



INTERVIEW WITH: FRAN DUNGEY

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Name of Interviewee: Fran Dungey (FD)

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GC: I'm Genevieve Chevalier and I'm speaking with Fran Dungey, daughter of Wanda Harding and niece of Wilfred "Boomer" Harding. So the way it's organized is, I have questions in sections, so I have background questions about who they were, about your family, some specific questions to your experiences and your family's experiences with the Chatham Coloured All-Stars. So I have questions about sports and life after the Chatham Coloured All-Stars. There are a few basic questions about how sports affected their lives. There are questions about sports in the community, and the value of sports in the wider community, and certainly for the black community particularly in Chatham. And then a last set of questions about the impact and significance of the Chatham Coloured All-Stars, why it's important to study them, and that kind of thing. So these are kind of the basic categories to give you a sense of where we're heading with this. It's also ok if you don't know the answer to some of these questions, you may not, and it's ok if you don't. So just say you don't know the answer, we'll move on to the next question. And then if there are any questions you don't want to answer, that's fine, just let me know and we can move onto the next one. Ok, do you have any questions before we start?

FD: No, that's fine I understand.

1:30

GC: Perfect, so we'll get right into those background questions. So what are the names of the people you

knew who played with the Chatham Coloured All-Stars, and how were they related to your mother?

FD: And you understand that this is all before me?

GC: Yes we do, that's no problem.

FD: So I think, and you know I tried to find the pictures or something to give me a better hint. But, I can't find them. So I have to say that if I remember correctly, the team that my father played on, that would be Ken Milburn Sr., and he played with Gouy Lad, and I think Ross Talbot was on the team. And these were not relatives, they were friends. And I can't say for sure who the others were. If I see a picture I may be able to say, but I can't recall exactly.

3:06

GC: Ok, and what was your mother's name?

FD: Wanda Marie Harding Milburn

3:16

GC: Ok, and when and where was she born, and where did she grow up?

FD: She was born in Chatham, April 25<sup>th</sup> 1924. And she lived in Chatham all her life. She passed away in September 1995.

3:38

GC: Alright, and can you tell me anything about her family, her parents, who they were and what they did for a living?

FD: Well, her father was Andrew Harding, and I'm not really just sure what he did for a living. I know that when my mother was born my grandparents were a pretty fair age. She was the baby of the family and I think my grandmother was more than forty or forty-something at the time. And I have a list of the whole family so I'm not going to go wrong here. So her mother was Sarah Ethel Holmes Harding, and she was born January 22<sup>nd</sup> 1882 and passed away March 14<sup>th</sup> 1951. I don't think I gave you my grandfather's birth date, Andrew Harding was born October 22<sup>nd</sup> 1868 and he passed away July 12<sup>th</sup> 1947. They had eight children. The oldest was Florence Evelyn, who was born January 24<sup>th</sup> 1903, she died as a child in 1909. The second one was Georgina, she was born September 13<sup>th</sup> 1905, and passed away December 23<sup>rd</sup> 1972. The third child was Beulah, her birth date was July 27<sup>th</sup> 1907, and she passed away, I believe it was around 2003. She was 96, she lived the longest of all of them. Carl was born January 14<sup>th</sup> 1911, and I don't have the year of his passing. I'm sure one of my cousins does. And then James Leonard was born November 23<sup>rd</sup> 1912, and he passed away February 1942. Uncle Boomer, I'm sure you have, was August 6<sup>th</sup> 1915, and he passed away in, it was the early '90s I believe. And then Andrew Eugene was born June 3<sup>rd</sup> 1919, and I struggle with when he passed away, it was in the late '90s I believe. And my

mother I told you, Wanda Marie was the last one on April 25<sup>th</sup> 1924, and she passed away September 22<sup>nd</sup> 1995.

7:54

GC: Alright, and how important were sports in their family growing up? What sports did they play?

FD: Well my understanding is that they were, especially the males, were very very into sports. A lot of track and field, a lot of baseball. Especially Uncle Boomer, of course. But you have most all of his history. He was definitely, definitely into a lot of sports. Their brother Len was also very active in track and field and baseball. And it was unfortunate he passed away so early in life. My mother was very much into track and field in high school. Especially in high school, she really enjoyed racing and track and field activities. And then after she had children, she took up bowling. She was a great bowler. I believe Uncle Andy and Aunt Inez bowled also, certainly Aunt Inez did. And then my mother played golf with my dad in their later years. My dad played ball obviously and he played hockey. He was a firefighter. He joined the fire department in, I think 1950. And I know that they had a hockey team, and the Jaycees. He belonged to the Jaycees and they had a hockey team. And so he played a lot of hockey, along with a lot of baseball. And then he played a lot of golf. So he stayed very active, well into his later years.

10:28

GC: Excellent, so you've already kind of covered this, but I'll ask you just to restate it for the record. What sports did your mother do?

FD: So it would be track and field while she was in school. Then when she was married and after she had her children, she definitely bowled, five pin. And she golfed and that's about what she did sports-wise. She supported my dad.

11:16

GC: Excellent, and we're getting a little repetitive again here with the questions. But did she do sports in school, through the community, or both?

FD: Well then I'd have to say both.

11:28

GC: And do you know what it was she liked about sports?

FD: Well she certainly liked the activity, and I think she loved the camaraderie.

