

Transcription  
Norris Petit  
- Interviewed Feb. 25, 1993 -

Dave: Okay. I'm here with Norris Petit. It's February 25, 1993 and Norris has agreed to an interview for the Métis War Veterans book that the Institute is producing. What I usually do Norris is just ask some basic sort of information type questions, and then we get on with the bigger stuff. When were you born?

Norris: 7th of April 1924.

Dave: Where were you born?

Norris: Duck Lake.

Dave: When did you enlist?

Norris: I went to Regina in December 1951, but it was at Christmas time so they sent me back. Then I come back to Regina and I was sworn in on the 10th of January 1952.

Dave: So you enlisted at Regina?

Norris: Yes.

Dave: Were you married at the time?

Norris: No, I wasn't.

Dave: After you enlisted what regiment were you with?

Norris: Prince of Patricia \_\_\_\_\_ infantry.

Dave: Where did you go for basic training?

Norris: Aprilwash, ON.

Dave: How long did that take?

Norris: We were there from January till June. And then they moved us to advanced training in Wainwright, AB.

Dave: After that, what happened?

Norris: That fall we were told that we were going to Korea to take over from the first battalion \_\_\_\_\_. So we were done advanced training there and after that we were given leave and we departed I think it was September. We boarded a ship in Washington, Washington anyways and we went to landed in Yokohoma, Japan, 13 days later.

Dave: Do you remember the name of the ship?

Norris: No, I don't.

Dave: What was the voyage like?

Norris: It wasn't too bad until all the boys started getting sick. They had you working in the kitchen. You had to do your turn in the mess. And we had to stand up to eat. And we were about 8 high bunked in and with all your gear tied up to your bunks. I don't know if you call them bunks, but it was a hammock of some kind. But we had all our gear except the rifles. That we had to turn in before we left. And we got to Yokohoma and then we boarded a train that we were on for a day and a half. We went to Furo, Japan. Then we got out there and then, but the trains were really well fixed up. They were fixed up for 2 trains. They had bunks in them. It was nice to get into a kind of a bed after that ride on the ship. And then we got some more training with mountain climbing. We couldn't believe the mountains for a week or ten days I think we were there. But the country was beautiful. It was nice and warm there yet. It was getting cold in Canada when we left. And from there we boarded another ship to Puson from Kuree, Japan to Puson. I don't know how many days we were on there, 2-3 days or a day and a half or whatever, but it seemed longer than the other. It was an English ship and all we ate was smoked fish or whatever. But it was rough. But now still not thinking what we were getting into. We were all young. I was underage and my brother was underage. He was on the same, with the same bunch. Some of the boys from back home. We got off, first of all when we got close to Puson, we could smell the place. They have different kind of way of fertilizing, they use. But anyways, we got in there and it really stunk. Human garbage. And then we got in there and we got real down there thinking of what we were getting into there. There was a troop train waiting for us. They gave us a bandolier and a hundred rounds of ammunition and a quart of beer. First of all we got a quart of beer and we thought oh my God, this is heaven. Then I started looking at the trains and there was bulletholes and bullets all over. That's when you start thinking, where the hell am I and what am I doing here. A lot of the boys are \_\_\_\_\_. (interruption)

