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HIGHLIGHTS:

- Account of plants and herbs used as medicine.  
- Description of basket making procedures.  
Evelyn: The following is an interview with Edith Tasse of  
Burleigh Falls. The interview is being conducted in 14 Spadina  
Road, Apartment 214 on July 13. This interview is conducted by  
Evelyn Sit.

Evelyn: When and where were you born?

Edith: I was born in Burleigh Falls, Ontario, in 1923,  
October 17.

Evelyn: What is the origin of your name?

Edith: My Indian name?

Evelyn: Yes.

Edith: Morning Star.

Evelyn: And how do you say that?

Edith: Morning Star in English, (Ojibway) in Indian, in Ojibway.

Evelyn: And what was the origin of that name?

Edith: Just Morning Star.

Evelyn: Who told you about this?

Edith: My parents.

Evelyn: And how were these names given?

Edith: I really don't know how they were given, but my second oldest brother was called Silver Fox. He was called Silver Fox, he died five years ago, he was still Silver Fox. But my young brother was called Cub, that is a cub bear.

Evelyn: How big was your family?

Edith: We had quite a large family. My father was married twice. His first wife was Hanna Tobico and she had three sons; Wilfred, Sandy, and Mike. And when she died he married my mother, Edith Marst. She was from Scugog Island, and she had seven daughters -- I'm the seventh daughter -- and then five years after me she had a boy. That was my young brother Cub.

Evelyn: What are their names?

Edith: All of them? Oh, I named the first three, didn't I. Well, there was Ethel, Corra, Linney, Mona, Gladys, Evelyn, and Edith. Did I miss any?

Evelyn: What was your home like?

Edith: My home like? I had a normal home, like the only thing that wasn't normal was we had no church and no school. So my mother died when I was nine -- that left us pretty well on our own. My father had to teach us how to read and write, he had a good education. And before he would go out to trap, or hunt, whatever he was doing, he would leave us all our work around the tables so when we got up in the morning we had to do that every day before he returned. And then he would correct it and check it all off. If we had to do it again, then we had to do it again, but this is the way got our education.

Evelyn: Was your family, was it strict?

Edith: Well, not really. I don't think my father had to be strict with us. We must have been very obedient, I don't remember any of us getting beating like children do nowadays. But I know we had to cut our own ice for the hotel in the summer. Each of us had a job. One had to drive the horse to unload the ice in the ice house, one had to pack; we had sawdust to pack the ice in, and one had to pull it out of the

water, one had to cut with the saw. We all had our jobs, winter and summer. We had to cut our own wood. My father made axe handles, and handles here for the candy factories -- I think there was only two at that time here in Toronto. They used to use paddles to mix the chocolate with, they didn't use machines. My father made those paddles and they would come up there and buy them. So during depression time we had it pretty easy because we could trade whatever he made with the farmers for our vegetables and all that sort of thing, our meat. And when we didn't have meat we'd get wild meat. Of course, we had to hunt for wild meat.

Evelyn: So you didn't suffer very much from the Depression?

Edith: Not us, a lot of people did. But my father did help out a lot of people, because that was called more or less a trade, eh, that he had, that nobody else had. And he could get things that they couldn't get, so we would just share it with the community, which wasn't very big then.

Evelyn: Is this most typical of Indian families that they didn't suffer from the Depression?

Edith: No, no. The Indian people that were in Burleigh Falls didn't suffer from the Depression, but I guess they did

in the reserve. Although they made baskets and traded with the tourists, with their baskets -- that was birch bark baskets and ash baskets that were made out of ash and baskets that were made out of birch bark and quills. They didn't do all those headbands and things in those days like they do now. Earrings and all that sort thing, they didn't do all that.

Evelyn: How were the children treated? Did you get, you didn't get beatings but...

Edith: No. I don't believe I ever saw Indian people beat their children. They were disciplined, but we were just made to do without something, something that we wanted to do. If we'd done something wrong then we just didn't do what we wanted to do, like go swimming, you know. We might be deprived of going swimming.

Evelyn: What were the roles of men, women, and children in the family?

Edith: Like the father being the provider, my mother being the cook and so on? Well, I guess that would be their roles and we would all help. Me being the youngest, I didn't do too much, I don't think.

Evelyn: So, how would say you were treated?

Edith: Oh, I was treated too well. Like we would go picking berries, that was one of our jobs also. We would pick berries to preserve for the winter. But I, my sisters would fill up my

baskets or whatever I had and I'd sit in the shade, I can remember that. And I didn't like shoes, so when I wore shoes I would take them off and hide them somewhere. My poor sisters

would hunt all over looking for those shoes. I wouldn't tell them where they were. They'd take me home with no shoes, but I never got punished for that, I don't know why, I should have but I didn't. I got another pair of shoes.

Evelyn: Were they specially made?

Edith: No, they were just running shoes or whatever time of the season it would be. We used to gather cranberries, too -- that's late in the fall. You have to go into a marsh for them, so you wore rubber boots and things like that.

Evelyn: What was your basic diet?

Edith: Well, we had just about everything we have now. Never heard of margarine in those days, but we had lots of... We didn't have no cows ourselves, but the farmers did and we used to have to walk about two miles for milk and butter. And we got buttermilk, cow's milk, and we got our butter, and we got cheese. And we had an awful lot of wild meat, though, like muskrat, and beaver, deer meat. We didn't have many moose up there. I don't know why, I guess it was too rocky. See, where I was born it's nearly all rock.

