

Road Allowance Interview, Victor Rose

Conducted by Scott Duffee

November 25, 2013

SD: It's November 25th, 2013, and I'm Scott Duffee interviewing Victor Rose for the Road Allowance Project. Could you please tell me your name?

VR: Victor Rose.

SD: And what's your home community?

VR: Frenchmen Butte.

SD: What community did you grow up in?

VR: I grew up east of Cochin. I'd say about three miles. That's where the road allowance was. My dad's land was right next to it, just across the road. That's where I grew up. How many years we lived there? I can't remember. I was quite young, and then from there we moved to Cochin. There was an old house there that we lived in. I think it was the summer and winter. It was a very cold house. I think my parents had the chance to buy it. It was only \$700 at that time. It was just along the lake there, Murray Lake. It was a nice place, and then from there, from there, we moved further east of Cochin. Next to, I can't think of their names. They're farmers anyway, and I think I was a teenager when we lived out there. My brother bought a quarter of land, and my dad built a log house there. We lived there for three or four years, I can't remember. And then I was on my own after that. I spent a lot of time in Lloydminster doing odd little jobs. I stayed with George Cardinal's family most of the time. They were my half-cousins. I kind of chummed with him, did odd jobs, and his dad was a butcher there. We did that, too. They cut holes along the hide there, and you would hang on with that. They're hitting the hide next to the ribs and stuff because it goes fast.

SD: Where you grew up near Cochin, was that a road allowance community?

VR: Yes, I guess it was. I can't quite remember how many families lived there. I know there were the Pratts, Laplantes, and the Cardinals lived there. There were some other people there that belonged to the reserve. It was too long ago for me. And then there was the Prudens, but I think maybe they lived there. They had their own land. That was Fred Pruden. Yet, I can't remember, maybe he was there. And Laplantes, Joe Laplante. The road allowance was right next a. a pasture and on the other side was the reserve.

SD: Who were your parents and grandparents?

VR: My grandparents, on my mother's side, were Joe Laundry and Marie Falcon. And my dad's side was Boniface Rose. I guess they'd call him "Ernie" for some reason. He's registered as Boniface Rose, and my grandmother was Julia Whitford. And I

think they were also related. She was related to the Desjarlais. They used to call them "Desjarlis."

SD: And sorry what were your parent's names?

VR: My dad's name was Boniface, but they called him Joe for some reason.

SD: So, your dad and his dad's name was both Boniface?

VR: No, the one I was talking about before, that was my dad. But his name was Ernie, Ernie Rose. My dad had that name. Boniface is my dad's name and we didn't know that. He got a cheque in the mail from the Pool, I think. Anyway, it was quite a bit. That's when we lived further east there. Anyway, we didn't know who Boniface Rose was, and it was about close to two thousand or something like that, I don't remember. I think my dad finally ripped it. It's too bad. We didn't know our grandfather's name. We had some money there. He ripped it and because my grandfather used to farm out towards Iffley. That's where he lived. That's the Rose side, Ernie Rose. And we used to go to Cochin once in a while. And we had this honey can. It had Ernie Rose on top. We used to wonder if that was our grandpa. And it was. He lived in Lethbridge somewhere. I think he lived with another lady. But I heard he came and looked for us one time. And somebody told him that we weren't around there. He came with probably a Bennett or a buggy. That's a long ways to go from Lethbridge. He would have liked to have seen us. There was a guy who worked for my grandfather. I don't know if he was a Laplante or not. My aunt was living with him. I guess he was asking this guy, to see if the Roses were good looking.

SD: And how about your mother, what was her name?

VR: She was a Landry. Yes, her mother was a Falcon, Marie Falcon. But I don't know who was the other part on my grandmother's side. I know they're Falcons, but I'd have to see. I'd have to study the family tree. It's all in there, where it branched off. Yes, there are some Whitfords south of Battleford, somewhere, Sweetgrass. We might be related to them.

SD: Did your folks always live in Cochin?

VR: No, just that one time. We lived right in Cochin, on that parcel of land. I think there was about seven acres there. They bought it for \$700, I think. From there, we moved to east of Cochin, I'd say about ten miles, maybe about 5-6 miles. I can't quite remember. That's where we lived until I was a teenager. Then we built a house next to my brother's on a piece of land he had that wasn't too far from the road allowance where we lived. I think it would be about two or three miles east from where my brother lived. I built a little house for my parents, a two-bedroom house. I wasn't finished, but it did the trick. I built it on the hill, but they moved it down to the valley. It's still standing there, I think. I didn't know much about carpentering, but I guess I knew a little from somewhere.

SD: You mentioned the Laplantes and the Cardinals lived in that road allowance. Any other Métis families live there?

