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TORONTO, ONTARIO
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HIGHLIGHTS:

- account of experiences in World War II.
- gathering and preparation of wild rice.
Ranald: Tape number RT 82.9. This is Ranald Thurgood, I am
interviewing Mr. Alvin Hagar in his apartment on Bater Street
[Avenue] in Toronto on August 9, 1982.

Ranald: Mr. Hagar, can you tell me where and when you born
please?

Alvin: I was born on the Indian reservation in Alderville.
That's just north of Cobourg in 1913, July 4.

Ranald: And what, what ethnic background are you?

Alvin: I am an Ojibway Indian.

Ranald: Is that Mississauga, do you know?

Alvin: I think it is Mississauga, yes.

Ranald: And what languages do you speak?

Alvin: I only speak English.

Ranald: Do you have any Ojibway at all? Do you understand it?

Alvin: No, I don't.

Ranald: What religion do you belong to?

Alvin: I belong to the United Church of Canada.

Ranald: Do you still go to church today?

Alvin: I go once in a while.

Ranald: How far did you get in school?

Alvin: I only got to about grade three.

Ranald: And what kind of work have you done during your life?

Alvin: Well, farming before the War, and after the War I done factory work until I... forty-eight I got to Imperial Optical and worked there for thirty years.

Ranald: And what were you doing there?

Alvin: I was polisher there.

Ranald: Do you belong to any groups or clubs or anything like that?

Alvin: I belong to the Royal Regiment Association, and I belong to the Legion, Branch 10 over here on Torrens Avenue, and I belong to the L.O.L. (Loyal Orange Lodge).

Ranald: Are you married?

Alvin: Yes, I am.

Ranald: When did you get married?

Alvin: We got married in '54.

Ranald: And what's your wife's name?

Alvin: Audrey.

Ranald: Where is she from?

Alvin: She's from Toronto here. She's a white girl.

Ranald: What's her last name?

Alvin: Her last name was Ray.

Ranald: Ray. Do you have any children?

Alvin: No, we don't.

Ranald: Okay, you were telling me about where your last name, Hagar, came from. Can you tell me about that again please?

Alvin: Well, I think that was taken from the Bible, but I don't know just what part of the Bible it came from.

Ranald: Did your father take the name, or was it in the family long?

Alvin: It was in the family before my father, yes.

Ranald: Who told you about where the name came from?

Alvin: Well, my uncle and aunts were telling me about that.

Ranald: And your first name, Alvin, were you named after someone?

Alvin: No, I wasn't.

Ranald: Do you know where that name came from?

Alvin: I don't know where that came from.

Ranald: What was Alderville like when you lived there?

Alvin: Well, there was farming down there, and I had a small farm. I was working with my uncle before the War. I joined the army and when I came back I never went back to Alderville. I stayed in Toronto and got a job.

Ranald: When you were a child living there, what were the major occasions or celebrations in the course of the year?

Alvin: Well, we didn't have any celebrations. Only big holidays like the Victoria Day, 1st of July, and Christmas. That's about the only occasions we had to celebrate. And we didn't have any no big powwows or anything like that. And I didn't fish, I didn't hunt, I didn't do any trapping. I was working on the farm all the time.

Ranald: How would you have celebrated Victoria Day?

Alvin: We had a baseball team down there and we'd either play at home, or else we'd go to some other place and play that for the opening season of the baseball season down home.

Ranald: Were there any fireworks or anything like that?

Alvin: No, they didn't have no big fireworks. Just the kids have the odd firecracker, or something like that.

Ranald: How about the 1st of July?

Alvin: That was a big celebration. Well, we'd maybe have a league game, or maybe they'd have a baseball tournament -- that was about all the celebrations we had.

Ranald: Did you play a lot of baseball?

Alvin: No, I didn't play myself. I was a spectator.

Ranald: When did you start preparing for Christmas?

Alvin: Oh my aunt, she'd start about a month before, baking her Christmas cake and getting that ready. And we had geese on our farm and we had those for.... Sam, my uncle, he'd maybe have a shooting match and get a goose, or a duck for prizes.

Ranald: Was the shooting match -- did this have to do with Christmas?

Alvin: No, it didn't have to do with Christmas. Just in the fall of the year different farmers would have geese and they'd have a shooting match; or if they see another farmer having a shooting match maybe three or four of them would go in and all gather at one farm and have a shooting match. Shotguns and rifles.

Ranald: How did you celebrate Christmas?

Alvin: Oh we'd have maybe a goose and same as any other white family, like. We'd have no special celebrations.

Ranald: Did you have Christmas trees?

Alvin: No, we didn't have no Christmas tree.

Ranald: Stockings?

Alvin: We just hang up our stocking, that was all.

Ranald: And what kind of presents would you get?

Alvin: I'd get maybe socks, maybe a little toy, or maybe a comic book, or some candies and an orange. Maybe a shirt, or maybe a pair of trousers, something like that.

Ranald: How many people were there in your family?

Alvin: Well, my father was killed in the First War, and mother died shortly after and there was just the little sister and I, and my sister died when she was only about two and a half and I was about five when she passed away. So I'm all alone and been all alone ever since.

Ranald: Were you raised by your mother?

Alvin: No, I was raised by my granddad and an aunt.

Ranald: Do you remember your father very much?

Alvin: I can just remember him and that's all. I remember my mother a little bit.

Ranald: What kind of work did your grandfather do?

Alvin: Well, granddad he was, he was farming, but his sons worked the farm and he didn't do. He was a farmer. He was older; I think he was retired at that time. So he would go out to the lake and do some fishing and he'd take me along with him, but he never taught me. Never taught me how to trap, or how to hunt, I just went along.

Ranald: Did he hunt and trap himself?

Alvin: Yes, he did.

Ranald: What kind of things did he hunt?

Alvin: Oh, he hunted for deer, moose. I didn't go back with him for that, for that hunt. But in the spring, and the fall or the early spring, or early fall, I'd go with him when he would be trapping for muskrats, in the fall for muskrats.

Ranald: And did he sell the furs?

