

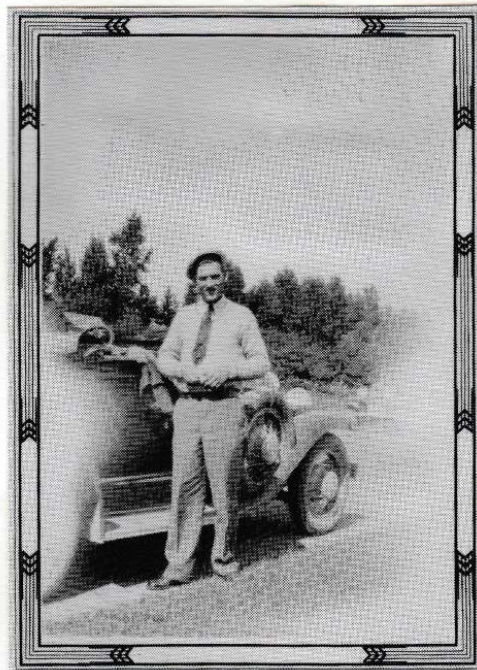
151

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Gerald Bélanger (1910 - 1976)

Irene Michaud (1912 - 1983)

Gerald Louis Bélanger was born 28 January 1910 in Grand Falls, New Brunswick Canada, the 12th child of Lucien and Leda Parmella Gagnon. Gerald was baptized on 30 January 1910 by Father Henry Jayner in Grand Falls. The Godparents were Mr. and Mrs. Louis Beaulieu (Aunt Alma). Gerald was confirmed on 20 June 1920 by Bishop O'Leary at Assumption Church in Grand Falls. Gerald and Irene were married by Rev J.J. Fournier, SM, in the presence of Lucien Bélanger and Louis Philippe Michaud. Gerald was naturalized as a United States Citizen in Caribou, Maine on 5 February 1941. He signed the paper as Gerald Louis Bélanger but the authorities typed in Gerald Lewis. They also noted that his nationality was British! Gerald was 31 at the time.



152

Starting with this chapter, I am changing the format somewhat. In prior generations I only had the information I could gather from records. My grandparents either died when they were young or I was too young to remember them so even this generation contained second hand information. My father's generation, however, contains stories given to me first hand by my brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles and cousins. The following stories are as I received them from different individuals and from tape recordings I made at different times during family visits. For this reason, the same story is told more often than once but by different people, each with its own interpretation. I have tried to keep the reader informed as to the story teller and the circumstances under which the information was gathered.

GROWING UP

Gerald always had stories about his early childhood and never needed much prodding to tell them. The setting had to be right, though, and this was usually with the family gathered around him. On one special occasion (27 May 1973), a tape recorder was set up in the middle of the table to pick up these stories for posterity. Printed here are the results of that session. Every attempt has been made to tell the stories as Gerald told them that night. The grammar was as it was used that evening and almost no attempt has been made to correct it. Lawrence Michaud and Cecile Violette were there that night along with his son Jim, his daughter Phyllis and his wife Irene. These are Gerald's stories as well as others who were there that evening.

MIKE'S CLOTHES BY IRENE

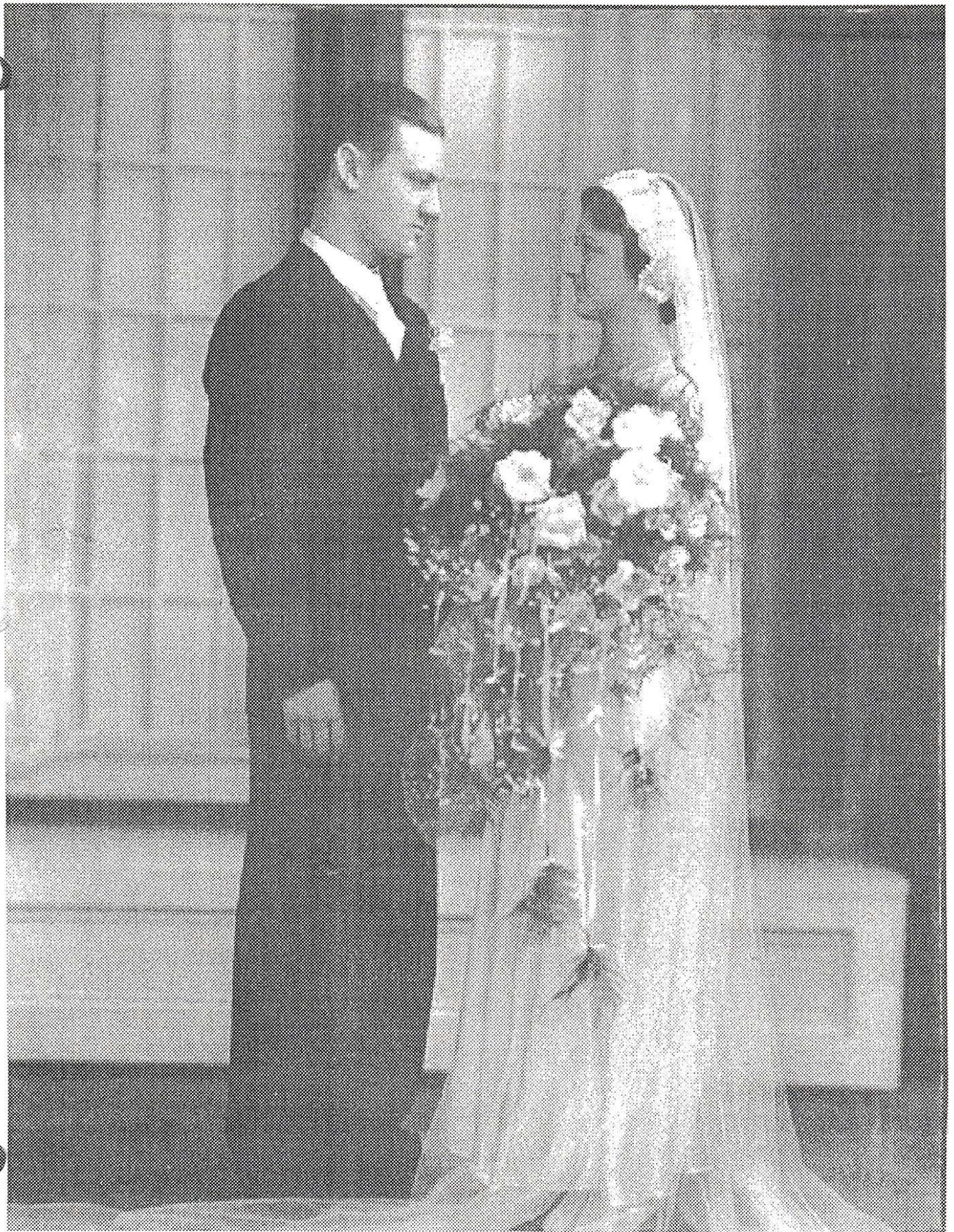
Dick had been asked to watch Mike so that he would not get into any trouble. I had been peeling potatoes and Dick was watching Mike when I saw Mike at the corner of the street. Mike had taken my pocket book and strolled off. By the time we caught up to Mike and got him back home, the purse was missing from the pocket book and all the money with it. No matter how we looked between the house and the corner, we never found the purse and the money that was in it.

SMOKING BY UNCLE LAWRENCE MICHAUD

When I was a youngster, many of us kids walked to town along the railroad tracks. We would find cigarette butts on the ground along the tracks and picked them up. We would smoke these and, one day, we got sick from these old butts. It didn't take long for the folks to find out why the other kids and I were sick. That taught me never to smoke again.

SESAME - LIGHTS GO OUT BY GERALD

Our sister Sena was married, and she lived above the old shop. Dollard was always doing something to be the devil. Sena and Dollard never got along much since Sena always said Dollard had the devil in him; she called him a grippette. One day Dollard cut the electric wires above the ceiling where Sena lived. He had made arrangements ahead of time and I was stationed above the ceiling, waiting for his signal. Dollard went down to see Sena and told her that he could make the lights go out. She said he couldn't do any such thing! So Dollard said, aloud, go out lights, extinguish, and I



153
pulled the cut wires apart. This made the light go out. Then Dollard said "light come on" and I put the wires together. Sena told our mother that she finally had proof that Dollard had the devil in him.

MY LITTLE RED WAGON BY GERALD

Felix Lajoie was building his garage in Grand Falls. Dollard was building a camp in the swamp behind the house and needed boards and other material to finish it. Dollard and I would go over and steal boards from the Burgess¹ mill. Burgess had a lot of old boards and we used to steal these and drag them into the woods to build the camp, but they needed nails. My father had bought me a nice little red wagon. Dollard says, Minoune (they always called me minoune) I'll tell you what we're gonna do. You and I will be partners. He says, we're going to go get nails at Felix's. Just a foundation existed and there was a board going into the foundation. Felix had made little wooden squares and in these were different size nails. Dollard and I went there, it was kinda dark, it was getting dark early then you know. Well, we were there stealing the nails when Felix Charette comes along. Well, I didn't want to leave my new little red wagon but Dollard, he took off. (Moudis son canc). Well, while Dollard was heading out through the field, I stayed behind with my red wagon. Felix comes in and caught me and started taking the nails out of my wagon and I was so scared I pissed my pants. The next day Felix tells my father about it. I caught hell.

