

Stanley MacEachern interview

(Interviewer: Anna Quon)

AQ: This is the Our Voices Matter project. I'm here with Stanley Mac Eachern who I am going to interview at the Belmont House on August 20, 2010 and my name is Anna Quon. Hi Stanley.

SM: Hi Anna

AQ : Thanks for agreeing to participate in this

SM: You're welcome. I should enjoy all of it.

AQ: I hope so, yeah. So, we'll start with your childhood. Tell me a bit about your childhood, and starting with where and when you were born.

SM: I was born in Oshawa, Ontario., born at the Oshawa General Hospital. I stayed there for ten years. I used to always play with myself, with a ball on the street. I used to have fights with my brother Angus and one time I put nails in the end of a stick and shot at him and that's where I remember most of it and I was in grade four, I failed a year, when I went back down to Nova Scotia- Mabou, Nova Scotia- and that's where my childhood started.

AQ: Ok, so you were born and lived in Oshawa til about age ten...

SM: Right

AQ: Is that right? And how many brothers and sisters did you have?

S: All together I have seven besides myself in the family. The oldest died at two from crib death, and my other sister died at 18 when I was just turned 17. And the other two younger brother and younger sister now live in Truro, while my other brother and my sister live in Ontario.

A: And were your mother and father both at, living with you when you were young in Oshawa?

S: Yes, yes.

A: Ok, so what was it like growing up in your family as a young child?

S: Very strict... too strict to be really deal with nowadays. Like I remember one time, I couldn't tie my shoelace...and my father persistently kept on hitting my knuckle to make sure I tied it right, and then he wouldn't warm up the porridge, he made me eat it cold. I remember that time. My mum when I was smaller, I accidentally put some margarine on the floor and she beat my legs with a han—broom handle. you know so, that stayed with me for a long time. I wouldn't eat margarine or anything and I wouldn't eat milk on porridge until I left home back in Nova Scotia.

AQ: Did you have- actually I should ask what year were you born Stanley?

SM: June 11, 1959

AQ: And what was your relationship like with your brothers and sisters?

SM: We were all close.

AQ: And tell me about going to school, what was it like for you in the early years?

SM: It was rough. Because I used to be a slow learner, and I think I still am a slow learner in knowing things. But once I knew them I would never forget, and so. I remember one time my teacher shook the hell out of me, or heck out me and I was so scared because I... would be Catholic school where we had to sign the cross with your right hand and I was signing with my left hand, she got mad at me for that and shook me. So that's all I remember that.

AQ: ok

SM: And for my brothers and sisters, I had a lot of fun. Went swimming on the lake, because we lived right beside the lake, Lake Ontario. And I..I remember we had a fort back on the beach where we played a lot with our brothers and sister. I remember one particular thing in this book I have. I remember I took a bite out of a mud cake muffin that my sister baked. So that's something funny. (AQ: laughs)I don't know why I did that but I did. She said it was good and I believed her. And as kid you do believe everything what they tell you. So and then my other brother, I didn't see him too much. He was helping my dad with the house and that. And my mum she looked after us pretty good. I remember back in the winter time, she would give us a mouthful of cod liver oil. Ahh gross. It was a terrible taste but we never ever got cold, so that was good. {inaudible}.

AQ: Can you tell me the names of your brothers and sister?

SM: Yeah. My eldest brother is Allen, my oldest sister is Cindy, my next sister that died was Delores, and my oldest brother was Gregory and my younger sister was Jeannie and my younger brother was Angus.

AQ : And you mentioned the school you were at in Oshawa, was it a Catholic school?

SM: yes it was. St. Philips.

AQ: St. Philips, OK. Were your teachers nuns...

SM: No

AQ: or priests?

SM: Just when I went to Nova Scotia, after grade 4 to grade 12, there were some nuns that were there. Not them all but there were some there.

AQ: So how did you feel about moving to Cape Breton?

SM: I liked it, I liked it a lot. I remember the time that we did go, we went in a station wagon where 5 of the 7 kids went down to...to Mabou, around the July 1st picnic, and that was a funny picnic because the first thing I did was play fish and I got a prize, and everything, put the hook in there and got a prize, and I remember the person that did that, she was in my class. I didn't know even know her then, but I knew her afterward, after I started going to school that year.

AQ: And your, your parents, had a farm in, in Cape Breton, didn't they.

SM: Yeah.

AQ: I should go back and ask you, in Ontario did they also farm?

SM: No. He was an engineer,

AQ: OK

SM: a stationary engineer, 3rd class.

AQ: What was your life like in Cape Breton compared to Oshawa. Were you, did you have to work harder or...

SM: Oh definitely, yes. Didn't have to work at all in Oshawa. I started working when I was ten years old. I used to sweep up the water from the spill of the pump, sweep floors in the house, do chores, like we all had to do chores in the house. It was all put on a piece of board, uh on a piece of paper. And we, by the time I was 13, I was milking the cow, shee- feeding sheep, working in the woods on the weekends, even after school, taking a tree home, and cutting it up, putting it in pulp wood in the stove area and making kindlings for to start the stove in the morning. And my God I used to get up at a quarter to six in the morning. That's when I was 13, right\

AQ: Right

SM: and my brother left home and I had to take the order, I had to take over, so I did that. And I worked from quarter to 6 in the morning til ten to eight in the morning before I got on the bus to go to school. And then from there I just worked all the time.

AQ: Right, and how did you- how was school?

SM: I was a slow learner.

AQ: Yeah?

SM: I don't know, i found it hard but every time we did a project, I always got 30 out of 30 or 29 out of 30, something like that ever since I was in grade 4 and when I was in grade 5, I said I wanted to go to Australia some time, and you know what? Can you guess? I went.

AQ: I know you went. That's great. We'll talk about that later when we get to your adult years.

SM: OK

AQ: Did you go to any special classes in school?

SM: No

AQ: OK. And do you remember any of your friends from school or your teachers especially well.

SM: I remember... I remember a lot of kids when I was at school, but I don't remember them now, I wouldn't know who they were except for a few, a few that you see when you go back home or something like that, I mean back to Cape Breton? And my teachers, I had Sister McKillop, she was a nice teacher, grade 6 teacher, James St. Clair, he was a nice teacher, he was my grade 12 teacher, English teacher, and Sister Nash, she was my biology teacher for grade 10 and grade 12 biology, and Daniel, what is his last name, I can't remember his last name, but he was teacher, a young teacher, kind of, kind of he was a good teacher, and what other teachers? Martin MacDougall was a good teacher, a good teacher. He was for history in my class. I didn't make a good mark on it though because I failed.

AQ: Did any of your teachers sort of stand out for you as an important influence on you, or, negative or positively?

SM: Yeah, I would say Anne Beaton, she was a nice teacher, or Elizabeth Beaton I should say, not Anne, Anne was the other teacher, I didn't care for her. She was nice too, in her own way. She started up a family and that so she was strict, eh.

AQ: What was your behaviour like in school? Were you...

SM: shy

AQ: You were shy? Did that go, for with the other children as well as with...

SM: No. Just with the teachers.

AQ: Did you have any special friends when you were...were young?

SM: Yeah I did. Philip Rankin, he was one of my best friends for the years you know. He was poor too. Poorer than I was.

AQ: So.. Are you saying your family didn't have much money when you were growing up?

SM: No, it went all into the farm... into the new house. We had a new house too.

AQ: Yeah. And how did... you mentioned you did a lot of work on the farm as a young person. How did that affect you, having to... you know, work hard.

SM: Good work ethic.