Alvin: Yes, he did. So I never got much schooling when I was with my granddad, because he was always away from the reserve. And the chief and council they took me down to my uncle and aunt. That's where I spent the rest of my life, or until the War. I was with him working on the farm.

Ranald: Your grandfather didn't teach you hunting and so on, what kind of things did he teach you?

Alvin: He didn't teach me anything. He would do and I was standing there watching him, but he wouldn't tell me what he was doing, why he was doing it.

Ranald: Was he a man who talked very much, or was he a quiet man?

Alvin: I found him to be a quiet man. He didn't talk too much. I guess that's why I'm kind of quiet myself. I don't talk very much.

Ranald: Did he tell you stories?

Alvin: No, he didn't, no.

Ranald: Did he tell you anything about the history of your people, how they came to be at Alderville?

Alvin: No. I got that from my uncles and my other uncles on the reserve, and some of the older, some of the other older men on the reserve. They would tell us little things, you know.

Ranald: What kind of things did they tell you?

Alvin: They told us that our tribe came from down the St. Lawrence River. I think they called it Grape Island.

Ranald: Grape?

Alvin: Grape Island. And they wanted to farm so they brought them up to Aylmer Township, and they had them settle in there for farming and there were some pretty good farmers before the Second War.

Ranald: And did they tell you other things about, say, about people before your time for instance?

Alvin: No, they never told me anything. Never told me much about that.

Ranald: You were saying you lived with your grandfather and your aunt, is that correct?

Alvin: Yes.

Ranald: What did your aunt do for a living, or what did she work at?

Alvin: Well, she was a housewife, because her husband was farming, and he had a small farm and we mixed farming. At one time we had about eight cows, five horses, and a bunch of pigs, and chickens, geese, and ducks. At one time we were working about a hundred acres. What my uncle had and the farm I had and he'd rent lots. So he had a pretty good little farm.

Ranald: So when you were a child you spent most of your time on the farm then?

Alvin: Yes, until the War. Then I left home and joined the army.

Ranald: How old were you at that time?

Alvin: I was about twenty-six or twenty-seven.

Ranald: And were you still living on the same farm?

Alvin: Yes, I was.

Ranald: Why did you decide to join the army?

Alvin: Well, I just wanted to, I guess, wanted to get away from farm life, been farming too long. I'm sort of lazy, I guess. (laughs)

Ranald: So it wasn't a great burst of patriotism, or anything like that? (both laugh)

Alvin: Sort of, I guess you'd say, yeah.

Ranald: Had you been away from home at all before that time?

Alvin: No, I hadn't. No, I hadn't.

Ranald: Where did you go to join the army?

Alvin: I was in Toronto.

Ranald: Was this your first time in Toronto then?

Alvin: Well, yes. I got a job in Clarkson working in the greenhouse, and then I worked there for about six months and then the war broke out. And I came to Toronto and I joined up in 1940.

Ranald: How did you get your job in Clarkson?

Alvin: Well, couple of cousins was working in the greenhouse in Clarkson, and they wrote me and asked me if I wanted to come up. There was a job there, so I went up.

Ranald: Were there a lot of people from Alderville working down that way?

Alvin: Well, there was a quite a few of them who would go up in the summertime picking strawberries, and raspberries, and some was working on the vegetable gardens up there until the fall, and then they'd go back home.

Ranald: So when you went, where did you go in Toronto to enlist?

Alvin: Down at the University Armories. I first joined up with the engineers. Then we got up in Camp Borden and they broke our group up and we were transferred then to the ordnance corps, and I ended up in the mobile laundry. I stayed with the mobile laundry until I was wounded in Belgium in '44.

Ranald: When did you go overseas?

Alvin: In '41 I went over.

Ranald: And you were training up in Borden until that time?

Alvin: Yeah, trained up there for about six months. We were trained up there.

Ranald: How did you feel about army life?

Alvin: Oh, I kind of liked it, yeah.

Ranald: Was it a big change?

Alvin: It was a big change, yes. Hard, kind of hard to take orders, tell you what to do, you know. (laughs) When you had to go to bed and when you get up.

Ranald: When did you say you went overseas?

Alvin: '41.

Ranald: '41?

Alvin: '41, yeah, February '41.

Ranald: And where did you cross from, Halifax?

Alvin: Yes. We went to Halifax to Glasgow.

Ranald: Did you have any friends in the army at the time you joined?

Alvin: Well, there was one of my buddies from the reserve, and we joined up together.

Ranald: And where were you in the reserve at? In Toronto, or in Hagersville or...?

Alvin: No, no. Alderville?

Ranald: I mean Alderville, yeah.

Alvin: Well, no. We were working in Clarkson at the time, and my cousin and Auson Chase went to join. They went to join the, the Queen's Own. And Lawsen, or Chum, he was only seventeen and they wouldn't take him. So he came back to Clarkson and we went down the next week and we joined the engineers, and we went over together; but we got over there and they broke us up. He went to another company and I stayed with the ordnance corps.

Ranald: What was your first trip on a ship like?

Alvin: I was sick. (laughs) But I enjoyed it. The first day out was our worst. Everybody, quite a few of the boys were sick, but after that we got used to it and we enjoyed the trip. It took us two weeks to go across.

Ranald: Did the sailors and the soldiers get along well together?

Alvin: Yes, we got along pretty good.

Ranald: Was there teasing or that kind of thing at all?

Alvin: No. The ship we were on they were more of less British soldiers on there. They were sort of manning the ship, like anti-aircraft and that. They had games of chance in the big ballroom in there, in the ship we had. We were on what they call the Drunken Duchess. I forgot the name of the ship.

Ranald: Did you cross over in a convoy?

Alvin: Yes, we did. There was a big convoy when we left.

Ranald: How long did it take to go over?

Alvin: It took us two weeks to get over.

Ranald: Where did they send you when you go to England?

Alvin: We went to Aldershot. We stayed there for a while and then they sent us up to three weeks training with the Royal Berkshire Regiment, in Reading.

Ranald: You were working at ordnance, but did you get the regular combat training?

