

Layton Savary

Interviewed by Cindy Graham, Nov. 14, 2000



Q. What is your full name?

A. Layton Savary and I was born in 1927 just outside of Digby a little ways in my grandmother's house, one of 11 children in March. I don't remember it but.....

Q. When you say just outside of Digby, where was that?

A. Just where Conway started, just over the Digby line.

Q. Which is?

A. Where Holly Mount lives, that house there, that was my Grandmother's house.

Q. I know Holly Mount but I don't know which house is hers.

A. It is the big house just above where Mabel had her place there.

Q. Behind it?

A. Yeh. Big house.

Q. That was and still is the line for Digby/Conway?

A. Well, it use to be the line was just past that motel a ways. That was the end of the line for Digby town because when I was small I first remember my father built a house there just in the Digby limits there, and in the 1930's there was a lot of bums, hobos, or whatever you call them, use to ride the trains into Digby or sneak over on the boat, and they would catch them in the town and the town cop would bring them out to the town limits and drop them off there. My mother

would get scared and she'd say, why do you leave them here for? He said, well this as far as my jurisdiction takes me. This is as far as I go. And he'd drop them off there and he'd say, o.k., stay out of town! So there they were at the edge of town right in front of our house. Course, we didn't know, we were small kids. We didn't mind.

Q. Were you fascinated by these characters?

A. Oh yeh.

Q. Did you ever make friends with them?

A. Oh yeh. We use to talk with them. Mother was scared to death of them, and he'd holler don't go near them. But they were friendly, just guys out of work, travelling around Canada, looking for work, bumming around. Course, those days the road wasn't paved or anything, it was all gravel road. And they'd keep agoing for Yarmouth and local prostitutes or whatever, was the same way. They would escort them out of town and drop them off there.

Q. Did they sometimes come knocking on your door?

A. Oh yeh. Sometimes they'd say hey kid, go in and tell your mother to give you a sandwich, and bring it out to us. We tried it out but it didn't work. Because nobody was very rich in those days.

Q. This was during the depression, eh?

A. Yeh, things was kind of tough. This was '31, '32, '30, '31, '32. I can remember back that far and just starting to remember pretty good. There wasn't too many cars in those days and the street lights and like of that, were generally shut off after dark, after 6 o'clock, I think it was, the hydro use to shut down.

Q. So that house right outside of town, that was Conway. And what was Conway like, what kind of little place was it?

A. There wasn't very many houses there. Not too many. The only thing in Conway was Larchie's milk business, that was about the only thing that was there that was anything at all.

Q. Larchie's milk?

A. Yeh, his father had a milk business - Jersey Farms. And Jersey cows, he had about 30 of them and they milked them by hand and he peddled milk, the old fella. And he hired another guy to do it, they peddled milk and then when we went to school, they use to take milk to the school, to the kindergarden classes and grade 1 and so on, kids that didn't get enough milk they figured, well, they gave milk to the school. And course, they was quite a few people that sold milk those days. Quite a few farmers around. There was some from Mount Pleasant, some down Barton/ Brighton and there was Larchie in Conway.

Q. And I think today there is not one single dairy farmer in Digby County.

A. No, they've put them out of business. Everything had to be pasteurized and it cost too much to buy the machines. Well then, over by the Pines Hotel there was a Jefferson fella had a farm there and he peddled milk. And he cut ice in the winter, but when the other guy working for him, was sort of a comedian, and in the wintertime he had a few cows. He said to him one night, it was cold as the devil that night. He said go out and take the horse blanket and put it on the best cow we've got. So he went out and put it on the water pump. Eddie fired him! Of course, everybody knew that all around town, and later on that Jefferson fella, he was kind of a nut anyway, he hung himself a few years later, over there in the Knights of Columbus Building. He built that went in the hole. He had too much going and he hung himself in that building. But everybody laughed over that, the water and the milk. They had ice in the summer. Oh yes, Bill Franklin had a big ice pond as well. He cut ice and sold it. He had two big ice houses out there and they were full of ice. He peddled ice all summer around Digby.

Q. So people bought the ice?

A. Oh yeh.

Q. I interviewed down the neck, the ice houses primarily were putting up ice for the fish plants.

A. Yeh, they had one along there by Lake Midway, I remember. I worked for Franklin one summer for a couple of weeks peddling ice. And I use to get the devil from a lot of them women walking over their floor with a cake of ice and dribbling the ice! And dropping the ice too quick in them old ice chests.

Q. Because they were heavy?

A. Yeh. I could never catch on to that slinging a cake of ice up and letting it go - I always dropped it. There was a trick to it.

Q. So, can you describe the whole ice making process , were they man made?

A. Oh, yeh. They let it freeze and a funny thing those days, the ice froze down there about a foot thick or better. And we use to skate on the ice, and they would come down and take an auger and drill a hole, and shove the rule down through and measure to see how thick it was. When it got to be 10" or a foot, they'd mark it. They had a marker, a big steel thing with something like a bunch of harrows on it, and it marked the ice about 14" wide, they'd haul that across as markers. And that marked quite deep, it was heavy. They would haul that across with their horses. Then they'd chop that with a long steel spade on a coal, and that would break off where they marked it. And then they'd have pipe poles they'd haul it in, and take it into the ice house and put a layer of sawdust and a layer of ice and a layer of sawdust and a layer of ice until they filled the ice house. And they done that all winter long, as long as it froze. And that would last about all summer. When summer come, they'd be down to about the last layer or two. And it is surprising, nowadays, it doesn't seem to freeze that thick. He wouldn't get no ice nowadays, and they cut ice where the legion is now in Digby. There was an ice pond there, a big ice pond. They cut ice there, I don't know who had that one. There is an ice house there back of that house that is there on the corner. And they cut ice there and stacked it in there.

Q. Why did they use horses instead of oxen on the ice ponds?

A. The oxen are too slow and too heavy. Horses were lighter and their shoes, they would crook their shoes better so they wouldn't slip. And they could go better on the ice. But they used a single horse. They didn't use double, cause a lot of times, the horse and driver both get in the water. Course, it wasn't all that deep. It wouldn't be over 8 or 10 feet deep at the deepest.

Q. So these ponds were made just to be an ice pond?

A. Yeh, they were ponds and they dammed them up so they'd have the water for the winter. Other times they'd let the water out in the summer. Then they had cranberries they use to grow around then. They'd rake them in the fall and after they got them all in they'd put the dam back in and save the water again. It was all spring water. They're still out there, the ponds are. But they don't seem to

have much water in them, it doesn't seem. But those are all tore down now, the ice houses.

Q. When did the ice houses come to an end, do you remember?

A. Oh, I think around the '50's. They were rotting out and they tore them down.

Q. So how old were you when you were going around helping to pedal ice?

A. Oh about 15.

Q. Do you remember what you got paid?

A. No, not too much. I wasn't doing anything much and they needed a helper so he asked me if I'd - the owner asked me if I'd come and help for awhile. I said, yeh, o.k. See the war had started pretty good and there was nobody around. Nobody to work. I said o.k. So I went over for a couple of weeks and worked with him. And after that, the owner one day went himself driving the truck, and I played a trick on him. There was one old lady, she was ugly, she always got after you and give you the devil before you left. It was raining too. And we stopped in back of the old Myrtle House, the old hotel. There is some left of it there now in back of that service station on the corner - Boliver's. And I said, there, they'll take a 20 cent piece in there, that would be about a half cake of ice, and that lady over there takes a small piece of ice, about 10 cents. He said, o.k. So he chopped it up and he went across, and he had his oilskins on, you know, cause it was raining. And I guess she lit on to him when he went in there across the floor with that ice. She give him the devil. He came in and got in the truck and said - you ever go in there with ice? I said yeh. He said how do you find her. I said she is a lovely lady. Oh, he said. Well, she wasn't today. Just like being home! I got clear of her that day. Some places were bad, and some were good.

Q. So how often would you go to each house a week. They'd need ice how often?

A. About one day a week. About one day. The restaurants and hotels were more often. They took bigger cakes of ice. But the restaurants and hotels were kind of bad because they had upright freezers, the big ones, and the ice had to go in on its edge. It was a hard job to get that thing in there on the edge. And some of them old ladies were mean, boy. They'd wrap that ice in brown paper and

newspaper so it would keep longer. But it still melted on those hot days. I didn't care much for that job.