AQ: When you were young in school, did you have any sort of symptoms of mental illness or mental health problems?

SM: No I must tell you one thing that did happen to me. You know at 13 years old, I attempted suicide. I don't tell too many people this, but I want to get it out now because it might help people, is the fact that I was so scared of my Dad, 'cause his fist could probably plough you through a wall, and I took poison and I drank it and I was sick in bed all that day, nobody knew what was wrong with me, because I broke a tap, down the stairs, and I didn't want to tell anybody because I was too scared, because I thought I'd get hit and that. That stayed with me until, oh ten years ago.

AQ: Right

SM: You know that's a long time.

AQ: Yeah, wow.

SM: I got rid of it anyways. Out of my system, eh. That doesn't bother me now if I talk about it. I might even help people out by it. So I must be here for a purpose anyways, you know.

AQ: Yeah. Were you ever- did you have any periods of illness as a child?

SM: No.

AQ: No. Were you... did you have any problems with being bullied or teased at school. And if so, how did you respond.

SM: No I didn't.

AQ: Did anyone close to you die when you were a child?

SM: Maybe not when I was a child but when I was a teenager. My sister died.

AQ: Right. And how did that...

SM: That was 1976

AQ: Ok. And that was that in Cape Breton?

SM: Yeah.

AQ: And how did that affect you?

SM: Well it just... well the fact was they never found her until three quarters of a year later. Then when we did find her, we all could say it was a relief, because we didn't know what she was like or where she was or what happened to her or nothing. You know so, after we found her it was a blessing that we found her anyways you know that she'd not been tortured or something like that.

AQ: You mentioned that you found her outside?

SM: Yeah, we found her about a mile from the house.

AQ: Right.

SM: At the beach.

AQ: Did you ever have surgery for physical problems either as a child or later in life?

SM: , we found her about a mile from the house.

AQ: Did you ever have surgery for physical problems either as a child or later in life?

SM: Yeah, when I was grade 2, grade two or grade three, might of been grade 2. Grade 2. My brother and I were fighting in the bedroom, and I hit my head right against the steel bed. It bled. My brother was saying "He's gonna die, he's gonna die, he's gonna die." I said, "No I'm not gonna die. Just say sorry to me" or something like that, I said. And he said..he did say sorry or something like that. And then I went to hospital and had three stitches in my head, in the back of my head,you know that was the first time. The second time was when I, for the second time was when I, geeze it's the second time or the third time, one or the other, it's pretty close together. And I hit my-my brother was fooling around with the branches when I was cutting wood, cutting in the woods, and I got three stitches on my left hand. And then the third time, I was trying to get a cow, get milked, into the barn and I slid over a ditch, there was this old barb wire, and it hit my eye. My left eye. Three stitches there too. Makes you wonder, 3 stitches you know? Three, three, three.

AQ: Yeah

SM: And then the last time, you might remember, is I got cut up here, up there. That was that time I was in the hospital back in 1999.

AQ: And you were... were you ill at the time?

SM: Yeah I was.

AQ: And what...what was your illness?

SM: Manic Depressive illness. Paranoia too.

AQ: OK

SM: I was definitely paranoid back then.

AQ: Right. We'll come back to that too a little later on. Let's see. Did you...When did you first get diagnosed with a mental health problem?

SM: When I was 22.

AQ: And what was your diagnosis?

SM: I don't remember

AQ: And what kind of treatment did you receive at... from that first time.

SM: I was in hospital from August to October.

AQ: In what year?

SM: It was 1982.

AQ: And was that in the hospital in Cape Breton?

SM: Both hospitals. This one in Cape Breton and this one here.

AQ: And the one here is the Nova Scotia Hospital?

SM: Yeah. Yeah, actually I wasn't even diagnosed with anything when I was in Cape Breton Hospital, just a nervous breakdown.

AQ: Do you... did something lead up to that breakdown?

SM: Yeah.

AQ: Can you tell me about it?

SM: I don't want to talk about that part.

AQ: OK.

SM: I think I wrote that in the notes.

AQ: Oh yes, OK. Were you ever institutionalized ?

SM: Yes

AQ: -As a young pers-as a child child?

SM: No.

AQ: No, not as a child

SM: First diagnosis for myself was when I was 22 years old.

AQ: Ok

SM: July 3

AQ: OK, so

SM: 1982

AQ: Ok And how long were you in the hospital...

SM: Or 81, 1981

AQ: 1981?

SM: Because I was 22 years old, because I was one year more.

AQ: And how long were you in the hospital?

SM: The first time?

AQ: Yeah

SM: A month

AQ: Oh. And when you came out of hospital were you receiving any treatment?

SM: No.

AQ: Were you on any medications?

SM: No

AQ: How long did you remain healthy that time?

SM: A month. Three weeks would be the most.

AQ: Oh

SM: Three weeks

AQ: Of health? After you got out of the hospital?

SM: Yeah. Three weeks, because I went back in the Nova Scotia Hospital.

AQ: Ok.

SM: I was, I was telling the guy he was sinning because he had a girlfriend in the house. And I went over to the greenhouses, greeting everybody. And also I went to ... do you want me to talk about that now, or?

AQ: Sure

SM: And then the next time I went over to the golf course, got my car stuck, burnt, burnt the keys and burnt the mirror, stood on the car, pressed on my feet, and walked out and all's I had on was a bathing suit. And then once that happened I had a ghetto blaster playing French. And this guy said, "Oh you're playing French are you?" and I said... I said "Yeah", and then he took off and then I took off. And then I was looking at the trees, and it looked like they were white, white, white colour to them, and then I decided that I would put my ghetto blaster underneath the pipes going out towards...towards Springhill Nova Scotia where I was. Then I walked all the way from Springhill to Oxford, stopped at the first house,

knocked on the door, "Can I have a drink of water?" and I asked her, "What time is it?" " 12 o'clock" "Thank you, sorry to bother you." And I walked all the way to Streets Ridge and slept for... didn't even sleep almost for 4 days I never slept at all, you know. And then I... then I... then I... went to Amherst, told the people there they were crazy and everything else like that. They said "calling the cops on you." The cops came and I was fled out the door, they took me to the station, couldn't find anything wrong with me, so they let me out, go outside the town, and then I saw this guy with a trailer, and I was telling him he was nothing but a chicken, "Chicken, chicken, chicken" and throwing rocks at him and stuff like that. It was my boyhood that I was thinking of somebody that I knew back in Ottawa that triggered my mind. Same thing, and I thought it was him...

AQ: The guy reminded you of him,

SM: Yeah, that's right

AQ: Or you thought it was him?

SM: Yeah I thought it was him.

AQ: Oh

SM: So he took me to his place and he gave me my second beer that I had. The first one was just that morning. The guy said, "Do you want a beer?" and I said, "What?" he said "Do you want a beer?" I said, "Yeah, ok". So I got myself intoxicated by one beer. And.. and then I left there, the cops came and got me and they took me to the Nova Scotia Hospital.

AQ: Ok So I'm going to have to back you up a little bit to make sure I get the time line correct. When you were 22 and you had your first breakdown, were you in Springhill when that happened or were you in Cape Breton?

SM: Springhill

AQ: You were in Spring Hill. So you moved from Cape Breton to Spring Hill?

SM: No, Oxford.

AQ: Oh from Oxford. Ok so maybe I'll go back even a bit farther...