Alvin: Yes, we did, yes. Yes, we had to have rifle training and foot drill. Commando courses. And they give us lecture on the laundry and we had to pass our exams for a laundryman to get trench pay. But I just managed to pass that course.

Ranald: So what were you washing?

Alvin: We were washing all the military personnel like -- their laundry. Socks, underwear, shirts, battledress, fatigues, blankets, and we wash the hospital blankets that come in; we'd do all that laundry.

Ranald: How did you wash it?

Alvin: They have washing machines, and they had driers. We had a big trailer with a generator and we had another trailer with the boilers for the water, and then we had trailers for our driers and four trailers for the washing and the extracting.

Ranald: Was it gas generated or electric?

Alvin: Oil, oil generator.

Ranald: And that's what they would have when you were over in Europe too, is it?

Alvin: Yes. Well, when we were getting ready to leave England for France they gave us some new laundry. There was the generator, boiler, washer and drier all in the one truck. And then we had a electrician, our boiler man along with three laundrymen for one shift. Then there would be another shift taking after. And there was two shifts and there was a boiler,

electrician, and then the three laundrymen for the shift. And there were four trailers.

Ranald: How long were you in England before you went to France or Belgium, or wherever?

Alvin: Well, we got in England in '41 so we must have been in England for three, four years, three years.

Ranald: Why so long, do you know?

Alvin: Well, they couldn't make up their mind when they were... when D-Day. They were just having training.

Ranald: So how did the soldiers feel over being in England for so long?

Alvin: They were getting kind of fed up. They wanted action.

Ranald: Did you get a lot of leaves and that?

Alvin: Yeah, sure. We had two weeks leave every six months. And we'd have a weekend, get a weekend pass to go to London if you wanted, down to Brighton or Hastings or wherever you wanted. Could get away for just a weekend.

Ranald: What would you do when you were on leave?

Alvin: Well, when I'd go to Scotland, you know, I would go to dances and go to shows. I didn't drink so I wasn't one of the boys.

Ranald: Why Scotland?

Alvin: Oh, I like Scotland. I liked Glasgow.

Ranald: When did you find out that you were first heading across the Channel over to France?

Alvin: Well, two weeks before we left they give us -- half of our group -- they give them a week's leave. And we came back and the other group went away. And then when the second group came back we left about two days later.

Ranald: And how did you feel?

Alvin: Excited.

Ranald: In a good way, or scared?

Alvin: In a good way, yeah. Well, some of the boys got scared. I guess we were kind of scared. But then, we were kind of glad to get going.

Ranald: And was it D-Day when you went over there?

Alvin: No, we left in about a month after D-Day. And with the laundry they wanted, we couldn't get over, because we had to set up our laundry. About a month after when we went in we set up our own; our first was near Caen. That's where we first set up.

Ranald: Did you end up near the battle zone at all?

Alvin: No, we didn't. We were back a ways. Maybe three, closest we ever got was three miles from the battle zone.

Ranald: Could you hear the battles from there?

Alvin: We could hear them, yes. We could hear the mortars and the big guns going.

Ranald: What was the mood among the soldiers to the people doing different jobs? Was there the feeling that everyone's in this together, or was there resentment against people who were behind the lines, and thing?

Alvin: No, no. At least I didn't find any anyway.

Ranald: You were saying you got wounded. How did that happen?

Alvin: Well, I was wounded in just east of Antwerp with a rocket. The V2 hit our laundry, and there was eight of our guys killed. And there was quite a few of us wounded.

Ranald: And how were you wounded?

Alvin: I had shrapnel in the leg, and I was in the hospital for a year after that.

Ranald: Did you get knocked out by the rocket?

Alvin: Right. A concussion, yes. I was knocked out.

Ranald: And where were you taken to a hospital?

Alvin: I was taken to a hospital in... it would be the camp hospital, up near Brussels. And I was there for a few days, and then they sent us back to Bramshot, in England. And at Christmas time I was sent home on the hospital ship. Back to, well we landed in the Exhibition Grounds and they took us up to Shorelay Park, and then I was transferred to Christie St. Hospital where they done the operation.

Ranald: Did your leg ever recover from that?

Alvin: Not fully, no. I still have pains in my leg, in the ankle; I'm getting a pension out of the thing.

Ranald: I see you walk with a cane. Is that related to your war injuries, or not?

Alvin: It's sort of that and arthritis. I have arthritis in the knees now. I can't do what I would like to do -- I used to do quite a bit of dancing, and square dancing and round dancing, and I can't do any of that now.

Ranald: Was there a lot of that kind of dancing at Alderville when you were younger?

Alvin: There was before the War, but I didn't dance.

Ranald: Why was that?

Alvin: Well, I didn't... one thing I didn't have the money to go, you know.

Ranald: Were there just home dances in people's kitchens?

Alvin: Yes, there was, yes. Then we had a hall that they used to have the odd dance in there. But it was mostly ended up in people's homes they used to go to square dancing and all the dancing. They used to have a nice time. They would tell me. I used to go the odd time and watch them, but I couldn't dance. I never danced until I got to England. That's when I took up dancing over there.

Ranald: How did you learn to dance?

Alvin: Went to a dancing school over there.

Ranald: When you were on leave?

Alvin: Well, when I was on leave and then I found a dancing studio in the little, in the town where, just near where we were billeted; I used to go in there and take dancing lessons.

Ranald: You must have had a lot of contact with the English people when you were over there, did you?

Alvin: Yes, we did.

Ranald: How did the English people receive the soldiers?

Alvin: Quite well. I guess some of the boys they didn't like them. The rest of us seemed quite friendly with us.

Ranald: Did you have girl friends over there?

Alvin: I had one girl friend. Oh, I had a couple of girl friends over there; I never got married over there.

Ranald: Did you keep much contact with your family, or with home when you were in the army?

Alvin: Yes, I used to write back the odd time, and I was no good at writing letters; I'd write once in a while. My aunt

used to send me parcels, socks. I didn't smoke, you know, so there's no cigarettes.

