

TAPE GUIDE (Mr. Cherry and Mr. Beare)

	<u>Page</u>
Mr. Beare's background	1
Mr. Cherry's background	1
The Houston Company (building materials)	1
Early wages - Houston's and Railroad	2
Bayview School	3
Subjects taught	3
Mr. Beare's railroad work	4
Bill Cooke's Cigar Store	4
Tobacco tastes	5
The floods	6
Selling tickets for community events	6
Mr. Cherry's flood experience	7
Backup and repeat flood	9
Trenton Explosion - 1928	10
Childhood recreation in Belleville	11

Reel XI  
XII

Subjects: Mr. Cecil Cherry (C)  
          Mr. William Beare (W)  
Case Number: 46  
Subject Code: VII/1/B  
Date of Interview: July 22, 1975  
Interviewer: Robert Miller (R)

- W: I was born in England in 1901 and I came to this country around 1905 to Toronto and from Toronto we came to Belleville with my family and I've lived here ever since.
- C: I was born in London England in 1905, July 9 and I eventually became an orphan. Lost my parents and I came to this country in 1902 . And I concluded that I was adopted in this country on account of the circumstances and I lived at one time in a place called Landstop, Muscote and I came to Thomasburg, Ontario and then eventually I resided in Tweed, Ontario and then I, as I told you, I joined up in 1914, the First World War.
- R: So Mr. Cherry, what work did you do in Tweed, Ontario?
- C: I trained for a factory carpenter, that means bench work. Sort making anything at all but, you know for building materials and like that. You know cupboards and frames and anything that goes in a house. And then I worked for the Houston Company, Belleville, about 1927 they moved to Belleville, and I carried on with them until they decided to close up. About forty-five years I worked for the Houston Company.
- R: And what was the Houston Company?
- C: ~~There~~ They were manufacturers of building materials.
- R: Can you tell me where their factory in Belleville was?
- C: What part of Belleville?
- R: Did they have a factory in Belleville?
- C: Oh yes, yes, on St. Paul Street. <sup>W</sup> Could you describe that factory to me?
- C: Oh that's really pretty hard to explain that to you now.
- W: Is it still down there Cec?
- C: Well that's what I can't say too much about. I can't say too much about that now. It's a brick building on St. Paul's Street on the way down to Stevens-Adamson.

It was a brick building and they built an office right on the bay shore but it's dilapidated a lot now because it was an old building when we went in it.

W: Wasn't the old Quick and Field across the road?

B: Right across the road; right across the street. And on St. Paul Street.

W: You wouldn't remember that. That's too many years back for you.

C: I can still take you down to see it, but it's pretty dilapidated now. We supplied <sup>materials</sup> ~~houses~~ for all houses that was being built; that is people through other customers of course, like contractors. If they wanted frames for a house, well we would build it. We would build the frames for that house. Supply them with the trim for the house, bricks or anything they wanted.

R: What were your wages when you first started out?

C: My what?

R: Your wages when you started working for Houstons?

C: Oh, I don't think I want to bring that up, eh Bill! That'd be a pretty tough question for me to answer. Well I suppose I was only a kid when I worked there; I think I got about fifty cents a day. d

W: I mean when I started on the railroad we got ten cents an hour. I started on the railroad in 1915 as a call boy. The regular wages then was ten cents an hour. There was no overtime; you worked twenty-four hours you got two dollars and forty cents and there wasn't such a thing as overtime or time and a half. It was all straight pay those days.

C: But the Houston Company was a good company; they were wonderful people but I can't go into the detail of that when they started to go out of business. I can't go into that.

- R: Mr. Beare, you would have, if you came here in 1910, would you have attended school in Belleville?
- W: I attended school in Toronto for a while and then when we moved here we moved out to Herchimer Avenue out there. You know where that is? I attended school down at that school down Number Two Highway down there. We had to walk all the way; we lived in the first house by the railroad track; walked all the way down to Dundas Street, Number Two Highway and then right down the highway.
- R: That would be Queen Alexander School?
- W: No, it was a country school; it's a lot bigger but it was only a one room school when I went there. And the one teacher teaching every class. Me, I had to quit school early so I never had any...in fact I had to quit school when I was in what we called then Junior Third or something like that and had to go to work because Dad was overseas and somebody had to work in the family to keep us going. The army didn't pay enough money in those days.
- R: What subjects did you take in the school?
- C: I can pretty well tell you what subjects you took: Reading, Writing and Arithmetic.
- W: Yeah, that was the main thing.
- C: They don't do that today, because I've met so many children right now that can't spell.
- W: And the biggest part in writing is spelling. If you can spell you can write. It always was for me anyway.
- W: That's right. Reading and writing was the most important part in life wasn't it?
- W: And one of your biggest subjects in shhool in those days was writing. They taught you that the minute you went into school. If it was only drawing o's and o's and o's and circles, gee that was all you did for

a day maybe until you got the hang of them and writing, but you don't see that today in the school. Not what I've seen, but a lot of them...

