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BERRY RICHARDS

Berry Richards is a resident of northern Saskatchewan and a long time socialist. He knew both Norris and Brady through their political associations and he employed Brady in geological work.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- Comparison of Norris and Brady: their relationships, their ideology, their style.
- The disappearance of Jim Brady, the subsequent search and the theories about his fate.

GENERAL COMMENTS:

Berry Richards was a close associate of both Norris and Brady - a long time socialist and political activist who shared the goals of the two men in the north. Contrasts the two men regarding their approaches to politics, their individual intellects; the practical nature of their political work.

INTERVIEW:

Murray: I am talking to Berry Richards in Prince Albert about Jim Brady and Malcolm Norris. Berry, both men considered

themselves radical socialists and Marxists from quite an early period. Did they ever talk to you about their politics and what led them to their beliefs?

Berry: You know, you are probably talking to the wrong person when you ask that question Murray because I knew and they knew I knew, they didn't have to profess their tenets. So our relationship was, if you'll pardon the expression, of a somewhat higher level than deciding whether we were or were not socialists. This we understood. And I think that, I know as a matter of fact, that both men, Norris and Brady, sort of proselytized about the validity of socialism to those who were not yet convinced. I mean, I've heard Malcolm especially presenting this point of view with no hesitation at all. Jim would probably do it in a more subtle way, in a more academic and sort of intellectual way, perhaps even a little more detached from practicality than Malcolm. And Malcolm built it in very much into his sort of day-to-day work. And I'm sure Jim applied it in his day-to-day work but he didn't enunciate it in the same way. I suppose what I'm saying is that I'm sure that these men were very similar, ideologically, held beliefs that... there were no contradictions but they came out

differently because they were two different men. One was outgoing, Malcolm; Jim was more reticent.

Murray: Could you expand on that a bit, maybe, the different aspects of the men - Malcolm's outgoingness and how did he approach people in his organizing and in politics?

Berry: Well, I think Jim Brady, in fact, I know Jim spent an awful lot of time reading and thinking. In fact, his library - some of it you can see behind you - was one of the best personal, individual libraries in the province covering a wide range of subjects from history through philosophy to socialism to Marxism. And every book that Jim had, he had read and understood and it added something to his thinking. Malcolm on the other hand, while he was, I suppose, well-read, the intellectual sort of weapon was not as important to him as it was to Jim. Malcolm was an activist. And he stirred people to action by his oratorical ability, by his flashing brown eyes and by his expletives and by his absolute honesty, in fact honest to the point of being embarrassing in his attacks on those with whom he did not agree. Jim on the other hand, was more reticent, took the more reasonable approach. I have never heard Jim, in a discussion or an argument, raising his voice, for example. But I can seldom remember Malcolm presenting something when he didn't raise his voice and bang the table.

I really think that Jim got a lot of satisfaction in - this is a hard thing to say in a way - but he did get a lot of satisfaction even though nothing resulted from it, seemed to. Malcolm, on the other hand, would show his frustration if nothing overt resulted from his actions or his preachings. He would get disgusted; he would cry. Jim, on the other hand,

seemed to be able to take this sort of thing more in his stride. I don't know. That's not a very accurate picture. It's part of the difference.

Another way this sort of comes out when I think back on it, if you met Jim Brady you didn't have an immediate sort of response, you didn't immediately get on the same wave length. He seemed to be sort of detached and in order to sort of deal with him, one had to feel out what his interests were at the moment. This sounds like a little bit selfish, and it was really. Malcolm, on the other hand, was openly communicative about anything and any subject with anybody. I can remember the difference, for example, between getting to know Malcolm and getting to know Jim. You got to know Malcolm very quickly, cards were all on the table. Jim, on the other hand, seemed to be - he didn't trust a person till he got to know him very well. And I never felt too comfortable with Jim for two or three years. I always felt that he was still judging me, testing me. And I hope he found I was okay. I'm still not quite sure, really I'm not. But that was one difference.

Murray: How did native people react to the two men? Did they react more or less as you've described or do you think one or the other was accepted more by their own people?

Berry: You know, that's a question which is probably impossible to answer. It's a little bit like an anthropologist does not study a culture, an anthropologist studies a culture being studied by an anthropologist. And I wasn't there when the answer to that question could be determined. The answer to that question would be based on a relationship that probably would not admit the presence of a white man. Now, okay, having

said that, both men - I don't know how to put that because it's really secondhand information I'm talking about. I'll put it this way (this is part of the answer to the question), Malcolm Norris did not associate with native people except in strictly organizational ways. His contacts were essentially non-native people. Jim, on the other hand, had a lot of native friends. But the relationship between Jim and his Indian friends was probably sort of on the basis that Jim was helping them. He gave them shelter, he gave them food, he took them in, he fought for them. But another thing that enters into it is that Jim Brady didn't speak Cree, didn't speak any Indian language, whereas Malcolm spoke Cree quite well. And that, of course, would make a difference. Yet surprisingly enough, it seems to me that the man that was closer to the Indian people was the one who couldn't speak Cree.

Murray: That's the difference in their politics perhaps, too, the fact that Jim was in one way detached but in another way giving over his house to them, his food, his money and Malcolm attacked his politics more directly but was more aloof from the people. Is that correct?

Berry: Oh yes, that's more or less what I was trying to say, that they were entirely different in their relationships. For instance, I can recall Jim Brady and Malcolm Norris sitting down and discussing native questions and other questions. But I can't imagine... no, let me put it this way, I'll draw you several pictures. I can also see Jim Brady at an Indian trapper's camp talking about the problems of the Indian trapper and whatever other subjects were of mutual concern and interest.

