- Discusses her participation in the Walpole Island fair.

Burton: ...what went on then, is that right?

Eva: Yes.

Burton: Well, we want to talk about your racing at the fair on an Indian pony. And I understand that you did a lot of racing, and I understand also that you won first prize one summer. Could you tell us when, about when that took place, what year?

Eva: No, I don't know what year.

Burton: No, just... Oh, just make a guess, you know. Was it in the '30s, or was it in the '20s?

Eva: No.

Burton: Was it in the middle '30s, like 1935?

Eva: It was 19-- before 1931. I was all alone, and I was starting about 15 up to 18, racing at all the fairs.

Burton: Did you use the same horse all the time that you were racing?
Eva: Yes.

Burton: What was the name of the horse?

Eva: Silver.

Burton: Silver.

Eva: Grey is the horse.

Burton: It was a grey horse, eh?

Eva: Yeah, and its name is Silver.

Burton: Did you do a lot of practising before the fair?

Eva: Yes, I do a lot of practising.

Burton: Did you race with other young boys and girls, or just...?

Eva: Just one girl and lots of boys. Me and Ida, that's the only ones I know.

Burton: Well, she is Ida Sampson now.

Eva: Yeah.

Burton: Do you know any other young people that used to ride ponies, you know, in your day?

Eva: All I know, like Claudy Sands, and Eddie Johnson, Alvin Johnson, and me, and Ida, and Ivan Thomas, and... Oh, there's Sands down the Highbanks, older ones, like Earl Smith, a lot of them but I've forgot now. I know there were a lot that time trying to race the girls.

Burton: Oh yeah.

Eva: Trying to beat them or something, stop the horses, not to go through.

Burton: Oh yeah. When you were racing at the fair there was you and Ida. What was her name before she got married?

Eva: I don't know.

Burton: Did she go by Miganky or...

Eva: No, Windblow.

Burton: Oh, Windblow.

Eva: Something like that.

Burton: They called her Ida Blew for short?
Eva: Yeah, yeah.

Burton: How much did you receive for racing at the Walpole Island fair?

Eva: I don't know how much we get, I forget. I should have wrote it down at that time.

Burton: But there was a first prize, a second prize and a third prize?

Eva: Yeah.

Burton: How many times did you have to go around the track, just once or twice?

Eva: Oh second. If they miss sometimes you have to go to the next one.

Burton: Oh I see. The pony races was the main attraction on Walpole I remember. Do you remember any unusual thing that used to happen during the race? Did somebody fall off or...?

Eva: Oh yeah, they fall off on young ponies. And they fall off and go around the corners, they want to go the shortcut through the bush. And a lot of thorns over there, you know, one of them fall off on top on that thorn. (Inaudible)

Gladys: Where was the fair held, and how many days did they last, do you remember?

Eva: Three days.

Gladys: And where were they held?

Eva: At that old fair ground. And one over here but I didn't go there, I was over there.

Burton: That's the fair ground behind the Customs?

Eva: Yes.

Burton: Did you have to pay to go into the fair when you were racing?

Eva: No.

Burton: You got in free?

Eva: Got in free.

Burton: Well, did they feed you also?

Eva: Yeah.
Burton: They fed you, got your meal.
Eva: Yeah, got meals.

Burton: That horse that you used, was that your own?
Eva: Yeah.

Burton: It belonged to your family, eh?
Eva: Yeah.

Burton: Did you own any other horses besides Silver?
Eva: Yeah. I had a black one there, it's in the picture right there now.

Burton: Who was racing that one?
Eva: That one there?
Burton: Yeah.

Eva: Oh, before me that's Uncle Ivan rode it, Thomas.

Gladys: Can you remember what other attractions that there were at the fairs? Like did they have Indian dancing, and beauty contests, and that kind of thing?

Eva: Oh yeah, they had everything.

Gladys: The same as they have today?
Eva: Yes.

Gladys: And what kind of stands did they have?
Eva: Oh, all Indian stands, and some of the straight ones, and all of them now over, ferris wheels and all that, rides.

Gladys: Were there any famous people hired to perform at the fairs? Do you remember any?
Eva: Well, there was some of them, but I don't know, I forget. (laughs) Long time ago. I know there were something going on the platform.

Burton: Well, do you remember the Indian people serving meals?
Eva: Yeah.

Burton: Do you know who they were?
Eva: This what you call, Sampson.
Burton: Sam (name)?

Eva: Yeah, that one I know. And some at the front but I forget what the names were. There were a lot of them anyway.

Burton: Did your family ever take anything to show at the Exhibition Hall?

Eva: Yes, vegetables.

Burton: What did they...?

Eva: All kinds of vegetables.

Burton: Oh, you used to take vegetables? Did you, your family win anything, did they win a prize?

Eva: Some of them.

Burton: What all did they have in that Exhibition Hall? What all did they show?

Eva: Oh, they got everything in the hall.

Gladys: Did any non-Indians operate stands too?

Eva: Yes.

Gladys: What kind of things did they sell?

Eva: Oh, baskets and all that.

Gladys: Non-Indians?

Eva: Non-Indians, they sell that too.

Burton: She means white people.

Eva: Yeah, I know. Oh, they sell like, I don't know, popcorn, hotdogs, everything.

Gladys: What would the prices be to get on the midway rides? Can you remember what they had to pay for the merry-go-round?

Eva: I think they was three for a dollar that time.

Gladys: How would these rides operate? Was there electricity, you know, on the grounds?

Eva: Yeah.

Burton: Could you tell what the fair looked like? You know, the, you know, maybe you could describe it, you know, as best you can. When you go into the fair ground, and what you see.