SM: But I stayed in Oxford Nova Scotia first, then I took my car to Springhill. I was just wandering, eh? With the car? I also took it to the woods and put SOS on the ground... you know, like, SOS? And I knew there was something wrong, it was just the way I was playing my ghetto blaster, I was getting crazy in the head, and all this stuff was getting mixed up with myself and it just flew...

AQ: Ok I'll have to go back and go through it with you. The.. so when did you leave Cape Breton, how old were you when you left?

SM: Oh ...21 years old.

AQ: 21?

SM: Yeah

AQ: And you moved to Oxford?

SM: No

AQ: Where?

SM: I moved to... yeah Oxford, You're right."

AQ: Oxford?

SM: Yeah it was Oxford.

AQ: Did you work in Oxford?

SM: Yeah, I scooped blueberries. In one day I scooped 1684 pounds of blueberries... And then I was scooping 800 to 700 berries [] for two weeks. And I stayed at their friend..at the person's farm's place for three weeks.

AQ: OK

SM: in Springhill.

AQ: And when was it that you moved... Oh so you, you...the blueberry farm was in Oxford...

SM: Yeah

AQ: And then the people who had the farm also had a place in Springhill?

SM: Yeah

AQ: Ok so you stayed with them in Spring Hill?

SM: Yeah, yeah 3 weeks

AQ: Ok, and that was when you had your breakdown?

SM: No this was before.

AQ: Oh. Ok.

SM: This is when I moved from home to there,

AQ: Right.

SM: when I was 21 years old.

AQ: Ok, So you moved to Oxford then you moved to Spring Hill?

SM: No, I moved to Spring Hill and then to Oxford.

AQ: Oh Ok sorry. So your breakdown happened in Oxford?

SM: Yeah

AQ: OK

SM: No it happened in Cape Breton.

AQ: OK

SM: Leading up to it. When I was, when I was 22 years old, I went to Cape Breton and I knew of the situation between my Dad and my family, which I didn't tell you. And then I went beserk there!

AQ: Oh Ok

SM: You know, that's where I went beserk.

AQ: I see

SM: And then I was hospitalized for a month. They couldn't figure out what was wrong with me, so they let me go. So after that I went to..back to Oxford, where I lived, then I went back to Spring Hill, and then I did the episode in Spring Hill then back to Oxford again. I know it's confusing but that's how it went.

AQ: No that's right, that's fine. Yeah so, when you, so you had your breakdown starting in Cape Breton and were hospitalized in Cape Breton and then you came back to Oxford, and then you went to Spring Hill, and is that where you had your car...

SM: yes, stuck

AQ: at the golf course?

SM: stuck in the golf course.

AQ: Were you driving it there for a reason?

SM: I was just mixed up.

AQ: Ok

SM I was driving everywhere.

AQ: Yeah. And am I correct in saying that you kind of trashed your car while you were... yeah.

SM: (nods) In the golf course.

AQ: So you left your car there. And you...Can you tell me what happened next?

SM: I walked to Oxford, got a drink of water, then walked to this guy's place and told him he's sinning because he had a girlfriend, and i walked all the way to Streets Ridge where I stayed only two hours, and then I walked to... to Oxford, I hitchhiked a ride, I got a ride, he gave me the first beer I ever had, and then after that I went to Amherst, and in Amherst, I went... I didn't even know where I was going, but I was just going to a building, and then the cops came behind me, questioned me, they let me loose at the intersection going towards Oxford, and then after that, I got as far as a trailer, and saw a guy standing out who I thought it was somebody that I knew back in my school age. I kept on saying "chicken, chicken" to him and started throwing rocks at his...place. And then after that they called the cops. And they took me to hospital about half an hour later.

AQ: Ok, so...

SM: And I was hospitalized for ...until October that year.

AQ: Ok so just to back up, you said you went from the golf course, you walked to Oxford, you walked to was it Streets Ridge?

SM: Streets Ridge

Aq: Streets Ridge. How do you spell that?

SM: Streets and then Ridge

AQ: Ok ok. And that's in Nova Scotia?

SM: That's next to Oxford.

AQ: Next to Oxford, OK. And then you made your way to Amherst.

SM: Yeah. The next day

AQ: And that's where the cops-

SM: Saw me and took me to... they didn't even have to arrest me, really. They never took me in handcuffs or nothing.

AQ: And they let you go. And then what happened next?

SM: What do you mean?

AQ: Well, after they let you go at the intersection?

SM: I stopped at the trailer court and started throwing rocks at the place and I was telling him "chicken" and then they came back and took me to Oxford and Oxford took me to hospital.

AQ: Ok. So the police took you to Oxford.

SM: Yeah

AQ: And then who was it in Oxford that took you to the hospital?

SM: The police.

AQ: The police. Ok. And so that's when you ended up in the Nova Scotia Hospital?

SM: Yeah. For the first time.

AQ: And what was the date of that, do you remember

SM: I don't remember, August sometime.

AQ: Ok. Do you remember the year.

SM: Yeah, 1982.

AQ: Ok. So how long were you...

SM: 1981 I mean. I always get that mixed up.

AQ: And how long were you in the Nova Scotia Hospital?

SM: well from August til October, November 11.

AQ: Ok and what was it like in the hospital for you?

SM: Scared

AQ: You were scared? Why

SM: I called my sister up every night just to say hello. She said it's ok, you're going to be ok. I did that for... I remember that phone number just like I remember it now. 895-3596. I remember that number. And if it wasn't for her I probably wouldn't be alive today.

AQ: Which sister was that?

SM: My younger sister.

AQ: Her name?

SM: Jeannie.

AQ: Jeannie. And why were you scared in hospital?

SM: Well...

AQ: What scared you?

SM: Well first of all, I didn't know anybody, and second of all I was wondering why I was in there, and third of all, I...I didn't want to be there. It was like... it was against my will, even though I was ill right, so...

AQ: Right. and...

SM: And they let me go, in the middle of November without even a coat on. That's how the system was back then. They wouldn't do that now. But it was rough, it was a rough first two months in my life.

AQ: What, before...

SM: I don't even remember what I was on either. I don't think I even took half the medicine anyways. And that's how come I ended up in the hospital eight times. Because the Stellazine wasn't really working for what it's supposed to be. And I don't remember being on lithium or anything until later on eh,

AQ: Right

SM: About two or three years later, I think it was four years later.

AQ: Ok so are you saying... You said you weren't sure what medication you were on when you were discharged.

SM: No I don't remember. I remember I was on something but I don't remember what it was.

AQ: And where, where did you...

SM: You could find that in the history, in my medical you know if they wanted that bad.

AQ: And what happened, what did you do after you were discharged?

SM: Still worked in greenhouses.

AQ: In the Halifax- Dartmouth area?

SM: No, in Oxford.

AQ: In Oxford, OK. So did you move back to Oxford, or...

SM: I lived there...

AQ: So you had a house, or a place there?

SM: I had a place there. Old age home.

AQ: Ok, you lived in an old age home?

SM: In the attic

AQ: Ok So you... was it rented? Or

SM: Huh?

AQ: You rented it

SM: Yeah. No I didn't rent it, I boarded

AQ: You boarded.

SM: \$35 a week for board, for room and board.

AQ: Right

SM: They were nice people too. And I fitted in with the old people too. Made them laugh and everything. I could probably do that now.

AQ: So how long were you back in Oxford for? (Stanley motions to his book)

AQ: You can look in the book if you want.

SM: I don't remember.

AQ: I guess I'm wondering...

SM: I think it's a year, I think it was a year then I stopped taking my medicine.

AQ: Ok so you were on some medication, and you were taking it then after a year you stopped taking it?

