



## Ron Coffey

### *Interview*

November 13, 1990

Length: 1 hour, 46 minutes and 58 seconds

George Jackson introduces himself and Joe Saint who are interviewing Ron Coffey at the library [*it can be assumed that it is the Bradford Public Library*]. Anne Coffey is also present. Ron introduces himself. He lives in Bradford at 181 Hurd Street. He has lived in the town of Bradford for 47 years. Anne has lived in Bradford for 30 years. Ron's dad was Henry Coffey and his mother was Vira Coffey. His mother was a Tottenham girl; she was a Hardwick. His dad was of the old Coffey family. Some say it was in 1797 but some say it was in the 1800's that they came down through Hudson's Bay. It took quite a while to come down from Hudson's Bay into the middle ground between the Huron and the Mohawk. That was Tecumseth Township and his great-great-grandfather started farming there on the 5<sup>th</sup> Line of Tecumseth. That is going back to about 1820 or 1817. The farm and the old original mud brick house are still there, east of Pennville. That's on Highway 27; the first farm on the corner is the Radley farm. It is the third farm west on the north side. Ross Lang owns that property now.

George asks if Ron's family followed the same path as the Scotch Settlers who came down. He believes his family came down a little earlier than that but it was basically the same route. Records were not kept about this; they started being kept around 1820. When Ron's great-great grandfather came down, he came together with Wes Stone's great grandfather and Charlie Kurzweil's\* great-great grandfather; they were very close. Charlie Kurzweil's\* grandfather's name was Coffey Curdle. Some say the Stoddarts came down first, but they came down about the same time and they settled in what is now known as West Gwillimbury. Ron's forefathers settled across the 27 Highway and in Tecumseth Township. The Brathats\* also settled in Tecumseth. The Coffeys, Brathats\*, and Kurzweils\* were all on the west side of the 27 Highway. They came





down from Hudson's Bay. Originally they came from Cornwall. They were Irish but there was [inaudible] going on in Ireland so they got out and went to Cornwall. They emigrated from Cornwall to Canada. It took an awful long time to come across on the boat. Very few people lived. Ron's father said they were survivors because there weren't too many people who survived the boat trip, let alone the terrible trek from Hudson's. All that was there was bush. It took them 4 generations to clear the ground before there was any crop surplus. George asks if Ron is aware of any histories that have been recorded of the Kurzweils\*, Brathats\*, or Stones. Ron says that Bill would probably have some; his dad Gordon was quite a historical man. Charlie Kurzweil\* is still around and would probably have some information. There are not too many of the Stoddarts around now.

Continuing with Ron's family history, his dad was Henry. Henry's father's name was Richard and they used to call him Dick. He farmed on the south side of the 5<sup>th</sup> Line of Tecumseth and he farmed there all his life. He died young at only 60 years old and he died the year that the Second World War was over. He died of a stroke in Cookstown. Ron's father had 2 brothers and 3 sisters. The oldest one was his Aunt Sue and she married Roy McClean. The next one was his Aunt Irene and she married Harry Kitchen at Kitchen's Hardware in Schomberg. Then there was his Uncle Richard who lived in Temple\*; he's Don's dad. Then there was his Aunt Marge who married Clisten Winter from Barrie. There was also a baby boy who passed away. When the young fellas came home from World War One they brought with them the influenza and they could live with that virus but the people in Canada were not used to it. Ron's Grandmother had just had a child when the virus took over, named Ken Coffey. They both passed away. His grandfather buried his wife with the baby in her arms in 1919-1920. They buried them in the spring of 1920. It's amazing how when you look at rural cemeteries how frequently you see this kind of thing, particularly with the flu epidemic and young women who died in childbirth. She just took sick and there was nothing you could do about it. There was a lot of sickness. Aunt Aida Coffey was Ron's grandfather's sister and she was a nursing woman. They went around with a horse and buggy up the 5<sup>th</sup> and as far as Nobleton, Cookstown, Beeton, and Tottenham nursing these people. Back at that time the Coffey Armstrong telephone





service was working and it saved a lot of lives. It was hung through the trees; it wasn't hard to find trees in those days. They got the telephone service working at that time which serviced Schomberg and about halfway to Nobleton, coming up as far as Bond Head. It was the old crank phone. Anne's dad's mother (Flannigan) also died during that flu epidemic.

