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JOHN COOK:

John Cook of Stanley Mission is a trapper who has worked for various mining companies in Saskatchewan. He knew Malcolm Norris and Jim Brady.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- Brady and Norris. Cook's impressions of them.
- Effects of welfare on the northern way of life.
- Government programs in the north.

GENERAL COMMENTS:

John Cook is a resident of Stanley Mission and knew and worked with Jim Brady. Also knew Malcolm Norris. He discusses the characters of the men and what they used to talk about, their popularity, what things were like for the people in the early days of the CCF, the effects of the welfare on the people.

INTERVIEW:

Murray: I'm talking to John Cook of Stanley Mission who knew Jim Brady back when Jim was a prospector. John, could you tell me when you first met Jim and what he was doing at the time and what you were doing?

John: I think it goes to 1950. That time I worked for a company by the name of La Ronge Uranium Mines. No, the first time I met him was in Prince Albert. He was at the time a field officer at Cumberland House. And we were both in a co-op

school in Prince Albert. That's the first time I met him.

Murray: You were studying at a co-op school?

John: Yeah. We were attending co-op school. And then after that, that's in 1950 when I was working for this company. About 1952 he come in with my company there. He worked with us, you know.

Murray: That was La Ronge Uranium, eh?

John: Yeah, La Ronge Uranium.

Murray: He had quit the government then?

John: Yeah, he quit the government. So he was working over there and La Ronge Uranium had a mining camp just below here.

Murray: At Nistowiak?

John: At Nistowiak. I keep the buildings there, you know.

Murray: You sort of looked after the camp, eh?

John: Yeah, sure, I looked after the camp. And then he was working over at another camp just east of La Ronge from Hunter's Bay. Jahala Lake is the name of that lake.

Murray: It was the same company he was working for?

John: Same company, yeah.

Murray: He was prospecting there?

John: Yeah, they were cutting mines and trenching. So that come in summer. I worked with him all summer.

Murray: That was at Jahala, eh?

John: No, the river. See, we had our main camp... the company came back to this camp after a year and a half I guess. Then they were a lot of people here. You know, they were mining.

Murray: Working for the....

John: Yeah. So what we were doing, me and Jim were just prospecting for the company so, I think about three, four years I worked with him. Now and then, you know.

Murray: Yeah, not all the time.

John: Not all the time.

Murray: So he worked all around, eh? Where else? You say up the river. Whereabouts was that?

John: We were working over at, maybe, Dead Lake, on this side. Oh, I don't know, about three months I guess.

Murray: What year would that have been? Do you remember?

John: That would be about 1953.

Murray: And that would have been the summertime?

John: Yeah, the summertime.

Murray: All the prospecting was done in the summer wasn't it?

John: Yeah. But the company we worked for, I think he was with the company all the time, you know, all year around.

Murray: So he was doing different things all the time?

John: Yeah, yeah. But anyway, I was called anytime, you know, during the winter.

Murray: What kinds of things would you do in the winter?

John: Oh, cutting line and doing assessment work. Assessment work, you call this drill and blast.

Murray: And look and see what you've got?

John: Yeah.

Murray: What do you do when you cut line? I've never done that.

John: Oh, it's kind of easy, you know. All you do is sight whatever direction with a compass, what direction you should go when you are working with the mining company. Generally they go from south to north. That's your base line. And then you cut cross lines.

Murray: Did you cut trees down along that line or...?

John: Oh yeah, yeah. See, you set two pickets this way. And then you line them up and then you go cutting line and you set a picket, oh don't matter how close you put it, a hundred feet or maybe a little farther. When you are cutting the flat country, you can see a line like...

Murray: Further away.

John: Oh yeah.

Murray: And you just cut down some trees so that....?

John: Oh yeah, you cut down some trees and just lay them all over this way.

Murray: What happens after that? What does the mining company

do then? It goes through looking? It sends prospectors through there?

John: That's right. See, they have instruments.

Murray: Geiger counters and stuff like that, eh?

John: Yeah, yeah, walk around these lines, yeah.

Murray: So the idea of cutting the line is to make it easier for the prospectors to walk through?

