

REMEMBERING WILL HAVE TO DO: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF LOUISE (TROTTER) MOINE

in my home, ~~and~~ ^{was} a radio, and the other ~~was~~ ^{was} a sewing machine. I felt that a radio ~~would~~ ^{would} besides keeping ~~us~~ ^{us} up to date on news items, could also be entertaining when supplying good music. Being fond of music, I already had in my possession a small portable phonograph. I also had a choice of some records by famous artists which ~~are~~ ^{were} seldom heard at the time. I already operated by a little of the most of these have now passed away but their music lives on.

As for me, I consider ~~it~~ ^{was} a most enjoyable time ~~for~~ ^{for} turning a piece of material into a seamstress, there were times that if one wear it out darning, mend and ~~can~~ ^{were} be that can be



ence for, I'm sure, one lady told me you will live to learn the way of time and patience amount of savings

As a young material was a memory. Young go. That summer was the material enough material ing that same d that same day and

own sewing ~~as~~ ^{because} nds out in my they come and cushions) s, so I bought started sew the dress ening.

Unlike so man- ure, I was in no time that I entered

It was during the ~~the~~ ⁱⁿ year of 1932, to

net-with-standing the Dirty Thirties I was marrying, & only ~~did~~ ^{didn't} know too much about the man that ~~he~~ ^{was} a Frenchman, and ~~was~~ ^{was} (well educated) who ~~as~~ ^{the} spoke French fluently. Since he had studied languages in the school ~~that~~ ^{he} had attended, he could converse in German and English. Having only recently arrived in this country, he hadn't yet become accustomed to our western ways. ~~so~~ ^{he} was a homesteader ~~with~~ ^{with} very little property ~~besides~~ ^{besides} the 160 acres of land and a good saddle horse ~~that~~ ^{that} he had named "Glory", ~~My~~ ^I initiation into marriage ~~was~~ ^{had to} borrowing my sister-in-law's wedding ring as Vick, my husband had neglected to buy one, & ~~I~~ ^{me} ahead of time that I would be need

Louise Moine

**REMEMBERING WILL HAVE TO DO:
THE LIFE AND TIMES OF LOUISE (TROTIER) MOINE**

∞ Louise Moine ∞

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Table of Contents

- 1. Publisher's Introduction: Louise Delina (Trottier) Moine (1904-2006)
- VIII. Louise Moine's Foreword
- 1. Remembering Will Have to Do
- 42. My Life in a Residential School, 1914-1917
- 68. The Last Buffalo Hunt: Kaayash Mana (Long Ago)
- 70. A Gentleman from the South
- 76. With this Ring I Thee Wed
- 81. Bells Don't Ring Any More! (1895-1970)
- 92. My Sister Talia: A Non-American Indian (1906-1949)
- 108. I Hear You Calling Me
- 115. Going Once, Going Twice! (1933-1963)
- 123. Miracles Don't Happen
- 134. Back to Batoche in the Style of 1973
- 138. A Time of Joy and Tears
- 151. My Life with a Teenager
- 157. A Proud and Noble Century
- 162. Religion VS Christianity
- 168. Let There Be Peace on Earth
- 173. Appendices:
 - 173. "Wash Lampkin Died at Malta Hospital: Funeral on Saturday"
 - 174. "Our People: Louise Trottier Moine"
 - 177. Letter: Louise Moine to New Breed Magazine
 - 178. Interview with Louise Moine, Lisa L. Dale
 - 195. Ron Miksha, Bad Beekeeping
 - 196. "Louise Moine Celebrates 100th Birthday"
 - 197. "Final deal to compensate residential school students reached"
 - 198. "Settlement pleases residential school victim"
 - 200. "Southwest author remembered fondly"
 - 203. Kathy Grant Interview
 - 210. Jacquie Richards Interview
 - 218. Pat Stewart Interview

Publisher's Introduction: Louise Delina (Trottier)
Moine (1904-2006)

Louise (née Trottier) Moine¹ was one of those rare individuals who crossed boundaries and witnessed the transition of way of life. Long-lived, she was both an Aboriginal residential school survivor and a pioneer who lived in a region sparsely populated by Métis extended families as it was opening up to Euro-Canadian and European settlement. The eighth child of a family of ten, she was born one evening while her family was travelling to what is now northern Saskatchewan. Her father, Patrice Édouard Trottier, and her mother, Tillie Rose Whitford, were both Red River Métis² who settled in the area around Swift Current. Most of their children were born at Lac Pelletier near Swift Current where the family resided for a number of years.

Her childhood memories were formed in the Lac Pelletier Valley in present-day southwest Saskatchewan, the Lebret Indian Residential School, and in Ponteix, Saskatchewan. In 1911, at the age of seven, Louise entered the Lebret Indian Residential School where she remained for six years. In 1917, she attended high school in Ponteix, Saskatchewan, making it to Grade 9. Later, when the family settled in the small southwest Saskatchewan village of Val Marie, she met Victor Pierre (Vic) Moine, a recent French immigrant. They married in 1932 and had three children: two daughters, Jacquie (Richards) and Gloria (Tone), and one son, Gail. The Moines spent most of their lives in Val Marie.

Never taking her writing very seriously, Louise had been writing vignettes of her life for some time prior to the early 1970s. The first impetus

¹ Val Marie History Book Committee, *Prairie Footprints Then & Now. Val Marie and Area History Book*. Val Marie History Book Committee, 2008: 492-3. These pages have a biography of Louise Trottier Moine and her husband, Victor Pierre Moine. There is also information on Jean-Marie Trottier (3); as well, various Trottiers are named in Dominion Land Grant applications (13); and there are also biographies of Bryan Trottier (619-20), Eldon Joseph and Mary Trottier (620-21) Joseph H. and Valerie Lily Trottier (620-21), and Patrice Edward and Tillie Rose Trottier (622-3).

² North-West Territories Métis Scrip Application: Trottier, Jean Baptiste; McGillis, Rose. (R190-44-1-E). RG15-D-II-8-c. Library and Archives Canada. <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca>.

to publish her stories came 1971 when she contributed stories to a Val Marie history project.³ After this work concluded, she was encouraged by others in the community to write more stories. In 1973, her life partner, Vic passed on. This sad event was clearly a catalyst for Louise to chronicle her life and times. Shortly thereafter, in 1975, her first book, *My Life in a Residential School*, was published by the Provincial Library of Saskatchewan. The book was the winning manuscript in the autobiography category for the first “Native Writers Contest” held by the Provincial Order of the Daughters of the Empire. Winning this contest encouraged Louise to write other stories. Shortly thereafter, in the same contest, she entered *Remembering Will Have to Do*, which described her childhood experiences and her Métis heritage. After being printed in an abbreviated form in a December 1976 edition of *New Breed Magazine*⁴, it was eventually published in 1979 by the Saskatchewan Indian Cultural College. Louise’s writing had an immediate and lasting impact upon both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal society. In April 1977, *New Breed Magazine* chronicled Louise’s life and her writings.⁵

Like many other authors who have written about southwest Saskatchewan⁶, Louise Moine wrote about the colourful people who made a living in this stark, haunting landscape. Perhaps more importantly, she was also one of the first Aboriginal residential school survivors to have written

³ Val Marie Homemakers Club, *Wagon Trails Along the White Mud*. 1971.

⁴ Louise Moine, “The Way It Was ... Then,” *New Breed Magazine*, December 1976: 10-11. The Virtual Museum of Métis History and Culture. <http://www.metismuseum.ca/media/document.php/05118.pdf>.

⁵ “Our People: Louise Moine,” *New Breed Magazine*, April 1977: 11. The Virtual Museum of Métis History and Culture, <http://www.metismuseum.ca/resource.php/05139>.

⁶ See Sharon Butala, *Wild Stone Heart: An Apprentice in the Fields*. Toronto: HarperCollins Canada, 2011; S. Butala, *Lilac Moon: Dreaming of the Real West*. Toronto: HarperCollins Canada, 2005; Thelma Poirier, *Rock Creek Blues*. Regina: Coteau Books, 2011; T. Poirier, *Rock Creek*. Regina: Coteau Books, 1998; T. Poirier, *Grasslands*. Regina: Coteau Books, 1990; Candace Savage, *A Geography of Blood: Unearthing Memory in a Prairie Landscape*. Toronto: Greystone, 2012; C. Savage, *Prairie: A Natural History*. Second Edition. Toronto: Greystone, 2011; Wallace Stegner, *Wolf Willow: A History, and A Memory of the Last Plains Frontier*. Toronto: Penguin Classics, 2000; Andrew Suknaski, *Wood Mountain Poems: 30th Anniversary*. Regina; Hagios Press, 2006; and Guy Vanderhaeghe, *The Englishman’s Boy*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1996.

about her experiences in a residential school, and her writings are also part of the canon of Aboriginal and Métis women's autobiography and "fictionalized" autobiography.⁷ Her memoir, *My life in the Residential School* is one of the seminal texts of this body of literature and remains a valuable introduction to the residential school experience.⁸ After four decades, this candidly written book *still* carries an authenticity that makes readers better understand the dysfunctional nature of these institutions, which mixed faith, racism, neglect, abuse, and love in varying degrees. In an ironic twist, her parents, particularly her pious mother, willingly sent Louise and her siblings to the school for reasons of economy and practicality.

An astute chronicler, Louise Moine did not mince words when she wrote about her life and those who shared it. Writing both critically and lovingly of family members, she leaves readers with a sincere, but often frank assessment of her kinfolk. In her matter-of-fact stories, we are introduced to Tillie, her frugal, pious, and practical mother; Patrice, her meek, dominative father who occasionally drank to bolster his courage; John, her musically-inclined and sometimes violent older brother; Talia, her headstrong younger sister who died too young; Vic, her shy, atheist husband; and Chantal, her troubled granddaughter who caused an elderly Louise a fair bit of angst. Over the course of her long life, Louise encountered countless other individuals who made an impact upon her life. She wrote about them in the same frank sincerity that she wrote about her family members. In this anthology, readers will be

⁷ See Maria Campbell, *Halfbreed*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973; Lee Maracle, *Bobbi Lee: Indian Rebel*. Toronto: Women's Press, 1990; Beatrice Mosionier Culleton. *In Search of April Raintree: Critical Edition*. Winnipeg: Portage & Main Press, 1999.

⁸ See Roland Chisjohn and Sherri Young, *The Circle Game: Shadows and Substance in the Indian Residential School Experience in Canada*. Penticton: Theytus Books, 2006; Celia Haig-Brown, *Resistance and Renewal: Surviving the Indian Residential School*. Vancouver: Tillacum Press, 1988; Linda Jaine, *Residential Schools: The Stolen Years*. Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan Extension Press, 1995; James R. Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996; John S. Milloy, *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879 to 1986*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1999.

reintroduced to the following western people: the beloved Oblate missionary priest, Father Hugonard who ran the Lebret Indian Residential School; the “miserable” Father Kalmès who beat children in the residential school; the orphaned “blond” Belgian children who were raised by her parents after the 1918 Spanish Flu epidemic took their parents; Washington Lampkin, a chain-smoking Texan who managed the Hog Ranch, a post-office-saloon-cum hotel in Montana; and Emilie, her long suffering “Bohemian” friend who committed suicide. Other vignettes emerge from her stories, including her spiritual conversion from being an ardent Catholic to an atheist to finally being a member of the United Church of Canada. She informs us about her passivism, democratic socialism, and her comical addiction to bidding on “everything” at country auctions. As well, she wrote about her homage excursions to Batoche, the Lebret Indian School, and to France, her husband’s homeland. Writing about these memories from her Val Marie home was clearly therapeutic for Louise who believed that, “One gets totally involved in the stories.”

Located in a picturesque valley framed by cacti and sage-laden buttes, Val Marie’s natural environment is hauntingly beautiful. However, making a life in the driest part of the arid Palliser Triangle requires tremendous tenacity—all the more so since most people left, particularly during the 1930s depression, to make a less arduous life elsewhere. Besides Louise, the village has had its share of accomplished residents, including Bryan Trottier⁹, Louise’s great-nephew and six-time Stanley Cup champion; Will James¹⁰ (Joseph Ernest Dufault), the famous French-Canadian cowboy author, horse thief, and artist; Ron Miksha¹¹, author, beekeeper and geophysicist; Habeeb Salloum¹², Syrian-Canadian travel

⁹ Bryan Trottier, *The Legends*. The Official Site of the Hockey Hall of Fame.

<http://www.legendsofhockey.net/LegendsOfHockey/jsp/LegendsMember.jsp?type=Player&mem=P199702>

¹⁰ Will James and the West: Life and Art of a “Lone Cowboy,” http://knowledgecenter.unr.edu/digital_collections/exhibits/will_james/default.aspx.

¹¹ Ron Miksha, *Bad Beekeeping*. Victoria: Trafford Publishing, 2004.

¹² Habeeb Salloum, *Bison Delights: Middle Eastern Cuisine, Western Style*. Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, Regina, 2010.

and culinary writer, and author Jean Stav.¹³ It is also home to the west block of Grasslands National Park and is home to (the reintroduced) plains bison and black-footed ferrets as well as prairie dogs and rattlesnakes and countless other flora and fauna.

For a joint Gabriel Dumont Institute (GDI)-Parks Canada project—which chronicled Métis history and culture at Fort Walsh, Grasslands National Park and Fort Battleford—I had the privilege of visiting Val Marie on two occasions. While there, I met several people who had a connection to Louise Moine, including her great-niece, Kathy (née Trottier) Grant, a Parks Canada employee, and Pat Stewart, a friend who read to Louise and helped her organize her stories. For a decade or more, I have also corresponded off and on with Jacquie Richards, Louise’s daughter. Jacquie had encouraged the Institute to publish her mother’s stories. During the early 2000s, we published some of them in *New Breed Magazine*, the journal of Saskatchewan’s Métis. Earlier, from 1976 to 1994, the Métis Society/Nation of Saskatchewan printed many of Louise’s stories in *New Breed Magazine* as well, including a serialization of *Remembering Will Have to Do*.¹⁴ These original stories can be found on the GDI website, The Virtual Museum of Métis History and Culture (<http://www.metismuseum.ca>).

This anthology merges two of Louise Moine’s published works, *My Life in a Residential School* and *Remembering Will Have to Do* with various published and unpublished stories. It does not contain all her writing, but a large cross section of it. Therefore, this book is not a complete autobiography of her life, but is rather collection of recollections as well as opinion pieces on topics of interest. Also included in this book are a few newspaper articles and

¹³ Jean L. Stav, *The Barefoot Boy from Val Marie: One Man’s Journey of Self-Discovery*. Nanaimo: Self-Published, 2000.

¹⁴ Louise Moine, “Remembering Will Have to Do,” *New Breed Magazine*, October 1988: 10-11. The Virtual Museum of Métis History and Culture, <http://www.metismuseum.ca/media/document.php/05203.pdf>; November 1988: 16-17. <http://www.metismuseum.ca/media/document.php/05204.pdf>; December 1988: 12-13. <http://www.metismuseum.ca/media/document.php/05205.pdf>; and January 1989: 13-14. <http://www.metismuseum.ca/media/document.php/05206.pdf>.

a *New Breed* article about Louise, an interview with Louise by Lisa Dale as well as interview segments about Louise and her extended family by Jacquie Richards, Kathy Grant, and Pat Stewart. There is also an exchange that Louise had with author Ron Miksha about local weather phenomena that appeared in his book about beekeeping. Ron, who knew Louise from the mid-1970s until the mid-1980s, was impressed by Louise's wisdom, kindness, openness, and genuine nature. He wished that he would have been "wise enough" to learn more from her since she was a "remarkable" person.¹⁵

Louise was indeed a remarkable person. Few of us have the opportunity to live to almost 102 years and witness so much change, let alone write about it. Louise passed away on September 2, 2006, just a few weeks short of her 102nd birthday. She was likely the oldest residential school survivor in Canada. Unfortunately, she never received her settlement from the government for attending residential school.

While putting this book together, keeping Louise's original voice was vital. It was somewhat of a challenge to compile a posthumous anthology of writings by a writer who wrote in the 1970s and early '80s. Through the editing process, redundant bits of narrative were deleted and other texts were merged together, and unpublished bits of text were added to previously published text. At times, this process proved difficult because Louise often repeated many of the same words and phrases, and like other people of her time and place, she used words and terminology that we would now consider dated or offensive such as "Negro," "Chinaman," "Gypsy," or "Jewish-looking." These have been changed to use more contemporary terminology.

Certain people should be thanked for their kind assistance and support for this project. Above all, Jacquie Richards should especially be thanked for her kind encouragement over these many years and for sharing her mother's files and photographs for inclusion in this book. Pat Stewart and Kathy Grant also deserve thanks for sharing their thoughts about Louise. Kathy

¹⁵ Ron Miksha email to Darren Préfontaine, May 24, 2013.

also provided innumerable information about the Trottier family. Archivists and librarians are often a publisher's best friend. GDI thanks the staff of the Saskatchewan Archives Board, the University of Saskatchewan Library Special Collections, and the Philips County (Montana) Museum for their kindly assistance.

Maarsii! Thank you all!

Any errors or omissions in this book are my own.

Darren Préfontaine
Gabriel Dumont Institute
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
June 2013



Louise Moine's Foreword¹⁶

What are memories made of? A lifetime of events and happenings, tears and laughter, love, joy, and anger resurge as one remembers. Do memories become distorted with time? They are real and sufficiently strong to remain alive, and they represent an intrinsic part of one's moral fabric, playing no small part in moulding what we are and how each of us came to be.

What are memories worth? A heart overflowing with love and pride, but at the same time, breaking with sorrow and regret; a mind filled at times with unbridled thoughts of what once was, or painstakingly prodded to recall an elusive name, place, or time; a soul; one's spiritual essence; the very core of one's being, influenced from before birth by all which surrounds it.

Certain occasions are more conducive to remembering than others, such as those times associated with strong emotions like joy at family gatherings, deep sorrow as one bids farewell to a special friend or a loved one, or fear, perhaps of the unknown.



Louise Moine, New Breed Magazine, April 1977: 11.

¹⁶ The text presented here was on a solitary document in the Louise Moine papers which her daughter, Jacquie Richards provided to the Institute. This brief writing, written at an unknown date, sums up the complex interplay of feelings and the distant and more recent memories which Louise Moine drew upon to write her varied stories. Whether intended or not as an author's foreword, it more than adequately serves this purpose.

BIRTHDAYS



"Louise Trottier Moine celebrates her 100th Birthday"

A Come & Go Tea, reception and dinner was held at the Val Marie Hall, Saturday Sept 25, 2004 to honor Louise Trottier Moine, the oldest living member of the Lebret Residential School. Approximately 100 people attended. They were entertained with singing, music, telegrams, stories and a slide show of Louise's life. The evening ended with a fireworks display. Special thanks to Kathy Grant, Verna Howlett, Karen Mitchell and to all the guests who made the evening a success. We wish Louise the best of everything in the coming year.

Keep smiling Mama, we love you.

Jacque, Gail, Gloria and families

Louise Moine, 100th Birthday Announcement. Louise Moine/Jacque Richards.



Remembering Will Have to Do

My husband Vic and I drove along the road that took us down to the Lac Pelletier Valley. We stopped at the first farmhouse to inquire, as there were fences now, how we could get to the old Trottier homestead. I could tell at a glance that the young fellow who came towards the truck was a Whiteford as he carried a strong family resemblance. My mother had been of that family. After introducing ourselves, we asked him how to get to the place. He told us that it was only a mile (1.6 km) or so east of there and pointed out the way. So we followed the trail, which seemed to lead to nowhere. We had to go through a gate as we entered a pasture.

When I decided that we were close to the original spot, we stopped and got out of the truck. Actually, there was nothing to see, not even a sign of the little brook that used to flow past the cabin. The willows that once flourished along the brook behind the cabin had also disappeared. The elements and the ravages of time had completely erased all traces of the life that had once dominated the scene, leaving only the remains of an abandoned well. I gazed up toward the coulee and noticed a grove of poplars, which I could not remember being there, but then again, that was sixty years ago. It was still a beautiful spot, wild and isolated, except for the cattle grazing on the hillside. My husband immediately fell in love with the place, but it was not ours any more.

I tried to visualize a memory of those bygone years, when, as a child, I played from morn till dark with my little sister Talia and my little brother Joe. What a time we had! Is it any wonder that my thoughts ramble back to those happy carefree days of childhood? As Elizabeth Akers Allen wrote in "Rock Me to Sleep," "Backward, turn backward, O time in your flight, Make me a child again just for to-night!"

As a descendant of Indian, French and Scots ancestors, my life was more or less guided by a mixture of these three groups. Since my parents were both Métis, it was only natural that my Indian blood predominated. Both my

parents spoke “Half-Breed” Cree¹⁷ to us—not pure Cree, but we still called it that. It was the only language that we spoke until we learned English in school. Since everyone else in the country was speaking it, we switched to the white man’s language, and little by little, we seemed to drop ours. In the end, we forgot our native tongue, which was sad because there was no one left to speak it with.

We followed in the footsteps of our ancestors, adopting whichever ways and customs suited our way of life. We lived from day-to-day, with no anxiety for tomorrow. Until the time when the white settlers started moving closer to us, we were a free and happy people. Not only did their way of life infringe on our liberties, but their discrimination against us was not easy to accept, as we were a proud people. In time, we learned that we could not fight them, so we had to join them. Whether this was for better or for worse, it is hard to say. I know we learned a lot from them, but they could also have learned from us.

Around 1896, my parents moved from the village of Swift Current, where they had been since their marriage in 1892, to settle at Saskatchewan Crossing. The crossing was shallow enough for travellers to traverse the South Saskatchewan River by team and wagon. Sometime later, my parents and their relatives, mostly on my father’s side, decided to settle in the nearby Lac Pelletier Valley. Their shacks and log cabins were loosely scattered throughout the valley. Like my father, they all raised cattle and horses. As time went by, my father acquired more land and more horses and cattle.

We were likely the last Métis family to find our place in the valley, settling at its end. The valley took an abrupt turn at the end of our place, continuing on as valleys do, only not as pronounced, but more scattered. White settlers lived to the east. Our closest neighbour was the John Pierce family. To the west and northwest lived our relatives. The nearest, the Fayants, were only half a mile (.8 km) away. Next to them was my father’s sister, Mrs. Parenteau, her husband and family, and then there was the Harry Whiteford family, our

¹⁷ Louise was referring to Michif or “Michif-Cree,” the Métis language which mixes Cree verbs and verb phrases with French nouns and noun phrases.

first cousins on our mother's side. Farther on was the Sam Pritchard family (Mrs. Pritchard was my father's sister) and then the Laroques (another of my father's sisters). My paternal grandmother, Rose Larose (McGills) Trottier, who lived with my uncle Baptiste, was much closer to the lake. Two more of my uncles, Jean-Marie and "*Jeune Homme*" Trottier, lived north of us in their separate homes. The Lemires and the Adams had settled along the lake, and they could have been distant relatives. Only one of my father's sisters had settled elsewhere, so initially most of my relatives here were on my father's side. As for my mother's relatives, they came and went, sometimes staying indefinitely.



Trottier Family Relatives, Lac Pelletier, 1911. Louise Moine/Jacquie Richards.

Since everyone was raising large families, we followed the same pattern. (As a result, we had lots of playmates.) By 1908, over the course of 15 years of marriage, my parents had ten children: four boys and six girls. Thus, visiting relatives back and forth in the valley reigned supreme. Most of us were born in Lac Pelletier. The three oldest were born in Swift Current where my parents were staying for a time.

Since I was born on the road somewhere, I was considered the family "nomad." My parents were travelling north as usual, and had stopped for the night to camp at a place known then as Swift Current Crossing (now known as Saskatchewan Landing), 18 miles (29 km) northeast of that city. My unexpected arrival caused only a slight delay of four days in the trip (so my father informed me years later). Since my parents travelled so frequently, the possibility of a child's birth was no reason for them to remain at home. They

merely accepted the fact that a baby could be born anywhere at any time. Thus, I became the eighth member of this wandering pioneer family.

No one ever fussed over a birth, since it was a natural phenomenon, and it was accepted as such. The idea of going to a hospital or calling a doctor never entered these peoples' minds, unless, of course, there were complications. All that was needed was some temporary help—a midwife who could stop in and give a hand for a few days. In fact, most of the pioneer women, and even some of the fathers, could handle a birth.



The Patrice Trottier Family, circa 1909 or 1910. Louise Moine/Jacquie Richards.

Names chosen for babies were very commonplace. They were usually named after their godparents, who gave them little gifts, but not necessarily on their birthdays, as these were seldom observed. We all had nicknames, some in Cree and some in French. I remember only the odd one.

I can remember when my little brother Joe was born. We were staying at my grandmother's house. It was early October and we were outdoors playing our favourite game on a nearby hill. This was a game where we placed little rocks side-

by-side pretending to make rooms and left open space for doorways. Someone called us to come and see something. We all ran down the hill and into the house, and there was this tiny baby lying beside my mother. Being an inquisitive creature, I naturally asked where the baby had come from. My grandmother said that a little rabbit had delivered it to the house. I told her that I had not seen any rabbits around, so she said that this one had come from the cellar!

Grandmother Trottier lived in a two-room log cabin with a porch that was equal in size to the front part of her house. Its walls were papered with back issues of the *Regina Leader-Post*. We were often there, and we ate with her many times. I will always remember her set of dishes, so much so that, through the years, I still look for another set that would match their beautiful design and colour. Her son, my uncle Baptiste, a widower with four sons, made his home with his mother. Unfortunately, Baptiste's wife passed away while giving birth to her last baby girl.

Like most settlers in the valley, our first home was a two-room log cabin with a porch, built of logs and clay. It was on the west side of a little brook that originated from springs in the coulee and flowed down by the cabin. At this spot, wild fruit trees grew in abundance. The roof and floor had boards nailed over the logs, which were then covered with tarpaper and interconnecting chunks of soil. I never found out where the logs used to build the cabin came from, but they were likely hauled from Swift Current. Through the summer months, the weeds grew and flourished on the roof, which kept the soil from drifting.

I dimly remember when the new cabin was being built, and how I played in the clay which was mixed with grass to chink up the logs. This one was on the east side of the brook, closer to the little hill. There, a dugout was constructed sort of like a root cellar. It had an upright door, to facilitate going in and out and to keep out "unwanted visitors." Perishable foods like milk, cream, butter, meat, and vegetables were kept there. Most pioneers used dugouts to preserve food.

The cabin's furniture was mostly homemade, except for the stove, table, beds, and chairs. The wooden floors were bare save for my mother's handmade braided rugs. Our clothes were kept in trunks or boxes, which also served as seats. These were usually kept under the bed. Mother, who was handy with a needle, made all our quilts, pillows, and mattresses. Being a good duck hunter, my father provided her with feathers for the mattresses and pillows. She also braided rugs for the floor.

Although we raised our own beef, we still used all types of wild meat, like deer, antelope, and ducks. Whenever we had fresh meat during the summer, my mother sliced it up into thick pieces and hung it up to dry in the sun on poles that my father put up. It dried quite fast on a warm day, and this dry meat kept indefinitely. It was usually placed in a clean grain bag, as it had to have air to keep it dry. Instead of bread we had bannock. We grew up on this type of bread. Even when we were travelling, my mother would make "*galettes*" as we called them. She often cooked it in a Dutch oven in an open fire.

No one in the valley was really poor, but no one was rich either. If they had life's necessities, they were satisfied with this simple life. Like all pioneers, they had no conveniences, and had to manage the hard way. In the community, equality reigned supreme. In sickness, and in health, and through sorrow or happiness, they were united. No one complained, except my mother who was always bemoaning the fact that she had too many girls and not enough boys! Since there was so much visiting, everyone knew everyone's business. Of course, there would be gossip, which is only natural since nobody is perfect.

There was no such thing as sowing crops in the valley during those early years except for the odd field of oats. The main occupation in summer was haying. There always seemed to be plenty of grass to cut in the hay meadow and around the sloughs. All that was needed was a hay mower to cut the grass, a hay rake to rake it into a pile, and a hay rack to haul it away and pile it in a stack. Each outfit was, of course, pulled by a team of horses. Hay stacks were placed close to the barn or not too far away in the field. At times, there was a surplus which was sold to buyers who also needed hay for feed.

I remember when the boys took on a haying contract for some large company. The hay land, located about 100 miles (161 km) from home, consisted of two or three sections of good, non-irrigated grassland. Initially, the whole family got involved. Since nothing was supplied, it took two or three days of slow, steady travel to get there with all our haying and camping equipment. There was one tent with a camp stove for the cooks—my mother and my sister, Stella. Most of our food was bought at Rush Lake, a small nearby village. There were two other tents—one for the boys and one for the girls, who all helped with the haying. The younger members usually handled the hay rake which was simple enough to operate. Our other job was to turn the big emery wheel which sharpened the mower blades, an endless and tiresome task.

Unlike today's children, we were never paid or compensated for our work. We did it without complaint because we knew that it had to be done. As long as the sun was shining, haying time was good, but there were rainy days, too. These were dreary days, which always caused a setback. We spent them in the tent playing cards. We dreaded bedtime as well because lizards were always seeking shelter by crawling under the tent and into our beds located on the ground. Though they were harmless, they felt cold and slimy. Somehow, we managed to keep them out. Because the hay field was large, we had to move camp twice. Eventually, when we were through, the hay flat was covered with stacks.

An accident happened sometime after we had moved to a new location. A young mare with a colt was hooked onto a mower. She was on the side where the sickles for cutting hay were attached. All the noise and commotion made the colt nervous and skittish so she kept close to her mother. The mower driver kept hitting her with a whip to keep her away from the blades. Eventually, however, the colt got too close and both her hind legs (fetlocks) were severed. She had to be destroyed. Since we were camped near the hay meadow, I saw the accident. It was very upsetting. The mare neighed most of the night, calling for her colt. I felt so sorry for her. I know that horses cry. I cried with her.

Life was not always pleasant living in the valley. There were times of

concern and anxiety, most especially when fugitives from the States fled to our part of the country to escape the law. Their main objective was to steal horses, so they became known as “*les voleurs de chevaux*” (horse thieves). When they were around, they could be seen peeping over the hills, throughout the day, waiting for night. When the men were home, they were not as brave, but they created quite a disturbance when the women were alone, which sometimes happened when the men went for supplies. When it was suspected or known that the fugitives were nearby, the women gathered in one spot, fearing the worst. On one occasion, someone came to warn my mother and begged her to join the others in hiding, but she refused to leave, claiming that she had too much at stake—young calves, chickens, and many other things that meant so much to the family. Somehow, she was willing to take the risk as perhaps she felt that if she stayed and faced them, she could protect herself by treating them with a bit of hospitality. She had been in tight places before. I vaguely remember them coming to the door (they must have noticed the light). Mother gave them food and they left. Many times after that, I heard the pounding of the horses’ hooves as the fugitives galloped away, but it was only my heart beating as I lay in my bed, so very afraid.

We only used our home as a temporary shelter through the cold winter months. We travelled a great deal in those early years. The long summer days usually found us on the trail, heading in one direction or other, usually to visit relatives. Living next to nature as we did, time and distance meant nothing to us. No one rushed, least of all my father. We seldom, if ever, had an early start. Invariably as we would be nicely started and moving along, my father, the “general,” would call a “halt” to stop for lunch. We always stopped by a creek or slough so there would be water for us and the horses. Though we always carried a bit of wood, the younger members of the family were usually sent out to gather prairie chips, so we would grab a gunny sack and away we would go. One time, when I went to pick up a chip, I found a big worm. I ran back to the camp crying. I timidly refused to gather chips after that frightful experience.

Our “wandering” way of life was intensified by the fact that we raised our own horses and had plenty of travelling conveyances and camping equipment. My mother, believing in comfort away from home, usually piled up the wagon with bedding, feather mattresses, and pillows, and other essentials. We rode high and comfortably, even if the trail was rough. The grub box and gun were always handy so fresh meat could be shot on the way. We also had plenty of dry meat, too.

On one trip, we took a mother cat, which had just given birth to a batch of kittens. How excited my little brother Joe was the morning he discovered that the kittens had opened their eyes. The little family kept us busily occupied and helped break the monotony of those seemingly endless trails.

Our outfit consisted of a two-seat democrat wagon pulled by two horses, and a single saddle horse. By-and-large, my mother handled the buggy and usually remained in the rear to keep an eye on the rest of us. We seldom travelled alone; another family or two made up our wagon train.

Our nearest source of groceries was a store about six miles (10 km) way, up over the hill. It was in a little French settlement appropriately named Lac Pelletier, no doubt after the lake. Most of its settlers were French, Belgian, and German. The general store was owned and operated by the Monette Brothers. There was also a Catholic Church, a rectory, and a public school and, of course, a few houses here and there. Though we attended church regularly, bought our groceries and got our mail in Lac Pelletier, none of us attended school there. Instead, our parents enrolled us in an Indian Residential School, located in the Qu’Appelle Valley, in the little mission village called Lebet. The distance of 300 miles (483 km) miles did not matter since we were educated, housed, fed and clothed at no cost, except for the return train fare.

The nearest train terminal was Swift Current, which was a 25-mile (56 km) drive from our place. Since there were always so many of us and so much to take, we generally used the wagon and democrat. We could usually make this trip in one day, provided we left early enough. Then we would pitch

the tents somewhere along the Swift Current Creek. Like turtles, we carried our house on our backs. Who needed hotels? Although we sometimes ate in restaurants, hotels were foreign to us. Since we had to board the train at the station, I can remember a small Chinese man with a single braid, who, like a teacher, stood outside of the depot and rang a little bell, essentially, I suppose, to let the people know that the meal was ready. Oh God! What a long time ago that was! I remember too the bread and the buns my mother bought. Who needed butter when they tasted so good!

While wandering around Swift Current's streets, we first encountered the Salvation Army. Being curious, we immediately followed their music until we came upon them all in uniform, playing vigorously on different instruments and singing hymns. We were spellbound, fascinated, and rooted to the spot while we listened to this unusual treat. Since they were playing in front of a saloon, they must have been trying to lure out some of its patrons, but they were entertaining us just the same. Someone finally came for us but, by that time, we learned all the hymns and repeated them for days afterward.

Since there were six girls in our family, the three oldest were assigned to look after the three younger ones. I was in the care of the oldest girl, Marie-Rose. I became her sole responsibility and naturally became attached to her. If she did not have me by the hand, I was hanging on to her skirt. Once when we were camped by a creek, she went to fetch a pail of water. She started toward the creek with me following, and unaware that I was hanging onto her skirt, she swung to dip the pail. I, too, swung—right into the water and got a good ducking. Luckily, she was able to pull me out. Since I was completely soaked and she did not dare take me back to camp in that state, she took off my clothes and dried them on the bank.

My mother was a tall, good-looking woman with dark curly hair, which she kept braided and rolled in the back of her head. No fancy hairdos for her, she was not style conscious. She always wore long dresses, even when the styles changed. The apron she donned was a necessary item, serving many purposes.

In later years, however, she adopted the custom of wearing a coat and hat instead of a shawl and kerchief. She always wore a crucifix on a chain around her neck, no doubt a carryover from her religious upbringing.

She came from a Métis family, which ensured that she would lead a diversified life. Her grandfather, the Scot in the woodpile, initiated the name Whiteford into the family. She could converse in French, English, some Gaelic, and most of all, the Métis language—a mixture of Cree and French. Christened Tillie Rose Whiteford, she was born on March 1, 1867 in Oakville, in what is now Manitoba. Her parents had seven children—three girls and four boys. Eventually,



A Manitoba Family of 1875. Tille Rose Whiteford (back row, right-hand corner) and her immediate family. Louise Moine/Jacquie Richards.

the family settled in Grande-Clairière, Manitoba—a parish established by a French priest, Father Jean Gaire—which was settled by French and Belgians with a few scattered Métis families. My mother's early education was in the Grande-Clairière convent, which was operated by the sisters of St. François Xavier, an order of Grey Nuns. What had once been a lively and thriving community has completely vanished. All that is left is an empty rectory and an authentic weathercock which has survived the elements and the graveyard. Sometime during her teenage years, in her desire to become a nun, my mother entered the St. Boniface novitiate and studied there for two

years. Her plans to belong to a religious order somehow fell through and she returned to her former life.

In 1891, my grandfather, John Whiteford, a horse rancher, moved the family to Willow Bunch in what is now southern Saskatchewan and to nearby St. Victor. Her family was not poor by any means—they had a herd of 500 head. In time, my grandfather became owner of a small coal mine and a herd of horses. His chief occupation, however, was freighting. My sister, Marie-Rose told me a story about how my grandfather died while trying to stop a runaway team of horses. My grandmother, Rose had passed away in Manitoba earlier.

My father also worked as a freighter. Though the railway had been built through Swift Current as early as 1883, there were no railways any farther north. Therefore, all goods had to be freighted to northern areas. One of my mother's brothers, Alec, also worked around Swift Current, and by chance became acquainted with my father. On one of his trips back home, my uncle Alec invited my father to accompany him. This is how my father and mother met. In 1893, my father and mother were married in the little hamlet of Swift Current and lived there for about four years. From here, they moved into the Lac Pelletier Valley. My father's homestead was about six miles (10 km) south of the lake.

My mother, a tall strong and energetic person had an iron constitution. Like all pioneering women, she had no conveniences, and did things the hard way. She had 11 babies in 15 years (one died in infancy) with no doctor or hospital, just the assistance of a midwife. She was clean, orderly, and very thrifty, so nothing went to waste. Whenever we would stop at a town or village, she headed for the nearest Jewish store where she bargained for items over the counter. She bought yards and yards of material to make our clothes. Seldom did she buy ready-to-wear clothing. She always made our clothes a size or two too big, so we would grow into them rather than out of them. Joe never grew into his breeches. She even designed and made our tents. From

her Indian ancestry, she learned to tan deer and antelope hides before working them into jackets, mitts, gloves, and moccasins, trimmed with dyed porcupine quills. With the help of a dressmaker, she even made herself a beaver coat with hides she tanned herself. She was very proud of this coat because she had her picture taken in it. To make winter caps for the men, she tanned beaver and muskrat hides from the animals that my father trapped. Sometimes, she even sold her work.

My mother was a practicing midwife. Many times, she assisted the doctor when babies were delivered in homes, which was the usual thing in those years. She normally remained with the mother until the woman was strong enough to be on her own. With her wide knowledge of nursing, she treated minor ailments with simple remedies. Besides being an able and capable midwife, she often helped to prepare the departed for burial since there were so few undertakers then.



*Rose Marie, Joe, and Tille Rose (Whiteford) Trottier.
Louise Moine/Jacquie Richards.*

When Little Joe was about nine-months old, he became very ill, which developed into pneumonia. The thought of losing him was so terrifying that she resorted to her only hope, her belief in God. She earnestly prayed and promised that if his life would be spared, she would devote her life to nursing the sick and dying. She kept this promise. She told me about this a few years before she died. I was about 23 years of age when I too had a serious bout of pneumonia. The fact that a doctor advised my family to call a priest to administer the last rites proved how

close I came to death's door. This is when she told me about her promise, and her belief in miracles, which can happen when a person has deep faith and is willing to make sacrifices.

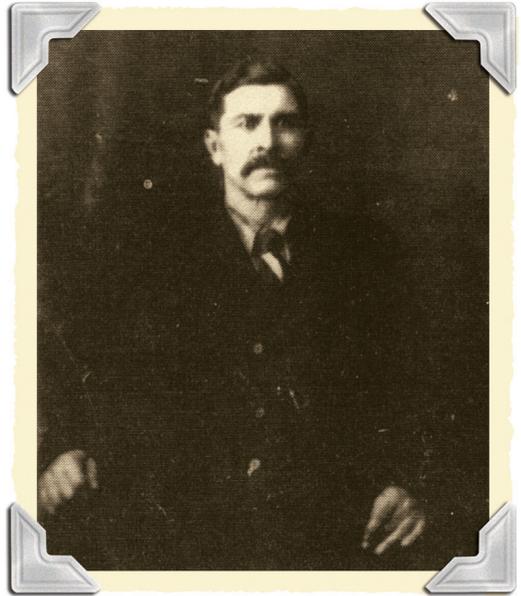
Since mother was deeply religious, she was also a bit superstitious. She told us ghost stories, which we never grew tired of hearing. She related weird happenings, some of which were substantiated with facts. She could translate an omen, good or bad. She had us believing that the moaning of the wind through the building's eaves was the wailing of souls in purgatory. As I was very young and easily influenced, I was deeply impressed and grew up to believe in the supernatural. Our relatives in the valley also believed in all sorts of strange happenings. I remember people believing that if they went to a dance during Lent, a big ominous-looking black horse would trail behind their sleigh or buggy, all the way home. Some of them even claimed that this was a fact, as they had witnessed it! This effectively stopped the rest of them from going to dances during the Lenten season.

While we were still very young and living in Lac Pelletier, every night before we crawled into bed, my mother had us kneel by her bedside to say our prayers, which she usually said in French. One night, Little Joe had snuggled down under the covers, no doubt hoping he would be excused from the nightly ritual. My mother, of course, had noticed his absence from the nightly ritual, so she asked him to come and say his prayers. The lamp had been lowered and the flickering lights from the heater seemed to dance on the walls and ceiling. At first, Joe refused to budge. It was only when mother warned him that she could see little lights originating from "*le petit diable*" (the little devil) flashing around his bed, that he decided to play it safe. I could hear him crawling to our mother's bedside.

Like all deeply religious pioneers, my mother had a puritanical view of the world. These convictions led her to believe that all aspects of sex were degrading and sinful. As a result, we grew up ignorant in the ways of nature. Funny, even though we lived on a ranch, where little calves were born and we

always had puppy dogs and baby kittens, we still did not learn since everything was hidden from us. Consequently, we learned the hard way, which was not the right way. I remember the time we got hold of an illustrated medical book. Of course, we studied the book which pondered the beginning of life and its process till birth. Just when we were getting educated, we lost the book! We always suspected our mother of getting rid of it.

My father, Patrice Trottier, was born in St. François-Xavier, Red River (now Manitoba) into a family of eight—four sisters and four brothers: Marie Rose, Rosalie, Athalie Rose, Ursule, himself, Jean Marie, Baptiste, and André. He must have been very young when his parents, Jean-Baptiste and Rose, migrated to Saskatchewan since I never heard him mention Red River. My father was likely one of the first settlers who travelled through the Whitemud (Frenchman River) River Valley, passing near the site of Val Marie. He told me that when he was about 14 years of age, he rode his pony through here accompanying his parents north to visit a new settlement from Montana.



Patrice Trottier, 1911. Louise Moine/Jacquie Richards.

Like most of the Trottiers, he was short in stature and small in build, while mother was quite tall. As a matter of fact, my parents both wore the same shoe size. When she had a pair of new shoes that fitted a bit tight, he wore them around the house and broke them in for her.

My father was a self-educated man. Coming from a family of nomads who travelled around a great deal, it was impossible for any of them to receive an education. My father could neither read nor write, so my mother conducted

the family's business. However, mother taught him to sign his name and do simple arithmetic. Somewhere, he also learned to write in Cree syllabics, which allowed him to correspond with his relatives and friends. He always spoke to us in our native tongue. What he lacked in book learning, he made up for in his study of human nature, and the unpredictable elements of nature. In his quiet observing way, nothing went past his vision that he did not absorb. Like my mother, he believed in making sacrifices. During the Lenten season, to atone for his sins, he deprived himself of the things he loved the most—tobacco and tea.

In later years, he became affectionately known as “Old Pat.” He was a shy, modest person and spoke only when addressed. His grandchildren called him “*Mushom*” (Cree for grandpa), and some of the children in the village also picked up the habit of calling him that. Being meek, he was a bit henpecked and was often criticized by my mother. When he tried to defend himself, he was generally overruled. Since we were always close by, he told us his side of



Patrice Trottier, Don Gun. Louise Moine/Jacquie Richards.

the argument, perhaps feeling we would understand. However, like so many other men at the time, he was a bit inclined to “hit the bottle,” and would wander astray when he met up with some of the boys. Timid when sober, he became quite the opposite when he “tied one on.” In fact, he became bolder, even a bit aggressive, even challenging bigger guys. He must have felt that he would win, where he had always lost before. When he meandered home in this state, there would not be anyone there. Someone usually informed my mother of the present state of affairs and rather than face his arrogance, she would stay at a neighbour’s place until things got back to normal.

1914 brought extreme change to our family. My father sold our place in Lac Pelletier to Leon Lamothe, and moved his stock to a new site, in the Whitemud Valley, near Val Marie, a French settlement. His reason for selling out was understandable. Since he had always been accustomed to the open range, with his stock running at large, he resented the fact that as the settlers moved in, they impounded his stock. So he moved out—lock, stock, and barrel—to a new location about 50 miles (80 km) away. A homestead patent was filed for my eldest brother, John at Section 9, Township 3, Range 13. My parents settled on John’s homestead, which was located about four miles (6.4 km) south of Val Marie.

