



Margaret Darling

Interview

November 1, 1990

Length: 1 hour, 35 minutes and 49 seconds

George Jackson introduces himself and advises the speakers to do the same. Bob Brown is a neighbour of Margaret's. Ken Wood* is a history enthusiast and Margaret's longtime friend. Joe Saint is a friend of Margaret who has had discussions with her before. Ruth Melbourne is a niece to Margaret [*It seems that June Chambers is also present*]. Margaret's father was born in [*inaudible*] and his family went north, past Huntsville. Her mother was born in Utterson (between Bracebridge and Huntsville). Margaret was born in [*inaudible*] near Huntsville, where her father had a sawmill. When the timber gave out, Margaret's mother had always wanted a farm so her father came to this area to look around [*it can be assumed the area being referred to is the Scotch Settlement*]. Sam Faris wanted to sell so they moved in on a muddy day in March. Her father had been down in this area before, working during two summers. The Ogilvie family had gone into the north country at the same time but, after the first winter, decided it wasn't for them and moved to Bond Head. Dave Ogilvie (the son) ran the livery in Bradford and George Ogilvie was a tailor. In 1907, her father paid \$8,500 for the farm. He didn't make a profit until eight years later. Margaret comments that she doesn't know how they survived. They had an old Model T Ford car and got a lot of use out of it.

When they travelled to the farm, Uncle Will from out West came to help her father with the move. They had a box car on the train and loaded everything in it including a cow, a team of horses, and the family. They arrived in Bradford with Dave Ogilvie meeting them at the station. He brought them to his sister's house in town (Mrs. Wardman) where they had a meal. Dave had a Democrat wagon which they loaded up and brought to the farm. The neighbourhood was different; they all made their own parties and entertained themselves.





All the daughters in her family were named after aunts. Her oldest sister was Jenny who moved to Brampton and has since passed away. Beth went to teach in Ottawa and married a dairy farmer. Ellen decided to stay on the farm after high school because mother needed some help at home. She married Bill Melbourne and had four children. She has since passed away [*She passed in 1933, soon after having her fourth child*]. Margaret was the youngest girl. Then there was Graham who stayed at home on the farm. Jim taught in the area before moving to Toronto. Jim's widow Mary comes to visit Margaret sometimes.

When George asks what Margaret did for a living, she says there were three options for women at the time. You could become a teacher, nurse, or administrative assistant. She chose to be a nurse because in 1924 there were quite a few women in the neighborhood who were nurses. They all seemed to go to the Western rather than the General at that time. There was also St. Michael's or the hospital in Barrie. One of Margaret's classmates from Unionville saw an advertisement for help wanted in Albany, New York because their employees were on strike. Margaret and her classmate didn't think that was a good sign but the superintendent was from Hamilton and convinced them that it was a good place to work. When they arrived, the staff welcomed them. Margaret was in men's surgery and her classmate was in women's surgery; they enjoyed it. There were many Canadians there (mostly from Toronto) and the supervisors thought the Canadian nurses were doing better than the American ones. Margaret was paid \$5 for a 10 hour shift. As soon as the patient was doing well, the nurses would be off for five days. It took three years to complete her training as a nurse. George Weston had a bakery next door. When he was being driven home in his chauffeured car, he would always give the nurses a ride anywhere they wanted to go. They would sometimes go to a delicatessen where they could order anything they wanted and Mr. Weston would pay the bill. Now Margaret always buys Weston bread. The Westons were fine people. They were Americans who moved to Canada and had four children.

Margaret was just over seven years old when she moved to the farm. They attended the #4 School which they walked to. They walked to high school as well. One man named McKay* walked all the way from the river to the high school. She isn't sure when her father and Graham





bought the other farm. It was Grandmother McLellan's* farm and when she died it was rented to various people by the McLellan* family. It was 100 acres on the 4th Line, Concession 3, where George Stoddart used to be. When they moved to that farm, the majority of families living there had the Faris name. There were also McDonalds. She remembers coming home from one house party when the sun was coming up. The following day was tough because you had to do the usual farm work. One day, Graham was crossing the canal and lost the tax money* that was in his pocket.

