

Frances Adams

Interveiwed by Sue Amero, Nov. 15, 2000



O.K. I'm just going to start with the vital statistics actually.

Q. What is your full name?

A. Frances Ruby Stronach. Adams now.

Q. O.K. Could you just spell the Stronach, please.

A. S-t-r-o-n-a-c-h.

Q. O.K. And who were your parents?

A. Harry Foyle Stronach and he married Mary Anthony.....Mary Celeste Anthony, of Bridgetown. They were both from Bridgetown or Clarence West area.

Q. O.K. And do...can you spell his middle name please.

A. F-o-y-l-e.

Q. Thank you.

And your mother's maiden name?

A. Anthony.

Q. And who were your grandparents?

A. Well, one was William Nelson Stronach and his wife Alena ah.....I don't even know her last name.

Q. That's O.K.

A. She was grampa Stronach's wife anyway. And then my other grandparents, on my mother's side, were a.....Willaby Anthony and he married Lavinya Bent.

Q. O.K. And when were you born?

A. August 12, 1927.

Q. And where were you born?

A. Bridgetown, Nova Scotia.

Q. O.K. And how large was your family?

A. I'm the only one.

Q. And what did your father do for a living?

A. My father, before he married, was a World War Veteran, from the First World War. When he came back, he had shrapnel wounds and gas wounds. And the only thing he could do was work outside. So he was an orchardist and he became a foreman to an apple grower.

Q. O.K.

A. And he had to work outside all the time. Ah...and then, these shrapnel wounds that he had, would break in the skin, every once in a while, and they'd have to lance them, they come up like boils, and take a piece of metal out.

Q. Oh gosh.

A. In...in different areas. And eventually, I think it was the gas wounds that he had, that killed him. But that was many years later.

Q. O.K. What do you remember about your mother's work day.

A. Oh...she never worked outside the home. She was always home to look after me. Ah...one day, yeah she did, my father was short in the packing house of a...packers, to pack apples. And she begged and pleaded, could she go. He didn't want her to, but he said alright. He let her go. He said we'll see how this works out. And she hired a house keeper for me. And a...she came home at noon to see how things were going. And I was bawlin' my head off. And I said "She spanked...she spanked Babe behind the door. She spanked Babe behind the

door." And I apparently showed the door that I was spanked behind. So she looked at my backside and I was all black and blue. And my father said to the housekeeper "Have you had your dinner?" He said.....she said "Yes." He said "You have one more thing to do. You have to go upstairs and pack your suitcase because I am taking you home."

Q. Very good.

A. So that ended that that little bit.

Q. Yeah.

A. And she never got to work again.

Q. And you didn't want a babysitter again.

A. No, I never did.

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

A. Well.....I had to walk across the railway bridge and usually I got cinders in my eyes. And the doctor that usually tended me, when I got the cinders in the eyes, was one that came from school. So, the bus didn't pick me up. There was no bus in that area. But he said "I'm gonna solve that." Because he went to work the same time that I went to school. And he said "I'll take you to school, at least across the bridge." Sometimes he delivered he delivered me to school and sometimes he just took me across the bridge. "Now" he said "I won't have to tend your eyes today, probably." (laughter)

Q. Isn't that amazing, though.

A. Yes it was.

Q. So what kinds of things did you have to memor.....memorize in school?

A. Memorize.....no, I don't know. We had The Lord's Prayer, to start off the school day. And a.....A Salute to the American Flag and then a....not especially in school. But I belonged to C.G.I.T. (Canadian Girls in Training) Girls Scouts a....4-H, ah.....When I belonged to the 4-H, my mother was one of the teachers. Not necessary of my group all the time.

Q. Umhmm.

A. Ah.....when I belonged to Girl Scouts, I wasn't so very old. I had just come out of Brownies. And one time I cut my mother's tablecloth, the lace one, across the end. Then I knew I had done wrong. I put a pile of magazines, one or two at a time, rate across the split. Well, this didn't look attractive to my mother, so she went and picked it up and found the tablecloth was cut.

Q. Ah ha.

A. By that time, I had gone to spend the weekend with my grandparents, on her side. And she phoned and said that the money I saved for my Girl Scout uniform, I was not to spend for that, that I was to buy her a new tablecloth. So, I did that and my grandparents bought me the uniform. And was my father ever annoyed when I got home, that they had done that, because he figured that was no lesson to me.

Q. So what kinds of things would you have done in the 4-H club?

A. well, there was cooking and I was interested in animals. Oh, I just always loved animals. And a....we had exhibits. And I got badges on my exhibits. My mother was a good cooker and I presume that probably she helped me, with some of these things I cooked, or at least taught me to cook and.....I got prizes for it and earned badges. And in Girl Scouts I earned badges. And I guess I still got some of them today.

Q. Well, that's good.

How were you disciplined in school?