But anyways, it was really scary and a lot of the boys, some were in tears. I think they wanted to turn around and come home. But it was too late then, we were there. Those days in the army, they just treat you like a bunch of cattle. Get in there and that's it. In that train, I guess there was a few boys that got hit when the troops had been brought in before. It was the advance party for the 3rd battalion. They come from Fort Louis, and I think one of them was Leon Ferguson. But anyways we got on the train and we travelled all night and then they brought us God knows where. And then they said this B aschwon, and then we stayed in tents like. A lot of the boys were even in Japan, some of the boys didn't make. A lot were underage and got caught there and even told on themselves I guess cause they didn't really like what they seen. But we got in there to B aschwon. The sergeant left and went to check out the line I guess to see where we were going to come in. They were having a big joke about it. We all put our helmets on when they come back. We wanted him to tell us a war story. But then little things started happening. Guys starting getting shot in the foot and other little stupid things and cleaning rifles, but I think it was nerves or whatever. But, little things like that happened. But then we had a change over of the guards, the first battalions were leaving and we were taking over and the other guards had a little parade there. And standing right across from me was my uncle that I hadn't seen for about 5-6 years I guess. \_\_\_\_\_ the second World War right into, from the second World War he joined the Princes Pats and got into the Korean War. And then we of course had a little party. There was a canteen in the room. It was something. He started crying right away. Well, because he couldn't believe we were big enough, we were underage. Claude was younger than me. He was there also underage and I was there. And they were all getting excited. But we ended up with the A ashcwon now. Now you're in pop tents and stuff like that and they really give it to us. They start bombing us and we were really scared you know. They weren't lining too far away. Them guys were jumping right up. The guy I was with was really hyper, he jumped right up, right out of the tent in the middle of the night. It's scary, that's it. If you're not scared, then you're not human. From then on it was just, in the British outfit, the Fridgeleers I think, then the American outfit really got hit that time. But they were sending pamphlets over for us to go back home. They knew we were there. We couldn't believe it. But after that it was the same old thing. We went on guard duty and then we were in the trenches and we stayed there so many hours, just like shift work really. And then Claude got wounded. He got chranel in the back and I got word. Everything started

hitting the fan then. Mom wired Ottawa, phoned them and told them about him being underage and I was underage. And then they drove me back to I don't know, D company on rest or something. I was in this camp, and I didn't know a soul, and it was raining and cold. Then a guy comes up to me and he shows me this birth certificate. And I always use Norris Leo, and here on this birth certificate it says Noah Leonard. That's really what the priest put on there I guess. I said, that's not mine, but I knew that in a way it was \_\_\_\_\_, and they don't even use the first names anyways. All of a sudden I got called, I was going back to Japan. They brought me to, this was in March or something like that. They brought me to Seoul, Korea and I had to board one of those big transport, what do they call them, flying boxcars or something, that flew us to someplace in Japan. I couldn't hear for about 3-4 days after that. But anyways I got off there, and I think it's an airforce base, and I seem to be the only Canadian there. You know even there, the second World War hadn't finishes, places still bombed out. It was kind of scary. So they got me on one of these little boats to go across whatever, some part of the ocean I guess, I don't know what it was, on the tip of the ocean I guess, into Huro, Japan. We landed in Kuree and they brought me to Huro again. Back in the tent. And then I went to all kinds of rigamarolls about my age and they said that I was going home. I thought they'd keep me there until, cause in April I would have been older. No, they shipped me right to Tokyo. I don't know something happened to the plane and then I was back home. I didn't really know what exact month. But Claude was sent home right away after he got out of the hospital. Because my mom wired them. It was interesting. Come back here and then I had to leave. I went to Ontario, my folks were in Ontario at that time. Went back to Calgary and was kind of lost for a long time. Everybody was separate really. Some guys there that we knew. I don't know what they were, they were forming the Canadian Guards at that time. After I got back, I wanted to go back, but then it was already to late. They had signed the treaty I guess. Then I got out there in 1954. July 30, 54 in Calgary. That's about all there is really. Except I trained for the troop and the colors. Lady Patricia. That's when the 3rd battalions and the 2nd battalions received there colors. I was with Leon Ferguson. I trained for 6 weeks, just an hour or two per week. Just something that you don't see very often. That was about all. I did mind \_\_\_\_\_ work. I seemed to kind of enjoy it really. There's a lot of other things, it's a good learning, something to really make a man out of me. And the way I got into the army it was because there was no, really work. That's all everyone was talking about really in Duck Lake in those days. Everybody

is coming out of there. Some were trying to get back in, the younger boys. And that's about it.

Dave: So how did you manage to enlist underage?

