

Transcribed by David Morin

GABRIEL DUMONT INSTITUTE FOLKLORE INTERVIEWS

Jimmy LaRocque, Guy Blondeau, and Sherry Farrell Racette

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Videotape 2

9.51.14 Sherry Farrell Racette: Good morning.

Jimmy LaRocque: Morning. I'll continue somewhat on the settlements we had around the Lebret area.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh, that'd be great.

Jimmy LaRocque: But I think I left off the Jackrabbit, Chicago [?]. Now, there's two coulees. One at [?] town of Lebret and another one a little east of Lebret, which is called, you can call it, this one's called CNR or one's called LaRocque Coulee, and when the CNR went through it in 1910 or '9, they call it the CNR Coulee since then, and back and forth, various names. And that, but the other, the one that's by Lebret, is called the, the Indian Coulee. That's where the, when the Indian school was started in 1884, they had no land, and so they bought a piece of land from Francis [?], I think, to start the Indian school. But they called the land grant for, for the Indian school, which ran from the lake right back, about a mile back, that was a government land through a grant for the Indian school. Now, part of that is not the way it was at that time, but the, the school and their properties still further grew closer to the lake. But behind that, these Métis people that lived, not that many right now, but at one time there was about ten or twelve families up there, like Majors, Pelletiers, Desjarlais, Martins, Dumonts,

and stuff like that. Now, there was—I'm skipping some of them, but Morins—that was that coulee. Now, the other coulee, the CNR coulee or whatever it was called at one time, there's a, it was mostly Robillards that lived in it. There was about four families that lived in there, all really good, all who, but as I said a different part of the, the coulee. Some on the side of the hill, some down at the bottom, some over this way and that way. They're all out, and some of them are on John LaRocque's land, but they're all dead now. Well, their ancestors are not, but those people are all dead, and there's not that many. In fact, there's no Robillards living up [?] now. That's the, as far as I'm concerned, that's the community of Lebret. And they had lots of kids, and lots of kids went to school in Lebret. In fact, we had about 250 to maybe, not 300, too full for four rooms at school.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh, it was little school?

Jimmy LaRocque: Well, it was a big school, but ...

Sherry Farrell Racette: Yeah, 250 for a small town [?].

9.54.14 Jimmy LaRocque: It, it's lots of, so lot of what would happen was that there'd, the French lesson would go to the convent, do their French lesson, the, the mathematics would go to the convent, and all these sort of different subjects would go to [?]. That's why you could accommodate more kids in, in the school. But I don't know if you want, we could continue about this school.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Sure, yeah.

Jimmy LaRocque: 'Cause it gets little complicated. See, the nuns run the school from 1899 to 70-something, '72 or '3, wasn't it, Guy?

Guy Blondeau: '72.

Jimmy LaRocque: And fine and dandy, but in 1929 the Conservative government said we were, get rid of this teaching, teachers that have garments and crosses and this and that on their, on their body. So the idea was that Lebret was one of those places, had all nun teachers with, with garb and rosaries and crosses and stuff like that. So fine and dandy when they, when they finally got in power in '29, they stopped it right there. No more stuff on the blackboards, drawings of this or nobody, pictures of religious picture, no pictures of any [?]. Fine and dandy. So Lebret school, the nuns were told they had to take, get rid of their garb and, and the, and headdress. So you might as well tell them to go naked. They refused and they stopped teaching school in the public school. And they went, they, they taught school in the convent. The convent had about four rooms, small rooms and, of course, you had to pay to go to the convent. Now, as a kid I didn't really realize all this, what was happening. My dad sent me to the convent and my sister was just barely at the turning school, so she went to the convent. So every, the government thought everybody went to the convent and the school was finished, eh?

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh, right.

Jimmy LaRocque: Well, they, everything good until, until August, when the school started in August, and all this, I think 174, if I remember right, out of that two or three hundred kids went to the public school in the morning, and no teachers, no nothing. The door wasn't even open and there was, "Well, don't you go to the convent?" "No." "Do you?" "No. Where's our school here, the public school, it's supposed to be here." So there's some pretty tall jumping around for awhile. Then they hired two teachers that were just, I don't think they even had finished normal school or something like that, but any rate, they came at, at Mary Legaré. And Julie, can't remember right now, but they, they took on the school and they had the, the register said they had a 174 pupils between the two of them, and they had a four room school.

So that's, they, they and that number was 4907, I think. But any rate, I could be wrong. 4907, and before our, our number was 12. So, and my dad got pretty mad about this that we had to keep this school room when nobody else had one and only had number 12. All of us in 1930 were 4907 [?] we just come out of the woods. So then the priest heard about this and he started writing about it: "No, we can't give you this, can't do that." He kept it up for a bit, ten years or better, fighting about this number. Back and forth and finally he was given 12B. We gave him 12B but not 12, but 12B. And I think it was a [?] year later [?] 19. So that's what happened at our school.

Sherry Farrell Racette: So now it's 12B?

Jimmy LaRocque: No, there's no school to [?], not nothing at all now. But as I said, it was 12B for about a year, I think. I'm not positive about the length of time. And then it went into [?] 19. The [?]. So, 12. Poor dad fought for it for years, but finally got his 12B, but ...

Sherry Farrell Racette: Well, you could put 12 now. The government can't say. But how many students—174 for two teachers?

Jimmy LaRocque: Two teachers, yeah.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Wow. How many, that's quite a bit.

Jimmy LaRocque: Well, that there was, that it was a very, did you know Mary Legaré? Mary Legaré was a good-sized lady.

Sherry Farrell Racette: She'd have to be for eighty kids.

Jimmy LaRocque: And she didn't she didn't take much [?] from anybody. The other one was not quite as big, but as I said they run the school. Mary was the principal and forced them. And negotiation went on, they said, "We'll

let the nuns go back if they take the, the habit off." So, no, no, that won't happen. So back and forth. The first thing, you know, then, they decided if you cover the habit, we'll let you go back. So they designed smocks to go over the habit and it satisfied them, but you have to take the head off, headdress off. Oh, again, you might as well ask them take off their clothes. Said they weren't taking off the headdress no matter what happened. Fine and dandy, so then the government decided to settle on women wear all kinds of headdress. Well, what's the difference, this kind of headdress or another different kind of. It let them go with their headdress. So the nuns went back teaching a year later to the school with a covered, the smock covered the, the, their actual clothes, and the headdress remained the same. So they looked like nuns, actually, and that's, that's the way it was, yeah, it was [?] from then on. And, and in reality, as time went on the nuns said it was a blessing. Well, how come? "Well, we usually have to go home every night from school and clean our, our garments 'cause it was full of chalk, eh? But with this, with this cotton cover over their garments, just take the garment, cut the cotton [?], shake it, put another one tomorrow morning in your things."

Sherry Farrell Racette: Made life easier?

Jimmy LaRocque: Yeah, so it so they must have made it better for cleaning.

Sherry Farrell Racette: So was that where you went to school?

Jimmy LaRocque: Yes.

Sherry Farrell Racette: How many grades did it have?

Jimmy LaRocque: Twelve.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Twelve?

Jimmy LaRocque: Well, it had Grade Twelve in 1918 already.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Really?

Jimmy LaRocque: Yes. One, one to Eight, and then in 1918 they got Grade Twelve. But I think there's, in that book there's records of, of some of it, like in the...

Sherry Farrell Racette: Yeah.

10.01.44 Jimmy LaRocque: There's another thing that's peculiar about it, which is, it doesn't happen very often. A public school, a Catholic public school.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Yeah, that doesn't happen very often.

Jimmy LaRocque: No, a Catholic public school, and that was, and that, what was our school, was a Catholic public school at that time.

Sherry Farrell Racette: So, that would be kind of like the Catholic system is now. You know, that you don't have to be Catholic to go to the Catholic school.

Jimmy LaRocque: Well, I...

Sherry Farrell Racette: It was publicly funded.

Jimmy LaRocque: The public part of it, the public, the actual public, public where the hitch was, the, the land was owned by the priest and Lebret, combined or whatever, eh?

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh, okay.

Jimmy LaRocque: And when they, and from 1930 on, when they, government, was doing this, running it or whatever, the case, they didn't know what to call it. They couldn't call it the, a public school because it wasn't a public, and they didn't want to call it the, a farm school, but it wasn't that neither. So, they had to turn around and call it a Catholic public school. That was what written, and I think that's in there, too.

Sherry Farrell Racette: That's in the history?

Jimmy LaRocque: But it, they, that's quite a time, straightening it all out before they could run it.

10.03.05 Sherry Farrell Racette: When did the school shut down?

Jimmy LaRocque: '72. Well, I told you that the bad unit came in then, and first off I, I have, I, maybe Guy can tell it better, started off at the, they took the high school to Fort Qu'Appelle. So they left the rest in Lebret for awhile, and then all of the stuff wasn't good. Gonna take all of them over there and set up all of them to, to the youngest ones back to Lebret?

Guy Blondeau: Yeah, it was, it was grades, up to Grade Eight for awhile, right. They took the high school and bussed them. And then Fort Qu'Appelle had all of the Grades One to Three, and Lebret had all the Grade Four to Six. That's the way it was for the last couple of years.

Sherry Farrell Racette: So the little ones all went to Fort Qu'Appelle and then Four, Five, Six stayed in Lebret?

Guy Blondeau: Yeah.

14.0 Jimmy LaRocque: Well, it was...

Guy Blondeau: Yeah, rather than One to Six in both.

Jimmy LaRocque: ...reverse it the [?], reverse it the last [?].

Guy Blondeau: That could be.

Jimmy LaRocque: Grade One, Two, One and Two or, or something like that. So that was the beef—my kid can't take home lunches and my kid can't ride the bus.

Guy Blondeau: It was alright for Lebret, but Fort Qu'Appelle couldn't put the kids on the bus. I remember, I remember that.

Sherry Farrell Racette: It was okay for the Grade Ones in Lebret had to take the bus, but not the ones...

10.04.28 Guy Blondeau: But they, they know, I know it was decided to keep, you know, Lebret had, I think, six classrooms of Grade Four, Five, and Six for awhile, 'cause Brian went, went there in Grade Six when we moved uptown. And then Fort Qu'Appelle had all the grades, the smaller grades, One to Three. And then I don't know if they switched or what happened, but then it shut down. I think it shut down right after.

Jimmy LaRocque: Well, there was only, I know two women for sure went to [?] and said, "My kid can't eat cold lunches." See, so that was, it didn't last very long when they all had to go to Fort Qu'Appelle, rather than stay.

Guy Blondeau: Yeah, the total numbers dropped a bit, too, because Brian took his Grade Six there, and I think that was the last year it was open.

Sherry Farrell Racette: I'm gonna have to ask you to pull your sleeve over your watch.

Jimmy LaRocque: Again?

Sherry Farrell Racette: Clunking again. Okay, that's good. Well, that's interesting because there's, like, I'm trying to think of similar communities that had schools, like Métis communities that had schools. Like a lot of communities didn't get schools until the NDP came in, in '44. Ile a la Crosse had a school for a long time, though, and so did Cumberland House, and so that, that would put Lebret right, you know, in that kind of very, very small group of communities where the children had access to education. Katepwa had a little school, too, had a little school in Katepwa. What, didn't they? Sure they did.

Jimmy LaRocque: I didn't say anything.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Well, I know, but you looked at me.

10.05.58 Jimmy LaRocque: Well, see that brings in another, another clause. When the NDP came in and they said they wanted to put a school on the farm ...

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh, right on the Métis farm.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Yeah, and you, you would never believe. The, the Métis themselves said, "No, you're segregating us from the Whites."

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh, so they didn't want that?

Jimmy LaRocque: So they said, "We'll, we'll transport our people there everyday and make sure they get there." And, and they got a real good school attendance from the farm after that. So that's where that ...

