

**Tape #5 12:35 p.m.**

**Geo.:** Opening prayer

Help us this morning and today. Teach us how to do our work well. Help us and after when we are all going home. Look upon us. That's all.

How is she supposed to speak this one? In Michif.

**St. P.:** In Cree. That's my language

**We first have to start this in Michif. Speak about how the Métis lived long ago. Everything that you can remember growing up. First you tell us your name.**

Before I was married? Vitaline Flammond was my name.

**And what was your Mom and Dad's name?**

My deceased father, Alexandre Flammond, my Mom, Marie Adele Allary.

**You then. Where were you born? In a house? Or in a hospital? Where? In a house? Who was your midwife?**

My deceased Grandma.

**What was her name?**

Zabell.

**Was she a Flammond too?**

Wait. I have to think.

**You can't remember?**

Zabell was one of my Grandma's names and the other one was...now let me see... What was my Dad's mom's name now? Oh, I have that paper.

**But your Dad's mom? Is she the one that help you born?**

That's the one. Yes.

**Did she help a lot of children born? Didn't they call them nurse?**

Yes. That is how they used my Grandma and she did not get paid. She did this for free. They used to help each other. They used to help each other,

people, long ago. Not like today, eh? You can't do nothing if you don't have any money. Yeah. Then you're poor.

**And your Mom? Where were they born? And your Dad?**

My deceased father was hmmm... somewhere over there in Quebec, like those French people. But my Dad is a Métis. Oh yes.

**Where was he?**

Up there by Quebec. All the Flammonds came from there.

**What about your Mom?**

My mom in Cowessess Reserve.

**What was her name?**

Marie Adele Allary. Marie Adele Allary.

**An Allary, her too?**

Yeah.

**What kind of language did they speak?**

The way we're speaking. Yeah.

**What about your family? Did you come from a big family? You?**

You mean my sisters and brothers?

**Yeah. Was there a lot of them?**

Eh ha yes. My mother had thirteen children.

**How many boys?**

Six. The rest were girls. Yeah.

**What about the others? Your brothers and sisters? Did they have their jobs?**

Oh yeah. They went digging roots. Hunt coyotes. They would sell the ears.

**Oh so that's how they made money?**

Yeah. When they got a lot of them, they would have lots of money.

**What would they buy?**

Food. What else? Flour and grease.

**Did they make their own grease?**

Yeah. When they can get a hold of some fat. We would buy fat if we could. It was cheap. Some tea. Some sugar. Everything.

**Where were you married?**

Eh, over here, south of Yorkton in a big house. There used to be a lot of people living in Crescent Lake in those days.

**What was the name?**

St. Pierre. Alexandre St. Pierre.

**Was he born there?**

No, in the States.

**How come you moved to Crescent Lake?**

It was very poor over there in the valley where we were. We were tired of the present waiting for the snow to go away so we could go digging and hunting coyotes, the men and selling roots all summer. That's the work we do. We'd buy flour ahead of time for winter. We moved to another house down there. We'd go and live there. We'd wait all winter for spring so we can move my deceased father. Had only one wagon and there was so many of us. We'd be walking at the back. Moving all over. Moving over here.

**Oh, you moved over here?**

Yeah, finally, we just stayed on here.

**Is that where you met your husband?**

Yeah, there.

**When did you get married?**

1930, we got married.

**How many children did you raise?**

Me. I had eight. Three girls and five boys.

**Are they all living now?**

No. We lost the oldest girl.

**Your kids, where are they? What's their name?**

Well, one is Edwin and Lawrence. He's not here. Martin and Gerald.

**And the girls?**

My sister, the one we lost is Laura, then me, Lucy, Stella and Florence.

**You sure must have a lot of grandchildren, eh?**

Yeah. I have two. Five generations. Yeah.

**And how many grandchildren?**

Eh, hay hay, I'll never get done counting (laugh).

**You have a lot?**

Oh yeah. A lot.

**How many grandchildren?**

Well, one time she counted eleven. Deceased Laura had eight and Stella six. Florence had five.

**Then from there your daughter-in-laws. There's a lot of them.**

Yeah.

**Did you say you had two?**

Yeah I have two.