And I can see Malcolm Norris in a meeting of DNR officials raising shit with them. And I can also see Malcolm Norris in a prospector's tent telling them about prospecting and perhaps talking about some of their problems, but not in the same way as Jim would do it. But I can not see Malcolm Norris, Jim Brady, both of them together, in Indian company. Now, I don't know what those pictures mean to you, but they reflect what I can see in these two men.

Murray: Very different approaches.

Berry: Entirely different, entirely different, yeah. Even though they were the greatest of friends for many years obviously, as we know. You know, these are sort of indirect answers I'm giving you but that's the only way I can give them. You'll have to read into them what you will.

Murray: Brady and Norris came into Saskatchewan just after the first CCF government was elected, in fact at their invitation, at the invitation of the government. Did they as Marxists see any contradiction in doing that, although I know you met them sometime later?

Berry: Well, I don't think there was anything non-Marxist in having the hope that government policies towards northern Saskatchewan could be improved. And both of them were pretty pragmatic in that sense. I don't think they ever said that we should leave things as they are and let the kids die before age one and let TB take over and to hell with them, you know. They believed that there were certain reforms could be accomplished and the CCF presented an opportunity, they thought, to

implement some of these reforms. Looking at the kind of work that both of them did, Jim Brady came with the Fish Marketing Service and one of the objectives of the Fish Marketing Service was to give the native fisherman a better deal than the private fish companies. And it did. Despite all the other weaknesses, it did this. He went to Cumberland House for the DNR thinking, and he was disappointed of course, Jim was disappointed in that he attempted to build up native control in trapping. He fought against the Hudson's Bay lease. He worked, especially through the Legion, for the sawmill and the farm movement, all of which he saw as a possibility towards improving the lot of the native people which were right at the bottom of the ladder. Malcolm, on the other hand, came in because he was afforded the opportunity of hopefully involving native people more deeply in prospecting and exploration and of engaging in training programs which would make them more capable too. So, despite

the fact that both of them met several disappointments, I think they came in merely on the basis that there seemed to be an opportunity to do some of these very practical things.

Murray: They were both obviously socialists and Marxist philosophers in some sense, but was their work, for the most part, practical kinds of work that wouldn't lend itself to talking about socialism so much?

Berry: I think that's right. In the work that they were doing, this is perfectly true. And that didn't mean that they were not concerned about the broad political implications of what they were doing, about which they would talk to anyone who was interested and held some concern in this area. The fact that Jim became involved with the Centre for Community Studies, which was probing in a much deeper way into the relationships

existing and the whole political picture in the north, from a probably Marxist standpoint (knowing some of the people that were in the Centre including Jim), means that they were not indifferent to this sort of thing. But they were not opportunists. I mean they didn't go around with their socialist buttons on their lapels. They were practical organizers - both of them - in this respect.

Murray: Dedicated to their people rather than some party or...

Berry: Yes. Well, aside from that they were good... I mean, a good Marxist is not going to throw his Marxism around under situations where it doesn't apply, sort of thing, hey.

Murray: I've heard it said, getting back a bit to some of the individual characteristics of the two men, that Malcolm would be comfortable debating how many angels can be on the head of a pin. That he was that kind debater and orator. Did you get that impression of him as well?

Berry: Yeah. It's not that he would stoop to arguing about unimportant questions, but discussion argument to him was an art, and he practised it at every opportunity. And if he had to talk about angels on pinheads, he would do it, and could do it. But not because he was indifferent to important questions.

Murray: But he did love the debate itself.

Berry: The debate itself, the repartee, the, well as I say the flashing eyes and the expletive, you know. Christ, he was...

Murray: And Jim was not of that kind?

Berry: No, no. When Jim spoke, he spoke very slowly and carefully, he didn't raise his voice and, well, they were just two entirely different approaches.

Murray: Much of the native movement, primarily outside Saskatchewan, I think, tends to be quite nationalistic. They talk a great deal about 'back to old native ways' and that sort of thing. How did that sort of native politics, if you like, fit into Brady's and Norris's view of the situation?

Berry: Well, as far as northern Saskatchewan is concerned where both of them were operating during those years from '47 on, native consciousness, as far as I know, had not reached the point where nationalism was a consideration at all. I have never heard during all those years the same kind of attitudes and statements as you hear now about back to the old days, native religion. I mean during those days the Catholic and the Anglican Church and all their tenets were accepted as if they were the final word. There might have been, and I'm sure there were in some of the old Indian people, a feeling for the past, but it was not expressed the way it is today. That's changed so radically in the last ten years, just incredible. And they didn't deal in nationalist terms because, understanding the people with whom they were working, they were not going to confuse the issue with nationalism at a time when it was not acceptable. I mean it would have been an adventurous sort of thing, it seems to me, and I don't think they would have been - neither of them would have been engaged in that. I should temper that a little bit by... Malcolm had it much closer to

the surface than Jim. In fact, I remember his children, at the time we had this celebration in his memory, all of his children when they talked to the gathering that evening made a point of the fact that their father, Malcolm, had always told them to be an Indian. "You should be proud to be an Indian, it would be terrible to have white skin, to have colorless skin. You've got color, you've got background, you've got history, you are THE people." He talked that to his own family, and he talked it to non-Indians. But like I admitted before, I have not been present during his relationship with Indians. But in any time I've heard him talk where Indians are present, I never heard him present this point of view. But the fact is that it was there and almost waiting for others to catch up.

