

**Transcribed by David Morin**

GABRIEL DUMONT INSTITUTE FOLKLORE INTERVIEWS

Norma Welsh, Joe Welsh, and Sherry Farrell Racette

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**Videotape 1**

**2:13:55 Sherry Farrell Racette:** Okay, well, usually we start by just asking people where they're from and who their folks were, a little bit about their family background. Do you want to go first?

**Norma Welsh:** Well, my name is Norma Welsh and I'm from Lebret. Born and brought up there. My father was Joseph Welsh, my mother was Eleanor Amyotte, and we grew up several places in Lebret. Several areas, I guess I should say—we lived in, on the road allowance and on the Métis Farm, and went to school and had lots of fun.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Where'd you go to school?

**Norma Welsh:** Lebret.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Oh, Lebret.

**Norma Welsh:** And my mother died when I was fifteen. I quit school at that time. I was in Grade Eight and a couple years later the kids went to Prince Albert Orphanage. St., St. Pat's. And they were there for, I'm not sure how many years, but I hung around Lebret for awhile and ended going to Regina, got married and moved to B.C. for a few years. I've lived all over the place. Yeah, I'll let Joey tell you too his side.

**Joe Welsh:** Well, I'm Joe Welsh. I'm Norma's, one of Norma's little brothers. Well, we got the same family sister as she has except in, in, when her mother died there was Norma and the other older sister, Billie, and her sister Polly, who were all teenagers at the time, they looked after us for a couple years. And then this other youngest of us were shipped to St. Pat's Orphanage in Prince Albert. I spent eight years there and during that time, well, we didn't lose all contact with our family, but, but it was such that we're made to feel that we were lucky to be there, that we had nobody except them, you know, to be thankful for, for education, food, and clothing and shelter, and all that kind of stuff, but we're fortunate enough that we didn't forget our family and, and where, you know, we came from. But in that eight years we can appreciate that we lost a lot of where we come from and who we were. And then in June 16<sup>th</sup>, 1961 I jumped the fence and I hitchhiked back to Regina.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** You remember?

**Joe Welsh:** Yes, yeah, they, yeah, I was in high school and they had a rule that if you failed a grade in high school that you couldn't come back. So I failed Grade Nine on purpose and went back to Regina, and there my father and a couple of sisters—Norma was in B.C. at the time—that I would re-establish as a family. I, I didn't finish high school. I quit after Grade Eleven and I done everything from working in an eviscerating plant and working for farmers to being in the army, to being a social worker, to being a bum, anything. And I've worked all over the place, too, and I'm still a bum.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Did you know your grandparents?

**Norma Welsh:** Oh, yeah, and I knew my great grandfather, Johnny Blondeau.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Oh really?

**Norma Welsh:** Yeah. He was, he used to live with, with my grandparents, and he was very ill and was bedridden for quite a few years, but my grandmother looked after him until he died, but we used to, yeah, visit them and we had to go by their place when we were going to school. We would walk up the hill from the school there, up one side of the, the valley of where the seminary was, south side. So we did that and we had also, we used to walk across the lake in, in the wintertime, and we had this old grandpa, we used to call him Moshum St. Pierre, and he was married to my dad's aunt, and we always stopped there on the way back. And we always had bannock and tea from Grandma and she was just a wonderful bannock maker, you know. I never ever learned to make bannock like that, and that Moshum would be sitting in the, in his chair, his rocking chair, and he had this spittoon about a mile away. He used to sit there and smoke his pipe and spit—never miss it. We always thought that was so disgusting.

**Joe Welsh:** Isn't that what they call [?] Diable?

**Norma Welsh:** I don't know, but we used to call [?] Diable that black stuff you pick off the trees. Oh, I'll be something that will poop there. Was part of learning the stuff we were growing up with, but, yeah, we, but we lived at the Métis Farm, too. We were there for eight years and I believe that's where I started school. I didn't start school till I was eight. The reason being is that there wasn't any room in the school.

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

**Norma Welsh:** Yeah. And I think a lot of kids my age didn't start till they were eight for that reason.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Yeah, that happened, I think, in a few places.

**Norma Welsh:** Yeah, so some of us were unfortunate that we, we couldn't start earlier, you know, but as a result I quit school when I was fifteen and just went, went to work in different places, looked after the kids for a couple years, and moved to Regina. And first place I worked was at Sears, which I think everybody in Regina worked at Sears at one time. Like I say, from there I got married and moved to B.C.

**2:20:35 Sherry Farrell Racette:** When, when people would get together, like when you were, how were stories told like that, do you remember the situations and the settings that stories were told or stories still are told?

**Norma Welsh:** Well, for us, like, I don't know, Joey's probably too young to remember, but we, my grandma, Grandma Welsh, she used to tell us stories, and she couldn't speak English, she always told 'em to us in French. And we would all sit around the big pot bellied stove, you know, in the wintertime, of course, and sit around the stove and she would tell us these stories, and not one of us knew what, what she was talking about. But, but we were right into it, we were so intense, you know. You could more or less tell by her, her, her actions and, and her, her expressions that you knew when to be scary and that kind of stuff, you know. But she did that for years for us. And other people told stories basically the same way in the wintertime, getting around, gathering around at the pot belly stove and, of course, they would be telling stories about Rou Garous and, you know, scaring the heck out of you and that kind of thing. But there were lot of good storytellers in those days.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Can you remember some of them?

**2:21:58 Norma Welsh:** Well, I remember one story about a Rou Garou about in this, these people I know them or I knew them at that time. They're, they're dead now, but anyway this one lady suspected her husband was a Rou Garou, and one night she had to go to the neighbours to borrow

some coal oil 'cause that's how we had light, you know, coal oil lamps. Anyway, she, on the way she met a dog, and the dog grabbed her by the apron, and she hit it with a stick. She had a stick, picked up a stick and hit it, and it took a little part of her apron with it. And that was fine, she went and borrowed the coal oil and she came home and her husband was laying on the bed and looked like he was sleeping. And she went over to look at him and he was laying there and he had a bump on his head where she felt she hit the dog, and he had a piece of the apron in his mouth. And this went on I don't know how long. She, she was telling these stories, but anyway at one point she went to the priest and asked him what she should do. And he said, "Well, you better bring him to church, you know. Maybe we can get rid of whatever's possessing him." Anyway, she took him to church and when he saw the host, the Eucharist, he went crazy, went screaming out of the church and I don't know if anyone has heard from him since. But she told that story for many years about her husband being... And there was also one of supposed to be a Loup Garou. Now the difference between a Rou Garou and the Loup Garou was, was the Rou Garou was a dog and a Loup Garou was a wolf. Now, I never heard stories about the Loup Garou, but I guess they must be [?] about it. So you hear all kinds of stories like that, you know, with this man was a very violent man and, and drank a lot, you know. A lot of them did at that time, beat up on their wives and stuff, but the this man I knew personally, you know, so I don't know whatever happened to him after that, or her for that matter. I guess they moved away from the area maybe.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Was it always, what shape would a Rou Garou take? So it was always a dog or?

**Norma Welsh:** Well, it was just, the Rou Garou was the dog as far as I know, was always a dog.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Any kind of dog in particular?

**Norma Welsh:** Well, like a wolf-like dog. Maybe a coyote or something like that. That, I've heard a lot of stories about husbands, you know, being Rou Garous. And a lot of people really believed in that. So that's one of my Rou Garou stories, and I know there are others, but I'll, I'll have to really think about it to remember.

**2:25:34 Sherry Farrell Racette:** What about you Joe? You heard any Rou Garou stories?

**Joe Welsh:** Yes, and I've never heard this difference before she...Loup Garou is, as far as I know, is French for werewolf and Rou Garou was a halfbreedization of the word, that rou would really mean wolf and I don't know what garou means. It, like I said, it was the French version of a, of a, a werewolf. But I looked it up in a couple of dictionaries—they're so old—well, I went to the library in Regina and, and looked this up and all of them have the same the same definition. And the one that the story of the Rou Garou that I became familiar with is, is one that Norma's told. And, you know, we talk about differences in, in communities and that kind of thing, there's a family difference, difference **[?]**, I was younger and I, I don't remember back when, my buddies wouldn't even been born then, but, you know, my attempt to catch up, you know. Years later there was different versions out and these are people, guys from my generation would sit around and, and add to that, just a little bit. This guy, well, in all the Rou Garou stories that I've heard, they, there were supposed to be able to be here one instant and over there the next instant, and they were kind of like they, they would bring news from one community to the other. And then this particular guy that Norma's talking about, he, he was supposed to be able to be in Fort Qu'Appelle one minute, in, in Lebret the next. And there was two guys who told me, two guys from Lebret, Clarence Blondeau and Bruce Klyne told me this, this story about they were, Lebret and Fort Qu'Appelle, you know, four miles apart. And when they wanted to go to Fort Qu'Appelle they usually walk, you know, so they walking along the railroad tracks this one day and, and they heard

this running sound behind them and, and panting and stuff like that, and they looked around and here it was this **(Unknown)** guy, said, "Hi guys, how you doing there?" They talked to him and stuff. He said, "Well, I gotta go." So he went down to the bush along the lake, and so they continued on their way to town. And when they got back here, this guy was, was in town already and they said, "How long has been there?" "Oh, about fifteen minutes," and he said, "Oh, we saw him fifteen minutes ago. We, we were talking to him." So then, then the mystique spread. Then I was, I was living at Gabriel's Crossing there, and then I met an old guy in, in Duck Lake, Leonard Pambrum. Well, we got to talking about where I'm from and where he's from. He told me, you know, his version of Rou Garou. It was pretty well the same, and I was telling him about my Rou Garou. And he said, "Was this guy named **(Unknown)**?" You know that, yeah. And he said, "Did he have a little scar on his eye?" I said, "I don't know, I don't think so." And he said, "Did he have a bad shoulder?" And I go, "Well, I don't know." And he said, "'Cause there was a guy named **(Unknown)**. He was from Lebret. They say he was a Rou Garou. He used to come up here, you know, tell his news and then he'd go back to Lebret, Fort Qu'Appelle, tell them news and that kind of stuff." And he mentioned this old guy. Now, I forget his name, but Leonard has a particular way of telling his stories. So he heard that this **(Unknown)** was, was a Rou Garou and they were drinking one night and, and the way to stop a guy from being a Rou Garou is to cure the curse, is you have to draw blood from him, and the only way to draw blood from you is to, to cut him on the left ear. So I guess these guys are playing cards, and they got drunk and this guy felt sorry for old **(Unknown)** so he is going to cure him from being a Rou Garou, so he went outside, he got a little stick and he sharpened it. He was gonna stab him on the ear with this stick, so I guess this **(Unknown)**, he saw him and he moved away and he nicked his ear, and he felt, "Uh oh, I missed his ears," so he took another shot at him. He stabbed him in the shoulder and I guess **(Unknown)** got the hell out of there. So here's, you know, he checked with, you know, a few guys there, "Yup, he had a scar on his face and **[?]** scar on his shoulder and..."

