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# Oral History Transcription with Edwin J Bossie

Edwin J. Bossie

Don Cyr

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Oral History Interview with  
Edwin J. Bossie  
by  
Don Cyr

Q. What is your full name?

A. Edwin Jacob Bossie

Q. Edwin J. Bossie

This is Don Cyr and today is March 12th, 1981 and I am interviewing Edwin J. Bossie at his home in Stockholm.

Where were you born?

A. I was born in St. Agatha. Black Mountain.

Q. Were you born at your home or in a hospital?

A. At the home.

Q. And what date were you born?

A. December 9th, 1910.

Q. Did you live in St. Agatha for very long when you were a child?

A. We moved here in 1912 then we went back around 1917.

Q. Why did you come back to St. Agatha?

A. Well, the war was coming, I think; I think is why. My father had a farm there so he went back to the farm. Then he sold the farm and we built the little store and it is still there.

Q. Oh, really. A little store in St. Agatha?

A. In St. Agatha.

Q. Is the house you were living in when you were born still standing?

A. No.

Q. What kind of a house was it?

A. It was a main house with a built in kitchen, smaller. Same shape, only smaller.

Q. It was a summer kitchen or was it...?

A. That was a kitchen.

Q. What was the house made of? Was it a log house?

A. No. It was shingles, 2 by 4's in the walls.

Q. Do you remember what they used to insulate the house?

A. I think what they used most often was this building paper and they put these shingles on both sides.

Q. Were the shingles on the inside of the house?

A. Yes. These were there just on the edge to hold the paper there, you know. Against the two-by-fours.

Q. In the walls, did they ever put buckwheat hulls in there?

A. No, I can't remember that.

Q. In some places they used to.

A. It was already built sort of.

Q. Oh, I see. It was not built by your family, but, it was built by someone else?

A. I think maybe my grandfather built it. When I was born it was already there.

Q. Sometimes when you change a window around or something like that you get to see what is in there.

A. As I said, I was two years old when I left there. I didn't go back for three or four years when we moved further down by the cross road down by that little hill over there. There is a building there where one roof goes this way and another goes this way.

Q. The public building?

A. No. Used to be Thibeault farms there. Now I don't know who owns it. Paul Guerrette was the last one who owned it, and is still there.

Q. Now, you left St. Agatha to come here when you were how old?

A. I think 1922. I was going to be twelve.

Q. So, you had gone to school in St. Agatha?

A. Oh, yes.

Q. Did you go to the convent?

A. No, we had a little school there all eight grades.

Q. Oh, really.

A. We only had one teacher and we took French and English. We translated both.

Q. Wow. Because there were a lot of schools back then that didn't want to have too much French. But they had that there. Were they lay teachers or were they nuns?

A. Lay teachers. Concession.

Q. And what concession was that?

A. Well, there were three rows and there was a Bouchard at the top one. The next one I don't know. Then the one below that was where Desrosiers, The Guerettes and Martins lived there.

Q. Did they have a name for the concession?

A. A word that means "in the middle".

Q. Oh, so you had the high road, the low road, and yours was in the middle.

A. Yes, that's right.

Q. How large was your family?

A. We were ten in all, but, three died so now we are seven.

Q. Who were your parents? What were your parents' names?

A. Adwar Bossie.

Q. And your mother?

A. Modes Shawsee. You probably heard of Zephian Shawsee, that was her father in St. Agatha. That big building there that has gone to pieces on the road to St. Agatha in Frenchville.

Q. Oh, wow, that is a nice big house.

A. That used to be quite a building. It cost eleven thousand dollars and in those days that was quite a bit of money.

Q. For sure. That is a great big house. Where were your parents born?

A. My father was born there in St. Agatha and my mother also.

Q. Could you tell me approximately when?

A. Hmm...

Q. Well, could you tell me how old they were when they died?

A. My father was 76 when he died in '59.

Q. So, that was back in the 1880's or so.

A. I think it was 1881 or '83 because that was two years ago.

Q. And they were both born in St. Agatha. Did they get married in St. Agatha?

A. Yes. June 21, 1905.

Q. St. Agatha must just have been getting settled right around the time they were born when St. Agatha was very, very small.

A. Yes.

Q. What was your father's occupation?

A. Well, in the winter he went into the woods to be a lumber jack. In the summer time he was a carpenter. He built some of those barns that you still see in St. Agatha. Some of those with double roof.

Q. Those barns together with a connection in between, you mean. Someone at the University of Maine has done a barn study and they determined that those type of barns are only built around here and around Sherbrook, Quebec. Only two places.

A. Oh, really? My father built one on what they call the Caribou Road when you go up to St. Agatha across the road and it is still standing. He probably built seven or eight.

Q. Do you know why they would put two barns together like that?

A. I thought maybe you got more room without so much pull on the roof. Tied together better.

Q. Most of them are still standing.

A. You don't see any of those caved in because they were built better.

Q. Smaller barns were better built. Did your mother work outside the home?

A. No.

Q. Of course, with ten children.

A. Not then, but, in her later years she did when she was in

Waterville.

Q. Oh really! What did she...

A. She worked in a cotton mill

Q. Did your grandparents live with you when you were young?

A. Yes. When my grandfather died, I barely remember him. I don't know just when he died. Probably around 1915. My grandfather was married in St. Acluse the eleventh of August, 1873.

Q. So, that would be in Frenchville? Upper Frenchville?

A. Probably, yes.

Q. Around that time St. Agatha split from Frenchville and became a town of its own. And you said you were young when they died, so, you don't remember them living with you?

A. I remember my grandmother. She lived here until she was 98, so I remember her. She lived with us for a long time. She remarried, then when he died she came back to live with us again.

Q. Who did she remarry?

A. Elzear Voisine

Q. Do you remember your great grandparents?

A. No.

Q. Do you remember their names or anything?

A. I have it right here. My great grandfather was Alexy Bossie.

Q. And do you know his wife's name?

A. Celeste Lelac.

Q. And do you have anything on where they were born or when?

A. Isle Det.

Q. That is in the province of Quebec. And do you know what date?

A. They were married in 1831.

Q. Now, your grandparents, do you know when they were born? Or when?

A. On my mothers' or fathers' side?

Q. It could be on either.

A. My grandfather was married to Mary Barbeau. They were married in St. Luce in 1876. His father married Rebecca Ouelette, St. Basile, New Brunswick.

Q. Do you have the year for that?

A. 1831.

Q. It is nice to have all that information right at hand, isn't it?

A. Oh, yes. I hope to make a permanent record of it.

Q. For sure. It is very important. You mentioned that you came to Stockholm in 1917?

A. The first time was around 1912, because, I had a brother who was born in 1913. He was born here. I haven't been able to find out, yet, just when we moved out. But, we lived right down here on Red Row. There used to be a lot of houses, all red.

Q. So, they called it Red Row.

A. They were company houses. The company built them.

Q. Oh, from shingle mill?

A. On this side of the river there was only lumber. Milliken. The governor was brother to one of those Milikens, here. My father worked there. He was one of those, I don't know what you would call it. He had a pad on his shoulder and he carried these big 8 by 8's.

Q. Eight by eight pieces of lumber, you mean?

A. Yes.

Q. He must have had shoulders on him.

A. Yes. And strong legs, too.

Q. Is the house, where you moved here the first time still standing?

A. No, it is gone. I think those lots were all fifty feet wide. All the same partitions in the inside.

Q. Each house was a duplicate of the other, then?

A. Yes.

Q. And they were all probably built at the same time.

A. And there was four double tenement houses. They were divided in two and one family in one and one in the other. I've seen these

houses were they have had four families. Two upstairs and two downstairs.

Q. And they were designed for 2 families, but, they had 4 families in them?

A. Oh, yes. It was crowded for awhile.

Q. When you moved back to Stockholm, after you had been in St. Agatha for a while, did you stay in the same house?

A. No, we lived in that little white house. My aunt owned that.

Q. It is off the road that goes off there, kind of across from the Baptist Church?

Q. And we lived there for a while and then moved to my other uncle's while my father was building a house. We were living on Lake Street. That house had been torn down, too. You know the Sunoco filling station. It was beyond that.

Q. Are your brothers and sisters around here still, or have they moved away?

A. My nearest relative is in Caribou in one of those apartments for the old. I have two sisters in Florida and one in Kansas and one brother in Waterville.