Evelyn: How do you go about preparing something like a muskrat?

Edith: Oh, you've got to skin it and then clean it, clean all the innards and take the feet and the arms and the head off, just like any other kind of animal. You got to slice it open and take the innards out, throw them away. But then that's where they get the musk is from the... You've heard of that musk perfume they have now? I hate that because the smell

-- I've cleaned so many muskrats that I can't stand the smell of that musk anymore.

Evelyn: Where does it come from?

Edith: It comes from the leg of the muskrat. Right here.

Evelyn: The thigh?

Edith: Yeah. And you got to cut it out with a knife. It comes out in little wee pieces, it looks like fat, really. But if you ever cook the muskrat with that you couldn't eat it. So you got to learn how to clean the whatever it is you're eating. A lot of people ate porcupine, and groundhog, squirrels and stuff like that. Those are things you can kill without a gun. A lot of people didn't have ammunition, but somehow we always did.

Evelyn: So you didn't attend school but you were taught by your father. And how long did this go on for?

Edith: Oh, a number of years, I guess. I can barely remember when I started -- maybe it was three or four. And I was never graded, even when I joined the army. I joined in Peterborough. They wouldn't take me because they knew I had no education. They knew that, that's only twenty miles from Burleigh Falls. They knew there was no school when I was being raised. Oh, I forgot to tell you, in the older days when my father's business was good, he boarded my sisters out and they got a better education, because they didn't live at home at school time. But by the time two or three of us came along the family was getting poor, so they couldn't board us out, so he had to teach us himself.

Evelyn: How much was tuition?

Edith: For the children he boarded out? I don't really know. I don't imagine it would be much, because they boarded with friends. You know, people that come to the hotel all the time, like neighbors, you'd say, but they lived a long way away. They'd come in the wintertime with horse and cutter and so on. And in the beginning I can remember we only had sleigh dogs to bring in our supplies. The leader was a tame dog, but the rest of the dogs were very wild. My sisters wouldn't go near them, but I used to go out and feed them. (laughs) I wasn't afraid of the dogs, they didn't bother me.

Evelyn: So when your sisters boarded school where did they board?

Edith: About eight or ten miles from home. But that was too far to walk in and out, eh.

Evelyn: Do you know what the school was called?

Edith: Deer Bay School.

Evelyn: Did you play any Indian games at all?

Edith: No, not really. I don't know any Indian games. Like we played all kinds of games that the white children played, but I guess we learned them from the tourists. You know, they brought their children.

Evelyn: Do you remember your ancestral history?

Edith: Like...?

Evelyn: What your grandfather did, what your great-grandfather did.

Edith: Oh, they were only trappers and hunters. I think that's how my dad come to place his hotel in Burleigh Falls. It was from his dad trapping and hunting there all the time.

He found it was good trapping and hunting grounds, and that's why my dad went to Burleigh Falls. He founded Burleigh Falls. There was no one else there at that time.

Evelyn: Have you ever heard any unique stories about your ancestors?

Edith: Not really. I've heard the story about Lovesick Lake -- that's where our hotel was, it was on the Rawartha Lakes. But they talked about how this Indian princess fell in love with a brave, and she wasn't allowed to go with him, because he wasn't in the same category as her family. So she drowned herself and then he drowned himself and that's why it's called Lovesick Lake. That's the only, about the only thing I know.

Evelyn: Do you, was this passed down to you?

Edith: Yes.

Evelyn: From who?

Edith: From my father and all the other older Indian people that are there.

Evelyn: Did they tell of any other kind of stories or legends?

Edith: No. I mean a few miles away they have the Warsaw Caves they're called now. They are old Indian burial grounds, and the serpent mounds, all those places but I have never visited there. I'd like to have gone, but I just never had the opportunity.

Evelyn: Did they tell... is there any story behind them?

Edith: Oh, I think there is. I have seen a lot of books on them but I never went there myself.

Evelyn: Is there a name for your tribe?

Edith: Ojibway.

Evelyn: And is there a name for your reserve? I guess Burleigh Falls is...

Edith: Burleigh Falls is not a reserve, it's a summer resort. And now we have a lot of Metis and non-status Indians there, which we never had before. Like when my father lived there, he told the people from Curve Lake, which he had come to work for him, when they could afford to build a nice house they could stay in Burleigh Falls. But he didn't want them to just build a little tar paper shack, as he called it, and he wanted a nice house. He didn't want the land, how do you say it, the value of the land, he didn't want it to drop. But that isn't the way you say it. I know the words but they just stopped coming to me.

Evelyn: So, did you interact with other individuals on other reserves very much?

Edith: No, not too much. Of course my mother's people, coming from Scugog Island, they didn't come too much, because the grandmother, being French, she didn't talk much Indian or English. And they didn't come to visit us very often but we used to go there maybe once a year. My mother would take us to visit my grandmother. I never did get to know my other grandfather very well, but my grandfather Jacobs -- the reserve is only about twenty miles from Burleigh Falls, where my father was born. I got to know that reserve.

Evelyn: Do you remember what kind of important individuals existed on the reserve?

Edith: You mean like Indian chiefs? Well, I had an uncle that was the Indian chief there for quite a while -- George Copaway -- he married my aunt, Lillian Jacobs. And after he died we had the youngest Indian chief there, which was my cousin Jimmy Copaway, he was only seventeen. But he didn't last, only two terms I think. He was really very young. Then he, his older brother now is the chief of the reserve.

Evelyn: Were these individuals elected, or was it...