We were not around when our house was moved from the hillside down to the river flat. By the time we returned the next summer, an extra room had been built. Now we had a three-room house. The view was altogether different. We were closer to 70-Mile-Butte, Saddle Butte across the river and to Twin Buttes to the south, which made the country seem wild and uninhabited. Two miles to the west (3.2 km), another homestead patent was filed two years later for my second oldest brother, Jim, when he became of age. As late as 1971, Joe, the youngest child was still living on this homestead.

In 1916, my father bought a house in Ponteix so that the younger family members could attend school there. Ponteix, another French settlement, would be our home for the next six years while the White Mud Valley site was my brother John’s homestead. All this change took place while we were

away at school. Consequently, we missed out on all the excitement of moving. However, we looked forward to our new locations. We spent our first summer holidays that year at the “Ranch,” as we learned to call the country place.

In 1917, our lives took a drastic change when we were transferred from the Lebret residential school to the Ponteix public school. Up until then, we lived a secluded life, first in the Lac Pelletier Valley, where we associated only with relatives, then in the residential school, where we mixed with children of our own kind. In Ponteix, we found that life could be a bit complicated. Since we were the only Métis family in the village, we faced discrimination. The village’s children began to call us all kinds of names—sometimes in French, but more often in English. They waited at the school gate and would start yelling out insulting names as soon as we appeared. What hurt me the most was when they called us “dirty half-breeds.” I thought, “We were not dirty! My mother was a clean person!” The name calling and insults eventually took their toll. I began to dread each school day, and since I was already a shy and sensitive person, I grew up to be self-conscious and developed an inferiority complex. However, four of the older girls eventually caught up with some of these bullies and slapped them around a few times.

I grew up ashamed of my Indian heritage—something which should have given me great pride. As time went by, I began to envy white children. They did not live the way we did. We always seemed to be on the road, travelling in wagons and pitching tents. This was alright before the invasion of white settlers, but now, it seemed as though everyone was staring at us, no matter where we went. We seemed to stick out like the proverbial “sore thumb.” We even ate differently—drying meat, melting beef tallow into grease to eat with our bannock, and mashing chokecherries and drying them in the sun for food for the winter. Last, but not least, we raided wild ducks’ nests, gathering eggs to eat. Is it any wonder that the children teased us at school! My folks were not poor. In fact, we were the first family to own a car in the community, a Chevrolet touring model. But I suppose customs die hard and this was the

life they wanted. I loved my parents and I never wanted to be ashamed of our Indian heritage. Unquestionably, white people made me feel the way.

When I started school in Ponteix, I was put in the principal's class. In five years, I had four different male teachers. The first two had no influence on my life. The third, "Sir" Bordeleau as we addressed him, actually stopped the name calling and insults that we endured at school. The other, Gideon Matte, my last teacher in 1921, was one of the best teachers that I ever had. Being a slow learner, I did not always grasp the meaning of certain subjects like others. I believe he understood me better than I understood myself. It was through his encouraging help that I passed Grade 8 with honours (these were my departmental exams). Later, I registered back in school to tackle Grade 9, but half way through the year, I dropped out because I could not understand Algebra and Geometry. Mr. Matte tried his best to coax me back, always with words of praise and encouragement but, lacking self-confidence I told myself, "What's the use? I can't make it." As time went by, I regretted my decision. Studying under such an outstanding personality had a tremendous influence on my life. I later learned that he had moved upward in the world.

As for Lac Pelletier, I believe that we were the first Métis family to move out of the valley. The fact that the people were not dryland farmers, and never could be, may have been the deciding factor in their decision to move elsewhere. They moved in all directions. Leon Lamotte, who bought our place, lived there for a time with his wife, Julia McGuire, a step-daughter of our closest neighbours, the Fayants. Apparently, they moved a granary on the place and used it for a dwelling, but later, when it was destroyed by a fire, they decided to move and settle on the Lamotte homestead north of Cadillac. One of their sons or daughters remained on the place for a time, but after the older folks passed away, the place was sold. From then on, the land was fenced and was used for pasture.

One of the Whiteford boys settled on the land near our old place for a time and carried on a mixed farming operation with his father who lived in

Swift Current. Actually, the younger Whitefords were one of the last Métis families to move out of the valley.

Tragedy struck the Whitefords during the Spanish Influenza outbreak in 1918. Harry Whiteford lost his wife, Adeline, his oldest daughter, Agnes, and an infant son. All died within a short time of each other. The fact that they were living in a tent was no doubt a contributing factor in their untimely deaths. Harry was left with two little daughters. He remained in the valley for a time while relatives looked after the children. Eventually, Harry married again and raised a second family. All of these children attended school in the district. The two daughters who survived the epidemic married, and both settled in Shaunavon, but, at this writing, Edna, the eldest of the two, is the only one left. Much later, when Harry retired, his sons carried on with the farm, until it was sold sometime in the '60s. As for Harry and his wife, they passed away sometime in the 1960s as well.

The Parenteaus, my father's relatives, lived only a mile (1.6 km) west of us in the valley. When they moved to Montana, only part of the family went with them as two of the girls had married and settled on nearby farms. One incident concerning that family stands out in my memory. Mr. and Mrs. Parenteau had gone for a visit to the north, taking their youngest child, four-year-old Dominic with them. The rest of the children were left in the care of the older girls. While the parents were up north, Dominic contacted an illness, which developed into pneumonia, and he died as a consequence. Naturally, the news of the child's death was related to the children still at home. That they were unable to bring the body back for the burial in the churchyard, not too far off, only added to the anguish of this tragedy. While the men were putting up hay, we camped close by, and were there when they returned. When the mother dismounted from the buggy and started toward the house, and saw the children coming out to meet her, the sadness of the tragic loss gripped her senses and she wept aloud. Her grief was so heartrending that we all wept with her.

The Pritchards, who were my father's relatives, moved north and settled somewhere in the bush country around North Battleford. After the death of my grandmother in 1928, my father's three brothers also moved north, and in time started up a little sawmill industry. On occasion, when we go north to visit, we see some of younger generation. All the elders have left for the "Spirit World."

The Laroques, also my father's relatives, always appeared to be the most prosperous of the Métis families, but then again, they may have been better managers. They remained and carried on with mixed farming for several years, until age and poor health forced them to retire. They sold out and retired in Swift Current.

The Adams and the Lemires, who had settled along the lake, were perhaps the most reluctant to leave. Even after all of the older Métis families had left, they remained for a time, but they too left, abandoning their traditional role as fishermen. So, like the rest, Swift Current was their last resort. Now, whenever we drive along the lake and see where the Lemire place used to be, we see instead a monument that has been erected to honour someone else, but definitely not the Métis settlers who really deserve this honour. I remember when Alec Lemire made us feel so welcome, treating us to a feed of freshly-caught whitefish. We will no longer see those times. All the old-timers have now passed away, and what was once a lively Métis community no longer exists and has faded away. The only landmarks left in the valley are the Larocque and the Whiteford places.

At the Val Marie homestead, we had three neighbours across the river, the Bos family, Antoine Ponait, and the Colons. They were all earlier settlers, originally from France. Mr. Ponait had been married in France, but he left his wife and family there. They never came to join him, and he never returned. He was our closest neighbour, and lived alone in a little shack. He became a regular visitor, and usually stayed for a meal. On occasions when we had extra company, he would be asked to sing. He had a remarkable voice, and was always willing to oblige. Throughout summer days and evenings, we were often

entertained with his solos (in French). His opera singer-like voice resounded through the hills and valleys. “Even the birds hushed their singing.”

Around 1924, Mr. Ponait was involved in a bad accident. A wagon load of grain toppled upon him causing serious injuries, from which he never recovered. He passed away in the Ponteix hospital. He was about 50 years of age.

When Mr. Colon came to this country, he was accompanied by his second wife and young daughter and two sons from a previous marriage. The eldest son, Claude returned to France to fight in the Second World War. He returned after the armistice with a lovely Scottish bride. The Colons built their shanty half way into a cut bank, sort of a dugout affair, but it served the purpose for the time as they did not remain in this country. In the spring of 1920, they loaded all their belongings in two grain wagons and headed for greener pastures to settle in Oregon. They were accompanied most of the way there by my father who knew the country well.

With winter came the holiday season in December. My folks made very little fuss over Christmas since back then it was just a religious feast. We were Roman Catholic, and we attended midnight mass. As a child, I cannot remember Santa Claus until I went to school. By that time, I was too old to believe. The little gifts which we received came with the New Year, and we knew their origins.

The advent of the New Year was the most outstanding occasion for our Métis families. It was a time when relatives and friends got together and celebrated a very joyous season. Since this was a feast to be shared with everyone, food was very important. My mother worked hard to make this event a very happy and festive one. The food she prepared included the traditional dish, *les boulettes* (meatballs), roasted or boiled wild meat, fruit puddings, pies, and sometimes, even pemmican. She prepared the table’s New Year’s Eve feast¹⁸, using our best dishes, set on a white table cloth. Since it meant so much to my folks, I too began to feel the significance of this very important event. Actually, it is

¹⁸ Also known as *réveillon*.

something I will never forget. It gave me such an overwhelming sense of elation; a table set for royalty would not have been any grander. At the stroke of midnight, everyone kissed everyone, and then there would be food and drinks.

Sometimes, we stayed home long enough to greet nearby friends and relatives. Then we would go calling on others. Everywhere we went, the table was set, and after greeting everyone with a kiss, we would have a bit to eat, and go on to the next place. Eventually, when everyone had gathered in a certain house or place, there would be square dancing and jigging to old-time fiddling. The celebrations could go on for days, as relatives would come from long distances and were reluctant to end the festivities. It was a great way of getting together to create closer relationships. This custom still occurs where there are Métis communities, but not as extensively.

Once, when we were living in Ponteix, my father hitched up the sleigh with a team of horses, and after supper, we left for Lac Pelletier to visit relatives for midnight. It was a calm winter night, so we took our little sleigh and tied it to the back of the larger one. This allowed us to have a bit of extra fun, especially when we would tip over. Since we were only going about twenty miles (32 km), we made it in good time to wish everyone a happy New Year. I never did find out if this custom was carried over from the French, Scots or Indians, but it was a wonderful way of getting together to reinforce closer family relationships. Consequently, it has faded away with the old-timers.

While we were living in Ponteix, my father bought a piano. Prior to that, we had a reed organ, which we later gave to the church in Frenchville. Buying the piano was, of course, a wise investment since we were a musical family. Some of us were taught to play by note, others by ear. Younger family members took piano lessons. I took three years of music—enough to play so that I could amuse myself. Most of all, I learned to play hymns on the organ, which gave me the practice to play in church.

Two of the boys, John and Max, played the fiddle, often at dances. If there was an organ or piano in the school where the dances were held, my

sister, Stella, accompanied them with chords. Laura and I often danced to Father's music when he played the small accordion. Even Mother could handle a violin. Edna, who was considered to be the prettiest of the girls, received her musical training from the sisters in the Lebret School. James, who had received the highest education and was the most handsome of the boys, was intelligent and continued his self-education by reading and taking a keen interest in world affairs. Though he did not play any musical instrument, he was a good singer, enjoyed performing, and picked up tunes quickly. There were times when we were riding along in the democrat and his voice would ring out as he handled the reins of the team. The rest of us, usually the younger ones, would listen to his beautiful songs; even the horses perked up their ears. One little song he used to sing went as follows: "Maggie, Maggie, if you'll marry me, I'll tell you what I'll do!" Another song went: "Give my love to Scotland, the dearest place on earth." He also knew different songs of gone-by years. Inevitably, I would be carried away by his singing style and the songs' lyrics.

Life was anything but dull at the ranch. Being raised on a ranch ensured that three of my brothers would be cowboys. They always worked around horses and cattle. Two of them, John and Jim, worked for the "76" Ranch as cowhands. Cowboys or riders came and went. Bucking broncs and runaway teams were common. We had some fast rides and we were often bucked off. Luckily, there were never any serious injuries. However, I know my mother worried a lot in those days. Especially when my oldest brother John, had to leave for the army to fight in the First World War.

There were four large ranches, all enclosed by three wire fences. They were owned by a packing firm, Gordon, Ironside, and Fares. The one closest to our place was the Sand Lake Lease Ranch, and it was about 25 miles (40 km) in length and 12 (19 km) to 15 miles (24 km) in width. This ranch ran approximately 2,500 to 3,000 head of cattle, mostly beef-type Herefords. Consequently, several cowhands, as well as general help were needed to handle all the work.

John, the oldest boy, was not a bronc rider. His job at the “76” was to serve as night watchman over the herd. My brother Max rode broncs, but he never got any prize money like Jim or Joe, the youngest family member. Max, however, could have been a master fiddle player. As for the girls, he could win them all with his sex appeal.

Jim was the champion horse handler. Many times, he won first place in rodeos. Later, he became a roving cowboy. At one time, he worked for the “Johnny J. Jones Show,” and was featured in the Wild West section, where he did trick riding, fancy roping, and target shooting. He travelled throughout the United States with the company, and generally spent winters in Florida. We saw him perform at the Regina Exhibition in 1919. We had free passes.

Jim was also the first of the boys to marry. When the letter arrived informing us of his marriage, Laura and I were all excited. Since we were at that romantic age, we went around in a daze, and awaited the big day of their arrival. Besides, did not Jim write that she was pretty? We had visions of this beautiful girl. When Jim finally walked in with his bride, we were not disappointed. On the contrary, we were elated: she was pretty. Laura whispered to me, “Doesn’t she look like an actress?” I agreed and whispered back, “She looks like Mary Pickford.” She wore her beautiful curly hair in ringlets, and she was very young, no more than 17 years of age. We had to admit that Jim could sure pick them. After his marriage in 1919, he had to give up show business for his wife could not take that type of life.

Throughout the summer, we spent our holidays at the Val Marie ranch. The first house that had been built there was a two-room, storey-and-a-half structure. It had been built on a plateau and seemed an ideal spot, allowing us to see a long way and even



Trottier Ranch, 1923. Louise Moine/Jacquie Richards.

look down on our neighbours to the north, the DeGraws and Corbetts. Mr. LaCompte, the carpenter who built the house had done a fairly good job, especially on the wide sloping stairway, which we used as extra seats when we ran out of chairs. However, his placement of the “ladies quarters,” over the hill and out of sight, once caused me a great concern when I developed a bad case of summer complaint¹⁹, which kept me on the run to ease my tummy ache. Finally, in desperation, my mother gave me a tablespoon of coal oil followed by a bit of sugar, and it did the trick. If I did not have the utmost confidence in my mother, I would not have swallowed that coal oil, but, even as I took it, I knew she did not poison me.

The house seemed big enough for the boys who batched throughout the year, except for the summer holidays, when the rest of the family moved in with them. Since there were so many more of us, tents were pitched to handle the overflow. My mother always had her own tent in which she kept her bed, her trunk, and her sewing machine. We had a free and happy childhood, and it did not take much to amuse us. We went wild and roamed free: running barefoot through the brush, spending a great deal of time in the water since we were close to the river, and we camped. There was no fanfare about retiring for bed: most of the time, we were too tired to remove our light dresses. If we did, our puppy dogs would lay on them or carry them off. In Indian fashion, we went to bed fully dressed and got up that way. We also had the tamest horse to ride, and we had puppies, kittens, and once, even a fawn, which followed us all over the place.

Talking about puppy dogs reminds me of one little incident. We had two little collie dogs that were just at the playful stage. Talia, Joe, and I would run and amuse ourselves to no end with them. Then, one day, my mother broke the bad news that the little dogs were eating the eggs from the chicken house. She told Joe, who had just recently become the proud owner of a little .22 gun, to shoot one. She stated that one alone would not be as bad as two. That same

¹⁹ A gastrointestinal condition effecting children.

afternoon, I was shocked to see Joe take his gun and then coax one of the little dogs towards the manure pile. Actually, I did not believe he would do it, but he did. Sometime later, I went and took one last look at the lifeless form of our small playmate.

There was also the incident of the little calf. Since we always had milk cows, they would naturally have to calve. One of our favourite milk cows, “Betty,” was expecting a calf, so she was kept around the barn to await the new arrival. Every morning, Talia and I would race to the barn to check to see if the calf was born. Finally, on this one particular rainy morning, lo and behold, there it was. Betty was licking her little calf, but then I noticed something else. The afterbirth had not dropped, but, of course, I did not know much about this then. We ran back to the house to announce the good news. Being curious, I asked my sister Stella what was hanging out of the cow’s behind—“Oh you,” Stella replied. “You always notice everything.” Consequently, I did not learn where calves come from. There was no point in asking as one never got the proper answers. That was the way it was in those days.

It was while we were living on the hill that Talia, Joe, and I got ourselves into a mess. Everyone had retired for the night and all was quiet until we heard a commotion in the chicken house. We decided to investigate because we suspected that the chickens were being molested. Since it was a bright, moonlight night, we bravely ventured out, each grabbing a stick to use on the intruder. It is said that “fools rush in where angels fear to tread.” Nothing could have stopped us. After poking around a bit in the dark chicken house, the overpowering odour told us that the molester was a skunk. Once we got it out in the open, we gave chase; however, we did not get very far. The skunk, being a nocturnal animal, gave us the slip. We tried to return to our beds, but the uproar that greeted us warned us that we were not welcome, so we bunked in one of the tents.

In 1916, my father bought our first motorized vehicle, a Chevrolet touring car. The older boys learned to drive it first since my father never

quite mastered the art of handling this horseless mechanism. On the girls' side, Marie Rose was the only one old enough to drive a car, but she had her shortcomings. Since we were living on a hill's plateau, a short climb was necessary. Though she could shift gears on level ground, she could never manage them on a hill. Thus, ascending the hill was not always accomplished. She stepped on the gas to make a run for the hill while yelling "*ah kinikake*," which means "Push!" in Cree, in case the car began to stall. We were always ready to hop out and push! If there were enough of us, we made it. If not, the car would roll back down the hill. A little incident happened at one of the Coriander Stampedes. While Marie Rose was trying to drive through the crowd of people on the grounds, she ran over a man. She came to a full stop after the front wheels of the car had run over his legs. Luckily, cars were built fairly high at the time. As he climbed out from under the car, we quickly piled out and scattered in all directions.

Then there was the time when Marie Rose received a marriage proposal when she was 17 or 18-years-old. She was rather pretty, in a petite sort of way. In fact, one of our neighbours, Roy Degraw, claimed that she was the prettiest girl in the country, but there were not that many girls around just then. This little incident happened while we were living on the plateau. Incidentally, the house was moved down to the flat and closer to the river later that same year. During the summer, our household was busy: relatives came and went, some stayed indefinitely and, of course, there were always extra hands during haying and branding time. On this one quiet, peaceful summer day, a "disturbance of the peace" emanated from Marie Rose who screamed insults and threats at the young man who was driving away with his companion in a single horse buggy.

Apparently, he asked our father for her hand in marriage, and when she was informed of this, she was terribly insulted. I felt sorry for would-be suitor since he did not deserve this type of treatment. Later on, the two young men were back with a crock and were indulging around a campfire. Talia, Joe, and I were running for willow sticks to keep the fire going and were doing other

errands. During the course of the evening, I heard my father, who was then about “three sheets to the wind,” telling the young man to not feel bad or too disappointed as Marie Rose would not have made a good wife since she had a bad temper and could be very mean. “However,” he continued, trying to comfort him, “I have other daughters growing up and you can have one of them.” No, he could not have meant Talia or me!

Funny how much we enjoyed those little drinking sprees. Whenever there was a crock or bottle being passed around, we younger ones were usually very much around since everyone seemed so kind and generous. Even our father developed an overly-generous streak. At such times, we were paid for running errands, or for singing or for other little performances. By and large, only the men indulged in those days.

Who else but my family would have handled washday on the ranch the way we did? My mother, who was particular about the washing, believed in using soft water. So on a bright and sunny day, all essentials required for this big undertaking were loaded onto the wagon. Naturally, as we would be gone for the day, we took our grub box of food and some wood, the three-legged pot for heating water, the hand-operated washing machine, the tubs and wash boards, the homemade soap, and, of course, all the dirty linen. We younger ones regarded this as a picnic since all that was required of us was to fetch water from the slough and keep the fires going. So when the team was hooked on to the wagon, we all piled in and headed for the nearest slough about five miles (8 km) away. Naturally, we seldom followed trails; we made them. Since the wagon box bounced around so much, some of us had to hang on to the washing machine to keep it from tumbling out.

Once upon a time, a Norwegian built a little shack by the slough that we expropriated. My father had appropriately named it the “Norwegian Slough.” Who knows, we may have scared him away since he was no longer on the scene. Even his shack was gone. Upon arriving there, we would unload. We used a tripod to hang the pot over the fire to heat the soft water. The only

drawback was that all the water had to be strained because it contained all sorts of little wiggly bugs. Once the clothes were washed, they were spread out on the grass where they dried nicely. Thus, in addition to being a very worthwhile endeavour, it was much enjoyed by everyone.

Berry picking was another outing that we very much enjoyed. Even some of the men went along. When we were living in Lac Pelletier, we did not have very far to go, as the berries were just up the coulee. There, we picked saskatoons, wild currants, wild raspberries, and chokecherries. However, in Val Marie, since the berries were much farther away, we had to take the horse team and democrat and a grub box to carry our lunch. Unlike the white folks, we never made sandwiches. A round of bannock, butter, jam, some cooked or dried meat, and some tea made our lunch. We usually had a campfire going to boil water for tea or eggs, if we brought any. Coffee was a rare commodity at our place in those years. The only time we had it was when we visited some of the French settlers.

After we picked the chokecherries, my mother mashed them between two flat rocks and then dried them in the sun on a canvas. This dried fruit kept indefinitely. Eaten largely in the winter months, it was rendered edible by adding a little water to bring back the juices, then sugar, lard, and flour. This is very tasty if you do not mind the crushed seeds. However, you have to grow up on this fruit, otherwise, it can make you sick. Chokecherry seeds are considered poisonous, but we were used to this crushed fruit because it was also in our mother's pemmican.

As a child, I enjoyed berry picking. It was an outing that brought me very close to nature. The birds singing, the cattle mooing in the pasture, even the lone eagle soaring up high overhead on out-stretched wings, brings back fond memories of those wonderful bygone years. It was a different world then, so far removed from life's troubles and the strife of everyday living. The overwhelming peace I felt seemed to bring a little bit of heaven to earth. I still enjoy berry picking, provided that I do not have to climb hills.

One year, on July 1st, Roy Degraw's Hereford bull wandered into our neck of the woods. Someone must have left the gate open. However, does a bull stop for a gate when he decides to go meandering? My father's repeated attempts to herd him back were useless. He was out to make trouble—he had spied our Hereford bull, closed up in the pasture, peacefully minding his business. While the Degraw bull was in top shape, ours was lean and lanky. The fight that took place was a fight to the finish. Eventually, the intruder dropped from exhaustion and died, probably of heart failure. Our bull survived the ordeal. The next day, when Roy came looking for his prize bull, my father pointed toward the fence, where the critter lay, deader than a door nail.

Branding time was not my idea of fun. I loved animals and all this, though it had to be done, seemed like torture to me. Unlike everyone else who seemed to look forward to this occasion, I dreaded it. Talia, on the other hand, would not miss a moment of it. She perched herself on the top rail of the corral and remained there until it was all over. I would ask myself, "How could she?" But then she was as tough as they come. Since she and Joe were continually having squabbles, she learned to fight back with her fists, unlike the rest of the girls, resorted to hair-pulling and kicks. She was brave. She always walked through the pasture carrying a pail of oats to get the saddle horse while the bulls were around. Not me, I was scared to death of bulls.

Being timid, I was no fighter. The three older girls—Marie Rose, Edna, and Stella—had some great fights, usually when our parents were away. I especially remember one which took place at haying time. We always moved all our haying and camping equipment to my brother Jim's homestead to be near the hay meadow. Our meals were prepared and served in the shack, which served as a converted cookhouse. Two tents had been pitched, one for the boys and one for the girls. One morning, Marie Rose, usually the first up, was preparing breakfast. As no one else would get up to give her a hand, her patience was wearing pretty thin. When she started complaining about the other two girls who were still in bed, calling them "lazy," "good-for-nothings"

and other insults, the girls, hearing this abusive language, for once lost no time getting out of bed and headed for the cookhouse to defend their reputations. As Stella walked in the door, Marie Rose hurled a platter of fried meat at her. No doubt this was the first thing handy. Then the fight was on, first in the shack and then outside. By this time, the boys appeared on the scene. John was rooting for Marie Rose, who was always the toughest, while Jim and Max were on Stella and Edna's sides. Eventually, the fight wound up in the boy's tent. That afternoon, when peace was restored, Marie Rose baked a cake. When she offered me some, I knew that she was not mad at me. I never wanted anyone to be mad at me. Later that evening, there was quite an uproar in the men's quarters when John discovered that his fiddle had been flattened beyond repair. Well, anyway, those fights always ended on a sour note and left deep scars as time went by.

Yes, I was the timid one of the bunch. And yet, I could run and yell from a distance, especially, when my brother John was beating a horse. I could not restrain myself. My sister Stella would warn me to be quiet since she feared that he would turn on me. Actually, I hated trouble and fighting, and I seldom sided with one or the other. If I did, I usually got it, since I was no fighter. Experience taught me to keep out. In the end, I grew up ignorant in the art of physical defence, but I could fight with words, and was able to say the right thing at the right time.

An amusing incident occurred when Edna chastised Joe for misbehaving. She ended up saying, "If you do that again, I'll choke you." Without hesitation Joe replied, "You can't choke a dead fly." Edna naturally took this as an insult. She flew at him and started hitting him! My brother Max intervened with the following words, "What are you hitting him for? He told you the truth, didn't he? You can't choke a dead fly!"

Since our horses ran on the open range, they were extremely wild. It required a lot of time and effort to break them for the saddle or harness. It usually took about three men to handle a bronc. With patience, the horse

was halter broke, then trained to follow or lead, and eventually, trained to the bridle, saddle, or harness. As a precaution, when breaking an untrained horse to pull a wagon, a tame horse was usually hooked up with the bronco. All this infringement on their freedom caused them to tremble with fear and apprehension. I watched the boys hooking a bronco on to a wagon more than once. We had some great runaways! I remember one in particular: a wagon pole dug into the ground, causing extensive damage to the wagon. No one was ever seriously hurt, but there were many anxious moments.

Once, my brother John and his wife, Anastasia (“Annie,”) were leaving for some distant point, and they were taking advantage of the trip to break-in a bronco. Everything required at the time had been loaded on to the wagon, including the Singer sewing machine, as they had a family and Annie did all the sewing. At an inopportune time, the rope attached to the bronc broke whereupon the horses took off at a terrific speed. Generally, after a few miles, they played themselves out and would slow down to a trot, and, by the time the travellers returned, the bronc would be well broken-in for harness.

On one occasion, matters did not turn out as planned. Instead of staying on the trail, John lost control of the horse team as they made a sharp turn, upsetting the wagon and scattering all of its contents. Luckily, no one was injured except the sewing machine, which was damaged when the cabinet was splintered. Only the head remained intact; thus, rendering it useless for the time. It was then stored away in a trunk. Since it was purchased on the time payment plan, John discontinued payments for what he considered to be a useless item. Repeated notices from the company had no effect, so in a final effort, the salesman came to the ranch to see what the holdup was about. Since John was absent and the salesman was not getting any satisfaction, he decided to repossess the machine. Jim’s wife, Philomena, or “Phil” as we called her, who was in charge at the time, went in search of the head, found it in the trunk, and presented it to him. He was flabbergasted and remarked, “Well, that’s the first time I have ever seen that happen!”

Breaking broncos was always a bucking contest for the boys who liked to show their skill. They liked their horses high-spirited, and did not like the girls riding them since we would invariably tame them down. We generally used our father's tame saddle horse to ride, and when available, we used Joe's saddle since it had the shortest stirrups. None of us owned a saddle. The only riding article we had was a leather riding skirt, which belonged to Jim's wife. She left it at the ranch and we made use of it. I know it saved my hip from getting badly scraped the one time that I got bucked off and slid along the ground.

I know for a fact that geldings can be tamed, but the only tame mare is an old mare. I found that out one year when we were attending summer school. As it was a seven-mile (11 km) drive, we used a buggy pulled by a versatile mare. Jenny could be very patient on a straight and level road, but there were times when she kicked up quite a fuss and start bucking, and sometimes she would even end up in a runaway. This happened only when going downhill and when the traces touched her rear. Her attempts to rid herself of the offending contraption taught us to respect Jenny's rear, and since we did not want to get kicked in the face, we learned in time to let her take the lead on the downhill slope.

Another incident involving a mare started out pleasantly enough, but ended on a sour note. Country dances were usually held in school houses, and this one was at Coriander School, about 15 miles (24 km) from the ranch. John and Max were going because they were supplying the music. When they asked me if I would like to come, I eagerly accepted, and was especially pleased when they saddled up Belle, the little chestnut mare. She was a beautiful horse although a bit high-spirited. I was feeling very proud as I rode alongside of my brothers, who were splendid horsemen. One could make fairly good time on horseback once one learned to follow the short cuts, and for a change, there was only one gate to open.

We arrived at the school in good time and danced till daylight. Of course, since it was summer, daylight came early. However, I was surprised to

see my brother-in-law from Ponteix at the dance. He came in his “runabout,” a little roadster. The boys soon deserted me, and decided to go with him to Ponteix. Someone took charge of their horses, and I had to go home by myself, in the wee small hours of the morning. The sun rose as I rode home and so did the mosquitoes, and they were giving me a bad time. My riding skirt did not quite cover my legs. To avoid them, I would gallop my horse a ways, and then I would let her walk a ways. The little pests would swarm, but they kept me awake. Finally, when I came to the gate, I tried to open it without getting off the horse, but as it was hard to open. I dismounted as it was impossible to open. My attempts to remount Belle were unsuccessful, as she did not stand still, and since I was too tired to be nimble and quick, there was nothing to do but walk the rest of the way, leading the mare. There was still the river to cross, so when I came to the crossing, I removed my shoes and stockings and waded across.

When I got close to home, the dogs started barking, waking up my sister Stella. I noticed her when she stuck her head out of the window. In a fitting finish, the horse stepped on my foot when I went to remove the saddle. Consequently, it was sore and swollen for a few days. I did not forget that excursion for a long time. About the mosquitoes, I remember Max saying once, when he became exasperated with them, “I wish the S.O.B. who invented them would get them all down his back.” That sounded like blasphemy to me.

Laura, the older sister next to me, was the family’s clown and mimic. She did amusing impersonations, performed little skits and plays, and excelled in comedy. However, like me, she was a bit impetuous. In the fall of 1918, we set out to do the impossible. Due to the Spanish Influenza epidemic, there was no school, and were left at the ranch on purpose, to avoid all possible contact with others in view of the disease’s seriousness. Both our mother and our sister, Stella, were in Ponteix nursing victims at the school, which had been converted into temporary quarters to accommodate the hospital’s overflow. Neither of them contracted the contagious disease.

On a calm October day, Laura and I decided to go get some soft water, mostly to wash our hair. We hooked the horse up to the buggy, loaded the five gallon (23-litre) churn in the front, and took off for the nearest slough. On our way back from the slough, we decided that instead of going home, we would drive to the post office, four miles (6.5 km) away, to get the mail, which came once a week. On the way there, we discussed the latest events. A new baby, our first little niece, had been born to our sister, Marie Rose. As there had not been a baby in the family since Little Joe, who was now ten, we were naturally anxious to see the new arrival. We decided right then and there to travel to Ponteix, a distance of 45 miles (72 km). We figured that we could travel all night and be there by morning.

After picking up the mail, we informed the acting postmistress, Mrs. Louis Denniel, in our best French (as she could not speak or understand English) that we were going to Ponteix, and to let our father know in case he came looking for us. Horrified, she did her best to talk us out of it, but our minds were made up. So in spite of her protests, we headed north for Ponteix. As we hit the horse and started off, we could hear her voice as she hollered, "*la nuit, il vient.*" Sure, we knew that night was coming. As we went a little ways, we were not so confident, and began to doubt our decision to attempt a journey of this distance. As we kept on, all sorts of disturbing thoughts crossed our minds. First and foremost, we were not dressed warmly enough to spend the night in an open rig. Then too, there was the horse. Being rancher's daughters, we knew he could not possibly travel all night without food or water. Therefore, we decided to turn around and head back home. A lucky thing we did not dump out the soft water. Since we had to go by her place, I am sure that poor Mrs. Denniel would have been relieved to see us heading south on the way home. She seemed so concerned about us.

During this time, our family took in (for about five years) two little orphaned Belgian children: Lucien, a boy about three-years-old, and Lucy, a

little fifteen-month-old girl. Their mother, a victim of the flu, had passed away after giving birth to a third child. Relatives adopted the infant. Both Lucien and Lucy understood only French and, therefore, we addressed them in their native tongue. Since they remained with us for a time, we also taught them to speak a bit of English and some Cree. While we were all dark-haired, Lucy and Lucien were completely blond, almost white; otherwise, they did not seem to be too much out of place.

When in Ponteix we lived next to their grandma. Their aunt, who was about our age, became one of our playmates. At times, when we wore out the grandma's patience, she called us "*une bande des tête noirs*" (a band of black heads). On one occasion, we were travelling and, as usual, our father, who had both Lucy and Lucien with him in the wagon, related something which he thought was quite funny. He said that when he met some travellers on the trail, they stared at him, and he added that, no doubt, they were astonished to see these little white-haired children riding with this "Indian" as he called himself.

On my 16th birthday, I decided to treat myself to an afternoon of visiting. 70-Mile Butte was directly east and across the river from the ranch. These hills were high, with steep embankments and sharp drops. There was a trail through the hills, but it was narrow and was passable only on horseback. I followed this trail to go calling on the Smiths who lived about six miles (10 km) over the hill and around the bend. Incidentally, there were three gates to open, which were always a nuisance, especially when they were hard to open and close.



*Louise Trottier, 16 Years, Regina, 1920.
Louise Moine/Jacquie Richards.*

The Smiths, with their family of eight girls, were a happy and lively bunch. I always enjoyed visiting them. Dorothy, who was about my age, was a niece who had been raised in the east, and she was now making her home with them. She always impressed me with her ladylike and outgoing manners. I wished so much that I could be more like her, but that was impossible because I was a shy, retiring person. When I was invited to stay for supper, I accepted. Night was descending by the time I started for home, but it was a bright, moonlit evening. Naturally, I returned by the same route. Since I had a good horse, I was not the least bit worried; otherwise, I would never have taken the same trail. I eventually came to the place which I took to be the way down. But when I tried to force the horse, he refused to move. I decided to let him take the lead. He went on for a little way and then started the descent on what was the right trail. You can rest assured that I thanked my lucky stars for relying on the horse whose common sense brought us through those treacherous hills.

In an all-out effort to combat mange, a disease that was quite prevalent and very contagious among cattle in 1916-17, the "76" outfit had constructed a large dipping vat at the edge of the now dried-up Sand Lake. This slough-like lake, located right in the "76" Pasture, was fairly large, but was not deep. The anti-mange dip contained a solution of lime, sulphur, and water. In 1917, the government issued an order requiring all cattle owners to dip their stock to curb the disease. Until then, only the big ranchers used the dip. The territory's farmers and small ranchers made a deal with the "76" to use the dipping vat, and repeated dips finally wiped out the mange. Now, all that remains of this once lively and tremendous undertaking is a long cut in the ground. Old-timers who visit the area claim that since so much of the sulphur had been worked into the ground, there is still a noticeable odour.

It became a habit of my mother's when the "76" broke camp (usually one of the boys working there would inform her of the move) to go to their campsite. Sometimes, I went with her, and we would find the odd package of dried beans and dried fruit like peaches or apricots, even salt pork. Since

this was a big well-to-do outfit, a little waste could be expected. Then, too, the cowboys preferred their meat fresh, not cured. As a result, we were the ones who benefited.

In the years to follow, our family drifted away from home—some to work and some to marry. In 1923, as we had been renting the house in Ponteix, my father decided to sell it when he had a chance. In the same year, my parents moved to Montana, taking Talia and Joe, the two youngest with them. My brother, John stayed to look after the ranch. In January 1924, he married Anastasia Gladu of Malta, Montana. Jim and Max also moved to Montana. The girls, too, had moved away when they married. Only three of us were left at home: Marie Rose, Joe, and me.

My father found employment at the W.W. Phillips Ranch, which was located 25 miles (40 km) south of Malta, Montana. This was a big outfit: their main industry was raising sheep, though they also raised horses and cattle. They owned so much land in that part of Montana that Phillips County was named after them. My parents returned to Saskatchewan in 1931.

The first death in the family occurred in March 1928. We were living in Montana when we the received the sad telegram, which informed us of the death of Marie Rose's 38-year-old husband, Constance Demeules. She was left with a family of five children. The realization of this terrible tragedy hit my mother pretty hard, and she wept aloud. My mother had many disappointments in her life. One of these was when I dropped out of school. Since I was the only one of the girls who attended high school, she naturally held high hopes for me.

Though my mother had been steadily losing weight during that same year of 1928, none of us were too concerned until she developed a sudden illness and had to be rushed to the hospital. With treatment and rest she recovered somewhat, but, while she was convalescing, the doctor informed us that, according to his diagnosis, she had an internal cancer. He further indicated that she could live another four years, which she almost did.

Because mother had always been robust and strong, she believed that she would recover. Furthermore, since she was only 65, she believed that she would recover. As time went by, she steadily weakened, though she never complained, and only took to her bed on occasions when weakness forced her to do so. Even her doctor marvelled at her will and determination to carry on, considering the disease's extent.

By this time, the Depression had hit in full force. Mother travelled about a great deal in her Model "A" Ford with my sister, Stella at the wheel. In view of her condition, this was an outlet to ease her mind from the tension, worry, and stress. I heard her reply to one woman who had remarked about her travelling, "I don't think so much when I am on the go." As the ravages of the disease progressed, she seemed to be shrinking away before our eyes. Towards the last, she returned to Ponteix to be with the nuns she loved. I was not with her when the end came, but afterwards, the sister informed me that she died like a saint, meaning that she suffered. These were comforting words. As I walked out of that hospital, I felt a deep sense of gratitude, knowing that at last she was at peace, even though I had to face a future without her love and guidance. She was 68-years-old when she passed away on December 26, 1931.

After my mother's death, my father remained at the ranch with his oldest son, John, where, on leased land, he kept his stock. Originally, this was John's homestead, where he raised a family of ten. I was married in the fall of 1932, and, since we lived only two miles (3.2 km) from the ranch, we often visited there.

During the dry years of 1930-32, John herded my father's cattle 300 miles (483 km) north where feed was more plentiful. They were herded back in the summer of 1934. I can remember my father selling cattle for \$5 and \$8 a head, although everything else was cheap.

The 1930s were not kind to my family. Two other family members passed away in the early 1930s. The first was Laura who died on January 13, 1933, at the age of 29. The second was 36-year-old Jim who was killed in the fall of 1933, leaving a family of four children. At the end of the decade, my father passed away

in April, 1939 at the age of 70, eight years after mother's death. We laid him to rest next to our mother in the Ponteix cemetery as he had requested. By 1971, only four out of my parents' children were still alive.

You never know what your parents really mean to you until it is too late. Nor do you tell them this until after they have passed. If we could have only known while they were living what we have learned since they died. We cannot tell them until it is too late what we could have done for them. There is a certain sorrow which comes when our loved ones pass beyond the sunset. I loved my father very much and dreaded the time when he would die. More than once I noticed his eyes dimming with age. I knew he would not always be there to talk to us. If we would have only known while they were living what we have learned since they died!

Unquestionably, my parents left me with a great heritage, which gives me great pride. What I would give to live those wonderful years again in the wilderness and security of nature; to wake up in the morning to the aroma of burning willows while my father started up the fire in the cook stove; to keep a watchful eye on the coulee for the first appearance of the team and democrat; or to run out in the dark, stillness of night and listen for the rattling wheels and the snorting horses, proclaiming the long-awaited return of our parents; and to excitedly unload and wait expectantly for whatever mother had bought us on this trip. No, I would not trade my life as I lived it then for the life of today's children. Our luxuries were many and were beyond the price of gold.



My Life in a Residential School, 1914-1917

At the time my story begins, we were living in the Lac Pelletier Valley. My parents, who were Métis, had settled there sometime during the “Gay Nineties.”²⁰ Other settlers in the valley were mostly relatives who were raising large families. We were no exception. By 1908, there were ten of us, four boys and six girls.

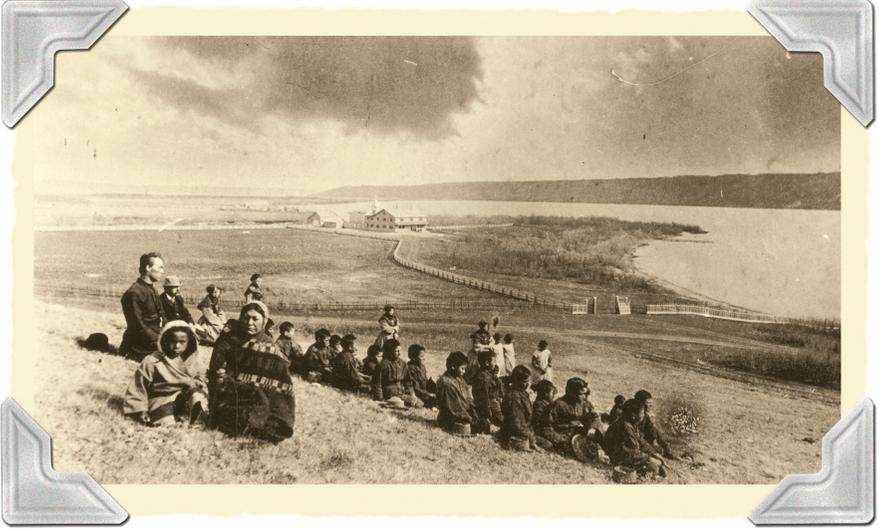
My mother always made the important decisions. When she enrolled us in the Indian industrial school, I never questioned this at first because I was too young to give it much thought, but in later years, I began to see why. We were living in a remote area where day school was simply out of the question. Although the industrial school was 300 miles (483 km) away, this was a minor detail compared its advantages: we would be housed, fed, clothed, and educated at no cost, except for the train fare to and from the school. Also, it was a religious institution operated by priests and nuns, so my parents were assured that this part of our education would not be neglected.

One of the first Indian residential schools to be built in Saskatchewan was on the shores of Mission Lake in the Qu’Appelle Valley in 1883. It officially opened on September 23, 1884 under the supervision of Father Joseph Hugonard, an Oblate priest originally from France, who was instrumental in the school’s construction. Understanding the problems facing Indians since the white man invaded their territory and more or less took over, he believed that in educating their children, the Indian people would somehow learn to live and accept this new way of life. He also loved children, and could see the changes coming in the future.



*Father Hugonard. Louise Moine/
Jacquie Richards.*

²⁰ The 1890s were a socially liberal decade and a period of prosperity, especially after the long depression of the 1870s and '80s.



View of the first Qu'Appelle Industrial School from hillside with Father Hugonard, nuns, adults and pupils in foreground, 1885, Saskatchewan Archives Board, R-A448.

Treaty Indians were wards of the federal government. As a result, the funds to build and operate the school were made available through the Department of Indian Affairs. Since this was a mission, there was also a Roman Catholic Church. In the following years, the little village of Lebret—a name chosen by Father Louis Lebret who had come from a place with that name in France—sprang up as French, German, and Métis settlers moved in. In 1904, the first school was destroyed by fire, and a new one was built in 1905 to take its place. Considering the year that the building was erected, it was quite modern with central heat, running water on every floor, and gas lamps.



View of second Qu'Appelle Industrial School from hillside, with snow on the ground, ca.1903, Saskatchewan Archives Board, R-B1814-1.

I shall attempt to describe the school as well as my life as a student there. The school consisted of three ostentatious-looking buildings, each four storeys high, built in the French architectural design, and finished in red-brick siding. The largest, main building was in the centre, and it held the administration office, Father Hugonard's study, and a showroom where arts and crafts made by Indian people were displayed and could be bought. The priests' bedrooms and the guest rooms were also on this floor. The dining rooms, kitchen, and food storage rooms were on the lower floors. One had to descend a few steps to get to all lower floors. The chapel and sisters' rooms were all on the third floor. The hospital and dispensary were on the top floor, and above this was a cupola.



