

TAPE GUIDE (Mr. Ken Hill)

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ORAL HISTORY

Subject: Mr. Ken Hill (H)
Case Number: 22
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Date: February 27, 1975
Interviewer: Robert Miller (R)

R: (referring to Miss Merry) She mentioned how you'd have places to get to classes; she didn't go into too much detail about that. I wonder if you might.

H: Well, I don't think I'll go into too much detail about that. I came here in 24. Yes, 1924. Well, when I came, we taught in...we were teaching in three buildings: the original old...well, the original school was both a.. what was known as the Belleville High School was both a public school and a high school. At first the lower floor was used for public school and the upper floor for high school. Well then, as the number of high school students increased, the whole building was used for high school. And what was left you would call secondary school today. Ah, at the back of the building, facing John street, there was a stone building, the original grammar school which had been built around, in the 1850's. It was a stone building and there were two rooms: one was used for a classroom and the other was...side was used as a domestic science room. Then there was the main building. On the southeast corner there was a little brick building in which there was one classroom. Well that's when I ar- there were two rooms rived. Ah, then there were rooms down...in fact used in the Y.M.C.A. so we had to move around (laughs) to take classes to these various places, and it was very incon-

venient. Now the old high school was an attractive old building, but it was very much from the outside, but inside it was pretty run down and very hard to heat and they only had one janitor; not like it is today, (laughs) and the staff when I arrived: there only twenty on the staff and we had about four hundred and fifty students, and of course the salaries weren't too high in those days but this condition prevailed, ah, over the province old school buildings and I had in ~~xxxxxx~~ Pembroke couple of years previous to coming to Belleville and there we taught in two schools and there we had to take a taxi to change from one school to another and previous to going to Pembroke I taught in St. Catherine's and they had old buildings and the same, and we taught in two or three buildings, moved around, so that it was a condition that was fairly common throughout the province, and new schools were being built in practically every city, so Belleville was not any different from most places at that time. So I started in here. There was a twenty...twenty on the staff and not too many men on the staff and I found that I had to look after hockey and rugby which I had done in Pembroke; in fact I started rugby there, ah, in Pembroke, so for a year or two here I had to look after the sport and then Mr. Shields came and

took over...Mr...I believe Mr. Shields.

So, now as to the building, it was very hard to heat, and there had been an agitation for a new school; a new building and there was some times in the winter when we just couldn't carry on inside it was so cold. But ah, I had a room on the second floor, northwest corner. Ah, there were no keys to the room: we couldn't lock it up. Consequently, if they had a real cold morning, some students would come early and open the windows to add to the chilly atmosphere. (laughs) Then, when you arrived of course, the windows would be closed but the room would be very cold. Oh, they couldn't stand that; they'd have... we'd have to close the school today. However, knowing what had happened, "It'll probably warm up later on", I'd say, well get your overcoats on", so that did happen; that not too long, but there were...they were fairly anxious to have a new school of course and anything that would arouse their parents at home about being cold etcetra, well that would help out. Ah, now as far as the school is concerned, we had, there was no vocational aside from, there was a commercial department, Mr...Monsieur was in charge of that and Mr. James taught in that part of the work: the commercial department. And the main... it was all academic...ah, straight high school course where the students...the school was divided into the lower school, the middle school, and upper school. You probably

I suppose from Miss Merry.

R: Vaguely, yes.

H: And ah, the process of study was set by the department of education and there were exams set by the department of education in lower, middle and upper school, and marked in Toronto, which meant that you were tied down to a particular course and you had to cover that course because, exams, departmental exams was set on the course so you didn't waste any time during the year; you covered the course. If you didn't cover the course, and there was a question on the departmental examination and you hadn't covered it you heard about it. So that's the difference today; the courses aren't as rigid and teacher had quite a lot to do I guess with setting a course today among other things. Teach. So those differences; they were tied down to regular courses that were outlined by the department and you had your high school inspectors who made their regular inspections and see that you were following the courses.

R: Can you tell me what it would be like to have a visit by one of these inspectors.

H: Well, once we dropped into the new building, we had ah... we had the vocational and the academic sections and we would have inspectors; we'd probably have the vocational inspectors ah, at a different time but usually they all came at the same time and there probably would be four...there might be four or five of them, and they spent a ~~whole~~ oh...

