

# Harry Hill

Interveiwed by Susan Amero, Oct. 16, 2000



Q. O.K., What is your full name?

A. Harry Albert Hill.

Q. E, O.K., Who were your parents?

A. Benjamin Hill, mother's name was Blanche Hill.

Q. O.K., and what was your mother's maiden name, before she was married?

A. Hawkins.

Q. And, when were you born?

A, 1913, May 14th.

Q. And where were you born?

A. Out, just the head of the tide, here, where, you know, house I still live in now. Ya, same house we live in now.

Q. So, how large was your family?

A. Sixteen.

Q. Where do you fit in, in the family?

A. Oh, can't hardly remember, but back quite a ways. Most of our friends are passed away.

Q. No, but I mean...

A. Um, I'm the family.

Q. Out of the sixteen kids, what number were you?

A. Oh, I don't know.

Q. You can't remember?

A. No, I can't remember that. I can think back, I got it home but I....

Q. So, what did your father do for a living?

A. Father, he was, learned to be a stone cutter and a brick layer and plaster and he could do carpenter work and different things.

Q. So, did your mother work outside of the home?

A. No.

Q. What was a typical school day like?

A. They was good school days. I went far as grade 1. Want to know how far I went?

Q. No, what kinds of things did you do during the day at school?

A. Oh, study, I guess a little bit and do questions. Teacher asked the questions and things like that.

Q. And what you have done for activities? Playtime at school.

A. We had recess around quarter to eleven and back in school again.

Q. And did you play baseball or anything like that?

A. Oh ya, played rugby and a baseball, yup.

Q. O.K. who was your best friend at school?

A. My best friend was a, a girl that lived by, out my vacinity and we sit together. The girl's name was Jenny Alexander.

Q. So, what types of things would you do with your friends when you weren't in school?

A. Oh, play around here and different places. Out, stay out few nights after we studies our lessons and then go home and go to bed. (laughter)

Q. What is your best memory of school?

A. Oh, I don't exactly know, but a, I remember lots. (laughter)

Q. Can you give me an example of one?

A. Oh, I liked my school teachers. The school teachers liked me that's all, liked me. I, I was the teacher's pet.

Q. Well that was good.

A. Ya.

Q. Do you have a least favorite memory of school?

A. Um...not too much, at the present time.

Q. What subjects were you taught in school?

A. 'Rithmetic and spellings and history and geography, things like that.

Q. And, which subject was your favorite?

A. My writing, I was favorite writer. I always made a hundred in my writing.

Q. So, why was that? Why...

A. Well, I suppose, I was a good writer.

Q. Which subject was your least favorite?

A. Oh, I couldn't do 'rithmetic to good. (laughter)

Q. So, what kind of things did you have to memorize in school?

A. The spelling....mostly. In the morning, you want. In the morning I would start "God Save the Queen" and "O, Canada" with the kids. But I was one of the best singers.

Q. Good

A. Ya.....

Q. And how were you disciplined in school?

A. Pretty good.

Q. No. If you were bad in school what would the teacher do?

A. Oh, sometime I quite mischievous. (laughter)

Q. So, what would happen if, when you were mischievous?

A. Stand me in the corner. Stay after school and 'rase the boards for her.  
(laughter)

Q. O.K., and how were you disciplined at home?

A. Home, you had to do what they asked you to do and you done it

Q. And if you didn't do it, what would happen?

A. Might get a little trimmin', not too much, were, we were brought up that way.

Q. And what were your daily chores at home?

A. Sawin' wood, fillin' the wood box.

Q. And after your chores were done, what would you do with your time?

A. Study lessons and go to bed.

Q. What was your favorite holiday, when you were a child?

A. Well, don't 'xactly know really.

Q. Like I mean, Christmas, Easter...

A. Oh, Christmas.

Q. And why, why was Christmas your favorite?

A. Well we always looked for presents and (laughter) Santie Clause.

Q. And what other holidays or special events do you remember from your childhood?

A. Oh, swimming mostly and ball.

Q. O.K., what was your favorite toy?

A. I don't remember that, not that.

Q. O.K., what pets do you remember having?

A. Cat and dog.

Q. And what was the cat's name?

A. I don't know.

Q. And the dog's name?

A. Jeff.

Q. Jeff.

Q. O.K., what was it like, at your house, when the catalogue would arrive? Like the Sears

Catalogue or the Eaton's Catalogue.