Sherry Farrell Racette: That's what they wanted?

Sherry Farrell Racette: See, and Katepwa school was a public [?] where lots of Métis people went, eh? But, and I think maybe other people did told you about that, eh, like the ...

Sherry Farrell Racette: Yeah, like Jerry went to that school there, but I know there was other kids that went as well. It was like a mixed school, but there were a lot of Métis kids that went at Katepwa.

Jimmy LaRocque: Oh, yeah, well, of course, it wasn't a very big school neither.

Sherry Farrell Racette: No, it was pretty small, but it really puts that whole area, you know, having access to education, whereas a lot of other Métis communities didn't.

Guy Blondeau: Could that have been the influence of the priests and the nuns, a bit, Jimmy, too?

Jimmy LaRocque: Well, the, if you want to get in that story, that story.

Guy Blondeau: ... because they were, they were quite concerned with education.

10.07.21 Jimmy LaRocque: The first teacher started about 1880-something, eh? The first teachers, they'd come, and they came from Quebec or something, and they came for a week or two each or a month, same ones.

And, I can't think of his name, Noah Fellafant [?] came and developed teaching them. And can I have one of those, too? Mine makes too much noise. Anyway, he came and he taught school in Lebret school for a number of years, but I'm getting ahead of my story. What, well, these teachers would come and, of course, the end of the world, they come from Quebec and then come to Saskatchewan where two or three buildings and try and teach school. Lots of kids, but just nothing else, eh? So, but finally got down, even Father [?] taught school for awhile just to keep filling the gaps. Well, they now [?] in 19-, in 1899 [?] went to France and went to see the nuns—the [?] mission nuns—and, and ask them would they come and teach in Saskatchewan. And they said, "Oh yeah," so he came home and they started to come. Took them from May to October before they landed in Lebret. There's four nuns landed in Lebret, and they landed in the evening and they had come by wagon from Crooked Lake. So they couldn't find the place for them to sleep that night, so they had to empty the mission house, which is inside of the, there was a whole bunch of priests. The mission priests had to get out and go and find a place to sleep and the nuns would stay there. Fine and dandy. Now they started teaching school in what they call the, the first convent, but that was the building, just where the school is now, that was there and they had been built for, for a school by the priests, and they were gonna charge them five dollars a month, or six. People wouldn't, people wouldn't pay it.

Sherry Farrell Racette: That's a fair bit of money back then.

Jimmy LaRocque: So not gonna pay it. So, in the mid—that was in 1899—and so they built a school a little north of there on that same street, a log school, and a fellow by the name of Norman Musty built it. He could talk Cree. He used to be a, a Northwest Mounted Police. He built it and that's where the first school was. Like the, our own, that's our own school, and they went to school there. Kids went to school there, including my dad. Now, one of, there was other teachers, but one other the teachers was J.G. Smith,

and J.G. Smith was the first municipal affairs man in the government of Saskatchewan 1905. But we, and he, but at that time—that was before 1905 and so—but he was, that's who that he was. But anyway, he was teaching school there. Never consulted him, never asked him, never said nothing to him. They brought these teachers from France to teach school in Lebret, and they and the school was, another school was put in the old convent, eh? And that, at that time it was I think three or four schools in Lebret then. But anyway, this and that, and, and Smith was a force in world, first man. And he asked him, "Where do you get the authority? I'm the teacher here. I'm in charge in here. where'd you get [?]" "Never mind, [?]. I'm running the show," he says, "I put the nuns here to teach and that's it." So they argued back and forth, but it finally landed in court over it, eh? And I, of course Smith was no dummy. He says, "How did you come to that vote?" "Oh, this guy, that guy, they got land." "Oh, you have this land and that land, and that's all there, you see." And Smith says, "As far as I'm concerned, that there's nobody equal and those lands is just [?] that [?] find in court that." To give you a short version of it, the idea is that the court ruled Smith was in charge. And Smith tried to have a good school and the other one was just nothing. That was in December of 1902, no, yeah, 1902, and he resigned and went to Regina.

Sherry Farrell Racette: So he had enough?

10.12.13 Jimmy LaRocque: He had enough, and there's nuns that were in full charge of the school from then on. But the funny part of it was, again, now in all this controversy they found out the woman that was in charge of the nuns, was in charge, wasn't a qualified teacher in the eyes of what was there, eh? So they, they won't let her, wouldn't let her do anything. She could teach, but no signing of this, and couldn't sign nothing. So they had to bring out another nun that was qualified to do it and after if went [?]. See, they stay at that old convent from 19-, 1899 to 19-, excuse me, 1905, when they built a convent and can't stop there anymore. But there's a four story

convent east of there, and that's where they helped kept borders, and then they had as high as twelve, fifteen nuns there.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Wow. Do you want to get a water? I wonder if we should stop and just give him give a water, for Mr. LaRocque.

10.13.18 [No audio]

10.17.44 Sherry Farrell Racette: I wonder if you could tell us about your grandfather, Antoine LaRocque. Whoops, sorry...

10.18.00 [No audio then someone says "Go ahead whenever you're ready."]

10.18.04 Sherry Farrell Racette: So, now I'll try again. I wonder if you could tell me about your grandfather, Antoine LaRocque?

Jimmy LaRocque: Well, I don't know that much about Antoine LaRocque outside of what my dad said, and I don't think he knew that much. He was only thirteen years old when his dad died. But, of course, he heard the stories from his mother. His mother lived another, 1910, so he heard lots of stories I suppose. Now the idea, the idea was what I understood, was that he had carts, twenty-five carts or thereabouts, and he could haul stuff from Minneapolis-St. Paul, or Minneapolis it was called at that time, to Lac La Biche. Now, they would start off, say, in Minneapolis and go to the fall when the weather start to changing [?], they like to find a place, like the Qu'Appelle Valley, Saskatchewan River, or someplace where there was water, wood, and place to put their animals on a, on the northern hill. Where the sun off, get the sun off the snow, off with the sun, eh? That's where they kept their cattle. Now, in this fur again, there was when the weather started to look good away, they would go again, eh? Go towards Lac La Biche. When they got to Lac La Biche by that time, they would unload their stuff for the trading stuff, and they load up furs, and he'd start back again and do the

same thing on the back. And they did that for I don't know how many years, but lots of years anyway. And in one of those trips in '71, 1871, he stopped at, at Qu'Appelle, Mission Qu'Appelle, and at that time he met some priests heading back and forth, and they didn't do that much, but at any rate he was told that you can't continue doing what you're doing after the railway comes. "Oh, the railway's not here yet," he says. But in '82 the railway did come, eh, and the trading or the freighting went out of, the train carried everything east and west. The only thing that was left was the off of the train north, eh?

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh, right, yeah.

Jimmy LaRocque: And, and they tried that, too, but didn't work. He did it a few times and it didn't have the same results as the time before, so they even stopped that. But that was the end. But in one of those trips, I think in 1874, he stopped and talked to Father Hugonnard, and Father Hugonnard said, "Mr. LaRocque, you can't do what you're doing. You have to—how many kids you got?" I think he had three or four. And he said, "You have to start making a home for those children so they can go to school and read and write and stuff like that." And this old LaRocque said, "Well, I don't know about that." "Oh yeah," he say, "you have," he says, "find yourself a good place. It doesn't have to be here, but you find a good place to stay," he says, "and then you make it home." Well, this, well, in the meantime he had taken his wife south. They have their kids over there. The three first children are born in the States—that was Alec, Antoine, Alec, and William were born in the States. And John was the next one after that, but John was born in Canada in Qu'Appelle. Now, he did finally decide he'd bring his, his, he would, after he went to the States again he brought his family in 1877 to the Qu'Appelle and settled on southwest of the 121, the east half of [?]. And they were, well, he had quite a time buying land, eh? The first time he, he wanted to buy land it was a team of horses, eh, for this piece of land, so he bought that piece of land. And then after that he found out he only had half that piece of land, so the other half he tried to buy, couldn't buy it. In the

meantime, the survey came through, eh? Survey came through in '82. He found himself on southwest of one. And as on southwest of one was alright, but it, I don't know if, you know, [?], but he said the CPR bought every odd section for six or seven miles on either side of the railroad. They were granted odd sections like one, three, five, seven, whatever. So LaRocque now had CPR land. He didn't have any land, eh.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh, jeez.

10.22.54 Jimmy LaRocque: So in one place I read, he paid two bits an acre for the land he had, and he bought it from the CPR. Another place I read, he bought land from CPR for a dollar an acre, so that's how he get his land, you know. And lots of people have told me, "Oh your dad homesteaded, your dad got scrip, oh, and your grandfather got scrip, your grandfather homesteaded." And I say, "No." "What do you mean 'no'? You don't know what you're talking about." But dad bought his, his grandfather bought his land from the CPR. You see, it was a gift of, the CPR got six, six, seven miles of, I think it was a couple miles. No, not six, twenty-five miles.

Sherry Farrell Racette: They got a good chunk of land?

Jimmy LaRocque: Twenty-five miles it was, but five or six miles from Lebret. It went further yet. That's what I'm talking about. I was mistaken there. But the twenty-five miles would generate, you got, you got that, bought the land from CPR, and that's where he stayed. And the following year, in '78, he went back to where he was in the States and brought his cattle by over land to, to Mission Lebret.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Where had he been living in the States. Do you know?

Jimmy LaRocque: It's in that book. I have a title where he was living, eh?

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh, okay do you know, like, around what community was there, were they in Pembina?

Jimmy LaRocque: No, and a way down south.

Sherry Farrell Racette: South of that?

Jimmy LaRocque: Yeah. [?] in Sioux land, in Sioux land, eh, where there was Siouxs.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh yeah.

Jimmy LaRocque: And [?] the trading, so he traded, and finally he, he sold some of his, his carts to different guys who wanted to buy them and [?] and he, he [?] Lebret, and he did this and he did, they fished and stuff like that [?].

Sherry Farrell Racette: And when did he pass away?

Jimmy LaRocque: In 1894.

Sherry Farrell Racette: 1894.

Jimmy LaRocque: And grandma lived till 1910, in February 1910.

1025.11 Sherry Farrell Racette: Okay, now, next I wanted to ask you about some of the community traditions around weddings, if you remember any of the old time weddings.

Jimmy LaRocque: I don't remember very much of it. The only thing I liked, if you [?] me. What I like was, was the Katepwa people or the people down

the valley drove nice horses, nice horses, you know. And hooked, double hooked, two horses hooked to a buggy. So [?] only horse, eh? Double horse. And, and spirited horses and decorated like you never seen anything decorated, you know. The bridles, the tails, the bells, and the this and that, all over these things, like only one of horse like that or horses like that. And the added attraction to the horse. If I didn't get born in the horse days, I'd never be here—I'd be dead [?] as a, from about nine ten to maybe fifteen I fell off more horses and broke more ribs than ...

Sherry Farrell Racette: So they used to put two horses on a team and then decorate them all with ribbon?

Jimmy LaRocque: Oh, then just like never before. It's spread real Scotch Thompson and things that ran out here like on their bridles and wrapped up [?] that, oh, just you'd never believe. And that was the wedding.

Sherry Farrell Racette: That was for the wedding?

Jimmy LaRocque: That was what brought the bride and groom to the church. And that, and that's, even I remember in the old church, 1925, eh. But I don't think I can remember that far back.

10.27.03 Sherry Farrell Racette: But you remember people doing that. When abouts would that have stopped, when people started ...

Jimmy LaRocque: Oh, it stopped in the 30s.

Sherry Farrell Racette: In the 30s?

Jimmy LaRocque: In the 30s, everything stopped.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Yeah, I guess people were too poor to buy all that stuff 'cause that would have, would be something to see though, eh?

35.6 Jimmy LaRocque: Oh, yeah, it really, well, another man that had nice horses, and I used to talk to him, was this little, years on, was a [?] Bellegarde.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh, yeah, yeah.