Murray: That was part of his fire, the native pride.

Berry: Yep, yeah.

Murray: What about Brady, did he see things in the same way or can you recall any explicit conversations?

Berry: Well, he never expressed it in the same way. I can't answer that. I don't know. And trying to look back and look into Brady is not easy. I can look into Malcolm, Malcolm in retrospect, a hell of a lot easier.

Murray: I remember talking to one fellow who said he always got the feeling that Brady was a white man, and Norris not. Now this person didn't know them well, but that was obviously the impression they got. Where might they get that from?

Berry: Strange. There's real contradiction here because I just finished telling you a few minutes ago I can see Jim Brady being right at home, even though he couldn't speak Cree, in an Indian trappers camp, and couldn't see Malcolm in quite the same way. And yet in the other hand, I also said, and it's also true, that Indian nationalism was closer to the surface in Malcolm than it was in Jim, at least observably so. Well, I mean the fact is that it's not fair to say whether more white man or more Indian. The fact is that both of them can be defined in their own historic context and their own personal lives, the fortunes of their lives. The fact that Brady had a certain type of parent born at a certain place, got a certain education, came in contact at an early age with socialist thinkers which were not Indian philosophers or Indian people, so naturally he was drawn into that world. The same thing would have applied to Malcolm. So that, I suppose they're Malcolm Norris and Jim Brady because they're not Indian, more than because they are, maybe. I use the word maybe because its just that there are all kinds of Norrises and Bradys who have come to this same sort of beliefs as they have. And this is where I am wrong when I said that they're... and its because they are Indian plus this, is that their Malcolm Norris and Jim Brady. That's what I am trying to say.

Murray: They are an interesting combination of having a sophisticated modern analysis and yet being part of the native world as well.

Berry: Yeah, yeah.

Murray: Which is pretty rare.

Berry: Very rare.

(END OF INTERVIEW)

(PART I.)

CONTINUED...

Murray: I'm talking to Berry Richards, of Prince Albert. Jim Brady, when he disappeared, was working for Berry in a mineralized area in the Foster Lake area.

Berry, could you describe what Jim's and Abbie Halkett's job was for you? What were they going into that area for?

Berry: The job consisted of... I think it should start here. Back in 1953, there was a lot of work done by Eldorado and other companies in the Foster Lake area when the sort of uranium rush was on in the early '50s. And they had worked a lot of these properties but in many cases hadn't completed it because about that time the federal government had ruled that it was against the law for anybody to look for uranium because they were sort of putting the clamps on it. They wanted to make it a nationally owned mineral, because of the bomb scare sort of thing, you know. So a lot of the work was really not completed. They staked these occurrences, they did some

trenching, and they did some sampling, but then they sort of let it go. So when the uranium interests were revived again and this would have been in the 60s, people were going back to these showings and looking at them.

Murray: It was legal to do that now, was it?

Berry: Yes, oh yes. That changed in '55, I think. So, my company was employed on contract by a mining company who owned some of these reclaimed claims to go and look at these old showings. Quite a number of them existed along the shores of Middle Foster Lake stretching from just off the northeast end right down, pretty well all the way down the lake. There was

a whole series of these showings. And our plan was to start at the northeast end at Middle Foster Lake, go into these zones - and they had already been staked so we had to claim that, we knew exactly where they were - go into these zones, clean them out, sample them, with a Geiger counter and also physically take samples, and collect them, and have them assayed to find out whether or not it would be justified to do further work on them. So Jim Brady, along with his partner Abbie Halkett, were hired to do just that, go into the Middle Foster Lake area, establish a camp and to systematically examine these showings, the first one being off the northeast end of Middle Foster. So the idea was to put the camp in at the northeast end, do the work in that area and then move by canoe systematically down the lake to the other showings. So in other words, we were starting at the northeast end.

Murray: So the first showing would have been the one actually north of Middle Foster Lake?

Berry: Right. About, I don't think more than a mile and a half, something like that.

Murray: How long would it have taken them to do that work? How long would it be before you would go back into the camp?

Berry: Well, I always planned visits to the camp on the basis of, first, a sort of a stage approach towards the work. In other words, if the first stage of the job was done I would like to get in and pick up the reports. And the first stage in this particular program would have been to examine - I think there were two showings, there were two or maybe even three that could have been accessible from that camp. Because I think they could have come down the lake, yes, for another one

still leaving their camp at the northeast end. So I figured in about a week they would have some preliminary information that would be of value. And that information would dictate whether we did more in that place or whether we moved on. So probably a week to ten days would have been sufficient to do that first stage of that work.

Murray: Right. Well you did fly in about eight days later, did you? Could you describe what you found?

Berry: Yes. When I left Jim and Abbie at Otter Lake, I told them that I would be in in about a week. But they had a radio so I would tell them ahead of time or, not necessarily tell them ahead of time, but they could let me know if they needed anything. This was the usual procedure knowing that I was coming within a day or two, here or there, one way or another, they would radio in for fresh meat or vegetables or whatever. So I said in about a week, which I did, it was eight days actually when I flew in. And you want me to describe the whole procedure flying in and so on.

Murray: Right.

