

This is Neil Flindall in the home of Mr. Percy Detenbeck, 545 Central Avenue Fort Erie, Ontario, this the 12th day of August 1985.

**N.F:** Where were you born Mr. Detenbeck?

**P.D:** I was born in the Township of Bertie, three miles west of the Bertie Boundary.

**N.F:** How big was Bertie Township at the time?

**P.D:** Well it took in Ridgeway, Stevensville, Crystal Beach and then out to the subway on the outskirts of Fort Erie.

**N.F:** Where exactly was it that you lived?

**P.D:** I lived on Sunset Drive, that's the name of it now, but it had no name then...it was just a side road...I went to school at Number Six, up on Ridgemount Road...and then after school I worked part time on the farm...and then I got myself a job at the age of seventeen on the Michigan Central Railroad at that time...and in 1930 I started 1928...and in 1930 the New York Central leased it for ninety-nine years.

**N.F:** For ninety-nine years?

**P.D:** Yes they were supposed to...and I worked for the New York Central up until the Penn Central took it over...then after that...why it was only a few years I took my pension...that was in 1974...and I've been on pension since 1974...I get an American pension because I worked for the New York Central...so I've been retired ever since...doing nothing but gardening and such.

**N.F:** The Michigan Central had a roundhouse in Fort Erie?

**P.D:** Yes, that's when I first started...it ran between Detroit and Buffalo the Michigan Central...then the New York Central took it over and it was between Chicago and New York...which we thought we were going to work for a big railroad and everything was going to be real prosperous...and in 1930 they cut the staff just about fifty percent.

**N.F:** That was in 1930.

**P.D:** And then the Depression came and I was laid off...worked some time in the winter and then in the summer I'd be out of a job...and no unemployment in those days either, in those days the last

cheque was it...you had to go out and find a job some place with a pick and shovel...and then I started back in 1936...and I continued right on through...steady.

**N.F:** Did you travel with the railroad or were you always in Fort Erie?

**P.D:** It was the Fort Erie yard was where I worked...and then in 1960 they give us nine days notice that they were going to close the yard up.

**N.F:** Seriously, that is what they did?

**P.D:** Nine days...that was all they gave us and all these men...well we had joint seniority with Montrose and Welland...so I left here and I went to Welland after that and I worked in Welland until I took my pension.

**N.F:** That wouldn't be very easy either travelling back and forth.

**P.D:** No, it wasn't and I'm on pension now on my twelfth~~th~~ year...I travelled back and forth...well I must have travelled back an forth at least ten years or so before I took my pension.

**N.F:** That is difficult.

**P.D:** In the winter time especially.

**N.F:** There is no direct route into Welland.

**P.D:** Well now it is worse than it used to be when I first went up...at the time they put the new canal through and I saw that right from the time it started until it was finished and the boats came through, then they moved our yard from the City of Welland out five miles west of Welland, out on the highway along the Welland River...and that's where it is today...and the T.H.&B it is a joint the T.H.&B and the Central, and since that time they've the C. N. R. they went Conrail first and now the Conrail has sold out to the C.P. and the east end you work for the T.H.&B--C.P.--C.P. and if you are on the west end the C. N. kind of took the west end over...so the west end now they have the tunnel...we had the tunnel so the C.N. uses the tunnel at the west end and the C.P. uses a bridge to Niagara Falls on this end.

**N.F:** You've seen a lot of changes then, from the time you started.

**P.D:** Well I've seen lots of changes especially in the boxcars...the cars, the boxcars they were only forty-eight foot, forty-two foot, now you have got cars that are over a hundred foot in length.

**N.F:** That is huge, really huge.

**P.D:** So there have been a lot of changes in my day especially in equipment we had the old steam engines...now they are all dieselized.

**N.F:** When did that begin?

**P.D:** Well I can't say right off.

**N.F:** Was it a really a fast change over or did it take a number of years?

**P.D:** Oh, it changed over quite fast...the first trains that came over here in our yards here in Fort Erie was the Pennsylvania, and that was the first diesel I saw...they used to come over and bring their trains over and drop them off and take a train back...well then a little while after that the New York Central came out with a few diesels...and as the diesels came out, why they would get rid of a steam engine...so we've had six or seven steam engines up here standing stored for a long time...before they took them away to scrap them.

**N.F:** They scrapped them.

**P.D:** During that time a lot of those brass bells that a man couldn't lift, they were stolen off them...so when they left here the bells were pretty well gone...I think they even took the bell off the one over in the museum...that there was supposed to be stolen...they would be worth a lot of money of a fellow had them today.

**N.F:** There must have been a lot of memorabilia that people didn't think to keep at the time.

**P.D:** Yes and the old roundhouse up here...they tore it down, and all the car shops...and another thing that happened just before they closed the yard...they built us a new yard office, and repaired the car shops and fixed all the repair tracks up and everything...and then a year or so after that they closed her up and all those new buildings, they tore them down.

**N.F:** They simply tore them down.

**P.D:** They just tore them down...well they were wrecked in the first

year that they were vacant.

**N.F:** Did they have cattle pens up on the tracks?

**P.D:** Yes we had stock pens up...they were on the top of Jarvis Street yes they sat right at the top of Jarvis Street, if a train got delayed or something...and the cattle had to be fed...we had to have a stock thing to run the cattle through, down to feed them...and the section man would chase them back up again, roll them up.

**N.F:** When you were in school what was there in the area for recreation?

**P.D:** We had no recreation at that time...only what we made ourselves, we'd make a football field at the school yard of our own, and then put up sticks and then that's all we would ever have, or make a little baseball diamond...but we had no recreation at that time... and the school I went to out there on Ridgemount Road was a stone school...and I can still remember the wooden emblem on the front 1865 when it was built...out of stone, and all we had for heat was a great big box stove...and a woodshed in back of the school, and we'd, each one would have to take turns carrying this three foot square block of wood in, to keep wood on the stove...to try to keep her warm...and the school was so drafty, there were lots of times that we had to come home, you just couldn't keep her hot.

**N.F:** I'll bet, winters were more severe then weren't they?

**P.D:** Oh, yes, and then an outhouse way on the outside...you had to walk about five hundred yards to get to it in the winter time...a ladies in one corner of the school yard and the man's on the other corner, and then walking back and forth to school a whole mile...we didn't have any busses...we'd walk in snow right up to our bellies...hoof her back and forth to school everyday.

**N.F:** It couldn't have been very easy.

**P.D:** No, not like they have got it today...you had so many chores to do in the morning before you went to school...and then when you came home from school you had chores to do at night...and no television to sit up and watch either...in later years we wound up... well I used to start building crystal set radios...and then that was

something...then it went from crystal set, why we'd build a one tube, that was really something.

**N.F:** I bet it was yes.

**P.D:** And sit up half the night and see how many stations you could log.

**N.F:** That would be very interesting.

**P.D:** It was sure different then and now.

**N.F:** Was it a one room school house?

**P.D:** One room...all the whole classes right from premier class right on up to your senior second and then you went and passed your entrance to Fort Erie here to high school...you came down here when you passed your entrance.