Q. Was that your very first job?

A. No, no. I was working on the highways before that. And really I shouldn't have been because they only took people of voting age, but they couldn't get anyone, you see. I was working pick and shovel work and helping them patch pavement and so on. That's why I worked for him because he was the highway's man here for Digby County, engineer, and he knew me so he knew I wasn't doing too much. I had been working on the highway and political stuff, you couldn't work unless you voted their way and you were old enough. Plus it took six months to get paid for it. But he was good to work for personally. Course, when my father came back I worked with him. He was a bricklayer and I started working with him and started learning my trade. And we travelled around the maritimes working for L.E. Shaw, brick company, and different places.

Q. O.K. Let me back track for a minute. What were your parents' names?

A. Russell Savary and Lisa Savary.

Q. And what was your Mother's maiden name?

A. She was a Winchester. But she died when she was 40. She died in 1940.

Q. How old were you?

A. When she died I was about 13 or 14.

Q. So your Mom had 11 children, and where did you fit in?

A. I was about two older that passed away when they were young, and then there is- the oldest one was a girl and she passed away when she was only a year old, I think, pneumonia, I think. Those days when you had something like that, you died with that. And then there was another boy passed away but him and I were 10 months apart. He was older. And my oldest brother - he passed away in 1970. I was sixth.

Q. But did your actual mother have 11 children, or some of them.....

A. Yes, she had 11 children.

Q. So some of them were very young, much younger than you when she died?

A. My youngest sister was 6 months old. She had cancer.

Q. Your mother had cancer?

A. Yeh. It was hard old days, because you had to pay for everything. Doctors, hospitals, and the whole thing.

Q. Was she sick for quite awhile before she died?

A. Yeh, about two years. And money was hard to get and you couldn't get nothing without money. You couldn't get it anywhere. If you went to the hospital it was the same story - who is paying for this? How much are you worth and so on and so forth. Different than today.

Q. You must have some pretty strong opinions on how you'd like to see health care done in Canada.

A. Yeh, well its going to go back to that again, I guess, the old days, the way it was. I know I went in the hospital once. Stayed in the hallway for quite awhile until they found out the insurance was paying for it and then it was fine and dandy. Semi private. But had it hard going. A lot of people lived through it. Course, a lot of people didn't too. Course it didn't cost too much for a Doctor, a Doctor would come out to see you for 50 cents or \$1.00. And in the winter if he couldn't get out why you'd have to get out and shovel the road out. But you didn't have to shovel it out too wide. Just enough for a horse and sleigh.

Q. Can you remember your younger sisters and brothers being born?

A. Yeh.

Q. Were they born at home in that house?

A. No, in the Digby hospital. I know a younger brother was born - we couldn't get a taxi or nothing, lot of snow, so we took Mother to hospital on the sled. We had a big sled home there that we use to coast on and we took her to the hospital on that.

Q. Were you pulling?

A. We were all - my older brothers and myself -we were all pulling and getting through the snow drifts. See they didn't plow the roads in those days, so you had a lot of snow. Some places the snow was up to the top of the poles, course the poles weren't that high. High enough you had to go out around the fields and ditches and so on. But made the winter seem worse. Going to school in the winter those days, you really were going somewhere. Most people didn't go. Winter time you stopped going pretty well.

Q. Where was the school?

A. I went to Digby first. Down to the old school there in Digby, the school is not there.

Q. Where was that?

A. The old academy there by the Courthouse. Well, we went to the Courthouse first, they had - there was so many in that grade, that we went to the Courthouse, quite a few of us. And then after awhile it thinned out some so we went back to the school again. Well, when I got out of that grade, I went back to the other school again. But there were quite a few kids around in those days.

Q. So there wasn't a small school out in Conway where the kids from Conway went?

You went to town?

A. Yep. Then when we moved out here to Conway, went up to Hillgrove school. We use to go up through the woods here - there is a roadway went from the shore right up through to Hillgrove where the old farmers use to haul seaweed. So we went that way up to Hillgrove. See the school - there was a school down here but the colored people had it. That was for them. So we went up to Hillgrove for that school.

Q. When did your family move from Digby near the town line there?

A. I was 1941 or 1942 we moved out of Digby and moved out there.

Q. That was after your mother died?

A. Yeh. No just before. About two years before she died. No, we moved out in '38 or '39, '39 I think it was. It was her Mother's place, this was.

Q. So exactly where was that house?

A. Up there, it was up across the road on the hill there. The old house is gone. And we moved up there and went to school up to Hillgrove.

Q. What was the main road from Digby to that house. How would you get there?

A. This was the main road here, the one you came on. The Robinson Weir Road. That was the No. 1 highway then. There was just a driveway up to the house and that was the main highway then out of Digby. Such as it was. But there was quite a difference in that school we went to up there. There was 9 grades in one school. That was quite a difference coming from Digby to that school.

Q. Which one did you like better?

A. Well, I liked Digby better. That school out there they - the kids were a lot different. They weren't as smart because they couldn't be because the teacher had so many kids to look after. She had from primmer class right up to grade 9. She didn't have to teach Grade 9 but after grade 9, I think you had to go to Digby or wherever higher. Anyway, she could teach it if she wanted to, but normally they didn't.

Q. So did you go further than that school? Did you go back to Digby later on? Or you stopped school when you were in.....

A. No. When I was in Grade 9. I stopped school then and went to work. Most people had to work before that. Lots of people in school had to quit work going to school. I knew a lot of guys going to school were big boys, 12, 13, 14. And people use to remark well, you're too big to be going to school. They would sit in school and make a dam fool out of them. You gotta get to work. Lot of them worked in the mills, in the woods and so on. But you didn't get much for working. 5 and 10 cents an hour. The going wages.

Q. So you started to say your father was a mason, that what he always was when you were growing up?

A. Yeh. My grandfather was too.

Q. Good trade.

A. So I went with him working.

Q. And that became your trade also?

A. Yeh. I was lucky to be able to learn at that otherwise I don't know how I would have gotten a trade.

Q. Did that include all kinds of stone work?

A. Stonework, yeh. And brickwork. Yeh.

Q. So after your mother died, how did your father manage? Did grandparents alive who could help you?

A. No, just my grandmother was alive, that's all, in Digby. She wasn't very able to do too much. She had althizmers disease, not that bad, but you couldn't trust her too much. She could get along by herself pretty good, but no, my oldest brother, he looked after the house. Done the cooking and looked after everything.

Q. Even the 6 month old baby?

A. Yeh, he looked after her too. And he use to get some help from some older women across the bridge here - cousins. And everything went pretty good.

Q. Everybody must have been pulling together.

A. Yeh, we pulled together pretty well because he still had to go to work, you see. Still had to work. He couldn't stay home, there was no work around here much. The war was on, the work was in Halifax.

Q. So your father did not enlist or go to war.?

A. Not the second world war, no. He was in the first world war, but not the second.

Q. Your father was in the First World War?

A. Yeh. But not the second, no. He wasn't fit. Anyway, he had lots of work.

Q. But he had to go to Halifax?

A. Yeh. That's where all the work was. Lots of work going on. Everybody else went too, I guess. There was nothing much around here until after the war.

Q. So that's when your father came back, or was he going back and forth quite a bit?

A. Oh, he went back and forth quite a bit. Weekends he'd come home, generally. After the war, then the fellows came back from the war, and they started building houses, and of course they needed chimneys and so on. That's when he came back home and that was good for me. That gave me lots of experience.

Q. So it was after the war that you started learning the trade?

A. I started before, then after I was working at it too. I done quite a bit of work. Done a lot of work down Digby Neck and on the Islands and around. The Island, I use to stay down there and top chimney's out and build new ones and so on. So I knew a lot of people down that way, for quite awhile. Now I suppose it is all changed.

A lot of the families are probably the same families in the communities.

Q. What do you remember about your Mother's typical workday before she got sick and with all those children?

A. Well, there was generally cooking and washing by hand, cooking was her main thing every day pretty well. Making bread was her main thing.

Q. Did it have to be done every day?

A. Well, every other day. They didn't make it every day because they would make 9 or 10 loaves at a time. A big batch. And in those days they'd wash about

once a week, I guess. That was quite a big thing. Of course, we'd all help too, you know. Hanging out clothes, and so on. Had a set of wringers there and so on, that helped.

Q. Everybody had cloth diapers in those days.

A. Yeh, that was the usual thing. So we never bought anything those days.

Q. Did your mother do some sewing also? Did she make any of your clothes?

A. Oh, yeh. She didn't make too many clothes. Her relatives use to do all the sewing and knitting and all like that. She never had time, really. She didn't have time for that. But she had Aunts and like of that that use to knit and do sewing and they liked doing that. And my grandmother use to knit and sew a lot and hook rugs. Her big thing was hooking rugs. She didn't have much time for stuff like that time she'd do the cooking, get kids to school and get everybody dressed. It took a lot of her time up.