VR: You know I can't quite remember. I know there were some people that came out there and lived there for the winter. Their name would have been. It comes to me then it fades. It was Lena Don Pruden. They lived just at the end of my dad's land. It was a slough on one side, and on the west side were the Prudens. They were only probably about half a mile away or maybe a quarter mile away. Paquette was her name. Lena Paquette, Mrs. Don Pruden. And her sisters, I remember they lived along the road allowance or somewhere. They were Paquettes. I don't know where Lapointes used to live, but they came down and lived just where my brother is living now. When he was living there, that's where the Lapointes were. I don't think they were in the road allowance.

SD: Did any non-Métis live in that community?

VR: Just the Prudens, but they were Métis. The pasture on the right side of us was owned by a farmer or maybe a councillor from Cochin. Mr. McGus was the one who I think who bought our land. He told my dad, "You don't have to pay taxes." I got a picture of that somewhere, I'll show you, if I find it. There's a picture of my sister in a little steel coffin with my dad. I saw it a while back, our little house on the road allowance, just a little log house. Probably in spring, there would have been weeds on the roof. They used to grow on top. We were poor, but I don't know. There would have been 13 of us if it wasn't for the two girls that died. I don't know how old one was. I thought she was about five or six. The other one was just a baby. That's the one, my dad was holding it. I think it was in the winter time, or not. I'll have to look for that picture. And our house wouldn't have been much bigger than that. Otime we lived by Lashburn because my dad used to go out and look for work, cutting brush. We'd be picking it all. But one time, we wintered out there somewhere by Lashburn. I can remember the house, not much bigger than this room here, maybe a little wider. And I slept on the trunk, right next to my parents. And then on this side of the house, there were poles, and we had cross breezes and we had rails. I think they put straw or something in the gunnysacks. That was our mattresses.

SD: This was in Lashburn?

VR: Lashburn.

SD: Was that a road allowance community as well?

VR: No, I don't think so. But there was some Wells that lived around there too and Loyies, but that wasn't a road allowance that was just a place where we stayed for the winter.

SD: Did you live at any other road allowance community?

VR: Not that I know of.

SD: Did any of the people in your road allowance community own their own property?

VR: No, I don't think so.

SD: And how did your family and other Métis families make a living?

VR: Well, they usually worked out in summertime. They'd look for work like brushing and picking rocks and seneca root. I think that was somewhere in May or June when they blossomed. That was northeast of Cochin towards Robinhood and Medstead. We used to go out there, take a tent along. We lived on rabbits or whatever we could get, like partridge. Most of the time, the people were pretty nice, the farmers. At times, they'd take a job cutting brush. In the fall, they'd go thrashing for the farmers. But we weren't allowed to fish. The Natives had the right to fish, not the Métis. And we were so few here, but they wouldn't let them fish. My dad was telling me one time he was hunting. I think this was maybe in the spring or something like that. He was hunting and he had a couple ducks. And he had his gun in one hand, and this Simmons caught him shooting with it out of season. Simmons took over the ducks and gun. They were walking by and my dad said, "Soon as he turned his head, I hit him right in the jaw like that. Knocked him right out." He said, "He took his ducks and his gun and he came home." Later, he saw Simmons in Cochin in a store. He said he wouldn't even look at me. He was a bad man.

SD: Simmons was a conservation officer?

VR: Yep, Simmons. What was his first name? I can't remember, but he rode a horse. One time this guy named Dumont, told me that he came to his house, and I don't know what happened, but he said he pulled him off his horse. I think he kind of knocked him out, too. Yes, he was kind of a bad guy that Simmons. This farmer gave him dinner one time. He was having duck or something. He wanted to charge him for shooting a duck out of season after he had his meal. So, the farmer he went to the barn and released his horse and scared it away. He had him going for a while on foot. There was so much fish and you can't even get it, you know?

SD: You were not allowed were to fish, but what other resources did your family harvest?

VR: We used to have a little garden. I remember I worked in the garden, for gardeners. Her name was Tournier. They'd give me 75 cents a day, and if I took vegetables, they gave me a dollar's worth. That's getting labour for nothing you know because all that stuff was thrown away. They couldn't sell it all. Yes, that's when we lived on the road allowance, so I was getting a little older there. I'd walk about two miles to get there, right along side Murray Lake on the north side. I'd walk there and pick weeds. The Delormes used to live around there, too. Yes, not too far from where we lived, and if they heard of someone that got out of the asylum, you know in North Battleford, they'd come and stay with us. They were afraid. I guess Mr. Delorme was out working or something. They'd stay with us. I don't know what they got to eat as there was never that much to eat.

SD: You said that your dad shot some ducks, sometimes rabbits, partridges. Were those the main things that you guys ate?

VR: Yes, my mother killed a deer one time with a little rabbit gun. Not too far from our place. She told me how far it was. Gee it was a long ways. Still got the year somewhere, but I can't quite remember, but maybe with a little help from God.

SD: So, with the hunting, was it any time of year or was it certain time of year?

