

Arther Turnbull

Interveiwed by Jennifer Whalen. December 1, 2000



- Q. O.k, we'll start with what is your full name?
- A. Archer Roope Turnbull.
- Q. And who were your parents?
- A. Guy Victor Turnbull and Margaret May Turnbull.
- Q. O.k, and what was your mothers maiden name?
- A. Roope.
- Q. Who were your grandparents?
- A. Jesse S. Titus and George D. Turnbull.
- Q. When were you born?
- A. September the eleventh, nineteen twenty-seven.
- Q. And where were you born?
- A. On Queen Street in my grandmothers house.
- Q. How large was your family when you were growing up?
- A. Two of us, my sister and myself.
- Q. And were you the youngest or the older?
- A. No, I was the eldest although my sister thinks she's better than me.
(Laughter)
- Q. Tell me about a typical school day for you?
- A. Well, I used to, I lived right on Queen Street so I only had to run over to the school. I was only about four or five houses removed from the school so we didn't have far to go and a typical day, let's see, well I'd go and be there for nine o' clock and we'd have classes and Miss. O'Brien, she was Mrs. Ida Dylan later,

she taught us in grade two and there was Mrs. Moses, she taught us in grade one and Bessie Turnbull taught us in grade three and grade four, we'd thought we'd get rid of her in grade three but oh geeze, she followed us in grade four, god and she taught us all this, you know, arithmetic and stuff you had to learn by route, the timetables and things like that and spelling. We'd have spelling "B's", oh god, I hated them on Friday's and I couldn't spell worth a damn anyway, so that was pretty well my day in my lower classes and that was in the old school if you remember seeing it on Queen Street, it's right by the Anglican Church, that's the one we're talking about and then, I don't know what year it was, that was in nineteen what?, thirty-two or thirty-three I think it was, no about nineteen thirty-two I guess I went to school, well a little later on they built a piece on the back and they, I think they had grades five and six and upstairs was nine and ten so we went through, the old part of the school, we went from seven to eight in the front of it and then in the back end of it, we were in high school then so we changed classes, we didn't sit in the class all day which was quite a privilege but we didn't have anymore recess or anything like that and then down in the basement they had woodworking and manual training and it was good fun too. You'd get down there and you didn't do much in classes, anyway, anyway that was about it, I guess.

Q. Describe to me what the school would look like?

A. Oh, the school. Well, it had great big windows, huge windows and I always remember, we'd go in, in September and the, you know, and they'd have, all the floors were oiled at the time so you could smell fresh oil and I don't know what it was, pine tar or something mixed in it and that was to keep down the dust I suppose and then we had our wooden seats and then we got in the new school, of course, they had the ones that moved back and forth, you sit in them there at your own desk but before that we were always two of us in a seat together and then in, well no, I guess in about grade eight or something we got our single seats or something 'cause I remember, well maybe in the, it doesn't matter anyway 'cause it was still two of us and then in high school of course, we had our single seats and the new classrooms and everything. It had nothing to do with school though, school was a boar.

Q. How would you have been disciplined at school?

A. Well, we had, teachers knew how to use the strap and we had one teacher, she used to grab you by the arm with her fingers, like between here and the two fingers and twist it and pinch you and, or by the ear, one or the other, you'd have black and blue marks. (Laughter)

Q. Wow. What would a student have to do in order to.....?

A. Be disciplined?

Q. Yes.

A. Oh, I don't know. They had to talk, chew gum, you couldn't chew gum, you couldn't do anything like that, you couldn't talk out of turn and usually somebody was always teasing you about something so they'd give you a whrap on the side of the head with a ruler or something and you'd answer them back and you'd get in trouble right away, of course immediately, things like that.

Q. How many teachers would there have been per class?

A. Oh, just one in the lower grades. I remember Miss. Moses taught, they used to have little grade one and big grade one so she taught the both grades and then in grade two Mrs. O'Brien was, she just had, I was lookin' at a picture not too long ago, I think it was in grade two, there were fifty-three of us for grade two, I've got the pictures here somewhere.

Q. Wow. It must have been hard for her to teach all those children.

A. Yeah, well I suppose. I don't know but it was sort of a battle of attrition, like by the time you got to grade eleven, there was only about seven or eight students left. They didn't have grade twelve until, I don't know, grade twelve, it would be about, oh I guess it was just before the War they started grade and we always had just grade eleven before that as high as you went.

Q. Why was it that there were so few students left in the high grades?

A. I have no idea. The kids just tired of going to school, (Laughter) I guess, I don't know, but that's what it was all through the years. Well, when I went to school, of course, the War came along and a lot of kids from grade eight on joined the army or whatever it was because they would be fifteen, sixteen years old, seventeen, you know, and, so that was a lot of the attrition then but by the time you got to grade twelve I suppose there'd be only seven or eight in grade twelve at the most, then, they didn't, kids didn't want to go past grade eleven, there was no need of it, really, past grade ten really in those days. You didn't need an education to join the army, yeah.

Q. Describe to me what your mother's workday would be like?

A. My mother's workday? Oh gosh, I don't know. Let's see, I'd get up and build a fire in the morning in the kitchen and, so she'd cook breakfast for

us and we always had porridge so she'd do that and then I suppose she'd just dust around the

house, I never took much notice to that (Laughter). I'm a boy, I don't have anything to do with the housework, that's woman's work, god, geeze.