Q. So your mother was pretty big on getting you all to school?

A. Oh yeh. She was big on that.

Q. Can you remember there being much reading material around the house?

A. Yes, always. She always encouraged that. I done a lot of reading, too. And I always read everything. When I learned to read, boys, that was a great thing, I thought.

Q. Opens up a whole new world!

A. Yes, in those days it was more restrictive on the reading. You couldn't read them old western magazines, they didn't like it. Said they were bad for ya. But I'd read them if I could get them. No, we use to read the Bible and the story of the Bible, she had those, and I'd read those. She'd make you read them. I was about the only one that read the most, I believe. But I like reading and well, I had a lot of other books too. I use to get a lot of books for Christmas, I read all the old regular books those days, Robinson Crusoe, Robin Hood, and all them old stories that came out. Charles Dickens, they were all interesting.

Q. Did you get them from your parents for Christmas or from other relatives?

A. From my parents and other relatives too would send them along. So we enjoyed that.

Q. What else do you remember about Christmas?

A. Well, Christmas was pretty good. We always had a good Christmas, pretty well. It seems as though the main thing at Christmas was oranges. But the first Christmas I remember, well when I found out there was no Santa Claus, I remember that one! That was a disappointment, that one. I remember one Christmas I was about 4-5 year old. I got a pair of knee rubber boots and on the top of it was candy, and I thought they were full. So I said to my brother, you take this one and I'll have this one. And they were trying to tell me, no, no, don't give that away! And I thought they were both full, but they weren't! But what amazed me at Christmas in those days was an orange. That was a big thing to get an orange at Christmas. I don't know where they come from or how they got them but that was the only time we seen one of the darn things.

Q. They weren't even available?

A. In the summer you never seen any because I suppose they didn't keep that good in the summer. Bananas, lots of bananas in the summer, but oranges - and at Christmas time they seem to come out from somewhere, but I don't know where. But they were nice at Christmas, boy, to get an orange, great.

Q. Where did your family do its shopping when you lived - when you actually lived there, was that actually on the town side or on the other side?

A. Just on the edge of it. The town line was just maybe foot from us. No, we use to shop at the South End Grocery. You know where Sears is now, - that was South End Grocery. Kingsley Collins had that store. He had quite a grocery store there. It always was a grocery store but he took it over and we always went to this store.

Q. Little bit of a hike, wasn't all that close to your house.

A. Yeh, it wasn't that close. That was the only store handiest. And when we got out here we use to go just across the bridge to Woodman had a store over there. He had everything in it, and we use to use that store over there. And of course,

on Saturday night everybody went into Digby. But that was the main store there, South End Grocery. He had everything. Course those days, everything was by the barrel, and all open.

Q. Did your family rely on the store for almost everything? Or did you.....

A. Well, we had our own vegetables, but for winter we always got a bag of sugar and a bag of cornmeal for winter. And a bucket of peanut butter and a bucket of jam. By the bucketful. Wooden buckets. So there was a jam factory in Digby, fellow made the jam. It was cheap, but it was good too.

Q. Were all the berries picket around here?

A. Some yeh, quite a few. Course the secret of jam was apples. Main filler. But it was good jam, good as anywhere, but he couldn't sell as cheap as they could ship it in here from Ontario so finally he went out of business. It was right across from Tideview Terrace, along there by the pine trees. He had a small factory there. Cardoza, and he made the jam. He put it in the stores, he put it in tin cans, tin buckets and wooden buckets.

Q. Do you remember the name of him?

A. Cardoza. He made the jam. And below him there use to be a big mill there. That burned down.

Q. Across from Tideview Terrace also?

A. Yeh, down that hill.

Q. Who owned that mill?

A. A Sulis owned it. And another Sulis owned a mill there where Mike Huey lives. He was a wagon maker. He made wagons and sleighs and stuff.

Q. Where's that now?

A. At the foot of Town Hill. There was a mill there, quite a big place. He lived overhead in one side, and the rest was all mill. And he made wagons, and across

from him was a blacksmith shop, on the corner there. There was three blacksmith shops in that area. One across there, one down from where Paul Winchester lives and one the other side of Paul.

Q. And blacksmiths in those days were?

A. Shoeing horses.

Q. That kind of evolved into serving the fishing industry in later years.

A. We use to watch the horses go by. A lot of horses and wagons in those days. And oxen. We use to watch the horses go by and there was a guy in Marshalltown that had a pair of old grey horses and they were wild as the devil. And when he'd go in, he'd generally - we'd ask him, Are you going to the blacksmith shop today? He'd say, yep! And generally if you got too close to him he caught you with the whip. So we'd find out he was going to the blacksmith shop and we'd all go down and watch because when they shoed his horse, one of them there, he'd kick. And the blacksmith had a helper there. Use to kick him right out of the door. So we'd go and watch and wait to see, sure enough he'd come flying out the door. So then they'd have to take the old horse over and tie his leg down. They had a place there where they could tie him and they'd put a thing around his stomach first and they had windlass there and they'd haul him up off the floor. He couldn't kick with two legs on the floor and two off, he couldn't kick. And then they'd shoe him.

Q. That was the exception, it wasn't the way they usually shoed horses. They wouldn't have to do all that, generally?

A. Oh no, otherwise they just picked their feet up and shoed them. Between his knees here and he'd pick his foot up and of course the old horse would start. And he'd come out the door. He'd curse and swear and get up. Put his old cap back on and go back in again. He couldn't shoe him. They'd have to put him in the slings.

Q. Why do you suppose those horses were so wild?

A. Oh, I don't know. The fella use to beat them so much, I think. That's the reason. He was a bad man with horses. He use to beat them. But we got a kick out of them old horses, them oldtimers, them old farmers.

Q. Did your family have a horse?

A. No, but my grandfather did. He use to go to work with a horse - take him to work. But we never, we had oxen. We had single ox, I use to team him when I was quite young. I use to team him around. But he'd just follow you around like a dog anyway.

Q. So that oxen was kept at your house. Did your grandparents live with you?

A. No, my grandfather died the year I was born. And we lived at my Grandmothers quite awhile and we had the ox to haul wood with and so on. We had one out here . Had one for quite awhile. I hauled wood with him.

Q. How did your father travel to work and do his trade?

A. Oh, they bought an old model A car for about \$50. - \$75. 00. The oldest brother learned to drive and they got around that way. An old model A coupe. Fella in Yarmouth brought it up and they bought it. They went to work that way for quite awhile.

Q. Where did your father get the bricks?

A. Oh, A.R. Turnbull. Turnbull had a supply, and H. T. Warren's - he had a lot of brick there too. And they got brick from the old pulp mill. They use to sell them up there - second hand brick. They cleaned them and sold them. Well, they were really third hand brick because they were second hand when they came there to the pulp mill. They were actually second hand when they got them.

Q. Where was the pulp mill?

A. At the Bear River Bridge. See, they tore down another one and shipped it down here and used the brick over again. And it only ran for a day or two and they closed it. Another political scheme, I guess.

Q. What's the story behind that?

A. Well, that was a - the story behind that was to sell shares in it, sell stock, and make money. There was nothing to it. Because it didn't amount to anything. And they had a picture of it about that long, and there was more in the picture than there was up there. I had the picture here somewhere one time, and an old

guy in Deep Brook, he is 86 now, he use to come see me once in a while - he still does - and I showed him the picture because he was born up there. Well, he said, that wasn't there and that wasn't there. He was showing me, you know. And I said, that's why I showed you the picture, I was wondering. No, he said, they never had half of that. Like he said, too, you know, they sold that to sell shares in it, and mainly to the Americans and make a clean up on it. And they did. He said it run a few days, and that's it. They run one load of pulp out of it and that was the end of it.

Q. So they built the whole thing?

A. Yeh they built it, yeh.

Q. Ran only a load or two of pulp through it.

A. Yeh, one load. They showed it with wharves and everything, and they never had a wharf there at all.

Q. So it was a scheme to get investors? And I guess the investors must have lost their money?

A. That was it. That's what it was. Crooked.

Q. What about H. T. Warren's. Can you tell me any stories about that?

A. I worked there quite awhile.

Q. We heard you could always get a job there. He'd never turn you down.

A. Oh, anybody could work there. Yes, anybody could work there. I went to work there for a little while in the winter. I had to walk from here in.