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Just some guy trying to help him out.

**Joe Welsh:** Yeah, some guy tried to help him out they didn't know who it was and, well, they, they, just a coincidence of learning that from, from my community and from the people that I had spoken with, and then moving, well, two hundred miles away, talking to a guy from, you know, this **(Unknown)** generation and hearing the story like that, you know. It, well, it's a beautiful to happen, you know, beautiful coincidence, and it adds to, to the legend. And it always grows, I guess.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Maybe there's stories about him in B.C.?

**Joe Welsh:** Maybe there are, yeah, right.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** I guess that's where he went when he ran out of friends[?]. Then he went to Batoche. Didn't want to be cured maybe.

**2:31:20 Joe Welsh:** Didn't want to be, yeah. Well, that was, well, that was the curse thing being part of the, the, what I had to find out was that [?] there, my that, I know there are three versions, and one has to do with Catholicism, that there was the, the one where in the old days where all the rules the Catholics had there, was there was a period of time between the beginning of Lent and what's called Ascension Thursday. I don't know. Anyway, this one is forty days ahead of Easter, one is forty days after Easter, and during that time you have to, it's a rule of the, or it was a rule of the Church that you had to go to confession and receive holy communion. And if you didn't, that was a worst kind of mortal sin you could commit, and no matter what you did for the rest of your life, you were condemned to hell. So this is how...

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Pretty harsh.



**Joe Welsh:** Yeah. It was tough [?]. But that was one of, one of the versions, and it was the same cure. Well, in stories that I've heard anyway, and this partic-, this other guy, this one that we've been talking about, there was another rule that, like Norma, neglectful, he had had ability to be, oh, like all of us have, but he was supposed to be not exceptional, but more ability than the average person and he wasted it. Like he was an old drunk, you know, missing church, beating his wife, neglecting his responsibilities as a man, and that was another way you could be, become a Rou Garou. And again in, in the Métis and Half-breed stories, we, the cure was the same. And around Fort Qu'Appelle, again, there was another guy who was the Indian version of the Rou Garou, and they called him the same thing—Rou Garou. And there, there was another guy, he wasn't bad, wasn't an abusive man, but, but he was, he put himself above everybody. But he was proud and cheeky, and he wasn't kind to people who were less fortunate than he was, and that's how he became a Rou Garou. And the, to lift the curse is a little bit different, but it ended up the same—you had to draw blood from him, but he didn't, in this particular story that I that I learned, it didn't have to be from the, from the left ear. But you, you could, if you were kind to him, he could have good luck in hunting or fishing. So the old people who told me this story about this particular guy is that if you leave to go hunting in, in the fall and they don't get one duck or something, you leave that in the wood pile where went fishing in the wintertime, and you pulled your nets, and you can get there and bring the fish and you leave the fish in, well, with wild game you can, or candies or things like that. Sweet sweet stuff—they're supposed to like sweet stuff. So, if you left them in your wood pile or along the trail where, where you knew that this, he frequented, and he'd find them and you would get better luck in your hunting or fishing. This, this old guy, he said he used to do that all the time. And if he, you know, left a duck or a goose or something in the fall, he'd have particularly good hunting, and then in the winter he left a couple of fish in his wood pile [?] for the next couple weeks or so his nets would be full. And, you know, sweet stuff and all that kind of

stuff was be dessert or something, or an extra effort to make sure you have extra luck. So, so just out of that one community, three, three different versions of a, of a legend, and, and they all have to do with, with morality and being decent.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Yeah, values.

**Joe Welsh:** Values, yeah, yeah, goodness. And the Catholic Church's version naturally was the meanest. You didn't have a hope in hell, but the other way you might have a way of redemption.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Yeah, that's like no hope for redemption, eh, one way, but the other way. But it's when you were, I had never heard that associated with Rou Garous, that, you know, like to not, if you have, like, gifts that to not live up to your gifts was like, but I've heard that, that, that's like, you know, to use the word sin, but if you're given a gift, that it's like a really bad thing not to commit yourself to that gift because you can't give that gift to somebody else. It was given to you for a reason. So I'd never heard that associated with Rou Garous, but I, oh, yeah, okay, 'cause I had heard that value before, you know.

**Norma Welsh:** Yeah, I heard that, too.

**2:36:30 Joe Welsh:** And the other thing that if a, this one, these one, John Redman was an old Indian guy from, from Standing Buffalo. He told me that the, well, he had relatives from all over North America, but, well, he had relatives from Louisiana, the Bayou, Cajuns, [?], there's different Rou Garou there, and he said there's an island in, in one of them oceans there down south of the States there. I finally figured out he meant the Caribbean. And then in Haiti, they have, they have a different version. [?]. And so I went to libraries and stuff and looked it up, and sure enough there, wherever there's Catholics and French and French and [?] Aboriginal, Indian, [?] there comes

those kinds of stories and, and they have the same root. The same moral lessons and more or less the same kind of story. The redemption factor is usually the same and that's, well, that's all over the place.

**2:37:45 Sherry Farrell Racette:** Have you, you had in the story that you told, the sort of, the redemption or to cure him of being a Rou Garou was to bring him to church, but then when he saw the Eucharist then he, he flipped, he flipped. And you, it's cutting the ear. Any other ways have you heard, that sort of taking someone from, like, stopping someone from being a Rou Garou?

**Joe Welsh:** No, I never. Okay, the, the other part of the thing is that when evil or the force, whatever it was, curse you, that the curse would last seven years and during those seven years someone had to redeem you from the, from the burden. If after seven years you weren't saved by someone, then it became, they needed the Catholic Church. You had no hope of redemption after those seven years. That was the other, I mean, the guy gave you certain time to, to be redeemed. And the form of the Rou Garou in the stories that I've heard were, you were big ugly black dog who everybody was afraid of and to show kindness to something that you are afraid of took a lot of courage for one thing, and, and I guess the idea was that, you know, to face a fear and to confront it. And something worthy would happen to you at the hand of somebody else, so there was another, I guess, a moral lesson or moral obligation for fellow human beings. I found that, I found that to be, well, in direct contrast to the Catholic one, where you had no hope. Whereas in, in the other one, in the Métis one, in the Indian one, you had to depend on another human being to, to save you, to redeem you.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** That's neat, eh?

**Joe Welsh:** Yes, it is beautiful.

**2:40:01 Sherry Farrell Racette:** Were you ever just, did people just ever use Rou Garous to, to frighten you or to...

**Norma Welsh:** Oh, all the time.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** All the time?

**Norma Welsh:** Oh, for sure. It's like the Catholic Churchs scared the heck out of us, you know, with all this gloom and doom and we're going to hell forever, you raised it on Earth, you know. It didn't matter what we did, we had to go invent sins to go to confession. You had to convince [?], and when you're seven years old, how much do you sin, you know? But you still had to go to confession and, like, it was scary, like, you know, you were always going to hell if you didn't do something or other, always, lightning would come down. And to this day I am terrified of lightning. It, lightning was always gonna strike us. That's one way God would punish us is by striking us with lightning, but, yeah, they, they, we were afraid of everything. I was afraid half my life and I still am at certain times, you know. It just was a terrifying experience. I had a very good childhood, my childhood was wonderful, but it was going to church all the time and hearing all these stories. And, of course, your parents use them, too, at times, you know, to...

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Did anyone ever say the Rou Garou will get you or the Rou Garous are out or...?

**Norma Welsh:** And in those days, I mean, whoever did wrong, like, you know, we were to scared to do anything. So, yeah, they did use a lot of that kind of stuff to scare us.

**2:41:45 Sherry Farrell Racette:** Was there a time of year when people talked about Rou Garous more, or was there a time...

**Norma Welsh:** To me it was during Lent, you know, there was more talk about stuff like that because if you danced or ate meat when you were, when, during Lent, that was, you were going to hell for sure. Absolutely.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** If you danced?

**Norma Welsh:** Yeah. If you didn't wear stockings. There were all kinds of...

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** If you didn't wear stockings?

**Norma Welsh:** Yeah, you had to wear stockings to go to church regardless of how hot it was or anything. And I remember one occasion that he wouldn't, the priest wouldn't let me in because I didn't have stockings on. And it was always had to wear something on your head, you know, a hat or a scarf, whatever you had. If you didn't have a hat or a scarf, they'd put a Kleenex on your head because you couldn't go in there.

**Joe Welsh:** That was, that was females?

**Norma Welsh:** Yeah, for females, yes. Yeah, it was pretty frightening, and, boy, if you were a pregnant woman and you looked, happen to look at something ugly, your baby would look like that when it was born. You know, really, it's stupid things like that.

**2:43:05 Sherry Farrell Racette:** Was there a lot of beliefs around pregnant women or things that women...?

**Norma Welsh:** Well, that was the scariest one I can remember, but, and that, you know, we used to have this guy in Le Bret who was a hair lip and pregnant women would avoid that guy like the plague.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Oh, 'cause they didn't want their kids to have it?

**Norma Welsh:** Because they didn't want their kids to have the hair lip.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** And that's what they believe?

**Norma Welsh:** Yeah. It was sad and scary, but we believed it, including myself. Like, I believed it, too. So we, I don't know, it was quite, quite a time in our lives.

**2:43:46 Sherry Farrell Racette:** You mention [?] Diable. Were there any other stories about Le Diable, like, sometimes there, they were different, or references to...

**Joe Welsh:** Well, the only one, well, similar to her, they were always made to sin and that, oh jeez, let me talk about letting their imagination go all day, and then how many. I saw, there's a couple of times that I saw Le Diable, you know, in, because it was so, the, the indoctrination was so intense and the fear was, yeah, I was afraid half of my life, too, of going to hell and of encountering the Devil and all that kind of stuff. I mean it was, well, a fear factor, and it came more from the, well, it did more, it was all came from the Catholic Church. I'm sure in your research, in talking to people that you, you know, that the Catholic Church had great control over us, eh, in matters of religion. And the, the way we looked at each other, it was not particularly [?]. There was a another rule that in the altar in the church after the hosts are consecrated for the week, a woman couldn't set foot on the, on the altar area there, otherwise she would be, desanctify the, the host.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Oh really?