Q. What did your father do for a living?

A. He was a dentist so he took off and he'd be gone, he used to come home around, between six and seven at night and his office was downtown and we, as I said, we lived on Queen street so he didn't, he used to walk to work and walk home. We never had a car in those days, it wasn't 'till we moved out in the country they got a car.

Q. Would he do the dentist work on you guys when you were younger?

A. Oh sure, oh my yes. I remember the first time I ever saw it, he had, they didn't have any electricity really and they used to run the treadle, it was for grinding your teeth and he used to have a foot treadle and they used to, they would drill with that and then years later, of course, they got, they got the machines and the electricity and he had an electric machine that did it. It wasn't very high speed, it's speed was all, you could hear it grinding away, it's not like today, it doesn't go geeeeeeeeeeeeeee (Sfx) and he always had, if you see the cords going around making the drill go, he always put a little cotton baton on it see, and he'd get the kids to watch the rabbit run around the thing, fascinating. They never used to, the never, they didn't freeze your teeth in those days, my father, so you just sat there and took it.

Q. He must have been one of the few dentists probably around here at that time was he?

A. Well, all in all there was two of them. There was always two, before he bought his practice from Dr. McGregor who lived in Bear River and after him there was, when he went in the army Dr. Rogers came here for a while and he went into the army and then Dr. Outhouse, Burley Outhouse, he was here after the War and then my father came back and there was always two, two or three dentists around.

Q. What would your daily chores consist of?

A. Well, I always had to fill the wood box for one thing and keep the woodshed clean and I always chopped the kindling and things like that and stoke the furnace and, we always used wood in the furnace so I always had to keep that going. In the fall I had to put the wood in and I used to, I always remember we had seven quarts of wood in the cellar and

three quarts of wood in the wood shed for the winter and I used to have to put that in and pile it up as part of my chores. In the summer we'd mow the lawn and things like that. I didn't spend many summers

here, I used to go to a boy's camp in the summer, mostly from the time I was about eleven, I think, I went away every summer.

Q. Where was that camp?

A. It was down in Weymouth at the time and it was run by a Mr. Blakum from the states and it was mostly boys from the states that were there and we always had a good time.

Q. What sorts of things would you do there?

A. Well, it was like, it was a boys camp so you did, it was run on athletics and just living together and there was swimming pools and we played games all day and we had rest periods and that sort of thing and we used to, in the evenings, they had a huge fireplace in the main building and particularly in August when the days got shorter and the weather got a little cool, they'd always have a big fire going and the senior councilor, everybody would sit around and they took boys from ten to eleven years old right up to eighteen, nineteen, and the senior councilor would, everybody would gather around and the senior councilor would read some story about Jack Armstrong or something like this, always a chapter every night so everybody would settle down and listen to this.

Q. How would the people, the boy's get up from the states?

A. Well, they used to come here on the, they would come by trains, or in the years before they'd come by a boat from Boston to Yarmouth and then they'd take from Yarmouth, drive up and the people would go out and get them or they'd come over to Saint John and come across on the boat and go down and during the summer they'd go back in the woods and Ned Sullivan's camps were back in Sprague Lake, they had a camp there for, they'd stay there and you'd learn canoeing and this sort of thing, it was a nice, great place to be in the summer.

Q. Did you find the boys from the states to be any different from you?

A. Oh yeah, yeah, they were quite a bit different. It was interesting to be with them. They always had better clothes than we did, no matter how well dressed we were they'd have something better. I always remember their running shoes were great, oh man, they had beautiful shoes and we'd have these old damn sneakers, you know, (Laughter) this sort of thing, oh my.

Q. After you were finished your chores at home, what would you like to do with your spare time?

A. Listen to the radio and read, we used to read a lot in those days because we didn't have a t.v, we had radio.

Q. It must have been one of the old battery radios?

A. No, oh no, no, we were plugged in. (Laughter) The, oh no, it was electricity, we had electricity, geeze. I can remember though when I was just very small and my grandmother always had electricity and it was only twenty-five watt bulbs, very dim, so they used to use lanterns a lot and then my great grandmother, I used to clean her lanterns, she lived down on First Avenue and she was ninety-two, or three, or four, or something like that when she died, so I remember doing the work for her. When I'd go down to her place I used to take her, her lunch down in the summer times for her and I'd pack a lunch and I'd carry it down on a basket and she had an organ in her house and I'd play the organ for her and she'd sit there and rock (Laughter) and I couldn't play the organ worth beans but she'd thump on it but I found out years later that she'd been brought up in the old style where the man of the house was supreme, you know, he could do anything he wanted and they sort of always showed appreciation for it, so I suppose she was board to tears listening to me (Laughter) and she was a great old soul, she was.

Q. What would you say your favorite holiday was as a child?

A. Favorite holiday as a child? Oh, Christmas, oh my yeah. I remember, I was just thinking about it the other day, we'd get the, there used to be in the funny papers, there was always a Christmas one they had run everyday up until, well I don't know how long before Christmas, but it was a Christmas story of some sort, some kids that would get in trouble and get out of trouble and we'd always look forward to this and as soon as we got the paper we'd push it down on the floor, looking at this and trying to read this and get somebody to read it to us 'cause you'd get the pictures but you couldn't get all the whole story, of yeah, yeah.

