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GABRIEL DUMONT INSTITUTE FOLKLORE INTERVIEWS

Jimmy LaRocque, Guy Blondeau, and Sherry Farrell Racette

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Videotape 1

10.26.17 Sherry Farrell Racette: Alright. Morning.

Jimmy LaRocque: Morning.

Sherry Farrell Racette: I wonder if you could just start off by just introducing yourself and just telling us where you were born and who your folks were and your grandparents.

Jimmy LaRocque: My name is Robert James LaRocque, and I was born in Winnipeg, Manitoba. I came from there to Balcarres for a few months, then to Lebret, 'cause my dad was a policeman and had resigned as a policeman and moved to Lebret. I stayed in Lebret until '41, and going to school, and from there I went to work for Prairie Airways, was first, first job I had.

Sherry Farrell Racette: So you were born in Winnipeg?

Jimmy LaRocque: Yeah.

Sherry Farrell Racette: And who were your parents?

Jimmy LaRocque: My parents was Joseph Zephren LaRocque and Mary Theresa Solomon, and grandparents was Antoine LaRocque and Rosalie

LaPlante on the LaRocque side, and on the, my mother's side was Michael and Anne Solomon. Were, they were, were both born in Europe, came to the States, got married there. My mother was the first born that, when they came to, they came to Canada in 1908.

Sherry Farrell Racette: So where was J.Z. born?

Jimmy LaRocque: J.Z. was born right in Lebret.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh, he was born in Lebret?

Jimmy LaRocque: Or east of Lebret about a mile and a half, in a log house, that log house is in the. He, educated in Lebret to an extent, and then he went to further his education and he sold his scrip.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Okay.

Jimmy LaRocque: And went to Winnipeg for a business course, and he did, from there, in the meantime he worked for the CPR while he was taking this course off and on Saturdays, and then they wanted him to work for them afterwards, so he did work for them for a short time. I don't know exactly how long, but he would look at the track that went to Saskatchewan. He used to, my home was over there someplace. So it didn't take long, and came back. He started a business in, in, of his own in Lebret, a land business, and, selling land here and there, and scrip, and buying and selling scrips. That went on for awhile, and then did other things, or this or that. And finally, in 1914, he became a provincial police, Saskatchewan provincial police, and nobody knew he was a police. From 1914 to 1916, he just worked his clothes and was sent here and there in order to do this and that, but nobody knew him. But in 1916, he was told, if you want to be a policeman, you have to put a uniform on, and you have to go to Turtleford. So that, in 1916, him and my mother and their daughter, who were the oldest in the

family, travelled from there to Turtleford. And from Dundurn on, they— William LaRocque and a partner, they travelled together, so on and so forth. But when they got to Turtleford he, he told him, he said, the most business is in Meadow Lake. So they sent him, so they sent him, then they posted him in Meadow Lake. He's in Meadow Lake for a couple years, and, I don't know if he got into trouble or what, but he wrote some pretty tough articles about Métis and Indians being starving, and the government was doing nothing. So they moved to Willow Bunch. And then Willow Bunch, it was alright for awhile, but my mother took the, had the flu. At that time, everybody died of the flu, so, so she was sick for a couple weeks, and, the doctor gave her a pill the size of a silver dollar, she said, and about a quarter inch thick. And he said, "Mrs. LaRocque, you take that, and if you're alive tomorrow morning, you're gonna make it. Take tomorrow morning. If you're not here, we'll know that you didn't make it." So much for that. But at that rate, she was very weak for some time, and her sister Agnes came to stay with her, and so on, for about. And then, finally, he transferred them to Balcarres, and he stayed in Balcarres from 1919 to 1921, when my mother finally talked him out of the police force and told him to go farming. It was a much better way to live than this police force where he was always threatened, people to kill him there, want to beat him up there, want to do this, and my, my mother worried about this stuff all the time, but he didn't seem to care. And she said, "I can't sleep with this." So they went to, they moved to Lebret and farmed. Well, my dad was no more a farmer than he was a flyer, eh? So from then on, they said he, he was only, he was, he got out of the police force in 1921, and in 1924 was a game warden.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh yeah, yeah.

Jimmy LaRocque: Went back into the same thing, but little different. So was a game warden till 1929, and in 1929 the government changed and he went. So he was out of work from '29 to '35. In '35, the government changed again, and he got a job again, and continued off and on. And of course he

was starting to get older, eh? And that, it's quite, lost his job off and on, with the government changed. But he said, but his last job he had, worked for the P.F.R.A, in 19-, well, off and on, I guess he there. But finally in '67, when Diefenbaker took over, then he lost his job again. That was the last job he had with the government.

Sherry Farrell Racette: So I take it he wasn't a Conservative?

10.32.42 Jimmy LaRocque: He was, he was Liberal on the. The Liberal story is a long story for the simple reason, then, they, you were a Liberal. And he said, "You'll be a Liberal the rest of your life, too," he told me. So I said, "Okay." He says, see the idea was that somewhere along the, this is another part of the story, see Antoine LaRocque, his dad, and, and Star Blanket got arrested at the same time and taken, and taken to Regina and put in the building, and [?] supposed to be a jail or whatever. They were kept there eight or nine days and that. Meantime the war at Batoche was over, so they just turned them loose. That was it. Now, the idea was that then they talked [?] Antoine LaRocque, he should sue the government for false arrest. So then, so he did, proceeded to sue the government for false arrest, and then, as everybody knows, that if you sue the government, it's pretty hard to put your finger on it. Government's here today [?] the next day, old LaRocque, you haven't got enough money to keep go around, eh? So first thing, you know, old LaRocque owed more money than he was worth, so the government confiscated his land southwest of 1-2113 west of the 2nd. He lost his land, and, of course, he was told that. Now, Laurier came to Lebret, to church, in 1895, and they told Laurier about this. Laurier said if I'm elected, he says, I'll fix that up. So he was elected in that following year, I think, what, 1895, and nothing happened. So, later on they finally wrote him, contacted him about this, about this land deal, and he said, "Okay," and he restored the land to old LaRocque. And old LaRocque said, "I'll go live there the rest of my life," which wasn't very much after that, but, but my dad never voted anything other but Liberal.

Sherry Farrell Racette: That's why?

Jimmy LaRocque: That's why. That's one of the reasons why LaRocques are Liberals. That's one of the reasons why and I own that land today, so.

Sherry Farrell Racette: So you got that land back?

Jimmy LaRocque: Yeah, well he got the lost peg.

10.34.59 Sherry Farrell Racette: What about you Mr. Blondeau?

Guy Blondeau: Okay I was born at Jasmin, which is between Ituna and Lestock.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Okay, map here.

Guy Blondeau: About ten, twelve miles from Ituna on the main line of the CN. My dad was born and raised in Lebret and he attended his high school there. His dad was Joseph Blondeau. My dad was Joseph Adrian, and he was called, everybody called him Adrian. So his father Joseph was the youngest son of Simon Blondeau, Sr., who I think came out with the buffalo hunters in, I think, the '70s, or like they were all in '70s or '80s.

Sherry Farrell-Racette: I think, I, I think I found an obituary, and I think it was Simon, and it was like the last buffalo hunter, like he was one of the, those two old Blondeaus, were, like, two, like the last St. Pierre and Simon were the last living buffalo hunters.

Guy Blondeau: Okay, yeah, right.

Sherry Farrell Racette: So they had, they were right there?

10.36.03 Guy Blondeau: Anyway, his dad died when he was about, my dad was born in 1900, so it's easy to remember his age. Anyway, he, his dad died when he was a teenager and his mother went to work for the, the Oblates, keeping house for them and cooking for them. Now, my dad, just a little background here that I, things I sort of put together later on. He never did like the Oblates I found that out later on, too, eh? And when I went to teach at the Indian school and I became principal of the, you know, the educational part, it was a real feather in my cap, and there was an Oblate under me. I was his superior. So tickled. He was so pleased about that.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Your dad liked that?

Guy Blondeau: Yeah. So, you know, so, so between that and, something else is that when I was a boy, you know, they, you always had to, it was racial. It wasn't racial origin, it was nationality or whatever they call it, eh? Racial origin. And I was always French. I was raised, I, I thought I was French, and so I think between putting these things together that he must have experienced some discrimination when he was a boy living in Lebret.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Yeah, from the Oblates probably.

Guy Blondeau: Yes, from the Oblates and maybe society in general. Yeah, I don't know, eh, but the fact that I was always French, I was not Métis. I was French in school, you know, 'cause we, I was not raised as a Métis kind of thing, you see, because there was not a, not a large number of Métis around. They associated with their, there was Scotch and Irish, and there was a Walsh there and O'Donnells and, and Swedes around Jasmin and Kelliher and a lot of Ukrainians and Polish. You see, so there was not much of a Métis, especially in Jasmin, eh? Not very many there. So, so I, I knew nothing about my, my Métis background until later on when I, you know, start inquiring more about my, my ancestors. Anyway, my dad, his mother

remarried to [?] was his name and they moved to north of Jasmin. So that's, you see my dad became the postmaster in Jasmin later. I guess he'd worked around Lebet. He helped build the Fort San Road. He worked for, you would remember the contractor there—can't think of his name, Scottish guy, I think, doesn't matter. But, you know, he did some, some work around Lebet as a young fellow. He, he spent one part of a summer in, in the sanatorium. He had a, still had [?], when he died he still had the scar showing up on his x-rays. And, interesting, he, he walked, went out, pardon me. He went out for a walk one evening, eh, from the San. And, and a neighbour of his, his stepfather's of north of Jasmin, was just out driving by in a buggy. So they recognized each other and the guy stopped and he said, "How about I can give you a ride home." "Sure," he said. "Jump in." So jumped in and they went, they went, took him home. Hey, he had unknowing to the authorities at the San. And, and then he was telling me one time how he had, he, he put himself on a very strict exercise regimen. He would sleep with his window wide open all winter, you know. His mom never knew about this, but, you know, after everybody was in bed he'd open up his window and put on more blankets. He would tie his shoes to a chair and get into his shoes, and then he'd bend over backwards just so that his knees came up over the level of the chair, and he'd bend over and touch the floor. And he, you know, his mother would have killed him if she had been, she'd have seen him doing this, eh, so he made sure he was never caught doing that, eh? So a lot of exercise, sleeping in the fresh air, and he ate well, and he says it never bothered him anymore. Anyway, that's just an interesting little, little piece of history there about him. So he was the postmaster, eh, and that's as long as I can remember, eh? He was postmaster in Jasmin. And talking about politics, he told me when I was very small, I remember he says if anybody asks you how you vote, you tell them Liberal. And he, he, he was a, a CCF, and later on an NDP, as long as I can remember, eh? But I remember this more, that he ...

10.40.36 Sherry Farrell Racette: He was a closet CCF ...

Guy Blondeau: ...if, if, he was a federal, a federal employee, so they said, he said if anybody asks you, you tell him Liberal, you know, so. Anyway, it's, on my mother's side. Just a minute, I better go back here. My, my dad's mother was a daughter of Antoine Hamelin. Antoine Hamelin had, I think it was four daughters and a couple sons, Leo and Joel, and I don't remember all the first names of his daughters. My, my grandmother was Valerie Hamelin and her sisters married a Robillard, a Dazé and a Klyne. So the, the one that married the Dazé, Maurice, no, yeah, it was Angele, Angele Dazé, Angele Hamelin married Maurice Dazé. Okay, they had a daughter, Mary Louise, who was my dad's first cousin, 'kay. The mothers are both, are both Hamelin girls, so they're first cousins. My dad married his first cousin's daughter, Georgina-Marie, Georgina-Marie Klyne, see, and I guess my, this did not sit very well with, with her mother, see, but anyway they were married. And after that I had a brother who died of a brain tumour when he was twenty years old and, well, it was because he married his cousin. See, she almost called him first cousin, but it wasn't first, it was his mother-in-law was his first cousin, 'kay, so his wife was, I guess you'd call her a second cousin, but anyway whatever happened in the family, any illness any, you know, defects or any, because they married too closely. And, and they say that she never, you know, apparently didn't like him very much, but he, there was nobody better to her than he was actually, especially as she got older. Okay, so that's so, my, on that side, I, there's a Dazé connection, and I have a lot of first, you know, second, and third cousins that I never met or heard. She had a few sisters. There was a Kately, married a Kately. I can't remember their names, that moved to Alberta. Now, my, more politics. My grandfather, Michael Klyne, this was back, like he was, you had said, you know, like he said, "I want you to vote Liberal, too," eh? This was when a politician would come to the door and the patriarch would shake his hand, and help welcome him in. And when he'd leave he'd say, "Well, you have my vote and all of my family's votes." So, anyway, he didn't, he didn't quite agree with this. His dad, you know, ordered him to vote something and he

refused and he was ostracized completely. And he ended up moving to Medicine Hat for some years. And then when he died my grandmother came back and lived with us. So that was, you know, pretty severe, serious stuff back then. On my mother's side there was the, okay, the Dazé and Hamelin connection. So I am related to Robillard, I'm related to Dazés and Klynes, and they say the other one was a Bonhomme, you know. Okay, fourth daughter married a Bonhomme, so I'm first cousins with some Bonhommes. There's some, might be some left at Ituna. I think they're all dying off now, and they're, Phillip and forget her name, Bonhomme had a son. Laura Folk, you might know Laura Folk from Ituna, and she has, you know, there's still some of them alive. I think they've been dying off pretty quickly recently. So that's what, I was raised in Jasmin. Went to, moved to Lestock and there was Hungarians, so again there was not much of a Métis, there was some, some Métis people there, but, but my mother never cared to associate with them for some reason. She was a little too sophisticated for them, I think, and stuff.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Okay.

