

***NEITHER***

***WAIIF***

***NOR***

***STRAY***

***THE SEARCH FOR  
A STOLEN IDENTITY***

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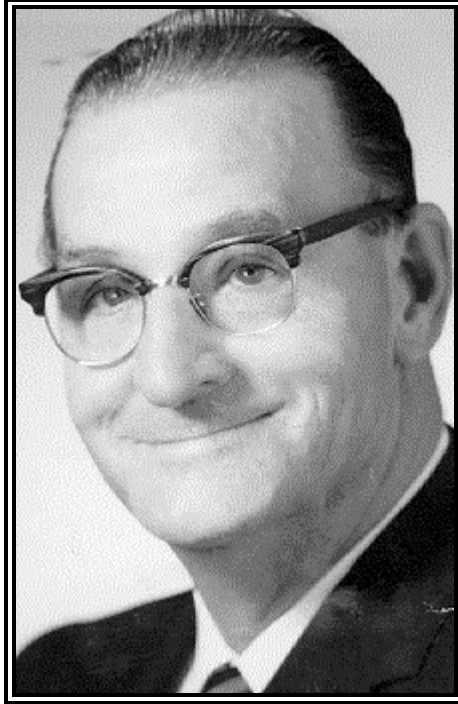
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IN LOVING MEMORY OF  
*Frederick George Snow*  
(September 17, 1909 - September 17, 1994)



My Mother loved my Father for who he *was* -- not for *who* he was. My Wife Bonnie -- my truest friend for over 40 years -- had faith in all my projects, when sometimes I did not. My Daughters Charlotte and Elizabeth assisted as editors and supporters. My Nephew Alan Auld provided his computer expertise. My English friend Robin -- yet unmet -- devoted three years of his life to help me with my quest. He restored the Snow family faith in the "kindness of strangers." Gary, Karen, Sandy, Roger, and Wendy have made me proud to be their Brother.

To those who helped in the search, and those who did not, "What goes around comes around."

Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over shall men give unto your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured unto you (Luke 6:38).



## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	7
<b>Part I: A Life Without an Identity (1913-1994)</b>	
Chapter 1: The Life of a Waif in England, 1913-1925.....	11
Chapter 2: A British Home Child Deported to Canada, 1925 .....	25
Chapter 3: Love at First Sight, Port Arthur, Ontario, 1934 .....	44
Chapter 4: Honeymoon in a Tent, Ozone, Ontario, 1935 .....	54
Chapter 5: Hard Times in the Bush, Peninsula, Ontario, 1938-1939 ..	61
Chapter 6: St. Anthony Gold Mine, Ontario, 1939-1940 .....	66
Chapter 7: War & Post-War, Fort William, Ontario, 1943-1949 .....	72
Chapter 8: Middle age, Fort William, Ontario, 1949-1963 .....	79
Chapter 9: Middle & Old Age, Thunder Bay, Ontario, 1963-1984.....	87
Chapter 10: The Final Years, Thunder Bay, Ontario, 1985-1994 .....	106
<b>Part II: Discovering the Truth (1993-1998)</b>	
Chapter 1: An Inherited Mystery of Family Origins.....	111
Chapter 2: A Review of Waifs and Strays Case File # 18264 .....	130
Chapter 3: A Kind Stranger Joins the Quest.....	175
Chapter 4: The Unearthing of Relatives in England.....	183
Chapter 5: Assembling the Pieces of the Puzzle.....	189
<b>Part III: A Stolen Identity Reclaimed</b>	
A Hypothetical Reunion, Thunder Bay, Ontario, 1994 .....	197
“Coming into Care,” Croydon, Surrey, England, 1913 .....	203
Foster Care: Rumburgh, Halesworth, Suffolk, England, 1913-1921 ..	207
St. Augustine’s Home, Sevenoaks, Kent, England, 1921-1925.....	210
Early Adulthood as a Waif, Canada, 1925-1935 .....	211
Family Life, Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada, 1935-1994.....	214
<b>Part IV: The Psychology of the Waif</b>	
The Development of a Personal Identity .....	227
The Childhood Trauma of “Coming Into Care” .....	236
Child Training or Brainwashing? .....	238
The Legacy: Depersonalization and Dissociation .....	244
Malignant Memories of a Traumatic Childhood .....	248
<b>Part V: The Universal Rights of the Child</b>	
Appendix:.....	271
Bibliography.....	273
Index.....	277



## Introduction

My Father was a reserved and solitary man, who quietly stood at the fringe of conversations when others spoke of their past or families. His family was a mystery to him. He did not know who he was. He never had a Birth Certificate, and for the first 33 years of his life, had nothing to verify who he was. From the age of 33-48, he carried a tattered "To Whom it May Concern" letter for identification. It stated his name and identified him as "of British nationality." For the first half of his life, he had serious doubts if his surname was really "Snow." He wondered if someone had simply invented it and assigned it to him. When he was 48 years old, he obtained a Baptism Certificate that confirmed his name, and identified his Mother, but not his Father. From the age of 48-64, this was all he had for identification. When he was 64 years old, he received his Canadian Citizenship. All his life, he tried to identify his Parents and Family -- and find out who he was.

