

DOCUMENT NAME/INFORMANT: JANE MCKEE
INFORMANT'S ADDRESS: #507 - 14 SPADINA ROAD
TORONTO, ONTARIO
INTERVIEW LOCATION: #507 - 14 SPADINA ROAD
TORONTO, ONTARIO
TRIBE/NATION: OJIBWAY/CREE
LANGUAGE: OJIBWAY/ENGLISH/FRENCH
DATE OF INTERVIEW: 07/20/83
INTERVIEWER: CYNDY BASKIN
INTERPRETER:
TRANSCRIBER: HEATHER BOUCHARD
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TAPE NUMBER: #IH-OT.027
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PAGES: 40
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HIGHLIGHTS:

- Account of native use of plants for medicine.
- Prophecies concerning the arrival of the white man.
- Accounts of her life in the bush.

Cyndy: Today, July 20, 1983, I am in the home of Jane McKee of 14 Spadina Road, apartment 509, in Toronto, to interview her for the Native Canadian Oral History Project. Mrs. McKee has many interesting stories to tell about her childhood and young adult life while living in Bisco and surrounding areas. My name is Cyndy Baskin.

Jane: In Ontario when I lived in a village called Biscotasing, B-I-S-C-O-T-A-S-I-N-G. It is, this little town is often seen on T.V., about the lumbering and the old... Did you ever see it?

Cyndy: I don't think so.

Jane: It comes in sometimes with Grey Owl and other times it's just this little picture called Biscotasing. We were on

the panel when that was being made. I had all the people over at my place. I lived at 1516 Bathurst, you know, in an apartment up there. And I had all these people up there. I don't know how many people I had in this little room -- some were sitting on the floor, I didn't have enough room for them. (laughs) And I had to borrow chairs from my neighbors and everything. And of course I had to invite them in too, eh. Then I borrowed their furniture. (laughs) I had so many people there you can't believe it. Yeah, that's where I was born, Biscotasing. It was a little lumbering village, and then they had this... But my father, he was an outfitter for the C.P.R., you know, for the American tourists. They went down, this was a twenty-one day canoe trip through the wilderness. He was an outfitter. I tell you, my dad was a smart Indian, at least he was part Indian. I'll show you some pictures after.

But my, I think his great-grandfather was a Spanish fur trader. And we're supposed to be the only Spanish Indians up there. That's what they say, we're the only Spanish Indians that are up, that are in northern Ontario. The village of Espanola, it was supposed to be my grandfather named that village -- that's where he lived. And then his, I think it was his grandsons, that worked on the Spanish River, so everybody called it the L'Espagnole, (Indian word) that's in French, eh. But then the (Indian word) is the Indian... And then my grandfather, my dad's father, he kept... He was more like an Indian, this fellow. He worked in... he ran the Hudson's Bay store at Pogamazing.

And then he, my father went to school in Montreal. He went to a brother's boarding school or something. He could read and write French better than English. He didn't read many English newspapers, he read the La Presse. He subscribed for it. (laughs) That was his paper. But us kids we all read English. Well, our neighbors were Scottish, I think. And then the other people on the other side of us were Germans from Pembroke or somewhere. So I went to school in a public school eh, I didn't go to...

Well, there was Indians around there, too, but there was lots of them, eh. But they didn't stay there. They only came out in the summertime. And as soon as the Thanksgiving feast was over, they were all gone again for the whole year. You never seen them till next year again. I think they usually came there for, to watch the activity of the town, see all the trains going by, and then the stores... and then they have pool rooms and hotels, what have you. I think that's what they came there for.

Cyndy: So your father would have been Spanish and Ojibway?

Jane: Yeah.

Cyndy: What about your mother?

Jane: My mother -- I can't tell you. I guess, I guess she

was an Ojibway, too. But her grandmother came from Chicago, somewhere. My mother used to tell me she used to remember when she and her mother, in the summertime... They lived at the old Fort La Cloche, you know, when the Americans was fighting between Canada? Well, they lived at old Fort La Cloche. There was a Hudson's Bay store there, too. I think that's where my grandfather lived, the old Spaniard. And my mother used to say that they used to have a, some kind of a boat they made themselves, I guess. They used to sail. They didn't have not motor or nothing. She said they used to wait for the wind and they used to go to Chicago. And then they wait for the wind again and then they'd come back again, she said. But they used to get off along the shore somewhere and sleep, eh. And I guess they fished, I don't know what they did. That's what my mother used to tell me.

Cyndy: What's the date of your birth? The date of your birth, when you were born?

Jane: November 7, 1910. Oh my God, that's a long time ago! Come and see the picture of my mother. My dad and my mother got married, I guess, and they moved out to Pogamasing -- that's where the old Hudson's Bay Post used to be. Somebody at the door? No, it's somebody pounding outside. Anyways, my dad

moved out to Biscotasing when he got married. And that's where I was born. But there were a lot of Indians there, there was Indians from all over, many different tribes. But when the flu came along, there was no more Indians. Very few came out the next spring. Hard to believe, eh?

Cyndy: They had a flu every year?

Jane: The flu epidemic of 1918. I think it's 1918 or 1919, somewhere. It wiped out practically all the Indians.

Cyndy: Can you tell me about... What was your home like?

Jane: I beg your pardon?

Cyndy: What your home was like?

Jane: What my home was like? Oh, I had a good home. I had a home just like anybody else. Yeah, I had a good home. We had hardwood floors, and we had a living room, and four bedrooms, and a kitchen, and a dining room, and we had a woodshed, and we had chickens. We had a good place. My dad was a man who made a lot of money. He wasn't a man that sat outside and waited for the money to come in. (laughs) He was a outfitter for the C.P.R., eh. He took a lot of rich Americans, what have you, down the Mississauga River. That was a big river at one time, but today you can jump over it, since they put the dam on it, eh. You can jump across it in places. I was looking at it one day when I was at Chapleau a couple of years ago. We drove from Sudbury to Chapleau. We were looking at the Mississauga River along the way. And they say they're going to do the same thing to the Spanish River. They're going

to put a dam on it too. There'll be no more rivers up there.

Cyndy: Did you go to school right in town?

Jane: Yeah, I went to the public school.

Cyndy: What was it like going to school?