John: That's right, yeah. And then they keep their books straight that way you see because those lines, they used to be 200 feet apart. And now they are 400.

Murray: So that if there is uranium somewhere, you'll find it some way.

John: That's right. You'll find it somewhere and then the lines you cut there 200 feet apart, used to be, then you know how much you'll find in there.

Murray: So if you find something, then you start looking more closely.

John: Yeah.

Murray: Was Jim a hard worker?

John: He was a hard worker, yeah. And he was a good friend of mine, you know. You know Allan Quandt?

Murray: Yeah.

John: And

Murray: Berry Richards.

John: Berry Richards and Tony Wood.

Murray: Tony Wood, yeah.

John: Well, we used to talk together a lot. When Jim was around, you know.

Murray: What kinds of things would you talk about?

John: Oh, anything, you know.

Murray: Everything and anything?

John: Everything and anything. But sometimes we talked politics, you know.

Murray: He liked politics.

John: Oh yeah, yeah.

Murray: What might he talk about? What kinds of things in politics would he talk about?

John: Well, he'd talk about people, what the government does for the people and what he didn't do, you know. That he was pretty, how it goes, the way they, he could help you anytime, you know. He was (inaudible).

Murray: He knew what was going on, eh?

John: Oh sure. See he went overseas, I guess, the last war. Went all Germany, England, and all that, France. Well, he knew quite a bit, you know.

Murray: What kinds of issues would he talk about about politics? Would he talk about native rights?

John: Oh yeah, he talked about native rights and also the Metis for instance. But, the treaty rights now are more, the government is trying to do what he promised today, eh.

Murray: But back then?

John: But back then there was nothing at all.

Murray: And would he talk about Indians and Metis people?

John: Oh yeah, yeah. But see, we talked a lot and we thought there is no difference between an Indian and the Metis people.

Murray: Right. Did the government try and make a difference between them?

John: That's right. I think that's what Jim was, Jim was against it you know. We were against it.

Murray: He thought the government was trying to divide the people?

John: Sure, yeah. Yeah, we talked quite a bit about people.

Murray: What other things would he be interested in? Did he talk about other particular things that you can remember?

John: No. See, he never talked too much, you know. But once he starts going he'll...

Murray: Something would trigger him, eh?

John: That's right, yeah.

Murray: And he'd start talking.

John: Yeah, but other than that he was pretty quiet. Like, I know him, you know, and go to La Ronge and he had a house there. Anytime I was there, I would go and stay at his place.

Murray: Lots of people did that?

John: Oh yeah. A lot of people. He was a friend to all people. Anybody, you know. But one thing that I know of Jim was the first time I met him here, we travelled around wherever camp we went to, boxes and boxes of books. And some of them were about this thick. And he sits down there and reads and reads. And one thing that he does, he had a memo. I don't know, I wonder if they found that. He wrote everything what he did that day.

Murray: A diary, eh?

John: A diary, yeah.

Murray: He was always writing in the diary?

John: Yeah, he was always writing on it there.

Murray: Did he ever tell you what he was writing?

John: No.

Murray: Never. And you would never ask?

John: No.

Murray: But he would read and write more than he would talk?

John: That's right, yeah. But once he started to talk, you know. When he was finished one of his books, well he would just lay it down and have a rest, then he starts to.

Murray: What kinds of things would get him going?

John: Well, the things that would get him going is, you know, you would talk about the company. See, I generally disagree with some of the companies I worked for. See, I worked all my

life with the mining companies except this summer. This is the first summer that I didn't; that's in the summertime. And it seems to me that, Lac La Ronge Uranium, the first wages I had was \$75 a month. And I'd been with them for three years, I got a raise to \$150. The highest I ever got was \$275 and that was in 1956 it was. So starting to tell him this, you know, just the low wages and if you find an experienced guy they'll bring them in. But I usually trained them, you know.

Murray: But you still only got low wages.

John: I still got low wages. And this is what he was. If you talk something like that, you know, what the companies are doing to some guys, that's when you would get him going.

Murray: Would he be emotional and angry about that? Or would he talk calmly?

John: No, no, he just talked calmly. This is the way it should be done, and a hard working man should be looked after more than a new guy that's never been trained.