Q. What was it like at your house when the catalogue would arrive?

A. Oh, I don't remember much about the catalogue. We didn't have much to do with catalogues. We used to go, I remember we used to go once or twice a year into Halifax shopping, my mother would take us in and we'd stay at the Lord Nelson, usually the Lord Nelson and she'd go shopping for the year for us for clothes and this sort of thing and I remember one year she bought me one of these hats, caps you wore, you know, it looked like hell on me, so we were coming back on the train and I deliberately

stuck my head out like this to see where the train was and it took my cap away, so I didn't have to wear that god damn thing anymore, oh I hated that thing with a passion.

Q. Do you remember that train ride well?

A. Oh, I remember that. I certainly remember that. (Laughter)

Q. Tell me about it?

A. What?

Q. What the train was like?

A. We used to leave here in night time and have, take the sleeping car to Halifax and that was great fun 'cause you'd, I'd like to get, I'd get all this room where I always had upper berth, you know, you'd climb up in there and, gee, the nice clean sheets and the people were waiting on you and this sort (Laughter) of thing and then we'd come back and usually we came back in the day time and we always sat in the parlor car which had big swivel chairs in it and gosh, you'd sit in there and fell just like a king, oh, it was good fun.

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

A. Well, I, god, I used to get a penny once and a while and I remember I got my allowance one day and, I was just a little fella and I got a penny to go to Mrs. Clinton's place, a candy store and there was two ladies, spinster ladies, the Mrs. Clinton's and my father gave me a penny and I dropped it on the sidewalk and Judge Woolaver, he was there and he made a grab for it and the two of us got in a fight over this penny and he was bigger than me at the time but I got my penny back. (Laughter)

Q. Where else would you get the things that you needed if you wouldn't get them out of the catalogue?

A. Oh god, I don't know, I don't know, I never had much to do with that when I was a kid. I don't remember, you know, ever having to think about things like that.

Q. Do you remember what stores would have been here in Digby?

A. Oh gosh, yeah. There's all kinds of them. Well, Mike Parker just wrote a history on it. Did you see that?

Q. I didn't.

A. You haven't seen it yet. Yeah, it's a good little book on, pretty well all of the stores were in it of the time except you didn't have B.J Roope's store which was a

clothing store years ago and we were talking about other places the other day, restaurants and things that were around but I don't, I had nothing to do with buying anything, it was just, my parents looked after that. I didn't worry about clothes, god almighty.

Q. What was your religion?

A. Anglican, Church of England.

Q. So, what would Sunday's be like at your house when you were growing up?

A. Oh, I used to, yeah, we'd go to church in the morning and Sunday school and in earlier years we used to go to church in the evening too and then when I was growing up in my teens I went in the mornings, probably once a month for communion but most of the time I used to like to go to evening services, the rest of the time, daytime, I'd go for walks on Sunday's 'cause we weren't allowed to do anything else, there wasn't anything else to do, (Laughter) geeze.

Q. What things would you have to grow and raise yourself, would your parents have had to grow and raise themselves?

A. We didn't raise anything. We lived in town and there was nothing to, no, well father had a little garden, I can remember helping him with that but there wasn't very much in it.

Q. What sort of things would people have bartered for?

A. Bartered?

Q. Yes.

A. Oh god. Well, I, they did a lot of bartering with my father because I used to have to go and bring home the groceries and things that people would trade for doing the, he'd work on their teeth and, like if he was a fishermen he'd trade and give him so many fish for doing a tooth or doing his teeth. There wasn't very much around, there wasn't very much money in those days and I know I've read, I've kept some of fathers stuff that people would write and say, "I'm sending my granddaughter up to work, you know, that you can do some work on, she needs fillings and this sort of thing and I know I haven't paid you myself or my son hasn't paid you

but none of us are working but we will when we get around to it", and I was talking to a chap the other day and it took him twenty years to pay off my father and my father was retired after the last payment but they did, they'd do their very best, the people around. Most of them didn't have any money,

fishermen, farmers, nobody had any money years ago. It's not like today, everybody's got money today, even no matter how poor you are, you got money today, but they didn't have any, anyway, you know, he'd get paid with, I don't know, some fish or something and I'd have to take the cart down or the sled down in the winter time and lug it home (Laughter) and that sort of thing and, yep, apparently it didn't cost very much to live, I don't know. It didn't seem like to me, as I said, I was just a kid, I didn't know what the hell was going on most of the time, (Laughter) I wasn't interested.

- Q. How much of what you needed, or what your parents needed would they have made themselves?
- A. God, I don't think they made, well, I don't, I really don't think they made anything themselves until the later years. My mother used to make things but she didn't need to, she did that for a hobby, I suppose but we never had to make anything, really, not that I know of. (Laughter)
- Q. Who was the doctor when you were growing up?
- A. Oh, Dr. Duverney, and Dr. McCleave, Dr. Ferguson, oh god, who, I forget who they all were now, Dr. Dickey, did I say him?
- Q. No.
- A. No, gee, I can't think of anything else. They pretty well all lived on Queen Street too. (Laughter)
- Q. How often would you have left Digby?
- A. When I was growing up?
- Q. Yep.
- A. Oh gee, not very often. As I said, we went once, maybe once or twice a year to Halifax, probably not a, oh no, that would be it, that was it, and then going to Weymouth in the summer which was just like going to Siberia maybe, you never got home.
- Q. What were the roads like back then?