SM: Yeah

AQ: Ok... ok I'll let you find the page (Stanley looks through book.)

SM: Ah I don't know where it's at. It's probably there somewhere, but I think it was a year after

AQ: A year ok

Sm: Consecutively until I was put on ... ah what was that drug called... Stellazine and Chroma, Chroma...How do you say that?

AQ: Chlorpromazine?

SM: how do you say it?

AQ: Chlorpromazine?

SM: Chlorpromazine. yeah I was put on that when I was in Australia.

AQ: Ok

SM: That's the two drugs I was on. And then lithium when I was... 1985. I was put on lithium right before I arrived in Australia.

AQ: Right. So when you went back to Oxford after your first hospitalization, you were working in greenhouses again?

SM: Yeah

AQ And for about a year it sounds like you were healthy, is that correct?

SM: No I was sick all the time.

AQ: Ok, were you?

SM: I couldn't work in the greenhouses anymore, but they let me stay.

AQ: And what happened after that year?

SM: Stopped taking my medicine.

AQ: And what happened then?

SM: Hospitalized

AQ: Ok. Which hospital again?

SM: Nova Scotia Hospital.

AQ: Ok, so how was your second admission to hospital? What was it like, was it any different than the first admission?

SM: No difference

AQ: Do you remember how long you were there for?

SM: No

AQ: Ok and do you remember when you got out?

SM: No

AQ. OK did you have any other kinds of therapy, in hospital or out? Like-

SM: Yeah, talking therapy.

AM Talk therapy

SM: They thought I was the doctor.

AM: Where was that?

SM: Nova Scotia Hospital.

AQ: Ok

SM: Also in Amherst too. I went to the day hospital in Amherst.

AQ: When was that.

SM: Back in... let's see, back in '87 I think...or no '85. Just before I went to Australia.

AQ: OK , so between 1982 and 1985 were you hospitalized several times?

SM: Yes

AQ: Always at the Nova Scotia Hospital?

SM: Yes

AQ: Ok Day hospital in Amherst... what was that like for you?

SM: Good, I liked it. Talked to your problems and talked about the other people's problems, give each body encouragement, eat down in the cafeteria, go for walks, go to bowling. And they would pick you up too from Oxford to Amherst. Which was good. A sad thing happened though. The guy that I used to travel with, he was from Springhill, he committed suicide, eh? That was sad for me.

AQ: Was that during that time period?

SM: No, that was years later when I was with Metro Community Housing. He was in Metro Community Housing to.

AQ: Ok, ok did you ever... did you have other times... you mentioned when you were...

(end of part 1)

AQ: ...thirteen and you tried to commit suicide, did you attempt suicide at any other times?

SM: No

AQ: No. When you... this is going back a little bit too.. but in.. when you were in school as a child did you ever talk to a counsellor or a therapist?

SM: No

.AQ: Ok. And did you have any side effects from the... when you were taking Stellazine and Chlorpromazine?

SM: Yeah, my hand used to shake like that, they'd think I was waving to the crowd or something like that.

AQ: (Laughs) And what about on the drugs that you don't really remember what they were but when -

SM: I don't remember

AQ: you were first discharged from hospital?

SM: don't remember

AQ : Yeah, OK. Have you ever had an mental health treatments like ECT or

SM: No

AQ Psychosurgery?

SM: No.

AQ: No. Did you ever experience any patient rights issues?

SM: No

AQ: No. Were there any professionals, like nurses or doctors or others, who were influential or had an effect on you while you were in hospital?

SM: Yeah. My own doctor now. Over 20 years I've known her.

AQ: And how... how has she... what has been her effect?

SM: She keeps me positive when I'm down and out. Gives me a sort of perspective of what's going on in the brain, and asks questions like " Are you feeling ok?" " Are you grandiosious" or...

AQ: Grandiose?

SM: " Do you think your medicine should be changed?" or " Do you like what you do?" "Are you doing too much?" or " how's your appetite?" "Are you putting too much weight on, or are you losing to much weight?" or "Overall, how do you feel about yourself? Do you have full esteemin' in yourself? Do you do enough to get by? Are you intertwined with other people?"

AQ: Right

SM: "Do you know lots of people?' Stuff like that.

AQ: OK

SM:, Well, not lots of I mean, you know people? And also, " Do you sleep well? Are you irritable? Are you tired? Are you cranky?

AQ: Right

SM:And stuff like that so... over the 20 years that I've known her,

AQ: Right

SM she addressed these things in good way... you know not negatively? but In a positive way?

SM: Which made me even think more positively about myself, when I wrote that book, The Life Story of Stanley MacEachern , plus spiritual writing.

AQ: Right

SM: Yeah so, this book here?

AQ: Right. Did you meet any people while you were in hospital that remained a part of your life when you got out?

SM: Yeah. Chris Forward for one. And also Dean... no he wasn't in hospital. No, that's about all, their names escape me. Oh Dustin! And also the other guy, Nathan... those two stayed my friends, they're young friends but they're still my friends. And Kevin, I think he was in the hospital while I was there, I used to know him. And any women.... there is one, but I can't remember her name, she stayed friends with me, But not really close friends like the ones I have that I mentioned.

AQ: Right. What has the impact been of your experience of mental illness on your relationships with family and friends?

SM: Great. The relationship now is a lot different than it was 20 years ago, where I feel I wasn't even on the right medication in the first place. Maybe that's one of the reasons why, ONE of the reasons why I stopped taking the stuff. But I must tell you, stay on your medication. Be truthful about yourself. Know yourself that you can do something for yourself that is important for you, not for what the other person wants you to be. And the importance of knowing yourself inside out is very important that you can tell yourself, you can talk to the doctors, talk to the nurses, talk to the social workers, talk to your friends, talk to your family and friends all about it, and then they'll let you know that you're on the right track if you try.

AQ Ok, Thank you. So, going back to day hospital in Amherst, that was in, did you say, 1985?

Sm: Both times. When I was before I went to Australia and after I went to Australia

AQ: Ok.

Sm: So that's '95 and '96

AQ Ok So you went to Australia in...

SM: '95

AQ: Ok So I think we were at 1985.

Sm: Yeah

AQ: So you were at day hospital in Amherst in 1985?

SM: yeah, went to day hospital

AQ: Ok and how long was that for?

SM: Oh about three months

AQ: Ok and after that what happened

SM: I went to Toronto

AQ: to Toronto? And what did you do in Toronto?

SM: Worked at a motel

AQ: And how was your mental health in Toronto?

SM: Wasn't the greatest, But we made it through anyways

AQ: And...

Sm: I was actually hospitalized when I was in Toronto. The cause was I was directing traffic. It's in my book. And it's a funny thing really. I was directing traffic, putting them in the white cars in the right lane and the black cars in the left lane. And then it was getting dark, and I was going like this for the blinkers (makes hand motion) and they were waving to me, "Thanks a lot." So you know that's something funny there. So this guy, he got out of his car and started running after me. Then the cops came by and took me to the nearest hospital. I only stayed overnight, that was it. And then they gave me a one way ticket to Nova Scotia. (Laughing) They knew who I was, because I don't know how they figured it out, but they knew who I was and shipped me back to Nova Scotia. Where you belong Stanley, get back there.

AQ: So when you went back to Nova Scotia, did you go to...

SM: I went back to Oxford.

AQ: To Oxford?

Sm: Just for... yeah I'm skipping a little bit there.

AQ: Ok You can tell me about it if it's...

