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HIGHLIGHTS:

- General account of his life.

Judy: Today is March 5, 1984, and I'm at the home of Mr.
Jean Ouellette and we'll be discussing Metis history. Mr.
Ouellette, how do you see yourself as a person?

Jean: How would I answer that one?

Judy: Well, would you describe yourself as hard-working,
honest?

Jean: Yeah.

Judy: Okay. (both laugh) When you look back at your life
and everything that's happened in it how would you describe
your life?

Jean: I'd like to do it all over again. That a good answer?

Judy: Oh yeah. Do you think your life is better than your father's life?

Jean: Oh yes, definitely.

Judy: In what ways would you think it's better?

Jean: Well, put it this way, I might have not worked as hard as my father did. I think his life was quite a life, you know.

Judy: How about your grandfather's life?

Jean: I wouldn't say. I don't know.

Judy: What are the things that mattered most in your life?

Jean: Well, get along with my family for one thing. My children.

Judy: How about religion?

Jean: Yes, I'm Catholic myself, but I don't press it too hard, you know, I mean I stay even.

Judy: What do you think the native communities most important problems are?

Jean: Well, if you want my opinion, (laughs) it's, how will I say it now, I'd say, well, the money should be really put into where people does need it, eh. Not all go one way. And that way it would be a better country for the natives. If somebody wants something that hasn't got anything, that's the one they should take care of, but if they got more than they need

they shouldn't take care of them at all. Is that a good answer?

Judy: Where do you think the native people would be better off living -- in the country, the city, up north perhaps?

Jean: Well, you know, if they put the native people today like we used to live a long time ago I think they'd be better off to live on a farm. I don't think it's a place for native people in the city, myself. I'm a native myself, eh, but I think that's the way it should be done.

Judy: Why do you feel that they should live on a farm and not in the city?

Jean: Well, I don't think they got quite enough trade in the city. You see, you have to put it this way -- about 95 percent of the natives they haven't got a trade, and what they should do, that's what they should do is learn a trade. To my

opinion. If you got a trade you know you always got a job.

Judy: What is it like for you as a man to have to deal with the government agencies such as perhaps welfare, or unemployment insurance?

Jean: Well, I wouldn't know too much about that because I never dealt too much with that stuff.

Judy: Do you think it would be different for you if you were a white person?

Jean: No, I don't think so.

Judy: How about if you were a Treaty person?

Jean: Wouldn't make any difference, because there's good and bad in everybody. (laughs)

Judy: If you had a chance to be born again what would you choose to do different?

Jean: I don't think I'd choose to do any different than I was doing.

Judy: Would you choose to be a woman?

Jean: No.

Judy: Why?

Jean: I'd sooner be a man.

Judy: What reasons do you have for that?

Jean: Well, a man has got more privilege than a woman really, you know. Does that answer your question? (laughs)

Judy: What do you think the future of your children and your grandchildren will be like?

Jean: Well, I'll tell you, I'd like to live long enough to see it. I wouldn't say...

Judy: You have no idea... Tell me about an ordinary day as a young boy. What you would you do during that day?

Jean: You mean when I went to school or what?

Judy: Sure, during those times.

Jean: Well, well I had a lot of fun, put it that way. I don't know exactly what I used to do. But we used to play a lot of ball when I was young, softball, we played a lot of that when I was young.

Judy: Describe the house that you grew up in.

Jean: Well, it was a log house and it was nice and clean. And I think it had two bedrooms. And my mom was sick all the time. My dad was a hard-working man. He used to cut cord wood for a living but otherwise... He wasn't a bad provider either; at least we never went hungry.

Judy: So you remember your father as a very hard working person?

Jean: Oh yeah, he was. A real hard man to work.

Judy: Do you remember if your house had a wooden floor?

Jean: Yep.

Judy: How about running water or electricity?

Jean: No, no. (laughs) Had a lamp. Yeah, many the times they used to use the bitch lamp, they called it. You know what that is? Did your mom ever tell you? Well, she should have. You just braid a piece of rag, put some lard in a saucer, get

that lard to working on that rag and light it, and you had yourself a light. (laughs)

Judy: Describe the furniture that you had in your house.

Jean: Well, I think my dad made the most of it. The table, benches -- didn't have chairs, you know, just had benches.

Judy: Were they made just out of logs?

