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HIGHLIGHTS:

- General account of his life.

Judy: Today is March 19, 1984, and I'm speaking with Mr. Ron Camponi. Mr. Camponi, how do you see your life differs from that of your grandfather?

Ron: Well, I suppose our style of living has changed, having lived in the city. I found that I integrated with the white community when I joined the service. Before that we were, we knew we were halfbreeds and different when their kids come to school, you know. We sort of had to hang around and chum around together as a group because we weren't accepted by the others and at the time it didn't bother us all that much. I suppose when you go back it does, but as far as my life as opposed to my grandfather, well, it's a lot faster, I think a lot more problems trying to get along in this society. I guess things were a lot easier in those days. They didn't have the

problems, I don't think. They had, they had their own little community and the type of work they did so they sort of stuck to that. My grandfather I think was a go-between with the Metis and the white people. I think he was sort of a horse trader and he had a little place out here where the, by the exhibition grounds, across where the freeway is there, now. So I guess he was sort of a liaison between the white and the Metis. They used to camp at his place there and he would deal for them, and with them, and act as a go-between. So I think my life differed a lot because I didn't really... Most of my life I wasn't involved with the Metis. I was in the army and integrated into the service with non-natives and I didn't really know what was going on, you know. Because you're sort of sheltered in the service and you got your own bases, your own communities, your own social life right in the army. So you don't really know what's going outside in the community, and I guess that's basically the way I spent my life until I got out.

Judy: Do you think your life would have been any different for you if you were a white person?

Ron: That's a hard one to answer. Well, I think it would have started out different, I guess it would have been a lot different. I really didn't get my identity clear until after I got out of the service, because I guess as kids we didn't really want to identify ourselves as halfbreeds, because that was bad. Of course, we were the only ones that didn't. Everybody else knew what we were but we were trying to hide behind Italian names, French names. And of course I hid behind the Italian name -- I was Italian, you see, but anyone ask me, I was Italian I was never a halfbreed. And as far as my life being different I think it probably would have, I would have been far more education conscious whereas with... I didn't like

school because we were always treated different. I think most of the ones you ask will probably, most of the halfbreed kids that I chummed around with, none of the boys went on, or very very few of them ever went on for an education, because they got out of school as quickly as possible because it was not a good atmosphere.

Judy: What do you remember about the teachers in your school?

Ron: The teachers in my school. Well, I found the majority did not treat us the same as they did the other kids, like the white kids. They tell you to, well they favored them -- we were just tolerated, I think. They weren't exactly mean to us, but we were not important to them, you know, like white kids. We just got an education, period, because that was their job. As far as them every trying to help us, or talk to us, they definitely... Some of the teachers, not all of them, some of the teachers were definitely discriminated against us.

Judy: What were some...

Ron: One teacher in particular I must mention though is Sister (name ?), that she was the only teacher that really treated us... She went out of her way to be nice, good to us. She always took an interest in us. She still does, she is still alive. So basically we were not accepted in the school community, if you want to call it that, or group. We were always outsiders.

Judy: What schools did you attend?

Ron: St. Joseph's, period. I went to Nutana Collegiate one day and they put me out pulling weeds on the lawn, or on the tennis court and not being a tennis player I didn't think that was fair so I quit. I just went and registered and quit. Went back to delivering groceries, so that was my schooling.

Judy: Do you remember during your school days if the girls and the boys were segregated?

Ron: Yes, not in the classroom or anything, but like they had the girls' basement and the boys' basement. Girls had like their functions; the girls would go down there, and we'd go to our basement. But there was no other segregation, it was straight mix, you know.

Judy: Describe to me the house that you grew up in.

Ron: Well, it's still around. Do you want to go and see it? (laughs) It's a national hysterical site -- not

historical, hysterical. Everybody laughs when they go by. Well there was a little front room, we had a kitchen, two little bedrooms. I'd say the whole house must have measured about six hundred square feet, which is not very big. And we had no bathroom, no basement, no furnace, and we had a porch built on eventually but that wasn't insulated, that was only for the summer -- we put our stove out there and that was our cooking area, kitchen in the summer. And right on the edge of town, on the outskirts.

Judy: Is that on the east side or the west side?

