



Charlie and Brock Evans

Interview

January 10, 1991

Length: 1 hour, 30 minutes and 22 seconds

George Jackson introduces himself and notes that he will be speaking to Charlie and Brock Evans with Anne Coffey, Joe Saint, Louise Evans, and June Chambers also present. Their father was Thomas W. W. Evans (Wesley Whitfield), born in West Gwillimbury on the 10th Line. Their mother was Edith Graham, born in Bradford. Milt* and Charlie were brothers of their father who went to work out West. In their mother's family (the Graham family), her siblings were Charlie, Vic, and Fred. They were born and raised in Bradford on John Street, right beside Dr. Campbell's house. No one belonging to that Graham family lives in Bradford any longer. Charlie and Brock were raised in a family with seven children, six of whom were boys. Graham was the oldest in the family and went to Toronto. Fred was next and he went to school for engineering and played hockey for the University of Toronto. He is currently in the hospital and is 90 years old. Joe Saint says he came across a picture in the Bradford newspaper from the 1950s depicting Fred getting an award. Max also became an engineer and worked in Oshawa. After returning from the war, he worked at Imperial Oil and General Motors.

Charlie was next and went to school in Bradford before going on to the University of Toronto in 1923, and then Osgoode to become a lawyer. Afterwards, he joined his father in his office in Bradford and has been there ever since. During the war, if you worked on a farm for the summer you would get academic credit so he worked on Edgar Evans' farm in West Gwillimbury in 1914. Charlie remembers that there was a veterinarian in Cookstown whom his boss called to look at the horses on the farm and he bled the horses. During school, Charlie worked at his brother's law office in Toronto. He also played for the varsity junior's hockey team in university. He played hockey on a team of six players in Bradford in Intermediate OHA.





They played against teams from Newmarket and Barrie. Their brother Graham was injured overseas during the war and came home to convalesce but played as a goalie on the team during that time. Lacrosse was a very popular sport in Bradford when they were growing up. Bradford had a team in the provincial championship. Both Charlie and Brock played lacrosse but Brock only played on an amateur level.

Joseph Cooper was the next oldest brother in their family and he was a teacher in Bradford for a number of years. Then he attended university and went on to be the Registrar of the University of Toronto. Elizabeth was after Joseph in age and she died around 10 years ago. She went to school in Bradford and then attended Ontario Ladies College in Whitby. She was married to a Jackson but they were later divorced. Brock is the youngest in the family. George comments that it is interesting that all of their siblings went to university. It didn't cost as much as it does now. All six of the Evans brothers joined the same fraternity in university. Their parents were both teachers and wanted them to have a good education.

Their family home in Bradford was across from where the post office used to be. In their time, their house was on the south lot and the tennis court was on the next lot. There was a garden behind the tennis court and an orchard behind that. It was where the Bradford plaza is now. Charlie went to Bradford Public School which was across the road from Dr. Stevenson. When it came time to go to high school, they had to write an entrance exam and the only person that beat Brock's score was his cousin Marion Evans. George notes that there was no television at that time and asks what they did for entertainment. Brock says that they did have a radio. Their dad enjoyed listening to the news. The main excitement in Bradford when they were young was sports like lacrosse. Dr. Campbell was one of the top lacrosse players. The grounds for playing lacrosse were across the road from where the community center is now. They didn't have bleachers at that time; they just stood around the field to watch games.

Brock's second name is Macdonald and he thinks he was named after Sir. John A. Macdonald. Charlie was the Reeve of Bradford from 1943 until 1949 and became Warden in 1949 before retiring. Their father was never involved in the city council since he was always the town solicitor. During his time as Reeve of Bradford, Charlie had to make decisions on liquor





laws but most of the other issues he worked through were the same as they are today. On the topic of liquor, George notes that, for a while, Bradford was the only place you could go to purchase or consume liquor.

George asks Charlie to describe his own family. His four children are named Tom, Jim, Bob, and Richard. The youngest died of cancer. Tom and Bob work at Lee Evans' law firm and Jim is a doctor. Brock has two children named Annabelle and Chris. Ann is married to Roy Gordon and lives in Bradford. Chris lives in Calgary and works with computers. Brock himself went to university and practiced law in Toronto before returning to Bradford to work as a lawyer. George asks Charlie and Brock to describe the changes that they've seen over the years. George gives the example of transportation as being something that has changed dramatically. Brock remembers travelling on the river and lake to get to Jackson's Point. Brock used to know where everyone lived in town because he used to deliver groceries for George Green. However, today he can get lost in the town because of how much it has expanded.

Both brothers worked at a summer resort in the Muskoka area. Brock worked at Bigwin Inn for three years as a bell boy. Charlie worked at the same resort managing the store for the hotel for four summers. Charlie remembers that there was a butcher upstairs who got drunk and was fired. Charlie's boss took his place so Charlie was promoted to be the boss and his wages went from \$25 to \$100 a month in about 1923. It was a wonderful job; he was entitled to eat in the staff dining room. Their brother Joe worked there for a while as well. Brock worked there in around 1928. George asks Brock about travelling to Jackson's Point. He remembers that a large boat would come to the dock in Bradford and travel down the river, to the lake. Charlie says just before he was leaving to go to Bigwin for the first summer, he had written his university exam but hadn't gotten the results yet. When he got on the train, he read the newspaper and the results were printed in it; he had passed with honours. When Brock first started at Bigwin, there were 16 bell boys with 8 on each shift. By the time he left, there were only two bell hops who looked after everything. As a bell hop, he would be responsible for delivering luggage, taking orders, and performing other duties as necessary. The lodges were about 500 feet long so guests would phone down to the desk to place their order, he would walk 500 feet to get it, and walk back to





deliver it to them. A quarter was a pretty good tip at that time. By the time Brock left, he and Matt Grey* were running the whole show as bell hops.