Jean: No, no, they were made out of lumber, oh yeah. Most of them was made out of planks, but still we had a place to sit. The beds -- well, you know, beds was beds, the old iron, steel beds, that's what we had. Cots, that's what we had when I was young.

Judy: Did your father ever own any land, or homestead on any land?

Jean: No, I don't think so, no.

Judy: When you were young did you ever hear the saying road allowance people, and if you did what does that mean to you?

Jean: Road allowance?

Judy: Right.

Jean: You know what a road allowance is? That's a private road. That's a government road there, a road allowance. That's... Well, say you had a section on this side and a section this side and the road allowance ran in between. That

was government property.

Judy: What about the people that lived on either side of the road?

Jean: They were allowed to cross it if they wanted to cross it. They were also allowed to use the road because it was a road allowance.

Judy: When you grew up and raised a family of your own did things change for you?

Jean: No, not much.

Judy: Did they change for better or worse?

Jean: Well, for me, better.

Judy: What do you remember as a young boy your chores being at home?

Jean: Chop wood. (laughs) We took turns. We had to chop wood, get the water, and if there was any ashes in the stove we had to take them out too.

Judy: When you were young and you thought of the word family, who all did that include? Did that include just your immediate family or was that your aunts or uncles, your grandparents?

Jean: Oh, that was everything, yeah.

Judy: Are there any other family members besides your mother and father that you remember especially?

Jean: Just my, just my Uncle Nolan, Justine Nolan, Justine Ouellette, that's the only one that I... And I had an aunt too but I can't remember her name, I couldn't think right now, but she died.

Judy: What do you remember about him?

Jean: About him? Well, he used to be quite a man that he'd sit up and sew all the time. He used to be an old veteran and he'd sew blankets. He used to call what they call a crazy blanket, you know. He had all kinds of patches on different blankets. That's what I remember, eh, that's the only thing I remember. He was a very quiet man, never drank that I know of.

Judy: Do you have strong family loyalty?

Jean: Yeah.

Judy: Did people stick up for each other no matter what?

Jean: Oh yes, definitely. (laughs)

Judy: You said that your father used to cut cord wood for sale. What other things did he used to do for a living?

Jean: Well, that's about all I used to know that he used to do, except his carpenter work. Well, he used to hew logs too, you know, for a living. That's where I learned to hew logs. He used to use one of these big broad axes, he used to hew logs for everybody. But he was a man that used to like to work. If you couldn't follow him he'd let you know.

Judy: Did your parents have a garden?

Jean: Oh yeah, they used to have a garden.

Judy: How about livestock?

Jean: Well, all I can remember they had, well, they had a cow and a team of horses. One was mine, of course, but that doesn't make any difference.

Judy: Can you remember any times that your father was unemployed?

Jean: No, I don't rememeber. No, I don't think he was ever on relief either. As long as I can remember.

Judy: Do you remember what your uncles or any other people in that area would do for a living?

Jean: Well, the only uncle I had was that... he had an army pension. That's the one that made the blankets, that's the only one I know. But he never worked. He used to come and visit, he didn't have to work hard because he got a pension.

Judy: But do you think the other, the other men your father's age did the same type of work that your father did?

Jean: I don't know, I never was too much into my father's family to tell you the truth, you know.

Judy: How old were you when you got your first paying job?

Jean: I think I was about 14, 13 or 14.

Judy: What was that job?

Jean: Farm, I was on a farm.

Judy: Working on the farm?

Jean: Yeah.

Judy: Do you remember how much you got paid?

Jean: \$35 a month. (laughs)

Judy: What other types of jobs have you had during your life?

Jean: Oh my gosh, I done everything; I cut wood, I trapped, and, you name 'em, I think I've done everything, I tried everything.

Judy: You said you'd been a carpenter for a number of years.

Jean: Yeah. And I also tried everything when I was a carpenter.

Judy: And you were a truck driver?

Jean: Yeah. I was in the junk business. You name it I was in it, everything.

Judy: The farm that you worked on, how long did you work there for?

Jean: Fourteen years.

Judy: Did you experience regular work or a lot of seasonal part time work?

Jean: Well, I done a lot of... Well, the longest I ever work in one spot I work for Carl Rowe for 14 years on the farm. Then I came into Saskatoon and I work for Beaudreau's Construction for 5 years as foreman. Then I went on my own, done carpenter work.

