



## Bill Fuller

### *Interview Two*

October 19, 1994

Length: 2 hours, 8 minutes and 40 seconds

*[The interviewer and interviewee are not introduced but it can be assumed that Joe Saint and George Jackson are speaking to Bill Fuller. There are also two unnamed men present.]*  
*[inaudible]* Bill says he *[it can be assumed he is referring to Professor Day]* fired Tom and then asked him to come back in the afternoon. Bill remembers the day that Professor Day died. Bill was wheeling home onions and Professor Day was wheeling home carrots when they stopped to sit down together for a break. Bill had bought a newly developed fertilizer from Professor Day to use on his onions. They discussed how the onions were doing and how Professor Day's carrots were doing. They sat down together at 11:30 in the morning and he died by 2:30 that afternoon in his carrot patch. Joe says when he was working for Professor Day, they used to dig from 7:00 in the morning until noon and they only got three rows done. Professor Day had gone home for lunch and when he came back he fired everyone. He said he knew that they weren't working because he was watching them from his house with a surveyor's level. Bill says he was very stubborn when he made up his mind about something.

George shows Bill a picture of the dredge that was used on the canal in the Holland Marsh. Bill says his brother helped to put that machine together and take it apart with Bill Sutton. An unnamed man asks if Wilbert Mulliss brought coal to the dredge but Bill says no. Joe thinks the two Graham\* brothers brought the coal. An unnamed man says he thinks the fireman for the crew was Jimmy Ringer\*. Joe thought Tom Prince and Dick Water\* were also part of the crew because they were the only ones who had a boating permit at the time. Bill remembers watching the dredge make the first few shovels, south of the *[inaudible]* bridge. The little canal was already there in the little scheme (in Bradford) at the time. The unnamed man says that the





first canal (the little canal) was about 50 feet long. Bill says the little scheme (the Bradford scheme) was done first. Bill doesn't know how they excavated it. He bought property by the little canal. Jobe Morris\* also had land there but wouldn't let them use the road so John Marino\* and Bill got some plank wood and made a road at the bottom of Piccadilly Hill. The road is still there today. Bill remembers that once he was dealing with Loblaws, a company that knew him very well. Jobe\* had celery business with them. He went to Toronto one day, drank too much, and couldn't come home to fulfill a celery delivery with Loblaw's. His wife, Anne, was worried and phoned Bill, asking him to get the load of celery from the Morris\* farm and take it to Loblaw's as a favour. Bill agreed but when he got to the Morris\* farm, Jobe\* was pulling in and told Bill to go away.

Bill remembers the dredge going behind the restaurant, up from the highway, and down to the 6<sup>th</sup> Concession. It went part way over the township. Joe thinks the dredge work for the big scheme went on from 1925 to 1928. Bill thinks the little scheme (the Bradford Marsh) would have been done in 1924 or 1925. George shows them an article that Professor Day wrote in 1927 for a magazine called A Canadian Engineer. In the article, he writes that the excavation for the big scheme was started in 1925. George assumes that the small scheme would have been completed before then. Bill says when Professor Day had property on the little scheme, he grew lettuce. Then Searle\* Mestagh came and he was the first person to grow onions on that marsh on the little canal bank. One of the unnamed men helped him grow these onions. Joe thinks Mestagh came in 1928. George says that they put the dredge together on the riverbank, where the Riverview Inn is now. The dredge got as far as Doane's\* bridge and then had to turn around because of quicksand but never ran into any more trouble after that. Professor Day surveyed the land before the dredge got started and laid out a path of stakes for where the canal should go. Bill Davey\* then cut in lines where the stakes were.

Speaking of figures like Professor Day, George brings up Tommy Cooper who was an Agricultural Reprehensive in Markdale. There are many stories about him. Bill mentions that Bobby Robinson\* was a government representative who went with Bill and Professor Day to different places, trying to organize a celery growers group. The first that Joe ever heard of





Professor Day was when he was surveying land in what the Bradford Witness newspaper called the Bradford Marsh and what Joe knows as Lagoon City in Brechin. This was before World War Two in around 1914. They speak about how the Holland Marsh got its name. Holland was the name of the man who surveyed the land (Edgar Holland\*); it had nothing to with the Dutch.