Edith: They're always elected, but, all but that one boy I was just telling you about. After his father died they just made him chief without... something like they do the royalty, I guess, eh.

Evelyn: Hereditary.

Edith: Yeah. But they don't always do that, they're always voted in.

Evelyn: What reserve was that?

Edith: In Curve Lake.

Evelyn: What was his function? He was seventeen years old.

Edith: Yeah, but his father died and then they made him the chief right away. And I guess it was wrong because he... Well, because he was the chief's son didn't mean he really knew what was going on. It's pretty hard to handle a reserve, even a grown up. Like my cousin, Dalton Jacobs, was the chief there for quite a while, too. See, I was a Jacobs.

Evelyn: Do you know what kinds of things he did?

Edith: I don't really know what they do. They just decide things, you know. They call a meeting, a board meeting is the same as other things and then they decide to do something and they take a vote on it. And then if they agree or disagree it's

up to the chief then to say the answer, "No."

Evelyn: Were there anyone, like Medicine Men?

Edith: There's always Medicine Men. Like my brother was supposed to be a Medicine Man but... I still have his bag here... Medicine Man's bag. But I really don't know too much about Indian medicine. There are a lot of things. And there's a lot of things you can eat.

Evelyn: For example?

Edith: Like I only know the word in Indian, it's called (Indian). We used to go and pick it at Riverdale before it was, you know, before there was too many people here. In that Riverdale ravine, there was lots of that (Indian) there. It's like -- my husband calls it wild Indian horse radish, it don't have to be wild Indian, it's Indian horse radish. And then there's potatoes, they're a funny looking little thing but they are potatoes. And mushrooms, of course. Anybody can pick them, eh. But they all grew in Riverdale, too, here in Toronto.

Evelyn: How far back was that?

Edith: Oh, that was only 1950, '52. That's before Regent Park came there and all this. There wasn't very many people. Even myself, in the east end where I lived then, we had our own house. There was only three Indian people, three including myself. Now look at the Indian people you see.

Evelyn: You said that your brother was supposed to be a Medicine Man. How was he picked?

Edith: I don't know how they pick their Medicine Men. In fact, they have one here, or they had one, here in Wigwamin. His name is Ken Gray. Everybody called him the Medicine Man. One day I had a nose bleed here and they called some Indian lady down the hall. I had terrible nose bleeds but it was from my drugs I was taking, eh, I knew that. But I had to have blood thinners because I had a bad heart and they didn't want me to get blood clots or whatever. And they all came in here and I said it's a good thing they weren't chanting when Eddie walked in -- my son. But they had a whole bunch of tea bags on me. Why the tea bags I don't know, I never did know. Because he came in, took the tea bags off me and put ice and it stopped my nose, eh. But whatever they were going to do I'll never know. But that was their Indian medicine.

Evelyn: Do you know of any sorts of herbs and roots?

Edith: I know that, I know there's a blue lily. The root is supposed to be good for the heart. In Indian it's called (Indian), but it's really a blue lily that grows in the water. You can only get it when it's in season, like, but you can put it away for the year round. And bull rushes, they're good for

a lot of things. You know, the cigar-looking part, you boil that and make a tea. And you can put it away and your supposed to rub yourself with that tea, and it will help arthritis, or bursitis, or any kind of bone disease or whatever. But the root of that is the... You have to dig the root out and then you pound it with an axe or the back of an axe, or a hammer and you get a lot of jelly out of it. And you put that in jars but you got to keep it cool. And it will draw sores like an ulcer, or anything, and it will cure the ulcer. I have seen that done.

Evelyn: Do you eat it?

Edith: No, no, no. You put it on like a salve. You put it in jars and you keep it like that.

Evelyn: How about the blue lily one?

Edith: Well, you use the root, you chew that for the heart. You know, like they have this nitroglycerin you put under your tongue. Well, instead of doing that you chew the root. You know, cut it up in little pieces and then you put it in your mouth. In fact I can almost taste it. (laughs) It doesn't taste bad. It could be good for the heart, I don't really know, but that's what they have used.

Evelyn: Are there any other types of herbs and roots that you remember?

Edith: I know my grandmother taught me a lot, my Irish grandmother. But even in the wintertime, when she had bladder trouble and she sent me to the woods. There was snow. She said to dig around a pine tree, under the pine tree you would find green leaves. They would still be green, they were quite large, but we had to find them. We took them home and she brewed them. And it helped her with her bladder trouble.

Evelyn: When you mentioned the blue lily and the bull rushes, did your Irish grandmother teach this, or is this Indian?

Edith: No, my father taught me that. This would be Indian, yes.

Evelyn: Your brother, when he... what would be in a sign, a Medicine Man's bag?

Edith: Well, the wheat cans, I call it, and jars of the salve from the bull rushes. And there are leaves that you put over a cut, too. You can put them in a, they always used to put them in a Bible and they would, it would preserve them for... If someone had a very bad cut you'd put the leaf on top of the cut and it would stopped it from getting infected. But you had to have a lot of those leaves to keep them dry.

Evelyn: Do you know what it was called?

Edith: No I don't. I know what the leaf looks like. No, I don't know whether it would be called a leaf. It comes out of the ground and only grows about that high.

Evelyn: That's about...

Edith: About four or five inches.

Evelyn: That's one leaf?

Edith: Yeah.

Evelyn: What were some of the ways that one could make a living on the reserve?

Edith: Oh, just trapping and hunting, I guess. And then selling the furs to the white man. But you could eat the meat, so that was one way of making a living.