Jimmy LaRocque: [?] Bellegarde had beautiful horses, and he would come to town and I'd talk to him, back and forth. And as of, as of later years, his daughters tell me that dad used to say I was quite a bullshitter. I don't know what I told him, I don't even remember what I told him. But they gone and I know a couple of his daughters. I had to go some and [?]. But dad used to say you were quite a woman.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Well, I'm sure he was mistaken.

Jimmy LaRocque: Make me laugh now when I think of it.

10.28.10 Sherry Farrell Racette: What about you Mr. Blondeau? Do you remember any of the practices around weddings?

Guy Blondeau: No, not Métis weddings. I could tell you about Hungarian weddings or [?] Hungarian community, but no Métis, no, I'm afraid not.

Sherry Farrell Racette: They used to have big dances, didn't they? That they went on celebrating for quite awhile?

Jimmy LaRocque: That's how stories go, those.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh, you...

Jimmy LaRocque: ...there were good dances, [?]. Just pick you up. It was usually about one o'clock when we had a free-for-all from then on in.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh, yeah, I think I've been to dances like that.

Jimmy LaRocque: So better not, just forget about those. I want to say that, that there was I, of course, didn't dance on that time. It was lots of people, you know, and then dance, of course, that backdoor fiddling. And someone had to start the contest—"I'm better than you, I can dance better than you, right." "What do you mean? Come on dance." And then, like I say, the [?]. I told you that story about the guy who would sit there and play and the other guy would just stand there and dance, eh, and the woman would be dancing, well, a lot of the women would jump, "[?]. I'm gonna do it now," see.

Sherry Farrell Racette: So, weddings were a time when there would be lots of games and ...

Jimmy LaRocque: Oh yeah, and I, I guess the eating was a good thing. I never had [?], but I don't know, but [?]. I shouldn't say that neither, that I had three cousins get married the same day. Johnny, Alec, and Roddy got married, the three of them at the same day to, like, not sisters or anything, but they're all, one was a St. Germaine, a Klyne, and the other one had a, a foreign name. And they all got married. All the guys are dead first, eh, didn't die very, died pretty quick after, but the women lived on and I think there's two of them at the one, made one, other one and...

Sherry Farrell Racette: Was that common for more than one couple to get married at the same time, or was that just a...

Jimmy LaRocque: In the paper, I think it's in that book, too, the [?] paper said there's a couple of things. Three marriages and three funerals at about the same time, all the same day, that was something of a record.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Yeah, that'd be busy.

Jimmy LaRocque: So.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Did they all stand up at the front together or did they get married ding ding ding?

Jimmy LaRocque: Yeah, no, no they were all...

Sherry Farrell Racette: All standing at the front together.

Jimmy LaRocque: Johnny died first, Roderick next, and, and, and Alec in, in the centre. And to, to add more to it, it was, shouldn't add, they all died of drinking.

Sherry Farrell Racette: So you sort of related to that?

Jimmy LaRocque: Well that's another story [?]. The J.B. LaRocque family, there was fourteen of them and I think fifteen of them died drinking.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh, jeez.

10.31.46 Jimmy LaRocque: No, everybody that knows them or even the ancestors since then say, "Well, why did they drink?" Don't matter you told you were gonna die, keep right on drinking. That Roderick, wife, and two children and lived pretty good for, I don't know, five, six years and then started to drink. Finally he went through [?], he went to south Alberta, south Calgary, High River is it. He got a lady that was running a dry cleaning place.

She's an, an Oriental and she must have liked him. She said, "I'll buy him a bottle of whiskey every day he wants one." Of course he finally died, eh.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Not too healthy a lifestyle.

Jimmy LaRocque: No, that's why I say. And then of course Johnny died Ocean Falls in B.C. in a fight, but drunk, but Alec, he just didn't, worked the [?] and drank till he couldn't work anymore. Then went home and died.

10.32.57 Sherry Farrell Racette: You had mentioned the food at the wedding.

Jimmy LaRocque: Well, the food at the wedding was like at New Year's more or less.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Okay, what kind of food would that be?

Jimmy LaRocque: Well, we mentioned some of them before, but like I said, boulettes and this and that, and it was pies and cakes and everything else. A real, a celebration, in other words. And the other thing was it was small houses, eh? And nothing nobody ever went to a hall. It was always in a, that had a house that held ten people, will have 500 [?] one day. So it was, well, I remember this J.B. LaRocque wedding, that three, three get married at the same time. Lot of people spread over three acres of people there, just wandering around trying to get in to eat.

Sherry Farrell Racette: So everything would be in this little house and then there'd be all these...

Jimmy LaRocque: Oh yeah, that house was on top of the hill, but it's not there anymore, but on top of the hill south of Lebret, they had people. J.B. had a quarter-section there in that it was a, the main house was a piece on

this land, and a piece on that way, and the kitchen back here. The third was a kitchen, know what I mean? It was, oh, I'd say ten by fifteen, fourteen, something like that, and that's where the table was. That's a whole lot of people, but not as many people as there was there. And all kinds of food.

Sherry Farrell Racette: I feel like going home and making boulettes.

10.34.37 Guy Blondeau: Yeah, if I can just mention one thing here. I have a [?] a couple of relatives of one of my aunts told me about who ended up, you know, like the old song, "I'm My Own Grandpa" kind of thing. I remember that song from forty or fifty years ago, and, but I guess it was not uncommon for, for a, maybe you have some stories about this too that, you know, if a man's wife died and his son died, his daughter-in-law was not related to him by blood, so he would marry his daughter-in-law. And he would have a housekeeper and she would have a place to stay and, and some support, eh? Because there was no, she couldn't go and work in the bank or get a job in the store or something, eh, so she would marry her father-in-law and go live with him, you see.

Sherry Farrell Racette: That was very common?

Guy Blondeau: And it was, yeah, I wouldn't say common, but not uncommon. I know I have a couple of very complex relationships there among my, some of my distant cousins that my aunt told me about. Let's see and do, you know, of any of that?

Jimmy LaRocque: I'm not familiar. The only thing is that my dad told me when I was little. "Well, be careful what you do. If you marry a Parisien, a Parisien, a Blondeau, who else was it, somebody else, you'll [?] in the valley."

Sherry Farrell Racette: True enough, eh?

Jimmy LaRocque: True enough.

Guy Blondeau: Hey, maybe I'd like to tell a story about my sister and then, if it's relevant, you know...

Sherry Farrell Racette: Yeah, yeah, no, go ahead.

10.36.15 Guy Blondeau: Okay. My sister's adopted, ten years younger than me. She and her, my mom and her mom, were first cousins.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Okay.

Guy Blondeau: I'm not sure if it was on the Dazé side or the Hamelin side, but I think it had to be the Klyne side or Klyne and Dazé side and, okay, the husband went away to war, came back, and there was a little girl, couple of months old there. And he said, "Hey, this, this is not right." He says, "You gotta pick, you know, me or the little girl." So, okay, she chose her husband, and that's how come my parents adopted this little girl, 'kay? The little girl was my, I guess she'd be my third cousin or I don't know what, eh? But anyway my parents adopted her and, and, so, okay, so it turned out that Don, the husband, could not have kids, so they never had any kids of their own. And then my grandmother, one day in, in the, you know, angry at the, at my little sister, which I don't know maybe ten, eight, ten years old, says, "You're only adopted anyway." Or something like that. And that's how she found out, you know. They were gonna tell her when she was older, eh, but that's how she found out she was adopted. Okay, that's, that's, that's on the side. Anyway, the other two, Don and Lill was the mother's name, could not have kids, so they, they, you know, my sister Vivian knew about it now and then, so, okay, it didn't change anything. She became, still the stay good friends with her, her real mom and her stepfather, and they, you know, they visited back and forth and everything. Okay, let me see if I can't remember

who died first. Don died first. My, my parents, of course, both died in, in the interim, and her, my sister's real father had gone down to Ontario, got married, raised his own family. His wife died. So guess what happened? He comes back to Winnipeg looking for his old or young flame and they got married.

Sherry Farrell Racette: So her natural parents eventually got married?

Guy Blondeau: Her natural parents were, were married again. You see, yeah, so she, you know, and they, she used to have a likeable, his name was Sigan. Not Sigoan, but Sigan—without the "o" in it, eh? And, and he was a livewire. This guy must have been a devil when he was young 'cause he danced like you wouldn't believe. Anyway, you see Larry died. My parents died. Lill died and that just 'bout a year ago, and so our son pointed out, you know, he says, "My auntie Vivian lost five parents."

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh, right.

Guy Blondeau: First of all was her stepfather, and then her real father and her real mom, and, of course, her adoptive parents, you see. So she had lost, she said, she said, "Well, you know," she said, "your mom and dad are my mom and dad too, eh? They will always be. They raised me. They will always be my mom, my mom and dad, but I know that these are my real parents and we are good friends, you know, and we'll continue to be and stuff." So she lost five parents. I just thought it might be an interesting relationship there.

10.39.35 Sherry Farrell Racette: Well, there was some I know that there, there seems to have been, you know, practices where people adopted relatives, you know. So that when kids were orphaned or whatever, that quite often kids would go with relatives and be raised up like that.

Jimmy LaRocque: More to your story, as far as I'm concerned, is that it, you and I are married, had a, had a kid, and whatever it was. And then all at once you died and I died shortly after. If that was a girl she would go with your sister.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Okay.

Jimmy LaRocque: And if it was a boy, it'd go to my brother.

Sherry Farrell Racette: That's how it would go?

Guy Blondeau: That, that's, that my, my wife, but this is, this is Hungarian, not Métis, eh? But, but that's exactly what happened to a cousin of my wife's. The, the mother died and the dad couldn't raise all these kids, eh, so the girls went to the mother's side and the boys went to the, the father's brothers, you know. And her, the boys went to their uncle on, on the father's side and the girls went to the uncles and aunts on the mother's side, just as Jimmy was describing it.

Sherry Farrell Racette: So, there was like an established practice for how to ...

Jimmy LaRocque: For example, when Isadore, Isadore LaPlante. Isadore LaPlante was married to—can't remember her name—but at any rate they had one girl and she died quite suddenly. And Isadore LaPlante went to Swift Current and got in trouble down there, and I don't know what happened to him. Some say he got a lickin' and died, some say this and that, [?] died. And this little girl lived with, came to live with Mrs., like Rosalie LaPlante or, or [?] went with her, her auntie. But, and she grew up, and she was about the same size and, and age as one of their own daughters. At any rate they brought them up. And this Klyne, he does family histories and stuff. He did a Klyne history and he says, you know, he says, "Your aunt married a Klyne." I

say, "Yes." "You knew that, eh?" I says, "Not really, but tell me." "Well," he says, "Liza married Mr. Klyne." "Liza, who?" He says, "Liza LaRocque." So I says, "Okay, fine." So I went home and start checking my stuff and there's no Liza LaPlante, LaRocque, eh? There's a Liza LaPlante.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh, who was raised up with them?

Jimmy LaRocque: Who was raised by the LaRocques, okay. So I went back and I told him, I says, "She's, she's a LaPlante, not a LaRocque." "How do you mean, you know? Don't get mad about this. That's all I can tell you is all."

Sherry Farrell Racette: But it was all sort of unofficial?

10.42.37 Jimmy LaRocque: Unofficial, but there was no, there was no baby. And the other fast marriages, I know about Red River cart. You're talking about the trails, eh?

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh, yeah?

Jimmy LaRocque: Yeah. Say twenty-five carts. You put twenty-five carts in a row and they'll spread out quite a ways, 'cause usually there's space in between. Alright, oh, I'll let this guy drive them with his [?] wife, had his wife and kids with him always. He died, eh, got hurt or killed or something. Those people in that cart trail or whatever would decide that woman couldn't be left without a man. Within six weeks, she had to have a man to take care of her, and that they'd take a man out of the, out of the trail to be her husband.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Boy, you hope it wouldn't be thin pickings, eh?