Ron: On the east side. In Nutana, right on Terrace Street.

Judy: Did you have electricity in the house?

Ron: Yep.

Judy: The type of stove that you had, was it electric?

Ron: No, no, no everything was, well, it was wood and coal.

Judy: And that was what you used for heat?

Ron: That was all we had for heat. Well, in the winter we'd put a little pot-bellied stove in the front room, as we

called it -- now they call them living rooms -- but it was a real small house.

Judy: Describe the type of furniture that you had in it.

Ron: We had a chesterfield, carpet -- that was just one that sat on the floor, it wasn't the installed type. We had a couple of beds in the bedroom, we had a kitchen table and chairs, we had a radio, maybe a couple of lamps. That was it, we didn't have what you call these entertainment corners now where they got stereos and all that. Dad had a radio. We called it Dad's radio because he always listened to it, none of us listened to it all that much.

Judy: Did your father own the house, or did you just rent it?

Ron: We owned it at one time and then he sold it. Or did he sell it? I'm not quite sure about that one.

Judy: What was the neighborhood around that house like?

Ron: Well, there was no neighborhood, we were living by ourselves. The closest neighbor east of us was, or west I should say, was about a block away. And then on the other side, on the east side, there was an old man and his wife lived there and they were about two, three hundred yards away. Then to the north it was two blocks before there was a house, well about three blocks if you went over; and then to the south there was just one huge, big huge... it was sort of like a park, Aden Bowman owned it, Bowman brothers here in Saskatoon. He owned, there was acres, it was a huge place; it was all fenced off -- we weren't allowed in there, but that was a little farm, so it wasn't really what you call a neighborhood at that time. So that was where we grew up.

Judy: Can you tell me to the best of what you remember what it was like as an ordinary day for you, say perhaps during the summer?

Ron: During summer holidays? Oh hell, that's when we had our best times. Well, kids would get up in the morning long before our parents. We'd get up about 6:00 or 7:00 o'clock in the morning. We'd make ourselves some tea and toast, make toast on top of the stove. That was mostly what our breakfast consisted of -- toast and tea every day. And then we'd go out. Oh, we'd pick berries in the berry picking season; we'd sell them for exhibition money. We'd go and collect beer bottles. We'd go down to the river and swim and eat choke cherries. And we used to go get junk. We knew what junk was, like scrap metal. We were only eight or nine and I can remember us going down the alleys picking up copper, or brass and zinc. We knew all that, eh, at eight or nine years old, and we'd go and sell that to make money. We'd go on hikes. We'd go on some little stealing forays, little trips where we used to go and do a little shoplifting as kids. And then we'd, we used to -- Len,

my brother, he's pretty small so we'd stick him in the Ritz theatre -- cost us a nickle, we'd pay his way in. So he'd go and sit there and we'd go out and lift a few little things and we'd go in and we'd stash it with him, see. Well, we used to steal, like, cigarettes and smoke them, and gum. I still don't consider it stealing, to this day. I mean it was just something to do, we'd go and do it, you know. Well, we just didn't go and do it continually.

Saturday noon hour was shopping day, you might say. The clerks over here at Adelman's(?) at noon hour -- they used to have a lot of clerks, not so much like now where you have to sort of go and get your own stuff and you know how hard it is to find a clerk sometimes, salesperson, whatever you want to call them. At noon hour, see, the guys and the girls they would go when things were kind of quiet and they would sort of stand around

and tell jokes, and I suppose guys were trying to get in good with the girls and all that. So we would come in at that time and I especially remember Adelman's because we used to go in there and we would say it was our mother -- we always used to have a real tear jerker for a story, like it was our mother's birthday and she was in the hospital and we were looking for a gift for her but we didn't have much money. So the guy would come over and he'd want to get back to where they were all standing around joking and kibbutzing, so he'd say, "Well, you look around and if you find something just come and get me and I'll..." So we were very polite and always we had a real good story that it was always our mother, you know. That always gets people -- your mother. "We're getting this for mother." So when he'd take off we'd steal little things like combs and wallets maybe, just little things. Well, I'm not talking about 50 to 60 dollars' worth, we'd steal maybe a dollar's worth of stuff or something.

Judy: How old were you then?