**Okay, when you were growing up, who was the one that talked to you about how to think well and how to make a good living? Who was that? Who helped you and your family?**

The lord.

**You say God?**

Yeah.

Break 2:20p.m. Back at 2:50

**And in your family? Who helped you? Was it your Grandma or your Grandpa? To live good?**

I didn't really communicate with them much. But my Dad, eh, he sure did hard praying.

**Hard praying?**

Yes.

**He's the one who taught you the good road?**

Yes. He's the one who taught me the good road.

**What about your other relatives? Like your aunts?**

No. Nothing.

**The only one was your Dad?**

Yes, my Dad.

**Because he did a lot of thinking?**

Oh he was a hard praying man.

**Hard prayer.**

Yes.

**Well Michif people relied on prayer a lot in those days, eh?**

Yes. Everybody did.

**What did you used to do when you were all young?**

When I was twelve years old. Oh yes, when I was twelve, they tried to put me in school. My godfather I had in the reserve. He's the one who tried to pull me in. I only went to school two months. They kicked me out. My old man didn't want me there.

**Which school was that?**

In Crooked Lake. Are you not familiar with Crooked Lake?

**I know it's in a big valley.**

Yes. A big valley. A big school stands there.

**What kind of school?**

An Indian school.

**So you went two months to what they call residential school?**

Yes. Only two months, that's all.

**You didn't like it? You were lonely? What?**

I didn't like it. Ba ba ba. I don't know. I guess because I hated it. We have never left our Mom and Dad before. I guess I was lonesome. When I went home my Dad had a hard time for they are going to school over there they call Debuc. A small little town. They had a little school there. Day school you know. These other one's tried it. Me and my sister, we went right away too. They throw us out from there too so we ran home.

**What were you coming to get here?**

We can't go to school. The government doesn't believe it. We told our Dad, "just wait," and away he went. That's right. He said to Mom, "These kids cannot go to school. They have to pay for books and such." See, that's the kind of schooling I got.

**So you quit? That was it? And there was no money? They were poor, eh?**

Yes, they were poor, but they sure got along good. Long ago. They really got along good, them. But, no money.

**So your school days were over?**

Yes, my days of school was no more. Twelve, thirteen years old. I didn't go to school after.

**What about games? What kind of games did you play? Did you play cards?**

Not really. We played a lot with mud.

**Mud? You would make things?**

Yes. Little horses, dogs, anything and we'd build cities. The little boys and my little sisters. You know. They liked that. And also, the Little Knife. What they call it? Oh yeah. That one too. We used to play a lot. Oh yeah.

**How did they used to play that? Little Knife? They just throw it there?**

This way. Like this and you have to put it here and here also here too. Ha ha ha. I forgot how now, really, yeah. Although we used to watch them play.

**What other kinds of games did you play? Hide and seek?**

Yeah, and we used to make swings. In them days, I never noticed if they ever played ball. Baseball. Things like that.

**They didn't play?**

I never seen it. Oh.

**What else did they used to make big?**

Oh yeah, when they used to invite others. The old men. Yeah.

**The old men, not us, but old men? Old men, they use to make this kind?**

They used to drink and sing. Oh, it was nice then, the old singers. Yeah.

**Who was the leader in singing?**

My deceased father.

**In French?**

Oh yeah. All in French.

**They were good singers?**

Oh yeah. They were good singers. Those brothers. There was lots of them. My little boy. My Uncle Louie. My Uncle Maxime, hmmm. One more, I forget. I think there was about five men. My Dad's brothers.

**What about the dances? Do you remember them? The old dances?**

Yeah.

**What were they called? Those dances? Do you remember?**

One was called jig. And waltz. Look. That one too. It's gone, eh? The rabbit and the fork dance and the duck dance too.

**Did you ever dance the one called the hanky dance? And when they danced that, they sometimes used the broom.**

Yeah. Sometimes. Yeah. They used to put the hanky there, eh. I used to dance that one. The hanky dance. Me and my sister, your godmother. Yeah. I danced that.

**You used to jump high?**

Oh yeah (laugh)

**And all which towns did you live at?**

When I got married. Well it was mostly here in Yorkton and we lived in Moose Jaw. I worked there for seven years. I was pension off there. Oh yeah. I keep forgetting. In Moose Jaw, I did sewing. I used to sew over there. Yeah. I worked there for seven years.