THE COMMERCIAL HOTEL BY GERALD

Mrs. Perie, at that time, they had what they called "The Commercial Hotel²" or something and that was abandoned. In that old hotel they had one armed bandits, des jibou, and we would get into the cellar. Dollard had found a way into the cellar and we would go in there. There were these tall machines with glass in the front and behind the glass there were quarters. We used to have a hammer and we would break the little glass and take out the money. It was during World War One and the girls had kind of a sewing circle for the Red Cross; they made blankets and stuff and it was good. On the side the girls would have a little snip, once in a while. Dollard and I would steal the Porter wine the girls had and we would steal beer. We would sell the Porter and the beer to guys from Caswell who came to Grand Falls for the dances. We used to get ten or fifteen cents a bottle and that was during prohibition, there was no beer to be had around; but these girls had some. One day Dollard got over anxious. We used to take only two bottles at a time, they were pretty big bottles, you know. My father had a fur coat, the fur was inside, it was fur lined. Dollard stole the coat from the old man, it was in the closet and he stole it and he cut the lining. We went over there and we must have taken a dozen bottles and stuck it inside the lining of the fur coat. Dollard was short and my father was quite tall so the coat was dragging right on the ground. Dollard had bottles all around him and was walking funny. Well, who spots him but old Bill Perie! Of course, it was his hotel and it was his liquor! I tell you we caught hell that time! We got a couple kicks in the ass and they took the beer away from us.

¹ James Burgess built a mill to produce boards and shingles. The first mill burned in 1912 and was rebuilt. The second also burned in 1929.

² This may have been the American Hotel and stables next to John Kelly's blacksmith shop.

154

DOLLARD'S BICYCLE SHOP

BY GERALD

Dollard had started a bicycle shop. He used to go visit the old man George (Ryan?). George used to fix bicycles and Dollard learned how to fix bikes from the old man. Dollard was smart you know. Dollard would steal the spokes and ball bearings from the old man and started a shop, in competition with old George Ryan. All the kids would come in and get their bikes repaired by Dollard but he had no money to buy parts so he would steal the parts from George Ryan. There was a shed in the back of the shop which is where Dollard set up his business. There was always a few little good looking girls hanging around. The girls always wanted a ride on the bikes Dollard was fixing. He would trade them a peak (and you can guess what he was peaking at) for a bike ride. So, they would get a ride around the block for a peak. When they wanted a second ride, it cost them a little longer peak!

DOLLARD'S MINSTREL SHOW

BY GERALD

Dollard planned a minstrel show one day. He sent us brothers to pick up strawberries and we would sell them to J.L. White's. Of course, before we could sell them, Dollard had to weigh them. He had fixed up a special scale and we would get a nickel a pound. After he weighed them, he would add water in the pail and then he would send us out to sell them. He made a few dollars, like this, and he planned this minstrel show. He got all the little girls that hung around his shop to audition for the show. The show never happened, you know. Dollard lined up all the girls and was looking them over, as if to select some. He told them that the ones who could pee further than the others could get into the show. So he would judge them as they performed. That Dollard had the devil in him; there was nothing that he wouldn't do. He went to work in the woods one winter and gambled away all his money. He had to sell his clothes to get enough money to make it back home. I never had the nerve that he had. He wouldn't take me along on his expeditions for that reason.

DOLLARD'S STORE

BY GERALD

One day, Dollard decided to start a little store in his bicycle shop, and he would sell American goods. So, we would go up along the railroad tracks and go to Cyr's. Dollard and I would go in along with 3 or 4 other guys. Dollard had to bring me because I cried to my father that Dollard never brought me with him. My father would say, bring Minoune with you, and so he did. Of course, he didn't know what was going on, the old man, you know. Had he known, he wouldn't have made Dollard bring me along. This had been going on for a long time. Dollard would steal beer, and tobacco and cigarettes and pop, workaday tobacco and stuff like that. It was a Sunday and we all went into the store and the store keeper was there. She said, Good Day my little Bélanger; she knew Dollard you know, he was a good customer. He'd buy for maybe a dollar and steal for ten. Dollard says, Mrs. Cyr, I would like; and then he'd ask for something that was not in the front of the store. She had it in the "back store". They called the storage room the "back store". While she was in the back store, we were supposed to steal the cigarettes real quick, you see, and put them in our pockets. My job, on this Sunday, was to steal some Pop Beer. So I had a big coat on and Dollard had sewn big pockets inside the coat. While Mrs. Cyr was in the back store, I was grabbing beer and putting it into these sewn in pockets and then I closed my coat. Mrs. Cyr came out, after Dollard had stuffed his

135

coat with cigarettes, and Dollard chit chatted with her. It bothered me, what we had done, it always bothered me. I was near the door and Mrs. Cyr looked at me and asked Dollard who I was. Was I with them? Dollard said, yes, that's my little brother. She said, what's the matter with him, he looks funny. I was ready to cry because of what I had done and when she said that, I started crying and admitted to stealing the beer and I pissed in my pants. Dollard exclaimed that he would never bring me with him again, I was a little thief and he would tell our father about it. Dollard made me take out all the beer I had stolen and give it back, while he was there with his coat packed with stolen cigarettes. Dollard, he could be straight faced and never flinched.

PEANUTS AND THE CPR BY GERALD

On Sundays, we would go up on the CPR, the railroad you know, and there were railroad cars parked there. The doors to the cars were sealed and we would take pliers from my father's shop and we would break the seals and open the doors. We looked for peanuts to steal. We never took anything else, but when we found peanuts, we would take them. Can you imagine breaking the seals on railroad cars! We'd be in the penitentiary if we did that today. Dollard had some dogs and he would make them fight. He operated dog fights, there was nothing he wouldn't do!

CHANGING A DIAPER! BY GERALD

You remember Romeo Pelletier, he worked for the light district? Anyway, Irene had gone out for something and Joe and I were baby sitting Jim and we were sitting, talking, having some beers. Pretty soon Joe says, I smell shit in here. Oh you're crazy, I sez, have another beer. Pretty soon Romeo says, there's something wrong, that kid must have shit himself. We were half in the can, you know, so we went over to check on Jimmy. Oh boy, did he stink, he sure had shit himself. I said jeeze, I don't how to change a diaper, you're right, he shit himself, there was shit all over the place. You know Joe, he knew everything. Joe says, I can change that diaper, there's nothing to it. So we take Jim and put him on the table with newspapers under him. Joe starts to change him and his hand slips and he got his hands full of it. By the time we were done, we had shit all over the place; oh what a mess.

COVERED BRIDGES BY GERALD

When we were dating, Irene and I would go visit the folks in Grand Falls every Sunday. One day we brought Irene's sister, Cecile, along with us. Well, on the way we had to cross through a covered bridge. Cecile says that if you hold your breath, while crossing a covered bridge, and make a wish, it comes true. Well, when we get to the covered bridge, Cecile takes a deep breath and holds it as we drive onto the bridge. Well, half way through the bridge, I stop the car. Boy of boy, was she mad at me! She said if I was the last man on earth, I wouldn't marry a fellow like you. She had held her breath so long she almost suffocated.

The stories, told above, were all told half in French and half in English. Writing them all in English has certainly changed the original flair with which they were told.

MOVE TO THE UNITED STATES

The depression years of 1929 to 1935 affected the New Brunswick region as much as it did the United States. Although, due to the major occupation of farming, people in the region had plenty to eat, they had no more than the necessities. This caused many young men to seek their fortunes elsewhere. The United States was tempting and Gerald already had a brother there, so he moved to Van Buren, Maine.

One has to keep in mind the manner in which the Bélanger family of Grand Falls had been engaged to make a living. Lucien was a blacksmith and several of his sons were following in his footsteps. The times were changing, however, and the need for this trade was declining. In 1931 there were close to 1500 horses, 3000 cows and 2000 each of pigs and sheep in the Grand Falls area. This agricultural makeup rapidly changed. By 1941 these totals had declined to a mere 500 horses, 1800 cows, 1100 sheep and about 700 pigs. During the same period tractors started taking the place of working steers and horses with no tractors in 1931, about 75 by 1947 and by 1958 they outnumbered the horses three to one.

THE EARLY ADULT YEARS³

Irene E. Michaud was born 24 September 1912 in Van Buren, Maine, the daughter of Louis Philip and Laura Cormier. Laura died while her four children were very young and Louis Philip remarried to Alma Lapointe who raised the children. Alma never bore Louis any children.

Because parents with children did not have to go to War (WW I) and because Philippe had four very young children without their natural mother, it was decided that Cecile go live with her Aunt and Uncle. Philippe's brother Joe had married Laura's sister Angele and they had no children. They raised Cecile as their own and it was not until Cecile and Irene were in High School that they found out they were sisters. Irene said she "always knew there was a special attraction between my cousin and I that was more than being cousins". The two had been best friends before and were much closer afterwards and forever.

