

# Eugena Hodges

Interviewed by Christine Callaghan, Dec. 12, 2000



Q. What is your full name?

A. Bessie Eugenea Hodges. I go by B. Eugena Hodges.

Q. And what was your maiden name?

A. Simmons.

Q. And where were you born?

A. Here in Weymouth Falls. Down by the first church, the Baptist Church- Mount Beulah the Baptist.

Q. Is that house still there?

A. No, that house burned down.

Q. And who were your parents?

A. Cecil Simmons and Reta Langford, she was Solomon Langford's daughter.

Q. And how many children were in your family?

A. There were four in the first family.

Q. What do you mean by the first family?

A. Mother died when I was five years old. She died of childbirth. So Dad married the second time. So there was eight children in the second family.

Q. And where you in the first family, what was your position?

A. I am first.

Q. You're the oldest?

A. I am the oldest.

Q. What do you remember about your natural mother?

A. I remember my Mom very much. She played the organ in church and the first time I ever got in a car, the Jarvis' had a car. It must have been Sunday and they were going for a drive and I crawled in the car, and I was that small that I was on the floor. And she said, no, no dear, you sit on the seat. Get up here. I had a little blue suit on with a collar and a little hat with fur around it. So I must have been about 4.

Q. And you remember that that vividly.

A. I remember that. And I don't remember seeing her on the bed, but I remember Dad coming and getting me when she passed away. And he said your mother is asleep. But I don't remember anything very clear there.

Q. Did that child survive?

A. Yes, he is 60 years old now. He lives in Toronto.

Q. What are the names of your brothers and sisters?

A. Next to me is Willard is in Nanaimo, Iona – she is in the States in Ohio and Beau is in Toronto. He didn't live with us for awhile. When Mother died an aunt took him. We called her Aunt Liza and she took him and she looked after him until, I don't know, he may have been two or three. It seems to me he was a big boy when he came home to us. To me he was big, but he could have been two or three. She brought him up.

Q. In this community as well?

A. Yes, down - it's down by the first church. You go down Gates' lane and the house is still there, but my sister lives in that house. Sharon, that's the second family.

Q. How long after your Mom died did your father remarry?

A. I don't know, '45 or '46. She would have died in 1940, maybe, '39 or 40. I was old enough but the rest of them don't remember her. But I do. They ask me what she looked like and I explain to them she was short like myself. Short and heavy set, shorter than I am.

Q. I forgot to ask you what year you were born.

A. 1936.

Q. Were you actually born in your parents home?

A. At home. Yes. We were all born at home.

Q. Who would have attended your mother when you were born?

A. Mrs. Frances Langford. That's Bernice Beals mother down the road. She was the midwife.

Q. No doctor. came?

A. Dr. Melanson was the doctor. And then she had trouble with every one of us, and then when the last one came, they couldn't save her.

Q. How old was she when she died?

A. Oh she must have been 36 or 39, around there.

Q. Why don't you read it? (her mother's obituary).

A. Mrs. Cecil Simmons, they spelled it with a D but that's not correct. Weymouth Falls, February 1. The death occurred at her residence here on Thursday last of Mrs. Cecil Simmons, at the age of 38 years. Mrs. Simmons who was the former Ms. Reta Langford, daughter of the late Mr. And Mrs. Solomon Langford of this place was very musical, took an active part in community affairs, especially the African Baptist Church of which she had been church clerk for 20 years as well as being choir leader. She is survived by her husband, four small children, also by two sisters in New York. The funeral took place on Saturday from the church. That's the Mount Beulah Baptist Church. So she was 38.

Q. Your parents didn't get married at a real early age!

A. They were late. They got married late. They got married like in February and I was born the next January.

Q. They mention in that that her sisters were in New York.

A. Aunt Lila Langford, she had owned this house, she left me this home, and Aunt Bessie, she married a Wilson and she lived in Jamaica Plains, New York.

Q. Had your mother ever gone to the States to work?

A. No.

Q. A lot of young people did in those days.

A. They did. Aunt Lila went to Montreal first then she went to the States. Then she came back again. But my Aunt Bessie, she went there and she stayed and she married. They didn't have any children.

Q. What did your father Cecil do for a living?

A. Dad worked in the mill, he didn't have anything stationary. He went in the Army, but he didn't go overseas, he stayed home. And he worked like in the woods, just farming. Farming was the thing he did. But he cut wood – that's how they earned money for food on the table. I don't know if he ever got any help, they use to call it the "town". That would be the welfare today. But we always had food on the table, we had a pork barrel in the cellar, there was always food, vegetables was always canned, pickling and everything was there in the cellar for you. Fish, salted fish. They even pickled eggs – not pickled eggs. They put them in isinglass. They put them in something and this preserved them. Even you could put them in salt and put them in the cellar and they kept. I last remember Mom doing that. Putting the eggs in salt because the hens stopped laying in the winter. And you need eggs to cook like at this time of the year.

Q. Oh, so they put just the fresh eggs!

A. They put the fresh eggs, preserved them in salt, just the plain dry salt. Nothing in that salt. Then the pork barrel. Then we had a beef hanging. And you had eels down there, and mackerel and this stuff was all salted.

Q. Where would they get the eels and mackerel?

A. Well, fishermen use to come to the door in those days and fish was really cheap, maybe someone would be selling eels, or someone would have an eel pot and they would give them to them. And then another thing we use to do for the fruit, the apples. We use to dry them. And you come in the house and string these apples, hang them on the clothes rack, and dry them. And we'd have them to make applesauce in the winter.

Q. Now would you have to slice those apples?

A. You sort of quartered them and you put them on string, use the darning needle, and put them on string and tied them in circles and put them to dry.