Mr. Fraser on the Doane* farm (down the lane) was always preaching that they should drain the marsh. Mr. Faris was in favour of it too. However, many people couldn't envision it, couldn't see that far ahead, and didn't have the machinery for it. None of Mr. Fraser's family stayed on the farm. Margaret had one of his daughters as a teacher in high school. Margaret had a habit of coming to school late in the winter time. After the Lord's Prayer, Ms. Fraser would read a story because she knew Margaret liked to listen and she was never late after that. To walk to high school, she would cut across country and come out at the west end of town. One rainy day, Mr. Stoddart's pigs were out in the pinery* (there was no fence) while he was cleaning. The boys came by the girls and put a pig in the window. They broke the pig's leg by accident so it had to be butchered and the boys had to pay for it. Mr. Stoddart was not very mild mannered.

In Margaret's time, Jonathan Kneeshaw was retiring and would go to town at the same time every day to have his glass of ale. He had three sons named Roy, Elmer, and Wilbert. Roy married a Selby girl (Percy Selby's sister). Education was very important to people in Margaret's time. Mr. Kneeshaw lived in the first farm off of Simcoe Road on Lot 14, Concession 6. Bob's dad used to tell a story about going to church with Jonathan Kneeshaw and his wife. Mr. and Mrs. Kneeshaw would go out first with a horse and buggy. Each son would follow in a horse and buggy with two sisters in each (four buggies in total). Margaret says that everyone went to church and in the summer time there would always be someone over for dinner.

The Armstrongs lived next to the Kneeshaws; they were an interesting family. They had a fireplace in every room in their house. The house must be about 200 years old with handmade bricks. They weren't really farmers, but more "gentile" and musical. Margaret would be sent





over to ask for a hand* during the threshing and when they got near the house they would hear music. Mrs. Armstrong would be on the piano and the men would be playing the violin to prepare for a party. It is a beautiful home and Margaret hopes that it will be preserved. Mrs. Armstrong told them the house was built on an angle so that they could see when the teams of horses were coming over the bridge to get the fireplaces lit and the food ready. The Armstrongs would go all the way to the market in Aurora with seven or eight teams of horses to sell their grain. There was a trail which First Nations peoples used that went through the front of the Armstrong house. They once encountered what Margaret assumed were grandparents with their grandchild on the trail. Apparently, before the settlers came in, the trail came along the top of the hill. The Metcalfes own the Armstrong home now. It was a beautifully decorated house with big square rooms and Mohair furniture. Mrs. Armstrong would always take them in and play the piano for them and they would be sliding off the Mohair chairs.

Margaret says that the Scotch Settlement is a misnomer because it was the Irish who settled the area where Margaret's family lived. The Scotch were from Manitoba who were sent there to settle but failed and came back to the Scotch Settlement. She thinks the Armstrong house is the oldest in the community. The Armstrong, Faris, and Watson families were Irish. When Margaret's family moved into the community they were the foreigners with no relatives in the area. The Coombs owned a little cottage next to the Armstrongs which had been in the family for three generations. The Armstrongs went under because they were not very good with the business or hard work. There were two rooms with two fireplaces in the basement for their elderly aunt (Aunt Mattie*) who rarely came out. Margaret can't remember if the doctor came to see the aunt when she passed away. There were only two doctors in town: Dr. Campbell and Dr. Stevenson. The Armstrongs lost the farm during the Depression and it was sold for about \$3,500. Clarence Metcalfe bought it and Lou Armstrong (the last surviving member of the family) stayed on the farm to work for Clarence. Lou died about 15 years ago, which ended the family line.

George would like to go back to speaking about Margaret's nursing career. She left New York for various reasons. Firstly, her classmate had to go home because her parents were ill. Also, some of the new supervisors had the policy that nurses would sleep in a cot under a





patient's bed and stay with them 24 hours. They were behind the times compared to Toronto's hospitals. Margaret stayed for a while after her friend left until her own father became ill and she returned home as well. He had cancer in his stomach and had an operation done at the General Hospital. After that, Margaret stayed home with her mother for a while because she needed someone to take care of her.

Joe asks about the trail that was in front of the Armstrongs' house which the First Nations peoples used. She says it went through their front yard to the area north of them called California Hills. The trail went along the hill and past the Sutherland's house on the top of the hill. There was said to be a First Nations burial ground on that hill. Margaret says there were no First Nation families living in the area in her time; they had already left.