Lebret Indian Residential School, 1911. Louise Moine/Jacquie Richards.

The girls' building to the southeast had two playrooms, one for the younger girls and one for the teenagers. There were washrooms on every floor. The second and third floors contained dormitories and the three classrooms



Postcard Collection, Special Collections, University Library, University of Saskatchewan, Qu'Appelle Industrial School, LXX-83, S.1, s.n., 190-?

were on the top floor. The cloak room, where all the good summer and winter clothes were stored, was on the third floor.

The boys' building to the northeast also had a playroom on the ground floor. The second and

third floors held the dormitories and classrooms. The top floor contained the gymnasium, where concerts, Christmas programs, and all sorts of entertainment, even picture shows, were held. Here, we saw celebrities such as the Duke of Connaught²¹ and Sir Harry Lauder, who sang and entertained us. Even the Prince of Wales²² visited this school, but that was sometime later. I remember the baby grand piano and the big canvas that hung in front of the large stage. The curtain was operated by ropes at each end and could be rolled away, up and then down, between scenes. This curtain displayed a hand painting of Indians hunting buffaloes with arrows. It was a remarkable work of art considering the canvas's size.

The boys' and girls' buildings were joined to the main building by two-storey hallways. There were verandas on every building, with two on the main building, one facing west and one facing south.

Since not all Indian children were considered Treaty Indians, Father Hugonard, the school's superintendent, had some Métis children admitted.



Postcard Collection, Special Collections, University Library, University of Saskatchewan, Qu'Appelle Industrial School, 1907, LXX-1202, S.I. s.n., 1907.

²¹ Arthur, Queen Victoria's seventh child and one-time Governor General of Canada.

²² The future Edward VIII.

We were in this group. Apparently, he was doing this over the heads of government officials. One I remember, Mr. Graham, was quite often at the school. We were told to call him the “Inspector.” He and his wife resided in Regina. Once in a while she accompanied him, and I remember her as an elegant looking person with a pleasant smile. They were usually invited to all special functions, no doubt to observe the Indian children’s work and progress. They were treated like royalty. If Mr. Graham noticed any “little strays” around the place, it was never mentioned; so we remained.

Naturally, our family did not all start school together. The older ones, John and James, were the first to be admitted, followed by Stella and Maxime, and later Edna, and Laura. Talia, my younger sister, and I were the last to be enrolled. My oldest sister, Marie Rose, did not get the chance to go to school at first because she had to stay at home to work and look after the younger children. Finally, when we were all at school, my mother decided to send her too. However, she informed the sisters to not teach Marie Rose to read or write; she only needed to learn her catechism and make her first communion. Consequently, she never received an education, and she more or less held this against mother and the sisters.

When my sister and I had to leave for school, we were excited to start this new adventure. However, once we were left there with a group of strange children who seemed so different from us, the loneliness was overwhelming. We cried a great deal, but no one paid any attention to us. The sisters, no doubt, were used to this type of behaviour. They knew that in time we would become accustomed to this new way of life.

Since it was an industrial school, we learned to do all types of work. Everyone, right down to the youngest, was given assignments, which were changed at specific intervals. Since the school did



*Louise Trottier as a little girl.
Louise Moine/Jacquie Richards.*

some mixed farming, it was self-supporting: there were horses and pigs to be fed, and cows, which would later be butchered for food, had to be milked.

Next to our playground was a huge vegetable garden, which was planted by the boys. When the weeds took over, the younger children pulled them. Whenever possible, we helped ourselves to peas, carrots, or cabbage. We knew that this was not allowed; however, there were always one or two brave souls who were willing to take the chance. They crawled on their hands and knees and picked whatever was there, ready to eat. Then we would have a good feed.

Wood and coal were used for cooking and heating. For lights, there were hand-operated gas jets. These were turned off and on by a twist of a little key at the bottom. I know this type of light would be considered quite risky today, but I believe electricity was installed sometime later. The school had its own bakery with a French baker in charge. A schoolboy helped him prepare the baking. A shoemaker made all our shoes. Sometimes, we would go to his shop to get a pair from his ready-made stock. It was only a matter of trying them on to get a pair that fit.

We wore long black stockings that were made on a hand-operated knitting machine by the older girls who worked in the sewing room. We all dressed alike in loose-fitting “menage” dresses during the week and in our dress-up clothes on Sunday. We wore aprons for work.



*Girls at Qu'Appelle Industrial School, 1907.
Saskatchewan Archives Board, R-B118.*

Short hair had not come in style; therefore, we wore our long hair braided or tied back. We wore little black veils on our heads while at chapel during the week, and wore white ones on Sunday. One could almost compare the school to a Hutterite colony except that there was not any money available.

Besides Father Hugonard, there was another priest who worked under him. Father Mathias Kalmès, head supervisor of the boys, was a teacher who conversed in five languages—English, French, German, Cree, and Sioux. The children disliked him because he was very strict and was mean. He was always ready to use the strap at the least provocation. The only time we spent with him was during catechism, which was from 5 pm to 6 pm on week days. We all marched to the boys' building to take our religious instruction and to answer questions from our memorized catechism. If someone did not know the answer or broke the rules, Father Kalmès would make the child kneel in front of the class with outstretched arms until the class ended.

Father Kalmès was miserable. I will never know how Father Hugonard ever tolerated him. Father Kalmès only smiled was when he was around the nuns. I remember one incident when he tried to hit one of the boys, and in his haste, stumbled over one of the benches and fell headlong. I still see him sprawled along the bench. Some of the kids snickered while the rest of us stifled our urge to laugh.

One day, the younger boys were hauling wood from the woodshed to the kitchen. Everyone had an armful of wood and walked single file with Father Kalmès in command. My brother Max, being a bit puny and having poor eyesight, could not keep up with the others. The priest kept pushing him to hurry. From an upstairs window my older sister, Marie Rose, noticed what was taking place. She threw the window open and yelled, "*Atimo machi Manito*" (bad devil). Naturally, Father Kalmès looked up to see who had called him that, but she quickly ducked out of sight. I am sure he knew where it came from, but he never did anything about it. I believe that he knew better because Marie Rose was as mean as he was.

One of the teenage boys passed away under questionable circumstances. The rumour going around the school was that Father Kalmès had given him a hard push causing him to fall and then gave him a kick, breaking a rib, which in turn punctured the boy's lung. Pneumonia set in

causing his death. No inquest was ever held. My brother, Jim, hated him and vowed that someday he would return to get even with the priest for all the misery he dished out to the children. However, when Jim returned to Lebret in 1928 to sell horses, Father Kalmès was no longer there. Jim never did get to even the score. Years later, I learned that the priest had died sometime in the 1960s. He must have died a natural death.

There was also another man who wore a robe like a priest, but he was known as a “brother.” I believe he was studying to be a priest, but I cannot say what role he played in the school. He reminded me of a monk because he wore a huge rosary around his waist and appeared very pious. He seemed to be praying continuously. The children knew he was a German, and since this was during the First World War, we all came to the conclusion that he was praying for the Germans to win the war.

There were always one or two other male instructors for academic classes and for athletics. The boys were very good in sports, and played football, now known as soccer, baseball, and other sports common in those years. There was also an exceptionally good band, which played at all the important functions in and away from the school.

Throughout the summer, the school held its annual sports day, usually before the holidays. We had a special picnic lunch and we learned to call it “Picnic Day.”



Boys band, Qu'Appelle Industrial School, Saskatchewan
Archives Board, R-B119.

Unlike our playground, which had lots of trees, the boys' side was quite bare, so we gathered there. We played all sorts of competitive games, including foot races, wheelbarrow races, sack races, 3-legged races, and tug-of-war. The

winner always received a small prize. We never competed with the boys: the teachers were very strict about segregation. The boys kept to one side and we kept to the other. I cannot speak for the teenagers, but we younger children were quite satisfied with these regulations.

I remember Billy Adams, an 8 or 9-year-old, who was an exceptional pow wow dancer. Once in a while, he would get decked out in a feathered headdress, and this was the highlight of the entertainment. One could always rely on Billy as he was forever willing. Whatever became of Billy?

Before 1912, there was no railway going through Lebret, but finally, when the line was completed in that year, the first train, from the Grand Trunk line (later the Canadian National Railway), came chugging its way just north of the boy's playground. Since this was an auspicious occasion, we were herded to the boys' side of the school where we could see the train and wave at the crew. This was progress in action—we now had a faster way to get to and from Regina.

The school's sisters were the Grey Nuns or the "Sisters of Charity," an order of nuns from Montreal. They arrived in October, 1884, and worked for charity and donated their labour. Their garb consisted of taupe-grey uniforms made from French-made woollen material. When they went outdoors, they wore short black capes for warmth, and aprons when performing menial tasks. There were about ten or twelve nuns in this school. Each nun had her own assignments while in charge of the girls. They were also the overseers of all departments except those on the boys' side.

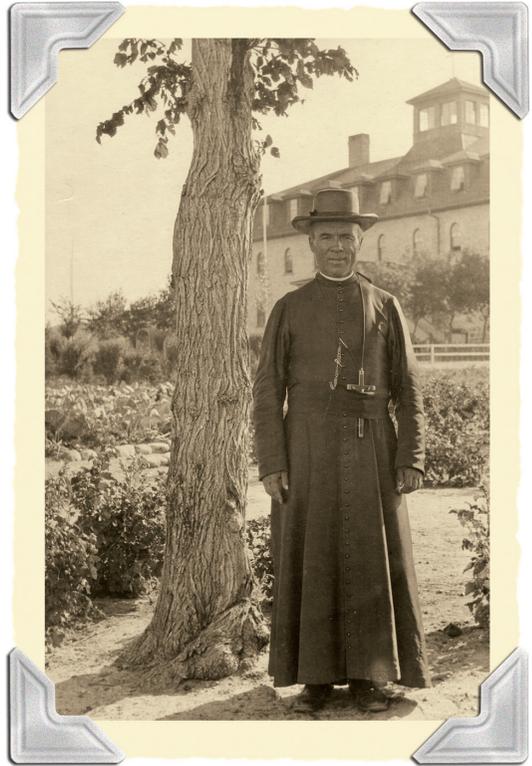
Mother Superior appeared to be the oldest, so it was only natural that she had this distinction. She spent most of her time in the kitchen supervising the girls to see that nothing went to waste. I remember there was a hand-cranked potato peeler. The wood used for the huge stove was just behind a door in the kitchen.

A frightening incident happened while I was at the school. One of the girls tried to burn the school by starting a fire in the wood box by the kitchen. She must have hated the school, and did not realize the terrible consequences of

her actions. Fortunately, it was discovered in time (the smell of smoke, no doubt, brought quick action), and the girl was apprehended. That was the one and only time I ever saw Father Hugonard use the strap on a child in his care. He had no choice. He strapped her legs in front of the whole class as a lesson to the rest of us. We all felt sorry for her, but she had done a terrible thing and deserved to be punished. We often had fire drills and whenever the alarm sounded, we learned to file out of the school in a hurry.

There were two sisters who supervised the girls in the playroom, one for the teenagers and one for the younger children. Sister Lamontagne, who was very strict with the teenagers, used the strap on one of them. The girl reported this incident to her mother. Most of the Indian children were from the nearby reserve and their parents came quite often to visit them. The mother was terribly angry and marched right down to the playroom where she confronted the sister by shaking her fist at her and telling her off in Sioux. The sister, fearing abuse, held her cross up in front of the woman, but the mother knocked it out of the sister's hand.

For a time, our supervisor was Sister Dupuis. Since she did not have the patience to cope with a bunch of busybodies, she started using the strap. The first time that I was given the strap was over a minor incident, or so I thought. It concerned an Indian woman who came into the dining room and started arguing with the priests and teachers at the head table. Some of the girls got up to look

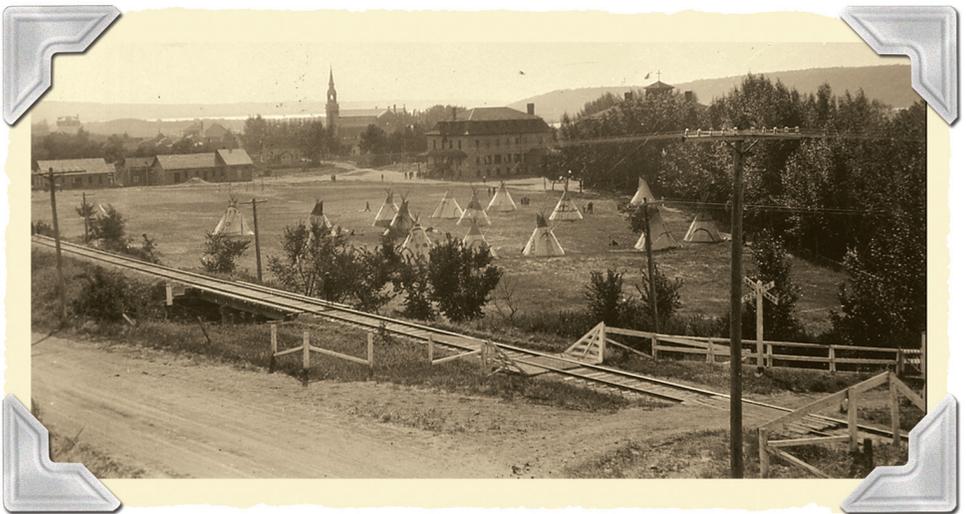


Father Hugonard, on school grounds. Saskatchewan Archives Board, R-B439.

because this had never happened before. I got up too just then, but I was not interested in the woman. I was only trying to reach for the salt because no one would pass it to me. Later, I tried to explain this to the sister, but she refused to accept my excuse. We heard, in a round about way, that the woman was upset that the priests and nuns were eating so much better than the Indian children.

From then, on matters went from bad to worse between the sister and me. It did not take much to provoke her. On another occasion, we were playing a game in the playroom when the sister rang the bell. I yelled out loud, "Never saw such a sister." She rang the bell again and asked, "Who said that?" My sister, Laura told on me because she was always the sister's pet. Well, now she had a good reason to use the strap on me, so she took me into the bathroom and strapped me till she got red in the face. When she stopped for air, I threw in an apology (which I did not mean). She stopped then and kissed me, but the damage was done. Since she strapped me on the seat, I could not sit properly and my behind was sore for days. However, matters did not stop there. She dished out more punishment to me later. I must have done something to rile her up again, but I cannot remember what it was.

About two or three times a year, concerts, which were eagerly anticipated by all the children, were held in the gymnasium. One time, I did



Teepees in Industrial School Grounds, Saskatchewan Archives Board, R-A6532-1.

not take part in any of the plays, and the sister, instead of allowing me to go to the concert made me go to bed alone in that big dormitory with only a dim light for company. I never felt as alone as I did that night. The time seemed endless. I could not relax, let alone sleep. Since the school children were always spooking each other, I was more afraid of ghosts and “*tchi-pay*” (spirits) than of live people. I believed that locked doors or walls would not stop them. My only comfort was the murmur of voices coming from the room down the hall reserved for visitors—Indians who did not go to the concert because they did not understand English. Being a sensitive child, the memory of that night remained with me, and no doubt left its scar.

I did not miss the sister at all when she was transferred to another school. Her replacement was a little French nun who could not speak a word of English. We all liked her right from the start as she was very kind and patient with us. We learned to understand French, and she in turn picked up some English from us. She also taught us to sing some French songs which I still remember to this day.

I also remember Sister Brabant, a Métis nun, who appeared on the scene out of nowhere. Her voice rang out like a general in command as she shouted, “I hear a word!” Like little chickens, we would become so quiet that not even a peep was heard. You could almost hear a pin drop. The children used to get quite a bang out of her, and would mimic her behind her back.

There was one little nun who was a full-blooded Indian. She was a talented person who did most of the oil painting required in the school. I remember the roses and rosebuds she painted on the wide white ribbons that we wore as “Children of Mary.” They were delicate works of art. She also did all types of handwork and taught handicrafts to the girls such as crocheting, embroidery, and beadwork.

Once in a while, Sister St. Alfred, one of the teachers, would come and stay with us. Since she was a good storyteller, we would beg her for a story. We would sit quietly and listen because her stories were always so interesting. She

walked back and forth working her knitting needles to create scarves, mitts, or stockings. We all loved her. Sometime later, after she was transferred to another Indian school, we heard of her tragic death. The story we heard was that she died while attempting to rescue some of the children from a burning building.

Sometimes, the sister from the teenagers' side would come and stay with us. Sister Lamontagne was a deeply religious nun. Most of the time, she had us down on our knees to say our act of contrition. She continually warned us that, if we were to die with a mortal sin in our hearts, we would go straight to hell. Hell, we learned from her, was a place of intense fire where devils with forks, and all sorts of vipers, existed. There was a horrible picture in our playroom which showed a dying man being pulled into hellfire by the devils while the angels turned away. She informed us that even a four-year-old child could go to hell. Oh, we believed in hell alright, but that would be far away in the future. In the meantime, we grew up to be regular little demons, pulling off stunts behind the sister's back.

We were just at the age when children indulged in sex play. To the nuns and priests, this constituted a mortal sin. If such was the case, then we were guilty. However, we could lie with a straight face when we were apprehended. We made good little hypocrites because we believed that all would be forgiven when we confessed to the priest every week. My confessions became a repetition of the same sins. We did not need to examine our conscience except to change the number of times. Invariably, the priest would ask the same old question, "Did you play with yourself?" Naturally, I would answer, "No." How could I admit to such a monstrous sin? The priest, always generous and understanding, usually gave me absolution and, for my penance, I had to say three "Our Fathers," three "Hail Marys," and three "Glory Bes." My confessor, Father Royer, who wore a long beard and who was from the mission, always brought me an orange.

Sister St. Eugene, who taught Grade 3 and 4, was petite and a bit timid. We sensed her timidity and took advantage of it. Since we seemed to have the

upper hand, we gave her a bad time. As she had noticeable fuzz on her upper lip, we called her “Sister Moustache.” Children can be so cruel! I know we had her in tears many times. Eventually, when matters went from bad to worse, she was replaced by a stricter sister who taught us how to behave.

The Grade 5 and 6 teacher was as beautiful as she was kind. It was rumoured that she had come from a wealthy family and had renounced it all to join the Grey Nuns. When she called me to her side, she put her arm around me, and asked me if I liked Lionel. I had to admit I did. She noticed me smiling at him in the dining room. At meal time, after grace was said, and while we were still on our feet, Lionel would look my way and give me a big smile. I would smile back because I found him rather nice, at a distance. Sister Cloutier, in her understanding way, proceeded to give me a few pointers on the facts of life. I felt affection for the first time in that school. I shall always remember her.

Although we had all kinds of playground equipment in our yard, we preferred to play hide and seek in the tall pigweed. It was there, just before the holidays, that I came in contact with poison ivy which did not seem to affect any of the others. By the time I left for home, my face was a mess and it took some time before it cleared up. Owing to that mishap, I missed my place in the family picture which was taken at the studio in Swift Current.



Qu'Appelle Indian Industrial School, Saskatchewan Archives Board, R-A18797.

Since this was a Roman Catholic institution, religion's importance was deeply stressed. From the time we got out of bed at the sound of the bell, we went down on our knees to pray. After we washed and dressed, we headed for the chapel to attend low mass, which was always held at 7 am. From there, we went to the playroom to don our aprons and get ready for breakfast.

In the dining room, we said grace before and after each unappetizing meal. For breakfast, we had dry bread and tea, and some kind of gruel or porridge mixed with skim milk and brown sugar. Salt and pepper were always on the table. Sundays were the only days we had lard on our bread. Though the boys milked cows, we never had butter or drank whole milk; the butter was sold to the villagers while the children went without. The priests and nuns ate butter. Even though the children complained among themselves, it did not change matters any.

Since all the food, even the locally-caught fish, was boiled I just could not enjoy it. My first year in school was the hardest since I was not eating properly. As a result, I got terribly thin, and I would easily faint. I could not kneel because I developed sores on my knees. I finally landed in the hospital where the doctor, after examining me, prescribed me some tiny little white pills. I had good meals while I was in the hospital. I especially enjoyed the buttered toast. Downstairs, we had dry bread, which I soaked in sweet tea, while at home we always had bannock with butter. While in the hospital, I made up my mind that once I got downstairs, I was going to start eating since I did not like the children calling me a "skinny baboon." Finally, in desperation, I wrapped a towel around my stomach so I did not look so thin, but I do not remember how I kept it there. This was very insulting to me as I thought being fat would be really nice.

Our favourite meal was boiled beans, which we could usually smell cooking from the playroom. Sometimes we had stew for dinner, and we occasionally had roast beef. For dessert, we received dried fruit such as apples, prunes, or peaches, and sometimes we had syrup, molasses, and puddings.

Once in awhile, the cook would come to our playroom with a dish pan full of apple peelings and we would all delve in. That was a treat. No doubt, it certainly was not easy to prepare tasty meals for 200-250 children with the facilities they had in those days.

We bought luxury items like dates, figs, oranges, fruit cookies, gum, and candy, which were sold to us as cheaply as possible. We always seemed to have a bit of change on hand as nickels, dimes, and quarters went a long way in those days. All these items were kept under lock and key. The sister usually had to dig down into her long skirt to find the right key. As my father was kissing me goodbye, I distinctly remember him giving me a whole quarter while I was crying so hard.

One year, "consumption," as we called TB then, was on the rampage in the school. There was a death every month on the girls' side, and just as many boys died. We were always taken to see the girls who died. The sisters dressed them in light blue (the colours of Virgin Mary), and they always looked so peaceful and angelic. We were led to believe that their souls had gone to heaven as this would somehow lessen the grief and sadness we felt for the loss of one of our little schoolmates. There would be a requiem mass in the chapel. Then we would all escort the body, which was lying in a simple handmade coffin, to the graveyard which was located close to the village's Catholic Church.

Three white children, who were of Irish descent, had been admitted as students to the school. We called them "orphans," although only their father had died. Beatrice, the oldest, was about my age. Florence was about three years younger and Pearl was the baby of the family. Off and on, their mother would come to the school to see them. Although the children were being raised Catholic, we assumed that their mother was a Protestant since she never knelt down when she was in the chapel. Unfortunately, Pearl passed away following a severe bout of tuberculosis. Though we always felt sad when one of our playmates died, it was more so when Pearl died. I felt that her death should not have occurred. Here she was, a white child, dying in an Indian institution of a contagious illness.

When the public health officer ordered a physical check up and TB tests for all the students, there were several positive cases. Naturally, those students were placed in isolation. A sunroom was built over the main building's south veranda to keep the patients in isolation. Once in a while, we were allowed to visit them. With proper care and treatment, including good food, some of them recovered. Others who did not improve were moved to sanatorium at Fort San (when it was completed). I will say this for the school, every spring we got our usual dose of sulphur and molasses, and, throughout the year, we were given a tonic of beef iron and wine which had a horrible taste.

In the school, even the youngest students had to work, often doing unpleasant tasks. At times, we would to clean the young boys' dormitory, make their beds, and sweep the floors. I distinctly remember once when a sister reprimanded me for not sweeping correctly. She stated that I was not getting the dust that was flying around, but that did not ring true because I could not catch those elusive flying particles. I only managed to catch those that stayed put. It is funny how this stayed with me for so many years.

I remember one chore that I detested. Every Monday morning, we were herded down to the boys' side of the building. We settled down in the visitors' room, which had benches built along its walls. The sister passed around the boys' long black stockings. Some had terribly big holes, but we had no choice. We helped ourselves to darning needles and black wool, and went to work darning these stockings. Those were the days when the boys wore short pants called knickerbockers and the stockings were long enough to reach under their pant legs. In time, we all learned the art of darning, if one could call it an art.

For a time, my job, before classes started, was to clean the stairways in the main building on the boys' side. Boys who needed medication used these stairs to get up to the dispensary on the top floor. Usually, when I heard them coming, I would hide because they tried to grab me and give me a kiss. At times, they got so rough that they would push me into Father Hugonard's study, and, if he was not there, I would have quite a battle with them. So I

had to be on guard when they went up and down the stairs. One time, when I ran and hid in the broom closet, the door snapped shut and locked me in. When I realized what had happened, I was frantic and started pounding on the door. It was completely dark. It took some time before someone rescued me and, believe me, I did not try that stunt again. I also remember, too, how I hurried to finish my cleaning so I could sneak down the hall to a utility room filled with used items. I would search for the *Regina Leader-Post*, and would be completely absorbed by the “Sandman’s Story for Tonight.”

I must not forget to mention the school’s laundry, although we called it the “washhouse.” Indian-like, we learned to simplify the names of different places. Set apart from the school, this building was next to our playground. The older girls did the laundry in hand-



School, Lebret, Saskatchewan Archives Board, R-A19888.

operated washing machines, but we sometimes helped to hang clothes. I know washboards and wash-boilers, which heated the water and boiled white clothes, were also used. The waste water ran out into a spillway, winding its way through our yard, emptying into the lake.

I realize now, that there must have been a tremendous amount of work to be done in this school. This was accomplished only under the sisters’ excellent supervision. I believe we earned our room and board, notwithstanding the fact that we did not have fancy meals and were deprived of butter.

One time four of us decided to go fishing, even though we were never allowed on the lake by ourselves. We were not always obedient. The lake was calm as we got into a row boat, each taking a fishing line. It was only after we got to the middle of the lake that one of the girls got a bite, so she pulled the

fish out of the water and turned it loose in the boat. Since it was fairly large, we were a bit scared of it, watching it as it flopped around. We started yelling and lifting our feet until one of the girls grabbed the fish and put it in a gunny sack. It was a wonder that we did not tip the boat over in the middle of the lake. We could have drowned since we were not wearing life preservers. We started rowing back, and like all fishermen, we were very proud of our prize catch. On shore, two of us took the sack and headed for the kitchen to present it to the cook. Somewhere back of my mind was the thought, "What if she makes us clean it?" This was a job I did not relish. However, I need not have worried. When the cook saw the fish she yelled, "Get out of here with that. We don't eat that kind of fish." That was the first and last time we went fishing.

In a school where there were about one hundred girls coming from every type of home, there was bound to be some kind of pests. Here it was in the form of lice. The sisters worked constantly to rid our heads of the annoying little creatures. They plastered some red ointment on our heads and even resorted to coal oil at times, but it was a losing battle as there was always someone who brought in a new crop. We ultimately went home with three things: holy pictures, medals, and lice. The first two things were harmless and insignificant, but lice were a constant worry to our mother. She and my older sister would patiently hunt the lice on our heads, but we were not always patient for too long. Finally, in desperation, my sister warned me that if I did not let her hunt the bugs, they would multiply so much that they would pick me up off the ground, carry me away, and dump me in a lake or mud puddle. I pondered this for a time, and I was not too sure if I should have believed it or not.

Excursion trains came through Lebret during the summer, bringing groups of white people from Regina, Fort Qu'Appelle, Indian Head, and other places. They came to visit the school and were escorted around the school's grounds by the sisters. The sisters lined us up, showed us off, and then had us sing some of our practiced school songs. Gathering in our playground, the visitors ate their packaged lunches on our picnic tables. After they left,

we would all run to the tables, and gobbled up their discarded thinly-cut sandwiches; some whole, some partially eaten. They were delicious!

On one occasion, I cannot remember exactly what was going on at Fort Qu'Appelle. I believe the event was held in the fall as it was already quite chilly and, to top it all off, we had to walk four miles (6.4 km) to Fort Qu'Appelle. Our boys' band played special numbers, and there were speeches which meant nothing to us. As I was only about 8 or 9-years-old, I got terribly tired, and I thought that if I had to walk back to school, I would not make it. However, I need not have worried as some of the boys showed up with a team and wagon and we had a ride back.

Going home, of course, was always a joyous time and an adventure. My parents had moved twice since we started school, so we always looked forward to our new home. Until 1914, we lived in Lac Pelletier, which was about 25 miles (40 km) from Swift Current. From here, we usually got on or off the CPR train to or from Regina. The trip between these two points usually required the use of the team and democrat. In Regina, we had to change trains from the CPR depot to the Grand Trunk (CNR) or vice versa. Since the depots were some distance apart, we hired a taxi. Until my older sisters, Stella and Edna, were able to look after the younger children, my mother usually accompanied us all the way back to school. Sometimes, two of the nuns would ride with us part way home. Father Hugonard even accompanied us on one occasion.

When we got back to school after the holidays, the sisters always seemed so glad to see us and made us feel welcome. We even had some special food to eat for our first meal. Going back was always an ordeal for me because I missed my parents very much. The fact that I had some little Métis friends who spoke my language helped a lot, which somehow helped me to put up with that school.

Our mother used to come and see us during the year, and she usually stayed a few days as a guest of the school. Seeing her made me lonely. Longing for home, I begged her to take me back with her. While I was pleading with her and crying all the while, I told her that I was going to be in a play where I had to do some crying. "Well," she stated, "that shouldn't be hard for you since

you cry so easy.” Anyway, she did not take me home.

The play was a three-act drama, and I was its principal actor. I memorized my lines and we practiced. Finally, the big day came. Most of the villagers came to watch, along with the parents. The play must have been a success because some of the viewers informed me the next day that I had acted my part so well that I had them crying. The sister who directed the play deserved most of the credit for her patience and endurance.

I sang this little sad song during the play:

*Out in this cold world alone,
Walking about in the streets,
Asking a penny for bread,
Begging for something to eat,
Parentless, friendless, and poor,
Nothing but sorrow I see,
I am nobody's darling,
Nobody cares for me!*

One of the between-act pantomimes, which I found really inspiring, was performed by a group of girls wearing long white robes and glittering headdresses. When the curtain went up, all the lights were extinguished except the flood lights. The sisters created a lighting effect causing the lights to turn into different colours, red, blue, and green. In the background, while the chorus sang, “Nearer My God to Thee,” the girls took different poses following the words of the hymn. Never again, did I witness a scene so breathtaking and spectacular.

We had our good times too. Through the summer, the sisters took us out on little picnics. Sometimes, we went for long walks, and we often went swimming. Although the boys had swimming instructors, no one taught us how to swim, so we just paddled around in the water. Our picnics were usually

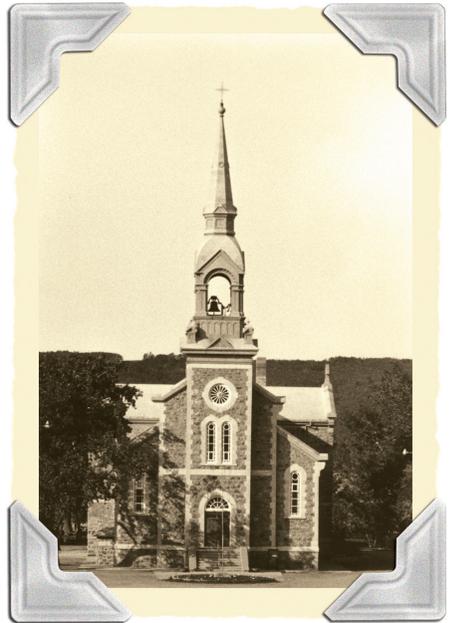
in the woods, and if there were berries, we would pick them. Since we always walked to the woods, the older girls carried our lunch in large wicker baskets. Our sandwiches were made of brown sugar and lard, which we enjoyed very much. We had lime juice to drink.

At this time, automobiles were not too common. On one outing, I was walking down the road when I heard a car's motor. It seemed to be coming my way and, as it came closer, I quickly ducked into the bushes. Going backwards, I sat on an anthill. I jumped up quickly and brushed the ants off as best as I could, but I must have taken some home with me. They pestered me most of the night.

When I was about 9 or 10-years-old, I came to the conclusion that I was me, a person, a human being. From then on, I lived a day-to-day existence, and told myself, "Today is today." Then I developed a bad habit. Little unpleasant things popped up now and then, and I would tell myself, "Now if I had worried about that, it would not have happened." As a consequence, I developed the bad habit of worrying, believing that this would keep bad things from happening. In short, I became a worry wart.

The cross on the Lebret hill had a deep significance to the mission. The missionary who came in 1865 was not able to build a church. Instead, he erected a cross on the hill's summit to take possession of the region for Jesus Christ. He requested that the resident Indian and Métis families respect this sign of the faith. In 1866, a house chapel was built, but it was not until 1868 that Father Jules Decorby, O.M.I. came. The Oblates have been there ever since.

Through the years, we often climbed that hill, saying our devotionals



Catholic Church, Lebret, Saskatchewan Archives Board, S-B12297.

as we followed the Way of the Cross. Now, whenever I go back to Lebret, I notice steps have been built all the way up the hill. The Stations of the Cross are marked by little crosses placed at specific intervals. A small building resembling a church is in place where the cross stood. How I would love to go up that hill once more, but it would take time, I am not young any more.

How can I describe the Christmases that I spent at this school? They were like having all our holidays rolled into one. There was an air of excited anticipation for this joyous season to arrive. Even the halls and corridors had a faint odour of lavender. The sisters were cheerful and patient as we eagerly practised the carols we had to sing at the Christmas concert and in the chapel. The sisters, always artistic and precise in all their undertakings, could accomplish almost the impossible. The chapel was decorated with tinsel from one end to the other and then crisscrossed. The stable by the altar—made of rustic lumber, imitation rocks, and straw—appeared so real. We were all inspired by the babe in the manger, the Virgin Mary, the angels, the shepherds, the star of Bethlehem and the three kings, who never arrived till January 6th.

I can truthfully say that I learned the true meaning of Christmas at the school. To highlight the joyous event, my mother would come and join us for the great feast, bringing our presents. Mine was always a beautiful doll. Since we were past the age to believe in Santa Claus, Father Hugonard usually gave our presents to us during the Christmas program. Although we generally received prayer books, colourful rosaries, and little statues, it was still an honour to be chosen as a deserving student. We even had special food throughout the holidays.

Another religious event that we looked forward to was Corpus Christi Sunday. It was usually held in May, the Sunday after Trinity. The trees were covered in leaves, and the wild flowers were in bloom. As usual, preparations were made ahead of time. Our veranda was transformed into an altar, and some of the younger children were picked to act as angels to stand at the altar. The sisters prepared the girls the night before, using rags to curl their hair into ringlets. They were dressed in long white gowns, and had long wings tied to

their bodies. On one of those Sundays, my two sisters and I were chosen to act as angels. We were perched on the edge of the veranda's steep roof. Edna, the oldest, stood in the little platform's centre, while Laura and me, both kneeling, held the two ends of her ribbon. The cold wind blowing in from the lake did not help matters, but we managed to stay put until the service was over. (Our "wings" would not have helped if we had taken off from our perch!) The procession moved on to the village following a prepared tree-lined pathway strewn with sweet peas. It stopped at a different altar, made from another converted veranda, and once again, a short worship service was held. From here, the procession returned to where it began. The perfume of blooming lilacs permeating the air was a suitable climax to this spectacular display of worship. Too bad it has been discontinued.

New Year's Day was another big event at the school. Traditionally, it was a big day for the French, and as Father Hugonard and some of the sisters were of French origin, it was only natural that this day would be celebrated. Father presented each child with a cornucopia of nuts and candy, and we were also given an orange for a treat. Since we were all so happy, we sang to the top of our lungs, "Happy New Year, Happy New Year."

One little song that I remember went as follows:

*Voices calling o'er the snowflakes
Say each old year must depart
And we are all very happy
For the New Year's come to stay.*

Throughout the year, we learned to sing all kinds of little songs, including happy and sad ones. I still remember some of them. No matter the occasion, we had a song. During the First World War, we learned many of the songs that were popular in the army. Most of all, we learned to sing hymns, in English, French, and Cree, and we could sing the mass in Latin (although we

never understood a word of it.) The sisters encouraged musical training, and, as time went by, I realized that this taught me to appreciate good music.

Oh yes, it all comes back to me now. I remember the young Indian girl who sang like a nightingale. She had the most beautiful soprano voice, often singing solos at the chapel and at special functions. I especially remember my favourite; the first two lines went,

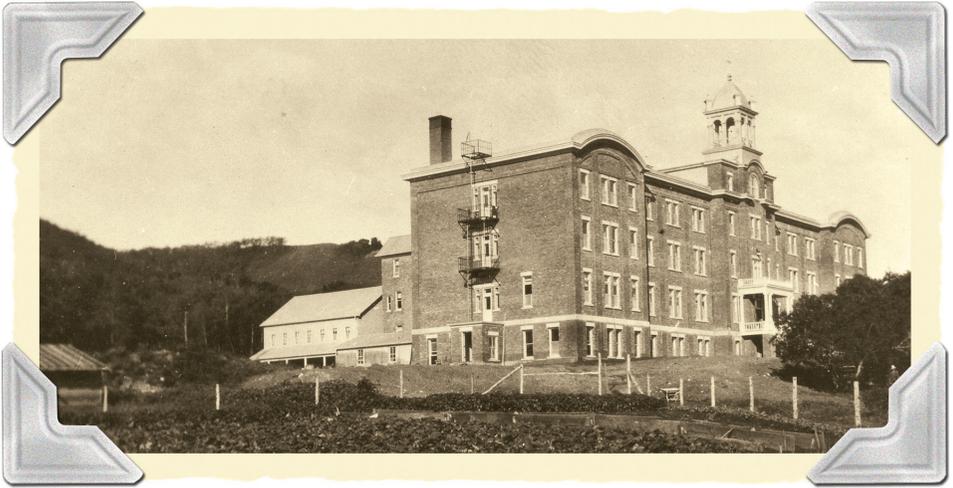
*There's a letter in the candle,
and it points direct to me.*

The responsibility of supervising an institution of this size must have been a heavy burden on Father Hugonard. His health began to fail. When he was in his 60s, he remained at the school resting in his room. No one could have coaxed him away. He spent his life here, and this was where he was going to die. It must have been his wish to see us as the sister took us to see him, two by two. He passed away on February 11, 1917 at the age of 67. He was laid to rest in the church yard alongside other priests who had died in Lebret. I remember my



*Monument at Lebret, Saskatchewan
Archives Board, R-A27082.*

mother coming to the funeral. On July 8, 1927, ten years after his death, a bronze monument, which stands in the front yard of the school, was erected in his memory. The monument stands in the schoolyard in front of the school, and it shows him standing with his arms around two little Indian children while he looks down on them with compassion. There is a book written in French entitled, *L'Apôtre des Prairies* (*The Apostle of the Prairies*). It describes him and the development of the Indian school.



Qu'Appelle Indian Industrial School at Lebreton, Saskatchewan Archives Board, R-A19829.

The priest who replaced him, Father Le Coque, was also a French Oblate priest. He was not young: he was quite grey and a bit bald. He had a delightful French accent, which my sister Laura imitated to perfection, leaving us all in stitches.

The school that I have written about was totally destroyed by fire in November, 1932. A third school was built and completed in November, 1935. While the school that I attended had three separate buildings, this school is compactly housed in one building.

When I started school, I was seven-years-old. I spent six years of my life there. Looking back, I believe that they were not wasted years. My education gave me a good foundation, which gave me strength to face life's many problems, and tribulations.

Whenever I go through the valley and drive to Lebreton, I stop awhile and gaze at the place. Now, only pleasant memories return of those childhood days. Once again, I see the school that I attended and I imagine that it is still there. In my mind, I would wander down its hallways or corridors and listen to the voices of the past. Where are you all? Where have you gone?



The Last Buffalo Hunt: Kaayash Mana (Long Ago)

A₁₂ a Cree-Métis, my family followed in the footsteps of our ancestors, adopting their ways and customs to suit our way of life. We lived day-to-day with no anxiety for the future.

My father, Patrice Trottier's birthplace was in the Red River. His birth certificate showed that he was born November 1, 1867. Throughout 1883-1884, when he was 14-years-old, my father rode through the Whitemud River (Frenchman River) Valley. This was before the railway came south, and before the great ranches developed with the arrival of homesteaders.

In 1887, Sir John Lester Kaye founded the huge cattle empire known as the "76" Ranch, which reached from Swift Current to Calgary and parts south through the Whitemud River Valley. In 1900, the Turkey Track Ranch reportedly ran from 18,000 to 30,000 head of cattle on the range extending from Swift Current to Wood Mountain. In 1910, they made their way southward from Swift Current following the winding prairie trails across the hills. To a 14-year-old, it must have seemed like riding through virgin land. By that time, the herds of buffalo were gone. The few remaining herds had retreated westward toward their last refuge in the Cypress Hills. Little did my father know that two years later he would participate in what was known as the "Last Buffalo Hunt."

In the fall of 1885, hunters gathered on a long sloping hill (La Roche), about 10 miles (16 km) southwest of Val Marie. Known locally as "McCarthy Butte," one can climb the hill and find many tipi rings, which attest to its long-term use. Having an altitude of 3,117 feet (950 meters) above sea level, the butte was an ideal look-out post. From its flat top, an impressive view stretches in all directions. In the fall, when the natural prairie grass turned to gold, it was possible to spot a grazing buffalo about 25 miles (40 km) away.

Hunters had to be cautious when approaching these large beasts, which have a keen sense of smell and hearing. Tribes like the Plains Cree and the

Blackfoot developed effective hunting techniques. One type of drive depended on hunters funnelling the buffalo into a corral and killing them with bows and arrows. Another type used when open terrain gave way to a sharp drop was to stampede the entire herd over the precipice; the animals would break their necks and their backs in the fall. The latter method was used when my father was invited to join the hunting party which consisted mainly of Métis, some on horseback and some on foot.

A single buffalo bull could provide 1,534 pounds (700 kg) of meat and the cows, 992 pounds (450 kg). The fresh meat was roasted on a spit over an open fire, or was boiled in a skin bag heated by hot stones. The meat needed for pemmican was taken from the lean part of the animal and was cut into thin slices, and then hung on racks to dry in the sun. This dry meat, or jerky, could be stored in bags for a long time.



A Gentleman from the South

Washington

Lampkin often spoke of Houston, so I surmised that that he came from Texas.

How he made it from Texas to Montana was a mystery to me; however, he may have been one of the riders who drove longhorn cattle across the country.

1924 brought drastic changes to our lives. My parents moved from Saskatchewan to Malta, Montana for a short period. They applied for their passport papers, which is mandatory for all foreigners entering the United States. Even though my parents were Métis, they were still considered foreigners. When they left, they used a team and wagon to take all of their belongings such as bedding, household, and person items. In 1925, I joined my parents, and I stayed with them until I became employed.

The following spring, my father, who was looking for work, moved his outfit 25 miles (40 km) south to the W.W. Phillips Ranch, which was a large operation owned by Walter Phillips and Jake Myers. They operated a sheep ranch and usually employed extra help during the spring and early summer, around lambing time. My father and I found employment: he was a sheep herder and I was a cook's helper.

The Hog Ranch (named after the family who owned it) was only a mile



Hog Ranch, near Malta, Montana. PH.487.2009.020D. Eudell Lundman Collection, Phillips County Museum in Malta, MT.

(1.6 km) or two (3.2 km) from the home ranch. We went there quite often, sometimes on horseback, and other times by car. Actually, the Hog Ranch was a settlement with a

house, a store, and a post office. The house was used as a stopping place for travellers who needed to stay overnight. Meals were served for a small fee.

When my job at the home ranch was over, I found employment at the Hog Ranch as a housekeeper for Washington Lampkin, the place's manager. Besides being a housekeeper, I was also a clerk because "Wash" (as we learned to call him) did not have the patience to cope with some of the customers, mostly women, who wanted to buy money orders. As a result, I was appointed assistant postmistress. The first job I tackled was a general clean-up of the place.

Both the house and the store were built of logs hauled from the Little Rockies, a small ridge of mountains located south of the Hog Ranch. There was also a garage for the car and a barn where Wash kept a saddle horse, mostly for me, which I used to visit with nearby friends or relatives. I learned in a round-about way how Wash's favourite saddle horse burned to death in a fire, which destroyed the stable. Liquor was involved. Wash blamed himself, and from then on he never indulged, not as far as I knew.

Sometimes when the reservation Indians brought sawed lumber to the ranch in exchange for groceries, they usually stayed to eat. As the cook, I always tried to give them a good, hearty meal. After they were done eating, they took their left-over food, tied it up in an apron or kerchief, and took it home. In time, I learned that this was an Indian custom.

Wash always had a good car, a coupe. He kept a car for two years and then traded it for a newer model. Whenever he needed to go somewhere, or if I wanted to use it, Wash let me drive his car since he did not like driving. He



Louise Trottier, 1927. Louise Moine/Jacque Richards.

was also kind to my parents. One winter, he let my mother stay at the house which was quite large. There were six rooms—four bedrooms, a living room, a kitchen, and a veranda. Wash had his sleeping quarters in the store's back room.