Q. Must have smelled nice!

A. It did.

Q. Where did those apples come from?

A. In our orchard. We had lots of apples around. One time my grandfather had an orchard. There was apples, plums, gooseberries, currants, which you don't hear of gooseberries and currants now. There was wild blueberries when you went back in the woods and the raspberries. We lived off the land.

Q. How much land did your parents own?

A. Well, at one time it must have been maybe 200 acres, but when it come down to us we ended up with 50 acres. That's what was left to us. But everything was their own.

Q. So when you say like they had a beef hanging, did they raise their own cattle?

A. Well, maybe that was a steer that the cow, they bred the cow and Dad would just have that for the winter.

Q. And you would raise your own pigs, of course.

A. Own pigs, hens, chickens, ducks, the old dirty things! Yeh, we had ducks as well. They are not very pleasant to have.

Q. What would you use the ducks for?

A. We killed them and ate them. You had the eggs, duck eggs. Really rich. I guess that's all we had. The hens, you had them all winter, you could kill them anytime. Never raised turkeys anything like that.

Q. So as a young girl, what were your chores?

A. Many. Butter, I was a little girl and I use to stand on a chair and churn the churn to make butter, wash dishes, look after my little brothers. They use to try to scrub on a scrub board, empty the pails, I worked hard when I was a little girl.

Q. Were you aware that you were working hard? I mean, do you remember times when you would rather be playing but you had to do these chores?

A. Yes, I do. Well, I had rheumatic fever at a very young age. And I don't know how old I was, if I was 7 or 6. And then I went along until I was 10. I use to carry water, you had to carry your own water, then I ended up with TB. So I was kind of sickly. And I was the one that was around the house but I stayed home. They didn't put me in the hospital. In a year I cleared up, I had an uncle that lived with us when he come from the war, he had TB so my resistance being down with rheumatic fever, I ended up with TB. None of the rest of the kids got it.

Q. What do you remember about that? In terms of treatment?

A. When I got up this one morning, I couldn't breathe. So they took me to the Doctor and the doctor sent me, Dr. Lawley his name was, sent me to Digby and they did an x-ray and then he put me on some kind of – it was like heavy, heavy molasses. I don't know what it was. It had a funny taste and I use to have to take that and rest. I'd get up in the morning and have my breakfast and I'd have to go back to bed. But I was a little child, and I wanted to stay up. And I'd get up and have my lunch, and I'd have to go back to bed again. I had to rest a lot. And then after a year, well they x-rayed me every six months. And then after that I went back to the Doctor, I missed a whole year of school, he said she can go back to school in the fall, so it was like in the spring when it cleared up. And I had to eat eggs, and all that stuff to keep my immune system up. But that was the only treatment was rest; I don't remember any medication other than that heavy thick stuff they give me.

Q. Well better than going away to a sanitarium.

A. Oh yeh, I was only a child.

Q. What do you remember about your father remarrying?

A. Seems to me I was in a crib, and this lady come in the room and she said you can call me Mom now. And I remember me just laying down in the crib. That's all I remember. But he wanted to keep the four of us together.

Q. What was her name?

A. Gussie.

Q. Do you remember her maiden name?

A. She was a Langford. She was another Langford.

Q. And did you grow to love her?

A. Well, in later years I did. But it was a hard life for me. She was cruel. I love my second family, my sisters and brothers. But you know, then there was a step sister and she use to get us spankings and all kinds of bad things, like tell Mom I swept the dirt under the rug, and I hadn't even touched it. It kind of makes me sad yet today when I think of it. But when I got older and I left home, I couldn't wait to leave home and when she started getting sick, I realized that this lady that my father had married meant a lot to him and he married her to keep us together. I asked God to forgive me for any bad feelings and thoughts I had for this woman. Because I didn't want her to die and me go around carrying guilt. And when she got sick, who was the one she called for, would be us to come to her. But her other children were younger, Sharon and Ada were good to their Mom. Just the stepsister was mean to her.

Q. Now the stepsister was older than you?

A. Marion, her name was Marion States. Oh no, she was younger. She was my sister's age, Iona, the one in the states. They were around the same age.

Q. Where did you go to school?

A. Down in the Weymouth Community Center.

Q. You know where that is?

A. Yes. I went to school there. Did you see the brown house down there next to the Community Center? That was the school I went to school in. Then they built the new school. And I went to school in that school for a couple of years, I think. Not that long. I think it was in the fifties, '49 or '50 it opened. I had pictures of it somewhere. I should have dug them out.

Q. What would a typical school day be like?

A. Oh I enjoyed school. I'd get up in the morning and you had one dress and you had to make sure that one dress was ready for school and get up and go to school from nine, come home at twelve, and we just lived across the level from the school. And we'd come home and have our dinner and there would always be something to do. All the kids would be playing ball, and we couldn't go so we use to set the clock back. I use to set it back, so when I went to school I could have a little playtime with the rest of the kids. Well, she caught on to that.

Q. You mean you set it earlier than it was?

A. I would set it ahead so I could get out of there. So he'd say gosh, seems like the time comes fast for you going to school. So I'd go and I'd play ball and I'd come home. I took piano too, and Friday was my lessons day. It was 75 cents I paid for a lesson.

Q. Wow, that seems like a lot for those days! To me 75 cents seems a lot for one piano lesson. They must have really wanted you to learn.