(wife)Hello.

R: Hello.

(wife)Having a lovely time?

H: He'd sort of do our best and and make a good impression and we got generally good reports from the inspectors.

R: Would they kind of ah, walk into a classroom and just tour around and see what was happening and...

H: Sit down. / .not (garble) you'd probably be expecting them but you wouldn't know when they'd come...they'd just walk in and sit down in a back seat.

R: One very famous inspector from this area was Harry J. Clarke. I guess he didn't inspect at the high school level.

H: Oh no. These inspectors were from the Department of Education in Toronto.

R: Did you have any contact with Mr. Clarke?

H: Ah, with Mr. Clarke? Oh, to a certain extent but not as far as inspection is concerned. No, ah I didn't have ah...when I first came here, he used to preside at the departmental examinations and that is in June: the departmental examinations: the upper school and middle school exams and then that was finally; I forget the year; handed over to the regular staff. We looked after them and ah, for a number of years, I looked after the upper school... middle school departmental exam. We would have both the gymnasias filled some of those and had arranged for the presiding officers.

booklets were placed in envelopes and they to be arranged and sent into Toronto, at the end of the exams and then some of the staff would probably be appointed during ...th examin the... as an examiner in Toronto and it usually took about a couple of weeks and the results were sent to the school, and the results... your...the ~~x~~ marks were given or you're graded first, second or

and pass;
third class and first class honours was 75 and over, second class 66 and ha, I think third class was 59 to 65. Then, whatever the pass mark was: whether it was 40 or 50; it was just, you were given a pass mark and ah, I would say that in most of the years when I was on the staff, our results at B. C. 1. were very good. Ah, it's quite different today: they have Ontario Scholarships and things like that that we didn't have. I retired in 1957, so there've been a lot of changes even since that.

R: Um, what kind of text books...first of all, what course did you teach?

H: What did I teach?

R: Un huh.

H: I taught science.

R: What kind of text books did you have for your courses?

H: Well the text books were ah, they did give out, in the last few years text books for upper school Botany published and one for upper school zoology. These were by Toronto teachers that published them and they weren't very good text books on the course but usually before that the course, they didn't follow directly you see, ah, but these text books that were published later, covered the course fairly well, ah...The big difference as far as the students were concerned...ah...I don't think I have any text books here that we used...at that time...some of them down at the cottage... Ah, then in the lower school, there was a lower school text book on Botany, and there was a lower school zoology but I taught agriculture as well: agricultural science and the agricultural courses ah, we taught a little place of botany and zoology. Now there was quite a lot of botany and then there was a certain

amount of zoology in the courses but there was no strong objection to them; they were taught in the lower school. Agriculture one and Agriculture Two and then in the middle school there was agriculture One and Agriculture Two there, that corresponded to physics and chemistry. And the agriculture course, of course we had quite a few county students here you know, and the agriculture courses were fairly popular; in fact in the middle school it came to a point where I had...I had two agriculture classes and though there was only one physics class so...and, ah, basically the classes seemed fairly popular. Then upper school botany and zoology. I started upper school botany and I had three students the first year and aught that in a classroom. There were no facilities. Ah, the next year; they all passed; the next year I had six. and they happened to all pass their upper school. Well of course next year I had twelve I think. Gradually increase in the la...I think the last...near h the last there were...the last year, I had that I taught; both upper school botany and upper school zoology...I had forty-eight in upper school botany and there were forty-six in upper school zoology. And that year they got another science teacher and divided the classes because you couldn't possibly...and we didn't have any of the microscopes and so on...we didn't have the equipment in 1956 or 57 along there, we didn't have the equipment, microscopes and things to handle that they have today.

R: What kind of equipment would you have when you started out...about say 1930?