A. Oh, they were all dirt roads (Laughter) and I clearly remember the day they paved Queen Street. This other young fella and I, we were just kids, we got into the tar on the sides of the road before it hardened, you know, and you could pick it up

and chew it, and that stuff, we used to chew that stuff, yeah, and then we got it all over our clothes and everything but that was, everybody did that, all kids but before that we used to have, I remember the kids down the road, Paul Morehouse, and we'd get in a rock fight and we'd throw stones at each other. (Laughter) We'd stand in the street and throw stones at each other. (Laughter) when they paved it, that put a stop to that because you couldn't find a stone anymore. (Laughter)

Q. Who would have been in charge of maintaining them?

A. Oh god, well I think Frank Robinson probably. He had a livery stable down where the, down on First Avenue and, gee, Church Street, yeah I guess it's Church Street, he had a big livery barn there and had horses, teams of horses and things so I think he did a lot of maintenance around town at that time too and looked after that.

Q. What had you expected to do when you were growing up?

A. What did I expect to do?

Q. Yes.

A. When I was growing up?

Q. Yep.

A. Oh, I was gonna go to sea for a living, that's what I expected to do and I don't think it ever changed?

Q. As a teen, what kinds of things would you do for fun?

A. As a teenager?

Q. Yep.

A. Gee, not very much. We used to bowling once and a while and, they had the bowling alleys underneath the Catholic Church at the time, played basketball, played badminton, they used to have badminton at the Scout Hall, dances once and a while and that was about it.

Q. Where did you say the bowling alley was?

A. It was underneath the Catholic Church.

Q. In....?

A. On.....

Q. On Queen street?

A. Yep, yep, where the Catholic church is now, yep, but that's what they.....

Q. I didn't know that was there.

A. Yep.

Q. I've never heard anyone talk about it.

A. Didn't you? Oh yeah, and the Scout Hall was right next door to it and that's where they had the, used to have badminton, basketball, that's sort of where the gym was for the school and they, when they were building the Catholic Church, they built it in bits and pieces, so that underneath it, the basement was the, at the time, was the, were making money by having a bowling alley there, they had four lanes. (Laughter)

Q. Who would your screen idols have been?

A. Geeze, god, oh, Hop Along Cassady, (Laughter) that was one, and Jean Autry, yep, William Boyd was Hop Along Cassady, I don't remember ever having any other screen idols, these were when I was a little kid, gee, Tom Minks, oh I remember Tom Minks, he was a great guy, god.

Q. What kind of music would you have liked?

A. Well, I didn't like any music until Wartime came along and I was old enough to start appreciating music or thinkin' I did. I liked all the songs they had then but I don't think there was, we never had, we never took any interest in Classical music or anything. We never had, other than the radio in the house, we never had anything, no victrola's or recorders or, you know, anything like that, so we only heard the radio. Sometimes we'd hear, we'd all hear all the modern music on the radio but that was it, that was all we ever had.

Q. What stations would you listen to on your radio?

A. Well, we used to listen to WEI in Boston, WOR in New Jersey, Loll Thomas used to broadcast from Chicago, I don't know the name of the station but we never had any local stations, we used to get them, mostly American stations and

we'd listen to them. Sunday night we'd listen to Charlie McCarthy and the Shadow, and the Green Hornet, and I forget who else we'd listen to in the day time 'cause every time you'd got sick you'd stay home and I used to get sick a lot and I'd listen to Ma Perkin's and all these Soap Operas that were going on. (Laughter)

Q. Soap Operas?

A. Oh yeah, just like they have today only they have them on t.v, but they had them on radio then, oh yeah, yeah, god what was it, I can't, Argyle Sunday and, I can't remember them all now.

Q. What do you remember about dating?

A. Dating, oh god. Not very much, I was awful shy. I had, well I guess it was in, I was in grade ten before I had a girlfriend, grade ten?, nine or ten before I had a girlfriend. I don't remember much before that, we never had time for girls, god we had too many things to do. We'd go rabbit hunting and things like that, running around the woods playing. We used to, the kids and I in the neighborhood, we used to play kick the can and hide and, you know, things like this. There was always kids around, so we'd always play and there was always Scout trips and we had, there was always kids around, boys, girls, we didn't have much time for them, god.

Q. Once you left school, what did you do?

A. Well, I went to sea for a living. That's what I did my whole life after that, once I left school.

Q. Tell me about being a sea captain?

A. Well, I was, I didn't get to be a sea captain 'till nineteen sixty-two and before that, when you're a sea captain you just sit back and, it's like, they did a time in motion study one time and I was captain of a ship and they were figuring out what everybody did, so when they interviewed me, I said, "Well, I don't do anything", and I don't do anything, I'm just here just in case somebody needs me, oh I used to enjoy my life.

