

# Susan Elizabeth Bragg

Interviewed by Jennifer Whalen. October 11, 2000



- Q. O.K., we'll start by getting your full name?
- A. It's up there on the chart. (Laughter) Susan Elizabeth Bragg.
- Q. O.K., is that your maid en name or your married name?
- A. Married name.
- Q. And what was your maiden name?
- A. Washburn.
- Q. O.K. Who were your parents?
- A. My mother was Jenny Augon and my father was Henrey Washburn.
- Q. What was your mothers maiden name?
- A. Augon.
- Q. O.K., when were you born?
- A. In July second eighteen ninety-eight.
- Q. And where were you born?
- A. A little place called Scott's Brooke. A little community in New Brunswick.
- Q. So when was it that you came here?
- A. The year I came to Nova Scotia was nineteen thirty>
- Q. And do you remember how old you were then?
- A. I must have been thirty-four, no thirty-two.
- Q. How did you get here?
- A. Well I went to the United States first.
- Q. What had you gone to the States for?
- A. For work.

Q. And what was your job back then?

A. I was a waitress in a girls school.

Q. How did you like doing that?

A. I loved it.

Q. Did you? So when you came back here, how did you find you were treated?

A. Beautiful, wonderful people.

Q. Did you feel accepted? Did you feel that you were safe here and O.K. here?

A. Oh yes.

Q. O.K. How often would you get to see your family?

A. Oh at that time probably once or twice a year.

Q. And how else would you communicate with them?

A. Well at least once a month.

Q. And would you talk to them, would you write them letters, or talk to them on the phone?

A. Yes. Quite often.

Q. O.K. How old were you when you got married?

A. Thirty-one.

Q. And how did you meet your husband?

A. I met him through his cousin who was a friend of mine.

Q. And what did he do for a living?

A. He was a carpenter.

Q. What attracted you to him?

A. Well his friendliness I think, and kindness.

Q. How long did you go out together before you were married?

A. Two years.

Q. What do you remember about your wedding night?

A. Well we went to the parsonage and were married at a parsonage because I had no people over there.

Q. How was that?

A. Well it was very quiet and we had his brother and his brothers friend for witnesses.

Q. And what's his full name, your husbands full name?

A. George Milton Bragg.

Q. Where did you go for your honeymoon?

A. To North Range, Nova Scotia.

Q. And how was that?

A. That was the tenth of August.

Q. How much did you know about the birds and the bees before you got married?

A. How much did I know about?

Q. The birds and the bees?

A. Not much, I guess.

Q. Had anyone talked to you about it before? Your mom or your dad?

A. I don't think so.

Q. No? O.K. How did you plan for your family?

A. How did I plan for my family? I didn't/t plan anything.

Q. Did you have any children?

A. Not of my own, no.

Q. O.K. What would happen in your community if a girl got pregnant before she was married?

A. I don't get it.

Q. If there was a girl that was pregnant before she got married how would the community treat her? Would they treat her differently?

A. Ah, I can't answer that question. I don't know that.

Q. O.K. Once you got married, did you stay around here?

A. We moved back here again in nineteen-thirty.

Q. And did you build a house?

A. We bought this house in nineteen thirty-two.

Q. Do you remember how much you paid for it?

A. Five hundred dollars.

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

A. Oh, we had surprise parties on different people and we played games of all sorts and before I came here they used to have a group that had a singing teacher who taught them how to sing and he lived nearby and that was part of their entertainment. They liked that and quite a number of them became members of choir's.

Q. Did you ever become a member of a choir?

A. Yes. I was a member of the choir for a while.

Q. Which choir? Which choir were you a member of?

A. North Range Baptist Church.

Q. And what did you think about that choir?

A. I think they were all pretty nice people and very friendly and some of us couldn't sing too well but we were forgiven.

Q. Good. What did you grow and raise yourself?

A. Well we raised all our own vegetables and that sort of thing and we kept a cow and a oxen and we used to sell the milk and cream and butter. Things on the farm. General things on the small farm.

Q. How much would you sell the milk and butter for?

A. I think the milk was fifteen cents a quart. Not a liter, a quart and the butter was twenty-five cents a pound.

Q. What did you barter for? Did you trade for anything?

A. Did I try for.....?

Q. Did you trade anything?

A. Oh, trade. No.

Q. When did you first get electricity?

A. Nineteen-forty.

Q. And how did that change things for you and your husband?

A. Well it made quite a few changes. The best one I think was because we had good light and then we had the appliances of course and outside of that it was just, we just enjoyed it. That's all.

