

The Oral History of:

Ellen Maud Agnes Shill Waddell

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An edited version of the original videotaped conversation between Nell Waddell and her grandson, Peter Waddell, on the occasion of her 90th birthday, March 1989.

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LIFE IN ENGLAND

I was born the 8th of March, 1899 in Melton, Suffolk in England.

My father, John Shill, was born in London, England. So was my mother born in Clerkenwell, London, England. He was a tailor to start with and he finished up being a male nurse. He went around to houses and helped people being a male nurse. The last thing he did before we came over to Canada, he and my sister, Cara, who was a nurse at that time, they took a house down at Ipswich, Felixstowe, which is a seaside place, and they had patients at home. My mother was a Maternity Nurse. They had 9 children but two died when they were young and 7 of us grew up.

The first child, Hannah Ellenor, died very young, about a few days old and the fourth child, Violet Elizabeth, she had a fall and then died of something. My two brothers, Jack and Bert were killed in the 1914 war, and that left 5 girls. My eldest sister, Cara, was a Maternity Nurse too. She stayed in England. She didn't come over here, when we came over. Bert was the youngest brother.

COMING TO CANADA

My father came over about 2 years before we did (1906). Then he sent for my eldest brother, Jack, and he came over and got work in the CPR.

Before he had come over, Father had given up drinking, so he said. Then he promised he was not going to drink, otherwise my mother wouldn't have come.

Mother brought the rest of us over. I don't remember what boat we came over on. That would have been 1908. It was a passenger boat, but it was not posh by any means. We would be in the Steerage. We didn't have the money to come. I don't know how, but it was paid by the Salvation Army and then you had to pay them back.

FIRST YEARS IN MONTREAL: 1908-1914

Father met us at the boat, a little bit tipsy. Maybe seeing the family was a little bit more than he could take, I guess. We had to go into rooms for a while until we got a flat, and gathered up a little bit of furniture and we were off and running. I was 9 years old. I don't remember too much of the crossing, because I was the youngest and I just went with the rest. The youngest travels behind.

When we got all here, May got a job, that's the eldest one that came over. Then, Anne was the next one to get a job. She got first working with somebody in a home, looking after children and things like that. Then she got in the Bell Telephone and that's where she stayed for a long time. Bert went to school.

JACK (JOHN BARTHOLOMEW SHILL)

Then, of course, Jack got married. After a little while he went out west, Saskatoon, and he enlisted. Jack was killed as soon as he got over there, because he was a sniper. He was up a tree and somebody saw him before he saw them. They had a little girl, but the little girl died. The mother, we never kept in touch with her until quite recently somebody sent us a picture of her. She had married again in England; she'd gone back to England. She had no more children, so...no family there.

FATHER

Father got a job here as soon as he came at the CPR. But then he didn't stay with them. He then got a job at a wire factory. He used to gauge wires. He was very good at that, gauging wires. How he ever kept his job I wonder, because he drank every weekend. He always sat in the corner, and had a case of beer and drank all weekend.

He never bothered me because I used to be the youngest and if he wanted anything he'd send me for his beer. He maybe gave me a quarter a week or something to run for his beer. I had to do as I was told. I got sunstroke one time too. It was very, very hot that day and I went and got sunstroke. It didn't affect me very much only I was sick to my stomach, I think. But that was a long time ago.

RUNNING AWAY FROM HOME

The worst thing I ever did when I was a kid was run away from home I think. Not far. Just across the street and behind the telegraph pole till it got dark and then I came home. My mother was mad at me and she wouldn't even come to look for me. I felt terrible. Nobody cared. I was stuck outside in the road. Nobody was looking for me. They didn't give a darn whether I was coming home or not. They said they knew I would be back as soon as it got dark. I must have been about 10 I guess. Just at the age where you think people are gonna go crazy if you're not home for dinner.

MOTHER

My mother, I can remember her slapping me. She used to slap your face. One time I said to her, "You can't hit me, I'm bigger than you." I was, you know, she was only about up to here. She said, I can't, can I? Wham!"

She was small. My father was only 5' 8" I guess, but that wasn't tall for a man, either, but I guess the food had something to do with making you taller. I'm the tallest of the girls. My eldest sister, she was the tallest until I got bigger, then I got a little bit over her. She was more on the stubby side at the time. She was 18 years older than I was. She was the oldest and I was the youngest. There was 18 years of babies. There's 18 months or 2 years between each one, exactly. Grace was born in January and I was born in March, so that's 2 months difference.

THE FIRST WORLD WAR.