Judy: So you weren't unemployed that much?

Jean: No.

Judy: During the times that you were unemployed what kind of problems did you face?

Jean: Well, really didn't face too much, you know. Well, we had, we had some pretty tough times, I mean, but seems things always come pretty good. To start out with may be tough for a few days and then things would pick up. That's it.

Judy: Where did you spend most of your early years of your life?

Jean: Where? North of Biggar.

Judy: And how, when you lived at your house how far was your nearest neighbour?

Jean: Oh, quarter of a mile. You mean on the farm? Quarter of a mile. That was the wife's grandparents.

Judy: Oh, so it was family then that lived pretty close.

Jean: Yeah.

Judy: What sticks out in your mind about community life when you were young and growing up?

Jean: What do you mean like...?

Judy: Perhaps if you all got together.

Jean: Oh, oh. Well, that used to happen pretty near every Sunday, you know. Go to the lake, take the dinner, play ball, yeah.

Judy: That would be all of the Metis families?

Jean: Well, no, they weren't Metis, the white family.

Judy: Oh, so you socialized with white as well as...?

Jean: Oh yeah. Oh yeah.

Judy: What language do you remember being spoken in your parents' home?

Jean: French.

Judy: French was your first language?

Jean: Yeah.

Judy: And then you learned English eventually?

Jean: I learned English, yeah.

Judy: What language were you allowed to speak at school, do you remember?

Jean: English.

Judy: When were you first aware of being Metis?

Jean: Oh, I knew I was Metis when I was 10 years old anyway.

Judy: Did your parents often speak of themselves as being Metis?

Jean: Well, tell you the truth, I never heard my parents speak about anything of life, their life.

Judy: Do you think, though, that they were proud of being Metis?

Jean: Oh yeah, oh yeah. My dad was, my mom was. I had a step-mother too, you know, she was Metis too.

Judy: At what age did you get your step-mother?

Jean: I was about 9 years old. That's why I left home.

Judy: You left home because your father remarried?

Jean: Well, my father was, I stayed with my father till I was about, well, maybe 9 years old. But I didn't want to stick around because, well, my mother died when I was 7 and I didn't want to argue with my step-mother, so I just stepped out.

Judy: Where did you go at such a young age?

Jean: First shot I came to Saskatoon.

Judy: Who did you stay with?

Jean: I stayed with Buster and his mom and dad for a while.

Judy: So they were relations?

Jean: Yeah, and we sold wood, you know -- we had an old truck -- Buster and I sold wood. And then I decided to go for the farm and I went to Biggar. From Biggar I went, stayed with my sister at the Wilson Lake country and I cut wood. And I didn't like that idea so I went to work and I asked for a job, and this guy gave me a job to work on the farm. And that's where I stayed for 14 years. And that's where I met my wife at Wilson Lake.

Judy: Do you remember any of your relatives ever telling you Metis stories about Metis history?

Jean: My dad said something about Batoche one time -- when they were fighting -- that's the only time that I ever heard my dad talk about Batoche.

Judy: You don't remember any other family members talking about it?

Jean: No, no.

Judy: Did the Metis families in your community or your area ever get together for social events or holidays such as Christmas or New Year's?

Jean: Oh yeah, that was quite an event was New Year's.

Judy: What would they do?

Jean: Well you drive from one place to the other and have dinner. You'd have a drink. Of course I didn't have a drink -- I was too young. (laughs) That's the way they used to use their New Year's, they never done Christmas very much.

Judy: But New Year's was the big celebration.

Jean: New Year's was their big day, yeah, for the Metis people.

Judy: Did your father ever wear a Metis sash?

Jean: What the hell's that? (laughs)

Judy: It's a leather belt with beadwork on it.

Jean: Gosh, I wouldn't know, I couldn't say.

Judy: You don't remember him?

Jean: No, I don't remember him wearing that. He might have worn a belt but I wouldn't remember.

Judy: Did your father or any of your other relatives know how to jig?

Jean: Yeah, there was one in the family but I don't remember which one.

Judy: Did you know how to jig?

Jean: Me? I used to but I couldn't do it now.

Judy: But you did?

Jean: Yeah.

Judy: Was jigging a local custom with the dances there?

