

Clotilde Comeau

Interviewed by Cindy Graham, Nov. 28, 2000



Q. What is your full name?

A. My full name is Clotilde Marie Comeau

Q. What was your maiden name?

A. My name was Comeau and I married a Comeau – I did not change my name. I married a Comeau, not related but.....

Q. Who were your parents, obviously Comeaus?

A. My father was Pierce Comeau and he was from Little Brook and my Mother was Elizabeth Gaudet and she from St. Bernard. My father was already in Weymouth. He had started, he and his brother had started a mill on Journey's brook and Weymouth was very prosperous at the time and they made it a bigger mill and so he bought a piece of land and built, he and his brother built a mill on route 340.

Q. 340 still goes towards Yarmouth.

A. At Corberrie, yes.

Q. And where's Journey's Brook, I don't know where that is.

A. Well, Journey's brook is down on the way to St. Bernards, down that way on that road. There is just a little brook and it flows into the river, where we use to go swimming. We use to go swimming across the road, and that's where we learned to swim and go swimming in that brook. And it drains into the Sissaboo River.

Q. What was your father's brother's name?

A. Eloi?

Q. How do you spell that?

A. ELOI. Yes, it's French. And they bought an acre of land and divided the acre of land and they each built a house. My Uncle Eloi's house was white and my father's house use to be red ochre, it was a red house – it's a beige color now.

Q. Are they both on Route 340? On that road?

A. Yes, both houses are there.

Q. And the mill was –

A. Across the road, they built a new mill. They bought land and they built a big mill. I could show it to you if you like. I have a picture in those books that I have finished working at them. And my Father's and father's house. All those are in my book for my children.

Q. Did the mill have a name?

A. Sissaboo Planing and Saw Mill and it was – at Sissaboo Planing they planed lumber, they made windows and doors. Weymouth was thriving at the turn of the century and they were building a lot of houses and building boats and so on and so there was a great demand for finished products and they also – in the wintertime they didn't build houses in the wintertime. They sawed logs and the mill yard; they would haul logs with oxen and horses. Mostly oxen because they were, I don't know why but it was easier to keep oxen than horses. They would haul the logs to the mill and my father and a crew would saw the logs. There would be a sawyer and different men that would work in the sawmill and there was also always a fireman. It was steam the mill ran by steam – all the machinery ran by steam and all the fuel they had was a well to produce the steam. And that's what my father and my uncle did at the first part of the century in 1900.

Q. So was it necessary for the mill to be located on a brook?

A. No.

Q. There was no connection between having it on the brook?

A. No, it was not adequate on the brook. That was just started, but the demand – they needed more space, they needed more power and so they reengineered their mill. It was quite an established mill. They also had a dry lumber, a kiln. And that's what my father and my uncle – that's what they did.

Q. And did they remain life long business partners?

A. My uncle died before I was born, he died suddenly, and my father continued and a nephew, that is a cousin of mine, he also ran the mill too.

Q. One of Elio's sons?

A. Elio's son, yes. But he gave that up after awhile and I guess he didn't really like it. He found another job. But my brothers worked in the mill. And that mill, during the war, it was when the war started, my brother had a contract to make ammunition boxes. And one day they had be organized, they had to clean up the mill and so on, and that's what they did, that was the cleaning up the mill. And they went out for lunch to settle the dust, but spontaneous combustion happened and in 20 minutes the mill was gone.

Q. This was World War 2 you're talking about?

A. World War 2, yes.

Q. And they didn't rebuilt?

A. No, they didn't rebuild. No, because the shipyard was getting built up here, that's behind Campbell's store there, Weymouth Supplies, and so my brother was a superintendent over there. But they never rebuilt the mill.

Q. Did your father retire at that point?

A. My father would have been devastated had he seen that. But he had already died. My family, my brothers have been victims of heart problems and my father died in September 1938, before the mill. The mill burned in 1939, October of '39.

Q. So your father was how old when he died?

A. My father was 73. So that ended the mill. We had lots of fun around the mill, playing around the logs, playing hide and go seek, and playing in the lumber piles.

Q. That wasn't dangerous?

A. No it wasn't. Because we could play around the mill, Not when the mill was going. But after supper and that we could play hide and go seek. Not in the wintertime of course. So that was our livelihood, bringing up the family.

Q. Do you remember how many people supplied the mill with logs that they needed for lumber?

A. Well, I don't know how many, because they use to bring loads of logs with oxen – they didn't have very many trucks at that time. I do have a picture where they were hauling logs on the truck and that was only the beginning at that time – 1940? Trucks would just be starting – people wouldn't be having them. So there was mostly oxen.

Q. And you can well remember what that looked like. Oxen and.....Would they be in a pair of singles?

A. Usually in a pair because of the power. They were slow, steady, strong. Yes. They would haul them.

Q. Did your father keep oxen himself?

A. No. My father was a carpenter and he was dedicated to running the mill and he didn't do that sort of thing.

Q. Before cars, did he have a horse?

A. My father did have a horse, but I don't remember because he had built a barn, and I've got a picture of that little barn that he had. He had a horse and a wagon, a carriage, and he used it, well, I don't remember. I've never seen it because by the time I was born, I didn't know anything about it. He had done away with it. And instead of having a horse, he had a cow and it was a complex little building. It had a haymow, and we had the cow, and it had a pigpen, it had an outdoor toilet because we didn't have bathrooms, and it also had a hencoop. And it had a place for the wood, to store wood because we used a lot of wood to heat the home.

Q. That was all in one building?

A. All in that little barn.

Q. That barn was not connected to the house?

A. Oh, no. It was separate. That little barn is not there anymore, and things have changed.

Q. I'll bet that building was fun to play around.

A. Yes, behind it there was a little pond and we, my brothers use to clean the snow and we would skate. We use to skate, I'm digressing here, we use to skate, you know where Lewis' Mill is, not Lewis, Irving Mill, well there is a pond there and the land belonged to a Mr. Ernest Brooks and my brothers use to go ask him every year if they could dam the meadow, make a dam. And he always gave them permission to do that. And they'd dam the meadow and that's where we skated on that meadow. We use to make bonfire and it was a lot of fun. From my house, we had to go through the woods to go to that pond. And that's where we skated.