SM: I... I ... back ... yeah, I knew there was a mistake...back in 1980- yeah, yeah, 1985, I was depressed. Remember I told you about the three months depression I had just before I went to Australia? You know? Now tell me how many people can do that? Come out of depression than go onto a plane for 18 and a half hours, and go up to Australia. Not many people can do that. And I ... I...

AQ: Can I ask where were you when this depression-

SM: Oxford.

AQ: Ok. So you were three months in bed in Oxford.

Sm: Yeah, in bed.

AQ: And-

Sm: I'd only go out one meal a day, supertime, then go right back to sleep.

AQ: And was this before you went to Toronto?

SM: Yeah, before.

AQ: Or after? OK.

SM: Oh when I went to Toronto was after I came back to Oxford from ... I went to Toronto after I came back to Oxford, then I went straight to Ox-...or, Toronto after two months in Oxford, when I came back.

AQ: Ok So, just so I know, making sure I've got it clear, you went to Toronto ...

SM: '85, '86, '86 I went and then I was sent back in '86, not 86, '89.

AQ: '89?

SM: I worked in the hotel for three years.

AQ: Oh for three years, in Toronto?

Sm: Yeah.

AQ: Ok and then you came back to Oxford.

SM: Yeah

AQ: And... but before you went to Toronto is when you had the three months of depression or after you came back from Toronto?

Sm: Before

AQ: Ok

SM: Before I went to Australia

AQ: ok Now i'm getting a little lost because I'm not sure when the Australia trip happened.

Sm : 1985

AQ: So that was before you went to Toronto

SM: Right

AQ: Ok (laughs) Sorry. So why did you go to Australia?

SM: I always wanted to go and I made it. I saved \$4000 up in four years.

AQ: So what did you do in Australia?

SM: Farm. I was on a blueberry farm, I was on a tobacco farm, I was on a sheep farm, and I was on a dairy farm. Mostly dairy.

AQ: OK. And what was your experience like in Australia?

SM: Good. Until I stopped taking my medicine. Went back to the hospital in Shepparton. Shepparrton, in Australia

AQ: Ok« how long were you there

SM: A month. Then they shipped me back to Canada. They liked me back there, did they

AQ: So what was the hospital like in Australia? Was it different than here?

SM: Yes it was. It was like a motel. (laughs) Or a hotel I should say. It was good. That's where I put on weight. I weighed a hundred and ninety-five pounds when I left there. All's I did was eat. Because I didn't know the area, so I didn't want to walk too far. I used to walk so far, so i said I'm going to get lost.

AQ: So you gained weight because you weren't walking as much?

SM: That's right, i wasn't exercising at all.

AQ: So...

SM: That's what i stress on people. Even though when you're sick, make sure you do some walking. You know, make sure you get a nurse to take you walking or something. Even if it's in the hospital. I used to walk all the time when I was in the hospital.

AQ: Yeah, ok. So when you came back to Nova Scotia, where did you go and what happened?

SM: I stayed in Truro. Geeze I go a lot of places, don't I? In Truro for a year before I went to...

AQ: Were you working then?

SM: No. I just lived there and moved ... I got hospitalized again, because I was acting strange or whatever and then ended up in the rehab centre, after that. That was 19... 80... 1989.

AQ :1989, and that was the Nova Scotia Rehabilitation Centre?

SM: Yeah.

AQ: In...

SM: Bissett

AQ: Where was that? On Bissett Road?

SM: Yeah

Aq: In Dartmouth?

SM: Yeah

AQ: Or in Cole Harbour.

SM: Cole Harbour.

AQ: Ok, so that was after a year in Truro.

SM: Yeah

AQ: So what brought you to the rehab centre?

SM The doctor said you have to have a place to stay. Can't keep you here any longer. And that was the doctor that I had, back...now...and she was the hospital doctor back then. She knows all the history. And after that I was in the rehab centre, and I practically did all the green house work, practically put a garden in, practically cut all the lawns, practically cleaned rooms and dusted everything else like that. You know my worth ecthis.

AQ: Your work ethic, yup. So how long were you at the rehab doing all that?

SM: Nine months.

AQ: Ok, and what was it like being in the rehab?

SM" It was fun. Played floor hockey, went to church, and ate good meals, and did chores, Got up at 7:30,

Geeze somedays I didn't feel like getting up at 7:30.

AQ: did you... were you on medication while you were there?

SM: Yeah, I was.

AQ: Yeah?

SM: I know I was on lithium back then. I think it was Stellazine I was on too.

AQ: And so that was 1989?

SM: Yeah

AQ: And so what happened after your nine months in rehab?

SM: I joined Metro Community Housing Association, which I belong to right now. Twenty-one years.

AQ: And how did Metro Community Housing.... what did they do for you?

SM: Well first of all, they put me in a group home, where I only stayed six months and a roommate with me applied for a place to live, in an apartment. We did, and then he quit, and he went back somewhere, and then i had to have a live-in, and then I quit him, and went over to Dartmouth Nova Scotia.

AQ: OK

SM: Back in 1993.

AQ: OK. So just let me rephrase that so I know, I'm sure I know what you did. You had a roommate in the group home? And you decided...

SM: No. From another group home he was from.

AQ: OK

SM: And I just joined together to get a place.

AQ: OK

SM: Because I had to have somebody they said in order to have a place.

AQ: Right. So he eventually left and you had to get a live-in?

SM: Yeah

AQ: Ok, and then you moved to Dartmouth?

SM: Yeah

AQ: Ok, And when you moved to Dartmouth, did you live with a live-in, or did you have your own place?

SM: Had my own place.

AQ: Ok

SM: And I had my own place ever since.

AQ: Right. And what kind of support has Metro Community Housing given you?

SM: Plenty. They... they help you budget, they help you get a place, they help you get furniture, they help you get medication right for doctors, and pharmacy and all them places, they help you with work, see if you can get any work, and I used to do the courier for them back in 19... I

think I knew you then.... back in 19... 1990, 1990. And then I got a job in the... in the Super Sandwich shop, I got a job there for three years, I also was working at the Red Cross, as a volunteer job, and... and then I went to school, over in Dartmouth, I went to rehab- rehab- I went to Akerley Campus, and took up a baking course.

AQ: Is that the Nova Scotia Community College or?

Sm: Yes

AQ: And after that I took a cooking course in Options Nova Scotia, then learned how to cook better than I used to be able to cook. And as you know I'm a pretty good cook now, so don't all come at once though, if you want my cooking. And I stayed in... oh I was going to Halifax that time so it must have been 1990, around the same time as I was doing couriering. I did couriering for about four years . Three, three years I think.

AQ: Are you saying you lived in Halifax at that time?

SM: Yeah. Two years I lived there

AQ: OK. Before you moved to Dartmouth.

Sm: yeah. I think I was doing couriering then. Then I got accepted to college, and I went over to Dartmouth . I don't know if you remember Rosalee, Power at the time, she helped me out, get me a place, so ...

AQ: So that was... what year was that that you took the cooking course at the community college?

Sm: 1990. 1992 I think or 91. 91 or 92.

AQ: And then you went to Options, what year was that?

SM: No that was the year., 1991.

AQ: Oh, OK.

Sm: What did you ask me?

AQ: Well the cooking course at the Akerley Campus, was that...

SM: Oh that was in '93

AQ: Oh. Ok

SM: September

AQ: And then Options was after that?

Sm: Before that. '91.

AQ: Oh ok. And did you ever use your cooking training on the job or...

SM: No, just cooking for myself.

AQ: Ok

SM: I did volunteer work though. Quite a bit of volunteer work, really.