Q. What was bath night like when you got running water? Bath night?

A. Oh. (Laughter) I don't know. I guess we bathed every day, I guess. You know, in a way.

Q. How often would you see a dentist?

A. Well I didn't see a dentist too often.

Q. How would you take care of your teeth?

A. Well I used to brush them, that's all and then I had upper dentures until nineteen forty-five and I had to get lower teeth because they were beginning to cause some sort of a disease in my gum and I had to have more teeth removed and get dentures.

Q. What would you use to brush with? What would you use to brush your teeth with?

A. I must have had a brush. (Laughter)

Q. Did you use toothpaste?

A. Oh, yes. We had toothpaste over in the States so I must have used it when I come here.

Q. How far away was the doctor?

A. Well, the first doctor we had when I came here was only about three miles away. After he retired, about ten or twelve miles.

Q. When would you call the doctor?

A. When?

Q. How big of an emergency would there have to be?

A. Well, I don't think, I don't ever remember calling the doctor. We went to the doctor. We didn't have any emergencies that would cause you to call the doctor.

Q. What were some home remedies that would have been common back then?

A. Well aspirin was one and there was the Raleigh man. He had ointment and that was rather good for lots of things. So that was one of the things we depended on, was the different medications the Raleigh man had.

Q. Would he sell those?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you remember how much they would be?

A. No. I couldn't tell you.

Q. When somebody died, how was the funeral handled?

A. Very well. The funeral director, funeral director Linden Digby and he took care of all the funerals in this community.

Q. What would happen to the body?

A. They would Bury it.

Q. How long would they leave it out for at the wake?

A. I don't know.

Q. What do you remember about the depression?

A. Well I remember that, that was the reason we came back to Canada, because it was so bad over in the states and we just thought we couldn't live there so we came here.

Q. What were some of the ways that it affected you?

A. Well there was less money to be had and people were looking after their own troubles and so on and we just thought it would be better here and then my husband's father was getting old and he wanted his son to come and be with him, so that's the real reasons we came back.

Q. When you came over here, did you notice a big difference in the depression in comparison to how it was in the States?

A. No. I think the reason was because these people produce their own food and things like that here, so you didn't have to go to the store and buy them and it was much easier. You had your own vegetables and your own meat and everything was raised on the farm.

Q. What do you remember about the World wars? The Second World War?

A. Well I don't know. I know it was terrible but I don't know too much else about it.

Q. Did it have any effects on the community over here?

A. Well I think there were several men or boys that went from here. They enlisted in the army and, I don't know if there was any of them that was killed over there. Do you know? No.

Q. How would you plan for hard times or retirement? How did you plan for retirement?

A. Well, we saved a little. What we could. That's all.

Q. How did your parents pass on their possessions? How did your parents pass on their possessions?

A. I don't seem to.....

Q. Your father's parents, did they pass on any of their possessions? Your husband's father, did he pass on any possessions?

A. I don't think so.

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

A. Well, I know that it used to be that if a person needed help, that the whole community would go and help that person and then if someone else in the community needed help, everyone would go there and it was sort of a chain, everyone helped the other person that needed help.

Q. What sorts of things would they do to help each other out?

A. Well, for instance, if anyone needed a barn, or a barn had burned down and they wanted to build a new one, they'd get together and start, get the frame of the barn up.

Q. Do you remember anything about the Poor Farm?

A. No. I know where it was in Marshall Town but I don't know anything about it.

Q. What do you remember about elections

A. Well I know we always had them.

Q. Were they any different back then from now?

A. I think so. I think there was just two parties then and you belonged to either one or the other and that was it. There was, I don't know when the third party came along but at that time it was just the two.

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

A. I think the worst weather that I can remember was when I was about eight years old. We had a thunder storm. I was in New Brunswick. We had a thunder storm that lasted all night and it struck a building, a hall and burned it to the ground and it was just like day light all night, the lightning and I was so terribly frightened that my father came and took me out of my bed and put him in bed, put me in bed with him because I was so frightened and in the morning the sun was shining bright and everything was all right.