Jean: Oh yeah. They had the fiddle and then somebody'd step up and somebody else would step up and try to beat you to

the draw -- that's the way it worked. There's no arguments about it, it's just one was better than the other one, the other one went and sit down.

Judy: Were there any fiddle players in your family?

Jean: No.

Judy: Nobody that you can... Any friends of yours that played the fiddle?

Jean: There was a friend of mine that played the fiddle and his name, what the heck was his name now? I can't think. There was Pete Bisnett(?) he was, he wasn't, he was a Metis too, you know, Peter Bisnett. There was Alex, Paul, they used to play the fiddle, Louis, he used to play the banjo.

Judy: Do you remember them ever playing any Metis songs?

Jean: Oh yeah, they used to play a lot of them, but I don't remember what they used to play. God, I think they played one that was a square dance was Old Dan Tucker -- that was a square

dance. Then the reel, what the heck do you call that? Oh, they had a name for that, anyway they used to play the fiddle. I don't remember, it's been so long.

Judy: Did you have any white relatives that lived in your community, or area?

Jean: Oh yeah, lots of them.

Judy: What was your family's relationship with them?

Jean: Same as would be like you and I talking today.

Judy: So there was no problems, you got along?

Jean: Yeah.

Judy: Do you remember any of the elderly people in your family believing and practising the traditional Indian medicine?

Jean: Gee Willikers, I think my mom used to do that.

Judy: Did they ever use sweat lodges?

Jean: I don't know. You got me on that one.

Judy: Do you remember any illnesses when you were growing up such as tuberculosis?

Jean: My sister had and my mom. That's what my mom's sister died with.

Judy: So it was your aunt that died with that?

Jean: My aunt? No one of my sisters.

Judy: Oh, one of your sisters.

Jean: And my mom.

Judy: Did the doctor ever come out and see them, or...?

Jean: No, I don't think so. Not as I remember.

Judy: When you moved into a large city did your living standard increase or decrease? Did it get better or worse?

Jean: You mean like when I left home, or when I moved in with my family?

Judy: Yeah, when you moved in with your family.

Jean: Well, it was bad some days, but I couldn't say it wasn't good either.

Judy: When you moved into a city did your ties with other Metis people get weaker or stronger?

Jean: What do you mean? For me?

Judy: Yeah.

Jean: Oh, I had more ambition.

Judy: So you knew more Metis people and your ties were stronger with them?

Jean: Yeah.

Judy: How would you describe the Metis community in Saskatoon? Would say there's actually a community here in the city?

Jean: Well, I don't know how I would describe that. But I tell you one thing about the Metis people, they don't get together enough. And share for what they got. That's one

thing that the Metis people mistake is not sharing, because I figure if you share it's a whole lot better for the Metis people than it is not sharing at all. It should never go only just one way it should be all -- everybody should share together and it would be a good life.

Judy: So you think that Metis people should be closer?

Jean: That's right, yeah.

Judy: When you were growing up did your family get along with the white community?

Jean: Oh yes, definitely.

Judy: Did the white kids ever call you names because you were Metis?

Jean: No.

Judy: Do you remember if you or any other Metis people ever got paid less than a white person for doing the same job?

Jean: Not me. I don't remember that, no. I always got the same as the rest of them.

Judy: Were you ever turned away from a job because you were Metis?

Jean: No. Never.

Judy: When you first came to the city did you feel comfortable going into the stores and businesses?

Jean: No, never bothered me at all. (laughs) Maybe I had

too much gab. (laughs) Like your mom. (laughs) I used to say if they don't like me the way I am they can go you know where. (laughs)

Judy: Did the city authorities such as the police treat you fairly?

Jean: Oh yeah. I've been treated very good with the police.

Judy: Never had any problems?

Jean: Never had no problem.

Judy: Have you ever dealt with government agencies such as welfare or U.I.C.?

Jean: No.

Judy: How about... Do you have any memories of dealing with places of business such as banks...?

Jean: Oh yeah. Oh yeah, I dealt with banks lots of times.

Judy: Have you had any bad experiences with them?

Jean: No.

Judy: In any place that you've ever lived, any towns or so on, have they ever tried to force the Metis people to move away?

Jean: No.

Judy: So you were generally accepted into the community?

Jean: Anything, yeah.

Judy: Did the church play an important role in your parents' life?

Jean: Yeah. My dad's.

Judy: Did he attend church regularly?