**N.F:** How did you ever manage to get to high school in Fort Erie?

**P.D:** Well that was the only place that you could go you see, that was the arrangement.

**N.F:** Just no choice about it.

**P.D:** No, when you got through there, you went down to try your...they called it an entrance, and there was no grades in them days...there was...you went to premier school, junior first, junior second, senior second, junior fourth, senior fourth and then that was your end... that was as far as you went into that, then you go to high school after that in Fort Erie which...I went out and got a job for.

**N.F:** Most people did.

**P.D:** I didn't bother going no further...after that you had to self-educate yourself.

**N.F:** Which is not such a bad idea.

**P.D:** Yes, you got self-educated...and that you don't ever forget...self-education.

**N.F:** Because if you don't do it right the first time, you automatically do it right after, do it until it is right, when did you first move into Fort Erie?

**P.D:** Oh, well I moved in as soon as...about eighteen when I came down and I boarded different places and I'd go back and forth...I always had a car, to ride back and forth...I'd stay down a week or so...I was in and out of town all the time...my father he worked for the

C. N. all his life...and he used to run the farm and always worked nights on the railroad, and worked the farm in the daytime...but he always commuted back and forth in a horse and buggy first, and a horse and cutter...and then after he got the cars, why he used cars...I could always go back and forth when I was working, but then I came and let's see I was about thirty some years old before I got married...but I didn't figure on getting married, and my wife came from out west they brought her here to the Fleet Aircraft during the war, and that's how I got married...she never went back west...and we've done pretty good since, real good...since I took my pension now we, we get along pretty well, making more money now than I ever did while I was working.

**N.F:** I can well imagine, yes.

**P.D:** And I still pay a lot of income tax...when I first worked on the railroad whatever I made I got the whole full cheque, no deductions...no income tax or anything taken out...that didn't start until about 1935, when they started taking income tax out...then I didn't know much about income tax and the boss come to me and told me get those income tax papers filled out or we'll, you'll be garinsheed, and you'll lose your job.

**N.F:** Well that's one way to convince you.

**P.D:** So I got a hold of a local lawyer Teddy Tyrill, used to be here in them days, got him to fill it out, but he made a mistake so I got money back instead of more than I had to pay in, he made an error so...nobody knew too much about it in those days...and then they started taking out hospitalization and all that stuff like that, and they never...oh, it was quite a while later that it was before they started taking income tax out of your cheque...we had to pay the whole thing at the end of the year...and that's what make it tough for us too.

**N.F:** Would it ever, yes.

**P.D:** Yes when I started, it was for 56¢ an hour, and Horton Steel at that time was getting about 30¢ or 35¢...so I figured that I had



a real good paying job.

**N.F:** It is hard now to think about wages like that.

**R.R:** Yes now the wages that you get today one hundred and twenty-five or one hundred and thirty-five dollars a day, just an ordinary switchman.

**N.F:** That's without being on the road.

**R.R:** It's a good pension plan, I get a very good pension...our pension started in 1937 President Roosevelt put ours through, it's an American pension, and we got, well our pension was real good then according to the C. N. and the C.N. is real good now too, then the only thing about the C. N. like our American pension your wife gets half of what you get...between the two of us you see, we get American pension now is discounted and we have to pay income tax on that too, and that is thirty-six, thirty-seven percent or it's been close to forty cents on the dollar...but we pay income tax on that, of course you can gain a little bit though.

**N.F:** They'll take that little bit away as fast as they can too.

**R.R:** Oh, yes just as fast.

**N.F:** When you first started working at the railroad did they have a lot of people working there?

**R.R:** Oh it was big and it was a very busy yard, men, there were all kinds of men until the big layoff in 1930...that's when the New York Central took it over, and the Depression hit at the same time...so I worked even in the...Windsor some times when men were going on vacation, in the summer...and I was lucky enough to get a job at the Erie Downs Golf Course...I drove the tractor up there, did that for a while.

**N.F:** Coming from a farm that would be second nature.

**R.R:** And then, maybe in the winter time and things got tough then I might be called back on the railroad for the winter...and just in the spring when the trucks started to run again I'd get laid off, that's the way I had to start...for the first five or six years...till 1936 and then it got steady and I worked right on through.

**N.F:** That is a long time.

**P.D:** Forty-seven years, same job.

**N.F:** What were you doing?

**P.D:** I was a car inspector.

**N.F:** That's the first job you started with so I guess you do know quite a few of the changes in the cars, and equipment.

**P.D:** Well I was off sick in there for, and I was laid off, and I took a turn as a switchman and then I got laid off again and car inspector was a more secure job, much more secure in our department so...well I had a chance to go firing or anything but I wanted to be where it was going to be steady, because them jobs you only work a few weeks and then you'd be laid off a while so in 1936, you had to have a lot of seniority to have a job then, so I got one there and then I was all set.

**N.F:** That worked out well.

**P.D:** So it worked out quite well for me I never ever killed myself... and the railroad was a pleasure in those days, it really was, and you couldn't wait to go to work...not today.

**N.F:** You don't hear many people say that.

**P.D:** You used to have more fun at work than you did when you were home.

**N.F:** Did you use to have a baseball team or any teams?

**P.D:** No, they had a hockey team for a while but not a ball team...we had a hockey team after they built the arena up here...and one of the fellows, I'll tell you how lax we used to be on the railroad, this guy is dead now so I can mention this...I was a Union Representative, for twenty-five years and I travelled all over the United States... California, Texas and in Canada too, B.R.C. of A. Brotherhood of Railway Carmen of America, I represented that for twenty-five years, so that was another thing I'd be on these conventions at Kansas City or anyplace, Montreal, and we were getting seventy-five dollars or eighty dollars a day when they were getting about fifteen dollars a day for working home here, the wife and I, she always travelled



with me...we had the best of hotels and everything...oh, that was really good...I made pretty near as much money in the union as I did working, and some days well more, because I had to go to Detroit to the Joint Protective Boards they called it, about every month, and that would take three days to go up there and back... and we got paid for travelling time, same as we do at the convention, and we'd go from here to Kansas City, I'd put three days to go to Kansas City and three days to come back, six days there, just travelling and you'd get on the train here and it was always free transportation on the train, you'd get on at ten at night and the next afternoon you'd be in Kansas City, but I'd put in three days...five days going to California, each way, Longbeach was our last convention in California you figure five days going and five days coming back...that was interesting too...okay I was referring to this guy, he was working four-to-twelve and he come to me and told me the boss won't let me off, what are you going to do about it, so I explained that I couldn't do nothing because we didn't have no men, and he argued and argued, and he went to work that afternoon, for o'clock for the four-to-twelve, but in the meantime when the things were all cleared up, without permission or telling anybody he goes up and plays hockey, he was a hockey player because he come from Elk Lake, up north, and they were really hockey fans, so he went up playing hockey and he broke his ankle...well he came back to work and he called me up on the phone and he said "I want you to come up to work", so I went up and he's got a broken ankle, he's got a rag wrapped around it and he wants to know how he can say how he has done it on the job...I said that it's impossible, because all the people up there at the arena saw you do it, how can you explain that...so he got fired...and it took me about six months before I got him back...I got him back...I got him back with his full seniority but no back pay or anything.