Ron: Oh, about ten or eleven, I guess.

Judy: Do you remember around that age if you ever heard the saying "road allowance people"?

Ron: Yeah, yeah.

Judy: What do you remember about that saying?

Ron: Well, it was kind of confusing to us at the time. We didn't pay much attention to it. But it sort of sounded like people just living along roadsides to me, that's all it meant to me, that, you know, you go along the road and people just sort of put their tents up along the road. And I know, in the city I know my halfbreed friends and that like, they lived in tents. They would just put a tent down on the prairie. There was nobody owned it as far as we knew, it was just prairie, and if you wanted a place you just went and put your tent up. And most of them lived in tents or little shacks all over the... the ones in Nutana lived in little tents and shacks, like, in

the summer a lot of them just moved right into tents. We just lived in our house all the time. You know, the road allowance, that just sort of meant that... well I heard my mother and them talk about it and they would... It sounded like those were the kind of people that were out of town and that they live along the roadsides there, you know, where there was sort of open land.

Judy: What do you remember your chores being when you were growing up?

Ron: Oh, we used to have to... well my chore, the oldest one, I used to get up every morning and make breakfast for the rest of the kids was one of my chores. I'd get all the kids up, make the fire and make toast and tea, that was our breakfast. Not too imaginative, but they didn't like it they could go somewhere else and eat so I always had my customers. But we would have to take out the garbage, I suppose. We didn't have too many chores, we didn't have cows or chickens, my dad worked. And we didn't have no lawn or anything, it was just open prairie. We washed dishes, we'd have to wax the floor sometimes, scrub the floors and that was on our hands and knees, but we had those kinds of chores. Clean our room up, but there was about four or three in a room at least, so lots of... Well, the room was only about as big as this so there wasn't much clean up to do. So I guess that was basically what our chores were, not too bad.

Judy: When you think of the word family who all does that include, is that your grandmother, grandfather, your cousins -- is that all family to you? Or is family just your immediate family -- your mother, your father, your brothers and sisters?

Ron: No, more in the olden days family was huge. I mean we used to go to the Pilgrimage at Duck Lake, the whole family, like the immediate family would go and I met uncles and aunts that I know now were sort of cousins of my mother and they would be my aunts, and uncles, and grandfathers, you know. I couldn't, you know, I never questioned it, why I had six grandfathers and fifty uncles and aunts. And we'd only see them, most of them once a year at the Pilgrimage, they all used to go to the Pilgrimage. And that's the part I used to like, the Pilgrimage, because there was campfires and they had tents. People took a week to come down there and like a big reunion plus a religious ceremony that was out here at St. Laurent. You ever been there?

Judy: No.

Ron: You should go.

Judy: How do you remember your mother? How would you describe her?

Ron: She was kind, she would give up anything, you know, for us kids, you know, us kids came first. She was a happy person. She enjoyed life and like I say, kind -- she got along

well with everyone. She was, she got a little bit involved with the Metis Society in around '30, I shouldn't say a little

bit, quite involved about '36, '35 or '36 as I remember it -- maybe '34, in the '30s anyways. And they tried to get something going, you know, they have the association and they were being helped by a Miss Moore then who worked for -- we used to call it Technical Collegiate -- it's down by the river there on 19th Street, you know, behind the Legion, that one. She taught French there, this Miss Moore, and she was sort of helping them get organized, and Mom was involved, I know that and I think on the board of directors, whatever they had. But outside of that, oh, she played cards and (name ?) as they called those little poker games they used to have. She was a good person.

Judy: When she was involved with the Metis Society do you remember her saying anything about what they were trying to do?

Ron: Yeah, they were trying to get, at the time they were talking colonies, and I think some of them did get the odd one, I think, like farms, like there's one down around Lebret and that. But they were talking just having colonies, Metis colonies. I think what they were thinking of was getting out of the city and going back to their old style, life styles at that time. They weren't that far away from it yet, you know, it was in the '30s. And I think they didn't care much for living in the city I guess, the urban life. All they talked was just getting some land and having Metis settlements where it was all Metis people and they could live by themselves, that was the main thrust.

Judy: Did they ever talk about Metis history at these meetings? Do you remember her ever telling you?