H: In 1930? Well, in 1930, we had practically no equipment in the science rooms because the school opened in 1928 and I ordered

equipment for the chemistry lab...two chemistry labs, two physics labs, (what was called physiography then), which was a tenth grade subject, two chemistry labs, two physics labs and ah, physiography and then equipment for biology - that would be botany and zoology. That's the new school: that was in '28. Well that equipment didn't arrive until Christmas time, so at...I was teaching...I was teaching chemistry without any lab facilities until Christmas. Then I unpacked...I spent all of Christmas two weeks unpacking that equipment and one boy helped me to get it on the shelves so that we were able to catch up on our lab work in chemistry and so on. 'Cause they had no equipment to carry on. Well it was some of the difficulties that we had to begin with. However things soon became straightened out and carried on.

R: What would be some of the pieces of equipment? I'm wondering, you know, how close you came to having microphones...micro...microscopes. Can you give me a few examples of some of the pieces of equipment you might have?

H: We, we had, ah,...well when I ah, retired, I think there was about, I'm not sure now, six or eight microscopes. That would...they weren't satisfactory if you had a class of forty-six. But we did have, we had projection lanterns and we had...and we had a proje... on the projection we had an attachment where you could project microscope slides. Well you had to do that you see; you didn't have enough microscopes to project the slides and it wasn't satisfactory for the students using the microscopes, and there are...you have to do a lot of slide work in connection with upper school botany especially. We had projection lanterns.

And so on. Well they managed to cover the courses. They passed the departmental examinations. A few failures but they did very well.

R: ~~Was~~ When people graduated, did the school or teachers do anything in the field of helping graduates find jobs?

H: Well, yes. There was work done in that line, and especially in the vocational, and commercial. You know there's a few people that'd be be working ~~xxxxx~~ locally but for others that graduated from the academic courses...yes there was assistance, where it was possible. I suppose you're referring to the...the department now that's in charge...

R: Guidance Department.

H: Guidance Department.

R: Did you have a guidance department in...

H: Yes we had a guidance department in the later years, yes. But ah, Mr. ...Mr. Musgrove was our first guidance officer.

R: What year would he have started working?

H: I beg your pardon?

R: What year would he have started working in guidance?

H: I just can't tell you whatyear...whatyear he started. Ah, you I'm going back fifty years. Well my memories fairly good, but the exact ~~xxx~~ dates and that, I couldn't...it's rather difficult.

Now you say, "Did we have people that have; hold important positions.

R: Un hum.

H: Well, there are students that have been very successful, in various lines. Ah, Don Spring was quite a high-up official in the Eastman Kodak in Toronto. He was a local graduate. Ah, Jim Moon with the Explosive Department, or Explosive ah...at Valleyfield. He's quite high-up in that company.

R: I think Miss Merry mentioned him.

H: Yes. Moon. Ah, now let me see, who else; oh there were a number. Ah, Jack Carmichael (?) is holds a senior position in the Department of Transport, in Ottawa: there's another one. The Will boys, there was Jack and Bob: they went to the United States but they graduated from here. They have rather important positions in the United States. There's one thing that the Belleville High School has been rather famous for (students going into the field of education from Belleville high School)

END OF FIRST SIDE TAPE ONE

H: ...training college, for teachers at London. Ah, Bill Turner and Gladys Moning is an inspector with the Department of Education a graduate of Belleville High School, and a Mr. Jack Snecksinger; he's an inspector now, or consultant or whatever they call them. But number, a large number of teachers that were on the Belleville staff are principals in various places. Some of them superintendents of education. Ah, that is ~~probably~~ something that probably a lot of people aren't aware of.

R: You mentioned a little while about looking after two particular sports: rugby and soccer? What...Can you tell what other sports you had at B.C.I.?

H: Well, ah, those were the days before we got the new school. When we got the new school, there was basketball and volley ball and hockey and rugby or football, whatever they call it today. I don't know that there was any...any other sports outside that. Not today where they have...I don't what they all have now. They have lots of them over here. Now what's this new sport with the idea of knocking

a ball around. Is it called broom ball or what?

R: Field hockey maybe. Outside?

H: Yes.

R: Probably field hockey.

H: Well over here they have a kind of a web-shaped part on the end; it looks as if it's flexible and an aluminum handle.

R: Yeah, that's field hockey, no floor hockey if it's played inside.

H: Floor hockey. Oh that's what they call it. Oh they play it outside over here. Um, outside of ah, ...we had basketball, volley ball; I don't think there were very many other sports.

