



Bill Fuller

Interview One

1990

Length: 1 hour, 1 minute and 35 seconds

Joe Saint introduces himself and says he will be interviewing William Fuller, who is better known as Bill, and asking him to describe his early life. Bill says his early life was spent in London, England. His parents were married in India because they were involved with the army. His mother was a Powell* and the Powells* were all involved in the army. Her great uncle was Sir Baden Powell* and Bill's Aunt Annie (the only aunt he had) was married to Colonel Webb* in the Indian army. Bill's father was a Drum Major in the army in India. He was transferred from India to Ireland in around the 1900s. Two of Bill's brothers were born in Ireland. Bill's father was made a Drum Major in Ireland but he became ill with cancer and died in a London hospital in about 1905. Bill would go to see him at Whipps Cross [*Whipps Cross University Hospital*] Infirmary in London when he was six years old. Bill's oldest brother Fred was 16 and his youngest sister was six months old when their father died. There were six children in the family, with only one being a girl. Since their father had not worked in the army for a full 20 years, he was not entitled to a pension (he was only short by a few years). So Bill's mother did not have any money when his father died.

His mother didn't know what to do so the minister of the Anglican Church that they attended suggested that the oldest brother Fred should go to sea. He went to sea on a merchant ship and Bill's second oldest brother George went to a naval training school in [*inaudible*], England. Another brother of Bill's also went to naval training school. Walter (nearly five at the time) and Bill (seven at the time) were put in Dr. [*Thomas John*] Barnardo's Home on Stepney Causeway in London. [*For context, see academic research and information about British home children*] Bill remembers the day they were going through the vacant lot at the end of the street





and he asked his mother where they were going. She said that she was taking them to a new home and he said that he didn't want to go. When they got to the door, Bill wouldn't go in but they made him. The Stepney Causeway was in a very rough place in the east end of London. Two or three days later, they shipped him to a place called Shepherd's Bush in London. He didn't like it there either; he always wanted to go home. After being there for about two weeks, on Saturday morning he went to Victoria Park with the nurses and ran away. He was wandering in London for a full day (he didn't have anything to eat). When it got dark he didn't know what to do but he saw a sign for the police station and went there. Bill told the police that he was lost and when they asked him where he came from he told them he lived where he used to be with his mother in Walton. They sent for his mother and she arrived at 9 or 10 that night. She told the police the truth and so he ended up back at Shepherd's Bush. His punishment the next day was scrubbing the floors.

A week after that, he got notice that they were shipping him out to the country to live with elderly people at a place called Ballinger Common in Buckinghamshire* (a small village of about 75 people). Bill lived there until 1914 which was for about five years. It was a wonderful place just outside of Great Missenden. He stayed there until World War One was declared, which is when they said that Bill was going to Canada. They were all delighted to go to Canada [*it is unclear which family members went to Canada*]. He hadn't seen his mother or siblings from the time he went into the home until they got on the boat at Tilbury Docks in London to sail to Canada. They landed in Quebec City 13 days later. There were 700 people on the Quincy ship, which sank six months afterwards.

They travelled to Toronto and Bill's brother had a place in the country but Bill had to stay at a home in Toronto for about a month by himself. Finally, he got notice that he was coming to Bradford and arrived on a rainy, Saturday, October morning in 1914. He took a train to Bradford and there was no one at the station to meet him so he didn't know what to do. A man named Joe Scanlon was running the express (which was a wagon with a horse) at the time and asked him where he was going. Bill didn't know where he was going; all he had was a name. Joe told him to get in his wagon and took him to the chief of police (Bill Simpkins*). Mr.





Simpkins said that the house he was looking for was out in the country. Bill walked as far as Kneeshaw's gate, just past the high school, until he sat down in the ditch and started to cry. He eventually continued on and got to the farm where the McCanns lived (where the Ritchies lived afterwards). A woman came out and asked him what he needed. He told her the name he was looking for and she told him to come in because he had found the right spot. She made him tea biscuits and apple sauce and it was the best meal he ever had.

He went to Middletown School from then until Christmas and his teacher was Thelma Morris (who lived in town). He stayed with the McCanns until he got married and then he lived in town. Wallace was killed overseas. Jack was injured in the war and then got a job on the railroad as a mail clerk. Bill moved to the house on the hill where Teddy Peterson* and his wife lived. It is where Bob Evans lives now and was originally the Mark Scanlon homestead called "The Pines". Bill peddled milk in Bradford. They had the fairgrounds as a pasture field. Where the public school is today, they grew corn for the cows. They kept cows and had two teams of horses. Bill planted an acre and a quarter of raspberries right where the new Catholic Church is today. There was also some property that belonged to Bill where Mac Lewis*, Jackson, Church, and Evans were. One time, he grew some onions there and someone left the cow's gate open so the cows went to the field and ate the onions tops. The next day, he was peddling his milk and the customers were complaining that it tasted like onions.