Q. So in the spring, they'd have to take the dam back out again?

A. Yes, it would just break itself.

Q. Did it make a big, big skating area?

A. Quite a big skating area. Another time, another place where we'd go skating, we'd go through the woods and go to the lake. Journay's Lake, they call it Journay's Lake, and we use to go skating there. And on that lake they use to cut ice for the summer. They use to – there was always a place where we could not go skating because they were cutting ice.

Q. So there was always some open water there?

A. Well, hardly open water but not safe. They would pack the ice in sheds in sawdust, and in the summertime the iceman would deliver ice.

Q. Can you remember watching them cut the ice off the lake?

A. No, very seldom we were there when they were cutting the ice because , you see, we had to go to school, and they perhaps cut the ice when we were at school and on the weekends, like on Saturday and Sunday, that's the time we would be skating. But it was a lot of fun and now the lakes don't freeze enough for that.

Q. Can you remember if they always froze, every single winter? That was never a problem?

A. Well, perhaps I can't remember that. Maybe there would be some, but anyway that was our fun. And we didn't all have skates. We had to – at my house we had three pairs of skates. But there was a lot of us and so we had our turn.

Q. So in your family, you had many children in a wide spread, you were starting to tell me before.

A. Well, we were 11 in my family. We were really 12 – one died of diphtheria. Diphtheria was a dangerous disease at that time. So I had one little sister that died, she wasn't yet two years old.

Q. She was born after you?

A. No, before. Long before me. So we were 11 in my family. I have 8 brothers and two sisters.

Q. And the two sisters are older than you?

A. My oldest sister was at Normal College when I was born. And my other sister was 10 when I was born.

Q. Did you ever get a chance to get to know your oldest sister very well?

A. Oh, she was like a second Mother to me. I have a picture of her. And my oldest sister was a teacher, and my other sister was a nurse, and I was a teacher.

Q. So your oldest sister was probably about 18 when you were born.

A. She was 19 when I was born. Because she had worked in the village – she had worked in a store and she decided to go for teaching at Normal College in Truro, so she didn't go right away in her young life. She was working at one of the stores in Weymouth at the time.

Q. And then your brothers.....your 8 brothers, are they all younger than you?

A. All older. I only had one brother younger than me. And he was one of the first ones that died too from heart problems. Heart problems were in my family, downfall. My oldest brother was a teacher, he graduated from College St. Anne and he was 19 when he graduated. And he taught school, I don't think he taught 3 years, but he got a scholarship to go to the Sorbourne in Paris and he came out with his Masters and after awhile he got

his doctorate – Doctor of Philosophy. And he was a Professor at Truro, Normal College, and he left that position and he went to Montreal. My other brother, Agnew, and Louis, they took up drafting and boat building and my next brother he went to the states. After the Weymouth fire. He had a business; he was building furniture and doing things like that. And Weymouth burned, you know it had a big fire. It changed his life so he went to the States. It was common then at that time to go to the United States. And my brother Louis he stayed around and he was Superintendent of Shipbuilding here. After the war that phased out and he went down to Mahone Bay and he was building ships down there. Let me see, Catherine was a nurse, she trained for a nurse in Lynn, Mass. Because at that time it was difficult to train nurses - there were no hospitals around here. My other brother Camille, he was a carpenter and he stayed around most of his life. My other two brothers became priests, they had scholarships and they became priests. During the war, my two younger brothers, one older and one younger, they went to war. My brother Adol was in the Army and he landed at Normandy at D-Day – he was there for the invasion. And he retired from the Army and he married and lived in Yarmouth where he was a postman. And my younger brother was also in the army but he had to retire because of his ill health and they died of heart problems.

Q. And you are the only one of 11 children left?

A. I'm the survivor! Almost didn't. But I'm the survivor.

Q. Did you almost not survive as a child or as an adult?

A. As an adult. I had heart surgery with complications. Usually heart surgery you're out of the hospital in 7 days, 5 - 7 days. Well, I was in the hospital over 40 days, oh, longer than that and I was transferred to Digby for 18 more days and I had complications. I was allergic, you know they wire your chest, well I was allergic to the wires so I had all kinds of problems. I had to have, actually I had three surgeries, because they didn't know what the matter was with my chest. And I wasn't getting better, so one day they had to open up my chest again. And I was in a bad way. I was under heavy medication until, well for 6 months, until my chest healed. And they removed the wires and in a week I was all well.

Q. How long ago was that?

A. It will be 7 years in April, the first week of April. 1994.

Q. Since the whole ordeal, you have been enjoying good health?

A. I'm enjoying good health. I lead an active life – not as active as I use to because I don't do very much housework because my daughter-in-law does a lot of it. But anyway, I'm free, my health is good and I'm enjoying life and I'm the survivor. 80 years old.

Q. So you must have been born in 1920.

A. Absolutely. I was a March lamb. March 2, 1920. Well, I'm proud of my age, and I bragged all year that I was 80, but I'm not going to do any bragging from now on. I'll be boring.

Q. Well, you sure don't look 80. You don't talk like 80.

A. What, I'm really impressed at how all 11 children received such good educations.

Q. What do you attribute this to?

A. That was one of the things - it was an understood law that we went to school and that's what happened. My Father and Father didn't have a lot of education. My father didn't get married until he was 35 - and my Father was 24 and my Father had to go out to work when she was a very young girl.

Q. So was it an understood law in your family or your community? Just your family. Seems like you received exceptional educations.

A. Well we had to do something with our lives. I think it was just an understood law. My parents never pressured us but we had to go to school and I think perhaps my older brothers and sisters always would urge us on because all my brothers went through high schools and my sisters were professionals. And that just was understood.

Q. Do you remember there being lots of reading material around your own house?

A. Yes, we always had lots of reading material. We borrowed books from the school library. We had no other library. We had the beginning of radio in our life and we could listen to the radio and listen to the news and other programs, you know. Radio was a big thing then. We could stay up late at night on the weekends and listen to Wheeling, West Virginia, and all these things you know. All these exciting stuff. So, electricity was started too. I remember when they put lights in our house. And we had radio, electricity, all these things were really exciting things in our life. It was exciting too to see a car because the cars started when I was a young girl. When we could see all these cars it was quite the exciting things to see. We use to have big boats come to the wharf, sailing boats, you know. And then there were other boats that came - they were coal fired boats. Hankinsons - they use to carry fish and coal and all kinds of things. And the lumber use to go out too. But it was a change to the cars, and then the planes after the war, you know, the planes coming. And so the trains, we had the trains, the train station. It was on the way home from school, and we would stop to see the train go by. And all these things have been part of our lives here in the Weymouth area.