Berry: Well, I used to take the car up to Otter Lake and then take a plane from there because that saved actually thirty-eight air miles by starting there rather than La Ronge. So I went up and I hadn't heard from them, and this is perhaps relevant. I was a little bit surprised in a way that they hadn't phoned in or wired and radioed in for supplies, and then on the other hand I knew they had a good supply of grub. And maybe Jim would have just said that, well, he knows enough to bring some fresh meat and vegetables anyway, I won't bother. Which I did...

Murray: So it wasn't a terrible surprise.

Berry: No, no, no it wasn't that unusual. Perhaps less unusual in the case of Jim than in other people, because Jim was pretty self-sufficient and he hated bothering people and so if it wasn't necessary to radio in, he wouldn't do it. So anyway, I went in and I'm directing the pilot, showing him on the map before we left, as I always did, that the camp was here which is the north end, northeast end of Middle Foster Lake. So we took off and headed directly for that point and as we approached the lake I - as you know both the passenger and the pilot is always looking down to see where the camp is and where you land, and where they've got a dock built, and all this sort of thing. And we were looking, and we couldn't see any sign of a tent. You can usually see these tents because they are white and they are very visible from the air. There was no sign of a tent so we did the usual thing to start with was to circle the immediate area and the pilot looking out one side of the aircraft and me looking out of the other, depending on which way we were making the turn. And we just couldn't find anybody, we couldn't see a sign of anything. So I said, "Well, we better land because it could be that the tent could be hidden under a big spruce or something like that. So we landed and could see no signs of anybody having landed there previously, but we landed anyway. And I walked around looking for signs and it was fairly evident that nobody had been there, certainly not in that summer, but I thought, well, to be sure I'd walk over to the next lake and there's a portage alongside of a creek. I think it's about, oh maybe four thousand feet, three, four thousand feet. And I walked the portage and thinking maybe they might have gone to the next lake, thinking that they would rather camp there.

Murray: This is where they would have been doing their work would it?

Berry: Pretty close, yes. Their first job would have been on that lake and, well, they might have gone in to camp there. So I walked the portage anyway and there was no sign of anybody there, so I came back. And then we decided that they must have been put down someplace else. Well no, the first thought we had was that maybe they had been there and we couldn't see their signs and they had moved down the lake. So first we took off and we took a trip down Middle Foster Lake to where I knew the other showings were to look to see if there were camps there, and there was no sign. So we came back and we decided we'll do the old technique of sort of flying in ever expanding circles from the point of where we expected to see them, which we did.

And on one of the turns, after flying for about maybe fifteen, twenty minutes, one of the turns passed over the northeast end of Lower Foster Lake, which is perhaps ten miles south of where the camp was suppose to be. I looked out of my side of the aircraft and I could see a tent and I told the pilot to circle and it didn't take me long to realize it certainly was our tent and our camp. You could tell even from the air (we were pretty low). So we landed and sure enough there was a camp there and the usual facilities. A bit of a dock, I think. No, I guess we just pulled up by a rock. There was pretty good, suitable rock there for a sort of a dock, so we pulled up beside that and tied the aircraft up, and saw that they had excavated the usual toilet hole. It had only been used maybe twice, I think, and we looked into the tent and it was empty. There was a map, a plain map or some kind of map, lying on the bed and it had been turned yellow by the sun so it had been there for quite a

while. And I picked it up and you could see that it left sort of a mark underneath it. And there was hardly anything taken. There was maybe a loaf of bread and maybe half a pound of butter, you know. I looked around to see how long they had been there and it looked to me as if they had only been there about, not more than two days, looked like about a two day occupancy. And I had known before that on the eighth of June, because it was a seventh that they went in, on the eighth of June, Alex Sarabin, from the mine at Rottenstone, which was about twenty miles away, had talked to Jim on the radio and Jim had mentioned that it had snowed and they were held up a day.

Murray: This would have been delay for them to start?

Berry: Yes, they wouldn't have gone out that day. In other words, they didn't go out on the eighth, I guess they probably went out on the ninth then. I'm assuming it was the ninth, there is no way of knowing this. It was on the eighth that he talked to Alex anyway. So it was pretty obvious in the look of the tent then, the camp, that nobody had been in it for a few days, and the canoe was gone. Of course, I looked for the canoe because this would have been...

(END OF SIDE A)

Berry: I did this but it was in very early stages of the search. We started from where the canoe had been found and we were able to track these men for a distance of maybe four miles. They had walked east along this sort of a draw and hit a lake. The lake would be maybe two thousand feet from the canoe. We were able to track them by, first the foot marks in the moss - you could see there was fairly soft green moss there - foot marks in the moss and occasionally where they had

stopped to talk and their ax marks were visible on the trees. And then, as we went around the lake, we saw where they had stopped and there were a couple of cigarette butts left there and also ax marks in the tree. Because they had taken two axes with them, and also the Geiger counters were gone so they had them with them.

Murray: These ax marks were fairly obviously recent?

Berry: Oh yes, yes it was pretty obvious it was made by them. So I could sort of give you, if you like, a possible explanation of what they did. You see, they had been provided with maps covering the area in Middle Foster Lake in which they were required to work. Now they were placed in Lower Foster area. They had obviously taken a map for the Middle Foster area and attempted to apply it to the conditions and geography of Lower Foster. And it so happened that in each case, in both cases, by going approximately two thousand feet to the east they would have hit a lakeshore. Had they been at Middle Foster Lake they would have followed that lake shore to the northeast and would have come on to the first showing which they were to work. But adopting that same approach out of the Lower Foster area they hit the lake all right, but when they followed the lake shore to the northeast, it took them to the east and eventually right around to the south. It took them to the east and then to the southwest, in other words they were sort of making a circle right around the lake. They never did get out to what they expected to find. So Art and I traced them right around this lake with the sort of indications that I've mentioned and at about say, four miles, the signs disappeared. So there was no point in us wandering around the bush, we came back to camp.