VR: Well, out there, at that time, there were no phones. You could pretty well shoot whatever you wanted, if Simmons wasn't around. Yes, in the wintertime, there were a lot of rabbits. We'd go with the Delormes and we'd set snares, and then we'd walk to the bush. We'd get lots of rabbits, but the snow was deep you know? It was probably about that deep or something like that. And if you go down, you're right up to your crotch. Sometimes you could walk on top, if it was hard, and you kind of walked like you didn't want to fall. You didn't want to go down. You had a special way of walking. Then you'd go down once in a while. Yes, we'd hunt a lot of rabbits that one day. But now, the way it is it's hard to get there and hunt rabbits or anything else.

SD: What kind of traditional medicines did people use in the community?

VR: Mostly herbs. My mother was an herbalist. What you'd learn from the Natives and the Métis. I know one guy told him if it wasn't for my mother, his mother would have died. That was Mrs. Delorme. I know that she treated one guy who had syphilis or gonorrhoea. I wouldn't want to put his name in there.

SD: Fair enough. So, she was kind of a medicine...?

VR: Lady, yes. She was pretty good, and then she tried to show my brother, but he wasn't interested in that. She knew a lot of good medicine. The Natives were good too, you know? They could pretty well cure anything. Now all they know is marijuana.

SD: Did you remember any types of medicines that your mom used?

VR: I can only remember when she treated the guy with syphilis. She used buck brush for one. And they had to be so long from across the hand like that. I'm sure she peeled the bark. How many, I don't know, but she'd mix something else. When I had a headache, she gave me a little branch and used a horn, just the end of a horn. It's tapered that horn. She put a little cotton batten in there, and she'd put the horn in there and she'd suck the blood out, to take the pressure off. You don't have a headache anymore. I might have that yet somewhere, her little medicine bag. I looked for it, but I didn't find it. It should be there. Yes, and then she used to deliver babies. I remember she did that. And then one time, we got lousy. She put coal oil on there. I guess it worked. There was one time that there were so many bed bugs and fleas. You'd go somewhere, and those little fleas would get up on your legs and bite you. And at night the bedbugs got you. Yes, that's funny there so much of that stuff. That was during the war, in the 30s. I was born in 1930, but I remember when I was just a little kid. I can barely remember what I did yesterday.

SD: Did you have anyone in your family that beaded or embroidered moccasins or other?

VR: My mother used to do that. She'd do beadwork or she'd use dyed porcupine quills. She made nice moccasins, though. Then she used to make mukluks, too with a little fur on the top.

SD: Do you know what happened to those artefacts?

VR: No, I don't. They were probably worn out and were left somewhere.

SD: How did your family celebrate special occasions and holidays like Christmas, Easter, or New Year's?

VR: They mostly celebrated Christmas. I think we'd eat pretty much everything on Christmas. We didn't have much on New Year's, but when we got older and we weren't living on the road allowance, we'd celebrate Christmas. We'd go to midnight mass. We'd come home and have a little sleep, and then we'd start on the wine. There were quite a few of us. We each had a jug of wine. We had a dance at our place. I got a picture of my mom dancing and somebody's playing the violin. They were all feeling pretty good by the looks of it.

SD: Which church did you guys go to?

VR: In Cochin. Cochin is named after a priest. Yes, Father Cochin. I even remember a little French priest there that knocked up a girl and then they blamed it on somebody else. And one of my half-cousins married that girl. They lived in Lloydminster. They both died for some reason.

SD: Did or does anyone in your family speak Michif?

VR: My mom did.

SD: How about you? Do you speak Michif?

VR: Not really. No, I mainly spoke English and Cree more than French. I thought French was funny. When mom used to say something in French, we'd laugh at her. We thought it was funny. We didn't understand it. But mom used three languages: Cree and French, and English. So, if she can't think of a word, she would use, you know, a different, English or Cree. My dad spoke mostly Cree. He liked the Natives. He also spoke broken English. And whatever I learned I don't know much of it now. Even with English, I have quite a time. Simple things I don't understand. They used more Cree, but I would say that was my mother. But now I can't use it either. I forget it. They used just some words. Some words I can't understand in Cree. But I like Cree. There are no swear words in Cree. When we lived in the road allowance, I could remember these Natives would ride horses and maybe they'd be on the hill, and they'd sing these love songs. Gee, that sounded so good. And then we used to go to the sun dances. My mother would make pies and she'd sell them there. But that story was true, at the sun dances, they'd have horses and they'd go around. They'd be about, oh I don't know, here with a rope like that, go around. And they'd be singing. And sometimes there are two or three bunches. They go around this

tipi. Or what you call it, not a tipi, but a big round thing anyway with a hole in the middle?

SD: Arbour?

VR: These young people, they'd ride these horses, and they go around where they dance. And they go up and down with that and they'd use a little whistle. My mother said they used to cut themselves somewhere. They'd cut themselves and put a rawhide in there. And they'd be tied to the place where they'd dance until the skin broke. And the Natives, they sounded so good, especially at night when you're trying to go to sleep. We'd put our tent up in there, and we'd hear them in the distance. You could hear them getting louder and louder right in front of your tent, and then it kind of fades around you. And the other ones would start coming around. It's so nice, the love songs. I really like love songs. I don't care for the powwow songs. To me they're all the same. Like my brother-in-law used to say, they're just a bunch of coyotes. But he didn't understand. It was okay for me because I was brought up with it, but he didn't understand.