Evelyn: Were there any other ways that one could make a living?

Edith: Making baskets. The men made apple baskets, but the ladies always made the finer baskets, like flower baskets, or for pot holders, and clothes baskets. Oh, there's names for all sorts of little baskets they would make, little fancy things like for handkerchiefs and so on, which the tourists bought all the time.

Evelyn: Do you know the process of making one?

Edith: Oh yes, I could make a basket myself if I had the material. You use birch bark for birch bark baskets and you have to get a porcupine to get the quills and you dye the porcupine quills if you want to, but that's using the white man's dye, eh. There's only one other dye that you can use. That is the Indian dye, that is from maple bark, but it dyes a

bluish-black. I don't know of any other kind of dye that's bright, you know, just one dye, so they don't use that. They just use the plain black and white quills off a porcupine -- unless they use the dye that you can buy now off the shelves, which isn't real Indian, is it?

Evelyn: No, but you mentioned about the maple dye...

Edith: Yeah, you can buy, you can buy, you can pull the bark off of the maple trees and boil it and you can get a dye from that; it's a nice dye. Now when they buy brand new traps they're a silver color. Well, you can boil them in that maple bark and then they turn black and the muskrat don't see them under water, so you can catch your muskrat.

Evelyn: So, do you know the process of making the basket and what you use the porcupine quills for?

Edith: Oh yes, you can take a maple leaf or something and

cut it all out, or draw it all out on top of your birch bark. And then you got an awl like a pin, a safety pin or something, and you punch holes in your birch bark. And then you take your quill and shove it through at one end, shove it through the other end and you take a scissors and cut off the back so it won't be sharp. But then you got to put another piece of birch bark after you're done your little pattern of maple leaf or whatever, and you can sew that together so it's not sharp on one side. It's not sharp anyway but it's prickly. And then you get sweetgrass and you put it all around and it makes the box smell nice; it smells like birch bark and sweetgrass. I mean, I have done that, but I can also make baskets from ash. I used to like to make what they call flower baskets -- they are very easy to make. They are shaped like this, eh, and then you put a little handle on them.

Evelyn: Like a "V"ish shape?

Edith: Yeah, then you put a little handle on them and oh, they sell like mad, because you can hang them anywhere.

Evelyn: How do you go about making one, the birch bark one?

Edith: Oh, the birch bark. You cut the birch bark off the tree, it don't kill the tree. The next year you can go back and cut the same bark off and they call it rough bark baskets then. You use the same bark but it's very rough. And you can make a different basket out of that. But the ash is the easiest. At first it's harder to... You have to pound the ash; you cut the tree down and then you section it off. And then you pound it, and pound, and pound it and it will lift up. You have to do that at a certain time of the year. I guess something like sap, you know, when the trees are running with sap. Well you get all your ash then, and you can make it into hoops, like, and tie it and put it away in a damp place, or you can put it in water in a creek, or whatever, and then it's soft to keep on making your baskets for any time at all. But there's only certain times of the year that you can take it off the tree. After you take it off then you got to shave it and make it nice and smooth. Then you can break it in half and pull it apart and it's like satin inside. It's really nice.

Evelyn: And how about the birch bark one, how do you do that one?

Edith: Well, you cut the birch bark off the tree while it's standing up. You don't touch the tree at all, you don't cut it down. But our trees up home are not that... they don't grow too

big, the birch bark. I was talking to a man one time about the trees up home, and he thought I should study forestry. But me, with no education, that wouldn't be a good thing, eh. But the trees get diseased. After a certain time they get scabby, they get black scabs; white birch get black scabs. I don't know why, nobody knows. But then after they get to about that big around then they start to die.

Evelyn: How big is that?

Edith: Well, that would be about twelve inches I guess, they start to die and then... I've never seen a great big birch tree up home. I have seen them when I've gone up north, like, to Cobalt or some place like that. I've seen big birch trees, and even the elm don't live up in Burleigh Falls.

Evelyn: So with the birch tree you just peel it off and you could make it right away, a basket?

Edith: Oh, yeah.

Evelyn: So there was a lot more work to make a ash basket?

Edith: Oh yes, it takes a lot longer. With birch you just can cut a piece off it and peel it off. If you only want to make a small basket then you only need a small piece of birch, it's something like paper, eh. You can cut it into whatever you want to use it for. I wish I had some baskets here to show you. I have up in our place at Burleigh Falls.

Evelyn: What sort of things did you do on a typical day as a child?

Edith: Wintertime, if we weren't cutting ice or getting wood, then we could go skating, or sleigh riding, or whatever kind of a day it was. But I guess that was all we'd do.

Evelyn: So you mainly had fun?

Edith: Oh yeah, but the nights used to be very cold. I can remember we used to, you know, have hot irons for the stove, like to iron clothes with. You'd put them on the stove and we'd roll them with paper and the cloth and we'd put them into our beds. And then we'd go skating that night and when we'd come home our bed would be nice and warm, eh. We'd take the irons out... We had to do this. My dad insulated our house with sawdust, but I don't think that was very good insulation. But they didn't have insulation in those days.

Evelyn: You mentioned trapping and hunting. How do you go about trapping and hunting?

Edith: Well, it's seasonal, eh. There's open season for muskrat, and there's open season for beaver. Well, there's open season for different things. Like, when my dad was there, he was president of the game laws and fisheries. He made the seasons, like. He knew when you could trap things and when you couldn't, like. If the muskrats are carrying babies then you don't trap. Or the fishing season is the same. If the fish are spawning then you don't fish. Some people do. The fish are very quiet when they are spawning. You usually see two of them all by themselves and they're quiet, they are very easy to go and spear or something, if you want to do that sort of thing. But then my dad didn't allow that. And we used to...