Q. Could you give the names of your brothers and sisters and where they are?

A. Eddie is in Caribou. All my brothers and sister's names start with Ed. My mother liked "Ed", or something. Edna, the oldest, and Madeline (the last one, she forgot the "Ed") And then there is Georgette, but her middle name is Edwee. Edna and Madeline live in St. Petersburg, Florida. Edwina lives up here on the main road from Caribou. That big white house on the hill. Georgette is in Kansas and Edgar in Waterville.

Q. You went to school here in Stockholm?

A. I went to St. Agatha, then Stockholm, then to Caribou.

Q. When you went to school here in Stockholm, what school was it?

A. It was the one that burnt down. I started school here in the sixth grade. The funny part of it is I knew stuff up to the eighth grade. But, in English that wasn't so.

Q. I see. Form St. Agatha you were ahead in some subjects, but, you weren't ahead in English.

A. So, I started in the sixth grade in the spring. In the woods, my



father had a camp he was jobbing for the mill. He had to work his farm. I didn't go to school the first winter. In the spring I went to school for the sixth grade. Then, in the fall, they had another job in another place near here, and he used to come and get me every Friday night. I set some snares and caught some rabbits and came back on Sunday afternoon and sold the rabbits and bought some food. My mother made some pies and cakes, but, for other stuff like steaks and stuff, I lived high.

Q. So, when you went to school in Stockholm, was it a one room school?

A. There were two classes.

Q. One for the lower grades and one for the upper grades?

A. There were 5th and 6th, 7th and 8th, and 3rd and 4th. So, there were two grades per room.

Q. What did you study? Of course you studied reading, writing, and arithmetic.

A. Yes. I liked spelling. I was good at spelling.

Q. Uh, huh. You used to have spelling bees and things like that?

A. Yes. All my kids got the first prize in most of them.

Q. You mentioned your English wasn't up as much...

A. It still isn't.

Q. Did you speak much English when you first went there?

A. I was a bashful guy. I didn't talk too much, because I was afraid that they would laugh at me. I had the French accent.

Q. They didn't laugh at you though, did they?

A. Well, no.

Q. Because you didn't give them the chance to.

A. No, I'll tell you. In math and stuff like that I was pretty good and of course I kind of liked it because I got the lessons...and these friends of mine...

Q. Sure. You were a little shy about talking because you didn't speak as much English as the others.

A. To answer questions, I had second thoughts.

Q. Did it take you very long after that so you were fully proficient

in English?

A. I don't think I have ever been fully proficient in English. I try.

Q. You do well. What was school like? Did you like school?

A. Oh, yes. I loved it.

Q. Do you remember your classmates and your teachers?

A. Oh, yes.

Q. Can you remember some of the names of your teachers?

A. The first one was Adams, the second one was ...I can't remember. There were so many children they had to put some in the basement of the Lutheran Church when I was in seventh grade. I can't remember her name.

Q. Were there any teachers you particularly liked?

A. One I liked very, very much was Neal. He came from Danforth.

Q. His last name was Neal?

A. Yes. Lawrence Neal. And I didn't have the money to buy a class ring and he said "I'll lend it to you". And he did.

Q. Wow! That is really something. Where did you attend church?

A. In St. Agatha. For first communion we had to go to catechism for two weeks. We had to walk, and it was three miles from where I lived. One day we didn't go. It was pouring cats and dogs. We walked. One of the sisters said "What do you think you are made of, sugar?". "You won't melt", she said.

Q. After that you made sure you got there whether it was raining or not, huh. Where did you attend church when you were in Stockholm?

A. Well, at first the priest came from north Caribou and there was a hall beside the filling station.

Q. A town hall?

A. It was a movie hall upstairs. Downstairs was the barber shop and they had pool tables and stuff. There was an outside stairway. To go to see the movies, I used to put the posters up and clean the hall and could go in free. That way I'd clean the hall and the next day, Sunday, there would be Church there.

Q. I see. You used to clean the hall Saturday night to get the hall ready for Sunday morning. Would you have a dance there or something

on Saturday?

A. Yes, sometimes they had dances there on Saturday, but, the dance person would take care of that. But, for the movies, I took care of that.

Q. What would they set up an altar and everything?

A. Yes. They had a little one over to one side.

Q. What would they do for music?

A. There was an organ there and a little old lady would play the organ.

Q. Oh, you had the organ there for the movies, anyway.

A. Yes. You remember the old silent movies, well, you probably don't remember. In most of the western scenes the horses would go real fast and they'd play the organ faster.

Q. Did you have to go to catechism when you were here in Stockholm?

A. No. I had already been confirmed in St. Agatha.

Q. And when the priest visited would he teach catechism to the younger children after church or there wasn't any until the church was built?

A. No. I don't remember any there, then. The church was built in 1927, I think. I came here in 1922, so it wasn't that long. Then, there was a big building right above the post office that they used for potato house. it was a big department store. Standard Supply they called it. I worked there. Upstairs, when the priest, Father Camillon, came from France. He had a cousin they called her Mademoiselle Prevotat. She was from France, too. She was a photographer. She went up to the Canadian wilds and took pictures of everything. One time she took me to Fort Kent. I was applying for a bus boy job at the hotel in Fort Kent. She took me there. She was talking to this man. I was supposed to be translating for her. She said something in French and I said "wild forest?". She said, "No, no". I said "Virgin forest?" and she said "Yes, that's it". But, I didn't get the job, though.

Q. Father Camillon, was he active in the parish?

A. He had a hard time here. He was transfered in '33. Those were the worst years.

Q. During the depression?

A. Yes. People were giving ten cents and it was hard to give ten cents every Sunday. He had a really hard time and, of course, he was

old. And it was hard. But, Father Cyr, the one who came next was younger and full of ideas.

Q. Did he organize a lot of organizations?

A. Oh, yes. He had these plays and parties. We had good times. And card parties every Sunday, almost. Oh, yes, it was really active, then. This church was built to burn coal, I think. Coal was expensive, so, Father Cyr changed it to wood. We would go out, I think it was I.P. who gave us the free stumpage. We'd go out in the spring and cut about 42 cords of hardwood.

Q. What would you have a Frolic? Parish frolic?

A. Yes, all the men. Of course, in the spring after the mills were closed, not too many men were working.

Q. They would go out and cut the wood and the women would prepare a lunch and come out and feed them?

A. They prepared it and we brought it with us. It's quite a ways to California.

Q. That must have been a lot of fun...

A. And a lot of work, too, because we tried to do as much work as we could so we wouldn't be there a long time. It would be about a week to do it.

Q. Were many other things in the parish done that way for Frolics? Like cleaning the cemetery and things like that?

A. When they did the cemetery it was all by hand and horse. They didn't use a bulldozer.

Q. The church, was the church built by the people?

A. No, that was people from Canada.

Q. People came from Canada built the church. Were there any frolics to help build the church or anything like that or did the people from Canada do it completely?

A. Yes, for some reason or another. Of course, this was supposed to have been a growing town, but, it was really at its peak. By 1933 there wasn't anything left here but the hotel. They had probably started it around '25. It was finished 1927 or '28.

Q. Just in time. They finished it right before the depression.

A. Yes. Inside you could still see the steel beams and everything. When Father Auger came, he lowered the ceiling and stuff.

Q. I see. It was easier on the people, then. What kind of church organizations were there? Was there a Knights of Columbus?

A. No, they had League of the Sacred Heart, League of St. Anne, Children of Mary.

Q. What did the League of the Sacred Heart do?

A. They were sponsored by these card parties.

Q. I see. Was it an organization of just men or was it families?

A. I mean, The Ladies of St. Anne sponsored card parties. The Sacred Heart, they were only men. Mostly they went to communion in a group. That's about all.

Q. The Ladies of St. Anne, did they make a trip to St. Anne de Beaupre every spring or anything like that?

A. They couldn't afford it.

Q. This other group was the Children of Mary?

A. They were younger, single girls. Like 15 to...they varied in age.

Q. And what did they do?

A. Well, they helped the women and had meetings. They had a president.

Q. I see. Something to keep together socially.

A. And one Sunday was for the Sacred Heart, one was for the Ladies of St. Anne; for the communion and Children of Mary.

Q. Was there any organization for young boys?

A. No.

Q. Who did you marry?

A. Lucy Gagnon

Q. Where was she from?

A. Stockholm?

Q. And she had always been here in Stockholm?

A. She was born in Stockholm. A native.

Q. What was the date and place of your marriage?

A. September 12, 1933.

Q. Here in Stockholm?

A. Yes.

Q. You don't remember who the witnesses were?

A. No.

Q. That's all right. Did you have a honeymoon?

A. Yes. We went to Quebec.

Q. The city of Quebec or the province?

A. Well, I'll tell you, my father had an almost new car, but, it started losing oil. So, before I got married he got a new ring seal. The guy who put the rings in put them in backwards. So, we started going to Quebec and we started losing oil. I put two quarts of oil and gas before we left. Then, every town we went to I put two quarts of oil in. We went to St. Dennis. Is there a place near Quebec named St. Dennis?

