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HIGHLIGHTS:

- general account of his life
- describes his role in local Metis organization

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ARTICLE:

SATURDAY MARCH 11, 1939

THE STAR-PHOENIX

Province's Oldest Militia Volunteer Recalls Stirring Times,  
When Interviewed at Hospital.

SASKATCHEWAN'S oldest militia volunteer, John Pambrun of the Battleford district, sat in a chair in a Saskatoon City Hospital ward Wednesday afternoon and recalled incidents from the early days of Western Canada when he was a volunteer with the Battleford Infantry Company, the first militia unit organized west of Winnipeg. Mr. Pambrun, now 82 years old, is recovering from a major operation.

He is actually recovering, in spite of his advanced years and the hardships he experienced as a young man in the pioneer days of Western Canada. He conversed freely for more than an hour and his mind was as clear about places and dates that he knew as though the events were yesterday. His voice occasionally had the falter of age, but most of the time it was clear and firm.

Mr. Pambrun was born in the West. His father was with the Hudson's Bay Company at Lac la Biche, which is still on the fringe of settlement, when the boy John was born. John entered the service of the company as soon as he had finished his school in St. Boniface.

Together, father and son left the company to take a farm in the Battleford district in 1878. Battleford was then the capital of the North West Territories. It was while he was on this farm and there were rumors of unrest among the Indians that Mr. Pambrun joined with his neighbors in forming a home guard. He is the only survivor of this first Western regiment.

Mr. Pambrun comes of a family whose name has been prominent on many of the margins of Canadian history pages. His grandfather was in the Oregon territory when the dispute raged between Great Britain and the United States. In some of the narratives of the time the name of P.C. Pambrun figures prominently.

PHOTO WITH CAPTION: NATIVE of Lac la Biche, John Pambrun, 82, is proud of his Indian blood. Here the oldest militia volunteer, whose grandfather fought Americans 127 years ago, is seen taking it easy after an operation at the City Hospital.

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John Pambrun's grandfather was with the British forces in the war against the United States in 1812-1814. The elder Pambrun held a seigneurie in Vercheres and served as a sergeant at the Battle of Chateauguay where he was wounded in the knee. When he returned to the army, Pambrun was made a captain.

After the American War, P.C. Pambrun joined the Hudson's Bay Company and was sent to Qu'Appelle where he was taken prisoner, along with other Hudson's Bay men by Cuthbert Grant of the North West Company who was on his way to attack the Red River Settlement. The conflict between the companies ended in the death of Governor Semple and many of his men at Seven Oaks. Pambrun was called as a witness during the trials that resulted from this incident.

The grandfather finally lost his life in the West Coast territory of the Hudson's Bay Company. His love for spirited horses was the cause of his death. He took a fancy to a young horse which the Indians warned him was a wild one. He bought the horse and the first time he mounted it, it reared up

and fell over, crushing its new owner beneath it.

When he was a boy at Lac la Biche, Mr. Pambrun recalled, he had helped to drive cattle from Fort Cavelton on the Saskatchewan to La Biche and thence to Portage la Loche, which marks the divide between waters of the Churchill and the Mackenzie system. The cattle were used to portage the traders' goods from one river system to the next.

During the insurrection of 1885, Mr. Pambrun served as a police scout. It was he, in company with another man, who went to reconnoitre the country around Fort Pitt after the Indians, who had been under Big Bear, fell upon the fort and killed and drove out the inhabitants.

As to the events of the rebellion, Mr. Pambrun had decided opinions. His sympathy was all with the Metis and the Indians, as might be expected of a man who counted among his intimates many of the leaders of the insurrection and whose brother was with Big Bear most of the time.

Asked his opinion about the battle of Cut Knife Creek, the old man had no hesitation in declaring the march of Colonel Otter and his men against Poundmaker had been rash folly.

"There was no need for them to go. They wanted to make a name for themselves. It would have been a terrible massacre, except for Poundmaker," the old man continued.

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"All through the day the Indians saved their ammunition. Their supplies were small and there was no place they could get any more. The young men planned to trap the soldiers after dark."

"You know the country between Cut Knife and Battleford is all sandhills and potholes. The young men planned to lie in ambush for the army as it fell back on Battleford. Only Poundmaker prevented them for doing so.

"When Poundmaker was put on trial, he told them: 'I saved hundreds of your men from death and now you want to send me to prison.'"

Mr. Pambrun indignantly refuted the suggestion that Colonel Otter and his men were successful in the battle of Cut Knife Creek. "The man who runs away is usually the loser," the old man said in pointing his argument.