Murray: Would the terrain change there, is that why the signs disappeared perhaps?

Berry: Well, if they had continued around the lake they would have come back to where they started, but I think what this means is that they left the lakeshore somewhere across the lake.

Murray: At that point where they left, they probably realized they were lost. Is that a reasonable assumption?

Berry: I would think so. Yes, I would think they would realize fairly quickly that there was something radically wrong. After they got right around the lake and had walked as far as that and not reached the showing that they were looking for, they must have realized that there was something wrong. So at that point I don't know what they would have done because still being so confused with their own map and the fact there was no sunlight... It was dull, the weather was dull.

Murray: It had been dull all during most of their trip?

Berry: During that period, for a long time, yes. From the snowstorm on it remained dull, dull for some number of days. So it was during that time that they apparently became completely lost.

Murray: Would they have had compasses with them?

Berry: They had compasses with them, yes. But that wouldn't have helped because if they hadn't used the compass when they first left, which they wouldn't have, to use a compass after you are lost, it really doesn't mean anything. All it tells you is which north is.

Murray: Right.

Berry: And you don't know where you've come from anyway.

Murray: And they wouldn't have likely used them because they had no idea they were lost.

Berry: No need to use them at all. Up until the time that they got right around the lake and by that time it was too late for the compass to be of much value.

Murray: The compass would have told them which way to go if they wanted to get to Rottenstone.

Berry: Yes, right.

Murray: And is that probably what they would have done?

Berry: Well, just sort of putting myself in their position, I would think this is what they would want to do, yes. This is a logical thing to do. They knew the camp was there and that's confirmed by the fact that he talked to the camp, and of course he knew anyway that Rottenstone was operating. The other two sort of escape routes possible - and they should, I think, have realized that these two existed... One would be pretty well southwest following the terrain. You see there's a ridging effect in the north, that part of the north, the ridges run northeast and southwest. If you follow the southwest trend, you would eventually hit the Churchill River and then, of course, by going down the river you would hit the bridge. That

would be one out. The other one would be attempt to go pretty

well east, a little bit south, south and east to hit Rottenstone, which was much closer, which is only about twenty-five miles away.

Murray: How many days would that be normally going through the bush?

Berry: Oh, if they knew what they were doing, that could be done in a day and a half. You know, if you had a map, sure. I'd make it in a day and a half, no problem. If you didn't have a map and not knowing how long the lakes were that you had to get around, it could take you, maybe, two or three days. No more than three days, I don't think. I could make it in three days quite easy, and even if you didn't have anything to eat, in three days you wouldn't suffer too much.

Murray: There's so many questions and it's hard to know how to put them all. Do you think then that something happened to them fairly quickly after they were lost?

Berry: Well, since we didn't have dates marked on trees and things like that, which would have helped, all we know is that the last evidence of them - and I'm convinced it was of them - was a raft which I sighted from the air in the lower part of Lapointe Lake. Now, if they had gone directly to Lapointe Lake, they could have done it within a day and a half, because it was sort of following the ridges. If they had gone directly. But we have no way of knowing whether they went directly or not. Now, in view of the fact that we arrived there, I mean we found the raft probably nine days after, maybe eight days, maybe six days after they used it, you couldn't tell. The ax marks were fresh, at three day, or five days, or

six day old. If they had spent a lot of time wandering around, it could have taken them, I would say, not more than three to four days to get to Lapointe.

Murray: The outside?

Berry: The outside, yes.

Murray: There's some difference of opinion on the raft. You saw it and you're convinced that it was made within the time period?

Berry: Oh yes, yes, sure.

Murray: Fresh, fresh saplings used and...?

Berry: Oh, yes. The ax cutting on the paddles that they cut were quite obviously not more than a week old. You see, ax marks on green spruce age turn yellow very quickly, you know, a few days. You can tell a new ax mark from a two week old one. Anyone that's worked in the bush can tell that just at a glance. And these were relatively new ax marks. See, on the dry wood that they'd used for the raft it's different. It's harder to age them, to determine the age of an ax mark in dry

wood, but it's not hard to determine it on wet wood, on green wood.

Murray: What was your impression of the raft? Was it one that could have been used?

Berry: No, it was inadequate. It might have supported one man, but it certainly couldn't have supported two, and yet they had to have a raft to support two unless they were prepared to

separate. So my impression of what happened - well first let me say what the raft looked like. It was pulled up against the shore, I don't think it was tied, it was sort of in a little bay, maybe the front end up in the grass.

Murray: But it had been pulled up?

Berry: Slightly, enough to stick it to the shore. And one of the paddles was still on the raft and the other one was on the shore. Well, okay, there's two paddles, two men obviously. Now one man isn't going to cut two paddles. So there were two paddles and one was on the raft and the other was on the shore.

Murray: So one man hadn't been lost at that point?