**N.F:** That's amazing.

**P.D:** How it happened..I went with the General Chairman to Detroit, or rather the General Manager was in Detroit, so the General

Chairman was going to take his pension at the end of the month and so was the General Manager...so our General Chairman says "what do you say, your taking your pension at the end of the month and I'm taking mine, what do you say we put this man back to work and we can leave a clean slate", so the General Manager okayed it and that's how we got him back.

**N.F:** Isn't that great.

**P.D:** Well I came back that night and he lived over here on Jarvis Street in an apartment upstairs, so I went over and told him be ready to be back at work anytime your ready.

**N.F:** Oh, I bet he was happy.

**P.D:** Yes, a young fellow with a wife and family.

**N.F:** Jobs have never been that easy to find in this town.

**P.D:** No not at all, but at one time the railroad was the only thing in this town...there was nothing much else...that paid good money... like the Horton Steel was thirty-five cents an hour for years...and the Fleet started up but they didn't have too many men years ago.

**N.F:** It didn't start off large did it?

**P.D:** No, no not until the war time, that's when the Fleet really started up, but before that Jack Sanderson and a girl by the name of Emma Storm was his secretary, and that was all plus a few men...so that's all that consisted of...so the railroad was the only thing, and it used to be always busy because if you didn't like working on the New York Central, why you would just quit and go over the next morning and work for C. N. or the C.N. would quit and they would come over here and work for the Michigan Central, and that's just about how easy it was in them days...yes I started off with the first old car I got was an old Modet T and I drove it back and forth to work.

**N.F:** What were the roads like?

**P.D:** Well they were mostly ordinarily stone roads, and then they would put oil down on them...in the winter time it was bad,well just hook up the horse and cutter slide the shafts over on one side so the

pathway would be where the cutter marks run and you could see the horse could run up that...they would slide the shaft sideways, and the cutter would stay in the two marks and you were coming back the same way.

**N.F:** That makes a lot of sense.

**P.D:** Yes well that is the way that they used to do it in them days...and if you wanted a doctor like there was babies to be born or anything like that you called Stevensville, there was a doctor in Stevensville and one in Ridgeway, Doctor Buell in Stevensville, Stackhouse in Ridgeway and Doctor Douglas down here in the south end, and Doc Menck, and they were the four old doctors, and say you wife was going to have her baby or something you would call them up the day before...so he would hook up his horse and cutter, and you would horseback out to meet him if the weather was bad and the roads were bad, bring him in and put his horse away and everything and he'd stay overnight.

**N.F:** Really, that is what they would do.

**P.D:** The baby was born right in the home, no hospitals, and then they had to stay in bed it was nine days, before they could even get out of bed in those days.

**N.F:** Nine days.

**P.D:** Nine days and right in bed..I was just up to the hospital here a couple of weeks ago with a cold here...and there was a young girl had a baby there...and the next day she was up and walking around, it was the same way with an operation, my father had his appendix out in Buffalo and he was a month before he was ever allowed to get up out of bed, just last year I had my gallbladder out and I was seventy-four years old at the time I had my gallbladder out...and they had me up...I had it out at eight in the morning and they had me up and walking around at four o'clock in the afternoon...and three days after that they sent me home with a bunch of tubes taped on my stomach, and he told me to come back in ten days and I'll look you over... so in ten days I went back and he pulled out

the tubes and the stitches...never touched it after, it was a perfect job and I can eat anything I want...that's something...and that was a serious operation years ago.

**N.F:** Well it must have been a life threatening operation.

**P.D:** Yes oh yes, even pneumonia or bronchitis were real bad...and then if an old person, they broke any bones pneumonia would set in and that is what they would die of is pneumonia, not from a break.

**N.F:** Times really have changed that way.

**P.D:** Yes, so that is about it.

**N.F:** How big was the hospital when it was first opened?

**P.D:** Well it was just about maybe half the size that it is now, that front part was all original, the new part in the back and the emergency areas, they are the only parts that were put on...the front part is all the old part of the hospital.

**N.F:** Coming from a farm did you ever go to the Bertie Fair?

**P.D:** All the time, oh that was something we would never miss...that was a good day, a day when the schools would close and everything and we used to have foot races up on the racetrack...they had this up at the racetrack you know, they had foot races and all kinds of shows and you would take some of your farm produce down there for prizes.

**N.F:** It was an agricultural and social event as well?

**P.D:** Oh sure, it used to last about three days, then the firemen they'd have dances at night, they'd run the dances the fire department would, and we'd dance under the grandstand, that is when Maddigan had it.

**N.F:** It was a private enterprise at that time?

**P.D:** Yes it was in those days...used to be a bush there where all the barns are...and he had game hens all chicken coops through the bush...and he put a shotgun in his buggy and he'd drive back through to check his chicken coops everyday...with a shotgun.

**N.F:** Yes, no fooling around.

**P.D:** He'd see if anybody would steal chickens, and he lived way over

on the corner of what was it, Concession and Bertie...way back in the corner where they pile the manure and the ground stuff that is where his house was, he had a cock pit in there where he used to collect and cockle the birds...my father worked on the thrashing machine in them days and he used to thrash his grain, he went as far as Texas fighting cocks...he was outlawed around here so he would go down there because it was lawful down there and he had certain chauffers drive him down...different guys.

**P.D:** I can imagine it would have been an interesting trip.

**N.F:** Yes in those days they wouldn't have the highways...well my brother has been down there for over thirty years...he left Ridgeway and sold his business when he came out of the air force and he moved to Texas, and he made himself a fortune down there, he is worth over a million dollars in property...he never had too much when he went down but he borrowed all the money from the banks down there, it's easy to borrow money from the banks down there, there is a board, and you step in front of this board and they loan you ten thousand and you make good so the next time you get fifty thousand dollars and that's how he built himself on other people's money...well he was down selling airplanes for Fleet after, and he just got scouting around to see where was a good place to settle so Houston was really prospering, so with all the money he had he bought property outside of the city...then he started to build apartments and what they call warehouses down there, and I call them factories but he used to build a warehouse, just with angle iron, put on tin and spray it with a foam substance on the inside to keep the heat and the cold out, and then maybe he would make four...four little factories there, just enough to start up a little business of some kind, if you were in the plumbing business you'd have a little plumbing shop on one corner and on another corner something else...he used to build them and rent them out...and then the city built right out to him...that's where he made his money...he owns property in Freeport Texas, Marble Falls and on Lyndon Johnson

Lake, and he had got a daughter a son-in-law in Dallas, a doctor, he built him a big clinic and then he lives in Houston, right on the outskirts of Houston.