SD: Do you know any traditional Métis songs or stories?

VR: No, not really. The only one I heard was Wiisakaychak, but I even forget that. The story where he invited all the birds and ducks to come to dance. And he would sing, Wiisakaychak was singing, and the little birds were dancing around. And Wiisakaychak drops in and waits until one of the ducks opened one of his eyes and saw what was going on. I knew this was Wiisakaychak wringing their necks. This was in Cree. "Oh, let's get out of here, he'll kill us all. Kill us all or something like that."

What a name, Wiisakaychak!

SD: Who told you that story?

VR: I think it was my half-cousin, George Cardinal. There are lots of Wiisakaychak stories.

SD: What are your best memories of living in a road allowance community?

VR: Well, I guess for us kids, we didn't think of how hard it was for our parents to try to make a living. We didn't think that because we were too young. But I know I was quite happy when I was small as were my brothers. We'd have so much fun sometimes. We made them little things you push with the one wheel in front. I think it was on the side of the stick. And you get something. Oh, it was a ring. Take a little ring of some kind and then you put this little round walking stick with the cross piece for where the pulley was, the wheel. And you put something as you go under and turn the other wheel. It's hard for me to figure out now how it worked, but it was simple. And we'd go running around with this wheel, spend so much time. By putting this little cross piece under the wheel, it made it go, and when I worked at Tourniers there as a gardener, I bought this old bicycle. Old Isaac offered it, but it didn't have a chain. I didn't use a chain. I just used to peddle on the front wheel because I didn't have a chain. Then I'd go out on the hill, and get on it, and get going

down. You don't dare put your feet on there when the wheel was going round. I couldn't even afford to buy anything because I didn't really have the money. That's the things you remember.

SD: Do you have any bad memories that you would like to share?

VR: The only bad memory I could share was when I broke that window, which I told you about. We hit each other with little rocks, and I knocked out the window. That was a loss. I think my dad was sitting right next to it because he gave me a good lick. And my brothers got away with it. It was Gilbert and George, who was a little younger. I don't know what he did, but they were kids. But we went and got some water one time, they'd call him "Fatty Cardinal," that was Joe Cardinal's dad. He was dad's half-brother. I went and got some water, and my dad must have still been mad. He pushed me off the wagon, and then I fell in the water. Just when I was coming out and getting in, he'd push me again. A few more times, I was sure crying. But it was over. I didn't have anything against him really. Probably felt better after he tried to drown me. That's for breaking a window, that's a lot he had to pay. Sometimes, I think about it and it kind of gets me you know? I still loved my dad and he had four strokes. The fourth one he didn't make it. He died on his fourth stroke. That's the only bad memory I have.

SD: How were the Métis treated in that community?

VR: Well, I guess they were more or less on their own. I remember one time we got some cod fish. They sent it from the east. It was so salty that you could hardly eat it. You had to boil it and boil it to get the salt out. It was cod fish, but there was something else, I can't remember what it was. And then it was a good thing. You know the Natives helped us quite a bit, especially Mrs. Wright? Mrs. Wright was a Métis, I think. She was quite fair. She was married to a Wright on a reserve. She used to give my mother flour and stuff like that. We didn't have any. I think maybe my mother worked for her a little bit. There's quite a few there now on the reserve at Cochin. They were related to me. I think this Ambrose Wright married a Loyie, Bella, Loyie. She wasn't Mr. Loyie's daughter either. That was, I think, Dave Delorme. It was his daughter. So that's the way we were related. I phone her up once in a while, this Delorme (Wright) lady. Yes, otherwise I was quite happy. Being a child, in wintertime, in the morning, I can remember there was a blanket for our door. A blanket in the door so the draft. But you'd go out there sometimes, and go out there barefooted, and there'd be a snow bank around our house. Then you'd go and have a pee there and would make these fancy little designs on the snow. We had an outhouse there, too. I can remember that, but that was a little further from the house. It was closer just to go around the house to go and pee. And there was a little hill there I can remember. We'd have a sleigh. We had a little sleigh. I think my brother made some skis. But I'd take this little sleigh up. It'd take me a long time. Now, I look at the hill, and it wasn't a very big hill. When I was smaller, I thought it was a big hill. I'd go up