Murray: Did he encourage people to fight for their rights?

John: That's right. He told me never stand back, you know, what you can see is right.

Murray: Stand up for what you believe.

John: That's right. This is what I do.

Murray: Do you think he influenced people that way?

John: Oh yeah, yeah.

Murray: A lot of people listened to him, eh?

John: Sure, sure. Like Allan Quandt and Tony Wood. They are hell of good talkers, you know. The same. But Jim was, I thought was the most experienced guy between all of them.

Murray: Do you think when he talked about politics that some people maybe didn't understand what he meant?

John: Well, that could be true, you know. But there is a lot of guys that, like an opposition, you know. He was an NDP for sure.

Murray: And there were some Liberals who wouldn't like him.

John: Oh yeah, they didn't like him too much. I think he helped more Indians than any other guy that I know of. And like, in trying to influence and all that.

Murray: Indians and Metis people.

John: Yeah, sure, yeah, yeah.

Murray: Would he talk politics to almost everyone?

John: No, no.

Murray: Just some people, eh?

John: Just some people.

Murray: Who else in Stanley for instance might he have talked to?

John: Well, I think he talked to old Malacka. He is still around here.

Murray: Yes, I talked to him this morning.

John: You talked to him, eh.

Murray: What about Joe McKenzie? Would he have talked to him about politics too?

John: Oh, Joe was just a young fellow then. I don't think so. Joe didn't know too much then. But Isaiah Charles, he's not here.

Murray: He's out in the bush.

John: He's out in the bush. He know him the same as I did. And you know Joe Bell from La Ronge?

Murray: Joe?

John: Bell.

Murray: No.

John: Oh.

Murray: How do you spell his last name?

John: Bell, B-e-l-l.

Murray: Joe Bell, eh.

John: Yeah, Joe Bell.

Murray: And he would know?

John: He would know what Jim was.

Murray: Was Joe in Stanley?

John: No, he worked with a different company just on this side of the bay below here and we come back and forth, you know. He'll know.

Murray: So he was a friend of Jim's, eh?

John: Oh sure, yeah.

Murray: I've heard a lot of people say that Jim was always helping people. What kinds of things would he help people with? Can you remember any particular things that people might ask him to help them with?

John: Well, like I say, he had a house over here. And any fellows that he knew from Stanley that was broke, he always had money.

Murray: He would lend them money?

John: Sure.

Murray: Or give them money?

John: Give them money or lend them money. But some of the people, you know, they are pretty honest. They would just say no, and give the money back to him. Now, that's helping, you know.

Murray: Right.

John: That's the way I know him to help people with money when we were broke.

Murray: Right. He never turned anyone down?

John: Not from here.

Murray: Right. And did people always try and pay him back because they liked him?

John: Oh sure, yeah, that's right, that's right. Because he was pretty honest that way, you know. And they always wanted to pay him back, you know. If you owed money, that's the way you should do.

Murray: So you keep a good relationship with him.

John: That's right, that's right. That's how Jim got to be liked quite a lot.

Murray: He was popular?

John: Oh yeah. He was popular.

Murray: What about the people like Liberals? They didn't like him but did they respect him?

John: Oh, I guess some did but I'm pretty sure some didn't. When they talked about politics, you know. See, he could do more if he were... I'm pretty sure if he had been alive he would...

Murray: He'd have kept working hard, yeah.

John: Sure.

Murray: Did he ever get sad about the situation of native people? Did he ever seem to be upset or depressed at all?

John: Well, sometimes. You see, he stayed in Cumberland quite a few years, I guess. I don't know how long. But he went all over the place. That's working, you know. And he knew all the people. And he says that some of the places like in Manitoba, he says they were pretty poor people. Sometimes he would get

pretty upset about that, you know. He didn't say the government is not doing enough.

Murray: So he would feel sorry for the people who were poor?

John: Yeah, that's right, yeah, yeah.

Murray: What did he tell people? How did he see that those problems could be solved? What would he say to people about that?

John: Well, the way I talked to him personally, it's never... when you ask for something and you know that you are going to get it, never stop.