A. Well nothing would happen, not that I know of.

Q. O.K., so where would you get the things that you needed.

A. "Round town here, just the stores.

Q. So, your parents bought them or did you have hand-me-downs or...?

A. Bought them, ya.

Q. O.K. And how much spending money did you have as a child?

A. As a child, oh you had twenty-five cents a week, that last you a whole while.

Q. And what was your religion?

A. My religion I was an Advent.

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

A. Oh, we had to be good.

Q. Did you do anything special on Sundays?

A. Not really, no. Go to Sunday school.

Q. What was your favorite hymn?

A. "How Great Thou Art"? I sing that a lot.

Q. Could you sing me a verse of it?

A. Ya. (Cough)

And sings my soul  
My Savior God to thee  
How great thou art  
How great thou art

And sings my soul  
My Savior God to thee  
How great thou art  
How great thou art

Q. Mr. Hill that was beautiful.

A. Ya.

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

A. Good, I had good religion. I was born and brought up in, young. Went to Sunday

School four years, never missed.

Q. How did you keep up with what was going on in the outside world? Like did you

Communicate, like, did you hear about things that were going on through the radio

Or newspapers?

A. Well, some ya, I don't remember that much, ya.

Q. Did anybody else live in the house with your family when you were a child?

A. No.

Q. And what do you remember about your teenage years?

A. Oh, they were good years, far as I know.

Q. How often did you leave town?

A. What do ya mean?

Q. Well to go, when you left Bear River, and maybe if you went to Digby, how often

Would you get to go to Digby?

A. Oh, maybe once or twice a month. Not too often.

Q. And how would you get there?

A. Hire a car.

Q. And if you got the chance to leave, where would you go?

A. Probably Digby.

Q. So how long would you stay?

A. Oh, three or four hours.

Q. And what were the roads like?

A. Oh they wasn't so good as they are now. (laughter) Dirt roads at that time.

Q. And who would maintain the roads, who would look after the roads?

A. They had road foreman. You have to go out and work on to 'em.

Q. As a teenager what kinds of things would you do for fun?

A. Well mostly play ball, I guess. Going skating, hockey.

Q. O.K., and who were your movie idols?

A. I don't know that.

Q. Did you ever go to the movies?

A. Oh yes.

Q. So, did you have anybody that you really liked who played in the movies?

A. There was one lady, played the piano. She was quite nice woman.

Q. Do you know her name?

A. Gert Barr.

Q. So what kind of music did you like?

A. Oh, all music, all kinds.



Q. So, what did you expect to do when you grew up, when you grew up?

A. Well I 'pect to a work with my dad most the time, brick laying, building stone walls.

Q. So how far did you go in school?

A. Far as grade nine.

Q. And why did you leave school?

A. I got a job and I went out to work.

Q. How old were you when you left school?

A. Nineteen.

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

A. Went to work, in a mill.

Q. O.K., Harry, can you tell me what happened when a  
Can you tell me the name of the mill that you worked in?

A. The name, oh, we called it J. H. Cunningham's Mill.

Q. O.K. and where was that? Where was the mill located?

A. Out the head of the tide.

Q. It was. Sorry.

A. Out the head of the tide.

Q. Out the head of the tide

A. Just down by my place, just about a fifteen minute walk.

Q. O.K., can you tell me about a typical work day? What did you have to do at work?

A. Oh, I done all kinds of work. Different jobs, you know, different machinery, working with different machinery, like joint and stave, or saw and stave, or makin' heads, things like that.

Other voice: Why don't you just talk about the work stuff and forget about these questions.

Q. O.K., what year did you start your first job?

A. I forgot. About after I left school. Yup.

Q. And how old would you have been then?

A. Nineteen sense.

Q. O.K., what was your salary when you started that job?

A. Ten cents an hour.

Q. So how many hours a day would you work?

A. Ten hour days.

Q. And how much tax did you have to pay?

A. None.

Q. None?

A. None.

Q. Was it a dangerous job?

A. Yes, lot of fellows got cut. I came close but I never have got cut.

Q. So, they would get cut by the machine they were working with?

A. Yup, right, yup.

Q. What do you remember about war time?

A. I don't remember too much. But second war. Why I was up for the second war, but.

Q. You were in the second war?

A. Well I weren't in the war. I was too short. (laughter)

Q. So what effect did the war have on your community?

A. Well I don't really remember it, wasn't paying much attention, I guess. (laughter)

Q. Do you remember anything about the depression?

A. Oh yes, depression time we couldn't sell a thing. Depression time I made as high as seven dollars a day. 1930.

Q. So, how would it have affected your community?

A. Well, you couldn't sell anything, you had to pile it up, 'til, couldn't sell your staves or your heads.

Q. Did you still work during the Depression?

A. Ya, we still worked through the Depression.

Q. So, how did you plan for your retirement?

A. I, I don't know really. (laughter)

Q. What did your parents pass, how did your parents pass on their possessions? Did every member of your family receive something after your parents passed on?

A. Oh yes, ya mostly.

Q. So, what would you have gotten from your parents?

A. Well we got, most of us got a, the timber land that was left, that we had, ya.

Q. So, how did people help each other in the days gone by that's different from today?

A. Oh, quite a difference. They'd all work together. If I had a little load of wood to saw up they'd come over and help me saw it and I'd go over there place and help them saw their's.