George would now like to discuss Henry and Vira's family. Ron's mother's father was Matt Hardwick\* and he was a section foreman working out of Tottenham. He was with the railroad for 43 years and for 27 of those years he was section foreman for the CN running between Tottenham and up through to Beeton, a little bit North of Alliston. He lived in Tottenham and there was just the one girl. Ron's grandmother on that side died very young; his mother was only about 6-7 years old when this happened. She died of nephritis (a very serious kidney disorder) and then it was just his mother and grandfather. When Ron's mother was about 10, his grandfather re-married to a Lyons\*. She took sick about a year and a half after they got married and she was bedridden for years. Ron can remember even when he was born and she was still a sick woman. His grandfather kept working at the railroad; he retired when he was 70 years old, the year the war was over [*WWII is most likely the war referred to which would make the year 1945*]. He only lived 3 more years. He had arthritis in every bone of his body, and it would take him 3 quarters of an hour just to get out of bed in the morning. He was a great man.

His father's father, Richard Coffey, was a farmer. He lost his wife in childbirth in 1920 to the flu and he re-married to a Mabel Coutts from Cookstown. She was with him until the day he died. When grandpa had his first stroke he couldn't farm anymore so they bought him a house in Cookstown and that's where he lived the rest of his life. He was a farmer the rest of his life. Ron's great-great grandfather was gored with a bull at 27 years old and he had a terrible rip in his side. All he would do to treat it was wake up, put a pad in there, and tighten his belt up. He would hunt most of the time and he died when he was 42. George's dad's uncle had a similar story to that. He had a run-in with a bull as a young man and couldn't do very much work after that.

Ron can remember starting to farm just at the start of the war. He would do "boys" chores and milk the cows when he was very young. The one thing in farming which you always





had to do was watch the animals. Their family always kept a boar, as well as a bull, and you never knew what to expect from them. A good 70 percent of them were rough and very hard to handle. They used to put a ring in their nose; you could never turn your back on them. They also had a stallion. Ron was chased by a big Yorkshire boar one time and he probably cleared the fence by 7 feet. You really had to know what you were doing. Ron can remember when he was a boy they'd go up to his Grandpa Hardwick's\* in Tottenham (they used to go up there about once a month in a horse and buggy). He had chickens, and a fairly good lot. He was chasing the rooster (he was about 5 or 6 years old) and he hit it on the head with a croquet mallet. There was a big difference between growing up on a farm and growing up in town; you had all these things to watch for. He doesn't remember when he couldn't ride a horse; it was quite a wonderful life.

Ron only has one brother named Harry. Ron's mother had twins first but they died. Then his brother came along a few years later, and 7 years later he came along. So it was just his brother Harry and himself. Harry lives in Brampton. They were born and raised on the farm, which is about the 3<sup>rd</sup> Lot west of Highway 27 on the north side, in the mud-brick home. Ron went to school in Pennville, which would be SS Number 2 in Tecumseth. When he started school there were about 28 children attending. His brother was going out the door just as Ron was going in; he was in grade 7 when Ron was in grade 1. The first teacher he had was Ms. Lillian McMaster and she is still alive today. Ron got the strap the first day he went to school. The grade 8 kids were always trying to put the little kids up to something. They put Ron up to batting the ball through the window while the window was closed. They walked about a mile one way to school. They used to start on the second of September, and in the winter time they used to have hot lunches there. Some days there used to be really terrible snow storms. Ron can remember winter clearly where the snow would be up to the telephone wires. One year they had to go up on the highland to get the rail down the fence and prop the telephone wires above the snow so it wouldn't crackle when people wanted to use the telephone. Some days you couldn't get to school at all and you just stayed home and worked on the farm; there was always something to do.