Murray: Until you get it.

John: Till you get it. Because that happened, you know. I remember I was the councillor for here. Whenever you go to this agent - we called them agents, Indian agents - you ask them for something, you know. They are the bosses, what they tell you that's their...

Murray: Their right.

John: Their right. But he says, "No, that's not their right." So now I found out just a few years ago, that's not their right. They're just employees for the Indian Affairs. But we couldn't get no help from them at all because that's where they were bosses. We didn't know enough, you see.

Murray: You didn't have the knowledge.

John: Yeah.

Murray: But Jim did.

John: Sure.

Murray: Would Jim often go to the Indian agent and talk to him?

John: No, no, no. He would just advise.

Murray: He would encourage you to do it.

John: Yeah, he would tell you just to do it. That's the way he did with me.

Murray: So he wouldn't do things for people so much as he would encourage them to fight for themselves?

John: That's right, yeah, that's right. To fight for yourselves, not to rely on somebody else. Because if you do that, you know, you are not doing the right thing because he might be not an honest man.

Murray: The only way you get things done is to do them yourself?

John: That's right, that's right.

Murray: I know that in 1964 in La Ronge he started to organize a Metis Association? Did he ever come to Stanley and try and do that here?

John: Not that I know of because at that time, you know, I never did stay here. Now I worked with him for four years I guess.

Murray: In the fifties?

John: Yeah, in the fifties. And then I started to change over. I worked for Falconbridge then. That's for a company from Manitoba. So I never saw him much you know. Except when I go to La Ronge. So, when he started this, I know him and Frank Tomkins were... you know Frank?

Murray: Yeah.

John: Yeah. They were good friends, you know.

Murray: Right. That's Pete's son.

John: Yeah, yeah. So I saw him once in a while, but what he was doing about meeting people, I didn't know.

Murray: But you would always visit him when you went to La Ronge, eh?

John: Yeah.

Murray: Did he ever change at all? Can you remember him changing over the years? Did he seem less enthusiastic about politics or did he always seem to be the same, fighting for people's rights?

John: Every time that I seen him - like I say, I stay there most every time when I got there, at his place. Because he had a pretty good house there, three or four beds in the house and anybody, one of his friends wants to stay, he could stay in there. But I thought he was always the same.

Murray: Right.

John: Yeah.

Murray: So things didn't get him down very much. He would keep fighting even if things were bad.

John: That's right, that's right.

Murray: Do you remember any of his close friends in La Ronge? Besides Allan Quandt and Tony and Berry? Did he have native friends as well?

John: Oh yeah, he had a lot of native friends there.

Murray: Can you remember any of their names?

John: Jim Izbister, that's one of his best friends.

Murray: I've talked to Jim.

John: And Frank Tomkins. I think the Izbisters, like...

Murray: Ernie and Jim.

John: Yeah.

Murray: And what about Janet Fietz? Did he know her too?

John: Oh yeah, and also his husband. He was a bit of a friend.

Murray: Janet's husband?

John: Yeah.

Murray: Where is he now?

John: Well, he got burned in one of the houses.

Murray: Oh did he?

John: Yeah.

Murray: He died?

John: Yeah.

Murray: How long ago was that?

John: Oh, now I don't know, about four or five years ago, somewhere in there.

Murray: In La Ronge?

John: In La Ronge, La Ronge. I worked with that guy too you know, for a long time. John Fietz was his name.

Murray: I've heard from other people that Jim would always talk to native people, Indian and Metis, and encourage them to be proud of themselves.

John: That's right.

Murray: Did he talk like that?

John: Sure, yeah.

Murray: What kinds of things would he say to people?

John: Well, the way you know, but I always did that. This wasn't much new things to me. But he would encourage that if you find a job, you keep that. You try and keep your job and try and handle money and look after yourself, you know. This is the way he generally talked to me, but I always did that.

Murray: You knew that anyway but he would talk to others who might not know that?

John: That's right. Because, when you do that, he says, you'll always have a little bit and then you don't have to borrow.

Murray: Right. He wanted you to be self-sufficient.

John: That's right, yeah.