11:41

GC: Did she ever encounter any challenges or difficulties playing sports in the wider community or at school?

FD: I'm sure that she did, you know there were those who didn't want to associate with. Especially with their family, being of mixed race, it made life even a little more challenging for them. Yes.

12:13

GC: So we're going to get into a little more specifically to the Chatham Coloured All-Stars. Did your mother ever talk about her brothers being in the Chatham Coloured All-Stars?

FD: Oh yes! Yes, and she was a great follower of sports. And certainly baseball was one of her things she really enjoyed following even all of her adult life. And it must have been in the earlier years when her brothers were in various activities. She was a great fan.

12:55

GC: Did she ever say anything about the team, or did she have any memorable stories about them?

FD: You know, other than that they were a great bunch of guys and great friends, I can't be specific about any of the stories. I don't recall.

13:19

GC: Ok, did she ever talk at all about people's reactions to their playing, about the fans or spectators?

FD: Occasionally, she would say something about how difficult it would be going into various communities and the prejudices that would show up. She didn't dwell on those things. But she was clear about the fact that they were real.

13:51

GC: Did she talk at all about challenges and difficulties?

FD: I would say not specifically.

14:04

GC: And did she talk at all about travelling with the team to watch them? Or did she have any stories about travelling to other towns, what it was like, what kind of reception they had?

FD: I don't think she talked about that much, no.

14:

GC: Ok, did she ever talk about them winning the 1934 championship?

FD: Well, you see she would have been ten years old. So no, I can't say that she [technical issue – word cut] widely about that.

14:43

GC: Did she happen to have any stories about the final game or the reactions from family, friends, or the public in Chatham?

FD: No, not that I know of.

14:52

GC: Do you have any memories of your uncles who played on the team? Or do you have anything you would like to say about what they were like?

FD: They were great! Of course I remember them well because we spent so much time with our family, with my mother's family specifically. You know, in my youth we would maybe go and watch a game that Uncle Boomer was umpiring. Like I say, it wasn't something that I remember well, because I was too young.

15:54

GC: Well, we'll get into a bit of sports and life after the Chatham Coloured All-Stars. Would you like to share anything about your mother's life after she left her parents' home? How she made a living, or family life?

FD: My mother worked part-time while we were small. She worked for a while at Eaton's Department Store in their stock room, and then she worked for a number of years as a receptionist for a doctor in Chatham, and then she worked for the VON for a while, and she was a ward secretary at St. Joseph's Hospital for a number of years.

16:59

GC: Alright, so she did a lot then!

FD: She did!

17:07

GC: And I know we said this already a little, but did she continue to play sports of any kind throughout her life?

FD: Well, it would have been then bowling that was the highlight, and then golf.

17:19

GC: Of course, and did she encourage others in her family to get involved in sports?

FD: Well she certainly supported my brothers playing sports. You know, they did hockey. When they were little they played ball, and you know that usual kind of thing that little kids do.

17:55

GC: So do you think she saw a value in it?

FD: Oh yes, good activity. You know, good to get out and use your energy in a wonderful positive way. She enjoyed that kind of thing.

18:14

GC: Excellent, and how do you think sports affected her life?

FD: Oh wow, I would say that it was almost like a focal point for conversation and entertainment, and you know going to the baseball games in the summertime when my dad played. That was part of the activity for the summer. It was an important part of being active.

18:55

GC: Excellent, so if we look more at sports in the general community. Do you have a sense of the importance of sports in the black community when she was growing up, what its value was?

FD: I think it was a social activity for the community. It was a way for them to get together and display their talent. To feel good about themselves, and there is great value in that.

19:26

GC: Of course, and did she ever talk about any barriers or difficulties in participating in sports within the wider, mainstream community or how that changed over time?

FD: Well, she talked about her brother Len for example, playing and the fact that he was so very good. Uncle Boomer was so very good, but they didn't have the opportunities that their race, they didn't have, they weren't accepted as being eligible for larger, greater sports teams. It's just the way it was, and it's really unfortunate because they were really that good.

20:20

GC: That's what we hear. So, if we look overall at the impact and significance of the Chatham Coloured All-Stars, overall what do you think was their impact and importance?

FD: I would say the biggest impact was that it showed the broader community just what great sportsmen they were, and what great talent they had. Whether people chose to accept that or not, maybe not. But they could display the fact that they were good at what they did, and they were a force to be reckoned with.

21:06

GC: And have any members of your family been involved in public commemorations of the All-Stars? So the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations in '84, or the Blue Jays game in 2002?

FD: You know, I don't remember about the one in '84. I would almost say that my parents would have partaken in some sort of gathering. But I was living my life and I was not in Chatham at the time, so I'm really not sure.

21:54

GC: Ok, is this a story that you think more people should know about?

FD: I think anytime you can share these stories with people it's a wonderful thing. So often people don't realize that because your name isn't in bright lights, that you didn't contribute in many many ways, for many years. It's a wonderful thing to be able to share.

22:28

GC: And finally, do you have anything else you would like to say either about your mother or your uncle?

FD: Well, they were good, caring people. And they contributed I think as much to the community as they could, in as many different ways as they could. Often through sports or other activities. You know, Uncle Boomer did so many different things. He was so good at darts, and when he wasn't umping a baseball team he was playing darts and was so good at that. They were a fine example of how wonderful it was to be active, and be a part of the community.