AQ: Right. So, tell me about some of the other things you've done in your life. I know you have some, you know have had some, interesting accomplishments and experiences. So for example, maybe you can tell me how you came to create Sunny Skies Gardening Association.

SM: Oh yeah. I never thought of that.

AQ: Yeah

SM: Yeah, just the idea that I help the poor out? I wanted to help the whole world out really, but I had to be point, pinpoint of what you want to do, I had to learn that, I had to go to school for that. I had to learn it, at Henson College, he taught me. Percy Paris,

AQ: OK

SM: And he told me, what did you want, not what other people want.

AQ: Right

SM: And so I had to narrow it down from where I got a letter from you, Anna Quon, stating the fact that he has the idea to produce, but he doesn't have a piece of land. You remember that? And then I did eventually get a piece of land at the North Woodside Community Centre. And I farmed there for the next four years and I produced 680 pounds of food.

AQ: Right.

SM: Organically. No chemicals or nothing. so

Aq: So I know – I just backing up, was it the Self-Employment Benefits program that you did at Henson College?

SM: Yeah.

AQ: What year was that in.

SM : (long pause) I'm getting mixed up. 90... '98. 1998

AQ: 1998. Ok so in 1998 you'd been with Metro Community Housing for how long?

SM: Since 1989.

AQ: !989 ok

SM: Ten years

AQ: Right. And in between Sunny Skies Gardening Association and the Rehab centre, it sounds like you did some courses , you had some jobs, you had some volunteer work,

SM: One year I had four volunteer jobs.

AQ: Is that right? What were they?

SM: (smiles) Thanks. One was Red Cross, one was a church, one was a cleaning place, and the other one I don't remember

AQ: OK

SM: I could probably remember if I look at my book.

AQ: Right. And were you quite healthy all that time?

SM: Oh yeah, yeah, very much so.

AQ: Yeah.

SM: Except I didn't sleep that much.

AQ: Were you ever hospitalized during that time?

SM: Yup, yup when I stopped taking my medication of course.

AQ: Right

SM: Stellazine, you know. Nice drug.

AQ: Right. So can I ask, when was it that you decided not to stop taking your medication?

SM: Uh Let`s see, when. I think ten years ago, it must be close to that. Eleven years ago.

AQ: Right

SM: When I had that big episode with my arm.

AQ: 1999?

Sm: Yeah

AQ: OK. So I'll go back to that but Sunny Skies Gardening Association, can you tell me again the dates that you ran that?

SM: 1998- 2002

AQ: Ok So... and during that time Sunny Skies gardening Association was a not for profit society, wasn't it?

SM: Yes

AQ: Ok. Did you get much support for your...

SM: Very much so. EDN helped me out, with what's her name...

AQ: The Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Network.

SM: Yeah, what was her name?

AQ: Pam Langille

SM: Pam Langille

AQ: Yeah

SM: And Sandra. The one over in the Initiative. Not the initiative but the one you said, about ... I can't remember her name... anyways it's the one over by the... by the... King Street.

AQ: Oh, Carol Tooton

SM: Yeah, not her, but the ones upstairs.

AQ: Oh upstairs with the Consumer Initiative centre.

SM: Marg, is that her name?

AQ: Marg, Marg is actually with the

SM: CEO Isn't it. Is that what it's called?

AQ: No Consumer Initiative Centre, I think it's, I think it's CIC, but Marg is with the CMHA Dartmouth-Halifax (sic) branch. Anyway, I'm not sure, but you can think about who that person was, and maybe we'll come back to it. But it sounds that you did get some support for your...

SM: Yeah. And Chalene when she was there.

AQ: OK

SM: Her, she helped me out.

AQ: OK

SM: I'm trying to think of the other one's name because she helped me out. She interviewed me again too, afterwards to see how I was doing, did I get enough support and stuff like that. So...

AQ: Right.. so- so it was during the time that you had your Sunny Skies gardening Association that you raised food for the community .

SM: Right. For...

Aq: Was it for foodbanks?

SM: For foodbanks and soup kitchens.

AQ: Soup Kitchens. And it was during that time that you decided you were going to stay on your medication?

SM: No, it was after.

AQ: After?. Ok so when was that?That you decided you were going to stay on your medication?

Sm: 1999

AQ: OK

SM: You see I had the gardening for the time period in between too. 1999 I didn't do it, 2002 I did do it.

AQ: I see. So was that because in 1999 was that because you were ill?

Sm: Ill yeah. I could have did the garden but I was in the hospital for three months.

AQ: Right.

SM: So they thought I was too weak, which I was.

AQ: ok, ok

SM: And that`s when I weighed 195 pounds.

AQ: So how has your life been since that time, that you decided to stay on your medication and that you were going to run your own garden- gardening association?

SM: Excellent. Really excellent.

AQ: Yeah.

SM: No, no- hardly any side effects at all. Even the stuff that I`m on now, no side effects on it at all, except that i`m thirsty all the time for lithium. And I have to cut back on that too.

AQ: So you`re on lithium and stellazine now?

SM: No I`m on Olanzapine.

AQ: Olanzapine? and is that all?

SM: And lithium

AQ: And lithium, ok, ok. And what kinds of other activities have you been doing in your life during that time period from when you decided you were going to stay on your medication til now?

SM: Plenty. Plenty.

AQ: Can you tell me about them?

SM: Ok well first of all, when I get out of the hospital, I decided to do the garden again the next year, which I did. I did the garden for another two years, til I decided that`s too much for my head. So I decided that this is enough is enough for this. And then I took a writing course in college, two writing courses. And then I think...

AQ: Was that at the community college?

SM: No that was at Saint.... Mount St. Vincent University.

AQ: Right.

SM: Oh I know...gardening. I was still volunteering for Red Cross. I...I kind of forget now, what I did in the last ten years.

AQ: When did you write your book, Stanley?

SM: Oh, that came out two years ago.

AQ: Ok, what is it about and what is it called?

SM: It`s called ``The Story of Stanley MacEachern plus Spiritual Writings`` and it came out three-two years ago, and It`s been successful so far, just by word of mouth and I don`t have it in the store as of yet... actually I don`t think I will- don`t want to be publicized than much. Anyways, and then I... worked at Walmart for three months. I used to gag every morning because I`d get so sick before I`d go and what other things...

AQ: Can I ask you why you got sick? was it a physical thing or a psychological...

SM: it was physical. I couldn`t stand myself being there.

AQ: Oh

SM: But I made it look like I was fitting in and stuff, but I wasn`t.

AQ: Ok

SM: The treated me really bad there. No one would talk to me unless I talked to them and stuff like that.

AQ: Ok so the sickness was from feeling like you didn`t fit in.

SM: Yeah. Can we take a break?

AQ: Yes we can.

PART 3

AQ: This is the second part of my interview with Stanley MacEachern, my name is Anna Quon, I'm an interviewer with the Our Voices Matter project. Stanley, you were mentioning that there was part of your life that we didn't talk about, your earlier life when you first left home?