Jane: What was it like then? You know, that's what I can't get over. People always say there's discrimination and all that. Not us kids -- there were only just my sister and I. Of course we spoke English, you know. And we went to public school. We didn't have no trouble. Sometimes we played with the French kids, another time we played with the German kids, then sometimes maybe we'd join the Findlander kids. There was a lot of Finnish people there, eh. And other times we played with the Protestant kids. We used to call them, you know, the English-speaking people. Sometimes we played with them, we played baseball or something.

Cyndy: Are you Catholic?

Jane: Yeah, I'm Catholic, or supposed to be. (laughs)

Cyndy: The school you went to wasn't just for Catholics?

Jane: No, it was public -- everybody went to the same school.

Cyndy: What kind of things did you learn there?

Jane: I beg your pardon?

Cyndy: What did they teach you there at school?

Jane: Oh, just the ordinary subjects like, just like today. Composition, grammer, arithmetic, and literature, and history.

Cyndy: Did they teach you things like how to sew?

Jane: I beg your pardon?

Cyndy: Did they teach you how to sew and things like that?

Jane: How to what?

Cyndy: How to sew?

Jane: No, we didn't have nothing like that, nothing. We just ordinary... learn to read and write, and that.

Cyndy: Can you speak Ojibway?

Jane: Yes, I learned in later years. I speak a different kind of way. That's why I can't talk to these people, you know, they speak different. I understand them all right -- I

have a hard time to understand them. I didn't learn, you know, to talk Indian until later years.

Cyndy: Your parents didn't speak it at all?

Jane: I picked it up in later years.

Cyndy: From other people?

Jane: Yeah, from other people.

Cyndy: So your parents didn't teach you how to speak Indian?

Jane: Well, my father, he spoke Indian, too, but not too much. But he didn't, he wasn't home enough, eh. So my mother didn't have anybody to talk to, so we spoke English all the time.

Cyndy: Your mother didn't speak it?

Jane: Oh yeah, my mother spoke Indian, but she spoke a different kind of Indian, eh. From, like the way the people on the north shore talks, eh. That's the way she talked. But in later years I learned to talk Indian from other families.

Cyndy: Do you speak French too?

Jane: Oh, I can read and write pretty good. Read, especially. Oh, I suppose I could talk if I tried hard but I never... Well, my dad used to teach us, eh, how to write and everything. My dad used to teach us. In fact, you know, when I went to school -- I was able to read and write when I went to school -- that's why I didn't go to school long. I went four years, I think, four years and a half. And I did the old entrance class and I did the old fifth class -- that's like grade nine today. I did all that in four and a half years. I still go and visit the old teacher up here -- she lives on Spadina Road.

Cyndy: She was a teacher of yours?

Jane: Yes. (laughs) She always tells me, yeah, she can't imagine how I did all that work in four years and a half.

Cyndy: You must have been pretty smart.

Jane: Yeah. That's what she always said, she can't imagine how I did that in four years and a half. Of course I was able to read and write before I went to school, but there was a lot of things that I didn't learn, eh. But it came fast to me when I finally went to school. My sister and I, we were the only two Indians in school. Then, later years, of course, we had my young brothers in then. They went on, too.

Cyndy: So you would have spent most of your time when you grew up with people that weren't Indian, would you?

Jane: Eh?

Cyndy: When you were growing up you spent most of your time with other people that weren't Indian.

Jane: Yeah, that's right.

Cyndy: So you didn't grow up on the reserve?

Jane: Yeah, we completely got away from the Indians, eh. The only time we went to the Indians is when my mother used to go and visit her people, eh.

Cyndy: In Chicago?

Jane: No, in Naughton. White Fish Indian Reserve. You know, when my mother, this is my grandmother I'm talking about, her people came from the Chicago Reserve, eh. I don't know where but over there anyways, somewhere. And they were visiting at Fort La Cloche in the summertime, and she met an Indian there. He was a freighter for the Hudson's Bay fur from James Bay. I think he was a Cree Indian. And he and my grandmother got married right away. They didn't understand each other. So my mother used to say she was a part Cree Indian. That's what my mother used to say, she was a part Cree Indian. So my grandmother and her husband didn't understand each other. Indians, you know, a long time ago they just looked at a nice girl and they liked her -- well they got married, eh. (laughs) They didn't bother about courtship or nothing. They just got married right away. And there was always a priest there at the old Fort. There was Hudson's Bay store there, and I don't know what else was there. When they were fighting... The old Fort was there quite a while after they were finished fighting with the Americans. It's hard to believe, eh, that these things happened? I used to look at the La Cloche mountains when I lived in, when I looked -- when I was working I worked along the big Panache, eh. And on clear days you could see the La Cloche mountains. I used to think about my mother. She used to tell me about the La Cloche mountains. I used to think so wonderful to think about so far away. I thought it was far, eh, (laughs) but it wasn't actually.

Cyndy: So what did you do once you were all finished school?

Jane: Oh, nothing much. A long time ago there was no work for girls, eh. We would either work in a restaurant, or go work in a private home, or... That's all there was a long time

ago. So I worked in private homes, and I worked in restaurants, hotels, what have you. But in later years I worked in -- I took a course in Sudbury there at the Mining Technical School. Then we came to Toronto and worked in the war plant. We made rifles for the army.

Cyndy: What year was this? When did you come to Toronto?

Jane: I beg your pardon?

Cyndy: What year did you come to Toronto?

Jane: I think it was 1941, 1940, I think. That's when they started to hire women for the war plants. I think it was in 1941. I can't say for sure.

Cyndy: And you were making guns?

Jane: Yeah, we were making rifles for the army.

Cyndy: Was this before you got married?

Jane: Yeah, before, yeah.

Cyndy: How old were you about this time when you came here?

Jane: About this time? In 1941, gee, I must have been around 31, I guess. I got married twice, you know.

Cyndy: When did you get married the first time?

Jane: Oh, I don't know. I just forget now, 1927, 1928 I think. 1929, somewhere there.

Cyndy: Who was your husband? Who did you get married to?

Jane: Oh, an Irishman, a man from Ireland. My second husband, too, he was Irish also. But he was born in Canada. His people came from Ireland. My husband died in 1962. He was a pioneer up north.

Cyndy: What year did you get married the second time?

Jane: 1952.

Cyndy: You had mentioned to me that you spent some time on a trap line. Was that with your first husband, or your second?

Jane: No, it was with my second husband, Tom.

Cyndy: So, you were living in Toronto for a while and then you went back up north?

Jane: Yeah, went back up north.

Cyndy: Did you meet your husband here?