**Joe Welsh:** Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. And, and that, okay, that relates to some of the other Indian stories [?], where the women's medicine is, is powerful

and, and that was made, came out of priests' [?] the Indian people and to our people, but, and they [?] is evil instead of what ...

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Good or ...

**Joe Welsh:** Yeah. Well, yeah, I'm gonna laugh at him [?]. The priest there, he used to give a little sermon. Well, every, every Sunday at church, and this one I remember, the, the, the text of the sermon was about two guys, and two Indian guys. One was Big Chief Big Fat Nose and Little Chief Little Nose, and everybody used to laugh at Big Chief Big Fat Nose because of his big nose, but when the flood came, and they were floating down the river, and Big Chief Big Fat Nose, he didn't drown because his nose was sticking up in the air, and he was breathing, and he was [?] to the moral of the story, and he was sitting there, and all of a sudden he went quiet, and bam, he keeled over 'cause he had a heart attack. The nun who was in charge, you know, of setting up the altar and all that kind of stuff, she ran up there and the guy who was in charge of the boys in the choir, he yelled at her, "Stop right there!" And she just froze in place, and because she was just about to enter the, the, the holy place, or where, where woman couldn't go. Here she is trying to save the priest's life and the guy [?]. Yeah, but he, he didn't die. They managed to, Lebret went up there and they did something to him. Big Chief Big Fat Nose and Little Chief Little Nose.

**2:47:31 Sherry Farrell Racette:** I know that, like in Quebec there's a lot of stories about, like, Le Diable, the, what's one of them, oh, coming to a dance, a stranger comes to a dance. Did you ever hear any of those stories where a stranger comes to a dance and then they have if, if it's a woman you lifted her skirt and you see hoofs. All the dance, you see hoof prints or something like that, 'cause it's the devil, they have cloven hooves...?

**Joe Welsh:** Yeah, okay, did that have a name, does that mean [?]. No, 'cause I have a story once about that, and it seems to me that the name of

the beast was [?], and I've been trying to look for him and I can't find him. Even Francophone society in Regina doesn't...

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Oh really?

**Joe Welsh:** Yeah.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Well, it depends on, I guess, the names change too from place to place, but there's, I know, like, like, and I know it even has to do with the, the fiddle, but they'll be having a dance, you know, and some stranger will come in and then at some point, you know, it would be revealed, because it's the feet, you know, you see the feet and that is, that's the Devil. So sometimes the, you know, it's part of the French Canadian folklore that came out as well. I didn't know that the black stuff on trees is called Devil's Poop.

**Joe Welsh:** Well, okay, well, yeah, it had, yeah, so, well, I remembered something did that on trees, and there's stuff in the bottom of your grandpa's spittoon.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Same thing?

**2:49:06 Joe Welsh:** Yeah, well, what, just thinking of that, I remember her Grandpa Amyotte used to do, too, eh, and I remember, you know, I don't remember much, but I remember him being able to hit that, go **[claps]**. You know, when you see that in those old western movies, that...

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Oh yeah.

**Joe Welsh:** That really went, they happened.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Those old guys could really do that?



**Joe Welsh:** It made that sound.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** It really made that sound?

**Joe Welsh:** Yeah.

**Norma Welsh:** 'Cause the spittoon was kinda silver plated, you know, and when you hit on it, it would make the sound.

**Joe Welsh:** I guess it was good craftsmanship [?].

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** I think it's just target practice.

**Joe Welsh:** Yeah, right!

**2:49:47 Sherry Farrell Racette:** Did people tell any Chi-Jean stories? Those Little, Little John stories, did you ever hear any Chi-Jean stories?

**Norma Welsh:** No, I never heard any of them. Or did I? Like, it's so vague, though, it seems to me I heard one about that and [?] whatever you call it, Wesakejack, and Chi-Jean, but, you know, that's, we's, everybody in Lebret was called Chi something. We had a Chi-Jean, we had several Chi-Jeans, and we had Chi-Mikes and we had Chi-boys and...

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Oh, Chi-boys, yeah, that's...

**Norma Welsh:** ...all that kind of stuff.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** My grandma's nickname was Chi-[?]...

**Norma Welsh:** Oh, really?

**Norma Welsh:** Yeah, yeah. So, that, we had was another nickname, so...

**Norma Welsh:** You know, it might be that I remember it, you know, instead of an actual story, but...

**2:50:42 Sherry Farrell Racette:** Lebret is bad for nicknames eh?

**Joe Welsh:** Holy cripe.

**Norma Welsh:** Don't get me started on it.

**Joe Welsh:** Get started. Wanna tell her yours?

**Norma Welsh:** I told Sherry, but I'm not telling anybody else. Oh my gosh, yeah, there was lots of nicknames and...

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** How would people get nicknames?

**Norma Welsh:** Well, I, for sure, like, my grandfather named everybody in Lebret, including all his grandchildren. We all, every one of us had nicknames, and I think the grandparents would call their grandchildren by nicknames or made them up for them.

**Joe Welsh:** Yeah, they, they would, yeah. There's differences that I've learned, that those people who, they go to the grandparents, the old people who gave the younger people nicknames and wasn't out of cruelty. Like, I don't know, physical defects or anything, it was about a characteristic or, or [?] traits, or family traits or anything like that, whereas now in that orphanage everybody had a nickname, but it's based on cruelty. Like, you know, you had a little guy that had polio, bad foot, we called him peg leg, like, or if, you know, guy was little bit overweight call him fat or ugly or three

men in a tub, or, or the, the... Those kinds of things were, well, I don't know which children, the idea of cruelty returned to us, but, but those were the kinds of names that we gave each other, but the names that the old people gave children and grandchildren was based on, you know, kindness and love and they always funny, but never had a cruel context to it.

**2:52:37 Sherry Farrell Racette:** What were some of them that you can think of, some of the good ones that you can think you can tell, other people's nicknames? You don't have to tell whose they are.

**Norma Welsh:** Well, one family, there was, these are mostly girls, I think, that I can remember is the one, one girl was named Boxcar, another one was Chicock, and there was Wesakejack, no, [?], and stuff like that.

**Joe Welsh:** Okay, those...

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Any translations?

**Joe Welsh:** Okay, well, technically...

**Norma Welsh:** Someone who farts.

**Joe Welsh:** Yeah.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** That'd be one to get stuck with your whole life.

**Joe Welsh:** No, I lost my, my train of thought there, so I'm sorry there.

**Norma Welsh:** That's okay. You can remember some, too. Chi-Boy and Chi-Girl and Chi-[?]. There's Peepee and Peewon.

**Joe Welsh:** Peewee.

**Norma Welsh:** Peewee, yeah. [?], [?]. My brother's name was Pitchot. My second oldest brother [?]. And [?] was my little sister. Was it [?] or?

**Joe Welsh:** [?].

**Norma Welsh:** [?]. But there was [?], too, and, you know, all kinds of names like that.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** A lot of them are Michif, eh?

**Norma Welsh:** Yeah.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Most of them.

**Norma Welsh:** [?].

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** What would that be?

**Norma Welsh:** I, half of them don't mean a thing, you know, they don't mean a thing.

**Joe Welsh:** Or anything that translates to anything.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Nonsensical.

**Joe Welsh:** Yeah.

**Norma Welsh:** Yeah, it just, and Grandpa used to do that all the time. Like, I know it, oodles of them, but, you know, right now I'm getting a blank mind.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** So it was your grandpa that used to give nicknames, so some people would...

**Norma Welsh:** Not to everybody, but, yeah, there was Puff Wheat and Puff Rice, which we called the Cereal Brothers. There was Pine-Sol and...

**Joe Welsh:** Those came later, yeah. Even I know them.

**Norma Welsh:** Yeah.

**Joe Welsh:** That guy's my age, yeah.

**Norma Welsh:** Just Jesuit.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** What about Chimon? Was anyone have that nickname Chimon?

**Norma Welsh:** Oh, lots of them.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** That's a very common Saulteaux nickname. It means canoe, chimon, yeah. It means canoe in Saulteaux, and it's a very common nickname in Saulteaux. There's a lot of people that get that nickname, Métis and Saulteaux.

**Joe Welsh:** Could be another one.

**Norma Welsh:** Shypoke. We'd get named after animals, too. I know this family who had, they all had big teeth and they were called beavers, you know. But that, that was cruel, mind you, but, like, people accepted that, you know. I don't think it was meant to be cruel, but...

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Well, everyone had one.

**Norma Welsh:** Yes.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** It was like it was, like, if you got too full of yourself somebody would call you your nickname.

**Joe Welsh:** Yeah, right, okay, yeah, hmmm.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Follow you right out.

**Joe Welsh:** Yeah.

**Norma Welsh:** I'll have to write some down as I think about them tonight when I'm...

**2:56:05 Sherry Farrell Racette:** It's, there's something that's quite unique, you know, you look at culturally unique, you know, compared to other communities that are not...

**Joe Welsh:** And it's in every community, every Métis community that I've been through, everybody else, and that having a similarity of names, what. Kokum [?]. There have been four places I've been that everybody has a Kokum [?]. It was a medicine woman or healing woman and real well. And we first met Maria—remember, she was a Kokum [?] in her book and then her, Billie and Norma got talking and [?].

**2:56:47 Sherry Farrell Racette:** Were there any practices that you remember around holidays, special practices in the valley, things that people did around special holiday?

**Norma Welsh:** Like do you mean the whole valley or, or just family?

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Well, both...

**Norma Welsh:** ...I guess our biggest thing was Christmas, I think, because then the whole valley was involved in that. It was that we all sang in the choir, you know. It was really big thing. Everybody walked to church that night at midnight. And we did have in the summer time, we used to have track meets, but never anything elaborate that I can think of. Like Halloween was knocking down old toilets.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Outhouse, nice.

**Norma Welsh:** And bobbing for apples, pulling toffee, like, and of course, your near, nearest neighbour was half a mile or a mile away, so we didn't do a lot of those kinds of things that they do now.

**2:57:48 Sherry Farrell Racette:** What about New Year's?

**Norma Welsh:** New Year's was big. That's when we'd have boulettes and bannock and we'd hitch up the sleigh and go from relative to relative, and you always ate everywhere you went, you know, and visited and you would take the whole day to do that. I don't know what you remember?