Q. I believe so.

A. I think we turned around there because we figured we couldn't afford it. Those were hard times.

Q. So, you were in the province of Quebec, anyway.

A. We were gone three days. We figured at the rate we were using oil we couldn't afford it. That summer I had worked all summer for seven dollars a week.

Q. Seven dollars a week. And those were probably good wages back then.

A. I was chore boy for Fraser's Sporting camp at Square Lake.

Q. It is amazing how the difference in money is, isn't it? Where did you live after you were married?

A. Well, we lived a month with my sister. Then, we rented a house for a couple of years by the Sunoco station. It used to be mine.

Q. Oh, that used to be your business?

A. I bought it and started a store there.

Q. Oh, I see. What kind of things did you sell in your store?

A. I started with groceries, gas, oil, and beer after a while.

That's where I made a few dollars.

Q. For sure. When did you move up here to this house?

A. In '42 when I got the post office.

Q. You were really lucky to get land right next to the church here. It is really beautiful land.

A. Fifteen hundred dollars. But, when you think of it, at 7 dollars a week it takes an awful long time to pay for fifteen hundred dollars.

Q. You are right.

A. It wasn't like this, either. We did a lot of work to it. I like it. It's a nice place. I'm prejudiced about this spot.

Q. Of course you'r prejudiced. When you put a lot of work into it you have to like it, right? That is unless you didn't like the work.

A. I liked it.

Q. Can you give the names of your children and when they were born?

A. Shirley, September 4, 1934. Jim, August 28, 1935. One was 16th of October, but, she died when she was a year and a half old in 1936.

Q. What was her name?

A. Bernice. Then, Roger, August 11, 1940. Anne, February 1, 1943. Richard January 12, 1945. And Peter November 29th, 1951.

Q. How many children did you have in all?

A. Seven. Six are alive.

Q. That is a big family.

A. We thought so when they were going to school, college, and things.

Q. For sure. Where do your children live now?

A. They all live in Stockholm except for Richard. He lives in Caribou.

Q. Do you have quite a few grandchildren?

A. Twenty-four and seven great-grandchildren.

Q. Can you name your grandchildren?

A. The grandchildren, yes. But, not the great-grandchildren.

Q. Yes. Could you name them all?

A. Bruce, Sharon, Connie, Steve, (Russell), Brian, Kevin, Brenda, Bernice, (Curtice), and Scott. That is the Brisette family. Then Jim's children are Dennis, Janice, and Douglas. Roger's are Marty and Jeff. Then Timmy, Tammy, Tamara, Jennifer and Jessica. Richard, Reginald, Sherry and Karen. Peter, Krista, and Chad. That's it.

Q. That is a lot. That is very good. I am impressed. Don't ask me to repeat those. What was your occupation? You owned the filling station and the store.

A. And I was postmaster for 34 years.

Q. Were you postmaster when you owned the store?

A. I let go the store because I couldn't handle the business and being postmaster. My wife had four young kids then and it was hard to keep store by yourself.

Q. Was the post office in a separate building or was it in your home?

A. No, it was in a separate building. When I first started working there it was across town by the IGA store. Then, I bought this place here. I bought from Paul Cyr. He comes from Grand Isle. Have you ever heard of Beaugret?

Q. No.

A. Paul Beaugret they used to call him. I don't know why they called him that.

Q. Probably just another nickname.

A. His father called him Paul Beaugret. I don't know why. He was brother to Father Cyr in Caribou. What was his name? But, he's dead now. Anyway, he had a store down by the river were the post office is now. So, I bought that and changed it into a post office. Then, somebody hit the post office. A car ran right thru it. He was on dope. He went across the bridge and ran right thru.

Q. When was this?

A. In 1975.

Q. Then they built the new one?

A. I built the new one. I rent it to them, the post office. It is my building.

Q. Did anyone in your family work in the mill?



A. Yes. I worked there for a while.

Q. What mill was that?

A. That was Atlas Plywood.

Q. What did you do there?

A. I used to work with the dryer 12 hours a night. Six thirty to six thirty. Six days a week. For \$18.00 a week. I was working there and then Paul Cyr, the one I bought the place from, he...I went thru high school, so, he needed a clerk. He hired me. Then I worked eleven hours a day, six to six, with one hour for dinner. On Friday and Saturday I worked 14 hours. Twelve dollars a week. then after two or three months he gave me fifteen dollars, then he gave me eighteen dollars. But, that is 25 cents an hour.

Q. Really? That is unbelievable.

A. I was glad to have it.

Q. You didn't like your job at the mill? Was it a boring job?

A. It was hot. All those dryers in the summer time. No, I didn't like it. Let's face it. I didn't go to school to work in there.

Q. Especially when you had a head for business. Did anyone in your family work in the woods?

A. Oh, yes. My older brother started working in the woods when he was fifteen. He used to go with my father. My father had a friend who had a son.

Q. So, your father worked in the woods, too.

A. In the winter time.

Q. I see. And when did they usually leave to go into the woods.

A. Well, when we were in St. Agatha, my father used to set out in the fall after digging. It wasn't that far. It was Square Lake. But, he had to walk and he would come at Christmas and he would come at Easter.

Q. Then he would come back in the spring?

A. Yes.

Q. Then farm in the summer?

A. Well, at first, when he was younger he used to go on the drives.

Q. The log drives?

A. Yes.

Q. What did he do when he went into the woods?

A. He cut long lumber and stuff like that with a cross cut saw. A cutters saw they called him. Those fell the trees. There was a yard man. The one with the horses that pulled them into the yard. But, there were two men with the cross cut saw that cut and limbed.

Q. He must have had good arms working that saw the way they did?

A. Yes.

Q. Were they going after hard wood or softwood?

A. In Square Lake it was really huge lumber. It hadn't been cur for many years. It was big stuff.

Q. All virgin timber. It was pine?

A. I don't remember. I know they used to fish on the ice and get lake trout, cut and freeze some and bring some.

Q. Oh, I see. So, a lot of the food they had in the woods, they would get from fishing and hunting right there, probably.

A. I don't really know. But, I know part of the fish they did. In Cross Lake and Square Lake they would go out fishing.

Q. When they would come out of the woods in the spring what would happen? I know with my grandfather they had a special cabin on the farm where they would stay for a couple of days and de-louse themselves.

A. Is that right.

Q. They never used to do that?

A. No, no.

Q. They never had a problem, then with lice? They must have taken good care of themselves, then?

A. Must be. They may have, but, he never told me, anyway.

Q. Did they have any stories they used to tell about when they were in there? Was there anything that happened in the woods they used to tell about that you particularly remember?

A. Not too much. My father used to like to tell stories, but, I don't remember any of them.

Q. He used to tell a lot of stories?

A. Yes.

Q. What types of stories were they about? Were they about the woods?

A. No, they were mostly about the good guy and the bad guy or the big one-eyed giant. Anything like that.

Q. Oh, I see.

A. Tall tales.

Q. Did he tell stories about the devil and things like that?

A. Oh yes. Scary.

Q. Did he ever talk about the ride through the sky in the canoe?

A. No.

Q. Lots of stories about the werewolves and things like that?

A. They used to have some about the de Lutin.

Q. The de Lutin? The little leprachauns. The little people. What kinds of things would he say they did?

A. Things they would do in the stables. They would put their horses up at night and the next day in the morning they would go out and there would be braids on their tails and manes.

Q. And all kinds of mischief.

A. He almost kind of believed that. He said it and he kind of believed it. Of course, it was probably told to him.

Q. Did you ever see any of the horses or anything? Did you ever see it happen?

A. No, no. Well, we had some horses when I was quite young. Then we left. When we came back, we didn't have any horses. We had cows.

Q. Did he accuse de Lutin of doing any other things around the farm?

A. I haven't heard any.

Q. Can you remember any holidays or any celebrations you had when you were young?

A. Well, usually New Years and Christmas were the big days.

Q. How did you celebrate Christmas?

A. Well, even though we were poor, we always had something for Christmas. Even if it was only an apple or orange or something.