It was quite a change when Ron moved. He moved to Bradford in 1947 and he was in grade 7 then. There was one grade in one room. He was about 12 years old when they moved. They moved because after the war, Ron's brother decided he didn't want a farm and Ron was too young to farm. When they were farming full tilt, there were always four of them (Ron, Ron's parents, and his brother). Harry wanted to get in the butchering business and he went up to work in Barrie. His father sold the farm. One day a fellow from Saskatchewan (Ross Lang) bought Cecil Haye's farm (which was the first farm east of them on the same side) and their farm as well. Sinclair had a home in Bradford and Mr. and Mrs. Cordingly\* lived there. That's where they moved to. That's the house that right now is beside Jim Catania's, just east in between Artie Saint's house and the garage.

Ron started going to the public school in Bradford and his first teacher there was Mrs. Semple, Don Semple's wife. She died about 3 years ago. The 400, this wonderful Toronto to Barrie highway, was starting to be built and Ron thought it would be a good job opportunity. There was a superintendent whose name was Lawrence Scott and there was also a sub-super named Fred Tippin\* who lived at Ron's family's place for a while until they got the camp going at 88 Highway and 400. Ron got a job out there and that was the first job that Ron had where he earned wages. He stayed with that until that job was done. He was about 15 years old at this time. The first thing he did was dig French drains. On the 400, they were anticipating that there would be a lot of water building up. They dug this trench that was about 3 feet deep and about 2.5-3 feet across. It was perpendicular to where the asphalt would have been. These were dug maybe every 75-100 feet. You would dig the hole and then fill it up with sand and gravel to eliminate any moisture. It must have worked pretty well because when Hurricane Hazel came along in 1954 (Ron was working on the 401 highway at that time) they said the road would be washed out but when they got the pumps from camp Borden and pumped all the water off, the road was still there.

George asks if any of the people working on the 400 at the time are still alive today. Lawrence Scott is gone; his brother worked on the canal bridge. Ron says he would imagine there are a few of the Trumble\* boys living (like Frank Trumble\*), but many of them are gone.





They started that job in 1950 and they finished in the fall of 1952. Then they worked on the 401. It was the same type of work, but he was more experience and worked with heavier equipment. George says John Fennell worked on the 400 building bridges. Everything was done by bull work, with a shovel and wheelbarrow; they didn't have the mixers they have today. Ron had nothing to do with the bridge; that was Harry worked on. In the winter of '49-'50 Ron was packing. At 6 o'clock in the morning they would drop you off at your machine, you packed all day, and they picked you up until 6 o'clock at night. You got paid every 2 weeks and Ron brought home \$84.20. When he came home after work (especially in the winter time) his face would be so red and he would fall asleep at the table. That was all winter long; you would wear 2 or 3 coats and you would still be cold. George asks where the gravel would come from. Mr. Scott was looking for gravel and Ron had told him that there was very little gravel in West Gwillimbury (he knew this because he used to be quite a hunter and had walked all over hunting groundhogs. If there were groundhog holes, there was gravel). Most of the fill used on the 400 Highway was sand and it was hauled in from Beeton. The sand worked well; it packed well. All of the asphalt chips were hauled in from Beeton. That 8<sup>th</sup> line got so impossible to drive over with the pot holes. They had a crushing plant on the north-west corner of 88, it was quite an operation. The Millers built a camp, and fellows lived in the camp. They were from all over Ontario and they would stay there and get 3 meals and a bunk for a dollar and a half a day. Ron used to stay out there himself and got along pretty good with the lads; he learned a lot from them.