Jimmy LaRocque: Well, and I said, I always said, well I asked...

Sherry Farrell Racette: Who picked the woman, the woman or the...?

Jimmy LaRocque: Not, not, not, I says, "Was the guy single?" "Oh, yeah, more than likely." But, but, when you—I always laugh at this—when you, 'course I, that's me again. You go to a funeral and a woman's crying that she lost her husband, eh? And they'll cry for quite a while after. Oh, on this Red River cart, the old time trail you didn't have long to cry. You had...

Sherry Farrell Racette: You better cheer up there 'cause you have to snag yourself a man in six weeks. But the men would know that right?

Jimmy LaRocque: Oh yeah.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Like they would know that would be expected, so all the single guys would be going, "Ulp."

Jimmy LaRocque: And, of course, a woman died, the kids were spread around, or if there were kids better spread [?] the trail to different people, eh?

Sherry Farrell Racette: So they had six weeks to decide?

Jimmy LaRocque: Yeah, about six weeks, and some said in a month, but six weeks was the regular time.

Sherry Farrell Racette: I was wondering about that because I have come across, you know, women where you look at when their husband died and when they marry, and it seems so quick. It's like men must have been a lot more eager to get married in those days.

Jimmy LaRocque: I don't think that you were eager. You were told, that's it. Lots of men today, I think, would be better off if they were told.

Guy Blondeau: So the, the community had a lot of influence then, eh?

Jimmy LaRocque: Oh, yeah. That's, that trail would, yeah.

Sherry Farrell Racette: So, the people in camp would sort of do some matchmaking, but I suppose you might have somebody that you sort of had your eye on. You know how it is. I'm sure you don't, but you know how people will kind of like each other, you know, and then after, you know, if they're separated.

Jimmy LaRocque: [?] husband dies. No, I, I, I don't know how it was worked. That's the only thing [?] told that, but I read that, eh?

Sherry Farrell Racette: Hmm, six weeks.

Jimmy LaRocque: Yeah, six weeks. There was a regular, usually the time and sometimes quicker, 'cause if the woman was having trouble with the cart and with this and that, then send that man back there. You go help her. In no time, married. So, and the other thing that that Red River cart trail that, that caught me, it really got me, is if a Red River cart broke—and they broke quite often 'cause there was no other [?], it's just two pieces of wood rubbing, eh, and that'd make a hell of a noise besides, but the, an axle would break, eh? And you'd say, "Well, what am I gonna do now?" And they, and they, and they [?] I heard it says it, it was no, it was no trouble for a man to go over to chokecherry bush and cut an axle and put it in, in half day or less. Shape it, everything, for an axle. An eight inch chokecherry tree, and I've never seen an eight inch chokecherry...

Sherry Farrell Racette: Maybe they're all gone because they cut them up?

Guy Blondeau: I was, I was wondering about the size, yeah, when you were talking about that, yeah.

Jimmy LaRocque: Yeah, eight inch chokecherries.

Sherry Farrell Racette: It'd be hard pressed to find a poplar around.

Jimmy LaRocque: That's right. But apparently I have seen chokecherry trees six inches, but it's only been one or two that I know of. And straight. Now, I say that's a different kind of chokecherry, than the rest. But the chokecherry was this way or that way. Chokecherry were around the valley, they are like weeds. You plant them here, in no time they're over there, growing over there, eh? But, no, that article said no time at all he could, he could shave. And all he had was an axe or a [?] knife, and he could shave an axle, put it in a half a day or less, and it was back on the road again.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Well, those old people that lived on the carts all the time, they must have been able to do everything, you know, 'cause they, everything they had was in, you know, was in those carts, and most of the stuff would have been what they were trading.

10.47.40 Jimmy LaRocque: And the other thing, I always laugh, of course, that that's only the, that's forty, fifty years, I regret, that I used to say, "What did they do when they got to the river with this Red River carts, eh?" And they said that that Red River carts of the late, late Red River carts had the wheels and a bevel—the, the axle to the wheels was slanted—a bevel, and what they did was took, took the wheel off, and turned them upside down, or they just put them underneath the, the hard part and float it across. [?].

Sherry Farrell Racette: I found a journal written by William McKay when he was seventeen years old, he got hired to go with a cart train. That's how he got back to Saskatchewan, and that thing broke down, got stuck, they had them on the, put the wheels up to float, got caught in the river. They had more trouble. So much for the romantic idea of living on the Red River trail, eh? Holy.

Jimmy LaRocque: But you, you, that museum in St. Boniface is the only place I ever saw a bevelled cart.

Sherry Farrell Racette: That one that they have there?

Jimmy LaRocque: Yeah.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh, yeah, I never really looked at it that closely.

Jimmy LaRocque: Well, it's, it's got a nice bevel in it, and it's, of course, pretty big wheel and a big hub, so it would float with a dent in it.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Yeah, I guess I'll have to take another look at it. Well they're telling us to have a break now so we can have a stretch, something to eat.

10.49.12 Guy Blondeau: Okay, I got, I gotta, I gotta, maybe a story of my grandmother's yet. I just, just remembered it.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh, okay.

Guy Blondeau: About the Red River carts here and stuff. Is it true they could, you'd hear these things coming hours before you could see them?

Sherry Farrell Racette: "Tormented beasts" is what...

Jimmy LaRocque: Five miles, five miles.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Five miles? Yeah.

Jimmy LaRocque: I [?], that's what I read it in.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Someone interviewed, what's his name, Chief Plenty Coups[?], who was a Crow Chief. And the Half-breeds used to come down to the [?] River, and he said, "Oh, they used to come with their Red River carts like tormented beasts." Like, as they sometimes, there'd be hundreds of them. You can just, at St. Boniface, they actually reproduced the sound of a squealing Red River cart, and I was making an audio tape to go along with this book. And they sent us this tape and it was the most god awful noise. And then you'd take that by, you know, that was one, one cart.

Jimmy LaRocque: Did, did you read where it? It was Welsh and, and McDermott, was it, I think? Could be mistaken.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Was that in *The Last Buffalo Hunter*?

Jimmy LaRocque: No, not in that book, but the time they surrounded St. Boniface in sewed up Riel, and nobody could get out or within, and they were starving.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh no.

Jimmy LaRocque: And then Welsh and McDermott, I think, I'm not positive of that, got 'em food from Minneapolis to the Red River, and they each had 500 carts. Now, just think of the noise that that made.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Well, I've heard some of the ones that went to Minneapolis. There'd be 500 carts—that, that was about as big as it got. But some...

Jimmy LaRocque: Yeah, well, but, no, but I said they, they said they, they had it, told that one going down, the other one would come back up. That's how they worked it, so I was told.

Sherry Farrell Racette: That was quite an operation, eh?

Jimmy LaRocque: But when you stop to think of it, 500 carts.

Sherry Farrell Racette: That would be lots. How long would that have made?

Jimmy LaRocque: Well, at that time they said you could hear the, the carts for five miles away, round figure. And that's how Sitting Bull, when Sitting Bull was in Lebret in 1881, I think, he, he camped west of Lebret. And I said west of Lebret is Senator Lake. But it must have been on a hill, eh? They said that he was, he wanted supplies before leaving there, and Father [?] sent some fellows with carts to St. Lazare or to, what's the name of it. What's the other name doesn't really, doesn't matter. For food, they got flour, eh? And they didn't tell anybody. They had sent them sent them by night, and they came back and Sitting Bull lands at the door step the next morning. "I want some flour." "How do, you know, there's flour here." "I heard them come."

Sherry Farrell Racette: Didn't sneak up in the dark, eh?

Jimmy LaRocque: No.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Okay, we'll take our break now.

10.52.30 [No audio]

11.28.09 Sherry Farrell Racette: We were just talking about Red River carts.

Guy Blondeau: Okay, that's just speaking of, of the trek between here and Winnipeg reminded me of some more of my grandmother's stories. And, you know, she used to talk about, I had no concept of this at the time, I was just a little guy, of "prairie fires," she said, "nothing more terrible than a prairie fire." Well, now we're calling them grass fires, eh? But she called them a prairie fire, and I could imagine three, five foot grass, dry grass, you know, in the late summer, eh? And a, in a wave of fire coming off, and they talk about what do you do with the horses, eh? And with, like, you read in the old westerns, you know, you blindfold the horses, and you go through, through the fire, right into it and through it.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Holy jeez.

Guy Blondeau: Yeah. And she, she mentioned something like that. You know, I've read that a number of times. You've seen it in these stories, eh, in fiction, eh, but she actually mentioned this kind of thing happening. Anyway, she was telling us one time about the, there used to be, there were not, not all the, the Natives they met were friendly, okay? So there was some hostile groups, and I guess once in a while there'd be some fireworks, you see. So, so I guess after there was a minor skirmish one time, and, and the, the, the hunters or whatever they were, they retreated, eh? Well, they got back to Winnipeg a month later, and here this guy, this one particular guy is, he had jumped on his horse backwards and, and the horse was going. And, but of course he was powerless to do anything, then so he had to stay on until it stopped, eh? They, they retreated. And he was bragging about this big, this big fight they were in, you see, and he's talking about the, the smoke from

the guns, see? And he said, and I tell you, when the two smokes mingle, you know, things were pretty tough, you know, from the two guns.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh, right.

Guy Blondeau: Two guns, you know. He said things were pretty tough, yeah, and, and, and somebody else who had been on that same trip and saw him jump on his horse backwards said, "Yes, so and so, and we remember how courageous you were that you jumped on your horse backwards so that you could continue to fire at the other Natives as you were retreating." She told that as a true story anyway. Okay. I just, she spoke of one time of this priest that was walking with this group of people, and I never quite could figure out. He, she said, he just, all he did all day was pray here, read his book, and he'd pray all day, and he doesn't bother with the mosquitoes. They were just swarming around him and biting him, and, and he just read his book. He must have been a saint. Now I, you know, I could never figure out what made him a saint about, you know, being allowed himself, allowing himself to be bitten by mosquitoes, you see, and stuff. But anyway, I see, see, I guess this was a story about the mosquitoes and about this, this priest's sacredness in allowing the mosquitoes to bite him so that, you know, he would suffer more. I think that's the connection.

11.31.19 Sherry Farrell Racette: But that would have been what people would have noticed, eh?

Guy Blondeau: Yeah, and that time you see if he, he ignored the mosquitoes and he was just suffering there. Well that wouldn't make him a, a saint, not stupid. It would make him a saint, you see. Nowadays you'd say, you know, smarten up. But anyway, okay.

Sherry Farrell Racette: I wonder who that was?

Guy Blondeau: She didn't name any names. Maybe she did give a name, but I don't remember.

Sherry Farrell Racette: And he would have been on the hunt with them?

Guy Blondeau: Yeah, well, or, you know, or, or coming to a settlers coming up or something like that or whatever, yeah.

11.31.55 Sherry Farrell Racette: Would most of the people in the valley have been Catholic?

Jimmy LaRocque: Yes, they, at one time, say, in the 30s, I think there was four or five children that went to school that weren't Catholic. Otherwise, everybody was Catholic.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Everyone was Catholic?

Jimmy LaRocque: And those, one of, one of those families partake, you know, partook in everything that Catholics did. When the Catechism time, they'd go home. But that was the only thing that they left, and as far as the village of Lebret, [?] are the district, everybody was Catholic. You might be a poor Catholic, but you would be one that didn't go to church. But when it come to get buried or dead or whatever, that time he was Catholic. Doesn't matter which way [?]. They, they buried, oh, and the other thing, too, if, if a Catholic at that particular time would go to a Protestant funeral, you were excommunicated.