Q. You would have a gift. Did you open it on Christmas Eve or on Christmas Day?

A. The next morning. Santa Claus always came during night and we never saw him.

Q. Did you go to midnight mass on Christmas?

A. Of course we lived quite a ways from church. My parents went unless they had to babysit a bunch of kids at our house. And then the other parents would go to Midnight Mass.

Q. Would they have a Reveillon?

A. Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

Q. What type of things would happen at the Reveillon?

A. I really don't know.

Q. You never went to the Reveillon? Did you ever hear them talk about it or anything?

A. Oh, yes. They had fun. They had a few drinks, told stories, and sang.

Q. It would be kind of like a party, then?

A. Yes.

Q. Would they eat a meal?

A. I don't know.

Q. What would you do on New Years?

A. Of course we'd tell each other happy New Year. We'd get together and pick up more. A whole bunch of people would go from one house to another.

Q. Oh, I see. You'd go to your neighbor's and have a party. Then you would pick up your neighbor and it would grow.

A. Yes.

Q. Poor person at the end of the road, they would have a lot of people there.

A. Well, they just went to those they liked more. Probably five or

six families.

Q. I see. Did you ever celebrate Mardi Gras?

A. They used to some. I don't remember too much about it, but, that was a big event, too.

Q. Just before Lent.

A. Yes. Even here we had some parties because Lent was coming.

Q. So, it was the last chance to do anything at all before Lent started.

A. Right. They had la Micareme, too that they could break.

Q. What was that called?

A. La Micareme. Of course they had a party then. The young folks more so than the older. Dances and stuff.

Q. Had your dances because you weren't allowed to dance thru lent at all?

A. No.

Q. So, you'd have your dances and sweets that you wanted half way thru.

A. That had to last thru the rest of lent.

Q. And, of course, Easter was a special day because Lent was over.

A. Yes. A big celebration. Lent was over Saturday noon. You could eat all you wanted.

Q. Did you used to do Easter water?

A. At church, you mean?

Q. Some people used to at dawn, on Easter morning.

A. Oh yes, go to the spring. My father did that. I never did.

Q. What was the process he had to go thru to do that? To get Easter water.

A. I think he had to go to a clear spring. We lived on Main Street and there was one behind the rocks with good drinking water.

Q. And he would go to the clear spring on Easter morning just as the sun was rising and take the water?

A. Yes. I don't know if he did it in later years.

Q. What would you do with that water?

A. I don't remember.

Q. Did you ever have special celebrations on the feast of Christ the King in June?

A. I almost think it was the lady Fatima. We had a parade from 161 to here. All the cars went five miles an hour and all the cars boiling up because it was going so slow. It was a hot day.

Q. Did they have the priests there?

A. Yes.

Q. Were there nuns, also?

A. No nuns, but, of course, the altar boys, the Ladies of St. Anne, the priests from other parishes.

Q. Where would the parade start and end?

A. It used to start at 161 and end at the church.

Q. And when it ended at church would there be a mass?

A. I don't know if it was a mass, but, it was the Blessed Sacrement.

Q. O.K. They would expose the Blessed Sacrement. Did people used to decorate all along the way? Would they put alters up

A. No, not here. In St. Agatha we used to have that. I think, Halfs Year. Is that what they call it? People went from the church, to the convent. It was kind of a Church de Route we made. I think they had heads, here.

Q. Would they do a mass outside or anything like that in St. Agape?

A. I don't know they did. I only went there once. I don't remember that.

Q. What about Fourth of July? Just the same as it is celebrated most of the time?

A. Yes.

Q. Thanksgiving? Did you ever celebrate Thanksgiving back when you were young?

A. Well, we used to have a feed. Not parties or anything.

Q. What about maple sugar time?

A. My father had a sugar camp on Fort Kent Road. Of course I worked with him hauling the buckets of sap. The smoke would get in your eyes in that shack if the wind was in the wrong direction. It was fun.

Q. Was there any special things you did in maple sugar time. Would you have parties at the camp?

A. No. But, like on a Sunday some of the relatives would come and he would put this on a snow covered dish, like tea. Or something like that.

Q. It was almost like carmel.

A. Yes. Maple candy they would call it.

Q. Was it almost like a taffy?

A. Yes.

Q. Did you gather your syrup and make you sugar for the whole year?

A. Yes, we had a lot of sugar.

Q. Would that sugar be used for anything special?

A. Well, I remember we used to use it in our oatmeal. That used to be good. We would scrape it.

Q. You would use a maple sugar scraper and scrape it off and put it on oatmeal?

A. Yes.

Q. Did you keep a lot of syrup, taffy, and that type of thing or was it just sugar?

A. Just sugar. At first you can because then it turns to sugar if it isn't done just right. Of course they didn't have the equipment then that they have now-a-days to test the right temperature. But, we used to have syrup and stuff like that. My mother used to make these fritters, I think they were called beignets. That is dough mixed up with eggs and stuff. They would then put it in with that maple syrup.

Q. Oh, rather than boiling it in oil you would boil it in maple syrup.

A. Oh, that was good.

Q. I bet that was good. Did you used to do anything else special with the maple syrup?

A. I think that's about it with the maple syrup. But, with plums and pancakes it was good.

Q. Were there any businesses around town that you particularly remember that aren't here now?

A. Well, this one I worked in, Standard Supply and where the museum is there used to be a hardware store.

Q. You mentioned something about a department store.

A. That was the Standard Supply. They had a dried goods in one section, they had a meat department, medicines, groceries, the whole thing. Ice even.

Q. What kind of entertainment did you have when you were young? You mentioned the movies.

A. I was quite young, then. I was probably fourteen or fifteen. After that we used to go to the movies in Caribou about once a week. Or Van Buren.

Q. A group of you would get together and go in one car.

A. Yes.

Q. Oh, that's right, because the road going to Route 1 was there.

A. I think it was 19 miles there and it was 17 miles to Van Buren.

Q. So, you were about half way in between. Did you go to Madawaska lake much?

A. Oh, yes. The lake was a good place.

Q. That was Madawaska Lake?

A. Yeah. Three miles there.

Q. Were there things like the boy scouts you could belong to?

A. No.

Q. Did you used to have Soirees?

A. Well, when I went to school in Caribou I stayed there. I worked for my room and board. So, I wasn't with the kids here.

Q. When did you go to school in Caribou?

A. From '27 to '29. I stayed there six weeks at a time without coming home. It only cost me a dollar and a quarter round fare.



Ccouldn't afford...money wasn't there.

Q. Did you come by train?

A. Yes.

Q. What grades were you in when you went to Caribou?

A. Junior and senior.

Q. So, you did your freshman and sophomore years here.

A. Yes.

Q. So, you graduated from high school which was kind of a rare thing back then.

A. Well, you see, I had a chance to go to Ricker. This guy came to see. He had seen my ranks. I think his name was Bither or something like that. I found out he was one of these Bythers who had been a recent teachers there or something. Well, anyway, he came over to see me at the mill and wanted me to go to college. I said I couldn't go. He said I'll find you work and I can get you thru for 150 dollars a year. That was cheap and I wanted to go, but, my folks needed the money, so...

Q. You must have done real well in school.

A. Trigonometry and solid geometry I didn't get too good ranks, but, I did better than the others.

Q. You said you didn't go to soirees much, then.

A. No, I wasn't...you know... Then I was eighteen.

Q. Do you remember if many happened around here, then?

A. Oh, yes. Every Saturday night they would have them.

Q. And what would they do? Mostly dance?

A. They'd have games and dance. Spin the bottle and that kind of stuff.

Q. Of course they were high school kids they played those kind of games.

A. Played Post Office. I don't know what that was.

Q. Well, you must have know where you were a post master later on. Did you very often have family get togethers were you would tell stories and things like that?

A. Not too much. What we used to do, even before I was married (I went out with her for two years first) we would meet at her place or my place and play cards with the folks. Charlemagne.

Q. I see. So, you got to know your in-laws pretty well.

A. Oh, we enjoyed playing cards. I still do. So, we had good times.

Q. That is a good idea because you get to like your in-laws that way, too.

A. Yes. I played with my father-in-law and he liked to win. We were pretty lucky. He'd ask me come on over.

Q. That's good. If you are winning that is a great way of getting thing going with the family. Do you ever remember stories that your parents or grandparents told you about any things that happened in the family or anything like that?

A. I don't remember much. They had a hard time. They did what they could for us, but, they had a hard time. Times were hard.