He became a ward of the Church of England Society for Providing Homes for Waifs and Strays when he was four years old in 1913. They placed him in a foster home in a small village in England from the age of 4-12. They then transferred him to a Home for Boys from the age of 12-15. When he was 15, they gave him the "choice" of emigrating to Australia or Canada. No one wanted him in England. They shipped him to Canada and sent him to work on farms in Ontario and Quebec. He was part of the little-known British Child Emigration Scheme. Fifty child-care organizations emigrated 100,000 children between 1880-1930 to Canada. These children ranged in age from 6-15 years old, and were known as "The Home Children." The organizations professed a dominant motive of providing children with better lives than what they might have had in England, but they had other ignoble motives.

Children worked as indentured farm labourers in harsh conditions until they were 18 years old. They were not allowed to go to school. They were not entitled to medical care. They had little protection under the law. They were not paid for their farm labour of 16 hours per day and six days per week. A third to a half of these children were neglected and abused, because the British organizations did not provide adequate inspections of their placements. They operated outside the control of the fledgling colony of Canada. The British Home Children were not voluntary "migrants" who "emigrated" to new lands. They were commodities that were deported because they were unwanted in Britain. The organizations expelled, banished, abandoned, and forgot them. A 'scheme' can be defined as a visionary plan, a foolish project, or a self-seeking, and underhanded plot. I prefer to call it the British Child Deportation Scheme.

From the age of 17-18, my Father was in a hospital for a year after he severely mangled his arm in a conveyor belt. He worked for a short time as a Timekeeper after they released him from hospital, but his work did not last long. From the age of 19-20, he enlisted in the Reserve Army Service Corps. He traveled to Western Canada to seek his fortune at the beginning of the Great Depression. From the age of 21-22, he was one of hundreds of thousands of single young men who rode freight trains in search of work. He met with "Help Wanted -- English Need Not Apply" signs when he sought work of any kind. From the age of 22-25, he lived in a highway construction Relief Camp in North-Western Ontario. He was an exile in a foreign and frequently inhospitable country. No one knew who he was. No one knew where he was. No one cared about a despised British Waif.

His life was irrevocably transformed on the Victoria Day Weekend of 1934 when he met and fell in love with my Mother. From that day on, he was never alone again. They married in the middle of the Great Depression in Port Arthur, Ontario. He began to live rather than subsist. For the first time in his life, he had someone who loved him, and someone for him to love. He had been deprived of so much love and human kindness in his life. In spite of this, he succeeded in becoming a loving Husband to his Wife and a devoted Father to his six children. Their early years of marriage were a struggle just to survive. They had two children during the Great Depression, three during World War II and one late in life in the 1950's. Their 59 years of marriage were a testimony of how their faith in God and their devotion to each other helped them overcome many challenges and adversities.

My Parents celebrated their Fiftieth Wedding Anniversary in 1985 in Thunder Bay, Ontario. The next year, my Mother wrote a book about their lives together. My Parents believed they had a love story to tell that might be of interest at least to their family. They had an everlasting faith in God. They firmly believed they were never alone, and a kind, loving God helped them along their way. In all things, they gave, "Thanks."

If I asked you to identify yourself, how would you answer? Invariably, you would volunteer your name. Although many others might have the same name, it is the first step in identifying yourself apart from others. Next, you might tell me your date of birth, because although many others might have an identical name, few others would have been born on the same day. Then you might tell me your Parents' names. Many others might have your name. A few might have been born on the same day, but no one -- apart from your siblings -- could have your Parents. You can only have one biological Father and Mother, and your moment of birth is unique to you alone. You might then specify where



you were born. No one else on earth could have been born with your name, to your Parents, at a specific time, and in a specific place. You might produce a Birth Certificate to validate your claim to be who you say you are.

My Father was riddled with doubts every time he identified himself. All he could say was what his caretakers led him to believe was true. When he said, "My name is Fred G. Snow," he thought to himself, "I think." When he said, "I was born on Larch Road, Balham, London on September 17, 1909," he thought, "I have no birth certificate to prove this." When he said, "My Parents were John George Snow and Annie Gifford/Snow," he thought, "at least that is what they told me."

Your identity allows you to value yourself as a unique person of some worth. The absence of an identity contributes to your devaluing yourself as a useless thing. If you know who you are, you feel like a "somebody." If you do not know who you are, you feel like a "nobody." The majority of the British Home Children were labelled as worthless, and believed they were worthless. How can you feel like a person of worth when you have doubts that your name is really yours? How would you feel about yourself if you believed you were an orphaned, abandoned, unwanted, illegitimate, and inferior nobody? My Father was an intelligent and resourceful man who succeeded in overcoming his early childhood experiences, but many others did not. They were permanently marked by their traumatic experiences. Most lived their lives burdened with the disparaging identities that had been assigned to them. They were shamed throughout their childhood and lived with these feelings all their lives. Most died not knowing who they were.

Are any of your relatives of English, Irish, Scottish, or Welsh ancestry? Did any of them immigrate to Canada between 1880-1930? Are you certain they came with their families? Did they have Birth Certificates? Do you know your Aunts and Uncles on both sides of your family? Your ancestors may have been British Home Children. You may be one of their four million Canadian descendants.