Berry: No, they were both together, they had to be. And also they had decided that they had to have a raft big enough to carry two men, obviously. The signs are, well, first from deduction they wouldn't want to be separated and secondly there were two paddles so they planned on using it. The water was fairly shallow for the first fifty, sixty feet out from that shore. And my picture that came to my mind was that they had cut the raft. They had gone out and they got dry wood and it was hard to get. There wasn't very much within a long range. They walked quite a distance to get dry spruce, which is, say, ten feet long and not more than six or seven inches in diameter. And they'd strapped together about five of them. They'd taken this thing out and it just didn't support two men. Obviously, you could tell to look at it it couldn't, but they tried it. And so they had returned and sort of stuck the raft against the shore there and continued on and, and if I'm any judge of sort of deduction, they would have continued to the southwest. Following along the west shore of the lower end of

Lapointe Lake, with hopes either of coming around the south end and heading over to Rottenstone or continuing southwest to hit the Churchill, the same two options that I mentioned before.

Murray: Would you have been able to tell if they had done any more building of a larger raft? They would have used the wood from the first raft in any case?

Berry: Well, unless they did it somewhere else. But we walked that shoreline very carefully and I recall about five or six hundred feet further down from where the raft was, there was an ax cut on a pole that was across an animal trail. But I'm not sure whether it was there where the wood was sort of old

and it was hard to determine, but I rather think it was. That somebody had just sort of stuck the ax in.

Murray: That was in the direction that you felt they would be going?

Berry: Yeah, that's down, that's southwest along the west shore of Lapointe Lake. So, if the ax mark on the trail, animal trail - doesn't really matter. The raft was theirs, the ax mark was theirs. If you were sure the ax mark was theirs, you'd be sure that they had gone southwest. But I cannot see them going any other direction but southwest at that point. They couldn't go east because they couldn't get across the lake.

Murray: Did you backtrack from that point where you found the raft to see which direction they had come from?

Berry: Couldn't find any.

Murray: Couldn't find any. You looked for them?

Berry: No. Yeah, that was done. Yeah, there were people out there, because there were several search parties and there was one I think, Jim Izbister, was on Lapointe Lake. They had a camp there and they worked that area pretty carefully. I don't know whether it's something you should follow up but this is always very vague. Seems to me that Izbister told me that he had found a place where they had had a fire and they had eaten lichen. Now whether that's true or not, I don't know. It was sort of vague, that story.

Murray: But they wouldn't, in any case, have taken food with them?

Berry: They might have taken a lunch.

Murray: A lunch but not more than that?

Berry: That's all. I'm sure they would have taken a lunch, because it was far enough out that they would, unless they didn't leave until after dinner, which is a possibility. I don't know. They left camp but, had lunch in camp and then gone, and then they wouldn't have taken lunch either because they would have been back in by five, six o'clock.

Murray: What evidence did he... there would be lichen missing, torn from rocks or something. He would have...

Berry: Well, he would have seen it presumably, yes. You should check on that. That was never put in paper and I'm not sure if, whether its just a rumor.

Murray: That was Jim Izbister?

Berry: I'm pretty sure it was Jim's party, yes.

Murray: Could you put yourself in the position of Jim or

other people who are familiar with the bush. In their position, their knowledge of the bush and the particular circumstances they were in, knowing that you were going to come back in seven or eight days, what would you have done in that situation? Would you have headed out for Rottenstone or would you have waited, collected food that you could find and tried to attract attention?

Berry: Well, there's another option that I would have taken. This is one of the greatest mysteries of the whole thing, the fact that they did not make an attempt to attract attention to themselves. There were aircraft over that area, over all of northern Saskatchewan, very regularly. And all you've really got to do to attract attention is to light a damn good forest fire. You'll have attention right away because every pilot has an eye open for forest fires, and he's required, practically, to report any forest fires and they do. That's one thing that could have been done. Failing that, if a person didn't have matches, and another thing that is sort of practice is to fell two or three big trees from a lake shore into the water, so it's obviously to... See, a big spruce tree lying out in the water means that, probably that somebody had done it, yeah. Sometimes it turns out a beaver has done it, sometimes it turns out the roots have been washed out or underwashed and it collapsed, but if...

Murray: But if you did a half a dozen...

Berry: You'd look at it. Yeah, if a pilot saw this and you knew that somebody was lost in the area...

Murray: He'd twig to it right away.

Berry: He'd see it, yeah, and he would land. In fact, we landed to look at one ourselves because I thought that maybe they'd done it, but it turned out just to be a shore collapse. So I don't know why they didn't do what seems to me most bush workers would do.

Murray: But that would be the logical thing, is not to try and find your way, but to attract attention?

Berry: No, that's right. It's all right to find your way if, you know, you know where you're at. But by that time, they must have known that they didn't know where they were at and that's what made it foolish for them really to try to do anything else except to attract attention to themselves.

Murray: Do you think they might have figured that they had been put down on Lower instead of Middle Foster?

Berry: I don't know if that would have occurred to them or not, because I don't know how familiar they were with the picture of that country in their minds. You would have to have a map in your mind to come to that conclusion.

Murray: You would have to be familiar with the area?

Berry: Extremely familiar. And I don't know whether either of them knew exactly that they were here and ten miles south Lower Foster was and they might have thought...

Murray: They could have been anywhere within twenty miles of that point.

Berry: They could have been anywhere at all. It could have been more than twenty miles. Aircraft have been lost and have been located two hundred miles away. Well for that length of time it wouldn't be that long, but it could easily be fifty miles away.

Murray: So that alone would make it peculiar for them to try and walk their way out, because they really wouldn't know how far they had to go.

Berry: That's right. And actually, when you think of it that way, and I hadn't really thought of this before, that if they had assumed that the pilot was wildly out of place, could have even - perhaps it might have occurred to them that the pilot could have gone, instead of northwest, could have even some- how or another gone northeast - God knows where they could be. This might have added to their confusion.