Jean: Yeah, he did. He had to go and make his Easter every year one way or the other.

Judy: So he was very strong in his belief?

Jean: Yeah.

Judy: How about in your life, did the church play an important role?

Jean: Yeah, I think of my church very much. Maybe not as

much as my dad did, but I still think of my church.

Judy: Do you remember if the priest ever visited your home?

Jean: Oh yeah, lots of times.

Judy: What did he talk about?

Jean: Well, for one thing, one time they came to my place -- there was two of them, there was Father Ouellette and Father Tombo and they brought a letter, and they asked my name. They said, "Is your name John Ouellette?" I said, "Yeah." "Well," he said, "that's what my name is. I opened your letter." "Well," I said, "that's all right, so what?" And it was... that was his initials and he had the same name as I had, see. But we had, we had priests come to visit us right here, Father Louis and Father Hammond.

Judy: What did they usually speak about, religion?

Jean: No. No, they're very, you know, they just come to visit and see everything is okay. That's one thing I'll say about them.

Judy: Do you remember when you were young if the church was ever involved in politics?

Jean: No. Never.

Judy: Did your belief in the church ever get weaker?

Jean: No.

Judy: It stayed about the same?

Jean: Yeah.

Judy: Do you think the church has more or less influence today than it had in the past?

Jean: No, I think today... Well, put it this way, today I think they kind of, how would I say that? They don't go by the old tradition, eh, it's changed quite a bit since years back. Years back they had the old tradition and that's the way they should have stayed, I think.

Judy: The old tradition in which way? To have regular attendance or...?

Jean: ...you had to go to sacrament and if you went to sacrament you couldn't eat, after sacrament you eat. But now you can go and eat and still go to confession. It doesn't make any difference now, not like it used to be. I had to, you couldn't even drink a cup of coffee, you had to go to sacrament.

Judy: So what you say then is because of the difference in the way that they do religion now, perhaps the church doesn't have as much influence as it used to?

Jean: That's right.

Judy: Do you think the church has generally helped Metis people face their problems?

Jean: Yes. I think a lot. Yeah, I think they have, and they still do, I think.

Judy: And do you remember any examples or anything how the church especially helped out one Metis family?

Jean: Oh yeah, I remember lots of them, but how could I explain that? They'd never let you go hungry, I'll tell you that.

Judy: So if you didn't have any food they would probably bring some over, eh?

Jean: That's right, yeah.

Judy: What about if a person had personal problems?

Jean: If there were sick kids in the family they helped them there too, I remember that. Or if your wife was sick or your husband was sick you got a little...

Judy: What do you remember about going to school?

(END OF SIDE A)

(SIDE B)

Judy: What do you remember about going to school?

Jean: I remember one time, well, I had a lariat anyway. We always used to ride steers, eh, so we'd bring them into the school yard and then we'd rope one and somebody get on him and he got thrown off, somebody else rode him. But I remember one time we got the school teacher to ride it and we put him on backwards. He said, "Well, what do I hold on?" "Well," I said, "you hold onto the steer's tail." (laughs) He got thrown off. (laughs) I remember that too, that was a lot of fun, but he was a good teacher, you know. He really enjoyed it.

Judy: What about your other teachers, is there any others that you remember?

Jean: Yeah, I went to school in Jackfish Lake and she was a nice teacher. But then there was a fight, you know. I don't know what the fight started on but this little guy he kind of got kind of rough with her and I took her part and instead of me taking a part I got a licking for it. I remember that and I

swear to myself after that never try again.

Judy: You don't remember what the fight was over?

Jean: There was something he did anyway. He kind of took over, you know, and he was a little bit stronger than she was. I remember that.

Judy: What age do you remember that happening at?

Jean: Oh God, I was about, I must have been about around 9, I guess.

Judy: What other schools have you gone to?

Jean: I went to school right here in Saskatoon there, you know, that school there right across from St. Paul's, no, yeah...

Judy: St. Mary's?

Jean: Yeah, I went to school there. That was quite a school too. But you see when we went to school there the girls played on one side and the boys played on the other side, and if there was any fights nobody told anybody. Not even the teacher heard it, and if the principal call you in you didn't say nothing, you fought your own battles.

Judy: So what do you remember about the teachers at that school?

Jean: Well, they never used to say too much to us.

Judy: Was there any discrimination against you from the teachers?

