

Growing up in Ontario

I was born in Renfrew, Ontario, in Victoria Hospital, on November 8th, 1944. My parents, Ender Stewart Waite and Helen Humphries née McBride, had a 92-acre dairy farm located on the Trans-Canada Highway three miles west of Renfrew, which is where I grew up. The Canadian Pacific Railway bisected the farm east to west, while a gully bisected the property north to south. The original pre-emptors of the farm had been Margaret and John Payne. The side hill across the highway, originally a part of the John Payne Farm, was part of the Precambrian Shield. The Phanehour family lived east of the farm, but their home was on the side hill. Our neighbour to the west was bachelor Cecil Crozier, and directly across the highway from his farm was the Jamiesons' limestone quarry. The creek at the bottom of the gully that bisected our farm meandered through rich black soil, under which was a chalk-white soil containing shells. The north boundary of the farm was the Bonnechere River, famous for its prehistoric caves. There was a little railroad workers' shack on the railway property at the gully called "Payne Station." The original Payne home had been surrounded by rose gardens, lilac and elm trees. There was a big barn, and the original farm had likely been 160 acres. My parents purchased only a portion of the farm between the highway and the river and therefore had only about 70 acres of workable acreage. My Grandpa McBride owned the portion of the farm across the highway, and it was used as pasture for young heifers. It had a maple sugar bush.

One of my earliest recollections as a young child is playing alone with a basset hound named Shep. During the winter months he'd haul me around on my sled. I was about five years of age when I followed him down to the Bonnechere River. It was winter and there was a foot or more of snow on the ground. It must have been cold because I trudged to the river on the crust of the snow. Shep started across the thin ice on the river and fell in but managed to break his way back to shore. We turned around and quickly walked back home.

I took kindergarten classes from a Miss Mc-



Dad, me and Mom, spring 1945 with the Jamieson Quarry in the background.



Helping Dad split firewood, fall 1946.



Mom, Grandpa McBride, me and Great Grandma McBride, spring 1947.

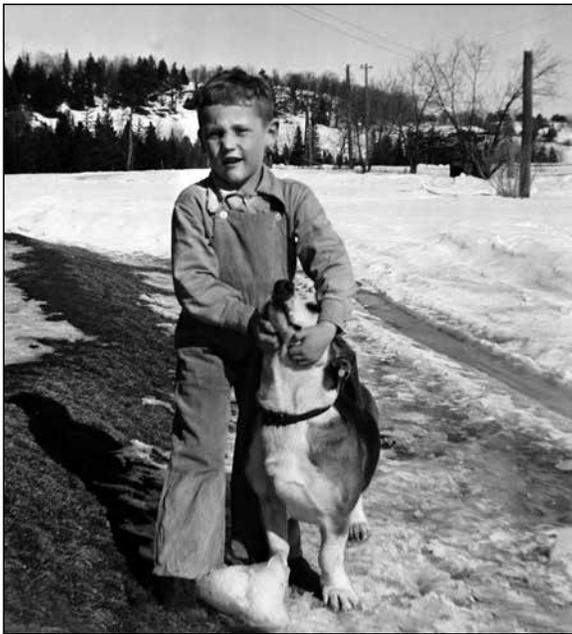


Mom and Dad's 92-acre dairy farm three miles west of Renfrew, Ontario, 2006





Mae & me in baby buggy, 1947.



Me and my basset hound named Shep, 1948

Laughlin in a little one-room building that was right on the main road through Renfrew. Dad would drop me off at the school on his way to drop off the cans of milk at Vice's Dairy. I'd go home on the bus. I hated my first year because the teacher kept me in for speech therapy. One day I took a bow and some arrows to school. The bow was made from a swamp alder and the arrows from cattails. Bobby Gould, my best friend, and I were playing and we accidentally fired an arrow with an expired .22 casing for a tip through the window.

My sisters Mae and Joan were five and six years younger than I, and I was often left to babysit them at the house while Mom and Dad did the milking and barn chores. I must have been in grade 3 when another boy pretended to stab me with a play knife. At the last moment he flipped the knife end for end and hit me in the back with the handle. He then pretended to cut my throat. That night I tried the same stunt with a dull table knife on Mae. I got a little carried away, and the serrated tip of the knife actually drew a little blood on Mae's neck. I was mortified when Joan, ever the dramatist, did a quick 100-yard dash from the house to the barn, screaming, "Donnie cut Mae's throat with the butcher knife." Although my actions hadn't been all that serious, her shouts certainly instilled terror in my mother's heart, causing disruption to the evening's milking process.