and then come down in just a few seconds. That's the way it was with the skis. You'd carry them up, you'd go down there and sometimes, I don't know what happened, but one ski would come off and you'd really get hurt. Pain would go away and you'd try it again. Just alone like that. I was alone. I can't remember where my brothers were sometimes. I know my dad delivered a baby one time. I think that was my little brother. He's not little now. He's probably over 200 pounds. He lives in Texas. When he was born, I could hear mom, moaning and crying, and hollering. I was pretty small then. Yes, and then there was a spring not too far from our house. Then it would freeze. There was a flat spot further up. The ice would build up and freeze and the Delormes used to come up there, and we'd play hockey. Our hockey sticks were made out of willows, and sometimes, they had cans, probably milk cans or something similar like that, that was our puck. We'd hear this thing ringing. It was the can. Pretty soon it's flattened so we'd need another can. Then we had these old skates that we probably found in the nuisance ground or something. And then when you're skating, they'd go that way. Oh, you could have fun there. One time, I got hit behind the head with a willow hockey stick. Good thing the guy that hit me was a little smaller. I don't think he made me cry. I can't remember, but I remember getting hit. Oh, that was good water in that spring. My brother and I one time had a contest to see who could drink the most water. We had these Coca Cola bottles or something. I don't know how many glasses he drank, but he beat me. I thought it was about 12 or something like that. But that water was cold year-round. I'd like to go down there.

SD: Did your family ever encounter racism from the larger community around there?

VR: No, I don't think so. I think the people were pretty good. There was that one time I helped my brother do some brushing. I think it was either on the road allowance or along the road. It had ruts, probably made from a car or horses. I don't know how long we cut brush there. When we went to get our pay and he wouldn't pay us. He didn't want to pay my brother for some reason. He tried to find an excuse, but he finally did. One of my brothers, Charlie was close to six feet, and he had fiery red hair. And if you go to the ferry, you can see him for quite a little ways, above the other people with his red hair. As my brothers got older, they got married, but there's not too many of us left. My youngest brother and my sister, one or two sisters, they went to Lost Horse Creek School.

SD: What was the school again?

VR: Lost Horse Creek. It runs into the other end of Murray Lake, and the school I went to was Murray Lake School. They have some little sign there that says, "Murray Lake School." I used to walk to school. From the road allowance where we lived to the school that's quite a little ways. It must have been over a mile or two. I played hooky one time, boy that was a long day. I was waiting for the other children to come by so I could come home at the same time. That didn't go over very good, and the kids

told on me, too. My brother was going to one of the girls in there. I think he drove me to school the next day. We didn't worry too much when we were kids.

SD: So where were your parents and grandparents originally from?

VR: Well, on my dad's side, my grandfather was from Scotland. But my grandpa, I think, was born in Canada, if I'm not mistaken. He ended up going to the Northwest Territories or the Yukon, and he was a member of the North-West Mounted Police.

SD: That was your grandfather?

VR: Yes.

SD: Your dad's dad?

VR: Yes.

SD: And what was his name?

VR: His name was Arnie Rose.

SD: Arnie Rose.

VR: Yes, he used to farm just across Thin Grass. I think it's called Thin Grass Lake, just east of Cochin towards Iffley there's a lake and he lived on Thin Grass Lake. That would have been on the east side, Grass Lake, I think. I'm sure that's what he called it. That's where he farmed. He wanted to marry my grandmother, but you know how the people were years ago. The white people didn't want to have anything to do with the Métis too much because there's Indian blood in there. And my grandmother on the Whitford side spoke broken English, but mostly Cree. Somehow the white, Rose lady didn't want her son to marry a Métis. But he wanted to marry my grandmother. That's the way it was.

SD: And where was your grandmother originally from?

VR: I hear my grandmother, on my dad's side, was born either in Onion Lake or Loon Lake because I got her birth certificate somewhere and that's where she's registered.

SD: And she was a Métis or?

VR: Yes, she was a Métis. Her dad must have been a Whitford, and her mother, I think, was a Desjarlais. I know it's in that baptism certificate, but from there on I don't know.

SD: Where did your dad grow up? Where was he originally from?

VR: He was born in Cochin. I don't know whether he had a house in his land or not, that I can't remember.

SD: And your grandma raised him on her own?

VR: Pretty well, I guess. She had two kids. One was Mrs Loyie, that's John Arcand's grandma.

SD: What's the last name?

VR: Loyie. L-O-Y-I-E. And he was a good harmonica player that old George Loyie. He was sitting in his tent playing the harmonica. Jee that sounded good to me, especially since I liked music. So that was John Arcand's grandma. Emma was his

mother and his dad was Victor Arcand. And that's why my dad and my aunt are Roses. And I don't know if she used the name Rose. That I can't remember.

SD: And your grandparents from your mom's side, where are they originally from?

VR: I know they lived in Cochin, but they also lived around Green Lake or Meadow Lake. That's where my grandpa, Joe Landry, got killed. His wife was Marie, Falcon, I think. But I remember when he got killed. I heard he fell off a wagon. Come to think of it, I wonder if he drank or maybe had a heart attack, I don't know. I remember mom crying. We lived in a tent. That was by Ambrose Wright's place. She couldn't go to the funeral because they'd have to have horses. You had to go to Meadow Lake on horses. It was about a hundred miles.

SD: And your mom, where was she originally from?