A. They did, they did. Cause Mother was a musician. And I use to play by ear. I went until I was 18. And I forgot everything I knew because I left home and then I started back in '82 or '83 after I got married, there was a piano in the home. And I started back to my music and I was going pretty good. Then I started - two years my husband got sick and I was away from it. And then he said well why don't you go twice a month and I did, and that was bad and I should never have done it. Now I'm right back to square one. And I'm so upset because my sister and I, she took lessons and she had stopped but she continued to play by ear. So now she is way ahead of me. She's playing in the church. I keep saying to my teacher, I'll never get it. She says you will.

Q. Are you taking lessons now?

A. Yes, I'm back taking lessons again.

Q. When you were a little girl where did you take lessons?

A. Church Gates. You went down by the first church lane, up the hill and you went off the left. One of the Gates brothers – he taught piano.

Q. His name was Church?

A. Church Gates, yes.

Q. You mentioned when I called you the other day that you left school in grade 10.

A. Well I didn't leave here in Grade 10, I left school here in about grade 8. And when I left home, when I went back to Saint John and went to night school, and I took night courses and I took a correspondence course. I did it every year and I got up to my grade 11. Which that helped me a lot. But when you drop out of school at a certain age, you are all your life trying to get that what you didn't get, and you don't get it. Because it was something you should have had when you were in school. Time to move on to higher up things. There was two of us. My brother Willard and I and eighty dollars for books was a lot of money to go to high school and my parents couldn't afford that.

Q. How old were you then?

A. I would be 17 or 18. So you went to Weymouth to high school for your grade 9.

Q. How did that make you feel to have to leave school?

A. Well I liked school. Well, I got pregnant. So that kind of stopped me too from going to high school and I really wanted to stay in school because those last years it seemed like everything was opening up for me and I was into my books and I was ready to go to high school. I was disappointed.

Q. What were your favorite subjects in school?

A. I liked math, and I liked English. English was hard, I'm telling a lie. I liked French. And we use to take it was to do with the government, they called it – it was a yellow book, it talked about politics. Its something they don't use now. And then we had a copy book and a speller. I liked spelling. I liked all of my subjects, my geography, my history and my reading. I really liked it.

Q. How many kids would have been in that school?



A. Around 30 something, the class and then going to school, like coming out I probably wasn't on the level I should have been. Because I was out more than I was in. Like, I was out for the year when I was ill, then teacher situation as you know in the country school you didn't have the teacher to be with you all day. Teacher got sick, then they didn't have a teacher, and you were out a whole year. That's the way it seemed when you should have been learning. And then this went on for quite a few years, then they finally got a teacher. But still, something would happen and we'd be out again. And I regret those days that I could have spent in school. It was a waste. Then when they put the schools together it was much better for the next generation come along because they went to the Weymouth school and there was school everyday for them and it wasn't half day classes. See, we were only in school half day.

Q. Really.

A. Yes, like we'd go in the morning, and the other grades go in the afternoon, the younger children. Say from grade 4 to 8, and from 4 down would go in the morning and there would be two class rooms. But still it wasn't enough to accommodate all the kids. Now you haven't even got enough to accommodate even half of them up here going down to Weymouth.

Q. That's the first time I have heard that that kids could only go half a day.

A. Oh we went half day school.

Q. As a young black girl growing up here in the community, what were your expectations for when you became an adult? What did you hope to do as an adult?

A. I wanted to be a nurse. I did. But I don't know what my parents expected because Dad use to say all he wanted us to do was to work like the boys, he wanted them to work in the woods. But my brother Beau, that's the youngest boy, he did get his education – I don't know if he graduated from Grade 12 I think and he took sheet metal. But his studying, he was the youngest, it was important to him so he put his nose in the books. When I came home I had to work. I didn't have time to do my studies which if I could have studied too it would have helped a lot more. But I don't think the parents expected anything of the kids in those days, much. And out of my class, just one girl was a teacher. And I look now comparing to the day, one of my brothers, Ray, he is a social worker, and went to university, and my nephew he went to university and Beau, that's the youngest fellow in the first family, he took sheet metal. All the family including my own children, they have done very well for themselves. If we'd only had the chance the kids have today. We had to pay for our books when we went to high school and the kids today don't. They don't realize how much that cost when you had to dig up \$80.00 for books every year and then not the children the year before did not have those books maybe those books that you were going to take this year. Citizenship was the name I was trying to think of.

Q. We might have called that Civics when I was in high school.

A. Citizenship was what they called it, a yellow book.

Q. So how old were you when you got pregnant?

A. I have to stop and think about it. I must have been seventeen (17) or eighteen (18).

Q. And so what happened then?

A. Well I stayed home for awhile and then I left home. Mom brought my son up. And I went to work so I could help support him.

Q. Where did you go to work?

A. Halifax. I worked in Halifax as a domestic.

Q. Had you ever been to Halifax before?

A. No.

Q. What do you remember your first impressions?

A. It was a big city. I thought looking across over the dam, I thought that was Boston when I was a kid! I didn't know, I hadn't been anywhere. I looked and I couldn't believe it. I would be standing down waiting for the bus and I thought this is Halifax? They would say, you're right in the middle of it. But I was ready to go to work and I think I was a bit insecure because I always wanted to work in a home. I didn't want to live out and go to work everyday. I felt secure that way.

Q. How did you get to Halifax?

A. I think I must have taken the bus, if I remember correctly. There was a train then too. But I think I took the bus and they met me at the bus. The family lived down here in the parsonage. The Parsons, and I worked with them down here and they had five (5) little boys and then they went to Halifax then I went up there and worked with them there.

Q. They lived here in Weymouth?

A. Yes they did. And Rev. Trivet got me the job down here. He was a minister and that's how I got to work down there with the family.

Q. And how long did you do that?

A. I don't know. Seems to me I stayed there for maybe six months and then I went to Halifax, because my son was here. And I thought it would be nice to go to work so I can support my son.