When Irene was 16, she graduated from Van Buren High School and was offered a position teaching English in Canada by the Nuns. They were hoping she would join the order! She decided to stay in Van Buren to work at the bank, where she had been offered a job. She had some experience from school where she acted as bank representative since the school held accounts for the children. This had to be around 1926 or so, just before the depression which started in October 1928. A job was a job and this one paid something like \$6.00 a week.

Just around that time, Pepère and Memère⁴ Michaud decided to leave Van Buren and go South, to Lewiston or thereabouts, to find work, as apparently Pepère had no job in Van Buren. There was never any question of Irene going too, as she had a job! Irene roomed at her Aunt Angele's. It is not known if Cecile was still there at that time. Times were hard, kids grew up fast, and being on your own at 16 was not that unusual. Irene's parents must have worried a lot less because she was rooming at her Aunt's.

Irene married in August of 1932, and must have turned 20 in September of that year, so she had been on her own for four years. Gerald had left Grand Falls, N.B. when he was 15, to go to Van Buren to work for his older brother, Emile⁵, who owned and operated Baker's Machine Shop. Emile

³ The information provided for the early years of Irene and Gerald's life was provided by my sister, Phyllis Bélanger of Caribou, Maine.

⁴ Alma Lapointe, not Laura Cormier as she had already passed away.

⁵ 5th child of Lucien and Leda Gagnon, (1895-1958)

157

had anglicized his surname to Baker for business purposes. Gerald was rooming at his brother Emile's house then and was making \$3.00 per week plus room and board.

There were several women who took in roomers, at that time, and Emile's wife, Cecile Sirois, was one of them. A Mrs. Cyr also did that and Irene was remembered as saying she moved there for a while because breakfast was included in the rent. Some of these ladies also served lunch. The working young people who only rented rooms, without lunch, met for lunch at different places.

Gerald was quite a man about town as he was dashing and had a car, a Roadster no less, and many a pretty girl set their cap for him. Apparently he saw Irene around and liked her looks, so he told one of his friends. He had many friends, as did anyone with a car in those days. His friend was asked to tell that little Michaud girl that he would pick her up for a date on a certain night at a certain time. Well, that little Michaud girl told Gerald's buddy to tell Gerald to take a hike! She was not about to be asked out on a date by proxy. This must have upset Gerald as he had not expected to get rejected and he vowed never to ask her out again. One evening, Irene and some of her friends were in town and saw Gerald's car parked at the curb. There was not much to do in the evenings and they decided to spend some time sitting in Gerald's car just for the fun of it. Irene left him a note, thanking him for the use of the car. That must have broken the ice because they soon started dating.

Gerald was always doing something to impress the girls. He had rigged up this button on the floorboard to blow his horn. He would press the button with his foot and the horn would blow. Well, when Gerald would bring Irene home from a date and would push in the clutch, "somehow" he would seem to always hit the horn button as he turned into the driveway. This irritated Irene's Aunt Angele and she would complain about it. She also complained at the hour Irene would come home from her dates and so Irene finally moved.

When they were dating, Gerald would give Irene all of his money to keep for him. Irene said that before she met Gerald, he would go to the Men's Clothing store and tell the clerk to outfit him with whatever he needed for the season. Gerald would probably pay so much per week for the clothing. After he met Irene, she advised him on his clothes and opened a savings account for him as well as kept track of his money. This was a habit that never changed over the years.

Every Sunday they had to go to Grand Falls and see Memère Bélanger. Gerald was her baby and she expected him to come and see her and take her for a ride every Sunday. Gerald had his Roadster, a two seater with a rumble seat in the back, and they would go to Grand Falls to take Gerald's folks for weekly Sunday rides. Gerald and his mother would sit in the front seat while Irene and Gerald's father would share the rumble seat. Irene often got badly sunburned. Irene and Gerald became good friends with Gerald's brother, Dollard⁶, and his wife Alphena Page who were living with Gerald's parents.

When Gerald and Irene decided to get married, Gerald had to ask his mother. Irene did not want to go with him but he insisted. Apparently, Irene stayed in the car while Gerald went into the house to tell his mother that he was getting married. You must keep in mind that Gerald was about 22 at the time and had been on his own since he was 15. Irene said he came out of the house looking very depressed and told her his mother would not allow him to get married. His mother had told him that "her baby" could not get married until she died. Irene asked him what he was going to do about it and he replied that they would have to wait. Irene told him that he could wait, she would not and if they didn't get married he could call the whole thing off! So, on 22 August 1932 Irene and Gerald were married. Memère Bélanger was suspiciously ill on the day of the wedding and did not attend,

⁶ 11th child of Lucien and Leda Gagnon, (1906-1976)

although Pepère was there and might even have been the "Best Man". The people in the wedding party were mostly friends of Irene's sister, Cecile. They went for a honeymoon in the Roadster.

MARRIED, AT LAST!

After Irene and Gerald were married, they lived with Memère and Pepère Michaud in the house on Roosevelt Avenue in Van Buren, Maine for 1 year, until August 1933 when they rented a house. Irene's father and step mother then lived in what was later to become the Doucette's home. The house rented by Irene and Gerald was two houses down from Thomas Michaud's store (Brookside Manor in 1993). Phyllis was born in this rented house in December 1933.



During the early winter of 1934, Irene was pregnant with Dick⁷, Gerald was laid off by Emile because business was slow in the winter since the town rolled the roads⁸ in the winter instead of plowing them. Cars were not used much since horses had much better traction on rolled snow. Since he had no work locally, Gerald left Irene and Phyllis⁹ in December 1934, to work in the woods in Portage, Maine for Irene's uncle John Cormier. He was going to be gone all winter, as was the

custom for woodsmen who lived in a bunkhouse and worked the timber with horses all winter. Since Irene thought this was an opportunity to save money, she sublet the downstairs of the house to a US Customs Officer and his family and managed with Phyllis using only the upstairs. She was pretty miserable living up there, probably with a hot plate instead of a kitchen, a baby and pregnant with Dick. In any case, it did not last long as, one day, the doctor came upstairs to announce that the downstairs tenants had diphtheria and the entire house had to be quarantined. He told Irene that, if she had a place to go and left right away, he would only impose the quarantine after she had gone.

⁷ Richard, born 11 March 1935

⁸ The snow was packed down with rollers to allow sleighs to travel but not motorized vehicles

⁹ Irene and Gerald's first-born, 27 Dec 1933

154
She packed up what she could take and went to live with Pepère and Memère Michaud on Roosevelt Avenue again. She never returned to the rented house after that.

In February 1935 Gerald came back from the woods. Irene had found an apartment in town, upstairs over a store. Her sister Cecile and some of her friends helped her move and got her belongings out of the rental house for her. Dick was born in that downtown apartment, on 11 March 1935. Gerald worked for the Bangor and Aroostook (B & A) Railroad in the "roundhouse"¹⁰ for the rest of the winter.

Irene heard that a house at 14 High Street was being sold by the bank in August of 1936 and she wanted it badly. Irene and Gerald bought it for \$2,000.00 and had to sell Gerald's car to make the down payment. For the next few years they walked. Pete¹¹ was born at the 14 High Street house on 7 April 1937.

The Bélanger family lived in that little house at 14 High Street with many and diverse remodelings, until they moved to Caribou in December 1955. In the fall of 1937, Irene went to work for Emergency Aid until the spring of 1938. In 1938-39 the roads were kept open in the winter so Gerald could work with Emile all winter long.

THE FAMILY

Irene and Gerald lived at 14 High Street in Van Buren and raised their family. In the summer, before the road was paved, Gerald would bring home old motor oil from the service station and spread it out on the street to keep the dust down. He manufactured a makeshift sprayer arrangement to tow behind a vehicle and this would spray oil over the dirt surface. The housewives must have alternately loved and hated him; loved him for cutting down the dust and hated him for the oily footprints all over their floors.

One day he came home to lunch with a "barrate-a-donut" which must be said in French for it to have any meaning. It was like a motorized scooter with a cab. One stood up in it and it was probably used to deliver donuts. Anyway, he gave all the kids a ride in it, on the sidewalk no less. Irene had a fit but the kids all had a ball.

The family was quite spread out in years even though they seemed to appear, two at a time. Phyllis was the oldest followed by Richard (Dick) 15 months later and then Lawrence (Babe, Pete, Larry) two years behind Dick. Irene called Lawrence her little Babe, as he was the baby, and the name stuck during his school years. Six years after Babe, Irene had James¹² (Jim) and then two years later Michael¹³ (Mike). Five years after the birth of Mike, Irene had surgery to correct a tipped uterus and she then got pregnant with William¹⁴ who was born 6 years after Mike. Then followed John¹⁵, 2 years later, and Stephen,¹⁶ 4 years after John. Stephen was the only one born in Caribou, Maine, 2 days after Irene and Gerald's 25th Anniversary. The other children were all born in Van Buren, Maine (26 miles North of Caribou). Dick and Pete were away in the military service when Steve was born but Phyllis was still living at home while employed full time at WFST, a local radio station.