Q. How dangerous would your work have been?

A. Oh, it was, sometimes it was dangerous, it was mostly boredom, and then there was a great, and then there was all these certain, things would happen and all of a sudden it was a panic and then you'd get back to a routine again. It depended on

where you were and what you were doing. Some days it was kind of hectic and other days there was nothing. You could sit out and sun yourself all day. (Laughter)

Q. Would you usually sail with big crews?

A. Yep, yep. I was with the Hydrographic Service for a number of years and we always had large crews because we were doing hydrographic work and we'd, we had, we carried launches and they always, with the hydrographers they would go away and we'd have, depending on what we were doing, we'd have over a hundred in crew, so, and they would go away and the launches, there was always six launches, so there'd be six coxens and six, twelve helpers and the two hydrographers would go away on each launch, so we had big crews and they'd be gone all day and sometimes we'd lose them and have to go searchin' for them depending on where we were and how foggy it was and this sort of thing, but it was great fun.

Q. How did you meet your wife?

A. I don't know, how did I meet you? (Yelling to wife) I haven't the faintest idea.

Other. (Archer's wife) (Laughter) Gee, what a short memory.

A. Geeze, it's only, it's only forty-seven years ago.

Other. (Archer's wife) He knew a friend I was working with.

A. Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, but I still don't remember. I knew her, what's her name?, Theriault, was it? (Yelling to wife)

Other. (Archer's wife) Yep, keep going.

A. Yeah, yeah, and she was working at the, she was a nurse at the Digby Hospital then, what a mistake. (Laughter)

Q. (Laughter) Could you tell me my wife's full name?

A. Joan Patricia.

Q. How old were you when you got married?

A. Twenty-four.

Q. And what do you remember about your wedding day?

A. Oh god, it rained. It rained that day and it was a stressful day, stressful day. (Laughter)

Q. (Laughter) What church were you married in?

A. In the Church of England and we had the reception at the Lour Lodge and then we went on our honeymoon and my sister came and interrupted us and, in the middle of the night and woke us all up and wouldn't go away. She had found out somehow where we were and, but we got even years later, didn't we Joan? (Yelling to wife)

Other. (Archer's wife) Yes we did.

A. (Laughter)

Q. Where had you gone for your honeymoon?

A. Well, I'm not about to reveal where we went on our honeymoon, we were away and then we went to Cape Breton and toured around there and came home and then we went away again. We went down to Maine, wasn't it? (Yelling to wife)

Other. (Archer's wife) Hmmm?

A. We went to Maine? (Yelling to wife)

Other. (Archer's wife) On our honeymoon?

A. Yeah, afterwards.

Other. (Archer's wife) Yeah.

A. Took a trip down there and came home and I went back to work. I was eleven days late for my wedding. I forgot I was supposed to get married, I guess. (Laughter) No, the ship I was on didn't get in when it was supposed to.

Q. You must have been worrying the whole time. (Laughter)

A. Well, it didn't bother me. (Laughter) I don't know how Joan felt.

Q. Could you describe to me what the Lour Lodge because we've been talking about it a lot?

A. Have you?

Q. Yes.

A. Well, it was old at that time. It had a, the reception area was downstairs just in back of the lobby. It had been a hostile during the War and they reverted back into a hotel, so all the bedrooms were upstairs and everything and the reception area had been originally, was a large dining room and it was all hardwood floors and everything. Other than that, I don't remember too much about it but I have pictures of it.

Q. Once you were married, where did you live?

A. Well, we lived here for a while and then we lived in Pictou for a number of years and in Windsor and then back here.

Q. Do you remember how much it would have cost for your first home?

A. We didn't have a home until we went to Pictou. It didn't cost very much. We bought a little place, six-room house and I think we paid six thousand dollars, wasn't it? (Yelling to wife) Yep and we only lived there for a short time and.....

Other. (Archer's wife) No, I think, oh I forget but it wasn't very much.

A. No, and we sold it, I think we bought it and a couple months later sold it for a few dollars more (Laughter) and moved to Windsor and bought a house in Windsor then and paid, what did I pay for the house in Windsor?, Eleven thousand? (Yelling to wife)

Other. (Archer's wife) No, twenty-eight.

A. Twenty-eight, was it? (Yelling to wife)

Other. (Archer's wife) I think so.

A. Oh, I didn't think it was that much, but maybe it was and we had a large mortgage. I paid a dollar, it was a hundred and twenty-eight a month, wasn't it? (Yelling to wife)

Other. (Archer's wife) Yeah.

A. Yeah.

Other. (Archer's wife) Yeah

A. Yeah. (Laughter)

Q. What do you remember about the depression, or did your parents tell you any stories about the depression?

A. Well, I was like describing it, nobody had any money and everything, you were talking about barter, well it wasn't really barter but it was a trading services where, for food and assistance and I can remember people, beggars, I don't know what you'd call them today, hobo's I guess, and they were coming to the back door and mother would feed them and this sort of thing and, there was obviously people that were hard up but Digby was a small town, it wasn't like a city, so you, transients alright, but they didn't seem to, the, as a child, kid you didn't take any notice of this, you just grew up and the system was such that, you know, you didn't, as long as there was food on the table you didn't know whether, how hard up you were or not and that sort of thing, so you really didn't notice that sort of thing.