During the summer holidays my first cousins Ian and Ray Edmunds often biked over to our farm and we'd pick pop and beer bottles from the ditches of the Trans-Canada Highway. Beer bottles fetched two cents, while a pop bottle fetched one and a half cents. We always used a discarded oat bag to hold our bottles. On one of our jaunts I happened to find a whisky bottle that still contained some liquid, and it went into my oat bag with the other bottles. Once home, we poured the booze onto a few slices of bread and then went to the barn and began throwing slices of bread in among Mom's laying chickens. They went absolutely crazy and the entire hen house was in an uproar as first one hen and then another would grab a booze-soaked slice of bread and tear around the coup in an effort

to elude the other chickens. These antics continued until all the bread and liquor vanished and Mom's chickens were falling around dead drunk. Ian, Ray, and I concluded that we had done something dreadfully wrong and so decided to keep this a deep secret. Sure enough, over the next few days Mom began complaining that her prize layers weren't laying as well as earlier. Their production dropped so badly that she was forced to purchase eggs from Ray and Jean Elliott, our neighbours, at 50 cents a dozen, to sell to the patrons of her egg route for the same price. The birds ended up being slaughtered and replaced.

Our bottle collecting forays declined greatly when a man bought a small tractor and trailer to collect bottles on a large scale. He was able to cover 40 to 50 miles per day with the used machinery and usually passed by our gate at a fixed time two days a week. One morning we decided to pick bottles before his pass, and every time we found a cracked or broken bottle we carefully placed it a good distance from the roadway but positioned so that it appeared whole and unbroken. Ian, Ray and I called broken bottles "dead soldiers." We walked both sides of the ditches for about two miles both east and west of our driveway. We especially went to great lengths to set up several such bottles in the gully at the entrance to our farm. Ian and Ray biked over really early on a long weekend and we decided to walk two miles east and west of our driveway and collect bottles ahead of our rival and continue our prank with the "dead soldiers." Walking through the gully toward Cobden, we found the ditches filled with new bottles, and by the time we reached the entrance into Hartley Henderson's farm our oat bags were full. We decided to cache our booty of bottles and head back home with empty bags. We crossed the highway and headed home collecting bottles as we went. We dropped these bottles off in the woodshed. We then headed towards Renfrew collecting bottles as far as Visneski's Restaurant. We cached these bottles and then headed for home. Once home our plan was to have Mom drive and collect our caches of hidden bottles. By the time we got home our bags were again filled to capacity.



Joan & me on trike, 1950.



Me and the first bloodhound named Tippy, 1951.



Grade 3, age 7, 1951.
My grandfather's mother was Olive Jane Smith and she had a hereditary condition called dentinogenesis imperfecta that resulted in grey teeth and the disease seemed to have affected half of the children born to the carrier. Such teeth are generally smaller than ordinary and lack the white enamel. Unfortunately my grandfather and mother passed this genetic defect to me.

When we got home Mom joined us and we all watched out the kitchen window for the entrepreneur and his tractor. He finally appeared and Mom was in tears laughing each time the fellow stopped the tractor, set the brake, and climbed down from the seat. He'd jump across the ditch and stoop over to pick up a broken bottle. This occurred 15 or more times from when we first observed him until he reached our driveway. He then drove down through the gully, but since it was too dangerous to stop he drove on through and then parked before walking back to retrieve bottles.

We pulled the same stunt on a long weekend a few weeks later but arrived home only to discover that Mom was away. When she returned a short time later we told her that we had bottle caches near the entrance to Henderson's driveway and another one at Visneski's Restaurant. As we were all getting into the car we saw the man driving his tractor and wagon at a high speed past our driveway towards Renfrew. We laughed and Mom commented that our old rival would have a poor run for the two miles east and west of the Waite driveway. Mom drove us to Henderson's driveway but our bottles were gone. Mom then drove us past our driveway towards Visneski's expecting to overtake the slow moving farm vehicle but he beat us to the punch. We arrived at Visneski's only to discover that he had managed to find that cache as well.