**N.F:** He made quite the decision when he left didn't he.

**P.D:** Well he had a lot of nerve, but my father he never would ever... he never did have the nerve to do anything, he wouldn't gamble on nothing...and I was just about the same way I could only be fooled thirty-five years ago when I moved here...I could have owned this whole corner here from Mark Smith, he used to be a rich bachelor in Fort Erie and he owned all them stores on Jarvis Street, and he owned all this property...and he wanted to sell it to me with nothing down, it was all rented, everything was rented, yes I would have been living here...so nothing down I could have made the payments, I could have been a millionaire here...this whole corner and then he offered me some places in the south end there on Forsyth and Waterloo, there are apartment houses on that side, no apartment houses in front and then a house in the back...and he offered it to me for eleven thousand dollars, with nothing down, and all rented, because he started to go to Florida at that time every winter and he didn't want the trouble with owning them...all he wanted was the interest coming in...he didn't care how much principal you paid as long as that interest was coming in and it was paid up and this Jamie, that's Jamie's Foodland, well his father came along and paid fifteen thousand dollars for those apartments about three weeks after he offered them to me and I could have sold it to him...so I lost four thousand dollars right there in a matter of weeks.

**N.F:** At one time Fort Erie was a bootlegging centre.

**P.D:** Oh yes. they had both, bootlegging and rum running all along the way from Cosy Dell clear down here to these docks, yes they used to load boats so they could take them to Cuba, oh yes and straight over to Buffalo.

**N.F:** That's a very fast trip..

**P.D:** They smuggled Chinamen over and everything.



**N.F:** When would that have been that they moved the Chinese, was that before the rum running?

**P.D:** Well these were pretty well all going on around the same time.

**N.F:** It was around the same time?

**P.D:** Yes, I don't know if it is to be believed or not but from what I hear... they tell me they used to put them in burlap bags to take them over by boat, and then if the Coast Guard or anyone should come along...they would just dump them in the river...just let them go... then they used to have this...where the school is down here at the shipyard, the marina is...I never saw it but they claim that they have tunnels right underneath to go into that building...I heard about it but I never did get to see it.

**N.F:** That would have been the Biltmore Club at that time?

**P.D:** No, it was some kind of a hotel, Biltmore certainly sounds like it, some kind of a club, and then they'd tell me that this place of Frank Pattison, had tunnels, remember these kids here a few years ago, discovered the opening for a tunnel in there...well that is where they used to store these Chinamen...and then they would take them out and be off with them.

**N.F:** It wouldn't be noticeable at all, so bootlegging was popular?

**P.D:** All over town...especially in the west end, up around Horton Steel there...pretty near every one of them side streets was a bootlegger one right after the other, on both sides...we were just talking the other day, Fish Thompson is gone I guess, that seems to have cleaned up all the bootleggers around here, in this part of Fort Erie.

**N.F:** For Fort Erie itself it may have.

**P.D:** Where was I up in the Ridgeway Legion the other day and a girl was saying yes there are bootleggers around yet, because I know three in Crystal Beach...well that's just normal because that's a summer resort...some things never change in Crystal Beach, that's where they put the welfare in the winter time.

**N.F:** Did you go to Erie Beach?

**P.D:** Oh, yes...that was, mother used to hook up the horse and buggy



and she had some friends that were in the ice business out there where we used to tie up the horse, and then we'd walk from there down the lake...a big wide cement walk, and walk all down through the park...the big Dance Hall, they tore that down, but it used to be a natural beach, just a beautiful beach, and everything was really natural then and picnics...that is where we used to have all the picnics, like any women's outfit wanted a picnic why they used to have their picnics there on a Sunday or anyday.

**N.F:** It must have been busy.

**P.D:** Oh, yes sure it was, well that was a real place...they had the train running from the Ferry Boat out to the...Ferry boat running to Erie Beach, and they had the boat going over...and that was just fifty cents...she and I used to ride over and back just for the boat ride, we never got off on the other side.

**N.F:** Were there many businesses in Fort Erie?

**P.D:** Oh yes, this here Jarvis Street was the main place in this, the north end.

**N.F:** It has always been like that?

**P.D:** Yes, Jarvis Street was the main thing, but there were quite a few clothing stores and things...you could buy anything...today you can't buy nothing here, when they got down to having two big stores Loblaws and the A&P, later on and that's not too long ago, but then the mall was built and then those places disappeared, the I.G.A. was the next biggest one to come in, has to do okay it's the only store left to buy anything in, and Bruntons they started down on Jarvis Street...I suppose most of them are doing fair but now they have got these big stores up in Ridgeway and I think that they will hurt someone...I don't know why they would put two big stores like that into one small area, and so close together...yes we had three drug stores here at this end at one time on Jarvis Street...now we are lucky to have one, we didn't have none for quite a while.

**N.F:** What were the drug stores?

**P.D:** There was Cornell was here...and Camm was down below...and in

the middle one was Lonsberry...three drug stores right the other side of Jarvis Street, but then we didn't have anything for quite a while until the I D A came in, well that's about all I know.

**N.F:** Everything helps, everything adds greatly, when did they take the roundhouse down, from the Michigan Central Yard?

**P.D:** Oh they tore that down...1960 is when the yard closed, and then they had one engine working here...and I worked here for three years after that, I worked till 1963, Clarence Benner and I...he just died, he used to live over here on Jarvis Street...he and I worked alone up here for about three years after...then that's when I went to Welland and he took his pension...and then they tore the roundhouse down right away, they tore everything down.

**N.F:** There is nothing left there now at all?

**P.D:** Nothing, nothing but weeds and the snow, I don't know if the snow is gone there now or not but there was some left there not too long ago...the town backs right up at the end of Jarvis Street and dumps all the snow, oh hell they dump it back way up high, it stays cold...it stays there...well there is a lot of snow there in June, lots of times.

**N.F:** That is different too.

**P.D:** But the Graham Manufacturing Company, that is where the roundhouse was.

**N.F:** It must have been a big physical structure.

**P.D:** Oh it was huge, it used to hold about twelve or thirteen steam engines and then they had the turn table you see...it could turn them and run them into any stall you wished...well it went from Phipps Street pretty near over to Jarvis Street, it's shape went around like that, like a great big half moon.

**N.F:** That is huge.

**P.D:** It held a lot of engines...and there were a lot of men working there and then those steam engines they had cinder pits...they were...they would run the engine over these pits and then use a shaker bar and they would shake all the cinders out of the engines...

and they would have to shovel them out...and then towards the end they had a...they could hump the engines and they and buckets, with an elevator for them to go on, more automatic instead of doing it by hand...that's when they started to do away with the men...then they had to have men in the coal docks too, they worked there loading and such...but the coal docks weren't used for long after that...it led to a lot of unemployment.