VR: She'd be around Cochin, too. I don't think she lived in Meadow Lake, my mom. She probably got married before they moved up there. And then they lived in South Battleford, west in a Triple A home. You've heard about them, hey? They're in the sand hills there somewhere. That's where they lived, in a Triple A home, the Landrys. My mother probably lived there. Years ago, they'd just go live anywhere in the summertime. They'd have to find a place for the fall. I always wanted to look for that lake. They said that there are only two lakes, but there's a certain time in the spring or something this other lake gets full. So, there are three lakes, and I heard there's lots of perch in there, too. That's why I wanted to go.

SD: So, the Battleford's somewhere?

VR: You go from south Battleford you come west, not too far. Frank Ironstand lives there. He's got a bunch of cars there on the left-hand side going right before Battleford, and not too far, there's a bunch of sand hills in there. But as you're going say from Lloydminster to North Battleford, you'll see a sign there I think it says, "Triple Lake Road."

SD: So, Métis used to live there too?

VR: Yes.

SD: Or just your mom happened to grow up there?

VR: I think they lived there. They had their house and everything. I know my uncle used to talk about Triple Lake. I always figured it was somewhere by Green Lake by old Jack Gaudry's. I don't suppose you know him? He's the one that told me about Triple Lakes. He lives in North Battleford there somewhere. He lives with one of my nieces, and he's 90-years-old already. He should know a little bit.

SD: Was your family involved in the 1885 Resistance do you know in Batoche or anywhere else in the province?

VR: No, the only one that would maybe he was my grandfather. I don't know whether he joined the police force by then. But then my great-grandfather might have been in Fort Battleford when this was happening. I can't say for sure. I know the Ross family were there. There was a Ross, I think, who got killed. Yes, I don't know what

else I can remember. We'd pick Saskatoons and mom used to dry them, and she canned some. That kept us going. We had a homemade table. I forget how long it was now, but when we all sat down there it was quite a good-sized table. They were made of just boards, and our chairs were something like that stool there. It was a big tree, squared off on the sides. And then you nail these legs like that. They'd be cut on an angle to sit on the floor. In fact, my brother made one, and I got some pictures. They'd have a little square on top, some had a little round seat, but most of them were square. Those were our chairs. There were two benches that I remembered on each side of the table. And I remember one time; there was quite a few of us. We hardly had anything to eat. We didn't have any meat or anything, probably vegetables. My brother Charlie said, "Pass the turkey please," and everybody laughed. Never any turkey there. But my mother had some little things, and she's made a big meal, maybe a rabbit or a partridge or something. It was enough to feed the whole family. But as we got older, we'd try and work. Too much work. I did a lot of stoking, stuff like that.

SD: Stoking? What's that?

VR: You have wheat sheaves that you make with the binder. And then they're in rows, these sheaves and you go along and you just put these together like that and put some all around.

SD: That would have been harvest time.

VR: Right before harvest, we'd make stokes. There'd be about four or five of us. I was probably the youngest. There was Gilbert, Ernest, Charlie, Pete, and my dad. We'd take quite a strip. I worked alone one time stoking, and boy I thought I was never going to finish the field. And there was one time, it was near Lloydminster, somehow the sheaves were all tied together. There was no break. So, my brother and I, well the rest of them too, we grabbed these sheaves, but they were all tied. So, we'd just make one big round thing like that. It was lots of hard work, maybe about 35 cents an acre. It wasn't very much anyway. It was rough going. I went with my dad one time, and we were on the road allowance at that time, and we got a load of wood, and we had to take it quite a ways. We had to cross the lake from Cochin to Meota. I don't know how many miles, but we just about froze. Going, you've got your wood in poles. I was the salesman, going around asking if they wanted to buy some. Finally, somebody felt sorry for me, I guess. My dad he didn't like that. He didn't speak good English anyway. I don't think I was much better. I went house to house, and we sold our wood for five dollars. Then he bought flour and sugar and tea, and I don't know what else. It was not very much, but quite a bit for five dollars, and then going back, there was snow on the sleigh. Riding in the back, we just about froze. It's a good thing, I could really stand the cold when I was young, but I hurt my back after that so I couldn't stand the cold anymore. We'd be going across that lake, just the horses. Dad was sitting in the front of the buggy, and I'd be in the back. Once in a while,

when the horses were walking, I'd walk too. They'd start running, and I'd grab one of the pegs and would hang on. Yes, they'd have a dance somewhere, I'd be happy. There would be a lot of fiddle players. There were three or four Delormes who played. You'd just hand the fiddle over to them and they'd take over. I used to sing at dances, too. And then there'd be other people, they'd sing a song, real good singers too. Old Harry Delorme was our square dance caller, and he was a good singer. I just got a little bit of his singing in French. Boy that sounds good.

SD: Did you remember that song?

VR: It just started and he broke down. He was just emotional.

SD: Really? What was the song about?