I attended Queen Elizabeth Elementary School for grades 1 through 6 and the Central Public School for grades 7 and 8. I did well in the elementary grades and even skipped grade 5, so for passing with higher than average grades Mom and Dad bought me a new CCM bicycle during the 1955 summer holidays. The bike got a lot of mileage and I'd use it to peddle the two miles across Hass's side road to visit with cousins Ian and Ray Edmunds. We'd usually join up with other boys our age and go swimming in a shallow pool.

Once Ian and some of the other boys from the "swimming hole gang" decided to visit the unoccupied Mask house located directly across the road from the entrance into the Edmunds' farm. They had so much fun ransacking the house that they persuaded me to join them a few days later for a return visit. The front and

DATE	SUBJECT	COMMENTS	SOURCE
25 January, 1954	WAITE, Donald E	Don got beating from Ender.	HHW
24 April, 1954	WAITE, Donald E	Don to marble tournament in AM.	HHW
12 June, 1954	WAITE, Donald E	Reid bought Don bow & arrow.	HHW
30 July, 1954	WAITE, Donald E	Saw oats eaten by army worms (at Bill Richardson's).	HHW
2 August, 1954	WAITE, Donald E	Don & Ender drew manure.	HHW
10 August, 1954	WAITE, Donald E	Don walked home from Jeans.	HHW
30 March, 1955	WAITE, Donald E	Got pictures at Loblaws.	HHW
2 April, 1955	WAITE, Donald E	Don got new BB gun.	HHW
23 April, 1955	WAITE, Donald E	Don won 2nd at alley day.	HHW
13 June, 1955	WAITE, Donald E	Got Don new CCM bike.	HHW
21 June, 1955	WAITE, Donald E	At barn meeting at nite. Don 2nd & won sweater.	HHW
26 June, 1955	WAITE, Donald E	Joyce, Ad & us up to Bonnechere Caves.	HHW
27 June, 1955	WAITE, Donald E	Don got tooth pulled.	HHW
11 August, 1955	WAITE, Donald E	Ian over here. Got 74 bottles.	HHW
6 September, 1955	WAITE, Donald E	Don got put into grade 6.	HHW
10 October, 1955	WAITE, Donald E	Police here to Don.	HHW
11 October, 1955	WAITE, Donald E	Over at Jean & she's feeling terrible about kids & police.	HHW
2 February, 1956	WAITE, Donald E	Litter carrier track fell down.	HHW
2 March, 1956	WAITE, Donald E	Don & I scrubbed & waxed.	HHW
9 April, 1956	WAITE, Donald E	Ender & Don to show 'Heien of Troy'.	HHW
21 May, 1956	WAITE, Donald E	Don hit my toe with ball.	HHW
7 August, 1956	WAITE, Donald E	Don on trip to Seaways.	HHW
10 August, 1956	WAITE, Donald E	Ender & Don drew manure.	HHW
22 September, 1956	WAITE, Donald E	Combined all oat until 10 to 7. 6 1/2 loads. Don & I unloaded them.	HHW
25 October, 1956	WAITE, Donald E	Don went to Ottawa on bus.	HHW
26 October, 1956	WAITE, Donald E	Don got 8th (at Ottawa Winter Fair).	HHW
21 January, 1957	WAITE, Donald E	Don jammed finger very bad.	HHW
24 April, 1957	WAITE, Donald E	Don lost at marble tournament.	HHW
28 May, 1957	WAITE, Donald E	Ender & Don at 4H meeting.	HHW
25 June, 1957	WAITE, Donald E	Don & Ender to Farmers' Union meeting.	HHW
4 July, 1957	WAITE, Donald E	Ender took Don to 4H meeting at J B Briscoes.	HHW
7 July, 1957	WAITE, Donald E	Don on 4H trip to Petawawa & Des Joachims.	HHW
19 July, 1957	WAITE, Donald E	Don swam (Bonnechere) river alone.	HHW
19 August, 1957	WAITE, Donald E	Don up to Gerald's.	HHW
22 August, 1957	WAITE, Donald E	Went up to Gerald's for Don at nite.	HHW
26 September, 1957	WAITE, Donald E	To Don's school last nite. Mr. Woods mad. 	HHW
9 December, 1957	WAITE, Donald E	Don got report 76 %.	HHW
9 January, 1958	WAITE, Donald E	Daddy coach had 20 players.	DEW
11 January, 1958	WAITE, Donald E	Ender & Don to hockey at Douglas.	HHW
30 January, 1958	WAITE, Donald E	Took Carol Kallies to Junior Red Cross Dance at Queen E.	DEW
30 January, 1958	WAITE, Donald E	Took Don & Carol to school dance.	HHW
5 February, 1958	WAITE, Donald E	Got first lesson on violin from Mr. Stephens.	DEW
7 March, 1958	WAITE, Donald E	Seen PM John Diefenbaker shook his hand.	DEW
3 April, 1958	WAITE, Donald E	Don to hockey banquet.	HHW
6 April, 1958	WAITE, Donald E	To Ottawa with Harry (Pettigrew).	DEW
8 April, 1958	WAITE, Donald E	To Parliament Buildings, Museum, Peace Tower 'Bridge on River Kwai'	DEW
10 April, 1958	WAITE, Donald E	Took kids to show 'Perri'.	HHW
28 April, 1958	WAITE, Donald E	Marble Tournament came second.	DEW
28 April, 1958	WAITE, Donald E	Don 2nd at marble tournament.	HHW
28 May, 1958	WAITE, Donald E	Don played ball.	HHW
26 July, 1958	WAITE, Donald E	Don on water skis.	HHW
9 August, 1958	WAITE, Donald E	Ender & Don drew manure.	HHW
12 September, 1958	WAITE, Donald E	Don got first on calf.	HHW