Turning to incidents in his own life, Mr. Pambrun said he had settled on the farm he now occupied in 1888. The next year he built a log house. He is still living in the house.

NEW HOUSE BURNS

Several years ago, the old man said, he had built himself a new house which cost nearly \$3,000. After he had lived in it five years, it burned down. He had no insurance on it so he had to repair the old log house and he has been living there since.

At the beginning of the chat, the reporter suggested that Mr. Pambrun did not look his age.

"Well," he said, "I look younger than I did a few weeks ago."

"I've had my hair cut. A while ago my wife said I'd better get my hair cut and so I did. I guess it's 40 years since I had it cut before. It used to hang down all like this," he added, making a motion towards his shoulders with his hands.

Just as the reporter was about to leave the old man's face lighted up as a flood of memory came to him.

"I want to tell you a story," he said.

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"One day I was in Battleford and W.S. White waved to me from across the street. I went over to see what he wanted and he introduced me to a man from the East who asked a lot of questions about the Indians and the half-breeds and old times."

"Finally I told him I was a half-breed, as he called them. And I added, 'I often think my Indian blood is the best in me.'"

"The visitor was amazed."

"When he left, Mr. White said, 'Do you know why I called you over? I called you over because that fellow was in here running down half-breeds and I thought if only John Pambrun would come in. Why you said the very words I wanted to put in your mouth.'"

The oldtimer still seemed mystified why he had made the statements he did to the stranger.

Brenda: March 14 and I'm doing an interview with Leonard Pambrun. What were we talking about? Oh, we were talking about school and what grades you left school.

Leonard: Well I, that's...

Brenda: Well what grade you started school and what grade you left.

Leonard: Well I started about, oh, I was about 7 years old, and I quit when I was 13, the fall of 13. The reason I quit was we were short of money and hard, hard times. I had to go out and work out for wages, which I went on a threshing crew, went threshing grain. And I guess I wouldn't have stood the run, but they had field pitchers and they had spike pitchers that help load and unload; so actually you really, the older people sort of helped us out but we still got the same wages, which was \$2.50 a day.

Brenda: \$2.50 a day, would you work all weekend or was it just normal...?

Leonard: Sometimes we'd work, sometimes we'd work right through Saturday, Sunday right through the week. As long as it was nice weather, if it was wet weather the threshing machine would stop on account of grain being too tough and then you couldn't thresh.

Brenda: When you were going to school what do you remember about your school life? Do you have fond memories of school?

Leonard: Oh yes. Oh yes, we used to walk and everybody there was all the same. There was no rich people in our community and it was mostly Metis people. Most of us were all Metis and it was a one room classroom from grade one to ten.

Brenda: Oh yeah and that was your...

Leonard: Country school, St. Laurent School.

Brenda: That's where you went from grade one to grade eight.

Leonard: From grade one to grade seven into eight.

Brenda: Did you walk to school?

Leonard: Yes we walked to school, in wintertime we used to use a sleigh dog to go to school.

Brenda: Oh, and how far did you live from the school?

Leonard: Well at first we was living about 5 miles and then when the school burnt down we had a lapse there while they moved the school down closer, which was 2 miles from home. But there was no snow plows at the time it was all sleigh roads and sometimes it used to drift in pretty bad. But of course the roads weren't open, that's what they are now.

Brenda: You, you, a school, I mean sleigh, what kind of sleigh, a horse and stuff like that or is it dog team?

Leonard: Well it was a sleigh roads, I mean horse sleighs -- roads -- but then we'd follow them to school with a sleigh dog.

Brenda: You had your own...

Leonard: We had a sleigh for our one dog or two dogs. And the neighbors, one the neighbors used to have a couple dogs too and we used to pretty well help each other out, give each other a ride to school, in the wintertime.

Brenda: Oh that's interesting. Did anybody else go to school like that?

Leonard: Oh yes, there was quite a few. There was lots going in with a horse, single horse on a cutter. That time we didn't know what a caboose was, it was just an open sleigh.

Brenda: During the winter?

Leonard: That was during the winter.

Brenda: How about the school, were you allowed to speak your own language, or what languages do you speak? You speak...

Leonard: Well we always, we never was stopped too much. The only thing that we was stopped at when there was an English teacher that had came to our school then she didn't like us talk English and French. We had to talk strictly English.

Brenda: And did she get angry with you if...

Leonard: She'd get angry with us if we talked French or a few words of Cree, which we was brought up talking a few words of Cree/French and English mixed.