Ron: I didn't go to any of the meetings, at least I don't ever remember being there, but they talked about scrip. She talked about my father, like my grandfather, her father, he owned all the land or a fair amount of it where the old CN Railway yards were and it is now (inaudible), and freeway and everything else. And somebody come along and bought it off him. And shortly after that the railway bought it. It was all announced the railway was going to put a big yards in there and everything, so I think he was duped out of it.

Judy: What was your grandfather's name?

Ron: William Vandale. And I think most of the old breeds will tell you that he did own that land. And it was very vague -- I tried to find out who would bought it, or who talked him into selling it; but he always said he was going to save one piece for himself and we don't know whether that piece was

there, or whether it was put on paper or what, and I've never looked it up. But he did own land there and I don't know whether he'd bought it or had title to it, or what, or just sort of camped on it. But they...

Judy: Do you remember what year this was in?

Ron: When the land was sold? I don't know, it was before my time. The yards were already there when I was born, so it must have been in the... somewhere early 1900s, I guess, but I couldn't honestly say. And history -- well, they used to talk once in a while about things that happened, you know. I'm not talking about the board of directors, I'm talking about family, like my grandfather, friends would come and see him. Old Isadore Trotchie used to come and visit my grandfather -- he lived with us -- and they would talk. But a lot of the times they would talk in Cree or French, or a mixture, so I couldn't understand what they were saying, and they'd talk for hours. But I don't remember much about it.

Judy: Do you remember if most of the Metis people were involved in that organization in those days?

Ron: Most of them were from the Nutana side that were involved. Like there was old Isadore Trottier, and there was Charlie Landry, there was Mike Vandale, there was my mother, there was a Bob LaRocque -- I don't know where in the hell he came from. There was Charlie Ouellette -- I got a picture of him here of sort of a board of directors -- Alec Fayant, but I think he lived on the west side. But it seemed to me that most of them that were involved were the ones that lived in Nutana.

Judy: Why would you think the ones on the west side would not want to be involved in it?

Ron: I don't know. I think, I don't remember too many of them... funny. The ones on this side lived in houses and that, little shack houses, and I think the ones on the other side of the river, like they were more of the old traditional types. Like they used to sell wood, and they would live in tents in the summer, and they were more traditional halfbreed I think, and I think the ones on the west side were starting to get a little bit integrated. Not so they were going out with white people and that but starting to live like them a little bit more. That's just my opinion, now, I don't really know.

Judy: Do you ever remember your mother mentioning the name of Joe LaRocque?

Ron: Yeah, Joe LaRocque, yeah, I remember that name.

Judy: Do you remember what he was involved in at that time?

Ron: Well, he was some sort of politics I think to do with the Metis Society, and I think they called it the Metis Society, I'm not sure. But I know it was something to do with halfbreed politics, you know. I didn't know politics at the time when I was a kid, but I realize now it was something to do with politics and he was getting people organized.



Judy: How about Joe Ross?

Ron: No, never heard of him.

Judy: Tom Major?

Ron: That name is familiar, but that's all I can say.

Judy: Joe McKenzie? How about do you remember the name Sol Pritchard, or Sam Pritchard?

Ron: Oh yes, the Pritchards, I heard of them.

Judy: Were they also involved in the...

Ron: Yeah, as far as I know that's, you know, that's how their names came up was in talking about this organization they had.

Judy: What type of things did your father do for a living?

Ron: He worked at the Star-Phoenix, he worked there all his life.

Judy: Did he try to earn money in any other ways such as selling wood?

Ron: Well, my father wasn't a halfbreed. However, my mother sort of influenced all of us -- even my dad, like, his best friends were halfbreeds. He didn't chum with his brothers as much as he did with my mother's brothers. So although he was not a halfbreed -- he was a traditional sort of white you might say -- he supported them very strongly like, and my mother. But he couldn't be, like, one of them, he couldn't go out and cut wood and that because this was not his way of life. But all our friends... and we identified as halfbreeds all our life, us kids, you know. Like, we didn't identify ourselves as halfbreeds but that's the way we felt. And, like, all my

friends were halfbreeds, they weren't white. As a matter of fact I think even our cousins sort of discriminated against us. We were sort of the dark sheep of the family, like we were halfbreeds, they weren't. But we were cousins, you know, and they weren't -- they didn't have any Indian blood in them, some of them, a couple of families did, but through their mother. But they sort of looked on us as halfbreeds too, I think.