**Joe Welsh:** Well, I was thinking of the last memory I have of my grand-, my, either grandparents, of New Year's Eve and that was, you know, [?]. I guess the custom was on New Year's was a bigger deal than Christmas was, and [?] with his glass fingers at before we went to the orphanage. That's what I remember, sitting on old Grandpa Amyotte's knees, us younger ones. And he gives you blessing and then he would tell us stories. I remember the ride from, from home to, to their place, and all in a, in a, in a cutter and the [?] is snorting and the bells is jingling, yeah. And the, like you said, they were the common practice, but a lot of those, well, you, getting back to power in the Catholic Church did a lot of those holidays and things were

related to the Catholic Church. They used to have what's called Holy Days of Obligation. I got a good Catholic education.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** I can tell.

**2:59:22 Joe Welsh:** Anyway, eight of them during the year, and there was, you know, January 1<sup>st</sup> was New Year's, of course. When Jesus got circumcised, that was a holiday. And then there were January 6<sup>th</sup>, when the three kings visited Jesus, that was a holiday. When was the next one? Oh, Good Friday, Easter Sunday—there was two together. And then there was called Ascension Thursday, which was when Jesus, forty days after he was crucified, he rolls up the heaven, body and soul. And then there was September the eighth—that was either Mary's birthday or the day of Immaculate Conception. And then there was December the eighth, which was, I forget, you know, December eight, September eighth, but one was the Immaculate Conception and one was something else. But there was one item in the [?] was it Corpus Christi or somewhere, they led the procession up the hill. There was Corpus Christi was first communion Sunday in most churches. So they used ...

**Norma Welsh:** First confession and confirmation, yeah.

**Joe Welsh:** So that, that's one way can remember [?].

**Norma Welsh:** We used to do the stations of the cross and everybody would go up the hill and, and when everybody got there there'd be a short mass and then we'd all come back down, and everybody would be back, have their first communion and be confirmed.

**Joe Welsh:** Be in good shape for a year.



**3:00:50 Norma Welsh:** I remember my brother was confirmed, my brother Ernie, and the bishop used to slap—was it on the cheek?

**Joe Welsh:** Yeah.

**Norma Welsh:** Yeah, he used to slap you on the cheek to confirm you, and my brother hit him back.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** I bet that went over real well.

**Norma Welsh:** Well, actually, we practically lived in a church. It was always, every Sunday, every Friday night, to benediction and then there was catechism. Just everything that was based around the church. And the, the brothers, actually a lot of the brothers and priests were pretty good to us 'cause they used to bring us food. They used to take us on picnics and they'd have their boats and they'd give us rides across the lake. And of course catechism was involved in that. We had quite a lot of fun with that, you know, swimming and boating, and they made their own ice cream then, too.

**Joe Welsh:** And toffee.

**Norma Welsh:** Toffee. We had quite a good time with them.

**Joe Welsh:** These are guys that weren't priests yet, though.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** They're so young and you're so [?].

**Joe Welsh:** I think half of them left after that.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Yeah, you guys are too much fun for them.

**Joe Welsh:** Yeah, right.

**Norma Welsh:** Well, I think there was a lot of molesting going on at the time, too, now that, you know, some people are starting to talk about it. I always ran too fast, so nobody catch me, but, yeah, they did, they were good to us, especially after my mother died. They were always bringing food to us.

**3:02:54 Sherry Farrell Racette:** I was gonna ask you when you got, when you got your blessing from your grandfather, how, how would that happen? Like, how, what can they do to the kids when they bless them?

**Norma Welsh:** Well, we would just all kneel around him, you know, and he would just bless over all of us, you know, like the priest does. He'll bless everybody and put his hands up like that.

**Joe Welsh:** Well, I remember, well, he knew something was coming because I remember he took us in order [?] put us on his knee.

**Norma Welsh:** Oh, yeah, hmm.

**Joe Welsh:** And then, and then put us down. Went from youngest to old for youngest of us and, and, well, that's the only way I remember so...

**Norma Welsh:** Yeah, well, there was, yeah, too many of us to go through them I guess.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** How many were there?

**Norma Welsh:** There's fourteen of us in our family.

**Joe Welsh:** Fourteen.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Wow. That's, that's a big family, but a lot of the families were big back then.

**Norma Welsh:** There were families with twenty-one, twenty-two kids. God knows my mother died having a child. So, I said they were just baby machines, basically. I can't remember too many times not seeing my mother pregnant. She was thirty-nine when she died and she had, actually it was fifteen kids ...

**Joe Welsh:** Fifteen kids.

**Norma Welsh:** ...'cause a sister died when she was two. So I'll, I can't ever remember her except, you know, right after the birth, of course. Maybe two or three months down, the most lot of us are just a year apart, some eleven months, some even two years, which kinda shocks me, you know, but ...

**3:05:52 Sherry Farrell Racette:** Were there, do you remember any midwives in the valley and women that were...

**Norma Welsh:** Oh, my grandma was one. The grandmother there, my aunt, one of my aunts. A lot of the women at that time assisted in births, whether they be aunts or your grandmothers or neighbours even. There was always somebody around to help. And most of us were born at home, too, except, I think, my brother Danny was the first one born in a hospital, and I think that was at Fort Qu'Appelle or Balcarres.

**Joe Welsh:** Balcarres.

**Norma Welsh:** I know that he knows.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** So you were born at home?

**Norma Welsh:** Yeah, the rest of us...

**Joe Welsh:** There was one of us born in the hospital for sure.

**Norma Welsh:** Yeah, the rest were born at home.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** And family would have assisted or, you know, what I mean.

**Norma Welsh:** Most of the time it was the grandparents, the grandmothers, and, you know, my mom's sisters, as well, would assist. My dad's sisters, they all, they all had big families so, you know, they knew everything there was to know about birth, I imagine, except, you know, when there was complications.

**3:06:04 Sherry Farrell Racette:** Right. Do you remember any people that were, would be like practicing traditional medicine or healers, people that knew traditional uses of plants?

**Norma Welsh:** No, I don't know anybody who does that, although there was one family, I think. I'm not sure if it's Jimmy LaRocque's relatives or who I believe are going to, to that kind of thing.

**Joe Welsh:** Well, Billie always says about Bobby's wife, **[?]**, that she has the **[?]**, so I don't know if she's looked upon it as a medicine woman or healer. Our family must have put her, for her to get the knowledge.

**Norma Welsh:** Yeah, there was people who knew about it, but I'm not sure about the practicing, you know.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Did anyone, like, make stuff out of any plants like, you know...

**3:05:59 Norma Welsh:** Sage, we used to use. What else?

**Joe Welsh:** Those roots there.

**Norma Welsh:** Seneca roots?

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** [?], wild ginger, that ginger root?

**Joe Welsh:** They're, well, it's apparently quite been around there, and then there was the roots of the, what are they called? Bulrushes. There's some stuff in there...

**Norma Welsh:** I don't remember ginger root.

**Joe Welsh:** In the [?].

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** They're mostly for colds.

**Joe Welsh:** Poultices and stuff like that.

**Norma Welsh:** Yeah, there was a lot of mint we used to, we call them Seneca roots. I'm not sure what they're called...

**Joe Welsh:** One of them, some people call them wild parsnips or...

**Norma Welsh:** But they weren't that big, like they weren't big or long, like a parsnip. Well, we used to dig up these roots and there would be a little roots about that big, and we can just dig 'em up and eat them, go up in the hill and, and dig them up. The only other things I can remember is the sage, the mint, and...

**Joe Welsh:** Well, what was that, what they call it? [?]? What is that?

**Norma Welsh:** Boom, that's, that's, isn't that mint?

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Yeah, I think it is.

**Norma Welsh:** It is mint, yeah.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Yeah, les boom, yeah, yeah. I forgot that name until you said it—les boom. I don't remember, you know, any other kinds of...

**3:08:37 Joe Welsh:** Yeah, I guess you use stuff like mustard plasters and poultices and, and stuff like that...

**Norma Welsh:** That was a big thing. I tell ya, they worked, those things.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** How would you make one?

**Norma Welsh:** Mustard plaster?

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Yeah.

**Norma Welsh:** You make a paste with flour and dry mustard and water, and you had a, a towel, and you'd spread it on the towel, fold it over, and you may have another towel to wrap it in because it was pretty strong. And they would put it on your chest when you had a chest cold, and believe me when it was finished your chest would be red. It burned, but, you know, it worked. Poultices were bread and water, all boiled, made very hot. You'd put that on boils or any kind of skin irritation and stuff. It worked wonderful on boils because I don't know why in those days people got boils a lot, but, yeah, that was another form. And Mom used to mix a paste of [?] sulphur and molasses, and we would get that to eat in the wintertime.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Sulphur and molasses?

**Norma Welsh:** Yeah. It was very good. I liked it. And also cod liver oil. We had to drink cod liver oil in the wintertime. I can still taste it. Yeah. So ...

**3:10:19 Joe Welsh:** I have a poultice story.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Okay, let's have the poultice story.

**Joe Welsh:** Okay, see at the orphanages we were, you know, in, we're confined to the place, so things were easy to pick up. Somebody'd get a cold, then pretty soon some guy's gonna get measles, [?]. And, well, naturally it happened with boils, and a lot of us, you know, got some, and there was one poor guy, he had a big ugly boil on his neck. And his brother, the way he used to do that, he used to soak a piece of paper or something in gasoline, and they'd put in a coke bottle and light that, and the heat would build up, and he flipped that thing over a boil and, you know, tried to pop it, you know. Oh, hurt like hell. Did that to me once.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Who did that?

**Joe Welsh:** This brother. That was when, it was a quick cure, but it hurt like hell [?].

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** That was a cure?

**Joe Welsh:** Well...

**Norma Welsh:** Sounds like a torture.

**Joe Welsh:** Yeah, right. And then before I got out of there that year that I turned fifteen, I got this one boil on my ass and I couldn't get rid of it no matter what I tried. I almost [?] I put that coke bottle on my ass and then. So, Billie, she made up a bread poultice with, she boiled milk and bread and she made this poultice. She put it on me and that, over night that damn thing went away and I never got it back.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** What kind of poultices did you have?

**Joe Welsh:** There was your bread poultice...

**Norma Welsh:** Well, it would bring it to a head, and then, of course ...

**Joe Welsh:** But it, but it just over night, and it goes away. Torture involved, yeah, you know, the one he stuck the coke bottle [?], oh, Christ. And he did that for lots of guys, you know.

**Norma Welsh:** Maybe he liked torturing?

**Joe Welsh:** Well, I never forget that one guy. He had it on his neck there, right along there, eh. Oh, he screamed. Holy cripe, and then there was couple others waiting in line.