Brenda: And she didn't like that?

Leonard: She didn't like that at all.

Brenda: Did she ever reprimand anybody for...?

Leonard: Well, well a lot of us used to get a strapping and then it got to the principal's ears and the principal was, well I shouldn't say our principal, he was more or less like a councillor, school councillor, and when it got to his ears he often talked to the teacher and he told the teacher that the kids were brought up to talk their own language and there was no way that he was going to force us to talk English, unless it was right in the school you had to talk English.

Brenda: Do you remember the name of this man that, that stuck up for the students?

Leonard: Yes, his name was Philip Umlay.

Brenda: Is he still alive?

Leonard: Oh no, he died quite a few years ago.

Brenda: Were you comfortable at school, or uncomfortable?  
Did you feel comfortable with the students?

Leonard: Well, I felt comfortable enough with the students, because everybody was all, there was all Metis and we all knew each other. Regardless whether we went to school or not we always visited each other a lot, helped each other a lot.

Brenda: Helped each other in ways like...

Leonard: Well there was different ways. If sometimes our parents they'd send us down if they figured that a person needed a piece of meat and we had a piece of meat too much, or I wouldn't say too much but they used to like to share, to help each other out. If one had potatoes more than the other, they'd more or less help the family that didn't have the potatoes or whatever.

Brenda: And this was happening when you were a young man?

Leonard: That's right.

Brenda: Is it still happening?

Leonard: Not too much, no. Now it's changed over the years. They don't visit each other any more, there's the odd families that do but if, mostly relation. You visit relation but you never visit out like they used to do years ago.

Brenda: Before they used to go and visit people that weren't relatives?

Leonard: That's right.

Brenda: And travelling was done by horse?

Leonard: By horses. Or on foot.

Brenda: When you were going to school did your parents encourage you to finish school, did they encourage you to go...

Leonard: Yes they did, but our school house was a country school and it was cold. Sometimes in the wintertime you couldn't have classes, you had to haul wood for the school and fire up, help making fires for the school; so that sort of... It was more or less help each other out, eh. And then a lot of times, well, the school is too cold -- you couldn't sit in your desk and do your lessons.

Brenda: It was too cold.

Leonard: It was too cold so you'd all pile up by the register or something.

Brenda: Did they teach you any Metis history at the school?

Leonard: None. None whatsoever.

Brenda: Was the Rebellion ever talked about at the schools that you went to, the Metis school?

Leonard: It was talked about but very little. It was a thing around here that the Rebellion was a sort of a thing that was, wasn't talked about. It was a thing that had went on and passed, and people were afraid of talking up.

Brenda: Did they, do you know why the people were afraid to talk?

Leonard: Well, I wouldn't know exactly why, but my thoughts is that they always, always figured that they were scared to get condemned for it or punished for it.

Brenda: For being Metis?

Leonard: For being Metis and talking about the Rebellion or picking sides or anything.

Brenda: So the Metis people were more or less kind of kept under control by not being, like they were told, or they didn't encourage people to talk about the Rebellion.

Leonard: No they didn't. They didn't, and most of the old-timers, oh, once in a while when they'd get together sometimes if they had little drink or something at a party, or something, some of the old-timers sometimes would come out with an incident that had happened during the Rebellion or before the Rebellion, or right after the Rebellion.

Brenda: And it was never spoken of in the other, in the other time?

Leonard: No. No you never heard about anything too much.

Brenda: And that was... So at school you were, you were, your overall feeling about school was it a negative or a positive thing for you? Being Metis and, and school, and...

Leonard: Well, I never felt discriminated upon. The only thing that I sort of felt a little bad about is sometimes we didn't have the lunches that the other kids had. A lot of times we used to hide to have dinner because we had a piece of bannock, a piece of rabbit leg or something to for lunch, and maybe a quart sealer for our tea.

Brenda: But your overall experience of going to school, it was pretty good?

Leonard: It was pretty good.

Brenda: Were there, are there any other experiences that you would like to share with me about school, or anything that happened in those days that really stands out in your mind?

Leonard: Well, there, there is an awful lot of things that... it's changed so much that, you know, you take that school. When I went to school from about three, three o'clock they used to teach you catechism and you just had to learn it whether you want to or not, you just had to take it as it can be. And not only that, it seemed if you had too, too, too much work... Even either to pay our pencils, I know we never had the chance of anybody paying our pencils by, by cutting cord wood or stove wood for the school and this is what we done. And a lot of times when we go out getting wood, 10, 11 years old, we used to cut our own cord wood, cord and a half, two cords for the year to get our school books. Which our parents couldn't afford, eh.