A. Well.....

Q. If some one in the classroom acted up, how would that person be disciplined?

A. Well.....I don't know. For one thing, I lived in an area where there were no children to play with. I guess I was interested in what other children wore, what other children did and things like that. So, my grades, to begin with, weren't very good. Ah...I was paying attention to the other child and probably not my studies. But any way, a....if you were gonna fail in school, you got three pick slips. And when I came home with the first one, my father said "If you ever bring

another one home," he said "you are gonna get spanked. You are gonna a....pay for this, in some way or another and don't bring another one home." So I did. I brought the second one home. But I hid it. Which was even worse. So, when they found out, then the teacher, I guess because the slip didn't come back signed or something like this, called my mother and wanted to know where that slip was. And she didn't know anything about it. Well....I...I had to confess to the fact that I had hidden it. But...he said "Don't let that happen again." So I did. I...he....I really got beaten for that. And....my mother didn't say anything, to me. But she must have told my father, because the first time I walked past the chair, and this was a rockin' chair, he grabbed me by the seat of the pants and through me up over his lap and wanged me. And the rockin' chair was rockin' and all I could do, was put my arm under my head, to save my teeth, from getting' banged against the chair. And he said "Now, I don't think you'll ever do that again. And should you disbehave in any way, again, I'll break the yard stick over your back side, the next time." So, I can't remember just exactly what I did. I did something wrong in later years, not too long from that time, and I guess he knew that I was doing wrong, and he cracked the yard stick, my mother said, out in the wood shed. But when he used it on me, he did, he broke it over my back side, (laughter) the rest of the way.

Q. Amazing.

A. Which wasn't too firm....firm because it was already had quite a big crack in it you know.

Q. What were your daily chores?

A. Oh...I had to clean my room, I had to make my bed, I had to help do dishes. On Saturday I had to dust and I belonged to a....C.G.I.T. And I had gone to that one night and I had a note on my door a...."Do not disturb." And this note was put there Friday night and my father found it on Saturday morning. And so he said to me a....."Get up and help your mother do the dusting." I said I dusted yesterday. He said "Today's dust is no better than yesterday's dust. Get up and help your mother." So I had to get up and help my mother. And I...I was really made to do things. And mom told me in later years, probably my father was too strict, but just for my own benefit.

Q. O.K.

A. Really.

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

A. Well...I collected stamps. I still have a stamp collection that's going on even today. Before I knew what a stamp was all about, there was a very elderly man that lived across the road from us. And he said "I think you should be a stamp collector." Well, that didn't mean much to me. But he had a room full and he designed albums of stamps and started them. I would go over on Saturday afternoon and he would say put such and such here, and tell me how to put it. It was quite a few years. Oh...three or four years probably, before he sent these albums home with me. But he worked on them, between times. I know he did because I didn't do that much on Saturday when I was with him. But I...I knew how to do it. I understood it. And he gave me these four different loose leaf ones to work in. Well, I continued on and I've started my own since that. That case over there is just absolutely full of stamp albums and a....things like that. And I had a girlfriend. She collected stamps and we traded. And I belonged to stamp clubs. And outside of that a...I don't know. In the summer we used to go to my grandfather's. I lived in the states then. I used to come to my grandfather's, here in Nova Scotia. And he was on a farm. And my brother, my father's brother, my uncle, and his family of three children, came. And they came to the farm, where my grandfather was. So, my cousin, that was about my own age, and I, would go out in the barn, and we'd guard the horses. And we'd ride the horses. And we'd have a great time playing with the cats and the dogs and things that were around there. And....

Q. Amazing. You were really lucky.

A. Oh yes I was.

Q. O.K. What was your favorite holiday when you were growing up?

A. Oh...I would almost say Christmas.

Q. Can you tell me about it.

A. Christmas? Ah...Christmas Eve, I'd go to my grandparents. The same ones I'm talking about now, on my mother's side. Ah....we'd stop some place and have supper. Then we'd go to their house. And, after I had gone to bed, mostly when I was young, they'd decorate the Christmas Tree. And...I guess my mother and aunt went to church, way late at night, then. But ah...in the morning, after

my breakfast and only after my breakfast, was I allowed to go see the Christmas Tree and whatever presents might have been there for me. And then.....oh.....I think Thanksgiving was another, of my holidays, that I thought a lot of. Because American Thanksgiving is very close to Christmas. And they had a Santa Sun Parade. So they used to take me to the Santa Sun Parade, sponsored by Jordan Marsh, the big store. And so I could see this parade, my father put me up on his shoulders, to see above the crowd. So I could see all the parade. And a....I know this was always right near Thanksgiving time, that this happened. And that was something I looked forward too.

Q. What favorite pets do you remember?

A. Well.....I don't know. I don't know that I had any favorite because I loved cats. Even after I came here, I had a cat that lived to be sixteen years old and eight months. I've got a dog now. She's going on twelve. And, all of my life I've had a dog. And I know of neighbors that have had a dog and they weren't treated too well. And that dog would come to me and not want to go back to them. After a while the person would say "I can't keep my dog because it doesn't want to stay here. It wants to live with you. Will you take it?" I said "Yeah, sure, I'll take it." And.....

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

A. Catalogue?

Q. The Sear's Catalogue or the Eaton's Catalogue?

A. Yeah. Well that would be the Sears and Roebuck.

Q. Right.

A. I'd....I'd look at it. And probably pick out something I liked. But, I wasn't told that there was a Santa Clause. I wasn't told I was gonna get these things. Ah....there wasn't much emphasize.....emphasis on Santa Clause at all. Not really. Ah....I was given lots of things, just numerous presents but...