C: That's right. I was in the same position.

W: I called from about October to March and then I went in the Round House and that was the new Round House up there and I served my time as a machinist until about 1922 and then the depression years hit and then we all got layed off and we finished our time in there and we had to go out and dig for ourselves. I worked for Elliot wood-working Oh I guess ten years or more before I went into retail business on Front Street. My brother-in-law, you know, I went to work for him, in the cigar business and I stayed there until I retired.

R: So you were on Front Street thirty-two to thirty-five years?

W: Thirty-five years.

R: And what was the name of the store that you worked for?

W: Bill Cooke's cigar store.

R: That sounds familiar.

W: It should, we knew everybody in town.

C: Tell him who had that.

W: Vern McKnight has it now. It's McKnight's Variety Store. They don't call them cigar stores anymore; they're variety stores.

R: What were some of the things that you sold in there?

W: Cigarettes, tobaccos, cigars, pipes, lighters, oh any kind of sundries that went with the tobacco: bill folds, pouches and stuff like that. That was the main stuff.

R: Where did you get your products?

W: Different wholesalers in Montreal and Toronto, Dunhill Company. That's the Dunhill Pip Company, London England and there was Rubewitz and Hascal in Montreal was a big wholesale house, Snell and Row Company in Montreal and off there were different companies that you dealt with.

- R: What was most popular then for people to smoke? What did they like the most?
- W: What in brand of cigarettss?
- R: Yeah, or did they like cigarettes most or pipes or...
- W: Cigarettes were always popular and cigars, and pipes, there was an awful lot of pipes sold then. Most of your fishermen or people like that always smoked pipes and you remember all the fishermen down here: they used to light up all the great big round crooked ~~Peter~~ Peterson Pipes, you know, you'd fill them and they'd last half a day once you filled them.
- R: What about cigars? Did many people smoke cigars?
- W: Oh yes. Yes, there was an awful lot of cigars smoked. Of course in those days there were, they were a nickel, ten cents, fifteen cents. If you bought a twenty cent cigar you were a millionaire. Cigarettes were those days...they figured a cent a piece you see. A package of twenty was twenty cents; twenty-five was twenty-five cents.
- R: How much would pipe tobacco cost?
- W: The largest I think was twenty cents, around in there. There used to be a ten cent package and a twenty cent package and the same as cigarettes. In the depression years they brought in packages of cigarettes with five in a package for five cents. If people didn't have twenty cents they had a nickel and they could buy five cigarettes anyways. Most farmers of the day chewed tobacco and a lot of factory workers. Chewing tobacco was a big...
- C: In them days.
- W: Like Napolean. Used to buy that in five-pound wooden boxes. Packed all in that, sealed up in wooden cases, five pounds to a package, all in plugs of course. I think in those days it sold for ten cents a plug

you see.

R: How long would a plug last a person, of chewing tobacco?

W: Well some of them would take half a plug in one chew. At least I think they did.

R: That wouldn't last too long would it?

W: Well you watch your old ball players. They did nothing else but chew tobacco when they played ball. Even today they do on the big leagues. You watch them on T.V. chewing tobacco.

R: Would you say that chewing tobacco was the forrunner of bubble gum?

W: Well it could have been yes. I mean now you see a lot of ball players with their bubble gum just like kids blowing it out when they're out on the field.

...but we had a lot of fun those days on Front Street. Of course Front Street wasn't paved when I first went on it. You used to be in mud up to your knees pretty near in the spring.

R: Were you involved in the business during any of the Belleville floods?

W: Yes, one of them.

R: Did it do any damage to the store?

W: No we were lucky. It just come up over the floor of the store.

R: Something McKnight's does now is...you always hear about them having tickets to some community event or something you know, they say on the radio, "You can get tickets for something or other at McKnight's Variety." Did you do that when you were there?

W: Oh yes. We handled the arena tickets I think from 1929 till I quit.

R: So that's a real tradition with the store?

W: Yeah, the store was...if you wanted a ticket to go anywhere all you did was call Bill Cooke's and we had them. In fact we have every ticket there was in the country I guess for any do there was in Belleville.