Brenda: Would other students do that too?

Leonard: Oh yes. Oh yes. Some of the students did and some of them they were fortunate enough that their parents did cut the wood and haul it for the school, eh.

Brenda: The church, did it play an important role in you life?

Leonard: Yes, the church was an important role. For one thing on Sundays it was a real... you had to be at mass, it didn't matter how cold it was. I, we used to walk across the river in wintertime, go to mass -- it's only about three-quarters of a mile from home.

Brenda: Did you go to church with your family with your dad and the whole family?

Leonard: Oh yes. Oh my dad, no, my dad was never home, eh. He left when I was 7 years old so my mother brought us up and my oldest sister, Eva.

Brenda: And your, your church, did it have, did it influence the people around here?

Leonard: All the people around they were really religious.

Brenda: Strong Catholics.

Leonard: Strong Catholics, all of them. Even most of the white community that were, the white people that were around they were really Catholics. And it's not the same. Take years ago at the Catholic church when I used to go to school they used to come. Maybe this is why I don't practise my religion so much now days. You went to church, it was always give to the church and then in the fall the priest used to go around and visit, visit the people around in the parish like, you know, parish people, and they used to call it a duty to give so much to the church. And I've seen the priest come up and take a of beef for the duties of the church.

Brenda: From the people?

Leonard: From the people, and I've seen it done at home.

Brenda: Oh, I always thought that it was the other way around, that the church would help the people. People helped the church?

Leonard: No. Yeah, as far as I can remember even the St. Laurent Church when it was built, the log church that was built, I was just a kid and I helped dig in the basement, in the St. Laurent. And I was, I had a horse and a scraper and I was just a kid, of course, all I was doing was going back and forth with the horse and scraper, but I still had to lead that mare or drive that mare. And when they put up the building, after they put up the building it was the same thing, we used to make fires on Saturdays because the priest used to come from Duck Lake and Batoche to come and say mass on Sundays.

Brenda: So you would keep the church warm?

Leonard: We'd keep the church warm. We'd start a fire on Saturday night, sometimes we'd stay in the church over night and keep the fires going when it was real cold.

Brenda: And the priest would come from here and go to...

Leonard: The priest would come from here with a horse and cutter to say mass in St. Laurent.

Brenda: And everybody would go to church?

Leonard: That's right.

Brenda: Was the church a, a great influence on Metis politics?

Leonard: Yes it was. Even them days, well maybe I shouldn't put it to a point that... I don't know, the priest were a great believer of, of, of Liberal party and I remember as a, as just a kid that they used to, to bring it up in church and sometimes in their service that they'd bring it up that, you know, in a way of campaigning in a way for the Liberal party.

Brenda: And this would be when you were a young man yet?

Leonard: When I was just a kid.

Brenda: And, and they would influence the people...

Leonard: To vote Liberal, because apparently the Roman Catholic Oblate Fathers were Liberals and they tried to hold the Liberal party together. And I think there's a lot of our people got fooled by that, because they were scared to pick other sides. And I think this is how all the community around here got held back so far.

Brenda: Through the church and the Liberal party.

Leonard: That's right.

Brenda: Who, what, what was the priest's name, do you remember some of the priests' names that would preach, that would influence the people to vote in that way? Did he give reasons as to why they should vote...

Leonard: Yes he used to, yes he used to give reasons because maybe there was a war in France or something, that such and such party was punishing priests, or something like that or even in Spain or whatever. Because it was a different party, it wasn't Liberal and they figured Liberal parties wouldn't do that, and this is the reason that the, I, that was my understanding at that time. Maybe I didn't understand it right because I was too young, but that's the influence that I got from them.

Brenda: And do you still vote Liberal?

Leonard: Well to be honest and fair I, I vote, I don't vote for the best looking man, it is the one that can do the most for me.

Brenda: So, what you're saying is that you will vote for whoever's there and whoever presents the best politics is who you will vote for?

Leonard: The best party that will serve my people is the one I will support.

Brenda: So the church, the church now doesn't influence you?

Leonard: The church doesn't influence me at all, because I've been turned around from the church as a kid. To me it was just a thing going to church with my family on account of my family going. I do believe in God, I do believe in some of the Catholic religion; but there's things that I didn't approve of.

Brenda: Like?

Leonard: Well, like a priest coming and you had to pay your duties and you had to give, they'd take your last of meat -- I didn't go for that. And then we had to turn around and go shoot a deer, poach a deer.

Brenda: For them?