R: Did...I understand that Miss Merry had some kind of drama club. Do you remember anything about that?

H: Oh, the drama club. Well of course, they put on school plays. Before...before we had...this is something maybe of interest; I don't know whether Miss Merry mentioned it to you or not...before we had the new school, our commencement exercises were held in the opera house and that was quite an occasion. Now each form would have form yells and so on; they sat together in the opera house. The staff and of course the guests and so on, the board members, were up on the stage and a lot of preparation went into that. It was quite a day. The graduation day or commencement exercises or whatever they call them and we'd have a prominent speaker and quite an afternoon. That was before we had our own school with our auditorium where we could have...of course we didn't have any place except the opera house that was large enough to handle the crowd.

R: Did you have a valdictorian as well?

H: Oh yes we'd have a valdictorian just the same as...much the same as they have today, their diplomas would be given to them and so on. But that used to quite a day, it took quite alot of preparation--and so on and they'd parade down the whole school.

R: Do you recall any of the form yella that were, the words to them?

H: No I just can't, now let me see, it's so long back, some of them used to be rather interesting...giving their form yell, no I can't recall.

R: Can you tell me about the, any special schooleexcursions that you were involved in or remember having?

H: We had one excursion that I remember, a school excursion up to the Toronto for the final playoff of the rugby championship of Ontario, secondary school in the Varsity Stadium. We had a special train up for that. That's the only special that I remember.

R: Did you ever take your science students out on field trips?

H: Oh I took, yes I used to take the botany and zoology classes. I used to take them down to the cottage on a, cause I had at my cottage I had done alot of planting of various trees, I had practically every around my lot, neighbours, I had practically every evergreen tree and then there was the marsh boardered the lake and swamp and so on so that I had, used to take an afternoon and take the botany and zoology classes down

and they enjoyed it very much. Mrs. Hill would make coffee and we'd have coffee and so on. But they enjoyed it.

R: About how many people would there be going?

H: Oh, thirty or forty...they'd come down in cars, and they enjoyed it...a different. As I say down there I had on my lot; I had a four acre lot down there; and I did a lot of ~~planting~~ planting of evergreens and I had samples (?) of ones that were naturally growing. And what I planted I had practically all the evergreens, and in fact, one year I had most of the small plants growing in the school in pots, carrying them through the winter. And, ah it's rather interesting. And then in the fall and they...I never took the students down in the fall but you'd have the same variety of fungus of various kinds, growing amongst the pines, and so on. And Mr. Bates used to ~~bring~~ bring his classes down occasionally. They'd come down in a group, because there were so many of the plants, you see we had there a low area: swamp and marsh, and high ground; dry, and you'd have such a variety. I could go out and get liverwarts. Well it was pretty hard to find those, but in the swamp there were liverwarts growing naturally and other plants that: ~~that~~ horse-tails and mosses, ordinary moss and so on. Everything you...in the botany line was right there. And the classes used to come down and then Mr. Bates used to bring his classes down occasionally. They'd ~~get~~ get a

number of cars you see; the students would drive down. You'd show them around and point out where things were and they could see them growing naturally that they were studying in class.

R: What about any dances? Did the school ever have dances?

H: In that day? Ah I don't...I don't think so. But they had commencement ex...when commencement in the school ah, they'd have a usual dance afterwards. Ah, a lot of...I wasn't too much interested in that social part. They ah...oh they had "Campus Capers" and son with Reg Townsen used to look after.

R: The Campus Capers have been going for quite a while then have they? That's interesting. They've still a performance there're putting this...this year they put on a performance didn't they, I think this week-end.

H: Yes. Ah, yes it used to be a very popular night: Campus Capers. Oh I don't suppose that...things have changed. I know that. I understand that discipline's a much more difficult problem today than it used to be.

R: What...can you tell me some of the skits that they might have in Campus Capers at that time?

H: No I, they had lots of skits but it's too far back. Ah, I don't think there were...the skits they put on varied very much from today. The staff used to put on

a skit and so on, and students, and various take-offs of various things. I...it was a very popular night. There was a full house for it anyway.

R: It seems very much like today.

H: Yes. I wouldn't say that it ... there was very much difference in it. Well, Homer Townsen always took an active part in it, so year after year, I think they'd probably change their skits somewhat but their acrobatics and so on were very much the same.