NELL'S WORK AND EDUCATION

When I was finished schooling, I went to work in a store, selling lingerie, everything. It was a general dry goods store, they called them in those days. They sold everything but food. Marie and I both worked there. We got \$2.50 a week. and we worked 6 days a week and some nights during the week. \$2.50 a week that's what we got.

That was 1914, 1915. That's a hundred and some odd dollars a year.

The average at the time according our cards was around \$400.00 a year.

That's people that had good jobs.

So we had very little. But we enjoyed it. We had fun together the two of us. So my Sunday School teacher used to come in there and see me behind the counter and he'd stand there and he'd shake his head. "This isn't for you. You can do better than this. Now get out and get some more education."

I was finished 7th year, but he wanted me to get something more than that. In fact I don't think I finished 7th, I finished 6 1/2. I never went to high school but a lot of people did. But we couldn't afford to send me to high school and pay for education, for books and stuff. There were no free books. I thought about it and thought about it and talked it over with Mother. I said, "Do you think I could borrow money from Bert's bank account and pay him back?", 'cause he worked in Imperial Tobacco before he went over and they were paying all the men while they were over there, putting it in the bank for them, you see. She said, "Well, write him and ask him." So I wrote him and asked him. He said, "Yeah, sure". So I borrowed money for my education and then took a year of bookkeeping and spelling and shorthand and typing and things like that. Then I was a stenographer from then on, you see. So that's how I got my education.

BERT (HERBERT EDWARD SHILL)

Anyway, that comes up to the point where my younger brother joined up and he didn't stay in Montreal at all. They sent him right down to Valcartier. That's where they were gathering everybody together to ship overseas. So we never saw him in his uniform. Grace went down there with a bunch of girls that knew some of them but I was too young. I wasn't allowed to go, but she went down and saw him off.

WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION ON THE HOME FRONT

While the war was going on, I was doing first aid work and all sorts of things in between. During the war, everybody was busy on it. I mean, there was no playing cards or anything like that. You went to a house and you made rolled bandages or you sewed this or you sewed that and you made nightshirts and you did everything. But nobody played. Everybody worked.

Then on a Saturday, I used to go to a church and cook for the boys. They had a meeting place there where they used to come, to St. James United Church, in the basement. All the boys were able to come and have free dinners. There were volunteers and I was one of them. I was 16 or 17 when I used to go there after work. I made lemon pies until they came out of my eyes and ears. There was always joking amongst the boys. They'd want bacon and eggs or they wanted sunny side up, so it was fun. It was hard work but it was fun. Then after they had eaten there was a dance and you'd dance with the boys. So that's that.

Then first aid and Red Cross work besides that. All sorts of things. We all worked. It was the same when they took count of the people. You had to get books of coupons for butter and sugar and things like that. You had a system whereby you used to have to go and they had to register. That was a lot of work too. Then you had to go into the city hall and work on those things. I did a lot of that sort of stuff. It was good. I think it's good for you to get busy on things.

ACTIVITIES

Basketball was my favorite sport. I was good and tall and I was always the centre.

And Dancing; I was crazy about dancing in those days. It was more ballroom than anything. We did a lot of dancing. Everything so that we could dance with the boys when they came back. Marie and I went and took lessons. She is crazy about dancing even yet. If she were well enough she would dance anywhere.

We usually had dogs, only I don't remember them too well. We didn't have that many because we were in flats.

FRIENDS

We had lots of school friends. I had a girl that used to live across the street from us and a boy that lived... We used to all play on the street. We'd play hide and go seek and all sorts of things. We were just three kids and we used to get together like that. There was a wood yard at the bottom of our street. We used to play in and out of the piles of wood. Most of them are dead. Most of them are gone.

BERT ANSTEEES

Bert Anstees was my boyfriend. That was when I was confirmed. I got confirmed in the Anglican Church. And his sisters were getting confirmed. We were getting confirmed and we went out a lot together and I think I lost my caring for him when my father threw him out of the house, threw his hat out after him and he never came back for his hat.

I said, "You're scared of my father." And because of that you know I lost a lot of confidence in him, but at that time he must have been 17 or something. I guess if you were kicked out of a house at 17 and that, you wouldn't want to go back to it either. But at that time I didn't think anything of my father's blow-ups because I was used to them. I thought, "Well, you don't have much spunk, or you wouldn't do that."

JOHN SHILL'S TEMPER

When Father blew up he'd...thing was he always imagined that things were going on that weren't going on. If he saw anybody leaning over you he'd think that something was wrong. He always thought there was sex involved. So, he'd say, "Get out of here. I don't want you in my house."