Q. What is his name, your son?

A. Philip.

Q. Now when you went to Halifax, how often did you get home to see your son?

A. I come home Christmas and Easter and I use to come home and visit in my holidays in the summer. I don't think I stayed there all that long because then I got another job and I went to Hamilton, Ontario to a lady I knew and I worked in Hamilton for awhile, then I came home.

Q. It must have been hard for you as a young mother and a young woman in those strange places.

A. Well it was. I was a greenhorn! There was a lot that I didn't know and I could have been into stuff and I didn't know it. Cause they could have said come on, lets go here, like you know, there's drugs and stuff out there, but I wasn't into that stuff. I wasn't into alcohol and stuff, I just wanted to be home. I didn't know nothing about it and when I stop and think today, I just cringe!!! Going to the big city and not knowing what was there for me! Oh dear. Hamilton was a smaller city. And the family that I worked for there was the man who owned Allen Candy.

Q. How did you get that job?

A. Well I met this man in Halifax, he is here now. He's with me now. And it was through his mother and I use to go over to his Grandmother's and I met his mother and she told me this lady wanted somebody to work. So I thought, oh well, there's a chance to go up there. So I said all right. So I told the lady that I'd be leaving to go to Ontario. So I went up there and worked.

Q. And as a domestic as well?

A. Yes. I never went into working – I went in 1979, I started working in a nursing home in Saint John. I worked there for about ten (10) years and my legs went bad and I had to give it up. And, oh, I just loved it. When I first started to work, I'm jumping from one thing to another, I got \$1.00 a day. There was people got less than that. But \$1.00, and that would be \$7.00 a week or \$6.00 a week if you had your day and come home, you didn't make much. And then I worked as a domestic in Saint John for awhile too. And I only got \$27.00 a week. It wasn't much. But when I look back to day, I use to make it stretch. I made it stretch and I always had to make my money stretch. And then when I went in the nursing home, I was rich. I was making a whole lot of money. It seemed that way anyway. I was making a lot more than I was use to having.

Q. How much, when you were making \$1.00 a day, how much of that could you save if any?

A. Time you give your mother \$5.00, you didn't have nothing left. And the family allowance when it would come, this month I would put it on altogether and then next month I'd put it all together. You only got \$6.00, and when they got older maybe you got \$7.00 then you got \$8.00. Today they get \$300.00, they get three digits! And that money use to have to stretch. Oh, I use to try to sew but, then, I do sew now. But then I'd make something for them.

Q. Would you sew for other people?

A. Then I didn't. But I do now. Later years I did when I was in Saint John I did a lot of sewing for people. I enjoyed it. So a little bit of that too. I sewed and I knit. People would want something knit and I'd make those pop top knits with the fingers out. I did a lot of those for people. Different things that I have made and people would see it and they would want it. But it takes all the fun out of it!

Q. So did Philip's father help you at all with his support?

A. No. Father didn't help me.

Q. What was the community's attitude towards a young woman then who got pregnant?

A. Oh, it wasn't very nice. The community sort of looked down on you. And you felt that you were, I don't know I felt that I was, until I got married and my husband said, you're not the only one. They did the same as you did. Just that they've got nothing to show for it. And it helped me to live, I guess. I love my children very much. It helped me to live with myself and my children. I love them but there was that thing, you know. That people were looking down over their nose at you.

Q. A lot of women that we have talked to have said you know, young women might just as well have gone and walked off the end of the wharf.

A. Life was too important for me to do that. I was bigger than the problem. I could go to work and do the things that I had to do and not let those things bother me. Maybe I was stronger in here than a lot of women would be today. But we didn't push out babies over down the river. You know, put them in a car and push them away or do away with them. We didn't do that. You got pregnant, you accepted it, as hard as it was, and you knew you were going to get balled out. What's the good. It was done then.

Q. When you were a little girl, how important was religion in your family?

A. Very important. We went to church in the morning, Sunday school and church. You come home and ate your dinner. Then there was church – over here at the Anglican church, we use to go there just to get rid of work. We went to church up here and Sunday school. Anything was going on, we went. Then at night after supper we went to church, back at the Baptist church again. So we went to church three times a day. Even though mother would always be late. And we'd walk in the church late. My sister would have this hat on and the back streamers would be here, oh dear!

Q. And tell me on tape just about the penny that you would give.

A. Well, there were five of us. And we went to church and my parents would give us each a penny. And we'd put that penny on the plate. That was our church money. And you had to sit there and be quite, and if you dropped that penny, you'd get the elbow. You just be quiet. You keep that penny and put that on the plate. Now, one time one of the boys saved his penny to buy candy. That was a no-no.

Q. Stealing from the Lord!

A. That's the way they put it. And we didn't have dimes and nickles. Now if you got a nickle, you were rich! And an uncle use to give us, Uncle Ollie, the man down Gates Lane, Christmas he'd put us all on his knee and tell us a story about Santa and he'd give us a nickle. And we though we had a lot of money. And Christmas shopping – you saved up. Dad would give us seventy-five (75) cents and we'd take that .75cents and shop for him and Mom and the brothers and sisters. They'd get a cake of soap, a face cloth and that old perfume, that old stinking stuff, we'd give something perfume. Always a little something. It didn't cost no more than 10 cents for a bar of soap. And a face cloth, that was a big gift. And my Father never gave us gifts at Christmas. He didn't have the money to buy gifts. But he must have given Mother money to shop. But when you get a doll, you'd look in the book and you'd want certain things. You'd get a doll, a set of dishes, and maybe a game or embroidery and that would be your Christmas, and a big bag of candy with an orange in it. And that would be Christmas. I always wanted a watch but I never got that watch until I left home.