Jane: No, up north. I worked for him. He run a tourist resort, eh. He ran a tourist camp, and then he had camps all through the bush. I went up there to work for him, so... I got married to him, he was a bachelor.

Cyndy: So how long did you stay in Toronto working in the war plant?

Jane: In the war time? Oh, I stayed up there till I think it was 1950. I worked all around Toronto then. I learned to sew on a sewing machine. I learned all kinds of trades.

Cyndy: Where was the tourist camp that your husband was from?

Jane: Oh, along the Vermilion River up north. On the C.N.R. line.

Cyndy: So what kind of work did you do for your husband?

Jane: Oh, I cooked, and washed clothes and what have you. Yeah I cooked, and washed clothes, and waited on tables and what have you. (laughs) Everything.

Cyndy: Were the tourists Americans mostly?

Jane: Yeah, Americans, they were all Americans.

Cyndy: They came up there to hunt?

Jane: Yeah, they came up there to fish, and just wander around, I guess. Sit around the veranda or something. Those Americans, that's all they do. In those days there was a lot of fish, but today you can't eat no fish up there. The only fish you can eat now is four ounces a week, and you don't drink any water out of the lakes either. Hard to believe, eh. Where you going to get the water? If you're camping out in the bush, you can't go and dig a well just to have a drink of water, and you can't collect rain water -- it's worse. (laughs) They say it's good for the blueberries though, that acid rain.

Cyndy: What's that?

Jane: Yeah, it's very good for the blueberries.

Cyndy: Do you know why that is?

Jane: I don't know. I read it on a paper. It's very beneficial for the blueberries, wild berries, eh. I guess the acid content in them, I guess, eh. I don't know.

Cyndy: Did you used to go out hunting and fishing?

Jane: Oh yeah, my kids and I we used to go around and we'd look at traps, eh. We did the river side and my old man did way far in the back, eh. That's after we were finished with the Americans and all that. Then my husband trapped, eh. But January, around after the deep snow came, he didn't trap anymore. So all we did was go around and visit relatives, stay home and eat and sleep, read the papers. (laughs)

Cyndy: So, you just ran the tourist camp in the summer months?

Jane: Yeah. And then the fall, too, we had moose hunters. I tell you we had a good time, we lived the life of Riley. All we did was sleep and eat all winter. We'd buy a hundred pounds of fish, we'd buy a side of beef, and a whole hog. And then we had moose meat at the same time. And sometimes beaver meat, and the odd rabbit, partridge or so. That's all we did was eat and sleep. No wonder I got fattened up when I was up there. (laughs) Before I only weighed about 110 pounds, after that when I got up there I got fattened up. (laughs) Because

I didn't have to do so much work. Just think, during the war, what you had to do. We had about -- we had four machines, three machines mostly. You loaded one machine -- by the time you finished loading the other one, the other one was finished, eh. You load it up again -- back and forth all day or all night, ten hour shift, eh. And all we got was \$.35 an hour for a ten hour shift. (laughs) For a six day week, we had one day rest. Hard to believe, eh, but that was during the Depression -- we just were no good. And I think the income tax allowance was \$650. a year tax free, just imagine. But later years though, and last year we worked, no, that was about the second year, 1944. Then the wages went up and we were making \$.60 a hour. And the more work you did, the more money... It was like a group, eh. The more work we all did, well, we got more money. Maybe one week we'd have \$60. or something like that just on the bonus, eh. But they'd all weed workers, eh. Anybody that was slow, well (laughs)... We all had to work. I know everything about a gun barrel, right from the start right to the, you know, where they do the nerling, I think it's the nerling they call it, you know where the -- the rifling. You know, where you look, where they make this thing for the bullet. We did all that. It was a sad day the day the Japanese quit fighting -- we quit work too. (laughs)

Cyndy: Did you do any hunting yourself? Did you shoot?

Jane: Oh yeah. I used to go around setting traps, and I skinned beaver, stretched beaver, and mink, and all that. But I'm going to tell you something about what an Indian woman she told me one time. But she made me promise never to tell where this thing came from, so I promised her. So I didn't want to tell anybody, I never did tell anybody. One day she came, she went, she got a bag out of her... and she showed me this thing

she had in there -- little chunks that looked like hard foam rubber, you know. You know, something with very porous, like, eh. Like in -- what could I say? It was in little strings, eh. Anyway she came out with pieces of this. It was round, wherever it came, it must have come from a hollow tree. Anyway she broke a chunk off and then she had a stone, two stones. She put this little piece, this thing, on the table there and she went like this with the stones, and right away this thing started to smoke, eh. And she blowed on it. First thing, it started to burn, eh. If she blowed on it, it started to burn.

But if you didn't blow on it, it smoked there for a long time. Then it exploded when it got so hot, eh. It burnt, it made a fire, eh. Indians used to carry this in their pocket in the wintertime, eh. They kept it at home too. They hunted for it in the summertime. It came from some tree. But I promised her I'd never tell anybody where, which tree it came from. (laughs) She might put a curse on me if I told anybody. She told me never tell nobody.

Cyndy: Was she a medicine person?

Jane: Eh?

Cyndy: Was she a medicine person?

Jane: No, I don't know what she was. And then her father was a Medicine Man, anyways. And you can take this pulp or whatever it was -- she showed me -- you can hold it under a water pail for quite a little while, eh. Leave it there, under there, and then take it out. And put it where there was air. Pretty soon you'll see smoke coming out of it again.

Cyndy: So what were they using it for?

Jane: They use it for lighting fires. That was like a, just like a lighter, or something, eh. But you had to carry those two stones and then this little piece of... You went someplace where there was no wind, eh, and then rub two stones together like that. It didn't catch fire mind you, it just smoked, eh. And then after a while they get it to where there was some wind or something. Pretty soon it exploded, eh. So you have birch bark and everything ready, eh, and dry wood or what ever it is. When that catches fire, then you put birch bark on it, and then you got a fire going.

Cyndy: So did you use that after?

Jane: Yeah, well you just break a piece off it at the time when you're carrying it. Maybe you carry a piece that big, eh. But then you just break a piece off it. Well, I promised her I'd never tell which tree it came from. (laughs) She might put a curse on me if I told. It's funny, eh, how they tell you that. She told me this, "Never, never tell anybody. You can go and get it yourself," she said, "and show people." Well, I was thinking to myself, "Gee, that would be a good thing to use when you want to set your house on fire or something. You could be there for a couple of days." (laughs) That's what Indians used to use a long time ago, you know, when they used to, especially the Iroquois. They used to come around and they'd put it on a tip of an arrow, eh, and shoot it into an Indian village. Well that village wouldn't burn for, maybe the Indians would go along there... the Iroquois would go along there and shoot it in the Indian village while they were sleeping. Then all of sudden that thing caught fire, eh. Well, gee whiz, if they woke up maybe they were saved. That's

how they used to set fire to each other a long time ago. Hard to believe, eh, they'd go around setting fires to each other like that.