High schools and colleges; wherever it was, we had them anyways. That's where we got a lot of our advertizing was through handling all the tickets. We handled all the tickets for the McFarlands when they went to world series...(McFarlands were a hockey team from Belleville)

C: Of course that'd be before your time. It's quite a while. Fifty nine would be the last one.

R: I would have been two then.

W: Yeah, you wouldn't remember then, but there's some awful changes on Front Street to what there were those days.

C: Well I can give you a story on the flood situation. I've seen two floods in Belleville in my life.

W: Well I did too but the only one that everyx bothered us was the flash one. We used to have a hole in the floor by the cash register. We used to poke our finger down and see how high the water was coming. Once she got up around the boards we knew she was going to seep in around the walls you see.

C: I was in the last flood. Well this was the flood of 1936. That's the last one Bill I believe. And when I got up in the morning to go to work, I went downstairs and there was twelve inches of water in the house and about before seven o'clock the Houston Company sent a truck up to move me out and I wasn't going. I said no, this won't last long. It'll be out before noon likely, but anyway I decided to stay and before I got out the water was three foot six in the house and they had to take me out of the upstairs bedroom window and my wife and my four sons and myself and the city come down to my house, down Jane Street, come to the front part of the house; we got out of the upstairs bedroom windows and there was a big boat, a very large rowing boat and they took us up to Christ Church lawn. The water ended at the lawn there but it was still on up the street. It ended at their lawn, and we

all got out of the boat and Bill Strahan, a friend of mine, was there to meet me and he took my wife and my four sons and myself to his house and we stayed there overnight, couple of days in fact until we got a place to go until my house dried out. And that's how I went to Chrystie(Strahan)'s grandparents. And I got a house back on the same street where I used to live until my house dried out. I could give you more details on it but it's not necessary.

W: That was when the ice was floating right down Front Street wasn't it?

C: It sure was; it sure was Bill. It was terrific. The worst I've ever seen anyway. It was terrible. But you know I seen that water coming from the river right through...there used to be a factory, butter factory, remember that creamery that used to be there at the end of Jane Street on Coleman Street. You know that on Coleman.

W: Was that Grills's there?

C: Yeah, yeah, he's the one that run it at the time, and the water come through there and the ice come down Jane Street, great big sheets of ice. If it had ever hit the house, I think it'd have knocked it off the foundations. And you know when the ice come up close to the house, the force of the water; the way the water was running avoided hitting the house. Never touched the house. But it really piled up on the parking lot and up on Jane Street, don't think it didn't. And we did have some friends that come up Everette Street in a boat and they tried to get around...come up Everette Street off of Bridge and come up Everette Street and turn on Jane to get to our house to take us out before the city come to get us and they upset; they almost drowned. But and it was Bill Strahan: that'd be Chrystie's Grandfather, he was right there to help us. And Mrs. Strahan lives over here now. They were right there and they made us as welcome as we could be welcomed and we stayed there a couple of days. And I got the house all...when

the water went down, I went down to the house and put fires on and got it all nice and dry, and when the water come in first Bill it wasn't dirty, but after I got the house all cleaned up nice - I had a lot of stuff destroyed you know, all my books were destroyed. I had a host of books because I had it in one of these tables with shelves in that you could put your books in, an ivory table like. I had to ~~through~~ through them all away.- and anyway I got the house so we ~~were~~ anticipating moving in and all of a sudden the river backed up again and the water backed up and it went back into my house about twelve inches deep and it didn't stay long but when it went out it left ~~nothing~~ nothing but mud and dirt and it was a mess and it was a mess and I had to clean that out again before...

W: That's when I think the ice at Corbyville let go and come down the second time.

C: It did. It came down the second time if you remember and backed up and it went in our house and yes there was twelve inches, but it was so dirty; it was mud. When it went out it left mud on the floor. It left mud on the floor. Oh I had an awful time.

W: The reason for that mud...when it left Corbyville it was taking the banks out up around there where the parks is there now you know. It was taking the shoulders of those banks out and coming right down the river.

CE That's right yes. Oh that was a bad flood, that last one we had.

W: We've never had one since have...nothing further.

C: No, nothing since.

R: What year was that, do you know?

C: 1936. Yeah, I can't remember the flood before that but it was a few years back wasn't it?

W: Yeah, it wasn't too far back. I imagine it was about four years.

C: I imagine so yes.