Norris: It wasn't really, you just put down your age and they never really checked your birth certificate or anything. Especially when the Korean war was going fairly strong. Cause the year before I had tried in Edmonton already, and I didn't make the M-test. I think \_\_\_\_\_, I didn't but a friend of mine did. He was underage, the same age as I was. But then I come back here, I went to Prince George and I phoned home and my mom had told me that Claude had joined already. I could hardly believe it. When I come back here I went to Prince Albert and joined. There was a whole gang of us. I think there was about 7-8 of us from Duck Lake that joined the Patricia's. Some boys on the reserve \_\_\_\_\_, the Spinks, there was a Pelon from Duck Lake, a Mickelo, a Misner, Hershel Misner, he was on the same ship as we were. 3rd battalion. He's married to one of the Paul girls. He originally lived in St. Louis.

Dave: So did you mom know that you had gone and enlisted and were about to. She was aware of that at the time?

Norris: Yeah. But I don't know if she realized what we were really getting into. Dad had went through the war for 5 years and never got wounded. Well he got chrapanel wounds, but not really bad wounds. So she never thought too much of it I guess. That was the way of life for awhile there, in those days. But then when Claude got wounded it was different I guess.

Dave: So what did you do after you were discharged?

Norris: All kinds of things. I went to work in the \_\_\_\_\_, worked in the bush in Ontario first of all. I worked in the sawmill there in Sapallio, ON, just out of Radicoki. And I went myself, and my dad and my mom moved to Prince George, B.C. And I worked there when they were building that new jail, we were construction at that jail. And dad worked at that planer room. After that we went back to Ontario, and back to the sawmill, and in the bush. In the wintertime in the bush mostly. After that I left there and worked \_\_\_\_\_ and I worked out in Winnipeg in the bush, and I got a job for awhile with the National Defense in Fort Eisbenbarrocks. I was there for about 6 or 7 months. And I really liked to roam around in those days, because I couldn't have probably retired on that job. I was with the engineers. Like working in

Dundurn. But anyways I wasn't home I guess. From there I did odd jobs. I went back to Duck Lake. Then I come to Saskatoon and I started looking for work here, and I started roofing. Hot roofing. I started and I worked on that for close to 20 years. I worked here in Saskatoon, and Calgary and Edmonton. But that's the job. It was good money. I hurt my back in 82 and I was off for 2 years. And they had an opening here in the Friendship Centre for Assistant Program Director and I got the job. I was always volunteering here. I've been training for boxing, coach. I coach here now for going on 25 years. Claude first starting off with the boxing club. Then I got involved with it and I stuck with it. I went back to work for awhile, roofing, but I couldn't really do it. Then they cut me right off. I couldn't go back roofing. So I got back on here again. I was off for another couple of years for my back. So I don't know, I just went through another scan for my back again, 2 weeks ago, so I don't know what's happening now with that. Some days you can't stand it really. But here I'm sports director, same thing as assistant program director. Still got the boxing glove. But I got two boys that were Canadian champions. One boy won gold at the Canada games, first native boy that ever won the gold at the games. He also won the Golden Gloves. I have about 3 or 4 of them that, well 2 of them won Golden Boy, and that's one of the top. This year I think was a better tournament than the nationals. It's an invitational tournament and they have Americans in there. That's why it's so good. There was 156 boxers in there. We won 2 medals and 1 girl even I have boxing, won. She didn't box but she still won a gold medal cause she was the first girl that ever got into that tournament. But they didn't have no opponent for her. The guy that won the Golden Boy 2 years ago won the gold medal again, and this year he says he's going to win the nationals. So let's hope so. He needs to get on the national team. He had a chance to go to the Olympics last time. He had no international experience and the guy that he had beat at the national level had. I think that's probably a little politics going on, because he lost by points the first fight and the second fight he did get beat because I was with him. But then he come home kind of discouraged after losing the Box off. But they work so the guy, but maybe he couldn't have went because he didn't have international experience. The guy that won the Box off got knocked out right away. They didn't gain anything by dropping him. He's a good boy to train, he'll train if he sets his goal at making something.

Dave: What's his name?

Norris: Jeff Hill. And the other boy that I had was Randy Smith. Randy and Ricky, Ricky won the silver 2-3 times I guess at the national level for boys. But now they're in the 30's though. They're officials now for boxing, but still with my club. At least they're coming back into it.