Cyndy: So what did you used to do with the pelts when you were trapping?

Jane: What's that with the pelts?

Cyndy: Yeah.

Jane: Oh, we sold them, we sold them. My husband organized, he helped to organize the Trapper's Association up north. So that's where all our fur went to. I laughed at my little son one time. He had a trap, too, right close to the house, eh. We were along the Vermilion River. So we used to keep hollow logs. Hollow logs is a good place to catch mink. You put little bits of old fish there or something in the summertime, or partridge feathers, you know. So when the fall comes, well, the mink is always, maybe there's a family of mink around there. So you just set traps in those hollow logs. I laughed at my little boy that time. I don't know how old he was -- about seven, maybe. He come in the morning, he says, "Dad, I got a mink!" And the darn thing was still living, eh. I guess he hit it a little bit, maybe he knocked it out. He brought it in the house, he dropped it. The darn thing was running all over inside the house. (laughs) We had a hard to corner it. We laughed that time. Imagine him bringing home a live mink. I guess he didn't hit it hard enough. He just brought it home and let it go in the house. (laughs) And then my daughter, she had a pet muskrat - we kept it all winter. We had a washtub, eh, and we filled it up with water and put a rock on one side of it, eh, and the muskrat used to sit in there. We'd change water, of course, we'd put clean water on

it for him every once in a while. You know, animals are funny. You wouldn't believe this. Of course we had carrots and stuff like that, but we used to buy lettuce and celery, eh. For ourselves too, eh, and then we used to feed it to the little muskrat. My daughter found it. You know, in the fall, you know how the lakes freeze up and everything? And I guess the muskrat was outside somewhere eating, and then the lake froze up, the pond froze up, eh, and he couldn't get back in. So he was hiding underneath... We saw it running across and it hid under the culvert, eh. So we cornered it, eh. So my daughter brought it home. It didn't even bite her or nothing. She brought it home in her arm like this. And then we fed it, eh. We fed it celery. And then he used to sit in the water, sit in the water for a long time. He'd wash, eh. It's funny seeing an animal doing that -- you wouldn't believe it. Then after he eat he'd sit on his rock, and he'd clean his teeth, clean every tooth. And then after a little while he'd put his head under the water, and he'd come back and he'd clean his teeth some more. (laughs) You wouldn't believe that an animal would do that, eh, cleaning his teeth. Especially when he ate carrots he used to do that. We kept him all winter then we let him go in the spring, as soon as the open water came, we let him go.

But he came back for a long time. We used to put food out there for it -- we had a kind of a little dock, my husband built it quite a long way for the boats. We used to put food out there for it at night, eh. Celery and carrots and stuff like that -- lettuce. For a long time he came there and he ate there every night. We used to see where he made a little nest there, so we knew it was him. Yeah, we let him go.

It was nice living out there. We fed birds, and we... And my daughter used to have a chickadee sitting on her shoulder. (laughs) We fed birds. We built a table for the birds to eat.

I bet you they missed us when we left there. And there was a gull that used to eat there. In the spring time we used to feed it fish. Anytime we caught fish, we used to give it fish. And one day the two of them came -- the mother and the father and they had a little one. A little gull is kind of a black when it's small, it's black. So anyways it came along and the big ones came along where -- they were eating there -- where we put the fish for them, we used to cut up the fish. And the little one she was going to come there, too, but the old ones, no, they chased her back. They sent her up and there was a big boulder out in the lake, you know. So they sent her back and they got her up there and they left her there. So anytime the mother or the father, I don't know which one, one would take a piece of fish and take it over to the little one. They didn't want her to come there for fear we might catch her, I guess. (laughs)

Cyndy: What was the camp like? Did you live in a hunting camp when you were out in the bush?

Jane: No, yeah, we had little cabins. They had beds and everything. We had wood stoves.

Cyndy: Was it just you and your husband and children?

Jane: Yeah, that's all. Then we'd... sometimes my mother used to come. I used to get her to mind, to stay with the kids for the day while we went hunting moose in the fall, moose hunting. I'll never forget one time -- my husband told me, "You stay over there at the pond." You know, I was going to get a beaver. I thought to myself, "Well, geez, I'll shoot a little wee beaver and bring it home to eat." It was early in the fall, eh, and you're not supposed to catch beaver at that

time. But I thought to myself, "Oh, gee whiz, I'll get a little beaver and I'll make a roast," because my mother was there. And I sat on the beaver dam. I didn't go to the big dam up at the top, I went to the one on the bottom. They make two dams, you know, beavers. They have one big one, and then there's a second one down below, eh, in case that one washes away, well, they still got the other one. It's funny, eh. You wouldn't think they'd have brains enough to do that. Animals are funny things when you're around with them. And anyways, I sat there, and I punched a hole in the dam -- just a little one

so the water would make a noise, eh. I was waiting for a beaver to come down and to fix it -- they always fix it, you know, as soon as they hear the water going away, they'll come down and fix it. I was sitting there anyways and it was muddy, eh. There was no trees, nothing, just little alders somewhere there. My husband was way on the other side looking for moose. So I told him, "I'll stay at the beaver dam." He said to me, "Well, when it's time to go home," he said, "to go the cabin, I'll fire a shot and you'll hear me." I was sitting at the beaver dam anyways, waiting for this beaver. I heard a noise in the back of me. I looked around and here was a great big bull moose coming out of the bush, eh. Big one! Oh yeah, did he ever have huge horns. I don't know, the wind was blowing the other way, eh, it wasn't blowing towards him. I don't know, he came up close to the beaver dam and it was kind of marshy there. Maybe he was going to come and eat there, I don't know. I was sitting there and he kept coming closer and closer all the time. I sat still, real still, eh. I guess he thought maybe I was a boulder or something. (laughs) Anyways he came close, real close. I bet you he was that far from the end of the door over there.

Cyndy: That's about four feet?

