

Lloyd Bercier Interview by Norman Fleury – English Paraphrase

Born Boggy Creek.

Dad Henry Bercier, Mother Annie Lafontaine

Dad born in Canada, Mom born in the States, Belcourt, ND.

Mom still has land in the States. Mom said don't bother with the land. In case of war, you will be conscripted. I don't want you to go to war. We still own the land. We were seven in the family. Two girls, one died at two years old, and five boys. There are only one sister and I living. We lived around Boggy Creek and Roblin, and Winnipeg later.

Two brothers died in Winnipeg. The others died in Winnipeg. They are buried in San Clara, Mom and Dad also.

Didn't know Dad's parents, they died. I knew my mom's dad. He is buried in Yorkton. I didn't know her mom, she also died. My grandfather died in 1960 around there. These are the Lafontaines. I have a cousin Willy Lafontaine in Saskatoon.

There were a lot of girls married and don't know their married names.

People worked in the bush with pulp in San Clara and Boggy Creek. Dad went to Red Deer lake from Boggy Creek with horses. Took feed and hay along and also Mafeking, MB.

Didn't know Dad too well. He was always away. Dad died in in 1956 on his trap line, in a tent. Dad and two Lafournaise guys had mink, beaver, and rats. Trapped in Winter and farmed in summer. In November, Dad trapped away from home. Joe Lizotte and my brothers took him there.

Dad died on his trap line. He was found about 4 to 5 days later. There was a big storm. Tent covered. Not a good sign. My brother found him in the tent. He was partially frozen. They loaded him on the sleigh. They took a long while to get home. The horses played out. They got to some people's place at Happy Lake of the name Laroque. They were given a team of horses to take the body home. My sister and I cried. The police were outraged that they weren't told. My brother had to go back to where Dad died. My brother took the police there. After two hours, the police got cold and slept in the hay. They asked the brother how can you stand the cold. They told my brother you did well to do what they did. How can you stand it driving the horses. It was hard digging the grave. People helped dig. Sometimes the frost was 3 feet or 4 feet. My mom moved to town of San Clara. She went on social assistance but helped herself. My brother took the farm and couldn't make it. We had cattle, pigs, chickens, and turkeys. Mom made big gardens and grew all types of vegetables. Mom also picked wild berries and made jam and canned. She also canned meat such as elk, moose, deer, and would put meat in the granary. There was no hydro, so she had meat canned. Mom also canned fish, jack and pickerel. She paid 5 and 10 cents a pound for pickerel and jack.

We moved to Roblin for two years and back to San Clara. I was a big kid in school in Grade 1 and 2 and I was teased a lot so I quit. I worked for farmers and the saw mill in San Clara. I worked for Cockerill in the saw mill. There were two or three saw mills. I sawed and measured the logs at the saw mill. The trees were huge like the table. The trees were spruce and poplar. I worked in Duck Mountain Forestry. I knocked the trees down and horses were used to haul the trees. Once they got a bulldozer then they didn't use horses anymore. I cut up 300 trees in a good day. I started at 8am until 4:30pm. A tree farmer and a cat were used to haul so I had to work fast. A poor day I cut 150 to 250 trees. I worked for five dollars a day. This was in 1962. It was a dangerous job. I was always scared. There was a lot of snow and you never knew where the tree would fall. You had to be quick and run away. Wilfred Bouvier's father died in the bush. A tree fell and hit him on the head. This was summer time. I quit the bush in 1965. I came to Winnipeg and worked. Trucks that hauled meat at the butcher plants. I worked at Motor Ways for 27 years. As the trucks and trailers came back I washed them. I got unemployment for 8 months. I worked for Reimer Trucking for 31 years. I worked off and on. I have a good pension.

My wife is Fay Leaman. She was born in BC and came to Roblin. They lived all over Durbin, Eriksdale, Rorketon, Benito, and San Clara. We have three children, two girls and one boy. I married my wife a few months after we met. There were a lot of Métis in Boggy Creek that spoke Cree (Michif). In San Clara, mostly French. My dad spoke the same. Mom didn't speak English.

My brothers were musical and they played in school dances, fundraisers, and also played in halls. They played fiddle, guitar and other instruments, mandolin, banjo. I play fiddle and accordion and organ. I played in floats and parades. I played in the parade for homecoming in San Clara. I played in Togo parade with Freddy Paul.

We celebrated New Years and not as much Christmas. We played music in the hospital for Elders. At midnight the party and celebration started New Years when relatives arrived. The people drank at New Years made their own home brew, stuffed turkeys and muskrat. The food was a lot of wild food. The women baked pies and cake. There were different dances, rabbit dance, dance of brandy, square dances and duck dance. It was a lot of fun making mistakes in square dancing. I sat in the corner and laughed. My dad, Roger Allary called and others and Joe Paul.

My dad played for dances, Marcel Paul and he also called. People took turns playing and calling. They corded with the guitar and banjo. People sang songs in Michif. I have guitar, accordion, and banjo. I play sometimes. Nobody danced during lent. They were scared of the devil and roogaroos. There were a lot of stories of roogaroos. They also had people that told legends and played cards. They played pedro, there are two pedros. One is crazy pedro. There is no partner. If you have a good hand you still might lose if you need a certain card. I got my mother-in-law angry many times when we played cards. You can go in the hole and get angry.

Our people lost our language because of embarrassment. Our relatives wouldn't speak they were too proud. Some wouldn't speak in public because of denial. Speak to me in English when you speak to me. We have to speak Michif. I kind of lost my language because I married someone who doesn't speak. My wife understands a little, a few words. I speak Michif when I go home to San Clara. Some people still

speaking in Michif but understand a lot more. We must speak our language. There aren't many Elders left to speak Michif. I go fishing with Lloyd and we speak. Our language is humorous. Our language sounds better than English. I dreamt about this and thought about this. There aren't too many Elders left. My sister understands but doesn't speak it. She is married to a Ukrainian.