Q. O.K., so what would happen if a woman was widowed in the community?

A. I don't know.

Q. Everybody would help her maybe?

A. Everybody would help her probably.

Q. And do you remember anything about the "Poor Farm"?

A. No, I'd been down there at one time, but I don't remember much about it.

Q. Um, do you remember anything about elections?

A. No.

Q. Do you, what do you remember about the first time you voted?

A. Oh, just about it, that's all. (laughter) I was a Liberal.

Q. What is the worst weather you can remember?

A. Oh, I don't know, there was a lot of 'em. Don't know the worst one.

Q. There's nothing that sticks right out in your mind?

A. No, nothing really.

Q. Do you remember any ghost stories from your younger years?

A. Nope.

Q. You don't have any stories that somebody would have told ya?

A. Ghost stories, no, they have, but, I wouldn't believe it.

Q. So, do you have any superstitions?

A. Nope.

Q. And how did people know when to plant and when to harvest their vegetables?

A. Well, when to plant, is usually in May, 24<sup>th</sup>, we usually planted in May, but you had ta.

Q. So, did you help your dad plant?

A. Oh ya.

Q. And what kinds of things would you have planted?

A. Potatoes and carrots and onions and beets, peas and beans, different things.

Q. Did you like working in the garden?

A. Oh ya.

Q. Did ya?

A. Ya.

Q. So, can you tell me about any shipwrecks in your area?

A. No, I don't know of any in our area here.

Q. And do you know of any local stories that you can remember?

A. No.

Q. So, what was the largest employer in your community? Who would employ the most people in this area, when you were growing up?

A. Well mostly mills, I would say, ya.

Q. And do you belong to any organizations?

A. No.

Q. O.K., Harry, can you tell me what it was like, being a black man growing up in a white community?

A. Well, right here in Bear River, in my day, there wasn't any discrimination. Oh, you may find one or two, but not seriously.

Q. So, were there many black families living in this community?

A. They were quite a few black families in Greenland. The government gave 'em a grant and a place to live. But in Bear River we was practically the only colored family was here. They was one more, but we were mostly the only ones that, they was all mostly white people. And they all worked together.

Other voice. Where is Greenland?

Q. Oh, how, ya.

A. That's only four miles from here.

Q. So, do you remember anything about the tourists coming to this area?

A. We have a lot of tourists come to this area. I get a lot of pictures taken from tourists. They ask me about Bear River and different things.

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

A. Not many.

Q. O. K.

A. Why do ya ask.

Q. O.K., do you remember anything about Maud Lewis?

A. (whispering) No, I've heard tell of her.

Other voice. I betcha Harry Hill's a colorful character in this community.  
(laughter)

A. I'm one the best.

Other voice. Yes I think so. What, what kinds of things do you tell the tourists about Bear River?

A. Well, they wanta know what we done for a living. That's it. Well I said mostly that time was mills, running. We had ship building here in Bear River and there was lots to do. Young people all had lots to work. We had a clothes pin factory back Lake Jolly. They had a movie hall and a church to go to and people commin' in. The railroad was runnin'. And this was a busy town.

Q. Do you remember all this?

A. Oh ya. Everything was fishing and hunting and a. All done by hand. Now it's machinery. I remember all that. I got it all down, all written down in them papers.

Other voice. What kind of factory was that at Lake Jolly?

A. They had a clothes pin factory and a lumber mill too.

Other voice. Right

A. Makin' clothes pins. Yup.

Other voice. And where would they send those clothes pins?

A. Go over, Saint John. Sell 'em. In the stores. Ya.

Q. So, how does, how does Bear River look now compared to when you were growing up?

A. Oh, nothing here now in Bear River. It was boomin' in my day! We haven't even got a drugstore here now. My day we had eleven stores, two doctors, sometimes four, two dentists, four blacksmith's shops.

Other voice. How has the population changed?

A. Population has changed. Six sixty (660) now. In my day nine hundred and sixty (960). Quite a difference.

Q. Big difference.

A. Ya.

Q. Oh, Harry, how far have you traveled? What are the places that you've gone to?

A. Not far, not far. As far as Halifax. I go up there quite often.

Q. You go shopping?

A. No, I have, I have a lady friend there. Then I got aunts and uncles and cousins and my sisters.

Q. So, how often do you go to Halifax?

A. Usually go 'bout once every month.

Q. And you go up by train?

A. I go by bus now. Years ago I went by train, when the train went.

Q. So, do you stay a few days or...?

A. Ya, few days, right. I like a train better. (laughter) By time .

Q. So the train used to come in here, rate into Bear River?

A. No, just four miles downwards, just four miles. Didn't come in here. At that time the Clark Brothers didn't want the train comin' in here.