Jane: Before that he was quite a ways from me, eh. I don't know, my foot made a noise in the mud, and he came real close. He was sniffing, sniffing. (laughs) And I only had a .22, eh. That's all I had was a .22. Anyways, he took off anyways. And there was another bull moose came along after a while on the other side, came along anyways. They took off -- maybe they were fighting or something. Then after a while when we went back to the camp... No, I heard my husband shooting -- that's what it was. He had got a calf moose, eh. So I went over there where I thought the shots came from, eh. Sure enough my husband had a calf moose. So I was telling about all the bull moose I saw, saw two bull moose while I was sitting on the beaver damn.

(END OF SIDE A)

(SIDE B)

Jane: My dad's step-mother, she used to come in the fall. She came from there -- around Pogamasing there, somewhere. That's where they originally lived there, eh. At, uh, what do you call this lake? I guess it's Pogamasing Lake they called it. Pogamasing, that's "an island in shallow water" that's what it means. Anyways, this old lady used to come and visit us in the fall. She used to come in the spring too, but especially she used to come in the fall. You wouldn't believe it -- she brought birch bark baskets probably about this big, I'd say about ten inches square or something. And they were all sealed up with, around the rim was a little piece of wood. And they were all sealed up on the sides with... Of course they were sewn with some kind of a willow or a weed or something, and they were all gummed up in the corners with balsam gum I think, or spruce gum, it would be spruce gum. And then inside this

little basket she had cooked blueberries -- real thick, eh. You didn't spoon them out, eh, you cut it with a knife. The top of the basket was a little bigger than the bottom. And then she had another lid on there made out of two layers of birch bark with the outside bark on one side and the outside bark on the top, eh, all sewed up together. And this was pressed on top of the berries, eh, on top of this jam. And then all around the edge was balsam gum again. Can you imagine anybody doing that? It must have took a long time. She used to bring those baskets of this jam over to us.

And then she had cedar bark, do you know the inside of bark of a cedar tree, you can pull it off in shreds like a string. She used to have those little bags woven, all woven, there was little holes in them, eh, like a mesh, I don't know how she wove them, but they were little bags probably about fifteen -- maybe they were a little bigger -- eighteen inches and they would be about twelve inches wide. I couldn't say how wide they were. Inside this bag was all dried-up blueberries. They were all dried, they were just like little currants, eh. And you could eat them like that, but if you soaked them in the water they came like blueberries again. And she used to say... Well, you know cedar brush, no bugs go near it. No bug would go near a cedar. You'd never see any bugs on cedar trees. That's where she used to keep those dried blueberries.

And then she'd have this cedar basket, again. A long one, a long one, and you know what she had in it? Dried trout, lake trout -- all dried up like a piece of paper. And the inside of this she put them in this bag, eh. She probably had about two fish maybe in this bag, maybe three fish she had in there -- all dried up, smoked and dried by the sun, eh, smoked and dried by the sun. And she'd bring this over to my mother's place.

But my mother never did any of that kind of work, you know. She was always used to being in the house, eh. I think my mother, well, she lived in Naughton there for a long time - I'll show you the picture after. And after she got older, well, she always worked as a domestic, eh. She worked for the old doctors in Sudbury, the first ones that lived there. Old Dr. Howie, and Dr. Mulligan -- that was the people she worked for. She learned how to work in the house, and she learned to cook and all that. Of course, my mother could read and write, she could read and write.

And this old lady, that's my dad's stepmother, she used to come there and bring all this stuff over to my mother's place in the fall. I'll show you her picture after. And she had dried moose meat. And you know these bags -- she used to have just a little shed at the back of her house -- it's like a little shed made out of, you know, split cedar, you know. There was no lumber in those days. You had to make it out of split cedar, and birch bark, birch bark for the roof. And she had, that's where she had all these bags hanging up -- dried blueberries, and dried trout, and dried moose meat. The Indians used to take a little bit of... they'd cut a little chunk of this moose

meat and carry it in their pockets, eh. And when they were trapping, that's what they ate to keep from going hungry or something like that. They said you didn't have to eat very much of this meat to satisfy your hunger, I guess. Maybe it was a lot of protein in it when it's all shrunk up like that. (laughs) Yeah, the old lady used to come over there and she'd bring all these, I remember her. I used to like her when she came over.

And then this is my mother's mother. The old lady, oh, she must have worked hard. I think about her today -- how hard it must have been. She used to come in the spring -- this old lady came in the spring. She'd come along and she'd have a, you remember the old sugar bags? They were about this wide. I guess they are still the same yet; they held a hundred pounds. Well, my grandmother, she'd come with one of those sugar bags. Probably she had about that much sugar. Probably she had about thirty pounds of brown sugar, maple sugar, that she made herself. She used to have a round leg, eh, and then when that sugar got hardened up, eh, then she'd pound it and it made brown sugar. And then she'd come along, she had all kinds of little wee cake sugars, eh, all kinds of these. She'd bring all that in the springtime. Then she'd bring this... There was no cans in those days, it was mostly those big stone jars. I think they held maybe a gallon, the old time gallon. My grandmother would come and she'd have all this filled up with maple syrup and she'd come and visit my mother and that's what she brought. Imagine the hard time she must have had tapping all those trees, and carrying all that sap, and then she had to cut wood herself.

My grandfather died a long time ago, but the old lady she was, you know, she was husky, eh, just like my mother. My mother died when she was eighty-four. And the storekeeper used to tell me -- that's at Bisco, I go up there, you know, every few years, every couple of years or so, sometimes every year I go up there. Last year I didn't go on account of my ankle -- I broke my ankle a couple of years ago, because it's too hard walking, you know, no roads eh. (laughs) Have to walk on pebbles and rocks on the railroad.

Anyways we, the storekeeper told me, you know, she says, "Your mother was very good for eighty-four." She said, "When I look at you," she said, "the way you are and everything," she says, "that's the way your mother was when she was eighty-four. She used to come here for mail every day," she said. "Even in the winter, the big snow storms, she used to come." She said, "She'd come on her snowshoes." That's what the lady used to tell me at the store. Imagine my mother walking around in snowshoes. Yeah, my mother used to walk around on snowshoes.

I used to walk on snowshoes too, but not any more. Pull my legs off. (laughs) Especially when I lived so easy all those years. Even when I go up there in the winter. I went up there to my sister-in-law's funeral -- that's one of my husband's

people. I went over there and there kind of a little hill of snow there, they hadn't plowed the streets on one side, eh, and Sudbury was broke when they had this big long strike for a while. So they only plowed on one side of the street. Anyways I was going up there, I could hardly make it up there on the hill. Lucky thing another man came along and he helped me to go up that snow hill. (laughs) I'm not used to climbing hills anymore.