Around 1943, during WWII, things were rationed. One had to have stamps to buy food, gasoline and some items of clothing like nylon hose. Every family was issued food stamps according to the

¹⁰ A round building where engines were placed on a turnstile and turned to face in the other direction on the same set of tracks.

¹¹ Lawrence Donald, 7 April 1937 (3rd child of Irene and Gerald)

¹² Born 5 March 1943

¹³ Born 26 April 1945

¹⁴ Born 21 November 1951

¹⁵ Born 25 December 1953

¹⁶ Born 24 August 1957

160

size of the family and gasoline stamps according to the miles one had to drive. Different food items required differing amounts of stamps. Although items were still purchased with standard currency, stamps were needed to justify the purchase. This allowed rationed purchases for those who had stamps and prevented those with money from capitalizing on commodities.

The young single men were being drafted into military service followed by married men and then men with families. When Gerald got a notice to go to Bangor, Maine for an induction physical, Irene got very nervous. She feared being left alone, with no husband, to care for three children and a fourth on the way. The gasoline service station had to be run, closed or sold. Irene knew she could not run it, which left the other two alternatives. On the night of March 4th, Gerald was gone to Bangor for the physical, the community conducted an air raid drill. All of Irene's children were huddled in the hall and Irene went into labor. Pepère Michaud was called and he brought Memère Michaud to stay with the children while he took Irene to the hospital. Jim was the first to be born in the hospital and then, even he, was almost born at home. Although Gerald passed the physical, he was excused from military induction due to Jim's birth¹⁷. Jim, Mike and John were all born at the Hotel Dieu Hospital in Van Buren, Maine.

Air raid practice was held during the 40s. The siren would sound and everyone had to turn out the lights or draw a heavy dark curtain over the windows to allow no light to be seen from the outside. Air raid wardens would patrol the streets on foot and check for any light which could be seen by enemy planes. In Gerald and Irene's house there was a hallway in the middle of the house which had no windows. When all the doors leading to the other rooms were closed, the lights in the hallway could be turned on without risk of being seen and so the family could sit out the air raid practice.

Sunday mornings, after church, Gerald would take a walk downtown and bring back ice cream for the noon meal's dessert. We always had a big meal on Sunday noon, roast chicken, gravy, mashed potatoes, dressing, fruit salad and dessert (ice cream, a treat). Gerald would buy 2 pints of ice cream and stop off at Mrs. O'Donnell's, the next door neighbor, give her one pint and bring the other one home to be split 6 ways. I think that many times Irene felt that charity should begin at home - but the O'Donnell's loved Gerald and they were good neighbors.

THE HOUSE IN VAN BUREN

Irene remodeled the house on High Street in Van Buren quite a few times, inside and out. Irene was a designer. She used every available space for storage. She had a beautiful flower garden on the side of the house, which she loved to work in. She said it relaxed her. When she finally had it the way she liked it, Gerald announced they were selling it and moving.

The house originally had a large front porch, but that disappeared after time. An enclosed back porch and a washroom were added. The washroom was quite large and functioned as a mud room/sewing room. Gerald would wash up there when he came home from work. From the back porch, you entered the washroom before you entered the kitchen.

The house was a story and a half; sometimes called a bungalow, with an unfinished attic. There were 6 rooms downstairs, not including the bathroom. Irene remodeled it by adding the washroom and back porch. The stairs going down to the cellar were moved when the attic was finished into 2 bedrooms and an ell. Phyllis had one room and the 4 boys had the other. You should have seen the built-ins Irene designed up there; storage galore! The boys' beds were built into the slope of the

¹⁷ Four children exempted you from military service.

161

ceiling and the little ones slept against the wall where they did not need as much head room. The bottom of the bed, under the mattress, opened for storage of blankets, etc.

At one time, the house was painted pink, which some thought really looked nice. It was so easy to tell people you lived at the pink house on High Street! The O'Donnell's lived next door with their house facing Roosevelt Avenue on the corner of Roosevelt Avenue and High Street. On the other side was the house where the Andersons lived. Jack Anderson had twins who were in Phyllis' class at school. They moved away after Mrs. Anderson died. Albert Levesque, the manager of the A & P store, moved into their house. Also facing Roosevelt Avenue, but a few houses to the south, was the Harris house. They owned 2 lots so their empty back lot faced our house. Mrs. O'Donnell, who we all grew up calling Donner, was a widow and had a large family but most of her children were grown. Mike, the youngest, was 4 or 5 years older than Phyllis (Irene and Gerald's oldest child). Donner had some grandsons from Boston, named Michael and Shawn, who used to come spend the summer. They were hell raisers and used to play with Dick and Pete (Babe or Lawrence, your choice). There were other families close by in the neighborhood like the Cyrs and Beaulieus who had a lot of kids our age. Mrs. Cormier, the 4th grade school teacher, lived on High Street and her husband worked for Parent Brothers, a large farming and commercial machinery business. The Cormiers were friends of Irene and Gerald with three children; Robertine, Lorraine and Roderick. Robertine was older while Lorraine was Phyl's age and Roderick was Dick's age.

During this period of time Gerald served on the Van Buren Light and Power Board and the Van Buren Water District Board. He was an active Knight of Columbus, a volunteer fireman and participated in several Minstrel Shows, which were popular fundraisers of the era. Irene belonged to the Daughters of Isabella and the Friendship Club, a group of eight ladies who got together weekly to play bridge at alternating houses. This group was not always composed of the same women but those that are remembered are; Irene, Bea Michaud, Dell Michaud, Martha Michaud, Giselle Labbe, Laurette Sanfacon from Grand Isle, Norma Beupre from Lille and Winnie Soucy.

IRENE IS EMBARRASSED AS TOLD BY IRENE ON 27 MAY 1973

Rose Ayotte had come to the door to see how I had changed the house around. Just as she comes to the door I went to see if Jim was sleeping in the crib. When I opened the nursery door, it smelled to high heaven. Jim had done something in his crib and had gotten into it and had it all over the place. I was so shy, in those days, I didn't dare tell Rose that Jim had done something and I had to clean it up. She must have thought I was an awful hostess; she stayed for about an hour and I wouldn't let her go into any rooms for fear of having to show her the room where Jim was with that awful mess. She finally left and I could go change Jim.

Dick was always doing something to spite me. One day Aunt Agnes and Aunt Hedwidge were coming to visit and Dick didn't like that. He went and crapped on the porch to embarrass me. One day he comes home from school and introduces me to his new friend. Come to find out he had bribed this kid into being his friend and told him that if he came home and said he was Dick's friend, Dick would give him a toy. So he had bought his friend.

THE BUSINESS

In 1940, Gerald started his own business at Cities Service on the south end of Van Buren. At that time he had 3 children, Phyllis, Dick and Pete. He needed \$600.00 to get the building and start

162

the business so he applied for a loan at the local bank and they turned him down. This insulted and hurt Gerald which became very evident in later years when his business was doing well and the bank wanted to lend him some money. He turned them down flat and thereafter always prided himself on never borrowing money or buying anything on time payments. His friend Sam Michaud¹⁸ lent him the \$600.00 and he started the business. Gerald told of an incident shortly after he got started that is worthy of note. He sold a tire and made a good profit on it. Since Sam Michaud's place was right next door, Gerald went over and tried to give Sam the profit he had made on the tire. Sam would not take it as, he told Gerald, if he did, Gerald would not be able to afford to buy more tires for stock. So, Gerald invested the profit which enabled him to pay Sam back for the loan, over time, and they remained friends forever. Gerald later put an addition onto the small service station. It had a high door to allow farmers to bring in their tractors, for repair, without taking them off the truck.

Doing business in Van Buren was not always easy. The competition was rough and at times a little cut throat. There was not much spirit of cooperation among the similar businesses in town. Water, as well as gasoline, was pumped into a customer's vehicle once and Gerald had to drain the customer's tank. Finding that he had some water in his main tank, he went across the street to the Parent Brothers station where he knew they had a pump to remove water from gas tanks. He asked one of the Parent brothers to borrow the pump and was told to walk around the back of the station and someone would lend it to him. While walking around, Gerald overheard that same person tell an employee to say the pump was broken. When Gerald got around the back, sure enough, he was told the pump did not work. He never forgot that incident and there was always friction between his station and that operated by the Parent Brothers from that day on. Gerald overcame that problem and continued to succeed in his small station across the street from the competition. There were many times, during the ensuing years, that the Parent Brothers sent customers to Caribou for parts and work that could well have been done at Bélanger's Service. That was the way business was done in Van Buren except that Gerald never subscribed to this attitude.

In 1941, Gerald had an opportunity to move to an ESSO station located right in the center of town, across the street from the A & P store (which we all called RED FRONT). The ESSO Oil Company made him the offer because it was obvious that he could survive in spite of the competition while other operators of this particular station had not been able to do so. Although he lost the \$600.00 investment he had made in the Cities Service building, by moving away, he took the chance and it worked out well for him. Since "Bélanger's Service" did more than pump gas; they repaired starters, magnetos, auto electrical systems, chain saws, etc., they continued to do well during those tough years.