**N.F:** Fort Erie has grow up quite a bit, and grown out from what it was?

**P.D:** Fort Erie never seemed to populate too much though, it went along back in the old days there was this furniture store and old man Atwood owned it, he and them, they were all the reeves and councilmen and the mayor...and they never wanted nothing to come in...they just wanted their little old town that they could run by themselves... and they wouldn't allow anything else in here...and that is why it didn't build up.

**N.F:** That is a shame.

**P.D:** And when the Fleet come in...well, that helped a lot and see during the war time they brought in so many outsiders like form Quebec, and all out through the western provinces...just the same as my wife came...well that is a lot of what helped populate Fort Erie.

**N.F:** I suppose that a lot stayed afterwards, yes.

**P.D:** A lot of them after the war was over they liked it here better than out in the west someplace, or wherever they had come from...so a lot of them stayed here...outside of that the population would never have expanded.

**N.F:** Was the amalgamation itself a popular idea?

**P.D:** Oh yes, well it started off in three sections...like there was...they took Bridgeburg away and they made it Fort Erie North...and they called the other end, the original Fort Erie, that was Fort Erie South...and where Amagari was they called it Fort Erie West... that is how it started...and then eventually we all, named it all Fort Erie...just like they merged it all the same way as they did when they brought in Regional Government...yes see all of a sudden

here we are these three places and they are all merged together like that.

**N.F:** When you were young and living out on Sunset, what is now Sunset would you have gone to Stevensville for any of your shopping or would you have come into Fort Erie?

**P.D:** Oh well at that time there was the only place you could go to get any feed was the feed mill, and there was only one in Stevensville and Ridgeway, if you wanted to get anything, say your grain ground up or anything there was nothing in Fort Erie so you went either to Stevensville or Ridgeway...then there was hotels halfway between Stevensville and our place...there was one out here on Ridgemount Road, that used to be a hotel...and of course that was the horse and buggy days, why they called them half-way houses...when the farmers would come home, there was a hotel in Stevensville and when they come home by the time an hour or so had passed they would be at this half-way house, and they would stop over there...and then they could continue on home...if they come from Ridgeway, there was another one up where I think they called that Stonemill Road now, that used to be Windmill Point but they call it Stonemill Road now, and there was one up here right near the Dominion, the corner of Dominion and Windmill, now that was a half-way house, if you come from Ridgeway you could stop there and then you could come on home.

**N.F:** I'd heard that term before and I never knew exactly what they were referring to.

**P.D:** These people would have farms, and do their farming too...and they would run their little saloon, but you see they weren't crowded like they are today, they had the old spittoons, and liquor used to be maybe ten cents a...maybe two ounces for a dime...nickel beers, that's how the old timers has their fun, they had fun out of it... they had a lot of fun...and my mother when she wanted to go shopping she went to Fort Erie, and she gathered up her eggs, and her butter, which she would make in a roll, she had these wooden pound things,

she could make it up in pounds...she would make some up in pounds but that was just for a few odd customers she had, and the ones that she took into the store, would be a round roll, these she would take her wooden ladle and mark them, you know, make them look good, then she would wrap it, or those, up into tissue paper and one week or so she would come down Bowen Road, now it wasn't under the subway, that subway was not built in those days...you had to go slanting across the tracks there out at, out at Petit Road... where the Union Centre is, where Miller's Auto Wreckers is...there is where you kept bearing to the left, and that went right straight down and clearing across all those railroad tracks...until you hit behind the Rio Vista Golf Course, and that is where you would come down is right there, that was the Bowen Road, and that was the only way that you could get into town...on this side...then there was a store up here on Central Avenue, Hanses Store they called it, two brothers they had it, and my mother would take her butter in there and her eggs and stuff and she would get her groceries, and then they would weigh up the butter and stuff...well maybe this week she might owe fifty cents or a dollar...well that would be on the book...you never paid it, no cash handled...and the next time she would come down and come around the other way on the Gilmore Road, by the Fleet there...and Malcolm's Store was over there, he was a judge at one time, Judge Malcolm right across from the Grand Trunk Hotel now, on the corner he had a store, it has burned down now...and she would do the same thing there take in her butter and her eggs and stuff...and there would be a bill there maybe when she got all through he would owe her a dollar, well then they would let that go for the next week...and that is how she worked both of these stores...and then she had different houses where they might just want a pound or two or a dozen eggs, and then she used to drop them off at the house for them...and I can just remember when I was young maybe she would buy me a candy and a pack of gum, that was a lot back then...it was a lot different

then, than it is now.

**N.F:** Yes that is for sure.

**P.D:** Oh yes, and then we had the trip...to Crystal Beach...we always went to Crystal Beach on Farmer's Picnic...they always had a farmer's picnic for the farming boys, so we would get a day out of school for that...all us country ones...and we would all go up to Crystal Beach for the Farmer's Picnic, and you got cut rate prices on some of the things and then you would meet these girls from Buffalo these Americans would come over here and they used to nickname us farmer boys, they used to kid us about being farmer boys...and then when we could see them they used to have long dresses, well they would kind of shorten their dresses, and they had what they would call jazz garters, and they wore them below their knee... they were a silk garter about two inches wide and they would put them on and boy we could see them these jazz garters and you really thought you were looking at something...we never remember too much of that, anymore I was looking at an old class picture just the other day and I realized that pretty near all of them are dead now, of all the ones I went to school with, so many of them are dead.

**N.F:** When you first moved here to Central Avenue, who were your neighbours?

**P.D:** Oh, I never had no neighbours here.

**N.F:** This would have always been commercial then.

**P.D:** Yes this was always in the business section, the commercial district here...see this here building at one time was owned by John D. James he owned where the Credit Union is here, well that was his general store, that is where my mother used to come shopping too, he had a general store here, and behind here where my garden is, well that was his lumber mill, he had a little lumber mill there and this was his barn...so then after that the Ziff brothers come here, you know Louis Ziff, they came here and they built it up a little bit and they had a gas pump out front, one of those round circular ones, that was right off the front here...well they didn't run it very long



and Ross Smith bought it and he remodelled it and he made an apartment upstairs, and this level he fixed up for the Junior Chamber...the Junior Chamber had this for, well they had it when I came here, and they had it about a year after I came here, and they rented it off from me until they got that golf course up there...so they built a little building of their own up there, a clubhouse like and they left here...and after they left here I just put a few partitions in here for storage like I've got now some on the other side here and I've got a pool table, and I've got a collection of hats here... well once in a while some one moves away and brings me another hat...so I don't know if we get any older the guy next door that bought Fickels why he is talking about buying this...so I don't know, I don't like the thought of moving into an apartment, I know I'd be lost, I've got a workshop here and I garden and I throw snow around, sit under that big maple tree, it may be an old shack but I think we would be lost.