Leonard: Well, for us to replace that of beef that the priest took.

Brenda: And Metis people not having, at that time they...

Leonard: They were scared. They were led to believe, to believe things that you see, you see different things or you'd be punished and then you couldn't do this, you couldn't do

that, you couldn't play cards on Sunday, you couldn't dance on Sunday and then the first thing you know they had bazaars going themselves. So this is what turned me around from the Catholic religion. Today they play cards they dance in church they're using our old church for A.A. dances.

Brenda: So the church has turned, done a complete turn around on the...

Leonard: A complete turn around, as far as I'm concerned it's a complete turn around. I've got nothing against the Catholic priest, but I think our people was led, led around too much by them. They're influenced by the Catholic priest -- if a Catholic priest wanted to vote Liberal they tried to turn the whole community Liberal. If they tried, if one was a CCF they'd try to get the whole community turning CCF. And there was a lot of politics through the churches, and I think this is where our first ancestors fell into problems.

Brenda: Through the church?

Leonard: Through the churches.

Brenda: Did the... You became a member of the Metis Local in 1967, was it?

Leonard: Something like that, yes.

Brenda: Can you tell me why you became a member?

Leonard: Oh, I was a member in Prince Albert, I was a friend's, a friend of Artie (name) in P.A., and they had formed a Friendship Centre. And then I understood it as a Metis, a Metis organization and this is the reason I have joined them. And then I got, got in touch with (name), well I was always in touch with him, a member of his local in Prince Albert. Then I wanted to know why we didn't have a local here and I found out that our local had been dead for quite some time and there was no sign of bringing it back up. So I talked to (name) and (name) got ahold of Joe (name) and Olive Stevenson, which was his secretary at that time with (name), and they come up here and they formed a local, they opened a local, local 10, they

opened it back up, in the Legion Hall. At that time I could have been a member of the local, I was a member but I wasn't on council. I could have got on council but I, I didn't want it because I didn't know too much about it and I felt that there should have been some older people in it, which was Archie Nicolet and his wife, and John Garner and his wife had been elected, and I'm not too sure I think Joe Fion and his wife had got elected for this local 10. That's when they first opened the local 10 after the war.

And then I, it sort of dragged on, dragged on, dragged on so then I was curious there was no meetings and I couldn't hear nothing any more and I got friendly with Olive Stevenson and Olive Stevenson put a little knowledge into me about Metis,

what the Metis were, although I was always a Metis but I didn't know what their work was. And when she did put me a little bit wise to it well I said, "Look." I said, "I'm going to get morally involved because our people need a lot of help." And this is when I started getting in to their meetings and finally called some of the meetings here with our directors and finally they changed directors. And I got more involved -- I got elected on the Welfare committee for the Local 10. The reason I accepted that is I could see a lot of our people on welfare and they're having a heck of time getting help from the welfare inspectors. So I guess I was one of them that had a little more mouth, not the know-how but little more mouth, half the time I don't suppose I knew what I was talking about but I still tried to help our people, and sometimes it, it really helped. Because we got some of our people back on that were having a heck of time making a living.

Brenda: When were you on the welfare committee? Were you vice-president then?

Leonard: No, that was before.

Brenda: That was before.

Leonard: Before, yes. And then I finally got on as vice-president, because I figured there was more that could be done through there being a vice-president. And I still wasn't satisfied with that, finally I let my name stand as president. And when I did put my name as president my campaigning stage was that we didn't have a place to meet and we was paying \$25. We wanted to meet in the Legion Hall and we couldn't afford it, we didn't have no money at all. So me and Lorraine Penner, she was the president at the time, I was a vice-president and we decided to sell bannock on the street to raise funds for the local. And we'd put the money in the local. And we raised quite a little bit, well quite a little bit \$300, \$400, and

then this is where I stuck my neck out and said that I was going to get a place to have our meetings of our own. And then I let my name stand as run for president against Lorraine Penner and she really helped me out because she wanted to get out, I think, although she was a good president. Me and her made a lot of miles and (name) the same thing. She was a president and we made a lot of miles, out of our own pockets not the local's. We attended meetings all over.

Then when I did get in as president I went after grants. I had Prince Albert office, our director, to help us, called him in a meeting, I had called some of the provincial candidates, or Gerry Hammersmith to a meeting to try and get knowledge of any grants available in order to try and get this building up. I had promised as a, as a campaigning stage on my own to my people and I didn't get too much results, I had some but finally I got fed up and I went to ESP, Employment Support Program, in Saskatoon, to Randy Wallace. Had a few little talks with him and finally I did put in a proposal, but I put the proposal in through Prince Albert office through Joe

(name), a fellow I didn't know at all and he thought it was a good idea so we put a proposal in for materials.