Q. Right.

A. Nothing too much from Santa Clause.

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

A. Oh....now I don't remember.

Q. O.K.

A. Ah....if I wanted something, I would ask my mother. Maybe she'd say yes and maybe she'd say no. But when she said no, I would ask my father. "Well, what did your mother say?" She said "No." So, I didn't like those answers. Then, I'd go see her grandparents, which were living up there, in the states, and ah....so....I learnt one of my aunt, uncle, aunt or my grandfather or grandmother would give me, what I had asked for. I would go right down the line 'til I got it. Well, grandpa might say "Ask your grandmother." And grandma might say "No, can't afford it right now." So then I'd ask my aunt. But....it would work different times, different ways. Maybe the first person I asked, there, get what I wanted. Very likely I might.

Q. O.K. What was your religion?

A. Well....I was a Baptist.

Q. O.K.

And what were Sundays like in your household when you were growing up?

A. Well....I had a kitten and one time I picked up a ball of yarn because she had messed it all up. Just to roll it up and straighten it out. And I was a....chastised for that because I wasn't suppose to do things like that on Sunday. And on Sunday, I would have to, maybe, sing hymns or go to church. It was a very definite thing that I went to church. And my parents went to church. However, the people that employed my father, were very wealthy people. And ah....they would stop by, every Sunday, and take me to church. Because, I guess, they got a kick out of having me, so I'm told. And my parents would be in church, in one place, and I'd be with them in another place sitting between them.

Q. O.K. What was your favorite hymn?

A. Oh, I don't know. Let's see. Ah...perhaps "Eternal Father Strong to Save."

Q. O.K. Could you sing me just a little bit of it?

A. No....I don't think.

Q. O.K. What influence did religion have, throughout your life?

A. Well.....I would say it played a very great part. Um....like I say, in June I lost my husband. If I hadn't been a Christian or didn't have the Lord to depend on, I don't know where I'd be. But I figure, when I read the Bible, it says that he'd going to look after me ah...not for bad things but he's got something good planned for my future. And this is what keeps me going I guess.

Q. Good for you. That's a wonderful out look. That's very good.

O.K. How did you keep up with what was going on, in the outside world? How would you get your information?

A. Oh...I don't know. Listen to the radio. There wasn't any T.V. in those days. But....ah....I don't know. Like I say, there was no children in the area. And...I was among adults and I listened to their conversation and quite often we were invited to a wealthy home. That was the home of my father's employer. And they had chauffeurs and maids and things you just wouldn't believe. They had a table and you'd put your foot on the bell under the table, if you wanted the maid for something during the mealtime. Well, there a conversation going on one time, oh, I was rate small, and a....they didn't miss me from the table at all. But I had gone up, walked across the carpet, out into the kitchen and got myself a glass of water. And I guess, maybe the maid might have brought it back but a.....My mother said "Where did you go?" I said "I went to the kitchen for a glass of water. "Well, why did you do that? You were suppose to tell us that you wanted it." Yeah. In a very frank way I said "Well, when I'm home, you told me if I wanted a glass of water to go get it. (laughter)

Q. That's right.

O.K. What things did you grow and raise yourselves? I mean like vegetables or cattle or things like that.

A. Well, we didn't raise cattle but my father had a big vegetable garden. And I remember of picking peas. Ah.....and I'd go down in the garden, and sit on the ground there, right by the peas, and eat peas. And then he'd go to pick his peas. Well, he couldn't understand why the peas weren't as good as they were the day before. 'Til a little while he caught on and I guess maybe after a

while I had left some of the pods on the ground. And also, ah....he was an apple grower and I can remember times when there was many, many ah....ah, half bushels of apples that he'd bring home. Ah, his employer said take anything you want. Bring 'em home. So, he'd bring maybe, two or three kinds. And so I'd have a choice of what I wanted. My mother would have a choice of what to make pies from. And a.....oh, I don't know. We were given large, at Christmas time, large boxes of oranges and grapefruit and things like that. Fresh from the south, with kumquats in them.

Q. O.K. Did you barter for anything? Did you.....did your father trade anything he had for some things?

A. Don't think so.

Q. O.K. And how much of what you needed did you make yourself? Like, did your mom make your clothes or things like that?

A. No, she made our food. She was not a seamstress.

Q. Right.

A. But she would hire, once or twice a year, a woman to come and make clothes, for me.

Q. Oh Yeah.

A. She started out when I was a baby, one time, and made a dress. And I was struttin' around and thought the thing was just beautiful. My father took one look at it, told her she better keep to cookin'. (laughter)

Q. That's funny.

So how did electricity change things?

A. Electricity. I don't....gosh....I don't.....I can't even remember when we got it.

Q. O.K. That's alright.

And do you remember when you got running water?

A. As far as I know I always had it.

Q. O.K.

And what was bath night like?

A. Well.....I guess it was just in the bathtub. It wasn't heated water on a stove, like some people might have had, years ago. Maybe I'm not old, maybe I'm not but.....

Q. That's O.K.

Who was the doctor when you were growing up?