They got some great meals at the camp. They had good cooks there. They would have steak and eggs for breakfast. This was done in a big cook trailer and 35 men could fit in one sitting. Ron worked in construction for quite a while. He worked with the Millers and then with Beamish\* down on the 401. The Ron got out of construction for a while and got into it again during the Bayview extension at end of Leslie Street and they had a big camp there. That was in the late 50s and early 60s; they created the Don Valley and they called it the Bayview extension. That was a big job which involved a river, a bridge, and a lot of moving earth. Miller was 88, then Storms, and then Law going north. Going south there was McFarlane and King Paving.







King Paving was all concrete and they ran it up to Major McKenzie. Anne's dad worked for Fenley McLachlan\*. George says that therefore, Ron's school career came to an end and he graduated from the school of hard knocks. Ron agrees and says he was never interested in school. He had a very poor attendance rate.

George asks about recreational activities. Ron says George Carson was the boy scout master and they had a hockey team so he played on that. They worked and they hunted; they did a lot of shooting. The moose hunting was done when they were older because you had to go further north. You had to go on the other half of the 17 Highway and that was a long trip. They used to go to dances in Bradford. On Saturday nights there was a lot of walking on the road in between Newmarket and Bradford. There used to be the 750 club in Newmarket that they used to go to and blow off some steam. They also went up to the lake sometimes to spend some time there. Ron spent more time on the lake ice fishing or duck hunting in the fall, they never swam around in it. Once a year, Ron's dad would tell them to get the chores done early and they'd go up to Innisfil. You wouldn't have the refrigerators that we have now, so it would just be fresh game when they hunted. They had a locker from Webb's Butcher Shop. There were no freezers in those days; you could use cheap ice cubes to freeze your food but that only did so much. They had a locker and they used to fill it with half venison and half pork. They would have pork in the winter time. Meat was fairly cheap. The locker was good for pork and the wild game.

George asks Ron where the 401 led to when he was working for Beemish\*. That was from Number 2 Highway and they had 24 miles of road to do. It ran back to the upper-middle road down the extreme west. They built the same type of road that they built for the 400. There were big contractors all the way down the 401. They were building on the 401 for many years, running east. It was a lot of work but a great road. After the 401, Ron worked for the TCA. Anne and he got married in 1955 and he went down and worked at TCA but he started at a bad time. They were just negotiating unions and he had no experience doing that. [*Tape cuts out*]

[*Tape resumes*] Ron hurt himself; he had a bit of a weakness. He joined the army back in the early 50's and he went down to 90 Richmond Street. He was in a building behind Sunnybrook hospital for a final medical. He thought everything was fine but they found that he





had a slight indirect double hernia. They told him they would fix him up at Sunnybrook Hospital and he would be okay in about 6 weeks. However, Ron didn't like that idea so he took a medical discharge without pension. He did not do anything about the hernias until he worked at TCA. He passed the medical exam there; you had to go to school for a few weeks and they would figure out what you were good at. Ron was found to be mechanically inclined and they got him to work on fueling and checking oil on the old piston type aircrafts. They had 2 types of super aircrafts: the Super Constellation and the North Star. Ron started to have trouble and feel some pain so he went to the medic and he got that fixed up. He had to lie around for a while, but he couldn't do that, so he went up to Barty's\* which Bill Greg owned and he asked him for a job. He was a short-order cook and he never cooked in his life. The first breakfast rush came and he cooked 2 dozen eggs and bacon so sooner or later he learned how to cook. After a while he was starting to get sick of that and he was starting to get healthy again, so Bill told him he would hire him at the garage. He worked for Bill Greg for a while and then he and Bill Muerhead\* started their own garage in 1957 in the fall. It was called "Canadian Oil" which was then bought out by Shell.