Q. So your house on the 340 was not too far down the road.

A. It was on top of the first hill. Oh, it would be about 100 yards. There's the corner and it's just up the hill and it's a big hill.

Q. Then where was the school in relation to your house?

A. Well, I'll tell you the school was where the fire hall is. The fire hall and the recording office was built there and that's where the school was. And it was beautiful. We had a nice yard, and we had big maple trees and it was just gorgeous, you know, all these big trees. And it was a four room school and there were 4 teachers.

Q. That's the biggest school I've heard of around!

A. Yes, it was a big school. Weymouth was a thriving village and my brothers and sisters all went to that school and one of my sisters taught there, I taught there too. After they divided – they divided some classes in two, so that it would be more compact so they could accommodate more children. I don't know if you've seen the picture of the old school. I don't know if I could find it, but I've got all those pictures somewhere in my collection – they are kind of scattered but I have a picture of the school. I gave one to the Historical Society, I think. Anyway, all my brothers and sisters were educated there.

Q. What do you remember about a typical school day? Did your Father pack lunches for everybody or did you go home for lunch?

A. In the wintertime, we took our lunch, and I think in the little grades I think we took our lunches because it was a long ways – well from where the fire hall is up on the hill, you know. In the wintertime, the winters were rugged and the ice was, you know, when the tide would come up, the ice would be right up to the bridge, and you know, it's a little big scary. And we didn't have the winter equipment – we didn't have the boots and the warm clothing that – so that we always faced the north wind too. So we took our lunches in the wintertime.

Q. Did the four teachers teach different grades or did they divide everybody up?

A. They divided the grades – like there would be Primary, 1,2 and 3. And there'd be 4,5 and 6, 7, 8 and 9 and then the high school.

Q. And it went all the way to Grade 12?

A. It was up to Grade 11 for awhile. It was Grade 12 when I was there, but my sisters and my brothers didn't go to Grade 12.

Q. Did they have to go to Grade 12 somewhere else?

A. No. There was no Grade 12 in Nova Scotia at that time. So I was the first one to go to Grade 12. My younger brother didn't go to Grade 12, he quit in Grade 11. So, at that time my father was sick, so my younger brother decided to go to work.

Q. Do you remember how old your Father was when your youngest brother was born?

A. When I was born, Mama was 44. And my brother was born 1 ½ years after, so she would have been about 46.

Q. So the kids weren't spaced so closely together, but she still must have of had her hands full with 11 children.

A. And my Father was, meticulous. She had a standard. We understood that standard, she had a schedule and the work was done every day at certain times and so on. And the meals had to be on time, and there was always a schedule understood, that we grew up with.

Q. And were you children expected to do a lot of chores to help?

A. Well, at that time, you know, men didn't wash dishes or do anything like that. That was a no-no. So I had to wash dishes, I had to stand on a little chair to reach into the dishes. But there was a lot of prayers, we were , at that time, going to church was a very important part of our lives. Everyone, whether you were Catholic or Protestant, your church was the center of your home, really. And that was a part of our daily life, too. And my brothers were altar service, and went to church every morning.

Q. Which church did you go to?

A. We went to St. Joseph's, the one across from the IGA.

Q. You didn't go to St. Bernard's.

A. No that church was built in 1893, I think. They may have gone to Church to St. Bernards before, I'm not sure. I don't know about that. And then of course, there was an Anglican church here, just across from the Bank, that was an Anglican Church there, they had the Baptist and the United. It was the Methodist when I was a child, but it is the United Church and there was another Church, not far from the IGA this way, there's a little cemetery there and there use to be a little church there too. A little Chapel. I'm not sure what the denomination it was. And there was a church down in Weymouth North, an Anglican Church; there was also a Baptist Church on the Weymouth Point Road. So there was a lot of church going people at that time.

Q. And a lot of big families?

A. Yes, a lot of families had a lot of children, 8 and 9, sometimes there'd be a few, but anyway, there was a lot of people. A lot of going on.

Q. Was French the first language spoken in your family?

A. Yes, my Father and Father both spoke French. My Father was deaf, - she did speak some English but she had an accent because of her hearing problem. But my Father was bilingual and no problem.

Q. Was your Father deaf all throughout her adult life?

A. Yes. She had perforated eardrums from earaches as a child. So we spoke directly to her.

Q. So she was able to do a lot of lip reading?

A. A lot of lip-reading, yes. And my Father and mother – they had their talking time, usually early in the morning. My father was deaf, but his deafness was from noise from the machinery from the mill, but they got along very well.

Q. You still don't remember communication ever being any problem?

A. No problem. I've never heard my Father and father have any words. It was just.....was a very understanding loving home. My brothers and sisters – you know sometimes brothers don't get along, well my brothers always got along. I have a picture of my brothers and they are all laughing you know, having a great time. We played games in the wintertime you know. We had checkers and Parcheesi, and snakes and ladders and all these games, dominoes, cards. And there was always entertainment in our house. In the wintertime, we had a double livingroom in the house, and my Father and father entertained in the furthest livingroom and there'd be lots of times there'd be three different groups of people living in the house and we'd all be talking and laughing and it was a really fun place to be. We had a lot of visitors in the summertime. Sometimes we didn't have enough sleeping quarters – we'd have to ask the neighbours if we could rent beds. We'd be 17, 18 and 19 sometimes in our house. A big family and a lot of friends would come and it was a happy place.

Q. How many bedrooms did your house have?

A. It had four bedrooms.

Q. So as children you doubled up?

A. Well, there was one bedroom had two beds, the three boys slept in that room. And there was a small bedroom off my Father and father's bedroom and I slept there when my sisters were away. When my sisters would come, I could sleep with them. And that was so exciting! It was so great. They pampered me.