Murray: Was it partly because he knew that you had to work mostly in a white society, that he wanted you to learn how to use money and keep your job? Was that part of it, do you think?

John: I don't know if that was part of it but he encouraged, I guess, to most anybody.

Murray: To be determined and to be responsible, eh?

John: Yeah, yeah, that's right. To be responsible, what you're doing and then you don't have to rely on somebody.

Murray: Did he ever talk about the problem of alcohol in the north?

John: No.

Murray: He never talked about that, eh?

John: No, no. Never. As a matter of fact, you know, he liked that himself.

Murray: He liked to have good drink?

John: Sure. Once in a while you know.

Murray: But would he ever get really drunk?

John: No, I never seen him drunk.

Murray: Just drink enough to have a good time.

John: Yeah, that's right and have a little talk with his

friends, you know, and that's the way he was. But he didn't take that all the time. Just when you see him.

Murray: Right.

John: Because sometimes I would just drop in there maybe to say hello to him and then he would.

Murray: But he didn't talk about other people drinking that you can remember?

John: No.

Murray: Was alcohol as big a problem back in those days as it is now?

John: No, no. You see, talking about alcohol now, it used to be that there was a law that you could buy only so much a day.

Murray: Each time you go into the...

John: No.

Murray: Each day.

John: Each day. Maybe a case of beer and one bottle of...

Murray: Liquor.

John: Liquor. That's all. That's all you could buy. And now they changed the law. You can, if you have the money...

Murray: Buy a truckfull.

John: If you have the money you can buy as much as you want.

Murray: When did that law change, do you remember?

John: Now I don't remember that.

Murray: It was quite a while ago?

John: It's quite a while ago. That's when it came worse.

Murray: Would it be 1960 or earlier than that do you think? Or later?

John: I think it, about 1960, I guess.

Murray: In that period, eh?

John: Yeah.

Murray: And that's when you think it seemed to start to get worse because there was more and more, eh?

John: That's right, more and more of that. You couldn't do nothing else. If you buy a case of beer and that and then that's all you're going to have for that day.

Murray: So you can't get that drunk on a case of beer, eh?

John: No. So I never seen anybody drunk in those days.

Murray: Up until the change of that law.

John: Yeah, yeah.

Murray: Is there anything else that changed that made people drink do you think?

John: Well, I think it's everything else, you know.

Murray: Welfare?

John: Welfare.

Murray: Lack of jobs?

John: That's right, lack of jobs. But the main thing is welfare. I don't like to say this but I got to say that was... it's about ten years ago I say to one of those agents here when welfare was coming in, "You are spoiling the people." And now see what happens.

Murray: Do you think they would have been better without welfare?

John: That's right. And people were, they would go to their traplines, you know. I myself don't make a lot of money in my trapline but when I go there, I stay all winter. I come only twice from there. I don't make much money but I live a good life over there.

Murray: You eat the meat and...

John: You darn right I do. And then I generally have a little bit of money left over too.

Murray: Yeah.

John: But now just a few of them do that.

Murray: Did people used to grow gardens too?

John: Oh yeah, a lot of them. All across here, they were full of gardens on this side. You don't see nothing here.

Murray: Lots of good land for gardens.

John: Nothing in here.

Murray: When did that start to change?

John: That started to change, I'd say about in the fifties.

Murray: Is that when welfare came in too?

John: Yeah, that's welfare started that.

Murray: The two things came together.

John: Yeah.

Murray: When welfare started to come, people stopped growing gardens and stopped going to their traplines.

John: Yeah.

Murray: What do you think welfare does to a man in his head? What happens in a man's head?

John: That I don't know because I don't know how many times I asked for welfare but I do, maybe once a year.

Murray: Only when you really need it.

John: When I need it. But other than that I do a little bit and make a little bit and never ask for any.

Murray: Do you think it stops people from being proud when they have welfare?

John: I think so. Because that's the only way that you could get them stand there.

Murray: Taking something for nothing.

John: That's right.

Murray: Getting something for nothing.

John: Getting something for nothing, you know, it's nowadays, right now.

Murray: And the Indian people have never had that before.