Q. Too big a gift, I suppose.

A. Yeh, it was too big and they couldn't afford it, and I got a play watch one time and I said, oh, that don't go.

Q. When you say 'look in the book,' what book would that be?

A. Catalogue. Eaton's Catalogue, we always had the Eaton's catalogue. And we never had outdoor plumbing, that Eaton catalogue use to be out there too. You didn't have toilet tissue. You probably heard that! No we didn't have toilet tissue. That Eaton catalogue did a lot of things. You'd be cold and you'd sit with your feet on the catalogue in the oven. It would warm your feet. And use to have chill blains. Oh, my feet in the winter would be so sore. I couldn't lift them off the floor they'd ache so bad.

Q. What caused that?

A. The cold. The floors was cold, it was just the wood stove. And you didn't have warm heavy boots to put on your feet and this time of year if my feet gets cold it would be the same thing. I would be the same. I have to make sure my feet are warm.

Q. Is it like a kind of rheumatism or arthritis or something?

A. No, well, it was an awful throb. You know when your fingers are cold or your hands are cold, and you went home crying. That's how your feet would get. And you couldn't pick your feet up, they'd be so sore.

Q. So when did you meet your husband?

A. Fred. I met Fred in 1968, expo was 69 right?

Q. 1967.

A. Well, I met Fred in 1966 in October. We were at a wedding. And I thought, oh, there's a man for me. So this man set up a blind date and we met and we went to movies every night practically. And we went together for 18 years before we married. We were married 16, and he died two years ago. And we travelled, we went to Expo, we went to Toronto to the exhibition, we went to Europe, we travelled all around New Brunswick, we drove all around the province. We did a lot of things together. We lived in Saint John in the old homestead.

Q. Was it in Saint John that the wedding was that you...

A. In the old homestead. Yes, we lived in the homestead.

Q. What do you remember about Fred that first attracted you to him?

A. He looked very sad and unhappy and that's when I thought, oh, he was sitting beside me, I said oh, there's a man for me. And he was the happiest man in the world I guess after he married me.

Q. Were you pretty close in age?

A. Oh, no. I was only 30 and he was 48 or 49. Oh, there was a big difference in our ages. 18 years. But that didn't mean anything. We were happy together. We did all the things in life that I wanted to do like go to symphonies and I can't explain it all. It was all the things that I ever wanted to do in life. And I say, if anybody asks me, I grew up with him. Because he helped me with a lot of things that I wanted to do but I didn't have anybody to go with me to do them. And like with his Union meetings I learned things about the unions, and I learned things about different things like Amnesty International, Human rights and all those things that I wouldn't have known anything about.

Q. What did Fred do for a living?

A. He worked the winter port. Yeh, the winter port in Saint John. Boats.

Q. As a stevadore?

A. Freight handler. Loading boats and that sort of thing. Flour, potatoes, and all that. Then he became a checker. They called them a checker.

Q. They still do.

A. They still do, but when he retired in '83 it changed. They didn't have the men they use to have. He worked there 43 years and those men worked hard. They worked in asbestos, they worked in everything and a lot of them died from it. And as the men retired they didn't replace. They downed to maybe 2 or 3 gangs. I don't know how many is in the gangs.

Q. Was Fred born in Saint John?

A. Yes, on Duke Street.

Q. Why did you and Fred wait so long to get married?

A. I was waiting for my children to grow up. And then he had children. And I don't know. To me, I wanted my children to be grown up so he wouldn't have the responsibility of bringing them up.

Q. How many children did you have, Eugena?

A. I have four. I have four children. Two girls and two boys.

Q. And where do they live now?

A. Eugene lives in Stanley, New Brunswick. Tina, the youngest one, she lives in Ontario, and Karen lives out on the West Coast and Phillip is out west.

Q. So they are almost all far away.

A. Oh, they're all far away, my grandchildren are all far away from me.

Q. But you and Fred were together 16 and 18 years, you were together 30 something years.

A. Thirty some years we lived together. And my heart broke when he died, because he went so fast. He was sitting right there in that chair and he said he was having trouble with his breathing. It was in the summer, we come home in July, we were late coming. And he said, I'm having trouble with my breathing. I was out in the kitchen. And I said, what? And I come in, and he said, I'm having trouble with my breathing. He was getting ready to do his blood sugar – he was diabetic. And I dialed my sister's number. He said, not your sister's number. Dial 911. So I dialed 911, and the ambulance come and he walked out the door, but I still say maybe I shouldn't say it. If they had put that tube down there, he still would have been alive. Because the fluid built up in his chest. But it come right up here. Something's wrong, you know. And he went into congestive heart failure.

Q. How old was he when he died?

A. 81.

Q. And that was when, again?

A. 1999, July 99. He hasn't been gone that long. There is a picture right there. That's Fred.

Q. Very nice, very nice. That must be a fairly recent picture, is it? Nice looking man.

A. Handsome.

Q. When you say you come home for the summer.....

A. We came home like in July,

Q. Every year?

A. Every year, until September and we'd go back after Labour Day because we were bowlers and we had our commitments back there, things that we were involved in. So this one year, the doctor had been doing – he said survey on him. Because he had had cancer in 1990/91. And he come through that, and they were running all these tests because he hadn't been feeling well, so he said I'll tell you when we can go home. So we came home on the 15th or the 16th. He didn't last a week. He was gone the next week. And it was hot, really really hot. And he'd been out there puttering in the garden and coming home he was feeling better than he had in quite a few years. After the radiation and I said to him. And I use to check his feet and watch his legs, because they use to swell. And I said, your feet and legs are not swollen tonight. But I didn't know it had gone up there. So, he said no. Well, why I was checking the foot then, because the doctor had cut his toenail and he nicked his foot here, so I had been treating it and it healed in that time I had been treating it. So he got up that morning, we had an outdoor house, toilet, we didn't have indoor plumbing then, so he went out and went down the hill, come up and put the garbage out, and like I said he come back and set in that chair and said I'm having trouble with my breathing. And we were almost there, eight minutes from the hospital.....