A. Well.....we had two doctors. Very good friends of the family. And they both lived on our road. And they were brothers-in-law. One was Dr. Hopkins and the other was Dr. McLean. And a....Dr. Hopkins told about a woman whose language wasn't too good, that came and brought two little girls and said that she wanted him to fas....fascinate her daughters. He said ah...."I think I'm a little too old for that," he says. "What I think you mean is you want them vaccinated." (laughter)

Q. Oh....that's really funny. Yeah.....that is. That's cute.

O.K. So how far away did the doctors live?

A. Oh....just within a very short distance. Even when my father was sick and dying, one of the doctors, Dr. Hopkins, he came to the house and he'd sit with my father, bring his slippers and just relax and sit there. Do what he could for him.

Q. Who delivered the babies in your community?

A. Well....as a baby, then, I was born in Bridgetown. And a....there was a doctor there. But also my mother was sick, after this, and a Mrs. Mitchie looked after her. And a....Bea Roberts looked after me, when I was small. For a short time.

Q. So they would be like amid-wife?

A. Well Bea Roberts was really an R.N. (Registered Nurse) But she was just on vacation at the time. And a....Mrs. Mitchie, I would say, was probably a mid-wife. I don't know too much about her. Don't even remember her. But I know that she worked there.

Q. O.K.

A. And, many years later, when I came here, ah...no I didn't come here. I was still living in the States then. But I was in nurse's training and I went to training school. And...in those days, you spent the first six weeks in a school to learn to cook, how to look after a patient, how to talk to them, be kind to them and so on before you even went into a hospital. And then, after six weeks, I went into the hospital. And the supervisor there of nurses, was the nurse that looked after me when I was a baby. Now, she knew I was gonna be in that class and she came into the room and before the girls introduced themselves, she looked and said "Right over there in that corner," she says "that's France Stronach, over there." And I said to her "How do you know?" And she said "You're father's looks is all over your face." (laughter)

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

A. Home remedies.

Q. Like, I've heard some stories about mustard poultices.....

A. Yeah, I know what you're talking about, I was.....I was just trying to think. I don't know.....that any of these were ever used.

Q. O.K.

A. I.....I can't.....

Q. O.K. So how did you take care of your teeth?

A. Well...I brushed them, two or three times a day. When I couldn't brush them they were brushed for me two or three times a day. And....a big part of my teeth, I still have.....my own teeth.

O.K. So how often would you see a dentist?

A. Oh.....maybe twice a year.

Q. O.K.

A. Get them clean, checked. I can't remember in the very early years, how often I was there but this was in later years that....

Q. Right.

A. I'm doing this myself, going twice a year getting them cleaned and checked.

Q. O.K. When some one died, what was the wake like?

A. Oh.

Q. You know, we've heard stories about when people die, they put....

A. Stand them in the corner, but...I don't know.

Q. You can't remember that. That's O.K. Really.

Q. O.K. Now I'm going to your teen years, I guess. It's about....it's all about when you were growing up.

Q. How often did you leave...your community?

A. Well, the only time I ever left my community, for good many....great many years, teen years and later were when I would go to spend my time with my grand parents.

Q. O.K.

A. But I was fairly young when I started this and I would say school was gonna close, we'll say June 9th . Can I come to see you June 10th? But September, school was gonna start on the 7th , but I'd like to stay with you 'til about the 6th of September. And that'd be the whole summer I'd want to stay with them. Well, I knew very well that this wasn't gonna be in the city where they lived, my mother's grandparents. That they were gonna travel all over the place and have a good time and go to beaches and hotels and so on. Well, I'd be taken. And my grandfather would be up early and I'd be up early so, he'd take me someplace and get my breakfast for me. And then we'd go down by the water, or go for walks, or um....just things to enjoy ourselves.

O.K. So when you traveled from the States, to here, to visit your grandparents, how did you get here?

A. Well, you see, my grandparents I'm talking about, when I was living in the States, I went to....I went to grandparents up there.

Q. Oh...O.K.

A. And I went by car. I was usually taken and brought back from there. But....when I...visited the grandparents down here, it would be a matter of vacation time. So, I'd be brought down by car and taken back by car. And...I'd be here then with my parents.

Q. O.K. So where did you live in the States?

A. I lived in Massachusetts, I lived in Ayre and Harvard and Groton. All of these about thirty- six miles out of Boston. Probably not more than three or miles apart, these places. Ah....let's see.....Then ah....after my father died, I went to New York and I stayed with my uncle for awhile. And...I lived in the nurse's home and I went to my uncle's very often and I did my laundry there. But the hospital I worked in there, required that every time you go through the gate, you had to open your suitcase. Well mostly what I took out of a ground, in my suitcase, was dirty clothes to do my laundry. But...the fellow would say "What am I gonna do, look at your dirty laundry today?" (laughter)

Q. O.K. What were the roads like, when you were a child.....teenager?

A. Well.....I guess they were good roads.

Q. They were dirt roads or paved roads?

A. Oh, I would say paved roads. I...I can't remember any dirt roads.

Q. O.K.

O.K. What did you expect to do when you grew up?

A. Well....what did I want to be?

Q. Well, I have two questions. I need, what did you expect that you were gonna do and then I wanted to know what did you hope to do?