My Father died on his unconfirmed 85th birthday in 1994. Shortly after his death, I told my Mother of my limited research of the Snow family the year before. I asked her for any information she had, and she gave me a file of their correspondence with England. Until then, I was completely unaware of their attempts to establish his identity over a period of 55 years. My Father's past was rarely a topic of family discussion. It was never a taboo subject, but rather one about which he could say so little. I read their file and concluded the Children's Society had given them the "run-around."

I combined information from my Parent's book and their correspondence file to write Part I: "A Life Without an Identity." It describes the life he had -- rather than could have had -- if he had known who he was. I had not intended to write a book about my search. At the start, I fully expected to find a few answers to his lifelong questions, and end the search by thanking his caretakers for their efforts on his behalf. It is the "Snow" way. Regrettably, my research led me to much different conclusions. The Children's Society never gave my Father the information that would have allowed him to know who he was, and to find his family. I could have written this book by simply presenting my discoveries as just another genealogical search. My Parents' lifelong search required more than just a summary of results. I wrote it as it unfolded, and how the secrets were revealed. The pieces of the puzzle did not come in an orderly or sequential fashion.

If one purpose of the British Child Deportation Scheme to Canada was to simply rid Britain of an unwanted element of their society, they only partially succeeded. They underestimated the strength of needing to know who you are. I hope the successful conclusion of my search will inspire others to persist until they re-establish their familial ties. No one should live their lives without knowing who they are and to whom they belong.

## **PART I: A LIFE WITHOUT AN INDENTITY (1913-1994)**

### **Chapter 1: The Life of a Waif in England, 1913-1925**

My Father had very few memories of the first four years of his life and could only retell this unvarying story.

I was born on Larch Road, Balham, London, England on September 17, 1909. My Mother was Annie Gifford and my Father was John George Snow. Something must have happened to my Mother. She may have died. That left my elderly Father to look after three young children by himself. Times were hard and there were no services available to help people in these situations.

I remember when I was about four years old being surrounded by ‘Bobbies,’ and taken away from my family. I might have been lost or perhaps I had run away. I never saw any of my family again. The Waifs and Strays Society placed me in a foster home in Rumburgh, Halesworth, Suffolk (Snow G. 3).

Imagine you are a four-year-old child living with your family in London, England in 1913. Your world is limited to your home and family. You are just beyond the toddler stage. All you really know is that your Parents love you. They would have told you this. You believe everything your parents and other adults tell you. One day there is a knock at your door. Some Policemen and strangers enter your home. All the adults argue and shout. They frighten you. You wonder why Policemen are in your home. You ask yourself what you did wrong. You try to understand what is going on, although all you can see is adult knees.

A Policeman picks you up and carries you away. You struggle and cry out, “Mommy!” The strangers shove your family out of the way. The Policeman carries you out of your home and away from your family. The last thing you see over his shoulder is your family crying and reaching out to you with outstretched arms. He tells you to stop crying. As they take you away, the image of your home and family gets smaller and smaller. When you look around, you realize that you have never been this far away from them before. You are terrified. You are afraid you will never see them again. You will wonder for the next 80 years of your life why this happened, and why you never saw your family again.

These people take you to strange surroundings. You wet your bed. They punish you. They are mean to you. They tell you that your Parents did not want you anymore. You do not believe them. You cry for your Mother. They tell you, “She is gone!” You do not know what that means. You know she is somewhere. They tell you that your Parents

abandoned you, but you know the truth. They call you a “Waif,” but you know you have Parents who love you.

You might be able to speculate a little how this experience might have felt. You can imagine being frightened and alone. You can imagine being taken forcibly away from your family at the tender age of four. At best, you can only imagine it as a temporary experience with a happy ending of a return to your family. Only orphaned, abandoned, and kidnapped children can truly appreciate the actual trauma of being permanently separated from their families at a tender age. This was the experience of thousands of British Home Children.

Dr. Thomas John Barnardo was one of the evangelical “Child-Savers.” He believed he could save their souls by removing them from their families and emigrating them to Canada (Bean 42-43). He was never affiliated with any established Church, and was a self-proclaimed Doctor who forged his Physician’s title (Wagner 1979 307-308). He notified Parents he deemed “respectable,” before he emigrated their children. He notified those Parents he regarded as “not moral,” after their children had sailed. He sent 30,000 children to Canada (Wagner 1982 147).

For the first 25 years of the scheme, he boasted that he had conducted “Philanthropic Abductions.” He took almost half of the children into his care on “moral grounds,” or because he decided, they were in the care of a “not respectable” guardian. In many cases, it was sufficient for them to label the families as “bad.” He forcibly removed one quarter of the children in his care from their families. He proclaimed that children would be damaged if left in circumstances of which *he* disapproved. Such evangelical “Child-Savers” felt poor families reflected only an “unintelligent and almost animal affection” for their children. Barnardo argued that only emigration to Canada would save them from their families’ evil influences (Parr 67). Parents took him to court over 80 times on charges of kidnapping. When he lost a case and the courts ordered him to return the children, he emigrated them anyway (Wagner 1982 147).