I trapped not really because I liked trapping, but it was money. I sold the pelt and if you were not trapping too far

away you could carry the meat home. You could clean it wherever you were trapping and carry it home in what they call a game bag, put it on your back and carry it. But then you had your pelts to carry, too. The pelts were more...

Evelyn: Valuable?

Edith: Valuable to carry than the meat unless you had nothing to eat at home.

Evelyn: So usually most people would just take the pelt and leave the meat to decay?

Edith: That's right, if you're too far away. Like I used to trap a long way from Burleigh because I could catch more. But they were smaller pelts and they caught right in Burleigh. In Burleigh Falls they could get great big muskrat. But I was really afraid of the big muskrats, but they got a lot more money for them and there was more meat if you wanted the meat.

(END OF SIDE A)

(SIDE B)

Evelyn: Can you tell me some of your experiences with trapping animals?

Edith: There was really nothing new about trapping animals except the one time when I got frightened by one. I didn't want to club it -- it was still alive -- and the old Indian gentleman I was trapping with, he had a bad back and he couldn't bend over, but he went around with me so I wouldn't be afraid, you know. And he said to me, "You get into that water

and club that muskrat." Well, I wouldn't do it. You have a tally stick, a stick that you put your trap on so when your stick is moved you know you've got something on it. But usually they're drowned, eh, when you pick them up. This one wasn't, it must have just got caught. So I took the tally stick and I dragged it back up to him. And I thought it was right after me, I thought it was just running after me. Probably I was pulling it, eh, and he clubbed it but I wouldn't. That was the only bad experience I had with trapping. Otherwise, I could skin the beaver, or muskrat. But the beaver we never took the meat home, not from where I was trapping. But if you're trapping, like where we live now, we don't bother with anything where our home is. You can see the beaver. The otter are really nice to watch -- they play. You can see them playing on the banks. I'd love to get pictures of them.

Evelyn: Did you ever catch one?

Edith: I never bothered the otter, or the mink. I can't stand the smell of mink, but the otters are cute little things, I wouldn't bother with them. But the muskrat and the beaver, you can sell the pelts and you can eat them. I like the meat. I don't think I've ever heard of anybody eating mink or otter, so I never bothered. I never trapped with my father, but I did pick up his traps after he died. But he never taught me to trap. He taught me how to use the .22.

Evelyn: The what?

Edith: The .22, the gun, eh. But that was all. He taught the other girls how to handle the other guns, but never me. I guess I was the youngest and he figured I shouldn't be handling guns.

Evelyn: Was this typical of females?

Edith: Oh yes. See, the men would often go away, eh. And if they didn't come home, then if you run out of food you had to go out and get your own. My mother often went out and she was a tiny little thing. But she could handle a gun, handle a canoe.

Evelyn: Was there any special ways of trapping?

Edith: No, not really. Well, not to me there wasn't, I suppose there would be to someone that's never done it, eh. I mean, you got to know where they are. They leave signs and that's where you set your traps, because you know they're going to come back. And another thing -- I could never shoot a deer. I know the boys in Burleigh used to take me on deer hunts, but I know they would never take me again after one time I went with them. And the deer did come to drink -- that's where they left me. They knew they would come for water and left me there. I watched them, I laid right still and watched them drink, and I watched them go away, but I wouldn't shoot them. I would have got one, maybe, but I wouldn't try. But I was told then I couldn't go on any more deer hunts. But the fox, the fox is a hard thing to catch. My brother used to snare them. I don't know how he could snare them. At that time they were \$3 or \$4, but that was like a million dollars. If the pelts were not hurt, you know. Like when you trap a fox they usually try to chew their way and they damage their own pelt. But if you trap [snare] them it just strangles them and the pelt is fine, it's good to the fur buyer -- there's no breaks in it or nothing.

Evelyn: How much would one sell for?

Edith: Well, nowadays they would sell for a lot. But at the time that I went out there was a bounty on fox -- \$2 if you got one. There was too many. Like they had a bounty on wolves. I don't know if there still is or not, but there used to be a bounty on wolves. If you got a wolf, then you got a bounty for it.

Evelyn: And that meant...

Edith: Like the bounty hunters, you know, you've seen them on television. They get paid for bringing something in that's not supposed to be around.

Evelyn: So do you get extra for that?

Edith: Well, yeah. You can get the bounty on your pelt and then you get to keep the pelt. Like I brought home three pelts and my kids made those Davy Crockett hats, like Brian and Edward they were... Well, now they're thirty and thirty-one, eh, so that was quite a while ago. But gee, everybody wanted those hats. If I would have had more foxes I could have made quite a little bit of money selling the hats, because I only cut them up and sewed them up myself, put the tail down there, you know. They were nice for kids to play with. I bet you grown ups would be wearing them around nowadays if they had them. (laughs) They put anything on their heads now.

Evelyn: So, you mentioned one time that you were the first North American to meet Mary Churchill.

Edith: Yeah, in Kitchener

Evelyn: Can you tell me about that experience?