Ron was in the garage business until around the winter of 1959. This was the first experience he had when The Depression was really bad. In his area, 75% of his customers were being laid off, and then the whole thing was shut down. He had fellows coming in and handing him their credit cards; they were done. They were working from hand to mouth and when their jobs were gone they had to seek new employment back in 1959 and 1960. Bert Laramer\* was the Ford Lincoln dealer in Aurora. Ron sold everything to him and then Ron was out of work. Anne was teaching at Park's school. Ron went back up to Bradford and Harry Mann (the hardware man) hired him. He worked there during the fall and winter. In the spring, the Hydro Farms needed a tractor-trailer guy; the money and hours were terrible. He returned to Bradford to work at Lou's who needed a man to drive a tractor-trailer for a bit. He worked that job until it was finished. They did have portable batchers down there and they finished the airport; that was a good and interesting job. Ron was getting sick of trucks when one day he pulled into Brampton and he left the truck idling. There was a man from Canadiana\* and he asked Ron if he could







weld. Ron said he could, and he started working at Canadiana\* [inaudible] on Rutherford Road on Monday morning. That was an interesting job. It was a new factory that was set up to make door latches and window winders for American Motors and for Chrysler. Ron's job was setting up the heavy breaks and punch presses, which he had never done before. Frank Kinsky\* (the supervisor) and him got along well. He helped him and it wasn't long before he knew what he was doing. He got the factory up and ticking and then he realized there would be nothing for him to do. It was running well and he would have to stand around and wait for something to break down. So he went to work at the Newmarket and Holland Landing plant, which was later bought out by Molson's [inaudible] This was in 1964 and he was working for Molson's when he was injured in 1965. He was there for a couple of years, 2 and a half.

He was working for Molson's when he had his accident. A toxic soda tank blew up. This happened on July 21<sup>st</sup>, 1965 at 5 minutes to 3. It blinded him and he was burned pretty badly. He was in the hospital around November. His body healed up well; 60 percent of his body was burned, with many of those burns being third degree. The skin grafts worked well on him and his eyes healed up but he lost his eyesight. In 1965 there he was: a blind man with no education. He didn't know what to do so he went down to see an IV and he took the training program. They taught him navigation and how to get along with a cane. He went back to the factory because they were offering job replacement for physically disabled people. He ran a spring [inaudible] down there; it was boring and he had no distractions so he would do in 2 days what another person would do in a week. Consequently, he was caught up with the materials; the stock room was full of springs, so he was bored again. Ron was waiting for a cornea transplant in 1967. [Tape cuts out]

[Tape resumes] He was on-call in March of '67. Doctor McCoullough\* and Doctor Joseph Hill were his doctors at the Toronto General Hospital. One morning he got a call that there was an eye waiting for him and he had to get down to the Toronto General Hospital immediately because back in those days they could only keep an eye for about 2 hours. So he took a taxi straight down to the hospital and they operated immediately. They performed a cornea transplant on his left eye (the eye in which he was totally blind). It rejected in 7 days, and





they sent him home blinder than he came in. The doctor told him to get out of his job because the metallic fragments in the air were getting into his eye.

Ron was always fixing things, so he decided to go into business for himself. Instead of fixing bicycles and repairing lawnmowers for free he figured he would charge for it. So he got permission from the town (Bruce Stewart was Reeve) to start this business. Ron's brother Harry was in the tire business in Brampton and they had fire arms but the personnel didn't know anything about them. Ron bought all the stock from his store and he started in the fire arms business as well. He had a lot of his own guns and the small engine bicycles and it mushroomed into something pretty good. He started this business in 1968-1969.

George asks Anne when she met Ron. She says they married in 1955 but they knew each other 3 or 4 years before that, back in 1950-51. They met at the Schomberg dances. Her home was in Lloydtown. After they were married they lived on Park Avenue in Holland Landing. They lived in Nobleton, and then they moved to King, then to Holland Landing and then Bradford. They lived on Main Street for a while, renting a place from Frank Maurino\*. Then they moved up to Toronto Street and to Bradford. Anne and Ron have 3 boys and 2 girls. The oldest is Mary who married Ed Jakes\* and is nursing at Newmarket Hospital. The next one was Kenny who is in the trucking business and lives in Cookstown married with 2 children. The next one was Peggy and she's in the performing arts. She was in Stratford and now she is at Mississauga Stage West. Then they had Rory who is a machinist and they had another boy named David who went through to be a mechanic. Mary and Ed have a girl and a boy (David and Jennifer) and Kenny has 2 girls (Rebecca and Emily), so they have 4 grandchildren.