George says when the men went through the marsh with the dredge, most of the trees were already cut which left only stumps and small bush to get through. He shows them a photograph (which was left at Ken Wood's door) of the dredge. They say that the dirt from the dredge was piled on the inside of the canal bank. When George asks how they leveled this out to make a road, Joe thinks that everyone just leveled it out on their own property with a horse and wagon. It took a long time for the road to become useable for vehicles. The pumps were all set up by that time (1928). Bill says that Caesar broke up more land on the marsh than anyone else. Bill was the first man to break up land in Cookstown in 1930 [*inaudible*] They grew lots of carrots, celery, and lettuce there. Bill shipped a carload of onions to Quebec and still doesn't know where they are since he never got paid. George Kemmeny has this land in Cookstown now. Joe says that Kemmeny once brought onions to United Farms which smelled like fish.

Going back to the marsh, George asks how long it would have taken, after the drainage was complete, for the land to be taken up by farms. They say it took a very long time. Joe thinks it wasn't until after World War Two. Dave Sicetti\* bought the last piece of property sold. Bill says the first people to farm on the big scheme were Cooney Foster\*, Jimmy Lemon\*, George Green, Cunningham, and Tom Fuller. Bill says he dragged Joe's father's drilling equipment up [*inaudible*] Lane to drill a well on Davey's\* property. No one had been up that canal bank with a truck before.

Going back to the dredge, George asks Bill where his brother took it apart. He says they dismantled it by the Riverview Inn. Tom (Bill's brother) and Bill Sutton had to go under the water to undo the bolts of the dredge. The dredge came from a company in Ottawa owned by Cummings and Robinson. The parts came by train to the stockyards [*inaudible*] Bill thinks the barge was about as wide as the canal (50 feet) and the dredge was about 40 feet wide. An unnamed man says that they had a dance on the barge before they put the dredge on it. The





dredge was about 60 feet long. There were two stabilizing arms that went out and Joe says they were operated by steam. The little building on the back end was the toilet. The crew lived on the barge; they never got off. Bill suggests that there were four men working as part of the crew: Bill Sutton, Dick Waller\*, Tom Prince, and one who they can't remember. Bill says they were all engineers [inaudible]

George says that Professor Day mentions that there was a consortium that came together to sponsor the drainage of the marsh. Bill says there were some men from Guelph in this group like Judge McKinnon\* and lawyers who called themselves the Guelph Syndicate and they owned practically one third of the land on the marsh. Buchanan was one of these men and he lived near Amsterdam. He asked if Bill wanted to buy land from him but Bill said he had no money. Buchanan told him he didn't need any money to buy land from him. Bill bought 25 acres on Simcoe Road which was the best land on the marsh. He got Tony Prima\* to break it for \$15 an acre. They had a flowing well which went 228 feet down.

During World War One, Bill can remember standing on the corner as a child (when Thornton owned the hardware) listening to two men talking. One of the men was W.D. Watson who owned the Bradford [inaudible] factory. They were talking about getting the marsh drained. When he went home, Bill said that they were going to drain the swamp but no one believed it. Alex Fraser used to live on the Doane\* farm. Una Fraser was a teacher. Then Jack Ward\* bought the farm [inaudible] [Tape cuts out] [inaudible] Bill says W.D. Watson moved down to the other side of Aurora, on the right hand side before the college. Joe notes that he just got Watson's burial in Aurora when he died [inaudible] Joe says Watson built what is now known as the Village Inn. Bill had a friend in Toronto named Tommy Russell who owned [inaudible] and the Russell Motor Car Company. While they were driving together in his car one day, Tommy told Bill that he should buy that building (*it is unclear which building he is referring to*). Bill said he had no money, and they wanted \$1700 for it. Tommy said he would lend him the money, but Bill declined and he regrets his decision. Tommy married a Brown girl whose father donated to schools and playgrounds in Toronto. George notes that Irwin\* "Buster" Brown (Tommy's father in law) had a big farm just south of Wilson Avenue, on Keele Street. In 1946, Mr. Brown came





to Oshawa where Sam McCann was living and Bill was visiting. He came there because he was to be married to Sam's daughter, Sadie. Mr. Brown was a sales manager for a big Ford Motor company in Toronto. He got appendicitis and died overnight before he and Sadie could be married.