Cyndy: Did you have any other scary experiences when you were out on the trapline?

Jane: No, I never had nothing scary, nothing. Nothing scary. The only thing that scared me one time, well I couldn't say I was really scared... This was a dream I had -- you wouldn't believe it. I told people that, I said, they can't... Anyways I woke up... No I was sleeping and I heard a big bang. I was dreaming I was in... This is what I was dreaming first. I was dreaming I was in San Francisco. For God's sake, I was

never there in my life. I saw all the tall buildings -- I don't know where I was, I was in some place pretty high. I saw all the buildings and people running all over. And I looked down the river, down the big bridge up there and I saw it swaying. Then after a little while I looked -- there was people running all over the streets and then I heard a big building crashed down.

Well I woke up, eh. I thought sure there was a bear in the shed so I jumped out of bed there and I knew where the cartridge was and everything. I took the big rifle and loaded the big rifle. We used to hide the cartridge on account of the kids, eh. Anyways I loaded the big rifle and I made sure I had about four or five cartridges in it. And I opened the door a little wee bit -- we used to have something... You know how bears tear down houses and that. They can rip down -- you wouldn't believe it what they can rip down. Anyways I opened the door a little wee bit thinking I'd see a bear there and put the gun out before, ahead of me, eh. I didn't see nothing. I opened the door, opened the shed door -- we had kind of, like, a sun porch and we used to close it up in the winter. But anyways I looked around and I didn't see nothing. I went around, feeling around the house, and I went over to the old ice house -- we used to keep meat in there and all kinds of things, eh. I went in there to look and I didn't see anything. It was 4:30 in the morning, because I looked at the clock, eh. I came back inside anyways, unloaded the gun. I hid the cartridges again, went back to sleep.

Well, I was used to waking up early in the morning, I'm still used to... You know, I still get up at seven o'clock in the morning lots of times. I don't sleep all day either. Anyways I got up and I had a habit of turning the old... we had an old battery radio. I turned the radio on anyways -- that was before television or anything like that, I had a big battery radio. I turned it on and I heard there was a slight

earthquake in San Fransico at 4:30 in the morning and the bridge swayed like a ribbon. And I was there looking at it. (laughs) Hard to believe, eh. Gee, I couldn't believe it myself. I said, "How could that ever happen?" Me dreaming that I was over there, then I hear it on the radio. I forget what year it was -- it was in the '50s anyways when they had the slight earthquake in San Francisco, and the bridge swayed like a ribbon. That was some dream I tell you.

Cyndy: What about when you used to go and visit at White Fish?

Jane: At White Fish?

Cyndy: Yeah.

Jane: Oh there were real Indians there. They didn't work, they didn't do nothing -- all they lived was on the reserve. They... of course, some of them had gardens, some of them had none. Of course they used to grow corn, eh. My grandmother always grew corn, and my uncle, my other uncle, my mother's brother -- they used to have corn mats, woven corn mats, all over the floor, and corn pictures on the wall, you know. They dyed the corn, eh, and they wove pictures and they hung them on the wall like a scroll. You'd wonder how they used to do that, eh. I wish I knew how to do that.

Cyndy: You never saw anyone doing that?

Jane: Well, my grandmother used to it and so did my aunt, my mother's sister, she used to do it. And my grandmother used to go, she used to take us in a canoe and we used to go and pull weeds, my sister and I. At first we'd look around and see if there was any water snakes eh, you know, they're like a, I

don't know what you'd call them, they're like a long eel, eh. At first we'd look around and see if there was any water snakes and if there wasn't any around, well, us kids would get off, eh. And we'd pull those weeds for my grandmother. She used to use them, she made mats too. But I don't know what she used the roots for. I think she made... I can't say for sure now, I think she made green dye. And then we went around and we pulled some more roots somewhere, and I think this made red dye. And then she'd use some other stuff. I think it was, we'd take, I don't know whether it was, what do you call those anyways? You know, like those little wee trees that grows along the shore?

Cyndy: They're bushes?

Jane: Yeah, bull rushes. I think she used to take some of those -- I don't know which one now. Maybe it was the alders she took. And there she'd scrape all the bark off that and throw it in the big pot. And you know, she made a brown dye, that's what she made out there. I remember that much. But we used to help her scrape that, eh. Then she made brown dye. She made her own dye, she didn't buy it in the store.

Cyndy: What did she dye with it?

Jane: Well, she dyed this sweetgrass, and those corn mats she made, and anything she wanted to dye that's what she used. Nobody knows that anymore. I wouldn't know myself. All I remember is the alder, but the others, I don't remember what they were. Probably if I went back on that little lake I might know, if I see the weeds again. And then there was all kinds of Indian medicine, of course. There was this... this is a story an Indian woman told me, I don't know how true it is.

When the Great Spirit was making the Indians he came along and he showed them how to make medicine. Anyways, first he showed them how to make a fire. And then after the fire got going good he stood over the fire, eh, and he burned his bottom. Then he went along the shore and he crawled over these bull rushes and he made those, you know, those green willows that grows on the, I think it's willows, yeah, that's what it is. Those red willows that grow on the shore. Well, he made them red when he went over. And then this old Indian lady told me this -- he made them red when he went along the shore. And he came back and he told the Indians, "Well, whenever you have a diarrhea, or something like that," he says, "you go down there and peel those willows and they'll cure you. And it's true. "And further down," he says, "these I didn't walk on," he says, "they are still green, so some days," he says, "if you get constipated," he said, "just take a little bit of this -- the ones I didn't walk on." (laughs)

Cyndy: The ones he didn't walk on were the green ones?

Jane: Yeah, the green ones, the ones he didn't walk on.

Cyndy: So what would they do with them?

Jane: Well, they'd use it like you would magnesia or something, eh.

Cyndy: So you'd have to get the willows and what, boil them or something?