10.44.51 Guy Blondeau: So you, she was a little, a little above them. I remember that very distinctly, and she didn't like Indians. She didn't care to associate with the Métis too much. And my dad didn't go out, nothing bothered him. He liked everybody and associated with everybody. But as I took my high school in Lestock and I taught three years in a country school up there, then I went to Lebret and I had, there were Bonhommes all over the place. I had never heard of them. My dad never spoke of them and looking, looking around at, you know, in Lebret at the time I could, I could see why he never spoke of them. But, but there were some, there was some wild ones, and I'll tell you, I remember that when we first went, and I also remember the. I should, maybe, I shouldn't be saying too much about this, about this, but, but the Eddie Crooks used to look after the telephones, eh, and he told us, "You're gonna have a hard time getting a telephone because

of your name, eh?" So, sure enough, we had to supply references and everything before they'd give us the telephone. Okay, that's the shady side of my history there. But I don't, I don't mind that.

Sherry Farrell Racette: We've all got one.

Guy Blondeau: My, my, my dad had no use for, for, you know, what would you call it, uppity uppity stuff, you know. And he, he used to tell us that whenever people would start talking about their distinguished relatives, he'd bring up this horse, this horse thief who was his great uncle, you know. Fictional character, eh, but, but he used to talk about his fictional relatives who were horse thieves and they were hung back there at such and such. And so he, he was a very genuine person and he, he was a real Christian person. Terms of, you know, being a universal, liked human beings in general. So that's, that's how I was raised in that kind of situation, not as a Métis but as a, you know, a community person, as a Catholic and a Canadian and whatever else. And, you know, I didn't really, really see too much of the Métis stuff either when we lived in, in, in Lebret for the first while because I, you know, I was just finding out who I was then, see. And so it's only recently, my son has done more digging into, into family tree and stuff than, than I have. But when I get time, maybe I'll do some more on that. So I spent twenty-two years at the Indian school as teacher and principal there, and then I went back to school for another year and I spent a year in Holdfast, three years in Radville in a separate school there, and then about ten years caretaking buildings in the city, and then back to Lebret to retire. I'm still there. Like, we like the valley. My son wrote in one of these, you know, history. You know, they take the register, I guess you'd call it, eh? Of the names, the one of the reunions in Lebret, he said, "I live in Regina, but my Lebret is my home." And I, I think that's the way my, you know, my wife was raised at Lestock. But to both of us, I think Lebret is our home, basically, no matter where we are, and that's where, that's where I come from.

10.48.08 Sherry Farrell Racette: I think a lot of people that come from the valley, doesn't matter where they live, they always think the valley is their home. A lot of people, I remember when my kids were small, we used to drive on Sundays to go into the valley and look where people used to live, you know. Well, this is where, you know, this is where I was raised, this is where I was born. It's just like a little empty house sitting there, but I notice that when we drive around the back roads, doing that we would meet other families from Regina who are probably doing the same thing, you know. Just making sure that their kids knew where their family had come from. People have strong connections to that.

Guy Blondeau: Yeah, and they, they come back to be buried in Lebret.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Yeah, and retire often.

Guy Blondeau: But, you know, other provinces, Regina, Lebret is the, the burial place, you know.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Still?

Guy Blondeau: It's got much to do with family plots, maybe Jimmy'd know a little bit more about that.

10.48.57 Jimmy LaRocque: Cheap place to get buried.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh, I think it's more than that!

Jimmy LaRocque: It's a hundred dollar lot isn't it?

Guy Blondeau: Yeah, hundred dollars for the lot.

Jimmy LaRocque: Try and buy a lot for the burial at a hundred dollars any place.

Sherry Farrell Racette: I don't know, I haven't checked yet.

Jimmy LaRocque: You're not old enough to check that.

Sherry Farrell Racette: You've been pricing, have you?

Jimmy LaRocque: Oh, well, I, I gotta, my dead mother and bury there, and I'm gonna get cremated in ...

Sherry Farrell Racette: Just ...

Jimmy LaRocque: ... same place. I hope.

Sherry Farrell Racette: But for both of you, there's generations of your family there?

Jimmy LaRocque: Oh yeah, there's, there's ...

Sherry Farrell Racette: Even though you moved around.

10.49.30 Jimmy LaRocque: There's lots of LaRocques there. There was some cousins of mine came, but one I'd never seen in my life before [?], and they came and I took them to where the LaRocques are buried, and there's Antoine LaRocque, here's Joe LaRocque, here's my sister Josephine, here's my dad and mom. And I said, "And your uncle is buried over there," and she said, "Well, there's no tombstone." I said, "Well, you don't put a tombstone [?] grow," I said. So ...

Sherry Farrell Racette: Yeah, there must be a lot of unmarked ...

Jimmy LaRocque: Well, yeah, oh, hundreds. As I said, I, I was at the funeral, so I have an idea like from where my dad [?] buried here to about ten, fifteen feet under the where Harry [?]. I said that that was Harry, that, that all those girls, there was four girls there, that was their uncle, see.

Sherry Farrell Racette: How old is that? That must be one of the oldest graveyards in southern Saskatchewan in Lebret.

Jimmy LaRocque: I would venture to say, 'cause it was started before, before 1864. Apparently some of them had been in St. Boniface, and Bishop Taché said, "I'm going there sometime and I'll start a mission there or some place." So they started to bury there, eh. Fine and dandy, they buried there. But then when the church came, the first church would, if you know where Lebret is, the bigstone church, the first church was behind there facing the lake.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Okay yeah.

Jimmy LaRocque: But it was a, a long building, only ten logs high, and a thatched roof, and one part of it was living quarters and the other part was the church.

Sherry Farrell Racette: It had a thatched roof?

Jimmy LaRocque: Oh yeah, that's why it burnt.

Sherry Farrell Racette: That was a, a Racette and a Desnomie. Who else built that?

Jimmy LaRocque: Lemire?

Sherry Farrell Racette: Lemire, yeah, cause I know it was a Racette and a Desnomie because, I think it's because Louis Racette wanted to get married. Because I was, him, and his father-in-law had built the church so I guess he had to build a church.

Jimmy LaRocque: But, see, they had a, they had a, Desjarlais was involved, too. Okay, it had a thatched roof and a wood humidifier in a thatched roof building. You're gonna have some snow on it or rain before it could burn right away up. And, but they, the church burnt—it was built in '66 and burnt in the first part of '68, I think it was. Then they immediately started to build a second church, which was like on the southeast corner of the big church. This or, if you know anything about the gar, the graveyard, where the little house is now, the utility house or maintenance hut. That's where the church used to stand. And it also faced the lake and it was a, the church, then they built the second church, was quite an elaborate church in the sense it was, is a twenty by forty log building, but it was twenty-some logs high and had windows [?], and they put a thatched roof on it. So then they got finished and [?]. I said, "What's this [?] gonna burn." But in the meantime they found out that the, Five Hills was north of Balcarres, that they were producing lumber and shingles there, so they immediately went over there and bought lumber and shingles, tore the thatched roof off and put lumber and shingles on the roof of the church. That's fine and dandy, everything went good from there, but the first modification after that was to build a piece on the north end for a sanctuary, like to put the altar in. So that's when they built that piece on. That's the first modification. The second modification was to build two [?], from there on the east and the west side. After they got finished with that, they, they had built a bell tower. The bell tower had a stairs in it, went this way and that way, and up. Up on top, that's where they had the choir, so that relieved the pressure on the church. See the sanctuary took [?] church, so that made more room for the people, the people that went up in the choir, that made room for people and some. In 1893, I have pictures, there's no bell in the belfry. But there's 18-, 1894

pictures with a bell up there. And that bell is in the church, is there now. The Lebret church, they set it up on top. It's the little bell, we call it, and it's, on it has 1892, Troy, New York. So if you let your imagination go a little bit, it built '92 in Troy, New York and they shipped it to Lebret. Five bells, hey shipped and that, I have a note there saying that they'll be at the blessing of the bells on October the 3rd, 1893, and they'll, after the [?] refreshments served, and that was to Forget, and the Lieutenant Governor and the Indian Affairs man were invited to this blessing. The five bells. There was four small ones and the one in Lebret. The one in Lebret weighs about 450 pounds, and it's, it's the smaller of the one that's there. But the others were smaller, yet there were only about, oh, maybe twenty-four inches high, something like that. I know we're forward about it, but three of them, I don't know where the other one is. One's in Five Hills, one in Lestock some place, it went west of Lestock, and the other one in Pasqua Reserve. That's where they are, they were taken. Now the other one was probably taken to a reserve some place so that it's never located. Probably what burnt already, eh? And they don't sound the same there. Alright, back to my story. They finally let the bell in bell tower and then the choir, and it was good, but this church was still too small because it served people for a hundred miles around.

Sherry Farrell Racette: A hundred miles around?

10.55.55 Jimmy LaRocque: A hundred miles around. In fact, in 1870, I don't know, Mrs. Dumont or Mrs. Pelletier or Mrs. [?], who's all the same person, who's all, who's brought a baby from Fort Walsh to Lebret to be baptized. If you think you got faith, just think of it in February, it came in a sleigh.

Sherry Farrell Racette: All the way?

Jimmy LaRocque: All the way from Fort Walsh to Lebret to be baptized. So, anyway, the, the, the church was too small, he said. Well, at that time they

decided to add twelve feet on each side of the main church, that made it bigger yet, eh? And that's where the modifications, outside, they put lumber on the outside, and they put this and fixed the windows and stuff like that, and so on and so forth. But in 1905 or thereabouts they told the parishioners that you're collecting stones and bring them to town. You're farming now, bring the stones to town.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Like picking rocks?

10.57.05 Jimmy LaRocque: Picking, yeah, rocks. So they, they did that. They kind of specialized what kind of stone they want. [?] pick a lot, lot along the shore of the lake and hold them and file them on both sides of where the church is now. The [?], back and forth. The church, little old church was serving the purpose, but was getting packed and this and that. They said they had to build another church pretty soon. But the biggest trouble came when this floor started to come up. Oh, there's something, the floor was coming up. So I, and my dad used to say the floor is not coming up, the church is moving down. Just log, a log church, you see and the logs just sat on the ground, eh?

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh, right, so it's all ...

Jimmy LaRocque: And they rotted, it went down, that's when folks come up. That's why the floor's coming up. 1925, they built this present church in Lebret. They started early in the spring and they finished [?], go inside, and Christmas of 1925. Then that little church became a parish hall. Card parties this and that, you put hay in it, and people lived in it, I don't know what else. And then in 1941, Father [?] was the parish priest, and he said, "We're gonna tear that church down. They're carousing it." To tear the church down to stop the carousing. At any rate, they tore the church down, and tore the church down in 1941, and by that cry, "They're crazy. Don't tear it down. Put it up, put some logs underneath and [?]." Good [?], the oldest church, the

oldest Catholic church in what you call now Saskatchewan, at that time. But they did tear down, so they did.

10.59.08 Sherry Farrell Racette: Well, it would be, there would be, Ile a la Crosse had a mission that was quite old. There was Cumberland House had something, and then, but then this one in Lebret, like for that whole big region. Like Ile a la Crosse would have been northwest territories, though, eh? [?] when Saskatchewan became a province.

Jimmy LaRocque: Well, you see now, back to another part of the story. Actually, Taché came to Lebret in August ...

Sherry Farrell Racette: Of '64?

Jimmy LaRocque: '64, and he said a mass there and he said a mass at Fort Qu'Appelle. Now, but he also went to Fort Qu'Appelle to tell them they need the Catholic Church there, or a Catholic mission there. But a lot of who he talked to don't need no Catholic mission here. We got one religion now. We don't need anymore. It was a Charles Pratt who was a, was the Catechist there at that time.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh, yeah, he was an Anglican right?

Jimmy LaRocque: Yeah, but he preached the gospel, so no matter where they were, what they were doing on Sunday, he preached the gospel. He took the railroad and read to them. So much for that. That's a lot, takes a lots of faith to do that. And any rate, he was promised that if he preached the gospel that they would make him an Anglican minister, eh? He died, never was a minister. But that's beside the point. But, any rate, Taché tried his best to get convince them. He talked to [?] in the Hudson's Bay post. "Oh, got one church now, I don't need another one." He talked to people downtown in Fort Qu'Appelle or what was at the Fort Qu'Appelle at the time.

He, he said, they said, "No, no, we got one now, we don't need another one," Back and forth. So finally Taché said, "I'll go back and make my mission four and a half miles back." And that's when he, back, went back to Lebret to start a mission. They told him, "Stay, stay right now. No, no, no, don't go back to St. Boniface. I can't live out here. There's no stores. There's no nothing. So, and I don't happen to go fishing and I don't do this." So back to St. Boniface he went, but he said, "I'll be back next year." Next year he come up the Assiniboine, but this time he didn't turn to Qu'Appelle. He kept on going and he went to Ile a la Crosse, right, and that's where he built the church.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Okay.

Jimmy LaRocque: Okay. Fine and dandy. Around October, he said, "Oh, I told those people I'd come back." So he crossed country again. Now that I don't understand. But he's supposed to come back cross country and landed at the top of the hill of Lebret, and that's when he planted the cross.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh, that's where Taché came?