R: One thing that Miss Merry mentioned to us was that for a while you worked in the administration of the school helping out the principal. Is that right?

H: Well from the time I went on the staff about, while Mr. Stillwall was there, he acted as what you might call vice-principal. Now he was only there a couple of years after I came and from that time on, for years, if the principal were ill or were away, I'd look after the school. Then, for a number of years I spent two periods a day in the office looking after attendance and during the years that Mr. McLaren was principal, I did the vice-principal work. There was no vice-principal. Ah, and no pay. I did a lot of work...I've handled...I handled...I've had the school for probably...McLaren might be off a week at a time and I'd have the school and in 19 in 1942 I was acting principal oh from about the first of April until September. I drew up the time-tables for that year,

You see by this time, I was getting up in years. I was getting near retirement age and Bill Turner took over as principal in the fall. I think in 1942. But I did the what you might call a vice-principal for years but there was no vice-principal; there was a principal. Then they did appoint a vice-principal. Those two was all that we had. In the latter years I was there, we had two vice-principals; that's what they have now. So that's just the change. But there were no vice-principals until...

R: Could you tell me what on a day when say Mr. McLaren was away and you would be acting principal, what your daily routine would be like?

H: My daily routine would be to look after whatever was necessary in the office, if anything came up and do my teaching as well, and I had a full time-table.

R: What would be some ~~thing~~ of the things that a principal would do? Maybe we could get an idea of what the changes are from that.

H: What the principal would do?

R: Um hum.

H: Well the principal ~~would~~ looked after discipline and anything that came up connected with the school, from the outside. I put on a very active time during the war years because I looked after the sale of war saving stamps and certificates, in the school. At the same time, Mr. McLaren was chairman of the war savings

committee for Hastings County and I was secretary-treasurer. I was also, for the city of Belleville, I was on the war savings committee in the City of Belleville. Well Mr. McLaren organized the whole of Hastings County for the war-savings campaign. And then, after we had ~~xxx~~ ^{that} organized, we were in all the school sections and...Trenton, Deseronto, Bancroft, Madocq, Marmora and then the townships. We would leave here to go to a township organization; meet in a township hall; and we were on ~~staff~~ ^{fast} time and they were on standard time. Well we'd probably arrive at a place around about nine o'clock. It'd probably be about ten o'clock before we'd get down to business. Mr. McLaren was a very good orator: he speak and get them all riled up and then I did the organization. And then we would drive back to down. Well we would get back to town probably three or four o'clock in the morning, drop into a restaurant and get a cup of coffee; get home probably around five o'clock, go to bed and in a few hours have to get up and teach. Well that was a very difficult winter but in that campaign, every day at four o'clock I'd be down in what was the staff room right next to the office. Teachers would get war savings stamps and turn in money. How much do you think I handled during that...in war savings stamps and certificates? Fifty thousand dollars.

Now I roled quarters. I had to do the banking, and buy the stamps, and fifty ^h thousand dollars. And in the last year, I headed up a group of teacher during the bonds sale. We used to have groups ~~of~~ you see go around to sell bonds, and we sold fifty ~~thous~~ thousand dollars worth of bonds, our groups. And the assets had to done under my name because that's the only way the government had to know you see. The money we got from that we put into the Elton Sills Memorial Fund. Ah, added that to the Elton Sills Memorial Fund. He was a very student from the county who was killed in a rugby game. Got his neck broken and died. It was one of the activities carried on. I sometimes look back and wonder how I...I survived all that.

R: Especially not being an official vice-principal.

H; Oh well that...things have changed considerably, and they didn't pay so much for the salaries. You know when I started to teach at the high school, fifteen hundred dollars a year and at the time I was ~~lucky~~ rather lucky in getting a school. I had taught on the staff of the Madoc High School for about a year, So for eight hundred dollars a year. Now I think the minimum is now is up to 7000, 7800. But the dollar's different now from what it was. ~~Much different~~ but it wasn't that much different. They were pretty tough Boards of Education to work for in those days. Because a fifty dollar raise was really something. But during

the depression they cut salaries very rapidly. There were teachers on the staff of the Belleville High School that were getting twenty-four hundred dollars that they cut down over the course of two years to ^{one or} seventeen hundred. I happened to be a male teacher so they didn't hit me so hard but I was getting a salary of twenty-six hundred and I was cut down to twenty-one hundred. A five hundred dollar reduction. Some of the teachers: lady teachers: were cut as much as seven hundred dollars.