Excerpts from my Mother's diary when I was 17, 18 & 19. Mom kept a diary for 40+ years.



Me and my first and only Gar Pike,
Cobden Lake, 1955.



Me sitting atop a 10-tier load of straw, 1955

back doors had been left open with the result that pasturing heifers had walked through the main level. It was a mess. I knew this was wrong, but I submitted to peer pressure. I accompanied the other boys to the upstairs bedrooms and joined in to help thrash every piece of furniture in the master bedroom. Downstairs we discovered a trap door leading into the basement. I went down alone and saw rows of wooden shelving containing jars of canned beets and pickles. I busily loaded up my arms with bottles and handed them up to the boys kneeling at the trap door. While I was away retrieving more jars, Ian pulled up the ladder and closed the trap door, leaving me in the dark. Over the next few minutes the other boys smashed the jars against the living and dining room walls. I climbed out of the cellar and there was beet and pickle juice dripping down the walls of the home. It never occurred to any of us that we might be caught.

Months later an Ontario Provincial Policeman drove down the side road and saw Ian and Ray picking bottles. He stopped the car, got out, and questioned the two young entrepreneurs. Instead of asking the boys whether they knew anything about the house burglary, he looked at them and said, "Who drove their bicycles into that house over there?" Ray squealed and it wasn't long before the policeman knew the names of every participant. It involved most of the 11 and 12-years boys within a two-mile radius of the home and even some visiting youths from Toronto. On 10th of October, Mom wrote in her diary, "Police here to Don."

I was across the gully collecting the cows when I first noticed the police car and the policeman talking with my father. I was absolutely terrified. Dad asked me if I had been one of the boys to visit the unoccupied house. I replied, "Yes."

Dad, "That will never happen again, will it?"

I replied, "No."

Neither parent mentioned the incident again.

When I was 11, in the spring of 1955, Dad bought me a Red Ryder BB gun. I would buy bags of BBs and place them all in my mouth and then blow them into an opening in the rifle. I was so small that I had to place the stock end of the gun between my feet and pull with

both hands to cock the lever-action air rifle. I should have used the gun to target practice or perhaps shoot starlings, but I was indiscriminate and often shot songbirds during the nesting season. I simply didn't know any better. I started hunting grouse at age 12 with a .22 rifle, and then, on my 16th birthday, Dad bought me a 12-gauge pump-action shotgun.

My mom used to buy her groceries at the A & P Grocery Store on Renfrew's Raglan Street. One time she managed to collect enough coupons for a free portrait sitting for Joan, Mae, and me. We must have presented quite a threesome, and the photographer rightly concluded that there was no possible chance of any reorder of photos. Joan had just cut her bangs with a pair of scissors and Mae was wearing a winter coat with her woolen mittens held in place with safety pins. I was wearing a winter jacket and cap. Our portrait session lasted no longer than a minute before we were on our way. I removed my cap but didn't even get to comb my hair. The three portraits were priceless.