An account of the circumstances which led Gerald to own the station, outright, is told by his son Richard. It seems Gerald was leasing the station from the ESSO Oil Company but the land under the building belonged to a third party in Van Buren. During the 40's and especially during WW II, times were tough and even the oil companies were affected. They wanted to own enough of their gas stations to have a say in how they were run but did not especially care about the liability of having and maintaining them. Most young men were being drafted and good service station operators were hard to find. Not unlike his ancestors, Gerald was enterprising in his desire to own the entire business. Gerald convinced the Oil Company that they should sell him the building, thereby getting rid of that liability, and then they could buy the land from the landowner. He, at the same time however, talked the landowner into selling him the land. To the Oil Company's surprise, Gerald closed on both deals on the same day which left the Oil Company with no holding in the business at all. He continued to

¹⁸ No relation to Irene's family of Michaud's although he was an Uncle to Jim's wife Sandra St Pierre

163
do business out of that ESSO station until 1955 when he sold the land and building¹⁹ and moved to Caribou.

Gerald's ESSO station became one of the few operator owned stations in existence. One day an ESSO Company representative came by on an inspection trip. He mentioned to Gerald that the place should be neater and should be open longer hours and Sundays. Gerald handed him a broom and said, "go to it young man, I'm busy right now". Needless to say, it didn't take long for the inspector to find out Gerald owned the station and they never bothered him again.

Many salesmen, for different companies, came to the station. Some were regular and Ken Berdeen was one of these that will long be remembered. He was a long, tall man with a craggy face and graying hair. He loved kids and Gerald would bring him home for supper whenever he was in town. Ken lived in Kennebunkport and became a good friend of the family. Another salesman, Clair Longstaff from Houlton, was often invited to spend the night whenever he had to stay overnight in Van Buren. ESSO company reps like Jack Chisholm of Caribou and Jake Golden came by the house on occasion. Jack moved to Bangor and the families lost touch. The name Warren Blocklinger is a familiar name which comes to mind. He was possibly from Bangor, which was at the other end of the world, in those days, and Irene was thought to have remarked that he was a Freemason. Boy, in those days you weren't sure if you might be headed "straight to hell" if you spoke to a Mason!

LOST IN FLIGHT

Gerald enjoyed life while he lived it. He was not one to wait for retirement to do those things in life which gave him pleasure. He got a pilot's license and a small Piper Cub plane to go fishing. This gave him access to several lakes that were only accessible by airplane. The plane was equipped with floats in the summer and skis in the winter and the St. John River was used as a runway. His wife's Uncle Eudo Cormier and his nephew Reno Cormier also had planes on the banks of the river and they often flew together. There was one time when the friends had taken off to check out a new spot when Gerald was not sure of the terrain. Eudo told him that he should head west in order to come home and as soon as he crossed the St John River, he should turn south and follow it to Van Buren. Well, Gerald was never much of a believer in compasses and so, being in the afternoon, he headed into the setting sun to establish his westerly course. In mid summer, in Northern Maine, the sun sets more north than it does west and this put Gerald on the wrong course. When the time came and went when he should have been crossing the river, he wondered about his instincts. Running low on fuel, he looked for a place to set down before dark really set in. Seeing a good sized lake with a plane on it, he decided this was as good a spot as any. What he did not know was that this entire area was privately owned by millionaires who were there to get away from worldly environments. They had no telephones and were many miles from traveled roadways.

In order to make contact with the outside world, a guide was asked to hike to a nearby fire tower, climb the tower and radio a second tower about the situation. The second tower operator was promised three dollars to hike three miles to the nearest phone and call the proper authorities about what had happened so that all would know. That call apparently never got made. Having little to do but wait, Gerald and Adrien Berube (who was with Gerald at the time) stayed the night. They waited another day for fuel for the plane to be brought in before heading for home. When that fuel did not arrive, they got a ride home in the other plane that had been on the lake and were to send someone back to get their plane with fuel.

¹⁹ To the ESSO Oil Company

164

Since the message of their plight never made it back to Van Buren, the panic alarm was set off in town. All of those with planes on the river and other volunteers set up a search party to cover the route Gerald was to have taken. They organized parachutists to jump at the sight of any crash and had provisions ready to be thrown to any survivors found during the search. The search party operated the entire next day and into the third when Gerald and Adrien arrived not knowing what had been going on all this time.

I can remember sitting at home and listening to the radio for any news of anyone finding a downed plane. All of us kids were glued to the radio and our mother really stood up well under the tremendous pressure. She was not nearly so full of control when Gerald finally showed up at home, unharmed, and having been fishing the whole previous day. The year must have been somewhere between 1950 and 1955. Gerald's airplane days were numbered, after that. The grass next to the river used to be burned regularly during the summer to keep it from growing so tall. On one of these days, the wind shifted and Gerald's plane was completely burned up. Reno Cormier was killed in an airplane crash after that and Gerald got rid of a second plane he had purchased.

THE MOVE TO CARIBOU

In 1955 Gerald was 45 and fed up; suffering from what we now call job burnout. He had enough of Van Buren and its petty small town politics, ungrateful customers, who griped and complained just to lower the price being charged, the unfair competition and he was looking to brighter horizons.

Like his ancestor, Nicolas, Gerald made a drastic change in his life. He consulted with his spiritual friend, Saint Joseph, and decided to sell out and move. He made this decision before even knowing where it was he would move to! He was unswerving in his decision, however. He must have been very sure of his convictions, what with all the flack he got from Irene over it. He contacted the ESSO company and offered to sell the station back to them. Since there were other gas companies interested in this prime location²⁰, he got his price of \$25,000. Then he started the search for an alternate location to settle and start up his business again. This took a lot of internal fortitude, more than one might imagine. He was to leave a French speaking Catholic community, with close ties to his native Canada, where he had been active as a water commissioner, fireman and other local civic groups like the Knight of Columbus. He picked up and moved to Caribou, which was predominantly non-Catholic, English speaking and where he had few friends.

Jack Chisolm and Mickey Carter, his long time friends, advised him to try Caribou. Limestone Air Force Base (now known as Loring Air Force Base and closed down in 1995) was newly built and he would get a lot of the military business in Caribou. Gerald wanted to explore all the possibilities so he and Irene got someone to stay with the kids while they looked over the country. One of those salespeople who used to call on him had gone to California and had told Gerald about the prime opportunities there. Perhaps a niece or Aunt Stella, stayed with Phyllis (22 years of age and with a job), Dick (who was 20 and worked with Gerald), Pete (who was 18 and was also working at the station with Dick), Jim (12 years of age), Mike (10 years), Bill (4) and John (2). Irene and Gerald left for Connecticut on their first leg of the journey to California to find a place to settle. In four days they were back! Gerald and Irene stayed in a motel on a hot, humid, sticky night with no way to cool off and experienced the rat race of heavy traffic. Gerald had gone the wrong way on a one way street, had someone yell at him for it and decided he wouldn't move that far south (Connecticut) if they paid him. He was not about to travel another seven days further from home!

²⁰ Gerald's gasoline station was geographically in the center of the business section of Main Street

165

It appears that out of the three "C" choices; Connecticut was out, California was much too far away and that left Caribou. He had some business contacts there and took their advice to move. He never wavered in that decision, once it had been made.

Gerald purchased a building lot from Chester Henderson on South Main Street, next to Grant's Dairy distribution warehouse, hauled in fill and started to build Bélanger's Auto Electric in October 1955. The lot had a huge drop from the street and much fill had to be hauled in. It was watered down for days at a time to get the fill to settle before the building could be erected. That building continued to settle for the next 20 years! Dick kept the business going in Van Buren while Pete helped with the move. Phyllis had a job in Van Buren and was occupied during that time but Jim acted like a helper in any way he could at the age of 12.

The business opened as soon as the building was done, which was in the fall of 1955. Business was good and Gerald never seemed to have regretted his decision to make the change. Even though the family had given him a hard time over the decision to move, all came to accept it and even agreed with it.

Dick and Pete worked with their father until they were drafted for the military service in 1957; Dick in February and Pete around April. By 1959, both sons had returned, worked for their father again and both got married in 1959. Since Gerald could not afford to pay both sons a living wage, he helped Dick establish his own business in Presque Isle, Maine, about 12 miles to the South of Caribou. He kept Pete to work with him and, as luck would have it, Pete got recalled into active duty from his reserve status for the Korean conflict. Rather than be alone, Gerald hired help while waiting for Pete's return in a year or so. When Pete got released from military service, for the second time, he (and his wife Velma) decided to give Connecticut a try. The job market there was appealing and he never did come back to Caribou.

Although each of Gerald's sons worked in the business with him at one time or another, Steve (born in Caribou) was the only one who wanted to be a mechanic like his father. Gerald had started working on Diesel pumps in 1959, as an addition to the automotive business, as he predicted that diesel was the coming thing. He had done the same with the advent of magnetos and had been correct there, too. Steve took auto mechanics in high school and John took drafting at a vocational school. Both worked with their father, much like Dick and Pete had done before them.