As a young child, my Father’s options were very limited. He could have believed what strangers told him about himself and his family. Alternatively, he could have believed only what *he* knew to be true of his first four years of life. In retrospect, I can only assume that he opted not to believe what strangers told him. Throughout his life, he always tried to make the best of the situation at hand. As a child, he must have told himself constantly that he was not an orphan, his Parents did not abandon him, and that they loved him. All he would have to hold on to were his vague memories of his Parents. He knew he was not a “Bastard.” He

knew he was not inferior. He resisted others' efforts to convince him otherwise.

I can only speculate how he survived his childhood traumatic experiences. I imagine he observed families and recalled memories of how his Parents treated him. This painfully reminded him of his loss, but he focused on the future when he would be free of his caretakers. He vowed to himself that someday if he ever became a Father, he would love his children as he had observed Parents displaying their love for their children. He noted how Brothers and Sisters related to each other. He imagined that if he ever had children of his own, he would make sure they would treat each other as he had noted. He knew he was on the outside looking in, so he decided that he might as well learn what he could from this. He sought solace in the Church, where he learned that God loved him and would take care of him. There was no one else.

Organizations saw the children as only living *things* -- a little more intelligent than animals. They treated them accordingly, and the children learned to regard themselves as things. The "Waif and Stray" label reinforced these attitudes. It is not enough to simply provide for only the physical needs of children. The medical diagnosis, "Failure to Thrive," describes children whose physical, cognitive, and emotional development is drastically arrested. This is a result of caretakers who exclusively provide for the child's physical needs of food, clothing, and shelter, but completely ignore the child's emotional needs. The literature describing the scheme rarely acknowledges the injurious effects upon young children of separation from their Parents. Stroud offered the rationalization that the child-care organizations did not realize that children had emotional needs, and it would take three generations before parents became aware of this (106).

I cannot accept the despicable assertion that no one knew children had emotional needs. The most primitive tribe knows that a child's survival depends upon love and affection. Six centuries before the British Child Deportation Scheme, people knew that infants could die if caretakers only attended to their physical needs. In 13th Century England, a ruler conducted an experiment to assess the effects of rearing children under psychologically deprived conditions. He wanted to know what speech children would develop if no one ever spoke to them. He speculated that children might speak Hebrew, Greek, Latin, or their Parents' language. He allowed foster mothers and caretakers to only look after infants' physical needs. They were not allowed to talk to them. All the children died of emotional starvation (Mussen et al. 163).

Their bodies slowly shrivelled as if they died of food starvation. The twinkle of life in their eyes dulled and then extinguished. Their last

breaths were sighs of longing for any sign of human affection or attention. Did those employed by the child-care organizations not have children of their own? Perhaps they regarded the children in their care -- not as someone's children -- but as pieces of ownerless property.

The medieval term “wayves and streyves” described abandoned things. These things became the property of the Lord of the Manor, if their owners did not reclaim them. Edward de Montjoie Rudolf adopted the phrase for his child-care organization in 1881. The selection of this name was touted as a stroke of genius, because it opened Victorian hearts and purses (Stroud 62). They generously made donations. Children in care were regarded as things that did not belong to anyone. It suited the organization's monetary motives to portray the children as foundlings. Who could not feel pity for the abandoned orphans? The organization did not change their name until 60 years later in 1945 to the Church of England Children's Society. In 1982, it changed its name to The Children's Society, but the children formerly in their care are still commonly known as Waifs and Strays.

Vital learning experiences occur in the first three years of a child's life. The most important lesson children learn in the first two years is love and trust. These experiences are transformed into long-lasting neurological patterns. They are etched upon the mind and become part of the personality of the child -- and the adult. Parents provide nurture, affection, protection, and love. The quality and consistency of parenting in the first few years is critical to normal child development. This determines whether a child learns he is deserving/undeserving of love, and the world is a safe/frightening place. I can only hope my Father's Parents loved him enough to give him a tiny sense of his being worthy and deserving of love from others before he came into care. He was an optimistic man, who trusted himself and others. I can only speculate that these lifelong attitudes were a result of his early positive experiences with his family. I do not believe he learned love and trust from his caretakers.

My Father's caretakers never provided him with an accurate explanation how he came under their care. When he was a young child, they may have simply told him he was abandoned, or his Parents were dead. His simple choice as a young child was to either believe what he knew to be true, or to believe what they told him. Fortunately, he chose not to believe his family abandoned him. As young as he was, he knew he had been taken from his family. He did not believe he was an unwanted Waif or Stray. I would like to believe that he sustained this belief in spite of how others treated him and what they told him of his Parents. His belief in his being worthy of love and his ability to love another must have remained dormant during his childhood, adolescence,

and early adulthood. His faith and trust in himself and God were all that he ever had.

These beliefs allowed him to subsist, endure, and persevere alone for the first 25 years of his life. Falling in love with my Mother allowed him to extend his faith and trust to another. It must have taken tremendous personal strength for my Father to overcome his early feelings of abandonment and rejection. As an adult, he had a long-acquired habit of looking through and beyond a situation. To others it may have appeared that he was simply staring off into space. I learned that it was his method of ensuring that the immediate situation would never overwhelm him. While doing this, he would also tilt his head back and raise his chin in a determined way. I believe he learned this as a young child, as a method he adopted to protect himself from the efforts of others to diminish him. He would not speak, but rather simply raised his chin. It was enough.