Many times, Wash talked about his parents and how they raised him to be a gentleman. In turn, he educated me when it came to my use of English, which I only learned to speak when I was seven-years-old. He corrected my improper use of certain expressions. For instance, when I said "Guys," he advised me to say "Gents" or "Friends," or whatever the case may be. I used to walk to the store (where he stayed most of the time) and say, "Come and eat," when a meal was ready. He reminded me of the proper language and, from then on, I said, "Dinner" or "Supper is ready."

There were two expressions that he used regularly. One was, "Yonder" when the rest of us said, "Over there," and the other was, "If the spirit moves me."

Like a parent, he was particular regarding the company that I kept. There was always a red light for certain male friends and very seldom a green light. In time, I learned that men are inclined to spread gossip more so than women. When a male friend came to pick me up just to go riding, Wash would say, "Why are you going out with him? You ought to know that he doesn't want to be seen with you in public." He was right, of course, but to tell the truth, I always liked those men who did not want to be seen with me. People always seem to prefer the ones they cannot have. In the end, I never had a boyfriend come to the house to pick me up, since they could not please Wash.

We were often invited to visit some of Wash's friends who lived near Dodson, a town along the Milk River. Most of them lived in beautiful homes. We, in turn, invited each of them back to the Hog Ranch for a meal, which I usually cooked.

One story, which he related to me, happened before Wash became manager of the Hog Ranch. Apparently, he was living in a one-room settler's shack with another settler who died of natural causes. Two neighbour men came to visit and were told of the death. As was customary, the death was

reported. However, Wash remained alone in the shack with the deceased. The two men who had gone to report the death were away for quite some time. It was getting dark, and Wash was getting sleepy. Since there was only the one bed, which was occupied by the departed man, Wash decided to lie down beside him and have a little nap. Finally, when he heard the door opening, he raised his head to look. The two men were so frightened that they took off. Wash, realizing that he gave them a scare, gave chase to reassure them that he was the person who was lying beside the corpse.

I worked for Wash mostly in the summer. During the winter, I worked in Havre, where I got my first job working as a chamber maid in a hotel for a short period. Later, I was employed as a clerk at Buttrey's Department Store. Mr. Buttrey gave me the best advice I had ever had. One day, when I was clerking, he came to me and said, "I would smile more often if I were you." From then on, I would smile knowing that it can go a long way.



Homesteaders in Wagon at the Hog Ranch, near Malta, Montana. PH.718.2009.003D. Butch Matovich Collection, Phillips County Museum in Malta, MT.

For a time, I worked in Great Falls. I went there with my friend, Barbara whom I met while working in Havre. We both found employment at a hotel as chamber maids. I found the work easy because the first floor did not have that many overnight guests. Barbara and I shared the top floor. When I finished there, I had to work in the cafeteria, which I found very tiring. We carried

trays of food for the customers, mostly for the ladies as the men usually carried their own. In the end, I handed in my notice. I also did some waitress work too, but it was usually on the night shift or the “graveyard shift” as it is called by the hashers.

I went back to Phillips’ Ranch where I got a job as a sheep herder at one of the camps because they hired young people to look after the birthing ewes and the new lambs. The ewes and baby lambs had to be kept separate from the older flock. At \$50.00 per month plus room and board, my wages were good. It was the best pay that I had ever received considering how easy it was to look after sheep.

When the head cook left because the camp was about to close, I was hired temporarily to take his place. There was not much work since there was an old shepherder, two teenagers, and me. However, upon searching the cupboards, all I found was a package of navy beans. With some bacon, I was able to make a pot of bean soup. When the boss, Walter Phillips, came to check on the camp’s closing, I feed him some bean soup which he seemed to enjoy.

I also received my first marriage proposal at this time. Merlin Brown had come on horseback. While his mother, who came in a wagon, must have assumed that I would go home with her. I was taken by surprise as I never expected that Merlin cared that much for me. As for me, I liked him as a friend. I said, “Surely, you are not serious.” However, he really meant it. He replied, “If you won’t marry me, I’ll kill myself, and then I’ll come back to haunt you.” Merlin did not give up, and true to his words, he haunted me like a phantom, appearing wherever I went. There was no doubt that he meant what he said, but, as I got to know him, I found him to be quite harmless.

At the time of the Stock Market crash in October 1929, I was living in Butte, Montana. I can remember how prices hit rock bottom, which made all foods and goods cheap. However, money became very scarce. Employment was hard to find and the pay was poor. Fortunately, I found work house cleaning at \$1.00 a day. I was also a waitress in a Greek restaurant, where I got sick and tired of their flavourless gravy.

Then one day I decided to go out and take orders for magazines. I carried the samples with me. I started out bravely enough, but when I made it to the first house, and, after telling the lady who answered why I was at her door, she gave me such a hard-luck story that I gave up and did not go any farther. Like countless others, I walked the streets looking for work. However, the soles of my shoes wore through, and I continually patched a fresh piece of cardboard in them, but I could not get very far as the soles kept wearing out. Finally, when I got too hard up, I wrote to Wash and indicated how I was not able to find employment. He usually made a point of sending me \$5.00 which seems small now, but it went a long way in the Depression.

Wash was a kind and generous man, and he was a man of his word. I was not a dependable person, and sometimes, I did not honour my word. He told me to always try to keep my word. To this day, I have tried to do as Wash told me, finding it the best policy.

Wash was a heavy smoker. I know that it is a hard habit to break, but when he started coughing and continually clearing his throat, he consulted the town doctor. When he finally decided to quit smoking, he was undergoing withdrawal symptoms. He felt miserable. He even asked me to bear with him, and in time, he mastered the symptoms. However, it was too late. The aftermath of this bad habit was throat cancer. Eventually, in June, 1932, he passed away. Washington Lampkin was buried in the Malta cemetery.

Now, as I drive along the highway and see where the Hog Ranch used to be, I once again see the buildings, and wish so very much that they were still there. They would be a landmark for younger generations to observe the true style of the first pioneers of the real west. I guess they were bulldozed because their expensive upkeep could be spent for a more worthy cause.



With This Ring I Thee Wed

Assuming that I would one day marry, I told myself many times as a young girl that there were two things I would want in my home: a radio and a sewing machine. I felt that a radio would keep us up to date on the news and would also provide good music. Being fond of music, I already had a small portable phonograph operated by a little crank. I also had a choice of some of the best records by famous artists which are seldom heard nowadays. Of course, most of the artists have passed away, but their music lives on. As for the sewing machine, I loved sewing and it became an enjoyable pastime. There is nothing more rewarding than turning a piece of material into a garment or whatever one chooses to make. This also helped to save money, too. Being a self-taught seamstress, there were times when I was forced to rip out some stitches. Luckily, I have patience—these ripped out threads would make a tidy pile. One lady told me long ago that if you rip a dress or garment that you are making, you will live to wear it out.

While attending residential school, I learned darning, mending, and patching. These skills take time and patience, and can be very useful, not to mention how much money they can save you.

As a young working-class woman, I did most of my own sewing since material was reasonably priced. One dress that I made for a special occasion stands out in my memory. Young people like to follow styles and fashions as they come and go, and I was no exception. During the summer of 1926, cretonne (now used for drapes and cushions) was used to make simple summer dresses. Of course, I decided to have one. I bought enough material to make it, cut the dress pattern out, and started stitching it by hand since I had no sewing machine. I finished it that same day, right down to the hem, and surprised my landlady by wearing it that evening.

Unlike so many young girls who marry in haste and later repent, I was in no hurry. I had seen too much friction in married life. Fighting and abuse was not

my idea of an ideal wedded life. I also valued my freedom. By the time I entered the sea of matrimony, I was considered an old maid. It was during the Great Depression (1932 to be exact) when I decided to take that drastic step.

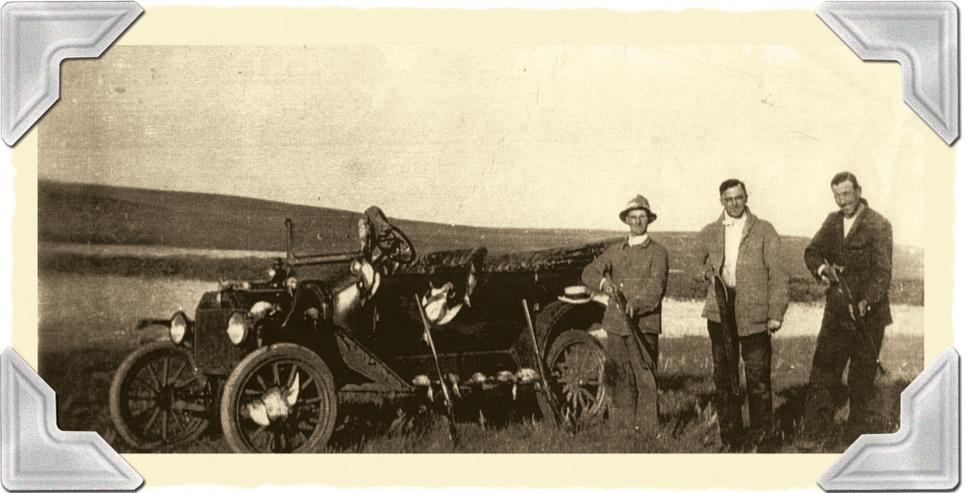
I did not know too much about the man I was marrying. I knew that he was a well-educated Frenchman who spoke fluent French, unlike Canadian French, which seems to be a mutilated language. Since he had studied languages at school, he could also converse in English and German. Having only recently arrived in this country, he had not yet become accustomed to our western ways. Actually, for a homesteader, he did not seem to own any other property besides his 160 acres and a good saddle horse he called Glory.

I had to borrow my sister-in-law's wedding ring because Vic neglected to buy one. I informed him that I would need a ring, but since he was also new at this, I was sure he did not realize the importance of it at the marriage ceremony. I knew times were tough, but, as I got to know him better, I realized he was an odd bird who did not put much stock in rings, except in a bull's nose. Then, adding insult to injury, he tipped the minister .50¢. The licence cost \$2.00, so we got married for \$2.50.

But the worst was yet to come. Vic applied for relief. Had he warned me ahead of time, I would not have been present when he approached the relief officer. They gave us only \$6.00 per month, which we desperately needed. Nonetheless, I do not know how we managed on so little. Fortunately, we received help from Vic's folks in France. They sent us boxes of good clothing and many other useful items such as cheese, French nougats, patent medicine, and more. Once a month, we received a small money order, cash owed to Vic for the rent on some property he owned in France. We got our beef from my father who owned a small ranch. We never went hungry, and we were never destitute, but we were always short of cash, as was everyone else. Thus, life became a business of trading and bartering.

Due to a serious feed shortage that first winter, my father and my brother, John, who ranched together, decided to move their stock north where

feed was more plentiful. Since the ranch house was empty, we decided to move in. There was another young couple staying with us, and they owned a team of horses and a little sleigh, which was our means of travel. It turned out to be an “open” winter with very little snow—barely enough to make use of the team and sleigh, meaning we did not get around very much. Finally, when we ran out of beef, the boys decided to butcher the four-year-old gelding. He was consuming feed required for the team. However, none of us could eat the meat. It tasted too much like the Russian thistle, which represented the bulk of his diet. Anyway, the meat did not go to waste—the hound dogs enjoyed it. We were unable to buy fresh meat in the village; therefore, our diet that winter consisted of wild ducks and bush rabbits.



Ducks for Sale, Val Marie. Mr. Stav, Mr. Corbett, and Vic Moine. Louise Moine/Jacquie Richards.

We spent that first summer close to Vic’s homestead. The shack located there belonged to Vic’s brother-in-law, Emile, as his homestead joined Vic’s to the north. It was an unfortunate incident that granted us the privilege of living there. Vic’s sister, Zette, had sailed from France, leaving her four-year-old son behind to spend some time with his grandma. While in Saskatchewan, she developed a sudden illness which resulted in her premature death. After this terrible, shocking incident, Emile moved out and settled with another French family; consequently, the place remained empty. We therefore became the

occupants of a completely furnished house. Unfortunately, I never met Zette since all of this had happened before I entered the scene.

During that summer, we managed to raise a few chickens. We also put in a garden which was doing very well until Emile did his summer fallowing and succeeded in chasing all the grasshoppers our way. That was the end of our garden.

Throughout the Depression, I became an expert in mending and patching, especially my husband's jeans and underwear. We learned to save in different ways. Flour and sugar came in cotton bags, which we sometimes dyed to make into curtains and children's clothing. Though ready-to-wear articles were reasonably priced, we seldom had the money to spend on anything except the bare necessities. My neighbours, who were moving away because they could not make a living on the farm, traded me their sewing machine for my almost new jacket.

After three years on the farm, we decided that farming was not for us. It was an expense we could not afford—actually, it was a gamble. We moved into Val Marie where Vic could seek employment. Finally, he found a job; his wage was .25¢ an hour. We were very happy with his eight-hour shift bringing in \$2.00 a day. It sure looked good to us. More or less, we felt that our worries were over, and now we could look forward to the future. So it came to pass that I was able to buy a second-hand sewing machine and later a radio.

All this time, I was wearing a cheap ring that I bought at the dime store in the city. Whenever I mentioned a ring to Vic, he made some silly excuse about me throwing it away if we got to quarrelling. Apparently, he knew of a case where a woman pulled off her wedding ring and threw it in a ploughed field nearby when she caught her husband with another woman in their car. Later, when she had a change of heart, she went searching for the ring, but never did find it. No doubt, it was like hunting for a needle in a haystack.

Actually, that was a poor excuse. Vic should have known me better: I was much too thrifty to throw away anything expensive. I had other ways of

getting even. So it was up to me to buy a good ring, but how could I afford one when I was not being paid to do housework? Strangely enough, it was my nephew who finally produced a 14 karat gold ring which fit my finger perfectly. I did not ask where he got it because I really did not want to know. I paid him the \$5.00 he requested, and considered that to be very reasonable. When I showed the ring to Vic, he made no comment. He was no doubt satisfied with the deal, and figured since I bought it, I would not be throwing it away.

Unfortunately, Vic suffered a heart attack when he was 69-years-old, and passed away in 1973. Maybe wishes and dreams are the stuff of which memories are made after all. Those memories, at least, are very vibrant.



Bells Don't Ring Any More! (1895-1970)

Down through the years, liquor has played a vital role in our lives, for better or worse. Who can say when saloons first made their appearance? These establishments, where liquor was sold by the glass or the bottle, were quite common in frontier days and were frequented by men and women alike. In fact, they were still very much around in the early 1920s. I remember seeing a Salvation Army group singing hymns in front of a saloon in hope of converting some of the occupants. The fact that gambling and prostitution were allowed behind the swinging doors of these dwellings might have been part of the reason why the government stepped in and legislated prohibition, thus running the country dry for a time. However, that did not exactly solve the problem because bootleggers started up their businesses here and there, selling booze illegally.

Most of the liquor was smuggled into Canada from across the American border. Even after prohibition was voted out, the bootleggers continued with their business because they were making good profits. There was also a run of “moonshiners.” Do not ask me why they went by that name—perhaps because they worked by moonlight. They had their own stills, which, of course, they kept hidden, sometimes in a coulee, a bush, or even in their own basements where they made extra strong brew that turned out to be pure alcohol. They had many customers, mostly at dances or parties. Many times, we spiked our coffee with their brew. Off and on, some of these culprits were picked up by the police and hauled into court, fined, or jailed depending on how many times they were caught. But that did not always discourage them. Some kept on with their illicit business after the government-controlled liquor stores had entered the scene. Then licenced beverage rooms were allowed to operate in hotels and only men were allowed where wine and beer were served.

One of our village bootleggers—we always had two or three at any one time—lived across the street from my brother, John. He was also the gent who

rang the bell at the Roman Catholic Church and, to make matters worse, his mother, who went to mass every morning and received the blessed sacrament, handled his business when he was absent.

When I mentioned all this law-breaking to John, he upheld the man's reputation, stating that there was nothing wrong in what he was doing since bootlegging was not breaking any of God's commandments. I had to admit that there was no commandment that said, "Thou shalt not bootleg," but, as far as I was concerned, he was not being honest in accordance with the laws of his church or those of his country. John, of course, found it quite convenient to have a bootlegger close by in case he ran out of booze when there was a party at his place. All were welcome at John's place, especially if they brought their own drinks. Sometimes it was wine, other times it was beer because the village liquor store handled only those two types of alcohol. It was only from the larger centres that one could buy hard liquor.

When John was 18, he filed for a homestead. Our father, Patrice, knowing the country, picked a site along the White Mud River (later renamed the "Frenchman River" by some early French settlers). The 160 acres were practically at the foot of 70-Mile Butte, just across the river. This butte was so named by early pioneers due to the fact that it is supposed to be 70 miles (130 km) as the crow flies to Malta, Montana, and to either Eastend, Wood Mountain, and Swift Current, Saskatchewan. After a small, two-storey frame house had been built on the homestead, the Trottier family moved out of the Lac Pelletier Valley, trekking horses, cattle, and any salvable furniture from a log cabin to the new place. My brothers, James and Maxime quit school, and along with our father, remained with John on the "Ranch," as we learned to call the homestead. The rest of the family, six girls and one boy, settled in Ponteix. From there, we travelled back and forth, a distance of 50 miles (80 km), at first mostly by team and wagon or democrat, and later, by truck or car. By this time, that part of the White Mud Valley had been christened "Val Marie" by a missionary priest, and thus, the name stayed even though the early settlers would have preferred the name "70-Mile Butte."

John was in active service in both the First and Second World Wars. In the first war, he made it to the front lines just before the Armistice was signed. On his return, we met him at the depot in Ponteix. As he stepped down from the train, he looked every bit a soldier in his khaki uniform. Marie Rose drove around the streets in our Chevrolet touring car. We were all so proud and happy that he returned home safe and sound. During the second war, since he was too old to go and fight overseas, he was stationed as a guard, keeping watch over German prisoners who had been transported from the battlefields to Canada. We picked up the songs which he learned in the army—most of them were funny and off-colour.

Though John was the oldest in our family of ten, he was not the first to marry. Two of his sisters and one brother had married and settled down before John was finally “roped in” by Anastasia (Annie) Gladu, a Métis girl he met and courted in Montana. They both could speak the Métis language, which unfortunately, their children did not learn to speak. John and Annie witnessed the village of Val Marie spring into existence with the coming of the CPR.

John's only wealth was a herd of horses and a few head of cattle. Our grandfather had given him a couple of mares from which he raised a string of horses. They were very much in demand before the advent of machinery and naturally brought a fair price. A team hitched to a wagon or buggy provided slow but sure travel. All that was required was some feed and water at rest periods to make it there and back. Horses were also used for field work long after tractors were invented. Cowboys and other riders were a common sight, and riding was the only way to get to places a little faster. When automobiles arrived, and could be purchased reasonably, the price of horses slowly dropped, eventually creating a surplus. In view of this situation, a horse plant was started up in Swift Current. Some owners sold their horses, both young and old, while others donated their old horses rather than turn them loose to pasture because the hay was poor. At the plant, the horses were butchered and canned. For a time, the meat could be purchased in our grocery stores. However, most of it

was shipped to Europe and other parts of the world; thus, solving the problem of surplus horses while helping to feed the world.

John, who was the huskiest of the boys, took after our mother who seemed to have inherited her strength and height from the Whitfords. She gave John the upper hand in controlling us. He became the boss, and as time went by, he also became a bully. I know my father secretly feared him, and the only time he stood up to him was when he “tied one on.”

When John married Annie, who was twelve years younger, we really expected him to run into some opposition. However, we were mistaken. Marrying at 16 seemed a bit young for Annie to take on the responsibilities of wife, mother, and housekeeper while trying to cope with a domineering husband. She found out all too soon that the marriage was no 50-50 proposition. Right from the start, she had no say whatever, even about her own person. She was only allowed to wear clothes that he approved, could not wear high heels, and had to wear plain hairdos. I remember when she wanted to wear bangs; so, without consulting him, she cut her own hair. When he found out about this, he grabbed a pair of scissors and cut her bangs right off. I believe she cried about this. I tried cheering her up by telling her “Never mind, your hair will grow in no time.”

As the years went by, Annie bore twelve children—two girls died in infancy. As the family grew, the little frame house was too small. Therefore, a room was added on to the back. At first, it was used as a bedroom, but later, it was turned into a kitchen, dining room, and bedroom. Different families of the Trottier clan, at varying times, occupied or lived in the house, but only when John and Annie were away. At such times, furniture got moved about.

Even the cook stove got moved from one corner to another. It was like this house could not make up its mind. One enterprising housekeeper finally moved the cook stove and table to the porch, thus turning it into a dining area. This was done, no doubt, to keep the rest of the house cool in spite of the fact that one had to climb two steps to get to the cupboard where the dishes were

kept, making it a bit inconvenient. However, John had a better idea. Since our brother, Jim's homestead shack was not being used, he had it moved and settled a few yards from the house. From then on, it was used as a summer kitchen where the family ate most of its meals throughout the summer, except when entertaining.

Throughout her child-bearing years, Annie remained slim and trim. When in the mission school as a student, she took up sewing, thereby enabling her to become a seamstress. Whatever she sewed took on a professional look. Even my sister, Edna, who was an accomplished dressmaker, remarked on her work. Even though I had my nose glued to the sewing machine, I could never compete with her. Annie could also be quite entertaining at parties or dances when she could be coaxed on the floor to do the "Red River Jig." She often sang and one of her favourites was "Smiling Through."

There was no beating around the bush with Annie. She was sharp and to the point. She got a great deal of practice living with John. As native people, we were now living in the white man's world and we often suffered insults and belittlements. I usually tried to ignore the jibes, but not Annie. She knew how to "put people in their place" (an expression we often used). Many times, she amazed me as she always seemed to have the right answer.

As the children grew older, educating them became a necessity. Since they were living four miles (6.4 km) from the village of Val Marie, a horse and buggy was used in summer and a sleigh in winter (if there was any snow). Driving back and forth in an open rig must have been a dreary for the children. Realizing that, John, decided to rent a house in the village where the children could stay through the school year. When the opportunity came, he bought a farm house and had it pulled to the village using two or three teams of horses. Then the family moved in and out, spending time in the village during the school year and on the ranch during summer holidays. This went on for some time, until the oldest son married and took over the responsibility of operating the ranch.

After the house was settled in Val Marie, John removed one wall to make a large space for a housewarming party. That was the beginning of many parties to follow. Initially, this house became a second homestead. John did not mind moving walls, and where the house had five rooms, he made it into a three-room home with only one private bedroom. All three rooms were used for sleeping quarters and many times extra guests were bedded down as no one was ever turned away. I once had a fight with my husband, leaving my house to sleep at John's. He gave up his bed and I slept with Annie. Next morning, he complained saying that the couch was not as comfortable as his bed. John built two porches—one at the front and one at the rear. Since he used scraps of lumber in its construction, which he likely gathered from the dump yard, snow and rain drifted in. This did not bother him, as long as he was saving money.

Since John always wanted to be more Indian, he tried to follow their way of life. In time, he became known as the “Big Chief” in the village which pleased him very much. Annie was called “*Kookum*” (Cree for grandmother) by most of the village children.

John was a proud man, but he was not always a gentle person. He had the upper hand in controlling his family, but that did not give him the right to control others or the homestead property. Even though it was in his name, most of the stock kept there belonged to our parents. There were times when he had words with our mother, but she was a strong-willed person with a good business head and she was not about to let him tell her what to do.

John never learned to control his terrible temper and often vented it on the livestock and other animals. If a horse did not obey his orders, he would give it a beating, usually on the head. He broke one horse's nose by hitting him with a neck yoke and he knocked an eye out of another. Our sister, Marie Rose, predicted that some day a horse would kill him. On another occasion, while he was giving one a beating, he put his arm out of joint and had to be taken to the doctor. That did not stop him altogether, but he became more cautious. There was a time when a little puppy kept

barking in the night, no doubt disturbing John's sleep. I heard him going out of the door, and then I heard the little puppy yelping. All was quiet after that. In the morning, I looked for the puppy and found him still alive, but with a head swollen twice its size. I loved animals and hated to see them abused, but I learned from experience never to try to stop him because he would turn on me instead.

From the time John and Annie married, Stella and I, being unmarried, would stay with the young couple. On one occasion during the summer, Annie had the chance to take a short holiday to visit some of her relatives across the border by riding in a truck that was going there and back. We assured her that we would look after the children so she could have more free time to visit—we knew that she needed a break. But, at the last moment, when she was getting into the truck, John picked up each of the children and put them in the back of the truck, telling her to take them with her.

I will say this for Annie—she stuck with John through thick and thin, even after she started calling him “Krushev.” John insulted me many times. Usually, if my feelings were hurt, I would leave the place telling myself, “If I ever come back here again, I hope I drop dead.” But, since blood runs thicker than water, I would go back.

During the Second World War, liquor was rationed, along with sugar, coffee, butter, and lard. Another item on the list, which made the going rough, was gasoline. One did not get very far on the amount allowed. The rationing was done to offset any shortages in the army. We all had our quota of ration cards, depending on the family's size. It might have been the suspense and anxiety of the war, but there was always a party somewhere, usually at John's. If a soldier was on leave, or before he set sail, there was a party, and we would all make use of our ration cards by bringing our own drinks, either a crock of wine or a case of beer. When our ration cards did not reach a liquor store, we began trading and buying them. There were a few families who did not drink, so we managed to get their coupons.

We even started making our own brew. We used canned malt for beer and raisins, which could be bought by the case, or other seasonal fruits and berries for wine. But again, we had to deal with others for sugar. Our ration cards did not allow any surplus. One day, while I was talking to Annie, she informed me that she had been to the ranch to set a batch of beer. My sister, Marie Rose, was staying out there by herself. Annie expressed concern because Marie Rose, who was inclined to drink, might decide to get into the brew. On the fourth day, when the batch was ready to be bottled, Marie Rose helped herself. With a gallon of home brew in the Bennett Buggy²³, she managed to hitch up the team and drive to the village. By the time she arrived, she was “flying higher than a kite,” and insulted everyone who happened to cross her path. What a character she became when she got herself in that state!

Regardless of the weather or the occasion, there was always music and a crock of wine at John’s house in the village. It became a regular party place where we could enjoy life and forget our troubles for awhile. Here we laughed, we danced, and we sang. It was a place where one could go after the bar closed, take a six-pack or so, and party until the booze ran out. In that case, there was always the bootlegger across the street who did not keep regular hours.



*Lloyd Trottier. Louise Moine/
Jacquie Richards.*

John was rightly proud of his family as they were a fine-looking bunch, three boys and seven girls. He often bragged that he had the prettiest girls in the country, and many were inclined to agree. To top this off, they grew up to be energetic and enterprising. Never being well off, they worked that much harder to become successful.

Lloyd George, the first born, was named after Britain’s Prime Minister during the First World War. From his maternal grandfather, he inherited a talent for drawing. His sketches of range life were

²³ An engineless car pulled by horses.

exceptionally realistic. He did not, however, make this his career; instead, he chose the life of a cowboy. Like his father before him in the first war, he was in active service in the Second World War, and fortunately returned unharmed. He did, however, meet his future wife, Christine, a CWAC²⁴ from Nova Scotia of Scots descent, while serving in the army. "Tina," as we called her, seemed to fit in with the family, especially when she danced the "Highland Fling," accompanied by her father-in-law, John on his fiddle.



John Trottier and Family. Front row: Left to right, John Trottier, Annie Trottier, Lloyd Trottier, Laura (Trottier) DeMontigny, Joan (Trottier) Curley. Back row: Left to right, Ruth (Trottier) Grunerud, Buzz (Eldon) Trottier, Cecile (Dolly Trottier) Bellefeuille, Shirley (Trottier) Eklund, Deanna (Trottier) Wirtzberger, Irene (Trottier) Leach, Jerry Trottier. Louise Moine/Jacquie Richards.

Laura, the first girl, grew up to be a seamstress like her mother. At this writing, she is the only family member who has passed away. Joanie, the third



Buzz Trottier, Louise Moine. Ron Miksha.

child, became an expert pianist just by practising on an old piano that her father had picked up at a sale. So it went on, right down to Jerry, the youngest. Born somewhere in between the girls was Eldon (better known as "Buzz") who became the family's best musician. He taught himself to play at least four instruments.

²⁴ Canadian Women's Army Corps.

He now manages his own orchestra, “The Fugitives.” Buzz loves horses and trains them for riding and for driving. Once a year, he organizes a small wagon train and a group of riders which follow old trails. Two of his sons went into professional hockey—Bryan and Rocky Trottier. It took a lot of Buzz’s time, money, and patience to train the boys, but it paid off in the end as it brought fame and fortune to the family.



Ruth Trottier (Bride) and Doug Grunerud (Groom). Left, Buzz Trottier, Joan (Trottier) Curley. Right, Annie and John Trottier. Louise Moine/Jacquie Richards.

Having spent over 60 years in the White Mud Valley, John had some rough times. No doubt, raising his family in a white man’s world was not easy, but he managed his best, all the while following his own path. Like his parents,

he adopted the western-style of hospitality, whether it was during feast or famine. Visitors were always welcome, and no one was ever turned away, and he willingly shared what he had. However, when he needed help, one of his mottos was, “After 24 hours, you’re no longer company.” Even in John’s last days, when he was slowly wasting away with a lingering illness, and there was company around at mealtime, he would say to his wife, “Come on old lady, get something to eat.” Even though he no longer enjoyed eating, others had to eat.

After his serious illness progressed, John spent some time in the hospital in Regina where he underwent a major operation. Then he was transferred to the Swift Current Union Hospital, where he remained for a time. When he was back at home, I saw him every day, which also kept Annie company. That was a sad time for us. I often took a small bottle of wine and we would drink

together. It seemed to relax him. The nurse who lived across the alley came over every evening to administer a painkiller so John could sleep. In spite of his weakness and suffering, his mind was clear and, with a little help, he was able to get to the bathroom. Only three days before he died, I remember him sitting in his favourite chair (which he had bought new) singing Indian chants. To see a husky man shrink to a mere shell was a pitiful sight. One of John's last requests of his son, Eldon, who took over his homestead, was that he must never sell it. John wanted a gathering place for his children and grandchildren.

In August, 1970, at the age of 77, John passed away in the Swift Current Union Hospital. He was given a veteran's funeral and was laid to rest in the Val Marie Cemetery. Now that John has left his earthly body to join the Spirit World, he was unable to enjoy watching his grandson, Bryan, playing in the NHL. He would have been very proud of all of his grandchildren.

Eventually, too, the bootlegger who lived across the street from John joined the Spirit World, too. An older man took his place for awhile ringing the church bell, but he too passed away. The priest is getting too old to handle the rope that pulls the bell for the village's weddings, funerals, and baptisms. So no one bothers anymore. Bells Don't Ring Anymore in Val Marie! Yes, we had our share of characters, both within our family and among the many friends we made during our life. Perhaps, some of my own habits and preoccupations are worthy of speculation for other folks?



My Sister Talia: A Non-American Indian (1906-1949)

It was early October. The trees in the valley had already donned their beautiful red and gold colours, thus highlighting the occasion's sadness. This was not an elaborate funeral: there were no Cadillacs or Limousines, not even a hearse. My husband, Vic was heading the procession, driving our truck, which carried the body of my sister, Talia.

When we reached the little mission church perched on the hill, with its nearby cemetery, we stopped. As I walked toward the church, I noticed that the priest was replacing the bars on its doors. I walked up to him and asked him why he was doing this. He replied that he had to leave because he had a wedding to perform at 2:00 pm. I knew that we were a bit late and I tried to apologize. I glanced at my watch and found that it was only 11:00 am. Surely, there was not that much of a rush; however, he seemed determined to leave. I pleaded with him, asking if he could spare a few moments to lead us in prayer at the graveside, but he refused to stay. However, he informed me that he could hold the funeral service the following day. I told him that we could not hold the body another day; some of us had come a long way and would have to return to our homes.

As he drove away, we unbarred the doors of the church and carried the coffin inside. We said the customary rosary, and then set out for the cemetery where the coffin was lowered into the grave. As we were driving back to town, my sister Stella remarked, "Perhaps, if we would've taken up a collection, he would've stayed." I replied, "Maybe," but it had never entered my mind.

Of the six girls in our family, Talia was the youngest and Little Joe was the youngest of the boys. As she was only 18 months younger than me, her babyhood escapes me, but I remember her as a little girl with rosy, dimpled cheeks, brown eyes, curly hair, which was kept in ringlets, and a turned-up nose. Unfortunately, she was born with a dislocated hip which caused her to limp because one leg was shorter than the other. However, this disability in

no way deterred her activities: she could romp and run as fast as the rest of us. Since we were the three youngest members of the family, we played together constantly. Throughout the summer, we were busy playing amusing games like rolling down the hills. When we reached the bottom, we could not stand up because we were so dizzy. We always had baby kittens, little puppy dogs, newborn calves, baby colts, and invariably the tamest horses to ride. What more could we ask for?

There was one incident which I remember so well. It was evening, and we young ones were left alone. Our older sister, who generally looked after us, was out helping with the milking. It was my idea that we go after the matches, which were usually kept on top of the cupboard, out of our reach. Talia, who was the most daring, did not hesitate to attempt the impossible for her size. When she reached for the matches, she slipped and fell hitting her nose, causing it to bleed. When my mother came in and saw what had happened, she gave me a good scolding because I was supposed to be in charge since I was the oldest. A little later, after she washed Talia's face and put her to bed, I went into the bedroom. Talia was fast asleep, her lip all puffed out. Mother had applied a bit of gauze with some healing ointment to relieve the soreness. I felt sorry for my little sister because I loved her very much. I promised myself that I would never again hurt her in any way.

Our way of life changed when we became school-aged and entered the Lebret Indian Residential School. Talia was about six and I was past seven when we started. The new way of life did not seem to affect Talia: she adjusted to changes better than me. In no time at all, she made friends. Our native tongue, a mixture of Cree and French, was all we could speak. Although we could not speak a word of English when we enrolled, once Talia learned, she became an expert in mixing English and Cree. It sounded quite amusing to the rest of us.

Following our move from Lac Pelletier to Pointex, our lives became more complicated and changed drastically. For the first time, we could live at

home and attend the village school. Despite the prejudice and uncertainty, we managed to put in six years of schooling in Ponteix. When the family moved to Ponteix, my father bought a piano, and Talia and I were given the opportunity to take music lessons. However, Talia did not seem to care about learning to play. She had to be reminded to practice every day. Generally, she would grab the *True Story* magazine and head for the parlour. There, she would play a few notes, and then it would be quiet. Mother would yell out, "Practice, Talia." We heard a few more notes and then silence again. That was the way it was during that first winter. As Talia had a good singing voice, my mother decided to have her take vocal training instead. She did try, but, when she got teased while practising the scales, she gave up on that too. However, I will say this for Talia—she had the distinction of being the only one in the family who could master the Jew's harp.

Mother was very strict about us girls gallivanting around. I knew what she said was the law, but not Talia. She took all threats and warnings nonchalantly and always went on her merry way. She was a strong-willed and determined person, and once she made up her mind, no one could change it. I also believe that she took advantage of her handicap to gain rights. In an all-out effort to offset suspicion, she figured out a plan which would take her out of the house on certain evenings. From the upstairs window, she tossed out her better clothing, depending on the time of year, of course. These would generally land on the coal box which was directly under the window. She grabbed the coal pail if it was winter, or the water pail if it was summer, and would then head outside, pretending to attend to an errand. One of us would generally rescue the pail when she did not return. Though we knew what she was up to, we never tattled. Actually, the only tattletale that we had in the family was Little Joe.

There was one night when Talia's plan did not work. It was evening, and she had thrown out all suitable clothing, including the little fur muff, a cozy contraption to keep one's hands warm. But something went wrong. Not

only did “she miss the boat,” but she also neglected to rescue the clothing, which she had tossed out of the window. Our bedroom was directly over the kitchen. I awoke the next morning to the sound of my mother’s voice which sounded more agitated than usual. My father uttered a monosyllable word here and again. As I listened, I began to put the pieces together. I glanced out of the window and could see why mother was so upset. Bits of black fur were scattered all over the snow. The dogs (we always had hounds) had had a merry time tearing the muff apart. That was the end of one luxury item. As I look back now, I am sure that my mother could see through all of the tricks and stunts that Talia pulled off practically under her nose, but then again, she was inclined to be a bit lenient on her.

Though Mother was educated, it was mostly in French as she received her education in the convent with French sisters. In order to read or write letters in English, or to make out orders from the catalogue, she usually got one of us to act as secretary. Talia, who was always the willing horse, usually got roped into this chore. If it was to be a catalogue order, she generally rewarded herself by including an order of two small items along with the rest. However, Talia was not that good with written correspondence. I remember when mother reprimanded her for not writing all the news and happenings that she would asked her to write, adding that three cents was too much to pay for a letter which did not contain all the news.

One day, a little English lady driving a single-horse buggy came to our place. She came to hire a girl to help take care of her eight-month-old daughter. It was spring and hired help was hard to get in those early years. She needed extra hands to help with the field work as well. Since we were the only two girls at home, and we were both attending school, my mother was a bit reluctant to let us go. The lady, however, informed my mother that it would be only for a month and that we could also carry on with our schooling, as she was a teacher and she could also give music lessons, if need be. Why my mother chose Talia over me, as she was only 12-years-old, I did not understand.

Talia, of course, was quite tickled to be earning her own money, which was to be \$15.00—the wages agreed upon for the month. The farm was only about six miles (10 km) away, but it was slow travelling by horse and buggy. Talia packed her suitcase and left with the lady. Unfortunately, however, she failed on her first job because she was lonely and had to be returned home. Since I was next in line, I was delegated to go in her stead.

As usual, we were travelling on the trail. On this trip, I was the wagon's teamster. My thoughts were far away as I was bouncing along on the trail, when all at once I heard a thud. I turned to look, and there was Talia only halfway in the wagon. Naturally, I stopped the team so she could climb the rest of the way in. I was horrified at the thought of what could have happened had she fallen. She would have been crushed by the wheels of the wagon! Apparently, the saddle cinch had loosened, causing it to rip sideways as the horse trotted. Her attempts to stop the horse were futile since he was trying to keep up with the team. It was all up to me to stop the horses. She was yelling at me, but I could not hear her over the wagon's rattling. She did the only thing possible, jumping from the horse to the wagon. I sure got hell from my mother who had seen the whole incident. Who else but Talia would have attempted to do what she did that day? Many times afterwards, I wondered what I would have done, had I been in her boots, under the same circumstances. Undoubtedly, she was the bravest of the girls, my exact opposite.

Talia was a dreamer which caused her to be a bit absentminded. Her thoughts always seemed so far away. Whenever I asked her a question, such as if she knew the whereabouts of something or other, her reply was always the same, "I don't know." Even if she knew, it seemed that she just did not want to get too deeply involved in anything that required too much effort in thought, word, or deed. Though impatient, she was not lazy as far as menial work was concerned. She could work circles around me, but she did only what was necessary.

Since Talia was the most daring, she was the best horseback rider of the girls. I remember one time at the Coriander Stampede when Talia and I

decided to compete in the ladies' horse race. We both had good ponies, but at the start of the race, my pony (which was loaned to me) took a jump causing me to lose my stirrup. The few seconds that I lost while I was trying to get my foot back in the stirrup caused me to come in third, while Talia came in first.

On occasions when we needed the field team to go somewhere, Talia would always go after them. Unless there was a saddle horse in the barn, she would grab a pail of oats and the halter or a bridle, and away she would go. One could always depend on her because she never failed to bring in the horse, and invariably, the team.

While attending school in Ponteix, the shortest route was to cut across an empty park. On occasions, we would race each other home. If Joe got ahead of Talia, she would grab him by the shirt-tail and hang on. This would rile him up and he would turn around and hit her with his fists. She got to be pretty good with her fists too because she had so much practice with Joe.

Actually, I cannot remember Talia and me ever fighting and hitting each other. We had other ways of settling our differences. Generally, she would grab something that I prized. One time it was my hat. In those years, hats were very much in style. Even as children, we wore hats everywhere—to go visiting, to go to church, and on every dress-up occasion. It was not unusual to see a girl wearing her hat to school. Summer hats were usually made of straw, or of cloth decorated with flowers, fruit, cherries, or feathers, while the winter hats were made of felt, velvet, or plush with less trimming. The fact that we might meet a similar hat in church or on the street never entered our minds. We were not that particular. Usually, when the spring and fall catalogues arrived, we hunted for the page which featured the hats, and we made our choice right there. Mother usually went along with it.

One time, Talia found my Sunday hat and threw it outside. Of course, I did the same with hers; so she gave mine a kick and I did likewise. Finally, she stomped on mine. Well, that was too much. I rescued my hat and pulled it back into shape. Unlike Talia, I was a fussy person, and I prized everything

that I owned and took special care of my property. However, my property was not that safe with Talia around. When she ran out of clothes, she started wearing mine. It became a battle to keep an eye on my property, not that I minded her wearing my clothes providing that she asked me and took care of them—except for the finer clothes which I would not lend.

I was constantly shocked at Talia's audacity and ability to torment me. Knowing how scared I was of snakes, she would often pick one up on a stick and throw it at me. Once, she threw one at me and it landed across my neck. I thought for sure that I was contaminated, and I ran into the house and started washing my neck. It was too bad for the snakes which crossed our paths because we killed all of them.

I believe the fates caught up with her. Since we lived by the river, we spent a lot of time in the water during the summer. This little incident happened on a Sunday, and there was company as usual. After dinner, most of the people had moved out of the house and were sitting on the bank watching the children in the water. None of us owned bathing suits so we usually swam in our slippers or dresses. When Talia jumped in the water, she surprised a snake, which crawled up her back and into in her clothing. Since it was in her clothing, it could not get away. In her extreme fright, she ran out of the water and was jumping up and down screaming. My sister Marie Rose managed to grab her dress, and tore it off her, thus releasing the frightened snake. Talia was terribly embarrassed as she was left standing without a stitch of clothing.

There was also the time when we were left alone at the ranch with our older brother, Max, the only adult left to look after us. Towards late afternoon, we noticed two riders coming over the horizon. As they came closer and dismounted, we recognized them as two of the "76" Ranch riders. We were inclined to be shy with strangers. We, therefore, retreated to the back room hoping that they would not stay too long. Max greeted them and invited them into the front room, which also served as a dining room. When it became suppertime, Max called out, "Are you girls going to get supper?" Talia naturally

took the easiest way out. She appointed herself cook while I was left to be the parlour maid and wait on the visitors. Before I could object, she crawled out the window and headed for the summer kitchen, which was only a short distance away from the house. She started cooking and I had the task of setting the table for the visitors. I have never been as embarrassed as I was on that day, with my shabby dress and my toes sticking out of my broken-down shoes.

Throughout the summer months, the school, which was some distance from the ranch, was open for classes. Mother, who believed in education, decided to enroll us. It was a seven-mile (11 km) drive, and our conveyance was a single horse buggy hooked to a versatile mare named Jenny. Not being early risers, we were lucky to make it there by morning recess. The continual friction which existed between Talia and Joe did not help matters any. If one wanted the reins, the other wanted them, too. It was the same with the whip. Since I could not talk them into taking turns, I would sit between them to keep the peace rather than be the referee. This went on for most of the summer. Finally, when one of the girls was offered a job elsewhere, I was forced to stay home and help with the work. Then Talia and Joe had to continue attending classes without me. Of course, I had my misgivings. The day came when Talia came riding home alone. When she was asked about Little Joe, she replied that he would be coming along after awhile. True enough, he came limping home with a rope tied to his ankle, dragging a bunch of sage brush. He told us that Talia had tied him to the brush and had left him there. I do not think anyone believed him when Talia denied the story; however, she was capable of anything.

Talia was 16-years-old when our parents decided to move to Montana. When they applied for passports, they included Little Joe, but neglected to add Talia's name, even though she too was a minor. This turned out to be a serious mistake in view of what would later transpire. The following year, I, too, followed my folks and stayed with them until I became employed. I found that life in the United States was not much different than life in Saskatchewan. Several Métis families were living in town, and we more or less formed a

community. There was always a fiddler or two and a guitarist to accompany the fiddler at parties or dances, which were usually held in private homes. This made our first winter enjoyable.

It was about that time that Talia and I went out on our first dates. One Saturday evening, we each planned for a friend to take us to the show, but we did not dare tell our parents because they would not have approved. Assuming that we were going by ourselves, mother let us go. Our friends had arranged for us to meet at a certain place which turned out to be a house. When we arrived, my friend was there, but Talia's was not. I wanted to wait till her friend showed up, but at my friend's insistence, we went ahead leaving her to wait alone. That worried me. After the show, when my friend suggested that we go for coffee, I agreed, as it was only a few doors down the street. As I was about to enter the café, someone grabbed my arm. It was my father, who said, "You're coming home with me." I was embarrassed because others saw what happened. On the way home, he told me what he thought of the young man, which, of course, was not good. As for Talia, when her friend did not show up, she returned home, and through her, my mother found out about my date. She probably sent my father after me. That was one romance which got "nipped in the bud."