Going back to Charlie's County Council days, George asks if the council had the same responsibilities that they have today. Charlie says that they did. An example is that they also looked after the county roads at that time. The only thing they didn't have which they have today was a county school system. Louise Evans brings up the fact that Charlie's nose has never been the same from an injury. Charlie explains that during one rough game in lacrosse, he got his nose broken. They used padded caps instead of helmets at the time. George mentions the Bradford agricultural fair and Charlie says he only attended as a spectator. It was held where the rink currently is.

George brings up Hurricane Hazel and asks about Charlie's involvement. [*Tape cuts out and then resumes*] The ditch was there and the hurricane filled it with water; that's how long ago the hurricane occurred. He says that Joe Saint could probably give a better recollection of the storm. Joe asks if their father built the Evans' house that they were born in and lived in (it is no longer standing). Brock says no, his Aunt Charlotte owned it. Their father moved into the house when he got married and had to make additions to accommodate his large family. Brock says that their mother had a charge account in every store in town and Jim Webb would eventually send a bill to their father. Their mother had a girl who would help in the house doing cooking and cleaning. Libby* Webb worked for their mother in the house for a number of years; she was married to a lacrosse player named Ollie Robinson*.

George asks Charlie if he remembers who was on County Council with him. He says that Vic Coombs was on it but cannot remember the rest. The Reeve just before Charlie was Ed Coombs and Frank Ellen* followed Charlie. After Frank it was Bill Compton, then Frank again, and then Art Evans. Art was on council with Charlie. Since Charlie and Brock have practiced law in Bradford, George asks if any big cases stand out in their mind. Brock says that Reg Wilson was chief of police when the bank was broken into and was living on the second floor of the building. Going back to lacrosse, Joe asks if it's true that some players from Bradford went to Australia to compete. They say that Doc Campbell* and Vic Graham* (their uncle) went.





Charlie says he once came up with an invention that never panned out. They had a large front lawn and their dad always kept some horses which Charlie would look after. One day, he had the idea to attach a lawn mower to a horse to get the lawn cut faster. When he turned the mower on, the horse took off into the barn with Charlie still holding on the handles. These horses were used as driving horses. The family had a Ford car and then a Dodge. They visited with many families in Bradford and the surrounding area such as the Jeffs, Bowles*, Lennox, Faris, and Cooper. Charlie has always been a Conservative along with his father. There were many political rallies that they attended. Brock says that he has recently noticed many vacant buildings in Bradford (especially on the main street) which had been in use not too long ago. There were two newspapers that came into town; one was Liberal (The Globe) and one was Conservative (The Mail and Empire). Eventually they combined to become The Globe and Mail. The Evans family also received the Bradford Witness.

Joe asks them to name some teachers who they had while attending school. Charlie says that he was taught by Tom Pratt who also owned the newspaper at one time. [*First name is inaudible*] Davey taught second form and Lukes was the principal. As long as they can remember, the streets in Bradford had been paved. George would like to speak with Brock about the organ in the United Church. Brock says that he and [*inaudible*] were in first form in high school (around 10 years old) when they worked in the church. The organ had to be manually pumped and he and [*name is inaudible*] would take turns going to morning and evening services. They each got \$6 a year. Brock did this for about five years. There was a morning and evening service every Sunday. The whole family went to church together. Charlie had a job pumping the organ as well. Brock says George Green had the finest baritone voice he had ever heard and his wife played the organ.

Brock says that there was a plank road on Highway 88 but neither of the brothers remembers too much about it. They say that their brother Fred would know more about it because he drove a gravel truck when many of those roads were being paved. Joe says the plank road might have been there in 1925. At the Evans' building, parts of it were often rented out. Dr. Ellis was upstairs for many years. The library was there for a while, as was the telephone office.





There was an addition built on the back of the building. Louise mentions that there was a fire there once. The only lawyers in town were the Evans family and Scanlon. There are currently two more named Roy* and Zig*. Going back to the fire, George asks if they had a fire wall between their building and the fire. They say yes and so they had no damage from the event. Charlie comments that they also had a wonderful fire brigade. Brock says there was a skating rink behind their building that they used around 1910 built by Thompson Fisher*. Charlie remembers that during the war, when the troops marched from Borden to Toronto, some of them visited the rink. Their oldest brother was staying in their house at the time and had a little argument with an old sergeant who saw him out of correct uniform on the streets of Bradford. The sergeant picked him up and brought him to their father's house. Their father was very diplomatic and smoothed things over.

Joe remembers a story about a lawyer that bought a new car. He got it started and went around the block many times, waving at everyone. Brock identifies the man as Scanlon who had a Studebaker car. He finally ran out of gas and had to stop. George asks if they remember when they used to take ice out of Lake Simcoe for Lake Simcoe Ice and Fuel. Joe says the operation was based at Belle Ewart. They did the same thing in the river in this area. The Evans family didn't have an ice house. Joe says Webbs, The Queen's Hotel, and Frank Cook had an ice house. Brock remembers knowing where everyone lived in Bradford when there were no street names or numbers. Jessie Sutherland ran the grocery store and Brock would get orders from her and deliver them when he had a chance in the day. He made his deliveries by bicycle. Mrs. Henderson was one of the customers he remembers well because she lived alone at the corner by the fairgrounds. He also remembers delivering to Mrs. Belfry who lived with her two children. Charlie thinks the family's telephone number was 4 at one point. George mentions the book Rural Routes and More (he is not sure of the title) by Bill Stewart* which discusses the rural telephone system in Ontario and party lines. George thanks Charlie and Brock for their time. Joe thinks the telephone came to Bradford in 1885. [*Tape cuts out*]

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