George comments that Bill and two others were involved in gardening (growing fruits and vegetables) on the marsh and asks who came in first. Bill explains how he got into the produce business. He first worked for Professor Day for a couple of years. Professor Day had an acre and a half of celery and Bill's job was to keep track of the weight as it came up. George asks if the insulbrick barn which is currently standing was the original Professor Day barn. Bill says yes but the rest of the group debates that *[inaudible]* Bill comments that they always say that the most prominent culture on the marsh was Dutch but he disagrees. He can remember when there were many Italians working on the properties belonging to Sutherland and Doane\*. Faris employed many Czechoslovakians and Hungarians. On the Nolan farm, there were many Germans and Hungarians. When they built those three new houses *[it is unclear which houses he is referring to]*, the Dutch came in. There were also quite a few English families living there. Bill cannot say who the first person or group of people on the marsh was. Joe thinks the first Dutchmen who came to town were Peter and Garrett Rawl\* in 1925. Joe remembers that John went to Charlie Wilson's to get a pair of shoes and asked for size 25 (using the metric system). Bill says that the Rawls\* had the first land broken on the west side of the big scheme (on the side belonging to York Region) which belonged to Art Saint. They had land broken before Bill did in 1930.

*[inaudible]* When Bill had the greenhouse, he put in a *[inaudible]* of cabbage which was 50 feet long and 6 feet wide. When it came time to sell them, no one wanted to buy. His wife asked what he was going to do with all these cabbages; she wanted to replant them. Bill asked Jack Ward\* what he should do and he told Bill to listen to his wife so that she would stop nagging. So they planted the cabbages and Jobe\* Morris and others started calling Bill "Sauerkraut" because he had nothing but cabbages. One day Jobe\* came to Bill and said he had been to market and it turns out there was a demand for cabbages. Bill gave old Davey\* (whom





he was working for) 10 flats full of cabbage plants to grow [inaudible] When it came time to harvest them, Davey\* asked if Bill could handle all the cabbages and he said yes. Bill cut them and sold them all to U. Walker and Sons Limited\* in Guelph; he trucked six tonnes of cabbage over. Davey\* later told Bill that the cabbage made him more money than anything he ever grew on the marsh.

Joe asks Bill if dredging went on during the winter and he says yes. One of the unnamed men says that the crew worked 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Going back to the cabbage, Bill had said that people came to buy from Windsor, Tilbury, Hamilton, Toronto, and Newmarket. George asks if these people came to Bradford looking for produce or if Bill had to go seek them out. Bill says he went looking for them. He would go to Simcoe Road with his truck to sell produce and some of the people would ask if he could save some produce for them. They had a meeting on Saturday morning at the corner of [inaudible] and traded goods. While he had the land down there (*it is unclear which location he is referring to*), the phone wouldn't stop ringing for orders and he had to keep going back and forth so he decided to give the land to his wife and Tom after one year. He then went into the wholesale business, got together with Loblaw's, and bought for them for nine years. Loblaw's paid him for buying and trucking produce. In terms of trucks, he had 1931, 1933, and 1936 Maple Leaf trucks, a 1929 Chevrolet, a 1940 Dodge, and 1940 and 1944 Mack trucks. He would deliver to North Bay, Timmins, Cochrane, Kapuskasing, [inaudible], and Sudbury in the 1950s.

Bill was doing a lot of business for Gamble Robinson\* with International Fruit and they talked him into opening a branch of International Distributors in Bradford, which he did. He worked for them for 11 years. From the day he started to work to the time he quit, he never got a raise. The entire time he was working for International Fruit (or Pacific Fruit and Produce Company), Loblaw's wouldn't buy anything from Bill. When he quit International Fruit, the phone rang the next day and it was the boss from Loblaw's who wanted to see him. He went down to see him the next day and [inaudible] The boss called [inaudible] and asked them to give Bill half their business. He started working for them the next day and stayed there until he retired. George asks if that became Ontario Produce but Bill says no, that was IGA.