The thing that Ron remembers most in Bradford was the street dances that they used to have; the Lion's Club used to have them. They used to have a flat bed and put it near Webb's Butcher Shop. It went along down to the four corners and over to where the bank used to be. They used to call it the street fair. Ron can remember some of the Lions were Charlie and Brock Evans. The shows were really something [*It is assumed that he is referred to a movie theatre*]. When they were living on the farm, they might get to go to the show maybe 3 times a year and it would be a big event. Ron would always hope it would be Roy Rogers and Dale Evans in a





good Western and not a soupy love affair thing. Then when they moved to Bradford it was 10 cents to get into the show and that was a lot of money. Mr. Reese\* and Mr. Haverlin\* used to run the show. They (Ron and his friends like Paul Stewart and Dick Lee) were always trying to figure out ways to sneak in which would prompt a cat-and-mouse game with Mr. Haverlin\*. Finally they started going in through the exit doors.

Photo night was also a very big event in Bradford. That was an idea that Mr. Haverlin\* and Mr. Reese\* had. It was held on Tuesday night and Ron remembers seeing lines going up to the 4 corners to the Village Inn. There were 5 local entertainers that would get up on the stage at intermission and sing songs and then they would pick a winner. [*Name is inaudible*] got his spurs locked together on his cowboy boots and fell off the stage. You might win 400 or 500 dollars if you were the winner. The Bradford Theater was called the Holland Theatre and they used to get some good shows. The best and first real show that Ron can remember was “Gone with the Wind”. Everybody talked about it a month before and 5 months after. They played that show for 2 weeks in Bradford and it was a sellout every night.

Ron can remember Mr. Kilkenny had the first TV set he ever saw. It was just after the war and Joe Louis and Jersey Joe Walcott were fighting; Ron was very interested in fighting. They stood down there around a little television with a round screen in black and white. The first thing that Ron ever saw on TV was Joe Louis and Jersey Joe Walcott fight. The screen would have been maybe 16 inches in diameter.

George asks if Ron was involved in any local sport activities. Ron says he didn't do much. He used to play hockey on the rink; you would have to wait until it got cold. [*First name is inaudible*] Wilcock\* ran the rink and they'd flood it. Bradford had a good hockey team. The [*name of team is inaudible*] were all good hockey players as well as the Evans and Joe McGanny\*. They had a good hockey team and it was all Bradford players. They used to go to Beeton and his Uncle Hardwick (who was a nephew to his grandfather and at one point the Mayor of Bolton) was quite the hockey man. You would see some good hockey; that would be in the late 1940s when the boys came home from the war. Ken Tupling\* was goal keeper. Once a puck cut Ken's main artery in between his eyes and it's a wonder he didn't die. They never





wore a helmet or face mask. There were no slap shots in those days, they were all wrist shots. The Sweeny\* boys played; Jimmy Sweeny\* took the net after Ken. Ken never played again after that.

George remembers that Saturday nights in Bradford were like a circus in the 1950s. People would congregate on the main streets. Ron can remember going down on Saturday nights in the early 1950s; stores would stay open until later. He would go to Webb's and Harry's Meat Market and you used to pick a number, stand in line, and get the freshest and finest meat. It would cost anywhere from 29 to 31 cents a pound and he would butcher it right on the block. You would see 40-50 people lined up on the street outside the butcher shop just standing and talking. Then they would call your number, take your ticket, cut you what you wanted, and weigh it.