**Where?**

Valley View Center. That's where they sew. Called seamstress. Yeah. Everything. Yeah. I worked there seven years, then my husband became sick. Already he was sick, then. I had a chance. I was pensioned off. I would be working yet. I can still sew yet.

**But eh, you can still sew?**

Oh yeah.

**Your family, did they ever own any land, like a farm or something did you have?**

Not here eh, but my deceased father did. But us, no, we didn't. My husband had some land in the States though.

**In the States?**

Yeah.

**So you still own that land?**

No. We sold the land, but not the oil. We did not sell that.

**You still have that?**

Yeah. We still have that. We sold the land.

**Where? That's where he was born, eh?**

Oh yeah. It was there.

**The land he had there, he sold it?**

Yeah. He sold it before I lost him.

**But he was old then, eh?**

Yeah.

**That was the time you were able to sell it?**

Yeah.

**Do you ever go and visit in the States?**

Yeah, oh yeah. We go every year to Belcollie. Two of my sisters-in-law are still there.

**They live over there? They stayed where they were born?**

Saturday they were here, eh, two women came to see me from the States.

**The kind of work you did, you was sewing?**

Yeah, I sewed.

**Plus you had to raise your kids?**

Oh yeah, but I've already raised my kids.

**Did you ever hunt or trap? Your husband?**

Oh yeah. Me too. I had my own gun. I done everything.

**You used to hunt? What did you hunt?**

Rabbits. There used to be lots in them days.

**Did you kill lots?**

Oh yeah. I used to kill lots. My Dad was thrashing, doing thrashing. We had nothing to eat. Mom said, "Ehhiy, we're going to go hungry. We have bannock," she said, "But no meat. My, my you are able to shoot when you used to go with your Dad, hunting ducks. You should be able to go and get us some ducks." It was so heavy. This double barrel and weren't very big. "John will go with you," she said. My brother next to me. So we started off. We both carried the gun and we used to follow my deceased father. Ah my

old man. A thick foot trail among the bull rushes. Just over was the lake. Crooked Lake. That's where he'd lay and wait till the ducks would bunch up. That's when he would shoot. Eh hy, hy. I am shaking. I am afraid to fire this gun. "Now shoot," he said. I closed my eyes and fired. I laid there. I wondered if I killed any. My brother said, "Look, come see." I went. Eighteen, I accidentally killed. I accidentally shot. They were not all big ducks. Some were small. All sizes. Now we had to leave some. Take some home. We weren't very strong and run back to get the rest. We used to do a lot of running then. We sure made a lot of ducks.

Break at 5:45 p.m. – back at 6:30

**When you hunted, did you used to keep small feathers long ago?**

Oh yeah. They kept that. Made pillows and feather quilts. It was nice and soft. Just like down. But now, it clumps up now. You can't wash them good.

**They used small feathers?**

Oh yeah.

**How did you used to pray? You are Catholic?**

Yeah. When you go to Church, well, that's where, in Crooked Lake. That was our Church. That's where I was baptized.

**In Crooked Lake?**

Yeah, in Crooked Lake.

**Who is your godfather and godmother?**

Francis Delorme and they called her Marie Rose. I think she's a Lavallee, my godmother.

**Was this church here when you lived in Crescent Lake?**

Yes. There was a church there.

**Is it still there?**

No.

**Was there a lot of Michif going to church?**

Yeah.

**There used to be a lot of Michif then, right?**

They used to live all around here. I don't know how many years we lived there. That's where my children grew up.

**Was there lots of people attending midnight mass?**

They never had midnight mass there. Just in Yorkton. When he said mass here in Yorkton, he couldn't come here.

**Oh, just one priest?**

Eh he.

**What about New Year's Day? Did they value that day?**

Oh God! Not like today.

**Tell us what you remember.**

We used to line up the tables. A bottle of wine over there, a bottle of wine here and line up a bunch of little glasses. We never slept. Twelve o'clock exactly was New Year's Day. They would come in singing then, half cut already.

**What did you eat?**

Meatballs. Le Paren.