Eva: Oh yeah, lots of stands here and there, around there.
Burton: Ferris wheel and the merry-go-round maybe.

Eva: Yeah, all that. Swings. Midway like pretty near they had in there. I know they died down after a while.

Gladys: Where did the people come from that attended the fairs?

Eva: Oh, all over. There's some in the excursion boat that landed at the dock. They have to come and meet them in there. All the Indian ponies, and the drums, and the Indians dressed have to come in there, meet them and take them up there to the grounds.

Gladys: Do you remember the names of some of the boats that came in? And how many?

Eva: Just one. I don't know what they call it now. Putten Bay or something like that, I forget now. One of those big boats anyways.

Gladys: Where did it come from?

Eva: Detroit. Toledo and Detroit.

Gladys: Walpole used to have a brass band. Do you remember some of the people in the band, what instrument they played?

Eva: I think there was Bob Wilson and his son, and then (name), Keith I think they called him. And the other one's his brother, and a lot of them.

Gladys: Were these people dressed in Indian costumes?

Eva: Yes.

Burton: Oh, you forgot to tell us. Were you kind of dressed up as an Indian when you were racing, racing the ponies?

Eva: Yes.

Burton: And all of those people that took part dressed up in Indian costumes?

Eva: Some of them don't though.

Burton: Oh, just some, eh?

Eva: Yeah, just some.

Burton: Well, how were those ponies kept, you know, around the island? Were they fenced in or did they roam around all over?

Eva: No, not mine. They are in the yard, fenced in.
Burton: But there were some that were roaming at large?
Eva: Yeah. One there, here, there.

Burton: Were you ever invited to take part in a parade outside of Walpole Island?
Eva: Yeah.

Burton: Did you go out to parade?
Eva: Yeah, we go out to parade. Went to Wallaceburg, and Detroit, Pontiac.

Burton: Yeah. Did you take your horse over there or...
Eva: Yeah.

Burton: They provided a little trailer?
Eva: Yeah, like a truck, to put all the horses in there. And we got in like a little bus going up to Detroit and Pontiac.

Burton: Do you remember what they were celebrating when you took part in that parade? Was it the 4th of July, or...?
Eva: Somewhere in there. I know we used to go into Alginack, parade in there.

Burton: Oh yeah, right.
Eva: 4th of July, I guess.

Burton: And you also took part in the parade in Pontiac, eh?
Eva: Yeah.

Burton: Did you get paid for that?
Eva: Oh, we never paid nothing.

Burton: I mean did you receive any pay?
Eva: Oh yes, we didn't go there for nothing.

Burton: Do you remember who all went, you know, with the horses?
Eva: Gee, I forgot all of them. Just I know the ones here -- Ivan, and Adam, and Alvin, and Claudy Sands, and Mr. Sands over there. Well, a lot of them.

Gladys: Can you remember the last fair that they had on the island, approximately what year it took place?
Eva: Gee, I don't know, I forgot that.

Burton: Was it in the '50s, somewhere in the '50s when they had the last fair, or was it before that?

Eva: It's before that, yeah, before.

Burton: It must have been in the late '40s then, eh?

Eva: Yeah, around there. That went all over Canada too, and we went to London...

Burton: With your horse?

Eva: Yeah. And then over here -- I forgot that town's name over this way -- Mel, no, not Melvin.

Gladys: Not Thamesville?

Burton: Not (inaudible)?

Eva: And there is a fair in there. They invite us to go there.

Burton: Would it be (inaudible)?

Eva: Some place over there. When we went up to London the truck (inaudible) and the horses fell off, and the ones watching the horses, they were in it too.

Burton: Did anybody get hurt? Did the horses get hurt?

Eva: Yeah, one of them.

Burton: Were you invited over there to take part in a parade or a race?

Eva: In a racing, they had a fair, like.

Burton: Oh, I see.

Eva: Yeah, we went up to Livingston, I think, too. But I didn't go because the horse that time, what happened down that way and I didn't go that time, let the boys went. You know Jack Knight?

Burton: Yeah.

Eva: That's the one who had a truck and that's where they put all the horses. And the men, they were in the front, and some were in the car, but I didn't go that time. They told me I'd get hurt in case the truck turn over again. Yeah, Jack Knight, he's the one that's driving that truck that time.

Gladys: Did they also have harness racing at the fairs?

Eva: Yes, yeah, they did.
Gladys: Can you remember some of the people that took part in those races?

Eva: No. I'd have to think.

Burton: Well, the harness racing... I don't remember any harness racing at the fair ground behind the Customs, but I used to see a lot of harness racing in this old fair ground by the church, by the Anglican Church.

Eva: Yeah, over here, yeah.

Burton: Do you remember the fair when it was held at the Anglican Church grounds?

Eva: Yeah.

Burton: Do you know what year that was, what years? Well, it was in the '20s, I guess, in the middle '20s, round about. It could be 1927 when they had the last fair there. Is that about right?

Eva: Yeah, it's around there, yeah.

Burton: What else do you remember about that old fair at the Anglican Church grounds?

Eva: That is good there, I know. There were a lot of people. Even foot race we have.

Burton: You used to have foot races? Do you remember the "Cowboy and Indian" show that they used to put on?

Eva: Yeah.

Burton: Do you remember any of the Indians that took part?

Eva: Not that I remember.

Burton: What did they have in that battleground? How did they fix it up?

Eva: Oh, they had everything there, ferris wheels and all that. And even tipis, selling Indian baskets. Oh, restaurants and like that, hotdog stand. Indian dancing.

Burton: What about the Walpole Island band, do you remember hearing them play, or seeing them?

Eva: Just hear them playing.

Burton: I think we have enough information to make a story, and we want to thank you very much for helping out.

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