

Irene Turner

Wednesday May 1, 2002

Length: 1 hour, 5 minutes, and 19 seconds

George Jackson introduces himself and says that he will be talking to Irene Turner. They are looking at the history of Joseph Brown as written by Ken Brown. Irene says that Ken lives in Markham now. He lived in Toronto for years before that and worked in Scarborough. George says that he noticed that Irene's mother was an Evans. He asks if there are other members of that family who still alive. Irene says no but notes that Edgar Evans lived in what was once a Brown farm. One son named Zachariah Evans moved kitty corner* across the road when he got married. Joseph Brown had bought the Evans farm which was the west half of Lot 14 and he bought the east half of Lot 14 for ... (*name is inaudible*) when they got married. So Irene's mother lived across the road.

Irene has prepared something to read and does so. She says that Joseph Brown, who lived on the farm on the west half of Lot 14, Concession 10 in West Gwillimbury, bought the east half of Lot 14 for his son Walter to live on. It was previously owned by a retiring farmer named Mr. Manning*. Walter married Mary Evans on March 3, 1909 and Irene (Margaret Irene Turner) is their daughter. Irene's father was very fond of fruit so one of the first things he did was plant an orchard. It was on the slope facing south hallway back on the string hundred farm. The orchard consisted of plum, cherry, pear, apple, and crab trees. The apple tree varieties were Yellow Transparent, St. Lawrence, Snow, ... Sweet, and Northern Spy. A groundhog made his burrow underneath one rhubarb root and that root gave them all the rhubarb they needed. When dwarf trees came on the market, a new orchard was planted near the fifth farm buildings located by the mud plain. This orchard included new varieties of the same fruits as well as a raspberry patch.

Irene's parents installed a telephone in 1914 and also put the "L" on the barn in that summer. In 1916 a well was dug in ... but it was so hard it had to be chipped out with an axe in the stable in front of the cow's manger. In 1918 they bought their first car which was a Model T Ford from Dennis Nolan*. The only instruction they received was from the man driving them a short distance on the 10th Concession and back. She doesn't know when the grinder was installed but it ended the time consuming trips to Lukes' Mill in town for chopped food for the cows and pigs. The Z Engine powered the grinder. Wood cutting bees were held in the spring and four neighbours came to help. One of them owned the saw which was also powered by the

Z Engine. The trees were cut in the bush in the winter and piled in the yard until spring. Threshing was another neighbourly job involving six local farmers. The threshing machine went around the farms after the wheat harvest and again to thresh the barley and oats. ... threshing was done in late fall or early winter. In the fall, farmers came with teams of horses and wagons ... and got gravel from ... Woods' (*first name is inaudible*) gravel pit. His farm was on the east of their farm. They used Irene's family's lanes as shortcuts to get to the 10th Concession.

In the summer they had a beef ring where about 20 families contributed a steer each week. Everyone picked up their share of the meat on Wednesday morning. When the beef ring was no longer feasible, Jim Webb (a butcher from town) made a tour of the surrounding country to deliver meat to the farm families. The baker also toured the country so they no longer had to bake bread. The mail was picked up at the post office in town until 1912, when a rural mail delivery was started. It was then delivered to a mailbox at each gate. Then the daily papers and magazines became available to the farmers. They subscribed to the Toronto Globe, Montreal Harold, Weekly Star, Ontario farmer, and Countryman. They loved the Countryman because it had something for everyone and it had serials. Two authors they liked the best were Ralph Connor* and Emily Lawrie*. Both parents loved to read aloud and when the Countryman was delivered, the serials were read aloud in the evening. The kids loved to colour on the children's page.

When her dad was young, Mr. Stopper* walked along the roads bringing music lessons to practically every farm's home. The Brown family took advantage of his services. Walter and his sisters learned to play the organ. One brother named Frank learned the violin and Harry the mandolin, but neither kept it up later in life. At one time, Irene's father played the organ at Coulson's Hill Presbyterian Church. His younger sister named Jessie played the Ebenezer Methodist Church organ and another sister named Mary played at a church in Ravenshoe where she taught public school. There were two tiring jobs that needed to be done during the summer. One was picking Mustard Weed from the grain crops. When it was in bloom it was a bright yellow flower. They walked the fields in a row from one end to the other, pulling all the weeds by their roots and carrying them away from the fields. She remembers the day her dad came in and told them that he had picked only 15 plants. Mustard Seed was very hard to get out of the grain and it spoiled the price if too many showed up in a bushel. The other job was picking stones from their fields. A horse and stone boat was used to carry the bigger stones and sometimes a team and wagon were used when they collected the smaller stones. Eventually the mustard disappeared and the stones were piled into fence rows or into the ... Small stones were very hard on the knives of the mower and the ...

Irene's father was interested in all kinds of trees and planted many trees on the farm over the years. He bushed their fence so the cows couldn't get into it. It was made into a

demonstration woodlot in the 1930s. There were over 100 species of trees in it according to a high school teacher from town who spent a lot of time there. A ... was planted west of the driveway which eventually sheltered the hen house, as eggs were income for their farm. They kept mostly Leghorn hens and some Rhode Island Reds which produced over 100 dozen eggs a week. They sold them at the Co-op in Barrie and also at the ... in town. Water from the well was piped into the cellar and then force pumped into a tank in the kitchen for drinking and cooking. There was also a cistern in the cellar and the pump in the kitchen from it gave them soft water.