Jimmy LaRocque: Yeah. The first cross, and was only made of two dry trees that were tied together. And that, they, they just didn't, "Oh, stay, stay." "No, no, I'm gonna go back." He got his, "If I don't." "Oh yeah, you told us that last year, too, but you didn't come back." "Well, if I don't back, I'll send a, a priest here to build you a church." And that's the time he sent Father Richot here to build a church, and Richot, Desjarlais, Lemire, Racette, and Desnomie ...

Sherry Farrell Racette: Built the little one?

Jimmy LaRocque: ...built that little church behind what [?] there's trees there now, but in behind there.

11.02.15 Sherry Farrell Racette: It'd be interesting to mark it off even, just to have, you know, it marked off where the old buildings were. Like the earlier ones, like, did anyone ever say why they faced the lake?

Jimmy LaRocque: Yes, it's a means of transportation.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Okay, so people were travelling by canoe?

Jimmy LaRocque: Yeah.

Sherry Farrell Racette: That was the main way, 'cause people lived around the lake, like?

Jimmy LaRocque: See, in 1925 they were gonna build a church. Wanna build it that way. No, no the roads are over here, so we built, we faced the church this way.

Sherry Farrell Racette: But before that, the main way of getting into the church would be ...

Jimmy LaRocque: ... [?] 1866, and before that 1860, after '64, '68, eh? And of course the idea, some of the argument was about, tearing down the church. They, they glad that the siding, eh, and everything this new addition was lumber. And this was lumber, the tower was lumber, the sanctuary was lumber, the, the [?] were lumber. That's [?] with the church that they built here in 1868, no. And everybody said sure it is. No, it all lumber.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh, so they didn't really believe that it was the original, like the original?

Jimmy LaRocque: No, but when they tore it down, in the corners they found the logs.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Yeah, that really is too bad.

Jimmy LaRocque: But then my dad said is they're crazy. He said tear it down. He says they could make it this and make it that, but of course my dad, to me, said things or did things when he was ahead of us, all of them.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Yeah, because, it's true that there was a time when people didn't really appreciate heritage, you know. Like there was that, there was that time. One of the things that, like, I wonder, like, when you said the first two churches had thatched roofs. I wonder if a lot of the old Métis buildings didn't have thatched roofs?

11.04.12 Jimmy LaRocque: Oh, more than likely.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Because if that was the first two that they built. I never thought about that. All of a sudden, I'm thinking it's like you just changed my mental image of all these little log houses, or for some reason I always thought of them as having a shakes.

Jimmy LaRocque: They really lost it. My, when the first church burnt, and that's, I read three, four places, one saving [?], saving [?], just saving that. All kinds of reasons why he was in there, but he lost ...

Sherry Farrell Racette: He was trying to save something?

Jimmy LaRocque: ... save something.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Well, that was a very devout congregation. Like, one of things, I was going through the old records there, and like a, a lot of

those hunters would have been, I don't know, not real, like, maybe they were baptized, but they didn't go to church very much 'cause there's all these confirmations of adults in like Wood Mountain. 'Cause in the 18-, yeah, the priest used to, they used to winter in Wood Mountain, and then they would go there, and then there's just like all these confirmations of adults. Just hundreds of people.

Jimmy LaRocque: Who did the confirmations?

Sherry Farrell Racette: I can't remember who it was.

Jimmy LaRocque: Lacombe? Lacombe?

Sherry Farrell Racette: I don't know if it was Lacombe. I can't remember. I know it's in all those old books, eh?

11.05.26 Jimmy LaRocque: Only one's far as I'm concerned, I'm just saying what I know. Lacombe was the oldest priest and did the most travelling, and knew where everybody was, and he went to, he went to St. Boniface, and they said, "You go back. We'll give you permission to confirm, confirm all the people you can confirm."

Sherry Farrell Racette: Yeah, it just said with special dispensation or something like that. It was, like, a special. Well, then that was Lacombe, because there's just, well, 'cause, you know, I was looking at all the names and that, and there's all the familiar names in there. There's Racettes and Desnomies, and, you know, Blondeaus. There's, everybody is in there, but there's like tons of them, just tons of them. So, you know, you always think of these as small communities, but there was like, oh, one year eighty people confirmed at one time. Another time, like, maybe more than a hundred. Like, it was just seemed that people, you know, when they, when they went

through that, that, that became the Catholicism, became a very important part of their, I don't know if they had it ...

11.06.27 Jimmy LaRocque: We've talked about names. The Brits had a petition in 1885, in March 1885, to have a post office in Lebret, or it was the mission at that time, have it come to Lebret. But what they thinking behind all that was there was a stagecoach came from Qu'Appelle to Fort Qu'Appelle with the mail that brought the passengers from the train. People on their butts [?]. If we can get mail delivery here, that stagecoach round here, eh? You know the government never works like that.

Sherry Farrell Racette: They think they'd save themselves a trip?

Jimmy LaRocque: They, they signed the petition in March '85, sent it to the post office department, never heard a thing, never heard nothing. And then everybody was scared, too, right, because at the time Rebellion, eh, Indians and Half-breeds were in trouble [?]. So they didn't say a thing. But they were all, that was over and they hung Riel in November. What happened to our petitions? They wrote back and said we have your petition and you'll get mail delivery on the first of January 1886, two days away, but you have to find your own conveyance from Fort Qu'Appelle because the mail only goes to Fort Qu'Appelle. They have to give Lebret mail or Fort mission. That's not there. Fine and dandy. So they did, and fellow by the name of Prisson[?] was a guy they hired to bring in mail twice a week, and he was paid sixty-three cents a trip.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Wow, don't spend it all in one place, eh?

Jimmy LaRocque: And he would bring the mail and rest his horse an hour, and take the mail back. The first time he come with the mail, that was the word [?] came or different came. Up till that time, anybody went to Fort Qu'Appelle, gonna ask the mail for the mission. You get it and put in his

pocket, eh, and give it around to everyone, but when Prisson[?] bought him a bag. So when he got to Lebret, there wasn't very much there. He says, "Where do I take this? Oh, I'll take it to the mission." So they took it to the mission. The mission laid it out on kind of a counter they had there. He laid the mail out there, and that's where you got your mail. So right away, everybody wanted to, wanted to figure out what we would call this. It was called mission, Qu'Appelle Mission or Mission de Qu'Appelle. Okay, fine, so he, he, they were, wrote this and they wrote that, into Qu'Appelle and, and post office wrote back in [?], in January. It said, "Well, all in Missions we need, let all the Forts we need, and all the Qu'Appelle we need. We don't need any of those." So they, they kinda said, "Well, I'm gonna [?]. What are we gonna call it, eh?" So another week or so went by and the letter came from the post office department, and said it will be called Lebret, and your first postmaster will be Father Lebret, that's [?].

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh really?

Jimmy LaRocque: That was in '86, 1886.

Sherry Farrell Racette: So who decided that? The post office?

Jimmy LaRocque: Well, a Senator Girard was most instrumental on that I think.

Sherry Farrell Racette: So it was because of the post office trying to get a name for the post office?

Jimmy LaRocque: That's right, and, see, and Father Louis Lebret did some of the correspondence for the, for the, for the, for that petition and for this and for that, eh? He did the correspondence and so they called him Lebret. The first post office will be Lebret and the first postman is Father, Father Louis Lebret.

11.10.27 Sherry Farrell Racette: Well, I guess they were right there. Were, there already was a mission, right, 'cause there's all the [?] and there were two Qu'Appelles. One of the things that I, that I first heard when I started hanging around with people from the valley was stories about Rou Garous. Did either of you gentlemen hear stories about Rou Garous when you were growing up?

Guy Blondeau: I, my grandmother, that's my mother's mother, used to, she had a lot of stories and I remember the, but it wasn't Rou Garou it was Loup-Garou.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh, Loup-Garou.

Guy Blondeau: They were [?] as Loup-Garou.

Sherry Farrell Racette: So they called it Loup-Garou.

Guy Blondeau: Yeah, and she, she had some stories. I don't remember specific things, eh, but I remember this was the ideal thing for scaring kids, you know. If you didn't want them to go outside, eh, you just tell some stories about this and, and, and, oh, you know, you didn't go outside. But I can't remember any specific things. But I do remember Lon Chaney starred in *The Wolfman* in the mid-1940 something. I'd have been around ten years old when this movie first came out and we were, you know, we, we, we saw this thing, and I remember my parents and some visitors discussing this movie, you see. But like, and remember the silver, the silver aspect, eh? It can only be harmed, you know, harmed by something silver, a silver bullet. I remember in the actual movie the guy had a, a cane with a, with, the handle was made of silver, and that's how he managed to kill this beast. And they were talking about how he in his, his normal form he had given this girl a silver bracelet, necklace I mean, and in his, in his animal form he couldn't

seem because of that silver. They can put it, he couldn't seem to, to get her, to get at her throat because of the silver thing. And I remember them talking about this, eh, and how silver was the, the big thing. But it was more, I guess, for my parents it, it was a superstition, you see. Now for my grandmother, it was something that maybe is real, see, maybe it was. So, this is the difference in generations.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Yeah, so for your grandmother it was real, and for your parents it was like a superstition. Did they ever talk about what form it would take?

Guy Blondeau: Wolf, wolf-like, or big dog-like form, but it, you know, was something you couldn't, you didn't stand a chance against this thing. If the full moon, they didn't want to go outside, that was thing was mentioned, you know, and you you didn't go outside, you know. If you had to go outside for something, you, you know, you, you kept watch on where the door was so you could find it quickly. I remember that much. I'm quite, being quite small.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Did they, was it ever any particular time of year, winter time? Did you notice that the stories would be told more or mentioned, or were they just sort of all the time and always out there?

Guy Blondeau: To me, I think it would have been more in the winter when the nights were longer.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh, okay.

Guy Blondeau: See, yeah.

Sherry Farrell Racette: What about you, Jim? You remember anyone talking about Rou Garous?

11.13.53 Jimmy LaRocque: I was the opposite way. You couldn't scare me. I, all it, to give you an example, I think when I was six years old my dad and mother left me at home with [?]. I said, "I'm coming, too." "No, you're not, you're go to bed." So they put me to bed in my pyjamas or whatever. I listened for the hired man to snore. I went to town from where I lived—east of town—to the town hall, the part of the, and I was on the, on the steps there. Somebody went and told my dad, "I think your son is on the steps." Dad said, "He can't be, he's in bed." So he came out and he got me holding [?] home. "And stay there," he said, or someone. I wasn't scared of anything. I didn't, nothing ever affected me that, but that's not because my parents never ever tried to scare me or whatever ever, eh?

Sherry Farrell Racette: So you don't remember being, the Rou Garou will get you or anything like that? So, I noticed you opened your briefcase. Is there anything in there you wanted me to look at?

11.15.08 Jimmy LaRocque: Well, I was looking for that post office thing.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh, the post office thing. Maybe we'll take a break? We'll just take a break and we can get it out.

[No Audio]

11.44.14 Sherry Farrell Racette: You were saying that you have a couple of ghost stories from Lebret?

Guy Blondeau: Okay, my, my grandmother on my mother's side had—I don't what you would call it, an intuition or receptiveness or whatever it was—but she seemed to know. I saw it myself when I was, you know, my early teens, and she was still living with us. That she knew when somebody in town or close by had died she knew. She'd come down for breakfast and say, "Oh, somebody died in town." One morning she came down: "Oh, some,

some somebody died. He came and tapped me on the toes last night. I was lying in bed." And sure enough, every time she said this she was right. Somebody did come and let her know that he was dying or had died, and she was right, you know. Every, it was, could have been somebody close by in town, eh, not somebody you read about in the newspaper in Winnipeg, you know, killed in a traffic accident, but somebody that we knew. One time my dad was out, I was in my room, and my, my mom and grandma were different rooms. And mom said to her, "Did you hear somebody coming up the steps?" And grandma said, "Yeah." We had, you know, the steps, the took a little landing. There was a landing, and then the final three steps and the three bedrooms out like that, you see, so grandma wasn't afraid of anything, you know. She got out of bed and walked over there, and she, she see nobody here. Went back to bed, thought nothing of it, eh. And I guess they were talking about it more in the morning, and they both heard these footsteps, you know, these creaky stairs coming up as far as the landing. The footsteps stopped there. They didn't go back down. They stayed and they both heard this, and there was nobody there. My dad knew when his mother had died. She was living with her daughters, going from one to the other in Ontario, and he was in Regina and he said, told me, you know, this was after, after her funeral. He said, "I knew when she died," he said. I was, he was sitting up doing some paperwork late at night and all of a sudden she was there. He knew it was her, she was there. And he said, you know, "I was not afraid of her any time before, why should I be afraid of her, you know, her spirit or whatever?" So he went into the kitchen where it was darker and quieter and he stood there and he said, but it didn't come back. But he remembered, and sure enough the next morning his, one of his sisters phoned from, from Ontario and said, "Yes, mom died last night." And two ghost stories I just heard from Audrey Shippe. They, they had moved that house in, I think the Gruffs had, had lived in that house. Does the name Zeke mean anything to you?

Jimmy LaRocque: No, the Gruffs came from the south.

