

Transcription
Dorothy Askwith
Tape 2

- Interviewed March 10, 1993 -

Dave: Your whole philosophy of a meaningful life is one that I'm really impressed with. It's such a refreshing change from an interview I had about 2 weeks ago with Leon Ferguson. Do you know Leon at all?

Dorothy: I've heard of him, but I really don't know Leon.

Dave: He and his wife are both retired

Dorothy: Would you like another coffee?

Dave: Sure why not. I can get it. They're both very depressed, they're retired and they have nothing good to say about it.

Dorothy: About life itself?

Dave: Yes, it's sort of like life has already ended for them.

Dorothy: Hell, life is what you make it. Like I tell them most of the time, we're on _____ now. (tape pause)

Dave: Because I wouldn't mind just getting a bit of your background as far as who your parents are, because usually there's some really interesting historical connections and that sort of thing. Your father came from Montana.

Dorothy: _____ Schilling is a writer here in Saskatoon. She wrote a book called Gabriel's children and she tells about all our family background in it. She did an awful lot of interviews with us. As a matter of fact my sister escorted her down to Montana to my dad's first place and the Metis community there in Havard and Fort Benton, Montana, where dad was born. The church where he was baptized, the grocery store where they had dealt with and my mother was born, her dad was also from Montana, my grandfather, but he married a Saskatchewan lady who was my gramma. She was an Arcand, my grampa was a LaFromboise, and my mother was born in Medicine Hat, AB, in 1902. My grandfather was born in the U.S. and dad was born in the U.S. in 1890. He passed away here in Saskatoon in 1974. He came here in 1906, 1905 or 1906. He was just 16 years old when he came to Canada.

He got married in Canada at 16 years old. Can you imagine his first wife, not my mom. My mom was his second wife.

Dave: So your mother and father were both Metis?

Dorothy: A-ha.

Dave: And your father's name again?

Dorothy: Peter, Trottier.

Dave: I was reading a book on Louise Moine or somebody who had written about a Trottier family who were in Willow Bunch for sometime and then in Montana. I guess Trottier, was that a family that originated from Montana.

Dorothy: They were from Montana.

Dave: Okay, what about your mentioning Clarence, he's a veteran as well isn't he?

Dorothy: Yes, he's a veteran as well. That was dad's first wife with his first family. It was his stepbrother.

Dave: Okay.

Dorothy: When Clarence was living, he was deeply involved with Local 11 Metis Society and he opened a little museum in the Metis society building. And he got all our veterans pictures up there. The only thing I got back was my medals. My pictures, I still have not been able to get them back, Nora Ritchie took charge when Clarence was terminating with cancer. Nora Ritchie took over the Metis Society building and next thing you know the building was closed and all our artifacts were in there. Including my pictures there. Ron Camponi was one of them, his brother served in Korea. And Toni Camponi and Clarence and Clarence's other brother Ervin. All the family veterans.

Dave: And all these pictures exist somewhere?

Dorothy: They're in there and I've contacted Nora Ritchie and she said they're put away somewhere and when I have time I'll dig them out and get them back to you. I said they're of no use to anybody but they do mean something to me.

Dave: Okay, I'm going to contact her as well, because the Gabriel Dumont Institute is the educational arm of the Metis Society and if they can't get a guy whose writing a book on

Metis veterans some pictures then we have a problem. I'll contact her, because I was talking with Ron Camponi and I couldn't get a picture of him either. They have a picture of him in service?

Dorothy: Yes.

Dave: I'll contact her.

Dorothy: There was a nice picture of him and his brother on a tank.

Dave: Oh, he was telling me about that picture. I want to get a copy of that.

Dorothy: It's there. And Nora Ritchie is the person that would know where they are. I called her, she's not listed in the telephone directory so the only time I could see her was going through Clarence's niece. So maybe I don't know why she'd want mine though for. I would sure like to have mine back and if you wanted a picture, that's where it is.

Dave: Okay, because I'd like to get copies made of them for the book. I'll talk to her. I'm going to get on that tomorrow because if they have a number of photographs and if they're all together still then that would be good. But there seems to be a bit of trouble getting them to find them. But okay, good. I will get in touch with her. The only other thing that I wanted to ask you about, oh, now your father. Was your father a veteran at all?

Dorothy: No.

Dave: Okay. Do you remember the names of any Metis World War I veterans?