John: No, never. There was no family allowances, no old age pensions; people were living a better life than it is now. Some of these guys are pretty poor. They don't have much to eat right now.

Murray: So maybe for older people who can't go out and trap, welfare or family allowance is okay.

John: Yeah, that's okay for them.

Murray: Not for young people.

John: Welfare for young people, it's no good for them.

Murray: Would there have been enough jobs back in those days for people if there wasn't welfare?

John: No, there was no jobs.

Murray: But there was the bush.

John: Just trapping.

Murray: And fishing, and there was fishing.

John: And fishing, yeah, that's the only... Only a few guys like myself, you know. There were a few companies that ever worked this way. Matter of fact, oh here in Saskatchewan, there was this company I worked for and the company, Eric Partridge from Prince Albert, the only two companies that were around this place all the time.

Murray: That was in the fifties mostly, eh?

John: In the fifties, and I'm pretty sure they were only about... before they started the mine here, there were at one time twenty employees here. But other than that about six prospectors.

Murray: Right. Why do you think the government brought in welfare? Could you ever figure that out?

John: No, couldn't figure that out.

Murray: Did they ever explain it or talk to people about it or did they just bring it in?

John: The first government that... when he was in power we called them CCF.

Murray: They were the first ones to bring it in.

John: They was the first ones to bring it in and they were trying to help the poor people. That's one thing you can say but...

Murray: So the intention was good.

John: Sure, the intention was good, you know, for the old people and the family allowances for the children.

Murray: But it got out of control, is that what happened?

John: That's right. I think this is what happened.

Murray: Did the government ever seem to understand what it was doing, that it was maybe making a mistake?

John: I think so because the agent I talked to, you know, this now, he says...

(End of Side A)

(Side B)

John: ...but...

Murray: You were happy.

John: You were happy.

Murray: What was the social life in Stanley like? Were there lots of dances and violin playing and stuff like that?

John: Oh hell, yeah. Yeah, every fall when everybody is leaving they would have a good time, you know, have a dance.

Murray: People wouldn't get drunk but they would drink and have a party and just have a good time?

John: Yeah, sure, yeah.

Murray: Were there dances every week do you think?

John: No, no.

Murray: Just when people were leaving and that?

John: Yeah, and weddings.

Murray: Right. Would people ever get together just on an ordinary night and do a little fiddle playing or anything like that? Would that happen?

John: No, they didn't. Except on dances.

Murray: Just dances, weddings and stuff like that.

John: Yeah.

Murray: Does that happen any more?

John: Well, not in dancing.

Murray: You still have weddings and stuff?

John: Sure. But there is a lot of this playing music going around now.

Murray: People are playing music again?

John: Sure, yeah.

Murray: Is that started up again or did it stop at one time?

John: Well, you see, like the olden days there was not too much of that, you know, but that is coming up.

Murray: Where people are playing their guitars and violins and stuff like that?

John: Sure, yeah.

Murray: So things are maybe getting a little better that way, eh?

John: Yeah, yeah. It's better that way.

Murray: Did you ever know Malcolm Norris?

John: Oh yeah, he was a good friend of mine. He was a good friend of Jim's.

Murray: Could you tell me a bit about Malcolm and what you knew about him?

John: Well, Malcolm used to be an old trapper. I heard him say that. Down in Alberta.

Murray: And a prospector too, eh?

John: And a prospector too. And him and Jim were pretty well-educated.

Murray: They knew a lot.

John: Oh yeah, they knew a lot what was going on. Matter of fact, Malcolm had a pretty good job with the government.

Murray: Yeah, Prospectors' Plan.

John: Yeah.

Murray: Did you ever take that plan, that course?

John: That course? Oh yeah, the last three years I worked with the government.

Murray: What was Malcolm like? Could you compare him to Jim and the kinds of things he used to talk about and how people saw him?

John: Well, I don't know how people saw him but I thought Malcolm was a little more... like, when he starts to talk you know, he can be upset for a little while, you know.

Murray: He gets pretty emotional.

John: Yeah, yeah.

Murray: What would get him going? What would make him emotional?

John: Politics.

Murray: Politics, eh.

John: Yeah, yeah.