11.47.21 Guy Blondeau: Yeah, I know, and Frank and Audrey moved that in, right. Okay, well, they had, they had a visitor in there, a frequent visitor. They would hear doors opening and closing, the toilet would flush, you know. The outside door would open and, and the inside door, and there would be nobody there. One time, the, the son was home alone, and he didn't believe any of this stuff, eh? And they, so they came home, and they said, "Hey, you guys, didn't you come in about half an hour ago? I heard the door come into the mud room and go out again." He said, "No." And he just turned pale, and somebody had come in and, and so he, you know, there were things moving around, too. And one time there was a pile of dishes on the, put 'em out, sitting on the table, pile of dishes on there, and then all of a sudden there was one plate beside the pile. And then this plate starting moving towards the end of the table and then fell down, almost as if it was thrown down on the floor. So Audrey yelled something at it about, you know, "That's enough this now. We've had it with you." And she went and got the priest, and he came, and it never bothered them after that. But the daughter had the experience of, you know, some, and she and the mother both saw this, this particular plate incident. Things used to disappear and then they'd come back again. The, the favourite thing to go was scissors. The scissors would be gone from their usual place in the drawer. Next day, the scissors would be back again and, and, and this, you know, this these were all witness some of these things. Anyway, Father Gary came back again, and they had tried to communicate with this thing with the ouija board, and they got the name Zeke out it somewhere, eh? And then Father, Father Gary told them, "No way," he said. "No more of this, you know. The church frowns upon trying to call, make contact with the with spirits, you know, so don't do that anymore." Anyway, but they had gotten something, and then the daughter had married a guy from Lestock, and they were in living in a rented house. Now, we don't know where this—see, maybe there's some Métis thing here at this house, too, I don't know. Anyway, they're living in a rented house and there was a poltergeist of some kind, and things would move around and

there was no, no meanness evident. They were more of mischievous thing, and it would, you know, things would be move here, move there. They'd see things moving, and so they started asking questions. And apparently a child had fallen into the well outside and drowned. So, you know, they said after awhile, they said, "Let's, let's pray for this child and see, you know." So they prayed for an angel to come and take the child, and then in the corner, one corner of the room, there was a light appeared. A blue-white light, and it spread and sort of enveloped, went right past them, enveloped them, and they said, they felt, you know. They were just petrified when they saw this light, but when it came over them they were very, very secure and comforted, you see. And then the light disappeared. Then they never heard from this thing again. And this is, this is, they both, both of them testified to this. We have or had a ghost in our own house. Couple of times, sitting alone late at night, I'd be, you know, tended to look over my shoulder, you know, some something's here, but I could never, you know, anymore than that. However, our son was quite familiar with this. "Oh yeah, sure," he said, "you know, he's here." He, his bedroom was underneath the front room, and many times when he was alone he would hear, even when we're gone, he would hear, you know, foot steps across the floor come upstairs. Nobody there, okay, you know. I, you know, Ralph Hutz had died in that house. I don't know if it was one story as the kitchen. One story has in the bedroom, eh, the previous owners. And so, so, you know, that's what we sort of assumed that's who it was. And one time our son and a friend of his were sitting in the front room and the drapes, you know, how if somebody's walking along the edge of the drapes, how little little waves seems to move along the drapery. They saw that and this, his friend was kind of startled, you know, and Brian said, "Never mind, never mind, it's a friendly one," you know. And our daughter, I think, was aware of it, but not as our son seemed to be the most receptive to this one. My grandmother had, well, this was a [?] story. I shouldn't say my grandmother, but they were building a house in Jasmin. This would have been way back, and there was no electricity and no lights at night, and with people walking. But [?] Harriet would hear the

hammers pounding in the dark, hammers. Somebody's building in there. One night a couple of guys got, "Well, let's get lanterns and go in, eh?" So they, they waited for this again, the right time, when these hammers were working. They, they took their lanterns and they went into the house. There was nobody there. So they didn't stay very long. They, they left and they didn't go back. And an old lady, some, somebody's [?] or something like that had moved in. She wasn't afraid of anything, eh? Oh, she moved in, it was almost completed, I guess, and her bedroom was up at the, just off the stairs, top of the stairs, and she, she knew there was something. She'd hear footprints and things, sounds, eh? And then, one time, his footsteps, you don't hear footprints, you hear footsteps. Anyway, these steps came up the stairs very loud and plain, and just stopped right at the outside of her door. So she grabbed her holy water, which was always present in, in the old—you know, the old people always had their holy water handy—and she sprinkled some towards the front door, and she says, "Get back to where you belong," or something similar like that, eh? And something went back down the steps, and the steps didn't bother her anymore after that apparently. But she didn't stay too much longer after that. She moved out, too, and then they, they, they tore the house apart because nobody was gonna live in it after, after [?]. I remember that that was a common well-known story in Jasmin. Among at least my, my, you know, my, my grandmother's generation. And there was some other small ones that my grandmother told about. You know, certain noises or somebody crying or somebody, you know, some noises, and they'd get the priest in and then it would disappear. And I can't remember anymore of the specific things, but this, this, the memories of that, that house story just really stuck in my mind. But to them it was, you know, the spirit was, the spirit world was sort of meshing with ours, you know, and, and ...

11.54.54 Sherry Farrell Racette: It was very real, another dimension.

Guy Blondeau: ...yeah, they were, and a lot of families had their own, their own stories. I don't know, did your family have any of these stories?

Jimmy LaRocque: Not that I know. Didn't want to tell.

Guy Blondeau: No, but, but, but my grandmother was, she was always right on, you know. Somebody in town died, she knew about it. Now, she would, I shouldn't say that she knew about everybody who died, eh, but when she said somebody died, it was true.

Sherry Farrell Racette: And would it be different signs? Or was it always somebody touching her, or?

Guy Blondeau: Well, no, she didn't always, she, somebody one time I remember, she came. Somebody came into the room and then he left. That's all she said. And one time, I think I mentioned this, he came and tapped me on the toes, see, and she had, she had her own way of knowing, but, and then she'd come down. We wouldn't question it, you know, we just wait and, sure enough, somebody would come. And then there was the thing about deaths coming in threes, eh? I think that's, I don't know, that's how people [?].

Sherry Farrell Racette: Yeah, yeah, come in three, yeah.

Guy Blondeau: Sure enough, every time, you know, they'd say, you know, the second one, and then they'd say, "Okay, I wonder who's gonna be next." And then it would be, you know, I kinda think that sometimes they had to go to some relatives in Winnipeg or something like that, you know ...

Sherry Farrell Racette: To get the third?

Guy Blondeau: ...to find to find the third one, eh? But you, you knew, and, and it, it was, you know. I kinda got to believe in it myself, you know, I'm not a superstitious person but, you know.

Sherry Farrell Racette: But you do look for it, don't you?

Guy Blondeau: Yeah, that's the thing you remember to ...

Sherry Farrell Racette: Yeah, you sort of think, okay, when's the next one gonna happen, or, 'cause you, you know, you're just sort of so used to having ...

Guy Blondeau: Yeah, well one of them, an adult, a relative of mine died in town, or, or near town, and then a child, a Robillard child, died in infancy, just, you know, a couple years old. And then the third one, we had to wait a couple weeks, but there it was. A close, fairly close, you know. And again, again, I think a friend of the, of the family's, but seemed to be almost, you know, almost a reality.

11.57.04 Sherry Farrell Racette: You said that the old people often used to keep their holy water handy.

Guy Blondeau: Yeah, oh yeah, yeah.

Sherry Farrell Racette: It was close at hand. What, what were some, other than would they use it for?

Guy Blondeau: Well, you know, the older people to me, as I remember, the older people were always more, their religions more visible. My, my, my dad's mother would walk around doing her housework and singing and humming hymns all the time, eh? And my grandmother Klyne, you know, the, the, the little font was always there, you know, make the sign of the

cross every time they go by it and things like that. And their prayer books and there were more, I'd say their religion was more visible.

Sherry Farrell Racette: So it'd be part of their daily life?

Guy Blondeau: ... practices, yeah. Yeah. And so there was always holy water around. Sometimes just in a bottle, you know, take the bottle apart.

Sherry Farrell Racette: You'd have a little font sometimes?

Guy Blondeau: Yeah. Some of them would.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh, I don't think I've ever seen one.

Guy Blondeau: Yeah, I remember one. I think my, my dad's mom had one. Saint, Saint Antoine was her, her favourite, you see.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh yeah, favourite saint. Saint Joseph was, yeah, my grandmother was, she died on Saint Joseph's Day, so everyone thought that was, yeah, she died on Saint Joseph's Day. Saint Antoine, what was his...

Guy Blondeau: Anyway, I think I'm, I'm out of stories, ghost stories.

11.58.30 Sherry Farrell Racette: Did, during thunderstorms or anything like that, did people have any, any things that they did during thunderstorms that you noticed from the old people?

Guy Blondeau: I can, I can remember they used to burn, you know, the dried palms you get on Palm Sunday. Those were, you know, they were blessed, eh, they were regarded as a sacred item, and, and burning palms was supposed to, you know, ward off danger from thunderstorms and winds

and stuff. I remember that they would take a little piece and burn it, little [?].

Jimmy LaRocque: [?] Can I speak?

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah.

Jimmy LaRocque: The only one I can remember, and I don't know anything about it myself, but my mother used to tell me maybe it was for the good of my health, I don't know, but when there's a thunderstorm or anything pray. Get down and pray. Reluctantly I'd get down and pray. She says you feel like, I forget his name right now. So we're at John's house, north of Lebret there, and there's about seven or eight people in the house, and this storm come along, eh, and everyone, everyone knelt down to pray, and this guy laid on the counter. "I don't have to pray," he says. "I'm alright," he said, "nobody will hurt me." [?] lightning hit, hit the house or whatever, and his shoe was lying on the floor, and he was on his knees. Say, say no more.

Sherry Farrell Racette: He reconsidered.

Jimmy LaRocque: Oh yeah, yeah.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh yeah, my, my grandmother used to sprinkle holy water around during thunderstorms, but, yeah, I've also heard ...

Guy Blondeau: Yeah, that was common too, that's right, holy water and then the palms.

Sherry Farrell Racette: ...yeah, I heard the palms, as well, and they did the windows, yeah, that kind of thing. But, so prayer was something that you would see people doing to also to protect themselves during a storm? You were really, really aware of those kinds of things too, eh? 'Cause I guess

there was always those incidents where, you know, lightning would hit the house and they would see people that they would know, how dangerous certain things were.

12.00.41 Guy Blondeau: Well, my grandmother had a couple stories. I can't remember the details but, you know, something like, something like yours there, where, you know, somebody sort of defied the gods, you know, and, and, pow, eh, some...

Sherry Farrell Racette: Retribution.

Guy Blondeau: Yeah. And it's, I remember a couple of those now that Jimmy mentions that one, but, you know, I can't I don't remember the details anymore. But my grandmother had so many stories and so many things like that, that, that, you know, I can't remember all of them, and I was very young, eh, six to eight years old when she was living at home. And then she went on housekeeping again for people, and then I was a little older when she came back to live with us again, eh? So I, I was very small, six, I'd say, six, eight years old, and I remember these stories.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Right. One of the things that I know that your dad wrote about, Jim, were some of the New Year's traditions that happened in the, in the Métis homes. Do you remember some of the New Year's traditions when you were a boy?

12.01.45 Jimmy LaRocque: Oh, yes. Start off with usually that I can remember was my grandparents were gone forth, but the tradition was that you're supposed to go visit the oldest brother or the oldest person in your family at New Year's, so we'd get up about five o'clock in the morning and hook up the horse, and my uncle on top of the hill, John LaRocque, was the oldest brother living, eh? So, that's where we'd go and, we'd get, dad would get a drink, and I'd get a lunch, and the big thing for dad and me was raisin

pie. So stuff like that, eh, and then from there you went to the next place you thought was in your line of seniority or whatever, eh? Visit every back and forth to the other brother on the side of the valley, so then we'd go there, get the same thing there. But as time went on dad used to go away by himself and organize old people that had, that danced on New Year's. Now, they were old people. They weren't seventy-five years old, they're eighty or ninety, eh? And then you go to Johnny Blondeau's place, 'cause Johnny Blondeau was the oldest. Get him there and dad would bring a bottle of wine, give 'em each a glass of wine. They'd sit there and [?]. And if they were able to get up and step dance, well, they would dance, square dance, eh. But that article I showed you there, that was the last one in '48. Before that year, before that was too much snow, and then '48 was alright, and the next year I think two or three were dead, including Johnny, I think.

Sherry Farrell Racette: They had done that years ago, right?

Jimmy LaRocque: Oh yeah, that's thirty-nine years ago, 200 for sure, they used to say.

Sherry Farrell Racette: All the people get together?

12.03.51 Jimmy LaRocque: Yeah. But it's, it was nice to see some of those old people, you know, are not that old even, and I can't do what they were doing. So it's, it's nice to see them get up and tell stories and tell about one another, what they did, here. Like that old Johnny Blondeau that we're talking about, he was, dad used to call him the last buffalo hunter. Not like the book. The book was Will's book about the buffalo hunter, but Johnny Blondeau was the actual last buffalo hunter in our area. Apparently the buffalo disappeared when the railroad came, eh? CPR railroad went through in '82 and it separated the buffalo. All the buffalo that were around the south side never came to the north side of the railway, and anything on this side of the railway never went to the south side, so there was, and after, I think it

was '80, I'm not even sure, '80 or '70 something, someone come and told old Johnny Blondeau there's a buffalo on this side of the track by himself. Old Johnny threw the harness on horses and away he went. And he got that buffalo, and that's why my dad called him the last buffalo hunter. The last buffalo hunter in that age and in that area. Apparently the buffalo wouldn't go across the track, why, I don't know.