Q. Where was it located?

A. Right across here - right straight across.

Q. This end of town?

A. Yes, right straight across. And it was a big mill, big store. I remember the first, I never use to think very much of it, the mill was always there, always a

going, there was always smoke all over everywhere. You could always hear the mill going, whistle a blowing, and we were - there was a pond there at the foot of Town Hill over here. We use to skate there. A guy came along and he had a bandage on his hand and we sort of knew him - he worked there to Warren's mill. So somebody said how did you hurt your hand? He said, I cut my finger off in the mill. Says, you did. Says yep. He had one of his fingers here, this one I guess, he took it out of his pocket and said there it is there! I just sawed it off a while ago. While I was working there, there was a colored chap there, he sawed off two fingers. I think he got \$100.00 a finger in compensation. And he sawed off two, he got the money, there was three of them, two of his buddies, and they all stayed drunk for a couple of weeks from this money he got. He said he wasn't going to work again. He had this \$200.00 and he bought this old wine and they stayed drunk for about two weeks. And he was broke. They healed up pretty good and he went back to work again.

Q. That was a lot of money then.

A. Yeh, it was a lot of money. But a lot of people in the box factory, a lot of people lost their.....I was working in the box factory, but not on the saw. Had them little saws all over the place and they went fast, sawing box ends , narrow ends you know, they use to shove them through fast those saws. I know one morning a girl sawed her hand there, and I heard her when she hollered. And the boss tried to put me on that saw. And I said no. But it seemed funny when you hired on there, they said are you going to school. And I said well, yes, I'm going to school. I was still going to school. And his daughter asked me what grade are you in? I said Grade 9. Oh. And I went out in the middle of work and we were putting box ends in something, and they told me to mark # 1, # 2, and so on. So I was marking it there somebody said, you know that smart ass there, he can read and write! I never thought too much of it, but none of those guys could read or write in that mill there. There was only a few. And the guy that use to set up saws and set them up and level them up and so on, he done a perfect job. He couldn't read or write either. When they'd go get their pay check, they'd just make a mark of some kind. They knew what they were making. And get their pay. But one thing about it, you got paid every Saturday at noon, and you got cash. It was good that way.

Q. What were you, just working odd hours?

A. Yeh. I didn't work a full week. Sometimes I'd go when I could or wanted to. I wanted to make enough money to - because you had to buy your own books in

Grade 9 and Grade 10, if you were going to Grade 10 , Grade 9 and 10 you had to buy your own books. I was trying to earn enough to buy my own books and some clothes. And sometimes I'd be late getting there and they'd deduct me. Sometimes I'd get my pay and only get \$5. Or \$6.00 or something like that. And then his son there, Hubert, he wanted me to eat there. I said no, I can get a bottle of pop, and that'd be enough for me. Oh, go down to the cook house, he said, what do you think you are, too good to eat here? So I said o.k., I'll go down. So I went down and I went in and I was already to sit down and they had a big pot of beans there, and one of them French fellows was eating there, he said, what's that and he held up a little mouse. He found a mouse in the beans. So I went out and I left. I wouldn't eat there! But I had eaten there before, and it was good. They fed good. They fed a lot of people around town that never worked there. They use to sneak in and get something to eat. They were good that way.

Q. Did they eat for free? Or did they pay a little bit?

A. No, they didn't pay. They were suppose to but they didn't.

Q. A little bit like a soup kitchen.

A. Yeh, that's right. The cook would let them in to eat. And they made their own bread there and like that, you know.

Q. Did they have a cook house, did they also board people?

A. Yeh, they had a big bunk house and they had a big cookhouse across from that. And that old cookhouse was going steady. They made bread and baked it. And they use to sell bread downtown at the store. They had a store downtown first, big store. Where the theatre use to be, Capitol Theatre. And it burned down, the store did. It was a two or three story building. It was a big building. Then they built the store up down across from the mill. They had everything in that store you'd ever want.

Q. Was the store just another form of business for him to make more money? Or was it something that was necessary?

A. Oh yeh. Normally you had to take your wages out of the store. You couldn't get cash. Some couldn't. But his daughter wouldn't let me take it out of the store. She said no, you take the cash. Because when I hired on, she said why do you want to work here. I said well, I got to earn some money for my books for

school and some clothes. She said alright. So when I'd try to get some groceries, they wouldn't let me have them. So she must have told them.

Q. But some people didn't have the choice?

A. But most of them took it all out of the store.

Q. Was that to their advantage to do it that way?

A. Well, just as well. They had to eat and they needed the groceries.

Q. And the groceries weren't any more expensive there or less expensive there?

A. No, they were a little cheaper, a lot of stuff was a little cheaper. But they had everything, clothing and groceries, everything you'd ever want. I remember one time we were going to school, they had molasses come in from the West Indies, big casks of molasses. And we always heard that they always put a little colored baby in the molasses cask, you know, to make the molasses taste better. So when they were unloading the molasses, one of the asks fell on the ground and broke. So we heard about it up to the school, so I think half of the school ran down there to have a look to see if that little baby was in there!

Q. Kids really believed that?

A. Oh yeh. We all believed it, you know, grade 3, 4, and 5. We all made a bee line for down there to have a look at it. And somebody said, where in hell are all these kids coming from. There was kids everywhere. Round by the railway siding there by the store. The molasses cask was there all broke up and molasses there all over the ground, but no kid!!! Everybody believed it. But he had quite a business. He built a boat and he use to ship his own lumber on the boat, down to the West Indies and bring back molasses, coconuts and stuff, but I don't think he brought any rum back. He was a Deacon in the Baptist church - he wouldn't do that.

Q. H. T. Warren was?

A. Yeh. He didn't drink, and he didn't smoke either because he had asthma. That's why he didn't shave either. He thought if he didn't shave, it was better for his asthma. But he chewed tobacco.

Q. You can remember him personally?

A. Oh yes. And he had some of his fingers cut off too because he worked in the mill. He couldn't read nor write either. And he worked in the mill when he was 10 years old - he use to brag about it. He worked in the shingle mill.

Q. Where was that, where did he come from?

A. He come from Hillgrove. He worked in the mill there out in Hillgrove. Down in Acacia Valley, by the bridge down there, he had a mill over that bridge run by water. A shingle mill. He worked there. But I don't know where he cut his fingers off. He cut them off in a mill somewhere. But he had these two or three first ones cut off. But the old feller was smart.

Q. He had no education hardly, but he

A. He didn't have any.

Q. What year did the company start up here in Digby? Do you remember?

A. I don't know. I think they started in the '20's, around there. The old guy when he was talking business, he always had a pencil and he use to mark on his knee when he was talking. But he couldn't read or write but he was smart, though. He was smart enough that when he was building his boat, he hired some money from the bank, and he fell short of money. And he went down to the bank to get some more money and they said no. You're not getting any more. Well, he said, you can come get the boat then. And they said come back here. How much more do you need? So he got the money. But, he also bought an orange grove in Florida. But that didn't pan out too good. It was the first year they were going to harvest they had a frost there and it ruined the oranges and he lost quite a bit of money, so he gave it up. Then he started another mill out west, but it didn't work very good out there because when he started paying people same as he was paying people here, it didn't work very good. They run him out of there. Got rid of him. So he stayed here. You know its funny - they failed up in the end. Some company in Montreal invested money in it and what happened was, where they made their money was from the fish boxes. And when they lost that contract that was it. Keyes Fiber put them out of business.

Q. What was it called?

A. Keyes Fiber. They made all kinds of boxes, strawberry boxes and everything out of fiber and cardboard. That put him out of business. That ruined him. But they use to make all that wooden stuff, all kinds of fish boxes. Newfoundland was their big contract. And they lost it because they went to the fiber board up in Amherst or Stellarton or some place. When that mill started up there, they could make it cheaper that finished them on the wood.

Q. So the main thing in the mill was.....

A. Well it employed a lot of people.

Q. Land mostly they were making boxes, that was the big thing.

A. Yeh, box factory.

Q. And they sold lumber - like regular dimension lumber?

A. Yeh, they cut a lot of lumber, 2 x 4 and heavy stuff for overseas. They were shipping heavy planks. Course, when they got them over there they cut them up smaller. The lumber over there is - they don't build houses out of lumber over there anyway. They use block and brick and stucco over there. Lumber's for the roof. So they cut it up, boards are about 1/2 inch or 2 x 2 for those tile - terra cotta.

Q. And the bricks that your father might have got from H. T. Warren, that was more just something he bought?

A. Oh yeh. He bought from L. E. Shaw. Tupper Warren, they called him Tupper, but it was H. T. Warren, he had a brick yard somewhere one time but they didn't manufacture too many. So they weren't too good. So he bought them, later on in years the company bought them from L. E. Shaw and then he bought them from Chipman New Brunswick. So Shaw bought that out and had a big brickyard over there. But the biggest one is in Elmsdale.