Murray: Did he ever talk about discrimination? Would that make him mad?

John: No. No, not discrimination, you know. But sure he can, but they never got mad over that. But they thought they were equal.

Murray: What kinds of things might make him mad? What would he get excited about?

John: Oh, the same as Jim, you know, but he was more... when he talked about what people are treating old people, you know.

Murray: Did he talk about businesses mistreating workers?

John: That's right, yeah.

Murray: And the government?

John: Yeah, and he knew quite a few businesses that would do that, you know.

Murray: What would he say about them, that they were cheating people or...?

John: Oh yeah, they were cheating people. He says, you're just working for nothing and you're making them rich.

Murray: Did people believe that when he said it? Do you think? Most people?

John: Well, I guess some did. Matter of fact, I did.

Murray: But some people didn't?

John: Well, I don't know that. But see, I believe that because there were some people that I worked for that I made a lot of money for taking a little contract for them, you know, cutting lines in them days.

Murray: They made a lot of money.

John: Sure.

Murray: But you didn't?

John: But I didn't. The one contractor not too long ago that the government was hiring, and I wouldn't name the guy, but he took the contract then I was supposed to cut the line and get all the boys for him. So I got five boys besides myself who were good line cutters. So we started cutting line. We were getting \$45 a mile.

Murray: That was this year or last year?

John: Oh, three years ago, I guess. And at the same time he was going to give us where to sleep and feed us, enough grub, feed us three times a day. And what he was getting from the government was \$125 a mile. And we kept, I don't know, talk about food and I can say about \$15 a day for myself. That's a good meal.

Murray: So he fed you well but still that was only \$15.

John: That's right. And then figure that out. See he wouldn't have spent maybe about \$70.

Murray: Altogether.

John: Altogether. And the rest is his.

Murray: So he gets \$45 for nothing.

John: That's right.

Murray: And Malcolm would talk about that kind of thing too?

John: That's right, that's the kind of thing. See, if we were responsible, you can be your own boss. And this is what I've been trying, myself.

Murray: Did Malcolm ever get angry with native people if they didn't understand what he was saying? Did you ever see him do that?

John: No, I never seen him do that but see, he tried to explain. The same with Jim.

Murray: They were always trying to explain.

John: Sure, sure, yeah.

Murray: How often would you see Malcolm?

John: Just once in a while because he was in Prince Albert.

Murray: He'd come north in the summertime?

John: Yeah, just once in a while. We'd shake hands and talk for a few minutes, that's all.

Murray: He was always friendly though, eh?

John: Yeah, that's right.

Murray: Did he have lots of friends too?

John: Oh, I imagine so.

Murray: But was he the same as Jim? Do you think he, it's hard to say this, do you think he was as much of an Indian as Jim was? Do you think he liked the bush as much as Jim and that sort of thing?

John: I think so.

Murray: He was the same then, eh?

John: He was the same.

Murray: And he spoke Cree?

John: Sure.

Murray: But...

John: Sure, he spoke Cree the same as I did.

Murray: But Jim, Jim couldn't speak Cree.

John: No. But Jim spoke French you know, pretty good French.

Murray: Did you ever see the two men together?

John: Oh, yeah.

Murray: What were they like together? Were they good friends?

John: Oh yeah, good friends, yeah.

Murray: Did they laugh and joke together quite a bit?

John: Oh sure, sure. Yeah, in the olden days it was... they knew each other from back, I don't know when.

Murray: Until 1927.

John: Yeah.

Murray: Did they have a different style of talking? Was one more quiet than the other?

John: Yeah, that's right. They have a different style. Jim was pretty low speaker, you know. But Malcolm, you could hear him, oh, going through the...

Murray: From a mile a way eh. (chuckles) Was he a fiery man, Malcolm?

John: That's right, he was a fiery man. Remember I told you

about the co-op meeting. Jim was there and Malcolm was firing away to the agents at that time.

Murray: This was in Prince Albert, eh?

John: This was in Prince Albert.

Murray: And this was a class to teach people about co-operatives was it?

John: That's right.

Murray: How long did that class go on, do you know?

John: Well, I only stayed there for two weeks, two weeks.