Sherry Farrell Racette: They didn't like it for some reason, eh? It sounded like, yeah, but the pipelines like that, too. I didn't know that it still includes, and I know that, that, well, actually it was, it was your dad that wrote a lot of the articles, and some other people that he wrote about were Blondeaus. He wrote about one Blondeau, and a Simon Blondeau, St. Pierre Blondeau. I found an old picture of a St. Pierre Blondeau, and he's like this, and I know what he's, I know what stories he's telling, these old guys sitting there like this here.

12.05.46 Guy Blondeau: Yeah, my dad used to talk about the, this New Year's thing, you know, how the oldest the patriarch, whatever, you know, whatever it was, he would not go visiting, but everybody came to visit him, eh, and then they'd go visit each other. But everybody had to come and see him, and he named one particular old gentleman who he said he had a big square back wicker chair of some kind, eh, and, and big armchair there. And he said, and he filled up that chair when he sat there, you know, his big, big body I can tell. And this guy would have a drink, but everybody who came in—every man I should say, the women were, were almost excluded from that, I think—but, but every, every man that came in, well, he would have a drink with him. And they said by two o'clock in the afternoon, and they, he was sitting in his chair and they were singing these, singing these old French songs, you know, they would match him drink for drink. Everybody who came in it was, I guess. Speaking of the hunting thing, I, I remember a story, this was my dad's, back when, in the Depression, things, ammunition was, cost, cost money, and so he didn't want to waste any, eh? So the story

is about this gentleman sneaking up on this big slough, eh, and there were two swans in this slough. And he sat there and he levelled his gun and he waited and he waited and waited, and then when the swans crossed like this one shot through both necks. No kidding. You can believe it.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Two with one blow?

Guy Blondeau: Or not believe it, but that's that was supposed to be. They say it's really true. That was it. You didn't waste ammunition. My dad, when he was a boy, was raised in a, they had moved to the St. Delphine district south of Ituna and Jasmin in that area, and he had gone a couple of times. They said he named, you know, the older relative took him muskrat hunting, eh, so they'd go for it. They'd gone four, five, six days, you know, and they'd camp and they'd set the traps, catch the muskrats, and bring 'em home and, and how he outdid it is his, the old guy one time, eh, and so, but it got back because he shot one on the way back. So that they were even like, at least, but this is the same one, the, the older relative. He had trapped a weasel and he was riding on his horse, you know, holding the weasel in his hand, and, and he said, you know, he tapped him on the nose and he said, "If you were alive I wouldn't be doing this." And I guess the weasel had was just stunned and he grabbed him and bit right through this finger, and the only, to get rid of him was you'd strangle them, eh, with the other hand. You'd strangle them until finally let go and he got his hand out. "I wasn't gonna [?] you were alive." But he had some, some stories about the, their childhood living in that area and how, you know, there was a Charlie Robillard and I forget who else, and everybody had a big dog, eh, you see, so there was some festive occasion and the different families were gathered and the dogs would come along. So these three big dogs there, well, the boy said, "I think you're about ten twelve years old." He said, "Let's, let's walk these guys up. They should be able to, to, you know, pull quite a bit." So they got the harnesses together, you know, they hooked the three dogs up. And just as they started off, the dogs got into a terrible fight and they chewed the harness, so, you

know, they ripped the harness all up. And I guess the, the kids got a licking for the harness, you know, being it wasn't the dog fight, but the harness was, was damaged, eh, when the dogs were fighting.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Was it harnesses from the horses?

Guy Blondeau: No, no, they had the dog.

Sherry Farrell Racette: The dog had a harness?

Guy Blondeau: Dog harness, yeah. But the three, three big dogs in tandem like that, and, and I guess they had an awful fight. They didn't do that again. The, the old man that used to visit dad said this—he knew, he knew how to handle kids—he said when, when they would go and visit he would call the kids together, you know, like there was some place he didn't want them to play, that's where he'd call them. And he said I want you guys to play here. Well, soon as he's in the house, you know, they stay there very respectful. "Yes, yes, we'll play here." Soon as he's out of sight they scatter, they never go back there again. They play where he wants them to play.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh, so he did the opposite?

Guy Blondeau: Yeah, did the opposite. Yeah, yeah, you guys play here.

Sherry Farrell Racette: You make sure you stay here.

Guy Blondeau: Yeah, and then they were gone from there.

12.10.54 Sherry Farrell Racette: When people did the blessing, was there anything like, would you just go and visit that old person or would they, or would you actually get a, a blessing from the old person on New Year's? Do you remember?

Jimmy LaRocque: I, I, some of my uncles could give blessings alright, but I don't know, my dad was not too religious man, so he didn't give blessings to anybody.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Okay.

Jimmy LaRocque: But I went to the John LaRocque and J.V. and Jerry, but Jerry was the guy who was laughing all time.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Was not all that serious?

Jimmy LaRocque: No.

Sherry Farrell Racette: So they'd give a blessing like the priest? Or touch them on the head or?

Jimmy LaRocque: Well, I used to stand in front [?] blessing [?]. "Don't do this and don't do that."

Sherry Farrell Racette: Then you go off and party. And there was music usually at these gatherings?

12.12.05 Jimmy LaRocque: Well, there was always somebody there to, but these old folks, somebody would be a fiddle there and they'd play and then four sets and then dance, eh? But they always had to have a little drink first, eh, to get him in gear, that's what my dad said, that's pretty slow if they didn't have drink, eh, they wouldn't dance. Dad would take a bottle of wine too, depends on how many there [?]. My dad used to always do that, he'd organize something, and it's a record in here that old [?] sing, eh? And they want him to sing it. "Well, I can't sing dry," he says. So he wouldn't sing it, eh, and back and forth. Finally the [?]-you've heard of [?]-that asked

her for a couple of dollars for a bottle of wine. I wouldn't give money for wine, but I never would have [?]. I said, "Dad [?] wine anyway and get going." Old [?] was pretty old at that time—that was about 1950-some, and old [?] died in '85, and he was ninety-something wasn't it? So the, they had to give [?] a drink of wine and nothing would happen that [?] if you [?]. And old [?] would sing, you know, French songs or, or songs he sang at weddings and stuff like that. So, but he, he sang in the choir, too, at one time. That's like before my time, eh, but he's quite, quite the man [?]. He had a sister that lived in Lebret and went to live with old Napoleon Poitras. Napoleon, doesn't matter, Napoleon, and she lived with him and all those Poitras, eh? Alec, Alec, Alec and whatever, well, but she, and she's buried in St. Delphine.

12.14.43 Guy Blondeau: Okay, yeah. Talking about music, Vince Lacroix was, we were talking about some of his old times and he remembers his parents come home from a house party, and they had, you know, the old kitchen stoves with the, the oven door and the warming closet on the top and stuff, eh? And he remembers his mother hanging up her corset on the upper part and his dad hanging his long johns on the oven door so that they would dry out, because they had worked up such a sweat dancing and they had to dry out their undergarments [?].

Sherry Farrell Racette: Getting themselves ready?

Guy Blondeau: Yeah. Yeah, no, there was, there was dancing at house parties. I can remember, I can remember them dancing there at square dances, you know. Even the kids learned, the young people, the teenagers learn to square dance too.

Sherry Farrell Racette: They used to clear the furniture away, you know?

Jimmy LaRocque: Well, that furniture was there, was there when you came. It's a place to sit down. Took everybody out sitting outside in the snow there for the New Year's one. Took everything out so it's just, wasn't very big, about maybe half the size of that, eh? That's all the room there was, and a guitar player and a violin player sitting in the corner. That was it, eh? Somebody would call—I don't know who'd call, I don't remember who'd call, but that's it. But it was, it was nice to see. I could remember that part. I thought that pretty good. Them old people can still dance, get up and dance, 'cause my mother and dad were pretty old and they never danced, eh?

Sherry Farrell Racette: So how, these people would have been like in their nineties?

Jimmy LaRocque: Oh, well this Johnny Blondeau, I think that, that article, was ninety-two at '48 or something.

Sherry Farrell Racette: So he would have been ninety-two?

Jimmy LaRocque: Yeah, it was sort of, and I think there was one other old woman who was, I know, was a Mrs. ...

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh yeah, the Klyne that was married to the Cavanaugh.

Jimmy LaRocque: Cavanaugh was 102 at that time. Yeah, old Mrs. Cavanaugh was pretty good. See, Mrs. Cavanaugh lived by herself. She's a big woman. She would get up and [?]. [?].

Sherry Farrell Racette: At 102?

Jimmy LaRocque: At 102, she'd sit there, and you'd think she was seventy-seven. Oh, she'd jump up and go. Well, not that far, but. Yeah, she's, she's

quite [?]. See, there's, that's funny, why that's a story, too, in itself. Cavanaugh and Kelly are two, first, one, two, of three first white men in Lebret outside of the priests. Cavanaugh and Kelly were in an American army. They got off the boat from Ireland, and of course unemployed, no money. They ask, "Where can we have a job?" "Join the army," they said. "What for?" "Well, fight on this side and you'll be, get paid." And so they did join the army, they fought [?], that's the side that won. But when they were about to be discharged, they were discharged at Fort Tough in North Dakota. Well, they, fine and dandy. While they were there Cavanaugh found this Klyne girl, thought she was pretty nice, so he, he had befriended her awhile, back and forth, eh. And Kelly likes her sister, so he befriended her. So that's fine and they were gonna go to Canada. So, back and forth, they all wants Cavanaugh getting married. So he got married to this lady and started for Canada. And Kelly came along with the other Klyne girl, but didn't marry her. But there was a third Klyne girl that came at the same time [?] than Lebret at that time, back and forth, he was in Lebret for a long, long time when Kelly got married to the Klyne girl, eh? Now [?] Klyne girl. Now, no-, nobody but herself, so one thing to another she went up north of Balcarres and married a Bellegarde. So that's Bellegardes in the [?], alright, all 'cause their religion that, in that respect.

Sherry Farrell Racette: So Cavanaugh and Kelly were Civil War veterans?

Jimmy LaRocque: Yeah, well, that's right.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Yeah, and I think in one of the articles your dad wrote, Mrs. Cavanaugh was getting a Civil War veteran's pension.

Jimmy LaRocque: At the time, yeah.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Yeah.

Jimmy LaRocque: He was sergeant, sergeant major, or staff sergeant or something like that. Old Cavanaugh.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Okay.

Jimmy LaRocque: 'Cause he, he's a pretty cute little fella, too. He, he always played both sides, not just one side, but both sides. He was [?] the Indians until they got, but also stored the ammunition for the army.

Sherry Farrell Racette: An Irishman. I think they want us to wrap up now for lunch, okay, thanks. I just wanted him ...

[No Audio]

13.40.52 Sherry Farrell Racette: You were saying you had a story about butter?

Guy Blondeau: Okay, when my dad was, oh, ten or twelve years old, he used to particularly enjoy going over to see this old person because this guy would tell stories, eh? Story on top of story, and my dad would just sit there and listen. And one day he had gotten there just before or just after lunch. I think, it's just before and the old lady had put some lunch on the table, and the old guy was telling the stories. You see, him talking and talking, so they had a little sandwich and, and the butter plate, and it was running low, eh? There was a little bit of butter left on there, so she brought a thin slab of fresh butter, which was cold and solid, you see. She put it down there on the plate. Well, he was talking and telling story, you know, and he reached out and, presumably reaching for the bread, but he picked up this little slab of butter instead, kept on telling his story. Picked up his knife, took some of the soft butter, spread it out on the cold slab, kept telling his story, and he ate this butter. And my dad said, "I just watched him," he said. "I, you know, I didn't believe what was going on. I didn't say anything, you know, I just

watched it." He ate that whole slab of butter, eh? Just like that kept on telling his story, and his dad says that's the only time, maybe the only time in anybody's history that the guy buttered his butter and ate it.

Sherry Farrell Racette: And he never noticed?

Jimmy LaRocque: No, he didn't notice. And my dad was, you know, just sitting there watching him. He said, you know, he wasn't going to, didn't want to interrupt him, you know, to be impolite or something. And he was so busy telling his story they didn't realize he was eating butter instead of the bread. Anyway, that's one of my dad's stories, eh, so you can, you know, water it down if you want, but he had a lot of those, that type of story.

Sherry Farrell Racette: You can just see that happening, can't you?

Jimmy LaRocque: Oh yeah. I, I they're silly things. When I'm concentrating on something, you know, and drive my wife crazy, but being so not paying attention to her.

13.43.00 Sherry Farrell Racette: I've got something here that I'm, I'm just gonna read part of it, and, and then, Jim, if you want to, if there's any things you want to add or any comments that you make, because, you know, you know, who these people are that are mentioned in it. And then there's some tunes that are also mentioned, and this is again getting back to the, the New Year's celebration. And I, I think this is the only documentation of the, of the real old Métis celebrations. What was the correct way to pronounce the New Year's Day?? **[Jimmy LaRocque says it; Sherry Farrell Racette repeats it]** So in 1948, this is what Jim's father wrote: "A custom near 200 years old among the Métis is the celebration of **[says New Year's in Michif]** New Year's. And this has been marked almost yearly. Last winter due to high snow and blizzards, the old Métis were unable to gather to wish one another Bon Anné, and partake of their pemmican and provide an

old time fiddler to dance a Red River Jig, McDonald's Reel, and Eight Hand Reel. This year they were blessed with mild weather and financial conditions somewhat improved by having good gardens and a fair crop of wild berries. The function was a simple one, but nevertheless enthusiastic one, for most of the old time dwellers were able to attend to enjoy most of their native foods. Les, les bang crochet ..." And, Guy, you were explaining to me what a, a, a bang crochet was. Want to describe that for us?