Edith: Nothing much, except I was scared when I was told. I mean there was quite a few of us out on the section, (inaudible) eh. There would be five or six hundred girls, and when I was told to drop out of line I didn't know why. I thought there was something wrong with my buttons, my shoes, anything, eh. Maybe my stockings weren't on right. But it was just because she wanted to speak to me, and I just answered her back. I even forget what we said. Then I dropped back into line again. But I have met a lot of people in my time that I didn't know who I was talking to. Like the Governor General Michener when he came through Burleigh with a bunch of destroyers. I was sitting at the point fishing, and he got out of the boat and walked around, you know, I guess tired of staying in the boats. And he said to me, "What are doing?" I said, "I'm fishing." He says, "Well, get your feet out of the water," he says, "You're scaring the fish away." I said, "No, I don't." I said, "The fish are nibbling at my feet." I said, "I'm trying for the big ones." And after he left a man from the store came over and he said, "Do you know who you were talking to?" I said, "No." He said, "What did he say?" I told him, I mean to me he was just another person, eh. If I had known who he was, I might have got scared and started to stutter, but it was the Governor General Michener, Michener, yeah, I think it was.

Evelyn: When was this?

Edith: Oh, it was war time because they were bringing the

destroyers from Collingwood through, from Collingwood I guess. This was the Hudson Bay route, too, and there was five destroyers that come through that day through the locks. I didn't think they'd ever get through, because they are only ordinary locks, eh. But those destroyers are small. Now... no, I'm getting mixed up with my Governor Generals. Michener is when I worked at the Empress Hotel, and he turned the sod

for the new city hall at Peterborough, and I was working in the hotel but they made me the maid for his suite that day. I think that's the way it was. Tweedsmuir was the other one, Lord Tweedsmuir was the one I talked to when I was fishing. I met quite a few people at that lock. My brother-in-law was the lock master. And Pearson was there too, he cut the ribbon for the hydraulic system.

Evelyn: So you joined the army?

Edith: Yes, in 1943.

Evelyn: And can you tell me about your experiences in the army? Were you the only native woman there?

Edith: No, there was two of us. One girl come from Curve Lake, and I never met her in the army. But as far as I know I never ran into any other native girls in the service. I was here in Toronto, over on Harvard Street. That's where I enlisted, not on Harvard, I enlisted at City Hall. But it's odd they wouldn't take me then. They kept me from January until March before they swore me in, because I had no education. Until this one doctor said, "Well, then, let's give her an in-test." And then that's how I finally got into the army. But why they kept me dangling around I don't know. And I've often wondered. I was here and then they sent me to Ottawa for the last two years. I had to have a driver and an interpreter. I couldn't talk French, and I couldn't drive. But why didn't they get someone who could drive and could talk French? I mean, it's a waste of money, isn't it, to have three people instead of one. I mean I don't think I was doing that much. I used to visit the jails, the hospitals, and deliver letters here and there, and write letters for people. Like, I guess you would call it a social worker, eh. At least I think

that's what they do here at the Indian Centre. They send somebody around to do things for people that can't do it themselves.

Evelyn: This wasn't typical of most Indian individuals, was it? Joining the service?

Edith: The boys, yes. But for myself I was alone and I figured I needed discipline, I needed somebody. I had no more parents and my sisters were all married, and I didn't want to keep running to my brothers. They were married, too, and had their own families. And I wanted to be useful. I didn't like

the idea of not doing anything, and at that time they didn't send you through school through Manpower or nothing, or I probably would have went back to school, or started school. Probably would have started grade one. (laughs) But they didn't have that sort of thing. But I got through all my basic training. You had to take first aid, eh, and then you had to have, you had to go through the gas chambers, the whole bit. And you had to write exams on all this. I don't know how they understood my writing, but I wrote my exams.

Evelyn: Was it strange when you became a native sergeant?

Edith: Not to me. I don't know why everybody tells me it seemed, you know, strange to them. Like now when I, my husband, he always seems to be... I don't know how you'd say it. He didn't seem to think I had the intelligence to be anything but a private, eh. But I guess I got along with people, because no matter what I went to work at, I was always made an uncommissioned officer, first thing. Like at, on Harvard Street there, I went in there as a waitress. Well, they gave me two stripes. I was made a full corporal the first day I was there. It went on orders, they didn't tell me, I had

to read it on orders that I was corporal in charge of the officers, not the officers, the corporals, the N.C.O.'s mess and the other ranks. All I was supposed to do was go around and inspect things and see that they were done. And I didn't like that so I asked to be put on something else. They put me in personnel then, and that was placing recruits and discharge. These girls were waiting for discharge, and reposting, girls that were being reposted to someplace else. Then they started sending me out to... I took the first bunch of girls to Camp Gordon. I took fifty girls out there. And then I took the first bunch out to Orillia. I took thirty out there.

Evelyn: You took them out there, but what was the purpose of it?

Edith: Well, to see that they got in there and got their jobs straightened out. Like when you first arrived you had to have roll call, we had to stay right in our huts. We weren't allowed to roam around the camp because it's a man's camp, eh. And the girls had their own quarters. You couldn't go to the mess hall. They had a certain time for us to go, and then for the men to go. And the canteen, you were never allowed in the canteen, until the men were out of the canteen. Then they had canteen hours for the girls. Well, after they were settled and the officer came to take over, then I could go back to my unit, which was here in Toronto.

Evelyn: What was people's reaction when they found out you were native?