Jean: No. No, I was always used good, I was used good from everybody.

Judy: What do you remember about the kinds of things they taught you in school?

Jean: Well, gosh, I don't know.

Judy: What, what types of subjects did they teach you?

Jean: Well, they teach you mostly how to write, you know. When you wrote something you had to write fancy. That's what they did learn, try to learn you if you wanted to learn it. But something wrong, I just couldn't learn nothing. Like being used nice, there was nothing wrong with the teachers them days.

Judy: Were you taught the basic studies such as arithmetic, English?

Jean: Yeah.

Judy: Were you ever taught any classes about Indian or Metis history?

Jean: No.

Judy: You don't remember anything about that?

Jean: No. I don't think they brought anything of that stuff in the school. Because I'm sure they didn't, yeah I'm positive.

Judy: Did you feel that you belonged in school or did you feel uncomfortable there?

Jean: Oh, I just liked to go to school, but I never learned anything.

Judy: It was hard for you then to...

Jean: Well, you see, when I... You put it this way, when I used to try to learn how to read I could take a book and read it, I could read the whole thing whether it was in my head or not, but I just couldn't learn how to read. I could read but I'd read the whole thing off and just think nothing of it.

Judy: Oh, so you could read inside your mind but you couldn't read it out vocally. What did you enjoy about school?

Jean: Well, we used to have a lot of, we used to play a lot of ball. I used to like to play ball. That's the only thing they used to play them days was just ball. I used to love hardball but they used to play a lot of softball, that's what I used to enjoy. Or jumping, what they used to call it, they used to have these school picnics. Two guys, young guys, would put the bag on their leg and then run three-legged, you know, I remember that. But you couldn't tattle tale either in schools them days.

Judy: It was a matter of loyalty there?

Jean: Yeah.

Judy: Looking back at your school years, what was your experience at school, was it good or bad?

Jean: Well, it was all good. I used to get along with all the kids pretty well.

Judy: How important do you think education is today?

Jean: Well, I think if I had to do it over again I'd sure make sure that I got my education, definitely. See, I haven't got any. But that didn't bother me from working.

Judy: But you think it would be better for Metis people...

Jean: To have a good education, very definitely, yeah, they should have.

Judy: What political parties do you remember your parents voting for?

Jean: Oh they were Conservatives. My dad was anyway.
(laughs) John Diefenbaker.

Judy: Did he ever get involved with the parties, or did he just vote?

Jean: Just vote.

Judy: Who do you think influenced them to vote the way that they did?

Jean: Gosh, I don't know. I guess they had a mind of their own.

Judy: Do you remember any politicians visiting your parents' home?

Jean: Yeah, Diefenbaker. John Diefenbaker.

Judy: John Diefenbaker visited your home personally?

Jean: Yeah.

Judy: What did he talk about?

Jean: Well I couldn't say, because we never was allowed to listen to anything like that in my home.

Judy: What year do you remember that, can you remember what year that was?

Jean: (laughs)

Judy: About how old were you?

Jean: Oh, I guess I must have been about 16 or 17 years old.

Judy: And where was that that he visited you?

Jean: St. Louis.

Judy: And he sat and spoke to your parents?

Jean: Yeah, he spoke to my dad all the time, he used to come and visit my dad all the time. He was a good man.

Judy: Were they personal friends?

Jean: In one way yes and one way no, you know.

Judy: So what times would he come? Would he only come at politics time?

Jean: No. He'd come anytime.

Judy: And you don't remember anything that they were talking about?

Jean: No. We wasn't allowed to go and listen to them talk. That's strict, strict people, strict father. (laughs) Yeah, my father was very strict. He used to... if you sat at the table you didn't dare talk out of place. If you wanted something you had to say please, thank you, that I can remember.

Judy: What other things can you remember about your father?

Jean: Well, used to get along with everybody, I don't know how but he did he got along with everybody. It didn't matter what nationality it was. But he could talk Cree, you know, my dad could, and read in Cree. But he couldn't read in his own language, he couldn't read French.

Judy: Did he ever teach you how to speak Cree?

Jean: He wouldn't let us.

Judy: Oh, why is that?

Jean: I don't know. I could talk Cree too and then he told me I had to quit. So look at that -- I could have had another language just like that.

Judy: What do you think the Metis people and your parents thought of politics?