**Fred G. Snow (4-11): Eight Years in a Foster Home, Rumburgh, Halesworth, Suffolk, England, 1913-1921**

It was unusual that my Father had so little to say of his eight years in foster care. If there were anything positive to say about foster care, he would have said it. Out of painful necessity, he repressed or blocked out many negative memories of this time. I can only conclude that he was unable to find much to be grateful for in this situation.

The next thing I remember was having a nametag pinned to my shirt, being put on a train by myself, and going to Rumburgh, Halesworth, Suffolk, where I was met by a Social Worker. She drove the pony and cart to the home of Mr. and Mrs. Smith. They lived about ten miles (16 km) from the train station. I stayed there eight years until I was 12 years old. I attended public school at Rumburgh.

I recall having to wear ladies' boots for some time. The Smiths were both white-haired and had no young children of their own, as their children were married and away from home. I used to run to the store for tobacco for Mr. Smith who always seemed to be cranky. I attended St. John's Church and sang in the choir at the age of six or seven as a soprano (Snow G. 3).

Your caretakers pin a nametag on your coat. You are too young to read, so you do not know what the piece of paper says. You have never been on a train before. A man plunks you on a seat. He tells you not to talk to anyone, and not to leave your seat. He leaves you there alone. You have no idea where you are or where you are going. You have never felt so alone. You know the train is not taking you home.

You only catch glimpses of buildings rushing by when you peek over the windowsill. You are very tired and want to lie down on the hard seat but are afraid that someone will punish you for that. You know it is best not to look back where you have been, because something says you will not be going back. You sit upright on the seat but your feet do not reach the floor and you are jostled back and forth by the train. You lean against the window. You pull your feet underneath you. You are frightened and suck your thumb. You have not done that in a long time. You wet your pants, because you do not know if there is a bathroom on the train. You were told not to move. You find a rag tucked between the seat cushions. You use it to dry yourself as best you can. You are cold because all you wear is short pants and a thin shirt. The shoes they gave you are too small and pinch your feet.

You peek out the window and no longer see buildings rushing by, but only trees and wide-open spaces. It looks very, very empty to you. The train slows down and a man tells you to get off when it stops. You



tentatively step onto the train platform. A stern woman approaches and says, "Come with me!" She looks at your wet pants and wrinkles her nose. She shouts, "Filthy Guttersnipe!" You have no idea what that means. She harshly takes your hand and leads you to a pony and a cart. She puts you in the back of the cart, instead of beside her. You feel like the bag of potatoes you sit upon. You watch the countryside with interest. Something tells you to remember every detail of this trip. You worry that you might never find your way back to your Mother. You ride in the cart for hours. Already, you have learned not to ask questions of these strangers. The woman stops the cart in a very small village. There are only a few houses. There is so much open space around you.

She takes you to a house and knocks on the door. An old man and woman answer the door. The woman says, "Here is the Waif!" Does she not know your name? The white-haired couple tell you they are your Parents now. You do not know why they say this, but you decide it is best for you not to say anything. You live with these old people for the next eight years of your life. They are poor. You quickly decide that you cannot afford to feel lonely. You decide just to feel alone instead, because it does not hurt as much. You wear shabby clothes. When your shoes wear out, they give you women's boots to wear that are too small for you. They cramp your feet. Your toes grow crookedly. There is not much food to eat. The old people are not cruel, but they treat you no differently than the family dog. They speak to you in the same tone. They do not really talk to you, but just order you around.

You learn to make yourself smaller when you are in their home. You learn to make yourself invisible so you will not attract undue attention from them. You know they do not really want you there, so you try to stay out of their way. Seven Christmas' come and go and you especially try your best to become part of the shadows on these occasions. You are not expected to participate. Their family visits them and they act as if you are not there. The old people surprise you when they give you a handkerchief on your eighth Christmas there. It is not wrapped, but you are grateful all the same. There is no one at school whom you can call a friend. All the children were born in the little village and live close to each other. Most are related to each other. You are the outsider who does not belong to anyone. They know you are not related to your foster parents. Everyone calls you a "Waif."

You wonder what you did wrong to deserve this. You know you belong to someone. You know you have a Mother and Father. Why do they not understand this? You go to Church and Sunday school and sing in the choir. The hymns are comforting. Outside Church, you hum these hymns very softly to yourself. You need to know that someone cares

about you. You wonder all the time, “Why doesn’t someone take me back to my Family?” As the years pass slowly, you realize this will not happen. When you ask the old people where your Mother is, they tell you she is dead. You do not believe them. You vow to find your Family yourself when you grow up and are free. No one ever told you when you were born and you never had a birthday. Every other child you knew in the village knew when they were born and had a birthday every year. You did not attend anyone’s birthday, but you heard of them.

The Waifs and Strays Society regarded village foster homes as ideal placements for their wards. They would not place children with their relatives. As early as the 1890’s, it was obvious that children were neglected in the foster homes. They were unwashed and wore ragged, dirty underclothes for months. They wore boots that were too small and permanently deformed their feet. They were infected with vermin, and years passed between inspection visits by local clergy (Stroud 68-73). The organizations persisted in fostering children in small villages for the next 50 years. My Father’s experience indicated that little had changed in the years he was in foster care. The organizations were adamant that *any* circumstances were better than a child living with his natural family -- his evil associations.