Q. That's Shaw, isn't it?

A. Yeh, Shaw. He looked like Abraham Lincoln! Warren was Mayor of Digby one time. He use to sell slab wood ,you know. He had a truck that sold slab wood around town. See everybody burned coal in Digby or wood.

Q. Was going to ask you that, if the cookhouses, for example, ran with coal probably, did they?

A. Well, it was coal and slab wood, mainly. And they'd cut the slab wood up in stove lengths. So what Warren done, was he sent a free load of slab wood around to a lot of the old ladies around Digby, widows and like that, and some people. He sent them a free load of slab wood, you see. And they all voted for him as Mayor. So after he got in as Mayor, he sent them a bill for the wood! It was only about 50 cents a load. It was a small dump truck. That's the way he was, you see. But he was quite a Mayor. A split tail coat he wore and a silk top hat and had a cane. Boy, he was a real mayor.

Q. Where was his home, his house?

A. Where Boliver's Station is, there was a big yellow house across there. Across the track - not where the Toy Maker is, but the other one across there. That was his home there.

Q. Did he have a large family?

A. No, he only had two. A boy and a girl. He was married twice. They were half brother and sister. Hubert and Dora. She run the business. It was a funny thing, the last two or three years she run the business, the last time I worked there was 1950 and 51. They started the mill up - bricked in new boilers - so I was there working as a bricklayer then. We were bricking in these new boilers. My father and I. And another mason from down below, a French fella, and we got well paid of course. And we put in these big boilers, bricked them in, and they had a fella come down from Montreal from the company up there that bought into it, he was overseeing the whole thing. And they took unemployment out of us, it was starting up pretty good then, unemployment insurance. So one day when we finished, the rest of the winter, I said I'll go down and see about this unemployment. So I went down and they said no, you never paid any unemployment. I said yes, I did. You know, she took that unemployment out but she never passed it in. They told me down there she never passed any in from anybody down there at the mill. Well, I said, what are you going to do about it? They said, nothing. They never did a thing about it.

Q. It probably amounted to a sizeable amount of money.

A. I guess it was. But the money was gone. They failed up, you see.

Q. So then it wasn't long after that the company was gone?

A. Yeh, it was gone. They tore down the whole thing. All that machinery went for junk. It was a shame too, you know. It was quite an outfit. They employed a lot of people. And they employed a lot of people in the woods.

Q. I forgot about that aspect of it.

A. Every fall they would start in about this time of year. And they'd build a camp and a cookhouse, they'd be out 6th Lake or someplace, wherever he bought timber. And get ready for a crew of men and they'd start hiring for their woods crew. And the boss would go get ready and line them up and away they'd go for the woods. That was a special crew. They'd work all winter and when spring come they were done. And they had a lot of men there at one time. They would have 400 -500 men easy. When spring come, Maritime National Fish, they'd start hiring people and they'd get up as high as 300 men down there working. They had a cod liver plant going there, you see. They made cod liver oil there, they cooked out the cod livers and so on.

Q. That was downtown?

A. Yes. It smelled terrible. The tourists didn't like it over at the Pines hotel, but.....made an awful smell there. I remember the first time I seen the cod livers cooked . It was down in Tiverton. Old guy there was boiling them out getting the oil out of them and it was in the wintertime and all he had on was a shirt with the sleeves rolled up. And he had a wooden mug there and he was drinking that oil. Here sonny, have a drink, its good for ya!!! , he says. Drinking that clear oil. And man, he was fat as a bear! It must have done him good, I guess. But they use to cook it at Maritime. Had a big boiler there and had a guy running the boiler night and day, boiler man. And they had fish cutters, and they had a big crew. They had a mill whistle too, and one would always blow ahead of the other one. His or Warrens. And you'd hear them all over the country, them old steam whistles. But it was quite aa lot of people employed at that time. Funny about it, now there's nothing going on.

Q. So did it seem like a much busier place? Just bustling and busy and lots of people at the train stations.

A. It was, yeh, it was busy. The station had a restaurant in it and that was a busy spot too. Then the boat would come in and you could always make a few bucks carrying baggage from the train to the boat, you know. And then there was mail drivers hauling the mail from the boat to the train and the train to the boat and so on. There was a lot of things going on. But that's all gone. It has sure changed. Never thought we'd see the train go. But it wasn't much good to anybody, really. I remember one time I was working in Tiverton and this old lady said to me, she was quite old too, she asked me where I lived and I told her. She said does the train go by your house, and I said yes, it does. Oh my soul, she says, everyday?

Yeh, I said, everyday, twice a day, day and night. She said, you're some lucky seeing that train. I said, didn't you ever see a train going by, she said no, I've never been off the Island. She was 80 some too. And never been off that Island, mind you, never seen a train on a track.

Q. Do you remember who she was?

A. I can't remember now who she was. I never asked her her name, but she had never been out of there, never seen a train, only pictures and like that. I don't know what she done when she seen television. Well, there was television then. It was just starting. There was a guy brought a television set over from Maine on a dragger. He sneaked it through Customs. Hung the T.V. thing over the wheelhouse, they thought it was a light! They didn't know it was a T.V. But he strung wire up along the fence post until he got it up the hill there and he had good reception. It worked good down there. That's when they said you had to have a - every so many - every half mile you had to have a big antenna up somewhere. To pick up the broadcast. But that fella, he brought that home and the next time he brought an aerial. He put the aerial up on the wheelhouse and brought that over. Some guy that lived handy to the ferry there. It didn't matter, there was always a crowd around the house there. I just stopped in and watched it. There was a ball game on, I remember that, the first time I had seen a T. V. working. Stopped in, and got tired of looking at it. But they brought the first T.V. around down that way. And a guy in Yarmouth made his own. A mechanic, he got fooling around and he said, hell, I can make one of those. They said, it won't work because you have got to have a broadcast station every fifty miles or so. He was getting Boston, made his own and it worked good. And he got it so the color was coming in a little. So they come over from the States and bought it from him. He was doing something that they didn't have, you see. That's why they come after him. A good inventor.

Q. What can you remember about Sundays? Did Tupper Warren shut his mill down on Sundays?

A. Oh yeh. Every Sunday.

Q. So the machinery was actually turned off?

A. Saturday at noon. Saturday at noon it was shut down - the mill was shut down and you got your pay, cash, everybody got paid in cash that had any money coming to them. And a lot of those are French fellows couldn't get the money. You couldn't get money - a lot got paid, like the bosses got paid in cash. They'd take a bag of flour, bag of sugar, whatever. And they'd go down to the corner store, South End Grocery, and they'd sell it to him, get some money to go home. So they could go home on the bus. And after awhile he couldn't afford to buy it anymore, he bought so darn much. So that's what they done. And where they boarded they'd take stuff there too to pay their board. Some of them didn't want to stay at the boarding house that he had at the mill cause the place was lousy, you know. And when they shut the light out at night, the bugs would start dropping on them. So, the old bunkhouse burned down in the wintertime, one winter, it burned down. They never built another one. After that if they stayed at the mill, they had to board somewhere. So a few people around there use to rent rooms and they'd stay there. But they never built another one.

Q. So, was cash in short supply or did H. T. Warren want it that way that you would buy from him?

A. Well he made it that way, so he made more money. But he wasn't the only one. Hankinson done that in Weymouth when he had a mill. Old George. He done the same thing. And they all done it in those days, everywhere.

Q. Could you run your bill up too, could you get credit?

A. Oh yeh, a lot of them were - they didn't dare to fire them because they were over you know. So they told them in the store to watch them, keep them back. Don't give them any more credit. They were going too far. So they had to watch them because they would get too far ahead of them. Lots of times they'd fire people and they'd have to go get them back and make them work it out. Catch up with them.

Q. So all in all, would you say Tupper Warren was a benevolent good employer?

A. I'll tell you, he was good in this way. Because when that mill closed, there was a lot of people went on Welfare after he closed. A lot of them. Because he employed a lot of people. And they didn't work that hard, either. Because when I went there to work I thought, I'll have to work like the devil to keep up with those fellas. And a lot of times I'd - first time I went down - you couldn't smoke in the box factory. So one day when nobody was looking, I jumped outside the factory and I said I'll have a little smoke. So when I got down, I looked under the box factory, it was up high on one end, there was four or five fellas under there hiding. So I said well, that's how its done! But, I went back to work though.

Q. What were these fellas doing?

A. Nothing. Just hiding there - loafing. So then I had to learn to chew tobacco, because you couldn't smoke in there. And then I never got much chance to get out of there. I didn't bother. So, I started chewing tobacco a bit. It was laughable with the oldtimers telling you what kind of tobacco to chew. What was better for you. They would tell you what was sweeter and better for you. But anyway, it would all make you sick until you got use to it.