13.44.35 Guy Blondeau: Alright, you take a square or triangular piece, and then you cuts, make cuts across it, going not just almost to the edge, but not quite, eh? And then you sort of wove your fingers through the top and bottom, and grabbed the, you know, every alternate piece would be in there. And then you, you pulled it this way with the result that the top part was bent this way, and the bottom part was bent the other way, as you would pull them that way. That's les bang crochet, crooked ...

Sherry Farrell Racette: Crooked bannock.

Guy Blondeau: Yeah.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Les boulettes?

Jimmy LaRocque: That's meatballs.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Meatballs, meatball.

Jimmy LaRocque: But, technically, most of the people don't know how to make meatball, meatballs. It is a trick to it. You have to get the ground meat to flavour and roll it up into balls, put it into, roll it in flour, and put it in boiling water. Nothing else but boiling water, has to be boiling water, and keep boiling because if you don't, if you keep throwing it in a pot of water

that doesn't boil, first thing, you know, you get a bunch of hamburger in, in your water, like hamburger soup, eh?

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh right, yeah.

Jimmy LaRocque: But if you take it and put it in the boiling water, you've got boulettes, boulettes, what they call them.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Well, now I know what I've been doing wrong. "And most of them, to smoke their well loved kinnicknick, this is the second bark of the red willow mixed with plug tobacco." How, do either of you remember any of the old people still smoking kinnicknick or?

Jimmy LaRocque: Yeah kinnicknick, and in, in the museum.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh yeah.

Jimmy LaRocque: I got crushed chokecherries in the museum.

Sherry Farrell Racette: All that good stuff. "To open the function there was a silent period with heads bowed. The Métis prayed for the repose of departed souls since the last function. Three of their members had died—Mrs. Melanie Delorme, ninety-two, Mrs. Francois Demarie and Simon Desjarlais, seventy-seven. The last named was a grandson of Governor Cuthbert Grant, who captured Lower Fort Garry from the Hudson's Bay Company at the Seven Oaks battle in 1816. At the head of the table was Mrs. Thomas Cavanaugh, 102, who was married to Thomas Cavanaugh at Fort Tottan, North Dakota, the year of Confederation. Beside her sat St. Pierre Blondeau, one of the few remaining sons of men who hunted buffalo. In fact, St. Pierre took pleasure in recounting some of his exploits against the monarch of the plains, where Regina now stands. In reminiscing, St. Pierre told of the customs of the good old days, and in a joking way he remarked that perhaps

nobody was worth killing in the old Qu'Appelle Valley as there had never been a murder among the Métis for the past hundred years or more. What a striking contrast to conditions existing in modern times. Doors were never locked and a house or a tent by the side of the trail was open to all where travellers, both White or Métis, would find friends, would be helped along his way and sent away with a blessing and good wishes. Among others who attended the function were Adolphus Pelletier, the weather prophet of the Qu'Appelle."

13.47.52 Jimmy LaRocque: Weather prophet. He was a weather prophet. He was very good at, a hundred percent until, oh, I don't what year it was, but it, it was in the, in the 40s or right in there some place, 40s, early 50s. He predicted a [?] winter—no, no snow, no ice, nothing. A week or so later, there was feet snow, a foot or more deep up. And the cartoon in the paper had the Pelletier on, on a pile of wood sitting on [?]. Believe it or not, that's no wet, and there was no snow for the rest of the winter, but, and his came true, eh? And then, of course, you had a little swellhead, did Mr. Pelletier, I'm sorry. He, he was such a good predictor that he wanted to paid for his predictions, eh? And my dad was writing them and sending them to the paper and stuff like that, and he, he told my dad, "Well, when do I get paid?" And dad says, "You know, I don't even get paid." "Well, I quit. Right now." So that was the end of the forecasts.

Sherry Farrell Racette: But he could tell the weather?

Jimmy LaRocque: He could tell the weather. He did it by moon and all those little the moons and the sun dogs, whether who was the bigger ones, the small, and what one day in the circle, and all this. He had all ways of telling how the prediction was. But he was, I, like I say, I don't know who told him that my dad used to get paid for write ups like that, you know, a few dollars, eh? And Pelletier said, "Well, where's my money? I did the

predicting." Dad says there's no money involved. "Well, I quit," he says. That's too bad but ...

Sherry Farrell Racette: But that's neat that somebody had that kind of, you know, knowledge, other people had that kind of knowledge. The one thing that actually my mom just last week, and I've heard other people say this, it's like by the moon, you know, if it ...

Jimmy LaRocque: Tipping ...

Sherry Farrell Racette: Yeah, tipping or not. Whether it's holding its water or dumping it.

Guy Blondeau: My grandmother, yeah.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Same?

Guy Blondeau: Same story.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Yeah, so how did she tell? Was just it like...

Guy Blondeau: Well, just that she said it's gonna be a rainy month because the, it's holding water or, you know, or if its inverted and it's spilling water out.

13.50.11 Sherry Farrell Racette: Who else was there? Peter Desjarlais, the grandson of Cuthbert Grant mentioned above. Mrs. Zachary Blondeau, ninety-two. Mrs. Chris-, no, I can't pronounce the name, Chrisiston? **[Jimmy LaRocque pronounces it and Sherry Farrell Racette repeats it.]** Robillard, ninety. Francois Demerie, eighty-nine. Mrs. St. Pierre Blondeau, seventy-seven. Oh, that's a bit younger than her husband. These old guys, eh? Mrs. Fred Major, also granddaughter of Cuthbert Grant, and Mrs. Renee

Paget. Mrs. Paget was aunt to the late Giant Beaupré, Willow Bunch, who was almost eight feet tall. It appears that the giant's mother took sick when he was a baby and there being no domestic cows or canned milk in those days, Mrs. Paget went to the rescue and breast nursed both her own baby and the giant. She often told the gathering that she and Jean-Louis Legaré acted as godparents at the giant's christening. Now, have either of you heard any stories of the giant or?

Jimmy LaRocque: Well, the giant was eight foot one as far as I'm concerned. So that's better than eight foot, but it wasn't spelled out at the particular time, but I have a, a picture at home, or in my [?] getaway. The, the giant is sitting down and, and three other men are standing and the giant is bigger than them yet.

Sherry Farrell Racette: And he's sitting?

Jimmy LaRocque: And he's sitting down. Oh yeah. And, of course, he died when he was about twenty-four years old, and he died of TB or liquor. Whichever. He went to the Chicago Fair, World's Fair, and got paid good, and of course drank every bit of it.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh, okay.

Jimmy LaRocque: And finally got TB and came home and died. And then they took his body to Montreal—and I don't know if you heard that story—took his body to Montreal and they preserved it somehow. And it stayed there for about fifty-some years or a hundred years or whatever, eh? And then they want, Willow Bunch wanted it back, eh? The big case, finally they were awarded it back. Willow Bunch would get it back, but it had to be cremated, eh? So they made a replica of it and I think it stands there yet.

Sherry Farrell Racette: So did they have him on display, like?

Jimmy LaRocque: Well, as far as, I'm not, I shouldn't talk too much. I haven't been there, but I was told it's in a specific case standing by the door someplace.

Sherry Farrell Racette: But he did have, he was Métis, that giant, eh?

Jimmy LaRocque: Oh yeah.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Yeah, and he had relatives sorta throughout Saskatchewan?

Jimmy LaRocque: Yeah, not only that, when you see his clothes—I saw a shirt of his one time, and my friend [?], just say, "What is it fit, a cow, a horse?" 'Cause it was, gee, that sleeve's about that long, you know. Well even longer than that and big, I guess. The, the, I don't know, three feet, a good three feet wide and stuff like that, eh? That you, you say to yourself, how can this be, eh?

Guy Blondeau: Yeah, he was not just tall, but he was also ...

Jimmy LaRocque: Oh yeah, big man, too.

Guy Blondeau: ... big, big, big ...

Jimmy LaRocque: Until he started to get down with ...

Sherry Farrell Racette: Where did you see his shirt?

Jimmy LaRocque: A woman from Willow Bunch gave it to my dad and my dad brought it to Lebret and showed around different people, and then to took it back to her.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh, so people were well aware of him?

Jimmy LaRocque: Oh yes, and like I said, Giant Beaupré, everybody was related to, related to no matter who. I'm Willow Bunch; I'm related to the Giant Beaupré.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Yeah, 'cause I, a friend of mine was, is related to him and he, his mom, his mom or his grandma used to tell stories. 'Cause he was too big to ride horses and then all the young guys went off riding horses and he couldn't, and he felt bad and he was crying ...

Jimmy LaRocque: Well, he was too big, too big to ride or too heavy, eh, for the horses at that time. See, they only had the little ponies. Indian ponies they call them. And that's not, and his legs would be about that far from the ground, so it ...

Sherry Farrell Racette: He couldn't ride.

Jimmy LaRocque: No, well, the horse didn't, didn't like that. He would, and the horse was on this kinda run a little bit, and quit.

13.54.28 Sherry Farrell Racette: I guess. "Following a number of short speeches, most of those were calling the days at eighty years ago and more. The tables would clear, the floor made ready, and time honoured eight hand reel music by an old fiddler started these old timers into difficult steps, whirls of a dance that few people can execute correctly." That's something that I've heard people talk about. You know, that there's sort of with the dancing that

there, that they did it before, it was done sort of properly or whatever. Do you ever recall seeing some of the real old people jigging?

Jimmy LaRocque: I, I always said too bad we didn't have video cameras at that time. I've seen square dances at night, you know, Saturday night, and beautiful dancing. Not like you see on TV, you know, mechanical stuff. Then it was smooth and went with the music, eh, but, and I said, oh I think when I see it on TV, "Holy hell, why, why didn't we have TV cameras at that." Could take a picture of these 'cause they were in a shack, they weren't in a house, you know. They were in a play I told you about besides this and square dancing, eh? Everybody else outside and square dancing going on inside, but beautiful, just, just beautiful, and that's what they talk about then, you see that.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Yeah.

Jimmy LaRocque: It smooth with the music they danced with, to music, not when you I remember to book the dancers on TV, with Don Messer, okay. Everything was nice, but it was 1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3, that sort of, the whole dance was 1, 2, 3, eh? It's alright. That's the way they dance now. Whatever. But these old people I'm sure don't say 1, 2, 3, when they were dancing. They danced beautiful [?] and of course some of those old, old ladies, like old lady Cavanaugh. I always laugh. I said she was 102, but she could jump up and go to that door just as fast as you could. She'd jump up and move not far, but I saw her at home one time and the picture of her and my dad sitting together, and my dad got up and she jumped up right with him and walked like, and 102, eh. And I was standing there, and [?] with they say something you don't realize what you're witnessing until fifty, sixty years, or a hundred years later then.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Yeah, then you think, yeah, that was amazing. I know there was a, an older lady from the valley who must have been ninety,

and she won at Batoche, probably in the 1980s, Mrs. Pelletier. A number of people talked about especially the, the women the older women, how they danced. That's what I noticed, too, but what about jigging? Different steps?

13.57.17 Jimmy LaRocque: Well, [?] we were talking to him last night about, about Red River Jig, eh? The versions are different. One version is [?], one version of this, but you want to dance, some women were pretty, pretty good dancers 'cause when you played the Red River Jig, the man, the man jigged a certain part and the woman jigged, jigged another part, eh, of that same tune, eh? And, you know, he'd be playing his [?]. Playing the music and they match it to the man, that's, that's a [?]. He's just gonna give and she'd be following his step, you know, step for step she'd do the same. Okay, almost this dance would change tune a little bit, and then she'd start dancing and she'd just trot around. And I don't know what you call it, kinda shuffle around though. Around like that until all [?], start up the, the tune again, and he'd, he'd step dance and she'd step dance with him.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Would she go around him?

Jimmy LaRocque: Not around him, but around, let's say he was here dancing and the fiddle player would be there or whatever—you decide. She'd be dancing over here, eh, and he'd be dancing, and she'd dancing, watch his steps and she'd step the same as him. Keep on [?], and all at once he'd change his tune and she'd stop dancing, and she'd go, go this way, yeah, and stop and turn, come back this way. By that time, he get a little rested up and he'd start to play the fast part again, and he'd be jigging, but that jigger would be jigging and she'd take, call to him.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Who was the best jiggers that you remember as a, you know, among the older people?

Jimmy LaRocque: Parisiens and Charettes. They wear the shirt and [?] Charette, he had two brothers, but the brothers were lost, two things. But [?] Charette was the youngest and he could dance like never before. But the Parisiens, the, the Norman Parisien, or Boo Parisien we'd call him, he could dance. You could put something on his shoulder and never fall off. That was a test of how good a dancer, you put something here and then stay there. He kept jigging, you were a good dancer.

Sherry Farrell Racette: What would you put there?

Jimmy LaRocque: Well, matchbox or a chip or some damn thing, eh, but it wouldn't fall off.

Sherry Farrell Racette: So you'd have to be smooth?