**3:12: 34 Sherry Farrell Racette:** Did you eat a lot of wild game when you were growing up? Did, was there...

**Norma Welsh:** Lots of rabbit and duck and occasionally deer, but I never liked the deer meat. But rabbit and duck was just wonderful. We always used to fight over who's gonna get the head and stuff like that. I tell my kids these stories and they just want to throw up and stuff like that. They think we were nuts, but it was wonderful. And fish, we used to ice fish in the wintertime. And Dad and them would go out and throw nets in the summertime. And this



one time, well, talking about putting up snares for rabbits, my grandpa used to bug Ernie, my Pitchot we called him, my second oldest brother. He used to tease him because he thought Ernie was just the, a brat, you know. And so he found out where Ernie put his, his, his rabbit trap, and he went one morning and put a fish in it. So Ernie comes home and, oh my god, miraculous thing happened. He got a fish in his rabbit snare.

**Joe Welsh:** This was the same guy who slapped the bishop.

**Norma Welsh:** He was quite the character, but we also, Mom would have chickens, and we kept them in house. We lived with them, you know, kept them in the house in the wintertime and...

**Joe Welsh:** And she was the beekeeper at the farm, too.

**Norma Welsh:** Yeah, Dad, both were in that, yeah.

**Joe Welsh:** Yeah, I remember that honeycomb, yeah.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** So did the chickens have their own room or did ...

**Norma Welsh:** I remember waking up in the morning with one perched on your head. The little ones, they were kept in cages kind of thing, you know, but they had to be kept warm in the wintertime, so and then in the spring, of course, you can let them out. So we had chicken with mostly, and then somebody would butcher a pig or something and they'd go out and cure it and that kind of thing. We had a root cellar where we'd keep cured meat, you know, but I liked, actually liked the rabbit better than any other meat. But taste very good. Ducks in the, the hunting season, and I couldn't eat duck now if my life depended on it—just prairie chickens, partridge.

**3:15:16 Farrell Racette:** Were there special recipes that people you used to use there, special...

**Norma Welsh:** Oh, well, not that I can think of. I know, like, you would stuff the ducks and, you know, prairie chickens with, not much you can do with them 'cause there's not much to them. Just cook them in the oven, bake them in the oven. In the summertime we had a stove outside so we could cook outside, 'cause with our family we had to make fifteen loaves of bread, three times a week.

**Joe Welsh:** You know, that's funny she would say that because I remember everything tasting good. No, really, no, really. I, like she said, it was a simple recipe, you know. Even the priest from the, you know, from the, from the frying stuff, you know, [?] they can order biscuits and [?], you know, [?], but, no, I, well, they cooked they kept us for two years and I don't remember anything tasting bad till we got to the orphanage. Bad, exact opposite, you know.

**Norma Welsh:** Yeah, well, we used to dip our bread in grease, you know. And 'cause I don't recall having too much butter. Then when margarine came along, we thought, "Oh my god" That was really something. We'd have to sit there and squeeze this bag till...

**Joe Welsh:** Oh yeah.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Oh, right, to mix it up, yeah, 'cause I remember ...

**[People talk at same time]**

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Some little button as I was, squish it out to make it orange, yeah, that was gross looking.

**Joe Welsh:** You must have been a Catholic [?].

**3:16:52 Norma Welsh:** Oh, yeah, we were on the farm though we made our own butter and we used to, to, we had an old butter churn, and we had a milk separator, so we used to separate the milk and then we'd make butter, and Mom would make cottage, cottage cheese. And it might taste like stinkweed or something, you know, because the cows ate everything and your milk would always taste like whatever it was they had, yeah. Sometimes it was bad. Most of the time.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Milk would taste like stinkweed?

**Norma Welsh:** I mean it smelt like it.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** But you don't, yeah, you don't think of that [?] antiseptic because you were talking about rabbits, and the only time I ate a lot of rabbits was when I was up north, and it always tasted like spruce 'cause that's all they ate.

**Norma Welsh:** Oh, I see.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Like so the rabbits there taste like you're chewing on a juniper berry, like they taste that piney.

**Joe Welsh:** Well, have you ever tasted the prairie rabbit? They have a different taste altogether.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** No, I haven't had actually had a prairie rabbit.

**Joe Welsh:** Well, they're a different taste altogether. Well, I...

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Must be better.

**Joe Welsh:** Well, I can...

**Norma Welsh:** Yeah, we loved it.

**Joe Welsh:** ... [?].

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** [?].

**3:18:10 Norma Welsh:** And, like, if you hear Billie tell about it—now I don't recall this—but grandma used to roast gophers out on the, we'd build a fire outside and she'd roast gophers. Apparently we ate...

**Joe Welsh:** And we always talked about, you know, Billie, about a [?], called swiss de braro[?]. [?] you figure it's a ground hog.

**Norma Welsh:** Oh, a swiss de braro[?], as far as I know, is a squirrel with a big tail. The one with a fluffy tail. Isn't that right, or do they all have fluffy...

**Joe Welsh:** No, well, the ground hogs would be different depending on where you are. We call them ground squirrels, so...

**Norma Welsh:** Oh, I see, yeah, okay.

**Joe Welsh:** Now, okay, well...

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** How did you say that again?

**Joe Welsh:** Swiss de braro[?]. And for the longest time, you know, when someone would make cheese or Mexican dish or, you know, something like that, but, but a little too long, there's two versions. The ground squirrel, ground hog, or, and, maybe you said a nickname before, Swiss that's [?].

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Swiss de braro[?]?

**Joe Welsh:** No, somebody's nickname was La Swiss, but, but...

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** How would you cook those? They're kinda little.

**Joe Welsh:** A squirrel, yeah, that's why [?] squirrel's [?] great nice big fat ground hog, you could you could get some meat on 'em.

**Norma Welsh:** Well, apparently Grandma roasted them on a stick over the fire that...

**Joe Welsh:** [?] squirrel legs.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** I was gonna say, jeez, yeah, I'll have to try that sometime at the next Lebret homecoming.

**[People talk at same time.]**

**Norma Welsh:** She said it was good. I don't know, I don't remember eating, so...

**3:20:10 Sherry Farrell Racette:** You should have known [?] anyway. Well, the reason I'm asking about food is because the women in your family do have, like, the best reputations for cooking, like, known far and wide for your, for your, you know, very good and, and, you know, a lot of the traditional cooking as well.

**Norma Welsh:** Well, Billie and I have always done most of the baking and the cooking and stuff like that, like our traditional foods, and we still do it,

like Gabriel Dumont poultice for bannock or bangs or whatever. I've made tons of pies, Saskatoon pies, for people and...

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Eaten some of them.

**Norma Welsh:** And I'm hoping there's a lot this year because I'm just about out [?], but, yeah, we've always kept that up, making a roubabou [?] or whatever we called it, you know.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Your rabbit stew?

**Norma Welsh:** Yeah, yeah.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** What would you put in it, what would they use to put in it?

**3:21:00 Norma Welsh:** Well, we just use, now we just use hamburger, you know, make, make meatballs and do that, and I guess that's it. We don't eat rabbit anymore, but we do, do the baking kind of thing, like, but we've always kept up our, our traditional baking.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** With your, also when you see the stuffed ducks, what kind of stuffing, like, would your mom have put in there. I was just wondering what kind of stuff you...

**Norma Welsh:** Just a regular bread stuffing, but you always used sage for, for the spice.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** So she would probably just collect that in the valley, eh?

**Norma Welsh:** Yeah, and I use sage in mine, too, because in my mind it makes the best, the best tasting dressing, but that's what you would use, you know, your salt and pepper. And, of course, at that time it's homemade bread, makes the most wonderful stuffing. You know, today it's just kind of bland, you know.

**Joe Welsh:** Yeah, you stuffed them pretty damn good, you [?].

**Norma Welsh:** We feed Joey all the time.

**[People talk at same time]**

**Norma Welsh:** ...and cake and chocolates and chicken dumplings and he made it.

**3:22:25 Joe Welsh:** See, that, that's why, you know, the, being monetarily poor, and having just those simple resources there, that they can make dirt faces of me. [?], you know, the, the, the, they can nip it to the, you know, to, to little brothers and sisters and roam. Mom there can take of them, that maybe that's why I never [?]. Like duck, I remember I used to like it, you know, when, when they, they took, I only had one, you know. Sometimes we were lucky that, you know, to have food like that, but the preparation, like, I never ever understood it, but it was always like a feast.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Like, fifteen loaves of bread a week would be that, you would have to make...

**Norma Welsh:** Oh, that's [?], you have to make it, yeah, because a lot of times that was our basic, you know, that was our breakfast food and that.

**3:23:30 Joe Welsh:** To make the toast, you sort of, top of the stove...

**Norma Welsh:** Yeah, on top of the stove.

**Joe Welsh:** ...melt the butter and just pour it on top of the toast there, and a big spoon full of honey or syrup, and lasted a couple hours.

**Norma Welsh:** Yeah, we used to have a lot of syrup and honey 'cause Dad used to work with bees, and, and he would just bring the whole cone home, eh, and we'd just eat off that. Oh, it was wonderful, and my uncle used to, Dad's brother used to go, he would hunt ducks every year. So we'd always have ducks. He would, you know, always have enough for us, too. And fish soup, you know, fish soup is wonderful.

**Joe Welsh:** It was at that.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** I've never had fish soup.

**Joe Welsh:** Oh, it's wonderful.

**Joe Welsh:** Suckerheads, and now you, I wouldn't look twice at it. But I remember they don't [?], you know...

**Norma Welsh:** Those suckers are so ugly.

**Joe Welsh:** They see them boiling there, eyes looking up at you, fish frying, but it was real good.

**Norma Welsh:** It was good, yeah.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** I've never had fish soup, but I bet it would be really good.

**Norma Welsh:** Yeah, it is.



**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Well, we're gonna take a break.

**[No Audio]**

**4:02:19 Joe Welsh:** ...there are three Frank Amyottes there. There's ten, twelve Amyotte families in that, where I was I was told anyway, that **[?]** came from, his family.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** So when you look, the lady that's in the picture back there, she is, what's her name?

**Norma Welsh:** She's a Blondeau, Josephine Blondeau.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Josephine Blondeau? And she's the one who married, who did she marry?

**Norma Welsh:** Joseph Amyotte.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Joseph Amyotte. Do you have any idea when this picture might have been taken or...