George says that one of the unique things about Bradford during that time was the fact that it had a liquor store and a beer store. It also had the 2 hotels that none of the other communities had. Although, Ron can remember going to Schomberg on a Saturday night when he was a boy and going to the market there during the war years, it was similar to Bradford. There used to be a general store with hardware on the left side and groceries on the right (no meat). In Schomberg there was Dove's, which was George Dove's Butcher Shop. There was Skinner's across the road, as well as Stuckey's\* Drug Store and Rosie Brown's Barber Shop and Pool Room. In Schomberg there were always people and farmers standing in clusters talking and meeting. There was a Pool Room in Bradford in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Butch Boyd had a Pool Room on the north side, east of 11. There was a nice Pool Room in there. There were 5 tables. That was directly across the road from the Bradford Theater. It was across the street from Carson's restaurant. Going further on down there was a storage there, and Frank Merino\* owned that; that's where the Royal Bank is now. A little further on from that was Cousin's Dairy\*, which served ice-cream. On the north side of the road was the New Star Grill.

There was Tommy's restaurant by the old post office. They used to go in there and give Jack a hard time. One time they went up the Stoddart [inaudible] and they climbed and caught a whole bag full of birds. They walked in the restaurant, let them go in the washroom, quickly shut





the door, and sat down. Someone went in the washroom and opened the door and let out all the birds; there must have been about 50 of them and they flew all over the place. They weren't too popular around there for a while. They had the police station on the corner and when the phone rang, the red light went up on the pole by the door. As soon as the light went on they would take off. Another thing they used to do when they were younger, before they started making money, was that they got into the booze business. Down behind Cousin's Dairy\* they used to have Jamaican Rum Barrels. By some fluke they were down one night and they could smell that some of them still had alcohol in them. They put their heads together and turned it into a pretty lucrative business. They would drain the barrels into Ocean Blend coffee gallons which had a big screw lid on them. They dumped the stuff into that and they had lots of business. One day they got caught and Red Wilson, who was a police officer (the OPP was policing at that time there was no Bradford Police) sweat it out of them. One of the first police officers to come to Bradford that Ron remembers was Fred Olby\*. Then they started the business again and they got caught again, this time by Fred. Finally the store started dumping the barrels. These barrels came from ships that were coming in; Cousins' was using them to put buttermilk in and they weren't drained. They would cut the rum in half with water and it still was too strong. Their customers always had a gleam in their eye when they saw them coming around; they were the bootleggers.

There wasn't much to do when you were younger so you made your own fun. They used to look forward to the various events like the fall duck hunt and the deer hunt; they would live for that. There was also the spring fishing and the ice fishing. Ron can remember being out in the bay ice fishing before Christmas (but now you can't). You'd be lucky if you could get out there relatively safely before the New Year. In Bradford there was the Davey Hunt Club, but he was too young to be in it. There was the Neilly Hunt Club and the Black River. The Davey Hunt Club was built in 1916 and it is still operating today; it is the oldest one. Mack Campbell, Davey Thompson and Webbs\* were all great hunters. There would be about 60 men going there on a Friday night or Saturday night. You could only belong to one club. If you got kicked out of one you might try to get into another. Membership was scarce and they were strict. Ron hunted in a





lot of camps. They always had a party before the hunt, which would be about 3 weeks before. Then they would have a party when they got home, cut up the game, and split it up. Ron doesn't remember ever drinking while they duck hunted. There were no drunks. Ron thinks that the "drunken hunter" stories were fabricated, he never saw anything and he'd done a lot of hunting himself. George asks about the routine of the hunt. Ron says you would choose your captains and they bought the supplies with the membership money. You would have your dog man [inaudible] [*Tape cuts out*]

Bradford is right in the center of the Mississippi flyway. Ron will never forget one time in 1944, the year before the war was over, they had an Alsike stack. His father never liked it lying around because it was very bad if a cow got to it, so he told Ron and Harry on Halloween night that they could go back and burn the Alsike stack. They did it and they had a beautiful fire going and it had been raining so they didn't need to worry about grass fires. Then all of a sudden an enormous amount of Canadian Geese landed by the fire, as far as his eye could see (maybe they were tired from flying and saw the fire). The whistling and noise scared Ron and he knelt down. That was the first time he had ever seen geese, and now hunters are getting geese just as much as they are ducks. Ron thinks there are more geese around because they are not migrating anymore, a lot of them stay at Toronto by the Harbour there and they don't really fly south like they used to. Fred Amey\* up at the 6<sup>th</sup> Line of Tecumseth had a pond and they used to go up there sometimes on a Sunday. They would ride their bikes up on a hot summer day and go swimming. Then there was a bit of a creek on the 7<sup>th</sup>, which was pretty far for riding a bicycle; there were a lot of hills. Ron thinks that there are more ponds now and geese like these for raising their young.