Jimmy LaRocque: Well, your, your, see your legs are going, but the rest of you stands still. And Norman Parisien was at the home coming in Lebrét in '89. And he went home from that and died in November.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Danced too hard, maybe, eh?

Jimmy LaRocque: Well, I, I don't know. But he always said, "Where do live, Boo?" "Winnipeg." "Oh boy, in a home there?" "Yeah. I'm, my wife's on the seventh floor and I'm on the ninth." "Why?" "Well, it's cheaper that way."

Sherry Farrell Racette: What about you, Mr. Blondeau, you remember some of the dancing?

14.00.35 Guy Blondeau: I remember watching a waltz quadrille, and just think of, you know, you're doing a waltz step and you're going in a straight line, eh? Like, like the men and woman used to go up the middle and around the outside, and I forget the rest of it, eh, but that was, I don't know, eh, ten

years old maybe. But I remember it, watching us one time, I think it was at a house party and in tie. You were talking about smooth, eh, and you try waltzing, you know, going forward, doing a waltz step, eh, and try and keep it smooth, eh, so and it was beautiful to watch, eh. They did the thing and then they, they, you know, do a little bigger waltz together and different and movements. I can't remember much about the actual dance like I'll play the, the melody here for you later, but I remember seeing this and what you said, eh, about, about looking smooth.

Jimmy LaRocque: Oh yeah, I know those first dance, too, like [?], but that those guys that really could dance. Oh yeah, well, Parisien, well, there was other Parisien, too, [?], called him "Chink," he could dance to, too, but he'd get too drunk always, eh? So he wasn't as good.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Yeah the, the, usually doesn't help. I never head of a waltz quadrille, quadrille.

Jimmy LaRocque: Oh yeah there's...

Sherry Farrell Racette: Yeah, you remember it, eh?

Jimmy LaRocque: Yeah, yeah.

Guy Blondeau: It's, you know, there's a caller, and you, and you honour your partner and, you know, what the, the person sang the call, eh? And there was the, the particular thing, you go through the whole thing, and then you change partners, and then the next, next couple would, you know, like split to go around the outside and come back together.

Jimmy LaRocque: By the way, that was when you get [?], show your stuff wasn't it?

Sherry Farrell Racette: Show your stuff?

Jimmy LaRocque: Oh yeah, that's what it was called. Everybody show your stuff. That was done in the square dancing, too. They, they, they do the, the, the, everybody did their thing and then, alright, show your stuff, and they, all the men would just [?] think they were four, eh? Can't think of that because they don't do that now anymore. Nobody does that. So it's gone.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Ladies need you older guys to boss us around when we're dancing. Do your stuff.

14.03.02 Jimmy LaRocque: Well, some of the women used to do the stuff, too, but not that many, but the guys would always do, and they'd ask, 'specially the Parisiens, the Parisiens, for some had a, had a gift to dance even when they, like old Leo Parisien before he died. I think two days before he died he was out dancing.

Sherry Farrell Racette: So some of the families would almost have like a gift?

Jimmy LaRocque: Oh yeah, I think it was a gift because nobody took, well, there's a couple of the Pelletiers did pretty good, too, but, but Mike Pelletier, he could dance to beat hell, but he had to get half shot before he'd do it, eh? He, he, he'd see us at that, "Oh, I can't dance, I can't dance." Have a few more beer and "I don't feel bad now, you know." He, he'd tap his toes a few times. Not bad, yet, just want to have another beer. Giver.

Sherry Farrell Racette: A little fuel, eh?

Jimmy LaRocque: Oh yeah.

14.03.58 Sherry Farrell Racette: For the engine. "For the older folks, the function closed with the benediction of the patriarchs." So that's what you had talked about before, eh, going and getting the blessing from the patriarchs. "And then they took to their conveyances, some in car, a modern auto, old covered sleigh, single cutter, and went home. At the meeting place, the young folks started their celebration, and the sun was well above the tops before the fiddlers went into the tune of 'Home Sweet Home.'" So sounds like quite a party.

Jimmy LaRocque: The other thing I'd like to say, all of this is my dad's, nothing to do with me, outside of maybe [?] here and there, but my dad did the whole thing.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Yeah, your dad really chronicled a lot of the old traditions. He did a lot of important writing.

Jimmy LaRocque: J.Z., J.Z. LaRocque.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Because I don't know, like '48, that was the last one.

Jimmy LaRocque: That's the last one that, that he would, had to do it. He used to say, "We'll, oh, these other guys don't want to do it now, don't want to. Not old enough, you know?"

Sherry Farrell Racette: That's too bad. It would be a nice tradition to bring back. Now do you know some of these tunes?

14.05.13 Guy Blondeau: I do, yes, I do. I'm just learning the Red River Jig and it's, I've listened to the Andy Desjarlais record, and what I'm gonna play is not too closely related to it. It's the same sort of same basic melody, but,

but what I, somebody got some music off the internet for me, and it's a, an arrangement by Graham Townsend, and you were telling me he was with ...

Jimmy LaRocque: He was with Donald Messer.

Guy Blondeau: So I can play his arrangement, sort of, and I'm still learning it. It's not as fast as it, as it could be, but I'll play some of the, if, if now is a good time, I can play some of the old tunes that my dad used to play. And there was a couple of jigging, good jigging tunes in there, and some, they call them the first change where it's in this triple time, and I'll play a few of them, yeah.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Did just about every family have a fiddle player?

Jimmy LaRocque: Well, the, the LaRocque, the old LaRocque, I think there was three of them could play the violin. My dad, the next brother up, and I don't know the second brother or whatever they could play.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Your dad played?

Jimmy LaRocque: Yeah.

Guy Blondeau: My dad was an excellent old time fiddler, and he was also a violinist, eh. I can, I'm a fiddler, but I can't play, you know. I can't sound very good play, play something slow. And he was good with both, and one of my older brothers, because an excellent old time fiddler, and he played with the Swing Kings in Regina. And you might remember the Porky Sherman Show from, oh, twenty-five years back, maybe, eh? And the Swing Kings have regular place on that. He had a half hour show once a week and they played, you know, old time music and some modern and that. And he was very smooth, more like Don Messer style, more than the, but he could play. He could play the Andy Desjarlais stuff as well, but he was very good, eh?

I'm rough and, you know, compared to, compared to both of them. My mother played the piano and I played the piano, and my, the brother who learned the violin, he also played the guitar and banjo when he was young, eh? So we had a family orchestra going. I remember when I was ten years old, we went out to some country church to play for a dance one time, all four of us. And it was a lot of a lot of music played in the house for quite a while. So I'll try and play the Red River Jig here and we'll see. I gotta keep an eye on the music going here. **[Plays fiddle from 14.07.53-14.08.04]** Lost it there. **[Plays fiddle from 14.08.05-14.08.51]** So that, there'd be one part you were saying ...

Jimmy LaRocque: Yeah, one part ...

Guy Blondeau: ... where the lady would lose.

Jimmy LaRocque: Then you would finish that, then he would start to play again, and then she'd **[?]**.

Guy Blondeau: And the man would do his stuff while she just sort of shuffled around the edge.

Jimmy LaRocque: No, when she was, when he was doing his stuff, she danced his stuff, but when he changed that tune, he was kinda resting and she would ...

Guy Blondeau: Oh, okay, I see, okay, yeah. Yeah. Okay, I'll just put this aside. The waltz quadrille.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Yeah.

Guy Blondeau: **[Plays fiddle from 14.09.23-14.10.14]** That would be where one couple would, you know, would do its thing, and then when

everybody would dance to the second part of it. Do you remember it, Jim?
[Plays fiddle from 14.10.23-14.10.28] I think everybody would waltz to a little bit of the circle in this part. Does that sound familiar?

Jimmy LaRocque: I think they went through all them, like, four times, and then they would walk.

Guy Blondeau: Yeah, oh, okay, yeah.

Jimmy LaRocque: That's what I remember.

Guy Blondeau: **[Plays fiddle from 14.10.40-14.10.55]** This is a Sears, Sears special, or Eaton's, maybe. My grandmother paid about sixty dollars for this when I left high school so that I would have a violin to take with me, and this is a an old bow with some cross hairs on it, so it it kinda squeaks a little bit. So it'd be very appropriate at this time to play the Chicken Reel.

[Plays fiddle from 14.11.17-14.12.03] Sometimes that chicken gets into my other pieces. Okay, there's a couple of old jigs that my dad used to play. Here, this is one, here's one. **[Plays fiddle from 14.12.13-14.12.58]**

Jimmy LaRocque: That one...

Guy Blondeau: That's...

Jimmy LaRocque: ...that one, as far as I'm concerned, was "who could play out fiddling. The fiddler played and this guy would dance, and that would dance and then she'd get tired, she'd go off. Another one would start. You'd say, "Well, this guy get tired," and that, but they keep going three or four or five guys would finally **[?]**.

Sherry Farrell Racette: And that's what they usually danced to?

Guy Blondeau: There's one, something, something like that one. **[Plays fiddle from 14.13.24-14.14.12]**

Sherry Farrell Racette: That's a, that's a great one.

Guy Blondeau: It's sort of close together. Like they used to play it, a lot of pieces like that that were slightly different, eh, just, but the little, you can recognize the two different melodies. But okay, so, okay, they used to call this the first change, eh. We're just in the in the triple time there. **[Plays fiddle from 14.14.37-14.15.11]** The chicken.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Chicken, yeah, chicken.

Guy Blondeau: **[Plays fiddle from 14.15.12-14.15.39]** There's something.

Jimmy LaRocque: You said that first change, is that what they meant by the, the, to the square dance the first round?

Guy Blondeau: Yes.

Jimmy LaRocque: There's the first change and then the second change ...

Guy Blondeau: Second change and then the breakdown, yeah.

Jimmy LaRocque: Breakdown.

Guy Blondeau: Yeah, the first change is in the triple time. Ba da da ba da da da. Yeah, yeah. **[Plays the fiddle]** Just a couple. I get them mixed up. Let's see. **[Plays fiddle from 14.16.04-14.17.17]** And McDonald's Reel.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh yeah, that was one of the ones that they mentioned, yeah.

Guy Blondeau: [Plays fiddle] No that's the jig. Just a minute. [Plays fiddle from 14.17.26-14.18.38] There was one high part they used to play a little higher there, and that's McDonald's Reel. I'm trying to think of some more small ones, some more of the old ones that he used to play, but.

[Tunes fiddle] [Plays fiddle from 14.19.21-14.19.40] Let me find that one. [Plays fiddle from 14.19.40-14.20.34] Of the three of us, I could play the loudest. I wasn't the smoothest.

Sherry Farrell Racette: When did you learn?

Guy Blondeau: At, at home, we had, you know, instrument, the piano and violins in the house, and so my brother started picking up the old time music when he was about ten or twelve. And I think I started, I'd play, I could play "Silent Night" when I was eight years old, and I won my first amateur hour playing the fiddle when I was ten years old. And this was with the, the Associated Canadian Travellers. They, they were, they were raising money, I think, for TB, and they would have a series of amateur hours in all, you know, all the small towns and Yorkton, Melville. They were working out of Yorkton. And they would have this, you make donations, eh, the, the one who raises the most money makes the, wins the first prize of fifteen dollars or whatever it was, you know. It wasn't much prize money, but they were raising money for TB. And so I guess a, a little guy—I was ten years old, you know—a little guy playing the big fiddle was, was kind of a novelty. So I was raising more money than other people, not that I was better than they were, but I was raising more money. And so I won a couple of small town ones, then went into the central one in Yorkton, and, you know, enough money came in that I got first prize there I guess. So, anyway, that's, that's, that's where that was. So I was, so the music, music was in the house all the time. My dad was a good singer. And he used to sing in church and things like that.

Jimmy LaRocque: And he is also a good singer. He is in a choir at Lebret and is, I'd say, the backbone of the singing.

Guy Blondeau: Thank you. I think I'm kinda pushed into it, but I'm trying to think of some more of the old ones here. I don't know if this is an old one or not. Might be. **[Plays fiddle from 14.22.47-14.24.01]**

Jimmy LaRocque: That's a French one, eh? Your dad must have played that one lots.

Guy Blondeau: I think, yeah, I think that's, that's where I learned it, from him. So, you remember that, you recognize it?

Sherry Farrell Racette: Sound familiar?

Jimmy LaRocque: French, yeah. And play it, would kinda take you along.

Sherry Farrell Racette: You can all see them dancing?

Jimmy LaRocque: No not so much dancing, but Morris **[?]** ...

Guy Blondeau: Okay.

Jimmy LaRocque: ... used to get half crocked and sing that.

Guy Blondeau: Okay, yeah.

Sherry Farrell Racette: You know the words to it?

Guy Blondeau: Oh yeah, sure.

Guy Blondeau: Can't think of any old ones this time. Maybe I'll remember some more later.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Okay, great, yeah, well, thank you very much.

Guy Blondeau: Yeah.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Those two jigs, those, so you figure those are the play out the fiddler jigs?

Jimmy LaRocque: Well, one of them was.

Sherry Farrell Racette: The first one?

Jimmy LaRocque: There's only one fiddler, and the guy would dance, the woman would dance. She'd get tired, she'd go off and another would jump in. So you get another guy would jump in, and you'd just keep doing that. You get five, six guys would jig for that time the fiddler was going down. The other thing about fiddlers there's a Morin, and I can't think of his first name right now, but he was old Morin's son. You remember, John, eh? John Morin? Big John?