Q. Were you a bit of a tomboy growing up? With all those brothers?

A. Well, they didn't always let me play with them, you know, because there was enough boys and enough boys in the village around you know, the neighbours. They would come to play ball and play a game like 'dock on a rock' and things like that. There were enough boys around to play, so I was left out.

Q. How was 'dock on a rock' played?

A. Well, they had a big flat rock, and they put another rock on the top, and they would throw a rock to try to knock the rock off and they'd get a score. I don't remember how they scored. But anyway, it was a simple game, but they played that a lot.

Q. So did you have cousins next door that you played with?

A. Yes, there were two cousins. There was one named Eloi, and he just died this fall, and then his sister, Geraldine, she was three years younger than me. So that's quite an age gap, so I didn't have too many girls to play with except the ones when I'd go to school. It was quite a difference. And the girls that I went to school with are still here, you know. I still, we call ourselves "The Golden Girls" and we get out together.

Q. And you've known each other ever since Elementary school?

A. Beginning school, all through school. Theresa Henderson, just down here and Muriel Cosman, she's in the nursing home now. And there are others that have strayed away, but we were a big crowd.

Q. Was Weymouth more bustling than Yarmouth or Digby?

A. Well, I can't compare that because I very seldom went to Yarmouth. Or to Digby either. We didn't have transportation or go on the train to Yarmouth or those places. And the transportation, we didn't have cars at that time so we didn't travel very far.

Q. Can you remember the first time you did travel very far?

A. Yes, I went on the train to Truro at 18. I did go up in the valley. Before I went to Normal college, I worked in the valley for a few months before I went to Normal College and earned a few pennies to go. There was a bus service, it wasn't a big bus like we have now because those were no.....but these were like a big car that you travelled in. And that's how I travelled and I worked in Paradise. There were two girls there, Cora Redden and myself.

Q. What was your job?

A. I was in charge of looking after a baby. The Father had just had this baby and I had to see to it. She prepared the formula and she bathed the baby, but I had to see to it and change it and look after all her household bedding, do all her laundry and did the cleaning and so on. And there were two girls, the Father and these two daughters and they were both married and both had children. And so that's what we did.

Q. Were there other children besides the baby?

A. There was another little girl. The other daughter had another little girl and the other girl, Cora, she use to look after the other one.

Q. Did you come home on weekends?

A. Not really. When I came home, I came home in August because I went to work in March and I came home in August because I had decided I didn't want to do this sort of thing the rest of my life. I wanted to go for teaching. So I came home and my father was bedridden at the time, so I helped my Father and my sister because they were tired. So I

went to Normal College and my father died three days after I was there. So that was life. So I was on my own.

Q. Were you able to come home for his funeral?

A. Oh yes. I was. My brother was a Professor at the College, and of course, he had a car, and so I came home with my brother. And that was a chapter.

Q. Hard way to start the school year.

A. Yes, but you see I was away and I was busy so I worked my way through college. I stayed with my brother and they had five children, so I had lots of dishes to wash and things to do, and I got a dollar a week, and that was a lot. My board and room.

Q. A dollar a week plus room and board?

A. Yes.

Q. What would you spend your dollar on?

A. Well, it went a lot further than it would now. A dollar wouldn't go very far. But there was no tax at the time and I had all my supplies and books and things and anyway, I survived.

Q. Was your brother one of your Professors?

A. Yes.

Q. How was that?

A. Well, I had had my sister for my teacher too, here in Weymouth. So I was kind of use to that sort of thing. There were other Comeau's, other girls that were Comeau's, and they had a French accent and my brother was a French Professor. There was one, she was bigger than me, and they thought that that was my brother's sister and he never told the Professors. He wouldn't tell them. And one professor never found out until three weeks before college finished. I didn't have a French accent.

Q. How come you did not have a French accent do you suppose?

A. Well because I went to school and learned English. When I went to school I couldn't speak English. I don't know if I knew any words at all. So I learned English and I learned it without an accent.

Q. The rest of Weymouth must have been pretty well English. Were there many other French families?

A. Yes, there were Belliveau's, and Gaudets back on the line. They were all French, Gaudets, Theriaults, Belliveaus, Amero's, a lot of French people. And our Church was French. And its only these past 25 years that it has really changed to English.

Q. Is it a sad thing for you to see that happen?

A. Not really because this is life and its history. We have a priest that doesn't speak French now. But we still speak French when we need to. And some of my children speak French. They can all understand it, mixing with the people around. It is good to know French.

Q. I wish I was bilingual. Maybe I will still be someday.

A. No problem. It is nice to learn other languages. In Europe they learn three and four languages. I'm talking about all my life, I don't know if that's what you want or not.

Q. It's a great story. An unusual story.

A. You're not recording all of this are you? My goodness! I have other things to say like there were drygood stores in Weymouth. Weymouth really had a lot of good stores. Weymouth has had two fires.

Q. I am embarrassed to say that I don't know anything about them, about the Weymouth fires.

A. Oh yes, there was one fire. When I was a little girl there were three doctors, two dentists. One dentist use to come in the summertime. He was from the States, and he'd spend the summer here and he would practice his dentistry – that would be just down the hill. We had two dentists, three doctors and there were all kinds of drygood stores, grocery stores, and butcher shops and a bakery, hardware store. There were all these stores. There were two blacksmiths, because they needed the horses and the oxen and they all had to be looked after. There was one gasoline station that I can just remember. We had a theatre; we had restaurants and ice cream parlors. There were two barbershops. It was quite a thriving village, quite different that what it is now.

Q. And there must have been a much bigger population than there is now.

A. There could have been. At that time they didn't take the census but there was a lot of people. People walked, they went down to do their grocery shopping, you know. They had no transportation. They walked to Church. And we walked to school - we walked everywhere.

Q. Do you remember your parents doing a lot of shopping or were they somewhat self-sufficient?

A. Well, there is a lot of self-sufficiency because we always had firewood, but we also had coal. We had hard coal that came from the States, Pennsylvania, and we had hard

coal, and we had a pot bellied burner and my Father would put a hod of coal morning and night, and that's all the heat that we needed. It kept all our house comfortable.