Ranald: I hear a lot about people being sent socks and things during wartime. Did they need those socks? Was the army not keeping them equipped enough in things like that?

Alvin: Yes they'd... the guys here would like to have, just have the homemade socks, because the army socks was kind of rough.

Ranald: How was the food in the army?

Alvin: Well, we had good food. There was some guys that would complain, but I found the food all right. Only when we were with the British is the only time we'd complain really. They'd just have a breakfast and a dinner. For supper they'd give us watercress sandwiches. And they kind of rebelled at that. So the cooks, they decided that they better get us some of our own rations, you know.

Ranald: How did they rebel?

Alvin: Well, they just told the orderly sergeant and the orderly officer just what they didn't like this, the supper that they were giving us. That's when we were attached to the British armies for training, and they'd give us this here watercress sandwiches and the boys didn't like them at all.

Ranald: Did you meet other Indian people in the army?

Alvin: I only met one young guy and he was from Winnipeg. He was like myself, he couldn't talk Indian either.

Ranald: Was there any feeling of camaraderie there, because you met another Indian person? You know, did you feel any closer or anything than you would with any other men?

Alvin: No, I didn't. I just met him on the street and we got talking and he was telling me where he was from, and I told him where I was from and he says his parents couldn't talk Indian. He couldn't talk Indian. I couldn't talk Indian. And the boys in my company I got along great with them. I had two young buddies. One buddy was killed over there, and the other one, he married in England. I think one guy was living up in, I think it's Bissett Creek, Chalk River in there somewhere.

Ranald: What's his name?

Alvin: Tooley, Malcolm Tooley.

Ranald: And what was your friend who got killed?

Alvin: He came from London, Freddy Mezener. The three of us was like pally over there.

Ranald: How did he get killed?

Alvin: I don't know if he was killed after we were hit or not. I couldn't say how he got killed.

Ranald: When you were spending time in England there must have been a lot of feeling among a lot of the Canadian soldiers about, oh, a lot of British Empire patriotism and a lot of feeling of being back to visit the old country and the ancestral homeland, and things that -- you wouldn't feel as much a part of that as other people would, would you?

Alvin: No, I didn't. But we had some of our guys came from England, well, their parents like. I met some of them from

Scotland, and some from Ireland, northern Ireland. They felt, I guess they felt part of it. They would like to get home.

Ranald: You don't feel that you necessarily feel any lonelier being over there, or anything like that?

Alvin: No.

Ranald: So were you still considered enlisted when you were in the hospital back in Toronto?

Alvin: Yes, until we got our discharge, but we were still getting our army pay until we got discharged from the hospital.

Ranald: Was the hospital for soldiers?

Alvin: Yes, it was. Christie Street was the First War soldiers and Second War soldiers.

Ranald: Where was the Christie Street Hospital?

Alvin: Just up at Christie Street and Dupont.

Ranald: It's not there any more is it?

Alvin: No, it's not. I think they made that into an old senior citizens home, when they moved to Sunnybrook.

Ranald: Did many people come and see you when you were in the hospital?

Alvin: Yeah, I had quite a few people come and see me. Some of the people from the reserve, some of them was living in

Toronto here and they'd come up and visit. And I met some people in Toronto here. They'd come up and they'd come and visit. We used to have a nice time in the hospital; they used to run bingo games for the guys.

Ranald: Were there a lot of volunteers working then?

Alvin: A lot of volunteers working there, yes. And we could get leave. Those that were able to get up and walk around they could get a pass to go downtown.

Ranald: Were you able to do that?

Alvin: I was able to do that, yes.

Ranald: Were you in Toronto at the end of the War?

Alvin: Yes, I was.

Ranald: Can you remember when you heard the War was over?

Alvin: I was in the East General Hospital when the War was over in Europe, but I didn't get out because I was still in bed. But when the War was over in Japan I was in Christie Street, and I was able to get out; and we came down. Down Chinatown-Bay, Yonge, Queen you couldn't move. People just, wall-to-wall people.

Ranald: What was everybody doing?

Alvin: They were just having a great old time singing, and yelling, and all that. Walking up Yonge Street the traffic was stopped; it couldn't move.

Ranald: What did people in the hospital do when, when they heard the war in Europe was over?

Alvin: Well, when I was in the East General we didn't... we just kind of glad it was over. We didn't have any big celebration.

Ranald: What are your feelings about the War when you look back at it?

Alvin: Well, I don't think I would have missed it. I'm not sorry that I went over.

Ranald: If you had it to do again you'd...

Alvin: I think I would, yes.

Ranald: What did you do when you were released from the hospital?

Alvin: I got a job working for Kappler Paper Box and I worked there for about three or four months, and then I went to the Ryerson Rehabilitation Centre. Took a course in... chef's course. And then I took the chef course for about nine months and then I got a job on the Imperial Oil tanker, went down to Venezuela; and I came back. When we got back to Halifax I quit the boat and came back to Toronto. I wasn't a seaman.

Ranald: Did you get sick a lot?

Alvin: I got sick again, going down and coming back. And when I got back to Toronto I got a job at the bake shop, but I didn't last there long. I didn't like it. I thought I would, but I didn't like it. And then my next job I got at Pure Gold Manufacturing where they made tea and coffee and chocolate. I was working a chocolate press for a year. And I had a chance of a job down at Imperial Optical and I went down there and I stayed there for thirty years.

Ranald: What was life on ship like? How did you live? What kind of rooms did you have?

Alvin: Do you mean going there?

Ranald: When you went down to Venezuela.

Alvin: Oh, it was nice. Well, I was busy helping the cook preparing the meals, and I would bake pies, I'd bake cakes, cookies, and help him with the preparing the meals. And then when there was nothing else to do I help the other guys cook their vegetables.

Ranald: How big were the ships?

Alvin: Oh, I forget how big this tanker was. Quite a big one. I forget now what tonnage it was.

Ranald: How many men would be on it, do you know?

Alvin: There was about forty-five men on the boat.

Ranald: Did you get to visit Venezuela a bit?