Jane: Yeah. You take the inner bark, just like the red willow, you only use the inner bark. You peel it and you use the inner bark when you have diarrhea, or someone complains or something. It's really good -- I've tried it, I've used it. And then another Indian told me about when you have a sore back and you have this burning sensation. He told me about balsam. So you go in the bush and you don't look for a nice tree, you come to the first one. Because if you look for a nice one, it might not work for you. (laughs) That's what they believed in. The first one you come to. You take the bark off -- not all of the tree, maybe one long strip, that's all you take. And you take the bubbles, the little gum bubbles on the outside. Well, you take some of that, and you swallow it, eh. Mix it up with lard or something and you swallow that. And

then the inner bark off the tree, you boil that and you make a tea, eh. You drink as much as you can drink. I tell you in the morning you're all right, because I tried it. I went to the doctor's... I had to make two, three trips and go and get some more prescription, but over there you only take it one night, that's all, and you're all right the next day. So it must be better. I told that to one doctor and he said, "You should write that down," he told me. (laughs) He said it might become very valuable in later years. He said, "This medicine we're using now," he said, "it might wear out." You become immune to taking too much, eh. So I told him that. How when I was in the north country, I said, I wouldn't have to come back a second time. I'd only use it one night, that's all. (laughs) It's true though, that's really true.

Cyndy: Was it Medicine Men that told you about...?

Jane: No, another Indian told me that.

Cyndy: Do you know any other kinds of medicine to use?

Jane: I don't remember too much. You know, I got away from all that, eh. I'd have to do some thinking. But I remember one time, too, I fell in the fire -- we had an open fire. Oh, this was a long time ago. My dad was trapping in spring, eh. My dad used to get a family of Indians come with him, and of course he and the man would do the trapping and the women would do the skinning and the stretching the beaver, eh. A long time ago they didn't use tacks or anything like they do today. They used to make a big hoop out of trees, eh. And they'd have a lot of bobeesh(?) you know, the skin off of the moose. And they'd put this in the water -- it was always soft -- and they'd hang it up, put it in the water for a little while, and that's what they laced the beaver with, eh. Laced them around this hoop. They didn't use tacks in those days. And he used to get those family of Indians to come and help him. That time I fell in the fire, one time in the springtime, my hand went in... You know how you build a fire, eh. And I don't know, we were running around and I tripped or something and put my hand in the coals, eh. And some of the coals was stuck on my finger, here. And my grandmother, she fixed it up -- that's my mother's mother. You can see where all the flesh burned away on part of my fingers here, eh. Well, my grandmother, she got some of this, Indians called it squirrel tails -- some kind of weed, eh. It grows... early in the spring you see it. It's about that high in the spring. My grandmother got some of this and of course she broke it all up, eh. And she wet it, and that's what she put on there, eh. She made sure all my fingers were all wrapped all around with this stuff. And every once in a while -- she never let it dry, eh -- she wet it all the time. Every once in a while she'd wet this piece of rag I had on my hand. You know, in a couple of days I had skin on my fingers! That willow, that weed grows skin, it helps to form skin.

Especially this finger, here, you can see where it burned almost to the bone. Yeah, wonder how Indians knew all this

kind of medicine a long time ago.

Cyndy: Did you learn any more stories, like about legends or anything like that?

Jane: I don't remember too much. But I do know Indians used to talk about this a long time ago. Long ago there was no airplanes or nothing in those days, Indians used to tell a story that white man was going to come to this island and he was going to take all the land. A man with whiter skin than us, he's going to come. And then in later years he's going to have an iron snake running across the land -- that was a train, eh. And then in later years they were going to talk across the big waters -- that's like telegraph I guess, eh. He said they were going to talk to each other across the big waters. And later years, he said, they're going to travel on top of the water and under the water -- that's submarines, eh. And then later years, he said, they're going to fly way up there, they're going to go close to the stars and everything, and by that time there will no more Indians left. You know, that's the culture, eh. He said there will be no more, there will be hardly any more left -- it's true. Yeah, there would be no more real Indians left that believed in the old-time stuff.

Cyndy: Do you remember who told you that story?

Jane: Oh, an old woman told that. Oh, she's dead a long time ago. I don't even know her name, I couldn't say her name anyways, I couldn't write it down. An old lady up north told me that. You know, I used to go around -- I still do when I go to Chapleau. I go over to the Indian reserve over there,

because I can understand them. Well, that's how I learned, eh, I learned their dialect. But over here I don't understand so I don't bother with them.

Cyndy: What's the difference?

Jane: Well, I don't know. Especially the Indians up around this way and all around the Manitoulin Island, and all that. They think the people that comes from up north, they don't know anything, you know. That's the way they figure it out, eh. But I think the Indians up north are far better off than the Manitoulin Island Indians. Look at my brother, eh. He was a supervisor for the Lands and Forests when they were fighting fires, eh. He never had to fight fires, he was there putting the men out and supervising, eh. He worked for the Lands and Forests for thirty-eight years. And then all the Indians from Chapleau -- all around there -- they were all engineers, and brakemen, and firemen on the railroads. That was nothing up there. You see section firemen all over, eh. Section men -- all Indians, roadmasters. They were far better off up there. People went to school up there, because they had school cars up there, but not any more. I have a story about old Mr. McNally on there. I knew personally Mr. McNally. Yeah, they had schools on wheels. The Indians are far better off up there, I

tell you, than the Indians around White Fish, or Massey, or along the Manitoulin Island all around there, they were far better off. At least they knew how to work. And lots of them, well, some are section men. They work on the section in the summer, then in the winter they trapped. They were living like millionaires most of them. (laughs) I guess there's a lot of Indians like that today, too.

I'll tell you the truth, you know, I worked a long time on Spadina Avenue in the one place -- they made ladies pants or whatever, work jackets and what have you. And it was real steady work, eh. I never saw one Indian girl looking for a job. I was the only Indian there. I worked there I think ten years, or eleven years, or something like that. I never saw one Indian girl looking for a job. I was the one who went to the door when a girl was looking for a job, eh. I size them up, eh. (laughs) Then I call the boss after. If I thought she was a (knock at the door).

...Indians used to, no it wasn't in the fall - probably August when everything was all full-grown, eh. They had potatoes, and they had... over there they didn't grow corn, eh, it was too cold. They had potatoes, and they had the blueberries, and the raspberries, everything. And all the Indians -- the men would go along and get on an island, they'd have to get on an island where there was nobody lived, eh, perfectly clean island. I don't know how long they worked. They made it... they brushed it all out, eh. And then on the top of the hill they had tipis made out of birch bark. I've never seen a real tipi in all those years. Last time I saw them was in Bisco. Too bad we didn't have good cameras in those days. All we had was those little lousy black and white cameras. Anyways the Indians used to go there and they'd clean out this island, and I don't know how many days they worked. They made fireplaces along the shore, and they had a road as good as this clean around it. They didn't have too big island, just small island. And they'd build a toilet, for God's sake. They always said the Indians didn't have no toilets. People always says that, eh, the white people, that the Indians never had a toilet -- I don't believe that. They had this little brush house with a seat on it, eh. Of course they dug a hole, eh. They'd have this little...