SM: When I first left home, I had 20 bucks in my pocket for a whole month. And then, just as I was looking for work, this fellow came out, and said, "Why don't you come with me? I can give you a meal." I don't know how he knew I was hungry and anything else like that, but he took me to the Nova Scotian, it was called the Nova Scotia Hotel, it was called then, and I went with him, and I didn't know he was a pimp. He fed me a meal, and he says, "You have to go on the streets for me after this." and I said, "No, I'm not going to do that. You take me to a place where I can get employment." So he took me to a his area, Springhill, and I just sat on the old hobby house that was out there and sat on there, and a guy came out of the car, and said, "Are you looking for work?" and I said "yeah", and he gave me a blueberry job. And at the same time this pimp was still staying in Oxford. He wanted to dress me up in white, so I could do hook ups, and... males- kind of scary really- and I said, "No I don't want to do that. " And then I got the name, blacklisted my name for that name, 'cause that pimp, whatever you call them people. And after that I got a job interview in oxford, Nova Scotia where he knew I could get a job in the greenhouses? And he was gay too, right? I didn't know he was gay or anything like that. And he met my boss, and my boss's name was Gay too, right? His name was Gay? And then he said to my boss, "I'm gay too." You know. He was saying that to him, and my boss just looked at him the other way. But after that I stayed away from him and that, and then he went his way and I went mine, and I ended up back in Halifax again. Kind of a nightmare, because I remember once when I was in the hospital, I used to blink like this (motions with hands) to wish all Halifax was gone, because of the way I was treated by that pimp. But I overcome it though, you know. I... when anybody ever says something to me I say back to them that it's not true, I'm not that way. And I've had plenty of girlfriends to know that anyway, so...

AQ: So it was when you were-

SM: 20

AQ: When first left home ...

SM 21

AQ: ...at age 21,

SM: Yeah

AQ: You were looking around for work, and this pimp picked you up in Halifax?

SM: Yeah

AQ: Ok and took you to Springhill and Oxford. OK, and how... you said to when, to me earlier that when this man picked you up in Halifax, that you were hungry?

Sm: Yeah

AQ: Was that when you were living on the street?

SM: Yeah.

AQ: How long did you live on the street for?

SM: A month.

AQ : A month.

SM: I stayed at the... what's that place called? Where all the men stay in?

AQ: Metro Turning Point?

SM: Yeah. Stayed there one night, just scared... If I can say it I will... just so scared that I was just... I had to get out of there the next day, so...

AQ: What was scary about it?

SM: There was a bunch of old men laying down on the floor? You're young and that? I was afraid someone was going to molest me there, too? You know, still was fresh in my mind.

AQ: Yeah.

SM: Yeah so, I went through my hell, too, so, just like anybody else goes through their hell.

AQ: Right. Right. When you said your name was blacklisted, by the pimp? Is that what you said, I'm sorry...

SM: No that was by other people that knew him, thought I was... what do you call those people, that are, do their job...

AQ: Oh they thought you were...

SM: A boy on the street...for him

AQ: Oh, a prostitute

SM: A prostitute, yeah

AQ: Right

SM: But I wasn't, eh and I told the people that.

AQ: Right, right. OK. Maybe you can tell me about, you started telling me about your life closer to today. Your volunteer work, your different jobs. You told me about Metro Community Housing as one of your supports. What about some other social supports you've had.

SM: Well my spirituality has helped me a lot. I went to about one, two, three, four, five, five different denominations before I really like the one I have now, which is the Seventh Day Adventist Church. They helped me a lot. They helped me stay on track, they helped me believe in God more, they guide me in things that are good for me, they have fellowship meals, which is very good. And we all contribute to each other in a way that the spiritual life is good. I go to prayer meetings sometimes, where you pray and you read from the Bible, which is very important to me. I find, since I opened the book, when I first got sick, was the time that I understood what the Bible is all about. It was from the time, 19...1981 to the present time, that, since I opened the book, that I could understand the spirituality of it, and I give spirituality to other people, by telling them to put God first, and everything else follows. And then I tell people that, you can be reached, in your matter, you know. And you... and another thing is you, you can feel at ease, you can feel at home, if you just do that. I find myself just happy now. So happy as... I couldn't be any happier. And positive about myself, and positive about other people. «putting the positive reaction to other people, by giving them advice that's proper, that are good for the soul, and stuff like that. And I pray to people too, I mean i pray for people too, so... Is that enough Anna?

AQ: It is, about that

SM: yeah

AQ: What about New Beginnings Clubhouse?

SM: Oh New Beginnings Clubhouse. Oh, when I first went there, I said, `This is the perfect place for me.` And I never looked back, at the place. I don't care for it that much now, the way they do stuff now, but that's the way people want it, so that's the way they have to have it. I'm more doing other things anyways, you know, in my life history, so...

AQ: Mmhmm.

SM: And I find the staff were great back then, they listened to your problems and listened to your triumphs, and be happy, cooking good meals together, cooking together, baking together,

AQ: When was it-

SM: Having meetings together, you know.

AQ: When was it that you first started going to New Beginnings?

SM: 1998

AQ: And when did you...

Sm: (inaudible) Eleven years... or twelve.

AQ: Yup. So it seems like there were some pretty important things in your life, like around 1998, like you started your gardening association.

SM: Yeah

AQ: You started going to New Beginnings.

SM: Mmhmm

AQ: And you wrote your book in the past couple years, right?

SM: Yeah

AQ: What other sort of things are you doing? I know you have some jobs. Part time jobs.

SM: Well what I'm doing now is I get on the phone, and converse with people I know, especially all of my friends . I have about a thousand friends in the whole two cities. But I have about ten close friends that I talk to everyday, you're included. And I started that job with Tim Hortons but I also was on committees for the last five years, two of them, and...

AQ: Mental health committees?

Sm : Yup, and one one was QI, Quality Integration, and the other one is Housing 250. And I...

AQ: What are those?Can you tell me about those committees?

SM: Quality and Integration discusses how you feel for the patients that are needed to be with and how recovery ... how.... what's the other one Recovery and....then there's the other one. I kind of forget. Recovery and...not discovery. Something like that. I forget. Then Housing 250, Housing for 250... I talk about people and their places, especially for Killam Properties, and talk about how we can improve the living conditions, how we can focus on different items that are on the agenda, and stuff like that.

AQ: So that's to do with housing...

SM: Yup

AQ:- for people living with mental illness?

SM: Yup

AQ: And Quality and Integration is to do with mental health consumers as well

SM: Yeah

AQ: Ok. Can you tell be a bit about your job at Tim Hortons?

SM: Well, I started last March, 2009, and ... 2010 I should say... going ahead of myself. ... 2010. And the

people there are very friendly, they`re outgoing, they like to see you achieve something. They even add more work to me, so I can stay there longer, which is good. And they trust me, my boss really trusts me a lot.

AQ: Right

SM: He even, when he doesn`t have the time card, it`s thrown away or something, he trusts me that I have it in my book. Just, just, he doesn`t have to look at it, he just has to ask me what they are...

AQ: The hours that you work...

SM: That`s pretty good. That`s pretty honest.

AQ: Yeah

SM: And you get a free meal out of it if you want.

AQ: mmhmm

SM: And you get lovely women talking to you all the time (smiles), you know so, and also I get to read more on the bus, `cause it`s an hour away. Back and forth...

AQ: It`s an hour each way? or just...

SM: No, an hour altogether.

AQ: Half an hour ...ok

SM: And it`s a chance for me to be like when I was a teenager. I get up in the morning, at quarter to six, I get up even earlier now, I get up at 5 or 5:30. Pretty well dead now. Anyways, i enjoy it there. I hope to stay there at least ten years, `cause they always telling me, ``Don`t quite, don`t quit,`` stuff like that. They don`t tell me to quit, they just kidding to me, and say, `We want you back tomorrow, You coming Monday, right? You coming Monday, Stanley, right? Say, `Yup I am`, so...

AQ: And that was...

Sm: And it`s flexible right? If you want to take time off, you take time off anytime you want.