Jean: Well, most Metis people that I can remember, I think there was a lot of Metis people they was mostly was all Conservatives, most of them that I knew of anyway. Either Conservative or Liberals, that's all you ever seen in them days.

Judy: Which party did they choose as the one that best represented the Metis people?

Jean: Conservatives.

Judy: Conservatives. Do you feel like talking about the way you voted over the years?

Jean: Me? No, I voted, well I started voting CCF to start out with when they first come out and I've never changed, I voted them all my life. Not going to change.

Judy: Have you ever got involved with that party politics,

or elections? Did you ever campaign for them?

Jean: Oh yeah, well I don't know whether you call it campaign but I used to have a truck and I used to bring them all in to vote. (laughs)

Judy: Do you remember if your friends ever got active in that way?

Jean: No. They used to ask me if I was drawing Liberals or CCFs, you know, that's when the old CCF came in. I said, "I don't care. They want a ride they get a ride. Which way they vote that's their business."

Judy: What kind of things do you remember that that particular party -- the CCF -- what kind of things do you remember them saying that they would do if they were voted in?

Jean: Oh, well for one thing they did say they were going to bring in the, like your hospitalization, that's one thing they said. They brought it in. I don't remember anything, and I guess something was said about wages too. That's all I can remember.

Judy: Were you ever involved in the Saskatchewan Metis Society? Or do you remember your parents being involved perhaps in the early 1930s and '40s?

Jean: No.

Judy: You don't remember them being involved?

Jean: No.

Judy: How about yourself, were you ever involved with the Saskatchewan Metis Society?

Jean: Well the only one, the only time I was involved was right here in Saskatoon.

Judy: What year was that in?

Jean: When they first started.

Judy: And that was in the 1960s, I believe.

Jean: 1960, was it '66 I think -- now I don't remember but that's when it first started, eh. I think it's '66 if I remember right, '66 or '65. No it wasn't either, it was in '67, I think. That's the only time I was involved.

Judy: How long were you involved with them for?

Jean: I was with them for about a month. Like I said, when they bugged me up I just stepped out.

Judy: What types of things do you remember trying to do for

Metis people?

Jean: Well, we tried everything. We try to sell tickets, membership tickets and all that stuff, you know.

Judy: And what were the proceeds going to?

Jean: Well, there was supposed to be like, you know, in the group, see, there was a group of four or six, I don't remember, but I think it was a group of four. I think Irene Trotchie was in it too.

Judy: Irene Trottier or Irene Demick?

Jean: Demick. Yeah, Irene Demick, yeah, that's right. That's what I was trying to think when I was telling you there.

Judy: Were most of the Metis people involved in the organization?

Jean: Well most of them was, some of them they wouldn't even come. Well put it this way, you know, you'd go, you'd have, you'd call a meeting and then they wouldn't come, then they'd say, "Well, why don't you call a meeting? We'll all be there." And then after there would only be the four of us, maybe six or seven.

Judy: Why would you think that they done that?

Jean: I don't know. But when it come to a deal like going to Batoche they all went to Batoche.

Judy: Do you remember your parents ever talking about the Metis Society in the 1930s and '40s?

Jean: No.

Judy: Do you remember any relatives?

Jean: No.

Judy: Do you remember ever hearing these names, perhaps from your parents or friends, or other relatives, the name Joe LaRocque?

Jean: Yeah.

Judy: What do you remember about that name?

Jean: Well all I, all I remember that they used to talk about him. It wasn't bad, you know.

Judy: How about Joe Ross?

Jean: Never heard of him.

Judy: How about Tom Major?

Jean: No.

Judy: Joe McKenzie? How about Sol Pritchard?

Jean: Yeah.

Judy: What do you remember about him?

Jean: Well, you put it this way, when we was small we didn't dare say too much about it. If they mentioned it we just kept our mouth shut, us kids, eh.

Judy: Do you remember them ever mentioning that perhaps these people here have been involved with the Saskatchewan Metis Society?

Jean: No, I don't think that I ever heard that.

Judy: But you have heard their names?

Jean: Yeah.

Judy: Is there anything else that you would like to talk to me about?

Jean: No, I think I said all I'm going to say. I think, I don't think I can add any more. (laughs) I think I added enough now. (laughs)

Judy: Okay, I want to thank you very much, Mr. Ouellette.

Jean: You're welcome.

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