Anne hopes that Ron has time to talk about the airplane crash. Ron says that was back when they were on the farm on the 5<sup>th</sup>. They would haul manure out and spread it on the snow in the fields because his father never liked the barn yard too full of manure. They were doing that on a beautiful March day in 1941 and these 2 planes (they were Avro-Ansons; twin-engine aircrafts with 4 men per plane) crashed just between their farm north and Billy Brooks' on the 6<sup>th</sup> Line. One was going to pass over the other and they hit and down they came. Ron can







remember seeing one that looked like it was really in trouble because it was coming down straight and the other one was upside down in a glide. Back in those days everyone had a crank phone and everyone knew whose ring was who and it wasn't long before people were using the telephone. It wasn't long before his mother came out and said that 2 planes had crashed at Bond Head.

They brought the horses in and jumped in the '37 Ford and went up to Bond Head. There was nothing there so they went up to what was called "Bradley's Hill" and down towards the 8<sup>th</sup> and Ron could see debris all over the white snow on the East side of the 8<sup>th</sup> Line. There was only about 5 or 6 cars there and nobody seemed to know what to do. On the west side on the hill there was a plane. So everyone was waiting around and it wasn't long before the police came. All of a sudden the undertakers came with big wicker baskets. Ron can remember the men helped (his dad, Carty McClean\*, Gordon Brathett\*). Ron crawled through the fence and he couldn't believe the disaster; there weren't any recognizable features of the airplanes left, just debris. Ron can remember an arm with a wristwatch on it. It was hard to forget the war (World War Two) because that's all that was talked about; war and work. 2 of the young men in the crash lived, one for a short time. In the airplane that crashed in the west field, there were 4 men: 2 were dead and 2 were very severely injured. They took them to Alliston hospital where one of the young men died. A fellow by the name of Peter Flower lived and Ted Hipwell\*, Ron's father, and other people in Bond Head stayed friends with him. He was shot down and killed in 1944. Ron phoned up Jack McClean\* and he remembers it as well. Ron's brother wasn't with him because he was in Barrie, but Ron remembers getting a piece of airplane made of plywood and sitting that night just daydreaming about it. His mother kept a diary and wrote what had happened. That piece of airplane is still sitting in the crawlspace of their old mud brick house.

Another thing Ron remembers was that in 1940 the United Church of Bond Head burned down. That used to be by the Red Cross Orange Hall right beside Carty McClean's\*; just about where the Community Center is now. His father was at the church with Gordon Brathett\*, Carty McClean\*, Mr. Brown, and a few other men. The church had burned down and the inside had all fallen down into the basement where Ron went to Sunday school when he was





a kid. The main doors were not damaged but if you stepped in, there would be nothing there. They were worried that the chimney would fall over onto Carty's house and kill someone. The men were standing there, trying to figure out what to do with this church. Billy Brooks' brother came up and he didn't know the church had burnt. The north-west side was where they parked the horses and buggies and since there was a north-west wind, that side wasn't burnt. Brooks came up and parked his horse and was wondering why the people were just standing around. Ron's father told him to go into the church and Brooks almost fainted when he saw the inside. You wouldn't know the church had been burned because all the walls were left. So they got some ropes on the chimney and pulled the chimney inside and let it fall in there too. Eventually they demolished the church. That happened within two years of the airplane crash. George notes that it is time for them to wrap up the interview. [*Tape cuts out*]

*Note: \* Indicates that the word or name is written as it sounded, and therefore may be incorrect.*