AQ: And what do you do at that job?

SM: Oh you... I must make a joke out of this. It`s my, my assistant manager `. The thing I do is I sweep up butts and stuff like that.

AQ: cigarette butts.

SM: Yeah. And also garbage, clean boxes, and sweep the pavement, and all that kind of stuff, take the mud away, take the weeds away, and all that stuff. But she said to me, `You`re still clean up those wet butts? I said `Yeah, them wet butts alright.`(laughs) Get it?

AQ: OK

SM: (inaudible) words now

AQ: You also have a business don't you? Doing yard work.

SM: Yeah

AQ: Yeah

SM: just volunteering, most.

AQ: And what other challenges do you face living in the community? I'm thinking of things like poverty, transportation, or

SM: None of that

AQ: Or discrimination

SM: No

AQ: No, ok. Have you ever had difficulty accessing... accessing housing or employment or other services.

SM: Yeah when I first moved from home. I was living in the woods.

AQ: In Oxford?

SM: No, here.

AQ: Here, ok. When you first moved...

SM: No, when I.. in the Valley. I used to stay there for a week? I got one job, he gave me 20 bucks for raking his leaves. He gave me bacon and eggs too, that morning. I'll never forget that guy.

AQ: yeah

SM: He was a cop too. A retired cop. I wonder if he's living ?I'd love to see him. Anyway...

AQ: So that was your one job in the Valley?

SM: Yeah

AQ: and it wasn't enough to-

SM: No

Aq: -get a place to live, or...

SM: Well, the way , the way I... the way it ended up was I, I got a job in Oxford. I was living in Springhill, and then I moved to Oxford... and from there i lived next door, there was an old age home, and the lady that lived in that home there, dies, died, eh and her son said, you can't stay here. So they came over one day, and said, how about you living over here ? You probably liked older people and stuff like that. So I lived inside the same room with stinky old men. If you know what I mean. I don't mean that in a negative way. I mean the smell, all that kind of stuff. The old smell.

AQ: That was in Springhill.

SM: No, it was in Oxford.

AQ: In Oxford. Ok, I...so...

SM: I moved from Springhill to Oxford.

Aq: OK

SM: Same year.

AQ: alright. And Springhill was where you lived in the attic of the old folk's home

SM: Yeah (inaudible)

AQ: And then you moved to Oxford. So has the way your mental illness been treated changed over time or have you seen any changes...

SM: Yes

AQ: Positive or negative. What are they?

SM: I feel myself as if I don't even have a mental illness. I discovered... that's what it is, recovery... that recovery can happen to all of us. We just have to get in the right stage. Where it fits the right foot for the right foot. We have to understand that we have to speak up, speak up to what you want in life. Once you do, you can achieve anything, anything at all. And you know what that saying that I said before- `Put God first and everything else follows.` And that's what I'm doing now, and I tell you, your life is free. Free, I'm free to do anything I want, you know. In a limited sense, right, so...

AQ: And has your quality of life changed?

SM: The quality of my life has been so great. I eat better, I sleep better, I feel better, I talk better, I listen better, all those five equalities.

AQ: And why... you attribute that to...

SM: To my mental health.

AQ: To your mental health. Ok... have you experienced the stigma of mental illness, and has that changed over time?

SM: That's a good question. (inaudible) Not to my knowledge I didn't, I don't think. No, not to my knowledge.

AQ: OK

SM: I was always a go getter, right? Go get this, go get that. I didn't care what people thought of me, as long as I knew what I thought of myself, right?

AQ: Right. So you said that you don't think of yourself as having a mental illness. Would you call yourself a mental health consumer, or how would you call yourself?

SM: I consider myself a healthy person.

AQ: And what helps you to keep your health?

SM: Prayer.

AQ: Prayer....

SM: Also, communicating with others. Doing this kind of stuff, too, which helps. And also, intertwining with people that have worse off than you are. To give a lift for them, to give help for them, to realize that you can take the potential you have and give it to somebody else that can have.

AQ: Right.

SM: I also believe that all the friends I do have, even though most of them are mental health consumers, I don't label them as mental health consumers. I label them as a person, what they are. So what you have a label? You shouldn't have yourself derived from it, you know. You should... could, you could, you could teach each other, which we do, all my friends and myself. You don't, you don't say, well I have a mental illness today, I don't feel like going to work. They don't say that. They say, "Well, today's a hard day but we'll get through it," you know. Thick or thin, you know? Starting to write another book now, just by talking to you.

AQ: Yeah tell me about your book, Stanley. I know we talked a little bit about this one. And what does this book...

SM: This book has two parts in it. The first part is... the first part is my, my life history of myself. All this part here...

AQ: Right

SM : While this part here has, more importantly to me, Stanley's Notable Notes, by Stanley MacEachern. I have about thirty-five pages of that, and then...

AQ: Right

SM: I have that again, you know, I have another book, and then...

AQ: You're writing another book now?

SM: No it's already written

AQ: You finished it?

SM: Yeah I just have to get it printed and...

AQ: And what is that about?

SM: Spiritual writing. It might, I might put my life history again

AQ: OK

SM: I might. I don't know.

AQ: And who helped you get your book out?

SM: Healthy Minds.

AQ: Healthy Minds Cooperative.

SM: Yeah. Do you know what that is? Do you know what Healthy Minds Cooperative is?

AQ: Oh yes.

SM: Oh

AQ: Sorry, I do. Is there anything else you'd like to say about your life with a mental illness, what's been hard, what's been your successes, or you know, anything important that we've left out?

SM: How much time do I have?

AQ: (laughs) You go for it.

SM: I feel, even though just as well as other people have a mental illness, that they too have a struggle too. But they can overcome it. They can overcome it, they can come it by over, overpowerment of themselves, toward a maker they believe in, doesn't matter if you believe in a stone, or you believe in a flower, or a cow, or a statue- doesn't matter. If you have something inside yourself you want to let it go out, just do it. Make sure you, you have a confident mind when you do it. Have confidence in yourself, that's what I'm trying to say. If you have confidence in yourself you can practically do anything you want. Read my books, read your book, compare them, live it, you know. And for the young people, get up there and do something for yourself before it's too late, before you can't do anything for yourself, you know, so...

AQ: OK. Thank you, Stanley. I...I know...I would just like to say that I've known you for quite a few years now, and it seems that you always, your life is always, progressing, changing, and things are getting

better, for you, and I think that's a really interesting thing that people, you know...might, it might be a good example for people? And I'm wondering what you think is the driving force behind that?

SM: I get up in the morning, and I look out, and it's a beautiful morning. Doesn't matter if it's raining, snowing, hail storm or sunshine, I gotta get out of this house and do something for myself, which I do. Once I achieve that, I move on to something else. Once that's achieved, I moved on to something else, as you will know in my book that's exactly what I did do. I didn't give up, that's what I'm trying to say. I did not give up on myself. My full esteem in myself is being esteemed. For other people, you know, so

AQ: OK. And this is my last question. To what do you attribute your positive attitude to? I know you talked about your doctor being a really positive influence, prayer... what is it that drives you?

SM: Just by talking to other people. I talk to, I talk to strangers, I talk to doctors, I talk to my friends, my family, I talk to myself even, you know, to reassure myself, to say, this is a beautiful day, is it really, yes it is, and then go for it, you know. I want to put a quote, the last thing too. You ready? "if you want to live your life fully, act on it."

AQ: Thank you. Ok, I appreciate it Stanley.

SM: Ok. Did you learn anything?

AQ: I did indeed. OK.