Judy: Do you remember if the house that you were living in, did your mom or your dad ever have a garden?

Ron: Oh yeah, we had a garden -- just potatoes. Yeah, we weren't very good gardeners, because I remember most of those weeds and we grew potatoes but the potatoes would almost grow in anything so our garden wasn't a showcase, showplace. But we always had a garden, quite a big one, but it was mostly potatoes if I remember, a few carrots, maybe, corn... But you had to take care of those and we were too busy to do it, so

nobody really took care of the garden very much. We didn't worry much about...

(END OF SIDE A)

(SIDE B)

Judy: Do you remember how old you were when you got your first job?

Ron: Fifteen.

Judy: Do you remember what the job was?

Ron: Yeah, delivering groceries.

Judy: How much were you paid for that?

Ron: I think I started off at \$5 a week.

Judy: What other types of jobs have you had during your lifetime?

Ron: I worked on the Modern Press, on the press itself, when I was fifteen. See the War broke out that year and a lot of guys went away so like they hired us on the big press. Did you ever see the Western Producer, that paper? I used to work on the press when they print that. But I think the reason we got that was because all the guys were going in the army and so they started taking us kids -- I was only fifteen at that time

too. Then I got out of the army for a very short period of time and I drove a truck, and I did construction work, laborer, and that's about it. Then I went back into the service again. So I didn't really have many jobs, because I joined when I was sixteen so I had a couple of jobs when I was fifteen, then I went into the army and pretty well stayed through. I was out for about eight months after the war and went back in again. So I didn't do many types of jobs and I didn't have too many jobs. Like everybody else when the War ended we were pretty sort of mixed up, you know, we didn't want to settle down all that much. Mind you, I was only eighteen when the War ended, or nineteen.

Judy: So you were in the army for a total of how many years?

Ron: Twenty-nine and a half. But if you take the little period I was out, you see, my whole lifetime from the time I was sixteen to the time I was forty-six I was in the army; so I didn't really... I just got out of school, had a couple of jobs and went into the army. There was only very short periods I had part-time jobs like driving a truck -- got drunk, got fired -- and I think that's why I went back in the army, I just couldn't settle down to jobs. None of the guys that I chummed around with could. So I didn't have too many, like I say, too many jobs.

Judy: What language do you remember being spoken in your parent's home?

Ron: English.

Judy: Is that the first language that you learned?

Ron: Yep.

Judy: Do you use any of the other languages such as Cree?

Ron: No.

Judy: Or French?

Ron: You see my father couldn't speak Cree or French, and my mother couldn't speak Italian. My father spoke Italian so in order for them to talk they had to talk English, but when my uncles came, or aunts, or visitors on my mother's side, they spoke Cree and French. But we were never taught it because the common language at home in the house was English, because my parents couldn't communicate any other way to each other.

Judy: I remember you saying that when you were growing up in school you knew that you were a Metis, a halfbreed. Did you realize it just when you started going to school that you were Metis or did you realize that before then?

Ron: It was after we started going to school. Before we didn't know what, you know, we didn't care, you know. I imagine now it didn't mean much to us then; but I know after we started school we started to notice the difference.

Judy: How did the other children in school treat you, the white children?

Ron: They mostly ignored us I think. We made our mark a lot in sports and that, you know, they would recognize us to play sports but that was... We'd go to the ball diamond and we'd play and we were friends. I remember a couple of times I was invited to one kid's house and he had a three wheel bike and everything, sidewalk there, you know, and we could ride the bike. I went there after school one day and we played at his place, and I went home and I was never invited back, but it didn't really occur to me at the time that probably his parents didn't want me around. I don't know, I'm just assuming that, but he never, we never did go back. We weren't invited to any of the parties, we weren't... Like I say, we were just sort of tolerated or again mostly ignored I suppose, maybe ignored is not a good word, tolerated I would say, because... Like when we were at school with the kids we played hockey with them and everything. We got along good with them there in sports and that, but that's where it started and that's where it ended like, in sports. There was no social, if you call that for kids, we never played with them. We just had our own group

that we socialized with.