When Talia decided to marry at an early age, my mother tried to intervene. However, this proved to be useless since Talia always had her way—a fact my mother well knew. How could my mother stop her now? She eloped and tied the knot in another town. The fact that they were accompanied by another couple with the same idea could have been a deciding factor in encouraging her to take this drastic step.

Marrying "Little" Frank (Azure), another Métis, as he was called, was not ideal because he carried all his worldly goods on his back. When she married him, she chose to follow that way of life and lived day-to-day, without a worry or care about the future. She never looked back, and if she had any regrets, she never mentioned them as she was not one to complain. Though she appeared

callous and indifferent at times, she was really a kind and generous person. Talia would have given me the shirt off her back. Since I had always depended on her, I was the one who became disoriented. It took some time to realize that I was now alone as we went our separate ways.

It became our parents' responsibility to provide them with life's necessities. Frank was not lazy, but he did not "feather his nest" in preparation for marriage. Like all labourers, he did seasonal work and managed to stay employed through the summer months, but he was generally idle throughout the winter, except for the occasional job. I remember them spending those first winters with us, even after the birth of their baby. In the years to follow, they had nine children. (Talia had the largest family of the girls.) When they decided to settle in the Fort Belknap Agency, in northeast Montana, my mother supplied them with a tent, bedding, and cooking equipment as well as a wagon and a team of horses. Here at last we hoped that Little Frank would have steady employment. But that was not to be.

As I was working not too far away, I dropped in on Talia and Little Frank occasionally. Unlike the ranch in Saskatchewan, where only willows grew along the river, this was beautiful country, especially along the Milk River Valley, where cottonwood trees grew and flourished, offering shade and shelter. This one day, I seemed to have hit an exceptionally bad time. It was summer and the heat was terrific. Talia and Little Frank's tent was pitched out in the open instead of in the trees' shelter. I did not ask why. I decided that it could be on account of the mosquitoes; they could be a stinging nuisance along the river. The stove was set up on the outside (and thus had no shade), which was good enough for an ordinary day, but I do not know how they managed on a rainy day. The rest of the stuff—table, benches, and bedding—were inside the tent.

When I arrived, there were no adults around, just the children who informed me that their father had gone to see their mother who was in the hospital. I immediately went over to see Talia, and was relieved to learn that

her ailment was a minor one. She also told me that the baby was also in the hospital with a summer complaint. I checked on the baby as well, and found her lying in the milk that she had vomited up. I could see that she had lost weight. After I returned to the camp, Frank came along with the baby. I was flabbergasted! I asked him why they discharged her when she was so sick. Apparently, they informed him that they could not keep her because her sickness was contagious to newborn babies, and since they were short of help, it would be impossible to keep her in isolation. I could not stay to look after the baby. Therefore, I decided to take her home with me and give her the care that she needed until her mother was well enough to take over.

Sometimes, Talia and Frank lived in a shack, but more often in a tent. I remember the Great Depression. Many people went through tough times, but it was more so with the Métis. During the winter of 1935-36, the temperature dipped between -40 and -50 °F (-40 and -46 °C), and stayed there for a time. The Treaty/Agency Indians on the reserves/reservations were in a much better position as they at least had homes. The Métis, on the other hand, had very little assistance from the government and work was scarce. It became a continual struggle to survive, and it was difficult to trust people in these settlements. One time, when Talia came to visit me, I gave her a portable phonograph along with my records. She was always so good to me, and I wanted to give her something that she and her family could enjoy. Unfortunately, someone else wanted to enjoy it too, and they stole it.

Mother gave them a steel trunk with a lock to store their finer possessions. Talia was visiting our place, and I was taking her back to her camp. When we arrived no one was home, so we unloaded her suitcase and other luggage, and she went in search of her trunk, but her efforts to find it seemed hopeless. Just when she decided that someone had stolen it, she discovered that Frank had converted it into a camp stove. He removed the cover, tipped it over, and cut a round hole for the stove pipe, another one for the pot to feed it with wood, and another one for a vent on the front's bottom.

My sister, Stella, having a sense of humour, found it all very funny, but I was disappointed. Camp stoves were readily available, and could be bought at a reasonable price. I wondered why he had to ruin a good trunk when she needed it so much.

When Talia wanted to learn how to drive a car, I appointed myself as her instructor since I had already learned. On this day, she wanted to go visiting and no one had time to take her. With her, it was always now or never. She no doubt felt that if others could drive, so could she. With me behind the wheel, we drove a little way in the Star Sedan. I tried to explain the car's operation, especially how to use its brakes and how to shift its gears. Unlike today's automatics, this car was a standard shift and required more effort to get it going. After some time, she got into the driver's seat and commenced to operate it as I had shown her. Then she let me out, and away she went with the car. I watched her drive away, hoping for the best, but when she did not return by dark, I began to worry. In those days one could never be sure with a car, unlike horses. I had visions of her walking back with the little ones that she had taken with her. However, I need not have worried since she came back in good time. How like Talia to take the course and pass the test in less than 30 minutes.

At the time of my mother's illness and subsequent death, I returned to Saskatchewan. It was during that time that I met my future husband, Vic. We eventually settled in Val Marie. Though Talia and Frank had made previous visits off and on, they had never encountered any trouble. Sometime before the Second World War, they spent the Christmas holidays with the family, bringing their five children. That was just about the time that the American border officials were getting rather strict with all foreigners entering the United States. When Talia and Frank tried to re-enter Montana, they ran into some unexpected opposition. Apparently, they followed my brother, Joe's advice. While travelling with them, he told them that unlike Canadians, American citizens were not required to report at the border if they were leaving the United States. They were only required to do so upon re-entry. Therefore,

they had not reported to the US Customs upon their entry into Canada. This turned out to be a serious mistake on Talia's part. The customs officers had not seen her before, and they were naturally suspicious. When Talia was asked where she was born, she naturally told them Saskatchewan. If she had said Montana, I am sure the officials would have accepted that. She tried to tell them that she had entered the States as a 16-year-old minor, and had come of age there, which automatically made her an American citizen.

Since my parents had neglected to put her name on their passports when they decided to move to the United States, they had no proof that she was an American citizen. They were bound to make trouble. It all seemed so unreasonable. Here was a Métis, also recognized as an Indian, classed as a foreigner and treated like one. Consequently, she was not allowed to cross and return to her home.

Frank, an American by birth, and the children were allowed to go back home. Talia had to remain in Saskatchewan, separated from her family. When the customs officers asked her if she had a place to stay, she was ready to say no. However, our father spoke up and stated that he would look after her, which no doubt added fuel to the fire even if he meant well. Initially, Frank had no choice but to return to their home. The oldest girl, Anna Lee, who was 13-years-old, had the task of looking after the younger children, the youngest only four years of age. Some years later, Anna Lee informed me that Frank's brother, in his kind and generous way, had taken it on himself to help his brother with his children. My brother Max, who was also living in Montana, came to visit that same holiday season, but at New Year's, when he was ready to return, he offered to take Talia back with him because he felt that she should be with her family. I believe he was right when he told her that once she was in her home, they could not force her to return to Canada. Since he intended to sneak her back, he would not be reporting at the border.

Talia, of course, was desperate to take this chance, but when she started packing, our father begged her repeatedly not to go. This made it impossible for Talia to decide, especially after he warned her that they could

throw her in jail if she snuck into the United States. No doubt, he had some reason for concern because only a year or so before, my sister Edna, who had entered the States without reporting at customs, had been apprehended and jailed. She spent two weeks in jail on a trumped-up charge of being a German spy. She was only released after she appealed to the officials to contact her uncle who was residing in Saskatchewan. He then supplied them with proper identification.

In the end, Talia was obligated to remain in Val Marie, living with our father. To add to all this confusion, she was due to have a baby in six weeks. But being an optimistic person, she believed that everything would eventually work out. Though he lived some distance away, Frank came down to see his wife every chance he could. Talia spent close to three years in Val Marie. The fact that she had her baby Iona with her must have eased the loneliness that she felt for the rest of her family.

We learned that, over time, friends and relatives raised enough money to act on Talia's behalf. However, once the lawyer who was handling the case was handed the \$500 fee that he requested, he left the country, and was never seen again. This might sound fantastic, but these things happened often, especially when dealing with Métis or Indians. Actually, the lawyer would not have been able to help in this sort of case. I am sure he knew that, but they did not. Obviously, this case required the attention of a higher official with the American government in Washington. As for the customs officers, they knew they were wrong, but were too proud to back down and admit it. I learned this through some border patrol officials.

Frustrated, Frank made up his mind to "take the bull by the horns." Working up a little bit of nerve, he hired a friend with a car to drive him up to Val Marie to fetch his wife and daughter (by this time, our father had passed away). After grabbing Talia and her child, they evaded the border patrol, crossed into the United States, and avoided reporting to US Customs officials.

Being wary of the officials, Frank moved his family to the Rocky Boy

Reservation. It was not long before the officials started pounding on their door. Obviously, a stool pigeon reported them to the authorities. They ordered Talia back to Saskatchewan, but past experience had taught her the wisdom of sticking to her guns. She told them very frankly that she would never return. They would have to drag her back. They knew better than to lay a hand on her. It was only after the United States became involved in the Second World War that they left her alone. Since there was nothing else the officials could do, they confiscated the car belonging to the man who kindly gave Frank a helping hand. Later, however, we learned that the car was returned to the owner. Unfortunately, this was not an isolated case. We learned about others, via radio and the print media, who got the same treatment as Talia, however, her Native ancestry should have been in her favour.

Considering that the Americans are forever harping away about their Christian way of life, why did they treat Canadians like criminals? I am sure that Canada would never stoop to such low tactics. Talia never returned to Val Marie, so it was up to us to go to Montana and see her. Unfortunately, we did not go that often. In the first place, the border crossing was a bit difficult, considering the attitude of the customs officers. At times, they were quite rude and made us feel like intruders, especially if we were driving old Model T cars. No doubt, we made a very poor impression. Nonetheless, as one American woman said to me when I mentioned our predicament to her, “You at least paid for your vehicles.”

It took a war to make some drastic changes. Suddenly, there were jobs to be had by anyone who wanted to work. At first, Frank rented a small house in town where the children could attend school. In time, the family became home owners. Talia had two more children after she returned to Montana. At the time of her death, I noticed a few conveniences—a new stove, a new fridge, and a new washing machine. Talia was only 42-years-old when she passed away, leaving four boys, four girls, and three grandchildren. She became a young grandma. Though she had not been in the best of health due to a severe

rheumatic condition, her death was sudden and unexpected. She was admitted to the hospital at 9:00 am, and that evening, when Frank went to see her, he was stunned to hear that she had passed away around 6:00 pm.

Through the years, I have regretted that I neglected my younger sister and, now that she is gone, I cannot forgive myself for not doing more for her. However, one does not dwell in the past, and for the present, I shall try to remember her as she lived. I shall remember her with laughter and not with tears. Anyone whose life was touched by Talia must cherish their vibrant memories of her. Each of us, of course, is unique in a special way; our brothers and sisters left their marks on us, and each retains a distinct place in my memory.



I Hear You Calling Me

She never got over losing the farm. What is more, she never forgave her husband for losing it over unpaid back taxes. Times were tough during the Depression. Someone was lucky to get their farm and all its buildings for only \$1,000. I am sure that was the price she had quoted me. Many times, she spoke of the place, including the house, the garden, the chickens she raised, and other things in general pertaining to the farm's upkeep.

I had heard rumours about her, but I did not pay them too much attention until she finally moved into our community. I shall always remember the day I met her. It was a sport's day in our village, and in the early evening, I went to the café, like everyone else. The tables were all taken except for one where this woman was sitting alone, so I went over and sat across the table from her. Upon inquiring who she was, she told me that her name was Emilie Dean. I thought, "This is her!" As I sat there, I tried to recall the rumours that I had heard about her. One that I remembered was that she gave her husband the boot; the other was how she always dressed in gaudy colours. I had already met her husband in my brother John's home, where he often played the fiddle at parties. She commenced talking about herself and her problems.

Two of Emilie's younger children attended school, and because she had to place them in homes close to the school, she decided to move into the village. She got a job cooking for a small crew on the flat, and she rented a little house down our street where she remained until the house was sold. As time went by, she moved from house-to-house, sometimes they were condemned, other times sold. She moved about five or six times before she finally settled down permanently.

When I first met Emilie, she was a trim little person with a good figure and a pair of legs I secretly admired. She was never quite sure of her ancestry, though at times, she mentioned being some sort of Bohemian, which could

have been true because she dressed in extreme colours with overtones of lace. She was a noticeable figure: no one else dressed like her. Ever since I knew her, she wore a dark wig, almost black, and over it, she always wore a large lace square when she went out.

After moving into the village, Emilie and her husband never lived together because her feelings about the farm never changed. He remained on the flat where he built a shack on the 40 acres he rented from the PFRA.²⁵ In time, he acquired 148 cattle, assuming, no doubt, that he could make a new start. He gave her some financial support. Little by little, she told me about her life and her youth, which had not been happy, except for the children. While still a child, her parents both passed away—the victims of an accident or of the 1918 influenza epidemic. She and her three brothers and two sisters were placed in an orphanage. She remained there until she was adopted at the age of 15. The woman who adopted her was actually seeking a wife for her son. Thus, Emilie became a child bride. Her husband, who was 30 years older, had always lived with his mother on the farm so that is where they settled.

Even though the couple had their own house, Emilie had a domineering mother-in-law who was determined to run their lives. Emilie had to ask for all her necessities and these were rationed out. Instead of being a source of help and guidance to the young bride, the mother-in-law became a hindrance, causing friction in their lives. Emilie's husband had no say whatsoever because his mother had always managed his affairs.

Emilie had four children—three boys and a girl—all born before she turned 21. She gave birth to all her babies at home with her mother-in-law acting as midwife. She was not allowed to see a doctor or to go near a hospital. One time, she told me that her mother-in-law accused her of being too sexy with her husband since her babies were all born so close together. She further confided that she had suggested to her husband that she would like to try to enjoy her sex life, but he reproached her for proposing such nonsense, telling

²⁵ *Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act.*

her that nice people did not mention sex let alone try and enjoy it.

While the family was still living on the farm, an accident occurred while Emilie was entertaining company. It was Sunday and her attention was focused on preparing supper. She was not able to keep an eye on the children who were running in and out of the house. She was frying ham, and was pouring hot fat into a container when Carol, her four-year-old daughter, bumped into her causing her to spill some hot fat onto the child's chest. They immediately rushed her to the hospital where it was determined that she suffered third-degree burns. They kept her there until the danger of infection was over. She was partly healed before being released to her mother's care. It took some time before Carol completely recovered. No skin grafting was needed, but she developed some bad looking scars on her chest, although these were not always visible. No doubt, a shock of this magnitude left a permanent impression on the child's personality.

After Emilie moved and settled in our village, young mothers depended on her to babysit their children. She had patience to care for little ones, and since there were always children hanging around her place, they must have loved her, too. She seldom accepted money for payment so the mothers gave her little gifts instead. Most of the time, it would be a china cup and saucer. She was very proud of her gifts, and would often use them to serve tea or coffee to company.

After Carol finished school, she was employed as a clerk in one of our local stores. A tall, attractive blond, she had her share of friends, and like all young people, she enjoyed fun times. She had a good singing voice, which made her quite popular especially at parties. She became pregnant out of wedlock, becoming one of our "fallen girls." Our community was predominantly Catholic, and premarital sex was deeply frowned upon and considered unforgivable. Most of the girls who got that "way" usually did a vanishing act, had an abortion, or settled for a "shotgun" wedding. But not Carol: she remained to face the music. She knew that she was not the first one

to have a baby this way, and she would not be the last.

In due time, a baby boy was born, and Emilie took care of him while Carol continued with her job as clerk. Even after Carol left the village to seek work elsewhere, her mother kept the child until Carol married, got a home of her own, and could look after him. Since Emilie had become very much attached to her little grandson, her house was filled with emptiness. What hurt the most was that the child had never been told about his early childhood with his grandma. To make matters worse, they very seldom brought him to see her.

As for the boys, the two older ones married and settled elsewhere. The youngest remained single, and for a time, was employed on a ranch not far away. He spent the most time with his mother.

Quite often I went to Emilie's place—sometimes just to visit, other times to invite her to ride with me to the city or some little town, or even to visit with friends on the farm. I found her to be a good travelling companion. She was always so agreeable, and besides, it did her good to get out. Until her telephone was installed, I was never sure if she was home because her blinds and curtains were always drawn and the door was locked. I would knock a couple of times and listen for her footsteps. If she answered the door, she was usually wearing her bedroom slippers. Sometimes, when she did not answer, I would start walking away, and, more than once, she came out calling me. I asked her why she kept the door locked. She told me that it was because children came in while she was trying to rest. A regular tea drinker, she always had a pot of tea on the gas stove, which she kept warm over the pilot light. Emilie sometimes helped in the café.

Outgoing, she enjoyed meeting people and made friends easily. Once, a black family landed in our village which was very rare. Emilie seemed so excited and happy to meet them that she invited them over to her place and treated them to a super lunch. She loved music, dancing, and fun. Having a great sense of humour, she always saw the funny side of any situation. We always laughed together, and we cried together.

Val Marie had a housing shortage, forcing Emilie to live in the old lumber-yard house. Located on main street, it was really too large to be rented out for a single residence. However, she needed a home. Not being hard to please, she quickly adjusted herself and her belongings to her new home. She curtained off an area for her bedroom, and used what had been the office for a kitchen. It would have taken a lot of fuel to heat such a spacious area. Unfortunately, she was only there a short time before she was forced to move out when the floor was condemned. Somehow, she did not seem to mind moving around. While she was living in that building, her son found her in coma lying on the floor. She was taken to the nearest hospital, kept there for tests, and finally diagnosed with diabetes. From then on, she was put on a diet and had to undergo treatments.

Emilie's last house before she moved into her own home was another old place located on Main Street. It had been built when the village first sprung up 50 or more years ago. It had first been used as a butcher shop, then a restaurant, then a grocery store, and finally as a residence. One could see that Emilie loved flowers, she had artificial ones everywhere. On one occasion, while she was recuperating in the hospital, her son Willis gathered all the flowers and packed them away. Perhaps he felt that she was getting carried away; however, on her return home, Emilie found them and placed them all back where they had been. It was useless to discourage her. Since the landlord refused to spend any money to repair her house, the village council declared it a fire hazard, and had it condemned.

Once again, Emilie had to move. Her sons bought her a house. When all of its repairs and improvements were made—including a new electric stove and refrigerator—Emilie moved in permanently. At first, she seemed contented. The first time that I went to visit her, she showed me around, and it was much better than any house she had previously occupied. Here, she had live plants instead of artificial ones. Her love of gardening was put to good use in the large backyard.

For a time, everything appeared normal. However, we learned much later

that Emilie had been regularly admitted to hospital psychiatric wards through the years for a nervous disorder. Haunted by mistakes from her past, she became disoriented, and the loss of the farm became an obsession. Her mind began to dwell even on the little house on Main Street. After all, she had lived there for 15 years, and felt that she could do as she pleased there.

On my evening walk around the block, I used to drop in, and have a short visit with Emilie. She always made me a cup of tea. There were times when she did not answer the door so I phoned her instead, and we would carry on a short conversation. On one call, she seemed strangely silent and barely answered yes or no. I asked her if she was mad at me, and she replied, "No." I figured she was having a moody spell, but, as time went by, her condition deteriorated. She was not able to keep up with the housework, which caused a rift between her and her son, Carl, who felt that (not realizing her true condition) the house could be kept in better order.

At different times when I was visiting her, I noticed all the neatly arranged pill containers on the cupboard. When I inquired about them, she informed me that they were prescribed by the doctor. I know that there is always the possibility of getting hooked on drugs.

It was not long after our one-sided telephone conversation that she was once again admitted to the psychiatric ward. However, none of us knew about it since her name was not included in the hospital bulletins. As a result, none of us went to see her during her month-long stay. Finally, when the time came for her release, her son took her in his car to visit with his brother and family who lived a short distance away. He hoped it would relax her a bit and ease her restlessness. While there, she started pacing. He then decided to take her home where she could have some rest and quiet. When they arrived at the house, he had a feeling that she should not be left alone. Since he had some pressing business that needed attention, he phoned a neighbour to come and stay with his mother. The neighbour, who was doing her family wash, dropped everything and went over.

After having tea with Emilie, the neighbour helped her into more comfortable clothing and persuaded her to lie down and take a nap, assuring her that she would return as soon as she finished her washing. When she returned after 20 minutes, a truly horrifying sight greeted her. Emilie was lying face down in a pool of blood. Assuming that Emilie had fallen and cut herself on some sharp instrument, she ran over to the neighbour's for help. They found that Emilie's clothes were soaking wet, and it was only after they found the suicide note, which read that she could not go on living and being a burden to her family, that they realized the true state of affairs. Emilie had tried to drown herself in the bathtub filled with water. In a final desperate attempt to end her life, she cut her throat with an electric carving knife.

What cruel hand of fate made her take this drastic step to end her life? It certainly was not a coward's way out. We ask why these things happen. As I tread the path of sweet, sad memories, I hear her voice calling me as it echoes across the valley in a requiem of distress and despair. Some experiences in my life, like meeting and befriending Emilie, are coincidental. If some impulse had not prompted me to initiate a conversation with a stranger that day so long ago, we likely would have never known each other, and I would have been poorer for it.



Going Once, Going Twice! (1933-1963)

Whenever

I saw an auction sale sign, I became hypnotized and was drawn to it like a magnet. Should the sale be within walking or driving distance, I make every effort to get there. I put on my reading glasses since the writing can be in fine print, and I scan for any household goods.

I distinctly remember one of the first auction sales that I attended. It was during the hard years of the Great Depression, and it attracted only a handful of people. What interested me the most was the piano that was up for sale. My father purchased it from Ennis & Company, and it had been in the family for years. Sometime after we would all left home, my mother traded it off for some needed items to a merchant whose family was now holding the sale. I remember there was a wagon in the deal. When the piano eventually came up for bidding, I could not even venture a bid. Those were hard years, and I was practically destitute. With a heavy heart, I saw it sell for \$125.00. I promised myself that someday I would get it back, but that was over 40 years ago, and so far, I have not been able to locate it. The auctioneer was a Norwegian who pronounced his “Gs” and “Js” as “Ys,” much to the amusement of the bidders.

One beautiful summer day, several years later, a farmer was holding a sale. Most of the merchandise had been moved to the yard. When household goods came up for sale, we women were bidding fast and loose until an old sausage maker was being auctioned. I thought, “Who the heck would want to buy that?” It was so old that it had bolts and screws instead of its proper fittings. It must have made tons of sausages. Not being interested in antiques, I turned away and started up a conversation with the lady next to me. Bidding continued. Finally, when the auctioneer said, “Sold,” I glanced around to see who had bought it. Lo and behold, it was my husband. As he grabbed it, he wore that “cat that swallowed the canary” look. “Son of a gun,” I thought. “Wait awhile.”

For a time, I was interested in beds which were usually at most sales. Times were better then so I started bidding \$5.00 when one of the beds came up. No one in their right mind, except me, would have bid as high as \$28.00 for an old bed. Believe it or not, I actually paid \$29.00.

One thing I will say for my husband—he never reproached me for making a bad deal. Perhaps he did not see it that way. If he did, he was not one to dwell on past mistakes. Anyway, I patched up the mattress and gave it to my sister-in-law since she had a large family. I sold the spring for \$5.00, so the bedstead cost me \$24.00. Mind you, it was good and solid, but I have seen some just as good in the nuisance grounds.²⁶ It took a long time to live that one down.

On one occasion, a retired farmer was holding a big sale. By the time we arrived, there were cars and trucks parked everywhere. People were milling around looking over the merchandise. While inspecting the sales items, I noticed a just-like new bed with an inner spring mattress that was enveloped in a plastic cover. One could always spot a good housekeeper from the items being sold. In that sale, everything was spotless. I made up my mind that I was going to bid on that set. I needed the mattress. However, since there were many other items to be sold before the auctioneer got around to the furniture, and it being a chilly day in early spring, my sister-in-law suggested we go for refreshments. I gladly consented. While she was treating me to coffee and donuts, I missed out on the bargain of my life. When I eventually got back to the furniture, I was flabbergasted to learn that the set had sold for \$4.00. Sometime later, I was talking to the buyer, and, while commenting on his luck in getting the set, he stated that he had bought it for someone else who had instructed him not to bid over \$5.00.

I also got three bags of chicken feathers at that sale. When the auctioneer asked for a bid, no one seemed interested. So, when he glanced my way, I bid \$1.00. I seldom start on less. I did not want to be considered cheap. To be sure, they were all white and clean, but I still could not use them. They had coarse

²⁶ A colloquial name for garbage dumps in Western Canada.

quills and would need stripping. Well, someday I expect to retire, so I shall sit and strip at that time.

It was a mistake to stand next to my sister-in-law at auction sales. You would think she was getting a commission. She would remark that the item up for sale was the best kind, and being gullible, I would commence bidding. One time it was a Delco radio, another, it was an electric iron. Both times, I bid a dollar over the opening bid of .50¢—not much, mind you, but I got them both.

For a time, I was interested in furniture—dressers, chiffoniers, end tables, etc. I did not need them myself, but I knew my daughter could use some good second-hand furniture. At one sale, I bid on an oak dresser, and I finally got it for \$25.00—a good buy. Then there were four un-matching chairs; two were quite old, but the others were fairly good. When the auctioneer glanced my way, I nodded at \$1.00 and I got them. In time, I sold one for \$3.00 and refinished the other, leaving the two old ones to be sold as antiques or to be taken to the dump yard. That was my lucky day! When a round oak table and six chairs with leather-covered seats came up for bid, I got carried away. The price shot up to \$50.00. I ventured one more bid at \$55.00 and I got the set. Though the table was in good shape, I refinished it a bit. In later years, I was offered a good price for the table, but hung on to it, and will until hell freezes over.

What is it about auction sales that attract me? I know people who would not be caught dead at an auction sale. If I happened to meet one of them at sale, they would make an excuse and say that they came out of curiosity. I preferred people like me who were there to bid even if they started bidding against me. I know we shared a common goal—looking for bargains. Actually, I seldom failed to buy anything, even for a keepsake. When I saw something I wanted, I generally decided how high I would bid. Coming back from a sale, I would ask myself, “Why didn't I bid on that article? It went for such a low price. It was really a bargain.” But invariably, if I had, the “powers that be” would start bidding me up, and I could be stubborn. Ironically, one was never

sure if one was ahead or behind at these sales. One has to be a good gambler to enjoy auction sales.

Then there was the sale of all sales. The owner of a 40-year business, “Art’s Novelty Centre,” passed on to the “Great Beyond,” and was not there to witness the catastrophe that was taking place. His store carried everything imaginable, and all items were considered new, even if some of the stock had sat on the shelf for years. One could never be sure if Art was getting the best of his customers or vice versa since his prices were either marked higher or lower than other stores. Even the kids who ran in and out for Coke and candy figured him out: they wrote an ethnic slur on the side of business indicating that he was somewhat crooked. He had the distinct notoriety, too, of having a man drop dead in his store after he paid for his cigarettes. Art, already ailing, was supposed to have remarked, “I’d like to go out like that.”

In spite of the cold fall day, a good crowd was in attendance. Small articles were packed into boxes and placed in the back of the auctioneer’s truck, and then the bidding started. Since the hotel and bar were next to the store, bidding was lively, but not too high.

There were lots of women’s and out-of-style children’s pointed-toe running shoes being sold in lots. I am sure one man bought 25 pair. Even my husband got six pair! Many of the better items—leather goods, cowboy boots, all types of men’s and boy’s wear, and electrical appliances sold at a bargain. My husband got 20 ladies’ summer hats for \$2.00, and I managed to get scribblers, napkins, and novelty items at a real bargain. As the sale progressed, it commenced to get dark. In a final effort to terminate what seemed to be an endless sale, the auctioneer announced that a final bid would be accepted on all remaining merchandise left in the building. Naturally, prospective buyers went in to see what was left before tendering a bid. Well, the upshot of the deal was that someone bid on the whole works and got it for \$25.00. Boy, were we angry!

The last auction sale that I attended was a real go-getter. The list of items advertised in the local paper filled half a page. There was merchandise of every

description, from machinery, household goods, brass chandeliers, two old brass beds and other furniture, and an upright phonograph with a collection of good records, and, above all, antiques which always draw a crowd. All these items were in good shape and brought a fair price. The people holding the sale had, at one time, owned and operated a small hotel. When the hotel was renovated and sold, all its old fixtures had been torn down and were stored away for 50 years. That is "looking ahead," eh? Ironically, the better quality stuff did not sell that high, but no one can predict the mood of the bidding public. I singled out a little oak table, but before I could catch the auctioneer's eye, it shot up to \$12.00, and I never opened my mouth. I had a sinking feeling as the buyer reached for it because I knew that it was worth more.

Coming up next was a practically new Maytag wringer washer. However, I already had one, although much older. I had not intended to bid, but when bidding started, I could see it was not going well. My thoughts raced around. What would I do with my old machine? The final bid was \$70.00. Then I remembered that my new neighbour was looking for a second-hand wringer washer. I could have sold her mine. As usual, I kicked myself all the way home. Then I asked myself, "Why do I go to auction sales if they're going to upset me?" Somehow, I would like to believe that the good deals I have made outweighed the bad.

Auction sales can be fun and exciting. One always meets the same people, and also makes new friends. As we all seemed to be on equal footing, everyone talks to everyone. Lunches were sold at a reasonable price by different organizations or church groups, and if the sale was in the morning, a full-plate dinner would be served. There were many auction sales that I attended like the one where I bought the Maytag washer. My brother, Joe was also at that sale with his truck, and I asked him if he would deliver the merchandise to my place, which he kindly agreed to do.

At another sale, there was a garden cultivator which we needed. I bid \$39.00, which I figured was quite reasonable and I got it. Because there was

no one at the sale who could deliver it home for me, I had to leave it there. The next day, I found a man with a truck who said that he would get the cultivator provided that I pay him \$20.00. He loaded it by himself. On the way home, I asked him if he would take it to the garage where the mechanic could check it over to see if it was in good working order. After trying to start it, the mechanic found that it was worn out; however, he told me that he would pay me \$20.00 for parts, which he could use when repairing other machines. Later, I decided to phone the auctioneer to inform him that the cultivator was not in working order. He asked me if any one of his helpers had tried to start up the motor to get it running. I said that they had not, so I was given back my \$39.00. So, all in all, I broke even.

I remember when a sewing machine was up for sale, and I bid \$35.00, which I considered a good buy. I also bought a little antique table. Then I turned around and sold the sewing machine, but I lost a bit on the deal because of the exchange rate. Once, there was a power mower for sale. At the time, our club members were the caretakers of a little picnic park, and since we needed a mower, we decided to buy it. Our treasurer had been instructed to bid, and we got the mower for \$20.00, but it turned out to be a bad deal since it refused to work and was beyond repair. It truly amazes to see the amount of junk that is being sold at these sales. However, it is usually thrown in with some useful items. I tell myself there will be no junk when I hold an auction sale. But then again, I have bought so much of it; some I have discarded, and some I have kept, like the sausage maker. So I, too, will be selling a bit of junk when I have the grandest sale of all, but like Art, I may not be around to see it.

Then there was the time that I went to one of the largest auction sales ever. There was a huge crowd in attendance on that nice, sunny day in early April. There was very little machinery since the owner had sold the farm, the house, and the machinery to boot. However, there was furniture, stoves, washing machines, fridges, tables, beds, and some good lumber. The owner had mostly used articles because he had bought things at other auction sales, and

was now selling them at his own sale. When the auctioneer started the bids on household items, the first was an electric stove. A friend, Tom bid \$1.00, and since there were no other bids, he got it. Some of the antiques, as usual, went for a good price.

Also for sale was a chrome table, however, when no one made a bid, the auctioneer added a brand new set of steak knives. I bid \$6.00 for the knives. I did not need the table, but now they were being sold together—I got them both. Later, when I went to get the knives, someone had taken them. I was sorry that I had not put them in the car which was parked nearby. I then learned that thieves attend auction sales.

When the lumber came up, the auctioneer informed the crowd that there were 80 good, dried 2x4s. Someone started the bid at \$5.00. I went to \$12.00, but the bidding went on. Eventually, the lumber sold for \$30.00, which was a very good deal. Afterwards, I wished that I had bid higher because I needed the lumber to build a larger porch.

Lunch was being served by two ladies' clubs. There were sandwiches, homemade donuts, pies, and a choice of coffee or tea.

Back at the sale, bidding started for the beds, but no one was buying. When the auctioneer called for bids on some harnesses, my brother John bought the whole works for \$5.00. While he was loading them on his truck, I asked him what he intended to do with it all. He told me that he only needed the leather.

When it came to the electric items, I bid \$1.00 for a Beatty wringer washer and got it. After the sale, the auctioneer, under instructions by the owner, informed the people that they could help themselves to whatever was not sold or it would be bulldozed into the nearby ditch. I helped myself to an oak chair, a little TV stand, and an oak dresser, which needed refinishing.

On another occasion, I bought another washing machine. We were driving a car. Therefore, I hired a man who lived in the same village to load the washing machine onto his truck and take it to our place. He and my son, Gail

loaded the machine on the truck and started out after us. The sale location had been on a hill, and when he tried to make the turn at the foot of the hill, the improperly latched tailgate lurched open and the machine fell out and rolled into the ditch. They both went back to reload the machine, which was now badly damaged and beyond repair. In fact, it was a complete loss except for parts, which could be used on other machines. What was left over was taken to the nuisance grounds.

The last sale that I went to was only a short distance away. It was a huge sale with furniture, dishes, and bedding. There were some hand-painted pictures which I would have liked, but the price jumped so high that I could not afford them. When there were only four pictures left, I bid \$1.00 and I got the works.

Reflecting on the number of peoples' paths that I crossed at auction sales brings forth an unexpected side-trip to my excursion down memory lane. Certain people or specific experiences seem to demand a permanent berth in my memory bank. For some unexplained reason, their impact remains deep and strong.



Miracles Don't Happen

For the past ten years or so, I have been bothered with pain in my hip, which after being x-rayed, had been diagnosed as arthritis. I have been forced, for the past few years now, to use a cane to ease the pain in my hip, which has caused me to limp. No definite treatment had ever been prescribed, outside of aspirin. My family doctor suggested 8 to 10 tablets per day, but the most that I ever swallowed was six, and only on those occasions when the pain persisted. In the mean time, I borrowed an up-to-date medical book from a friend. I naturally hunted for the page, which gave information about the different types of arthritis, and after some study, I came to the conclusion that my case was definitely osteoarthritis, a degenerative joint disease. The condition worsened as I got older.

I decided to make an appointment with the doctor in Ponteix who held a clinic in our village once a week. He told me that he would make an appointment for me to see an orthopaedic surgeon from Regina who held a clinic at the Swift Current hospital on certain days.

Some time later, I received a phone call telling me that the doctor would be in the city. At the hospital, I gave the receptionist my name and my hospitalization card number before being asked to sit and wait my turn. You can sit a long time before your turn comes. In fact, I waited for an hour; however, there are distractions as you watch others who have also come to see the doctor. They all have their problems. If that does not work, there also books for the patients to read.

The doctor sent me to the lab to have x-rays taken of my hip. The x-ray technician took the plates to show the doctor who, after looking them over, informed me that the artificial joint that I had put in during a prior surgery had loosened and was causing me severe pain whenever I moved my hip or leg a certain way. He said that he could remove the joint and replace it with a plastic one. The procedure, known as “osteoplasty,” had proven to be successful.

At that stage of the game, an operation was a remote possibility. For the present, he advised a cortisone shot, which he administered by inserting a long needle into the joint of the hip. He instructed me to return in two weeks for another shot, but I sensed no relief and the cost was high so I did not return. Actually, I was not in too much pain except when I did a lot of walking. At such times, I would start limping, but the ache would soon leave after I rested a bit.

Since chiropractors also work with people with arthritis and bone and muscle conditions, I consulted one, but I found him expensive, and he did not perform the miracle I expected. Finally, in desperation, I went to see a masseur that everyone was praising, and it was his advice that made me decide to seriously consider having the operation (the sooner the better).

I went back to see my own doctor, and told him of my decision to go through with the operation. In turn, he got in touch with the specialist I had consulted. He told me that I would be notified by telephone, or by mail, when there was a bed available at the Grey Nuns Hospital²⁷ in Regina where he did all his surgery.

Six months later, on Sunday, October 22, the call came from the hospital in Regina, informing me that a bed was ready for me and that I was to report that same day at 2:30 pm. Since I lived 240 miles (386 km) away, I informed the receptionist that I could not possibly make it to the city that day. I needed two days, one to get ready and one to make it there. I gave her my apologies. Naturally I was not at all prepared when I received the call. However, since there was a bed for me, I could not miss this opportunity. A frenzy of packing soon followed. What does one take to a hospital? Well, the usual I suppose, except that I took only one luxury item, my goose-down pillow (and I almost lost it).

My husband drove me to the hospital in Regina. We left Val Marie that morning at 9:00 am, arriving in time to register. My operation was scheduled for the next morning at 9:00 am. The nurse at the admissions desk placed a tape containing my name and room number around my wrist. I filled in a

²⁷ Now the Pasqua Hospital.

questionnaire and signed the permission form. In the back of my mind was the thought that I might be signing my death warrant. After that, I was asked to go to the lab for blood tests and a chest x-ray.

Then the nurse took me to my semi-private room, which was on the first floor. When I got there, the nurse asked if I was taking any medication, such as nerve pills or drugs of any kind. I told her that I was taking aspirin and vitamins, which she took from me, and said that they would be returned when I was discharged. They allowed me to keep a few dollars. Of course, these were all precautionary measures. She introduced me to my roommate, a woman who appeared to be about my age. After I got settled and talked with her a bit, I could see that she was quite ill, and had a prevailing weakness which confined her to bed. Later, I learned that she had a blood condition.

As I was afoot and on the loose, I became acquainted with some of the other patients. The hospital was still under the management of the Grey Nuns and it had a chapel. So at the sisters' invitation, I attended mass that Sunday and had the privilege of hearing a special male singer who sang that beautiful, touching hymn, "Prayer of St. Francis."

At this time, my thoughts were on the past. My memories have served a purpose. I have had a good life, a full life, surrounded by people that I have loved and who have loved me. Still, even though I am the one who is affected, the final call would be easier if my mother was here—she willingly and confidently accepted the responsibility of making family decisions. Talia would not be so hesitant or reluctant, decisions came easy to her. Now my thoughts return to the present. Vic, my husband, with whom I have shared so many decisions about my life, would talk it over with me. Being a pessimist, I knew that the surgery would take time and that I could die the hard way. What bothered me the most was when the doctor said that I would not be able to sit up for at least a month, and that I would be on crutches for a week or so.

That evening, my supper was served: the food was good and I was hungry. The nurse warned against taking any liquids after midnight. They

want me to remove my teeth, which happen to be my own. However, I relinquish my wedding ring and wristwatch.

The next day, the doctor came to get my signature on the surgery permission form. Later, the anesthetist discussed what sort of anesthetic I would prefer. I told him whatever he decided would be fine with me. That same evening, I asked the nurse to let me have a sleeping pill; however, in spite of it, I was awake most of the night.

At 11:30 am, I was wheeled down to the surgical ward, which must be on a different floor, since we used the elevator. I feel surprised that I am in full control of my senses. I even chat with the doctors. I notice with slight apprehension green uniforms and masks covering mouths and noses, something I had seen only on television. The anesthetist inserted a needle in my arm and I went out like a light. The next thing I remember is that the operation itself is a memory. A nurse is shaking me and is calling my name.

When I came to I was in the recovery room. I must have fallen asleep again because when I awoke a second time, I was flat on my back and in traction in my room. Unlike my other operations, I did not sleep that afternoon. My first night was very upsetting—I was terribly nauseated. Even the night nurse seemed a bit concerned as she kept repeating, “Oh dear! Oh dear!”

In the morning, I forced myself to eat a piece of toast, which somewhat settled my stomach. When the doctor came in, he told me that it was the shots that he prescribed that were upsetting me, and he changed medication. Naturally, the first day after the operation was traumatic, but, by the third day, my nerves were really giving me a bad time. I figured that there was no way that I would ever walk out of the hospital on my own two feet. The often heard expression, “the operation was a success but the patient died,” haunted me. And, to make matters worse, the nurse kept coming in to take my blood pressure. Even my roommate seemed a bit concerned, and remarked to the nurse that I should have been placed in the intensive care ward. Finally, on the fourth day, I began to rally a bit and felt much better. When the doctor came

in to see me, he told me that he was very satisfied with my condition. After five days, the traction was removed, a pulley was attached to the ceiling over my bed, and I could sit up.

At this moment, I missed the goose-down pillow which I had brought with me to the hospital along with a quilt. When I could not find it, I asked the nurse. I also mentioned it to the sister who seemed to be in charge of that part of the floor. They searched for my precious pillow and eventually found it in the operating room. I was so relieved to get it back that I could have hugged the nurse. In case it got lost again, she attached a clearly visible name tag to it.

While making his rounds, the doctor stopped in to see me. One day, I noticed that he was wearing a deep rose-coloured shirt, it was the first time that I noticed how handsome he was.

On the eighth day, I had a pleasant surprise visit from the physiotherapist. He brought crutches, got me on my feet and had me walk around the hallway. The next day, I went down to physiotherapy twice. At first, I had to get there in a wheelchair, but eventually, I took myself there on the crutches. From then on, I was on the move again.

I spent three weeks in the hospital, and during that time, I had four different roommates. The first one was a registered nurse with a blood condition. She struck me as an intellectual and was well-mannered. I told myself, "Now, I'm going to get educated." I thought it was about time that I learned something. She had quite a time getting in and out of bed, and I could not help her. When the nurse came in, my roommate was just coming out of the washroom. While the nurse was helping her back to bed, she informed the nurse that she had her "route all mapped out to facilitate" her return to bed. I could never have used such an expression.

She had many visitors, far too many for the shape she was in. It seemed such an effort for her to talk. In the course of our visits, she told me that she had worked with Indians, liked them very much, and got along quite well with them. I am sure they loved her too. Some of the Indian girls came to see her

and brought little gifts of their beaded needlework. She told me that she had two daughters and a son. One of the girls, also a registered nurse, flew in from Calgary and spent two or three days in Regina. Most of that time, she was with her mother. One day, a young couple and their two children came to visit—it was the younger daughter.

As my roommate was from out of town, her husband came to see her about twice a week. Generally, he would come “breezing in” like a breath of fresh air. He appeared to be a very amiable person. When I mentioned this to her, she replied: “Yes, they don’t come any better.” What a tribute to pay to one’s partner! Because she had applied for a private room when she registered, she was transferred when one came available. I missed her very much, and when I finally inquired about her, the sister, who had been away, told me that she was on a different floor. Since hospital regulations do not allow patients to move from floor to floor, I never saw her again. It was only after I was home for awhile that I learned the sad news of her death. I sent her a get-well card and, according to her husband, she appeared to be on the mend and had been discharged. She spent a few days at home, only to be rushed to the local hospital where she had a cerebral hemorrhage and passed away.

The second case was a middle-aged woman who was admitted to emergency for gallbladder attacks. With proper treatment, she recuperated within a few days. She had had previous attacks and the doctor advised an operation, but she told him that she was not prepared to have it just then, and would come back as soon as it was convenient. Later, she informed me that it was simply out of the question because she was deeply involved in wedding preparations. Her daughter, a nurse’s aid in the hospital, was to be a bridesmaid, and she, the mother, had all the gowns to make. She did not have time to part with her gallbladder just then.

The third case was a young girl who was admitted for a tonsillectomy. She only stayed for a couple of days. Her mother, a hospital employee, came in to see her. Otherwise, her visitors were mostly young people.

Finally, another woman who appeared to be in her 70s came in a wheelchair pushed by her daughter. They carried on a conversation which I did not understand, and learned later that it was in Polish. The woman could speak enough English to enable us to visit. I learned that all three of her daughters were registered nurses and two had married doctors. I now felt that I was in the company of the upper crust society. The girls came every day, sometimes twice a day, to visit their mother. They were friendly and sociable, so I capitalized on their visits. The woman was a devout Catholic, and she received communion every morning from the priest who usually came in around 7:00 am to bring the sacrament. Generally, he was preceded by an attendant carrying a lighted candle. The nurse came in ahead of time to draw the plastic curtains around the bed, but I could see the lighted candle go by.