Q. They were so busy making things go that they didn't have time.

A. Right. My folks had seven kids. With just my father was working and salaries were very low, you know. It takes a lot.

Q. What did people do in the evening? You didn't have television. Did you have radio?

A. The first radio we had at home, I was the one who bought it. It was a battery one with a little crystal.

Q. Before you had radio, what would you do?

A. There was this, not a card game, it was Finch, I think. The kind of game where the cards are numbered. Stuff like that. Checkers. There was a game borro? But, I don't know what they called it in English. Do you?

Q. I don't think they had an English name for it.

A. That is one game you would have a hard time to beat me at.

Q. Oh, really. I would love to learn to play it sometime. Would you play it with...?

A. Three lines, one smaller. Three rectangles, one bigger than the other. If this was it... A line in the middle going this way and a line in the middle going that way. Three on each side. They call it borro? See? You take one checker out, see. If you eat all the checkers, what can you do?

Q. I see. It was kind of along the idea of checkers. What was the goal?

A. To get the other guy to not be able to do anything.

Q. It is the same type of thing as checkers, then. You were trying to get all his checkers away from him. Who ever got rid of all the other person's checkers first was the winner.

A. Like if in the outside line there was three there and if the other one had two, there. If you had an open line there you had one checker which could go from one to the other. They called that wolfs' mouth. Because, you could go from one to the other every time you moved you had another. So, if you could ever make one of those, you were home free.

Q. So, the game had three rectangles inside each other. There was a line going to connect the three rectangles toward the middle?

A. Yes, in the middle.

Q. Then you could move that line up to the next rectangle.

A. It depended on how you placed your first checker, see?

Q. I see. How many checkers did you have?

A.  
ine each.

Q. You all worked towards the middle?

A. You worked to make a "border", or three down this way.

Q. I see. I'll have to get with you some time to play with that.

A. Someday I am going to make this even though you can just draw it. I'd like to make this for the kids because it takes concentration. You need concentration.

Q. Where did you learn this game?

A. Oh, when I was a small boy.

Q. Did you learn it from your parents?

A. Yes.

Q. Did they ever say where it was from? It must have been from Quebec. Or is it an Acadian one? Did they ever say?

A. No. Checkers takes longer and you get to figure out in advance, but, with this you only have nine checkers to watch. Of course you have to think of plays because you figure that this guy is going to come and plug you.

Q. How would you capture another person's checker?

A. You can't catch one until you make a border

Q. I see. When you make a border, you can take the other person's checker.

A. Suppose you put one there and the other person plays one there, then he can stop you from making a border because when you play here, if he stops that one you can get the other one. Then you take out this one. That takes out one of his. It's tricky.

Q. I see. We should have a video tape of this because it would make

it easier. Maybe sometime we will do that just showing playing the game. That would be pretty interesting. Did anyone in your family ever dance a jig or a reel?

A. Not in my family. My wife, her father used to dance jigs.

Q. Oh really? What was his name?

A. William Gagnon. Jim Gagnon.

Q. He used to dance a jig and a reel, too?

A. He used to like to dance, yes. My mother sang in a choir in St. Agatha when she was a girl. She loved to sing. She was a good singer.

Q. Did she ever sing any of the old songs?

A. She would always be singing, whenever she was cooking or anything.

Q. Would she sing just the melody or the words?

A. She would sing the words.

Q. Were they mostly French songs?

A. Yes. A lot of them were hymns.

Q. Where she sang in the church, of course a lot of them were hymns. Did she ever sing evangeline?

A. No, I never heard her sing that.

Q. Did she ever sing any Complaintes? Le Complainte?

A. Yes. I think she knew one or two of them. There was one here that died in the tanks.

Q. He died in the what?

A. They had these tanks in the mill to cook the bark so the bark would come off from the hardwood logs. Acid was in there. They are still standing there, the cement form. He fell in there and it burned him. Of course he died two or three days after. It hurt him so much that he sang. Desrosier was his name.

Q. You mean the person who was injured sang?

A. He sang to get the pain away.

Q. What did he sing? Did he sing about his pain?

A. Yes.

Q. So, he sang a Comlainte. Do you know of anyone who knows that song?

A. I doubt it. They claim it's because it hurt so much it took the pain away were he wasn't thinking about the pain. In those days they didn't have pain killers.

Q. I have heard of complaintes being written about things, like that happening, but, I have never heard of a person who it had happened to sing it. Sing the pain away. Talking about making the pain going away, was there anybody around who could stop the bleeding? Have you ever heard of that?

A. There was, but, I can't remember who it was. They claim that if they stopped it too sudden the person would faint.

Q. Could you tell a little bit about how this person would go about this? What would happen if a person was bleeding? What would they do?

A. I have never seen it done. Its just like warts, you know. Some people have just got it. I can't remember who it was. I think my wife had one here on her finger. I think it was a priest, Father Viosault? He said "That's not a wart, that will go away". First thing you know she forgot about it and it was gone.

Q. Isn't that something? Have you ever heard any stories about stopping the bleeding?

A. Yes, there are some people here who used to do that. But, I don't remember. I must be getting older.

Q. What would you do, say if you got cut? You would call the man up and tell him you were bleeding and what would happen?

A. It would stop the blood right up.

Q. Just knowing that you were bleeding would stop the blood?

A. She said that they used to go, like to the seventh son or something like that, ... the powers. But, there was one guy here, he still is alive, Boutot, Lomen Boutot. He could stop the blood. He is around fifty or something like that.

Q. And you say he is still alive?

A. He is living in Caribou.

Q. Did you know of anyone, or did anyone in your family play instruments?

A. No.

Q. Did anyone play the fiddle or did you know of anyone who played the fiddle?

A. No.

Q. When you had your soirees and things, when people danced, what did they dance to?

A. Yes, there were some who played the fiddle.

Q. They would come in?

A. No. In town. There were accordians, mostly.

Q. Oh, really. There were accordians more than fiddles. Is there anyone around who still plays?

A. There were two that I knew of, but, they are not around. Gorneaus and one was a Daigle.

Q. They are both dead now or did they both move away?

A. Mrs. Daigle was a Lagasse and she is in Greenville. She is old. But, they used to have good times. She'd play to beat the band and they'd dance.

Q. Did he ever say what he was playing or did he just play?

A. These were women. The women were playing.

Q. Oh, the women played. You didn't have the men play.

A. No. It was a man, Plourde, that used to play the violin.

Q. And was he from here or from Caribou?

A. He lived right here.

Q. He's no longer around?

A. No, he is dead.

Q. Do you remember of any remedies for sickness and thing like that you used to...?

A. Oh, there were all kinds for everything. There were some right down here that used to go out picking some kind of herbs.

Q. For different ailments and things like that?

A. Yes.

Q. Were there any in particular?

A. Women trouble or something like that.

Q. What about if a person had rheumatism or arthritis was there anything for that you remember?

A. There was an awful lot of different things. To bad, I try to think of these things and can't remember. I'll have to mark them down.

Q. For sure, there are a lot of things. A lot of superstitions and things.

A. They worked. A lot of them worked. Oh, yes. Made some tea out of them. Boil them and make tea.

Q. And they would always be things from the woods?

A. Yes. Some roots that they used to dig out. You are asking the wrong person.

Q. You mentioned your mother used to sing old songs. Did she ever sing evangeline?

A. No.

Q. Did you ever hear it sung around here?

A. The first time I heard it sung was in Fort Kent.

Q. Oh, really. Did you used to return to say St. Agatha, Frenchville, or Fort Kent very often?

A. Not too much. But, since I've been with the Catholic Foresters for many years. 1941. At first there were a lot of people in Fort Kent I knew. And Frenchville, St. Agatha.

Q. Laise Labee?, do you know Laise Labee?

A. Uhm hmm.

Q. Did you have relatives, do you still have relatives in St. Agatha?

A. Luke Desrosier, he's my cousin.

Q. Did you used to visit your cousin?

A. Not too much. See, when you had a big family you had to stay around the house and take care of them mostly.

Q. For sure. Do you have any records of your parents or grandparents like naturalization papers or church documents? Things like that.



A. No.

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Q. Most of those things would be right with the church.

A. I went to St. Agatha to look for death records, birth records and stuff, you know.

Q. You have a prepared genealogy? Is that something you are working on yourself or...?

A. I just started it this year. I started one before, but, it didn't work out like this one. It was Dubay. He's got information right there.