Q. From Digby?

A. Yeh. And he just went back like that and he was gone.

Q. And you were with him.

A. They didn't want me to go in the ambulance, but I went and I was there with him.

Q. When you weren't here in the summer, was the house just empty?

A. Yeh. Closed the house. This was our summer home we come home to. We did that from, well the Aunt died in the '80's and after we got married. He didn't come the first couple of years, he didn't like it, but then he said we're going to go home and spend the summer in Nova Scotia and he really liked it here.

Q. But he didn't have any relatives in this community at all?

A. Not in this community. He has a brother Delbert lives in Halifax. Delbert is in Halifax and his family.



Q. Now I'm going to go back again, you mentioned when you were little and your Dad would give you seventy-five (75) cents to buy your Christmas presents, where would you go to buy your Christmas presents?

A. We use to call it the Royal Store. I don't know what it was called, but we would go down there and things was like Steadmans. It was quite cheap. And that's where we would do our shopping.

Q. Where was that?

A. Weymouth. Down in Weymouth, we'd go down there and we'd buy our face cloths, and soap, and perfume and wrapping paper. We used tissue paper, we didn't have the fancy paper they have today. We used tissue paper, the green and the red and the white, and we wrapped our gifts in that.

Q. And would there be a special meal at Christmastime?

A. Yes, turkey, we'd have turkey, carrots, beets, pickles, mom would make a dressing, and she would make a mince pie. She'd make her own mincemeat. Everything was homemade. And cranberries and that would be our big Christmas dinner. But one Christmas, well there seemed to be so many of us, you know, with the two families. The table broke down. All the dishes went crashing to the floor. And then one Christmas again she had sent all the chrome chairs to be covered. We ate dinner on pop boxes! We didn't have chairs to sit on so we had to sit on these pop boxes. We were happy.

Q. How big a house did your parents have, the one that is no longer there?

A. Well, it was two stories. But that house at one time, the church hall use to be upstairs. And when it was just the small family, we just lived on one floor. But then as the family got bigger, they opened up up there.

Q. And who would you have shared your bedroom with?

A. My bedroom was a room with myself and my sister. We shared our room together. There was three bedrooms downstairs. There was Mother and Dad's bedroom, then a bedroom for my sister and I and the boys bedroom, the two boys shared their room. Then as it got bigger, they had to open up and go up that way. But they had bunk beds so you could put two sets of bunk beds. The bedrooms was big enough for two sets of bunk beds.

Q. How often would you get into Weymouth?

A. Well, once a week on Saturday. You didn't go by car, you went by horsecart.

Q. Whose horses?

A. Dads horse. Use to have oxen when I was a kid.

Q. I suppose he'd use those in the woods.

A. Yeh. He used to use oxen but then later years, after he come out of the army, he got a horse. Betty was the first horse.

Q. What pets do you remember having?

A. We always had a cat when I was a little girl. I remember a big gray cat and the dog came and she went over my foot, and she scratched me. Left a big cut in my foot. And we never had a dog until after Dad come out of the army. Then after that there was all kinds of dogs.

Q. When your Dad was in the army, did he live away from you then for quite awhile?

A. Yes, he was in Debert. He went to Yarmouth for awhile, then he was stationed in Debert. I think he was in Halifax for awhile too.

Q. Was this during the war?

A. Yes. He had been in Debert during the war.

Q. So you would be pretty young then, seven, eight, nine years old then.

A. Oh yeh. I was just small. I remember more than my brothers and sisters.

Q. Paying more attention, maybe?

A. Well, I lost my Mum, and I suppose I paid attention more, being older. And there wasn't nothing else to take up this space, so there was little things that I paid attention to.

Q. When you were a child what kinds of things would you do for fun?

A. I use to make a playhouse out of broken dishes.

Q. Broken dishes?

A. We set up a board and we'd set up the broken dishes, make mudcakes and things like that.

Q. Who would you play with?

A. Me and my sister and we'd swing on the swing, something like that. And we all had dolls, and I had a doll carriage and a set of dishes and we always had games, Chinese checkers and checkers, snakes and ladders. Those are the games that come in my mind that we played with a lot. And Mother read bedtime stories to us. But I don't know what she used for words, but she read to us.

Q. What do you mean?

A. She didn't have her education and I often wonder today what she used for words but we enjoyed listening.

Q. Were your grandparents living in this community?

A. My grandfather died – I was born in January and he died in October. I didn't have any grandparents.

Q. That was your Mother's father died?

A. My mother's father.

Q. And your father's parents weren't around?

A. No.

Q. I was just wondering how much you would see your extended family.

A. Didn't have any extended family. The closest family to us as children would have been Olive Langford. As you go down the road, you go down the hill and up the hill, when you go across that level she is on this side. I think its 903.

Q. Is she still alive?

A. Oh yes. She is only 71 or 72. She would comb my hair and we use to stay over there when Dad went to town.

Q. She would be like a cousin, probably.

A. She is a cousin, yes, we both had the same grandparents.

Q. Langford, I think of course of Sam. Was he recognized as the boxer when you were children growing up?

A. Heard the name. His niece lives just down the road – Bernice Beals her name is now. She lives just down the road. We knew of the name because of the brothers – Walter Langford and Amos Langford.