[inaudible] Bill had quit the marsh and he and Tom were looking after the farm. One day Bill told Tom that there was a patch of lettuce that was looking very good and he wanted him to put Nitrate on it when it reached a certain size. Lettuce at the time became scarce (in late August) and Bill was looking all over for some to buy for Loblaws [inaudible] Bill remembered that the lettuce at his own farm should be ready to cut and brought it up to his wife at the dinner table. She informed him that they cut it the other day. When he asked who they sent it to she said that Max Wolfe\* of Ontario Produce sent up three trucks and took it all. Joe asks if Dave Sutherland ever worked on the marsh but Bill says no, he just owned the land and had the gravel pit. Bill remarks that his gravel pit had the greatest cement gravel to use because it would set better than any other kind. Joe says that Dan McDonald lost a finger at that gravel pit. He was trying to set a charge but didn't put enough of a fuse on it and it went off before he could get away.

George says at the beginning of the marsh, he heard about [inaudible] Celery Company where the Churches had truckloads going into Toronto every day. Bill confirms this and says that they had pickups every night. If Bill wasn't going to Toronto and had 50 or 60 pieces of produce, Church would take it for him. George asks if Bill would have sold the produce before it went on the truck or after and he says it depended. You could have had it already sold and going to a destination or you could send it to the Commission Market\* in Toronto (on Yonge Street) where they would sell it for you. Joe asks if Bill remembers the period of time when Ben had part of the old river dammed off and put carp in. Some of the men on the marsh were paying about 15 cents to dump the produce that they couldn't use in Toronto so they began to bring it back and give it to Ben who fed it to his carp.

George brings up how Bill mentioned that he shipped a carload of red onions to Quebec City and he's still looking for it. Bill says he shipped that to the [inaudible] brothers at Western Produce. George asks how often that happened, where he wouldn't be paid for his delivery. Bill has heard of many instances where farmers would ship produce to the Commission Market\* and receive a bill for dumping instead of any money. This was because sometimes the produce just wouldn't sell so the sellers would have to dump it and charged the farmer for doing so. The





seller who trucked it down would also get nothing if this happened. An unnamed man brings up the fact that Professor Day sent carloads of celery to Montreal and never got paid. Bill says there was a broker in Quebec City who always bought red onions and [name is inaudible] asked Bill if he had any red onions because he had someone (the broker) who would buy them. Bill told him he had an acre of Red Willowfields\* so when they were ready (750 bags), [name is inaudible] got Bill to ship them from Gilford. Bill never found out if the broker got the onions; he never got any money for them.

George shows Bill a map which Professor Day drew in 1911 when he came out to do the original review of the marsh. It features the names of people who owned the land at that time. There was Lenny Hamilton, Jimmy Archer, John Sweezy\*, Bill Graham, Bill McClure, John Marino, McDonald, Gosnell\*, Sutherland, and so on. They look at another map which Professor Day used when they dredged the canal. George says that Bill Day's widow, who is in a nursing home in Barrie, gave them the map from 1911 and a book called The Canadian Engineer (in which they found a good photograph of the dredge machine) this past summer. George asks when the road (now known as Simcoe Road) was put in where Jonkman has the greenhouses now. Bill used to go to Jim Archer's to milk the cows in 1917 and at that time, the road only went up to Archer's gate. Next to Jim Archer was Sam Quinn\*. In 1918, there was a gravel pit there which Bill used to draw gravel from. George notes that they also dumped garbage there after Hurricane Hazel occurred.

The marsh property which Bill farmed at was on the south end of Simcoe Street. It was the very last lot on Simcoe Street before the river. The marsh land used to be sold for 50 cents an acre. Bill worked on the marsh with Ben Collins for two years cutting hay. They had as much as 500 tonnes in some bale piles. They would burn all around the bale piles, leave them there for the wintertime, and then gather them when the land was covered in ice. They did this on land west of Bathurst Street, where Federal Farms is now. People like John Marino, Goodman, and others used to cut hay here as well [it is unclear what location they are referring to] [inaudible] Joe asks Bill if there was a winter road that came up Simcoe Street and through Archer's property before the canal was dug which was used to haul Tamarack and marsh hay. Bill says he







has seen many sleigh loads of Tamarack in the wintertime which were brought up to Bradford. Every morning in Bradford there would be a power saw cutting Tamarack by seven o'clock in the morning. The woodlot was all around on the edge of the marsh, a couple hundred yards in from the highland. The rest would all be covered in grass of different kinds. The straw grass used for making mattresses was short and wiry. Around the edges of the marsh, where the soil was heavier, Bluejoint was grown. They would cut and salt the Bluejoint for cow feed which was cheaper to buy than hay from farms.