**N.F:** I bet you would be.

**P.D:** An apartment is just a place to live...the way I've got it figured every time I got my vacation I went to Texas to see my brother and my other brother is in Florida, they stay there for six months, and I can go either place and that is what an apartment would be good for, you wouldn't have to look after a house, the same way that we do now, worrying about freezing pipes and whatnot, I could just lock her up and not have to worry...we just came back from Winnipeg, we went out to see the wife's sister she is sick, and I just drove my car out there and back.

**N.F:** You have been happy with Fort Erie then?

**P.D:** Oh yes, well I'd have to be that's the only place that I ever worked, well everything was always home to me, I never had far to go to work, when I was young could even walk up to the subway, so in fact if the weather was too bad I could always walk, just straight up Jarvis Street and I'd be on the yard...so that wasn't too bad, and the hotels in those days...the New York Central used to be



paid on the tenth and the twenty-fifth...and the C. N. used to get paid on the fifteenth and the thirtieth, so the hotels always had four good days.

**N.F:** They certainly would.

**P.D:** They had four good days a month anyhow you know...and then between times if you wanted a drink, and you didn't have any money...why then you would have to charge it, simply put it on the books...all these stores used to be private stores and you would go down and buy your groceries and just charge it...it was all charges, there was no cash and carry...you charged everything, you had your own book...the storekeeper would have a whole shelf or shelves of books, with your initials on, so you went in and you got your meat, you got what you wanted to eat during the week, and charge it all...well then on payday, when that came, you went down and you had to pay these bills, by the time you paid all the bills and had three or four dollars worth of beer, you were broke again...and you would be back charging again, and that is the way it worked...but today now with these big stores now you can't charge and that is the only trouble...but all these stores were all run on credit, every one.

**N.F:** And you would know everybody.

**P.D:** Yes you would know everybody, but that is why between paydays and paydays used to be two weeks, and some times they would run over, sixteen days before you got paid...and the pay was small, so after you got your bills paid you didn't have nothing left...well you charged in clothing stores and butcher shops, and grocery stores everything was charged, well really a lot of them went broke, some guys you know wouldn't pay, they always claimed that the best paid on the railroad was the engineer, and yet they were the hardest men to get the money out of...the hardest families to get the money out of, it was always like that...and like you take the section men they were the lowest paid, and they would pay up their bills right up, better than the engineer did.

**N.F:** You would have known your politicians back then.

- P.D:** Oh, yes, all of them, if you got into any trouble in them days you just called up your Member of Parliament, and he'd tell you...oh forget about it I'll have it fixed up for you tomorrow.
- N.F:** Is that right, well that was good.
- P.D:** Some of the names are Billy Willson in Ridgeway, well he was a conservative... and my father was raised as a liberal...the women didn't have no votes in them days and I remember when she got her first vote...she told him that she was going to go out and kill your vote...which they wouldn't do, first they would talk it over and decide...but that was how she would talk, she was going to do his vote in now...then after Billy Willson there was Bill Houck, he ran a big dairy farm on the Niagara Boulevard so he was the next member of parliament for around here...so everybody knew him too, because he was the same kind of a fellow, only they were more temperance...Billy Willson he always played golf at Erie Downs... and then you take like after they lost the beer license and the liquor license years ago, then they had rooming houses, like the Barnea House down here, that was just a rooming house and the Bucket I call it, what is the real name, I've forgotten...well I call it the Bucket anyway...and that was just a rooming house, everything went dry, the hotels and such they couldn't sell or serve anything alcoholic at all at that time...and then like my father if he got sick and he wanted a bottle of whiskey or anything... he used to go to Doc Buell, go to Doc Buell our family doctor in Stevensville...and he had to get a prescription, and then he would have to send that to Montreal, oh yes, he would get the whiskey by the gallon...yes he would give you a prescription for a gallon of whiskey...send to Montreal...and then the mailman...he would be watching for the mailman for days and days and days...until the mailman came along and he would have the jug of whiskey, all in a box...so it would take maybe three weeks before he could get his liquor...that's the way they used to get their liquor in them days you see in Montreal you could buy whiskey, but not in Ontario...and there is something

else I've got to tell you about...you talk about bootleggers...there used to be about eight or nine bookmakers around town.

**N.F:** You mean here in Fort Erie?

**P.D:** Oh yes...if you go right on up to this here place right behind my place here...this long building...and this was run by the Hawkins family, you know that is old Harry Hawkins...and they would have boards...big black boards like you would have in a school house... all along these walls...and each blackboard would have a Racetrack on it...Hialeah, Pimlico, all different Racetracks..and then there was a guy walking on the platform, all these blackboards were raised up a bit...and this guy would have earphones on, and he was getting all the results...and they would have all these horses marked on these blackboards, different horses for different tracks...and they had a regular wicket where you could go up and make your bets... fifty cents, fifty cents was the lowest bet I think you could make... fifty cents, dollar, two dollars, whatever you wanted to bet, but fifty cents was the lowest and we'd chip together a quarter apiece and bet a horse...and this guy up on the platform he would tell you as the horses were running...he'd call them off just the same as Daryl Wells...and when the race was over he would mark a ring around them and that was the winner...and then eventually he would get the prices, and he would mark the prices down...and you went up to the wicket and you cashed your bet...you see there was a book here and there was one down at the foot of Courtwright Street...and then up to the south end there were three or four of them...there were a lot of them up there...but they were practically all financed by the Hawkins, you see they were quite wealthy people in Fort Erie, and getting wealthier.

**N.F:** That is the same family then that owned the Queen's Hotel?

**P.D:** Yes...and that house on the corner, you know behind the Queen's Hotel...right across from the Legion...well she used to run a book room in the basement of that house...and then they had an old building that was on the north side...and you used to go upstairs

and they had a woman running a book there...like the higher class of people went down in the basement, where it was nice, and she used to run it herself...and then she had this other girl run it upstairs at the other...and that was for the lower class of people...and then behind, right back, across the street from the Erie Lane, I call it the Erie Lane, it's Grammy's now...right across from Robo's Gas Station, there was an old building across the alley there, Forsyth Street runs this way, east and west, on Forsyth Street there was a big long building there was a book room there.

**N.F:** I never realized that it was that big a business, they must have had American customers also.

**P.D:** Oh yes, it was a big business and that is where a lot or most of the customers come from, the Americans...but it was always busy...and they must have been making money because they never stopped...and the chief of police he never bothered them.

**N.F:** Who was chief at that time?

**P.D:** Andy Griffin was the chief when they were really wide open...and of course he was a good friend of the Hawkins...but we never had too many police...I remember one police run the whole town, day and night...old Carter, he used a Model A car, and he would be police both night and day...and then there were some before that...like I got arrested for riding a bicycle over here on Phipps Street, on the sidewalk...on my bicycle...we took a ride one Sunday me and another fellow, and we got up on the sidewalk, boy that was because the streets was all rough and stones, so we got up on the sidewalk, oh that was a nice smooth ride and we only rode about a short distance and he waved a newspaper at us...sitting on the veranda...old Dowd I think was his name, he waved a newspaper at us and he come out and he took our names and addresses, and give us a summons...so we didn't know, I took it home and Jezz did I get a trimming...I had to give this summons to my father...and the other fellow, a neighbour who lived next door, he had to take his home to his father...and the court house was right across here someplace, over by the firehall here...and my mother come

down with me in the horse and buggy, and we stopped at the railroad and my father had told us to stop, and I guess he gave us all the money he had in his pocket...well we come down and they charged us four dollars apiece...well my father in them days was only getting about two or three dollars a day.