Bradford had a very good junior hockey team in 1919. Bill married May in 1923. He worked on the marsh for Ben Collings for a couple of years at the time that they would put wooden boots on the horses. Then he worked in the factory that made carriages and furniture for nine years. He was also designing furniture at that time and some of his designs were bought by the Honeydew* stores. He made a design for an English pram and they sold so well that Mr. Stein, the owner of [inaudible], told him [inaudible] When The Depression came; Bill worked on the marsh for Professor Day for a year. Then he and [name is inaudible] got together to break up the first 15 acres on the big scheme in the County of Simcoe at Doane's bridge* (which was previously the Fraser farm). One of the Fraser girls (Jessie) taught at Middletown School along





with Joe Harvey, Una Fraser, and Jock Fraser. The street by Doane's bridge* is called Fraser Avenue which is named after the Frasers on that farm.

After working on the marsh, Bill got into the wholesale business and then established International Food Distributors which he worked at for nine years. Then he bought the [inaudible] He was also in the Co-op for nine years with International Foods and then went out on his own in the turnip business until he retired. He was on the council for two terms [it is unclear what council he is referring to]. Bill's brother Tom went to Australia and he was only two years old when Bill left home. Bill never saw him again until the day before they left for Canada in England. One night, Bill was standing in the doorway of the pool room and saw a man coming up the hill (Bill was married by this time, around 1925). He noted to the person beside him that it looked a lot like his brother Tom. He watched him head up Yonge Street so Bill went home. When he got home, he saw the man at his back door and it was indeed Tom who had come to Canada.

As for the rest of Bill's family, Fred went to sea as a merchant marine shoveling coal on a ship. He went up the ranks from second mate to captain on an oil tanker called S. N. [name is inaudible]. Then he worked for the [inaudible] refining company and they built a brand new ship called the [inaudible] King which was the biggest oil tanker on the ocean. They hired him as captain of the ship; he was on the sea for 46 years. When he retired, he went back to England to a place called Woodhall Spa in Lincolnshire and had a nice estate there. Bill says that he is going to visit the place there next week. Fred had one son named Gordon who now owns the estate. After retirement, Fred became an American citizen because he worked for an American firm. Gordon was born in England but was registered in America so he has dual citizenship. He couldn't join the American army but got into the American Forces somehow. He was an electrical engineer and they sent him to British Vienna* to move a radio station from the coast further in during the war. Then he got a job with the International Airwaves Communications in Jamaica where he stayed until he retired a few years ago.

When they all came to Canada, Walter didn't stay at a nice place. One Sunday, Bill travelled by horse from the McCann house to where Walter was staying and he said it was





terrible there (Walter was nine at the time). He said the family was not friendly and made him work right when he arrived without offering him food or asking his name. Walter stayed there for seven years until Bill got him away. Walter worked at two farms: Ben Warner's and Lorne Hartman's. Then Bill sent him to Toronto where he got a job at a plating* company and attended high school. He then got a job at a life insurance company on Bathurst Street. After two years, they made him the manager. When they built a new building downtown, they moved him there where he was manager for 43 years. Walter currently lives in Barrie at Grove Park Home. He had two daughters, one of whom is married to Bill Thompson* (a relief* officer for the County of Simcoe). The other (named Shirley) is married to Willie Wickett and they own Power Train Services Limited* which manufactures transmissions, axles, and other parts for high powered machinery in Brampton. They had four boys who are all married and are now running the family business.

Bill's mother lived with him for three years when Tommy was a baby. She used to push Tommy in the baby carriage that Bill designed from Bradford to Holland Landing and back. One day, Professor Day was on his way home when he saw this woman pushing a baby carriage. Tom was working for Professor Day at the time and the Professor told Tom that he saw a little, old woman pushing a carriage up the Holland Landing hill. Tom told him it was his mother. When she lived in Toronto, she walked from Lee Avenue (by Woodbine Racetrack) to the Exhibition grounds and back.

Bill worked on the marsh hay with Ben Collings. Bill was driving a team of horses [inaudible] [Tape cuts out and then resumes] The group that he worked with included Jack Armstrong, Bill Westlake*, Watson, [inaudible], and [inaudible] McKinstry*. Bill also worked for Dan Collings one summer in 1919 when he built the wharf at the river. Bill transported gravel from Tom Brown's gravel pit to the wharf which took all summer with two teams of horses. Joe asks if Bill remembers the winter road that went from Dissette Street (McLean's* Lane), across the river, over the railway, to Queensville. Bill says that it wasn't only there in the wintertime, since they used that path to go cut hay in the summer as well. It was not a public road. Bill remembers the Sunday morning that Martin Dew's house burnt down on the corner off of





Federal Sideroad (now Bathurst Street). Joe says that before Martin lived there, he was on Colborne Street across from Dan Collings. He lived in the house that was later owned by Lorne* Church.