Q. A lot of people said too that because so many people down here had their own crops, that it didn't really affect them because....

A. Oh yeah, this was normally a depressed area anyway and people just didn't say, it didn't make any difference to them as a rule. As they say, it was seasonal and they'd fish and they'd farm or do the two things together, it was, there was always poor people because you had the poor farm but it was used as a poor farm. They used to farm, I remember they would, the kids would be farmed out to other places around, from the poor farm. Maud Lewis's husband, Everett Lewis, he was one of those that was farmed out and made to work on other farms for other people. He had a hard old time with that type of person.

Q. And they'd send him out from the poor farm?

A. Yes, yep, yep, yep, yep people would, yep that's just about what it was too, it was a hard life for them. Dr. Dickey looked after him for years, and years, Everett Lewis. He took him in and he worked for him. Dr. Dickey lived down at Barton at that time when he looked after him, kept him and a lot of people did things like that, that could afford it. They'd look after the more unfortunate people, like we had a maid, or a scrubwoman would come but we didn't need them because my mother could do that but it was her way of trying to help poor people out that couldn't do anything else, you know, she could afford it. I think had a maid, we used to have a maid that used to live in and she got all, she would get all our

meals and everything and I think she was paid three or five dollars a week too for cooking and doing the housework but she had her own area and then she'd have one day off a week where she could go and live somewhere, you know, visit her parents and this sort of thing but you

were expected to do that if you could, if you were professional people in the area, you know, like doctors, and dentists, and lawyers and that sort of thing, they were expected to do that, so it wasn't that you were being uppity or something, you were expected to have, to look after these people too, and we had quite a few of them. I grew up with maids around and this sort of thing, so I wouldn't know anything about poverty because we didn't know what poverty was really.

Q .At what point would someone have to the poor farm?

A. I really don't know. I know, I've been to the poor farm and I've seen people there and they just couldn't be looked after anymore by their families, so, but some of them were mentally challenged and this sort of thing, so that's what they would have to do with them because, I can remember one family in particular, they couldn't look after their boy, he was headstrong too but he was mentally challenged, so they couldn't look after him, they had to send him to the poor farm and I don't know what happened to him in there but I'm sure they looked after him but I don't know how. You're asking me something about I don't remember, you know, I never took any notice of it.

Q. Could you describe to me what it looked like inside?

A. Well, at the time I saw it, it was on it's last legs about. It was pretty dingy and dark and a dismal place and I can remember one old fella sitting on the bed, I don't know, it was sort of a dark room he was in and he was all alone in that room, now some of them I guess were doubled up or tripled up or in dormitories, I have no idea but the kitchen area downstairs was all, a huge kitchen area and it was big and cheerful and this sort of thing but upstairs was the only one place I saw but there didn't seem to be any life in them, you know, they'd just sit around and do nothing, I guess. There wasn't an organized games room or anything.

Q. Would they have, they'd work to stay there then, they wouldn't get wages?

A. Well, they had a big farm, a huge farming area and, but I don't know how many could work on the farm or how capable they were of doing that but they looked after themselves, they sustained the food and everything was self-sustaining as I understand it.

Q. What do you remember about Wartime?

A. What do I remember about Wartime?

Q. The Second World War, how old would you have been?

A. Well, when did the War start? In nineteen thirty-nine?

Q. Yes.

A. So, how old would I be? Twelve? Twenty-seven, thirty-seven, yeah, twelve years old and father went in the army in nineteen..., just after Christmas, he went in the army and, so we were left alone and that was, boy we didn't like that at all. The whole house was upset about that, he was gonna leave and we never had our father go away before, so it was something new for us and none of us liked that. I can remember that very distinctly but we gradually got used to it and then as the war progressed things got scarcer and scarcer and you had food stamps and then they started, I remember when they brought out margarine, it was like lard and you got a little wafer of coloring that you mixed, you mixed it all up, so you got butter that looked like butter (Laughter) but you got your rations, you'd use your rations, food stamps at the grocery store, we used to go over and get the stuff from South End Grocery mostly and we got, Cornwallis came in and, so we had lots of Navy personnel come here and the ships down at the wharf, Navy training ships and the submarines were all around, so, and the Princess Helene was painted grey (Laughter) and it had a gun put on it, so things looked like Wartime but it really didn't effect us at that time 'cause, other than that, you know, everybody being away. All of my friends that were older than me, they went in the services, so the next thing you know, you're left with nobody to play with but that was the way the War went but it was good times I guess, everybody enjoyed themselves, "I can't wait to get in the Army", they said. (Laughter)

Q. How would you say people would have helped each other out in days gone by that would be different from today?

A. Well, I don't know, I mean that, I really don't know.

Q. Like, say someone in the community, their barn had burnt down?

A. Yeah, oh well everybody would try to do what they can. They still do today. I was out in Greenland the other day and a house burnt down and within a week, the house was rebuilt and the people had no insurance or anything but all the neighbors got around and somebody donated cement for the basement and, you know, a big contractor, somebody donated lumber and then everybody got together and built the house within a week, it was all done, much better than the one that burnt down, so it's still done.