And I had, had a manpower program to put the people to work. I had raised, after I had been president I had raised \$3,400 hauling wood back to Batoche and sold to the provincial body. The wood I cut myself with some help of some of the local Metis people here, but I had my trucks, my power saws, I never even as much as took my gas money out or expense money out, I hauled that wood to Batoche and raised that \$3,400. I put it all in the local then I hit the town up for a piece of land and this place where this hall is sitting today was a water hole, and I honestly think that the town gave it to me for \$1.25 a lot, but more or less as a laugh to me because they figured I'd never build in here. But I think it backfired. Through the grants, the help that I got through Gerry Hammersmith and the Prince Albert office, Metis Society office and Manpower I happened to get a bunch of laborers that were on welfare. So instead of getting welfare we got this program going and we got them working on the hall here, I got up a crew together, none of us was experienced. We'd maybe built an odd outhouse on the farms but that's about it, and we come up here and we started digging and we started the footings, after we had the footing we got blocks with the \$3,000 I had, then we got that grant money. And when the grant money come from for materials from ESP there was a cheque delivered to me for \$60,000 right in person and it was the first one that I knew of in the community that was delivered to a president in a cheque for \$60,000 by Gerry Hammersmith.

Brenda: And that was how you completed...?

Leonard: And this is how I completed this hall. We had a lot of backfilling to do, we had a lot of headaches but we finally got it going and we had the opening on August 17, 1979.

Brenda: So after not having a local and not having anything for this local you finally had something concrete in '79?

Leonard: That's right, and we've been having our bingos. We don't make too much at it but we make just enough for an upkeep on the place. And people enjoy it, we do not rent it out.

(END OF SIDE A)

Brenda: You started more programs, do you have other buildings?

Leonard: Yes, we started a fast food -- we got that going last summer. That one was through Industry and Commerce, Manpower had something to do with it too. We build it all with unskilled labour the same as we did the hall here. But I think we've got a nice building and it's good.

Brenda: It is fast food?

Leonard: It is going to be a good income for our people. Now I don't expect it to be an income right away but we could, we've got a mortgage on it, but I think if we can make things roll the way I can see it coming I think we should have that paid up, and then our people would be able to have an income to start something else in the near future. So that would be, it would be more or less self-sufficient. It would be a local that would be self-sufficient, meaning that in a few years to come maybe we could get into a different businesses which could get into something else where our local people themselves in Local 10 would have an income from.

Brenda: Did the people, the Metis people, what was their view of politics? Were they, were they active in politics around the same time that you became interested?

Leonard: They are, some of them are, some of them are little leery of politics. And I think that's from being taken so many times by different politicians, so many promises made to us and nothing is kept up. And you try to do something about it and you just can't get anywheres, and I think our people is getting leery of that.

Brenda: I, I was listening to some older Metis people and they were saying that, that, well they're, like a lot of them have been members up to age 65 but it seems like that after they're 65, that they're not given any information, like the letters are not being sent out to, like people are still showing an interest, people that are over 65 are still showing an interest in what's happening to the Metis people, but they're not active. But these people are interested, but they're not getting any mail or anything to tell them...

Leonard: Yes, well that's one thing we cannot afford to start dropping mail, but we've got monthly meetings there, they're sure welcome to them, we've never stopped anybody from coming to our local meetings and anybody that is interested in the Local, I wish that they'd just step right up. Now there's been a lot of rumors and a lot of misunderstanding that as soon as a member is 65, that sure, a lot of them they want to step out of Local affairs, but that don't mean to say that they are not active members. They can still be members, we're not stopping that, but I think it's their feeling, I think it's their own rights to do whatever they want they just want younger people in the AMNSIS Local 10 directors, as directors. I think that's the reason that they're doing it. I do not feel that I've been let down upon by older people, I've had a lot of support from older people and as far as I'm concerned I'll support any one of them.

Brenda: Yeah, that's what, that's what I'm getting is that from these old people, that they were very active and are very interested in the Metis happenings of what goes on.

Leonard: That's right, but they miss, they've been misled, a

lot of our people have been misled. When I first got in the Metis Society Local, Local 10, even as a member my understanding was that you'd get a bunch of money from Regina, the Local'd get a bunch of money from Regina and that was spent in the Local. It is not so. It's just a misunderstanding, some of these guys that campaign for, for positions come and make big promises and they're misunderstood.