Sherry Farrell Racette: If you went to a funeral?

Jimmy LaRocque: Yeah. So you had to be a Catholic. And as I said, and nobody, nobody would, they go out like my dad used to go to funerals one time. And he'd come across the street. A Protestant shouldn't tell him that

you're gonna go church, but watch them come out and went. But I never went in church. But then, on later years, when he was older, he says, "Then I'm gonna be excommunicated." And he'd go, eh? But that like, like my mother said, when they got married in 1914—no, 1912. Lots of guys [?] this funeral, but it's in this Protestant church. "I can't go," he said, "they'll excommunicate me." That's about the time that I talked about.

11.33.53 Sherry Farrell Racette: So the Catholic Church was a real big influence...

Jimmy LaRocque: Oh, yeah, well, you didn't do much very much as far as like the priest was the boss, no matter where. He was the boss of the church, he was the boss in the street, he was boss in the school, school boss. So it was pretty hard to be anything else.

Sherry Farrell Racette: You're Catholic for sure.

Jimmy LaRocque: That's right.

11.34.20 Sherry Farrell Racette: So Christmas was mostly a, a religious holiday, not like it is now?

Jimmy LaRocque: Well, where it is, sure, midnight mass and everybody went to midnight mass and went home. And, and if the Sunday was on the same day, everybody would say that's a plus. You only had to go to church once, eh?

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh, right. Okay.

Jimmy LaRocque: But, like, this year's on a Thursday. In those days, you gotta go to church on Sunday, you gotta go to church on Thursday, and you gotta go to church on Sunday again. It just wasn't, didn't sound that good,

eh? So, but everything was, well, the Catholic Church, it wouldn't, like, you were talking about a meal, eh? There was no meal served with us.

Sherry Farrell Racette: No?

Jimmy LaRocque: Nothing. And as I says, I say here that you go to, you'd come, come from Chicago Street with a, which was pret' near a mile, and you walked there. And you didn't have slacks and you didn't have parkas and you didn't have this. And to walk from there to Lebret church in sometimes thirty-five below [?]. But then you got to church, the kid was, couldn't stand still, was shivering so bad, and the mother probably [?] and, but my dad used to watch for that, eh? And he'd go back into the cold. "Oh, and this, I'm froze and this," and dad sometimes would have to even take 'cause we lived in town at that particular time. And he'd take them to the house and warm them up, eh? And this one girl told me years, and there's just, "I never had a doll till your dad gave me a doll." I said, "What do you mean, my dad gave you a doll?" She said, "He took us to the house to warm up and there was one of your sisters' [?] doll there." Picked it up and here's the doll. "That's the only doll I ever had in my life," she said. Stuff like that, you know. The, that same woman, this is another story. Same woman, asked her in the hard time, what did she do in the hard time, and she said, "Well, didn't have much to eat [?]," and she said, "Oh, we used to go school." "Well, what difference that make?" "Well," she says, "you didn't eat when you went to school." "Well, what did you do?" "Well," she says, "dinner time come, I put my clothes on and walk home to Chicago Street, have a glass of water, and walk back to school." "Well, why don't you have it at the school?" "Well, then people would know I was poor and I had nothing to eat." And that's hard to believe but it's true.

11.37.02 Sherry Farrell Racette: Yeah, yeah, there were, there was a lot of poverty at that time, eh? You were talking about Easter being a time of, you know, importance in the Catholic year.

Guy Blondeau: Well, what I remember the most about when we first went to Lebret was the, there's still an Easter vigil, but it's not a marathon like it used to be, eh? At ten or 10:15, the ceremonies would start. There'd be the blessing of the, of the year's supply of holy water, and they'd have to bless the Easter candle. And there were songs and, and canting and, and, and all kinds of singing and ceremonies and incensing, and I can't remember all the, and, but the day must have had a lot of things to fill up an hour and three quarters, eh? Then at midnight ...

Jimmy LaRocque: Was that when the brothers were still there?

Guy Blondeau: No, no, this was when, like, in the, in the early sixties, eh, and then it would start, that mass would start at midnight. And I can remember Father Dubré, and he would have to, you know, there's some options—you can speak or sing—so, and so everything possible that could possibly be sung, he would sing. And that would take twice as long, you see, and then mass at, and the church was full. Takes a long time for communion and everything else. Seems to me I remember 2:30, you know, quarter to three, mass being over, so you were there from ten o'clock until almost three, eh? So that's a quite a long thing. And then, of course, maybe you get a chance to sleep in the next Sunday morning, I don't know, but ...

Jimmy LaRocque: You were happy because Santa Claus came?

Guy Blondeau: Yeah.

Sherry Farrell Racette: What were things, too, that...

Guy Blondeau: If I can just say one more thing.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh, yeah, sorry.

Guy Blondeau: One thing with, with some people, we used to, we used to have, mentioning big meals after this. I can remember some people, this was big deal to have a big feast after, after the Easter vigil because you had just been through forty days of Lent.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh, right, yeah.

Guy Blondeau: You see, and, so, oh, we could hardly wait for mass to be over and get at this food. And then, of course, Easter Monday you'd have a, a social deficit as well because you didn't dare go to a dance during Lent, eh? There were no dances to go to. So every Easter Monday, every little place that's had it's, a dance on Easter Monday, you know.

Sherry Farrell Racette: On Monday?

Guy Blondeau: Yeah, Easter Monday.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Couldn't wait till the weekend, eh, you just have to...

Guy Blondeau: Yeah, well, it was still, you know, the four day weekend, eh, people were still on them, lot of people still on holiday, eh, so that was the big, the big dance of the, of the winter.

Sherry Farrell Racette: On Easter Monday?

Guy Blondeau: Easter Monday.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh, I never heard of that. Do you remember the same?

Jimmy LaRocque: No. I'll, I'll, I'll tell you [?]. I got married on Monday.

11.40.05 Sherry Farrell Racette: Do you remember women making things to supplement the family income, like manufacturing things through their craft production?

Jimmy LaRocque: Well, I remember the Métis women, they can braided rugs or hooked rugs. The braided rugs were the ones they made years ago, and as time progressed they made hooked rugs and so on, eh. And cheap—two dollars a piece. And it takes hours and hours to make one of those rugs. But they would, well, the, they'd do that for bazaars and for this and that, and also sell to people who wanted to buy them.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Do you remember anyone in particular who, doing or did pretty much everyone do it?

Jimmy LaRocque: I'd have to think of that. Mrs., Mrs. Parisien, I think, did it. Mrs. Celina Poitras her name was, but she was a Parisien. She made hooked, braided rugs and it was. I can't think of it.

Sherry Farrell Racette: But it was quite common?

Jimmy LaRocque: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah, that's why they were two dollars a piece, eh. Everybody wanted five dollars for one, but if everybody's got a rug for sale, nobody gets paid five dollars. Two dollars and sometimes less than that. It was not too good a shape or not too fancy, so they had to be fancy like a horse, or this or that, or rose or something. It had to be nice to, to, not just and, of course, later years now, they put they put stencils on them, eh? So you just have to follow that, but the one time they had to make their own designs, and they like to put this on. That's why there was horses always on it and stuff like that.

11.42.18 Guy Blondeau: My mom used to crochet an awful lot. I can remember when I was a kid she would make everything from little doilies to, you know, six foot round table cloths, you know. And square or round of those, and she used to, for a few years there, she used to advertise. I think it had to be the *Western Producer*, would have been, or maybe the *Winnipeg Free Press*. Whatever, you know, weekly papers there were out at the time. And she'd take orders from all over them, mail orders, you see. And she would do these things. I remember one thing she used to make—you remember these tall vigil lights they used to be? You know, round tall round glasses like this, you know, for candles in there, and she used to use those as a mould and crochet things that would fit on that. And the cylinder coming up and then a large flat surface and a handle, and then she would starch these things, you see. And if you turned it upside down, okay, then the, then the edge of the, the horizontal part is flat on the table, and the other part is up around this glass vigil light container, and then she would attach, you know, starch the handle separately, and then attach it later. It made all kinds of shapes and forms and stuff. I remember that, and she would keep exercise books of all her, you know, all her customers from her dealings, and I have one of those books somewhere.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh, really?

Guy Blondeau: Tucked away in the house.

Sherry Farrell Racette: That would be really neat to see because, you know, it seems like a lot of women really supplemented their family's incomes with, with their talent, you know, with their artistic talent and their creativity. And I, women did, like, there's Louis Riel's wife did crocheting. So I mean, Métis women have been crocheting for quite a, quite a long time. Do you remember the colours?

Guy Blondeau: It was mostly...

Sherry Farrell Racette: Now see, this is the artist asking you the questions.

Guy Blondeau: Is ecru a colour?

Sherry Farrell Racette: A sort of a beige.

Guy Blondeau: Yeah. Yeah, okay, that's, that's mostly that, or sometimes white.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Sort of like the colour of the natural. Did she do it with wool or with like...

Guy Blondeau: A crochet cotton.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Crochet cotton?

Guy Blondeau: Yeah, yeah.

Sherry Farrell Racette: That'd be nice. Do you have any of her work? Did you keep any of it?

Guy Blondeau: I may have some around the house. I'm sure we have some tucked away in the in the trunk somewhere, yeah.

Sherry Farrell Racette: But she kept, you know, she really did it in a business-like way...

Guy Blondeau: Yep.

Guy Blondeau: ...and kept track of everything.

Guy Blondeau: Yeah, and orders came from a long way off, you know, and, okay, the, the, these papers have a large circulation area, eh? The *Western Producer* and the whatever, whatever, you know, else these, Winnipeg was the, where they came from.

Jimmy LaRocque: Manitoba, the *Free Press*.

Guy Blondeau: *Free Press*, yeah, yeah.

11.4456 Sherry Farrell Racette: I know that I was talking to one woman, and she, what did they used to buy? Sacks. You know...

Jimmy LaRocque: To make rugs with?

Sherry Farrell Racette: To make, well, they made all kinds of stuff with those white sacks. They could buy them from the *Free Press*. They made, oh, I don't know, all kinds of stuff. But I guess everyone used the paper. I never heard of anyone advertising in the paper.

Guy Blondeau: Oh, yeah, yeah she had a real business thing going.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh, that's neat.

Guy Blondeau: Yeah, it, it paid my way through, I attended Gravelburg College for half a year once when I was fourteen, and I know she said that's the only reason I could go was because she was doing that. I didn't get back—the money ran out, but I didn't get back after that half a year, but, you know, I mean this, this, it helped, I guess.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Yeah, yeah. Well, that's neat...

11.45.48 Jimmy LaRocque: Another thing they supplemented—you tell them supplemented income—the women around Lebret, anyway, all had clientele of cottages that they cleaned the cottages in the spring when they were coming back, and did little bit of chores, you know. Sometimes once a week and, of course, closing down the cottage in the fall, scrub it, wipe it down.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh, they used to hire themselves out to do that?

Jimmy LaRocque: Oh, yeah, lots of them. Joe [?] sometimes in the morning go out to Katepwa with a carload of women, and that was to do work in the cottages. And some of them got pretty, paid pretty good, especially in the later years—they got ten bucks an hour when everybody else was getting about five.

Sherry Farrell Racette: They must have been good at it.

Jimmy LaRocque: Oh, yeah, well, of course, they all saw the people that were having it done had a buck, didn't seem to worry, but that's how they supplemented their...

11.46.50 Sherry Farrell Racette: Do you remember any people who, you know, you might call them healers, people who used, you know, traditional medicine or?

Jimmy LaRocque: Where I lived, there's a picture of the old farm about east of town about a, a mile and a half from, on the Katepwa Road. There's a big house, that's where we lived up till 1937. And anyway, them '36, '37. Anyway, but another house further towards the lake was, was my uncle John's house, and he had in there a fellow by the name of DeMartin, but a, fellow by the name of Martin. But we all called him Shilladon [?]. Now, how you spell that, don't know, but Shilladon [?] was there, and he was a healer.