Q. Do you still chew tobacco?

A. No, I quit that a long time ago. Quit smoking too. But that's when it made it easier for me to quit smoking, by chewing tobacco. But in the mill, everybody chewed tobacco in the mill. It was the usual thing.

Q. Where did you spit, on the floor or did you have spittoons?

A. In the sawdust. And after while, if you chew the right tobacco, you don't have to spit. The old fellas use to say, that's the best tobacco, that's the best part of the tobacco.

Q. Did you swallow it?

A. No, just keep it in the side of your cheek. One time working - I worked down at Keith Potters mill one winter after I left school - in the wintertime you couldn't do much mason work, so they come after me to go to work in Keith Potters' mill. And he was sawing hardwood staves to make barrels and they were shipping them to the West Indies. So my job was outside. I had to roll the

wood on the ramp to the big saw where they saw them up. It was about five feet long, hard wood. So I had to wearin the mill and I didn't know it, in fact , they had two colored fellows on the job I was on, I didn't know that. They were young fellows, but there was two of them. And I replaced them, one guy . So anyway, I was working like the devil, on the run. And rain or snow, sleet, I was still working. So anyway, a couple of times, it was snowing bad and storming bad so I didn't come home. I stayed down there - they had a bunkhouse down there too, right there where Raymond Briton has his junk yard. And so I stayed there in the bunkhouse. So there was an old French fella, and in the winter, in the bunkhouse they had two oil drums, one on top of the other for a stove. And that use to throw out tremendous heat.

Q. Would it glow red in the dark?

A. I guess it would glow red! A lot of them fellas there, they'd bum chewing tobacco off this old French fella there. He use to chew tobacco. He ate that like it was candy. He'd chew two or three figs a day, so they'd bum him all the time. So one night we were all playing poker there, playing cards, and the old fella was getting ready to get in his bunk. So before he got in his bunk, he had his long johns on, and he took them off. So I said hey, what is he doing over there. He took his long johns off, and he took a fig of tobacco out of his pocket, and he rubbed it all over his behind, you know. And he put it back in and they all looked at him. After that nobody bummed any tobacco off him. I thought that was pretty good. I said to him the next day, that was a pretty good trick you done there! Well, he said, they didn't bother me for tobacco , and I said, no they didn't.

I just worked there for - starting working there in the winter and in the spring they closed it down because they couldn't haul wood - the roads closed and they couldn't haul anymore wood. The trucks would be overweight. But we sawed a lot of staves. They had number 1's and number 2's, and you had to watch them. If they had knots in them, that was number 2.

Q. Why did they have to be hard wood?

A. I don't know. It was making molasses casts and I suppose to stand the strain. Molasses is heavy. Capt. Bernie Melanson down below was hauling it to the West Indies and they were selling it for some company. Keith Potter was selling it. They were five feet long. Some were narrow, some were inch, and some were 2 inches and a half, 3 inches, but not too wide. Not over 4 inches, because they'd split I suppose when they curved them. But we sawed a lot of it. That yard was

full of hardwood there when they - that mill, where the mill set there - they made it into a house first. And it's still the house there. It was quite a spot there.

Q. You say this is where Raymond Brinton has his junkyard now?

A. Yes, that's where the office was. And across was the big mill. And on this side just above the office was the stave mill. Small mill.

Q. This is near the intersection of Smith's Cove, or is this down the road?

A. No, down towards Marshalltown. Where he has a, not Raymond but Roy Brinton. So I worked there and I didn't get much pay. Potter was poor pay, he didn't pay very well. He paid the married men by cash and the single men by cheque and the cheque was no good. You had to wait for quite awhile sometimes to get your money before it was any good.

Q. How old were you then?

A. Oh, about seventeen or eighteen.

Q. That must have been quite something to be hanging out with the older men, young and.....

A. Yeh. And learning to play poker and loosing your money. It was hard work too, it was always hardwork in the mill. Always working hard. But I ate at the cookhouse. They fed good. They had a couple guys there that cooked and they were good cooks, lot of macaroni and lot of beans and a lot of prunes. And they made good bread.

Q. And did you have a huge stack of pancakes for breakfast?

A. Yes, pancakes, oatmeal, beans, lots of bacon. We ate pretty good there. I thought it was pretty good. But, I stayed home here most of the time. A guy up the road here drove a truck for him, and when he came home nights I came home with him on the truck. And then I'd come home here but when he didn't I'd stay down there. Some nights it would be so cold the old truck wouldn't start in the mornings so he wouldn't bother. Plus he had a girlfriend down the road there and he'd come home to see her, mainly, and bring the truck. So if he didn't come up with the truck, I'd stay down there. That place was lousy too with fleas. Them old grey blankets. They had wool blankets, they'd hold a lot of fleas.

Q. What did they take out of your pay to stay in the bunkhouse?

A. Oh, not too much. I think it was about 50 cents a day, or something like that. 50 or 75 cents. But it was good food, I'll say that for them. They did feed good.

Q. They knew the secret to keeping everybody's spirits up was to feed them well.

A. Like he said, if you want to keep a good crew of men, you've got to feed them and feed them good. Lots of bread and molasses and butter and like I say, they use to make like a big casserole of macaroni and cheese, you know, only they'd make a big pot. But it was good and easier for them, I suppose.

Q. Can you remember anything about the stoves they cooked on?

A. Yeh, they had those big iron stoves.

Q. Did they burn coal?

A. No, I'll tell you what they burnt and how I know because where we sawed these hardwood staves, we had to lug wood over for the stoves. Everytime we come over for a meal we brought some wood over. Because we got hell for not bringing some over a couple of times. Cooks had to go over and get some wood and they got mad because they could have been peeling potatoes or whatever. So I use to get a bag and throw wood in it, you see, cause then the guy had a say there with double blades. Called equalizer. And when he run the staves through, that was five feet long and he sawed both ends at once. Instead of one and moving it up to get the five feet. He just put her through the once and that was your five feet. And he threw the stave out and I grabbed it and I had to lug them out as well as lug them in. So, those short ends we had to lug down to him to burn.

Q. And that all they burned?

A. Yeh, that's all they burned. Sometimes they had a hard job to get a fire going. But I'd take some sawdust and wood along with it. And a lot of times, the rest would take wood down too. But once they got a fire going, they were all right.

Q. I am just curious. I have a John Bull steel Range in my garage that looks like it might have come from that type of cookhouse.

A. Yes, they were big old ranges. Big stoves, big covers. Most all them cookhouses had big stoves. They went right down to the floor - there were no legs on them.

Q. Yeh, that's what I have in my garage.

A. Boy, when they get rolling good, they throw a lot of heat. They cook fast. And the old ovens get hot, too. Big ovens in them. They were good. But they made big pots of tea and coffee - great big ones. Had those big scoops to scoop it out with.

Q. Did you have desserts also, pies?

A. Oh yeh. Had pies - lots of pies. But mainly prunes. That was the main thing in all those places, cheaper and easier. They come in big wooden boxes full.

Q. And they would be like the stewed kind of prunes?

A. Yeh. They'd cook them - stew them. They were all right - they were good. They use to make a lot of apple pies. They'd buy the dried apples and make them that way and they made a lot of deep apple pies, you know. They'd fill those big deep pans with apple and just run the crust on the top. A lot of that.

Q. Since you're that close to Marshalltown, can you remember anything about the Poor Farm, or the Poor House?

A. Oh yeh, that was running good then. We worked there one time plastering.

Q. You and your father?

A. Yes. We went down and done a lot of plastering. They done a lot of repairs one year.

Q. Do you remember who was in charge?

A. Yes, Guy Thomas was in charge. And they fed good there too. They had a lot of people there. They all liked him. They all knew him and all liked them. He had the women there that were in there, they worked too.

Q. Doing what kind of things?

A. Oh, making bread and sewing and things like that. And sometimes, some were quite bad and couldn't do anything. Weren't able to. Gone in the head. But in the long dormitories like, a lot of people in one room. Lot of men. I know - its funny, but they never said much about it but a lot of things happened there that they wouldn't say much about. I know when a Comeau guy worked there quite a bit, and one old fellow would make a mess in the bed and they'd have to help clean him up, one night he choked. They smothered him with a pillow, some of the other fellas. They never said anything about it.

Q. What was the Comeau's guys job, what did he do there?

A. Just maintenance. But they use to burn wood and coal there but then they went on to oil. Municipality supplied oil. But they lived pretty good there. When he was there, Thomas, he looked after them pretty good.

Q. Was he the last manager there before.....?

A. Yes, he was the last one there. He used them good and they liked him. They all liked him. They figured he was the best they ever had there.