Poor Mother, she had a terrible time. He used to look through the key hole and watch that nobody went near Mother. He'd go into his bedroom, shut the door, and Mother was always laughing and talking with our boyfriends and that. He would watch and see that she wasn't doing anything she shouldn't be doing. That's pretty hard to take.

LEAVING FATHER

The family left Father. I was working and Grace was working. Dad wouldn't let us come in at night after a certain hour. He'd lock the door. He'd say, "If you've stayed out that late, you can stay out the rest of the night." My mother would have to lie awake and wait until she heard him snoring, and then she'd come down and open the door for us to come in.

Anyway, Anne used to go to bed with an umbrella beside her in case he came in and attacked her. She was scared of him. I wasn't scared of him, that's why he treated me differently.

He'd say, "I'll slap you, I'll do this and that."

I'd say, "Go ahead. Slap me. Give me a slap if you want." Of course, he'd laugh and go away. I was cheeky, then. (laughing) I guess that's where I got my cheekiness from, just having to put up with him.

Anyway, we left him and we left the furniture. We didn't take the furniture. We took a furnished place and had to pay for all the furniture that was in it. The three of us, we had a hard time. We were working. We were right down on Selby St, off Atwater, before you get down to St. Antoine. It runs east and west. We got a house there and it was backing onto the tracks. The tracks were up high at the back of our kitchen. It ran along the top of this thing.

We had to borrow money to buy the furniture. We borrowed money from one of Anne's friends, so we definitely had to pay every cent of it back, hmm hmmm. There was a piano there and the floor was covered with CPR carpets. The people had worked in the CPR and they had brought rugs and put them down. We stayed there a couple of years. At the time when we were paying back the bills we couldn't get silk stockings. Everybody else had silk stockings and we had to get Lisle ones because we couldn't afford anything else. It's kind of a cottony sort of material. It never hurt us. We went through it.

BOYFRIENDS

Then we went down to St. Antoine St. into a flat and decorated it all. We had fun. We had a lot of young fellows come in and help us, the three young women. Mother would never leave us alone with them. Those were the days...Mother used to sit in the corner and crochet all the time we entertained.

We never managed to get alone with a boy in the house. If we wanted to we had to go out. We would sing songs on the piano, play games, cards.

When you went out with a boy you went to shows, usually: Movies or theatre. We had Her Majesty's Theatre in those days. I had a young chap that used to take me but he was shorter than I was. The only reason I went with him was because he would take me to His Majesty's, and we sat down all the time. 'Cause I was taller than he was and I wouldn't be seen with him. But we went to His Majesty's once a week, to the plays.

But that was finished when he asked me to go on a boat trip with him and his sister. She was engaged and he had passes. He worked for the CPR, the boats. He wanted me to go as his partner on this trip. My mother said, "No Sir. You're not going anywhere where you have to stay overnight with a man...You stay put here." So I never got away with him. That was the old days. Nowadays you can go anywhere with anyone, you stay with them if you want. Maybe it's a good job I wasn't living in these days. I was very popular with the boys.

AFTER WORLD WAR I – 1918-1926

“WICK”

During the war, somebody asked Marie and I to correspond with a sailor. In those days the soldiers all wanted correspondence with people. So we both wrote to this sailor.

when he came back, we made a deal for him to meet us both at the same time, because we didn't know what he was like and he didn't know what we were like. We had him at our house and we had a meal. He called me the next day or something and made a date with me. I was the one that came out on top of that. I went with him for some time and then he was transferred to Halifax. He worked for the Otis Elevator people.

I was kind of struck very bad with him. He was a very nice chap and he was a little older than I was by a few years. Then he met a girl down there and they were gonna get married so I gave them a shower. It broke my heart but I gave them a tool shower, hammer and saw and things like that. I had it at the house and I had for decorations forget-me-nots all around the table. It was very nice we enjoyed it.

GRACE AND JACK HARDY

Then he brought up Jack Hardy to my house. He thought Jack would take his place with my affections. He didn't. So, I said to Grace, "I'm going to have to cut Jack off, 'cause I don't want him." She said, "Don't do that, 'cause I think he's very nice. Give me a chance, eh." So I said, "OK, the next party, I'll invite somebody for myself and I'll invite Jack for you. Don't forget." So, they started to go out and they got married. They were very good together. They did very well. But she never forgot that she had to take my seconds, or layoffs. (laughing).

HOLIDAYS WITH MOTHER

I always took my mother on holidays and so did Marie. She took her mother and I took mine. We were the only two in the family that did it. Marie had no sisters, but I was the only one in my family who took my mother with me always. She always went with me, up to the mountains, wherever we went: Phillipsburg, down south, down the other side of the river.