And people would come in the buggy two or three [?], especially on Saturdays and Sundays. They'd come there and he'd get them into shed behind the house, and that's where I'd come in, eh? I'd see this old guy there. He'd had kind of a pad, you know, I'd say something about the size of a napkin anyway, about that thick, you know, and he'd, he'd rub you down like that, rub down like that, and he'd take that pad and put it on and then **[blows]**. Some more **[blows]** and then keep on and then all at once he'd take the pad off and then go like this. I can't do it either. You know, you hear that crack there? And the better the crack the better it healed, eh? So the, but lots of people believed in him. They said to him, "I have, what's in my, in my shoulder?" It's gone, and I had not till next week. I had to go back and get it done again, eh? And, but I as a kid couldn't for figure for life or death how he could run like that, get something hit in the ground, eh? So, went home and told my mother. I says, "Old Shilladon[?]," I says, "He does this and he does that." I didn't do that. I just sit. He goes like this on the round and then you hear it click. "Horses, that's easy to do." "What do you mean it's easy to do good?" He does right [?]. Well, she then, she did the same [?]. That's what you hear, so then went back and watched, and sure he would. He was doing this. But he used to get two bucks for that, and in the thirties two bucks was a good, a good piece of money, eh? And he'd do it three or four in the afternoon, eh? They'd go in the buggy, really happy then he did that for years. Now to finish off the story, I wish that, doesn't finish off that good. He left there. Pretty soon he didn't have a road in there, and he [?] our property and be able to [?] something like that. And dad got mad, so close the gate or don't go through here anymore. But old Shilladon[?] moved to the, well, I talked to Chicago, Chicago Street into the house on west side of the street. Well, old Shilladon[?] moved to that house and he, he had a wife there and that's where he practiced. Well, he was more accessible to more, more open and stuff like that. He lived there and all at once one day somebody came to my dad and said, "Old Shilladon's[?] pretty sick." "What's the matter with him?" "I don't know, he's got something wrong with his foot. He can't walk on it." Dad says, "Well, can't he heal himself?"

But, anyway, dad went to see him, [?] went to see him, and then they talk French, and dad said, "What's the matter?" "Oh, I stepped on a nail," he says, "and I'm not getting better," he says. So he says, "Show me." And then he showed dad, and jeez these two red lines, you know, blood poison, ugly way. Dad says you better see a doctor. He said, "You're gonna die." "Oh no, I want to heal it," he says. He died three days later.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Couldn't heal himself?

Jimmy LaRocque: No, couldn't heal himself. And then the lady lived there for some time, not that long, but some time after, and so on and so forth and she moved away. That's fine, and fifty years later a woman come to me one day and she says, "[?]." She said, "You ever hear of a"—forget his first name right now—"a Martin, a Doctor Martin?" "Yeah." "Where'd he live?" I said, "Oh, he lived in a house, it's not there now." "Oh, yeah." "Did he have a woman?" "Yeah." "Did they drink?" I says, "I don't know. I don't think so." "My goodness," he says, "that's my aunt and she got away from Manitoba 'cause she was an alcoholic." But I never saw her drink. But that's fifty years later. I'm sure fifty, that was a long time.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Went looking for her?

Jimmy LaRocque: And that's the only man that I know that did, did, well, there was some other people, they used to try and do it [?] he travelled around. He came from Fort someplace, go from place to place to heal. But I never saw him performing.

11.52.10 Sherry Farrell Racette: Did you, did anyone make like medicine from the bush or use plants or anything for medicine?

Jimmy LaRocque: The only things that we—my mother, I don't know where she found it—a plant with a white flower and that kind of fern leaves, eh. It

looked like fern leaves, eh, and she used to pick that and make some kind of a mixture with it—I don't know what it was—and put it on a sore, a poultice like, eh? And that's the only thing that my mother did, and where she got that from I don't know. But you'd have as a kid, you know, the sore full of puss and this and that. She'd put that on a couple days, one here, one tomorrow and that, and it'd clear up. Now, that wasn't Native medicine, I don't know what she did that.

Sherry Farrell Racette: What about you?

Guy Blondeau: I've heard about tobacco leaves being used, you know, on, on infections and stuff like that, and I can remember, you know, you get a boil or a, a stye or something, and the, the bread and milk poultice go on there, you know, and that was supposed to dry out the thing. And we never did this at home, but I heard about it, being used, you know, you heat up the glass. Yeah, get it hot, and then put it over, and as the air cools it, it contracts, eh, and sucks, you know, thing out of boils. I think boils and stuff it was most effective for, but I remember this bread and milk was awful messy stuff, you know, and they'd slap it on you and it'd drip. And, of course, there was the old molasses and sulphur thing in the springtime, you know, to thicken your blood again was the idea. And didn't they ever use chewing tobacco? I think I remember hearing about chewing tobacco being used as something.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Okay.

Guy Blondeau: And tobacco, tobacco leaves. Honey, raw honey, something else I heard about, and that apparently is still, I think, that's still in, in, accepted by modern medicine. Not refined honey, but raw, you know, pure honey.

Sherry Farrell Racette: The raw honey.

Guy Blondeau: As a very, very powerful anti-, antibacterial agent.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh really?

Guy Blondeau: You know, yeah.

11.54.34 Sherry Farrell Racette: What do you do for a stye, you know, if someone gets a stye in their eye? Do you remember what people used to do? Didn't get them much?

Jimmy LaRocque: I think I only had one stye in my life. My wife always says you got a stye or something there. "I'll be alright tomorrow." And you were gone the next day, so can't be a stye, but I don't know what.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Someone from the valley told me you rub a gold ring on it. So, ever since then, I rub a gold ring on it and it goes away right away.

Jimmy LaRocque: Is that right?

Sherry Farrell Racette: Yeah. So that's...

Jimmy LaRocque: Good for you. You got a gold ring is it?

Sherry Farrell Racette: Well, not on me. But I got one at home, digging around looking for my gold ring.

Guy Blondeau: Well, that's, that's useful, 'cause everybody gets sties once in a while.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Yeah, try it. It worked for me.

Guy Blondeau: Kids and grandchildren.

11.55.26 Sherry Farrell Racette: What about when people got colds? Was there any sort of home remedies that were used for colds?

Jimmy LaRocque: Mustard plaster. That's my, mustard plaster 'cause I used to, well, I [?], when they get hot and, you know, sweat, eh? And then I'd lay down in the snow till I cooled off and catch pneumonia. And mustard plaster, boy, day and night for maybe ten days, back and front. You'd get better.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Back and front?

Jimmy LaRocque: Both. But at that time, in fact, one time I was that sick that they took the window out of the house in the middle of winter and put a, a sheet in there, eh? That the air would come in and I laid there with mustard plaster, and I laid there for, I don't know, eight, ten days. The doctor came and said, "No, he's gonna make it."

Guy Blondeau: I can remember a spoonful of sugar and you'd put a drop, couple drops of kerosene in it.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Holy.

Guy Blondeau: And, and, you know, you eat this slowly, and you inhale the kerosene vapours, you know, and that sure it did it. It cleared out, you know. I don't know what the harm of the kerosene would have done, the ...

Sherry Farrell Racette: The side effects.

Guy Blondeau: ...but, but it sure it did clean out, you know, the sinuses and the, and the throat it did, and I remember that.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Sugar and kerosene?

Guy Blondeau: And the kerosene made it, you know, the sugar, I mean, made it palatable. It tasted, tasted just fine, you know. I was glad to get a spoon of sugar.

11.57.14 Sherry Farrell Racette: Any teas that people would make that, you know, of, like, any?

Jimmy LaRocque: My dad and mother lived for the first five, six years of their life out there, married life, with a tea pot and a coffee pot. My dad would drink tea only and she'd only drink coffee.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Now there used to be Métis people were great tea drinkers, eh? Always have tea out.

Jimmy LaRocque: I drank tea as a kid 'cause I lived about a half, quarter mile past Chicago Street. And all the kids were on Chicago Street, so I come there to play. And about four o'clock in the afternoon or whatever and holler [?], "Mom, we're hungry." So, we'd all go in the house, she'd break off pieces of bannock, and pass the tea pot to us. And you drank out of the spout of the tea pot.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Everyone got a little hit.

Jimmy LaRocque: Oh yeah, oh yeah.

11.58.14 Guy Blondeau: Our, our equivalent to the mustard plaster was Vicks. You know, if you had a sore throat or, or bad cough, you know, I

guess whatever it was, that anything that heats used to be considered good, eh, so the Vicks, you would, you would get the vapours as well, and, and that a warm feeling, eh? I can remember that when I was a little guy, getting it would be smeared on that Vicks, like, you wouldn't, you know, that thick, you know, and it just it would just be warm and you'd smell the stuff and help the throat and the nose.

11.58.45 Jimmy LaRocque: Would you believe I made my first communion in bed. At the time I had taken [?].

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh really? So they came to you?

Jimmy LaRocque: Oh yeah, the priest came here, well, I don't know, seven or eight years old, something like that. And he, he gave me first communion, saying I was kinda mad I never got first communion like the rest, eh, like a big celebration, eh? It wasn't till, it wasn't till next year, I think, that I made first communion with not my class but another class.

Sherry Farrell Racette: What kind of a celebration was the first communion usually?

Jimmy LaRocque: Well, it was pretty fancy at one time, you know, but I mean you had to train for it, you had to learn for it, you had to do this and that. They put little ribbons and bows in your side. The girls had veils and communion.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Was there anything after for you guys?

Jimmy LaRocque: Go home. To hell with it.

Sherry Farrell Racette: It's over. Did you get dressed up, too?

11.59.55 Guy Blondeau: I remember my, my step grandfather, [?] Carriere, attended. He was my sponsor or godfather for, for this was confirmation I'm thinking about. Not first communion, come to think of it, but anyway there was, you know, twenty kids lined up there across in front of the altar, you know, and the bishop is going down, and then this particular time when so and so didn't have a godfather so the, the bishop beckoned my, my grandfather to come and stand and put his hand on his shoulder. And he'd be this kid, and he'd go down the line, eh? Whoever didn't have, have a grandfa-, a sponsor or a godfather picked out, he would just go, they call on him, he must have come out of there with about eight—what's the word I'm looking for here?

Sherry Farrell Racette: Godchildren.

Guy Blondeau: ... godchildren, you know, and ...

12.00.55 Sherry Farrell Racette: Do you remember any midwives, any women being midwives?

Jimmy LaRocque: My mother was a midwife.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Your mom was a midwife?

Jimmy LaRocque: For, well, I don't know, remember that many, but some of my aunts she used to go to. And then somebody would get sick and she'd go just to help, stuff like that.

Guy Blondeau: Nothing there.

12.01.30 Sherry Farrell Racette: Nothing there? Now, what was I going to ask you? Oh yeah, when was the Métis Farm set up? Do you remember when that was established or just around about?