Q. What about them, I don't know about them?

A. Oh yes, you'd have to go and talk to Bernice. She could tell you about them.

Q. What are they well known for, Walter and Amos?

A. Well, Mr. Walter Langford was a deacon in the Church but I don't know what Mr. Amos Langford was noted for.

Q. Were they related to Mr. Sam Langford?

A. Brothers.

Q. Now, Sam Langford has become relatively famous in recent years, but when you were a little girl was he famous?

A. No. We knew that he was a boxer. The Boston Terror they use to call him. That's all we knew. But then as years has gone on, he has become more known to the community. And he lived in the little yellow house, as I told you 903 and this little yellow house down there and that's where he lived.

Q. Is the house still there?

A. The house is still there. Probably a Heritage Property now. They probably won't let it be sold. Cause people come to see it from Boston. And this church over here is the only black Anglican church in Canada.

Q. Is it?

A. Yes, I think that's the way it goes. Yes, it's Anglican.

Q. What kind of things have I not asked you about that are important in your life, Eugena.

A. Nothing I can think of. Although I know it isn't like it is today when I'm sitting here just like this and this is winter. I'd have been all bundled up like Jobs turkey because it would be so cold in the house and you had a wood stove, you had a stove in your diningroom and a stove in your kitchen and you tried to keep warm. And when I look back today you scrubbed your clothes on a scrub board, and you tried to hang clothes out on a day like today and they'd be stiff as boards. And you just – today we just take all this for granted.

Q. We ignore our climate totally.

A. We do. And you didn't have indoor plumbing, you went down the hill or somewhere to your outdoor plumbing. And you carried your water and you'd get up in the morning and there'd be ice on that bucket of water.

Q. In the house?

A. In the house, it was cold! And a lot of people on this road will tell you that. But as far as food and eating, we had lots to eat.

Q. Would your family be kind of on the same level as all the other families in the community or were there some people that were more well off and some people less well off?

A. Well, maybe we thought that. But like there was one man, he had a farm and he did have, but I think everybody struggled for what they had. They worked hard to keep the family going. There may have been ones with a little more money than like we had, or others had. Maybe we had more than some of them had where we had our hens and we had our own cow. We had our own milk and our own butter. That was another thing we had.

Q. Was there a surplus for you to sell in terms of milk and cream?

A. Yes. Milk. And the creamery, MacKenzie's Creamery I think it was. We use to do the cream, and they would leave a can and then they'd pick it up and then when he came the next week he'd leave another can. So we use to sell the cream for the butter.

Q. And how about eggs? Were there a surplus of eggs to sell?

A. Well, we didn't have surplus with a big family, we used the eggs all up. Like I said, she put them in salt and put them down and got ready for this time of year. We didn't eat a lot of eggs. We ate a lot of dry fish and potatoes and pork scraps, and mackerel, herring and things like that during the week. Now Sunday, that was a great meal. You had your meat. You didn't eat a lot of meat. So you'd have a stew, or maybe you'd have a chicken stew or a beef stew during the week, but Sunday you'd have a roast of pork. You ate a lot of pork. Or you'd have a roast of beef. Never had too much lamb but you had mutton. It tasted awful.

Q. It wasn't lamb, was it?

A. No, it wasn't lamb – it was mutton! It tasted like hair! Like something burned.

Q. Some people over on this shore have told me they remember fishermen coming from the Neck and Islands and they would barter their vegetables for the fish.

A. I remember the grocery man coming, with the truck and all the groceries in it. And you would get your groceries from the grocery truck if you couldn't get down to the village. He'd have your baking powder and stuff like that. All of that would be in there.

Q. And where would he travel from?

A. I don't know where he came from. But I remember him coming. That was fascinating to see that truck with all that stuff in there.

Q. On thing I didn't ask you was – when you were growing up, you did tell me about the treatment you got for TB, but were there other home remedies that you remember?

A. Goose grease molasses.

Q. For what?

A. I guess that was winter tonic. If you had a cold, I think it was goose grease molasses they give you. If you had the croup. And then there was – somehow they use to put turpentine and sugar and give you that for something too. I can't remember all those – if you had pneumonia, they used onion poultice on you or a mustard poultice. Those were things they used. They were suppose to be the cures.

Q. What was the relationship between blacks and whites in your day growing up, say people in Weymouth and people in Weymouth Falls. Was there a line there?

A. Yes. Black people didn't work in the stores like they do today. You could work as a domestic but you didn't work in the grocery store or work in a variety store, a Steadmans I call it. You could go in and maybe clean the bottles off in the liquor store and that type of thing, but clerking, no.

Q. Do you remember how you felt about that?

A. No I wasn't here long enough to think about that, but I think maybe my brothers younger than me and then the other children coming along probably gave that a little more thought of why they couldn't do the same as everybody else. We had our own separate school when I was coming up. And when you went to high school you had to go in the white community to go to school. And there are a few of our girls that did go to high school down there.

Q. When you were going to school here in Weymouth Falls was your teacher a black teacher?

A. Yes. When I went to school I had all black teachers and I had all women, no men.

Q. How did you look at them as role models?

A. Well there was one teacher I looked at as a role model. It was Irma Jarvis, and she was the one – she got sick and died. She was a community worker same as my Mom. I didn't know it as a role model at that time.