A. Oh....I don't know. I guess the thing is all one answer. Because I wanted to be a nurse and that's what I was.

Q. Right.

A. I hoped I would be....

Q. O.K.

A. and....it's what I wanted to be all my life and that's what I was. And even after I was married, I did specialing. When I moved here ah....from the States, I worked in Kentville for a while....fourteen years. And then I wanted to come to Digby, and when I came to Digby I wanted to come to the Digby Hospital. They said "I'm sorry, there's absolutely no positions available." So by that time I had a step-father who knew the chief-of-staff at the hospital, and he said and I wanted to go to work there. So Dr. McCleave said "Give me just three days." He said "You'll be there. There's no problem."

After two days he called me. He said "You can go to work in the morning." And ah....I stayed there only a very short time because he wanted somebody to go to the Islands, off Digby Neck here.

Q. Right.

A. And look after Bligh Blackford, the ferry master.

Q. Umhmm.

A. So, he took me out of the hospital and sent me to the Islands. And speaking of un-paved roads, they were working on the roads there, with just one mud hole. And going down....we got stuck and ah...I....the tractor was there to pull us out. And then ah....coming back, that was several months later, the roads was still in very bad condition, in places. And the undertaker, I came back with him, because he knew I was all through and he said I'll take you back. And a....so, he said "You know, I don't remember if you know," he said "But the roads were very bad and that you're gonna get stuck. But," he said "a little tractor will pull us out." Well, sure enough, a little tractor was still there to pull us out comin' back. But, at the time that Bligh Blackford died he sent the family out of the house, because the man was never gonna be taken off the Island. Only buried there. "Now," he said to me "you have a choice. Do you want to leave with the family, or do you want to stay here?" He said "If you want to stay here and help me,

that's perfectly all right." I said "I wanna stay right here." So I stayed there, while they embalmed the old fellow and a....oh I didn't mind that at all. It didn't bother me. And....apparently when you put embalming fluid in or something, they make a gurgle. And the undertaker says to me "He's gonna talk to you rate soon." (laughter)

Q. O.K. What did you say the man's name was that you went down to look after?

A. Blighford....Blackford.

Q. And he was the ferry captain?

A. Cap.....he was captain of the ferry that went from Tiverton to.....

Q. Eat Ferry?

A. Yeah. East Ferry to Tiverton.

Q. O.K. So where did he live? On the Island?

A. Yeah. He lived on the Island and I stayed in his house. But....

Q. And he died from old age?

A. Yes. I don't think he had a disease. I think he just died from old age.

Q. Right. And he was buried on the Island?

A. He was buried on the Island. He died and stayed rate on the Island and was buried on the Island.

Q. Amazing.

O.K. As a teenager, what kinds of things did you do for fun?

A. Teenager. Oh I don't know. For one thing, I went to school with a girl, that came over here in wartime. She was a victim of Polio. And in school, when it came recess time, you had to go out and play. When it came lunchtime, you had to go to the cafeteria. Well this child was an absolute cripple and she couldn't hardly move her arm. So, I was very friendly with her and I was allowed to stay there and have my lunch with her. Ah....spent quite a lot of

time with her. Her name was Rosemary Auvereau. And she was sent here from England, at the time of the war, so she would be kept safe, to her aunt and uncle over here. And then she went to school, that was in the States. She went to school there with me. She was a very good friend of mine. And, for many years we corresponded with each other. I know that Rosemary's gone now because....she wasn't very well, the last time I was talking to her, by letter.

Q. Right. O.K. Did you ever go to the movies, when you were a teenager?

A. Well, once in a while, but not...not very often.

Q. So would you have....would you have had any movie idols? Famous movie stars....

A. Yeah, I know what you're talkin' about. Ah....I don't know. Gene Autry, maybe, if any.

Q. O.K. What kind of music did you like?

A. Oh...Christian music.

Q. Umhmm.

A. Ah....something that probably made you light-hearted. I....certainly wasn't interested in rock music or anything like that. Maybe in those days they didn't even have it. Probably didn't.

Q. O.K. What kind of sports did you enjoy?

A. Well....I was just never sports minded because when these children were out playing sports and so on, I spent a lot of my time with Rosemary and we'd play games and do things that were easy for her.

Q. Right. What do you remember about dating?

A. Oh dear. (laughter) Well.....I was an old girl by the time I did that. Let's see. I didn't date at all until I moved here to a....Nova Scotia, again.

Q. O.K. And when was that? That you moved to Nova Scotia?

A. That was after I finished nurse's training. 'Bout 1948.

Q. O.K. So you dated after you moved to Digby?

A. Yeah.

Q. O.K. O.K.

A. I only just ever dated the one man.

Q. Oh...cool.

A. That's the one I married.

Q. That was my next question to answer.

O.K. How far did you go in school?

A. How far?

Q. Umhmm.

A. Grade twelve.

Q. O.K.

A. Graduated.

Q. And why did you leave school?

Q. Graduated.

A. Yeah.

Q. How old were you when you left school?

A. Sixteen. Maybe closer to seventeen. About sixteen anyway.

Q. And once you left school, what did you do?

You went right into nursing.