Q. How important was politics in those days?

A. Oh, hey, oh. (Laughter) We always had the politicians come into the house when I grew up. The, when my father got out of the First War, the army in the First War and he went to university, he met all these people that became politicians later on, George Nolan, and Will Bird, and all these chaps and they would come and visit and of course they were, helped form the Legion and Will Bird helped form the Commission, was the original man that started the Commissioners and Willard Bird was an author too. He lived up in Sackville, in New Brunswick and they were all in politics in one way or another and, so they were always coming to visit and so they were always coming to visit and I'd sit at the table and listen to these people talking and I didn't have a clue what they were talking about but it was exciting and, so we always had, we were always involved in politics at the time, more so than today. You don't seem to talk politics in homes anymore than they used to, so it was good fun, yep.

Q. Describe to me what Digby would have looked like when you were growing up, how bustling it was?

A. Hey?

Q. How bustling it was?

A. Well, it's mostly that same as today as near as I can figure except for the outskirts of town have all changed but the interior of the town although when I grew up, Victoria Street was just a road, there was no houses on it. On the side where the schools are and things like that, that was woods. We used to go up there and hunt, rabbit hunting and this sort of thing and it's grown up quite a bit from that but the main part of town is pretty well the same, it hasn't all that great, great, deal. The houses are all pretty well the same as you can see, there aren't very many new houses around in their town proper, that's where we grew up.

Q. Who would have been some big employers, really big, that had big businesses back then?

A. Oh, H.T Warren was, had the South End, he had the big mill, lumber mill and on the other end was the Maritime Fish people, so that either end of the town were the big employers. There was no other big employers in Digby at that time.

Q. Were you ever in Tupper's mill?

A. Oh, yeah. We used to play down there when we were kids.

Q. Could you tell me what that looked like?

A. Well, you went down into the mill area properly and there was the general store and the offices. The general store was to look after workers more than anything else and the offices were where the accountants worked and then there was a machine shop where they did their own work, fixing engines and things like that. Further down was the barracks type place where the workers lived, the ones that came to work there and they were paid in script at the time, a lot of them. I don't remember how much they got or anything and then over on the left-hand side was the big mill and you, I remember being up in there when we were kids and they would chase us out but the logs would come along and there'd be a sawyer there sawing them and that was fun watching, that sort of thing. They used to have these White trucks, White was the name of the company and Tupper Warne, they would go through town and come down around the South end Grocery and go down there and all that area, all that area was just big lumber piles and now it's all houses, the whole area is houses but it was all lumber piles and we used to play down there and the rink was down there too and a chap by the name of Mr. Walker owned the rink, so a lot of people were down there and that was, I forget what year that burnt down but the fire truck couldn't get down there anyway, there was too much snow (Laughter) so, they got as far as the South End Grocery and they got stuck in the snow and couldn't get down there that year, oh, I forget what year it was now but where we lived, we could sit in their sitting room and look right out and see them trying to get down there and they couldn't get down, but as I say, the whole area was, around the mill and around the rink and everything, was all owned by Tupper Warne, so it was all lumber piles all around and they were great fun to play in 'cause they used to stack their, dry their lumber and they'd stack it like a triangle so the interior was always hallow and you could climb up because the wood was spaced so far apart, you could climb way up (Laughter) and get down inside, oh great.

Q. How long would you have said that Tupper Warne was in business for?

A. Oh god, I forget when he went out of business. He was in business after the War too, he died and his son took over, Hubert Warne. I remember when the Warne's built their house on Queen Street and they lived, their house was built right opposite from where we lived and I was about two and a half, three years old when they built the house and that's the first place I learned to swear. I used to go over there and the carpenters and everybody were employed by Warne's mill and they were coming up and building the house and of course I'd be over there and they were swearing and I learned to swear over there. I came home one day and I got caught in something and I was swearing a blue streak and (Laughter) and just toddling around and my mother said I'd never go back there again, I wasn't allowed across the road. It was alright, when you were that age it was alright

'cause there was no traffic on those roads like there is today anyway, so you could roam around as a little kid. One thing I always remember, when we were little kids, we had much more freedom than they do today. We roamed all over the place as little kids, parents didn't seem to mind so much, you know, nine, ten, eight, nine, ten, we'd be all over the place. In the summertime's just growing up, we'd be way down in the Cannon Banks or someplace swimming in the water, you know how cold that is and we'd go down there and come home and nobody would say anything, you know. I remember ever asking, you know, "Can I go down and swim today", or anything. We'd be down playing on the cliffs or something, fall off and get bruised or something and nobody said anything but today, kids can't do anything. The mothers are out looking after them and everything they do is supervised, we were never supervised in any way shape or form that I know of. It was altogether different, little rag muffins roaming around. (Laughter)

Q. What would people in the community do for a good time?

A. Oh, well they always had something going on, organized people. They'd have cantatas and plays they'd put on in the winter time, can you reach over there on that, see all those books there where that piece of paper is sticking out, right on top of it, is there, no, down, down, right on the top of the books themselves. (Asking the interviewer to get an old picture)

Q. Oh, o.k.

A. There. They'd have Mistral Shows.

Q. Oh, my goodness. (Looking at picture)

A. So, they'd, this is how they'd amuse themselves and they'd put on these things, these shows at the, one of the places they used was the Bijou Theatre and they'd have plays, and they'd, people would have bands and this sort of thing, Paul Yates always had a band.