Q. What kind of measurement is a hod?

A. Well, a coal scuttle. Have you seen those? People have them by their fireplaces. Well, that's what they would do. You know it has a lip like a pail, and one of those full night and morning kept our house, and we had a big house, and it kept us comfortable. Our cellar was loaded in the fall. My Mother planted a garden and that was just for fresh vegetables early in the summertime, but in the fall my Uncle would bring potatoes, ox carts full of potatoes, apples, turnip, carrots, cabbage, all of those and the fishermen use to come to the wharf. They'd come from Digby Neck and they would come to the wharf and they would have salt herring, salt mackerel and salt cod and dry fish and all these goodies, tongues and sounds. And they would trade them for vegetable to bring them back. And my Mother use to say, now watch them, when they have some left over that they have enough firewood. It really wasn't money that they wanted, it was the trading. And my Mother would caution the boys keep your eyes open so that we can buy a pail of salt mackerel, salt herring, dry fish, and cods and tongues and then we would have all that in the wintertime. And my Mother would raise a pig and from the pig we had pork and there was a man who made ham and bacon so we always had ham and bacon and salt pork. But we also had fresh pork. And of course, this is typical of every household, they had hens and chickens so we had eggs and lots of chickens too, roosters that we would kill for Christmas and Easter and the Epiphany, that was a holiday at that time. So we ate well. We had pork and beef, we would buy beef from the butcher shop, and so that's what was our housekeeping. And our cellar was full. We had good food so we didn't have to buy – well we bought extra things like luxuries I suppose. But we didn't – my mother always made bread – always made brown bread and white bread and baked beans and all that stuff. Tea biscuits and all that stuff.

Q. Was she an excellent cook, do you remember?

A. Oh she had to be because we were a big family and we were always well fed.

Q. Do you remember some families in the community not having as much?

A. Yes. There were some that were needy, always some that were needy.

Q. Can you remember, there was no welfare then; can you remember how the needier people were taken care of in your community?

A. Well, I think the people were generous and sharing. I can't remember too much about that because – I can only remember when I am older. Like when my mother – my mother use to hire a dressmaker to make the clothes for her boys and clothes for me like a coat and so on. But she use to, when I was older, she use to take clothes apart and redo them and take them to poor people. That's what she use to do. Now, that was only my mother, but there were others who did the same thing. And there were two families that had a lot of boys and they were poor. The mother was sickly or too many children, and they use to

help them out like that. And in the fall they would give them a bag of potatoes and share there. People were generous in helping out people.

Q. Do you remember if the Poor Farm ever came into play in later years?

A. Oh, I only learned about that later when I was older and I have a picture of the poor farm somewhere in my collection. There was lots of stories about that. But it was people who were in really bad situations that went there. There was some abuse too.

Q. Can you remember any stories good or bad that stand out about the Poor Farm?

A. Well, there were some but I don't think I can relate them properly because it was discontinued by the time I was grown up. There were children that were put there and unwed mothers and people who were not mental well because there was no place and people couldn't look after them. And that what they put them there. So I can't really tell too much about that because that was a long ways from my house. We didn't get that information.

Q. You were describing all the wonderful stores that Weymouth had, was that before the fire of the first time or was it the second time?

A. The first time. I remember the fire – there were buildings that were three stories high. That was a big thing. There were buildings, well these buildings next to the Goodwin Hotel and then there's the red brick building that was a bank – well next to that bank there was a drug store there – it was Guy Blackadar who had that drugstore. And then there was a big tall building three stories high, those buildings were all right up to the bridge. They were big buildings there – they are all gone.

Q. Did the fire wipe out two sides of the street?

A. No, it only – you know where the dry goods store is in Weymouth? Well that was the post office and the fire stopped there on that side of the street. And you know where the restaurant is – the restaurant there the pizza place and then there is another restaurant. That's where the fire stopped. It did not burn that store. Where Kenny Hankinson has his parking lot- right up to that house to the post office. Those were all stores there that all burned. And up from Kenny Hankinson's there is a big white building, white house, way down to the restaurant – all that was burned on both sides of the street.

Q. Can you remember what year that was?

A. I think it was 1930.

Q. Do you know what started it all?

A. Well, it was

Q. Was it in the wintertime?

A. It was in the fall, I think and it started in one of the stores. Well there's lots of stories, but the thing is that they were playing cards and of course they smoked and so on, and perhaps they had a bit of liquor, I don't know. And they think that's how it started. It started in that store – it was a shoe store. There were shoe stores, there were two tailors in Weymouth, there was lots going on. It was a self contained village. You could find anything – pots and pans, dishes, clothes, material, whatever you wanted. You could find it. But after that everything vanished. It changed Weymouth forever.

Q. That happened about the same time as the depression. Do you think otherwise maybe they would have rebuilt?

A. I think it devastated the people. One of the tailor, Albert Comeau, he rebuilt the store and the shoe store, but it didn't last.

Q. Can you remember if the decline in business here affected your father's mill also?

A. Well, it did. It was a depression time, and it was a difficult time for my father and I guess they didn't tell us very much about it but you could feel and sense.....I can remember my father giving his last 10 cents for us to get a scribbler for school. Things like that. People didn't have any money at all. It was very scarce. But we survived. We are survivors.

Q. What can you remember about the shipbuilding that your brother was involved with?

A. The shipbuilding – I have pictures of that too. They built Fairmiles, they built boats for the wharf.

Q. What's a Fairmile?

A. Well it's a little boat, type of boat, I have pictures of that and there could be pictures of those down to Weymouth too, because they took pictures of that. My mother christened some of them and so they built boats there during the war. After that, the shipbuilding was, well, they didn't build ships anymore. It turned into a furniture factory and then it was a casket factory not too long ago. And now it's vacant. It was a moulding plant too. And now its vacant. But that's not the original shipbuilding. I don't know if it burned or tore it down because I moved away. During the war I lived in Toronto, so I don't know all the history about that.

Q. Can you remember any other mills in Weymouth. I think somebody mentioned Tailors Mill.

A. Tailor's Mill is where Kenny Hankinson was in that area, back there, there was Tailors and there was Campbell's and Campbell's was down from – you know where the Goodwin Hotel is, down that hill. The Campbell's was there, and they were all thriving. All doing types of lumber. And shipping it. The boats would come and if – Dr. Doucet has a picture of all these boats and his son is an artist, a painter, and he has painted three or five boats there. They use to haul all this lumber by boat – sail boat.