A. That's right. I graduated in June and went in in September.

Q. And where did you take your training?

A. In Boston. Ah....for six weeks. And then I was moved from there to the Emerson Hospital in Concord, Mass. Yeah.

Q. How long did it take you to become a nurse?

A. Ah....three years.

Q. O.K. O.K. So how did you meet your husband?

A. Well....when I came here to Digby, I decided that I'd go, perhaps to the Wesleyan Church. I don't know why I decided on the Wesleyan Church. But I did. And ah...oh he was drivin' quite a lot of women home, (laughter) from various places. Like from church to where they lived, rather. And ah....so.....then after a while, it was just me he was driving home. And....he, he dropped all these other old girls. And I guess maybe somebody told him I might make him a good wife or somethin'. I understand they did kinda match maker type of person. And ah....so I married him. But the story he told me after we were married, was that when he was in the services, he was in the Second World War, and the war was almost all over and that two hundred men down here wanted to be captain of the Life Saving Station. They put a requisition in, application, to become a captain of it. None of them got it. My husband, in the armed services, who never put the application in, was transferred from the Department of Defense to the Department of Transportation. Put in his captain of the station and, something he didn't expect. And then when he had to go back to be re-released from the services, he had to take a week off from the station here, to go back, so they could let him out of the service, to go through that performance you go through or whatever it might have been. And...so as a result of that, when the station closed down here, they asked him if he wanted to be transferred. He said no. He guessed not. They gave him a number of places he could go. And I said "Why didn't you take the opportunity?" Well he said to me, "You know, if I had taken that opportunity and gone and something happened to my father, and I had to leave that position, then my pension wouldn't be as great as what I'm doing now." So," he said "I just decided to leave it be." Because his father was a very old gentleman and he lived with us. And he figured that something was gonna happen to his father. He was long in his nineties, then. And a...well....he just

said that he better not....that he just better leave this job and let be. More or less dismissed from it because the station had closed.

Q. So you never ran...he never ran the Life Saving Station, out there? The Lighthouse.

A. No, not the Lighthouse. The Life Saving Station down here.

Q. Oh, I see. Rate down here.

A. Yup.

Q. O.K.

A. He ran it, twenty-three years.

Q. So did you live there?

A. No. We lived right here.

Q. You lived right here and he just worked it.

A. Yeah....he just worked there.

Q. So what kinds of things would he have to do?

A. Well...he did all the office work. But he also had to go out and take the boat over to Saint John, for refit, when they went. And sometimes he had to go out on rescue missions. Not, perhaps, as much as other men, because he had boatmen and things working there. And ah....they had a cook and the cook sometimes had to go out on the boat too. But...there was one cook worked there and he was trying to save money. And he'd have fish and fish and fish for the meal. And he'd have time off. So then whoever was the second cook, which I don't remember his name, ah....would buy chicken or something like that. So, the cook would come back. Well, I see you had chicken last week. Why don't we have it more often. (laughter)

Q. So, did he work that job, was that a nine to five job or was it shift work?

A. Oh no....a shift work. Let's see. He might be on.....five days, pretty well day and night and then he'd have five days off and come home here but sometimes during that time off they'd be enough men, that some of those men would go to their own home, in that five days, maybe an hour or two and then go back. But if there was any emergentcy they'd have to be contacted at home.

Q. Did you ever visit him there, when he was working?

A. I was down some, yes. Yeah. It was an interesting place.

Q. Yeah.

O.K. So how old were you when you got married?

A. Oh, I was almost forty.

Q. Wow.

A. And, I wasn't quite forty. And he said ah...."I just saved you from being an old maid."

Q. So once you were married, where did you live?

A. Right here.

Q. O.K.

A. This is the only house I ever lived in after I married him.

Q. O.K. So how much money did your first home cost, this house?

A. This one?

Q. Umm.

A. My husband bought it for fifteen hundred dollars.

Q. O.K.

A. And it was brand new and built here for a minister. But, before the minister got to move into it, the little church up here in the village, had some kind of a

fight and put him out of it. And, so he sold it for fifteen hundred dollars. It didn't have the porch on the front of it like it has now.

Q. Right. O.K. What year did you start your first job? Your nursing job?

A. Oh....

Q. Just roughly.

A. Probably 1948. '47, '48.

Q. And how old were you then?

A. Seventeen.

Q. O.K. Describe to me a typical work day.

A. Oh.....let's see. I don't know. I'd go in the hospital and there would be a list on the wall, ah...indicating what patients you were to look after. You would find out what section you were going to, what patients would be yours...to look after. Ah...at that time, our uniforms were white, nothing except white. Very stiffly starched with a starched apron over the top of it. Ah...they don't wear such things today. No way. But ah....anyway, are....are...I would work shift work. Oh...and I don't know. I can remember these stiffly starched uniforms because they were most uncomfortable. Between the uniform and the apron you could hardly bend at the waist.