Q. How far back have you gotten?

A. Sixteen forties, 1757, some I couldn't go too far, 1637.

Q. Do most of those go back to Quebec?

A. Yes. Some Easue? on my grandmother's side.

Q. You mentioned Chateau Richer?

A. Yes. This is Easue.

Q. Easue?, that is in France?

A. Yes. I don't even know where that is.

Q. That is on the north shore of the St. Lawrence River. It is up near St. Simion, in that area.

A. Then there is right here and Shaunto Deshay?

Q. Shaunto Deshay is very close to Quebec city. It is very, very, very old.

A. There is one here, Teap Delongze.

Q. So, that would be back in France.

A. Another one in France is Sea Saons???. They were married in , Quebec. C, U, I, R, S, E, O, N, S . I don't know what that means.

Q. It's in France, anyway. Do you have very many relatives in Canada that you know of?

A. I don't know of one.

Q. What cemeteries were you ancestors buried in?

A. St. Agatha, mostly St. Agatha. My father and mother.

Q. Was your mother an old-fashioned cook?

A. Yes.

Q. Did she cook all the old dishes?

A. Yes.

Q. What was her food like?

A. Very good.

Q. Of course. Did she make plogues?

A. Oh, yes.

Q. How did she make her plogue? Did she make it with water or milk? Do you remember?

A. She had it in a wooden bucket. Zoodan? Plogue Zoodan.

Q. So it was like plogues that rose. It would be quite thick, then?

A. Yes. She kept that from day to day and used to same batter.

Q. Oh, something like sourdough. You would put a little bit of it in your new batter and it would make them rise better.

A. Yes, I think that is what it was.

Q. She must have made it with water, then. Buckwheat flour, white flour, salt, probably soda or something like that.

A. Yes. My wife makes it good.

Q. And how does your wife make them? Does she make them with water? Does she make them thin or thick?

A. The last one she made was with milk. I don't know. I don't follow her cooking. (Turns to wife to ask question). Water, she says she uses and sometimes buttermilk.

Q. Oh, really. I've never heard of making it with buttermilk. I'll have to get her recipe before I leave.

A. You know the boys, Roger makes them too. You met Roger. That small guy that goes to the meeting. He's my son. Wendy and Roger.

Q. Yes, I know them.

A. And the youngest, Peter, he makes them. But he calls his Mother, he forgets. Now he is making donuts.

Q. How did you eat them? Did you just put them with butter and roll them and eat them like bread?

A. Yes.

Q. Are there any particular meals you used to eat them with?

A. I think with a good roast with brown potatoes and with gravy with the meal. It's not real thick. It is a little watery.

Q. Oh, it's more of a soup type. A consomme. Like au juice?

A. Yes. From the potato and the beef. It's brown and it is good.

Q. Do you eat them with beans and things like that very often?

A. Very seldom. She likes to make roast.

Q. Do you ever eat them with molasses or with maple syrup?

A. I used too. I used too, but, now it's too sweet for me. It's funny how tastes change.

Q. For sure. Did your mother used to make a lot of pies and sweets?

A. Yes. She made some.

Q. What kinds of pies would she make?

A. Raisin.

Q. Raisin was the big pie?

A. Yes.

Q. Did she ever make torte tiere?

A. Some. But, not too much. My wife's side does more.

Q. Did she make torte tier? a lot around Christmas or something?

A. Yes.

Q. Did she make pot au pot? Or they would probably call it sept pot around here. It was many layers with many layers of meat. Many kinds of meat.

A. No.

Q. Did she ever make stew?

A. Oh, yes.

Q. Chicken stew and beef stew?

A. Yes. And soup.

Q. What kinds of soup? Vegetable soup?

A. Rice a lot of times with onion greens.

Q. Would she use real rice or would she make her own rice with...?

A. Real rice and I think she put a piece of pork in or something like that. I don't know. I've never been a cook.

Q. Did she ever make creton?

A. Yes.

Q. Did she make boudin?

A. Yes.

Q. She used to make all of that herself?

A. Yes. First, when we slaughtered the pig, they would gather up all the blood.

Q. Did you ever help her make the boudin, the sausage?

A. No.

Q. Were there any special things she made on holidays that you remember? Really special things that was a real treat?

A. No, I don't remember. We were a poor family.

Q. Well, you've had thousands of meals, so its hard to remember. Were there any special things you would have at special times of the year? Say when things were in season?

A. In the spring we used to have dandelions and fiddleheads. Things like that.

Q. Did she ever used to do anything with the fiddleheads other than to just cook them and eat them like a vegetable?

A. No. She used to can some for the winter.

Q. Did she used to do many other things to prepare for the winter? Make pickles and things like that?

A. Yes, pickles.

Q. Can things from the garden?

A. Yes.

Q. Where did you store food?

A. Of course when they were in jars they kept in the cellar.

Q. Did you have a root cellar or a place where you kept carrots, potatoes, and things like that?

A. No. They didn't. Well the last few years. They had a cellar then. Then they kept somethings. Potatoes, carrots, turnips in sawdust.

Q. They kept it in sawdust instead of sand. That's interesting.

A. Sand is not too bad. I've used both of them.

Q. Did they have a garden?

A. Oh, yes.

Q. What types of things did they grow in their garden?

A. Cucumbers, onions, lettuce, swiss chard, beets, stuff like that.

Q. Who kept care of the garden?

A. They both worked. You couldn't see a weed in there. They got up bright and early.

Q. Did the kids ever help with the weeding?

A. Of course that's after they were older. While they were working in Waterville they didn't. They lived there for 12 years.

Q. Was French spoken in your home?

A. All the time.

Q. A lot more than English?

A. No English at all. Even in my home here, when the kids went to school, they didn't talk English.

Q. So, all the kids speak French, also, then.

A. The last one understands anything and will say a few words when he is alone with somebody. The funny part of it is when we were living on Lake Street there were these young people who moved across from the road from us. They didn't know how to speak French and I couldn't

talk English. By the time it was time for them to go to school, mine knew English and theirs knew French.

Q. They were both speaking both languages?

A. Yes. To this day those boys can talk French.

Q. What do you think of your French?

A. I am glad that I can talk French. I am happy with it. You go somewhere and hear other languages. There was one priest here, Father , he said that you are as many people as languages. If there are five languages you are five persons because you can communicate and think in it.

Q. I see. Are there certain things you think about only in French and some things you think about only in English?

A. Some people think they have to think in English, but, I can think in French or English.

Q. When you are speaking English you are thinking in English. When you are speaking in French you are thinking in French.

A. Yes.

Q. Are there certain things you would think only in English and certain things you would only think of in French?

A. Of course there are some things where I don't know the French words. New stuff that they are coming up with, you know?

Q. So, if you are having your car fixed, you would think of it in English, then. Is the French here different from Fort Kent or Van Buren?

A. The same. It's surprising, you go to Quebec and talk French there and so many words are different. instead of saying you say

Q. I see. So, there a lot of different ways of saying things, but, you understand them all.

A. Yes. But, when we talk about...think we are talking funny, we are, according to them. But, you can be understood. That's the best part of it.

Q. Do you notice, when you talk with a person from Fort Kent or Van Buren, that they pronounce things differently? If a person is talking in French to you, can you tell where they are from?

A. Well, in the post office lumber jacks used to come and ask for somebody who was cutting wood. They were looking for a job. They

would start trying to talk English and they couldn't talk English. I'd answer in French. When they saw that I spoke French, you should have seen their expressions. It was like the sun coming out.

Q. Could you usually tell where they were from by the way they spoke?

A. No. I couldn't tell that. But, from the way they were trying to say the words, I knew they couldn't talk English, so, I would start to talk in French.

Q. Your father and mother both spoke French, of course.

A. Yes. My father couldn't talk English.

Q. And your mother could speak some English?

A. She knew. She had more education. But, she didn't dare to talk very much in it.

Q. Why didn't she talk to much? Was she shy or...?

A. Well, she was afraid of making mistakes and that they would laugh at her.

Q. I see. Did your father speak any differently from your mother? Were there some words your father used your mother wouldn't use?

A. He was more of a lumber jack type and she read a lot.

Q. So, she knew more words in French?

A. Yes.

Q. So, your mother had a more refined speech than your father?

A. Yes.

Q. Because there is supposed to be, well it is not so true now, but, there was supposed to be a masculine French and a feminine French. there was a French the women spoke and there was a French the men spoke. Of course they understood each other, but, the words were a little bit different. Did you notice that in your house?

A. Well, I know some words that he wouldn't use.

Q. He wouldn't use the dainty words.

A. No. Of course my father didn't swear, but, I know some people who swear and that is just a way of expressing themselves. They haven't got the vocabulary they should have. Say Mouze. Damn good, you know.