Margaret's father spent some time in the Northwest Territories. He was with his brother named [*name is inaudible*] who was working for the government. They were surveying and opening waterways that would open up the country. When the timber went out, her father thought it was a good opportunity so he joined his brother. Their headquarters was in Winnipeg but they travelled by boat and foot, surveying. Summer time was the busy season for this work but one winter he stayed to look after the machinery. It was a lonely time for him. One day, he heard a sleigh coming by and it was a priest whom he invited in for refreshments. The priest said he couldn't stop because he was on his way to baptize a baby. Margaret says in those days, you really depended on your neighbours. It was a simpler time with fewer decisions to be made. [*Tape cuts out*]

[*Tape resumes*] Margaret went to S.S #4 School in around 1912 or 1914. There was an average of 30 to 34 students attending the school in her time. Her teachers were Jessie Fraser, Netta* Faris, and Jean Faris. As soon as these teachers had enough money saved up, they went to university for better opportunities. The bell rang at nine o'clock and they would take their seats and have something to work on. She would teach the younger children first and then the older ones. Some years there would be many students doing the entrance exam to get into high school and other years there would only be one or two. Once, Margaret remembers Jock* Fraser wearing his sister's hat to school. There was no hot lunch at school; they made their own lunch





and brought it with them. There was a potbellied stove and then a furnace. The McLellans* moved away and the MacDonalds moved in. The school nurse was Mrs. MacDonald and she knew if a child really needed to be sent home or not. Once, she recognized that the Archer girl had a problem and sent her home (the girl had infantile paralysis which was going around). Margaret went to school with Margaret Holmes* McArthur who is still living but in the Newmarket hospital. The original McArthur home is on 27, where Bill (Margaret's brother) lives now. Margaret and one of her brothers decided to move into town so that Bill could take over the farm with his family. They lived on the west corner of Queen Street in Bradford and boarded high school students.

Margaret thinks the biggest change to the community was when hydro came. [*First name is inaudible*] Davey installed it in the winter. The dairy farmers on the 5th Line were the ones who got hydro first. Having running water and a bathroom was a wonderful change. They didn't get a telephone until later. The MacDonald sisters on the 4th had an aunt who married a Fraser living to the southwest on the same road. The cousin (Alec Fraser*) was interested in machines and he strung up a sort of communication device that they could use to get messages across. They were the first ones to eventually get a telephone with the Beeton Company in 1920.

George asks if Margaret was home when Professor Day and others began to drain the marsh. She says she was home part of the time. Professor Day's wife had taught up north where her mother came from so they made a connection. Professor Day drained the marsh with Mr. Fraser. Professor Day gave up a good position as a teacher at the University of Guelph and died poverty stricken; his family suffered. His wife began to work at the library. His vision is just now finally coming to fruition with the marsh producing a wealth of food. Some people thought it was a crazy idea and Mr. Day had trouble because of this. However, both the provincial and federal governments could see the potential. The Hon. Earl Rowe supported the idea. It's too bad Professor Day couldn't live long enough to see the great outcome. As a young child, she remembers going to Mr. Fraser's for a lemonade and cookie. In the winter time, she remembers seeing steam coming from houses of people who were making liquor (one such person was Mr.





Fraser). When Margaret was a child, there was always a bottle of liquor in the house because if someone got injured that would be the first thing to give them.

George asks if there are any events which occurred in Margaret's lifetime that really stand out in her memory. She says there was once a family living with them for a while because they were flooded on the marsh. The family was used to keeping to themselves and people of their own background. There were people of all different nationalities on the marsh. That changed Bradford quite a bit and caused it to expand. Emerson Faris had 100 acres of marsh cleared at one time. That was where the original Faris farm was [inaudible] Mr. Robert Faris explained to Margaret's father that his brother would be coming over to look through the house because the brother had owned the farm (Margaret's home). Frank (the brother) came over a few times to look through the house but he never came back. He would wander through the house and the one thing he didn't like was that they turned the upstairs prayer room into a bathroom.