**Norma Welsh:** Well, that's my oldest aunt. She was the first child in, in the family, and Auntie Agnes died out, oh, twelve, thirteen years ago probably, and she was ninety-three when she died.

**Joe Welsh:** So born in 1800 or late 1800, 1890s, yeah.

**4:03:17 Sherry Farrell Racette:** So you remember some of those old fellas, eh? They were still around your grandparents and your great grandparents?

**Norma Welsh:** I don't remember my great grandmother, my Mooshum Johnny's wife. I, I don't recall her at all, but I remember him because my grandma looked after him.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** What did he look like? What did those old people look like?

**Norma Welsh:** Well, he was tall, regal looking, like, similar to Mooshum St. Pierre, eh. He was, but, see, when I knew him he was bedridden.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Okay.

**Norma Welsh:** So he was, but he was tall, very skinny, dark, handsome man.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** What about your Mooshum St. Pierre?

**Norma Welsh:** He wasn't my real Mooshum, but we used to call everybody Mooshum in those days, and Kokum, but, yeah, he was, too. He was quite a, a tall handsome man and he was married to my dad's aunt. She would be Norbert Welsh's daughter.

**Joe Welsh:** Norbert Welsh's daughter.

**Norma Welsh:** She was Mooshum Francois' sister.

**4:04:33 Sherry Farrell Racette:** Did any of the old guys that you remember, did any of them have long hair or longer hair or big beards or ...

**Norma Welsh:** Well, my Mooshum St. Pierre had a big beard and so did Grandpa Amyotte, but he didn't have long hair.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** [?].

**Norma Welsh:** Yeah, I don't recall them having hair, like, that long.

**4:04:58 Sherry Farrell Racette:** Did you ever see any of them, like, did any of them dress old fashioned, or have anything about their dress that made them stand out?

**Norma Welsh:** Well, just I think they all looked the same. They all wear the same kind of clothing, like, what is in the picture there, you know.

**Joe Welsh:** You could, remember that picture that Billie showed us of Mooshum St. Pierre and their, their anniversary? He, I don't know how old he was, but he was still, like you said...

**Norma Welsh:** He was very straight.

**Joe Welsh:** ...Beverly Hillbillies when Jed Clampett dresses up in his tuxedo, and that [?], that's how that's what he looked like.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Jed Clampett [?].

**Joe Welsh:** Well, the way he dressed, yeah, a real classy thing with the bow tie and that, that starched bib.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Oh yeah.

**Joe Welsh:** I don't know if it was a Prince Albert jacket, but it looked like a pretty, pretty fashionable thing, you know, for, for a photograph or something like that.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Yeah, I remember that now.

**Joe Welsh:** But then she had a picture of old F.X., who, the most decent thing on him was a hat like that, but in his old shirt, elbows are torn out and all the buttons are off, and he had this old pair of pants and knees are worn out and...

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Who's old F.X.?

**Joe Welsh:** Our Grandfather Welsh who, yeah, but, but he, I guess he never was a fashion plate [?].

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** So his name was Francois...

**Joe Welsh:** Francois Xavier, yeah, yeah. But, but there was a contrast between the two, and then we have that picture of Grandma and Grandpa Amyotte where she has that—is it a nape she has on?

**Norma Welsh:** Yeah, old fur coat, and it's too short on her, and she hasn't got it buttoned up and the sleeves are way up here, yeah.

**Joe Welsh:** You remember those old stoles that they [?]. I think, no, it's a fox.

**Norma Welsh:** Oh, I can't remember what it was, but yeah.

**Joe Welsh:** And then he is not, well, I'm, you know, he's an old plaid shirt on and braces and stuff like that, but I remember most of those old time pictures, I thought in ten years I'm gonna look like that, but that bugger had hands that big, that wide. Hands of a working man who [?] all his life.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Yeah, they were pretty hard, yeah, but a lot of people have talked about how sort of proud the older people were.

**4:07:23 Norma Welsh:** Yeah, they, they were very proud people. They'd probably be turning over in the graves if they saw what's going on today, you know. But Grandpa Amyotte had two, well, two brothers that I know of, and we just found out in the last couple years he had four sisters we never knew.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Oh really?

**Norma Welsh:** We never knew it, we never knew where he came from or anything, but Dan, Dan Amyotte, apparently he's got a homestead quarter in Alberta there.

**Joe Welsh:** Right up north there, Peace River country.

**Norma Welsh:** Yeah, Peace River, yeah. And he left North Dakota because he deserted his wife, and in those days you couldn't. They would shoot you for desertion. That's what I learned. And, and the other one is a half-brother to Grandpa Amyotte, and he used to go back to Turtle Mountain, like, maybe once a year or something, and he always had money when he came back. And as far as I know, Grandpa Amyotte owned property down there, as well. Land, anyway. And I know, and did Dad sign that away or what happened there?

**Joe Welsh:** I remember how we were at [?] for some in later years later, but apparently they had these oil rights, were somebody's oil rights, each of us got a check for fourteen bucks or some [?] and, you know ...

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** [?].

**Norma Welsh:** Damn right. And those, those gave up for our oil rights to, you know, to whatever oil company, it was probably made trillion on that, those damn rights.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Wonder where that was?

**Norma Welsh:** Well, I have a copy of the letter some. Let me, I'll get it to you...

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** It'd be, just be interesting.

**Norma Welsh:** Yeah, yeah, but I think I even got the letter, copies of the letter.

**Norma Welsh:** I got a letter, yeah. It was written to Madeline, yeah, my sister Madeline.

**Joe Welsh:** 'Cause she was the oldest one, and then I guess the priest who was considered our legal guardian was, you know, the, his signature was required, too, as a witness or somebody in authority. I don't know. But that Madeline's signature's on there's, the oldest one to sign away our millions.

**Norma Welsh:** I was already in B.C. when this letter came up. I never got my fourteen dollars.

**Joe Welsh:** Okay, and Madeline, a couple years after we got out of the orphanage, we got another. It was eighteen bucks or something. That time [?] me and Cec got it for sure 'cause we were living with Dad. I don't know if, if Danny and Gary or anybody else, but I remember me, my sister Cec and I, we each got a check for eighteen bucks or something, and I guess, I was for sure, "Go buy this [?]."

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** You got twenty-two bucks coming to you.

**Norma Welsh:** That's a lot of money today, but what I found strange is my, they told that Dad signed a paper of some sort and, and, you know, took away our right to anything. Just signed it over to a lawyer came into town.

**Joe Welsh:** The lawyer was the trustee of the estate.

**Norma Welsh:** Of the estate, yeah. So I don't really know what happened because I wasn't here at the time, but there was always that question, and I remember Jeff Amyotte my cousin going to Belcourt to the reserve, and he was told that you had to go, he would have to go to vital statistics to find about out about this property or anything else we want to know about Grandpa. And I, I don't think he ever went, no. But he did find out, like, his wife's name was Leclair, I think it was Leclair, something like that. Like, see, we didn't even know if we had aunts, like, that he had any sisters, so we thought...

**4:11:51 Sherry Farrell Racette:** So you didn't know his family very well?

**Norma Welsh:** No, no. I never knew Dan, like, and this is my understanding. I was living in Quennel, B.C., and I was working in the post office there and this old—what are they called?—old miner used to come in and get his mail once a month, and his name was Dan Amyotte. And I always wanted to ask him, you know, but I, I, I just never got enough courage to ask him. And after I left Quennel he passed away, and my Uncle Larry and my brother, oldest brother went to Quennel to find his grave, and sure enough it, it was him. But, see, he was spelling his name different. He spelled it A-M-I-O-T.

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

**Norma Welsh:** But they, they looked up in the, looked up the obituary, and it was...

**Joe Welsh:** [?].

**Norma Welsh:** Grandpa Amyotte's brother. So he was out there, pan, panhandling or whatever it is they do for...

**Joe Welsh:** Panning for gold.

**Norma Welsh:** Panning for gold, yeah, 'cause he lived up in the area where they were, the Klondike and all that the gold rush was. So I guess I, I met him and I talked to him briefly and several times a year, but I never knew it was him.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** But you suspected?

**Norma Welsh:** Yeah, and he was a, oh, had white hair. There was a guy that had white hair all the way down here and his whole face was covered with white hair, like, big long beard and moustache. I just, I was, I was excited, you know, that I knew this guy. I didn't know him, but I wish I'd known. I would have taken a picture of him. You know, because as far as I know there are no pictures of him. So he's, that was Dan, and the other old guy, when he passed away, well, I was in Quennel or B.C., but he was a half brother.

**4:14:11 Sherry Farrell Racette:** Did any of the older people ever talk about, you know, the life that they lived before they came to Lebret? Like, did they were there any stories about buffalo hunts or anything about the Rebellion or anything like that that you remember, or did people not talk much about it?

**Norma Welsh:** I, I never heard them talk about it.



**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Never heard them talk about it.

**Norma Welsh:** No. No, they didn't talk about buffalo hunts or anything.

**Joe Welsh:** Well, yeah, you really tell it 'cause in Norbert's biography there...

**Norma Welsh:** And then I'm told a lot of that is questionable.

**Joe Welsh:** Well, the, I was always curious about what she might have left out of that book.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** I looked for the original manuscript.

**Joe Welsh:** It's in the archives.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Is it?

**Joe Welsh:** They were handwritten. I saw it.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Did you?

**Joe Welsh:** Yeah, and, but I ...

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Oh, I wasn't able to find it.

**Joe Welsh:** There were [?] as well, for that did they what their [?]. I know there's some stuff that they won't let people see, for their own good, I guess, but I was always curious if she left some stuff out of that, and there was letters there between her and Hudson Bay Company in both in Winnipeg and then Montreal and Princeton and stuff like that. And they're handwritten manuscript, but I couldn't read most of it. You know, if there's a, a type-

written copy of the original or what she submitted to the publisher, so I don't know what the edits were or anything like that.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Well, it's, yeah, because, you know, when you look at the time period, sometimes they leave things out that, you know, for whatever reasons, because they, they had their ideas about what was proper and what wasn't, and sometimes the really interesting stuff is what they, what they leave out. So, was that 'cause when was that book done? That was in...

**Joe Welsh:** '32, was it? In the '30s, I think.

**Norma Welsh:** Yeah, 'cause I think he died in '34 or something.

**Joe Welsh:** And then it was republished by I think it was Fifth House here in Saskatoon about '93, '94, around then.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** So did you ever know him, did you ever see him or...

**Norma Welsh:** No.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** No. So I guess that was just, like, those old guys had passed.

**Norma Welsh:** Well, I was born in '34, so I wouldn't have known him.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** You would have been a baby or not born yet.