Guy Blondeau: Oh yeah, Big John, yes.

Jimmy LaRocque: Well, he was his brother, and would you believe that guy could fiddle a song and was so smooth that people would just look and say, "How in the hell is he doing this?" But he had to be drunk to, to do it, eh, and he, he fiddled all over in Regina and in Winnipeg, all over the place, and always pay, pay him big money [?], fiddle for me. So he'd go for a day or two, get paid, and never see him again. He finally died—I think he was about thirty years old, thirty-seven, but could he fiddle. And everyone said, "Well, teach us how you fiddle that." Well, I can fiddle [?], but it, it was a gift of

his—nobody else had that gift. Well, the guys fiddle a little better than that, but I said, "The other thing, too, if you fiddle lots or always at it, then you get better all the time." But this guy would just, of course I forget his first name, but I saw him, you know that steel bridge in the south side of Lebrét? Come up there one day, carrying his fiddle like this, eh, drunker than hell. I says, "[?]." I says, "Give us a tune." "If you step dance on the bridge," he said, "I'll give you a tune." Well, I can step dance, and he couldn't step dance nothing. But he [?] start to give it up, you know, and that as far as I'm concerned that's the most beautiful song I ever heard. Like, over the river, eh?

Guy Blondeau: Oh yeah.

Jimmy LaRocque: Oh yeah.

Sherry Farrell Racette: So did you dance?

Jimmy LaRocque: Oh yeah, shuffle your feet.

Guy Blondeau: As long as he thought you [?], he'd keep playing.

Jimmy LaRocque: Yeah. That was, and I think that was even the last time I seen him alive, 'cause shortly after he died some place in Winnipeg or something. Too bad, but could play a violin like you'd never believe.

14.27.22 Sherry Farrell Racette: Did either of you get a chance to learn or hear some of the songs that they used to sing, like the, the French songs. Like, I think most of them are old French songs, but wedding songs and things that they used to sing at different times?

Jimmy LaRocque: There's a record there, got one or two of them in there. I can sing forty miles an hour.

Guy Blondeau: No, I never heard too much. My dad, I remember when I was a little guy, my dad sang a couple, you know, couple one night at a, a house party, and ordinarily I don't remember this, the old French or Métis songs.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Well, I just, it just seems to me that some of those songs must have been so old, like some of the fiddle tunes that you had. Some of them must have been passed down from father and son for how many generations, you know, because for most of those families they wouldn't have gone to school. They wouldn't have, there was no radio, you know, so they would have been passed down from fiddle player to fiddle player. And I just wonder sometime how old they are, you know, if, like, a lot of the singers just wonder how where they come from. Like McDonald's Reel in Lebret. Now, how did that get there? I bet there's a story to that, you know?

Jimmy LaRocque: Well, my dad didn't fiddle like him. He'd sit in his big chair and put the violin here someplace. And [?] bow [?]. So, he said, "You have a short bow fiddler. I fiddle [?]."

Guy Blondeau: I guess the thing, too, eh, was no accompaniment, eh?

Jimmy LaRocque: Oh no, oh no.

Guy Blondeau: At a dance, the fiddler or fiddler would go and play for half an hour, an hour and, and then, no accompaniment, and then somebody else would come along and pick up the fiddle and play for awhile. And that was, you know, just thing, and they had new the old step, eh, they used to keep time ...

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh yeah, with their feet.

Guy Blondeau: Yeah.

Jimmy LaRocque: Sometimes with two feet, eh?

Guy Blondeau: Yeah and...

Jimmy LaRocque: I used to remember [?] before his foot went haywire. You know, they like I, I can't [?] doesn't work.

Guy Blondeau: Yeah, you just, you get one going like this.

Jimmy LaRocque: That's also the beat for two feet.

Guy Blondeau: And then there's your drum, eh? You don't need it, your rhythm, you know, you know. And apparently—I heard this the other day here—that, that some guys would bring along their own little piece of, of, of wood.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh, plywood?

Guy Blondeau: Yeah. Piece of plywood to, so to in case they're playing on a rug or something, you know, then they, then they could, you could hear it better.

Jimmy LaRocque: Stompin' Tom.

Guy Blondeau: Yeah.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Think that's where Stompin' Tom got the idea from.

Guy Blondeau: Just heard that.

Jimmy LaRocque: I'll tell you, you got some other questions to ask?

Sherry Farrell Racette: No, no, go ahead.

14.30.16 Jimmy LaRocque: There's a thing I'd like to, I said that I would do it the first thing when I started, but I didn't do it 'cause I, but in Lebrét we had what you call Chicago and Jackrabbit Street. The first one was in town in the town limits. Chicago Street is the town on one side of the road and [?] the other side of the road. Well, the other side [?], what I own now, mostly, and over by [?], eh, and then the, the early 1900s he gave these guys each a place to live. Good time to come. They had no place to go. Put your shack there [?]. But as time went on, the municipal bodies or municipal affairs said, "I'm gonna tax these people." And the poor [?] said, "Don't tax me. Well, tax them." Well, they wouldn't pay, so they have, argue back and forth up till about 1940-something, after '44 for sure., the taxes, tax this or get rid of the building, so that's how the building disappeared. But on that Chicago Street, you leave the number fifty-six and go south, and today it's called Wideawake Road. That road was called Chicago Street at one time, and it, it had thirteen houses on the southwest of 1-2113, west of the seven. Had two houses on the southeast of 2-2113, west of the 2nd, and they were all Métis people. The first house was a two-story house, log house, built about 1918 or thereabouts. Isadore Blondeau built it, and raised his family there. Behind that house was a wood house, a cottage that one of his sons lived in. The next house was [?] that lived there. That was just a log little, small little shack. The next house was [?] Parisien. Okay, the next house were Desjarlais. Desjarlais had a lumber house that Roberts, Arthur Roberts, married an Indian lady by the name of McArthur, and he built a, a, a lumber house on three acres of land. And that's where the Desjarlais lived. Arthur Roberts died in the First War, and Desjarlais married his widow and they lived in that house. Now Arthur Roberts had four children—a boy and three, three girls. The one girl died fairly young, and the other two girls lived and,

and Fred, his son, did, they lived at the coast. Okay, but the house was rented or this and that, and the next was Parisien and, and Poitras were together on a piece of land there. The following was a two-story house again made of logs and that's where Corbitt [?] made his house. [?] had two-story house. And when Adrian got married, he built another small little house behind him, behind Corbitt's place, and he lived there with his wife. Across the, the, on the next piece of land was a two acre piece. Instead of running this way, it ran that way, eh, like the door was here. There was three, three Pelletiers living on that land, eh? The father and the sons, I think that's how it worked. Anyway, doesn't matter. They lived there and across the road a Poitras lived, and that's where I told you seventeen people came out of one. And from there a little further was Joe Juneau, who was called Joe Redman. He lived there, eh. And that, and beside that, there was three houses on the road allowance. You heard about the road allowance, did you? Okay the first, the furthest south was a Poitras, and next to him was a Schneider, and the Parisien that was closer to the corner. And there was a Martin lived on the west side, and a, an old, another old Parisien lived further up on the road. I bought that piece of land and tore down that house, and I didn't buy the one at the bottom, but it was tore down. And then the forty-fourth, like I said, when the women didn't get married or whatever and have trouble, after '44, if I see kids at the, kids have to walk to school, now the government been picked them up and took them to Regina, put them on social welfare and they educated the kids. Okay, and that happened to pretty near every family except, but the road like the whole [?], the old Blondeaus died, the old Poitras died, but, see, that's, but anything younger was taken to Regina. That was the finish of Chicago Street. And my, my mother, my wife worked at the Indian hospital, and she'd be nursing some guy. He'd say, "Where are you from?" "I'm from Lebret" "From Lebret? Oh my." "What?" "Oh, did I ever have lots of good times at Lebret." "Oh, what did you do?" "Oh," he said, "Get a jug of wine and go down to Chicago, go to dance, and a party like you would never believe." So that, that, and that wasn't only once, but a lot of times that happened. And the Jackrabbit Street was the next street over in

town. At that particular time, there was only two houses on it, and one was Paget and one was Poitras. And Poitras hunted rabbits and he put them on pole, a long pole up in the air, eh, and that's why it was called Jackrabbit Street.

14.36.31 Sherry Farrell Racette: Would he put the head up there?

Jimmy LaRocque: The whole rabbit.

Sherry Farrell Racette: The whole rabbit?

Jimmy LaRocque: And call it, and another one was Paget, Rene Paget, but Rene Paget died. He was a veteran and he died fairly young. The, the Paget lady, Mrs. Paget, had her children, lived there till about 1940-something. '42 or '41 they moved to Regina. Would you believe one of the daughters died, the old lady died at a hundred, hundred years old? The rest are still living though. All living on Jackrabbit Street. Now, like I said at the present time, I own on both sides of Chicago Street, land. I own one side of Jackrabbit Street, but not on the other side. But that's, I think it should be recorded where I said those Métis people only did live there.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Yeah, yeah, actually I know Jimmy Parisien. Before he passed away, he asked me if I would paint a painting of old Lebret, like kind of from the air, 'cause he said he could remember all the streets and what the houses like looked like and who, who lived in them. 'Cause he thought that, that should be should be recorded, eh, or should be ...

Jimmy LaRocque: That's [?], eh?

Sherry Farrell Racette: Yeah, yeah, that it should be, it should be documented because he, you know, 'cause he said he could just see it, and

so many people have so many fond memories of, of that community. Are there any of the original houses still standing, do you know?

Jimmy LaRocque: Not on, not on Chicago Street.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Anywhere in Lebret? Any of the original houses still standing do you know?

Jimmy LaRocque: Well, the originals standing in Lebret ...

Sherry Farrell Racette: Cuthbert St. Denis' house, is he?

Jimmy LaRocque: No, that's gone.

Sherry Farrell Racette: That's gone?

Jimmy LaRocque: Yeah. In fact, the one part of it just burnt here two, two summers, two falls ago. Something like that, two, a couple of years ago for sure. I'm trying to think what the reason was. [?] house is gone, eh?

Guy Blondeau: Yeah. What about where the Red & White store is now, that's, they don't go back that far, eh?

Jimmy LaRocque: Well, now, just with this Red & White store, this is the one across the way from that. They were both built in 1907 or 5.

Guy Blondeau: Okay.

Jimmy LaRocque: The Lefleur house behind that where the trailer is now wasn't build in 1907, 2. The one I tore down was built, was in 1911.

14.39.10 Sherry Farrell Racette: Okay [?] been telling us to wrap up now, so I'll have to save for tomorrow what I was wanting to get you to talk about your. Tomorrow I'll get, I'll get you to talk about your grandpa, free trading, 'cause I think that's interesting 'cause, you know, how many carts he had and where he went and stuff like that. I don't think people, I mean, very few people know the specifics of any one, you know, free trader.

Jimmy LaRocque: Not only that, but I worked at a government institution and a woman called me Charlie all the time, used to call me Charlie. So I let her call me Charlie, what the hell? So one day she says, "You gotta get new identification, Charlie. Coming in?" "Yeah." So I went in. So she takes out this the identification, she goes, "Charlie." I said, "My name's not Charlie." "What do you mean your name's not Charlie?" I said, "Oh, my name's Jim, Robert James." "You're not Charlie?" "No." "Well, how many years you been here?" I said about four five years, I said that. "And I've been calling you Charlie. Well, why I didn't say something?" I said, "Well," I said, "What the hell's the difference if you call me Charlie? I know what you want, whatever you want me to do I do." "You didn't ever live in Fort McMurray?" "No, why? No." She says, "I lived in Murray and"—doesn't matter—"I lived in there, and, my, Charlie, you were on living behind me across the back alley." "No, I never lived there."

Sherry Farrell Racette: Your double.

Jimmy LaRocque: After, she says, "I swear on a pack of bibles that's you."

Sherry Farrell Racette: Was he a LaRocque?

Jimmy LaRocque: He was a LaRocque.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Well, that's one I notice about Métis families, is that the resemblance is really strong. Because I went to Turtle Mountain, like

around Pembina, there was a, an organization was putting on a fashion show and I could tell ...

Jimmy LaRocque: Oh, there's [?] there.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh, I know, like, if someone said they want so, and so I could pick, like, okay, here comes a LaRocque, you know? There's a Parisien. You could, you could tell, 'cause it's the same families, and they really do look alike. So you got a twin in Fort McMurray?

Jimmy LaRocque: Yeah.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Well, I hope he didn't get into too much trouble.

Jimmy LaRocque: Well, I'll tell you, I was up north in Camp La Portage, and a guy came there. No, one time at Christmas time, a great big parcel higher than this table, or just about higher as table, and, and about that long and about this wide, from Eaton's, and you'd shake it and it was full of toys. They said, "Robert James LaRocque. That's yours?" "I don't know," I said. "My mother wrote me and told me there's gonna be a parcel." "You better read your mail," he said, "it must be yours." So I shake it. I went home read my mail. No, nothing about a parcel. So I come back and I said, "I don't think it's mine. Who in the hell would it be?" "Well, there's an Indian come here every, every Christmas," he said. "It's once a year," he says, "to get all his mail," he said, "and that's him."

Sherry Farrell Racette: Same name?

Jimmy LaRocque: I says, "Robert James LaRocque. Yeah." "This your number?" "Yeah." I missed out.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Okay, I guess that's it.

14.42.17 End of Videotape 1