Q. What ghost stories do you remember?

A. I don't like ghost stories so I don't remember any of them.

Q. What about superstitions? Superstitions?

A. My position?

Q. Superstitions?

A. Superstitions. Oh I used to have all of those little superstitions, but I don't believe in them anymore.

Q. Do you remember what some of them were?

A. Well, I remember one because it just happened the other day and I thought of it. When you drop the dish towel, your going to have company.

Q. Do you remember any more?

A. Oh yes, there are lots of them but they're too silly?

Q. Do you remember how the community here policed itself? How the community policed itself?

A. How the community.....

Q. Would police itself?

A. No, I don't know.

Q. Do you know how the law was enforced here?

A. I don't understand.

Q. If someone broke the law, what would happen to them?

A. Well I don't know. I wouldn't even want to think about that. Oh, you'd have a police call now or you could call 911 for help.

Q. What organizations did you belong to?

A. I belonged to the Baptist young people's union once and I belonged to the Sons of Temperance sometimes and the other little organizations of the Church.

Q. Could you tell me about the Sons of Temperance?

A. The what....?

Q. The Sons of Temperance?

A. Well it was an organization where you were supposed to be a teetotaler and they had it in this community for quite some time and then the organization seemed to die out in the head quarters and it just died out and there's no word of it anymore.

Q. Why do you think it died out?

A. I think people got so they liked to drink a little bit.

Q. How important was that organization in your community?

A. Well it seemed to be important at the time because there were a lot of young people joining the organization and they were quite active for a while and then it just seemed to die away.

Q. Who were some of the colorful characters in your community?

A. Who were what?

Q. Who were some of the different people in your community?

A. You mean people that are sort of outstanding or something like that? Oh, here's the milk man.

Other. Do you want me to get the door?

A. No, he'll come in and....

Other. O.K., O.K. Yeah, she's wondering about some of the different people that you might have some stories about.

A. Well, I don't know. Everybody seemed to be important.

Other. Hello.

Other. How are you? Nice day.

Other. Yes. You're on Candid Camera.

Other. Yes (Laughter)

Other. O.K., thanks a lot.

A. (Laughter) See ya later.

Other. See ya.

Other. Bye, bye.

Q. What do you remember about Maud Lewis?

A. Well I remember we went to see her one time. My husband's brother and his wife were here and they wanted, they were from over in the States and they wanted to look in on them and see what it was like and we went in the house for a few minutes and it was a very small little place. The house was about the size of this kitchen and they had everything in it and it was very nice. They kept it looking neat, you know except it was so crowded but that's all I.... I remember she was very much crippled and she did some nice paintings.

Q. How would you compare family values today as in days gone by?

A. Well there are still a lot of families that are close families but I find there are a lot of families that are not like they were in the earlier days. They don't seem to have the closeness.

Q. How has this area changed here since you were here to now?

A. Well it's changed quite a bit because there are a lot more people in the community now than there was when I came here. It was a place where there were larger farms and, but now those farms have been, people have given them up and houses have been built and new people have come in. It used to be that the farm was given from the father to the son and so on, but it's not that way anymore so there are a lot of new people in the community and a lot more.

Q. How have the roads changed?

A. Oh the roads have changed wonderfully and the roads are paved now and before it used to be so muddy in the spring, if you went out you get, you nearly always got stuck in the mud.

Other. You might just ask her about those topics. (Passing note book)

Q. What were some of your favorite holidays?

A. My favorite Holiday? Oh, I think it must be Christmas.

Q. And why's that?

A. Well, there are a lot of reasons. One of the reasons is because the family all got together on Christmas Day and another reason which I think is the most important is Christ's birthday.

Q. What was your Religion?

A. Baptist.

Q. And what role did that play in your life? How did that affect you throughout your life?

A. Well, that's a hard question to answer but I believe in the bible and I believe what the bible says and I read, I read the bible and I've been a Sunday school teacher and I've had to make quite a few searches on account of some of the students that were asking questions that I couldn't answer so I had to search the bible and get the answers and I've tried to live by it ever since and I think it makes anyone much happier if they can depend on what the bible teaches.

Q. What did you think about being a Sunday school teacher?

A. Well I never thought I'd like to be a teacher but I liked to teach Sunday school because I felt that I was doing something to help somebody else and I don't want to brag about myself but I always had a feeling that I liked to help somebody?