Q. They wouldn't say wonderfully nice. Your mother might say that.

a. Yes.

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Q. What was it like being French and speaking French in a town where there were a lot of Swedes?

A. Well, there were also a lot of French. The French stuck together and the Swedes stuck together. But, in my grade, I started in sixth, the French started dropping out and going into the mills.

Q. Oh, I see. The French would go as far as sixth grade usually?

A. Yes. There were a lot there, but, they started dropping out, usually. In high school you didn't see very many French kids.

Q. So, the French started to stick to themselves and the Swedes tended to stick to themselves. Of course the Swedes could speak English and the French could speak English so...

A. What I say after I got into the first year of high school most of my friends English or Swedes.

Q. So, did you learn to understand any Swedish?

A. A little bit. I'm fine.

Q. And do you know if very many of the Swedish understood much French or was it about the same?

A. Frederick Anderson, the one that had the store there, he understood a lot of French about the meat. My father would go over there and talk to him in French and say what kind of meat he wanted. He'd say "Yaa". He made it.

Q. That's great. So, not too many learned Swedish. Everybody learned English. If you were speaking to a Swedish person you would speak to them in English?

A. Oh yes. A lot of these ounger swedish boys and girls don't know any Swedish, anyway. Much less than the French.

Q. Oh, really. Do the younger French children in town know a lot of French?

A. There are a few families that do. A lot of families don't. It's too bad.

Q. It is too bad.

A. They can have it in the house for free and learn it easy. When they are young it comes easy.

Q. For sure. Did the French stick together socially pretty much?



A. Oh yes.

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Q. And the Swedish would stick together socially. Were there very many occasions when everybody would mix and everybody would be together.

A. I don't know if they would be together, but, they would be in the same building. Like graduations and stuff like that.

Q. I see. You would have your own circle of friend who were French and you wouldn't very often...

A. Not often. But that has changed a lot, because I know my kids had all kinds of friends.

Q. With everyone. Did you feel that Stockholm is your town?

A. Oh, yes. My town. It had its spots, but... It has been good to me and I have enjoyed it. Maybe I could have done better somewhere else, but...

Q. You didn't feel like a stranger in Stockholm?

A. No. Sometimes you felt kind of rejected. At first the French didn't have much to say. They outnumbered the Swedes, but, a lot of them didn't really go to vote, so... And the Swedes were more educated. A majority of the French were laborors, mill workers, lumberjacks, stuff like that. So, many of them hadn't gone to school much. So, they weren't going to go. They would say "What is the sense going when wasting our time voting like this when you out number us." And they outmanovered the French, because, they knew the rules. You can't do this and you can't do that.

Q. Is it still that way or had it changed?

A. They can't do that anymore.

Q. So, everyone takes part in that?

A. Oh, yes.

Q. What nationality do you consider yourself?

A. French. With a capital "F".

Q. With a capital F. Okay. Any particular reason why you consider you nationality as French?

A. I was born French, I talk French, I live French, I am no doubt a French.

Q. Okay. If I listed the choices as American, Canadian, French, or Acadian, if you had to make a choice of those four what would you say

was your nationality?

A. Of course I am American, first. I am French-American.

Q. Okay. What does being French mean to you?

A. I have found that being French gets you to understand so many more words than just being English. The same way with Latin. I took Latin for 4 years. I learned derivatives. A lot of English is, of course, derived from Latin. Latin, French, and Spanish. The romance languages. There are so many. Even in England they are over run by French.

Q. Yes, there are a lot of French there. So, you feel you learn more English by knowing...?

A. I can tell the meaning of a word much quicker than a lot of people can by knowing these languages because the root of the words.

Q. Did your parents ever tell you anything about being French? Did they ever try to instill a pride of anything like that?

A. In St. Agatha we were all French, you see. Just goes to show what the French are doing. There was one time the Rasmussens moved out of here North Caribou. They used to have the crucifixes in the school. That one family had it all taken out. One French family comes to a Swedish town, or a protestant town, he won't raise a fuss like that. They had never heard of it. That just goes to show you...

Q. What would you say about that?

A. Well, even in St. Agatha there was a fellow by the name of Olsen there. He didn't like all the things we were doing. There was quite a fuss there.

Q. You say the French people don't usually cause a fuss. They tend to adapt.

A. Right.

Q. Did your parents ever tell you about your ancestors or things like that? Did they ever tell you where you were from or things like that?

A. My mother used to tell us her mother was a daughter of a sea captain. That is one thing I've been trying to find out. She came from Augusta, and I don't know how my grandfather met her. I haven't been able to find or trace her. I just traced to Augusta, that's it.

Q. Did they ever tell you that your family was from Quebec or anything like that?

A. No.

Q. Or did they ever talk about France?

A. I don't think we were Acadian. Our part mostly belong to Quebec.

Q. Did they ever mention anything about Quebec?

A. St. Basille. That is in New Brunswick.

Q. That is in St. John Valley. That could be Acadians from there. Did they ever mention anything about Quebec. About relatives from there.

A. No.

Q. Were there any priests or nuns in your family?

A. No. Sorry to say, none at all. I had heard that the wish you made, when you had your birthday, on the same date that you were born, like the ninth see, that was 1957, would happen. So, I wished to be a priest.

Q. Oh, so you mean when you were nine years old on the ninth. Well, its not to late.

A. Yes, I think it is. I'm not sorry, though. I've enjoyed my life as it is.

Q. For sure. What games did you play when you were a child?

A. I remember we used to play ball. The toys you had, you had to make yourself.

Q. Would you make them yourself or would your father make them.

A. In the mill they had these iron wheels they threw away. So, we'd pick them up make some carts, push carts. We'd put brakes and everything on them. There's a lot of hills here, so...

Q. Did you ever play any other games like tag and things like that?

A. Oh, sure. We used to have these stilts.

Q. Did you make your own sleds and skiis?

A. My father used to make snowshoes and I used to help. I made some, too. It was fun. Of course he had the frames and everything. All I did was lace.

Q. Well, that's a job, too. What kind of shoe were they? The ones that were pointed in back or the ones that were small and round.

A. Pointed down to nothing in back. The tail.

Q. The bigger ones.

A. Michigan snowshoe they call them, I guess. I've got a pair of those somewhere.

Q. Where did he learn to make those, do you know?

A. I don't know, but, he used to take the hides and scrape them, put some water on them and scrape them and scrape them. He had a kind of a thin cup he used to have in the lumber camps instead of the chinaware they have mostly plates. He had a knife to cut on this little board. He had this little cup and just follow so they would all be even. He just put on this thing and once he got going, it would all come out even.

Q. And what would he use, ash for the frame?

A. Yes. Then you would lace them up. In those days they didn't have electric drills or anything like that. All by hand. All those little holes.

Q. How did you drill them?

A. I guess he probably had a greystone. I know he used to heat some wires or something. Maybe he used that to make the holes.

Q. Kind of burned his way thru. Did you ever make sleds?

A. Oh, yes. He made sleds. He made chairs. He made that chair there.

Q. Oh, that's an Acadian chair. That is an Acadian style chair. All the homemade rockers. He must have used an axe to make some.

A. That must be over fifty years old.

Q. It is made in the old way. The way they made it for hundreds and hundreds of years.

A. He used to make the straight ones too, but, he made those.

Q. And there is, of course, the rocking chair. Did you know how to ski? Did you ever ski?

A. Yes. I skied some.

Q. Did you have ski or did you use barrel slides?

A. Well, they used bobs. I don't know is you have ever heard of them? They had these flour barrels with these smooth, planed staves. And we would take a piece of longwood about this high or put something to hold it together towards the back end and put this cross bow. We'd sit on there and just ride down. It was fun. It was real

fun.

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Q. It must have been really slick. You must have gone really fast.

A. Oh, it went fast. It was to hold you down, see. To start out with a lot of the younger kids would put their belly on there. But, if you were really good, you could sit on there.

Q. Did you play cards very much?

A. After I got 17 or 18.

Q. Did you play charlemagne?

A. Oh, yes. Mostly. When Father Auger was here we used to play canasta.

Q. So, you played canasta and charlemagne mostly?

A. Yes. Something like that. We had fun.

Q. And borro, of course.

A. Borro, that was more when I was younger.

Q. Was charlemagne something you played in the family?

A. Oh, yes.

Q. Did you used to rap on the table?

A. Oh, yes and I still do.

Q. Did you have a special tablecloth so when you rapped your knuckles on the table you didn't hurt yourself?

A. No. Some people have some variations of that. Some won't say what trump is in Charlamigne. They say seven, six, or five. You have to guess. We play that five of hearts and so on.