Alvin: Well, we just went into one of the little villages in Venezuela; that's all. We were just there overnight, maybe a couple of nights, I guess. And then we have to load the tanker and then we'd pull out again.

Ranald: What do you remember about Venezuela?

Alvin: Well, I don't remember too much about it, because it was the evening we went into the village. And in the village there was dancing in there. But I couldn't dance so I didn't dance with the girls and we stayed there for a couple of hours and then we came back again. It's just a small little village. There was nothing much to do in there. If you drank you were all right, but I didn't drink.

Ranald: How did you find your first job when you came out of the hospital?

Alvin: I got that through my cousin, because one of my cousins was working there. I think all my jobs I got through relatives.

Ranald: The ship job, too?

Alvin: No. I got that when I was working at the Rehab school. It was posted and I applied for it. I was the only one who applied so I got it.

Ranald: Was the Rehab school for veterans?

Alvin: Yes, it was, yes.

Ranald: Were there a lot of job opportunities after the War?

(END OF SIDE A)

(SIDE B)

Ranald: Tape number 82.9 side B. This is Ranald Thurgood continuing an interview with Mr. Alvin Hagar in his apartment on Bater Street [Avenue] in Toronto on August 9, 1982.

Ranald: You were saying you lived on Geoffrey Street in Toronto.

Alvin: Yes, that was a house.

Ranald: Living with a family?

Alvin: Yes, yeah.

Ranald: How did you find that place?

Alvin: We found that through the want ads.

Ranald: And did you live there for a long time?

Alvin: I lived there for about... oh, maybe a year.

Ranald: And where did you go after that?

Alvin: And I moved up to Durie Street. I found that through the ads too, and then I moved up from Durie Street down to Browning Avenue, and then from Browning Avenue I got married. And we've lived in Tennis Crescent for four years and then I've lived up here ever since '59.

Ranald: Tennis Crescent, was that down below Broadview and Danforth?

Alvin: Danforth, yeah, just across from Riverdale Park.

Ranald: You were saying you got a lot of jobs through relatives.

Alvin: Yes.

Ranald: Did you have a lot of relatives living in Toronto

then?

Alvin: Yeah, I did have quite a few, yeah.

Ranald: You kept up a lot of contact with them?

Alvin: Well, I did here for a while, you know. You kind of lose contact with them.

Ranald: Did you have contact with many native people while you lived in Toronto?

Alvin: No, I didn't.

Ranald: Was that by choice, or just the way things fell or...?

Alvin: Just, just the way things fell, I guess.

Ranald: How did you get your job at Imperial Optical?

Alvin: Well, my chum was working there, and he phoned me one night and asked me if I wanted a job. And I went down and applied -- I got the job.

Ranald: So you were grinding lenses?

Alvin: Grinding lenses. No, I was polishing lenses.

Ranald: How long a day did you work?

Alvin: Oh, when I first started they were nine hour days.

Ranald: What year was that?

Alvin: In '48 I started. And then we got down to eight hours a day.

Ranald: Was your job skilled at all, or was it an unskilled kind of job?

Alvin: Unskilled, yes. You had to have a little bit of training for it, but anybody could have walked in and just applied. You didn't have to have no special education or training for it. Just train on the job for a couple of weeks and I was a polisher.

Ranald: What would a day at work have been like?

Alvin: How do you mean?

Ranald: I mean what would you do in the course of a day at your job?

Alvin: Just polishing, I was just polishing. They had a machine that we had. There was about twelve little bowls, or twenty-four little bowls on the machine that we had to look

after. They would polish about four on a chuck and I done about, I think, about forty-eight pair of lenses at a time. Oh, I forget now how many pair of lenses I would polish a day.

Ranald: So were you polishing them individually then, or was this machine doing a whole bunch of work?

Alvin: The machine did the whole work. You had to set it up and make sure it was polishing the lens all right. Make sure that there was no little pit-holes, and make sure there was no scratches on them.

Ranald: Were they a good company to work for?

Alvin: Well, it was... they were poor pay, but it was a steady job. That was the only thing good about it.

Ranald: Were they unionized?

Alvin: No. They weren't until about five years before I retired and the union got in.

Ranald: How did you meet your wife?

Alvin: I met her at the Y.M.C.A. They had dances Wednesday and Saturdays. So she was at the dance and I was dancing with her, I got going with her. I was with her for about a year or two and we got married.

Ranald: Was she born and raised in Toronto?

Alvin: Yeah, she was, yes.

Ranald: And is she from this area of town?

Alvin: Yeah, she's from Sherbourne and Gerrard Street where she was. Down in that area.

Ranald: What did she work in?

Alvin: She worked at Canada Life. Started out as a clerk and then she got into underwriting.

Ranald: What kind of social things were you involved in since you've moved to the city?

Alvin: Oh, I just went to the Y.M.C.A. dances, and other dances in Toronto that I used to go to. I never joined any other group except the Royal Regiment Association and the Legion.

Ranald: When did you join the Royal Regiment Association?

Alvin: I joined that in 1960 it was. I joined the Forty-eighth Highlanders a couple of years before that, and

then I got out of the Forty-eighth and then I got into the Royals.

Ranald: What is the Royal Regiment Association?

Alvin: It's infantry.

Ranald: Is it a militia too?

Alvin: It's militia now, yeah.

Ranald: And when did you join the Legion?

Alvin: I joined the Legion, I think about ten years ago, I guess.

Ranald: Have you been active in the Legion?

Alvin: No, I haven't. The only time I go up is when the meetings, or if they have any parades. I don't drink so I don't go that often. But they have other activities there. They have a shuffleboard, they have dartboards, and they have big crib. They have pool tables over there. But I don't play pool, and I don't play crib, or play poker so I guess I'm a poor member.

Ranald: You were saying you belong to the Orange Lodge too.

Alvin: Yes.

Ranald: And how did you come to join the Orange Lodge?