CHEEKINESS

I remember once we were going away and I was working in Johns-Manville at the time. I'd been going in early and staying late to get things up to date, before I went. I'd made arrangements to take the early train. We used to have to go by train up to the mountains, in those days.

I made arrangements for Mother to come down to the office and meet me. We'd go over and get the early train. She arrived and my boss came over to me and said, "Well what's your mother doing here so early?"

I said, "Oh, we're taking the early train."

He said, "Who said you were going to get off early to take the early train?"

I said, "I've been coming in early to get things up to date, and so on, and working late."

He said, "That doesn't matter. Your time is so and so and so and so and you're not going until the time is up."

I said, "Oh, Ok. I'll tell my mother."

You see, that's all you have to do to me is tell me something like that and I say "Alright, I won't go until then."

I told Mother, "You'll have to wait longer. We'll have to take the second train instead of the first train." So I'm working away, paying no attention. 'cause he wasn't gonna pay me. He wasn't gonna give me my money until he wanted to give it to me. So I was working away paying no attention to him or anybody else. When it started to get close to the train time, he got worried. So he came over and he slapped down my money and he said, "There's your cheque, now you can go."

I said, "I'm not going." I said, "I'm going on the next train."

He said, "You're not. You're gonna go on the first train."

I said, "I'm not." I sat there stubborn as a mule.

At last, he shut down the typewriter and he slammed this and he slammed that, and he said, "Get out of here". So I got out.

When I got out to the country I sat down and I wrote one hell of a letter. I told him he could keep his job and all this. When I came back, I came in and there was no mention of the letter made, no nothing. He just didn't want me to leave or anything.

That's me. In those days I was cheeky, a bit of a rebel. It's nice to know you had it at that time. It was taken out of me when I got married.

NELL'S 21ST BIRTHDAY IN MORIN HEIGHTS: CLOUDING OF THE LUNGS

I didn't have any problems. The only thing I had was too much work and too much fun. When I was 21, I had to go away because I had the clouding of my lungs.

I was working at that time down on St. James St. It was at Johns-Manville. It was before they got where they are today. I was working and also going out at night on parties, dates and things. The building that we were in - it was an old, old building. If you wanted to go to the toilet it was down in the basement and it was all water down there. It was really an old, dirty building. I think maybe I caught cold and didn't take care of it, because I mean, I was too busy having a good time.

So I went to the doctor and he told me that I'd have to give up smoking. I said I never smoked and he said, "You can tell your mother that but you can't tell me."

I said, "I don't care but I don't smoke."

He said, "I'll have to get you to get away then. You've got to get away and get rid of that infection in your lungs."

So I went up to Morin Heights and I was up there for a month when I was 21. I had my 21st birthday by myself up there.

It was near the church there. Just a house. But they were very good to me. They brought a porridge up to my bed. They weren't even a married couple. It was an Uncle and an Aunt that lived together. It's an old family house and she did the cooking and while I was there I met the curate who came out to preach on the Sunday. So he and I went around together.

But he wouldn't let me go into the houses because it was when they had a flu epidemic. That's one reason the doctor sent me away too. He didn't want me in town when the flu epidemic was on. It wasn't pneumonia.

But he came to see me after when I got home but I was never cut out to be a minister's wife and I knew it. It's nice to have company when you're away from home like that and it's nice to have somebody interested in you, even though you're not that much interested in making a deal of it.

I used to buy good clothes before I married. I had good clothes. I had good money. It was good money in those days. I had a good job.

JAMES VERNER WADDELL (JIM)

Jim was brought to the house by somebody who knew him in Scotland. Because he came over here, he jumped a boat. He was a waiter on the boat. A lot of them jumped the boat when they came over here.

THE WESTERN HARVEST

He went out west harvesting. That was when they were sending a lot of young men out west for harvesting. I didn't know him at the time. When he was coming back on the train, somebody stole all his money. They gave him short change. They folded over the money and counted it out to him by the folding. So all his money was taken from him after working all summer for it.

He said if he'd had a gun, he would've gotten off the train. He said, "I would've committed murder"

I'm sure he would've. If you've worked all summer and then lose your money, that's not funny.

He arrived in Montreal and a friend of his, Angus Tate; he had been staying with us. We had an extra bedroom at the back of the house and we needed help for the rent. We used to rent when we could. He was a salesman. He was living in Toronto. He was married but he'd come down to work. He stayed with us until he was sent back to Toronto.

JIM BOARDS WITH THE SHILL WOMEN

When Jim arrived he brought him to the house and said he was a friend of his and he was looking for a room and wondered if we would rent him the room that he was gonna vacate. I was the one who did the business end of all these things. I was the youngest, but I was always the one to make the decisions.