Murray: Just a short course.

John: Just a short course.

Murray: So you'd go every day to the class?

John: That's right, yeah, every day.

Murray: What year did you say that was, do you remember?

John: Now I couldn't remember that.

Murray: In the fifties, eh?

John: Yeah, in the fifties, (inaudible). After the CCF took over. And I know the guy that was our teacher there. You know George Coldwell, the Director of Fisheries?

Murray: Yeah. He was the one who was teaching about it, eh?

John: He was the one. And the other guy was Howard Chapman. I don't know where he is now.

Murray: Do you remember when the CCF brought in the fur marketing and fish marketing?

John: Yeah. What year, I don't remember.

Murray: It was in the late forties, I think.

John: Yeah, yeah.

Murray: Did people think that was a good thing or did they have to have it explained to them? Do you remember that?

John: Oh, they had to have it explained to them. And now they know because at that time, they thought the government was running their business for them.

Murray: And they didn't like that?

John: And they didn't like that too much.

Murray: So there was some hostility there for the government, eh?

John: That's right, that's right. But you talk to these government people and then it's not too fair because these, they couldn't buy fur here at the Hudson's Bay and the other store.

Murray: They wouldn't give you credit anymore.

John: That's right. So we had it changed around.

Murray: Well, they set up their own stores too didn't they, the government?

John: Oh yeah, they set up their own stores.

Murray: Did people use those quite a bit?

John: Yes sir, they did. And then finally the government turned them over to be co-op type of people in the settlements.

Murray: Did the government send people in to explain these programs?

John: Oh yeah, yeah. They had co-op classes for a little short times but the one that goes in there is supposed to come back and teach all the others.

Murray: Did they come and explain the fish marketing and fur marketing, too?

John: Yeah.

Murray: They tried to explain what they were doing?

John: Yeah.

Murray: So they made an honest effort to try and explain that?

John: Sure, that's right, yeah.

Murray: Did Jim and Malcolm ever try and help explain those things too? Did they talk about it?

John: Well, Jim did. But as I say, Malcolm wasn't around too much, around this part.

Murray: So Jim encouraged people to take advantage of those marketing things?

John: That's right, yeah.

Murray: Okay, I better not keep you too long.

John: Yeah.

(break in tape - poor quality recording on the rest of the tape)

John: (Inaudible)...

Murray: Would you try and walk out or would you try and attract attention from a plane or something? What would you do first probably?

John: If you really get lost?

Murray: You don't know where you are.

John: If I didn't know where I was, well I would start a fire maybe on a point because planes fly...

Murray: All the time?

John: All the time.

Murray: So you would try and attract attention if you were lost.

John: (Inaudible) But I generally have a slingshot with me.

Murray: So you would be able to get a bird or a rabbit or...?

John: (Inaudible)

Murray: Would Jim carry a slingshot too do you think?

John: No, he never did but he used to have a rifle.

Murray: So you thought it was pretty strange that he would disappear like that?

John: That's right, yeah.

Murray: Because normally you would expect him to start a fire or cut some trees into the water or...

John: He knew what to do.

Murray: He knew what to do. Anybody with that much experience would know.

John: Yeah. Especially, you know, if you know how to move around in the bush. (Inaudible)

Murray: So you think something happened to them. They didn't just get lost and die of starvation or something?

John: I believe that.

Murray: Do you think they could have been attacked by bears?
Is that a possibility?

John: That area was very well covered. Trappers that know the bush, you know.

Murray: So they would have found him if he was dead?

John: If he were attacked by a bear, you know, there would some bones be found someplace.

Murray: Somebody would find them.

John: Sure.

Murray: So what's the other possibility? That they would be in a lake somewhere?

John: They might be in a lake somewheres.

Murray: Is that your conclusion? That they must be at the bottom of a lake?

John: Yeah.

Murray: Is that what most people think?

John: That's what most people thought then.

Murray: One way or the other. Either they were killed or they drowned or, or something.

John: Yeah.

Murray: Do you know if Jim could swim?

John: That I don't know.

Murray: Did you ever see him swim?

John: No. I never see him swim.

(End of Side B)

(End of Interview)

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