Q. Who were the Clark Brothers?

A. They was the ones who had this big mill, these stave mills. They had it four miles out from Bear River. I don't know really why they didn't want it, but they never....

Q. Harry, what is this stave?

A. Well, short stave, eighteen inches long, what you put spikes and nails in, years ago, things like that, and horseshoes and ox shoes, when they shipped 'em. And then they made the apple barrel staves, but they was bigger, apple barrel. Mannie Cooper made them. I done all that work.

Other voice: How would they bend those staves?

A. With a circular saw, when you saw them.

Q. A circular saw?

Other voice. Right

A. Yup.

Other voice. But then how would they get to have that roundish shape, for a barrel?

A. For a barrel? Well they had to heat them, and then they put the rubber, wooden bands around them and they put these, I helped do it, put these staves in this barrel and they clamped together and pull it up tight and then push your heads in and they stay rate there, on the curve.

Q. O.K.

A. Hmm.....(pause) Ya.

Other voice. When you were kids, if you got sick, do you remember any home remedies that your mother would, a, treat you with?

A. Ya, I remember some home remedies. Mustard on your chest.

Q. And that was for when you had a cold?

A. Break cold, break your cold up, and....

Q. And how would she put that on?

A. With a, like a cloth, you know, ya, and put the mustard in there, and pack it on there. Put it on there.

Q. Anything else?

A. We used that goose grease, years back, used to use that.

Q. And what was that for?

A. Keep ya, the mustard from burning your chest.

Q. Oh yes.

A. Ya, and different things you would take at that time, they would, they had the bone set fer cold, used to steep it. You gather it in the woods. My dad used to gather it every fall, and then we keep it for the winter, and if we had a cold, we steeped that, just same as a tea, and then you take a little drink, now and again.

Q. And what was that called?

A. Bone set, it was an herb, growed in the woods. All the old people had it, at that time, and it would break your cold right up, ya.

Other voice. Would you steep the leaves or the roots of that plant?

A. No, there's just a leaf, you know, long, like a grass like leaf, 'bout like that, and then you you put it and dry it, and then.....

Other voice. How much contact did you have with the Indians here, in Bear River?

A. Oh we had a good contact with the Indians. We worked fer 'em, plowed the ground Fer 'em, dad done build some of their chimneys, worked together, ya.

Other voice. And would you learn things about medicinal plants from them as well?

A. Never, I never bothered that much myself, no.

Other voice. Interesting memory. Ya Um, what about digging graves? We haven't talked to him at all about that.

Q. Oh ya, Harry. So, how long did you dig graves?

A. Thirty-nine years.

Q. O.K., so, you did this by hand or by machines?

A. Everything was done by hand, unless you got a great big rock, you probably had to get a Machine, at that time. Now when I first took the cemetery over, oh it was hard, because the girls and boys, that I went to school with and worked with, had passed on you know. But I had to get used to it same, same as an undertaker I used to say, ya. And it was really hard, but I got used to it after a while.

Q. So, how long would it take you to dig a grave?

A. Oh, four hours. When I done 'em along, lots of time, four hours, take my time. And when I got older, I got a helper, ya. Takes three or four hours.

Q. So your job was caretaker at the cemetery ?

A. I was caretaker, kept the cemetery.

Q. So what other things, other duties would you have to do?

A. Mow the grass, and keep the lawn, keep the, the cemetery clean and the graves clean, and cut the weeds out the rows. I had everything lookin' nice. Trim up the fire bushes.

Q. So this was a full time job?

A. Full time job.

Q. And how many days a week would you work?

A. I'd work a whole week. Six days a week. Mostly my own boss. (laughter)

Other voice. Which cemetery is that, Harry?

A. Mount Hope, it's up there on the hill. Ya, thirty-nine years.

Other voice. What was the hardest grave you ever dug?

B. Well there was a few hard ones, like sometimes, a lot of slate and rocky, not that many, just in spots.

Other voice. Did you have to dig the graves for any of your family members?

A. I never myself, but a, we had other, other guys dug 'em fer me.

Other voice. Yes

A. Ya.

Other voice. Why don't you find out about the funeral practices in his time.

Q. Oh ya.

A. What next.

Q. O.K., when someone died, how was the funeral handled?

A. Well, the undertaker would handle the funeral, mostly.

Q. But did they have, did you, back in your day, did they have wakes rate in the house?

A. Oh yes, they've had, we've had, mostly our family was buried from the house, at that time.

Q. So how long would they keep the body in the house?

A. 'bout two days.

Q. And where would they hold the wake, rate in the.....?

A. Rate in the house.

Q. O.K.

A. Ya.

Q. And how, O.K. I'm sorry. When you were digging graves Harry, what would happen if the ground was frozen?

A. We dug it just the same. Keep your picks sharp. We done a lot of 'em that way. But now days they don't do it that way. We've got, we've got a vault. We put 'em In the vault, then stay there till spring, till the ground thaws up, then take 'em. Every Cemetery has 'em now.