Q. So when you were plastering in there, you were plastering the walls?

A. Yeh. Walls and ceilings. That old plaster was falling down in some places. Where the roof had leaked and so on. And we repaired one of the chimneys, that was kind of bad. There was quite a bit of work there.

Q. Big house.

A. Yeh, it was a big house. Had a big barn there - he had cattle and they had their own milk. In fact he was a good caretaker, because it didn't cost the municipality so much.

Q. They were pretty self sufficient, eh?

A. Yeh, they were. They had chickens, eggs and stuff and he was good. He was very good with the fellows there. He use to live over here, you know, he had a farm over here. Then he took that place over. And he use to bring some of the fellows with him to help him cut hay and like of that. They'd all come with him,

walking along, some riding on the wagon, some following. And one day, he went home and left some of them. I don't know what happened. Anyway, they were all crying, they were scared. He had to come back and get them. They all called him Daddy.

Q. Did he have a wife at all to help with the females?

A. Oh, yeh. He had a wife. She looked after the women and they all liked her. She was very nice and kind. Good with them. The motherly type. And she had a big family too. Yeh, they were good keepers both of them. Better than the fellow that was ahead of them there. I won't say his name, but his Grandfather a member of Parliament here now. He was a bad cat. Old Everett Lewis night watchman there.

Q. I'd love to hear everything you know about Everett Lewis.

A. He lived there you know. His family. They were put in the Poor House.

Q. So how could you come to be put in the Poor House?

A. Being poor. Couldn't support yourself. And you go for welfare, and those days you never got welfare. They put you in the Poor House, so he was brought up there.

Q. So Everett was brought up there, grew up there?

A. He lived there. He knew the place well. But when he was night watchman, nobody went around there at night because he walked around there with a double barrel shot gun. Nobody trusted him. He was a nut you know. I put a foundation under the house for him, you know.

Q. His little house?

A. Yeh, I put a foundation - a cement block.

Q. Was this when Maude was with him?

A. She lived in the trailer most of the time. She didn't live in the house. After awhile, after she started making money. She bought a trailer. See Lloyd MacNeil and his wife done all her business for her. Her banking and everything.

And she wanted a trailer. She always wanted a trailer. She helped her get a trailer and she lived in that. He lived in the house there pretty well. But the house had, God it was full of rocks. All sizes. They had just a stripe painted on it. You should have seen it inside. Everything was painted - there was tar paper on the floor and she had designs painted in that. And the walls, everything was painted. The stove. And there was a little attic, there was no upstairs in it just a little attic. And he didn't want to stairway or anything down in the basement. Just wanted to crawl in the basement. I said your nuts. But when the Atlas Construction put the house over on the foundation, they didn't realize it was so heavy. Well, I said, you want to look inside, you'll see why. The engineer looked inside and it was full of rocks. She had all these rocks she had painted. Use to go down to the shore and get these rocks and she'd paint them. They were smooth. Had everything painted. But God, old Everett was nuts. He'd go to town every day on the bus, and he'd come home with two quarts of beer and he'd hide it. He'd take his money - he'd have paper money and he'd change it into silver because he had pet squirrels there you see. Those squirrels would eat right out of his hand. And I said those squirrels will get your money Everett. He said no they won't. He changed it into silver, whatever he could get. So they couldn't get it. But he had quite a bit of money stashed away there. Well, not a great lot, but he had 4 or 5 thousand in coins. When he went to the hospital once, he took it with him. They had to count it out for him to make sure he got it all back again.

Q. What was he in the hospital for?

A. I don't know what happened. Something happened to him that he had to go in the hospital. He had a hernia or something, I forget what it was. But Dr. MacCleve looked after him while he was in there. He never worked too much, he use to go to town and work in the flower gardens for the old ladies around and make a few bucks.

Q. Did he do some peddling?

A. Yeh, he peddled fish in that old car he had there. Price of gas went up and he quit driving it. Parked it in the yard there and covered it over with hay. Gas went up to 25 cents a gallon, I think, and that was it. He told me, he use stay there and talk. He remembers me when I was only about that high! He use to come in the house a lot peddling fish.

Q. Then you ran into him again when you were doing this plastering job?

A. Yeh, when I was doing the foundation for him. I was doing one across the road for Jim Ross and he came over there, and well, he knew me anyway. I use to raise the devil with him and tease him. So when Atlas Construction was doing the highway, they had to move his house back. And he wouldn't have anybody but me do his foundation. And they said, no, we've got a guy. And he said oh no, I want him and nobody else. So they had to come and get me. I done it for him.

Q. So after that the house had a basement? Didn't have one before?

A. No, it never had one. It sat on the ground just on a few rocks. Few rocks in each corner, that was it. Oh, the old house wasn't any good for anything. It was falling apart. It was quite solid, but it didn't amount to anything inside. It was all cardboard and whatever they could find to nail on to it. And she had everything all painted. Well, he painted too, you know. He painted some the same as she did. Lloyd MacNeil told me he went up there one day and he painted, Lloyd had a horse in the pasture, Lloyd had a nice collie dog. The dog was smart, use to bring the cows in and things like that, bring the mail in and things like that. Smart dog. So he says, I'll paint a picture of him, Lloyd, for you. So he painted a picture of the dog and the horse. And the dog was bigger than the horse. Lloyd says I don't want that, the dog is bigger than the horse. So he done it again. But he use to paint some after she was dead, you know. He said they were hers, that she painted. But Lloyd said you better not do that anymore or you'll get caught. That's crooked. So he didn't paint anymore. But she did a lot of painting. I could have got lots of them for pretty near nothing. But I didn't care much for her painting. Oxen with big eyelashes and, he was a nut and she wasn't far behind them.

Q. Did they get along well, the two of them?

A. No, no. They fought like. Well, she was chasing around on him for awhile there.

Q. No, I didn't know that.

A. Yeh. He came home and there was a feller in the house with her. And Everett wanted to throw him out and he beat hell out of Everett so he had him in court. That was quite awhile ago. You never hear about those things. I don't know his name, he lives up in back of Marshalltown, a farmer. He is the guy with the grey

horses. He was a bad guy. I don't know his name. He was single. He had a farm up there. He was ugly.

Q. It is usually indicative of their character if they are beating their animals.

A. Yeh, he was bad with the horses. He use to sell wood and vegetables and like of that. He had a farm down there on the back road in Marshalltown somewhere. I can't think of his name. It doesn't matter. But I know when the horse and wagons would go by, we use to jump and ride on the back of them you know, but not with him. He'd get you with the whip. We use to spray the old horses with gravel and they'd run like the devil.

Q. How would you do that, with a handful of gravel?

A. Yeh, with a handful of gravel. Wouldn't they run!

Q. How many years did Everett have this job as a night watchman?

A. Oh, for a few years. I forget - he didn't have it with - I think he was hired by the County. Not by the keeper, but by the County.

Q. The keeper lived there too, though?

A. Oh yes. Yeh, and I don't know why they hired him at all. I can't figure out why. Course, there was a lot of stuff around there they could have stolen from the place. People would and he - old Everett was a regular night hawk - he would prowl around. He was like a cat. But he didn't like T.V.'s or anything like that. He was an oldtimer.

Q. Very suspicious of new things.

A. He couldn't read nor write either. I think she could but he couldn't. Neither him nor his brothers, some were smart, but not him.

Q. How did people make the leap from living at the Poor Farm all their live in an institutional setting, how did they make the switch to living outside of the Poor Farm?

A. Well, when the war started some went in the army that were the right age to go into the army. And some stayed there on the poor farm and died there, and

some were taken to other places after that closed. I don't know where they went but there was other institutions, Waterville, I suppose, some of them. And there was another farm down in towards Bridgewater through the woods there somewhere. You went down highway #10, down there somewhere.

Q. If you were a child growing up on the poor farm, would you be treated differently? Would you go to school?

A. I don't know about that. They didn't keep any children there. I think they sent them to an orphanage or something. Cause I don't remember seeing any children there. There were never any children there. There was never any children around there. They took them away from there. There was only people that were older and I remember there was some girls that went to school in Digby, two girls, they were kind of, well they weren't quite all there, but they went to school and their father and mother was all right, they lived by the Catholic Church in Digby. They were ok. But when they died, the two girls wound up down there. Course they weren't girls then, they were in their 20's. I often wonder where they went to, and I didn't know until I was down there plastering. I see them there. I said to my brother, isn't that the two girls use to go to school in Digby? He said, yeh. I wondered where they ever went to. And I said well that's them there. Course, they didn't remember us, you know. And they had gone to school in Digby. And of course after their parents had gone that's what happened to them. They couldn't look after themselves, didn't have brains enough. That's what happened to ya.