**N.F:** Wow, that is a lot of money.

**P.D:** Well you know what we had to do then...when we got back on the farm was do a little work...and I do mean a little work.

**N.F:** Bridgeburg always had a fire station, or company?

**P.D:** Yes, all horses and fire wagons...over here right by Don Dean's... Benners used to have their team...and they had the harnesses drop right over the horses...that was it...horses would just go crazy when they would hear the fire bell.

**N.F:** It must have been exciting at that time.

**P.D:** But I was pretty young for them days to know too much about them, I just can remember because I had an uncle who lived on Phipps Street, and we used to come down and play cards at night at this uncle's...and I remember he belonged to the fire company when that happened, and that is how I remembered.

**N.F:** Did they move the fire station when they got the trucks?

**P.D:** Yes they put it in the town hall...that is where it was moved over on the other side of the town hall, and they had just a small place, if you had a fire meeting, the firemen couldn't all get in it, used to have to back the trucks out...and make a little spot to have a meeting...and then this used to be the town tool shanty right here, that is when I moved here, they used to make repairs here, and it was still a tool shanty...and then after they moved over on Lewis Street, where they are now, well then they made a fire hall out of this.

**N.F:** So that is when that was done.

**P.D:** Yes, so they put the front on first for the trucks...then Guy Violino, he put the extentions on it...he put the last one on...so we've got

a nice little hall over there now...we had a big street dance here, on Saturday night...but it rained at eleven o'clock at night, never rained at Stevensville, or Ridgeway, and it just splashed down here it started at eleven o'clock...just shen everybody was getting primed up...everybody was raring to go and get out and dance, just got started, and the rain started, it just splashed down and lasted about an hour, just enough that everybody went home, and spoiled the evening, the whole thing, we lost a lot of money on that.

**N.F:** For sure yes, how long has the company in the north end here, and all the companies been having their parades and dances?

**P.D:** The street dance we had here...this is only about the second one we had recently...but we intend to have one yearly now...and Number Two Company used to have dances at the Racetrack, that was years ago at the Bertie Fair as I was telling you...but that had to be a long time ago because I was only a kid.

**N.F:** They've been doing it for a long time then.

**P.D:** Number One Company, they've been having that Jamboree there for quite a while...number one handles it but we all always joined in with working with them, all the companies go in and then there are a lot of companies from the states that come over...they have quite a parade because we are always on the front of the parade...pretty well in the front, and we are back drinking beer in the park here and the parade is still coming out of the school grounds where they form up...so it is a long parade, it goes clear down Wintermute across the Niagara Boulevard, and then up Gilmore and into the grounds...so it really is a long parade, and they have that every year.

**N.F:** They really had a good parade in 1957, the firemen really fit in well for Fort Erie's Centennial Year, the firemen worked extra hard that year.

**P.D:** Oh hell, they were up on top of my roof here, people were all over everywhere when that went by...well that was a big one...that was really a big parade.

**N.F:** The bridge, Central Avenue bridge was up then wasn't it?



**P.D:** Yes...yes, that was up.

**N.F:** I've heard that it was a huge, long, long parade.

**P.D:** Oh, yes it was...well yes they brought all those girls from McVan's you know, McVan's over in Buffalo at the corner of Hertel and Niagara...McVan's they have torn that building down now...but that used to be a real...all the movie stars from Hollywood used to come and stop there on their vacations...because Mr. McVan had a real good drag with a lot of big shots...and I met Rochester who used to be with and appear with Jack Benny...he came over here just to stop in for one weekend... and he ended up staying the whole week...he'd say "what a good time you fellows have around here" and everybody was buying him drinks...but I danced with the King Sisters over there, all three of them...and I danced with a girl who used to sing for Campbell's Tomato Soup...oh it used to be quite a time...and they would just let their hair down because they were really on a vacation...and Mr. McVan used to pay them...the place would be just jammed packed...well, probably he gave them enough for their meals and a few drinks and stuff like that, they didn't want no big money...they was just having a good time, sort of on vacation...and didn't have to pay for it...so there were a bunch of them, a couple of hay rack loads of them that went in that parade, that went by here...and the master of ceremonies...he was here and in on that too...but everybody knew one another...I'd take somebody over, some of my relatives, maybe a distant relative who lived far from here and we'd go over there to McVan's...and I'd get the master of ceremonies behind stage and I would tell him they were here visiting from such and such, and he would get up on the stage...and announce their names and they couldn't figure out how in the world he knew this, and he would make them stand up...oh, and that was the way the place worked, it was really interesting...everyone simply had a good time.

**N.F:** Yes I bet they did, did Fort Erie go through a rationing period in the Second World War?

**P.D:** Oh yes, everything was rationed.



**N.F:** Did it really get to a severe point in Fort Erie?

**P.D:** Well nobody suffered too much...because you was trading one coupon off to somebody else for another coupon...and gasoline, well you could get some of these places they got the gasoline somehow or other...you could even buy phony gasoline tickets.

**N.F:** I never realized Fort Erie got involved in those things.

**P.D:** Oh yes, we had a fellow here, right down at the end of the street here...he had a gas station and hell, he had to take those tickets and put them in the bank too, those tickets after they took them back in, you know after they bought gas...but he had coupons they would feel just like that plate, a thick paper plate...but I wouldn't take no chances by going to any other gas station, I'd always get my gas from him...and I guess maybe that was what he wanted.

**N.F:** It sure could have been yes.

**P.D:** I'd always take them back to him...and then I used to...when I was working the railroad, nights, I used to work for Archie MacGlashen... he run the Fort Erie Dock Company...down at the foot of Jarvis.