Q. Just someone you admired, probably.

A. Yes, I did. I admired her. And just as you said, it was a role model for me.

Q. Do you remember people having particular superstitions?

A. Yes, all kinds of them.

Q. Like what?

A. Well, you don't sweep the floor after dark. And something about onion peelings and if you dropped a knife or a fork, one was a man, one was a woman or there was a stranger coming. And you didn't put a hat on a baby's head because they would cut their teeth hard. There was all kinds of superstitions.

Q. What would happen if you swept the floor after dark, supposedly?

A. Oh, I don't know. Someone got sick.

Q. And you would not put a hat on a baby's head?

A. Cause baby cut teeth hard! It would be difficult for them to cut their teeth.

Q. There must have been a lot of cold little babies!

A. Well, you don't put a big hat on a little baby's head. And if you broke a mirror it was seven years bad luck. There's a lot of them I can't remember now.

Q. And do you remember any ghost stories from this community at all?

A. Oh, Post Hollow. They would say there was ghosts down there. I never seen anything or heard anything, but everybody was scared to go through Post Hollow. There weren't any houses down there from where the school is now right down till you got to the top of the hill. There was nothing there.

Q. On this main road here?

A. Yeh, there never were electric lights out there. It was dark. And we had lamps in the house. It was very very dark. So they probably saw things that wasn't there.

Q. So you don't remember a particular story about something happening there?

A. Well, step-mother told me that she didn't go to school one day and something went across the road with big chains dangling from it. It was a person I guess dressed up.

Q. Did people celebrate Halloween in anyway when you were growing up?

A. Oh no. It was too bad. They use to bar you in the house. People use to have to fix their picket fences, the bars that went in so people wouldn't take them out and throw them away. They'd upset your ox cart, your horse cart, they use to do all kinds of damage. And going out trick or treating never started until years later after I left home.

Q. So they had the tricks but not the treats when you were home.

A. No, they never did the treats.

Q. Do you remember any – do you remember being aware of the Poor House in Marshalltown.

A. Yes I do.

Q. What do you remember?

A. Well that's where my stepmom went. They put them there to live there. And she lived there and her mother lived there and they were very cruel to them. They were very cruel to Grammie. She said they hit her over the head with a cane and broke her head open.

Q. How old would your stepmother have been when she was living there?

A. Oh, she must have been in her twenties. She was a young woman. That's where she went. It was a big family and I guess the family died and that's where they put them, in the County Home.

Q. The whole family?

A. Yeh.

Q. Did she tell you about what they would do while they were there? I assume they had to work.

A. Oh yes. They had to do chores. She told me they had to do chores.

Q. And how did she come to leave?

A. Someone told Dad about her. That's where she came from. Grammie came first – later we called Grammie.

Q. Her mother?

A. Yes. So she came first. And I don't know how long she was with us, seems like she was with us for awhile. And then they told Dad about this lady so he went to the county home and brought her out and then he married her.

Q. He rescued her.

A. Yeh. Cause she was 66 when she died. And he was 21, so I am trying to think how old, she was 66 when she died, and Dad, when he died a couple years later, he was 75, so there was a difference in their ages. Twelve or thirteen years, something like that. I don't know how old she would have been when she went there in 1945. She couldn't have been any older than 27 or 28. Cause her oldest, Marion would be 62. Her oldest would be 62.



Q. Your half sister.

A. Yeh.

Q. Do any of your half sisters or brothers live nearby?

A. Oh yes. Sharon. Marion was my stepsister. But Sharon and Ada, Ada lives in Saint John, Sharon lives down the lane, Ray, he is a social worker, he lives in Halifax. And Ike, he's out in B.C. Those are the ones that are living. Four or five have died from the second family.

Q. Did they die at childbirth?

A. Yeh, Buddy was first – he had scarletina. Dad came home from the army and the baby was on the bed, and he crawled in the bed and whatever he had he brought it home to the baby. Then, Elaine, she died at childbirth. She was a blue baby. The two bloods didn't work. And Stewart died at birth – he was stillborn. And then my stepsister was a twin.

Q. It must be hard, as a young person, to understand that, I suppose.

A. Well, I remember when Buddy died. I think he was born in 1940, maybe, so they must have gotten married in '38 or '39, something like that. And, had to be '45.

Q. When was the war over?

A. 1939-1945. I remember when the war was on. '36, '37, '38, '39. Mother died in '38. I was only two years old. I keep saying I am five, But you know, I believe something that important, a three year old could remember that. So he got married, I must have been five when he remarried again. That must have been it. So, Mother died in '38, so he must have married this lady in '42, '43, something like that. I can tell when I find pictures and look at the pictures. See how old Buddy was. Cause he would be the one they had after they got married. And then came my brother Ike, Ike's 55, so Buddy would be older.

Q. And what do you remember – you started to say you remember when he died.

A. Yeh, I remember when he died. I use to hold him and play with him. He was only maybe four months old, something like that. And we cried. And then they didn't have the little coffins for them then. They made a wooden box and covered it with a sheet and this is what they laid the baby out in and he was laid out in the house. And I'd go and look at him hoping that he would wake up.

Q. Where is the cemetery in this community?

A. Mount Beulah. When you go down the road, it's on your right. You go down that hill.

Q. O.k. I did see a road, a sign on it. Mount Beulah. This one over here is the Anglican. So there is two. Well, this has been very interesting. Is there anything now you can think that I haven't asked you?

A. I can't remember anything now.

Q. The man you're with now, you said you met him as a young person?

A. Oh yes, I was only maybe 20. There's his picture up there.

Q. And what's his name?

A. Eugene. That's my son's father, the one in New Brunswick.

Q. Things come full circle, eh?

A. Yes, somehow we got back together again. I think it was through my son. His wife died, and my husband is dead, and here we are back together again.

Q. Nice for the two of you.