Q. Did your Father's lumber end up getting sent out also?

A. No, my Father was manufacturing. Windows, doors, mouldings, and things for the houses. That's what he did. And there was a shingle mill on the Weymouth Mills road that Pearly Gates, I don't know if you've heard of him. Anyway, he had a shingle mill. There was one of his brothers was a musician, and he taught music, organ and there was more than one who taught music. But there was a shingle mill, so that's where all the shingles came from and they were very much needed. Everything was complex but all needed for life. One thing demanded another.

Q. I didn't know Weymouth was so busy and thriving.

A. It was, it was a very busy place. And there was fishing on the river. They did smelt fishing. In the wintertime, we don't have ice on the river now, but there was ice, thick ice and they had slots, they'd break the ice and they'd have nets and they'd pull up the smelts and they would ship them on the train in the afternoon – the afternoon train to Yarmouth. Go across on the boat so that it would be in Boston,

Q. Fresh fish in Boston.

A. Fresh fish in Boston. And they also use to dig clams and did the same thing. Put them on the train and they would be for the market in Boston. My husband use to dig clams for the train. So all those things happened years ago. Manufacturing was quite different. A different time of life.

Q. Everybody was so busy all the time.

A. Yes, it was a good life. We didn't have packaged food – you brought your little jug and you got your molasses, you bought sugar by the bag, it was a 50-pound bag, it was a smaller bag. We had brown sugar. We had a sugar bin for brown and white sugar and our flour came in bags and the bags were bleached and recycled. Made into aprons, and I have quilts here that my Mother made and they are lined with flour bags. And so these are precious. She made a quilt for my 21st birthday and I have it and it's lined with flour bags. And nothing was wasted. Now we put the paper in the garbage and then we recycled everything. There was no garbage.

Q. We think we're recycling when we put those blue bags out, but not like it was then.

A. Yeh, we recycle now. Oh yes, we reused. Everything was baked at home. We didn't buy baked goods. We didn't buy bread, if we bought, I remember there was a Thurber who had a bakeshop down Weymouth. He baked donuts and bread and pies and all that stuff. But there was no waste paper or anything like that. There was a lady who used to make donuts and she peddled them downtown. Nothing was wasted and no garbage, no such a thing. We didn't buy things in cans.

Q. Was that one of the many things your mother did was preserving?

A. Absolutely. We'd have to go pick berries; we had to pick raspberries, blueberries, and strawberries. Strawberries to make jam, blueberries and the raspberries to make jam. Yes. And apples, we had an apple tree that – we had apple trees in our yard but there was some apples we couldn't keep for the winter so what did we do. Dried them. So we had dried apples to make apple sauce or apple pies in the wintertime. On and on. There's a lot more than I can tell.

Q. When you knew we were coming, what were some stories maybe you felt you would really like to share?

A. I was invited to my friends birthday parties, in the afternoons. We would have a birthday and a cake and I wanted one at home. And Mama said it's a birthday, it's a party every day at this house. So I never had a birthday party. We knitted; we learned to knit, sew and crochet. And do embroider work.

Q. Did you learn this from your mother?

A. And my sister. My sister taught me a lot about – she was like a second mother to me. I never got a haircut by – she always cut my hair. And she sold clothes, made clothes for me and altered things. And sometimes like a grownup her coat perhaps would be taken apart and turned inside out and made a new coat for me, you know. Because nothing was wasted. My mother use to make mats, hook mats. She made a lot of them, the last one that I had I gave it to the museum in Digby. And she made a lot of quilts in the winter too. So nothing was wasted. Woolen mittens that were worn out or the socks that were worn out, they were made into mats. There was nothing wasted.

Q. Do you remember if your Mother hooked most of her mats with spun wool or with the other, or sometimes both?

A. Sometimes both. Like the men use to wear woolen underwear and the boys, well, the mat I gave to the Historical was made with woolen underwear.

Q. We could see that mat in the Digby museum, you say?

A. Yes. There is one there. And they use to spin wool. I had a- what you wind the wool on to make a skein; I gave that to the museum too. My sister gave me that and I gave it to the museum. So that's the kind of life that I had in my young days. I learned to knit and crochet and do embroider work and sew and all that stuff. Of course, I had dolls too. Christmas you usually had two things – and in my big family you know, like I would get a doll and perhaps a pair of slippers - something practical. By the time all my brothers had to have a toy too, and a gift. Our Christmas tree didn't have lights, but it did have candles and on Christmas night the candles were lit and of course we always had a pail of water in case of fire, and it was just beautiful just for a few minutes you had that special time.

Q. On Christmas would your family go to midnight mass?

A. Yes. I can't remember going to all of them because I was too little I guess. But when I was big enough to go to stay up and go to mass. But you also had a mass in the daytime and that's where I went. And there was always a crib where Baby Jesus and Mary and Joseph and the shepherds and so on. They still have them there in St. Joseph's. They are made out of plaster. When I came back from Ontario, I was working there and I saw - painted them all over again. I use to go to ceramics and I painted them all over again. Because they needed refreshing, I'll tell you.

Q. I wanted to ask you a little about what happened after you graduated from Normal College. And if you have any other stories from before then, please tell them too.

A. Well, my first school was in Weaver Settlement just back here. And the road wasn't paved there at that time – it was a dirt road. Weymouth was paved or part of it, but on the hill where I lived, route 340 wasn't paved. I bought a bicycle, and I bicycled back morning and night to school.

Q. You stayed at your parents' home? Your mother was still alive?

A. Yes. My mother was still alive and my brother was living there and his wife, my brother Camille, was still living there with my mother. And so I travelled night and morning by bicycle until Christmas time and in the winter I didn't. I boarded from Monday morning and – I think I went on Sunday night and I came back on Friday afternoon until Eastertime and then I went back on my bicycle.