**Norma Welsh:** No.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Yeah.

**Norma Welsh:** But no, I never, never saw him.

**4:16:56 Sherry Farrell Racette:** Did people still have house parties and sort of, like, old time, you know, with the jigging and the fiddling and stuff when you were growing up?

**Norma Welsh:** Oh, yeah.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Oh, yeah?

**Norma Welsh:** That was just such a fun part of our lives, like, and everybody's all, like, mom and dad would go and make, take all us kids. We all went, hitch up the, the wagon, or in the wintertime it would be the sleigh. We would go, and LaRocques have a quite a few good parties. And everywhere we went, like, the women were just marvellous dancers and they'd be square dancing and jigging, and these kids would be watching in awe, you know, they were so good at it. And there'd be some pretty big women and just light as a feather on their feet. And this happened, actually, you know. And especially in the summertime, quite often we'd be at somebody else's place each time, you know, and you could see the, the, of course, the floor was just boards, you know, the boards would just be shaking and moving up and down, but it was a wonderful experience going to that.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** What, what was it about the women's dancing that made it stand out so...

**Norma Welsh:** Well, to me it was how light they were on their feet, you know, and even one of the old ladies could play the fiddle. They could call a square dance and they were just really wonderful at what they did.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Who played the fiddle? What woman played the fiddle?

**Norma Welsh:** I don't know if I'm supposed to give names, but Cliff Larocque's mom.

**Joe Welsh:** [?].

**Norma Welsh:** She used to, she used to play the fiddle. And there was always somebody, even my dad could play the fiddle. There was always somebody that had a fiddle and that's all. There would be no other instruments, just fiddles, and it was marvellous. And we'd sing, of course, we'd have singsongs, too. So it was quite fun.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Was there anybody that, say, sang any French songs, or songs in Michif? Actually, I remember Jimmy Parisien could sing songs in Michif. I heard him sing songs in Michif.

**Norma Welsh:** I don't remember.

**Joe Welsh:** I remember there, there were a couple, there was, they were called, they, they were French songs from France, from [?], and there was one about three ducks [?].

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Oh, oh, yeah.

**Joe Welsh:** And there was a voyageur song [sings song]. And that's all I remember.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** But it's amazing, like, how many generations some of those songs must have travelled down, to still be part of, you know, your life growing up, like, that's hundreds of years, you know.

**Norma Welsh:** Well, my dad spoke French and he could sing in French, you know. He used to converse with the priests. Like, a lot of them just spoke French and, of course, Grandpa, Grandma—I believe she's from Quebec—Grandma Welsh. 'Cause in the, in the family thing that Dennis did, it shows she was from Quebec. Exactly where I can't remember. Reading it now, have to go back and read it some more, but my son did a, a family tree going back to fourteen generations, and, oh my gosh, I think I'm related to everybody in Canada. Including the [?].

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Oh, yeah, yeah, [?] is so big, yeah.

**Norma Welsh:** I remember Welshs, Chartier's mother was a [?], yeah, Boyers.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** She was from James Bay or Hudson's Bay? She was from way up north?

**Norma Welsh:** Yeah.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** I found her scrip application.

**Norma Welsh:** Yeah, I've got that, too, that's in that package Dennis did, yeah. So it was very interesting, and a lot of these people were from all over, like, Paris, Europe, all way back when.

**Joe Welsh:** Germany.

**Norma Welsh:** Yeah, Germany.

**4:21:47 Sherry Farrell Racette:** When you went to the, went to the dances, did people have jigging contests? Do you remember people having jigging contests?

**Norma Welsh:** No, no, we just went up there. Was just usually house parties. I know there were jigging parties around, like, contests and stuff, but we were never at them.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** It was mostly square dancing that people did.

**Norma Welsh:** Yeah. And there'd be jigging, too. I think everybody in the world could jig at that time. But that was our entertainment, though, and it was wonderful.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Do you remember how they used to jig?

**Norma Welsh:** Well, I seen a lot of it on tv, like, the way they, they, they jig, and most of it is was the same.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** The same?

**Norma Welsh:** Yeah.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Did the men and women dance the same, or were there differences between the men and women?

**Norma Welsh:** I, I can't remember any differences. Like, a lot of the jigging there, there was no really high stepping, you know. I noticed some jiggers really step high, but I, as far as I can remember, it was the same.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** So the, the steps were lower?

**Norma Welsh:** Yeah.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** So there wasn't as much. I just find it interesting because sometimes when people watch, they say, "Oh, that's not right, that's not right."

**Joe Welsh:** Yeah, yeah. Especially in Batoche there.

**4:23:11 Sherry Farrell Racette:** Yeah, yeah, at Batoche. But there are changes. That does, does change over time. Do you remember people having, I guess we would call them superstitions, or just sort of little beliefs that they would have, that they would incorporate into their daily life, like things that people would do with, during thunderstorms or anything like that?

**Norma Welsh:** Yeah, my mother would cover all the mirrors in the house.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Yeah, cover the mirrors. Did she ever say why?

**Norma Welsh:** No, we, we always wondered why, you know, she was terrified, and that, I think, was why most of us got scared of them too, but it was also part of the church, but, and there was also that time if you looked at somebody who had a defect, you know, your baby was gonna look like that.

**Joe Welsh:** There was a "don't stand, don't look out the window because you'll attract the lightning." So there was, like, I remember this as a little kid—"Don't stand there, hide under the bed."

**Norma Welsh:** Yeah, right, used to be protected when you hide under the bed. But see...

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Did anyone, did they burn anything or do anything for a protection, do you remember?

**Norma Welsh:** Well, I remember burning candles.

**Joe Welsh:** And how about the palms, from Palm Sunday.

**Norma Welsh:** Yeah, yeah, but that was a Catholic thing, yeah.

**Joe Welsh:** Okay, yeah, but do I remember burning, but do you remember why?

**Norma Welsh:** I can't remember why and I can't remember the name of it either.

**Joe Welsh:** Okay, well, there was a feast on Ash Wednesday. They laid the ashes out of the palms from last year, but they were times during the year ...

**Norma Welsh:** Yeah, that you could use it.

**Joe Welsh:** ...but even, now, to relate it to some, like a thunderstorm or a rainstorm made some. I don't, I don't remember that, but the, to keep away spirits or evil or something, there was a time ...

**Norma Welsh:** That's right.

**Joe Welsh:** ...that you're allowed to burn the palm and or spread the ashes or...

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** For protection?



**Joe Welsh:** ...for protection, yeah, yeah. And 'cause on Ash Wednesday the priest used to get [?] and draw the cross on your forehead, and you weren't allowed to wash it off. You had to keep it there ...

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Eventually wore off.

**4:25:36 Joe Welsh:** Yeah, well, I guess you took a, well, you'd sleep on it or something or you got into a fight or rolled around on the snow or something, but if you touched it, you couldn't touch it with your hands. And, oh, the other time there, there was another one. There's now, this is how, how, by the way, it's funny to remember stuff like this. There was actually a saint to whom you would pray if we got a fish bone stuck in our throat. Honest to Christ, and it was [?], it was before Lent happened anyway, and Saint [?], is a French saint. Here's where the candles came in. You'd have to go to mass and the priest would have two candles and, you know, like that and he'd put 'em on a [?] with something, something to do with fire [?] may you never get a fish hook stuck in your throat, and if you didn't pray to this guy and fish won't come out, but you couldn't go to mass on that particular day. There was a ritual that the old people could do at home. I don't know if it was grandparents or parents or...

**Norma Welsh:** I don't remember that 'cause I don't recall ever seeing the ritual that, that, other than the church thing.

**Joe Welsh:** Okay, I had, 'cause I was too young at the time, but later on I hear this from different old people that, that I would talk with, that how, how trivial it is. I mean, that you had a fish bone stuck in your throat, there was actually a saint and there was ritual to this saint, and then if you couldn't get the mass on that saint's day, then the authority was passed on to grandparents or parents or some other elder.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** I guess you gotta get a lot of fish protection.

**Joe Welsh:** Oh, every damn Friday there was something.

**Norma Welsh:** Oh, yeah, for how many years, every Friday that's...

**4:27:48 Sherry Farrell Racette:** Anything else that people did or were told not to do? And usually it was in, in sort of cautionary, you know, don't do this or don't...

**Norma Welsh:** Well, there was that Lent thing.

**Joe Welsh:** [?] You sleep with your shoes on the wrong feet, you'll get a bear.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Bear, yeah.

**Joe Welsh:** You heard that one too? And there was something to do if you eat something or did something before you went to bed, you'd wet the bed.

**Norma Welsh:** Oh, yeah, I'm trying to think of that one. Oh, god, what was it? I can't, I can't remember. I might remember it later.

**4:28:28 Joe Welsh:** Oh, this is a, there was a guy in Le Bret, his name was Gus Varjeanotte.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Oh, yeah, he married a Blondeau, right? My aunt, my grandma's sister.

**Joe Welsh:** And he, he was supposed to have some, some spiritual power, like, or some spiritual connection, and do whatever is beyond us. And then there, when somebody died they would, there was road allowance community up there, they would call Gus Var and he'd come over and read

the rosary. And there is a another belief that, well, I learned this from that old guy who told me about the about the Rou Garou, that in his spirituality when somebody died, that instead of angels or somebody coming to get you, that there would be a horse, the stallion. And they described the stallion one, you know, white and black with a great flowing mane and the hooves, you know, pounding and pounding, and smoke coming out of his nostrils. And this was something not to fear, but to look forward to, and I remember that after mother died, old Gus [?] came over led us in the rosary. And I never told this to anybody for till thirty, forty years later, that when he was praying, I swear to god that I was five year old or four years old, that I heard those hoof beats going around the house three times and then away. And it, I always kept that to myself until this old guy told me about this and I started telling everybody else.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** [?].

**Joe Welsh:** I thought I...

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** So it made sense?

**Joe Welsh:** Yes, and it made sense to me, but, and then, and I remembered that. The, our Auntie Margaret, she, she put out a [?] one night on a, on a cold autumn night, and she was pretty elderly, and she was into the advanced stages of Alzheimer's, and she died by the railroad track on the way, on the way to Lebret.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** When was that?

**Joe Welsh:** Oh, this was about seven, eight years ago.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Yeah, that's not that long ago.

**Norma Welsh:** It's more than that because I still lived on Dewdney Avenue.

**Joe Welsh:** Oh, okay, yeah, 'cause I was in La Ronge. Yeah, it was over ten years ago.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** I think I remember that, yeah.