Q. Isn't this something? What a great thing to have.

A. Yes. (Laughter)

Q. Do you remember what the Bijou Theatre looked like?

A. Yep, yep, oh sure.

Q. Could you tell me?

A. Oh, it was only a little place. It was very narrow and they had the wooden seats, you know, the seat itself would come up but they were

wooden seats in a row and we used to go there to see movies. The first movie I saw was, that I remember seeing was a silent picture on the First War and there was no noise at all, I was about seven or eight years old, maybe nine years old, maybe not that old even and that's one thing I remember but they had the, they always had the, then they had the Capital Theatre, Mr. Walker built that and, but then the Bijou Theatre went out of business, they closed it down and they had the Capital and then when the War came along they had the influx of all the sailors coming home for the weekends to Digby and this sort of thing and there was so many of them so they opened up both theatres again, so for quite a while the Bijou ran on the weekends and the Capital of course was running too so you had the two theatres going at one time. That was during the War, so I left here in nineteen forty-four, forty-five and I don't know what happened after that.

Q. How superstitious were people when you were growing up?

A. Well, they still are. (Laughter) I had a godmother who was second cousin to my grandmother and she lived with us for quite a while and she always, like, you can't hang anything on doorknobs, especially your clothes, that's bad luck, all these things. Oh, she was very superstitious. She brought us all up to think of these things. (Laughter)

Q. What is the worst weather that you can ever remember?

A. What is the worst...., well I was, I've been in two or three hurricanes, I was in back of Craigador Islands in the Philippines in the typhoon, anchored there, that was pretty bad. I've been in several storms lasting for days on end. I remember one storm we couldn't eat, it was so bad there was nothing to eat, we gradually got some eggs and things like this, oh yeah, but those were, this was everyday stuff, you know, it's normal bad weather, you're gonna have bad weather.

Q. What about shipwrecks, what do you remember about shipwrecks?

A. What do I remember about shipwrecks, well I was shipwrecked.

Q. Were you?

A. Yes. So, what do I remember about it?, well it was thick fog and we ran aground and it was on the, it was four, yeah four thirty-three in the afternoon on July the fourth and the place was called Black Rock and we were there for about six days before we were pulled off (Laughter) and I remember that. I was in a mutiny in Panama and the crew eventually, most of the crew eventually was put in jail after we got back to Canada.

Q. Really?

A. Yeah, so I've been shipwrecked and in mutiny.

Q. Wow.

A. The Mutiny occurred in nineteen, I think it was in nineteen forty-six in Panama.

Q. What colorful characters can you remember from around here?

A. From around here? Oh god, gee I don't know. There was Happy, Jack, and Greg Squirrel Vantassel, colorful, gee. There were some characters all right. (Laughter) I don't remember real characters like their used to be.

Q. What ghost stories can you remember from your younger years.

A. (Laughter) Ghost stories? This is crazy, this is crazy. I remember there was a haunted house down at the other end, down towards the South End there was a vacant home and we always figured it was haunted, of course these are kids, just because it was vacant and falling apart, you know, the slats were showing where the stuff had fallen off the walls and things like this and I guess transients had lived in it a time or two because it was always dirty and we'd sneak in but we wouldn't go down in the cellar because it that was haunted. Down there, surely something would grab you and scare the daylights out of you, oh no. No, there was a character. I can remember Tom Melanson's wife, first wife I guess she was, I don't know. Boy she was a hard old character, she used to beat the daylights out of him and he joined up, she was a hard person, I can't think of anybody else that was that bad but I remember she'd scare the daylights out of us too.

Q. Can you tell me what you remember about Maud Lewis?

A. Just a little gnome. I didn't really of her or know anything about her, she didn't come into prominence really until after I'd gone. I remember Everett, her husband. He wasn't married to her then but he used to come to Digby on a bicycle and had a, in cherry time he'd come along Queen Street and pick cherries in back of Dr. Dickie's house and along Queen Street there was a lot of cherry trees and he'd pick the cherries there and sell them I presume but I always remember this Ichabod Crane type of person who was skinny and tall, on a bicycle with a ladder and I thought, "Geeze", but we didn't know Maud Lewis or anything like that, we didn't take any interest in her.

Q. How would you compare life in general today, to days gone by?

A. Oh, that's a good one. Well, life in general today, I don't think is as good as it was then. People aren't as sociable as they used to be because I presume television has caused all this. People stay home and are more

isolated and are less community minded. Well, as you saw that picture there, you could see what kind of community they had and there was an article written about that time too. An American stayed here to see what it was like after they had left for the summer and he wanted to see what happened in the wintertime and he was surprised at the community spirit that went on. He had never visited, never even thought that something like this could occur. Like, they'd have parties and get-togethers and you know, the whole community would take part in one way or another and he thought this was great and he wrote a big article about it in the American papers so, the people didn't just drift away and become isolated like they do now, you know, it was far better. I don't think people had hobbies or anything like they do today because they were all taken up with making a living, of course there was bridge clubs and this sort of thing, that was always going on but there was no such thing as BINGO or anything. Now, what else?

Q. (Laughter) That's it, you're off the hook.