And you know what they had for toilet paper? A bag of swamp moss. (laughs)

Cyndy: How long ago was this?

Jane: Oh, I was a little kid, mind you, I don't know how old. I was probably about maybe eight, or ten. But my mother used to go to those affairs. My mother was always interested in things like that, but my dad, he didn't bother so much. Anyways we'd go over there -- they'd have tipis up there. So when us kids fell asleep or got tired or something we went to sleep in the tipi. They'd have this road clean around the island and they'd have fires here and there. They'd have blueberries boiling, and dumplings on them or something. And

they had moose, lots of moose, of course, and rabbit, and fish -- whatever they had, eh, partridge, and...

Well, the men went ahead. They were dancing. They had drums, you know, moose skin drums, eh. They didn't wear no costumes or nothing, just, they had... They didn't do no smoking or nothing like that -- they didn't do nothing like that, they just...

I remember them -- all they did was they had this Thanksgiving feast. Of course, they did a little bit of talking on the start before they started. We'd all sit there on the side of the hill. I know there was just my sister and I. That's before I had any brothers, so I must have been young. I don't remember what they said, I don't remember. But they'd do a lot of talking. And then they'd start off after, they'd start off on this little path. The men first, then the young boys, then the mothers, I guess, and the women, and then us kids behind, and some more women underneath eh, well, behind, watching us kids, eh. And each one of us had a birch bark basket. It

wasn't a real basket, eh, it was just folded at each corner there, and a stick through on each end, eh. Then they gave you a little stick.

They'd be dancing around this fire, then they'd stop at one fire and they'd take a little bit of this food, eh, then us kids... I guess they ate, I don't remember. They'd go like that all around the... Their specialty was moose head, eh, moose head cooked, tongue, everything like that, eh. I remember I used to like the moose tongue. They'd have it all cooked in those big pots, eh. They were already cut up, eh. But all they do is take a piece when you go by, eh, or they give you a piece, or whoever is standing at the fire. They'd go like that till morning. They used to call it wobinow(?) I think. I think that's what they called it -- wobinow(?). They danced like that all night long. I don't know what time we got home, I don't remember.

Cyndy: And where was this again?

Jane: Us Indians at Bisco. There was many tribes that lived there, some of them came from Mississauga Indians, Onaping Indians, (inaudible) Lake Indians, (inaudible) Indians -- they all gathered there in the summer, eh, for the mill. To work at the mill I guess, or to the stores and bring their furs out. And then as soon as cold weather comes, September, they were gone again. They come look at the trains -- in those days there were a lot of passenger trains, eh, four or five of them going each way. And the lumber mill working. And we had lights in the town, we had lights all around the lumber mill, eh, and all around. I guess that's what they came to see, and then the stores.

I was always... talk a little bit of Indian, I don't know why. I suppose I wanted to learn or something. So when I got

older... There was a Hudson's Bay store and the Indians wanted something out of... I don't know how many stores we had there -- we had the French store, the Hudson's Bay store, and the people that owned the mill, you know, old J.R. Booth, you know, the lumber king. He owned the mill up there -- Shannons was running it. And then there was another store -- McLeod's store... But the French store, they sold a lot of dry goods, and clothes, eh, and shoes, like that. We Indians didn't wear shoes anyways, they wore moccasins. So they wanted cloth or something like that, or something different, well, they'd take me, eh. So I'd tell the storekeeper what they wanted, eh.

And then after we were finished all the Indians used to carry these little cotton bags made from the Hudson's Bay store. I don't know what they had them for. I think they had them for carrying food and stuff like that, eh. Most of the Indians had their money in there. I don't think they knew how to count money or nothing. So when we were finished the Indians would dig down this bag -- they always had a lot of silver, eh. I'd have to hold my hand like this -- that's how much they gave me. Of course my hands were small in those days. I'd have to hold my hand like this and fill it up and then I'd put it in my pocket. I always had a pocket too. (laughs)

Then us kids we'd sit at the Hudson's Bay store and we'd eat candy and oranges and apples. In those days there was no ice cream or nothing like that, nothing -- only apples and oranges and hard candy, hard candy from England. Great big suckers like that, eh, on a big stick. They were really what you would call all day suckers. (laughs) That's what they used to call them -- all day suckers. They didn't call them suckers, they

called them all day suckers. Hudson's Bay store used to have them. Of course I always spoke English, eh, and I knew lots of kids, and we'd sit around there all afternoon eating candy, oranges, and what have you. (laughs) I was making money off the Indians. I always think that was funny. I think about it today -- I don't even know much money I had myself. I knew I had a big handful of money and one pocket was all loaded down. And the Indians always gave me money -- maybe because I stuck around with them. I used to always stay around with them. I'd go to the Hudson's Bay store and sit around with them. I used to be glad in the summertime when they came out. They'd have this dried moose meat and stuff like that, eh. I used to like that stuff. I don't know what it tastes like today, I never ate any, oh, I don't know how many years -- fifty years I guess, maybe longer.

I'll never forget one time we went to visit the Sagamok, you know, Massey Indians. Then in the morning they went out hunting, or something, went for the nets. That's on I think it's the Georgian Bay or somewhere. No, maybe it's Lake Huron on the shores over there. They came back, they had a great big turtle, big one. Anyways we ate it, they boiled it. But I don't remember what it tasted like. I was probably about maybe eight years old or something like that. But I remember the shell -- my sister and I sat in it. (laughs) That's how big

it was. That's one place I'll never forget is the Sagamok. You know, another thing what I didn't forget was the sand fleas. The Indians, they were very poor there I remember. They lived in those little log huts and then they had hewn floors. But the floors weren't very close, eh, they were far apart. And it was very sandy over there, and it was hot when we were over there. So the fleas pretty near ate us alive. They only had straw mattresses, and they had woven rugs too,

eh. That's what they put on the floor, you know, straw mattresses for us kids, eh. My God, the fleas pretty near ate us alive! And then I ate sturgeon over there, I don't suppose they eat sturgeon over there now. That was a long time... But I didn't like it, I found that it was too greasy.

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