Judy: How about Metis families in your area, did they ever get together for social events?

Ron: Oh yeah, all the time.

Judy: What were some...

Ron: Lots, oh, dances, berry picking, New Year's, Christmas, the holidays, visiting, playing poker, a lot of cards and that, you know.

Judy: What kind of celebrations would go on during the day of New Year's?

Ron: Well, the people on the west side would come over too, like they would... just gangs of people would, you know,

they would come to your house and there would be maybe six or eight. But they had been at the other houses and as they went along they picked up more people and they would come and you would give them a drink and some food. And I remember they used to bug us kids, especially New Year's, you know. They'd all come in there and of course they sat down to eat and we sort of had to wait, and we were watching, keeping our eye on the food to make sure there was enough for us, but Mom always made sure there was, but sometimes we weren't sure. And then they would sing and dance, and a lot of singing.

Judy: Did anyone in your family know how to play the fiddle?

Ron: No. My brother played a banjo but... My father played the accordion a bit. But not too many musicians in the family, like on my side. Like my mother's side, my uncle played, both my uncles played the violin. There was a lot of fiddle players around in them days.

Judy: Do you remember hearing any of the music that your uncles used to play? Were there any Metis songs?

Ron: Yeah, but I guess I didn't realize what kind of, you know, didn't realize they were Metis songs, but they were the traditional ones, you know, jigs and that, reels. Like people would ask you to play it and they'd play it, because most of them, all of them, their music was learned from their fathers, or their uncles, or whatever. So it was all traditional music, there was no... I think after the '30s when you could hear Don Messer and them, they played other ones. But I know before that it was all traditional music, reels, and jigs and I guess that's all they learned.

Judy: How about jigging, did any of your relatives know how to jig?

Ron: Oh yeah, they all jigged -- my mother, and my aunts, and my uncles -- they all jigged.

Judy: Did you ever learn how to jig?

Ron: Never did. I started dancing, you see, when I was about, learning how to dance when I was about fifteen and my cousins, but they were into the jitterbugging and everything else, so that's all I ever learned.

Judy: Do you remember your mother dressing in what can be described as a Metis style, such as long dresses and boots that lace up?

Ron: I seen pictures of her in them but they weren't wearing those from the time I can remember.

Judy: Do you remember any of the elderly people in your family believing and practising the traditional Indian medicine?

Ron: They all practised it a little bit. I know my grandfather did, and his older friends. In our house we didn't. Well, there was certain little things some times, a certain type of poultice or something that Mom would make up, but we never sort of watched what she was doing. But I know they did practise some of it but they was just getting away from it when I was a kid. But I know my grandfather and that always would say just give him this, or give him that. He would describe it, the French word for it or the Cree word for it. But Mom would say, "No, the doctors will look after him," you know. But I know my grandfather, he believed in the old type of medicine. I don't even remember if he... well, he must have had a doctor later in life, but they always had their own remedies, you know, for most things.

Judy: Do you remember if there were any certain illnesses during the times when you were growing up that you remember sticking out, perhaps tuberculosis?

Ron: T.B. was very, yeah. Yeah, I had a cousin that had tuberculosis, he was in the hospital for a long time. I had another cousin, I don't know, he died when he was twenty, but I don't think he had T.B. but he was very weak all the time. But there was a lot of T.B. them days, yeah, you heard about it a lot.

Judy: Do you remember how they cured it? Or if there was a cure for it at that time?

Ron: Well, as far as... the only cousin I had, he was in the sanatorium with it. I never heard of anybody else, like any traditional type of cure for it, it was never mentioned that I remember.

Judy: When you were growing up did your family get along with the white community?

Ron: Yes. Oh, we didn't associate much with them. Yeah, I think it was something like our school. The kids we sort of got along with pretty good as long as they were just kids and playing in school, and playing sports and that. I think it was

the same with the white community, we didn't bother them and they didn't bother us sort of thing. We sort of, we stuck pretty well within our own group. I know in Nutana the halfbreeds stuck together and all their social activities and everything else was all, there was a few white people outside that got to know, like my parents, and that, were very nice people, friendly people. Most of them didn't bother, I suppose, to see what we were really like. I guess they just didn't want to associate with us. I think it was almost, "You know your place and we know ours," and that was the way it worked, and nobody questioned it, you know.