**Fred G. Snow (12-16): Four Years at St. Augustine's Church  
Home for Boys, Sevenoaks, Kent, England, 1921-1925**

You live in this foster home for eight years. You are surprised one day when the Social Worker knocks at the door. She is the same one from many years ago who took you to the Smith foster home. You remember seeing her only a few times before this. She says, "I'm here to pick up the Waif." Mrs. Smith invites her in. The Social Worker says she is sending you to a Home, where you will be "looked after." You could not possibly have known that your placement in the foster home would only last until you were 12 years old. You do not know that being taken to a Home is for the sole purpose of holding you until you are old enough to be "emigrated" to Canada. She tells you to pack your tin trunk. It has been under your bed for all these years. When you pack your meagre things, you notice there is nothing new to add. What you put in the trunk is exactly what you took out of the trunk eight years earlier. You put on Mrs. Smith's boots and grimace because you are older and have trouble fitting your misshapen toes into these boots you have worn for years. The Social Worker says you will have new shoes in "The Home."

You pass through the doorway and leave the only "home" you have known. Mrs. Smith says, "Good-bye." Her face is expressionless. Mr. Smith does not say anything. He does not even look at you. The Social Worker tells you to get in the cart. You rode the same one years before. She lets you sit on the seat beside her this time. When you arrive at the train station, you remember the terrifying train trip you had many years ago. She pins a nametag to your shirt. This time you can read and make sure your name is on it. She tells you someone will meet you at the next station. She leaves you there and walks away without saying anything. You get on the train and try not to think of where it is taking you. You wonder what "Home" you will be living in. As the train slowly pulls out of the station, you do not look back. You learned not to do that when you were four years old. You are a little boy who does not know where he is, and does not know where he is going. There is nowhere for you to run. There is no one for you to turn to. No one knows who you are. You do not know who you are either. As you watch the scenery pass by, you know you will not pass this way again.

As the train slows to a halt at a London station, a Porter looks at your nametag and tells you this is where you get off. He smiles and gives you a wink. You are not used to having someone smile at you, so you give him a shy smile back. You do not know how to wink. You get off the train. Another Social Worker hollers, "Here, Boy!" You assume that is yourself. He checks your nametag and tells you to follow him through the station, and not to say a word. He puts you on another train. As it

quickly passes through London, you wonder where your Family lives. You were too young to know where you lived when they apprehended you. All the same, you tell yourself your Family is somewhere out there. You have thoughts that now you are in London, somehow, they will find you, or you can find them. The train stops and you get off. You wait for someone to holler, "Here, Boy!" Someone does. He does not need to tell you to be quiet. You are a quick learner. You follow this man. He takes you to your new "Home."

It is a large and imposing stone building surrounded by high stone walls. They cut your hair off in clumps. They "delouse" you. You want to tell them this is unnecessary, but you know better than to speak. They give you clothes to wear that are more worn than your clothes. They give you old boots. To you they are new. At least they are too large instead of too small. You wonder if your bent toes might still straighten out in time. You notice that all the other boys in the Home have "empty eyes." You wonder if they are sick. They have scabs on their faces and arms. The adults take your nametag -- and your name away. One of the Sisters says, "You are now Boy Number 18264." You put your tin trunk under your bed in the dormitory, and notice the straw mattress reeks of urine. The older boys in the dormitory do not look at you.

An eight-year-old boy sneaks a look at you. He looks like a frightened puppy. At least the dormitory has a window, and you can see a little over the high walls. At night, you wonder which chimney pot belongs to your Family's home. You wonder why the Home is so silent. It absorbs the sounds of footsteps. It is a very strange place, full of very strange people.

The Home held 48 boys who were 6-16 years old in six dormitories. We slept on straw mattresses. Master Jago was quite sadistic and treated us as if we were criminals or slaves. I helped him fix some electrical wiring and he asked me if he knew anything about electricity. I said, 'Not very much.' I stood on a ladder and he told me to grab hold of a pipe. He handed an electrical wire to me. When I touched it, the shock nearly knocked me off. Mr. Jago laughed.

At the Local Council School they used a form of discipline called the 'cross' system.' A Head Monitor kept daily track of your mistakes or 'crosses.' The Headmaster of the Council School gave you one strap if you had eight 'crosses' for the day. He gave you another strap for every 'cross' more than eight. You got the same number of straps again when you got back to the Home! For serious misdemeanours, you leaned over and touched your toes while they caned you on your bare back. If they considered the offences very bad, you had to lie on a table

with one guy holding your hands and head and another holding your feet. They beat you with birch twigs across your bare backside.

Every night after supper, they lined us 48 kids -- big and small -- in a horseshoe formation in a big room. They punished kids in front of the whole school. They regarded running away, smiling, getting out of line while marching to school, and speaking back to your Head Monitor as very bad offences.