Joe asks about the men that made swamp* whisky. Bill says that Tom Watson [*it is unclear if he means Tom Foster instead*] was one of them; he was a good man. He used to [*inaudible*] cucumbers at Holland Landing for Bill. Tom Foster lived in the cement house on the corner of the Holland Landing plains. He had a reputation for selling whisky so people knew who he was in Toronto and Burwash. Joe remembers fishing with Ben Collings and Bev Woodcox* in around 1931 at Easter time. Bev Woodcox* told Joe that he shouldn't go home to Bradford afterwards because he had a job for him to do. They put on rubber boots and headed southeast through the marsh hay but Ben wouldn't tell Joe what they were doing. They finally arrived at a little area with trees and a four burner Coleman gas stove where Bev* would make and drink liquor. Bill went fishing on the river once when it was -17° C. He ended up with a load of fish in the tank and Al Hounscome was driving; Ben also came with them. They had to heat water in as many pots and pans as they could find on a burner to get warm water so that the fish would stay alive on the trip to Toronto. They sold the fish at the Bradford Fish Company on Spadina Avenue in Toronto. Back to speaking about Bev*, Joe says he took him to that spot around the same time that George Madill's* house burnt down as a result of making whisky.

After Bill Simpkins*, the police officer in Bradford was Jim Webb. Bill Simpkins* lived on the southwest corner of Moore Street and on the next corner was George Simpkins* (his brother) who was in the tinsmith business. He was next to the old bake shop on Holland Street which was once the Bradford Witness. Hosea Wilkinson used to be upstairs in the tailor shop [*it is unclear which building they are referring to*]. George Ogilvie was above [*name is inaudible*]. George Ogilvie made Bill's blue wedding suit which cost \$50. Bill says George always wore corsets. His brother, Dave Ogilvie, owned the livery stable and lived on John Street near the frame house which Ed McGeary* lived in. Bill doesn't think George Ogilvie was married nor had a family.





Joe and Bill discuss the Scanlons and Cooks as being very old families in the area. Bill remembers Fred Cook's father who used to have a music store where the veterinarian is now. They sold gramophones, pianos, and organs. Bill bought his piano from him. Joe says Fred McKay* was running an organ business on top of the drugstore. Bill says he had a pool house as well. The skating rink was built in 1912 or 1913. Jack McCann was the first man to put the first arch in the rink [inaudible] The express was on the corner near Bob and George Green's grocery store and the Masonic Hall. George Green also had an insurance company there which is where Percy Stevenson* worked. John and Tack Busby* took over later. John was in Bill's bible class along with Max [last name is inaudible], Fred Owens, Earl [last name is inaudible], Fred and Jack Cook, Jack, Harry, and Ted Gapp, Jim and George Webb, and Reg and [inaudible] Harding [inaudible]. Ms. Morton led the bible class and she was wonderful woman. Bill regrets not asking her to be Wallace's godmother.

The Greens (George Green and his father) had also been in the community for a long time. Raye* and Mary were George's daughters but they have since passed away and so have the rest of the members of that Green family. Ben Collings was born and raised in Bradford [inaudible] Bill boarded with Collings for three or four years. He worked for Ben for two years on the marsh and then got a job in the wintertime at Stein's during which he continued to board with Collings. His board was \$7 a week. Dan's wife was the sister of George and Howard Bennett; she died young. Some of her family members are Edna who is still living at 96, Emily who died a year ago, and Olive who died about six years ago. Dan was 98 when he died which is interesting because he drank and smoked quite a bit [inaudible] Joe says that [name is inaudible] was a great skater. He had a shack just below Collings on the west side of the river. Bill says they used to stable their horses around there (around Lowe's Creek*). Perch* and [name is inaudible] both lived up in the corner across from [inaudible] Bill remembers them going past his place in a horse and buggy. Gordon Ogilvie told Joe that, when his grandmother lived alone where McKnight's house is now, Perch* and [name is inaudible] gave her a load of Blue Joint* for her cows to eat in the winter. Bill says that Blue Joint* was good feed and it grew tall. They would pile it up, cut it, and sprinkle salt through it. It grew along the outside of the





marsh, between the marsh and the bush. It was only used for feed and not for packing like marsh hay. When Bill was with Ben at this time, he didn't do much fishing. You were not supposed to catch fish for game in the river at that time [*inaudible*] [*Tape cuts out*]

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