Q. So how dangerous was your work?

A. Well....in later years I can remember when I was here in Digby, that I was required to lift a man that was dead or almost dead and do it alone. And I sprained my chest, I guess, and this was in the winter and there was terrible colds going around and I got it. And , I came down and I was puttering around one morning at breakfast. And I lived on the Shore Road here with my mother. And she said ah..."You're gonna be late for work." I said "I don't think I'm going to work this morning." She said "Do you feel sick or something?" I said "I feel awful." So anyway, I didn't go. And for several days I didn't go. And then they started to call from the hospital, ah...when I was coming back to work. When I was comin' back to work. My mother said "She's sick. She can't go back to work." So she told the doctor, Dr. McCleave. So Dr. McCleave went, she said,

immediately to the telephone, and called the superintendent of nurses and said when Frances Stronach was able to come back to work, she would be back to work and I'll let you know when that time is. Well, that stopped the telephone calls. And I was really sick at that time and the only other time I can remember really being sick was just before I got married. Ah...I was home with a terrible cold and I think this was again because I had lifted somebody that was heavy. And ah.....well Harry used to come and without fail he'd pray for me everyday and...I...I got better.

Q. Well that's good.

So how much was your salary when you started your first job?

A. Oh gee. I don't know. That's something I can't answer because I just don't know.

Q. O.K.

A. If I knew I'd give you an answer.

Q. O.K. What do you remember about the Depression?

A. Well.....Let's see. Ah....going back to salary I can remember this of having, I don't what the pay was. But I can remember having a raise in my pay. But because of income tax and various things being taken out, ah....my gross amount and my check would be more. My take home pay would be less, because more money would go into these other things. Ah....and therefore I wasn't getting as much. About the Depression, ah....all I can remember is that this man, and this was in the States, that was my father's employer, and had this wealthy home, and all the servants and so on, ah....he had lost his money because of the Depression. And he was very depressed because of that. And he didn't commit suicide but he did die because of having to let all these servants go and feeling so bad and losing just about everything he had.

Q. Isn't that something.

A. And he never lived very long.

Q. What do you remember about wartime?

A. Well....The only thing I remember about wartime is that my father's bad injuries and these lasted for so many years after he came back.

Q. Right.

A. Shrapnel wounds like being lanced and so on like I spoke about, to have these pieces of metal taken out and the fact that he would sometimes have to get up in the middle of the night and go outside to get a breath of fresh air because his...his lungs were that bad. And he did die of cancer. And the doctor said he figured it was because of the bad lungs that he had that really killed him.

Q. Isn't that horrible though, really.

A. Yeah. And....at the time that he came home the government wrote to him. I...I don't remember this but I remember my mother saying that the government wrote to him and said "What do we owe you?" He said "I didn't sell my country anything. What I did I gave."

Q. That's awesome.

A. Yeah.

O.K. How did you plan for hard times or retirement?

A. Well....I don't know. I guess I was tight. I saved my money when I could.

Q. O.K.

A. Just because I had a certain amount of money from pay day to pay day, I didn't spend it. I put it aside and looked for the so called rainy day.

Q. How did people help each other out, in days gone by, that's different from now?

A. Well....I don't know. The example I gave about the doctor coming and sitting with my father, when he was so sick. Doctors don't do that. Not...not even neighbors. They...they don't do that. But he was just a....very close friend of my father's. And...just came and sat with him and things like that. But....I don't know. You were speaking of then and today but, today I find my church people and my neighbors ever so kind.

Q. Oh....that's good.

A. Because ah....in the church they've made arrangements and they've put a list on the wall. And the minister said "We want trans.....ah.....Frances transported to church on Sunday and on Wednesday nights. Now if you want to do this please sign the list." So opposite a certain date they'd write their name. I'll do it on Wednesday and I'll do it on Sunday. And on Wednesday it meant that they would take my....me to get my groceries on Wednesday night after church and then bring me home.

Q. That's very nice.

A. Oh yes. And between the Mountie, Wendell Ackerson, here in town, and the minister, they're the ones that planned this. And the minister, in the first place, said to me "If you wanna go to church on Sunday and Wednesday, why don't you call somebody?" I said "No." I said "I'm not gonna do that." I said "I don't want to be beggin' and bummin' all the time." "Well," he said "We'll do something different then." So then, between them, they thought up....this other way.

Q. That's so good. You're very lucky.

A. And I figure I am.

Q. Do you....what do you remember about the Poor Farm?

A. Oh.....well.....I don't remember very much about that, except that my mother is now a patient at Tideview. She never lived at the Poor Farm, but one of the residents in there, did. And she kept saying "My father and mother were....ran the Poor Farm." And she had kind of Alzheimer's and she was talkin' this all the time. Well it was true. Her parents did run it. But....she was saying just how , well....poor, the people were that lived there. And other people in there have said how poorly they were treated there. This woman didn't say that her parents treated them bad but I understand that the treatment wasn't too good there.

Q. Right. O.K. How important were politics in your days? In your adult life? In your early adult life?

A. Yeah. Well....I don't know. Ah....I can't say I did it myself. But many people voted, well, we'll say Liberal, because their parents were that way, or their grandparents were that way.

Q. Right.

A. They didn't especially vote for the man.

Q. Umhmm.

A. I think in my own voting time, that I voted because I thought a certain person was better. Maybe one time Liberal, maybe next time ah....Conservative, or something like that. But ah....not....I voted for the man and not the party you'd say.

Q. O.K. Describe to me, what your community looked like, when you were growing up?

Like the stores. How many stores would there have been? That kind of thing. What kinds of stores were they?