Attending school, I was more interested in playing marbles during recess and the noon hour than in learning reading, writing, and arithmetic in the classroom. I was a young entrepreneur and played marbles strictly for profit. Usually four or five children participated in the game, with the advantaged player sitting on the ground with legs spread in a V-shape with a tiny target marble between the spread legs. The other players stood behind a line about ten-feet away and threw marbles at the target marble. All marbles thrown at the target became the property of the seated player until that marble was struck. The person that had thrown the striking marble then got to sit down.

Even marbles was a game of strategy, and I sometimes placed a large rather than a tiny target between my legs with the result that the other players responded by throwing faster but with less accuracy at the larger marble. The players bought and sold marbles; a penny bought five marbles, and a nickel bought a package of baseball or hockey cards from Thom's General Store that was located kitty-corner across the street from the schoolyard. By the time I entered grades 7 and 8 at the Central Public School the only competitive player was Raymond Wall.



Mae's A & P portrait.
Note the safety pins holding her mittens to her winter jacket, 1954.



Sisters Mae, Joan and me, 1956.

Ramie was older and bigger and three or four years older than the other students. During the winter months the game went indoors and was played in the school's basement with light from a single bulb. Ramie won mostly by cheating, claiming credit for strikes made by other participants. He was the school bully. Ronnie Ferguson was another school bully and one time he hit me with a baseball bat. Guy Jamieson, a good friend, approached Ferguson and asked why he was always afraid to pick on someone his own size. Ronnie made the mistake of challenging Guy to a fight and was beaten so badly that he didn't come back to school for 3 days.

The marble championships for Eastern Ontario took place at the Central Public School, but the contest was played with rules that were totally foreign to us. I must have participated in these contests for several years because Mom's diary for 23 April 1955 reads, "Don won 2nd at alley day," and then three years later on 28 April 1958, "Don second at marble tournament." Each year an original game would be played with Renfrew players, with the winners advancing to the Eastern Ontario Championships held in some neighbouring town. In 1958 I managed to come first locally and advanced to the EOC, but in this particular year the players from the other towns came to Renfrew. In the final game a boy from Smith Falls came in first and I came in second. My years of playing and practicing had finally paid off, even if the prize was only a crest.

I started grade 7 at the old Central Public School in September 1957, and Frank Woods was my homeroom teacher, who taught woodworking to the boy students. One day wrestling came up in conversation, and I bet him that I had a special hold that would allow me to drop a grown man on the ground. He scoffed at my remark and foolishly allowed me to put him in my hold. It wasn't really a hold as I just positioned myself on the floor and squeezed my body between his legs so that I was looking up at him before he realized what was happening to him. I placed both my knees on his knees and then grabbed him by his heels. I pushed on my knees while pulling on his heels. It was the fulcrum effect. Mr. Woods crashed to the floor, but because he was standing between two rows of desks, his flailing arms hit desks during his descent. He

was furious and reported the incident to my parents, and Dad had to attend school. Dad knew exactly what had happened as I had earlier put him on the floor with the same hold. Dad and Mr. Woods talked, and in the end my father told the teacher that he had been the cause of his own fall. Mr. Woods was a strange teacher and one time told his class that anyone that could squirt him with a water pistol and escape from the room before he caught them would never be punished. Most of the boys at Central owned water pistols or peashooters, and several who tried squirting their teacher were apprehended and given detentions. I filled my pistol with liquid soap from the washroom, squirted Mr. Woods in both eyes, and before he realized what had hit him, I escaped up the stairs. I never got in trouble for the squirting incident. On September 26 Mom wrote in her diary about one of these two incidents, "To Don's school last night. Mr. Woods mad."

I got into much more serious trouble with Howard Hilliard, the school principal, for breaking Tucky Warren's collarbone. One winter afternoon Tucky hit me with a frozen snowball and I chased after him and took him to ground with a flying tackle. The next day Mr. Hilliard called a general assembly and talked about roughhousing on school property. Everyone knew that I was the reason for the assembly.

Next to marbles, hockey was a big deal during my childhood and while attending Central School I played on four hockey teams. The school was located within two blocks of the Renfrew Arena and on most noon hours all the boys would race down to the rink and get laced up to practice or play. On the weekends most youths my age played hockey at Renfrew, Admaston, Northcote or Douglas. I played on the Admaston and Renfrew teams.