VR: I don't know, I've got it somewhere in my little recorder. I went to record him one time. He lived in North Battleford, and I handed him the tape, and then, after all that singing, he didn't record anything. I think it was just one song. After we recorded these other tunes, he sang them to me, the fiddle tunes. I got him on tape somewhere. The last song he wrote down, he just started the song, probably rhymes; a few words. And then I didn't do any more recording. I think he was getting tired. I think he had cancer, too. I think prostate cancer is what got him. Oh, he was so happy when we went to see him. I took my brother-in-law too to go and visit him that time. He was so happy singing them old French-Canadian tunes. That's where I got some of my tunes, the ones I played. Leonard Delorme played a lot, too. And May Delorme, she was May McMillan. I think that was her name. She'd sing me a tune on the phone, and I'd start cording to it. Boy, I'd laugh so much. Sometimes, she sang too high, and she couldn't quite reach the notes. I was keeping time with my foot. Anyway, I couldn't see her because I lived in Lloydminster and she lived in Cochin. Now, I got her here somewhere, too. It's funny.

SD: Did anyone in your family serve in the military?

VR: My brother was in there for a bit, but he was released. There was something wrong with him. I think he found a place just south of Saskatoon. Dundurn, yes, he was in there. I know he was in BC somewhere and could have been in Manitoba. Then he got discharged. But you know my mother, she prayed so much I think she just saw something there. There's nothing wrong with him, I don't think. The only thing is he couldn't read. I've got a picture of him somewhere too in a uniform. And that old Harry Delorme was telling me one time, he got his uncle or his cousin that was a Laplante, I forget his first name. But he was conscripted and had to report. He said his cousin was holding his hand and he said he put on an odd-looking face on and pretended he couldn't talk. And the guy said, "Take him outta here." What people will do to get out of...

SD: That was for World War Two, probably?

VR: Yes, that was in the '30s, and then when he made the face to show us, he looked nutty alright!

SD: Was anyone in your family involved in the Métis Society?

VR: No, we used to go to Willowfield. It's across pretty well from Baljennie, across the river. There was some Métis settlement there. There was Babe Beauchesne who was involved, and he had something to do with that. I took some of them books and I gave it to a guy that was working for the Métis, and I never heard from him again. There were Beauchesnes, Whitfords, and Pritchards. There was a little colony in there really. Near Saskatoon they had Round Prairie.

SD: The first one you're talking about is Baljennie? Was that the name of that?

VR: That would have been Willowfield.

SD: Willowfield, across the river from Baljennie?

VR: It'd be further south, somewhere in there. We used to go there in the spring or something like that. I think we were living in the road allowance at that time. We used to work at Willowfield. And Babe Beauchesne would go around sheering sheep, and my brother worked with him and all the men and the Whitford boys. I forget how many minutes it took my brother to shear a sheep, but it was not very long. I tried once, and it took me an hour or so. I would never try another one. That's what they used to do, and then other jobs probably. My dad didn't speak good English, and he didn't have an education. I think he was a little shy to go and ask for work. But Babe took the jobs, and they'd work together, something like that. Yes, Willowfield. I can remember, we had a tent. We lived in a tent next to Solomon Pritchard's house. His house was on a little high spot that was more level on a hill. Ouelettes were in there, too. Yes, we were so poor. We had these little pants on. They had holes in the back. I used to have to walk sideways because I was shy that everybody would see my rear end. Then I remember that one summer there were armyworms were there. They were all over in our tent. They just filled the top. You'd hit it like that sometimes and some would let go. I didn't care too much for them, but I was young, I wasn't afraid of them. But I can remember they didn't even have a patch to patch my little pants. I must have been young, five or six-years-old, maybe more. I remember one time, I went hunting that's when we lived in Willowfield. I think we went there a couple times in the summer. I went hunting. I had this little rabbit gun. I killed a porcupine and brought it home and my mother cooked it. It was good. It's like pork, a porcupine. Yes, then my dog would grab a porcupine and would be all full of quills. My dad had to put him away. That was the end of my dog. His name was Bob. Yes, those are the things I can remember. You remember better when you're poor like that, things happen.

SD: So Willowfield is a place where you guys lived as well?

VR: Yes, we lived there. I think we'd go down there in the spring. Because I remember when my little sister had the mumps and she was all swelled up like that. And they'd use water lily leaves, put them on there, and would tie them up with a rag. I don't know if it was my mom's medicine or if it was from Mrs. Whitford. There was

another place in Alberta where there was a Métis colony. I may have the story on that sometime somewhere. That was quite a colony out there. That's where my grandfather was too. He might have been born there, just on the other side of Camrose. Anyway, my grandfather lived in that colony. I can't remember the name of the place. There was a creek up there, too. My grandfather was born there, and there was also Laboucan. So, there must have been quite a colony. There might be just a little hole there where they had their cellars. I might have the stories there.

SD: Did you have anything else you would like to share about living in a Métis road allowance community?