Edith: There was no reaction at all. In fact a lot of times, when I was in Ottawa, and if the girls kind of rebelled, a lot of times they would have to show a lot of pictures on

propaganda to get people going again. You know, everybody

start backsliding -- they were getting sick of the army. And then they'd show pictures. They'd have us all confined to barracks and they'd show us all the killings that were going on and all this sort of thing. And that would kind of spruce people up. But with me, if the girls didn't want to do what I told them, I'd say, "Well, all right. Then you don't want to do it. I don't feel like, that I have to push you. You'll just have to get somebody else to take charge here because I'll just revert back to private." "Oh, don't do that," they'd tell me. And they'd all start doing whatever I wanted them to do. But I never had no problems with anyone. And then after the boys come back from the war -- I stayed in the army until 1946 -- I was put in ordnance because that's when we had to put our stuff away, you know, all our bedding, and beds, and so on.

When they had the opening of the Community Centre in Burleigh Falls they put up a totem pole in honor of the Jacobs clan. And I didn't go there because at that time I was walking very badly with this arthritis. But I didn't know I was still secretary and they were phoning me from Ottawa to deliver messages to the Community Centre. I got a call from Hugh Faulkner. Well, there was three calls came that people couldn't come, but they were sending a representative. But I took the message down to the Community Centre and everybody was there from all the different reservations, from all around. But I didn't stay because I couldn't, not in the condition I was in. I would have liked to have stayed, but it was too big a crowd for me to be in.

Evelyn: You talk about the totem pole representing the Jacobs clan. Can you tell me anything else about this totem pole?

Edith: Well, we don't have totem poles in Ontario, they are from the west, but why this was done I don't know. There's a book about the history of Burleigh Falls, and there's a Centre of some sort in Willowdale here, where they do have the book also. I have a book, but my daughter has it right now. It explains all about this totem pole. My sister-in-law's brother makes totem poles. And he made the one that went up in Burleigh Falls.

Evelyn: Do you know what was involved when he made that?

Edith: Not really. I do know that it has different heads on it like, you know, different people. I do know that the Jacobs clan -- "Silver Fox" represents the Jacobs clan -- and that's at the top of the totem pole. After that I don't really know what's what.

Evelyn: Whose on the Jacobs clan?

Edith: Just my family I guess, because we were the only

people in Burleigh Falls at the beginning. In fact now there are only... there's just myself, but my name is Tasse now. But I am the only Jacobs left that was actually born in... There are Jacobs but they were not born in Burleigh Falls. I was born in Burleigh Falls. And that was why really I guess they picked my brother to be their spokesman at all times. Like he had to travel all over to do the talking for people. Like when they got the claim for the land that they built the houses on for the Metis and non-status Indians, he had to go to Ottawa to talk to the Prime Minister, Trudeau, about getting those land claims. But he got them and they've got their houses built, which they never had before, eh.

Evelyn: When was this?

Edith: About 1972. See, we built our own house, but I didn't have to. They would have built it for me, but I didn't know anything about this. I didn't really know what was going on up there. We bought the property a long time before that. Then we went ahead and bought our own material and stuff and built the place for ourselves, but all this material was bought for all the Metis and non-status Indians in Burleigh Falls.

Evelyn: You mentioned the Peekin?

Edith: The peace pipe?

Evelyn: Is that it? Peace pipe ceremony?

Edith: I guess it would be. My brother had bought a peace pipe and we had a... that was the only one I ever attended. It was on Good Friday. On Good Friday you're supposed to have a meeting and you go to the river before, well, when the sun is rising. That's very early in the morning. I remember it was very cold that day and you were supposed to wash in the river. And then we all come back to the Community Centre and then they smoke the peace pipe. The chief was there from the reserve.

Evelyn: Which one?

Edith: Curve Lake Reserve. And, like my brother, Sandy, the Silver Fox, he was the leader of whatever was going on, I really don't... They spoke their ceremony in Indian. I mean I understood what was said, but... It was like a prayer meeting, eh. And then they passed the peace pipe around, and I couldn't understand why the ladies smoked the peace pipe. I didn't think they should. But then I found out later that it was the

Indian women that first started to smoke the peace pipe, like many years ago. I don't know about that. I would like to know.

Evelyn: Who told you about that?

Edith: Someone here from the Indian Centre told me. It was when I said that I was protesting about smoking the peace pipe. I didn't think the Indian women should smoke it.

Evelyn: Why?

Edith: Well, I didn't see why they should. The men I thought should smoke the peace pipe.

Evelyn: What was the significance of smoking a peace pipe?

Edith: Well, to me it's the same as war, eh. Men handle all that. Nowadays they have this women's lib and there's more women getting into things than they should. I don't believe in that, but I guess I'm not the only one that don't. (laughs) I didn't want to smoke the peace pipe but I did that day. Everybody else did. When it was passed to me I smoked it too, but I didn't know what for. That was the idea of the thing. I didn't know what it was for. I know that my brother bought the pipe for this big ceremony they had, but then he told me, he said, "You get the key for the Community Centre and I want you to carry on with this every Good Friday," because he died the following Good Friday. We didn't have no ceremony then. I asked for the key and I asked for a meeting to be held like we did the year before, but nobody wanted to go ahead and do anything. And they still don't do anything up there anymore.

Evelyn: So the peace pipe ceremony, this was just...

Edith: I don't really know what the meaning is.

Evelyn: Did you use Indian tobacco?

Edith: No, it was sweetgrass. You can buy the sweetgrass at the Indian Centre and it grows around home, but I don't know what it looks like. You can't smell it until it's dry. You can pick it when it's, you know, you can recognize it but I don't know what it looks like. I know there's something else -- ginseng -- the Indian people did that in bag fulls, big sack bags, you know. And then they bring it out and they sell it and it's a medicine. You can buy it in that health shop right here at the corner. In fact there's a man here in the building that was telling me I should buy some for this arthritis. Well I don't want to mix too many medicines. (laughs)

Evelyn: So at the time you just used sweetgrass?