Murray: But it seems a very peculiar decision to try and walk out unless they felt for certain they were near Lower Foster Lake.

Berry: Well, I think it must be fairly safe to assume that they would assume that they were in the general area. And if they knew that, then the objectives of either the Churchill River or Rottenstone made sense. And if they were of the opinion they were out of the area altogether, then no attempt to find anyplace made sense. The only thing that made sense was sit still and make a fire.

Murray: Stay right where they were.

Berry: Make damn sure that you set the country on fire.

Murray: Would it have been normal for them to carry matches wherever they went if they were going into the bush?

Berry: They smoked.

Murray: They smoked, and there were indications they had some cigarettes so they had matches with them.

Berry: Yeah, oh yes, yes. Normally it wouldn't be necessary for a trip like that, because they only intend to go out for two or three hours. So unless they were smoking they probably wouldn't take matches with them, but the fact is they were smoking and we saw used matches, Art and I, when we traced

them.

Murray: Right. One of the things that occurs to me, looking at it from someone who had nothing to do with the search or who didn't know the men, is that something dramatic had to happen to the two men, rather than just perishing. How do you feel about that, that kind of theory?

Berry: I find it awfully hard to answer that question. It seems that this had to be what happened, yet on the other hand, they did get down to Lapointe Lake, they did build a raft. So if it did happen it must have happened after that and I'm saying, as I said before, it was probably three or four days at the least before they got down there - that if something happened to them, that still does not explain why they didn't light a fire. It doesn't explain why in the first three or

four days. You don't wait until you are starving to death before you try and, normally before you try... But the fact is they didn't do it. An oversight? Perhaps knowing Jim, and this is sort of a clutch at an answer, grabbing in the dark, they didn't want to bother anybody. He's a very self-sufficient person. Nothing bothered him more than having to bother somebody else.

Murray: Would the thought that he was with another man temper that feeling of his? That he would feel responsible for Halkett as well as himself?

Berry: Yeah, but he would probably feel that it's his responsibility in the same terms as he felt towards himself. And Halkett was a fairly submissive sort of a person, I think, did exactly what Jim would suggest. Unless, and this is another possibility, unless he were able to persuade Jim that east was west and west was east, because, as I mentioned to you before, Eric Partridge told me he's had experiences with Abbie Halkett, which led him to believe that Abbie could get lost in the bush with no problem at all. Now, if that had happened, that would cast a whole new set of possibilities.

Murray: Was Jim the kind of person who was pretty sure of himself in the bush? Would he take direction from someone else if he were relatively certain of the direction he was going?

Berry: Well, if he was relatively certain, yes, but maybe he wasn't. I don't know.

Murray: It's all speculation.

Berry: You go round, and round, and round. When you talk about disasters you say, now what are the possible things. There has got to be some kind of a really fortuitous event that took place. Well, what are those events? The first one is - let's list a few of them. The first possibility, an attack by a wild animal.

Murray: In the spring; a bear with cubs for one.

Berry: That's one possibility. Whether it's a bear or a moose or whatever, you know. Number two, being shot or killed by somebody. Number three, a physical, a fall or drowning off trying to go across in a tree or something of that nature. I don't think either man could swim. Well, the first one, the wild animal. They did have axes, and I've yet to know of a black bear or any other animal in northern Saskatchewan killing anybody. They go for mice but not for men sort of thing, even the biggest of them. The moose? It wasn't the rutting season. A bull moose can be a bit of a danger, but an accident by a bull moose is a blind sort of a thing and you would not get two people. He could go right over top of one but he would continue on. He'd leave the other one. That's the way they operate.

Murray: That's what eliminates most of the theories of an accident, because there are two?

Berry: Yes, because there are two. That's really it. And the same thing with a drowning, how can you see two men falling off the same cliff at the same time, sort of thing.

Murray: Unless one died after the other.

Berry: Or one attempted to save the other and died in the process of saving the other. That's a possibility, but that seems to assume an ability to swim on the part of both of them, and this is not true.

Murray: You were certain that neither of them swam?

Berry: I'm almost certain of that yes, almost certain.

Murray: That's true of a lot of native people in the north.

Berry: Yes, it is. Now, the question of somebody else being there and being destroyed by firearms is the other one that we haven't covered. Either the individual who shot (let's presume they were shot), the individual who shot them killed them by accident or by intention. If he killed them by accident, he would not have killed two. Highly unlikely unless they were lined up like some of these stories. If he killed them by intent, he would have had to know where they were and be there at the same time. Or he would have to cross their trail by accident.

Murray: Or he could have seen them on the lake and followed them, I suppose.

Berry: No, he couldn't because they were not on the lake. They were only on the lake for four hundred feet.

Murray: Right.

Berry: And there's no way that... If he'd been anywhere, this individual we're talking about, had been able to see them taking the canoe that four hundred feet from camp to the creek, they would have seen him.

Murray: They would have stopped?

Berry: Yes. Of course they would have stopped. You know, when anybody visits your camp, this is nice. So all right, coming back. If the guy was there to kill them intentionally he would either have to (a) cross their trail fortuitously, or (b) know where they were going to be at the point at which he eventually kills them. All right. Now can you figure out the possibility of a man who had some reason for wanting to kill these two men, by accident having to meet them at point A in some place in northern Saskatchewan. I think you have to rule that out. Then the second thing that you have to look at is, what are the possibilities of this man whose intention was to kill them, knowing where they were, away from camp. Somewhere out, out within fifteen miles of that camp. What are the chances?