You take our housing is a big problem. We'll always have a problem with housing, but if you want to live like a white person, like a white man, if you want to try and compare to, we've got no money. Our money was never laid down from generation to generation because we've never had any to lay down to our children. And them people probably come back from the old countries, come up here and had money and they handed that down to their, their ancestors. Now if we try to keep up

with the white population there's no way that we'll keep up to it. But the housing problem is a big problem because when it was first brought up to this Local in Duck Lake, I was to a meeting myself and they said as long as you have sweat equity in building your own home, that there was nothing mentioned about monthly payments, everybody figured they'd get a new house just for sweat equity, for helping work on it, and that was wrong to campaign in that way. Of course there's a lot of people that misunderstood it, today, right today, we've got around 35 houses in Duck Lake that's low income houses, we call it Metis housing, but it's CMHC and SHC and native housing and it all boils down to the same thing. You get our people in there, sure they put in sweat equity. Maybe they'll paint their house to get into the house, but then they might have a low rent -- 25 percent of their income. If they're working on the income today maybe they're going to pay \$150 a month for rent on their house, but the minute that their rent, that their wages go up, a lot of them don't report themselves right away, then they make maybe \$14 an hour instead of \$4.25, then automatically their rent goes up. And their rent goes up in a small town like this, there's some people that's paying rent as far as \$487 a month. Just for rent alone. Plus they got to pay their power, their gas, which is another amount of maybe \$75, \$80 a month and then you've got a phone, that all depends how many long distant phone calls they make, that's another \$10, \$15. What have you got left to live with? If you've got a car payment one of them is bound to be in trouble -- either your house or your car is going to be in trouble, and then not only that but your debt is going to be awful darn tight.

Brenda: Was there, was there a party, a political party that spoke best for Metis people? Was there a party that, that Metis people voted for in general so that they could get what they wanted?

Leonard: Yes. I cannot deny that. There was politicians in here that put out good speeches and they did come up with their promises at least with some of their promises, but they done better than a lot of other parties did. And I think we've been living long enough with promises, it's about time we get some

of them, start getting some answers back and some help, because our people is really... A lot of these winter works programs years ago that you couldn't get on the towns and get them and yet you was a Metis in town. I was one of them that tried to get on the work program, I did get on it but then the mayor had his own dad which was a pensioner as a foreman, and then when I stopped to fill my power saw with gas come and ask me what I was doing. "Well," I said, "this power saw won't run on air," I said, "you got to put gas in it." And I let him go, I, I quit the job. I wasn't going to work for \$2.50 a day with a power saw and then run all day. No way, slavery is gone, no more of that.

Brenda: Were, were you, did you hear about the Saskatchewan Metis Society in the 1930s?

Leonard: No I never, never did.

Brenda: Didn't know it existed then, eh. Does the name Joe LaRocque, or Joe Ross, Tom Major, Joe McKenzie and Sol Pritchard, do those names have any meaning to you?

Leonard: Pritchard's did.

Brenda: Pritchard's. And what did, what do you recall about Sol?

Leonard: Morse did. Tompkins. But that was in the later years, eh.

Brenda: And they, were they involved with the Metis Society?

Leonard: That's right.

Brenda: And you, you mentioned something about St. Denis.

Leonard: St. Denis, yes. He was some sort of a, I don't know if he was an MLA or what he was, but he was some sort of a government man. But he was a Metis.

Brenda: There's another gentleman that was telling me about scrips that were given to the Metis people, and there was one man that had a list of names. I think the man said 40 names he had taken with him to Lethbridge, and in Lethbridge they were given \$600 apiece, and I was wondering if you would know anything about that?

Leonard: No I don't. I don't know anything about it at all, but the only thing that I've heard, I've heard that they had land scrips and this is what most of the Rebellion was fought over as far as I could make out. See our people came from Red River, they came down, some of them went to Montana and then from Montana they come back down through Round Prairie, south of Saskatoon, around Dundurn there someplace. And then they scattered all over through here, through Batoche, Duck Lake, St. Laurent, St. Louis, and Fish Creek, and Gabriel's Crossing,

and Carleton, and Prince Albert, and they scattered -- Shell Lake, and Ile a la Crosse, and Meadow Lake, and Lac la Biche. And Lac la Biche, talking about Lac la Biche, one of my great-grandfathers helped to put up the Hudson's Bay post in Lac la Biche. There was one put up at Fort Pitt, he was the one who put that up that guided them for the Hudson's Bay Company.

Brenda: Your grandfather?