Q. When you had your milk, where would you sell it? Who would you sell it to?

A. Well they used to have a truck that went by and picked up the, when we sold cream, they picked up the cans of cream but when I sold milk, I sold it to people right near by.

Q. How old were you when your husband died?

A. Eighty-eight.

Q. And how did he die?

A. Oh, he had Alzheimers Disease and he went out and fell and broke the bones in his spine so he had to go to the hospital and the doctor said he couldn't live at home anymore because he had to have twenty-four hour care so he went to the nursing home and he passed away there in February, nineteen eighty-six.

Q. Tell me about some of the skits that you performed at local gatherings?

A. Pardon?

Q. Some skits that you would put on at the local gathering?

A. (Laughter) I'd like to tell the one that I put on for this lady.

Q. Tell me about it.

A. (Laughter) I'm afraid I couldn't get it straight but I used to write the skits and then have the people, pick out different people to do the acting and I enjoyed doing that and, but there were so many of them I just couldn't get them all straightened out, I don't think.

Q. What were they about?

A. Well it could be most anything but they always ended up in something silly.

Q. Where would you perform them?

A. Usually at the hall, sometimes in peoples homes and, but we had a lot of fun anyway.

Q. Tell me about the poetry you write?

A. Well that's another story. I've written so many poems that it's hard for me to remember them all. I have a whole book full of poems that I've written.

Other. (Inaudible audio)

Q. Do you remember one that you could recite for us?

A. Do I remember one that I could.....?

Q. You could tell us?

A. I don't know. I can do it when I'm alone. (Laughter) I don't know whether I could go through one if I started it.

Other. Maybe if we got your book, you could read us one?

A. Yes.

Other. Would that be O.K.

A. Yes, that little booklet is right around the corner there, that one with the fancy flowered cover. Yes. Well what sort of poem would you like?

Other. One of your favorites.

A. Well, I don't know. I think my favorite is, has been copy written. This is one I like because some of my friends wanted me to write one about their grandmother.

My Grandmother's Garden

I think of the green trimmed white cottage, that stands by a highway brown  
Once it was filled with gladness and love in each room was found  
The curtains are white at the windows, bright flowers the gardens adorn  
There's a big gray rock by the pathway and the tree by the gate is a hawthorn  
In her garden my grandmother taught me how beautiful flowers should grow  
They must be tended and straightened until all the blossoms

(continued on next page)

I was her fresh budding flower kissed with the dew of youth  
There's a place in the world for roses fragrant with goodness and truth  
Thus we talked and walked in her garden in a way seeming somehow divine  
And in the bright colored loopins and the morning glory vine  
I walked last night in her garden just to feel that old time glow  
But the beauty was somehow missing, I felt not that old time flow  
Of fragrance from the flowers or the touch of the guiding hand  
The life of the garden was absent, Grandma walked in a fairer land  
Twas when I reached for the soft pink blossom, by brier my finger was torn  
I remembered how Grandmother taught me, In life every rose has it's thorn  
Then suddenly there in the twilight, I felt such a peaceful calm  
There came the glow I had longed for, her hand still guiding me on.

Q. Beautiful

A. Well thank you.

Other. Very nice. Yeah

A. That's Maxine's Grandmother.

Other. Oh is it. Oh, very nice. Lovely. I'd be interested in how long she's been writing poetry.

Q. How long have you been writing poetry for?

A. Since I was born, I guess. (Laughter) No, I've been writing it for a long time.

Q. What made you become interested in poetry?

A. When I went to school. I used to love to read poetry in school and I could memorize it so, I could do it so quick and get it all right and I thought it was wonderful and one day my father said to me, "Why don't you read that poem", so I read it off to him, I didn't read it, I had memorized it and when I started to say it, I just rattled it off like I always did and he said, "oh, wait a minute. You don't read poetry that way". Then he read it the way it should be read and after that I always tried to read and write it the way it should be read and after that I always tried to read and write it the way it should be and give it some expression.

Q. Did your father write poetry too?

A. No, but he loved to read it?

Q. What was your relationship with Maxine's Grandmother?

A. We were the very best of friends. I can't explain it quite, but we were very good friends.

Q. What sorts of things would you do together?

A. When we'd have social gatherings or anything like that we always, we enjoyed each others company and they used to take me different places driving and so on.

Q. Thank you very much. You don't have to sit there any longer with all those wires on you.

Other. That's a very interesting life you've had.

A. Thank you.