When they had too many cows to milk by hand, the ... milking machine (*name of the machine is inaudible*) was installed using the Z Engine for power. In 1948, when they were connected to the hydro line that was on the 10th Concession, the milking was converted to hydro power. Mr. George ... (*last name is inaudible*) (a local electrician) showed Clarence how to string the hydro wire. Working together, they installed the necessary wires and outlets in the house and barn. It made life easier for them. They sold sweet cream to the creamery in town for table use. In 1947, Insulbrick replaced the original sheets of tin that covered the house and this made the house much warmer. In 1934, it was their coldest winter. Irene remembers going to the veranda and actually feeling warm at -12° F after a spell of -30° F and -40° F weather. Her brother Ernest walked to town in his first year of high school with snow drifts everywhere and was the only country pupil to make it to school that day. He went to his grandfather Brown's house after school to spend the night and then walked home the next day after school. He wore a ... cloth overcoat and a cap with earmuffs. In 1936 they had the hottest spell that Irene can remember. In the first two weeks of July, the sun rose as a red ball and set as a red ball. The farmers worked in the early hours of the day and late in the afternoon. The spent the rest of the time indoors or in the shade. It was too hot to work the horses as well.

In May of 1921 there was a flood across Simcoe County, especially in Scanlon Creek where a cloudburst took the bridge out on Concession 10 at ... Stewart's farm, a culvert on the 10th Line at Highway 11, and the bridge on Highway 11; they became a little island. There wasn't a drop of rain in town, three miles away. Irene remembers watching their cedar trees float away in the creek. 1921 was also the year that Highway 11 was paved in their area. It was in 1963 when the tops of three hills were lowered. At Mount Pleasant, it meant new entrances to the cemetery. The hill at Coulson's Hill school's site was also lowered. The intersection of Concession 11 and the highway necessitated a different entrance to the west. Before they had a tractor, an old Ford car was used to pull the powered implements. Next came a Dodge car that was made into a utility vehicle. It did farm work and took logs to the sawmill for lumber ... Next in line was a second hand Ford tractor before they got a new Ford tractor. Ken Wood restored the old ... and it was used to draw the ...

Willie Gardener's family were bee keepers and one of their many ... was in Irene's family bush. It provided Irene's family with 60 pounds of honey every year as rent. Irene's family also grew Buckwheat in the field which was near the hives. Therefore, some of the honey was Buckwheat flavoured. Irene liked this honey better than the sweeter Clover honey.

Art Brown sold the farm in 1976 and came to live with Irene. Six children were in their family. Ruth died at 16 due to pneumonia. Joseph died at birth. Grace became a teacher before marrying Herb ... (*last name is inaudible*) of Stroud who was a farmer; they raised three daughters. Irene left school after four years of high school to work at home since her mother was sick. Her mother died in 1944 of complications from diabetes. Irene married Victor Turner in 1963. Clarence had two years of high school before he left to work on the farm and never married. Ernest became a radio operator and sailed in two ships that were sunk during World War Two. Ernest worked in different stations across Canada before going to Ottawa to work for the Department of ... where he retired. He married Pearl Evans and they had one daughter and two sons. Irene's father died after three weeks in the hospital in 1973 at the age of 89. During his lifetime, he was always interested in new things in nature and had an interest in stars. This carried on in his son Ernest and grandson Harry who are amateur astronomers. ... (*name is inaudible*) had a singing voice. When the Reverend Jacksons were at the Bond Head United Church, Mrs. Jackson informed the choir of the surrounding area. Being in this choir, ... (*name is inaudible*) learned a lot from her. He became a soloist at Bradford United Church. After his sudden death in 1988 at the age of 70, they put up a stained glass window in Bradford United Church in honour of his memory.

George says he has some questions for Irene about what she has said. He asks what the Z Engine is. Irene does not know. She says it was about two skids long with a round back and it started with a spark. George says it was probably what they commonly called "the old hit and miss" which needed a load on it to function. George asks what the names of the people were who came around to thresh. Irene says Donald Coutts was the one she remembers the best. Donald was from New Town. Melburn Belfry and Mary Kneeshaw's husband Renvall* Hughes (from Gilford) also came. Earl James was the one who owned the threshing machine. Earl lived in town and worked as a mechanic. George asks about the grain grinder and Irene says it was also powered by the Z Engine. Irene says it was in the 1910s when they got a tractor and that they used horses until about 1940. The Z Engine was stored in the stable, but when they cut wood it was brought to the front yard. When they went to the gravel pit the gravel was shoveled by hand and was to be used on the road. It was a community affair to shovel gravel, just like other "bees". George asks about the beef ring and where the slaughter house was. Irene says it was at Elwood Bateman's house which was on the 10th Line, about 3/4 of the way up the hill around Lot 16.