One evening there was a lively discussion in Polish going on between the girls and their mother. Finally, one of the girls turned to me and said, "Mamma wants us to call the priest so she can make her confession. We are trying to talk her out of it as we feel that she cannot possibly have any sins to confess." I had to agree with them. How could a sick person who could not even walk commit any sins?

To the left of us was a private room occupied by a doctor who had suffered a stroke. His wife, a very pleasant person, a nurse herself, came in every day to help take care of him. Sometimes, I talked with her in the hallway and other times she would come to my room for a little chat. One evening, I counted 21 bouquets of flowers which had been moved out of his room to the hallway for the night. His room must have looked like a florist's shop or an undertaking parlour through the day. I wondered if he appreciated all of this. I doubt if I would have. It could have an adverse affect on a person.

The room to the right was in the men's section, which, at that time, held two cancer patients. One was an elderly man and the other was possibly in his 50s. The older man once worked for the railway. Off and on, he would yell out what sounded like orders, his voice fairly strong for a man in his condition.

The sister asked me if his hollering bothered me. Actually it did not, so I said, “No.” Once in awhile, I could hear him telling the nurse that he wanted to go home. She would go along with him and say, “Okay, I’ll get your clothes.” The poor man could not even get out of bed. He attempted to do so one day and fell on the floor where the nurse found him. One afternoon, just as I was settling down for a nap, I heard him yell out a couple of times. After a bit, I heard the nurse calling his name. The thought struck me that perhaps he had died, but I dozed off and completely forgot about him. Later, when I returned from physiotherapy, I met the doctor’s wife in the hallway and she gave me the latest news that our friend, the railwayman, had indeed left us. I was sorry, but relieved, too. I guess his number was up.

His roommate, who had skin cancer on his face, was a pitiful sight. I gathered that he was a bachelor as he seldom had visitors, wore only hospital clothes, and shuffled around in the flat slippers supplied by the hospital. Now and then, he would go past our door heading for the washroom, swearing to high heaven. Obviously, this was from the pain which was torturing him. Poor soul, I could not blame him. One day, I heard the doctor telling him that he could go out for the afternoon. Apparently, he had some business that needed attending, and since he seemed to be so alone, there was no one to handle his affairs. After his roommate died, he was transferred to another ward and I lost track of him.

Around the corner was the men’s public ward. One of the patients, a tall and lanky individual, had been admitted when he was having a bout with delirium tremens,²⁸ another patient told me. He kept the rest of us informed on the ailments of some of the new residents. He seemed to be generally well informed; perhaps orderlies are more talkative than nurses. I learned from experience the futility of asking questions about patients in a hospital because nurses seldom give you answers.

One evening, a patient was wheeled in on a stretcher with a woman, no

²⁸ The “shakes” caused from alcohol withdrawal among alcoholics.

doubt his wife, accompanying him. I happened to be sitting at the end of the hall where there was a table and a chair reserved for patients. A few minutes later, there appeared to be an emergency afoot judging from the commotion. The nurses and orderlies were rushing to move first aid equipment. Not being the curious type, I retired to my room. After a bit, all was quiet and everything seemed back to normal. The next morning, sometime after breakfast, my tall, lanky friend was in the hall. Naturally, I asked him what had gone on the night before. He told me that the man who had been wheeled in only lasted about twenty minutes and had to be wheeled out again. "Well," I said, "at least he came to die in the hospital."

Then there was the little, elderly lady who revealed to me that she had a kidney ailment. Her ward was down the hall and I often dropped in to chat with her. The nurses walked her up and down the hall for exercise. She was a pathetic little figure who reminded me so much of my mother in her last days. It was plain to see that she was fighting a losing battle. As her dismissal day approached, I could see that she was reluctant to leave. In the hospital, she had all the care she needed. She admitted to me that she lived on the third floor of a nursing home where patients did not get the attention that the first- and second-floor patients did because they paid more money. In view of her condition, all she required was plenty of liquids.

In the hospital lobby, I met a distinguished painter and writer, Robert David (Bob) Symons (1898-1973) from Sifton, Saskatchewan. I first noticed him when he was walking up and down the hallway hanging on to his wife's arm. He was a dignified-looking chap with his moustache and short beard, which reminded me of King George V. He usually wore a plaid kimono and a little Scot's cap, giving the rest of the patients the impression he was a Scotsman. As I sat next to him, I started up a conversation by introducing myself and, of course, he told me his name. When I told him where I was from, he was overwhelmed as he shook my hand, and told me that he had homesteaded in my part of the country. In the course of our conversation, he

mentioned my father and my older brothers, and stated that he had bought and traded horses with them. He promised to send me one of the history books that he had written about the country, and, in return, I promised to send him one of our history books. However, I did not get the chance to see him again. When I met his wife in the hall, she informed me that he was not well at all and was confined to bed. I was discharged shortly after and I never saw him again. I wonder if he died then or later. When his story, “the Wind Blows,” was published as a serial in the *Western Producer*, it carried the by-line of the “late” Bob Symons.

Then there was the ambulance with its screaming siren. We could generally see it unloading from our window if we cared to look. One day, when I was especially down in the dumps, the nurse, who happened to be in the room, was watching the attendants removing a victim or patient from the ambulance when she exclaimed, “Oh, it is a child. How awful!” Since I had four little granddaughters living in the city, I immediately started worrying. I tried to tell myself that, after all, there are thousands of children living in the city, but I still kept worrying. When the head nurse came into our ward on her usual rounds, she asked me how I felt. I replied, “Terrible. I think I’m heading for a nervous breakdown.” She gave me an odd look, but made no comment. As she left the ward, I reached for my purse, found the nerve pills, and popped two in my mouth. I thought, “Kill or cure—what’s the difference?” The next afternoon, when she came in and asked me if I felt any better, I had to say that I did.

As I lay in that hospital bed, I had plenty of time to think and to meditate. Above all, I wished that I was more patient with my husband, but my patience dissolved into thin air and was “gone with the wind.” I guess I’m too old to change. However, I had all the regrets as he left me one dark and lonely night. Who knows, he could have been the lucky one?

Finally, the day came for my dismissal. I should have been happy, but I was not. I was actually a bit disappointed. I would miss the nurses, the doctors, and my new friends. Of course, I would not see some of them again as they

would not be leaving on their own two feet. I should have considered myself lucky this time around since I left on crutches! In spite of my unwarranted fears and anxieties, it seemed, as I prepared to leave, that it had been like a trip on a luxury liner at a minimal cost of \$4.00 per day. We were well fed considering that every day we were given a menu with three different choices of food to pick from. These menus were usually passed around by young school girls—volunteers who would one day be taking up nursing.

As for the operation, I did not expect a miracle and there was none. But I will say this, for an operation of that sort, there was very little pain and, I believe, it helped me. Without the surgery, I might have been confined to a wheelchair. I also believe my recovery was aided by the strength I acquired from my past. Reminiscing dredged up this strength when I needed it most.



Back to Batoche in the Style of 1973

Ever since I could remember, I wanted to see Batoche, the famous last-stand site of the Riel Resistance. So when I was nominated as one of the delegates to represent our Métis Society local at *Back to Batoche Days*, I willingly accepted. The day before the grand opening, my husband, Vic, our granddaughter, Chantal, and I headed north in our Biscayne Chevrolet. We were told that everything would be supplied in terms of lodging and food. Therefore, we did not take as much as we needed to.

Our first obstacle was Saskatoon. Greenhorns that we were, we missed the bypass and got completely lost in the city. Vic wanted to stop every pedestrian for directions, but I reminded him that we would eventually come to a sign which would lead us back to the main road. By the time we reached the highway, a steady downpour set in. We decided to get a motel room rather than bunk in a tent.

Next morning, we were up bright and early only to find that the skies were still overcast. I breathed a silent prayer for the rain to stay away. “Oh God, please do not let it rain anymore.” We started off in an optimistic mood. Once again, it was a hit and miss affair. We were back on the highway heading for Duck Lake, but we did not see the sign for Batoche, and as a result, we missed the bridge crossing the South Saskatchewan River. Eventually, we came to the sign. We followed the gravel road leading to the river, and much to Chantal’s delight, we crossed on the ferry.

Our first view of Batoche was the National Historic Site. Within the fenced grounds is a well-kept lawn and picnic facilities. A large sign, alongside a two-storey structure, reads, “Canada-Batoche Rectory.” As I gazed at the building, I thought, “At last, I get to see the famous ‘original rectory’ that I had heard and read so much about.” Somehow, it had withstood the elements of strife and time, although it has been renovated and was preserved throughout the years. It now stands as a monument, dedicated to those who gave their

lives in the last stronghold of the Riel uprising. The bottom floor is used as a museum, while the upstairs has been preserved to appear as it did back then. There are two rooms: a classroom and a post office. We learned that, due to the ravages of time, the desks and furniture were replaced, but the new ones were based on the original designs. Like all historic sites, the public is welcome. I noticed the registration book lists names from all parts of the world.

It was only a short distance to the Batoche clearing where the gathering would take place. We saw army tents pitched all over the grounds. When we signed our names at the registration booth and paid for our rations, which amounted to \$50.00 per person for the week, we were told that these would be delivered at 6:00 am and 2:00 pm at a designated spot. The rations consisted of fresh meat, stew, hamburger, canned meats, and other foods. By that time, there were cars, trucks, trailers, and people milling about. We drove around to see if any of our relatives had arrived, but we recognized no one.

Everything appeared to be in good order, even the sun was shining brightly. The assembly hall and another building, set up for bingo, were built as temporary shelters. Their sides were open to let in fresh air. The concession booths were under the management of different Métis Society locals from all over the province. I noticed a stand where Indian crafts were displayed and sold. We bought tickets for a little tent completely equipped with various camping essentials.

At the hall, I registered as a delegate, and was given a name tag which also indicated my local number. I was handed a red folder containing a copy of the agenda of the last annual meeting as well as material pertaining to the Métis Society. Along with the Métis Society executive on the platform, there was a tape recorder, and, off to the side, a TV camera. Later in the week, the chairman informed us that a BBC reporter had arrived and would be taking pictures and writing reports since we were now a recognized society. The microphones on the floor allowed for delegates to voice their opinions on various discussed topics. At times, the meeting would be humorous, and, at

other times, people got carried away in their criticism of the administration. Invariably, the debates would take on a political edge. The only time that I wanted to voice my opinion was when the issue of the adoption of Native children came up for discussion. Not being aggressive enough, I did not get the chance. I probably would have sounded like a “voice crying in the wilderness.”

As the meeting progressed on the first day, we noticed some of our relatives coming into the hall. Later, we all got together and managed to find an empty tent close by. With an extra mattress and a couple of borrowed quilts, we managed to fix up our sleeping quarters for the week. Our relatives had a three-burner propane stove and all necessary camping utensils. Pooling our resources, we cooked and ate together. With the hamburger, we wanted to make “bullets,” which is Métis for meatballs (a traditional Half-breed dish). However, none of us thought to bring flour or onions.

Each camp had a stack of firewood, so we all had campfires going after dark. We also looked forward to the bannock baking contest, but it did not take place for some reason.

Bright and early each morning, a car equipped with a loudspeaker drove around the camp repeating the words, “*wanesh kack*,” Cree for “wake up.” That was okay for some of us who did not keep late hours, but what about the ones who did?

Sadness pervaded the gathering when a young man, while saving a teenager who had wandered into deep water, accidentally lost his life in the river. When we noticed the RCMP around, we knew that something had gone wrong.

A roofed open-sided structure had been put up purposely for pow wows. When we noticed tipis springing up here and there, we knew that the Indian pow wow dancers were arriving. There were rumours that they were being paid to dance, and that they would be coming from all parts of the country. When we heard the beat of the drums, we hastened over. Our little Chantal was so excited when she saw young Indian dancers in the group that she joined in

with them. Each dancer was introduced via a loudspeaker as he or she entered the dance. Two beautiful Indian girls, introduced as princesses, also took part. As I sat there and watched, I felt proud. My mind wandered back to the past, trying to visualize when our ancestors roamed and ruled the country, when we were a proud and aristocratic race that covered all of North America.

Only the first three days were taken up with the annual meeting's business. For the rest of the week, there were sports of every description for young and old, continuous bingo games, and in the evening, dancing to exceptionally good, lively music. Contestants who took part in the jigging and fiddling contests were both talented and entertaining. The "Miss Batoche Contest" drew many pretty contestants.

It was worth waiting for. Another of my life-long dreams had materialized. Although I never again attended the celebrations, I hear the gathering gets bigger and better every year. I go in spirit, but without my life-partner, Vic. He passed away; thus, ending a marriage which took place a long time ago, in 1932.



A Time of Joy and Tears

From the time I met and married my husband, a native of France, I had a desire to see that country. Many times, he related the happenings of his early life, and I tried to visualize his birth country's wonder and beauty. We often discussed the possibility of a trip to visit his relatives. But, as time went on, the children were born and, as we grew older, it became a remote possibility. The best that we could do was to keep up a correspondence with his mother, two sisters, nephews, and nieces.

After Vic's passing in 1973, the trip became just a dream. Then one day my daughter, Jacquie phoned me to ask if I would like to go to France with her and her daughter, Robin. I was pleasantly surprised, and happily accepted. She made all the necessary arrangements, leaving me responsible for my passport and personal items. She suggested that I get a new wardrobe, but since the French had not seen my good clothes, I decided that they would have to do, with the exception of a new housecoat.

In due time, I packed two suitcases. We planned for a three-week stay. Finally, the day came for our departure from Regina. Our plane was to leave at 8:00 am, which meant that we were up at 6:00 am. I was advised to pack a raincoat because France was prone to sudden showers. We were allowed 44 lbs (20 kg) of luggage per person, which seemed adequate. Robin had the heaviest, largest suitcase. It ran on little wheels and had an attached strap. Like a typical teenager, she packed seven pairs of jeans.

At last, we were flying over the clouds in an Air Canada jet going at a terrific speed. We flew over Winnipeg, which I could see through the clouds, and were on the way to our first stop—Toronto where we had to change planes. We learned that there would be a six-hour wait for the plane which would fly us to France. Toronto has a huge airport, one of the largest in the world. There were shops with everything imaginable in terms of souvenirs and luxury items, which mostly catered to well-to-do travellers. I shopped a bit and

bought three or four gifts. Then we all met together to have lunch in a cafeteria where the food looked so appetizing.

After all that, I needed a rest. I curled up in a lounge chair, using my handbag as a pillow. After a good nap, I decided to take another walk around the building. I noticed a bar where everything looked so spic and span and the glasses sparkled. I thought that beer must taste better in such cleanliness. I went in to have a couple just to pass time. I struck up a conversation with



Louise Moine, "The Way It Was...Then," *New Breed Magazine*, 1976: 10.

a Czechoslovakian woman who spoke fairly good English. She informed me that she was on her way back to her country. Since her plane departed before mine, she left me alone to finish my drink. Jacquie and Robin found me there and told me that our plane was ready to leave.

It seemed like a long way to get to the far end of the terminal where the doors led to the planes. Each door had a destination marked very clearly. Ours seemed to say: "This way to France." Once again, our totes and handbags were x-rayed, and we had to walk through an x-ray detector. It was about 6:00 pm when we finally boarded the 747, which would fly us across the Atlantic. We made one stop at Mirabel Airport in Montreal to let out passengers, mostly Italians. In a little while, we were up and away again. A movie was playing on the screen and one had to pay for earphones to hear the dialogue, which was in English or French.

Plane seats are not built for sleeping—they do not drop back very far.

Somewhere over the ocean, we lost track of time and lost six hours. Daylight came and with it, *le petit déjeuner* (breakfast). By that time, we were flying over France. An announcement came over the intercom that we were nearing Paris. Then the stewardess told us to buckle up our seat belts. We flew over the airport for some time, unable to land due to a lack of space.

We finally landed at the De Gaulle Airport. As we disembarked, we found the terminal's intense heat quite oppressive, especially after flying in an air-conditioned plane. Vic's first cousins, Alice and Guy met us with open arms and tears of joy. After clearing customs, we got into Guy's little car—we found that most Frenchmen drive little cars. We headed for Paris, some distance away. Guy informed us that this part of France was experiencing heat and severe drought, the first that he could remember. That afternoon, he took us on a sightseeing tour. We drove around the Champs-Élysées and the Arc de Triomphe, and also got a glimpse of the Eiffel Tower, which we would visit later.

Guy and Alice's apartment was too small for all of us so we spent the night at a nearby hotel. Many times, I have heard that France was a medieval country, and after spending one night in that hotel, I could believe it. First of all, when we came to the lobby, the floor was made of cement. The old-style locks on the doors were hard to open with a big old key, the likes of which I had never seen before. It must have been an old hotel which had been built to last. We found that wherever we went, men and women used the same facilities. Toilets were not segregated like in Canada.

We stayed at the home of my sister-in-law, Hélène and her husband, Phillippe. They lived at Brive-la-Gaillarde²⁹, which is quite a distance from Paris by train. Since we had not yet learned about kilometres, we adopted the time system—so many hours to one place and so many hours to another. It took six hours to get to our destination. Trains are extensively used for travel in France, more so than buses. They also use underground transportation known as the "Metro." The premiere class coaches were more luxurious and made for very

²⁹ In the Limousin region.

smooth travelling in air-conditioned comfort. Besides the dining car, there were meals on wheels serving sandwiches with coffee, wine, or beer. The French breads and pastries were something else, especially the long, crusty loaves, which are carried unwrapped in shopping baskets.

Our arrival in Brive-la-Gaillarde was another occasion. We were once again greeted with hugs and kisses. The French are very affectionate and sincere in their feelings. Two cars met us because my sister-in-law H el ene asked Monique, an attractive blond cousin on Phillippe's side, to come with her car in case one car could not handle our luggage. They were living in a third-floor condo, so we took the elevator rather than the circular stairway with iron rails. Most French hotels and apartments had circular stairways. We spent most of our time at H el ene's. We met more cousins as they came and went, and were invited to their homes for champagne, which was usually served around 5:00 pm.

H el ene's daughter, Lena and her husband, Alex also invited us to come and see them. They were living at Cannes on the French Riviera. We took advantage of the invitation to see them as well as some of the country. Once again, we boarded the train at Brive-la-Gaillarde with Phillippe accompanying us as far as Toulouse³⁰, where we had to change trains. No doubt, he was worried that we would get on the wrong train. However, after a two-hour wait and a meal, we eventually boarded. As we rode along, I noticed acres of vineyards. Now and then, I saw what appeared to be a homesteader's shack, but they were built of stone, not logs. Once in awhile, the train would stop to pick up or drop off passengers. As we travelled on, we noticed ships harboured at Marseille.³¹ The train stopped at Toulon and nearby Saint Tropez, one of the places that my husband had mentioned to me during his lifetime.

We arrived at Cannes that same evening. Lena, the only relative who speaks English, was there to meet us. Her son Pierre, who was nine at the time, was studying English. Thirteen-year-old Robin was studying French at school,

³⁰ In the Midi-Pyr enes region.

³¹ In the Provence-Alpes-C te d'Azur Region.

so between the two of them, they managed to understand each other. Alex was a paediatrician, and had just recently moved his practice from Casablanca, Morocco to Cannes. At the time, he and his family were staying with his mother. We were happy to see Fernand's mother once again. She accompanied my husband's sister, H el ene when they came to visit in Canada in 1965.

That evening we went sightseeing. There were so many people milling around, that it reminded me of a carnival. Lena informed us that the best time to visit the Riviera is in winter because, during the summer months, tourists crowd the streets, stores, and beaches. Funny thing, all the time that I was there, I imagined that I was in Los Angeles. It could have been the weather and the landscape—that part of France, without question, is one of the most beautiful places in the world.

On the following day, Alex took us for a longer spin along the blue Mediterranean. We were pleasantly surprised to see that the president of France was there, and was accompanied by an entourage of motorcycles and VIPs riding in limousines. Pierre first noticed the big grey battleships sailing in the harbour. I am sure we counted seven. None of us learned the reason for this big show of power at the time. We stopped along the beach to snap pictures, and then drove around Monte Carlo and Monaco. I thought of Princess Grace who belonged to royalty. We drove along a good, wide mountain road until we came to level ground where we visited a centuries-old Roman ruin, which was slowly crumbling. There was also a railing around a lookout where we could stand and see down the mountain. Here, we met some tourists who could speak English. Finally, back on level ground, we stopped for lunch and sat around an outdoor table. France has the custom of eating outside, and the food there is amazing. Later, Alex took us to what seemed like an underground tunnel where we saw millions of tiny, exotic fish. The three days we spent at Cannes certainly proved to us that this was indeed a beautiful country and well worth the trip.

On our return to Brive-la-Gaillarde, we travelled second class for some

reason. The train was a little rough and its compartments more crowded. I remember a soldier with a huge, muzzled dog on a leash. We travelled most of the night, and it was still dark when we arrived at Brive-la-Gaillarde.

We had one more place to visit Deciz³², my husband's birthplace. When Hélène decided to drive us there in her car, she informed us that she would be leaving at 7:00 am, and that we should be ready at that time. Of course, I did not get much sleep that night, and to make matters worse, there was a baby crying most of the night on the lower floor. Just when I slipped into a sound sleep, Hélène came in swinging some kind of an instrument with a very piercing sound. It certainly got me out of bed half asleep. However, when we got to the first big centre, we were held up in traffic for two hours, so I could have had extra sleep. I wondered whether Hélène read the papers. Apparently, it was the beginning of the Tour de France—a very big occasion in France. It was quite interesting to watch the competitors and their colourful uniforms.

Finally, when we got back on the highway, we saw more beautiful country, including a castle on a hillside. Except for a couple of detours, France should be complimented on the maintenance and the upkeep of its highways. We arrived in Decize about 5:00 pm, and searched for Jean, whom kept the keys to the house, which had been reserved for our stay. We found Jean's house, and he, being a polite Frenchman, invited us in for coffee. I was amazed to see how spotless he kept his place. Then he showed us where we would be staying. Around the house was a garden where strawberries and string beans grew in abundance. However, we could not pick them because of the mud.

We entered the house through the garage door in the basement. It was a fairly large, two-storey, four-bedroom home completely furnished right down to the choice of wines in the wine cellar. We only needed to buy fresh food. Hélène and I shared a ground floor bedroom adjacent to the bathroom. Toilets are never in the bathroom. Instead, there is a bidet which is used solely for washing genitals.

Later that evening, another cousin showed up and offered to take us on

³² In the Burgundy region.

a little tour. We drove around until we came to an elevation of land where we had to climb steps to a platform from which we could see the town and the surrounding country. I noticed dark clouds gathering and lightening flashing in what I assumed to be the west. I never did get my directions right while in France. Our guide then took us to his apartment where he treated us to champagne. While there, I noticed the beautiful antique furniture. It was the same wherever we went. The French seemed to have the patience and the skill to preserve their furniture. By the time we emerged from the building, the storm had abated and the air was fresh.

Back at the house, before retiring for the evening, I opened the windows and the shutters to let in fresh air. It must have been the oppressive air which awakened me. I felt like I was smothering, and no wonder. The windows and shutters which I had opened were now closed. I got up and opened the bathroom window. H el ene informed me the next morning that she closed all the windows because she feared burglars would come in through the night.

The next day Jean offered to treat us to a meal. Robin informed me ahead of time that she had gone with Jean and H el ene to seek a suitable caf e in which to wine and dine us. "Guess what Grandma," she said, "you're not going to like what I'm going to tell you." She added that she had noticed flies in the caf e located on a small farm some distance from town. Our meal of lamb and rabbit stew, salad greens, and boiled potatoes, which are usually served only as a special dish, had been pre-ordered. There was always a choice of wines which we usually left up to the host. All restaurants have fabric tablecloths and cloth table napkins. We made use of the napkins to keep the flies off our food since no one in France uses screens; at least I never saw any.

Jean, who was about 78, but did not look or act like it, was inclined to speed. Returning with him at the wheel, we seemed to be going at a terrific speed. (I know small cars always seem to go faster than they really are). H el ene, in the front seat, asked Jean to slow down while the three of us in the back seat were hanging on expecting to land in the ditch. Jean, trying to

reassure H el ene, replied that he was only going 60 kilometres per hour.

That same Sunday, H el ene decided to treat us to a meal so reservations were made at another caf e. When we arrived, the place was full, but the waiter found our table. Meals in France are always served in courses. Frenchmen never rush—they take their time to eat and drink. We did not relish the first course, a platter of tiny perch fried in oil. I could not chew them, they were very tough. After another course, we finally got our omelette, which was very good. Cottage cheese and thick, rich cream followed by a platter of assorted cheeses are always served. When H el ene went to pay, she and Jean told the owner of the caf e that the meal had not been satisfactory. As H el ene explained, they could have prepared it better. Most of all, she complained about the little perch. I was flabbergasted to learn that the meal had cost H el ene \$47.00 in Canadian money.

Our guide showed up early the next morning. After presenting me with a single red rose from his garden, we piled into his little car to view the main sights. We saw the house where my late husband was born and where he spent his early years. I felt his absence at this place, and remarked, “How I wish he were here with us.” Reassuring me, the guide replied in French, “Oh, he is with us in spirit.” Though there were many changes, the house appeared just as it had in his photographs. Its present inhabitants had preserved it remarkably well. It was surrounded by a high picket fence on a cement base. Since the owners were away, the front and back gates were locked; so we were unable to see the inside of the house. All private homes are fenced with locked gates—no doubt a safety feature. For admission to the house, one had to ring a bell located on the gate. Windows, which all have shutters, open like doors.

We also visited the graveyard where my late husband’s mother is buried. The Moines’ burial plot is enclosed by an iron picket fence. Though only his mother is buried there, H el ene informed me that the names of the rest of the Moines will be engraved on the memorial plaque. Monuments are large and impressive. Graveyards are enclosed in cement and iron fences, and gravel is used

on the cemetery's driveway instead of grass, thus making it easier to maintain.

The famous Promenade des Halles is located in Decize. A busy summer resort situated on the picturesque, sloped Loire River Valley, it has been there since Louis XIV's time. There are two Loire Rivers at Decize—the river proper and a dammed channel, the “*Vieille*” (spinster) Loire.

I was disappointed that no street or building had been named after Vic's father, Pierre Moine. A builder and politician, he supervised the construction of some public buildings. He even built the bridge over the *Vieille* Loire, which had been partly destroyed to stop the approach of German tanks during the Second World War. Decize was in the frontlines leading to France's capitulation in June 1940. In due time, the bridge was rebuilt. Here, I found a Josephine Baker record. She was a famous African-American singer.

We visited two more families. One belonged to my husband's nephew, Bernard whose mother had passed away while visiting in Canada. The others were cousins on Vic's mother's side, and again we drank champagne and ate good French food. Paul, whom we had already met on our first day in Paris, was there to greet us. My husband often spoke of Paul and his blindness. It happened while he was experimenting with chemicals, which exploded in his face. What he has accomplished is remarkable. He studied Braille and carried a Braille book, which he used to translate French into English. Thus, he was the only one who could translate the letters that I wrote to Guy and Alice. He also learned to play the piano by ear. He married, and, with his wife, they raised a daughter. Paul was so faithful. That evening, before we left France, he came to bid us goodbye.

In spite of the good times we were having with H el ene in Decize, we had to cut our visit short because she was expecting company from Casablanca, Morocco. We, therefore, packed our belongings and were ready to leave at 7:00 am. We arrived at Brive-la-Gaillarde around noon, having made very good time, and surprised Phillippe. H el ene's company, two young people with two small children, had crossed with their camper on a ferry from Casablanca to

Spain and then drove from there to Brive-la-Gaillarde. They spent their days at the apartment, and used their camper only for sleeping. Marie-France, the young woman, was a relative on Phillippe's side. They only stayed about three days as they had other places to visit.

We all went to see an underground mineral garden known as le Gouffre de Padirac, which is not far from Brive-la-Gaillarde. We descended a long way by elevator to the bottom. Hélène, Phillippe, and I did not care to go, but all the younger ones did. There was a railing which allowed us to look far away at people who, from a distance, appeared small. We watched them get into boats which sailed on an underground lake. This was a truly remarkable natural phenomenon.

On our shopping sprees, we found the stores to be much like ours. We changed our money into francs which we found confusing. Likewise, Canadian money was confusing to the French. Robin usually set me right since I was still hooked up on Canadian money. Even when I had francs, I was still a bit shrewd about the price I was paying. One time, when I wanted to buy a crochet hook, I am sure the clerk did her best to figure out the price. First, she had it priced at \$35.00. I told her that that was too much. Then she took one zero off and that made it \$3.50. I told her that that was still too much, so she took another zero off which brought the price down to .35¢ which was, no doubt, the right price.

We found to our enjoyment that the French liked Canadians. While there, we learned that they do not drink tap water. They buy spring water by the bottle and keep it in the refrigerator, which possibly accounts for the amount of wine consumed with their meals. Then, there is the Vichy spring mineral water which is famous for its healing qualities the world over.

Our three-week stay in France was coming to an end, and it was time once again to board the train which would take us to Paris. They say, "Parting is such sweet sorrow." When I went to say goodbye to Phillippe and to thank him for all his hospitality, his reply brought tears to my eyes. He said, "It is us who should thank you for coming to see us." I never did see him again—he passed away. He

was a veteran of two wars, serving in the French and Russian armies.

Saturday evening, Guy and Alice met us at the depot in Paris and drove us to their apartment. While they were going sightseeing, I thought it best to have a rest since I had a bit of an upset stomach. When they did not return, I decided to take a little walk around the block. I first checked to see if I had the address of the apartment block, and then, once outside, I studied the buildings close by so that I could find my way back. I soon found out there was no such thing as a block around here. It appears that towns and cities were not laid out that way. While window shopping, I noticed some beautiful jewellery and inquired about the price. I had enough money to pay \$18.00 Canadian, but it seemed like a bit of an extravagance for me.

I resumed window browsing until I came to a little shop with a nice dress in the window. I walked in with the intention of buying the dress. The sales clerk gave me the price in francs, which amounted to \$38.00 Canadian. After trying it on and checking my wallet, I found that I had enough cash. When I came out of the store clad in my new dress, I was completely lost, and could not find my way back to where I was staying. I was going around in circles. Three times, I saw two black people sitting at an outside table having a meal. Three times, I asked passersby for directions. As I headed one way or the other, I became more confused. I thought of phoning, but I could not remember Guy or Alice's last name. Finally, when I asked a woman where Guy and Alice lived, she told me that it was right there, and sure enough, it was. I went in, climbed the circular stairway, and found the right door. Alice and Guy were relieved to see me as they were sure that I had become lost. Guy was about to look for me. Because I had been wearing a yellow outfit to begin with and later switched to red, I asked if he would have recognized me. Alice informed me that Guy was colour blind. That night, we slept in the apartment while Guy and Alice bunked upstairs somewhere.

The next day, Guy took us on another tour of Paris. We ascended the Eiffel Tower via an elevator. I am sure that we stopped to change elevators

three times. One could walk around at each stop. On one floor, there was a café where tourists purchased refreshments, and on another floor, there were gifts and novelties for sale. Finally, when we reached the top, we were completely fenced in. No doubt, this was done to discourage potential suicides. Looking down, we could see the wide River Seine as it meanders through Paris. We also noticed tourists on the docks sightseeing.

Guy also drove us to the Louvre, a huge building which houses an extensive collection of works by famous painters. We saw the “Mona Lisa.” Kept under extremely thick glass, it bears a sign reading, “Do not take pictures,” which some people disregarded. Undoubtedly, the thickness of the glass would create a less than clear photograph.

We noticed that in every town or city there were always monuments or statues of famous personalities. Outside on the wide pavement, people of different nationalities spread out their wares to sell to tourists. Paris streets are wide, especially the famous Champs-Elysees, the fashionable promenade. We also visited the Notre Dame Cathedral during the Sunday service. Alice had remained at the apartment and by the time we returned, she had a nice veal roast cooked. I found out that Guy was in the business of framing while Alice worked in a power plant. They had no children.

The next day was our scheduled departure. When it was time, Guy and Alice drove us to the airport where once again we boarded the 747, which would fly us across the Atlantic. During our wait, Alice and I walked around the circular airport and found time to sit down and enjoy some refreshments. Finally, the time came to say goodbye. We promised that we would return. Jacquie and Robin did, but I never got another chance.

As is customary, on our way to the plane, the gendarmes were stationed at the entrance checking passports. Jacquie warned me to keep my passport in a handy place, but horrors of horrors, I could not find it. I searched in both suitcases, but no luck. The more I looked, the more confused I became. I began to get the most awful feeling that I could not leave the country unless I found

my passport. I was getting desperate. I even motioned to Guy and Alice not to leave until I was sure. Finally, the officials decided to let me go. What a relief! When I arrived safely home, the first thing I did was search for the passport. There it was in the top cover of my suitcase, in a handy place after all.



My Life with a Teenager

Chantal is the illegitimate child of my youngest daughter, Gloria. She was born April 28, 1968 in Regina. After her birth, Gloria kept her in a home for unwed mothers, which was operated by an order of nuns until the baby was three-weeks-old. Then, she brought her to our place for care. At first, Gloria found employment doing housework in the village. She put in her application at the Saskatchewan Government Insurance (SGI) office and was eventually employed there.

A strong and healthy child, Chantal was easy to look after. I put her in the playpen where she would sit for the longest time amusing herself with her toys. She was an active child and began walking at nine months. When her mother married, the two-and-a half year-old Chantal went to live with her stepfather, Bob. Gloria then quit her job and became a full-time mother and housekeeper. Bob was employed in Swift Current where they rented a house and settled for a time. While living there, Gloria gave birth to another daughter.

When Chantal was about four, she got into the habit of running away. She did that so often that the city police got to know her and knew where she lived. The last time that she ran away, she was trying to cross the railway tracks. The CPR agent's wife noticed her and phoned the police who took her back home. She always seemed to be heading south—was she trying to come back to us where she had had so much love and affection?

Chantal's stepfather never accepted her as his own and she must have felt like an outsider. Children need to be loved and wanted. Bob was an ambitious person and wanted to get rich quick, so he decided to go into trucking. He moved his family to Regina where he rented an apartment. He invested in a used truck with money borrowed from his father. A new motor had been installed, and he was told to drive below the speed limit until it was broken in. However, Bob, being in a hurry, ignored the advice and drove too

fast. This action burned out the new motor, thus ending the trucking business. From then on, he did odd jobs to support his family.

Gloria and Bob had two more daughters. After moving around three different times, they finally decided to buy a house of their own near a public school. All four children attended the school, and in time, they all graduated and went to high school to finish their education. Chantal went only as far as Grade 9 and never wrote her exams.

Chantal was an active girl. It was hard to handle and keep track of her. There were times when she strayed away from home, and did not tell her mother where she was staying. She knew that Gloria was not one to worry. Girls like her often got in with the wrong company and eventually into trouble with the police. Wayward children were usually placed in private homes or in the Dale House, a group home in Regina, and kept there until they learned to behave.

Is it any wonder that Chantal took to the road? The first time, she hitchhiked from Regina to Ontario. There, she got picked up for shoplifting a box of cookies. The police, after questioning her, learned that she was a minor who had thumbed her way from Regina. They put her on a plane and flew her back to Saskatchewan.

After a time, Chantal and her girlfriend decided to hitchhike to Vancouver. Upon arriving, they met people who seemed to be friendly, but when they were each given a shot in the arm, they ran out leaving all their clothes behind. As Chantal's friend had relatives in the city, she had a place to stay, but Chantal had to find her way to the social welfare office. From there, I received a telephone call. No doubt, she mentioned me as having a possible place to stay. The social worker phoned to ask me if I would take Chantal and keep her. I told her that if she behaved herself and attended school, she could come and live with me. Of course, Chantal agreed, so the social worker booked her flight to Regina. From there, she took the bus to Swift Current where we met her. When she got off the bus, she carried nothing, not even a handbag. I asked her about her luggage, but there was none. We stopped at the diner for

coffee and a bite to eat, and then headed for home. On the way, I thought of the future ahead.

Before Chantal could register for classes at school, she needed clothes. Therefore, in a day or two, we drove back to the city to shop. I knew that teenagers liked to pick their own clothes so I let her make her own choices. Whenever, I bought her a pair of jeans (which seemed to be the going thing), she would try them on at the store and they seemed like a good fit. But as time went by, like all young folks, she wanted them to fit tighter. When we arrived home, she would take a needle and thread, head for the bathroom, and would start sewing up the sides of her jeans. She did this so fast that it did not seem possible, but as I got to know her, she did most things quickly and could accomplish a great deal in a short time. As for the jeans, they fitted so tight that in a matter of days the zipper gave up and refused to close. She would then take a pair of my son, Gail's jeans, rip out the zipper, and sew it into her jeans. I found out about this when I discovered one of Gail's jeans behind the dresser where she had tossed them. From then on, it became a game of rip and sew. Finally, I gave up. She became an expert on the sewing machine.

I learned, too, that Chantal was disorderly. She never picked up her clothes, nor did she keep her room tidy except when she made her bed. As for classes, since she had not written her Grade 9 exams, the teachers had her repeat that grade which was a mistake. Chantal was bored studying the same subjects and started missing school without my knowledge. Her teacher estimated that she had missed thirty days.

I will say this for Chantal, she had a pleasant personality and she greeted everyone with a smile. Even her teachers gave her a good report, informing me that she was a well-behaved pupil. Her report cards were excellent which pleased me.

Most teenagers like driving cars. I decided to show Chantal how to drive. This turned out to be a mistake. I drove out of town, showed her how to handle the gears, and then let her get in the driver's seat and take the steering wheel. An automatic drive is easy to handle, unlike the standard shift. The

first time that I let her drive the car was during winter. She chose to drive down main street (maybe to show off) which, at the time, was icy. When she stepped on the brake to avoid hitting a pedestrian, the car spun around and hit a parked van causing some damage to the rear end of our car. It cost \$1,800 to have it repaired. Someone phoned the RCMP. When an officer arrived and saw that the car was still mobile, he drove it to the barracks and parked it. I was called to go and get it as now neither Gail nor Chantal were allowed to drive.

As time went on, Chantal started giving me a bad time. She continually disobeyed me and began staying out all night. I advised her to phone and let me know where she was, but she never did. During the time that she stayed with me, I lost 30 pounds (14 kg) from worrying. I lost my appetite and I could not sleep. I imagined all sorts of terrible happenings. She began to steal money from me. She also took all the liquor that I had in the house to drink with her friends. One time, I had a bottle of brandy. She knew about it, and, while I was away, she broke the basement window thinking that she would find it down there, but I had put it somewhere else outside. She did not find it.

It was uncanny how she could find mislaid or hidden keys. For example, I had an iron, fireproof box in which I kept my collection of silver coins and centennial money. Gloria warned me that Chantal had noticed the box under my bed, but as I had hidden the key, I was not worried about her finding it. However, I was mistaken. She found the key, took all the silver quarters worth about \$80.00, and she spent them as ordinary quarters. She did not touch the centennial money. I finally gave the iron box, which had come from France, to my daughter.

One time, she asked me if she could have the car to take her girlfriend to a show in a town 50 miles (80 km) away. When I refused, she started calling me names and insulted me. I asked her friend to take her for a walk to cool her off, unaware that she had been drinking. Chantal found my mislaid car key. After dark, she took the car without my knowledge, and drove down the highway where she hit a small deer and killed it. Of course, the car was damaged, and it was more serious than the previous accident.

1984 was the 100th anniversary of the Lebret Indian residential school. As a former student, I felt that I had to attend the celebration. I asked Chantal to go with us, but she had a ready excuse. She wanted to stay at her girlfriend's place, and since her girlfriend's parents liked and approved of Chantal, I figured that it would be fine. I knew that if I had insisted that she go with us, she would have met other teenagers and would have made some new friends. We were away for only five days, but, when we returned, we found that Chantal and her friends had knocked the glass out of the front door. If that was not bad enough, they went next door to the neighbour's house and tried to remove the glass out of their door in order to replace the broken one in our door. The neighbour's house was empty and was being watched by a relative who reported the breakage to the RCMP. Chantal had to appear in court once again and pay a \$50.00 fine. However, I asked the two girls who were there with her to each pay \$15.00. I had to pay the balance of \$20.00.

After we returned from Lebret, I had the misfortune of breaking my leg while going down the basement steps, and had to be taken to the doctor. After the doctor put a cast on my leg, I was kept in the hospital for three weeks. I let Gail have the car so they could come to see me, which was not the case. Still another mistake I made was telling the storekeeper to let them have all the credit they needed to buy groceries and cigarettes, another of Chantal's bad habits. I knew that Gail had \$50 from the sale of an electric saw, but he spent it on alcohol.

Chantal had yet another accident that damaged the car fender. This was caused from hitting a culvert when she went to make a turn in the ditch. It was only minor damage and SGI paid to get the fender straightened out. Finally, my son-in-law phoned the RCMP to seize the car, lock the door, and take the key. Altogether, it cost \$3,000 to fix the damage caused by Chantal's car accidents.

When she finally wrote her Grade 9 exams, Chantal was recommended in two subjects, Math and Chemistry. I told her that—in spite of all the

expense that she had inflicted on me by helping herself to my money and liquor, and the costs incurred through her car accidents—I did not have the heart to put her out. She would have to leave on her own. I also told her that she could stay with me for another year and take her Grade 10 which would give her a better chance to get employment. For some reason, she decided to leave. She carried with her two denim bags of clothing and about \$200 in cash. We drove her to the city where she caught the bus to Regina. Unfortunately, Chantal never went back to school.

As I look back, I know that I could have done better to cope with a teenager like Chantal who had gone through some hard times. Nonetheless, she knew that for whatever had happened in the past, she had only herself to blame. I found out that one can learn a lot from the youth if only one takes the time to listen.



A Proud and Noble Century

1984 was the Lebret Indian residential school's centennial. When I heard of this upcoming reunion, I made up my mind that I was not going to miss it. Having been a former student, I was invited to attend, along with other former teachers and staff. I envisioned reuniting with some of my former schoolmates, which would have been the highlight of my year.

The day came when we arrived at the school. The school that I attended as a child burned down in 1932. This school was constructed in 1936. It took four years for the federal government to decide if the residential school should be rebuilt. The building, towering on the shores of Mission Lake and dominating the Qu'Appelle Valley, is a monument for the education of Indian people. Unlike the other schools, this building is completely fireproof, which we learned on our tour.



Postcard Collection, Special Collections, University Library, University of Saskatchewan, The Mission, Lebret—Near Indian Head, Sask., LXX-1200, 191-?

At the gate, where we registered, there was a pleasant hostess who handed each of us a program which covered the next seven day's events. We also received a name tag in which we wrote our name and status. My son, Gail accompanied and drove me to the reunion. The first three days—Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday—were taken up with the Indian summer games. The

committee sponsoring the 100-year anniversary was especially pleased to host the games, which are held annually. The next four days were scheduled for the reunion: Thursday and Friday at the school, and then two days at the Standing Buffalo Reserve pow wow grounds.

The main events took place on the school's front lawn where we faced the bronze statue of Father Hugonard. Chairs were arranged for everyone to sit. I thought that was where the general assembly gathered. On a platform with a loud speaker, the emcee addressed all those present. We saw veterans in uniform, one redcoat policeman, and also a young Indian policewoman. First, awards and trophies were presented to the winners of the games followed by the ceremonies which occupied the greater part of the morning. First thing on the agenda, after lunch, was an opening speech by Mary Lavalee, a smart-looking middle-aged woman. She spoke mostly about the school's history, elaborating on the Indian students' successes and accomplishments, many whom have become prominent in their professions. Glancing at her paper occasionally, she mentioned that the most significant part of the school was the school's outstanding athletes, which were very well known across Saskatchewan. As she went on, I found her remarks very interesting. When she was finished, the emcee asked if anyone else would like to use the microphone. No one offered because she had covered every topic. What more was there to say!

Across the hall from the front entrance was a fairly large chapel, which was being used as a museum. There, we reviewed a documentary and literature about the school, which were suited to the theme—"A Proud and Noble Century." We browsed through old registration books, photo albums, and many more interesting items, including antiques. Most had been rescued from the fire of 1932. It would have taken more than two days to see and absorb all that was on display. Slides were shown at intervals. One especially caught my eye: three of my sisters with two other students slid on the screen. We were also shown slides of the fire which destroyed the first school. A narrator described the catastrophe as it took place as well as the efforts that were made to salvage whatever they could.

I met and reminisced with some former students; however, I learned that most of those present had attended the school later than me.