- W: Because after that they started to blast the river.
- R: Another major event in Belleville's past was the explosion at the Trenton Air base that was heard in Belleville. You would have been in Belleville at that time. Do you remember that?
- C: The Trenton Airport.
- R: The explosion at Trenton in 19...
- C: That was when that moving picture thing was there?
- W: No, no it was the...they were making amunition for the war in there. It was right south of the C.N.R. track as you went into Trenton. Oh you could hear it down here. The funny part of it was that...we often laughed after you know...they were warning everybody to get out of Trenton and here all the Belleville people were rusing to Trenton to find out what was going on.
- C: Didn't that happen when the first war was on?
- W: The first war yeah.
- C: Boy I heard about that. I was overseas but I heard about it.
- But wasn't there a motion picture system in there?
- W: There was a moving picture up there...
- C: But they got destroyed too.
- W: Well I think they were up around that district where this plant was.
- C: But they never continued on after that did they?
- W: No, never was built up after.

(segment ommitted)

- R: Mr. Cherry, you mentioned being involved in two particular organizations: The Masons' Lodge and the Orange Lodge. Can you tell us about your experiences in them in Belleville?
- C: Don't ask me to explain that to you. I'm not in the Orange now but I'm still in...I'm a member of the Masonic. Well Bill is too. But I won't speak on that.

- R: Were there any other community organizations that either of you were involved in that you remember?
- W: No, I never was involved in any of it very much. I always figured we did enough work on Front Street for the organizations without getting involved in them. We used to be selling tickets and one and another thing. But you never had too much time to bother with anything else when you had that job on your hands.
- C: No I never joined them. They were more the business...
- R: If we might backtrack to your younger days in Belleville, as a child growing up here, what things did you do for entertainment as children?
- W: Most of it, you just went to the shows. I think the only thing there was outside of making your own fun and most of it was shows and oh the odd dances. That's something I never did very much because I never could dance so I never got involved in them. I went to two or three but if you can't dance you might as well stay home so...
- R: Where were these shows put on?
- W: Well the old Griffin Opera House was the main...shows and acts and roadshows and that...used to be right on top of the hill here.(from Turnbull Street) END OF RECORDING

/ram

### DEATHS

**BEARS, William Frederick** — 5 Turnbull Street, Belleville, at the Belleville General Hospital on Friday, July 30, 1976, in his 74th year. Son of the late Mr. and Mrs. George Bears, beloved husband of the late Esther Taylor. Dear brother of Richard Bears, R.R. 7, Belleville, Jack of Tweed, Mrs. Kate Cook, Belleville, predeceased by sister Gwendolyn.

Mr. Bears is resting at the John R. Bush Funeral Chapel, 80 Highland Ave., Belleville. Service in the chapel on Tuesday, August 3, at 3 p.m. (Visitation from 7 p.m. Sunday). Canon R. B. D. Wright officiating.

Interment Belleville Cemetery.  
Jy31-21

ing  
O  
Lah  
tern  
ran  
C  
acci  
with  
Pur  
fam  
T  
bee  
M  
ed  
said

**WILLIAM FREDERICK  
BEARE**

Funeral for William Frederick Beare of 5 Turnbull St. was held August 3 at the Chapel John R. Bush Home, with Canon R.B.D. Wright officiating. The burial took place at the Belleville Cemetery.

Mr. Beare, who spent his life in Belleville, died on July 20, at the Belleville General Hospital, in his 70th year.

He is survived by his brothers, Richard of Belleville and Jack of Tweed, and his sister, Mrs. Kate Cook of Belleville.

He was predeceased by his parents, Mr. and Mrs. George Frederick Beare, his wife, the former Esther Taylor, and his sister, Gwendolyn.

1  
donations may be made to the  
Cambridge Street Baptist  
Church in Lindsay.

CHERRY, Mr. Cecil Greville of  
5 Turnbull Street, at the  
Belleville General Hospital on  
Sunday, October 31st, 1982 in  
his 87th year. Beloved hus-  
band of the late Clara Susan-  
nah Smith. Dear father of  
Gerald of Belleville, Kenneth of  
South Burlington, Donald of  
Ottawa and the late Arthur  
Cherry. Also survived by 12  
grandchildren. Resting at the  
John R. Bush Funeral Home,  
80 Highland Avenue, Belleville.  
Service in Christ Church on  
Tuesday, November 2nd, 1982  
at 1:00 p.m., Canon R.B.D.  
Wright officiating, assisted by  
Rev. David Robson. Interment  
Belleville Cemetery. Donations  
to Christ Church Memorial  
Fund or the charity of your  
choice would be appreciated  
by the family.

RASHOTTE, Mr. Jack S. of