I got the cane only once after my friend Leonard Knell and I cleaned up the big hall after a meeting of some kind. We had a game of floor hockey using brooms as hockey sticks. Sneaky Sister Megan caught us and we both 'got the birch!' Sister Pickett and Sister Megan wore blue habits with white starched cowls. They were particularly mean. They would do anything to get us in trouble. They enjoyed punishing us.

One boy ran away from a Barnardo Home. They captured him and placed him in solitary confinement. They gave him a nightshirt and locked him in a room for seven days. They fed him only dry bread and a glass of water three times a day. When the week of solitary confinement ended, four boys held him spread-eagled over the end of a table, and gave him six strokes of the cane over his bare buttocks (Harrison 203). How much money did they save by forcing children to eat mouldy food or bread and water?

We had soccer practice three times a week, no matter what the weather. They put us on bread and water for a couple of days when we lost a soccer game. Can you imagine playing soccer all day and coming home to that? If a kid ran away, they beat him and locked him in the 'tower.' They gave him only bread and water for days.

Breakfast invariably consisted of porridge and two slices of bread with butter. There was also jam and tea. Lunch was a bowl of soup and two slices of bread. There usually was no dessert. If you did not eat all of your porridge at breakfast, they kept it and made you eat it the next day. If you refused again, they would keep this up for days until the porridge had meld on it. Still they forced you to eat it.

One Home Child gave a piece of candy to another child. Someone told the Matron. She used large tongs to carry the young girl up a flight of stairs. She called the girl "unclean (sinful)," threw her into a broom closet, and locked her in the dark. The rest of the children ate their meal in silence while the girl screamed and kicked her feet on the floor of the closet (Stroud 117).

We did all the cleaning in the Home. We scoured the rough-wood gym floor with a scrub brush. We got many splinters in our hands and knees as we wore only short pants. We mopped and scrubbed the kitchen and scullery. We scrubbed, waxed, and polished the linoleum on the front steps and big staircase. We scrubbed the marble back steps down to the basement. We tended the gardens. The older boys polished all the other boys' shoes. Every Saturday night, three of us 14-year-old boys bathed 20 of the five-year-old boys. I was a server at Church. Twice a week I went to Communion at 6:00 a.m. On Sunday, I went four times a day for early masses, Matins, Sunday school, and evening services. I felt safe in the Church (Snow G. 5-6).

The Waifs and Strays Society operated on a food budget of 3s 6d per child per week (Stroud 45-46). My Father's account indicated that the diet established in the 1880's had not changed for 40 years. How would you subsist on this meagre diet? Your weekday Breakfast is porridge, milk, and "dripping." On alternate weekdays, it is porridge, water, and "dripping." On Sunday mornings, you have bread, butter, and cocoa. Monday Dinner is soup, bread, and milk pudding. Every other Monday you have boiled apple, or rhubarb pudding. Tuesday Dinner is Irish stew with rice and carrots, or a "dripping crust." Wednesday, you have boiled suet (fat) pudding with treacle. Thursday Dinner is meat, bread, and green vegetables. Friday Dinner is soup, bread, and milk pudding. Saturday, you have baked suet pudding with raisins, apples, or carrots. Sunday Dinner is meat, vegetables, rice pudding, or stewed rhubarb. You could have fruit in the summer. Your Tea (Supper) during the week is bread, dripping, treacle, and milk. On alternate days, you had bread, dripping, treacle, and water. The Punishment Circle follows every Supper.

The rules of the Home were rigid (Stroud 43-44). How would you adapt to this unvarying routine? You wake up every weekday at 6:30 a.m., in summer and 7:00 a.m., in winter. You strip your bed. You open the windows wide -- "a little at the top," unless it is raining, snowing or foggy. You kneel at your bed and say the Lord's Prayer. You wash your hands and face. You wash your shorn hair and "rub it perfectly dry." You bathe once a week. You help wash the younger children. You say Grace before and after every meal. You say Prayers and read Scripture before breakfast. All of this takes about an hour every morning. You have breakfast at 7:30 a.m., in summer and 8:00 a.m., in winter.

After breakfast, you make your bed. You wash your bed-sheets every second week. You wash your blankets and quilts once a year -- only in the summer. You work in the kitchen or laundry after breakfast.

You attend school in the morning and return to the Home for Dinner at 1:00 p.m. You say Grace before and after Dinner. You attend school in the afternoon. You have Tea at 6:00 p.m., in the summer and 5:30 p.m., in the winter. You say Grace before and after Tea. You read Scripture and say Prayers after Tea. You gather for the daily Punishment Circle after Supper every night. You watch other children being caned with birch twigs. It is hard to watch the younger children being punished, but if you close your eyes or look away, they cane you too. You unfocused your eyes so you do not see.

Once the caning is done, they send you all to bed. Children under eight go to bed before 7:00 p.m. Those under nine go to bed by 8:00 p.m., and those under twelve go to bed by 8:30 p.m. You go to bed before 9:00 p.m. You kneel at your bed and say the Lord's Prayer. On Saturday, you clean the Home -- "from top to bottom." You attend Church on Sunday morning and Sunday school in the afternoon. You can attend evening Church -- but only in the summer. You spend as much time in Church as you can. It allows you some respite from this place, if only for a while.