Q. Do you miss workin' that job?

A. No, not now, no.

Q. Oh, when you were little, how did you take care of your teeth?

A. I didn't take care of 'em too good. (laughter)

Q. Did, how, would you go visit a dentist?

A. Ya, sometimes, you have 'em pulled out. Now I've got 'em all out now. Haven't any. You wouldn't know it though, everybody says.

Q. No.

A. You wouldn't know. No false teeth. I never bothered to get, got 'em in.

Q. Did you have toothpaste back when you were a little boy?

A. Oh ya, ya toothpaste.

Q. And toothbrushes?

A. Ummm.....Never looked after them that much, should of, you know, them times.

Q. So, when you were a little boy, you said there would have been a doctor in the Community?

A. Yes, sometimes four. Now they got none.

Q. So how often would you go visit the doctor?

A. Never been to 'im. Never had. I went to school one time, and they used to go around and have the nurse come in to examine you for your, a tonsils. Teacher said you got to have your tonsils out. Well I was about thirteen years old. Ya she said your tonsils are bad. So it kept going on and on, and I never got 'em out. There was a lady came from from New York, she was a preacher, a woman. I told her about my tonsils. She said "Mr. Hill I can heal you." So one Sunday I went over to church, then she healed me, of my tonsils. I had to stand up in front of the church, put my hand on my head, I never forgot it, talked to me, "do I believe"?, this and that, "yes". I never had no more trouble with my tonsils, from that day 'til now, never.

Q. Did you remember who the lady was? What her name was?

A. Her name was Mrs. Tibbetts.

Q. And why was she here?

A. She was here to heal people. Well she was an Advent preacher anyway, so she said she could heal. Well she healed me. Never forgot it.

Other voice. Was that mostly a black congregation in that church, Harry?

A. No, no, all white people. Just, we was just the mostly colored people. Yup, ya. Umhum. You're all together, never know what color you are, don't matter.

Q. That's right.

A. Ya. Oh you have a few, you all have, I have a few around here, course I don't pay attention much. They don't bother me. I'm too smart fer 'em. (laughter) They

don't like the way I dress and they don't like...that's none of their business. I dress to suit myself.

Q. Well, that's their problem.

A. That's their problem. I like to look clean and nice. "Oh, you get a lot of pictures taken, Oh ya. Woman's man, ya ya. You know what I mean. Don't bother me. Well I had quite a lot of people jealous of me. I had started a skating rink one time. And I had a lovely skating rink, not long, outdoor, so the guy he got tired runnin' it, so he give ta me. So I run it for quite a while. So then, there's some talk about this fellow having a skating rink, 'bout trying to run him out of business, so the firemen over here got a (?) And they started a rink, back the fire hall. So I still had money goin' So one day they, they, I don't know they was lookin', and they say, "How you make ice on the ground"? I said up to you to learn and find out. So they tried it, and they put, and they had big lumps big around as my fists. They started 'bout two or three times. The next year they give 'er up and come to me said will you take our rink? I said you thought you were gonna run a nigger out of business, did ya, but I said I run a white nigger out of business. I said yes I'll take it. And I had it for eighteen years. Didn't have, always had lovely ice and the biggest crowd you ever see. Come from everywhere.

Other voice. Would you charge people to come skate on that rink?

A. Ya they charged ten cents, twenty-five, they didn't have it, go skatin' anyway.  
(laughter)

Q. So. How many years did you do the skating rink?

A. Eighteen years.

Other voice. How would you flood the rink?

A. With a fire pump.

Other voice. O.K.

A. Stay there half the night, sometimes, make ice. Cold, when. The secret is to make it when the ground is froze hard, and then you keep doin' your ice up a little more. And that's all yo it. But you gotta work.

Q. I skated on your rink many times.

A. Ya, you did.

Q. Yes, I did. When I was just a little girl. I did.

A. And I had skating carnivals and I'd take my kids over in Digby and I was in the carnival. Had my girls and we'd get first prize and sometimes second. You skated on my rink so you know what I'm talking about.

Q. Yes I do. As a Teenager.

A. There was one fella he.....They put one guy in to help me, on this rink, help me look after it, keep the snow clean and I didn't care for him. He came in and told me, one time, you should close the rink down a little earlier. How early I said. Ten o'clock. I said we're just getting' started. So I said to the boss "You best take him out of here, cause I hit 'im in the head with this shovel. I said I don't need 'im. Come and tell me when to close up. I'll stay here all night. Firemen said you can stay here as long as you want, he don't own the rink. I just put 'im in, thought maybe he'd help ya. No I don't want 'im. They told 'im you through here don't need ya. So, one Sunday, I wasn't there, he come down, and, there was about that much snow on the ice, he went and turned the water on. And it took me a week for I got that ice back in shape, with that snow and water, was no good, just to spite me. I buried 'im!. (laughter) I'll get you yet, I said, I'll bury ya. I did. (laughter) I went and told Ron, I put big rocks on that son-of-a-gun. I said he never got out. (laughter)

Other voice. You got him.