**What kind of meat did they use for their meatballs?**

When they had deer meat, they would grind it up. When they had cow meat, they would grind that up.

**Did they use rabbit?**

Yeah. They used those too. Jack rabbits. Boy, they were good, those ones.

**Did they feed a lot?**

Oh yeah, all day from twelve o'clock at night all day long.

**Did the horses have bells? Would you hear the horses?**

We lived along the lake. Our house was close to the lake. That Crooked Lake. I wonder if you've ever seen it. Yeah. It's a big lake. When the cutters are coming on the other side of the bushes, you can hear them so clear, and toboggans.

**I bet they had good horses?**

Yeah. Oh yeah.

**They were just about like cars, eh?**

Yeah. Well that's it. Yeah. They say it was poor, but I'd sooner see them days.

**Was there a lot of Michif living there?**

In the valley. Oh. This part of the valley. Métis people lived along the hills throughout. On the other side are the reserves. There's about six reserves there, side by side. They all get along together. The dances every night. They had dances.

**They are mostly Cree?**

Yeah. They were extremely friendly.

**Did they used to live on the road allowance? Do you remember?**

For a while, we lived on them. Finally, we were sent away, cause we were picking roots. We were digging them. They wouldn't let us anymore cause farms were coming up when we first came here around by the town of Saltcoats it was wide open prairie. No farmers anywhere. All open. We used to stay anywhere digging roots. Long ago that's what they lived by. Oh yeah. The roots.

**Did they make a lot of money?**

Yes. We used to make lots of money.

**And you had to buy flour for winter?**

Yes. Flour for winter. I don't know why now people buy bread now. Nobody makes bannock now. Some do yet.

**You're probably right.**

My Dad sometime five pound bags he used to gather up. There was lots of us. He had to. He used to take himself home with the flour for la vare. You can't get them that size today. Coffee twenty cents a pound.

**Did they have coffee then?**

Yeah. My Dad, that's all he used to drink, coffee, and my Mom, tea.

**So some of them drank coffee?**

Yeah.

**Did you ever make tea from those roots?**

Let me think what they used to be called. Muskeg tea they called it. They drank this. It was like medicine. They used to grow some places in the valley. We were always so happy when we'd find some.

**Long ago they didn't only make dances. But how did they make weddings?**

Oh my God! The last big wedding I've seen. What they call a real wedding. Two or three I've seen. Little Boy Pelletier. I was just a young girl. We were not even allowed to go to the dance. Twenty-fifth year anniversary and of course tents pitched all over. Now when they were coming. Say they're coming, they're coming. They went and got married. You can see the feathers on the horses. Man it was good. Just like a real picture show and so often the gun shot. Some were playing violin. Buggies only. Buggies and all of the feathers. It was long ago and they had real nice horses. For three days and three nights we camped out there and day and night they danced. You hear tap, tap, tap, all night.

**What did they do with the shoe at the wedding? Did they sell it?**

Yeah they sell it. They would pretend to steal it. They would take it off the bride. As hard time as it was they would make a lot of money selling that shoe.

**What would they do with the money?**

They'd give it to the bride. Oh yeah, they'd give it to the woman.

**Did the old men sing at weddings?**

Oh yeah. Before they would eat.

**Was the priest there?**

Oh yeah. Oh yeah. He would eat with them too. They used to value the priests. Oh yeah. The priests used to go visiting people to find out things. I lived here in Yorkton just about twenty years. Not once has a priest come to my home.

**To come and give you communion?**

Yeah. Women now would come. But what can you do? You can't refuse it.

**No you can't refuse it.**

**I want to ask you about the war long ago. Do you know if any of your relatives have gone and fight or joined the army?**

My boy went there.

**Which war? First or second world war? Oh my gosh! Was that the one in 1914?**

I think that's the one.

**Remember the 2<sup>nd</sup> was in 1939?**

No, I am pretty sure he went to the first one.

**The Métis, this is what they are trying to find out.**

Yeah. Yeah.

**Where did you first find out about speaking in Michif?**

We lived close to Debuc.

**Who showed you? Did you always speak Michif at home?**

Yeah. Always. That's how I was born. I didn't know there was any other language.

**Your parents, did they speak in Michif long ago?**

No, not really. A lot of them tried to speak in English, but there was lots of them using their own tongue. Yeah.