Gerald suffered a heart attack in 1975, when Steve was a senior in high school, and was unable to work much after that. Both John and Steve were working at the shop so Gerald retired from the business (at age 65) and just stayed on as an advisor. This meant he was supposedly able to go fishing, hunting and whatever else he wanted to do. He could not tear himself away from that business that had been his whole life and eventually died of another heart attack, at the job, in July 1976 at 66 years of age. Steve and John kept the business going for Irene, who kept the books as she had always done.

In 1978 John wanted to buy half the business from Irene but Steve did not feel he was ready to assume that kind of responsibility. They did agree to split the areas of responsibility and Steve did all the automotive work while John specialized in the diesel end. In the fall of 1981, John bought an unoccupied gasoline station at the corner of South Main and McArthur Avenue, just a few hundred feet south of Bélanger's Auto Electric. He opened his own business there under the name of Bélanger Diesel and Steve remained at the original location and continued the automotive business.

In 1989, Steve followed his father with the burnout syndrome, sold the building to a Mr. Corbin with the understanding that he could not use the Bélanger's Auto Electric name. Steve went to work

165
cutting wood. Three years later he started up the automotive business, again, at his farm on the Van Buren road and is there today. In the authors' opinions, he is the best automotive electrical diagnostician in the area although, his heart is still in the woods. In addition to some automotive work, Steve became a Maine Guide and, as of this writing, has entered the law enforcement community. He started working with the police departments as an animal control officer and later became qualified as a deputy sheriff. He is pursuing this as a career and seems to love it. John still owns and operates Bélanger Diesel after 15 years and has no plans on making any changes.

Although engaged in different businesses and careers, all of Gerald's sons have profited from what they learned while working with their father and the mechanical abilities they inherited from him. Thus is the dynasty left by Gerald Bélanger.

TRAVELS

Irene and Gerald went to Boston on business a couple times a year, usually in Spring or Fall when the roads were able to be traveled. Irene took the opportunity to do some shopping for the family clothes and she thought Filene's basement was a wonderful place to do it. In 1941 they went on a trip to the Gaspé Peninsula for three days and it rained all three days. In 1962, they took two weeks off and went to Washington, DC and then to the US. Naval Academy at Annapolis to visit Jim. Irene went to Jim's wedding in Washington, DC when he and Sandra St Pierre got married in July of 1963. She went with Sandra's mother, Harriet Tilley St. Pierre. James Patrick married Sandra Colombe St. Pierre on July 27th 1963 at St. Matthew's Cathedral on "M" Street in Washington, DC. This was the church President John Kennedy attended at the time.

In January 1966 Gerald and Irene flew to Chicago to attend Michael's wedding to Elaine Rawlins at the Great Lakes Naval Training Center, Great Lakes, Illinois. In 1970 they went to the Montreal Expo for one week, in 1971 they went to Vermont for one week, in 1974 they went to Florida for three weeks and in 1976 they went to Warren, Pennsylvania for Bill's wedding. These travels are recorded in light of the disdain our father had for traveling anywhere, except for hunting and fishing of course.

STORIES AS RELATED BY RICHARD

THE LOGHAULER

When Gerald was a young man, he worked in the woods hauling lumber with a loghauler. A loghauler looks like a bulldozer with no blade, operating on tracks much like the older dozers and military tanks. In order to pull the logs out of the woods the men used sleds, tied end to end, forming a long train which often numbered as many as twenty sleds. The downhill stretches were rather easy going but the loghauler certainly had its work cut out for it when the terrain was uphill. The engines which powered the loghaulers burned oil, not gas, and this often caused the spark plugs to foul. This often happened when the train of sleds arrived at the lake and the loghauler was pulling all of the sleds without any help from gravity. Gerald drove one of these machines and recalled the trip to the lake was not only hard on the loghauler but also on the driver. There was no cab to afford cover from trees, rain, snow or wind so the driver had pull down his hat and lift his collar to protect himself from the elements at 20 to 40 degrees below zero temperatures.

167

When the loghauler lost power, Gerald would check to see which spark plug was misfiring, so he could change it. Checking spark plugs is not a difficult task in warm weather but is made next to impossible in blowing wind and below zero temperatures. Gerald did not dare stop the engine for fear it might not start again. He devised a method by which he removed one spark plug wire at a time until he found one that made no difference in the engine's operation. This indicated that this was the plug that was malfunctioning and needed replacement. Now, the trick was to replace the plug while allowing the engine to continue running. Grounding out the plug wire prevented him from getting shocked by the high sparking voltage, but, that was the easy part. While an engine is running it creates a very high pressure on both the power and compression strokes. It is impossible to insert a spark plug into the threaded hole during these two strokes so one had to be quick and get the plug threaded during the intake stroke. Gerald became accomplished at this task and replaced many a spark plug while the engine was running so that he could continue his haul across the frozen lake. He brought this trick into the automotive world and used it while servicing automobile engines in later years at his own garage.

THE CLOCK GEAR

Being an auto mechanic, Gerald was out of work during the winter when the roads were not plowed. This was when they 'rolled' the roads with heavy rollers to pack it down for the horsedrawn sleds. Since automobiles were not used in winter, Gerald would go find work in the woods with his brother Emile. Gerald reminisced about the several nationalities of the woodsmen. Many crews were composed of Swedes, Germans, Scotts and Frenchmen. French Canadians did not have the monopoly on the timber industry. The French crew, being mostly Roman Catholic, would not work on Sunday. They saved that day to repair equipment and to give thanks to the Lord for the good week's work. Even though they took Sunday off from regular work, the French crews still cut more timber than the others; possibly because their equipment was better maintained.

One day Emile (Gerald's brother) was trying to repair a magneto and needed a gear which was not available at the camp. Getting a new gear would take a week which was more time than Emile and Gerald were willing to take. Emile told Gerald that, if he could find a gear that was anywhere close in size, he could repair the magneto. Gerald remembered that clocks had gears that were similar in size and he confiscated one from the camp cook's clock. With gear in hand, the loghauler magneto was repaired by Emile. Although breakfast was late the next morning, the cook never did find out who took his clock.

THE ARMY

In 1943, Richard was a young boy and remembers Gerald being called to war. Gerald bragged, to his friends at the gasoline filling station, about what he was planning to do when he arrived in Bangor for his military physical. He promised that he would let them see his back end and demonstrated how that was to be done. Richard was standing behind Gerald at the time and received the business end of the gesture in his face. Well, nobody knows if Gerald followed through with his promise but, nevertheless, he passed his physical and had thirty days to get his things in order before reporting for duty. He worried about what to do with his young business while he was away. He considered either selling it or having someone operate it for him.

Luck and devine intervention were on Gerald's side. Jim was born in March of that year which qualified Gerald for a deferment for men with four children. Gerald never did have to go to war. Thank God and Jim!

A BROKEN NOSE

Gerald told Richard a story about his own father (Lucien). In the early days men found many things to wager on. Since there were no casinos to gamble money the locals often wagered on feats of strength. One day some men from Limestone, Maine came to Lucien's blacksmith shop in Grand Falls, New Brunswick for a wager. Lucien picked up his sledge hammer by the handle while holding it with an inverted wrist. This is a very difficult maneuver, almost impossible to describe without seeing it done and requires a great deal of strength. Lucien then lifted the hammer above his nose and slowly allowed it to drop until it touched his nose and then lifted it back up again by turning his wrist until the hammer was again safely away from his face.

It was now time for the man from Limestone to demonstrate his ability to perform the same feat. After picking up the hammer with fist inverted, he lifted it high and started to bring it down to his nose as Lucien had done. His wrist did not have the strength of a blacksmith's wrist and he lost control of the hammer. The hammer came down so hard that it broke his nose. This challenger went back to Limestone minus some cash and with a broken nose.

INDIAN KNIFE

Grandfather, being a black smith, used to make knives. Well, the Indians found out that he was a good knife maker so they came to have some made. Dad said that when they came to get the knives they would taste them and if the taste wasn't to their liking, they wouldn't buy them. There was something about the hardness and the temper that they could taste.

FIREMAN

One year Dad was the 'fireman' at the lumber camp. This meant that he was designated to watch the wood fire during the night to ensure it would not go out. He didn't have to stay awake and watch the fire but he needed to make sure the camp stayed warm. In order to do that, he would take the cot which was the greatest distance away from the stove. He said that being cold would wake him up and he would then get up and stoke the fire. Nobody froze on Dad's watch!

BING CROSBY

One evening in Van Buren, Maine, the town was buzzing. There was word that Bing Crosby had come to town and that he was at the Hammond Hotel. We kids jumped on our bikes and raced to town. Once in town, we went to the Hammond Hotel and found quite a few people there waiting to catch a glimpse of Bing Crosby. I remember Alexander Tanous telling everyone he was a newspaper reporter for the Bangor Daily News so he could get in to see this famous personality. This didn't carry any weight and, to my knowledge, nobody got to see Bing Crosby that day. Later that evening, sitting around the supper table, Dad says, "Guess who I saw today?" Well, none of us kids could guess and we were surprised when he announced that he had seen Bing Crosby. After having heard the stories of Bing being in town, we certainly had no doubt our father was telling the truth.