Q. That's a long bicycling season!

A. Yes, it was. And I had never ridden a bicycle, I learned! I taught in that school, this is an interesting story too. It was a very poor section. I had from the beginners to Grade 9. I had a grade 9 student. We didn't always have firewood. And the children had a rash, and I was worried about, they had impetigo too, so I had to have the nurse come and we didn't have any firewood that day. She wouldn't let the children sit down that day or take their coats off. And so she examined the children and she said the rash that these children have are flea rash. They had hunting dogs. And the dogs slept with the children so the children had flea rash. So it was nothing dangerous. So I didn't worry about that anymore. Some of them had impetigo and she said there is no need to tell the parents to do anything about it. She says I'll get some salve and she brought it back to me and she said you clean them every morning and put the salve on. And that's what I did.

Q. Real public health!

A. Public health. I was doing nurse duty too. I had a grade 9 pupil that was intelligent. In grade 9 you began teaching algebra, you know. And he would try to trick me, and that was really funny. He was smart. He was clever. He had hunting dogs and he liked to go hunting. So one day he brought his dogs to school and he thought I would send him home with the dogs. And I didn't send him home. I let the dogs sleep by the stove. So that was the only time he brought them to school because he didn't get his own way.

Q. What did he hope to do – did the school only go to Grade 9?

A. Yes. That was from beginners to grade 9.

Q. You were the only teacher for the whole school?

A. Yes, it was a one room school. And anyway, the other thing – he joined the navy during the war, and I had wanted him to come to Weymouth school because he was a smart boy. So he joined the navy and when he came out of the navy he went back to school in Weymouth and took his grade 12. He has a daughter living down here. And I see her once in a while and she is a lovely lady and very talented. Anyway, another thing that he did one day. I had gone home for lunch and I came back. One of the girls went to get her scribbler out of her desk and she screeched! He had put a dead mouse on top of her scribbler. I laughed. Anyway, he thought he would go home. I didn't punish them at all. I punished them I put the dead mouse in the stove and they could hear it sizzle and that was the end of that. But they learned well. And there is one of my beginners - every time he sees me he hugs me. He's well, he's quite old now. But he's a mink farmer. So they remember me. My first school. My second school, I went to Clare and that was a French school. And I taught from beginners to grade 3. There were two teachers. I taught from grade 4 to grade 11, two grade 11 pupils. That's what I did the second year. But then I got married.

Q. So how did you meet your husband?

A. Well, I met him through a friend. He was a friend of my brother and he was a neighbour too. They had a car, my husband, they had a little car and they come to Weymouth and I knew this other man who is a teacher now and that's how I met him. And he was a Comeau. And we went to Toronto during the war and we came back and I had three children. And I said I'm not going anywhere else. I'm staying right here. Travelling with three children during the war, that was it. So that's why I stayed in Gilbert's Cove.

Q. So, your husband is no longer alive.

A. No he died three years ago. Well, three years in September. He had althizimers and he was 83. He was 6 years older than me. So we had a good life. We had four children, two boys and two girls. We have 10 grandchildren and we had 13 great grandchildren.

Q. What was your husband's name?

A. Frank.

Q. Frank Comeau.

A. Yes, Frank Comeau.

Q. So what took you to Toronto – his job or your teaching?

A. He took a course in doing something – what is the – it was a course that he took in New Glasgow and then he got a job working on airplanes in Moncton and we moved to Moncton and after 6 months, he decided that he would go to Toronto and he worked at Malten Airport which is now Pearson Airport, and he worked on Lancasters and we went up to Toronto. And then Frank was very close to his mother and we had been up there for three years and he said I gotta go home to see Mom. So he came home to see Mom, and when he went back he said we gotta go home. And we had to come home. His father was an invalid and with rheumatoid arthritis and so we came home to help his mother. And I didn't want to move again until the children were all grown up.

Q. So your children must be very close together in age?

A. My children are quite close in age.

Q. Three of them were in Toronto, and you had another one born after that?

A. Yes. David, the one here. He was born here in Digby Hospital. And my first one was born in Digby hospital too. But the others were born away.

Q. Did you start your married life in Gilbert's Cove?

A. Yes, I lived there part of the time. And then he was – Frank was in the wood business. He had a lot of land and he sold fire wood and he sold logs and things like that. But then this – during the war they started using oil so his wood business kind of collapsed, and he did other things.

Q. He had the foresight to take some courses and learn new trades?

A. Yes. And he was, of course, in the course that he was going to take, he didn't know math that well. He didn't know fractions and decimals anymore, so I had fun teaching him that. So he made out. And we lived in Toronto and we came back home and not until – I looked after Frank's mother. The father died 5 months after we were there. And she lived to be 92 and she was a great old lady and after she died, I was all alone. Frank was doing other things and so one day, I decided I'd go back to Ontario. I got a job, I had a job before I went. I was teaching in Barton at the time, and I stayed there 13 years. But I came back and retired here. I taught 30 years.

Q. Had you taught in Toronto the first time you were there?

A. No I didn't teach in Toronto. I was busy with my family. And during the war, things were quite different. And besides, married women – they didn't hire married women for teaching. No way. That was it. Once you got married you weren't a teacher anymore. But when I went back to teaching, they were reluctant to hire me, but they did.

Q. I think you were born to be a teacher.

A. I think so. There were a lot of teachers in my family. So that's what happened to me. And here I am retired.

Q. Sort of. Just from an everyday job. Not from doing lots of things.

A. Well, I did lots of things. I'm the one that started the food bank in Weymouth and I had it – see after my grandchildren, my daughters and my other son use to come with their children, you know to visit their grandmother and all that. But then they got their children got so they don't want to come anymore. This is what happens. So I had these rooms downstairs and so my husband, he didn't like for me to be going out very much. He didn't like to be alone. He had althizimers, you know and so I started things in my home and I started the food bank and I had it in one of the rooms downstairs. And of course, I had a big basement that the people could come in. There was lots of room. And I had lots of people to help me. They were very good about it. In fact, they are still working at the food bank because it was too much for me. And he didn't know why all these people were here and all the cars in the yard and all that. So it was moved. But I have to have people around me. So I started making quilts for the needy, so that these people – they come on Wednesday afternoon but I had all these things prepared. It gives me something to do. So that's my life. So I still do the quilts. I do these things for the needy people. This here, we are giving to Juniper House but we are also making crib quilts for the IWK. We are making a youth quilt right now.