Alvin: Well, we had an Orange Association down on the reserve and our hall burnt down, and all our records and the banners and everything burnt with it. So one of the boys in the army that I was with -- for about three years I guess I've known this guy -- and on the twelfth of July I saw him on parade and I hollered at him. Well, I met him a couple of weeks later and he asked me if I was an Orangeman, and I told him I was, and he asked me where, and I told him down in Alderville, but the hall had burnt down and the records and banners and everything. So he asked me the number of the Lodge, and I told him. And he went down to the headquarters and found the records and he called me and told me the day the hall burnt and the year. And so he got me into his Lodge, but

that was up on Thornhill. I couldn't get up there so I transferred to one of the Lodges down in Toronto here. I've been with the -- well, we had the Coronation Lodge, but our members were dropping off so we disbanded that Lodge and we transferred into the Birchcliff group and that's the Birchcliff Lodge I am in now.

Ranald: How did Alderville happen to have an Orange Lodge, do you know, do you have any idea?

Alvin: Well, there was a lot of Orangemen down around that

area, and I guess they thought they'd like to have a Lodge on the reserve; so they did. Before my generation nearly everyone on the reserve belonged to the Orange order, and we had a brass band down there -- twenty-four members, brass band.

Ranald: What else did the Lodge do? What activities did the Lodge do?

Alvin: Well, down on the reserve we just paraded on the twelfth of July. That was the big, the big celebration, and they'd have their meetings once a month. And then they'd have what you call box socials, or pie socials to raise money in the wintertime. That was quite an occasion.

Ranald: Can you tell me about them box socials?

Alvin: Well the women would make up a little box packed with sandwiches, or somebody would have a pie and we'd auction those off. And you'd buy the lunch and then after the auction was over you'd go and you'd have a lunch with the person that you bought the box from.

Ranald: It was the men bidding on the boxes?

Alvin: Yes, they were, yeah.

Ranald: And did they know whose box they were bidding on?

Alvin: Some of them didn't know, and some of the girls would put a little sign on their boxed lunch and only their boy friend would know. But then when he'd start bidding everybody would start bidding against him.

Ranald: Did you ever have that happen to you?

Alvin: No, I didn't.

Ranald: What other kind of social events like that can you remember?

Alvin: I can remember we used to have what they used to call a harvest home service; that was at Thanksgiving. And then on Monday night they'd have a what they call a harvest home supper, a Thanksgiving supper. And people from all around the country -- a lot of the whites -- would come to Alderville and have supper. And a lot of the people would have wild ducks, wild geese, black rice. We had black rice puddings.

Ranald: That's the wild rice?

Alvin: That's the wild rice, yes.

Ranald: Are there different kinds of wild rice?

Alvin: Yeah, there are. I have some here I'll show you.
(goes to get the wild rice)

Ranald: Oh yeah.

Alvin: See that, that's very hard and you'd have to soak that overnight, and then when that fluffs, when it soaks overnight and (inaudible) well four times that size.

Ranald: Yeah. Do you cook with wild rice?

Alvin: You can. I have some recipes, brought some recipes from home that you can have the wild rice, wild rice stuffing, wild rice soup, wild rice puddings.

Ranald: Those are recipes that people used in Alderville are they?

Alvin: Yes, yes.

Ranald: Did you ever harvest the rice?

Alvin: No, I never harvested it myself. But when they harvested there's two in the boat -- one is in front paddling and the other one is in behind. And they have two sticks about forty inches long and one leans over the bow and then he hits the top of the rice -- it falls into the boat and then they goes on the other side, brings it down, and he hits it again. They get a rhythm going. And just, as they pull the paddles along he can knock this off.

Ranald: So one pulls bending it and hitting it from one side?

Alvin: No. One fellow is doing the paddling and the other one is doing the harvesting.

Ranald: Oh, I see.

Alvin: And then he has a rhythm just going, you know, and then they harvest that at one spot and then they don't get all the rice. It doesn't ripen at the same time, and you can get over the same area maybe three or four times. But I think the harvest is the last two weeks in October. And down where I come from there's no rice in Rice Lake any more. They go down to Ardoch, down to Mud Lake. And there was a commercial harvester down there trying to get in and they demonstrated last fall and even the people in Ardoch were in favor of the Indians because they didn't want to lose that wild rice. When the commercial harvester goes through it takes all the rice and there's no rice to fall off or seed. In three or four years there would be no more wild rice. And that's what they're fighting against.

Ranald: What happened to the rice on Rice Lake?

Alvin: It just, I guess, it just died off when the weeds choked off the wild rice.

Ranald: Did you go out in the canoes with the men sometimes

when they were harvesting the rice?

Alvin: No, I didn't, no, no.

Ranald: How do you know how they did it? Did some people tell you?

Alvin: People would tell me how they used to do it. And then when they harvest the rice they put it in a bag and then soak it in the water for maybe a half hour, forty-five minutes to get the bugs and that out. Then they'd spread it on the blankets to let it dry, and then they'd get a cast iron pot around and then they have a fire in there. And then they put the rice in there, and then they stir that rice. Some man would sit on the side and he'd stir that rice all continuously to get the hull away from the rice. And then when that was finished they would put it into another smaller bucket and then the man would what he called "dance the rice." He'd have on a pair of moccasins that would be a light color, and he would what they call "dance the rice." And that would get the hulls away from the rice. And then when they winnow it they just hold it up in the air and then just press it down, and then the wind would blow all the chaff away -- they do that three or four times. And then they would get all the hull away from the rice.

Ranald: Was the whole procedure done outdoors?

Alvin: Yes, it was, yes.

Ranald: Do they still go through the same procedures today?

Alvin: They still do, they still do the same procedures, yes.

Ranald: What other kinds of wild plants do you know that people ate?

Alvin: I don't know. I don't know of any other plants. Down on our reserve we lost all our, all our crafts years ago. There was one lady -- two, three families used to make baskets and the husbands used to make ax handles. And now I think there might be a few of them, maybe one or two families might be able to make some ax handles, or maybe make some baskets; but we don't do that any more down there.

Ranald: When you were with your grandfather when he was trapping and that kind of thing, did you go on overnight trips, or would they just be day trips?

Alvin: Well, he had a cottage back at one of the lakes and he would go back there and spend time back there, and he would spend a couple of weeks trapping.

