

Interview: William Carriere

I joined up in the '41 but there was no recruiting officer here. So then they had to appoint a recruiting officer, he was a policeman, a Corporal. He was the one that recruited us here and then from here we went to Saskatoon. But we went by boat up to La Pas and then we got our examinations there from Dr. Trembley. I can remember that name. We got our examination in La Pas and we passed there in Manitoba. So then we went from there to Saskatoon. We actually joined up in La Pas, that's how they worked it. 'Cause [if] we didn't pass there then they wouldn't pay your transportation to Saskatoon. We go to examination here in La Pas. There was two of my brothers, Alphonse and Jim, and there was Nap Morin and Louis _____ and Garfield _____ and Russell Robertson. Russell Robertson joined from here. He passed away here a couple of years ago, Russell Robertson. He was looking after a lease. He was the manager there. Anyways we went to Saskatoon and took three days. It was actually four days from here to Saskatoon, 'cause then you had to go by train and you waited in Hudson Bay. You stayed there one night and then you didn't get to Saskatoon 'til the next morning. So then we stayed in the Exhibition Grounds and that's where we joined up.

I can remember when we were in Saskatoon there was ladies that were joining up in the services. So we stayed in that same building and I said to the boys, "let's go look at the ladies there," they were marching cause at the same time we'll try study from what they do. We were going to stand up there but we didn't know that we weren't supposed to go there. So we went over there and stand around and look at them. They had wonderful drills. They have already been in the service for quite a while but they were teaching other new recruits. Then an officer came board, the captain, and he gave us hell. He told us to get out of there and I will always remember that. But we weren't doing wrong. We were just looking at them ladies. We were so surprised to see them-how they marched, and how they did the drills. It was so nice, but our officer came and kicked us out of there. "You're not supposed to be here!", and all that. He was calling us down. That's the way the army was. You have to have discipline, to do things properly. Anyway, then we start. One by one we went in. My brother (Pierre) got in first, and the next guy was my other brother Alphonse. Next day I got in. James got in and other guys got in. And there was two guys that actually didn't make it. They came back. It was Jim _____. He was there already, and he came back. They were pretty disappointed that they couldn't

make it. So we made it and I always remember that marching. We were with George Buck and they marched and, by golly marched right in. They turned exactly at the same time. They met one another like that. They bounced back, and then we laughed so darn much, you know, and we, got hell for that too. So they put us in a real stiff march. But once you get used

to it it was easy. Another thing that I could always remember is when I first got in there the guys came running in. They had rifles and they were kicking everything and I was kind of scared. Them boys were really rough 'cause most of them were hoboes, the guys that never got a job and, you know, just roaming around in the city-they were the guys but they were rough. They didn't swear or nothing and most of them guys were big, big build. I was kind of worried 'cause I never seen anything like that. So these are the things I remember well.

From there we stayed in Saskatoon, just a pinch of basic training. So from there we went to Niagara Falls. We stayed in Saskatoon for about two weeks, I think, and then from there we went to Niagara Falls. But we went on a train, troop train. We got off first in Regina and then we already got into a boy that's been in for already three years and he had band music and everywhere. He went in and even in a little town they played band music, hey. It was really nice. We had a nice time. We got in Toronto. We marched there and then from there we went to Hamilton. We got off there too and then from there to Niagara Falls. But we had a wonderful time. We stayed, we were trained in Niagara Falls, we stayed there for about three months in ? and go to town on the weekends, hey. Everything was just nice. Nothing that was wrong there, hey, 'cause we had a wonderful time. I was young them days too, and we always got into-with the boys and we'd go on an activity and then when we got in, like, there was some boys that were selected to go to school. They train you real good they? Like for me, I turned down a lot of things that which I should have taken, but I had enough to pass. I had my I.Q. Test and I think I had around 80 per cent. So I could have stayed on for a good long time, but I didn't for some reason. I always wanted to come home. When I got in the army, over 5 years you know, my home that's all I had in mind. But you know, I could had more training. I could have went to school and I had the opportunity. They treat the boys nice like that. But you know where you brought up-I never forgot Cumberland, no matter where I went. Like we were stationed too

in Ottawa and that range, I will always remember that, that's the first time you were trained to handle a revolver, any kind of gun, machine gun just any kind of gun at all. It's a lot of training. The opportunity, but you had to pass. Like when you take a rifle you have to know everything in detail about it. You have to name all the parts for the rifle. But the understanding I got. For that reason is that if it broke down in action then you could just tell your commanding officer that that part of the gun broke down and they just replace it there. That's why you have to know everything, even the machine gun. You've got to know every part in there and there's lots of parts. But you have to know everything in detail, then you pass.

They were strict but for one thing. Cumberland was a way off town-you had to pay your way in. Sometimes you couldn't come in. You came home by horses, and then I always had on there you didn't get a leave for every six months. So you came home for the fall 'cause in the summer time you came home by canoe, 'cause there was no road, hey. Like nowadays you jumped in the car, you get into Saskatoon in a short while. Them days it's four or five days. But it was in your leave. But if you don't get there in time, when you got stuck in here, you get the blame for it. You didn't get that privileges like travelling time in between. That's where the army made a mistake. They should, especially the boys from the north, you know, have given them a break. You know 'cause if you miss a day then you're locked up there for a week sometimes, and it wasn't your fault 'cause it was hard to get home from here unless we went to the east coast, like Halifax. You got 28 days. That's exactly 10 days of travelling. It's a long time, 'cause it took four days from there by the train and then if you're lucky you could get in here two days from here by horses. That's four days. The train you paid half fare. But they didn't pay half fare for coming to Cumberland because you had to pay yourself. There's a lot of ways that the boys got gyped when they were in the service. Like, you know, you have to pay about \$15.00. You know in them days that was a lot of money, \$15.00, and you had to pay out of your own pocket. There was no half fares there so the boys actually, from here, from Cumberland, they were actually gyped. Everywhere the boys went, they should of paid half of the transportation. Like they did all over Canada. But

for a year they didn't, you know, it's. There is a lot of things happening, like here in Cumberland, because it was an out of the way place.