Judy: Do you remember how the town authorities such as the police treated your family? Did they treat your family fairly?

Ron: Well, I know my mother and dad were treated fairly because they never got in any trouble, but we were pretty well singled out a lot of times for anything went on. They'd come to us a lot, the kids, and question us, no matter what happened, you know, anything on the east side of town, they would come and question us. I don't think they treated us fairly. I don't know, it's hard to say. I don't remember ever hearing of white kids getting in trouble. I'm sure they must have, but we never heard about it. But I know whenever anything happened they'd come and question us right away, and this is from as far back as I can remember as a kid. That, if anything...

if they suspected kids doing it, they came to us first, so I guess that's about all I remember about that. I know there was a few that were around that they were always getting picked up and getting thrown in jail, and mostly drinking and fighting. Yeah, I guess we got along in a way. It was hard not to get along because we had nothing to do with them, they had nothing to do with us so, you know, you get along good when you don't have nothing to do with somebody. I suppose you call it getting along.

Judy: Tell me some of the memories you have of dealing with government, such as, say, unemployment or welfare.

Ron: Oh, I've had lots of that. It's frustrating, really, really frustrating. I honestly don't think that they really want to do anything about it, and I mean if they really wanted to do it they'd do it because they can see the gross injustice. There really is and the more I look at it, the more I can't understand how these people think. You know, if they are supposed to be leaders, they're supposed to be concerned about the community, they're supposed to be concerned about all our citizens -- how they can let things go on the way they are. It's tragic almost, you know. And I use these words -- sometimes it sounds like they're overused or something, but it

really is when you look at the children. We got thousands of children in Saskatoon that never participate in any kind of sport or recreation, just don't participate -- they're not even accepted. Our way of life is not understood or accepted today, you know. People, I think, because we're so dependent on the government because of the poverty that we're not allowed to do anything for ourselves because everything takes money and we just don't have it. And although they sympathize and all that -- they give us a lot of lip service.

No, I'm very frustrated with government officials and leaders because although they say that, oh yes, they want to do something, they will spend thousands and millions of dollars on the middle-income group and upper-income groups. And now it's even getting just poor people, whether you're native or not, if you're a white person, the government just don't give a shit. I mean they don't. You know, these sports money, the money they raise for sports and athletics, it all goes to people that are well-trained, have the money to get training and figure they might do something for the city of Saskatoon, or the Olympics. No, I am totally disgusted with the government and the more I see it the more frustrated I get because, you know, we try to get a recreation program or sports program for our kids and they talk about welfare.

These kids that... they just, you know, we just breed one generation after the other and you've seen it even in your time. You can see that the kids just drop out of school and get into drinking or whatever, drugs, prostitution and the next thing you know they're on... they have a family at sixteen or seventeen and they're welfare or they're struggling, you know, they're poor, and that's the only future they got.

No, I have... I think our whole society is... I think it's getting worse. You know, when we were kids at least we were allowed to do our thing -- it didn't cost us an arm and a leg to participate in anything. The white people are so over-organized that we no longer have... You see, we used to have outdoor rinks where at least we could play there, us kids, and we didn't need \$150 to go and join something, we didn't need any money, and at least we were allowed to... Now they've gone to these big rinks and the equipment and organized sports and it costs you money to join them so our people are left out, they have nowhere to go. So I'm totally disillusioned with government and the white population as a whole because they just don't give a damn, the majority. All they give you is lip service -- they sympathize to beat hell, but, you know, God, "It's recession and we don't have the bucks right now." And, you know, they expect us to come up with proposals and they know we can't, where we need an expert that's going to cost us \$15,000 to write it up and we don't have any money at all to start with. So we're begging for that money to get some white guy to write it up for us. So I don't know, I certainly don't like the situation.

Judy: Do you remember when you were growing up the church

playing a very important role, say, in your parent's life?