Jimmy LaRocque: It was 1936 or '37. My dad was instrumental in getting the government to, with the idea of a Métis, Métis Farm. Well, he didn't get much support there, so back and forth. So, fine and dandy, they, he said that they should get some land. And, and all these people that are living on Chicago Street now, they'd get an acre of land to five acres of land. That would be theirs, and they could put a little farm, get a cow or a horse or whatever, and work with the farms about. That's the way it started in, in principle. Now, nothing more happened then for, for a while, and then all at once, in about 1940, the Oblate Fathers had a farm on top of the hill by Lebret, what was called the Métis Farm today. They had a section of land there, and, and the government built ten houses on that land, east and west, no north and south. Two-story houses and they—you've been there, have you? Well, the road went like that. I think there was three houses on this side and, and seven this way, south, and this is north. The road went in here and there was one in the back, but that one had to [?] farm over. Well, that was there before, so that's where them people lived in this different houses, stuff like that. And that was going on good, but it didn't, the idea was that there would, they, when they went there, they were told that they would get a piece of land of their own. That's why they put these, these houses that far apart. There'd be a piece of land here and a piece of land there, and they'd be there. But that never materialized until '44, '44, the NDP government come into power, and as soon as the NDP government come to town, they said, told the Oblate Father, "We'll give you 14,000 dollars for that section of land. Take it or leave it. If you don't take it, we'll expropriate it." So they took it, eh. But they, you talk to them today, they get pretty mad about it. Anyway, they took it and then it became what they call the Métis Farm at that time. At that, at that particular time they went out for five cents a quart, two cents a quart, beef for ten cents a pound, and eggs for ten cents a dozen, and stuff like that. And you, I think you got twenty-five dollars a month besides. That's what you got and you worked at the farm at different, you different checking out the big house or cattle or this or the garden or

whatever. It went on fairly good for awhile, but the, the instructors or the people that run the farm weren't, they were brought there by the priests, and the guys had fall out to them right away and quit and fight and this. So, fine and dandy, this went on and it wasn't till about, well, there were several instructors and bosses like Falloon Yonkey[?], Johnson, [?], want to make them last.

Guy Blondeau: Okay.

Jimmy LaRocque: 'Cause he was the last. Who else was there? A Frenchman from Manitoba, can't think of his name right now. They were raised at the [?]. Anyway, it doesn't matter. That's when the houses were running north and south. All at once, Yonkey[?] came in the, in the, don't you remember [?] in the fifties [?]?

Guy Blondeau: No, I wasn't here.

Jimmy LaRocque: At any rate, he came and Yonkey[?] was, was a man that didn't waste, and accounted for everything, and, of course, the Métis Farm quite in the hole every year. Every year, in the hole, in the hole, in the hole, and the Yonkey[?] come along, and he says, "We're paying them good wages and we want good work from them and we'll build a them new houses," because they houses they lived in the forties, they were two-story, and I say like they were just like an icebox, eh.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Were they cold?

Jimmy LaRocque: [?] places weren't insulated. They weren't this. So they start there, and tearing down those houses, one after another. They start to build the houses right here now, east and west, eh. And the first thing he did was build a house out there and move there himself. He said an instructor should be up here, not right in town. So that's his first thing he did. And he'd

get up at three o'clock in the morning on almost every day, and do his garden before the work started, eh? And they said that man's crazy. But any rate, he kept doing that, but, you know, everything got better. He got more cattle, he got more pigs, he had more land. They bought more land. The land, the land finally got to be three thousand acres, for a section, which is kind of [?], eh. But two thousand acres, they bought all the land along with it, and, and they had different men doing this and that. And they was told to who the men should take on, 'cause this guy was on social aid and he's a good man why doesn't he come to work for there? So they sent men there, and old John would say to us, you know, "I got Martin today and I'm two men short yet." What do you get two men short? "Well, when you get Martin, you have to have one man to go with him," he says. Anyway, John was sincere as you could make him, and he instructed them how to do carpenter work, how to do mechanical work, and how to do this, and Mike Moore says, and that poor Mike Moore was a mechanic, eh, and it's the first [?] again. So you'll get to that [?], but [?] he said. One day, he says, "I used have to go outside and listen to see what I hear the tractors, where they were going, where they were, I'd say, "Well, that's him that's him." "Where Mike was," he says, "the tractor wasn't going." So I waited half an hour and went out [?]. I waited some more, still no Mike. So I took the truck and went look for him. Thought maybe something happened to him. And I get around that bush over there, he says, he had the radiator off. He had the head off, he had this off, and then what are you doing? "I hear a knock," he said, "I want to find this knock." "What kind of a knock is it?" "I don't know," he said. "That's what I'm trying to find out." "Well," he says, "you better put it back together," he says, "and we'll try and find out in the, in the garage at, at the farm," he says. "Why out here?" "Well, I didn't want to drive it in case it didn't work." Well, so they have a kind of an argument about it. At any rate, they wait a day and then put it back together [?]. So they had to bring it in, eh? They had to get a mechanic to put it back together and stuff like that. So old John says, "When you had Mike," he says, "you gotta watch him pretty close. He'll overhaul the whole place." But anyway that's, that's what kept

on. John had more pigs and more cows and more this, and he had made a slaughterhouse and he made a pig barn comparable to what they have today, but it was made of wood and stuff like that, [?] and had that stay right there in that [?] we were paid to watch. And I think it was about 1965 or thereabouts John was running the farm, and the farm paid all. It didn't, didn't lose money. It, it was a paying proposition. They changed it from the social welfare to the, to the Minister of Agriculture. When they changed it the Minister of Agriculture, John says goodbye. Not staying here.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh, so he quit.

Jimmy LaRocque: He says, "I can't have somebody come here and tell me what to do around here. I'm doing it and I'll do it my way, and that's the only way." 'Cause the guys were coming, experimenting, putting a little bit of grass here and a little bit of grass there, something else here and a tree here. See how they worked. John says, "That's just foolishness," he said. "I'll run this farm and I'll make money with it." So he told that Agriculture will be running it so, he said, "I quit." Then he went to work for Melfort Experimental Farm, Research Farm. That's where he went to from Lebret. And from one thing to another, and the Métis Farm has been going downhill since. Of course, then, all at once, Indian claim, what was that? Can't [?], I forget the name and year. The Indian claim said that Saskatchewan government had this land, and it was Department of Agriculture, and Indians went and made a claim against it, eh? But that's the Conservative, Divine government. So they were in the, getting ready to make a claim on this land, when the Conservative government gave it lock, stock, and barrel to the Métis. See, then it wasn't there, wasn't Indian claim anymore. So they, they kept it that way, and it's still that way, but it's, the only thing that my dad didn't like about it, was the fact that it is, it's hasn't got the Métis name in it or hasn't got to say that it's a Métis farm. It's an Indian Foundation, no Lebret Foundation Farm, which doesn't mean a damn thing. That should be then brought, my dad always [?]. "We know what you're talking about," he says.

They could put it up for sale tomorrow and that you put the big paper “Lebret Foundation Farm for sale”—nobody would know where it was or where it was, and they couldn’t sell it, eh?

12.12.25 Sherry Farrell Racette: Right, so he want the Métis?

Jimmy LaRocque: He was and I said that to know that it’s, it’s, it’s a Métis Farm, so there and then, and towards the end, John, he also got sheep. He got about two, three hundred sheep, and I, really at that time, I was in sheep myself, and I thought it was really get going now, ‘cause old Johnson, eh? But he stopped and everything stopped.

Sherry Farrell Racette: But for awhile, it was a moneymaking proposition?

Jimmy LaRocque: Oh, for, I think, about three years when John, at the time, he first took over the time, he made profit in the second year, I think. He made a profit the third year. Says, “I can’t live like this,” he says. “They throw more, throw away more than they make,” and stuff like that. And John went to the Melfort Research Station and the same thing there. John quit there, too, he says. Crazy, he said put hay in about six piles—one this high and one that high, and one high to see how they keep. They’ll keep, you put them in the right kind of way, he said. You don’t have to put the one on top of the other there. He quit there, too.

Sherry Farrell Racette: He didn’t like their experiments?

Jimmy LaRocque: No, no he’s not one to find out if it was put hay more this way or that way, back and forth. From there, he went to Lanigan, which is another government farm, and to raise cattle there [?]. I don’t know what the hell happened. He got somewhere and died, eh?

Guy Blondeau: Yeah, I think around, yeah, sounds right.

Jimmy LaRocque: And he was, when he got sick, he moved to Prince Albert, and I think he died there. And shortly after his wife died. So, and here I had, had [?]. And the farm is still there, I'm told right today, that some adverse conditions out there, and some very unorthodox practices. So, but I'm not involved so I don't, you know...

12.14.19 Sherry Farrell Racette: Got a couple of the original houses. I think there's still a couple older two-story houses there. Maybe they're the ones that the, the fellow you were talking about put up, 'cause there's sort of newer houses, and then there's these two-story houses that are older.

Jimmy LaRocque: Well, the two-story houses are, are not, they don't live in them, do they?

Sherry Farrell Racette: No, they're abandoned, but they're kinda solid, like they're kinda neat looking houses.

Jimmy LaRocque: One is an office, and one's a [?], what's the other one? Doesn't matter, but that's. But usually we all [?] road we, where you turn off the off the road, there's [?] all those houses, that was ten houses ran around the road like that.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh, like that.

Jimmy LaRocque: And then they made, when they started, when, when John go out there, he made the first house on the, on the east side of the road like that. [?] east and west, eh? Of course, there's some controversy there, too, 'cause a certain [?] pouring the cement and the cement was supposed to be, I don't know, three thousand square [?] tests of it. It was seventeen or something. Not enough cement.

12.15.32 Sherry Farrell Racette: Were there any, like, during the Depression, were there any relief projects that some of the Métis people were working on? You know, they had the different relief projects during the Depression?

Jimmy LaRocque: Well, you, well, in Lebret, you know, just Lebret, and you worked at the Métis Farm from Lebret is a, is [?] in the town or something like that. Well, that used to project quite a ways out, eh, and you couldn't see anything, so one of the relief projects was to do that, to cut that down. So they did cut it down. Not very much, but they cut it down. But Tommy Major worked on it, and he, he asks Tommy Major, "What are you doing?" "He says we're cutting down the hill, let the moon go by." But there's that and there's other relief, relief projects used to be, they didn't like to work for a fellow by the name of George Stevens. George Stevens was an old farmer west of, east of Lebret, and he was usually the foreman, eh. And they'd all ask, "Who's gonna be your boss?" "George Stevens." "I'm not gonna work there." 'Cause old George pretty tough, eh, and, but there was other guys there that they liked.

12.17.00 Sherry Farrell Racette: What about games that kids played? Any games that you remember playing as a kid?

Jimmy LaRocque: As far as I know, games, the only games we only played, or when I went from, of course already I was getting bigger and when I moved to town. But [?] east of town, I go to Chicago Street and that next piece of land over was the baseball diamond. It was for years and years a baseball diamond. Fenced and so on. Guys played there and it belong to, it belong to a fellow by the name of [?]. No, John LaRocque, [?], and Mrs. [?]. Because we owned it for about forty years. That they played ball there. And I bought it, and, of course, the, the lagoon is on it now, so no ball playing there.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Well, how long would people have played baseball in Lebret? Like, I wonder when they had first starting playing baseball there.

Jimmy LaRocque: Not, not baseball. It was softball.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Softball.

Guy Blondeau: Yeah, yeah. Needed less equipment than baseball.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh, that was the secret?

Guy Blondeau: Yeah.

Sherry Farrell Racette: What was the difference?

Guy Blondeau: See, I, I can remember, you tied it down, yeah, okay. I, just the games we used to play, tin cans were, were cheap, eh? You could, something accessible, so we had, we used to call it can can, and I guess it's the equivalent of cricket. See, you have two cans here and two cans here, and a little hole in the ground, and you play it with sticks, you see. And then somebody throws a ball, tries to knock the cans over. And then you hit the ball, and then when you hit it, you, you run back and forth and count your runs. So very really similar to, to cricket, and then they'd knock the cans over. They could throw the ball or, you know, hold the ball and knock it, but they had to, the ball had to knock the cans over when your whole stick was out of that hole. So it's, I think, it's pretty close to cricket, and then there was something we, that was can can. Hit-the-can was the equivalent, a variation of hide and seek. The ones that were hiding had to come and knock the can over while the one that was seeking was looking, eh? So it's the same as, you know, 'kay, you come and say, "Home free," to the base, but instead of that you knock the can over. And, of course, there's auntie-I-over. We'll be playing over the building, and then you'd catch it on the either side.