"Would you take him as a border?" he said.

Jim was always a little pushy to what I was. When he came in he said, "Can I use your phone?" or "Can I use your bathroom?" Anything, something that I wasn't used to having someone do as soon as they came in. They should sit and wait. But no. He didn't have any bedside manners.

Angus said, "Would you take him in my place?"

I said, "On your recommendation only."

Jim never forgot that. Years after he'd say, "you know, you never took me on my face value. Always on somebody else's." It's true. I did.

WORK AT THE MOUNT ROYAL HOTEL

So, he came and stayed at our place and he got a job in the Mount Royal Hotel as a busboy. He was working nights mostly and he'd come home about 12:30 or something at night. It was winter and we had an oil stove. We'd put it in the back bedroom because there was no heat in there and so it would be warm when he'd come in.

One day, those stoves sometimes smoke, and there's smoke hanging all over everywhere. He was in bed and he wakened up with all this smoke in his face. Anyway, that was only one affair.

JIM TAKES A SECOND LOOK AT NELL

Then another time, I was out, I was in a choir in those days and somebody brought me home and kissed me in the car. It was a type that I didn't like. I came in and I went into the bathroom. I had my toothbrush and I was scrubbing away and scrubbing away because he'd been kissing me the wrong way as far as I was concerned, putting his tongue in my mouth and that sort of stuff.

I was scrubbing and cleaning out my mouth and Jim came back in from work and said, "What's the matter?" and I said, "This thing happened to me today and I'm cleaning out my mouth". That made him look at me again and say "Well, I guess she's not used to that sort of thing."

Anyway, it was soon after that that he started to take me out and then he moved out. He wouldn't stay in the same house as me because he was taking me out. Scotch, you know. So he got a room on Selby St. He didn't think it was right. It was too close. Maybe he didn't trust himself.

We used to fight. He'd call me up at work he'd say something and I'd blubber. Gosh. Stupid. There's something that would make me blubber and it would make me so mad. Anyway, I won't tell you about that. Then we got married and that was it.

EARLY MARRIED LIFE (1926-1933)

WORKING AT THE BELL

Then poor Jim had a hard time because he was working nights. I called him up one night because I wakened up and I thought I heard somebody on the stairs. It was a three storey house. The stairs came up for our second storey, and you came up and you turned like that for our place and you come up and went straight up for the third storey.

I wakened up and thought I heard somebody on the stairs. I was scared to death. I was by myself, and I wasn't that old, I was about 26 (27), eh. I phoned him up at the office and I was crying, I guess, because I was so worried. So he came home and the people at the office had figured I must be pregnant, because that was about the time I should've been pregnant with him. But I wasn't. So they put him on days, after that. They thought I was pregnant and I shouldn't be alone. That was how he got on to day work.

He was working in the Bell. Anne got him into the Bell. He did very well. It was just when they were going into automatic. He did a lot of studying and I did a lot with him, studied and helping him. So, that was the first years of my marriage.

MARRIAGE AND NELL'S SELF-ESTEEM

The cheekiness was taken out of me when I got married. Jim seemed to think he knew a lot more than I did. I imagine he did. Maybe he had more education or something. So that he wouldn't include me in some things and first thing you know you withdraw. And you withdraw and you don't stand up for yourself too much. It changed my life an awful lot. It wasn't until I went to work again that I got back into the bossy ways that I could boss the boss around.

I thought, this is an example of what he thinks of me. We didn't fight or anything, but it was just something that kind of kept you down, a bit. You were scared to... We never fought about that or anything. It was just something that... Maybe I thought I had an inferior complex to him.

THE HONEYMOON

We spent our honeymoon in Toronto and Niagara Falls. We went up by train. We had a special compartment. I was sick before I went. I didn't think I'd make it. Somebody came to the house and did my hair so that I would look nice on the day. But I was very sick with a very bad cold and then we went up to Toronto and I changed all my clothes. I put all summer underwear and everything. And I got information that it was very windy and cold, especially up in Niagara Falls and around there.

I came back and I was in bed for another 2 weeks or something. I stayed at my mother's place 'cause I couldn't have done anything else. I know when the doctor came to see me and he told me I had to take enemas, I cried like anything 'cause I didn't want to have to bother with that. It was terrible. Anyway, I had to.

BABIES

Our daughter was the first one. She was born 18 months after I was married. There's only 18 months between them too. Our daughter and our first son. It wasn't 2 years. But it was 9 months before she was conceived.

MOTHER'S DEATH

So, Mother gave me my christening breakfast, after you've had your christening. She took stoppage of the bowel and she died within the week.