A. I got him. Oh, everybody that knew that goin' around for years. They still say it. You better watch Harry, he'll put rocks on ya. He'll bury ya. (laughter) Oh the poor fella.

Other voice. Was there music to, for people to skate to?

A. Oh I had music. I had everything. Music, ya and I had two dressin' rooms fer 'im. She remembered. (He is referring to the interviewer) We had music. Girls played the music Fer 'im, ya.



Other voice. This was an outdoor rink?

Q. Yup.

A. Oh ya.

Other voice. How nice.

A. Oh ya, they come from Digby and Annapolis and they....

Q. They used to be music.

A. I had music. Ya. We had a lovely time there. I often think about it. Now they got nothing.

Q. But our winters aren't like they were?

A. No, I know, but they still coulda had the rink 'Cause you can get machines and put a few pipes for the ground and you can make ice. This ain't artificial. Oh they didn't wanna bother. But when....

Other voice. Where was that rink Harry?

A. Just rate back the firehall. Ya.

Other voice. Did this river freeze in the winter time when you were a little boy.?

A. It certainly did. We skated on the river up 'bove the bridge.

Other voice. Wow!

Q. How far could you go on it?

A. Well they could skate far as way down, way down. But they never did. We just skated up the bridge 'cause you never know might be a whole or something there....

Other voice. Was there an ice house?

A. We had an ice house built. Well see, they had no, you didn't have no Frigidaires at that time. You cut your ice in block, and they said how'd you keep it. You cover it over with sawdust and then the next coat will be hay. And then in the summer time your ice is there, never melts. You take a team and you drive around and people have places where they put their ice. Keep your milk cool. And that was a big job in the States too. A lot of people used to go here to the States, go workin' (?) peddle ice. Cut it in the winter and peddle it in the summer. Now everything is Frigi-Daires. Ya.

Other voice. Do you remember how often you'd have to get a block of ice for your house?

A. Well they usually go around 'bout two or three times a week. (muffled)

Q. How much did the ice cost?

A. Certain amount a piece. I don't know how much.

Other voice. Was it common...you go ahead

A. O.K. yup.

Other voice. Was it common for people to go to the States to work in your day?

A. Oh ya, a lot of, a lot of men went to the States.

Q. And there families would stay here?

A. Ya. Just for the winter, and work in the ice houses, yup. I used to help 'em and they'd tell me about it, yup.

Other voice. Where in the States would they go?

A. Oh, Boston and New York and different parts. Big ice houses. Lotta work.

Other voice. I didn't know that.

A. Oh ya. Oh we had an ice house here too. Ya. You didn't know that. Ya.

Other voice. Did your father have horses when you were growing up?

A. Well we had horses sometimes when he. We had one pacer that would take us around... Like we had to carry our tools when we were laying bricks to build a stone wall, and after awhile he got a litter older so the oxen, they was slower then a horse, we had oxen, take 'em to the woods, gather our timber, and things like that.

Other voice. Your father had a wood lot did you say?

A. We had a thousand acres.

Other voice. Really.

A. Ya, left from my grandparents. That's when the government left them that acreage fer to build on and work themselves. When they...that's in slavery day.....when they.... that slavery day....they gave the black people a grant to go build in different places, see. the same they did the Indians. Give 'em their Reserve. But you had to go work, work it.

Q. O.K., are there any members of your family still alive?

A. Oh ya.

Q. You have how many?

A. There's only 'bout five or six of us.

Q. Are they all around Bear River?

A. Ya, there's three of us home here. Some in Halifax.

Q. That would be you and your sister.....?

A. And John, and Lenny. John's in Weymouth. He was overseas. And somes in Halifax, one in Kentville.

Q. Do you get to see them very often?

A. Oh ya, we see 'em once in a while.

Other voice. Is any of that wood lot still in your family?

Q. We had some, we had sold most of it, 'cause we don't need it, ya. You see, the old folks in them days, they didn't have the house fixed like we got it fixed now, 'cause we're all pension people. Well we had the place all fixed over the way my sister wanted. She's fussy, you know. And you see everything is electric and.....Them days they had to do what they had, with, ya. You had one pair of boots, one pair of woods rubbers you had it. Now I got so much I can't wear 'em. I got so many clothes I can't even wear 'em. all fancy. I bought my clothes in Halifax. All colors. I love 'em.

Other voice. Where do you get them in Halifax?