R: I suppose the married...I suppose the married women were cut...

H: The married men weren't cut as much. Single men were. So, they cut us very rapidly and we were a very long... time getting it back...getting it back, when things finally did pick up.

R: What kind of effect did the depression have on your students?

H: On the students?

R: Um hum.

H: Well, it had its effect. There were students that were coming from homes that were pretty hard up. And the effect it had that we had a lot of students in school that we normally wouldn't have had you see. They would have been out working. So we had a lot of students, and it was a rather difficult time because those students: they didn't want to be in school.

And we had more difficulty with the students at that time because they were in school because they hadn't any other place to go. I suppose in many cases it was warmer in school than it was at home. But it was a difficult for students and they didn't have money to spend and so on, and ah, but they didn't... I would say that even in the hard times they were better dressed than they have been in the last two years. But they might have patched pants and so on that they'd have to wear to school but at least they were clean anyway. Ah, it was hard time on the students ...for many of them; now many of them: it didn't effect them. Because their parents were in business and so on.

R: One question that I would like to ask you if there are any particular amusing incidents that you remember happening at the school.

H: Any particular amusing incidents. Well there were incidents that were amusing but to pick out any particular one...I couldn't...can't I don't think.

END OF FIRST CASSETTE

Mr. Hill (SECOND CASSETTE)

H: We taught as many as twelve hundred and sixty students in that school and handled them, with a staff of twenty-five. They couldn't do that today.

(laughs)

We didn't have...this idea of having seventeen students in a class and so on: that's a joke. Now it may be ah, necessary under conditions they do the work today but...

R: What was the average size of a class then, when you were teaching?

H: Average size of to teach? Thirty-five to forty.

R: So you had large classes.

H: Sure they were large classes but they passed the departmental examinations and so on. You take today now, just between you and I...

(END OF RECORDING)

DEATHS

HILL: Kenneth Sinclair of Belleville (former Vice-Principal of B.C.I.V.S.) at Belleville General Hospital on April 18, 1982 in his 80th year. Beloved husband of Jennie (Janet) Curtis Livingston, son of the late Mr. and Mrs. James Hill, predeceased by brothers Arthur Hill, George Hill and Ted Hill and sisters Jean Belcher and Ade Young. Survived by several nieces and nephews. Mr. Hill is resting at the Pinkston and Luscombe Funeral Home, 180 Victoria Avenue at Church Street. Friends may call Tuesday 2 to 4 and 7 to 9. Funeral Service will be held in the chapel on Wednesday, April 21 at 2:00 p.m. Rev. Malcolm Muth officiating. Interment Belleville Cemetery.

KENNETH SINCLAIR HILL

The funeral for Kenneth Sinclair Hill of Belleville was held April 21 from the Pinkston and Luscombe Funeral Home. Mr. Hill, 89, died April 18 at Belleville General Hospital.

A native of Tyendinaga, he was a son of the late Mr. and Mrs. James Hill. In the First World War, he served overseas with the Medical Corps attached to the Queen's Own Rifles. He lived in Madoc and Pembroke for a few years before moving to Belleville in 1923 where he began teaching at Belleville High School, retiring in 1967 as vice-principal.

He was an active member of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, having served as treasurer, a member of the board of trustees and, in 1950, elder. In 1967 he wrote a history of St. Andrew's in Belleville from 1821 to 1967 and was awarded a citation of merit by the Presbyterian Church of Canada.

Mr. Hill is survived by several nieces and nephews. He was predeceased by brothers Arthur, George and Ted and sisters Jean Belcher and Ada Young.

Rev. Malcolm Muth officiated for the service and bearers were Warren Hill, Douglas Young, Jack Martin, Carl Fleming and John Morris. Burial was in Belleville Cemetery.

AD
FR
J. N
CO

BRID

WII
BRID