She had been over to England and back, for the first time since she'd come over. She had everything finished. She had made her trip to England. She'd seen everybody there. She'd seen that I had a son. And she'd given the breakfast, so it didn't matter. She didn't care.

What happened was, she'd had this operation of the stoppage of the bowel and in those days they didn't keep you from turning over. I don't know if they do today or what they do, but anyway, they were supposed to put a pillow beside you so you couldn't turn over, cause if you turned over you might break open the incision. So, we employed a private nurse, and she left and went and had tea.

Mother turned over and broke open the incision and everything fell out....Anyway, she was 74. It was very young for her. She was a very active person.

SUMMER IN ENGLAND

Then, of course, we went overseas, Dad and I and the two children. I was over, I think it was for three months. Dad was only over for a month because he was working. He was looking after the house and that. When I came back, of course, I got pregnant. After being away for 3 months you see. That's where our second son comes in. (laughing) That was the end of the babies.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH PROBLEMS

Our second son had eczema when he was born. When I said to the doctor, "What's the matter with his skin? He's got a rash."

"That's just a baby rash."

I said, "No. I don't think so." And it wasn't. It was eczema.

We had a hard time with him because we had to put mitts on him and everything because when he'd scratch it was blood all over and blood everywhere. I think that went on until he was 9 months or a year old, I guess.

Then, I had the three of them sick. One had whooping cough, and one had measles or just the grippe or something. I had the doctor in and I said, "Now, you've given me something for them, what about this one with his eczema? It's terrible, I can't keep it up the way I'm doing." It was costing us a fortune because they kept giving us different kinds of mixtures.

So the doctor says, "I can only tell you one other thing you can try and that's crude coal tar. That black stuff that you use. But I haven't mentioned it before because it's dirty."

I said, "What's the difference with that? It's dirty when he scratches himself and there's blood all over everything. So we went to the drugstore and for a jar of that stuff it cost us .25 cents. And the other stuff that they were giving us was costing us a fortune. It cleared it up just like that.

That year, we were up at Park Extension. That year, Dad had Double Pneumonia and I had Phlebitis. We had the kids with measles, mumps, and whooping cough all in one year. So that's when we moved to the country. That was a terrible year.

It helped moving to the country. We moved to Ste. Rose....I think it was, the house we were in in the city was fine. It was a downstairs house. They went to school and they picked up everything at school and brought it home. Once one got it the other one...

JIM IN THE HOSPITAL

Our poor daughter, she went to the school and Dad he'd gone into the hospital to get an operation for appendicitis. This was a year when we had a lot of snow in October and it broke all the trees down. Nobody was ready for it and nobody had heat on.

He was in the Old General Hospital which is down off the main street. He had to walk down the hall with just his little short nightie on to get enema or something, before the operation. He got Double Pneumonia.

I never knew when I went down to see him whether he was going to be there or dead. I'd go down there and he would be sitting, looking up and he'd say he'd see beautiful pictures on the ceiling.

Then he'd say, "My mother and dad have just gone home. You've just missed them." Course they were in Scotland. So, I never knew.

But the Bell Telephone drove me down and brought me back and I had a fur coat when I moved into that house and I put it in a cupboard that was supposed to be moth proof. When I took it out it was full of moths. They really destroyed the coat. I never had another one. I bought it myself before we were married. It was muskrat.

MOVING TO THE COUNTRY IN STE. ROSE (DE LAVAL)

MEETING AGNES

Jim was the one that got me to meet Agnes. He had met Agnes' husband in the bar, I guess. And she had just had twins, I think. Agnes Colquhoun, she was a great friend of mine. She had two girls. Then she had twins, a boy and a girl. She was down by the station, right on the station almost. The train felt as if it was going through her house.

He said, "She's down there by herself. You should go and see her, get to know her." I had enough to do. I had my 3 children, and my house to look after. I kept putting it off, and putting it off. I was never that much for going around meeting people. If I had to meet them, I was alright.

I wasn't like Jim. Jim would go at the drop of a hat. It didn't matter. He was very outgoing.

I think she must have come up to see me, 'cause I certainly didn't go down to meet her. We became friends and the kids were very friendly together.

OUR SECOND SON

Our second son and Liz Valmer who died of Leukemia, they used to race around. If they could get their clothes off, they'd race around with no clothes on. It didn't matter and the two of them about the same age.

We were in the big property and they used to play in the sand pile. If they needed water they knew where to get it. They'd just have to pee in it and it would make good mud. This is when they were about 3 or 4.