Edith: That's right, sweetgrass.

Evelyn: What's the meaning of Burleigh Falls?

Edith: It was just a summer resort where my dad, well I guess his dad before him went there and thought it was a good place to trap and hunt, it was really good hunting grounds. And then when my dad got his hotel that's where he started his business, and it was a good business. Then they put another hotel up, and it's still a good summer resort. Everything is closed in the wintertime. You couldn't get a room there or anything in the wintertime. Your closest place is Peterborough if you want to go anywhere. It's still really, well, where we

are it's two and a half miles from nowhere. It's really wild, you can hear the wolves, as I said, watch the animals playing in the water. There's even big fish come up now from bigger lakes, because there's nobody to catch them, eh.

Evelyn: You mentioned the time when your father shot a bear.

Edith: Oh yes, in the daytime. Well he shot more than one bear, but this was exceptional because it was daylight and he was having his supper. They had just built this new highway, he looked and he saw a bear walking up the road. Poor bear. Dad grabbed the gun and shot him. They took the hide, the head, and the paws, and everything, and had it mounted and put it in the hotel, down at the Park Hotel where everybody could see it. But there are a lot of bears up there right now. If you go to the dump -- you have to take your own garbage and they change the dumps every little while. But if you go to the dump the bears are really tame. If you had the nerve you could hand them a lettuce and they would come and pick it up. They don't bother nobody. I suppose if you bothered them they might bother you, but they only come out at night. You never see them at the dump in the day time. A lot of people, they can see the cars, they claim, all lined up at night. They're not afraid of the cars. People get out with their flashlights and go and look at the dump, at the bears digging in there.

Evelyn: Do you know anything about Serpent Mound?

Edith: No. That was only about two minutes walk from my sister's. I wish I had visited there. I used to visit my sister, eh, and all I had to do was go outside and go over the hill into the Serpent Mounds.

Evelyn: Who was Josh Johnson?

Edith: Oh, he was, there was two of them. There was a young Josh Johnson and an old Josh Johnson, he was a veteran of the First World War, and a bachelor. He lived alone all the time, he lived on an island. But he was a good old man. Like, if my father went away for any length of time he'd get Josh Johnson to come and stay our house, to look after the house. And that is the man that taught me to trap and hunt. I would follow him around all over the place. He was a good old soul.

Evelyn: He was native?

Edith: Oh yes, he was strictly native. He was from the Curve Lake Reserve. There are a lot of Johnsons in Burleigh Falls now. His brother Isaac had several sons and one was Josh Johnson. He married a French girl from Toronto, here, and they had quite a large family, mostly boys.

Evelyn: Do you remember Josh telling you any kind of stories?

Edith: I suppose if I sat and thought about it I would remember. I can remember him talking to us, telling us all

kinds of tales when we were little, you know, to put us to sleep, I guess. But I really can't remember anything.

Evelyn: So you don't remember him telling you anything when you were a little older, trapping?

Edith: No, no, not really. I wish I could.

Evelyn: How about any of his experiences? So did your father ever tell you any of his grandfather's experiences or anything like that?

Edith: No. You see when my father left the reserve we didn't bother going to the reserve very much. And I guess I would have learned more. I didn't really know anything about Indian culture at all. Nobody did. Even those Indians that are over there right now, not until after the Trudeau government. You never saw anybody running around with long black hair like they do now, even ten years ago.

Evelyn: What made you move to Toronto?

Edith: For employment. There was no employment up in Burleigh Falls, only during the summer when the summer resorts would be open. And I was getting a little too old to go out trapping and hunting, so I came to Toronto for work.

Evelyn: What were the stories that you heard about Toronto before you came?

Edith: They were all good. I never heard anything bad about Toronto. It got bad after I moved here, but not because I moved here. (laughs) But there was, even in Peterborough, there was hardly any immigrants. Like, in Toronto, there was no immigrants when I came here. I first came here, I was really very young. It was before the War. The War came after I came to Toronto.

Evelyn: So when did you come to Toronto?

Edith: About 1938 I think. I remember getting off the Union Station and looking across at Royal York and getting scared to death of the big buildings, and then getting on the street car and it used to flash fire, you know -- they used to run by coal.

They had a big stove inside of the street cars then. And I was going to the Y.W.C.A. There used be Y.W.C.A. down in Stony Lake and the lady there told my father that it was safe for me to come down now and all I had to do the Union Station and go to Yonge Street and I'd get to Elm Street where the Y.W.C.A. was, and that's where I was heading. And I got afraid and got off the street car and I walked. It wasn't really that far but to me, I was young and scared, but I got to the Y.W.C.A. and then they helped me get work.

Evelyn: What was your first impression?

Edith: I was scared. (laughs) But then I got used to it. I had a cousin here going to Toronto Bible College from the Curve Lake Reserve. She graduated in 1940 here at the, what do they call that place on Bloor Street? At the Varsity Arena, is it? Yeah, the Varsity Arena. That's where she graduated.

Evelyn: When was your first encounter of non-natives?

Edith: Oh, I always was among non-natives, because my dad had the hotel. They were all American tourists visiting Canada, eh. I was never used to a lot of Indian people like I am now. I'm more used to the white people than I am the Indian people, really.

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