Ranald: Did he use commercial traps?

Alvin: Yes, yeah.

Ranald: What was it like spending just... would you be alone with your grandfather?

Alvin: I'd be alone, yes. He'd leave me alone at the camp and then I'd just be playing around the old shack.

Ranald: How old would you have been?

Alvin: I guess I would have been about five, six, and seven years old.

Ranald: And how long would he go away for?

Alvin: He'd go away for maybe a couple of weeks and then...

Ranald: I mean how long would he leave you all alone at the cottage?

Alvin: Oh, he'd through in the morning and come home, make lunch, and then he'd be out in the afternoon again.

Ranald: But you felt like you could... you weren't going to get into trouble if your...

Alvin: No, that's right.

Ranald: Do you think that was typical of the attitude of that generation, or not?

Alvin: Well, some of the other families, their fathers they would teach their boys. I can't even paddle a canoe -- even right now I can't paddle a canoe. I never fired a gun until I joined the army. Oh, maybe a little .22 down home for target practice; that's about all. But a heavy, heavy rifle I never fired until I got in the army.

Ranald: What would you eat when you were staying with your grandfather?

Alvin: Well, he was out trapping, fishing. We'd have fish and he had meat and potatoes -- he was a pretty good cook, I thought. He would bake pies in the summertime, if there were strawberries or huckleberries, blueberries. He'd make blueberry pie, and he'd make bannock, we call it scone.

Ranald: How would you pass the evening?

Alvin: I forget what we used to do. (laughs) I guess we just go to bed in the evening when the sun went down.

Ranald: Do you remember many old people from Alderville?

Alvin: I remember quite a few of them of my granddad's age.

Ranald: What was your grandfather's name?

Alvin: Robert Morrison. He was ninety-three when he died.

Ranald: When was that?

Alvin: In '39. And I have an aunt, she is living in the nursing home in Peterborough, she's ninety-seven. And she's pretty good. Getting a little hard of hearing and she kind of forgets. And she used to play the piano until about a couple of years ago when she had a little fall and she uses a walker now. And she used to crochet until she was about ninety-four; she crochet till then. She used to make things for the bazaar at the nursing home. She used to knit.

Ranald: What's her name?

Alvin: Elizabeth Crow.

Ranald: I was starting to ask you there about the older people from when you were a boy. That Mrs. Elmira McLeod

was telling me about remembering people, a few old men, who wore their hair long and some of them wore earrings, and things like that. Can you remember those people?

Alvin: No, I can't remember that, no.

Ranald: What do you remember about the old people?

Alvin: Well, the old, the young, you just remember, remember them. But I remember one old gentleman. There was one white boy, he was around my age, he used to go to this one old gentleman and he used to make him bow and arrows. And he'd go and visit with this old gentleman and when he'd go home he'd tell his mother that he was up visiting with -- he used to call him Uncle Alec. So then his mother would take him and give him a bath. (laughs) The other older men, some of them was farming and some of them would go fishing, and hunting, and a lot of them, when the tourists started coming over, they would do guiding for the summer months; so they made their living with guiding. And there was no motor boats in those days so we had to just paddle a canoe, paddling a canoe all day. And they'd walk to the lake. It was about three miles from where we lived on the reserve, and they'd walk down there early in the morning, and they'd paddle all day, and then they'd walk back home again in the evening.

Ranald: And how old would they be then?

Alvin: Oh, they would have been -- at that time they must have been around maybe forty, fifty, some maybe a little younger. They were like my uncle's generation. My uncle was about forty when I was young.

Ranald: Was there anybody around who was known for being especially strong, or who had done something especially brave, or anything like that?

Alvin: No. Well, we had one gentleman he was, Fred Simpson, he was quite a marathon runner. He represented Canada in the Olympics and he came in second at that time.

Ranald: When was that, do you know?

Alvin: That was way back in 1906, or 1907. He's represented Canada in a few of the marathons; he's a pretty good runner. He ran with Tom Longboat.

Ranald: Did he have an influence on the reserve? Did other people want to be runners?

Alvin: No, they didn't, no.

Ranald: Did you have a lot of contacts with white people when you were living at Alderville?

Alvin: Yes, we did. Because our reserve -- there was a white farmer just across the road from us, and so we used to see the white people all the time. Every day we'd see the white people. Some reserves is isolated from the whites and they wouldn't see them for weeks. Their little village from us, from Alderville was about a mile, Roseneath, and we used to go over there to do our shopping.

Ranald: Did you do a lot of social things together and that kind of thing?

Alvin: Well, we'd compete with the Roseneath guys when playing baseball, or playing hockey. And we had a baseball team and they had a league. It was about six or seven teams from different little villages around. And the same in the wintertime; the Roseneath had a hockey rink and our guys would go over there and play hockey, and they had a league that we'd play hockey with, I guess, the other white boys around.

Ranald: Did you get along well together?

Alvin: We got along pretty good, yeah. Actually we had our scraps, but we hardly ever... we got along pretty good with them.

Ranald: Was there much intermarriage?

Alvin: No, not at that time.

Ranald: Why was that?

Alvin: Well, I guess we just didn't think of it. It was just since after the War that the boys started marrying off the reserve and the girls started marrying the white boys.

Ranald: Was the church a major influence at Alderville?

Alvin: Yes, it was, yes.

Ranald: How was that?

Alvin: Well when I was young we used to -- that church was quite full, you know. And we had a Sunday school. They used to go to church in the Sunday service in the morning, and then they had the Sunday school in the afternoon. And then they

had the church service at night, Sunday nights. And the Women's Auxiliary, they used to have box socials too, and the Lodge used to have box socials, and the baseball team used to have box socials and pie socials and that. And then in the fall of the year they used to have a hunting match. They'd choose up sides, and one side would go out one direction, and the other side would go in another direction to hunt rabbits. There were so many points for a rabbit and so many points if they got a fox, or a raccoon. And then when they would come home they would add how many rabbits they had and then they'd add it up and add up all the points; and the loser used to have to pay for the suppers.