Out on the lawn, one row of seats had been reserved for the Grey Nuns. They finally arrived in the evening dressed in modern clothes except for one who wore a grey suit and a veil. There were only three of them and one Oblate priest present. Since they were honoured guests, each nun was presented with a red rose and the priest with a bouquet. I doubt very much if they even got to sit on their reserved seats. Most of the time, the chairs on the lawn were unoccupied; even when the emcee tried to carry on with the program. That part of the program obviously went askew. That first evening, the emcee had some of his helpers arrange the chairs for some kind of entertainment, and since there were only a few of us sitting around, he finally gave up. One has to take into consideration that older folks do not move around like children, others have poor hearing, and since this was an occasion of reuniting and reminiscing, many of them preferred visiting to watching entertainment.

In the course of the afternoon, a piano was pushed across the hallway. It required the help of four husky men and was finally left on top of the steps leading down to the ground. Well, I thought, we were going to have some music! Sure enough, a group of ladies gathered around on the steps and rendered two numbers to the pianist's accompaniment. Then the piano was pushed back to its original place as it crowded the front entrance. For those who enjoyed dancing and music, an old-time dance was held at the gymnasium. Thursday and Friday, music was supplied by the Eric Bear Orchestra.

While sitting on the lawn, I got acquainted with an elderly woman in a wheelchair who informed me that she had been a former pupil and was now 95-years-old. I also noticed a young white woman snapping pictures with a special camera, which she was lugging around on her shoulders. Being curious, I asked her who she was representing. Her name was Kathy Burburz and she told me that she was an editor/writer for the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs. After chatting for awhile, she promised to send me a write-up

of the reunion, including a few pictures, which I later received. On the lawn, in the shade of the trees, were the picnic tables. When the emcee announced that there would be barbecued elk for supper, we were delighted and lined up buffet-style for the treat.

The village's Roman Catholic Church is very unusual and impressive with its stone siding. A few years back, Father Solomon, a missionary priest, explained to me how the people in the community picked and hauled the rocks to build the church. Mass was celebrated every morning, but on this special Friday during the reunion, mass was sung in Latin, which is seldom done anymore. The congregation was elated as they talked about how happy they were to once again sing those familiar hymns of bygone years.

The majority of the reunion attendees spent most of their time in the museum. We made new friends there. Unfortunately, I neglected to write down their names and addresses in my little notebook. There was also a canteen and a coffee lounge where everything was free. The films shown in the junior boys' playroom were good and entertaining. For supper, we had another good meal: more barbecued wild meat, stew, salad, and vegetables.

While I was having supper at a picnic table, sitting with new friends, I was pleasantly surprised when a woman came over to me and said, "I heard you were here and I wanted to see you." She introduced herself, but the name did not ring a bell; nevertheless, we spent the next two hours together talking about old times at the school and she remembered happenings and incidents which I had forgotten. She talked about my mother and my sisters, which brought back so many memories of my childhood days. We spent part of the time in the museum, and were pleased to find our names in the registration book. She lived about 80 miles (129 km) from the school, so when it came time to part, she gave me her address, and, of course, I gave her mine. She seemed so sincere when she promised to write, and she also mentioned a picture that she had of me taken when I was attending school there with her. She promised to send that too. I came home in a happy frame of mind. Now,

I had something to look forward to, but, as time went by, I did not hear from Elizabeth (Ward) Thompson. Apparently, she forgot to write so I wrote to her instead. Many times, I wished I had asked for her daughter's address. She finally sent me a Christmas card and she excused herself for not writing. She mentioned that her husband was a chief who looked after six reserves, and she always accompanied him.

The celebration wound up with two days on the Standing Buffalo Reserve pow wow grounds. Many important events were listed on the agenda, but we did not attend any part of that ceremony. From where we were staying, we could hear the beat of the drums, which gave me pride in being part of their world.

A once-in-a-life-time celebration like that should have drawn a larger crowd. Of course, there is always the possibility of former students, living at distant points, being unaware of the reunion. It is not that simple to contact everyone, and many have left for the Spirit World.

My six years spent at that school were definitely not wasted years, and, as I look back, I believe that they were some of the best years of my life. I learned to foster pride in my Indian heritage, and I was proud to be a part of the great event. It was indeed a time of celebration: 100 years as an educational institution, which so adequately met the needs of Indian students throughout the Prairie Provinces. It was and is, "A Proud and Noble Century."



Religion vs Christianity

My first introduction to religion was when I became a student in an Indian residential school, which was strictly a religious institution, operated by priests and nuns.

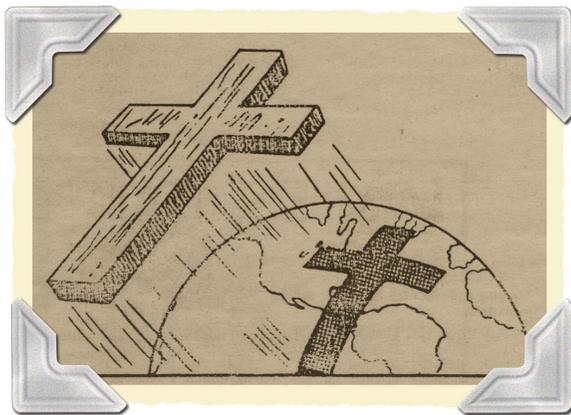
Besides learning the three “Rs,” we were thoroughly instructed in Roman Catholic beliefs. There were always two priests in the school: one was the school supervisor and the other was the boys’ overseer (since this was a segregated school). The boys and girls had their own buildings. The boys’ overseer gave us an hour of religious instruction every day of the school week, from 5 pm to 6 pm. We were required to study and memorize our catechism. When we knew all the answers, we were prepared to make our first communion, which was usually around eight or nine-years of age.

From then on, we received holy communion at early morning mass, providing we were free from mortal sin. From our catechism, we learned about



First Communion, Lebret R.C. Church, Saskatchewan Archives Board, R-A24127.

heaven, hell, and purgatory, and where the souls of those who died were sent, depending, of course, on the kind of life they led while on earth. We also learned whether they should receive the “last rites,” otherwise called the sacrament of extreme unction, and ask for forgiveness. If they did, then



Louise Moine, “Religion Vs. Christianity,” *New Breed Magazine*, April 1989: 14.

they would have a good chance to make it to heaven or purgatory for a period.

More than anything else, the punishment of hell was deeply stressed at the school. We were taught that hell was a pit of intense fire, far worse than any fire on earth, abiding with devils, which were there to torture the souls who died in mortal fire. Purgatory was also a place of fire, where the soul of those who died in venial sin would go to burn; but only for a time, until prayers and masses were offered and money was donated, eventually they too would enter the Kingdom of God. Those whose souls went to hell would spend all eternity there!

“Eternity! Eternity! Where will you spend eternity?” This was the hymn I heard the Salvation Army singing on the streets of Swift Current. In my younger years, I tried to figure out the depths of eternity. Was it forever and ever with no end? I never could, so I finally gave up.

From the time the bell rang to awaken us at 6 am, we dropped on our knees, and repeated our first prayer. After washing and dressing, we headed for the chapel to attend low mass, wearing our little black veils during the week, and our white ones on Sunday. With our eyes closed to avoid distraction, we memorized even the longer prayers, while our thoughts wandered to far more interesting places.

Besides praying to the Lord Jesus, the Virgin Mary, and St. Joseph,

we were taught to include all the different saints, as we were informed that each played a different role, depending on the problem concerned and would therefore respond. To this day, if I lose or misplace something, I pray to good St. Anne or is it to St. Anthony?

The sisters taught us to sing hymns in English, French, and Cree, and we also learned to sing the mass in Latin. We always wore religious medals and scapulars around our necks, believing that this would ward off evil spirits and keep us from sin.

If and when we were rewarded for good behaviour, we always received religious items, such as a rosary, prayer book, or a small statue. We did not study the bible that much, but we had books with stories of the bible written in a simple and interesting way with colourful pictures.

Once a week, we confessed to a priest, I remember mine wore a long black beard, and he always brought me an orange. There was no need to examine my conscience as my sins were always a repetition of the same; following the Ten Commandments and the Seven Deadly Sins, only the number of times were changed. The priest always gave me absolution and for my penance, I would have to say three "Our Fathers," three "Hail Marys," and three "Glory Bes."

A cross had been erected on the summit of the hill near the school to demonstrate that the first missionaries took possession of the region in the name of Jesus Christ. Throughout the year, when the weather was feasible, we would climb that hill and repeat the prayers of the "Way of the Cross." When we reached the top of the hill, we would all kneel and repeat more prayers. During the Lenten season, besides making the 14 Stations of the Cross every day in the chapel at 4 pm., we were asked to deprive ourselves of the things we enjoyed most and to make extra penance in atonement for our sins.

As children, we accepted and took everything for granted. If we questioned, we were told that life and death were a mystery and that no mortal being would ever understand. The priests in this institution were an order of

the Oblates and unlike the Jesuits fathers did not work for pay. The sisters were an order of the Grey Nuns, better known as the Sisters of Charity. They too donated their labour. So in this respect, they were following the true Christian way of life.

After spending six years in this religious institution, my parents, who moved to the village of Ponteix, decided to transfer us to the public school there. So it was here that we, the four younger members of the family, continued on with our education. Since this was a predominantly Catholic community, we also continued on with our religious way of life. We attended church regularly; we were warned that to miss Sunday mass constituted a mortal sin. We tried to abide by all the Roman Catholic Church's rules.

On this one Sunday, I heard the priest tell the congregation that they were obligated to give at least .10¢ to the collection. Every family had their own pew, which they had to pay for every year. Ours was upstairs where the organist and choir were stationed. As we entered the church we always dipped our right fingers in holy water and made the sign of the cross, and as we entered our pew, we made the genuflection. This we did out of respect of the tabernacle, which was believed to contain the sacrament of Jesus. My mother believed that as long as we went to confession and received holy communion, we were behaving and walking the narrow path of righteousness. Actually, I never minded going to church, it became a good habit with me. Besides, it was an occasion to wear my best clothes and to show off my new hat. Everyone was obligated to wear some kind of head covering. Besides being a place of worship, the church gave me a feeling of being on an equal footing with all who came to pray.

In spite of her deep religious convictions, my mother was broad-minded as she never objected or tried to stop us from attending the Protestant church with some of our little friends. We even joined in their programs and choirs, thus learning to sing some of their hymns.

To me, the most outstanding ceremony of the Catholic Church in those

early years was the celebration of the midnight mass, which was naturally held on Christmas Eve. Why did I look forward to this great event with so much fervour and anticipation? Even as I look back now, there was nothing else that could compare with this grand and religious service. At this time, every Catholic went to confession and received the sacrament of holy communion during the service.

The church was packed to capacity, and, there would be special music and singers. One person I shall always remember was one of our neighbours who sang like a nightingale. It was easy to see that she took voice culture. Though she was petite, her voice was strong and powerful, and would fill that church with an unsurpassed melody. When she sang that beautiful Christmas carol, "*Minuit, Chrétiens*" ("O Holy Night"), she naturally sang it in French. It seemed like a little bit of heaven descending down to earth, and it was the moment that I anxiously anticipated. I have never heard, nor will I ever hear again a voice that so truly reached my heart.

Then there was the requiem mass which was a service held for the death of a Catholic. It was only in high mass that the requiem was sung; in low mass, only prayers were said and there was no music. One was more expensive than the other. Now that all this has changed and these services have been discontinued and are not used at funerals, I realized too late how much these services meant to me.

The aftermath of all this religious training caused me to grow up to be a fanatic, believing that my church was the one and only true faith. I believed that only Catholics entered the kingdom of God. Whenever the topic of religion was discussed, I would naturally try to convince others of different faiths that mine was the only true one. But as the years went by and I grew up, I somehow learned to tolerate and accept other peoples' beliefs, which I found were not as fanatic as mine. There were times when I even envied the Protestants, as they seemed to have had more freedom of worship. They were not obligated to attend church every Sunday, and most of all, they did not

have to confess to a priest. So it came to pass that little by little, I drifted away from the Roman Catholic Church. Finally to top it all, I married an atheist. So ironically, I went from one extreme to another, and I too became an atheist, but only for a short time. Taking into consideration that what you were taught in your childhood comes back to you in your latter years, and since I wanted so much to believe, I joined the United Church, when one of its ministers started holding services in our little village.

Throughout my lifetime, I have had the opportunity of attending churches of different denominations and found that they all prayed to the same God. I feel that one can worship God in any church, but I have found the United Church to be more modern and moderate in its beliefs. Finally, I began to understand that Christianity is not necessarily based on religious worship. One can attend church regularly, pay his or her dues etc. and still not be Christian. It is the life we lead that counts. The capacity to love is one of God's greatest gifts to humans. If you have love and compassion in your heart, you will know the true meaning of life.



Let There be Peace on Earth

For thousands of years now, humans have struggled to find peace. So far, we have never reached our goal, but that does not mean that peace is unattainable. The tragic fact, however, is that we are neither heading nor thinking in a new direction. In the kind of nuclear world we are living in, it is imperative that we try to live in peace with all nations. Otherwise, if we do not learn to live in harmony, humanity will come to a tragic end.



Louise Moine, "Let There Be Peace on Earth,"
New Breed Magazine, March 1989, 9.

It is true that under our present system, social unrest and civil wars are a constant threat to a peaceful economy. Nations now believe that to keep the peace they must be well armed. Most of the world's problems are political; therefore, governments make the decisions. This arms build-up rains death and destruction on other humans whenever they revolt against a system of government that has brought them want, starvation, and exploitation. If a country wishes to use a different form of government to pull itself out of its misery, then they should be entitled to do so, and no nation, however great or small, should take away that opportunity.

We are creatures of our own environment. Therefore, we must try to understand people in different circumstances, and not be blinded by prejudice instigated by political propaganda. The competitive way of life is the only system that we have ever known in West. How can we be sure that ours is the only democratic way? It takes all kinds of people to make a world, and what is democracy for one nation can be tyranny for another. Thus, in view of this fact,

there has to be different forms of government in different parts of the world.

As long as mistrust and suspicion prevail, nations will continue to arm, believing that in doing so, world conflict can be averted. However, once war breaks out and nations are fighting for their very existence, what is to say that they may not use every possible means to achieve victory?

The United States is hardly creating a love of democracy when it involves itself in the internal affairs of other states. The business of supplying arms and direct military aid to the anti-leftist group in El Salvador only intensified the civil war that went on there. The argument that Cuba and Russia were supplying arms to the leftist guerrillas was hardly sufficient reason to do the same for the other side (since this was never verified). When in power, Ronald Reagan stated over and over again that he would use every conceivable means to stop Honduras, Nicaragua, and El Salvador from becoming like Cuba.

President George H. W. Bush appears to be adopting the same policies as the past president. Cuba today is a socialist state and is free from all foreign intervention. For years, the Cubans lived in abject poverty, with only the bare necessities of life. They had neither schools, and hospitals, nor homes or their own. It was a civil war that finally freed them from the clutches of foreign interests which exploited them. Batista, their ruler then, was nothing but a tool of the United States. Eventually, however, he fled from Cuba taking millions of dollars with him. Regardless of what political propaganda leads us to believe, we know that Cuba has a democratic system of government.

The arms race is costing billions of dollars a year. We know that nuclear power is far more dangerous than industry lets on. Those who form anti-Cruise Missile groups and protest nuclear tests may sound like “voices in the wilderness,” but they may, in the end, bring some sanity in our otherwise insane world. Productive sources now devoted to war and arms should be used to reduce hunger, want, economic insecurity, and the continual threat of famine, which casts dark shadows around the world. Surely, in a world of

plenty there could be a more equal distribution of wealth.

War is not just a political and economic question. Its roots lie deep, and the threat of war always brings to the surface humanity's tribal passions. Men are destroyers as well as builders. While a father is proud to see his son in uniform, it is the mother's heart which bleeds. Only mothers, who give life, are preservers. Now is the time for them to try to preserve future generations. They are not power-driven creatures, they abhor violence. Indeed, women and children suffer the most from incessant wars germinated by men. More than an end to war, we want an end to the beginning of all wars, an end to this brutal, inhuman, and thoroughly impractical method of settling differences between nations. When will we learn the futility of trying to settle our differences with arms? Never!

We are continually being told that wars are waged to preserve our freedom, even at the cost of innocent lives. As long as there is war in some part of the world, there is no freedom. Wars are costly in human and material wealth. Before all else, we must solve this problem and establish freedom from fear, otherwise we will not have other freedoms. Freedom is an ideal that appeals to everyone. As long as there is life, as long as there is hope, the torch of freedom burns. It lights the fire in every human heart, and is put there by the hand of God when he created man a little lower than the angels.

The free man may not live in peace with his liberties as long as slavery exists on the face of the earth. The globe has shrunk. We are too close to one another to rule in separate caves upon separate hills. In a neighbourhood which encompasses the world of humans, we cannot secede from the human race, as brothers we were born, and as brothers we will die. Science has made the world a neighbourhood. We must now try to make it a brotherhood by acting and feeling as if the world were one family. Brotherhood is an ideal, something to work toward, but still, something we may never hope to attain. Before we can witness true brotherhood, we must strive for what we believe in, we must search for the truth about peace and its possibilities. We must resign ourselves to the fact that there is no easy way to peace, but we will be guided by the only

thing that makes us different from animals—REASON.

There is no doubt that individual freedom for the labouring masses is a mockery when gigantic debts and inflation forces them into false security. Those who know and understand the normal life of the poor will realize well enough that without economic security, liberty is not worth having. We call ourselves Christians, but our Christianity is for one day in the week, in a special building, while the rest of the week, business is business.

Under our capitalist system where competition is the game, ambition and greed have taken over, and are the enemies of peace. In a system like ours, only the fittest survive. How can we call a system democratic where there is no equality? Most of us fall by the wayside trying to compete with the almighty dollar. When does it pay to be honest when we are continually being flushed down the drain? If capitalism is encouraging this type of democracy, then it is time for a change. Even Churchill once remarked, "Capitalism has been a good work horse, but now it has turned into a milk cow."

In a world torn apart by hatred and vengeance, how can there be peace? There is no doubt that many civil wars are between capitalists and communists. We cannot overlook the fact that we live in a world where catastrophes occur without warning taking thousands of lives. Accidental deaths also take their toll, not to mention death from natural causes, which so often take our loved ones. We live in a valley of tears, so why add to its misery?

The trouble in the world is not necessarily communism or capitalism. It is the fault of the whole decaying political system. Unless an overall change of government is established, it may be too late. With the possibility of nuclear war facing us, we can no more depend on the United Nations. We cannot risk reliance on a method that has failed miserably and has never once succeeded in keeping the peace. If our government cannot bring peace, then it is time for a change. Universal peace can only be achieved when a democratic world order based on enforceable law is established because peace is order, and peace is law. Survival lies not in more weapons or in the arms of destruction.

Equally harmful are the confrontational words, which will someday ignite the spark that will set the world ablaze. Let us face the fact that there are four great enemies of peace which rule the world today. These are greed, ambition, hatred, and pride. If we can banish these, we can have peace. Peace is not merely the absence of war. Peace is made in the hearts of all humans. If we have no peace within our hearts, it is useless to seek it from an outer source. "Let there be peace and let it begin with me."



Appendices

“Wash Lampkin Died at Malta Hospital: Funeral on Saturday”³³

Funeral services were held Saturday in Malta for WW Lampkin, who died in a Malta hospital last week after a long illness. The service was at St Mary’s Episcopal Church and Rev W R Rush was the officiating clergyman. R V Tucker was in charge of burial arrangements. Interment was at the Malta Cemetery.

“Wash” Lampkin came to Montana in 1893 and was a native of Texarkana, Texas. Previous to his arrival here he worked for cattle outfits in Wyoming, in the vicinity of Beulah. He followed the same occupation here for a number of years and for a time was in partnership with Dudley Jones in the cattle business. Later he ran saloons in Malta, Dodson and Landusky. For the past ten years he has been postmaster and storekeeper at the Hog Ranch, near Phillips.

Lampkin was past 70 years of age. Relatives survive in Texas.



³³ “Wash Lampkin Died at Malta Hospital: Funeral on Saturday,” *Phillips County News*, June 2, 1932. Courtesy of the Phillips County Museum, Sharon Emond, Curator.

“Our People: Louise Trottier Moine”³⁴

Perhaps one of the greatest contributions to Native writing will be made by a Cree Metis woman who has been recently recognized for her work. Louise Trottier Moine is the second time winner of the Annual Native Writer’s Contest sponsored by the International Order of the Daughters of the Empire (I.O.D.E.).

Mrs. Moine’s stories are written in an easy going manner as she recalls her past and the times in which she grew up. Much of her writing indicates the slowly dying traditional lifestyles of the Native people over half a century ago.

Louise was born while her family was on the road since many of the Native people then were still able to lead a mobile lifestyle. She was the daughter of Patrick Trottier and Thalia Whiteford. Originally from the Lac Pelletier area, her family eventually settled near Val Marie, Saskatchewan.

In 1911 Louise entered the Lebret Indian Residential School where she remained for six years. Her winning manuscript in the 1975 Native Writers’ Contest is of her early life and education at Lebret and is entitled *My Life in a Residential School*.

In this story, she refers to her education at Lebret as being one of the four Rs: reading, writing, arithmetic and religion. Although her schooling may be considered institutional and somewhat harsh, Louise is not bitter and commented that youth allows one to forget much easier and she has found that much of what she learned helped her in later years.

After leaving Lebret in 1917, she attended high school in Ponteix where she obtained her Grade 9 which was then equivalent to Grade 12. Her family later moved to Val Marie and this is where Louise met Victor Moine. The two were married in 1932 and had three children—two daughters and one son.

The Moines spent most of their married life in Val Marie, but resided in the United States for a short period of time. Louise did not write at this time,

³⁴ *New Breed Magazine*, April 1977: 11.

but later when her children had grown up she found she had more and more spare time on her hands.

Although her writing has been a hobby for the last twenty years, it is only recently that she has undertaken it as a serious and rewarding pastime. Her first recognition came when she helped the community of Val Marie in compiling a local history in 1971. After what Louise refers to as “either compliments or flattery,” she began to write about many events in her past and present.

In 1975, she entered the first Native Writers’ Contest. This had been an idea of the Provincial Library who saw the need for more literature written for and by Native people. The I.O.D.E. at this time was searching for a suitable project to commemorate their 75th anniversary. They also realized how important it was to have this Native literature and felt that such a project would not only be worthwhile, but also could be expanded if the materials were published on a wide scale.

The contest was offered in four different categories: biography, history, humour, and fiction. It was open to anyone of Native ancestry who was a resident in Saskatchewan. The judging panel was to be composed of members of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians, the Association of Metis and Non-Status Indians of Saskatchewan, the Saskatchewan Arts Board, the Department of Culture and Youth as well as the Provincial Library.

When Louise first heard of the contest she had decided to write a story of her early life. She found this would be quite a task which would not be completed by the contest entry deadline and decided to instead write of her experiences in Lebret. Her entry, together with the other winning three, impressed many. It was a well-written story and provided an interesting insight into the residential school system. The other three winners wrote of legends and the traditional life before the arrival of the white man. Their work was well done. The four winning manuscripts were edited and then designed into attractive books with illustrations by some Saskatchewan Indian artists. Louise’s book was printed with some early photographs of the Lebret School.

Louise’s 1976 entry was entitled “Remembering Will Have To Do”

and is of her early home life. (*Note: this article was printed in the Dec. 76 issue of NEW BREED entitled "The Way It Was Then."*) The story starts out with Louise returning to her parents' homestead and recalling many of her childhood experiences. The Trottier family was still very mobile as were many Native families at that time. Louise deals with the many traditional life styles of her people.

Although the manuscript remains to be edited, it will also be published. The number of copies made is limited but the Provincial Library hopes to someday find a publisher for the work which could possibly be distributed to Saskatchewan schools.

This year Louise was presented her prize money by Dot Volding of the I.O.D.E. Ed Tchorzewski, the Minister in charge of libraries, was also in attendance. Mrs. Volding commented on the importance of work such as Louise's and the other winners. She said Native people have a very important contribution to make to the non-Native world of literature. The Minister also commented on how impressed he was with the winning manuscripts and looked forward to the 1977 contest.

Mrs. Moine said she enjoyed her writing and would continue to write as long as she could. She was pleased with winning the award and said she planned on entering once again. Writing, to her, is an opportunity to express herself. It also provides many worthwhile hours as she is able to totally involve herself in the stories.

Perhaps with the proper promotion and a willing publisher the works of Louise and the many other talented Native writers could reach many more people. The need for this is apparent as it would serve to provide much more meaningful literature to Native and non-Native alike.



*"Our People"*³⁵

Editor:

In regards to the write up "Our People" in the April issue of the NEW BREED I'm taking this opportunity to express my deep appreciation for the article concerning the brief history of my life and my involvement in writing.

I sincerely hope I deserve all the complimentary build-up you gave me, if not, I'll have to make every effort to live up to it.

Thanks ever so much Donna [Pinay] and to the rest of the staff.

Yours truly,
Louise Moine
Val Marie, SK



³⁵ *New Breed Magazine*, July 1977: 1.

Louise Moine (Née Trottier): Memories of Her Early Years in Southwest Saskatchewan near Present-Day Val Marie³⁶

(Lisa L. Dale) *LD*: Today is February ... what is it, the seventeenth?

LM: Supposed to be my Lucky day.

LD: Is it? According to the horoscope?

LM: I don't know where I got. But I got it marked on the Calendar; Lucky day. I would have gone to Swift Current...

LD: The year is 1993, and I'm going to be interviewing Louise Moine [née Trottier] at her home in Val Marie. My name is Lisa Dale. This is the second interview. The first one was done last fall by Thelma Poirier.

...

LD: Well, anyhow, we were talking about the "76" [Ranch] and we were trying to figure out who these Ryan and Sons were, but we just ... I don't know, you did not hear anything about this Ryan?

LM: No, I can't remember the name Ryan.

LD: But you were also saying that Mr. Degraw was a rider for the "76"?

LM: Yes, he was at a time but he had his own place. He was our neighbour, down you know, where we lived; where Buzz [Lloyd] Trottier was. But that's been sold.

LD: So he was south of you guys, still? Along the river?

LM: Degraw would have been north. Northwest, I guess.

LD: I'm just going to make a mark here [on the map]. Oh yeah, of course it is on here. What side of the river was his house on again? Here's Degraw, he has this whole half here.

LM: Oh yeah. His house was just on the same side of the river as ours.

LD: Oh it was, okay. Something else that I was just wondering if you could

³⁶ Lisa L. Dale. Second Interview at Louise Moine's home, February 17, 1993. Printed with permission from Grasslands National Park, Val Marie, Saskatchewan.

tell me about in a bit more detail; the last time we were here, you were telling us about how you used to dry your meat, and you would cut it into strips and dry it. So how would you keep the bugs off it? Or would that matter? And how would you, how long would you have to let it hang?

LM: Well it would have to dry awful fast and be cut awfully thin before the flies would get at it. Like my brother John used to say, "September is the best time because the flies don't lay eggs."

LD: Right, and maybe it would have frozen a bit?

LM: But I can't remember, my mother sliced it so thin, you know, and my dad would fix these poles and put them between other poles. Fix other poles and then put this meat [to] hang.

LD: And how high up would the meat be hung?

LM: Oh, high enough so the dogs, I suppose ...

LD: Could not jump up?

LM: We all had dogs then. Of course, we fed the dogs. They would have been bothering the dry meat.

LD: Yeah. So then you would do that to the extra meat that you had if you ...

LM: Generally, it was the round steaks that were all cut up. The bones, we boiled I suppose and they made soup or.

LD: And what other kinds of game would you eat?

LM: Oh, we ate deer. We also ate antelope. We ate rabbit. In the summertime, you know, certain times of the year were good. But there was that one summer they grew little water lumps. And we would not eat rabbit like that. We did not know what kind of a disease they had. And they all had it that one summer.

LD: Did it seem to kill them?

LM: Oh no.

LD: Or they just, they had blisters?

LM: You would go and cut them and cut one of these water blisters. Even when I was married we were still finding those. You know, the French have a good recipe for making, what do they call it, "*Lapin*" something? Mom used to make it, too.

They put in the blood of a rabbit, and this would turn the sauce brown. And she cooked this rabbit, and cooked it real good. And then makes the sauce: really good.

LD: So would she roast the rabbit or?

LM: In fact: one woman got a prize for it.

LD: Oh really?

LM: Long ago, you know. So she got first prize for this recipe for fixing rabbit. Well in the summer when you can't butcher, you can't eat meat. Of course, they had these, what do you call it ... One person butchers, maybe half a dozen people.

LD: Oh, a beef ring?

LM: Yeah, beef ring. They had them but we did not belong to anything like that. That was the farmers.

LD: So did you eat other things like whatever came along? Did you ever eat porcupines or badgers or anything?

LM: No, we never ate them. My dad used to like the beaver tails.

LD: Oh yeah. Now how did you prepare beaver tail?

LM: [laughter] I don't know.

LD: Was it a tender part?

LM: It was a flat [part]. You know [how] the beaver tails slap.

LD: And its got that skin, that tough skin on it.

LM: I imagine it is kind of fat. I would think, you know, to drop it in the water.

LD: Slap it down.

LM: And then there was another guy down here, Lemire. His son's still living. He's gone. He asked Vic if he had any muskrats, if he had killed any muskrats. Trapped. He said, "I'd like to have one." He said, "they're very good meat."

LD: Really?

LM: We never ate them.

LD: So he would eat the muskrats, eh?

LM: Now I remember one time frying a little gopher outside. We had killed this gopher and skinned it, and it was nice and fat. You know, actually gophers

just eat grass, you know. We put [it] on a stick and we kind of barbecued it.

LD: Uh huh. Do you remember what it tasted like?

LM: I suppose it was OK. It was just the three of us, my little brother, Joe. Joe's still living, you know. And Talia, of course she's gone now. We were the last three. We were always together. And we decided on this treat! We caught the gopher, I suppose, in a trap, or maybe, I don't know

LD: Snared?

LM: Snared. That was the one and only time we ate a gopher.

LD: That's what you do when you're a kid.

LM: But like I say, what is wrong with eating a gopher? Because in those years, of course, now they're poisoned, you don't see that many gophers. The farmers get rid of them.

LD: Yeah, there used to be more. Do you remember the prairie dogs?

LM: Well when we go there. Down there to the ... I have been there off and on. Not anymore. My husband used to like to go there.

LD: Were they there when you were a kid?

LM: Yeah, when I was a little girl, too.

LD: They were there too?

LM: Yeah. They're all over the flat there. You know, they go way on down there. That time we went on that tour. Every once in a while you would see another little colony of prairie dogs. They can spread pretty fast.

LD: So were there colonies ... Were there fewer colonies when you were a girl? Do you think there are more now?

LM: Oh it is just that one that I can remember the SNHS dog town.

LD: Oh really? So there would be more now.

LM: Yeah, I think there's more now.

LD: Yeah. Cause there's quite a few colonies. And how about the snakes? Were there always rattlesnakes in the valley?

LM: Not where we were. I have never seen any rattlesnakes around Val Marie. I saw a rattlesnake here in town [recently].

LD: Did you?

LM: Right in the corner. It was in the summer, of course, or in the fall. But, I think it was a dead one. Someone had killed it.

LD: But you don't remember them being a nuisance when you were a girl?

LM: No. No, because we had a lot of garter snakes. You never see them anymore either. And I was scared to death of snakes. So one time my husband comes home and he had a snake in his lunch pail. [Laughter] Holding this little snake.

LD: Surprised you?

LM: Yeah, I would not have held that snake. But after that "Oh" he says, "they're harmless."

LD: So when you went travelling around, like during the summer, you were describing sometimes you would just get in the wagon and you would go. Where would you go?

LM: We always went to visit someone. We were heading for some place. Sometimes we went north. We probably had relations up that way. Or we went to Willow bunch. That's where my mother's folks settled when they first came from Manitoba. They settled in Willow bunch and St. Victor. I can remember St. Victor. I had an aunt and her husband Lavallee drove the mail. He rode in a little democrat to Assiniboia and picked up the mail there. I don't know how far it would be. Possibly 18 miles [29 km], and bring the mail to St. Victor. And we stayed at his place off and on. My mother, naturally that was her sister, her younger sister.

LD: So they were close?

LM: Yeah. But he dropped dead. He was quite a heavy, heavy weight man.

LD: Did he have a heart attack?

LM: Must have. They adopted a little boy, they never had children, and this little boy, they sort of kept him. It was one of her brother's little son, you know.

LD: So one of your cousins then?

LM: Yeah. I remember this, it is quite dim in my memory, but I can remember.

They had a house and you know I would love to go back to St. Victor. Course probably that house would not be there. It was a good frame house, and there was an upstairs. I can remember there were a lot of bushes around there, you know. And we picked raspberries.

LD: They must, were they wild raspberries?

LM: Wild raspberries. I remember my aunt ... I don't know if she was related to me, but I called her my aunt, Mrs. Beaudry. She had picked a pail of raspberries, and we kids got into her raspberries, and ate about half of them. They tasted so good. Those wild ones really have flavour. They're much better than the ones you grow in the garden.

LD: Were there ever any Beaudrys? Mr. Cornet was mentioning a Beaudry ...

LM: That's a different Beaudry, Alfred.

LD: It is a different Beaudry, eh?

LM: They used to live on the flat here. But this Beaudry was way in Willow bunch, and east. And Mr. Beaudry used to live at ... He would know that Beaudry too, that lived at Gergovia. That's probably the one he's talking about.

LD: Yeah, it is.

LM: Yeah, that's the one that used to have this little bottle of moonshine and go from house to house and treat the ... It was during the flu. This was his treatment. Fix them a nice hot drink of this moonshine. Strong liquor.

LD: Yes, well you never know what cures you. Who knows?

LM: Well that's the first thing they would do. Give you a dose of salts and ... A child would not get a drink, mind you. An older person would get maybe a hot ginger. There was not that much liquor. You had to go a long ways to get good liquor.

LD: So what would he have made his moonshine out of? Who knows?

LM: Oh, tell me? I don't know how to make moonshine. My husband used to hear about how they made it. It is generally they could take wine or beer and boil it down to alcohol.

LD: OK, distil it even more. I was wondering to myself if you used the cactus berries.

LM: Oh yeah, those little berries that are on the cactus.

LD: On the pincushion cactus?

LM: Yeah. Oh yeah we used to pick them. Eat them. They're like gooseberries.

LD: And you would just eat them fresh or would you mix them up?

LM: We would just suck the juice out of them. Certain time of the year, you know, there's a lot around. But don't go around where the cactus are barefooted, [Laughter] they're sharp. There are a lot of them up in there past that 70 Mile Butte and past that, just right in there.

LD: In the valley there?

LM: Yeah, a lot of cactus.

LD: And you said there were gooseberries around?

LM: Wild gooseberries.

LD: Yeah.

LM: What I like the best are those wild black currants.

LD: Yeah, I have heard about them. Now where would you find [them]? Were they down along the river there somewhere?

LM: Down in the coulees.

LD: Yeah.

LM: Yeah, we call them "____ sauvages," wild currants. And they made the best pie. Whenever we picked some of those we would have a pie. Now, I have currants here, but they won't make pie. They haven't got any taste. They're just good to make a little jelly or jam or a little wine.

LD: Hey are those the same as the bushes in Mrs. Guillen's (sp?) place there? Those are those ...

LM: Yeah. Black currants.

LD: But they're not the wild ones, they're the kind that you have.

LM: No, they call them ... What is it they call them? They come from the states. There was not any, you know, last year. There was none.

LD: There were not. Did the blossoms freeze?

LM: There were no chokecherries, there were no gooseberries, there were no

currants, and my neighbour never had any either. Well I think the blossoms must have frozen.

LD: Yeah. Something happened to them. Did you ever ... like say you hear of people using wild onions to flavor their stew with?

LM: Yeah you can pick those wild onions.

LD: Yeah. Did you use them when you were a girl?

LM: Oh we used to pick them I suppose.

LD: Yeah. They're pretty strong, aren't they?

LM: Yes, I think they are.

LD: They're a lot stronger than tame onions.

LM: Yeah.

LD: And you were talking, there was a Beaudry that lived in the flat.

LM: Oh that was another Alfred. I think they came from Quebec. They moved away. They're the first ones that built that big house. And that big house they moved out, way out in the country.

LD: Which big house?

LM: A great big house something like you see, that big house there.

LD: That yellow one?

LM: Yeah. Something like that. Beaudrys, I think, built that. And there were different families that lived in there. Beaudrys left, Pressants lived. He was the head of the PFRA. He lived there a while. And then Fernand Nadeau lived there a while. And that was finally sold, Browns. There were four different families that lived there.

[Break]

LM: ... Boys. Mr. and Mrs. Long and they had a son, Phil and Wayne. Wayne, I think, is still living.

LD: Yes. He's in Malta. But he has Alzheimer's Disease.

LM: Yes, that's what I have heard. Because I tried to talk to him the last time I was there. I was in this bar. We usually go to the bar, Gail and I. And I saw him walk in, and I was gonna go talk to him, and they took off. Because one

time they come up here, Longs. And Mrs. Dunan, she was running the Centre. She phoned up here. She knew I had a piano. She said there's a group here that wants to play, tryout their instruments. And they wanted to know if they could come down. I said I really did not care one way or the other. I said if they want to come they can, because I knew them all. And they came ... Phil used to play the piano and the drums, and Wayne played kind of a flute, and there was another guy too, and some woman with a baby. I don't know if it was ... It was not Wayne's wife. Could have been Phil's that had the ... It was a married woman because she laid her baby on the bed and she sat there. She did not play an instrument. Those days we did not tape. You know, record. I often regret that. So much good music went by here.

LD: Well did you play the piano?

LM: I used to play the ... I hardly play. I don't practice now. I read music. Well, we took music when we were in Ponteix. My dad bought the first piano. He paid \$700.00 for a brand new piano.

LD: Wow, that's a lot of money!

LM: And we had it in Ponteix. And they moved it down here. The first music we had was an organ. A little organ, that's where we played. But they're more for hymn singing. My mother gave that organ to the church here, the first church. And when they bought their other organ, the United Church has their second organ, that little organ went to Frenchville. That was a good little organ. I have often thought if I could only get to Frenchville. But of course, they would have an electric organ there now. But maybe that little organ was some place there, you know. There is a little organ here too, you know. Mrs. Guillen (sp?), you've heard of her. One of her shacks, where we lived in that shack when I was first married. And when she bought the school, the Beaver Valley School, this organ was in there. And it was a good little organ because I played on it. You know, most of these schools had organs in there for the children. Not that any of them taught, well maybe some of them could teach music.

LD: But they could sing in school.

LM: Yeah, they were mostly singing, you know. They always sing at school. [We talk about playing the piano and buying new pianos from Blackwell, a Moose Jaw outfit.]

[Break]

LD: Let's see, back to this ... Do you ever remember the Long family, being, living down in the [valley]. Did you ever have much to do with them?

LM: No, not that much. You see the Longs ... Jim was pretty good; my brother Jim was the one that made friends with all those people and travelled down the ... He's the one that took his wife, and they had ____ and myself in a bobsleigh. It was in the winter. Course we stayed there, stayed there all night, and they played. They were a musical family the Longs. Mrs. Long played the piano, I don't know about him.

LD: So they played and you guys sang?

LM: Yeah. Our family used to sing like everything. That's what I used to enjoy, you know, when somebody played the piano and we would all stand around and sing, or even if I played, and they stood around and sang. But even today when they ask me to play, I'll say, "OK, if you'll sing, I'll play."

LD: It is a good deal.

[Break]

LD: Did you ever use sage when you were cooking to spice up your cooking?

LM: No, not the wild sage. But I imagine it is all right. We ate sage hens.

LD: And they tasted like sage, did they?

LM: No. You get the breast of a sage hen. It is like steak. They have such a thick breast. Hardly any legs, hardly any wings; It was all on the [breast] ... But you can't hunt them. They're protected by law. They're scarce. But my dad used to go out and shoot one or two with a small gun.

LD: Yes, and they were not protected then.

LM: No. And I can remember how good that meat was. You could fool anybody [to] think it was some steak.

LD: Another thing that I have heard was that ... There was the inner bark of some trees, like ... say the chokecherry tree, or ...

LM: You know, maybe you're thinking of Kinnikinik. My dad used to smoke [it]. It is kind of a red wood, grows in the coulees.

LD: A darker red than the willow?

LM: Yeah. He would take the top off and take the inner bark. And take that and dry it in the oven. And that was his tobacco. And I used to just love the smell of that. Smoking his pipe.

LD: And you know, another thing that Mr. Jacob was, well it was bothering him. He was trying to remember the name of that dried meat that you used.

LM: In Cree?

LD: Yeah.

LM: Kah-ka-wook.

LD: Kah-ka-wook. OK, I'll have to write that down in sort of.

LM: I don't know how you would say it. Kah k-a-hr ka k-a, wook. He knew a few Cree words, Jacob.

LD: He said that he did not realize he still knew them, but every once in a while a word would pop out. [Laughter] and he did not know where it came from, but it would ...

LM: I was telling you; maybe I told you the story of my dad travelling with these two little white heads. They were both white-headed, two little Belgian children. He said "I'd be going along," and he said "I'd meet an outfit maybe a car or another buggy and they'd look," he said they would look. And I bet they wondered, "What is that old Indian doing with these two little white kids?"

LD: I suppose they were as blond as could be from the sun?

LM: And they spoke French. I don't think Lucien [Jacob] can speak French today. 'Cause that's all he spoke when he came to our place. He was three-years-old and she was fifteen months.

LD: Really? Just a baby then.

LM: And then you see, she died having another baby. So the other baby was

adopted by some relatives. She was taken way down to Louisiana, I think Lucien and Lucy went down there, to go and see that little boy, I think it was a boy. Let's see Lucien, how old would he be now?

LD: Oh, seventy – uh... he told me... eight? Seventy-eight, does that ring a bell?

LM: And she was only about, well, a year and a half younger than him. So she would be in her seventies, too.

LD: He was telling me about some of the things he remembered just as a five-year-old, say. About when you would travel around in the wagon, and he said he remembered gathering duck eggs to cook.

[Laughter]

LM: Oh, yeah. Yeah, I had a boyfriend, and I was telling him about these duck eggs we would get. Now this might sound funny, you know, we would always pick them when they were half hatched. And, you know, and they were juicy. And they were just like clams. We were awful the way we raided those [nests]. We would get tubs of eggs. And that's the way we would eat them. Boil them and ...

LD: Yeah, well that's different.

LM: Yeah. But I would not think of it now. After all, we get eggs now, chicken eggs. I raised chickens for the longest time in back here. You see we had a big lot. [We talk about raising chickens and the problem of rats.]

[Break]

LD: And your first house was up on the hill, up above the river?

LM: Yeah. It was a storey and a half. One room down and one room up.

LD: OK, into the hill right?

LM: No, I call it a plateau. Still another hill up after that, and then you went down. We lived right there, and you could either come up that way or down this way. There were two roads. But now that's all ditch there. Sometimes I think I should go up there, but that's a big ditch running ...

LD: That plateau, yeah. It is hard to get ... So it was something like this then, and you lived here.

[We look at a rough diagram.]

LM: The river was about a quarter of a mile [.4 km]. Cause we used to run down and swim. But we could come up this way or come up the other way. It was just a little hill south of two coulees.

LD: Well that sounds like you had a good place for a house.

LM: But you know the main thing we did those years was we ... The flat was just, well it says right here. I got this from the Olson's. [Mrs. Moine looks at some family stories that she has collected for the latest edition of the Val Marie history book.] You know, when you think of it, like I was telling Gail today. We start to live in the past even when we're young. When he was a baby, I can remember we used to go to, do you know where McInnes live? There's a dam there. We used to go and get soft water. I was always a soft water fiend, melt snow and catch rain water. Anyway, we would go and get these _____ in a little Model T. Put a couple barrels in the back and I would sit there, and Gail was just a baby and I would look over those hills. My father was still living, 'cause I know he would ride those hills. And I thought, I was beginning to think of the past, you know. Heck I was just a young woman. Now when I think of it I just brush it away. I think, forget it. You know, you can't live that.

LD: No, you can't live [in the past], but you can certainly remember.

LM: I can remember so many things. I tell myself, how can I remember that? Travelling? How it used to be like when we first started. Even just about before I got married, we would start out in the car and I would say, "Gee, we could be starting out in the wagon here." You know, travel this way. Course that highway was not there. You would go over those hills and across. We would get to where they called the divide there, camp up there. I remember them brushing the snow away and putting up the tent. We always had a little camp stove. And my mother, we had a lot of bedding, you know. So [with] a lot of bedding, we were not cold. Once we would crawl into those blankets. They could not keep the fire going, you know, it was just a little camp stove. Had to wait till morning to get it going, and then we would, we never got any place that quick when you were travelling

by sleigh or horses. We would get to Cadillac and we would camp there too. And every time I go back, even to this day, I know the exact place where we camped; by Cadillac by that creek there. And then my mother would walk to the store. There used to be a Jewish store there in Cadillac. And that's where she ... She always figured she could deal with the Jews.