Joe says that when he started on the marsh on the Graham Sideroad, there used to be a man there named Case Court\* and he had a boy with him who used to dig ditches on the marsh in around 1932. A Dutchman would come to talk to Case\* and he didn't speak English. Case\* would walk off to the side to talk to Joe because he said it was bad manners to speak a foreign language in front of someone who can't understand; he was a gentleman. He was on the board for the cold storage. Joe doesn't know what became of him. Bill was also on the board for the cold storage *[inaudible]* *[Tape cuts out and then resumes]* *[inaudible]* Bill says he was there for nine years *[inaudible]* Some people who cut hay were Jim Armstrong, Caesar, Duke Lowe\*, Ben Collins, Dan, and John Marino\*. George says he was talking to Sam the other day who mentioned there was a fire on the marsh in the peat. Bill says the fire burned for three winters through all seasons. In the winter, you would see smoke coming from under the snow where the peat was burning and it looked like a chimney. An unnamed man says that when their feet got cold in the winter, they would stick their boots under the snow where the hot ash was. No one tried to stop the fire because you would have to dig all the way to the clay. They could have flooded it but they didn't have the machinery to do it.

Joe remembers that when he was a child people would cut ice on the river and Frank Cook was one of them. Frank accidently cut the front of his rubber boot with his axe and water got in. He then put a hole in the back of his boot to let the water drain out. One man says Frank Cook used to stutter and one day he was coming back from Newmarket or Aurora in a wagon and buggy. He stopped in Bond Head to give a man a ride who also had a stutter. When the man began to speak to him, Frank thought he was mocking him and kicked him off. Bill used to





have a lot in front of Harry [*last name is inaudible*], where Soderburg lives. It was covered in cabbage and Bill had Frank working with him as a partner. One night, when Bill went to cut the cabbages he found that they were all gone. Frank had sold them and kept the money for himself. Joe remembers when they were threshing in the Scotch Settlement and the machine broke down on a Friday. Frank said he would go get the parts needed and have it ready to work by Monday which he did. Three months later, a man from King was staying at the hotel in Bradford and was talking about how someone stole a part from his threshing machine. Everyone was too afraid to tell him that it was probably Frank. Bill knew Frank's mother and father. In 1914, they were living in Middletown with their children Libby, Edna\*, Fred, and Frank. Frank's father left the family to go out West.

Joe says that once, Frank Cook was standing on the four corners in Bradford and a car pulled up asking for directions to Barrie. Frank said that he was going that way and would show them. He rode with him on 88 and then got out and told him to go as far as he could, turn right, and he'd be in Barrie (these were the wrong directions). Someone asked Frank why he did that and he said because he needed a ride home. Bill says Frank used to work for the farmers and everyone would try to hire him when they were ready to spread manure. Frank could shovel more manure than any man in the country; he could do it all day. George asks who dug ditches by hand on the marsh (on the highland) in around 1910 and Joe thinks it was Bill Root\*. One day, Joe was speaking to Howard Robinson at his home. He was overhauling the woodshed and found many rings which Joe told him were from the old wooden pumps that Bill Root\* worked on. Bill owned Howard's house before him.

One man says that Sam's\* people built a bridge over the canal on their own so they could get to their land. Denis Nolan used this bridge because the Graham Sideroad hadn't been finished yet. The bridge is not there anymore since it rotted; they use the Graham Sideroad now. Dave Sutherland helped build the bridge along with Mike and Jim Catania. Bill asks if the Spizziali\* family is still working on the marsh. One man says that John died, Frank is on the Graham Sideroad (not in the original house), and Vince and Tommy are in the dairy business up North.