A. Oh, the different stores. From the Jews and.....I had a budget up there fer five or six years. I got acquainted with these.....Silians. They had a big store, loved it.....everything. They took a likin' to me, one way or another, just go in and look around. "Can I sell ya some-thin'". No, I said, I haven't any money. "Don't have to have money, you don't have to have money. I know your name, Mr. Hill. Anything you want you can get it. We'll give you a budget". I run a budget there fer 'bout twenty years. I sometimes went up as high as four thousand dollars. You know, they said to me, when you come in Halifax, come in and give us a little money. No special amount. So every time I went to Halifax, I used to go two, three times a week, if I see something I like I'd buy it. Oh you gotta have a list, Mr. Hill. The name. O.K. no money don't make a lot. I'd give a little everywhere I'd go. And the time I went to Halifax, I'd give 'em a little money. And that's all that's said, nothin' more.

Other voice. Now what store was that?

A. It's one of the big stores there in Halifax, on Gottingen Street, and a.....Don't owe 'em

Five cents no more. (laughter) That's how I did my business. They took a likin' to me.

Q. Well that's good.

Other voice. When your father had that wood lot, he'd sell the wood to the mills, would he?

A. He'd sell timber, some (?). Well we didn't cut that much. We never.....When he got older we done little bit more, but when we, our boys was growin' up, some of my brothers, they had nothin' to do, might as well cut that old timber. Dad never cut much, 'cause he was workin' out most times brick work. He worked in Halifax, after the explosion, 1917. He was one of the bosses up there over the foreman, ya. He was tellin' me one time, he was boss, course there was boss over him, and he was 'bout the only black guy was boss, and it's all colors, you know you work with, at them times, buildin' Halifax up again. So some body called him up on the stage, certain things they wanted to know 'bout work, and every time he told me, he said when I went up on the stage I watched myself, feel that plank was, was all right.

Other voice. Oh.....Oh....

A. Scared he'd trip and fall and kill himself. So one day, he was goin' up the plank, they said he looked around. He said who done that. A guy said that fella over there. Down the office.....You're gone! So they say you gotta work with a crowd of white colors, you wanna watch yourself, they'll be jealous of ya. Fired 'im, he told me then. Watch your staging.

Other voice. Isn't that awful.

A. Ya. Well that was discrimination, you know, jealous 'cause he was the boss. Well I'll tell ya, I got tangled up in a mess when they built the pipe line up here. The boss would go away. I knew the cement work, see, the boss would go away and he'd.....I'll be back In a little while, Harry, you take charge of the cement work. So he had to go down where they built the dams, and he'd put in each (?) this stuff here, some there, so on. So I said the next few put some cement down that way. He said I'm not puttin' it down there, I'm not takin' orders from a nigger. I comes right up the hole, everybody was lookin', I jumped rate up the hole, and I said there was not a man there. He said you go back down the hole. No, I said I'm all through. Well he said you stay here 'til the boss comes, and let me tell him all about it. When the boss come, he

said you up the office, you're gone! Fired 'im. Mr. Hill you get down the hole. Don't wanna hear that around here any more he said.

Other voice. Good.

A. Stopped that. Just jealousy 'cause they put me ahead of him. See I knew my work. All I had to do, go 'round and mix the mortar and smooth it off, and then I had to wait for another pool, then I'd go and sit down, and talk to the boss, carry the boys a little water. Hmm.....you got the best job. Well, I said, a man knows how to do it. (laughter). Your jealous aren't ya. (laughter) Oh, I put it right on to 'im. Oh.it was fun. Oh,....done a lot of rig-a-ma-roll though, in your day, I mean, you go through them things. You do, you get through them things even though I'm colored, they don't get along, don't matter who You are, know what I mean. There's always somebody jealous of ya.

Other voice. How's your health now?

A. Oh my health's good. All 'cept my hands, my fingers got arthritis. Oh, he's on his way here and he's on his way there, and he wants to be seen, well I said that's my nature. You can't follow me. I said you wouldn't look good anyways, if you was dressed up. (laughter) Not like me I said.

Q. Very true.

Other voice. Can you sing us something else, you've got a beautiful voice?

A. Oh, see I wasn't singin' real good then.

Other voice. It sounds good to me.

Q. Oh, very good.

Other voice. Sounds beautiful.

A. I'll sing one more for ya.

Amazing Grace, How sweet the sound  
That saved a wretch like me

I once was lost, but now am found  
Was blind, but now I see.

Now I could sing better than that, but I just got that little cold in my throat there but.....

Other voice. I think it sounds beautiful.

A. I know. They say I have a lovely voice.

Other voice. You do.