Dad had gone to the gas station early in the morning to open up shop. While going about his business, a car pulled up for gas. While Dad was filling the gas tank, this gentleman came out of the car and started looking around at the fishing and hunting equipment that was on display. Dad not only operated a gas station but sold hunting and fishing equipment as well. He probably felt it was a

169

good way to fund his own hunting and fishing hobbies. In any case, the man whose car was being gassed up started asking Dad about what type flies he should be using for this part of the country. The two spent some time in conversation and fish talk until the man asked Dad if he recognized him. Dad said that he didn't and the visitor announced that he was Bing Crosby. According to Dad, his response was "By Christ, you are!" at which point he shook Bing's hand and said, "How are you Bing?". Then the two exchanged greetings and Bing went fishing.

OUTBOARD MOTORS

Along with fishing and hunting supplies, Dad sold outboard motors. He was a dealer for the Johnson Motor brand. The slow pace of the area and the proximity to near virgin regions of Canada brought many a wealthy visitor to the gasoline station in the center of Van Buren, Maine. One of the 'regulars' was a man we only knew by the name of Mr. Carter. He came up regularly, every year, and we got to know him and expect him. He would arrive in a chauffeur driven automobile which would bring him to his destination, return to the Boston area to pick up his wife and then make a third trip for the family dog. One time, right after World War II, Mr. Carter arrived and was asking Dad about a 5 horsepower outboard motor. Dad informed him that he couldn't get any and could only get the 10 horsepower model. Dad didn't stock the 10 horsepower models since they were too big for average fishing needs and didn't sell. Mr. Carter said that was nonsense and asked to use the phone. He made a call and his side of the conversation was overheard to be something like this. "Yes, this is General Carter, President of Johnson Motors . . ." During his conversation, he turned and asked Dad how many 5 horsepower motors he wanted. Dad said he would take three. Mr. Carter told the person on the other end of the phone to immediately ship five motors and that he wanted them here in three days. He said to bill Gerald's Auto Electric (the name of Dad's business at the time) for three and that the other two were for his personal use. The motors arrived, on time, and that incident certainly proved that some people have power.

FISHING TRIP

Our Dad was always promising Pete and I that he would take us on one of his fishing trips. Dad went fishing often but usually went with Francois Michaud, a local bachelor who ran a fishing tackle and hunting equipment store. He had other friends he would go with and I remember one of them was named Felix. Well, the day came for the promised trip and Pete and I got ready early. I can remember how happy Mom was that Dad was finally taking his sons fishing. This promise had gone unfilled so often before and it was finally come true. Mom packed Pete and I a lunch and our little yellow slickers, in case it rained.

We were off right on schedule. We stopped to pick up Francois and loaded his gear. That meant we boys had to squeeze in the back part of an already small jeep. But, we were small and that was a minor discomfort to endure. We were finally off, with Dad and Francois in the front seats and Pete and I huddled together in the back. No sooner had we started off, we heard Dad ask Francois if they shouldn't stop by and invite Felix. Francois said, "You know he'll moan and say there isn't enough room". Dad said, "You know if we don't invite him, he'll be hurt". Well, a phone call was made and Felix said he wanted to come along. On the way to pick him up, Dad turned and asked if we minded taking him along. There was no way we were going to put a damper on this trip so we said we didn't mind. We didn't want to disappoint our Dad. We picked up Felix and Pete and I crowded even more into the back of that jeep but we said nothing.

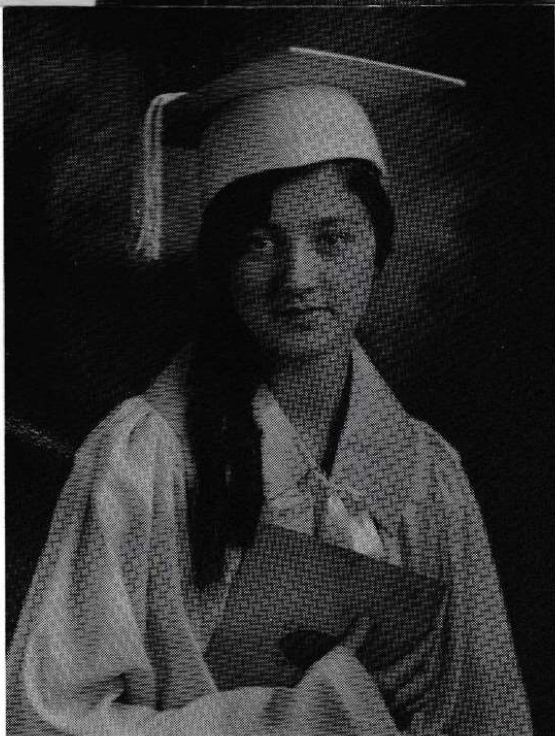
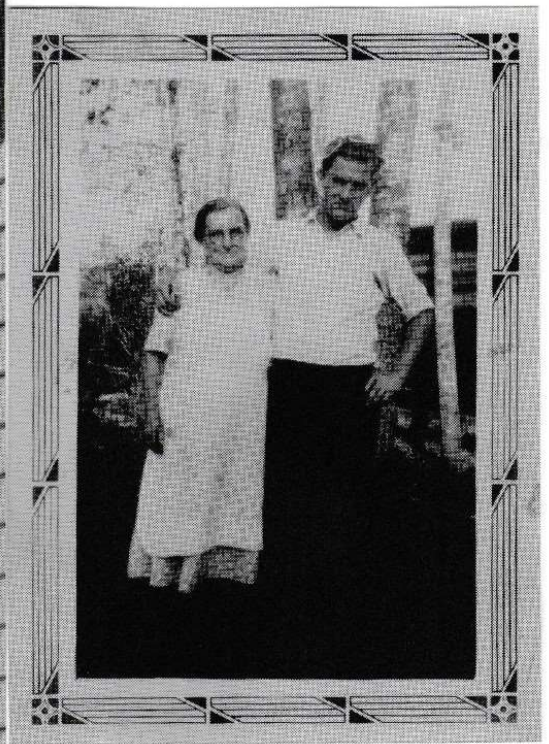
170

We weren't a quarter of a mile down the road from our house when Felix started complaining that there wasn't enough room, just as Francois said he would. Felix said he really wanted to go fishing, but, it really was crowded. Dad stopped the Jeep at the bottom of Popular Street and told us he would make it up to us another time. He made some excuses about it being hot and buggy and it might not be all that much fun for us anyway. So, Pete and I got our stuff out of the Jeep and walked home. As the Jeep drove off, Pete and I started to cry as we walked the quarter mile back home lugging our gear. When we got home, Mom asked what had happened. We explained the events of the morning to her and she wasn't a happy camper.

Pete and I were determined to go fishing, so, we took out this rubber boat that Dad had and we went fishing below the dam and caught 154 sunfish. When Dad got home, we asked how many fish they had caught. He informed us that they had caught 32 between the three of them. Well, we topped the catch for the day but lost out on that elusive fishing trip. Dad certainly understood that there was a considerable degree of disapproval regarding his actions as Mom gave him a piece of her mind.

TEACHING JIM TO RIDE A BIKE

As all older brothers are expected to do, Pete and I remember the day when we were called on to teach our younger brother Jim to ride a bike. Dad didn't have the time to teach Jim so he asked if we older boys would do it. We agreed and set out on this fun chore. We explained to Jim about the fundamentals of bike riding, steering, balancing and braking. We weren't looking forward to pushing him all over the streets so we decided to walk up to the top of the hill leading down to Main Street. This way, we could just run alongside as Jim coasted down hill for his lesson. Well, Jim being very stubborn and strong minded and knowing better than us, he was going to show us he didn't need our help. Pete and I stood on each side of the bike holding onto the seat and started on our way. We had no more than gone a few steps when Jim started shouting "Let go, Let go", so, we did. We weren't worried when he got ahead of us since, this being his first ride he was bound to fall in just a few seconds. Well, as a matter of fact, he didn't fall and did very well for this first ride out. We started running after him but, we could not catch him. We shouted, "put on the brakes, put on the brakes" but we were too late. He was almost to Main Street with all the car and truck traffic when we started to yell, "turn, turn". Well, turn he did. Dad had heard the commotion and came out to see what was happening. All he saw was Jim, out of control and speeding toward one of the open doors at the gas station. There were no 'lifts' in the garages back then as we serviced cars in a 'pit' under the car. Cars were driven over the pit and the mechanic would work under the cars. Well, Jim was headed for that open pit. Before Dad could catch him, Jim turned the handlebars just a little and he came up short at the wall between the two open pit doors. There happened to be a rather large display of tires piled up there between the two doors and this is what broke Jim's sudden stop. The impact set that display of tires loose and they started to topple. Several of them rolled out across the front area of the gas station and headed for Main Street. I can remember the cars dodging rolling tires and having to stop as tires bumped into cars. It was a mess, but, Jim learned how to ride a bike in one easy lesson and came to know the value of brakes. Today, still on two wheels, Jim drives motorcycles all over the country.