A. Well.....We had to travel quite a distance to stores out....right where we lived. It was in the country.

Q. Umhmm.

A. Because of....like I said my father was an apple grower there. And ah....well, you just had to go quite a long distance. But I can remember my mother talkin' about back when she was real young, of going to these country stores and walking a long distance to get there and maybe having five cents to spend. And she'd buy something for five cents that included a number of pieces of something and maybe my aunt would get an ice cream cone. Well....she'd have half the ice cream cone, my aunt would have the other half and then my aunt would have half the candy my mother bought. That they'd share their five cents or their ten cents that way. So that....each had something.

Q. O.K. How was the law enforced in your community? Did you have policemen?

A. No, I don't.....I don't think so.

Q. O.K. Who was the largest employer in your community?

A. Well.....I guess it probably was J. P. Sullivan, the man that my father worked for. The...the apple grower. He had just...large, very large fields, orchards and things like this. Towards the later years my father had orchards of his own and then umm....in these orchards my father, of course, would pay for his own fertilizer and things like that. But the...at the time he died my mother said that she wanted the fertilizer bill because she knew my father had a fertilizer bill. And the employer said no.....no longer. He said "I've paid for that." He said "It's all looked after. You don't have to worry about it." For six months after my father died, he was paid a salary just like he had earned it. And also, when he was sick and still working, his employer said "If you want a nap, you go have a sleep." And that would be in the car, rate up in the orchard there. Sometimes after he had his lunch, he might sleep an hour or two, and then go back to work. But, he didn't live long after that anyway.

Q. He sounds like a good employer, though.

A. Oh he way. He was just great to us. And he was the one that said "Take the apples that you wanted." And so on.

Q. O.K. Do you know how many people, roughly, that he would....he would have employed?

A. Oh, I don't know. I.....probably in the hundreds.

Q. Oh really.

A. Yeah. Because he had all these orchards and he had packing houses and things like that. And, at certain times of the year, when the orchard work was all done, my father was in charge of the packing house, to pack apples. And these were packed, maybe in those days, a little different that what you see today. Because there'd be a little tiny box, oh so many inches long and so many inches wide, about wide enough to hold an apple. And there'd be five or six apples, probably five apples in a box. And they were all place in there sunny side up to look just lovely. And then also they were packed in bushel boxes. But they weren't just tossed into the bushel box. They were all lined up there and they looked so pretty.

Q. Right.

A. And especially the top row was all lined up so one apple came right close to the other. Red long and rose. They were really pretty. Sunny side up.

Q. When would people get together for a good time?

A. Oh...I don't know. Let's see. My....mother belonged to something called 'A tongue and needle club.' I guess it was..... you'd say the men did the talking and the women did the sewing. Ah....this is what was said anyway. But I imagine the women did their share of talking too.

Q. Right.

A. But...ah...these two doctors that were our friends, they came to 'The tongue and needle club.' And one night, one man came, one of the doctors came and he came fairly late. And he was just so tired he couldn't keep his eyes open. So mom said "Go upstairs and have a nap." Well during this time, telephone rang and they wanted Dr. Hopkins to come deliver a baby. Well.....my mother answered the telephone and she said ah..."Wanted Dr. Hopkins." And she said "I'm sorry. He's out." And she said ah...Dr. McLean, I guess, more or less prompted her to say this. To say he was out, the other doctor who was there. And a....after she hung up the phone she said out, just like a light. So Dr. McLean went and he delivered the baby but...(laughter)

Q. Isn't that amazing.

A. Yeah.

Q. So do you remember going to the tongue and

A. Needle?

Q. Needle.

A. I went some but..... it was mostly for older people and.....I...I wasn't too involved in it.

Q. I'm just curious to know, back then, if you can remember, did the men stay in one room and the women in another room?

A. Not entirely but sometimes they would divide up and sometimes they'd get together.

Q. Right.

A. But ah....

Q. Would they play any music at this?

A. Oh yes, they played music. Ah....probably more or less, Christian Music or something that wasn't, a rock type of thing.

Q. And was it at a different house each time or at the same house?

A. No, no, they went to different houses. And then they had, what they call, the progressive dinner. And ah...the first house you would go to, maybe you would get umm....a punch, hors d'oeuvres or something like that, maybe just punch at the first house, then you talk there for a little while, a half-hour or fifteen, twenty minutes, something like that, then you'd go to the next house and get hors d'oeuvres. And the next house you go to you'd probably be served a salad or something like that depending on how big the item was, depending....would be....depending on how long you stayed at the house. Then, the next time would be a full course meal some place. And then you'd move on from there, in the late part of the night. And you'd get a desert at somebody's house. And then you might get your coffee with that desert but you might not get your coffee 'til you went to the very last place just before you went home.

Q. That is awesome.

A. And that was a progressive dinner.

Q. Hmm. What do you remember about tourism?

A. Yeah travel.

Q. Do you remember tourists coming to this area, during the summertime or anything?

A. Oh yes I know. I don't remember. But they came here. But this was a very great tourist place in the summer. Ah...this village right here, because, this house next door, they had a place where they kept the tourists and they also fed them there. And there was a little cottage, across the road, from there, where they kept their help.

SOME OF THE TAPE IS MISSING HERE.