You'd come around and try to throw the ball at the people that, that threw it, see, and get them. And prisoner's base, of course. That's an old, you know, you know that one. And if somebody threw a clock away, you didn't throw clocks away, you took 'em apart, eh? And the gears, the little gears make wonderful tops, and you put it on a plate, eh? And then you'd look at their clock, and you, you see how many minutes you'd, and we used to spin these things three minutes on a, on a plate, you know, they're very, 'cause they're very fine ends. They used to make another kind of top out of wood. It was be kind of spade shaped, eh, round, and then tapering at the bottom, and then a little pole projecting from the top of, of, of this thing. And then you put this through a, I think it was a double piece of wood with a hole through it, eh? So you thread this thing through the wood and then you wrap a leather thong around it, and then you pull it, eh? And it gives us an awful spin to this thing, eh, and then you drop it down and it'd spin, and then you could use the leather thong if you had the space and you were skilful enough, you could use the leather thong to keep whipping it.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh, right, yeah, some of them can whipping these lots.

Guy Blondeau: And keep on whipping, keep it spinning, 'cause this thing had a lot of weight, eh? Some of them, I remember some like that big, eh, kind of thing, and you'd just keep this going for a long time. We used to play knife games. If you could lucky enough to have a jackknife, you could, you know, if you had, there was a sequence you had to follow, you know. You throw it in like this and then, and then you go like, you know, from your, from your thumb you gotta stick it in the ground, and then from your elbow and your shoulder in your chin, in your forehead, and you had to flip it over your head, and then they stick it in the ground, eh? And, of course, once you missed you had to start over and work up to that sequence again. We used to do this for a long time. This, this was a great game to play in the spring. And, well, hopscotch was, was around forever, too, think. Old marbles, yeah.

We used to, we used to build using sheets of old paper, eh. We would make, you could make well for airplanes, of course, paper airplanes or something that was always fun. But we used to build boats of that, eh, different, fold 'em up a different way. And then I used to use my marbles to bomb these, my boats, you see. Just fly any, anything over and then drop marbles on to there. And building card houses, and you used a, an old deck of cards was best for this because they, they're not as slippery. And then you could build several houses five six stories high sometimes, eh? And I used to make big thick strong ones and bomb them with marbles. I had, you know, nobody to play with in the wintertime. I don't know, you know, I had to use my imagination, and there's not many kids in town. You'd play scrub if you're lucky enough to have a rubber ball. They used to throw, I had a tennis ball, oh, rubber balls, too, they used to throw them at the house, eh, and catch. Play with myself. Throw them against the house and my, I think of it now, my poor mother inside there in the kitchen right there on the other side of that wall, but they never, she never complained, eh. They knew what I was doing, eh. I wasn't getting into trouble or mischief, you know, and so did a lot of things with, with rubber balls and tennis balls if we were lucky enough to get a tennis ball that somebody threw away. And not very often, eh? And I don't know what else I used to do.

Jimmy LaRocque: I'm sorry to say I never played any games like that.

Guy Blondeau: There was, okay, a game called by groups, two groups of people, you know, five or six to a group, and you did this at night. You know, the winter nights, you know, are pretty long, eh, so you get home at seven. And you used to call the game "horse for sale," and one group had to go and hide, and then one person from the group would come and, and go around with the seeking group, see, and they would have some prearranged signals. You see, usually colours, eh, you know. Black, okay, that means stay put, eh? Or, or, you know, blue means, well, okay, you're safe, we're going the other way, eh. And this guy that was with the seeking group would yell out

his, these signals you see, and then this group would, would move around. There was no electricity, eh, so it was dark, eh, so you could, you run around. And then, you know, this group eventually would catch, you know, track down, because the town was only so big. It was just a couple blocks. Big, eh, but there were enough houses to hide behind and stuff. And so this, I remember the, the bigger kids doing this, and I was just sort of tagging along at the time, eh? And then when I became one of the bigger kids, there were no kids left in town. That's when it was shrinking.

12.24.22 Sherry Farrell Racette: Did you ever play hide and seek in the dark in pairs? That was something we did. And I met a guy from Camperville, and he said that the kids up there used to do that, too. So, then, when you were running home free, you were, you know, hanging on to your partner. Or did either one of you play that? Maybe it's just a Manitoba game.

Guy Blondeau: No, no that's almost like this, this group game.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Yeah, yeah it's similar.

Guy Blondeau: Except that we had somebody signal, yelling signals.

Jimmy LaRocque: [?] were you in Camperville, or just ...

Sherry Farrell Racette: No, this guy was in from Camperville 'cause we had, we had played the same game from when we were kids. So what did you use to do for fun when you were a kid?

12.24.57 Jimmy LaRocque: Cleaned barns.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh, well that sounds like a heck of a good time.

Jimmy LaRocque: We used to, I drove dogs. Two of us, Desjarlais and Poitras, had dogs, and we used to go out to these dogs and go out to the big snow banks like that. The beach from Lebret, where them houses are today? They used to be thirty-foot banks there, eh. Way fine, that's, we go over there and play in these banks and down, and back and forth, and we'd take the dogs with us. [?] was good, but my dad said, "You have to do this, this is before you leave here." So most of the time I had to clean the calf pen and clean the barn [?]. And it'd take me a long time. That's why I tell these guys come on over to my place and hop in and we'll get away quicker. Take three, four guys to come, so clean the barn, get on the dog team, and away we'd go.

12.26.02 Guy Blondeau: Yeah, and my, my dad would only tell me once, you know, to, you know, make sure the wood is in the wood box, the axe, you know, saw, call it, eh, and if he had to tell me the second time, I got it. You know, that was it. But on Saturday, what we used to do was all the farmers would come into town to shop, eh, pick up their mail, so we would catch rides, you know. They'd come in on their sleighs. Well, we'd wait at the edge of town and, and get our sleighs and hook the sleighs on to their, you know, to the sleighs and cutters and get a ride into town. And then we'd watch them when they were going out, you know. We'd, you know, put our hook, our sleigh on little sleigh onto theirs and get a ride out of town.

Sherry Farrell Racette: The origins of bumper shining.

Guy Blondeau: We used to go all Saturday, we would do that.

12.26.50 Sherry Farrell Racette: So you had dog teams?

Jimmy LaRocque: I had two dogs.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Two dog teams? So what would the dogs be hooked on?

Jimmy LaRocque: A team of dogs, a mother and a son, that was the dog team. And would you believe, I'm sure we took hundreds of pictures of it and I can't find one picture today. There's all kinds of negatives there. I'm not going through the negatives, but the pictures, no. I just want, I want to put dog team in that book. Couldn't find one. So.

Sherry Farrell Racette: What would they be hooked up to?

Jimmy LaRocque: Oh, to the sleigh or a toboggan. Most of the time sleigh. I'm gonna say one behind the other. Queenie was my, my lead dog, and Pat was the next dog. And I'd, my sister and I go to school in five minutes from where we lived. And like I said, unhook my dogs tell them to go where, do what you like, and they'd be gone all day till 3:30 that night. And three, four times put the harness on, and away we go, and the dogs would stay home. You try that to a dog today and damn dog wouldn't know where he's coming from, where he's going, nothing.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Did other kids go to school by dog team?

Jimmy LaRocque: I've seen a couple of the Poitras went to school all the time. He only had one dog, but he's a [?] fella. He's just a little fella. Probably weigh fifty, sixty pounds. He had one dog and he used to turn the dog loose. Sometimes the dog wasn't there when he went at night, but most of the time it would. And, who else was there? Somebody [?] but, of course, other people used to, used to complain to my dad, "You got those dogs in town and they just walk from garbage can to garbage can to this one, eh." "Did they hurt anybody?" "No, they didn't hurt anybody, but you shouldn't have any dog doing that so."

12.28.49 Guy Blondeau: I did a lot of reading when I was a kid, and I would think this would be the exception rather than the rule, but my, our house was full of books. My mom belonged to a book-of-the-month club, you know, for years, eh. And we, she'd get a book every month, a book would come in, and I read probably fifteen, eighteen Zane Grey books. Do you remember Zane Grey westerns?

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh, right, yeah, yeah.

Guy Blondeau: And they used to get, oh, some detective stories, and I remember the wisdom of Confucius when I was reading that book...

Sherry Farrell Racette: A little light reading.

Guy Blondeau: ...I was like ten years old, I was reading this book, you know, and stuff, but it, it was, we were encouraged to read, you know, and, and the stuff was there to read. And I didn't, you know, just whatever there was, I just read whatever there was 'cause winter nights, you know, nothing to do, eh? And so, and, and I was getting ten years old, there was, you know, the town was shrinking so much, you know, nothing to do, so I did a lot of reading and they supplied, you know, the books were there to read.

Sherry Farrell Racette: What about reading aloud? Did you ever hear people, like, reading for other people?

Guy Blondeau: No.

Sherry Farrell Racette: No.

Jimmy LaRocque: I did very little reading as a kid.

Sherry Farrell Racette: No?

Guy Blondeau: My, my grandmother that I had talked about here many times had a good supply of Grimm's fairy tales in her head.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh, right, so she'd...

Guy Blondeau: And she would tell these, eh, and my dad used to talk about, you know, every time that the storyteller was in big demand, eh, when there'd be a social gathering, eh. There would come a time in the evening when everything would settle down and, and the, the, the best storytellers would, you know, tell their, their stories were, you know, mostly like fiction, you know, and stuff. But I don't remember her telling me these Rumpelstiltskin and all kind, you know, the, I can't even remember anymore, eh, but she had a lot of stories.

12.30.36 Sherry Farrell Racette: You said you had a story from your dad?

Guy Blondeau: Okay, I'll tell you. Censor it as you wish. My dad, I never heard him say "damn" in my whole life, you know, and he never told off-colour stories or anything, but I remember this surprised me then when he told the story. It's just, it's not serious, but the Great Spirit or the Trickster or somebody or other was walking around, eh, and he saw the eagle flying, eh. So he said, "Hey, how about giving me a ride?" "Sure," said, you know, just, he said, "I'll, you know," the eagle thought, "Well, I'll do it just to get rid of, you know, get 'em off my, get rid of him." And so he said, "Okay, get on." So he flew and they made some big circles in here and he kept going higher. And, and the guy said, "Hey it's getting cold up here, you know. Shouldn't we go down?" Well, he kept on going up and finally landed on the moon, and he said, "Okay, get off now because I need a little rest." So he jumped off. And the eagle took off and flew back down to the Earth. "Well, how am I gonna get down?" he said. "Oh," he said. He's thinking and thinking. It's getting cold, his bladder was awful full you see. So he started

peeing and it's an ice, you know, and it's going towards the Earth, and an icicle started to form, you see. So he kept on peeing and peeing and this icicle kept getting longer and longer. But he finally ran out, and he had, you know, twenty, thirty feet left that he didn't, you know. So he started sliding down this icicle and he went down closer and slide himself down the, he got to the bottom and there's nothing he could do. So he finally had to let go, and down he fell. Well, he landed head first in a swamp. So, there he is kicking and his feet up in the air, and the eagle came by. He says, "Oh," he says, "I'll never get a better chance than this." So down he came, you know, but at the last minute he just come, miscalculated, and, and got his head stuck you know where. Well, okay, you started, eagle started pulling and pulling, and as he pulled, you know, all the feathers came off of his head, see, and stayed there. And that is why to this day the bald eagle is bald, and also to this day why a man has a hairy, you know...

Sherry Farrell Racette: Well, I always wondered.

Guy Blondeau: So, you know you can you can relate the first part of that story easily enough anyway. I remember my dad telling that one. Yeah, I do remember, though, like that he never swore. Never in his life swore. Self-controlled.

12.33.27 Sherry Farrell Racette: Yeah, they're asking us to wrap up, but thanks for that...