LD: She liked it, eh? She liked to deal?

LM: She was a ... She sewed, you know. She made all our clothes.

LD: What kind of tents did you stay in? Were they canvas?

LM: She made tents too. They were canvas tents. The bottom she had an extra strip all around so that you could bring it in.

LD: Bring it underneath.

LM: Yeah. Then she would put a canvas for the floor. We would always sleep on the ground, of course, we did not carry beds. When you're young, you can sleep any place. You would jump right up. Now I have a hard time getting up.

LD: So would you cut a tent pole then, wherever you were you would cut some poles, or ...?

LM: No, they carried those. They carried the big one, and extra one and then the other one. The only thing you needed was some posts to tie the rope.

LD: OK, some pegs. So then you would have one post on one end of the tent, and then a ridge pole sort of along? You would have a post here, and one here, and one here?

LM: Yes. And the tent was not that high. It was just about like that. And then we would have these posts here to tie these ropes you see. She might have four ropes. And then there would be a little hole for the little stove.

LD: OK. So the pipe would go up through this hole.

LM: Yeah. Then she would have extra canvas here to close the door.

LD: And you could close it very well so that no air would.

LM: Tents were well made. Course you could buy a good tent now.

LD: So then you would take it down and fold it up. You would put the canvas down after you would set the tent up, on the floor I mean?

LM: Well yeah. After the tent is up you put the canvas on the floor. She always had this tarp. Canvas was cheaper I think. We always had two tents; one for the boys, one for the girls. Throughout the summer, they were pitched throughout the summer, so we slept outside most of the time, in the tent of course.

LD: So even when you were at home where your house was, you still sleep outside in the tent?

LM: Yes, throughout the summer. Do you know that my sister lived through the winter in two tents?

LD: Really? No.

LM: But she claimed that her home was warmer, but I think it is solar heat you see, the sun hitting the tent. And it was warmer than some of the shacks that those half breeds lived in. She lived across the line.

LD: What was she doing?

LM: We moved to ... 1924 we moved to Malta. She herself was about 16, and Joe was about 14. But I did not go with them, I went the next year.

LD: And is that when she lived in a tent?

LM: No. I figure I was the best off when I was with my folks. My folks worked hard, but we were a big family.

LD: There was always something to eat and you always had clothes?

LM: Oh yeah. Had a lot of clothes, had lots to eat. We had lots of horses, well and we had the cattle, notwithstanding the fact that we robbed the "76." [Laughter.] I remember, maybe I told you the story when my dad. My mother pushed my dad. My dad was a little different, you know. He was more... Oh I don't know. She told him, "You'd better go butcher a calf. We need some meat." So away go Talia and I and him with the wagon, went to the "76," and we hung around there till we spotted a little calf. Well, it would be a good-sized calf. And [he] shot it, and started skinning it. And we were supposed to sit on the hill and watch that nobody came!

LD: So you were lucky that nobody did come.

LM: Nobody showed up.

LD: That's good.

LM: We had some nice veal anyway.

LD: I suppose the "76" had so many calves to keep an eye on it would have been hard for them to.

LM: Yeah, they would not have missed it ... I mean, how could they? It shows on the picture of the "76" where they had the dipping...

LD: Oh, the dipping vat.

LM: The dipping vat.

LD: Do you remember that? Do you remember when they rounded up all those cows and?

LM: Oh yes. [We look for photocopied pictures of the dipping vat.] These are the houses that they built, you see.

[Break]

LD: We're just talking about the "76" again, and you were remembering the big tents.

LM: Yeah, well I can remember the big tents when we went to... We had to take our cattle to dip. All the farmers had to ... Sort of a sickness. "Mange," they called it. And the "76" had built this dipping vat, where they just [plunged] down. It was a kind of sulphur. And they just, down they went and they swam all the way across. I would say here to that gate.

LD: Oh really?

LM: That's as far as they would swim, then they would get out again and they would be all yellow.

LD: They would be all drenched in sulphur?

LM: Dumped right in there. I don't know if there's anything left up there, the "76." Course it is all fenced now. How can you get in any place, you know. But nobody lives out there. The Hutterites took, that's what they call the Sand Lake Colony. And then from there on, hardly anything till you get to Chandlers. Chandlers have a beautiful place. It is just like an oasis in the desert. And they keep it nice, too.

LD: So you were saying you remember the cowboys would camp out at the dipping vats and they would have a cook tent and some sleeping tents?

LM: Yes. And they would move camp. See, they would move from one to another.

LD: I imagine they would have their chuck wagon, or whatever, to haul all the things in?

LM: Yeah. Every time they moved, my mother would go and, I suppose I told you that one. We would gather all the dried fruit and bacon. I suppose they would rather eat fresh meat. But we would get beans, dried beans you know. And there would be some ham, bacon.

LD: They would just leave it behind?

LM: Yeah. Maybe they knew we were going to get it, I do not know.

END OF TAPE



Ron Miksha, *Bad Beekeeping*³⁷

Mrs. Moine, Buzz [Eldon] Trotttier's aunt, had seen this all before.

"It is a circle, God's circle," she said. "You get good times, then bad times, then good times again. It is the way things will always be."

Mrs. Moine made rose hip tea for us. She had saved last fall's red bulbs from the wild roses that cluttered the roadside east of town. Mrs. Moine boiled and strained the tea, served it on china. We sipped the tea in her house, two doors west of my own tiny home.

Louise Moine handed me her book, a story that told of her family's arrival from Manitoba, part of a group that fled the British Canadians when they seized her parents' land near Winnipeg. I opened her book, *Remembering Will Have to Do*. Half the words were in English, but every second column was printed in the blocky Cree alphabet, where triangles, squares, and circles caught my eye.

"You can read this?" I asked her.

"I wrote it," she said. "English and Cree." She dripped more honey into her tea, stirred it again. "It is going to be dry this year, Ron. And windy."

I objected. Surely it would rain during the summer. And we had had a flood.

But the prairies dried up.

"Just like the Thirties," said Louise Moine, "The circle goes again..."



³⁷ Ron Miksha. *Bad Beekeeping*, Victoria: Trafford Publishing, 2004: 199-200. *Bad Beekeeping: Read the Book*. Chapter 18, "Dust Clouds," http://www.badbeekeeping.com/bb_exc18.htm.

“Louise Moine celebrates 100th Birthday”³⁸

Louise (Trottier) Moine celebrated her 100th birthday with family and friends in Val Marie, Sask., Canada, this summer.

She was born Sept. 24, 1904 in Saskatchewan, Canada to Pat and Talia Trottier.

In 1926 she worked for the Hog Ranch south of Malta for “Wash” Lampkin, cooking and helping to take care of the post office and store there.

Louise traveled extensively in Europe, Montana, Washington and California. She married Vic Moine from France in Val Marie.

Louise began writing books about 15 years ago and has published works, including “Remembering Will Have To Do.”

The Moines had three children, two girls and one boy.

She now makes her home in Pontix [*sic*], Sask. nursing home and is visited by many nieces and nephews. Among them are those living in Malta, including Maxine Trottier, Shirley Eklund, Tasha Murphy and a cousin, Leonard Whiteford.



³⁸ *Philips County News*, Malta, Montana, November 24, 2004: 5. <http://pcn.stparchive.com/Archive/PCN/PCN11242004P05.php>.

“Final deal to compensate residential school
students reached”³⁹

OTTAWA (CP) _ A final deal has been reached that will offer about \$2 billion in compensation and healing programs for former students of native residential schools.

“The government will now immediately consider the settlement agreement and the interim payments and the timing of those payments,”

Indian Affairs Minister Jim Prentice said Tuesday in the Commons.

The deal must be cleared by cabinet, a formality that’s expected within days. It must then be approved by courts in several provinces.

If upheld and accepted by enough survivors, the agreement would allow about 78,000 people to apply for compensation. Many are over age 65 and living in poverty.

The money could allow Louise Moine, 101, to return home to Val Marie, Sask., from her care home in Ponteix.

“She has nothing,” said her daughter Jacquie Richards. “All she wants to do is go home.”

“I feel happy,” said Moine, who wrote a book about her experiences in the Qu’Appelle Industrial School in Lebret, Sask. “What else can I say? It is pretty good.”

Payments are not expected before early next year even if the legal process goes smoothly.

Prentice has been pressured by opposition critics and survivors’ groups to offer advance or fast-track cheques as promised last November when an interim deal was announced by the former Liberal government. ...



³⁹ Sue Bailey, *Canadian Press Newswire*, April 26, 2006. Cited in *Indian Residential Schools Resolution Canada Media Clips*, April 27, 2006: 12-13. http://archives.algomau.ca/drupal6/sites/archives.algomau.ca/files/2010-061_003_086.pdf#page=1&zoom=auto,0,201.

“Settlement pleases residential school victim”⁴⁰

A survivor of Indian residential school abuse is pleased to hear she’ll finally be getting compensation from the federal government.

“I feel happy. What else can I say?” said Louise Moine, 101, from her care home in Ponteix in southwest Saskatchewan. “It is pretty good.”

Federal Indian Affairs Minister Jim Prentice announced Tuesday that victims of residential school abuse would receive \$2 billion in compensation. About 80,000 people who went to the schools are still alive, and about 16,000 of them filed Indian residential school claims against the Canadian government.

Each former student will receive \$10,000 as well as \$3,000 for each year they spent in a residential school. According to the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN), the more than 3,000 claimants in Saskatchewan will get an average of \$25,000 each.

Moine could use the \$31,000 she is to receive to move back to her home in Val Marie. She is in a wheelchair and needs special care. Her daughter, Jacquie Richards, said the compensation might cover the costs of a wheelchair lift and home care.

“She has nothing. All she wants is to go home (to Val Marie). That’s the only place she wants to be,” said Richards.

Moine spent seven years in a residential school, where she said she was strapped by the nuns and never had enough to eat. “I was skinny. They used to call me ‘skinny baboon.’ We only ate lard once a week, and the only thing we had to eat was bean soup,” she recalled. She wrote about her experiences in *My Life in a Residential School*, which was published in 1975. She and her nine siblings were sent to the Qu’Appelle Industrial School in Lebret. She is the only one from the school still alive to receive compensation.

⁴⁰ Sarah MacDonald, *The Saskatoon StarPhoenix*, April 27, 2006. Cited in *Indian Residential Schools Resolution Canada Media Clips*, April 27, 2006: 10. http://archives.algomau.ca/drupal6/sites/archives.algomau.ca/files/2010-061_003_086.pdf#page=1&zoom=auto,0,201.

The FSIN is glad that years of hard work to get compensation finally paid off. “I’m very, very excited for the survivors,” said vice-chief Morley Watson. “We hope that the government can move forward as quickly as possible, because Lord knows the survivors have waited a lifetime to get what they’re going to get.”

In response to Tuesday’s announcement, the provincial government said compensation payments from the federal government would not affect current income support benefits, including the Saskatchewan Assistance Program and the Transitional Employment Allowance.

“The Saskatchewan government recognizes this is about a unique situation,” said Buckley Belanger, the minister of community resources. “This is about addressing a historical wrong and these people have waited a long time for compensation.”



“Southwest author remembered fondly”⁴¹

Louise Trottier-Moine was a gifted writer, and a source of constant encouragement for her friends. She was fiercely proud of her Metis heritage, a voracious learner, and knew how to tell a dirty joke.

For all of these things, she is missed.

Trottier-Moine passed away Sept. 2, three weeks before her 102nd birthday. She was the province’s oldest surviving former residential school student, and wrote about her time there in her book *My Life in a Residential School*, published in 1975. Her second book, *Remembering Will Have to Do*, was published in 1979, and details a vivid recollection of her childhood. Her books are a personal record of the early 20th century in the Lac Pelletier Valley, the residential school in Lebret and the community of Ponteix, but reveal an important and little-recorded history of the region.

A student of the residential school between the ages of seven and 12, she wrote both positive and negative memories of her time there. Trottier-Moine was never sexually abused at residential school, but she wrote about the strappings and confinement that were doled out as punishments, going home to Lac Pelletier with head lice, and the students that died of tuberculosis. What bothered her most of all—what she would talk about the rest of her life—was the malnourishment of the students at the Lebret school. She lamented in her book and in her story telling later that they were not fed properly, and the gruel, dry bread and tea of the institution were a poor substitute for the bannock and butter she ate at home with her parents. She developed rickets at school, and said it resulted in one of her legs being shorter than the other. Students would milk the cows and churn the butter, which the priests and nuns would eat, and sell.

“In the dinning room we said Grace before and a short prayer of thanks after we ate. For what?” she wrote, “... Although the boys milked the cows, we

⁴¹ Aasa Marshall, *Prairie Post*, October 13, 2006.

never ate butter or drank whole milk. It was common knowledge that the butter was being sold to the villagers. Why was it sold when the children went without?"

Trottier-Moine was eligible for residential school compensation from the government from the federal government, but did not receive it before she died.

Though she recalled the hardships endured under the watchful eye of the school staff, the last page of her book says "they were not wasted years." It was at school that she gained her love of reading and learning, and she retained her thirst for knowledge for the rest of her life. Even at 101 she wore glasses only to read, and it was her ability to continue reading and keep up with current events that kept her mind sharp.

Cecile Blanke, a friend of Trottier-Moine's who gave her eulogy, believes that if her books were written today she would have written them differently, perhaps being more candid of the wrongs done to the students who attended the schools. Blanke said the loss of culture and language was hard on Trottier-Moine who resented losing the ability to communicate with her grandparents who did not speak English.

Married to French immigrant Victor Moine in 1932, Trottier-Moine settled in Val Marie. The couple had three children, Jacquie, Gail and Gloria. When Victor died in 1973, Blanke said, she became more active in Metis culture, and reconnected with her family.

The oldest child, Jacquie Richards, said she admired her mother's ability to stand up of herself and her values, and her pride in her Metis heritage. Richards, 72, said she was many things: honest, compassionate, forgiving, and ever-active in her community. Writing was her passion, and she wrote in her diary everyday. Nearing the end of her life, Trottier-Moine's journal entries became illegible, but there are remaining manuscripts that Richards plans to publish in the future.

Richards said her mother's generous nature knew no bounds. Once, when Trottier-Moine and her son Gail were travelling to Regina to visit Richards, she insisted that he pull over and pick up a hitchhiker. They

had brought along a cake to give to Richards, but fed half of it to the new passenger before reaching the city.

“I thought gee, she’s taking a big risk,” recalled Richards. “She thought it was hilarious.”

Trottier-Moine was “all-forgiving” Richards said, and “figured you only hurt yourself when you dislike someone.” She was involved in quilting bees and the Homemaker’s club, and was a staunch socialist who once had Tommy Douglas over for tea.

“She was active in everything,” Richards said. “I can never remember seeing her moving slow. She was never tired.”

The last three years of her life were spent at the Foyer St. Joseph Nursing Home in Ponteix. Nurses there remember her wit, her candidness, and her propensity for off-colour jokes. In the pale pink common room of the Foyer, she could hold the attention of the room with her stories, made vivid by her lucid recollections.

Trottier-Moine’s memory meant that her friends and family got away with nothing. When Blanke began the process of having a plaque placed at Lac Pelletier to commemorate the Lemire family who lived there, Moine gave her the first \$20 to get the project started.

“What are you doing about that plaque?” she would ask each time Blanke visited. “You had better see that it gets done.”

The constant encouragement is what Blanke said she will [miss] most.

“It was like, ‘don’t stand still, keep moving,’ said Blanke.

Richards said she will remember her mother’s insistence that she be proud of her background, and that she’ll miss the simple things.

“I’ll miss her smile,” she said. “She had a beautiful smile.”



Kathy Grant Interview, December 19, 2011

...

Kathy Grant (KG): My name is Kathy Grant and I am from Orkney, which is about 25 miles (56 km) from Val Marie. I'm originally from Val Marie, and I was a Trottier. I was raised here in the community. My parents were Buzz [Eldon] and Mary Trottier. My dad, Buzz, was not born here, but he was raised here. My grandfather, John, his father, homesteaded here. My mother is Irish, and she is from the Climax area, which is about 45 minutes from here. And my grandparents were John and Anastasia Trottier. My grandfather homesteaded here in 1914. And they made a homestead here. And my grandmother was from the Gros Ventres [Fort Belknap Reservation] reservation south in Montana, and she was a Gladu.

...

Darren Préfontaine (DP): Did or does anyone in your family speak Michif?

...

KG: I heard that word "Michif" probably maybe 15 years ago. And that was through my great-aunt Louise Moine. And she talked about the Michif language, but other than that I had never heard of that before.

DP: When your grandparents were by themselves they would have spoken French or Cree together?

KG: They spoke Cree.

DP: So their Métis orientation was more of a Cree-First Nations than a French orientation?

KG: Yes, absolutely.

DP: Did anyone in your family serve in the military?

KG: Yes. My grandfather John Trottier served in both the First World War and in the Second World War. And then my dad's oldest brother, Lloyd, he served in the Second World War. He was very young, but he did serve overseas. My grandfather never ever went overseas, but my uncle did. Joseph Trottier, my

grandpa's youngest brother, served in WWII as well. They're the only ones that served.

DP: Did they receive any help at all being veterans from the government or were they kind of shunned?

KG: I don't know about my grandpa. My dad never ever said that, but I know my uncle Lloyd. I wish my dad was here because he knew the trouble that Uncle Lloyd went through. I don't know if it was because he lived in the States, because he lived in Whitefish, Montana. But I know he had to come up here, and my dad helped him with Veterans Affairs. I don't know. They never said that he was shunned, but I know they had trouble getting assistance, or something but I never really questioned it, I just remember them talking about it.

DP: So your family, there's a lot of ties between Montana and Saskatchewan and back and forth?

KG: Yes, quite a bit.

DP: Were a lot of your relatives dual citizens?

KG: I'm not sure if they were dual citizens. I know my grandmother was born in the US. And then they were married down in Malta, Montana. Some of the kids went to school down there. My dad's one sister went to school there. Are they dual citizens? I'm not sure, but most of them were born up here. There were ten siblings in my dad's family. But most of them, three out 10 lived in Canada, and the rest all lived in the States. ... My grandmother was raised on the Gros Ventres Reservation.

...

DP: How were the Métis treated in your community? Did you or your family ever encounter racism from the larger community?

KG: Yes, we lived in a very dominate French-Catholic village. And my dad talked about it quite a bit. He was taught by the nuns in school, and he said that he was finally accepted when they realized that he could sing, and he had a gift for his voice and sort of a natural born singer, entertainer. He could play lots of instruments. His nickname was "Little Buzzo." He was gifted very musically, and was well accepted

then by the nuns. They did not come to town very often. They were about 5 miles (8 km) south of town; where we were raised on this ranch. And he said when they used to come to town, the comments they would say were like, “The Indians were coming.” But the Indians were coming to town and what they would do is run to the window to see who the Indians were. He said as we got older we realized they were talking about us. Yes, there was quite a bit of racism. And, there was some when we were growing up as well. We heard the name calling like “Half-Breed” and “wagon burners,” and “dirty Indians,” and that was my generation.

DP: Would you say that it has gotten better, like say for your grandchildren’s generation? Like now you’re just Mister—

KG: I think so, yes. There’s just not that many of those dominate French-Catholic families left here. ...

DP: And that’s where most of that came from?

KG: Yes that’s where it came from. You did not hear it so much from the English-speaking people than you did from the French. The French dominated here at one point. There were only three Métis families, and they were the John Trottier, Joseph Trottier, and the Louise Moine families.

...

DP: You mentioned a love of music in your family. Did that come from your father or your grandpa?

KG: No, it came from my grandpa, John. My grandma, Anastasia was musical, too. She was a piano player and my grandpa was a fiddle player. Grandpa’s brother, Max was a fiddle player as well. So they used to play at all the little rural schoolhouses. My dad’s brothers and sisters are musical. ... And a lot of parties happened at my grandparents’ place when the bar shut down. ... My dad was a fiddle player, too, and he played all those jigs that my grandpa played. I would think they were like a Métis jig because a lot of them did not even have names. My dad would say, “I’m going to play one of your grandpa’s fiddle jigs,” and we were like, “okay.” So I never knew what the names were. I just knew how they went. They were definitely jig-type music.

DP: Did your grandparents and your dad sing the old traditional songs too or just whatever was popular in their generation?

KG: I think what was popular in their generation. I remember my grandpa playing the fiddle, but just the jig-type music. Yes, they used to do some singing, but I can't remember what the songs were called. I could probably find that out from my dad's older sisters because a couple of them are still alive.

...

As a kid, I realized that racism existed. I really felt that my grandma wanted us to fit in. So she kept her past and how she was raised a secret. She did not want to share it because she did not want us to be talking about it so that would be more reason for people to make fun of us. She wanted us to really fit into the white people's ways. She used to say that, "You want to get along with these white people," she would say that to us. Because we would ask grandma, "How come they are calling us wagon burners?" The worst ones were the ones that lived right next door to her.

...

One thing I should mention is that my great-grandpa, Patrice was the last buffalo hunter. He was the one that went on the last buffalo hunt in the area in 1883.

...

DP: I heard that your family had such expert knowledge of the land that they guided all the pioneers and farmers and ranchers to their sites. Is that true?

KG: Well I have heard that, too, but I don't know exactly which ones. I have heard that the Trotters were scouts. But I never heard who that was: if it was Patrice or John, Jim or Max.

I don't know. What I remember people talking about was when my family used to be in the Lac Pelletier area. They would stay there for a month, and they would move on, and they would come back, and they never really settled there, but that was one of their stopping places. ...

DP: So they moved quite a bit in south-western Saskatchewan before they finally settled in Val Marie?

KG: Yes because my dad was born on the Red Pheasant Reserve, up by Willowfield. I don't even know if it is there any more, but up by Battleford at Red Pheasant Reserve. ... So I knew they were kind of migratory and nomadic.

DP: Were they mainly scouts, guides, ranchers, cowboys, that sort of thing?

KG: They were all of those things, scouts, guides, ranchers, and cowboys.

DP: In terms of the ranching aspect, was that the main area of your family's operations after Patrice came out west?

KG: Yes, they had lots of horses. They were still there when my dad came back to the ranch in 1965. He came and took over the ranch for good. Like he used to come back in the summers before that and help with the haying. But then he came back in 1965, and there was just this big herd of horses there. I still remember that. They were my grandpa's. And he would use these horses for like rodeo stock, supplying rodeo stock to the rodeos in the area.

DP: Did they ride in the rodeos, your family?

KG: Yes. My dad's oldest brother Lloyd was the, well they said he was, could have been a world champion bronc rider.

DP: And your dad and your brothers did too?

KG: Yes, my dad and brothers did. They did more of the calf roping and barrel racing, not so much the bronc riding.

....

Louise Moine made her own wine. And a lot of people thought it had a medicinal quality to it. I don't know that for sure. Maybe, it just numbed the pain. She used to make dandelion wine and Saskatoon wine. She had all kinds of different wines that she made. I never tasted them, but I know people commented on them, that they were good and strong.

...

DP: Did any of your family go to a residential school?

KG: Yes, my grandpa did, and all of his family like Louise [Moine] and that whole generation.

DP: Did they face any traumatic experiences?

KG: Yes. They were so traumatic that they did not speak about them. But what I do know is that my great-grandmother, Tillie wanted her children to be educated so she willingly wanted her kids to go. I know some did not want their children to go, and they were taken away and forced to attend. That was not the case in my grandpa's family because I don't think the kids wanted to go, but the mother wanted them to go. She knew that they would, and I know Louise talked about this, she said, "We would benefit from the education." And like, she said, "My mother knew that so that's why she let us go or that's why she made us go"

DP: Louise wrote about her sister Talia, too?

KG: Yes, she did. I interviewed Louise probably back in 2000 or 2002. We talked about that. She said, "I resented my mother for sending me, but then I was grateful once I got my education because it made me be accepted into society."

DP: I interviewed another person who said that Louise faced quite a bit of adversity and racism. Was she finally able to overcome that? Because I noticed when we were in the meeting, pretty much everyone had a lot of respect and reverence for her soon as her name was brought up. She kind of became the community elder in the end, would you say?

KG: Absolutely.

DP: So that was just universal respect?

KG: Yes, I do think so.

DP: Okay, that took a lifetime to get that.

KG: Yes, it did.

DP: Because she faced quite a bit, I talked to Jacquie [Richards] and she said her mother faced a lot of real ugly moments in that community.

KG: I really believe that. But, she was very you know, well respected at the end. I remember we had a 90th birthday party for her. My dad was still alive at that time, and it was just a huge turn out by the community, which shocked me. Everybody came because it was Aunt Louise's 90th birthday. They did not

even think twice that she was Aboriginal or anything like that. It was here's somebody who's 90 and we need to come and celebrate it. And it is funny, because, I don't know, if Jacquie talked about this, but when they first put her in the old folks home in Ponteix, she was really put out. Louise said, "How dare they put me with all those old people in there?" She was way older than they were, by ten, 15 years. We laughed about that. I remember talking with Jacquie and laughing about that. She said, "Mom was really put out about that." I remember her saying, "All these old people but mom's way older than them." That was kind of comical.

...



Jacquie Richards Interview, January 23, 2012

Jacquie Richards (JR): My name is Jacquie, Jacqueline Richards, and I am from Val Marie.

Darren Préfontaine (DP): And what's your maiden name Jacquie?

JR: Moine.

DP: Who were your parents and grandparents and where they from originally?

JR: My dad was from France. My mother was born at Saskatchewan Landing, which is around Swift Current now. And her parents were from Manitoba. ...

DP: And was your mother's name? And your maternal grandparents' names?

JR: Maternal was Tilly Marie Whiteford and my grandfather was Patrice Trottier.

DP: And your mother was Louise?

JR: Yes.

DP: Did anyone or does anyone in your family speak Michif? I know your mother did.

JR: No, just mom.

DP: It pretty much stayed with her generation?

JR: Yes.

DP: Do you think the discrimination in the area ensured that they abandoned Michif and did not pass it on?

JR: When she [Louise] went to residential school they were not allowed to speak Cree so it was English. Then she married my dad who was French. So there was no Cree spoken or Michif. That's what mom spoke. So, therefore, we were not exposed to it at all really.

DP: So you, your mom and dad might have spoken French together?

JR: Once in a while yes.

DP: But generally, English was spoken in the home.

JR: Yes.

DP: From what you can remember and what your mother told you, how were the Métis treated in your community, Val Marie? Did your family encounter racism from the larger community?

JR: Yes.

DP: Was it quite systemic? Did it occur all the time?

JR: No, I think because my dad was white, he was really respected, being from France and he was white. When I was very young, I was called a “Half-Breed,” and told I would go to purgatory and burn in hell because I was not Catholic. But it did not last. As I grew up, somebody must have addressed it because it quit. By the time I was 8 or 9, I never heard any more of that to my face. I heard about things said behind my back, about being a Half-Breed, but not to my face. No taunting.

DP: And were there a lot of Métis families in Val Marie or was it mainly just your family and a few others?

JR: Just my family and my cousins. My mothers’ brother and his wife, they had ten children. They were both Métis, so my cousins were treated really badly. They were always put down, and were called “Half-Breeds.” They were not treated very well at all.

DP: So your Trottier extended family experienced racism more than you yourself or your siblings?

JR: Yes.

DP: And you attribute that to your father being non-Aboriginal?

JR: Right.

DP: How did your mom and dad meet? Did your dad come out west, to Canada, to farm?

JR: He came to Canada because there were already people here from France. His brother-in-law was already here along with an older couple, and they were already farming. And so daddy came and he met my mother, about three years after he came, and married her. He said while he was in school all he ever did was read comic books on the Indians and bows and arrows, and the cowboys in

Canada. So he was attracted to the Indian culture, the Indian life. It was rather ironic that he should come and marry a Métis woman. But, that was his life.

DP: He was very tolerant and already had an appreciation before he came here of Aboriginal people.

JR: Definitely.

DP: Other than the Trotters and their extended family were there other Métis people in the vicinity or just basically your own extended family?

JR: That's all, my own extended family. I can't think of anyone else who had Indian blood.

DP: Do you know or remember any traditional Métis stories or songs?

JR: They told a lot of Boogeyman stories about carrying the Wandering Jew across the river. A lot of, I don't know where they got these stories from, but they would scare us with them.

DP: Did they tell them a lot during Lent?

JR: No.

DP: What sort of resources did your family harvest? Did your family live off the land, did your mom and dad hunt or did they trap?

JR: Dad was a trapper, and he farmed for a while, then he worked for the PFRA, and then for the Department of Highways.

DP: Did your mother harvest resources like berries and all that stuff?

JR: Oh yes.

DP: Tan hides?

JR: Daddy did all that. Tanned the hides, and mom just loved picking berries, making jellies and jams, and she also took in ironing for the people at the hotel. I remember she ironed white shirts.

DP: What sort of traditional medicines were used in your community or family? Did your mom use any traditional medicines to make people feel better?

JR: Well some old cod liver oil. We had a woman from Belgium, Mrs. Carlier who was a nurse. She made powders that were good for the flu. And I think most of the people in Val Marie used her medication, and it was good.

DP: Did anybody in your family make beaded or embroidered moccasins or other items? Did anyone embroider? Did your mom do any of that?

JR: She embroidered, but she learned all that at the residential school—how to embroider, how to darn, how to sew, how to do all those things, handiwork.

DP: So you generally wore more Euro-Canadian type clothing?

JR: Yes.

DP: How did your family celebrate special occasions and holidays such as Christmas, Easter, and New Year's? Now you said you were not Catholic. Were your mom and dad Catholics?

JR: They were both Catholic. Daddy really was agnostic. Momma had left the church when there was an episode when her sister died. The priest would not bury her sister. I think it was then that she lost faith in the Catholic Church, and started going to the United Church. Christmases were usually quiet, in a French tradition. We had goose instead of turkey. And New Year's Eve, Christmas was a little more quiet.

DP: New Year's was the big gathering?

JR: Yes. Just with that couple from France and my uncle and my mother, but not with the Trottiers.

DP: So it was during New Year's when your mother got together with her family?

JR: No, it was more through the years that she was with her family quite a bit. Christmas and New Year's was with the Verreaults—Daddy's French relatives. My dad was not a very sociable person. He did not like visiting, going out for dinners, and having people over, and he was a loner. He was like an Indian really.

DP: Not like the Métis who liked big parties.

JR: Oh, he did not like any of that.

DP: Because I imagine the Trottiers would've had a lively Christmas party and New Year's.

JR: Yes, exactly.

DP: Was your mom involved in the Métis society or were you or any of your siblings?

JR: I think my mother was.

DP: She was? So when they were founding it in the '30s or '40s or more after, like say the '50s or '60s?

JR: Probably more after, the '60s. I got married, and I left home when I was 17. There were a lot of things that went on that I was not aware of. I know mom was very active in everything. She was always off to Batoche and to all these Indian pow wows, or to Fort Qu'Appelle, wherever there was a gathering of Métis or anything like that. Mom was always involved. And my dad would go with her.

DP: Was he supportive of your mom's culture?

JR: Very.

...

DP: Was your mom a good horse person?

JR: Yes, when she was younger.

DP: Was that something that she passed down or just kind of stayed with her?

JR: No, it just stayed with her. I could not ride a horse.

DP: She definitely rode a horse as long as she was able to.

JR: Yes.

...

DP: How many children did your mother and father have?

JR: Three.

DP: All girls?

JR: No, I have a brother. He died two years ago. And you know it is funny I never asked him if he ever encountered any racism. We never talked about it.

DP: No one in your family talked about racism or Métis identity?

JR: No.

DP: You only really brought it up in the context of your mom sort of thing?

JR: Yes, it was not the topic of conversation for some reason. Although I remember when I was called that name, and I think Mom had a few run-ins

sometimes because I remember her putting her coat on and her hat and saying, “We’ll see about this.” And all I could hear between her and Daddy was that somebody must have made a remark about her, or me or the kids. I’m not sure what happened, but she took care of it. My mother was very outspoken.

DP: And she stood up to people.

JR: Yes, she did.

DP: Do you think that garnered her respect in the community?

JR: Not in the beginning.

DP: But over time?

JR: Over time, I think they learned that you have a right to say what you think. Even though it was very political, it did not make her very popular. She said what she thought, and that’s respect, but she was a smart woman. You know it took me a long time to realize it. My mother had a backbone, and she was aggressive. She would go after what she wanted and what she believed in. And what she believed in was the way she lived.

DP: And for her time, being a woman, she actually had a pretty good education compared to—?

JR: She did.

DP: Compared to other women, non-Métis women that lived around her, she was probably much better educated.

JR: Well that’s true because she had her Grade 9. She did not quite finish Grade 9, but that was a lot.

DP: For a woman of her generation.

JR: Yes, it was.

DP: Is that something she took pride in?

JR: No. She never said too much about that. Momma never bragged about anything, ever.

DP: Very humble.

JR: Yes, and she never lied. She could tell you a joke ten times and not a thing would change.

DP: Always consistent.

JR: Yes. That was exactly the way, for sure.

DP: What do you think made her want to chronicle her life and the life of Métis people? Do you think she thought the story was not being told? Or, was it just something she thought she had to do?

JR: That's a good question. I think it is just something she felt she had to do. She went ahead and did it. It started with that book, *My Life in Residential School*. It was just the way things were going with the Métis, you know? They just were not going good. Everybody was against them, and if you were a Métis, you did not want to tell anybody. And I think it got her. I think she thought something should be said. Like at the residential school, she learned a lot there. You know she said there was the odd time when a boy was kicked and he then died a couple days later. The priest was mad and punished him by kicking him, and they all saw it. And he died in a couple days of pneumonia or something.

DP: When it was an injury from the kick?

JR: Everybody knew why he died because he was kicked so badly. And in other instances, but she did not mention them in her book. I remember her telling them to us. But on the whole it was the priests that were meaner and not the nuns. One or two were mean, but anyway, she learned a lot from there. There was some good that came out of it. Of course, there was. You know, it was not all bad. Although for some, of course, it was. We have to get past that and move on.

DP: Did your mom travel a lot in the US? Do you have a lot of relatives in the States? Mainly Montana?

JR: Yes.

DP: All Trotters?

JR: Yes.

DP: And they all lived in communities like Harlem?

JR: Harlem, Malta. I think that it was in Malta. She visited her sister a lot there.

DP: She definitely visited and travelled a lot down there.

JR: Yes.

DP: Were any of the Trottiers in WWI or WWII?

JR: Yes, my cousin Lloyd was in WWII and so was his dad John, in WWI.

DP: Do you think they were treated well at the end of the war? The reason I ask is some Métis veterans were treated poorly at the end of the war.

JR: I don't think Lloyd was treated the way he should have been. I think John was okay, I never heard any complaints from him, but my cousin Ruthie, Lloyd's sister, mentioned something about Lloyd not getting a pension that he was entitled to, but never got. But I'm not sure.

...

DP: Did your mother or grandparents receive Métis Scrip?

JR: My grandfather did, but he sold it.



Pat Stewart Interview, January 27, 2012

...

Pat Stewart (PS): My name is Pat Stewart. I live in Val Marie Saskatchewan. I'm going into my 11th year here. I came from Ontario. I bought a house, and have settled here.

Darren Préfontaine (*DP*): When you came out west, did you have any preconceived notions of Métis, or did you know anything about the Métis?

PS: I did, and I was brought out here after my friend and my companion died. He was an Ojibway man. His nephew lives in Waywayseecappo, Manitoba, and he asked me to come out for the Sun Dance. I thought it was just to watch, but he suggested that I take part in the Sun Dance, which is a commitment for four years. When my sister came with me in the third and fourth years, we came down to Val Marie to do photography.

I was introduced to Louise Moine as being the first Métis person that I had ever met. I may have met others without knowing. I was introduced to her by a lady here in the community. I started visiting Louise and her son Gail, who looked after her in the house. Louise was getting up in years, she was in her 90s, and she could not read very well. She was an avid reader, and writer, so she needed someone to read to her, and I volunteered. I used to go over just about every day for an hour or two, and I would read to her, whatever she wanted me to read. She enjoyed a variety of different literatures. I know her son was listening, because every once in a while, he would come to the door and ask a question about what I was reading. He was a very smart man, too, but he had been in an unfortunate accident and had been brain injured a little bit by some exhaust fumes, so a lot of people did not think he was that smart, but he actually was.

Louise was confined to a wheelchair for a number of years. Her house looks onto my house at an angle, and into the back of my house, and there's an empty field in the back, behind the arena and the curling rink. When rodeo time was on, they put all the horses and the bulls and everything in this field, and Louise really

enjoyed sitting in her chair, looking out the window at the livestock. She grew up in the country, with horses mainly. Her family travelled. They were constantly on the move. Then Louise married a Frenchman named Vic, and they built this house behind me, and that's where they lived and raised their family.

I would be over there every day, and I would read to Louise. I remember her stopping me one day as I was reading a romance story to her, which she really liked, and she said that there was one thing she missed, and that was having a man's arms around her. I thought, "Well, I guess that never changes, no matter how old you get, does it?"

They were very generous people. When I bought this house, I had nothing in here. All of my furniture and everything was back east. She told Gail to go into their storage place, at the back, and to get out a bed for me so I would have a place to sleep in my house. They would share whatever they had, and her daughter Jacquie used to come down fairly often to visit, and I really hit it off with Jacquie, she was a great person. She lives now in Regina, and we would talk about her life and Louise. I asked Louise one time about her time in the residential school, and she was kind of evasive. She was a very optimistic person, and did not like to talk about negative things. But, when you read the part that she dictated, I did part of her history and edited it for her, and I gave it to Jacquie. ... I still have my copy here. I was reading through it again to refresh my memory, and they had some bad times with food, and I guess some mistreatment, but she never dwelled on it. I have other friends back east who are First Nations who've told me horror stories of what happened to them, or members of their family, but Louise would never dwell on that.

DP: A very positive person.

PS: Very positive. She played piano when she was younger. The whole family was musical. I guess when they could ill afford it, and when they were living in Ponteix, her father made sure that he got a piano, and some of them took lessons on the piano. But some of her brothers played a fiddle and different musical instruments, and they sang. They were very musical.

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DP: How do you think Louise was viewed upon by the community at large at Val Marie? Was she a respected person?

PS: I believe so, by the people who lived here. I never heard anything really negative about her, or her family. Near the end, she got really helpless, being in a wheelchair, and she could not help Gail very much, to lift herself. In her bedroom, there was sling attached it from the ceiling, and Gail had a rubber belt that went around a little higher than her waist, and then he would hook this up, and it would help him swing her from the chair into the bed. He had ways of handling it. To get to the bathroom was difficult, because her bathroom was not built for a person in a wheelchair. It was a lot of lifting for Gail. She was a big woman, and he was as thin as a rake, so it was heavy for him. But, I never heard Gail complain, not one word. It was amazing the way he looked after her. It kept her out of a nursing home, until finally Gail was getting sick himself. It ended up that he had pneumonia when he left here and had to go to the hospital in Regina. He had cancer.

...

DP: When did Gail pass on?

PS: Oh, gosh, I have lost all track of time.

DP: Was it before Louise or after?

PS: No, after Louise. Yes, she was gone. He was still in the house for a while after she was gone. She went into a nursing home, and he used to go and visit her. She was in Mankota and then she moved to Ponteix, and Gail used to go and visit her. After she died, Gail, he was lost. That was his life, looking after his mother.

DP: Never had a family of his own?

PS: No. When I was going to Swift Current, they would give me a list, and ask me to pick up some things for them. Some of them were personal items for Gail, and creams and things that Louise used. Now, Louise had the most beautiful skin. Even at 100 or so. She was almost 102 when she died. Her skin

was unblemished and beautiful, kind of rosy and smooth. She said that was due to Oil of Olay. ... She would have been a good advertisement for that product. No, she was an amazing woman. She recounted her stories of life on the prairies, between Lac Pelletier and the Qu'Appelle Valley, and down here on the prairie. It is all in that book, that manuscript.

DP: So, she always talked positively about growing up and being Métis, and never brought up any of the racism that might have existed?

PS: No, she did not. Jacquie did tell me of one incident involving Gail. I believe he had gone to the store for something, and some young men grabbed him and dragged him up the alley, and ripped his shirt and scratched up his back, and now whether that was because of who he was, I don't know. Maybe it was some beef they had with him over something else, but she thought it was racism. ... I guess, because Louise did not get out very much when I knew her, she was in the house and so was Gail. Gail would only come out to go to the store and would back home again. I did not really know them on a social scene.

DP: So she shared a lot about growing up, and told you stories?

PS: Oh, yes.

DP: Were there any special stories that she told you that stick in your mind?

PS: Yes, there was one about her sister Talia. When her sister died, they took her body, and they were going to some church and they wanted the priest to do a little service; to just say a few words over the grave. The priest would not do it. He said he was in a hurry and did not have time. They opened the church and went in, and they did a little service themselves, and then they buried her.

DP: That was pretty much the nail in the coffin for Louise supporting the Catholic Church?

PS: I don't know. She did not go to church because it was hard to get her out, but I think she was still a believer, even when she died.

DP: A spiritual person?

PS: Spiritual person, yes she was. She could talk to you a lot about her family. She knew them inside out. She was the 8th, I believe, in the family, so she

knew everything that had gone on, and she kept good records. Some of her brothers were cowboys, and one raised horses, they were always involved with animals. ... She talked about everything, so that's why I have got it all down in this book that she started doing because she's already published, of course.

...

They did bring her out for her 100th birthday, and I believe, from what I have heard, she was the first person in Val Marie to actually reach 100.

DP: So the whole town celebrated that event?

PS: Yes, they had a supper at the hall for the family members, and then they had a little ceremony for her at the hall. Yes, it was full.

DP: So it was quite the event?

PS: Yes, she was amazing. By then, of course, she was getting kind of tired, but she was all dressed up, and every once and a while we would look over and she would be dosing a little bit, and then she would wake up and listen to the rest. Yes, she was 100.

DP: So, you would say she was almost like the town elder, then?

PS: Yes, she was. Of course, I don't think too many people went to visit her.

DP: Okay, she kept kind of private near the end?

PS: Yes. Well, once she was confined to the house, and could not get out. But, her family came, like her cousin Cecile Blanke came, and then she has relatives in Montana, and they used to come up and visit her. I met a few of them. It was an interesting time for me, to listen to her stories, and to read to her. Of course, Gail would always come in and give us a break every once and a while because he thought my voice was going to give out. He would come in with a treat, a chocolate or orange, and then we would just sit and chat until I went back to the reading. They had a little garden out back, Gail did that as well, and he was an excellent cook. Oh gosh, he could bake pies and bread and whatever. It did not matter. He made it. She was well fed.

DP: Are there any other things that stand out about your time with Louise?

PS: I can't think of anything else, other than what's in her story. Yes, it was upsetting for me when she went into the home. It was like the end of an era here, when she had to leave. ... She had big bruises on her knees or legs where she had fallen. Near the end before she went in the home, it was hard—if she fell on the floor—for Gail to get her back up. So they would call an ambulance, and they would send the attendants over to help lift her and get her back in the chair or in bed. ... It got to the point where Gail just could not

cope anymore with her at home. She needed bathing and so on, and he just could not get her in the tub.

DP: When she passed on, was the funeral in Val Marie?

PS: Yes.

DP: And all her relatives came?

PS: Yes

DP: From the States, and I guess throughout Canada?

PS: Yes.

DP: So quite a few people came?

PS: Yes. She had a good-sized funeral.

...



*Gail and Louise Moine, Louise's 100th Birthday.
Pat Stewart.*



Deftly merging pioneer history with Aboriginal autobiography, Louise Moine wrote about her childhood spent on the ranching frontier of southwest Saskatchewan in the early 1900s and about her time in an Indian residential school in two published books and various articles in the 1970s and early '80s. A long-time resident of Val Marie, Saskatchewan, she also wrote candid vignettes of her many family members and friends living in southwest Saskatchewan and in northern Montana. *Remembering Will Have to Do: The Life and Times of Louise (Trotter) Moine* collects her various writings, including her previously-published books and essays, as well as unpublished stories, photographs, and appendices. Having lived almost 102 years, Louise Moine witnessed the changing Prairie West as Euro-Canadian and European settlers moved in and overwhelmed the region's Aboriginal residents. Although much of this text was written decades ago, it still retains its relevance and carries an authenticity of somebody who personally witnessed the rise of southwest Saskatchewan's ranching culture, the end of the Métis' nomadic lifestyle, the growth of the dysfunctional Indian residential school system, and the impact of colonization upon the region's Aboriginal peoples.



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