(Upper Left)
Gerald Belanger
and his wife
Irene Michaud

(Upper Right)
Gerald Belanger
and his mother
Leda Gagnon

(Lower Left)
Irene Michaud
wife of
Gerald Belanger

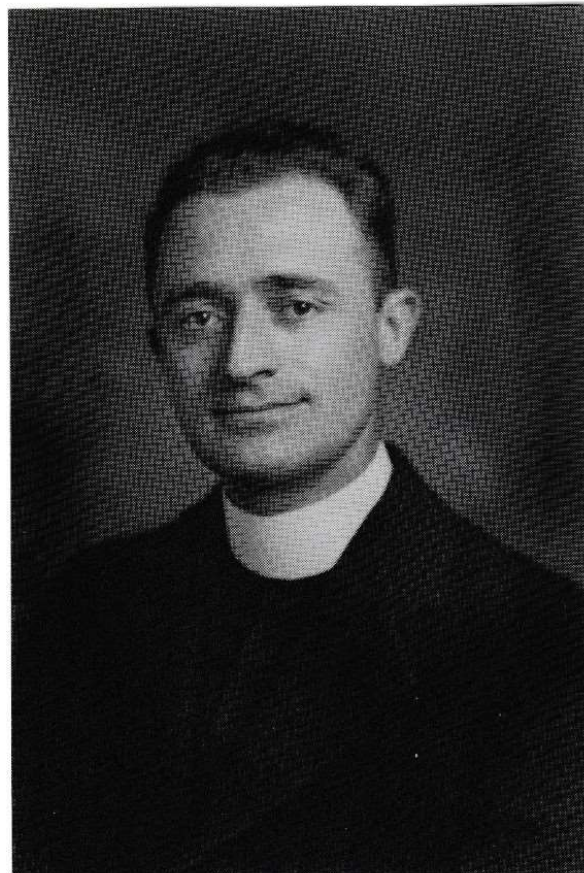
(Lower Right)
Gerald Belanger
and his mother
Leda Gagnon



Laura Cormier
and her sister
~~Agnes~~ Cormier
ANGELE



Fred Violette
Father Lawrence
Cecile Michaud



Father Lawrence
Michaud
Irene's brother

Family Group Record

Page 1

Husband **Louis Philippe Michaud**

Birth	17 Dec 1888	Edmundston, Madawaska Co, NB
Burial	May 1949	Van Buren, Aroostook, Maine
Death	21 May 1949	Van Buren, Aroostook, Maine
Marriage	19 Apr 1909	
Father	Philippe Michaud (b 14 Oct 1867)	
Mother	Marie Castonguay (b 1870)	
Other spouse	Alma Lapointe (m 12 Nov 1917)	

Wife **Laura Cormier**

Birth	31 Mar 1889	
Death	29 Oct 1916	Van Buren, Aroostook, Maine
Father	John B. Cormier (b 1853)	
Mother	Julie Martin (b 1860)	

Children

1 M **Lawrence Michaud**

Birth	8 Mar 1910	Keegan, Aroostook, Maine
Chr	8 Mar 1910	Van Buren, Aroostook, Maine
Death	2 Nov 1990	Van Buren, Aroostook, Maine
Burial		Van Buren, Aroostook, Maine

2 M **Harvey Michaud**

Birth	2 May 1911	Van Buren, Aroostook, Maine
Death	1987	Florida
Spouse	Helen Lizotte	

3 F **Irene Eva Marie Michaud**

Birth	24 Sep 1912	Van Buren, Aroostook, Maine
Death	15 Jan 1983	Caribou, Aroostook, Maine
Chr		Van Buren, Aroostook, Maine
Burial		Caribou, Aroostook, Maine
Spouse	Gerald Louis Belanger (m 22 Aug 1932)	

4 F **Cecile Michaud**

Birth	20 Oct 1915	Van Buren, Aroostook, Maine
Chr	21 Oct 1915	Van Buren, Aroostook, Maine
Death		
Spouse	Wilfred Violette (m 15 May 1939)	

Prepared 3 Nov 1997 by:

Jim Belanger
32 Plain Road
Hollis, NH 03049

603 465-2301

Comments:



Pedigree Chart

Chart no. _____

No. 1 on this chart is the same as no. _____ on chart no. _____

2 Lucien Belanger

B: 26 Oct 1868
P: St Pascal, Kamouraska, Que
M: 26 Oct 1887
P: Ile Verte, Riviere du Loup, Que
D: 18 Apr 1939
P: Grand Falls, Victoria, NB

1 Gerald Louis Belanger

B: 28 Jan 1910
P: Grand Falls, Victoria, NB
M: 22 Aug 1932
P: Van Buren, Aroostook, Maine
D: 12 Jul 1976
P: Caribou, Aroostook, Maine

Irene Eva Marie Michaud

Spouse

3 Parmella "Leda" Gagnon

B: 2 Dec 1870
P: Ile Verte, Riviere du Loup, Que
D: 27 Jan 1943
P: St Basile, Madawaska, NB

4 Damase Belanger

B: 27 May 1830
P: St Andre, Kamouraska, Que
M: 22 Jul 1862
P: St Pascal, Kamouraska, Que
D: 5 May 1927
P: St Alexandre, Kamouraska, Que

5 Georgiana Modeste Pelletier

B: 10 Jan 1842
P: St Pascal, Kamouraska, Que
D: 31 Oct 1882
P: St Alexandre, Kamouraska, Que

6 Paul Gagnon

B:
P: Ile Verte, Riviere du Loup, Que
M: 2 Feb 1869
P: Que (St Georges de Cacouna)
D:
P: Fall River, Bristol, MA

7 M Ophidie Bergeron

B:
P:
D:
P: Fall River, Bristol, MA

8 Joseph Marie Belanger

B: 4 Apr 1797
P: St Roch des Aulnaies, L'Islet, Que
M: 12 Jun 1820
P: St Roch des Aulnaies, L'Islet, Que
D: 22 Nov 1884
P: St Alexandre, Kamouraska, Que

9 Baselisse Dufour

B:
P:
D:
P:

10 Pierre Pelletier

B:
P:
M: 28 Nov 1837
P: St Pascal, Kamouraska, Que
D:
P:

11 Marie Bard

B:
P:
D:
P:

12 Onesime Gagnon

B:
P:
M: 20 Jan 1846
P: Ile Verte, Riviere du Loup, Que
D:
P:

13 Julie Gauthier

B:
P:
D:
P:

14 Paul Bergeron

B:
P:
M: 8 Jan 1833
P: Que (St Georges de Cacouna)
D:
P:

15 Apolline Hudon dit Beaulieu

B:
P:
D:
P:

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Pedigree Chart- IreneEva MarieMichaud

26 March2019

Chartno. 1

No. 1 on this chart is the same as no. 1 on chart no. 1

2 PhilippeJos Louis Michaud-120

b: 17 Dec 1888
p: Edmundston, Madawaska Co, New Brunswick
m: 19 Apr 1909
p: Van Buren, Aroostook Co, Maine
d: 21 May 1949
p: Van Buren, Aroostook Co, Maine

1 Irene Eva Marie Michaud-8

b: 24 Sep 1912
p: Van Buren, Aroostook Co, Maine
m: 22 Aug 1932
p: Van Buren, Aroostook Co, Maine
d: 15 Jan 1983
p: Caribou, Aroostook Co, Maine

sp: **GeraldLouis Belanger-7**

3 M Laura Cormier-121

b: 31 Mar 1889
p: Van Buren, Aroostook Co, Maine
d: 29 Oct 1916
p: Van Buren, Aroostook Co, Maine

4 PhilippeMichaud-123

b: 14 Oct 1867
p: Rimouski, Rimouski Co, Que
m: 24 Jan 1888
p: Riviere du Loup, Riviere Du Loup Co, Que
d: 21 Jan 1931
p: Corinna, Maine

5 Marie Castonguay-124

b: 1870
p:
d: 1944
p:

6 Jean BaptisteCormier-210

b: 23 Jan 1853
p: St Basile, Madawaska Co, New Brunswick
m: 30 Oct 1882
p: Lille, Aroostook Co, Maine
d: 30 Jan 1930
p: Van Buren, Aroostook Co, Maine

7 Julie Martin-259

b: 16 Jul 1860
p: St Basile, Madawaska Co, New Brunswick
d: 3 Jul 1904
p:

8 PhilippeMichaud-22736

b: 22 Aug 1835
p: Rimouski, Rimouski Co, Que
m: 21 Jan 1856
p: St Simon, Rimouski Co, Que
d:
p:

9 SeverineBerube-22737

b:
p:
d:
p:

10 EdouardCastonguay-22806

b:
p:
m: 13 Jul 1868
p: St Epiphane, Riviere du Loup Co, Que
d:
p:

11 CesarieCelanireTheriac-22807

b:
p:
d:
p:

12 LouisCormier-330

b: 25 Aug 1818
p: Grand Isle, Aroostook Co, Maine
m: 22 May 1849
p: St Basile, Madawaska Co, New Brunswick
d: 1912
p:

13 EleonoreCyr-331

b: 12 Aug 1830
p: St Basile, Madawaska Co, New Brunswick
d: 1918
p:

14 MichelMartin-12203

b:
p:
m: 16 Apr 1850
p: St Basile, Madawaska Co, New Brunswick
d:
p:

15 Flavie Martin-12204

b:
p:
d:
p:

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