**N.F:** That was the name of it, the Fort Erie Dock Company?

**P.D:** Yes the Fort Erie Dock Company...he had piles of coal in there... stoker coal, he used to get it in there by the barge loads, this stoker coal...well then I used to run that big crane, that crane had a ninety foot boom on it...and I used to go down and help him run that crane... my brother ran it first...when the war broke out he had just got his commercial license...so they grabbed him and took him in the Air Force right away...so I used to go down there...this Mike Storm that has this contract business here...well he used to run it, but he had a business of his own, and he just couldn't put in all that time...so between my young brother and I, we used to run the crane for Archie MacGlashen...and then he was selling stokers, and putting them in...well, I used to go around putting in stokers, in people's furnaces in my spare time...and then we were loading scrap iron, we would push in a...the railroad would push in a whole bunch of empty cars down there...and we would have a barge load of scrap

iron come in...and we had a magnet, for the crane, and we used to pick it up...and load all these cars up, because it was always shipped by rail...the scrap iron was during the war...oh that was a...really a going concern down there...that was really something...he done a great business down there...and then he used to have this sand dock too...silicate sand they called it, that's something else they used to ship out too... Williams, Bud Williams of the Williams Gold Refinery, they had a share into that, you see MacGlashen he had I think fifty-one percent or something so he could have controlling interest of it... and Williams had the rest...but MacGlashen he operated it all, and it was a little extra spending money for me...I'd be working nights and oh, sometimes you would get an extra two or three hours sleep at night on the railroad on those benches, those hard benches... that is where I got arthritis I think...sleeping on them benches...but hell in them days when you were young you only needed two or three hours sleep, and you were all set to go...as far as the money you made down there, it didn't do no good...you would spend it maybe before you got home...or charged that much, whatever you made you would have it put on the book someplace...yes there were a lot of boats used to come in here, and then they brought soft coal in there, and it used to come from Toledo, Ohio, boats running back and forth, that was the old coal dock they called it...stokers everybody in town that could afford one had a coal stoker in their furnace...a good idea...oh it was all right in them days until the coal got bad, and then, see I was getting telephone calls all the time to come and fix people's stokers...they got stones, the stones got mixed up in it, in the coal...MacGlashen had gravel and stuff down there too...they used to get the gravel right across the river here, yes they could take gravel right out, just over across the river, and he would bring a scow load over there and he was selling gravel there then too...and then the kids were throwing the gravel around these stone piles and coal piles...well, in the furnace then, the stones would work their way against the stoker worm and shear the pin

off...then they would be calling me to come and help them...they have got no heat...and the kids would freeze to death...if I was home and wasn't working I'd have to get up in the middle of the night and go out and fix somebody's stoker.

**N.F:** That would be a miserable job, yes.

**P.D:** Well you know, you didn't mind it then when you were young, and working was simply a way of life...if you weren't doing something else...you were working...but this Archie MacGlashen he was a real nice fellow though, yes anytime I needed any money, why, I'd just go down to him.

**N.F:** I hear that he did a lot for the community too.

**P.D:** Yes he was a great Chamber of Commerce man too, Fort Erie's Chamber of Commerce...he was a good man...he could figure in his head as fast as you could with a pencil...and that man could remember anything...he had a good memory, he would scratch his head when he wanted to call...maybe call Ottawa, somebody in Ottawa about a boat load of something, and he would just scratch his head a little while and then he would dial the number... that is the memory he had, yes he was fine...well he helped build the Windsor Tunnel, and how he got to Fort Erie was the Peace Bridge... see they built the Windsor Tunnel, and if you go through that traffic tunnel, well there is a curve in it...it goes around a curve, and then into the United States at Detroit...and they started from the other end, and they started from this end and he told me when they got together they were only three inches out...working from both ends underneath the water.

**N.F:** To meet at a point like that.

**P.D:** Yes sir, and they worked in compartments in that tunnel and all compressed air you know...them guys got well paid, bigger than the ordinary salary, but they were rough, and he told me that there would be men die pretty near every other day, they would clear them out dead...they'd die in there...and at the end of the week... when pay day was... that gang that was working that week, you

would never have them the next week...so you would have to have another gang, all ready to go in, and they would go in in their place and this other gang would go out at their shift end and booze up, spend all the money they made, and when the alternate gang would go out, they would do the same thing...and that gang was ready to come back in again...but he told me he had run across a blacksmith, he needed one of those for tools and everything... and he said "the best blacksmith he had was an alcoholic, he was continuously all the time drinking, but he could really sharpen chisels and things, he really knew his business about iron", and he was an alcoholic... yet he was one of the best blacksmiths they ever had, strictly an alcoholic...well then after they finished...that big crane I was telling you about...they moved that from Detroit, they brought it down here and it worked on the Peace Bridge...so he, Archie, worked on the Peace Bridge...and just the day before he died, he died on a Sunday, watching television, he lived on the Niagara Boulevard, just down below Frenchman's Creek, he drove out in front here, in front of the house here on Central Avenue, and he was telling my wife, he says "you tell that husband of yours to get that belly off, or he ain't going to last long", and he went home and dropped dead in his chesterfield the next day.

**N.F:** Isn't that something.

**P.D:** But he was really, really good to me...well I used to help him out whenever he wanted help...and he would loan me his car, or truck or anything I wanted, I couldn't be without wheels.

**N.F:** It must have been busy down at those docks, I've never realized how much they handled and did.

**P.D:** Now you see that track ran right straight through...right up in front of the Royal Hotel there...maybe at one time they took the steel off the tracks, tore it out, but the tracks used to run right back in, right back to the end...and that wall, started to cave out... because we had that great big boom crane must have weighed tons and tons... and big wide caterpillar treads on it they were huge...

well, you know, that wall started to shift out...so I helped him on that...we dig the ground away from the inside of the wall...and we drilled holes through that cement...oh the walls were about, two feet thick...we drilled holes through that cement and put bolts in and nuts and a cable...then we dug a trench oh halfway back to that dock, we dug maybe from here to across the street, a good fifty feet...dug a trench about that wide, maybe eight inches to a foot wide, and deep, and filled that with stones and rocks and everything and layed this cable in, with clamps attached to it, you see there were clamps on the cable...and they would lay it back in, and fill that full of cement, and put them maybe six feet apart...all along the length of that whole wall, and then let it dry, and fill it in...and that is what is holding that wall today.

**N.F:** That was a good idea.

**P.D:** It is still solid down there now...well that wall will never go until those cables deteriorate...that is the only thing that will let it go, you know a lot of people don't know anything about that...person I was going to talk to, I'll see him at lodge, the owner, Utivitch, yes I'll tell him.

**N.F:** The dock down there was that a natural shape or man-made?

**P.D:** Well, how it got started I don't know, it was all filled, they just kept filling and filling, they got all the dirt that they could get, it was built way up towards the International Bridge, but there was another building at the south end of that dock too...where there was a laundry put in there at the south end of the dock one time, they run a laundry there, and there was a carpenter shed where they made boxes for the Fleet Aircraft, and a carpenter shop in there too, of course that has been all torn down.

**N.F:** And that is where Herb Guess eventually moved into was down there.

**P.D:** No, Herb Guess is down across from the Ohio Hotel, down further still, that was all filled in, there were two places down there...so he got one...and different ones lived in the other one, it was Mrs. Bard ol that owned Erie Beach at one time, she lived in a little

cottage down there, next to Herb Guess...then right out here... there was a water tank...stood right out behind the garden here, just a big round water tank... fifteen feet around maybe, and seventy feet high...and when they tore that down, to build the other water tank... they dropped her down, and they cut her up I think into three silos, and that is what Archie MacGlashen used to store coal and stuff in after that...and that is about all that I can tell you sir.

**N.F:** Thank you very much for the interview, and for all of the interesting information.