Dorothy: All I can remember is possibly an uncle of Ron Camponi, and he was William Vandale.

Dave: Yeah, he had an old picture of the Metis Society from 1938 and I think.

Dorothy: Yeah, those are all in Gabriel's Children book.

Dave: The one last thing that I sort of wanted to get your perspective on, you were talking about how your father would bring home Indian soldiers, and that was when you first sort of began to realize how many, there was a lot of them. Do you

think there was sort of a connection between Indian soldiers who had to leave the reserve or aboriginal soldiers and then there migration into the city and then alcoholism. Do you think there is a connection there at all?

Dorothy: I think so. They were introduced pretty heavily during the war. Most of the reserves were dry reserves back then. And of course you come into the city you have access to all those things. And I really feel that, that was certainly a contributing factor, cause like I say in myself and in everybody else, I was associated with all non-native people. And it was our way of entertainment. Just go do some relief drinking. I had to get away from the routine kind of thing. I think everybody did kind of routine drinking. I was never involved in any drinking prior to that. It was your peer group again. You know, everybody does it so you do it too. So you just fall into that pit, that bottomless pit. You could have a lot of devastating experiences certainly. Thank goodness there's a way back. Thank goodness there's a choice. Any young people that I speak too, my granddaughter is going to high school. She's in grade 10, but she's going into the airforce this summer. She's listened to me. I said you know I was such a fool, I could have made such a good career for myself because I had such an advantage, but I could have had continuous training after my discharge. I had a certain time to take advantage of educational programs for a career after, again the freedom, I'm free at last, I can do whatever I want kind of thing. You just throw that aside until it was too late, you had limited time. You finally got around to realize and you say hey I better go out and see about this and they say sorry, that program is no longer available. Procrastinator, you learn from experiences certainly. My only way right now is, I really like being in the helping area and I like to get involved in all these programs, but with so much politics around, so damn much greed and dishonesty and were there's dishonesty I just back off. If you can't do anything _____, then the hell with it.

Dave: And if it is going to be purely self-serving than you know it's not going to succeed.

Dorothy: It's not going to succeed. And that's what I feel bad about. I feel that the other thing that is lacking is unity. I recognize so many things that is holding us back as an organization as Metis people. As an institute, I admire Gabriel Dumont Institute. It could be such a wonderful, much more meaningful and successful program if we had some unity. Everybody serving, have a goal and everybody work towards that

goal. Not just for selfish reasons. There's so many jealousy. I notice that in our people. So much jealousy. You strive for your soft _____. When I worked with this program, I saved my money cause I know that I'm getting on in life, I don't have too many working days left, my goal was to buy a brand new car. I've always had second hand cars. I got a Chrysler in the garage now. That was our last car and I think that will be our last new car, hopefully if we live another 10 years. That was my goal. And somebody said, who did you rip off to get a new car. I was really offended. And that's the way people are. The Metis people are. If you get something that you strive for, there's always that somebody who are you ripping off. Don't judge everybody by yourself mam. I saved for this. If I have to rip somebody off then it's not going to be meaningful. It's only the things that you strive for and you gain that you make a lot. That's where the good feeling comes. That's where the pride comes and it takes a lot of, I have my own little slogan for pride, how am I going to achieve pride with a lot of perseverance. Don't be a quitter and to be responsible. I have to be responsible if I'm going to have a job and if I'm going to do anything meaningful, I have to be a responsible person if I'm going to gain credibility. A lot of self-discipline. What I want most of all is to be independent as a person. Without those two upper things, perseverance and responsibility, I'll never gain that independence, and when I do get that picture, I can start putting little bit on the side so that one of the things I've wanted is a car. And if my husband did it for me, what would be my pride. Hand me down. A give me thing. If I go out and do it myself, it feels so good. And when you see the gain you make as you strive and struggle. It's not easy. Lots of times you feel like giving up, but hey don't be a quitter. Keep going. And when you see things happening and when you're achieving something, it feels so pleased. That's my PRIDE. That's what gives you the pride. And when I got that new car I was so proud. I did it. I did it. And myself, I did it myself. If ask you for handouts, that feeling wouldn't be there. And I think that's in anything we do in life. We got to help ourselves or do it together as a team. If we're going to do anything big like GDI. Needs benefits like a set of heads and a lot of people working together to make it grow. One can't pull the load by himself.