**Why did we lose our own tongue? What do you think?**

Eh hey. Many times I think about this. Why, why they do this. What a pity they ruined our language. The school is what, that's it. What is that school? It just spoils everything. Smart people that's the one that spoils the whole world. A person doesn't know nothing, doesn't spoil nothing. Ha ha ha. That's true enough.

**Do the people you still speak Michif?**

Not too many.

**When someone would ask you how do you speak, what was your answer? In Michif or did you say in Cree?**

In Cree. It's different now. I am a Métis, but I speak in Cree, you used to say long ago.

**Because as you get older, you tend to forget, eh? You don't talk about the old days often enough?**

No. I have nobody to talk to at home. My kids don't know anything about the olden days.

**When you were little, did your people ever tell legends?**

Yeah. Used to be my grandfather. He used to tell legends.

**Your grandfather good at telling legends?**

Yes. He was real good at telling legends. And also one of my uncles, oh, Jack O. He used to be a good storyteller. Nile's grandfather, eh? There was a lot of old men. I used to tell them, but now, but now, they don't care to listen anymore. They used to long ago. But now they are starting to get interested. They want to know these things. Yeah. Well in them days, there was no TV and there was no radio, no, and that spoiled everything. When you would talk they used to hear everything.

**You would forget, eh?**

Yes.

**What language did they used to speak at home? Did they speak in French?**

Yeah. My Dad was real good speaking it.

**But in the reserve how did they speak?**

In English. Some of them in Cree, in Saulteaux.

**You then, did you know those languages?**

Most of them, I understand.

**But you don't speak them?**

No. We already talked about...

**What did they do at Christmas time?**

They have a big dance.

**They'd have a big dance, eh?**

Yeah.

**That's what we wanted to know today. How your life was. Where you were born. Your kids and long ago. Your grandfathers and grandmothers. What do you think now that you're an old lady? What do you think about how the young people of today make their living?**

They are pretty wise. They know they can get what they are looking for.

**Do you think they can?**

Yes. I think they can. I have a strong feeling they can.

**You feel strong?**

Yeah.

**So you think we can succeed in this?**

Yeah.

**What do you think about the small children of today? Do you think they'll be able to speak?**

The small ones have a better chance to succeed. But the ones that are already fully grown, no, not those ones. They don't like to hear. Even our own people. They don't like to hear anybody speak Michif.

**Can I help her a little?**

What?

**Can I help her a little?**

Yes. Help her. Some of the kids understand and some don't. When we lived in here in Crescent Lake, and when we were gonna move, the priest used to find them some jobs to work, the men and of course, not long, they would soon be let go. We used to move all over and the kids would go to school on foot and over there, the kids would work just like us. We would all speak in Michif. Just in English. How can they know they were not allowed to speak their language?

**They went to too many different schools?**

Yeah, and they were not allowed to speak anything but English. They were alone and had no one to speak with. Because of the schools, we are the ones to help. Yes. You know the old men and old ladies. They have to be the ones to teach now. Yeah he. Cause there is nobody else that will teach the young. Yeah. Nobody. But it's not their fault. They didn't do it to themselves. No. When I started school at age twelve, I couldn't even speak in English, and when we got there we could speak. Ha ha.

**You were in the back, eh?**

Yeah.

**It sure was hard, eh? In those days?**

Be darn if we could speak in English.

**I guess that's how we lost our tongue, eh?**

Yeah. That's how.

**Even you, as old as you are, you keep wanting to speak English.**

Yeah. That's it. (laugh). It's overpowering me. When I speak to people, I speak in English. It's not everybody that understands Michif. Eh ha.

**What do you think of us with these meetings, learning our tongue?  
Do you think it's good?**

Really, really, I truly value what you're trying to do. We should all speak the same. The tongue. That's how we should speak all the time. We have to help each other. To help each other. That's the only way. If you speak in English, you will lose it. (laugh). I see these young ones like my kids about these meetings. They don't see it. They will not know about it. Them too, they should have this kind of conferences. The young, yes, with old people to help them along. So they can be told about how we used to live. Even to see it too. So that they too will know. Yeah. That's it. Thank you very much.