Leonard: Yes.

Brenda: What was his name?

Leonard: Oh, there's a Peter Pambrun and there was a John Pambrun. I never knew them but I've got some history on them.

Brenda: And they, the Metis people, this is your family and they travelled all over with the Hudson's Bay Company or just...

Leonard: No, no just this one man, but he moved his family a lot of places, his relation with him, eh.

Brenda: And this St. Denis, do you know anything else about him?

Leonard: No.

Brenda: Metis scrips? Land scrips?

Leonard: No, as far as the land scrips I don't know anything about St. Denis. All I know he was some sort of a government man, some sort of an MLA or I don't know exactly what it was, because I was too young for it and I just heard old people talk about it, eh. No, as far as land scrips, what I was trying to say a little while ago when they first got their land scrips in here, they all settled along the rivers, eh, and that was for fishing. And there was a lot of hunting along the rivers too, eh, a lot of game and that's where they, you know, it was their livelihood, eh -- ducks.

And you know this is one thing that really bothers me, even today, we've got to have a license to go and hunt. And even as a kid -- I must have been born a poacher, or whatever you call them, because I've always hunted for a living. I've got some awful close calls for getting caught but I was fortunate enough I never got caught, but we always had wild meat. And I feel that it's wrong. Because the government goes to work and they, they sell license to Americans that come up here and hunt and they don't even take the meat, they maybe take a trophy head or something and leave the meat spoil. And you know it's stupid, the Metis people, Indian and Metis people they'll go and kill a deer, they will never leave the heart or the liver, or the kidneys there, they'll take it along. And here the white people they'll leave, they'll take the hind quarters and leave all the front and all the insides, you know, and then we're

getting the blame for it. Today the Fish and Game Leagues some of the big officials in the Fish and Game Leagues, the directors, they go and hunt the same as we do -- the only thing they don't wait for a license, they don't wait for open season, and yet they pretend to go and feed deer and then they go and shoot them. They go and poach them. And you know this is the kind of thing that I'm really up against. I mean there's governments, you know, selling licenses where we can live on there, and we don't destroy that. You take like our deer, certain time of the year, this time of the year we never shoot a female, we never will because she's carrying calf. We'll shoot a bull, a buck, but that don't hurt the population. But if you start destroying females this is where you're losing your game. And you know, I think it's wrong, them guys come up here like I said and they make a big kill, they done the same thing with the buffalo, now they're doing it with all our elk, moose and deer.

Brenda: Pretty soon there won't be anything left.

Leonard: That's right.

Brenda: In 1968 you started...

Leonard: 1968 I started in pigs on the 10th of May. I rented a piece of land at \$100 a year and the contract was that as long as I paid that \$100 a year that he wouldn't raise the taxes, he wouldn't raise that rent and he wouldn't kick me off as long as I paid it. Now that was good, just as good as a 99 year lease providing I kept on paying. I raised 480 pigs. I bought feed from the reserve, feed was cheap, but then the price of pigs went down so I lost, lost out. I wouldn't say I went in the hole, I didn't go in the hole, but I wasn't making any money, just enough to keep living and working hard steady. So I got fed up with that and I started in cattle. A few head of cattle. I didn't have no land. I didn't have no money. I borrowed a few dollars and I went to the bank and I finally got a loan through the bank and I bought a quarter of land, \$14,500. There wasn't a post on there. The place wasn't even fenced. And today it's paid for.

Brenda: You have your land?

Leonard: I have my land and I've got buildings on there, in fact last fall I built myself a new house again on that place.

Brenda: That's all through your own income?

Leonard: That's all through my own income. Now I've taken a lot of my income to run to meetings all over the place for

Metis Society, not only Metis Society but I figured I was doing it for myself and my people. Now I don't care if I quarrelled with anybody. I could have a big row with anybody regardless who it is, one of my members that do not, that don't, I don't mean to say that I'm going to quarrel and have a grudge, I will not have a grudge. I'll turn around and if he needs help

he comes to me, or if I'm aware that he needs help in any way I'll help him the best I can. I've got no enemies. I don't hold grudges. Because I figure the people, the Metis people have trust in me, elected me here. They didn't elect me to fight with them they elected me to help them. And this is what I intend on doing. I'm not rich, I'm just living from day to day. That little bit of farm I got, I got 40 head of cattle, and there was the one I sell them, like yesterday I sold three young calves and big bull, \$2,200. That's going to help me for another four, five months.

Brenda: You're, you're your own self made man.

Leonard: Well I try to. (laughs)

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