Bill says he was born on March 19, 1902 and came to this area in 1914. He was here when lacrosse was still popular. Bill played juvenile and junior lacrosse with Charlie Evans, Big Bob (he weighed about 240 pounds), Mike, Bill Sutherland, Lorne Church, Ollie\* Robinson, Kit\* Harman, Dr. Campbell, [name is inaudible], and [inaudible] Wilkinson. They used to have tournaments and many different teams would have Bob McKinstry hired to play for them. He would get \$15 or \$20 for every game he played. They would call him the travelling blacksmith and he was very good. Joe says when the lumber company closed in this area, Bob kept going further north and then west, working his way through Thunder Bay. Then he went west through Minnesota and got as far as Chicago before getting homesick and coming back. Bob owned Bill's old restaurant at one point. Bill sold it to Warren McKinstry (Bob's nephew) and it ended up with Bob. The restaurant was located by the Royal Bank. Joe says you would be eating in the restaurant and the lights would go out. Bob would tell the customers that they had to pay 10 cents for their hamburgers so they could turn the lights on. That was when they had hydro meters that you put coins in.

Bill was working in a factory and had worked there since he was quite young in the 1920s. The men working there would say that Bradford should have a restaurant since there wasn't one near them; the closest one was in Newmarket or Barrie. They discussed it and thought it would be a good idea so they decided to have a "bee"\* and Bill won. He bought the land from Dave Ogilvie and his coworkers got the lumber from Spence to build the structure. Bill bought everything on credit since he had no money; he had just gotten married. Their honeymoon was a weekend on a farm. The restaurant was so busy on weekends that they weren't able to get the doors closed from Friday until Monday afternoon. In those days, there was a dance hall at the lake, on the 6<sup>th</sup> Concession, called Tent City. Many girls would come from the city to that dance hall and would stop by the restaurant on Saturday. They would come in the back kitchen, cook, do the dishes, sweep up, and wouldn't go home until Sunday. Bill had members of the Toronto and Detroit baseball teams come to eat at his restaurant. Bill was married in 1923 and built the restaurant in 1924. He sold the restaurant to McKinstry in 1927 or





1928 because it was too much for him. Bill was working as a manager in the baby carriage factory while also operating the restaurant.

[inaudible] Right where the Royal Bank is today was Dimock's\* garage where Sparky Peters worked and Vince Willoughby\* stayed. Frank Marino\* then turned it into a cold storage where Bill stored celery. The building was originally Bob McKinstry's garage. In the 1930s, the dairy was built by Ed Kay\* (which would later be known as Cousin's Dairy) [inaudible] George asks about the Bradford Fair. Joe says Bob Brown thinks it didn't end until after the war. Bill says that could be right; he remembers going to the fair in 1917. They played lacrosse in the same field as the fair. In 1923, they celebrated the Orangemen and Bill sold the concessions like ice cream and pop. He didn't sell any beer there. Bill went to see inspector Putman\* in Barrie who gave him permission to sell beer at [event name is inaudible] in Bradford, which was a one-time celebration. The event lasted for three days and featured a car raffle and parade. Discussing subsequent car draws over the years, they note that some people who won cars were Nick [last name is inaudible], Adrian Bateman, and Hector Wilson. Bill says they had horse races at the fair and he remembers Jake Pearson\* (who lived in the Hollows) had a mare that ran in the races [inaudible]

Joe brings up Bruno Cavella\* and Rex Morris\* who had a trailer which they parked in the back of the Bank of Commerce. Bruno would have a clown suit on with an alarm clock around his neck and they would sell moonshine. Joe also remembers when there was a lacrosse game in the old rink and someone hit one of the lightbulbs with the ball. It made a sound like a gun shot and Rex ducked into the penalty box. He said for a minute he thought he was in the Detroit River [inaudible] since he got kicked out of the United States for rum-running. Bill was at a lacrosse game one night when a big fight started. Bill was sitting on the top rail and Dick Lee was also there. Dick hopped over the rail, knocking it over in the process and causing Bill to fall off [inaudible] Bill's wife, Mae, comes in the room and shows the group an unnamed object from 150 years ago. [Tape cuts out]

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