If I sometimes put our second son in the water tub - we had a round tub in the kitchen for bathing because we didn't have a bathroom in that house, first off when we moved there. Whenever I bathed our second son in the round tub, I'd have to watch him otherwise he'd jump out and run outside, up and down the street absolutely naked. He loved to be naked.

Our poor second son was the one that got the bad end of the stick, I guess. He was 3 1/2 years younger than our first son and he followed our first son like a dog. He went everywhere with him and our first son was very good. He never ever kicked him out or said you can't come with me or anything. But our second son never got a chance really to put his two cents in. When there was an argument going or when there was anything being discussed, because he was the youngest one he couldn't get his two cents in.

We lived in a house in Ste. Rose where there was a hole in the ceiling for the heat to go up. He would get away up there. He'd listen but he couldn't talk 'cause the others wouldn't listen. He'd drop notes down so that people would have to pick up the notes and see what he wanted to say. So that he never got a chance to get out what he wanted to say.

I find him a little bit like that now, slow in talking sometimes. It's hard to hold back. You want to finish talking for him. That's because he didn't get a chance when he was young to hold his own with the other two. It's too bad I didn't notice that at the time. Not that I could have done much about it 'cause, I mean, the other two were more of the age. There was only 18 months difference between our first son and our daughter. So they had more things in common. They went to school and they had higher classes so they had more in common. It's too bad.

HOMES

We didn't buy the house we only rented the house. It was a summer house really that they had made over. We didn't own any house until we built the one on Mountain Ave. The other ones we rented.

Our first son did a lot of the decorating, the gyprock. He sanded all the seams. He'd do a lot of work.

WINTERTIME FUN

Well, we had fun in those days in Ste. Rose when the kids were small. We did a lot. I can remember skating on the river pulling Our second son on a sleigh behind me while I was skating on the river.

Teaching them how to ski down a small hill. Now they can teach me a lot, but I mean in those days, we used to play with them and do all sorts of things. And being in the country, it was so nice for that.

We had sleigh rides and we had skating parties, and we'd invite people from Montreal and I'd cook baked beans and brown bread. We had a big shed at the side of our house and we'd have it there so it didn't dirty the house up and a lot of people remember the good times they had. I have pictures.

WORK OUTSIDE THE HOME

Jim didn't want me to work and when I went to Bouchard. I wanted to work in the munitions up at Bouchard. I needed things in the house, I needed a carpet and I needed a few things and we didn't have the money. I went up to apply for a job. I had a car. I had Auntie Anne's old car. I went up and applied for a job and they were so glad to get somebody that had something on the ball. They were dealing with most of these little girls that came from the villages and that.

They said, "Sign this contract." So I said, "Contract?" "To say you'll come and work with us."

"When do I have to come?" "Tomorrow."

I knew Jim's feeling about me working, but I mean, I went home and I told him and he said, "No wife of mine is going to work!" That's Scotch people, you know. Really, Scotch.

So I said, "I can't help it. I've already signed a contract."

He said, "A woman's signature on a contract isn't worth the paper it's written on." In those days, in Quebec it wasn't.

I said, "Well, let me work until I've got a new rug for the living room. We need it so badly." I talked him out of it. I talked him into letting me work. I worked for 2 1/2 years. (laughing)

Anyway, I wouldn't have left them only I had to have an operation, for hysterectomy. Then my boss came down and said, "Come on back. We can't do without you. We're having a hard time." I went back too early and I had a nervous breakdown, almost, I guess. So, I just gave it up. I couldn't handle the job, because the person who'd taken my job was...terrible. She had everybody, instead of working nicely together she had them fighting together all the time.

I was in the Stationery department, where we used to supply all the the.... with Stationery. We had machines there we used to make the forms and all that. Great big machines. It was run by electricity. You had to collate them afterwards.

She had got everybody so fighting together, I just couldn't get them back into shape again, unless I'd have fired her I suppose. I might have done that. I was the boss but getting back after being sick, you really can't go in and say well, to get back to normal we have to do this and that.

Anyway, even after I was, I guess a year or so after when everything closed up, Canadair phoned me up because the man in charge of Stationery at Canadair called me and asked me to go to work for him.. I said, "I can't."

He said "Why?"

I said, "I'm not working anymore."

He said, "What's the matter with you? You getting old or something?" He said, "We need you down here. Why don't you come?"

I said "Look, I can't ". I knew I couldn't get Jim to let me go work full-time somewhere. I said, "No, I can't."

He said, "Well, you're a chicken." If I'd have gone there, I'd have had a pension. But I had no intention of going there.

A NEW BEDROOM SET

I can remember my bedroom set there. I had an insurance policy that came due and they wouldn't let me reinvest it. It was one of these .25 cents a week things that you paid for years and years and years. It came to \$600.00 and that's all you got, was what you payed in. It was \$600.00 anyway. I know it wasn't much.