Ron: My mother. My dad didn't go to church much, he didn't. But I know my mother was far more religious than my father so we were religious, or at least she tried to make us religious. Yeah, the church -- they discriminated the same as everybody else. There were certain priests here and there that were good, that we liked, or seemed to like us, you know. A person seems to like you then you sort of like them, especially when there isn't that many seem to like you. But I think the church was just as discriminatory as the rest. Not quite so much now, actually, but I think in those days... Like everything else, we went to church, the church, you know, they looked after the ones with money. And I don't like to say that about my church but that's true.

Judy: Was this the Catholic Church?

Ron: Yep.

Judy: Do you ever remember the priest coming to visit your parent's home?

Ron: Yes, couple times.

Judy: Do you remember what they talked about?

Ron: Well, one time they came there was a poker game going on, it was a Saturday night, Father Michael. Now he was one of the priests that was an exception to the rule, because I think he was brought up a fisherman's son down in Nova Scotia or something. So he was sort of hardboiled -- more our type, which really, you know, surprised us because he would come out with things that we never thought a priest would come out with, you know, because priests were away up here somewhere, you know. But I think once or twice that I can remember that they ever visited, that's all.

Judy: Do you think the church was ever involved with politics?

Ron: Are ever involved?

Judy: Were, at that time, do you think they were involved in politics?

Ron: I think the church has always been involved with politics because people in the parish... The church wants something, there are certain people in the parish can do certain things and... your know, it's a different kind of politics. I think they're more involved with political activities than they are with social activities -- that is, social change.

Judy: Do you think that the church has generally helped the Metis people face their problems?



Ron: No.

Judy: Is this in the past or is this still today?

Ron: It's still today. They're not doing anything. They won't get up and speak. I think the church is more concerned about Biafra and all those places -- and there's nothing wrong with that -- than they are with right in their own back yard. No, I don't think the church is doing their job. They're handing out food over here on 20th Street but that's not changing anything or helping anybody change their lifestyle. All you're doing is feeding them -- that's salves your conscience, makes you feel like you're doing something for these poor people.

Judy: What political parties do you remember your parents voting for?

Ron: Liberal and NDP.

Judy: Did they get involved with the parties or did they just vote?

Ron: Well, the CCF -- which was the original NDP before they became NDP and changed their name -- well, I think they would do a lot of talking, you know, at the house and a lot of the friends of the family were I think politically active, like my uncles and not so much the Metis people. I'm talking about my father's side of the family and they joined organizations -- my mother and dad, like -- that were sort of political. But my parents themselves, my mother was a little bit political but they weren't too involved with the parties being organized, the established parties.

Judy: Do you remember any politicians ever visiting your grandma's home?

Ron: No.

Judy: Do you feel like talking about the way you voted over the years?

Ron: Sure, I voted NDP.

Judy: So you don't vote the same as your parents did?

Ron: Well, my dad voted CCF, after the CCF party, you know, in 1944, the first year they came into Saskatchewan, that's when I had my first vote because I was in the service. They allowed servicemen to vote, even if you were under age to vote. And my father, well I went to him and he said the CCF was the government that... I guess my father was sort of a socialist. So I voted NDP pretty well all my life.

Judy: Did you ever get involved in the party politics or did you just go and vote?

Ron: I was a member, a card-carrying member here a couple a years ago for the NDP. But I find it's kind of politically dangerous if you get tied in with a party, although my leanings are NDP, they still are because they're a socialist party. Not as they'd like them to be but they are. I think they give us the best attention and the best ear.

Judy: Did the Metis people generally see one party that spoke the best for them?

Ron: I would say the Liberals and I don't think they spoke the best for them, but they spoke a little for them. But I think they were pretty well all Liberals before the NDP really got off the ground. See the CCF, I don't think -- well, it started in the '30s, I think, but won their first election here in Saskatchewan in 1944 so they became sort of prominent then. I think most of the Metis people, a lot of them that were politically involved went NDP. I think a lot of them remained Liberals that didn't sort of get involved with party politics. I think most of the Metis people didn't understand politics too much in those days, not nearly as much as they do now. So they sort of got onto one party and sort of stuck with the one that done the best for them, or done anything for them, and I think that was the Liberal party. I know it was all Liberals until the CCF got more prominent.

Judy: Okay, I'd like to thank you for your co-operation.

Ron: You're welcome.

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