Every Friday night, they "dosed" the children with a mixture of castor oil and liquorice powder. A single spoon was licked by one and passed to the next. Ringworm, vermin, and chilblains were rampant in the Homes. They allowed the children a one-day outing per year. They did not allow them to go outside the gates of the Home except briefly during school holidays. Children could go out on the large paved areas that were surrounded by high walls, but there were no toys with which they could play (Stroud 113-115). They had to refer to themselves by their number at all times. Perhaps there was another motive to their numbering of children. In 1911, a Canadian eugenicist suggested all of humanity should be numbered. He contended that if numbers replaced names, over time everyone would develop pride in their assigned digit (McLaren 25). I do not think many British Home Children developed pride in their digits. I am surprised the organizations did not tattoo the children's arms with, "Waif Number 18264." This might have made it easier for them to locate children, since they lost track of so many in Canada.

The Homes strictly enforced the Rule of Silence, especially when children were outside the Home. They could talk quietly amongst themselves for an hour between tea and bedtime (Stroud 112-113). The Punishment Circle was held every night after Tea, so there could not have been much time left for communication. What could they talk about after they were forced to watch other children being caned? The organizations justified the Rule of Silence by saying that the prevailing attitude of the

time was, “Children should be seen and not heard.” If they were seen and heard at the wrong time and place, the organizations feared the loss of the gentry’s goodwill -- and their financial contributions (Stroud 106-107).

The dominant motive of the Waifs and Strays Society was to permanently isolate children from their families and deport them overseas. Their 1893 constitution stated their primary mission as one of doing “all things expedient” to assist the emigration of children (Stroud 229). They wanted to rescue children from their bad surroundings and permanently place them in Canada to prevent them from drifting back when they were no longer under their care. The entire emphasis was upon breaking “old evil associations.” The Waifs and Strays Society regarded their efforts as wasted if children re-established their associations. Admission was made contingent upon the nearest relative handing over the child “unreservedly” into their care (Stroud 80). The child-care organizations conducted a Holy Crusade against poor families.

They appeared to have modified their objectives in 1952 when they professed their first priority as one of providing financial assistance to families so that children could remain with them. The provision was whether they judged the homes as “reasonably satisfactory.” Their second apparent priority was adoption, if they decided it was “inadvisable” for children to stay in their homes. Their third priority was to board children with foster parents, and their final option was to send children to the Homes until they were of employable age (Stroud 230). There was no mention of child emigration in their policies, even though they were very much involved in the British Child Deportation Scheme to Australia until 1967.

When I imagine St. Augustine’s Home for Boys, I see only grey. I see the sun shining overhead -- but not on this building. Inside, I see spirits frozen in the still air. They are images of children with hurt but tearless eyes. They all wear numbers. I see cold stone walls saturated with their muffled cries. I do not hear echoes of children’s laughter, because this is a silent place. Instead, I feel the vibrations of their unspoken pleas. I feel a silent, “Please help me.” I see my Father’s dormitory, and imagine him sitting by the window, leaning on the sill, and praying to the night sky for deliverance. I see a children’s prison.



## **Chapter 2: A British Home Child Deported to Canada, 1925**

The child-care organizations regarded the children as simply commodities for export. It cost them 10-15£ each year to keep a child in their care. It cost them only 2£ to emigrate each child. They saved a great deal of money by exporting children at the earliest possible age -- many as young as six years old. Not only did they save money, but also they profited. Canada's need for cheap farm labour was insatiable. For every child sent, there were requests for ten more.

The Canadian government paid the organizations \$2.00 for each child (Wagner 1982 154). The British Parish Guardians paid them \$75.00 for each child they emigrated. The Canadian government paid them a cash bonus of \$5,000.00 for every 1,000 they sent (Bagnell 1980b 69). The organizations sold the children as slave labour. The Canadian government bought them. The scheme was always about money and never about the best interests of children. There are many similarities between the British Child Deportation Scheme and Black Slavery in the US in the 19th Century.

The Waifs and Strays Society saw Canada as a void to fill with their "surplus" children. By 1919, the scheme had been in operation for 50 years. Fifty British child-care organizations sent 73,000 to Canada unaccompanied by parents or guardians (Stroud 78-79). Between 1882-1908, Barnardo shipped 14% (4,500) of his children to Canada illegally - - without parental consent. A further 9% (3,000) were sent because of court orders and the Home Secretary's authorization, but not parental consent. One quarter (7,500) of all Barnardo children were sent to Canada illegally (Parr 67).

Few of those in the organizations had ever traveled more than a few kilometres from their place of birth. They had no appreciation for what was involved in traveling across the ocean and could not comprehend the vastness of Canada.

Boys were shipped in the spring and girls in the fall. Each child had a metal suitcase that contained what the naïve English considered necessary for survival in Canada. The suitcase contained a cap, a suit, belt, ball of wool, boot brush, one pair of rubber boots, one pair of slippers, one pair of overalls, one pair of underwear, two long nightshirts, two pairs of woollen socks, two shirts, two handkerchiefs, some needles, and thread. Each case also contained four books: The Travelers Guide, Holy Bible, New Testament, and Pilgrim's Progress (Corbett 123).

The clothing was quite inadequate. Many farmers did not replace children's clothes when they wore or outgrew them, and many wore the same clothes for years.