Even let's say if your wife had a baby you couldn't report that right away. You know, even my oldest girl never got assistance from the army, never did get assistance, and they would have got more when I was in the service. You know that girl should have got a monthly payment but she got jyped out of that. Never got a cent, 'cause it was too late when I reported it, but that shouldn't make any difference. They should have got back pay. These are the things that the Veterans experienced that lived in the isolated places. They never got no help like that, you know. Furthermore, it's about housing problems, you never get any help. Other people get, like people that live in town, they have places. Veterans homes, they need lots of help. Look at the house I live in. I try to pay myself. I never got no assistance like that and the boys would get help, you know. They're left out of everything, including the land. There was a lot of land here. Guess in them days they should have trained them how to farm, you know. Cumberland House was one of the best areas for farming. It still is today. All that land you see that when you came by the road, you got all that good land. But you know, I guess to say this, that's what would have happened if you let Japanese farm there. In

no time they'd make a nice farm land in that country, just across here. You know they'd build it so nice right down to the La Pas. You know that would be a great thing too. There'd be always jobs around here. Be nothing to see of them people that they would farm this country so quick. Or sell that country and give it to the Metis people. It's a rich country, it's a rich soil. It's been

There was a biologist worked here. He says this is a good country. Cumberland House has always been a good country for farming. Its all flat country. But you see, where ever the white man set his foot in, that's were the road is good. You go from here it's all muddy road. There's nothing nice in here about the roads, and it's like what I say, when you get out of here, like when it's raining, this is all strictly mud and they shouldn't keep it that way. They should develop this country, the oldest settlement in Saskatchewan. I think they should do something and provide good roads. This is the only place. There is only one place that's not bad, in La Ronge. La Ronge is not bad but the white people live there. Before just the

Metis people lived there, they didn't look after it and that's what they got to do. Like this country here. The days would be much richer here. They have to build up a good highway right through to that Artic here. North part of Flin Flon, north part to La Pas, straight across. It's a funny thing. You come from La Pas and there's good road right to the Manitoba border. Right from there it's all mud, you come by that La Pas trail or out in here it comes through it's just nothing. Sometimes you could hardly move past that bloody highway. It's all mud and that's where the Shoal Lake Reserve is. And that's where that Red Earth Reserve is. They don't look after it. They come as far to where La Pas is. That's where you start getting pavement, where, that's where the veterans got the land, and it seems to me that you know wherever an Indian live is, well, he pays tax. You know you pay more here 'cause they always say you pay more because you have to pay more for your groceries, you have to pay more for everything. You pay more tax.

We've been mistreated, right from the start, right from when I was young. When I was young I never hardly stayed in Cumberland. I went to work. I worked in Manitoba and I was always on the go. If I didn't do that I had equipment, fishing equipment. I fished all summer and if I didn't do that in the fall then we did a lot of trapping from here. I did a lot of trapping. Now there is lots to do here. For instance, we used to dig out a lot of the seneca root, and they're a good price. But where do you sell them now?

BASIC TRAINING

It was real heavy training there in Ottawa, and that's where I hurt my leg. When I was in Ottawa, we were running in the morning and my knee went out like that, but I didn't want to say anything. But they found out and I stayed in the hospital for three months in Ottawa. I got as far to Halifax and I came home from there. My knee cap is on one side, but I get pension for that. I said I don't need a pension right away, but still it

took a hell of a time to get it. I could have got it as soon as I walked out of the service.

LOOKING BACK

I was married when I went into the service. That will be 50 years for me on the 24th. Once you made that committment, no matter what happens, I went and asked the owner of the daughter and you promise him you stick with your wife no matter what. And he said, "I hope you can look after my daughter just like the way I did", and I said, "I promise you I'll never leave her." It's a heavy responsibility. Today it's different. The people live together and they have no responsibilities. The government in some way gets in there, I know we never got that assistance. I think I'll die and I will still be a married man.

I was very happy when the war ended and I still had that mixed feeling. But in the worst way I wanted to go overseas, but I had my three brothers there. So what I did, I waited for my brothers. Jim was in Italy and I got a letter from him saying that he was in London and he'd be there for about six weeks. On the first of October. I got discharged from the army and I went and met him in Saskatoon - they were all Saskatoon Light Infantry. It was rather sad to be there. There was lots of them parents went to that place there in Saskatoon. It was very sad. I was happy to see my brother because it had been five years since I saw him there. But he had a wonderful time there. There were not one car was allowed to run on the street in Saskatoon. Everything was just dead.

And I remember five kegs of that beer, and they had a big orchestra - we had a lot of fun. There was a lot of things that I remember. But it was nice to see your brother that you joined up with at the same time, same place where they have that big celebration for all the boys that came back. That's where they stayed, right in that place where they have that big celebration.

It was three day celebration. Then we want to get a boat there in La Pas, to get to Cumberland. Two days by train and two coming up by boat, and from there it was on your own.