Ranald: How did they choose the sides?

Alvin: Well, they just choose a captain and then maybe flip a coin, and then they'd have the captain and then he'd pick out so and so and they pick so and so, you know. And sometimes they'd have one house at the middle of the reserve and then they used to call it the east -- east against the west. They'd have that sometimes, and then sometimes they just have maybe just pick a captain and just pick up sides.

Ranald: Did you have a lot of contact with the government when you were living in Alderville?

Alvin: Well they had, I guess, they had some contact with the government. I was young. I didn't pay any attention to it, you know.

Ranald: When you were farming you didn't notice dealings with the government or anything?

Alvin: No.

Ranald: You only went to school up until grade three, was that fairly typical at Alderville?

Alvin: No. Some of them, some of the boys went through and finished public school, and some of them went through and they maybe got two years high school. And we have one of the boys -- he's about maybe a couple of years older than I am -- he went through right through normal school and he taught on the reserve for about twenty-five years, or thirty years.

Ranald: What's his name?

Alvin: Johnny Lukes. And then we have other younger boys. We have a young guy, Johnny Beaver. He was with the hydro and he worked at the Churchill Dam. He was in charge up there, and he worked over at the Douglas Nuclear Plant out on Douglas Point; he was over there. And he was in Montreal. He's sort of retired now, but he says he's more busy now than he was when he was working. Of course, they'd send him out to different places now.

Ranald: Have you gone back to Alderville a lot since you've left home?

Alvin: I just go back maybe for the weekend sometimes.

Ranald: Do you still have a house or anything like that?

Alvin: No. The little farm I had, I sold that back to the reserve. And I have cousins down there and I had a friend down there that I've known since we were in public school and we were buddies ever since, and he passed away just this last May. So I still go down and stay at his place. His wife is living on the reserve. She was from Cobourg and she's still living on the reserve. So I go down there and I stay down there when I go down.

Ranald: Have you kept your status?

Alvin: Yes I have, yes.

Ranald: You could move back there if you wanted to?

Alvin: Yes, I could move back if I wanted to, yes.

Ranald: When you moved away from home, when you had to adjust to city life and so on, was that a difficult adjustment for you?

Alvin: No, it wasn't for me, no.

Ranald: Why do you think you didn't have too much difficulty?

Alvin: I don't know. I think maybe because we were in contact with the white people so much, you know. I mean every day you'd meet that white people on the roads, or if you went in to Roseneath in the evening for to do a little shopping.

Ranald: Had you worked wage labor when you were at Alderville?

Alvin: No, I worked with my uncle on the farm, and then I worked with him until I went to Clarkson and got a job in Clarkson in the greenhouse.

Ranald: You're very much of a city person it seems today. Do

you consider this home, or do you consider Alderville home?

Alvin: Well, I guess I feel both places are home. I'm at home in the city, and I'm at home down on the reserve.

Ranald: Is the fact that you're Ojibway important to you?

Alvin: Yes it is, yes.

Ranald: Why's that?

Alvin: Well, I don't know. I just like, I am proud to be called an Indian, you know.

Ranald: Does your identity as an Indian affect your life in any way at all?

Alvin: No, it hasn't, no.

Ranald: I mean in, you know, in positive or negative ways. Do you keep up any old traditions, or anything like that?

Alvin: Well, we don't have any traditions now on our reserve, because it all died off quite a while ago; so I don't have any, really.

Ranald: Do you still eat wild rice and stuff?

Alvin: Oh yes, we eat wild rice and I'll eat muskrat if I get it, you know.

Ranald: That's traditional?

Alvin: Yeah. (laughs)

Ranald: Okay. Thank you very much then.

Alvin: You're quite welcome.

Ranald: What we're going to do with the tape is put it in the Spadina Road Library.

Alvin: I see.

Ranald: Where it is available to the community, the librarians, the native people, anybody who wants to use it.

Alvin: Yeah, I see.

Ranald: Do you agree that the tape can go in there without any restrictions on it?

Alvin: Yes, I think so.

Ranald: Okay, thank you very much, Mr. Hagar.

(END OF SIDE B)

(END OF TAPE)

PROPER NAME INDEX

PROPER NAME	IH NUMBER	DOC NAME	DISC #	PAGE #
ALDERVILLE, ONT.	IH-OT.004	ALVIN HAGAR	110	2,13,20,34 -37,42,44-47, 49
CLARKSON, ONT.	IH-OT.004	ALVIN HAGAR	110	11,12,14,49
COBOURG, ONT.	IH-OT.004	ALVIN HAGAR	110	2
GRAPE ISLAND	IH-OT.004	ALVIN HAGAR	110	9

INDEX

INDEX TERM	IH NUMBER	DOC NAME	DISC #	PAGE #
CHRISTIAN CHURCHES				
-United Church	IH-OT.004	ALVIN HAGAR	110	2
FOOD				
-gathering of	IH-OT.004	ALVIN HAGAR	110	37,38
FOOD				
-preparation of	IH-OT.004	ALVIN HAGAR	110	39
FOOD				
-traditional	IH-OT.004	ALVIN HAGAR	110	36-38,41
NAMES (PERSONAL)				
-origins of	IH-OT.004	ALVIN HAGAR	110	4
SPORTS				
-baseball	IH-OT.004	ALVIN HAGAR	110	5,6
SPORTS				
-shooting	IH-OT.004	ALVIN HAGAR	110	6
WORK				
-for wages	IH-OT.004	ALVIN HAGAR	110	3,11,12,27, 28,30-32,43
WORLD WAR I				
-military service	IH-OT.004	ALVIN HAGAR	110	7
WORLD WAR II				
-army life	IH-OT.004	ALVIN HAGAR	110	12-19,22,23
WORLD WAR II				
-enlistment	IH-OT.004	ALVIN HAGAR	110	10,11
WORLD WAR II				
-overseas experiences	IH-OT.004	ALVIN HAGAR	110	12-19,21-23
WORLD WAR II				
-treatment of returning veterans	IH-OT.004	ALVIN HAGAR	110	24,25,26