VR: There's not a heck of a lot. I remember my mother, she bundled me up, and probably my little brother and sisters on a hay ride, but it was empty. And I was crying, I thought I was going to suffocate. I was crying you know, trying to open it. And then she'd get a little mad because I'd push the blankets away. I don't believe we were going to go far with the feeling of not being able to breath. It was so warm and it was cold. The one time we went, it was summertime, with the Delorme boys. We went to Murray Lake, and we robbed the eggs. There were many kinds of eggs, speckled eggs. I think we had maybe half a tub full. Then we went in the bush t and went and cooked eggs there. We were hungry. We sure had a good feed. But they'd make so much noise, these poor little birds. There were lots of birds there, a lot of little birds, seagulls and different kinds of birds. And they taste better than chicken eggs, you know? Oh yes, they got good flavour, none of that stinky stuff. There were mallards and there were black ducks, too. We had fun and a good meal, and we still had eggs to take home. I don't think it was good for the little birds. One time, we were hunting ducks not too far from where the road allowance where we used to live. Probably two miles east or something like that. And my brother shot a duck, and they got me to go and get it. I think I took my pants off. I just had my shirt. I was out there in the water and this girl came walking, and I didn't want to come out. I was so shy. I stayed in there till she went by. She was coming home from school, Doris Pruden. She was kind of a good friend of mine later on. I wasn't shy then. But that's the way it was, you know? Sometimes, you had ducks to eat. I always managed to find enough to eat, I guess. But there are times I remember eating boiled wheat. I don't think it had sugar. But another time we had sugar, and it really tasted good, just boiled wheat. There was quite a bit of bannock in those days. That's what we took to school. Our sandwich was bannock and lard. This one time, I found a .22 shell. It was just a little short one. And Bendel, his sandwiches were bread and ketchup. Oh, he wanted my shell pretty bad, so I traded him a shell for a ketchup sandwich. Oh, that tasted good. Then on Christmas, they'd have these pie socials to raise money for the kids. Yes, they'd have dances. Pie socials where the man would buy from the lady and they'd have to eat together. Then you get to have the Eaton's catalogue, and you get to pick something. You're allowed so much for a present. I picked this little

violin. It must have been about that big, a little metal one. And my dad would play a few tunes on it. I don't know what I ever did with it. Maybe it's in a hole out there somewhere. That was my first fiddle. It didn't last very long because it was made of tin.

SD: So, you must have known some traditional fiddle tunes from having lived out in Cochin?

VR: Yes, I learned a lot of the tunes from the Delormes. Yes, they're good players. You know Norm Delorme was not too bad. He was kind of a show off and he was short and had a roman nose. I remember he had his suit jacket on, and he'd have this violin he was holding. Then he would start playing, he'd go too high and didn't know when to come back. You didn't know what the heck to do when you're cording for him. He made his tunes too fancy. Yes, that was a little different. But like I say when you're young, you're happy as long as you have something to eat.

SD: Sounds like you guys really were busy in the summer though.

VR: Yes.

SD: Like you said you stayed, you went to sun dances, your mom sold pies there, went to Willowfield. You must have moved around a little bit in summer for work?

VR: And then there'd be the thrashing. They didn't live too far from where we lived. It's funny, I can't name that place when we moved further east there. There were a couple farmers there. But we'd go from there. My dad would go from there too. Scent Grass is where he did most of his thrashing. Every year, they'd go to that same farmer and he'd hire him.

SD: That was the name of the farmer?

VR: No, that was the name of a little store there. That little place had an elevator. Scent Grass, and then if you go further north is Iffley. But that's where they used to go thrash. First, they'd go and stoke for most of them, and then they'd harvest. And sometimes when it rained, they'd have to come home. When it dries enough, they'd go back. And they used to have so many. I forget now, a good run. They'd go 30 days or something like that, quite a few days, but sometimes only a few weeks. Yes, I did some of that too as I was growing up. That was a hard job for me. I hurt my back, and I was sent to Lloydminster, to go thrashing. I was loading a load, and I was going to top it off, and I think some way my back twisted, the vertebrae. It was out and I didn't have the money to go see a doctor or a chiropractor.

SD: When did people leave your road allowance community?

VR: I think as things got better after the war. You know when there was a little more work? And then our family grew up, like Charlie there. He could read and he used to read to us. I could read, but I didn't read very much because I didn't have a very good education. But as I got older, I did well. I got up to grade ten. I even did algebra and all that. Now I couldn't do anything because I forget all that. Yes, I guess people were happy. They were happier then because they didn't have to make

payments or anything. Your house was paid for because it was made out of logs and mud. And I didn't know the Delormes, they lived not too far from us, they're more south, I think. All these hills are places where I used to walk. Come see it once in a while, you remember little parts of it, maybe a piece of land.

SD: Alright. Sure, thanks Victor.

VR: I'll see if I can play a tune.

SD: Want me to record it?

VR: Sure.

SD: Is that one on your CD?

VR: Yep.