**Norma Welsh:** It was in October, it was Thanksgiving, or either just shortly before or after, or after.

**Joe Welsh:** So that was over ten year, ten year, but Billie and the whole bunch of us out there to go look for her, and I don't know who there was [?]. Her daughter found her, but when they found her, she had said she saw these horses nearby and nobody else saw them.

**Norma Welsh:** Yeah, I saw them, saw their belly, yeah, we saw them. The horses were running wild, like, just running around in circles kind of thing, and Billie pointed it out to me. She said, "Look at the horses."

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** 'Cause there actually aren't horses right around there, generally, you know what I mean? It's not something that you would see...

**Norma Welsh:** But she would, she died in the, in bulrushes, like there was bulrushes along the track. She took her jacket off and folded it and made herself a pillow.

**Joe Welsh:** So the three of you saw the horses then?

**Norma Welsh:** Yeah, they saw the horses. So did Madeline.

**Joe Welsh:** The four of you?

**Norma Welsh:** Yeah, we were all down there looking for her.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** And they were running around?

**Norma Welsh:** Yeah, they were, like, going wild kind of, like.

**Joe Welsh:** So we edit the part where I say [?].

**Norma Welsh:** Yeah, no, we saw it, too. I saw it.

**Joe Welsh:** [?]. I was in La Ronge at the time, so ...

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** You got the story third, fourth hand.

**Joe Welsh:** Yeah.

**Norma Welsh:** No, we saw it and that was pointed out to me right away.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Well, there were real horse people, so it makes sense that, that they would have some part, like, that horses would have a part in, in, you know, people's spiritual beliefs 'cause they were so important to people. But I can just see that horse the way you describe it.

**Joe Welsh:** Oh, yeah.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Yeah, I can just ...

**Norma Welsh:** Very vivid.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Yes, yeah, yeah.

**Norma Welsh:** But there was lot of little quirks, I think, and, you know, right now I can't think of them 'cause I know there's more than a couple.

**4:33:02 Sherry Farrell Racette:** Well, what's good luck? What's good luck? If you think of good luck, you know, 'cause it seems to be that's often when it's, there's around death, there's beliefs around death, and a lot around usually around luck. This is bad luck, this is good luck. You know, some of them are common, but some of them are, I think—what about hair? Do you have any around hair? I remember I was cleaning my hairbrush and I threw it on the street, and my mom was scrambling around to pick it up and she wouldn't tell me why, and I found out after it was because it was belief, it was bad luck to do that, you know, [?].

**Joe Welsh:** Well, there, there's one that by, again, from around there, where if you were, if you were in love with someone and it was unrequited love, that if—who was that old, [?], his wife, she was a, a love connection. If you got a strand of hair from the one that you were in love with, and when you get home you take it to, to [?]'s wife and she would do a ritual. And she'd twine those hairs and give it back, and that would guarantee that the one you were in love with would, would return the love. And then there was another one about the same kind of thing. The woman from Piapot reserve told me this one, that, that there was a, a mixture of such natural herbs and spices that you would get, and you would invite this person over for a meal, and you would speckle these things on his or her food there.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** [?].

**Joe Welsh:** Yeah, but she says, "Don't make a mistake because if you give that, your mother or your dad or your cousin Bill, bad trouble."

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Gotta make sure the right person [?].

**Joe Welsh:** Right, yeah. But there's usual ones with no salt and mirrors and stuff like that.

**Norma Welsh:** Yeah, [?].

**4:35:24 Joe Welsh:** But my [?] told me one that I found quite intriguing, and I have it on tape someplace and I don't remember it, but it had something to do with possession by, if somebody would bury you to go, if had cards and stuff. You cut the jack of spades to go and meet the Devil. Well, you take this card and carry it around the house seven times, and if you can make it then you will meet the Devil. And this was, if you met the Devil, he, he would possess you. And now, to be dispossessed, I guess, required the presence of a priest and prayer and some kind of ritual that involved a reversal of the process. You know that [?] I've been looking had them damn paper for those seven, eight years now. You'd have the whole story and the way she described it, like, you, you heard, well, this she was just animated in her look at you, just engulf you. Don't you [?], you know, her, and as you described the priest, the eyes of a saint, oh boy, he had this power when he come through the house. And she looked at Jim's eyes, and Jim was possessed by the Devil, and he, the priest, he was so afraid that he couldn't do this. But he had the eyes of the saint and he took him and held him and fought with the Devil and made us do things, and got somebody to reverse the process of running on a, you know, around the house counter-clockwise or clockwise, whatever the direction was, and he held on to Jim until this was here. And, but those eyes of a saint, he drew that Devil out of him and sent him right back to hell.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** You gotta find that.

**Joe Welsh:** Oh, you're darned rights I gotta find that now.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** But it was very real to people. It's still real to people. When you look, it's very real.

**Norma Welsh:** A lot of that stuff revolved around religion.

**4:38:01 Joe Welsh:** But, but there was [?] the, the way it was mixed at first with the, the Christian, the Catholic, and the Indian cultures and more, and how it got meshed into ours, how they made it ours, with the two influences, [?] ...

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** It's sort of distinct Métis, you know, and that's just this combination, because there'd be people saying, "Oh, that's Catholic." I'm going, "Well, not, not [?], you know, suburban, some place, that's not what they do, you know." It's different, different traditions, but Catholicism is, like, that it will in regions. It will have quite a distinct, like, Irish Catholicism and Mexican Catholicism, and, you know, Native Catholicism, they're really different, but they have some common things. But there's, there was, people were really, though, devout Catholics for the most part [?], it was very meaningful to them. When did people start sort of turning away from that, or do you know what caused them to turn away from that?

**Norma Welsh:** I don't know for anybody else, but it happened to me after my mother died and she wasn't that devoted Catholic. My dad was more into the religion than she was, but after she died I never went back again. It was at that time I was told the doctor told my mother that she shouldn't have any more kids, and because she would probably die, and the story was that she went to the Catholic priest and he told her, like, the doctor wanted to abort the baby. I mean this is when she was only a couple months pregnant, and the priest told her she couldn't do that, it was a mortal sin, and so she carried the baby...



**4:40:06 Sherry Farrell Racette:** But it was, it was very hard on women, you know, because I know the, there were a number of other traditional beliefs that was discouraged by the Church, like extended breast feeding, which used to be a form of natural birth control, and then that was discouraged. That was dirty or it was gross or something, but as long as you were breastfeeding, you weren't likely to, to get pregnant again...

**Norma Welsh:** And that's not true either.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** And a lot of people used to take herbs and stuff, but they would miscarry early on in the pregnancy so that, like, I know in some places, like First Nations belief it was, like, considered to be life threatening to give a woman more than one child to carry. Because if you were in a dangerous situation, you had to, you couldn't choose, you know, to have, so that spaced out the children so that you never had more than one child that you had to carry in your arms. If you had to nap, the others had to be able to, to run.

**Joe Welsh:** And when we were talking school there, that, and I don't want to make light of it, but I just can't help with that it was, God said to whoever that the bigger the family that you had, it was more pleasing to him, and, and that if what was it, I don't know, if you had over ten, and the eleventh one became a priest or a nun, that was especially pleasing, and the parents would be guaranteed a place in heaven. And it was all mind control. That we left at that particular originate at different times for different reasons, but, you know, talking with other brothers and sisters and other people with the Church, it was about the mind control. When we go into confession, she, she said at seven years old, we had to invent sins. Well, seven years...

**Norma Welsh:** Lie about...

**Joe Welsh:** Yes, seven years old children cannot commit sins. I mean the, the, the, I mean you're still in your innocence, and the, the concept of, of offending a, a being, a god is, I mean, it's a little numbing and it's just, it builds in here. So I attended Catholic school all my life, and up to seventeen or eighteen I had thoughts of, of being a priest, but all these things that, you know, that I was raised with and other people were raised with this [?]. "Oh, this can't be true, this can't be true, this can't be true," and there's too many damn rules, and there are too many people saying this is what God said. Somebody [?]. Well, no, God didn't say that, he said this. And all the different sects of Christianity, you know, the Protestants, and the fundamentalists, and the Catholics, and all these kinds of things. They, they're not united in their, in their attack, you know, so that when we've discovered that we can think for ourselves and still be decent, respectable people, you know. You screw up once in a while and, but used to be called a sin, but it's not a sin, a mistake, or [?] stupidity. So, and it doesn't, whatever I believe, I don't believe I'm accountable to anybody for, but I have something that I believe in and I try to follow it. And the other thing, but, you know, he talks of other people, is a willingness of people to impose upon somebody else to do, willingness of some people, to ridicule or condemn someone else who doesn't believe in the same thing that that they do.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** It's frightening when you think of the control that, that the Church once had on the people.

**Joe Welsh:** Yes, and it's frightening the power that it still has, you know. I know people who are, who are devout Christians in, you know, in Catholic Church or in any kind of church, and they, they still don't believe that they're allowed to think for themselves, that they can let other people say to tell them what is right and wrong, and they accept that.

**4:44:27 Sherry Farrell Racette:** When you were going to church as a child, were you going to the big church in Lebret? Was that the big one and you went, so then you would come in from different distances?

**Norma Welsh:** Wherever we were, yeah.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Wherever you were.

**Norma Welsh:** Walking mostly in the summer time, mostly walking if we had the horses and sleigh in the wintertime, that's how we would go, but it was every Sunday, and I can't remember now what the night's benediction was. It was either Thursday or Friday night. And all through Lent you'd be going just about every day to church. And, like, what can you confess every day, you know?

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** You have to really be bad during the day.

**Norma Welsh:** Yeah, I remember by the time I was twelve, thirteen the priest asking me, and, and this, like, I couldn't understand what he was thinking at that time, but he would ask me if I touched myself.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Oh, really?

**Norma Welsh:** And I'd say, yeah, I touched myself, I could, I wash my face every day and brush my teeth, you know. Of course, I touch myself. But I didn't, I didn't know what that meant, like, I thought he was strange for asking me that.

**Joe Welsh:** Everything was dirty.

**Norma Welsh:** Yeah.

**Sherry Farrell Racette:** Yeah, that's sensitive.

**Norma Welsh:** And then, like, you know, I, I don't blame them anymore for my mother's death, you know, but at that time I didn't, just something I never got over. So...

**4:46:04 Sherry Farrell Racette:** Well, I think we'll take a break for lunch now. When we come back, I want you to talk about the Métis Farm because we haven't really talked to anybody about living on the Métis Farm.