Margaret's family home was built so that the hired man could live in the back part, under the same roof as the family. She is not sure what year the house was built in. She thinks Mr. Faris built the barn before the house and then moved off. A man named Hanlon lived on the property next. One day Hanlon went down to Coombs to help butcher beef. Mr. Coombs gave him what he thought was a good portion of the beef to take home. When Mr. Coombs went out the next morning he found that a hind quarter of his beef was gone. It wasn't hard to track the trail of blood back to Hanlon's house. Mr. Coombs went to Hanlon's door and asked him if he'd taken the beef. He said if he had known that Hanlon was in such need he could've given him more and he didn't have to steal it. Mr. Hanlon played too many of these pranks on different people and he moved out back to Hockely*. Margaret doubts that he had a farewell party. In those days, farmers who were retiring usually had a farewell party. Mrs. Sutherland held a party of this kind with many people; she prepared all the food and played the piano. They didn't have halls to go to so they had parties and dances at home.

Before cars, everyone in the community went to the same church. When cars came, they could go to a church of their own denomination. When her family first came to the farm, they attended a Presbyterian church on the 5th Line. It would always be filled with people all





travelling by horse and buggy. You had to be there on time or else there wouldn't be a place to sit. The Auld Kirk was still operating at that time and had masses in Gaelic. The Sunday school concert and regular school concert would be big events for the community. The last burial that she can remember was for Emerson Faris.

Joe asks if Dave Sutherland was a surveyor on the canal. Margaret says no, he was surveying out West. He was working for the government out West with his brother Walter Sutherland. Walter died very suddenly which caused Dave to come back to the homestead. He thought about selling it but decided to stay home on the farm. There he met his wife Myrtle Coutts. George asks about Percy Corscadden and Margaret says he was younger than her. His family came from Barrie and was in the same neighbourhood as [*name is inaudible*] on Muskoka River in Port Sydney. [*Name is inaudible*] went there to teach and she married a farmer and stayed there. That old farm on Muskoka River is now a boarding school for boys. The best way to get onto what was eventually #11 was to paddle up the river to Port Sydney. There was what they called a "stage" which would get you back up to Margaret's grandmother's. The main road going north at that time (before #11) came right by her grandmother and grandfather Wingfield's house. Her grandfather would shake his head and say, "A man would have to be daft to come to a country like this". The land was for free and that's what drew her grandparents and other Scottish people.

Her grandfather was a great storyteller. He would tell them stories about Burke and Hare which her grandmother didn't like because it would keep them awake. Margaret always thought it was a fairytale until she got into nursing and found out it was true. Burke and Hare would pick people up on the road, murder them, and sell the bodies to doctors needing cadavers. Now when people die in hospitals, there are fewer autopsies done because they know more about the human body. When insulin came along, people from all over the world came to Toronto filling up beds. As soon as a patient received insulin you needed to have food ready for them.

Margaret remarks that the marsh was probably the thing that changed the whole area the most. Joe would like to share a story he heard about Jack Sutherland getting married. His wife was from Holland Landing and he was from the Scotch Settlement. On their wedding day, the





lumber company had moved the floating bridge so it turned out that Jack was on one side and his bride was on the other with the minister. They still performed the ceremony like that and afterwards Jack swam across to be with his wife. Margaret remembers one time they were driving in the Model T Ford in Gravenhurst when a flock of animals came by which caused their [*inaudible*] to be bent. A motorist who stopped to help recommended taking the [*inaudible*] out and using a part of the fence in place to get them to their destination (which was Huntsville). However, the part was never taken out and the car ran well; they never went to the garage. They got many miles out of that car. Margaret's sister took driving lessons to drive the car but Margaret doesn't think it was too complicated in those days. Margaret had a driver's license and drove the car sometimes but didn't like it and wasn't mechanically inclined. George notes that to get a driver's license in those days all you had to do was ask for it. His mother obtained one by that method, kept it up to date through the years, and never had a test.

Margaret's family would go to Huntsville for a Darling family gathering. After the forest industry was over, the Darling family was forced to split up with some going west and some going south. They decided to have a gathering where everyone would spend the day together. [*Tape cuts out*]

[*Tape resumes*] Joe says that he used to go there with Gordon Ogilvie sometimes [*it is unclear what location he is referring to*]. As Margaret mentioned before, Dave Ogilvie met them at the train station and took them to his sister's for dinner. Margaret says the Ogilvies were smart to move away from the north and back to Bond Head. Grandma Darling didn't want to take anything off the wagon once she saw what they were getting into. She wanted to turn around, go back to Goderich, and get their farm back. The next morning, after they had eaten and everyone was more settled, she decided that they would stay. George tells Margaret that they will conclude the interview here but that he would like her to make notes at home about anything she forgot to mention. [*Tape cuts out*]

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