Quite often kids my own age would come out to the farm from Renfrew on their bikes and we'd play in the barn. Three that I remember were Brian Troke, Brian Wainman and Brian McKeddie. We all had slingshots made from swamp alder, an old bicycle inner tube and the tongue from an old shoe. We used green plums for "bullets". One afternoon Brian McKeddie managed to hit me three times on the bare back as I climbed up a ladder into the haymow.

I guess it was the equivalent of the modern day paint ball games. As Brian was climbing up the ladder after me, I dropped a 80-pound bale of hay that knocked him off the ladder and onto the barn floor. He lay motionless for several seconds and at first I thought I'd maybe hurt him but he slowly got back onto his feet. We also used bows and arrows on our escapades around the farm. I once hit George Van Slyck on the bridge of the nose with a cattail arrow with an expired .22 casing for a tip and he carried the scar for the rest of his life.

Milking cattle on a dairy farm takes place twice daily 365 days a year, and with the preparation for big events such as haying and threshing there was never much time for relaxing. During the winter months the cattle were kept inside the barn, and besides being milked twice daily, they had to be fed and kept clean. When I was young, there was a track that ran the full length of the cow barn with a bucket called a litter carrier for taking out the manure twice daily. Manure would be forked or scooped with a shovel and placed into the litter carrier; then the barn doors would be opened and the bucket would be pushed along the track as it continued outside. By mid-December this would take place in the pitch black and quite often in freezing snow and ice. The bucket would be dumped and then run back into the barn. The carrier was about 10-feet long, four-feet deep and four-feet wide. It had a pulley system and could be lowered up and down. When I was very young, the cows were milked by hand, but later my parents had electric milking machines, which greatly speeded up the process. The milk would be put through a strainer and into 80-pound milk cans. The milk cans had to be left in a cooler with chunks of ice overnight. The five or six cans of milk would be hauled to the dairy in the morning in Dad's truck. I would go with Dad to be dropped off at school.

I can't remember when Dad bought the first hay baler, but I can't have been older than five or six. Dad used to cut the hay with a mower in the early morning of a sky-blue day and begin to rake it into windrows a day later for baling. The tractor would be hooked up to the baler, which in turn was hooked up to a wagon. The tractor provided the power to run the baler. It was Mom's job to drive the International DW4

tractor, and I was so small that I could sit in the wheel well. It couldn't have been more than 10-inches across, so I couldn't have been very old. Mom drove the tractor so that the dried windrows of hay were fed into the mouth of the baler, while it was Dad's job to pile the bales on the wagon. Dad was able to stack 100 of the 80-to 100-pound bales onto a wagon, but the task became more difficult as the load neared completion, since the load was sometimes piled seven or eight tiers high. Mom always highballed and would ride the tractor's clutch so that the baler's intake of hay was always at the maximum. This meant that bales were literally shooting out of the back of the baler.

Hay baling always had pregnant situations, with Mom either breaking a shear pin, a safety device in the baler, causing the baler to break down, or bales were coming at such a speed that Dad was unable to build his load properly. Once Mom managed to break the last shear pin and Dad was forced to use a bent nail in its place. The nail didn't do the job of the pin and the baler broke down. Dad had an expression that was used every time something went wrong, "Jesus, Jesus, German-hearted Christ." I don't think Dad had anything against Germans or Christ but he sure used the expression often. Dad was wearing short pants, long wool socks, work boots and an old pith helmet. He was shirtless and with his flailing arms and shouting he looked kind of comical. As Dad was carrying on with these antics on the one side of the tractor, I began to mimic him on the other for the benefit of Mom. I mouthed the "Jesus, Jesus, German-hearted Christ" words, for I dared not say them aloud, and Mom began laughing. This got both Mom and me in trouble. I jumped off the tractor and escaped to the house. Those four words got me into a great deal of trouble years later.

In later years, one of my jobs during the haying season was to assist Dad piling the bales in the haymow, while it was Mom's job to unload the bales off the wagon and onto an elevator to be conveyed up into the mow. Everything worked well if Mom paced herself to have one bale coming off the elevator and into the mow, a second bale mid-way up the elevator, and a third bale being placed onto the elevator. When Mom placed more than three bales on