Other. How did they come to have property in Yarmouth then?

A. Ah, I think that was grandmother's idea. After my mother was settling up there, my grandmother wanted to go to Yarmouth. She was originally a Crosby from Hebron and she wanted to get back towards Yarmouth and she had a lot of friends and things there but we would, been on the farm too long and we didn't like it down there. Alfred, I think would have liked it if he would have stayed but I didn't, I didn't want to stay there and I don't think mother wanted to. I think she wanted to come back.

Other. How old was your mother when she was widowed?

A. She was in her late twenties I think. Let's see. I was born in nineteen, yeah she would have been only in her twenties, late twenties 'cause my father died in twenty, twenty-one. I don't remember at all but she wasn't married very long. I think she was married in nineteen eighteen or seventeen.

Other. And your father already had children from a previous marriage?

A. Oh, yes, yes. He was married twice. One didn't live very long. I tried to find out about her but they said she was sickly and that's all they'd say and she died but the first one she, he had quite a big family. The only one I knew was Leila and she came home. She had tuberculosis, T.B and they advised her to go to a dryer climate. They cured her here, she was cured in the old house there and so she went West. She married a farmer out there and Elwood went out and lived with her. He was the oldest boy and he was a bachelor. He never married and he went out and lived there on a ranch with her. The other two I didn't know too well. Erwin, I think he was lost during the war. He was engineer and I think he was on the ferries going across 'cause he disappeared. I know mother had some company looking for him and they said they couldn't find him but he remarried and she didn't know what happened to him, lost track of him but they were all very much older.

Other. Boutilier is not a name that is very common on the neck. Was your father from here?

A. No. My father came from Halifax. My father, Peter Boutilier in Yarmouth and there was another Boutilier and I can't remember where he went. I think there was three of them but my father come and settled here and started the canning factory. Peter Boutilier went to Yarmouth and he started a cold storage and I had one time during the war, we had the old house down there, we used to rent it and sill went in the back of it, you couldn't get any help so I took a few days off and went down to put the sill under the house. Fix it up for the tenants and I needed a stick six by six, twenty eight feet long so I went, one of the Carmens plant and "oh", they said. "We don't keep anything like that, you'll have to go over to Boutilier's, you can get it there." So I went over to Boutilier's. I walked in the yard and just what I wanted was laying right there and I said "that's what I want right there, that stick", "Oh", he said. "That's ordered. It will take two weeks to get another one like that, a stick that length" and I said, "That's funny, I was told I would get whatever I needed here." He said, "What's your name?" and I said "Boutilier." "Oh" he said. "Load that on a truck." So several years after that I went down to the hake freezer that he was runnin' and the lady took me in and introduced me to Peter Boutilier. That's the first time that I'd ever met him and so I told him about the sill and then I was in Yarmouth for an operation here just a few years ago and the nurse come in and said, "Well they've spelled your name wrong, they're always doing that to me too" and I said "Why? Are you a Boutilier?" She said, "Yes, I'm Terry Boutilier's daughter." She was my cousin. (Laughter)

Other. How do you spell Boutilier?

A. Boutilier. They always leave one of the I's out.

Other. If you had traveled, where would you have gone?

A. I always wanted to go to sea years ago but my Uncle was Sea Captain. He went, in fact when he was a boy, he run away to go to sea. My grandmother was married twice so he was just a half uncle but he stayed with his mother and that would be my grandmother and the story, two of 'em, he come up from Austin Texas, he wanted to visit some old friends from Sandy Cove. Lee and I went into Captain Billy Barnes and those two started telling the stories. If you could have had that on the camera, it would have been a fortune. We was there two hours. The clock, we was there shortly, half past twelve and the clock struck two and Lee and I looked at each other and we couldn't believe it, where the time had gone. They talked about when they were kids, Captain Billy's father sent him out for some wood to fill the wood box. When he went out to the woodpile, Uncle Fred and some, two or three other boys was there and they said, "Come on. There's a ship loading lumber in Weymouth and they need a crew. We're going." He dropped his wood and went. He come back three years later, he went to England, and he went down in Australia, they went to China, they went all over on these sailing ships. They were gone three years before they got back to Nova Scotia again and he looked in the window, he come back in the evening and his father was sittin' by the stove reading the paper and he went out and he picked up an armload of wood and went in, put it in the wood box. The old man never looked up from the paper. He said, "huh, took you long enough" (Laughter) but after that my grandfather convinced grandmother that my uncle wanted to go to sea. He should be allowed to go so grandmother was quite concerned over it so she got in touch with Captain Smith in Saint John and he's some relation to the family and got him a place onboard there. Onboard his, he was runnin' a square-rigger freight down and he went down South America. I think it was the first voyage. They were shipwrecked in South America and the crew came down with the old fever and Uncle was just fifteen years old, sixteen and this Spanish family took him in and nursed him back. The rest of the crew died, the captain, all of them and he was there for over a year before he could get out and sail again. Hitch another ship and come home. He still went to sea after that and all his life.

Other. Would your grandmother even have known that he was still alive?

A. I suppose that it would be a long period. They didn't think much of it in those days because they were gone for quite a few years without correspondence. There was very little contact with sailors when they went to sea in those days. So he got his captains papers and then he couldn't get a ship and he was engaged in Texas. They were building a railroad up on the Pacific side of South America and there was no war, no fears and they wanted to put locomotives on these tracks and they were sending these locomotives and they sent three of them and they lost all three trying to unload them. Uncle was a young fella sitting in the office there, trying to get a ship and he said he could unload those, he wouldn't loose 'em. Well they said, "You can unload them." "If you can unload them, we will give you a ship when you come back" so he went to South America, went down there on one of these locomotives and he unloaded it and never lost it and they kept him there for three or four years unloading these locomotives and this heavy equipment they were bringing back and so when he come back he got on the Grace Line ships, they were passenger ships, in fact when the war started the Americans had it for a Tube ship to sail back but, so when war broke out when the United States came in the war, not when the war broke out but when the United States came in, he was in Cape Town South Africa with a German crew, they were all German and he was supposed to sail. He knew if he sailed, they would take over the ship and take it to Germany so he went to the policemen, and Englishmen, police constable there and asked him what he could do. "Oh", he said, "That's no problem, give 'em lead" so he gave 'em lead and they never come back. They got drunk and he locked 'em up and sailed the ship home. (Laughter)

Other. Do you remember this uncle?

A. Oh, yes. I took care of him 'till he died.

Other. And he told you a lot of these stories?

A. Oh yeah, yes. That was parts of his life. My family was more interesting that I was. I had a dull life. I just worked on the farm.

Other. Well, we'll track you down one of these days when you're here and we'll get some photos.

A. Yes, anyway I can help you.