A. I'll sing "How Great Thou Art". I'm gonna sing "How Great Thou Art" the way Bill Shea Sings. He goes like this,

And sings my soul  
My savior God to thee  
How Great Thou Art  
How Great Thou Art

And sings my soul  
My savior God to thee

How Great Thou Art  
How Great Thou Art

Other voice. Very good. (clapping and laughing)

A. That's the way I like to sing it. Oh, they get me singing in here all the time.

Other voice. Whose's Bill Shea?

A. Oh.

Other voice. You said sing it the way Bill Shea, sings it.

A. Ya.

Other voice. Who's he?

A. He's the guy that used to be on the, oh, preacher goin' around preachin' different places. What's his name now? Oh I can't remember. I shook hands with him, both in Halifax. Thirty thousand people there.

Other voice. Billy Graham?.

A. Billy Graham.

Other voice. O.K. O.K.

B. Billy Graham.

Other voice. Uhha.

A. I shook hands with 'im.

Other voice. You did?

A. I went to the big.....meet in Halifax, few years back. There was thirty thousand over there on the Commons. Ya, I was rate in there with the boys, after they found out who I was. What a lovely singer. I sing a lot here and there. Big church. Somebody want me to sing They get me to come sing. I like to sing.

Other voice. Ya, I can tell. No wonder.

Q. I wish I could sing.

A. Everybody says you have a wonderful voice. When I sing....

Q. I like to sing, but I don't have a good voice.

A. Ya, but when I sing in church, I drown them. They say we can hear you sing, boy that's wonderful. I'm a loud singer. All our family is a good singers. Were're all.....oh, every Sunday. I got a brother a good singer, all good



singers, sing in the choir, my sister's good singer, sing in the choir. Ya, my dad was a good singer. My mother was a good singer. She was an alto, dad was bass. Oh he could sing. Well I never seen a colored person couldn't sing, or dance. Lord, you got it, you got it.

Q. So, you must have had a lot of singing in your house, growing up as a child?

A. Oh I know it, oh ya. Well I used to start all the singin' in school, like I tell you before. And Christmas time, right at it, start 'em all singin', yup. I was teacher's pet. That Sweet Little Harry. (laughter) I'll tell ya somethin'. I used to get a kick. I'd take the teacher an apple, once in a while. Oh ya, here comes teacher's pet, he's got an Apple fer her, ya, and then he says, you need't worry. She said now come here and give me my kiss. Kids soon come to school. And then she kissed me good-bye, good-night, see you tomorrow. Oh, the kids said how come we don't get no kisses. No? You're not goin' get none from me she said either.

Q. Saved 'em all for Harry.

A. Saved 'em all for Harry, ya, Harry Hill, (?) Teacher's pet. They called me teacher's pet. Well she said he's a cute little feller, if he's anybody's, he's mine.

Other voice. What was her name? Do you remember?

A. Oh, one was Lexie Hatfield, one was Mammie Bristol and one was Mrs. ...ah...Marshall. Different teachers, ya. You get...I make believe I couldn't do a question, I'd get her to come down and sit with me and I'd put my arm around her. (laughter) She'd look at me. Everybody say he can do everything, ya. Get us in trouble and then we have ta go stand in the corner. I remember one time, I had to go leave the room, I was in grade eight, I put my hand up, to leave the room. "No"! I said "why". "You stay too long". (laughter) Well I sit there, just...not very few minutes. I had to go wait to leave. I said "what you want me to do" I said. I put my hand up. "Can I leave the room"? "I told you no". "You want me to do it on the floor"? I said "I'm gonna leave the room" I got up and walked out. She said "Don't stay too long". Never had to ask for any more to leave the room. Any time I wanted to leave the room, she said "You go". Yaaaaa, she said....everybody said, we can't do that. We have to put our hand up to go leave the room. I said "Not me". She learnt her lesson. I told her, "when I want to leave the room, I'm gonna leave the room", If you say no, whatever you say. "Just stay in after school and erase the boards off fer Me". "Ya, O.K." And that's all to it. Now she knew better than

that. I might stay out a little too long. They couldn't boss me, ha, ha. I was bad. I was mischievous and I was bad. Never forgot it. Lotta fun. (laughter) Oh God! That's the way it is now, everywhere I go, my God, the girls, the girls, they kiss and hug me, kiss and....oh, all the time, I get three or four kisses every day, from somebody.

Q. That's good.

A. Oh, we love ya, you're just a sweet man. We love ya. I teach 'em how to play pool and I taught 'em how to skate and now I'm teachin' girls know how to play pool. Oh, they Lovin' it. Well over here in this Legion, in here, rate after dinner, yup. Give 'im a kiss 'fore he goes. (laughter) Oh a, that's how I get along.

Q. That's good.

A. There's nothin' wrong with that.

Other voice. Not at all.

A. Well, soon be dinner time.

Other voice. Ya. Soon will be. We're almost done this tape here, I think as well. I'm gonna turn this tape over and see if there's anything....