George asks if Irene remembers any names of the people who delivered mail. Irene says the first mailman was the father of Harold Taylor but he only did it for two years. Later on it was Alf Payne* and he held the position for many years. They got their mail at 10 to 12 every morning and it came from the post office in Bradford. After Alf*, Jack Gibney was the mailman. Alf Payne* used a car instead of a horse and buggy like some mailmen did. Irene explains that Frank (George and Stan's father) played the violin but the boys never heard him play it. George says that he had to pick Mustard Weed as well, in addition to Thistles. George and Irene agree that by growing up on the farm you learned how to work; you were given a job did it without question.

George asks about the bush on Irene's family farm and if it is still there. Irene says it is, on the south side of the 11th Line. Glen Travis* has a house there now, on the east side and you can still see the gravel pit. They took many logs out of the bush. There was a sign put up to identify it in the 1930s or 1940s saying, "Demonstration Woodlot". George mentions his uncle worked in the Ministry of Natural Resources and he was one of the main promoters of demonstration woodlots. – Tape cuts out -

George brings up the storm on May 21st. He asks if there were any mills on the Brown farms. Irene says that all the mills were gone by that time but there were seven at one point on that section of Scanlon Creek. One was a grist mill and the rest were all lumber mills. The grist mill was in what is now Scanlon Park. The stones from it were put at the front gate and they put a spirea* in the center of each one. Irene says she hasn't seen the remains from the lumber mills. George says the storm on May 21st was the same one that went through the north branch and took out the bridges on the 5th Sideroad. Gorge asks about the modified car that they had before the tractor. Irene says it was an old Ford car that they just put a pull on. They used it for doing everything that the horses did. In regards to the Dodge car, the top of it was cut through the centre; it didn't have tractor wheels on it though.

George would like to go back to talking about Irene's experiences on the south part of Lot 14 with Vic. Irene says she will have to speak about that another time because when he (*it is unclear to whom Irene is referring; possibly Vic*) first came to Canada, Mr. Pulford was in Toronto to meet the boys that were coming. He came up to the 12th Line and began to work for the Pulfords. He lived with them in the summertime and spent the winters in Toronto at Quaker Oats. To speak more about this, Irene says she would have to come back another day.

George shows Irene a map and she identifies some different homes. George says that at one time, there was a road allowance down the west side of the north half of Lot 14 that used as the farm lane to get to the Turner home which was in the south half of that lot. Irene says it was fenced off at one time. There was a low part in the lane and she remembers getting stuck

in it during the spring. They would come up to the Turner property and turn east; that's where the house was. When they had to build the new lane, they went straight along the edge of the farm. George shows Irene a photo from 1946 with a farm and Irene is not sure if it was the Turner home. Irene says when the children walked to school they went west from the house to that lane, through Doane's* farm, out to the road, and on to #4 School. It wasn't until the late 1930s that this road was put through (*it can be assumed that they are referring to the lane*). – Tape cuts out –

... They sold the farm in around 1949 and built a house in town. Irene didn't marry Vic until 1963 so she never lived on that farm. George asks if Irene has any memories of the early days of the marsh in Bradford. Irene says no, but any milk that they didn't drink themselves would go to the people on the marsh. Irene went to #9 School and there would be about 20 to 30 students in one class. Her first teacher was Aunt Ella Adair* (her father's sister). There was also Vivian ... (*last name is inaudible*) who taught for a year and another named Gilda* Mather who was a relation of the Woods'. Irma Broderick* was the teacher who put Irene through the entrance. Irene attended high school for four years at the building on Queen Street in Bradford which is currently still there. It was new when she went there. The Hartman boys drove a 'Baby Grand' and would take her to school for two years. After that, her sister Grace drove. In high school she studied Algebra, Geometry, English Literature, English Composition, British History, French Grammar, French Composition, and Latin. She wasn't involved in any extracurricular activities. Her family went to church at Ebenezer. In the first two years, up until they got a car in 1918, they went to the Presbyterian Church where Irene's father played the organ. When the United Church was formed in 1926, Grandfather thought it was time to go back to a Methodist church so they attended Ebenezer until 1953 when it was closed. Clarence sang in the choir for many years. He was in a quartet with George Green and two others whose names she doesn't remember.

George asks what West Gwillimbury was like before Highway 400 was made. Irene says that when she was growing up, she was familiar with the community up until the school section; she didn't know about anything outside those boundaries. They wouldn't go out very much in the horse and buggy. The family got their first radio in 1930 and it was a crystal set. In 1940, you had to have a license for the radio. Having a car changed the boundaries of their everyday life. In the year that Highway 11 was paved, Irene remembers that the walk was awful because the tar stuck to your shoes.

Irene mentions the day that an airplane went down in ... McAfee's* (first name is inaudible) farm. It happened in the early 1920s, just after the war. The plane landed safely without crashing. George asks Irene if she has heard of the Rogers. She says she thinks they owned a large parcel of land which went to the Evans' property on the south side of the 10th

Concession. Ben Rogers live on the 8th Line (she's not sure if there is any relation). Zenos Rogers
... - Tape cuts out -

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

... Indicates that the speaker is inaudible.