Q. What was the end of the Poor Farm? What year was that?

A. That was in the fifties wasn't it, the last of the fifties. No I can't remember when it went out. I went in the army in the fifties, and it might have went then, I don't know.

Q. You went in the Army in the fifties?

A. Yeh, and I was away.

Q. How long was your army career?

A. Six years. I was away six years and a lot of things happened then that - a lot of changes. No it must have been in the sixties that it shut down. I know there was a fella working at the base, a Titus fella, he was brought up in the Poor

House, ya, he went in the Army and he was young and he joined the Army and got out of there. Him and his brother.

Q. Probably saw the army as a great opportunity.

A. Yeh, and they both had their own homes, but he was still a little, you know. He went to New Brunswick after, when he retired from the Army he went to New Brunswick. But I don't know what happened to the other brother. Well, the other brother died I guess. They worked in the steam plant there.

Q. How did you come to decide to go into the Army for awhile?

A. Well, there was nothing going on or nothing happening. And they were advertising a lot so I went in the Army.

Q. Where did you serve all your time?

A. Well, out in British Columbia, I was there about five month, almost six, and went overseas for two years. Then I come back and stayed in Ontario and then I got out and come back here again.

Q. Where did you go overseas?

A. Over in Germany. Stayed there for two years, then I come back here to Ontario and came back here.

Q. Were you in Petawawa?

A. Yeh, Petawawa. Stayed there for three years, then come back here. And things were no better back here than when I left.

Q. Were you married at that time? Did your family move with you?

A. Yeh. Had no family, just my wife. She went over too after awhile. After I got over there. Then we came back to Petawawa. Stayed there for three years.

Q. What was your trade in the Army?

A. I was in the Engineers. I couldn't get any trade in the Army because they were full up and the only thing I could get was driver. Driver mechanic, so I was a driver mechanic. But I went on a mechanics course, and there was twenty some on it, and I came second on the course. So, but I never worked at it.

Q. It all stems from your love of reading as a child.

A. Probably. Oh, I studied the course. Between that and the practical, I came second. I would have come first, but they asked me a question about diesel and I never had anything on diesel. Diesel starts by friction and the other motors by spark. I didn't know that. I never thought. I wasn't thinking. I missed out on that one question. Course every course you take you have to know first aid plus fire. Well that was no problem.

Q. Just a couple more minutes of your time. When you got out of the army, you had already learned your brick laying trade before that. You went back to it?

A. Yeh. No, I didn't go right back to it. I drove oil trucks for Irving Oil, I went to work for Irving Oil. I drove an oil truck for a year for them, then I drove an oil truck for Co-Op, and then I went back to it after that.

Q. Was that our Co-Op here in Digby? They also dealt in fuel at that time?

A. Yes. They dealt in fuel and stove oil and furnace oil. Then I went back to my trade again. And I was working for awhile at that and I got a job at Cornwallis at my trade, so I stayed there and retired from there.

Q. That was a boom for a lot of people especially living around this area.

A. Yes, it was. It was less money but it was steady and it gave me a pension at the end of the line. Which was good. Otherwise, if I had worked on my own, I had a good time working around the country meeting people, which I liked. But that doesn't always feed you. At the end of the line it paid off, got a fair pension from it from the government. I enjoyed myself working. Had a good time. Always had new people, every other day, come there to work, come and go. It was like the army, they were coming and going steady. New people. A lot of fellas wouldn't work and it seemed as though every lazy guy they had on the base, labourer, they'd send them to work with me because they didn't want them anywhere else. But I could always get work out of them, they couldn't figure out how. But what I use to say was, well, if you don't want to work you don't have

to, the hell with ya. I'd turn my back and start working. That would kind of get their goat and they'd start working. But, I didn't mind. I worked along and done what I was suppose to.

Q. What year did you retire?

A. I retired in 1993.

Q. What year did the base close?

A. The base closed not long after that, 1995 or 1996.

Q. You timed that pretty good!

A. Yes, I timed it out good. You know I knew it was going to close. I was told that quite awhile ago before that. Trudeau tried to close it, and he started it then, and he was going to close it. And the other fellows, I knew they were going to close it. Had to be.

Q. Did you do your own basic training at Cornwallis?

A. No. Out in Chilliwack, British Columbia. I done it out there. After the basic we went over to Germany. And we landed in Holland and we went from Holland on those little trains, into Germany and it was a funny feeling when we landed in Germany. We got off the trains, and standing there in the railway station, the Germans were hollering at us to go home and all kinds of stuff you know. Course, it didn't bother us. We didn't care. But we found out that we were about the smallest army there out of the whole works. There was everything there, British, American, Danish, Belgium, lots of armies there and we were one of the smallest crew.

Q. So just maybe a few words on your own married life. How you met your wife and the size of family that you had.

A. Well, we have had seven kids. We met here,

Wife: I'll tell you how he met me. When I was five years old he wheeled me around in the wheelbarrow.

A. Yes, I did.

Q. So you met Joyce when she was five years old.

A. Her father was up there working.

Q. What was your maiden name Joyce?

A. McGuire.

Q. Did you live in Bear River?

A. No, no, I'm from Winnipeg. (Can't hear the wife's conversation)

Q. I was only 12 year old when I wheeled her around in the wheelbarrow. Only a kid, little kid. I never met her again, when did you fellas come down here from Winnipeg? 1948?

A. Yeh, I met her again in 1948. We got married in 1950, so we are married 50 years this year.

Q. Oh, Congratulations.

A. Seems like a hundred!

Q. It will be 50 this year, next month? December?

A. Yeh. December.

Q. So you got big plans for a family get together.

A. Oh, well, we'll get together with the family, probably. So whatever.

Q. Wonderful milestone. One I'll never see.

A. Its too late to get fifty years in, is it?

Q. Yeh, getting there.

A. Then the trouble is, I'll do this fifty, then I got to start another fifty, have I?

Q. No, you go to 60 and 70.

A. Yeh, but I don't know if I can make another fifty or not.

Q. I would love to have on tape, you have a houseful of cats here, so I would love for you to tell me like you were telling me before the interview started, why cats are so important.

A. Why they are important. I don't know. I like them . I am sort of allergic to them too you know. When I get around them I get stuffed up a little bit, too close. But I like cats, I like dogs, I like animals. And plus they keep the rats down. When I had a pig here every year, we had all kinds of rats. And we got dogs first. She started raising these little dashunds, you know, and they were good rat killers.

Q. The Dashunds were good rat killers?

A. Oh yeh. He use to go over there with the pig, I thought he liked the pig. But it wasn't that, he liked to kill the rats in there. So I use to keep the dogs in a pen there, and she kept raising dogs, and I kept them in the dog pen over there. And the darn rats were coming in the dog pen - they couldn't keep them down, there was so many. So I'd take the cats over, and one old cat we had there and she went in with me and there were rats going everywhere. She just reached out and grabbed a big fat one. The fattest one in the bunch. But they are gone pretty well now. The cats keep them down pretty well. Every once in a while you'll see them get one, but they are scarce. Not like they use to be. But I put out a lot of poison too. But the rats are around. If you see one rat, there'll be a dozen or more there. And that 's true. And near the water, you'll get a lot of them too. That bridge over there is full of them. Around the old fish.

Q. Some people aren't keeping farm animals anymore and having a barn full of hay and grain.

A. Yeh, you'll get rats there. And if I had a barn, I wouldn't care if it was full of cats. They'd keep them out of there. But I didn't plan on this many cats, but I felt sorry for them out in the cold. Being out in the snow and the cold, so I brought the first one in. The other four kittens, I don't know if the mother is up there wild somewhere. I think she is going to have another batch. I don't know what to do. I don't think I'll bring them in anymore until I get rid of some. No good to take them down to the TLC, the shelter because they got too many now.

Q. What was the story you told me about the ship having to turn back.

A. The old whaler. My grandfather on my mother's side, he was on a whaler. He went to sea. This was a true story. I read about it. The old whaler, they had a favorite cat, a tom cat, he kept the rats down and when they went ashore somewhere in the New England States, along there somewhere to water up and get rations, before they went on another trip because their trips were generally for two years. They were taking the lines up ready to go, somebody hollered out tom cat's not here. He had a name, but I forget his name. The Captain said don't unfasten those lines, you fellas go ashore and find him. So they went ashore and after awhile they found him. He was down in an alley, the old cat was. There he was with a female! So they waited until everything was all over, and then they grabbed him and took him back to the ship. They said, we found him, Capt. He said all right. Untie her and we'll go. So away they went. But they wouldn't go without him.

Q. That's a good story.