Q. Where is that destined for?

A. For the IWK, because the youth needs quilts too. They take them home. They give the quilt to the child when they are in the hospital and they are theirs to keep. We've done quite a few already. So that's what we do. That's my life. And so community stuff. I belong to the Garden Club, to the Historical Society and take part in anything that goes on in the community. And of course, us 'Golden Girls' that are 80 now, we started when we were 70, and now we have a dinner together.

Q. On a regular basis?

A. Well, once a year just to celebrate our birthdays. Our birthdays are all a different time but we just celebrate the gathering. A lot of those are some we went to school with. And people that are 80 years in the community. One of them is an invalid now because she had a stroke and she has a heart problem so she doesn't gather with us. And another one just went to a nursing home when her husband died. So we are getting further apart. Although we went to – the one in the nursing home is able to go out, and so we went out to dinner together just a few weeks ago. And I take an active part in the church. I said when I was 80, younger people can take over. I'm too old now for all this stuff. So anyway, that's my life.

Q. Did you stay in close touch with your sisters after you got married?

A. Yes. Very much so. And we wrote letters continually. My sisters were very close to me. And I was very close to them. My older sister was like a mother to me. She named me. My other sisters were named after my Grandmothers, and my mother wrote to my sister, she was at Normal College and she said she could name me. And my oldest sister named me. She was boarding at Professor Benoit's house and she said she got the letter

from my mother and she asked to name me. But she didn't know what to name me. So Prof. Benoit said name her after my daughter. And that's how I got my name. So I one and only. There is not too many. My name has given me a lot of problems. Misspelled and pronunciation.

Q. So it is Clotilde.

A. In French it is Clotile – because the d is silent. Because there is two consonants together, you know. And in English it is silent also, Clotile. Misspelled, I don't know how many ways it is spelled. With an 'h' in it. I had a hard time when I was first teaching. You got paid by check and it was Clothilde and –

Q. How is it spelled?

A. CLOTILDE. And they questioned it. I never would put an 'h' in it. So I had all kinds of trouble with it. But there have been a few Clotilde's in Clare. One of them is in Halifax now, another one is up in Ottawa. But it is a rare name. I was in the cemetery one day and this lady on her head stone, it had Evangeline Clotilde Rice. So there, somebody else had my name. It's been difficult. And I have been spelled all different kinds of ways. And when I was in Ontario, when I was teaching there. They didn't say my name, they just said 'Clo'. They could say all these Ukraine names, but they could not say Clotilde. And it's in my Bible. There is a list of names in my Bible, and the name Clotilde is there.

Q. It's a nice name, I like it.

A. Its different.

Q. I don't know what else to ask you. You've told me some great stories. I have my list of questions but I don't think I really need to ask you them.

A. Well you can ask me more questions. I have the time. And maybe this is not what you really wanted.

Q. It is exactly what we are looking for.

A. My childhood , growing up,

Q. A couple more questions – maybe if you can remember legends or fables or superstitions or anything like that, that kind of were believed in and spoken of in your childhood.

A. I don't remember superstitions.

Q. Can you remember your mother having any maxims – little sayings she would say to teach you life's little lessons – morals.

A. Well, I guess maybe she did. We learned our prayers at my mother's knee. We had to look at my mother when we talked and we had to say our prayers. She knew if we were not saying it right. I don't know. There was a lot of laughter in my home. She didn't hear everything that was said, but if jokes were said that she didn't hear and she saw us all laughing, she laughed too. She was happy that we were all happy. I don't know. I can't remember superstitions in my home. My mother-in-law was superstitious. But that was later.

Q. Can you remember if there were any issues surrounding race in Weymouth when you were growing up or later on?

A. About race? When I was young, there were Indians that lived just outside of Weymouth and I remember the Indians stopping at my house and my mother would give them some bread and butter. He would come and rest I suppose, but he always stopped. And I remember seeing them, you know, and they were Indians.

Q. Were they living nearby permanently or just an encampment?

A. Yeah, they had a little encampment. There was a place where they lived. I didn't see it but I knew they lived back on the line not far from the lake. There is a big lake there. And there was an Indian settlement there. And there were Indians in Clare and Hectanooga, also. I know one very well and she is a famous lady. But they all disappeared. I don't know if they went to other places - there are some in Bear River and some in Yarmouth so I don't know just what happened to them. But there were Indians there. And there were blacks. The blacks in Weymouth Falls and Southville and so on. They were good neighbours. Some of them are my friends. They are very good people. That's the only thing that I can remember is about the Indian.

Q. You've clearly kept up with changing times and you have a wonderful attitude about life in general.

A. Yes.

Q. Is there anything you'd like to say about how things today measure up with some of the stories you have told me in the past. If we're going in good directions or bad?

A. Well, a lot of the things that nowadays don't really interest me. There is a lot of movies that turn me off. They are not important to my life. They are not inspiring. And so there's a lot of movies that I don't watch on T.V. A lot of things in T.V. I do like the news and the documentaries and the historical things and things like that. But I don't watch T.V. during the day. It wasn't part of my life and I haven't gotten in the habit of watching it. I never think of it. And my daughter-in-law either, doesn't - its not part of our life. I don't mind flying. I visit my children out west and I don't mind flying. I've done a lot of visiting out west where my grandchildren are. Gone to New York a lot of times with Frank's family there. I've travelled a lot. And now I'm glad to be home. It's time to settle time for the last part of my life.

Q. Thank you for a great interview.

A. I don't know if this is really what you wanted. I don't know about my life. There are others that have different lifestyle. Some of my classmates, but this was from a large family. And I think – I just made an album for my four children. The year 2000 was my project and I took pictures that I didn't have any negatives for and I took them to Amero's and he made negatives and copies and he was just wonderful. I was out west for awhile and then in the summertime I didn't really bother very much. But I really went at it in September and now I've got my albums done . It's a lovely project. One of my daughters knows that she is going to have it but she has no idea what the pictures are. My husband's family and my family. So it's a big project.

Q. A labour of love.

A. Yes, when my children left home and I knew they were not coming back, I made them an album of their childhood and they have that. And this is beyond that. I also have the genealogy of my husband and mine. And they were way back at Port Royal, all the Comeaus come from Port Royal. The Comeaus from all over Canada and the United States.