Q. Did your father ever make furniture that was in your house?

A. Oh, yes.

Q. He used to make all of it?

A. All of it, yes. He was a good carpenter. More of a rough carpenter, but, for the tools he had, he did good.

Q. What kind of tools did he work with?

A. Well, plane, shaver. He used to have these crooked knives. You'd put your thumb right there and it worked like this. It looked to me

like a razor. The old fashioned razor. He wire around with picture wire.

Q. What would he use the crooked knives for.

A. Finishing, you know. For like a hammer handle bar and axe handle. You know where the knob is and around there.

Q. I see. It was kind of like whittling. Did he ever use it when he was making furniture to shave corners?

A. He probably did. In those they probably had it, but, never used it. He had a glass for sanding. YOU know just broken glass.

Q. Just take a piece of broken glass and scrape it with that. That is a good idea. Did he ever work with an axe when he was making furniture?

A. Oh, yes. He roughed it with the axe.

Q. Then finished it off with either his crooked knife or the glass or the plane.

A. Something you can't use planer on, you know.

Q. What kind of furniture did he make? Chairs and tables?

A. Yes. Stuff like that.

Q. Did he ever make an amoir or anything like that?

A. No. I don't remember anything like that. He used to make sleds, you know hand sleds. Whhen I was young we had to haul water in a barrel you know.

Q. Do you have many pieces of furniture that he made? Are they still around?

A. No. All the kids, he made these little rocking chairs and everybody loved them. Roger had one.

Q. None of the stuff was thrown away or anything like that? It just wore out with use?

A. Yes. Some chairs, he made a lot of these chairs, straight chairs like this except they came straight up. They weren't curved like this. But, they were sturdy. You knew when you sat on them you wouldn't fall through.

Q. Was the kitchen the most used room in your house?

A. Probably so. Because the table was in their for eating. The house we were in had a seperate dining room.

Q. Did you used to do your homework and things in the kitchen?

A. After supper, you know, you had the table to yourself.

Q. After supper did you used to say the rosary?

A. Yes. Especially during lent. Sometimes the rest of the year we didn't say it so often.

Q. Of course your mother cooked in the kitchen. Was it used as a work room that often. If anyone had a special project to do would they do it in the kitchen?

A. In the winter time my father would be sitting right there in the kitchen. Of course we had no other rooms, but, maybe six rooms with seven kids. You didn't have too much room. You don't heat that whole house. In the winter time we didn't use the living room.

Q. So, you would heat the kitchen in the winter time and, of course, you didn't need that much heat for the bedrooms.

A. Well, our folks had a bedroom downstairs and upstairs were the other bedrooms.

Q. In the winter time you would probably work in the kitchen.

A. Like chairs and stuff like. Of course it was heated up.

Q. You would use it as a work shop and of course it would be a play room, too.

A. Yes, well, of course we were outdoors a lot. I used to build bobsled and ice the road and go down on that.

Q. Did your mother used to do the laundry in the kitchen?

A. Yes. She'd bring in the tub and put it on a bench. They didn't have a washer then, you know?

Q. And she would wash it all by hand with a scrub board?

A. Yes. A frottoir (wash board).

Q. Did she use to wash every day?

A. Oh, no. Once a week. Well, if there were kids, baby diapers, she had to wash those more often. Didn't buy those ready made.

Q. Did the girls help with the cooking or did they help take care of the kids?

A. Mostly washing the dishes. My mother wanted to do what was

healthy. She figured she could do it better than they could.

Q. I see. She was independant.

A. Yes. My wife, we taught the kids to wash the dishes. It was enough that she cooked and took care of the house. Talk about homework, I never brought home any homework. I used to do it at school. We had some study periods.

Q. So, when you were at home you were doing chores and things you wanted to do?

A. Yes.

Q. Did you used to entertain company in the kitchen?

A. When company came they used to sit around the table and play cards.

Q. Did your family used to get together and sing and that type of thing?

A. Not too much.

Q. Just mostly playes cards. That helps your math. YDu'really get to be good at math when you play cards a lot.

A. Yes.

Q. Was there any schedule your mother would go by when she was doing her housework? Would she do certain things at certain times?

A. Well, I don't know. Of course she did all the knitting for us. Stockings, mittens, scarfs, and sometimes sweaters and stuff like that.

Q. What about grosmenage? What was that like?

A. Yes we would clean everything twice a year. She would clean windows.

Q. Ceilings, doors, and the walls. Everything.

A. She did windows.

Q. But, she used to clean absolutely everything?

A. Oh, yes. And my wife still does that.

Q. When she washed the floor, what would she do after she washed the floor?

A. Well, had one of these hand made rugs that she made. She'd put



those on.

Q. She would put those back on and then would she take them back up again after a couple of days when the floors started getting dirty again?

A. I noticed that she left some on. We had a hardwood floor, but, we had no linoleum or carpet on it.

Q. Did she put newspaper on the floor sometimes after washing it?

A. Yes, sometimes.

Q. Why would she do that?

A. I don't know. Just to preserve the clean for a little longer, I guess. I don't know why that print wouldn't...

Q. I've seen French people do that everywhere. Both wash the floor and then put news papers on it. I always wondered why wash the floor if you are going to cover it up with newspaper?

A. Well, I think it keeps it clean longer.

Q. Very, very cleanliness minded. Very neat.

A. I find the French are much more proud of there homes than other people.

Q. What about styles and things like that?

A. The French like the Swedes around here look very good from the outside. But, inside, its all black sinks and everything. Some of them don't do very much.

Q. Do you think they tend to keep it the old way more?

A. Yes, yes. Not convenient.

Q. And then the French, you find them modernizing more?

A. They try to fix things up right away much more. That's my personal opinion. I've been wrong a few times.

Q. There aren't many Frenchmen who will admit to be wrong, though. So you find that the French are style conscience or fashion conscience?

A. Too much. The women are.

Q. But, as far as the home goes. If one person gets a stainless steel sink, everyone else had to get one?

A. Yes. That is probably so. My wife wants a new kitchen, but, I say your too fussy. But, she'll get it someday.

Q. Is there anything else we haven't mentioned that you would like to cover?

A. No.

Q. Well, thank you very much. I appreciate you taking the time to do this.

A. Your'e welcome.

Q. We were talking about snaring. Did you tell them about the snare your father-in-law used to make?

A. He used to take a branch of a birch twig, twist it, then soak it in brine. Some type of twig he had he used to set that up. There was a log balanced and this little stick was holding and tied to that branch. When the rabbit chewed on this stick, the log fell him dead. Killed him.

Q. The rabbit would chew on the branch wich had been soaked?

A. It was tight. Just to hold the twig on there. And my father used to make these row boats we would go up the spring with. All these dead logs in the spring sticking out of the water. He would make a notch and put a trap in the notch. He would put a carrot on a stick above it. The muskrat would come out on the log and step in the trap and get caught. Some mornings we had 25 muscrats.

Q. Wow. Were there any other things? Were there other trapping places?

A. He used to trap beaver, too. But, in the spring he would kind of like the muscrats because that was the time when he wasn't working.

Q. Uhm, hmm. What was his name?

A. Veoli Bossie.

Q. Did he have a certain trail he used to go by. Certain places where he would always trap?

A. Yes.

Q. Did he do much hunting?

A. Oh, yes. Illegal and legal.

Q. Oh, really? What did he hunt? Did he get moose?

A. No, not moose really. But, sometimes the season wasn't right. Of

course we were poor and we needed the meat. None of it was wasted.

Q. And they would never bother him for that?

A. No. Of course what he had, he had one of these gas lights he would put on his head. He would go out and jack.

Q. Did he ever have any problem with the wardens?

A. They never saw him.

Q. Too smart. You mentioned when you had your store, the priests used to live above the store?

A. It wasn't my store. Standard Supply. That was the company store. I worked there.

Q. And you say Father Camillon used to live up stairs in a room while they were building the church?

A. Yes. We had mass right there. I was an alter boy.

Q. You did? You had mass right in his apartment?

A. Yes. That was before I started working in the store.

Q. Were there many people who would go to mass there.

A. Oh, there were quite a lot. About fifteen.

Q. That's a lot of people going to daily mass.

A. Especially during lent, you know. In those days, well they probably still do, the priest had to say mass every day. I think maybe they still have to.

End