I had always wanted a bedroom set. Agnes and I had seen this one advertised in somebody's house in the North End of Montreal. So, we went in and looked at it. It was fairly good. It was a lot for the money because we had the two beds, twin beds and bedspread, drapes, two bureaus like my big bureau and one for Dad and two end tables and it was \$600.00. It was worth it. It was a good buy.

Today it's way up high you know. So, I bought it without asking. It was my money and I bought it because I wanted it. When it was delivered, my bureau was so big, very very big and the staircase in the house had a turn in it. Somebody tried to get it up. I forget who, whether it was the men that brought it or something. They said, "It won't go up." And they stuck it down in the hall. Jim was working.

I thought, "Oh oh. What am I gonna do when Jim comes home. He's gonna say, 'What the hell is this doing here?'" I'm gonna say, "Well, it won't go up the stairs. What am I gonna do about it?" Anyway, he came home. I was very upset because I didn't know what was gonna happen. I said, "It won't go up the stairs." He said, "Ah, come on. Sure it'll go up. We'll get it up. Don't worry about it. It'll go up." That's all. He never made a fuss about it at all. I forget who it was that helped him up with it. But they got it there by turning and twisting a bit and never a word. Never a "Well, you should have thought of that before you bought it." (laughing) He was very good that way. When things really, you'd think he was going to blow his top, he didn't. He was very good in that way.

PETER AND THE CAR

There was the time you (Peter Waddell) ran the car down the hill.

You jumped out, and the car went down. It was a new car, too. It hit the tree and you came running in and we said, "He's ok anyway. He's alright. He's not hurt." "Poor tree," you were saying. You said poor tree 'cause you hit the tree. Dad was quite good. He was good about it. He was very good about things like that.

1965

NO PENSION OR TELEPHONE FOR THE WIDOW

I got no pension from Bell because Jim had signed a paper. We had discussed it and he said that he had heart trouble and I had heart trouble. We were the same age, and He said, "I want to travel when I retire. If we take the full pension we'll be able to travel. But if I leave part of it for you, we won't." I said, "Well, it's up to you. I don't care."

So, what happened was he signed the paper to take the full pension. He took it for two years after working for the company for 35 years and we got nothing. We got a year's salary, which at that time was \$9,000, but that was all. We had a free phone. They took that the day he died. The next day, I didn't have a free phone.

So I've never had any good feelings towards the Bell. I don't think that's right after people working for so many years and then just after...At the time they're looking forward to a retirement with less money coming in and they're thinking, we can't manage. I don't think it's fair. I think they should give the other partner something if the man dies early like that. I never got anything. So that's why I went to work. I had nothing coming in. I was 64. I didn't have much choice.

NELL REDISCOVERS HERSELF

It wasn't until after he died that I realized I maybe had something on the ball myself. So that I did alright after I got on my own. Everyone said, "My goodness. What a change!" People that had known me in the church and like that, they said that I seemed to blossom. It's funny, eh?

A SATISFYING LIFE

TRAVEL

I don't think there's anything I wish I had done but didn't. I did a lot of travelling. Everywhere that our first son was stationed, I went to see him. Goose Bay and Belgium and anywhere like that. Then Agnes and I, we went to Australia, and New Zealand and Fiji. We went to Scotland and drove the car all around Scotland. Up one side and down the other with Marie and Agnes. Neither one of them drove. I drove all the way. Then I went up to Alaska with our daughter on the boat from Vancouver.

SO WHAT'S THE SECRET OF HAVING A CONTENTED AND LONG LIFE?

I think it's making up your mind to do things and then doing them. I think that has a lot to do with it. I mean I was the one who'd suggest, I say to Agnes, "I want to go on a trip."

She'd say, "Yes, I'll go on a trip." She always was willing to go. But I would do the planning and I would do all the arranging. Then I would write up what we did and give her a copy. I was the instigator, but she

would follow along and she enjoyed it. It's nice to enjoy something that's all planned for you. But anyway, I enjoyed planning it and that. Marie came along when we went to Scotland. She just sat in the back of the car and slept most of the time. She didn't seem to pay any attention to where we were going. Agnes sat beside me and she read the map.

But Marie didn't read the map or anything, she just went along for the ride. And she had one wish that she never got, 'cause I wouldn't do it. We were up where the Queen goes for church when she's there. She said, "Can't we stay here and go the same church with the Queen?"

I said, "If you want to get out and try and find.."

It is a long time to be on the earth though isn't it?

Yeah, I know.

THE END