Murray: At least four miles.

Berry: At least four miles, right, at least four miles. Other people have said that perhaps they turned to the west and they came back to Lower Foster Lake and he met them on the lake shore.

Murray: As they get back to their camp.

Berry: Yes, but that again requires a high degree of coincidence - extremely high odds it seems to me.

Murray: And there was no indication in the bush as far as tracking that they had ever come back to the camp?

Berry: No. And the west is the last direction they would go. And having a compass they'd at least know which west is.

Murray: They would rather go for the Churchill or Rottenstone if they were going.

Berry: Yeah, east or south would be the normal... From southwest from east, that whole arc was covered by the Churchill River the highway and Rottenstone, so that was the way to go. So the chance of murder, and this is the question that is raised really, is so hard to give any credence to, so extremely hard, because when you take all the possibilities, it just doesn't make sense.

Murray: People grasp at it because nothing else seems to make sense either.

Berry: That's right. And, of course, once you grasp that and you begin to believe it then you will not question and you

won't try to analyse it. And perhaps I'm a person that has absolutely refused to accept it because I have not got any either deductive evidence or real evidence to indicate that has been the case. If you try and deduce it, as I've just done, it's destroyed as an argument.

Murray: You were at the inquest into Brady's death were you?

Berry: Yes, I think I was. I'm not quite sure.

Murray: Another person who was at the inquest says that they questioned the R.C.M.P. officer who investigated the disappearance, Sergeant Conrad, and he claimed that he had evidence that there were two other men on the lake at the time. Do you recall ever hearing that?

Berry: No, I don't know. And your talking about Lower Foster. Well, I'm quite sure there were two other men on that lake at that time, because there was fishing in that area and it was June, the fishing season.

Murray: Right.

Berry: There could have been fishermen, there could have been guides, there could have been anybody. It's a hell of a long lake. It's about forty miles long. But again you recall what I said, even if there were somebody. Yeah, a coincidence of accomplishing a meet - one with the intent to kill, having a gun loaded. I mean, why? Suppose it was a guide and he was out guiding, he wouldn't have a gun.

Murray: Not in the fishing season.

Berry: No, he wouldn't have a gun. So even if he did meet him on the shore - perhaps he saw them on the shore and came back - I mean this is a possibility, but...

Murray: What about the theories of falling trees or falling down a cliff or that kind of thing?

Berry: Well, I think I mentioned that before. It's very difficult to imagine two people having met their end of death at the same time. At the same time.

Murray: Or injured where they couldn't do anything about it.

Berry: So it seems to come down to, I don't know, but it seems to come down, in my mind, to - drowning is still a possibility - at separate times. One man drowns, the other guy tries to get out and he drowns too.

Murray: Or meets some sort of accident where one man could be hurt.

Berry: Yeah, right. Or one man's hurt, or tired, sick, starving - the other guy tries to go and get help. This could

quite easily happen. And he suffers the same fate, twenty miles further down the road.

Murray: How old were the two men?

Berry: Well Brady was about fifty, I think. They were both about the same. I think Abbie was a little older. Brady had some trouble with his feet at times. I don't know how Abbie was physically; I think he was okay. You'd have to talk to a doctor to exactly how starvation affects you. But I know freezing, for example, people can just simply lie down and go to sleep. Now, whether the starvation hits you the same way, I don't know.

Murray: Right, to determine how long a person can keep going without food.

Berry: And then as to when you just simply stop and sit, wait for the end, you know.

Murray: What kind of food would be available to them if they didn't actually stop and do some snaring or something?

Berry: Well, they couldn't snare because they didn't have any wire. They could have picked old cranberries, they could have eaten lichen moss if they knew, they could have eaten, probably they didn't know, they could have eaten the roots of water lilies. Maybe they did. There's not an awful lot obviously, you know.

Murray: But chances of them getting any animal was pretty remote?

Berry: Very remote.

Murray: In terms of what they had with them.

Berry: Sometimes, although the weather wasn't quite hot enough for that, but later on in July and August, big jackfish quite often lie at the shore right at the surface of the water, and you can sneak up and clip them with a log and get them. But in June the water is still pretty cold and I don't think they're basking in the sun in June.

Murray: One thing just occurred to me. They had apparently taken their Geiger counter with them. What would have happened to that? Once they realized they were lost, would it be sensible for them to keep taking that Geiger counter with them?

Berry: Knowing Jim's determination to do things properly, I think he probably would have carried them because they weren't very heavy anyway. It wouldn't have made much difference. I think he would have carried the axes and the Geiger counters and the compass. I don't think he could have brought himself to abandon anything. That's right, yeah. He was fastidious about that sort of thing, if it was somebody else's property

especially. You know, his own property didn't matter a shit. But somebody else's, he was extremely careful. It doesn't matter how often you talk about this incident, you always end up in the same place, one big bloody question mark. And I've talked this over with dozens of people and the same way as you and I've talked about it. The same sort of end point comes, you just don't bloody well know.

Murray: One last thing I'm thinking. Was either man of the character they would likely panic and maybe get extremely upset and maybe and try and rush through the bush or something? Or do you think they would likely stay calm?

Berry: I would think they would stay calm, but I don't know what can happen to a human mind if black flies, or mosquitoes, it would be at that point, and starvation and frustration...

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