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HIGHLIGHTS:

- General discussion about his life.
- Discusses bee keeping. Adeline: I'm going to interview Jake
Korzinski from Eagle
River. Where were you born Jake?

Jake: In Dinorwic.

Adeline: How old are you and what year were you born?

Jake: I was born 1914.

Adeline: Where? In Dinorwic, eh.

Jake: In Wabigoon Township.

Adeline: Was there a doctor to deliver you?

Jake: Dr. Lingwell at home.

Adeline: What's your religion?

Jake: Catholic.

Adeline: Could you tell me some of your childhood experiences
while you were in Dinorwic, if you can remember anything?
Anything about your family and your...

Jake: Well, my father was working C.P.R. as a pumpman, water for the C.P.R. trains. And I went to school in Dinorwic. We lived beside the lake. Well, most of the Indians were living there all the time. I went to school with them most of the time. And we stayed there till I was seven years old and we moved to Eagle River and went to school in Eagle River.

Adeline: What did you do? Was it easy to find a place to live here?

Jake: Oh, we lived across the track inside an a old shack. There was the C.P.R. coal docks there and they only had... It was kind of dirty when we got in there -- we had to clean it up, of course. It's all coal dust in there. Just across the tracks from Eagle River here. And we went to school from there. And dad built a house out at Eagle River again on this side of the tracks, stayed there. And those days were pretty rough. There was no roads, we had to make our own roads, shovel our own snow. We go to school there, just about a mile to school, you know. Every time there was a big snowstorm we had to go through our knees there and walk to school and then you freeze in school -- they only had a little wood stove there. I stayed there till I was 14 then I went into Manitoba and went to school there and learn a little better French there. Them days we learned French there too. And that's where I started my bee keeping after that, for three years, then I went back home here again and went to work here. Well, before I went to Manitoba we used to go into the bush here and pick blueberries all day, pine cones, and keep ourselves going. I used to sell them papers when I was seven years old, you know, on the road all the time, selling needles and Christmas cards, and valentines, and stuff like that. Make our money -- of course it's very little, but it's always, you know, doing something on the road all the time.

Adeline: How much money did you make when you were bee keeping in Manitoba?

Jake: Well, we got \$17 a month. That's board and room, of course, it's not much.

Adeline: Did your mom and dad used to have a saw mill?

Jake: My dad had a saw mill up here, up in Eagle River here. It was hard work shoveling sawdust, carrying, pulling slabs out of the mills. I was about 16, 17 years old doing that. We (inaudible) cut wood all the time, carry (inaudible).

Adeline: How many was there in your family altogether?

Jake: My family, there was sixteen, so we had quite a struggle to keep going, to keep ourselves going to make our own money.

(END OF SIDE A)

Jake: We'd walk down to the highway up there where they was building this new Trans-Canada Highway. We worked in the rock cut there, digging with a shovel for 25 cents an hour. We were there for the winter months, like kind of relief work it was, they gave us there. And after that we went, last few months, then went back to Eagle River and cut wood in the bush again for the winter, near spring it was for \$1.75 a cord. We walked five miles with the bucksaw on our backs. We'd cut our cord of wood and then walk back home again another five miles. It's a hard day's work for the little money we had.

Adeline: And then you worked in the hotel, the Lac du Bonnet hotel?

Jake: At the present time we worked in the... My dad sent me down to Lac du Bonnet to look for a job. We went down by train there and they offered us \$5 a month. That's what we worked for, but 14, 15 hours a day, Sundays and all. So I

stayed there for the winter and went back out again, went back on the C.P.R., that's when it was winter. I got a job as a painter, learned that job and got 48 cents an hour. That was pretty good them days.

Adeline: It must have been compared to those other wages. And then...

Jake: Yes, I went to Winnipeg there to work there in the store, in St. Boniface it was, on Marianne Street. And then he told me that I had no pay, I had to learn for nothing, so I learned there for about five months. So then I quit there after because I had no money, nothing to work on. So back to Eagle River and then I went down to... There was a job opening down at the power house down here at McKenzie Dam, and saved up a little bit of money there. Then some of the people told me I should start up a store, which I had a little experience in learning already. So I did that and I only had \$200 to work on. I bought my first order from the groceries there from the wholesale house, started up my little business that way in a little chicken house. Which I was going to start chickens and I changed my mind and had no heart of killing a chicken, so I sold them and started a store. You can see the picture there.

Adeline: Who was the little girl? Is that one of your sisters?

Jake: Yeah, my little sister.

Adeline: And then you started the store.

Jake: Yeah. And struggled on that and the wholesalers were pretty good to me and they told me that they'd vow(?) at me if I... They'd give me the stuff in time and pay for it as I go

along, which I did. And I ran a sum of, a bill up to \$5,000

there that and I owed them, and I sold the stuff and kept paying off that way all the time. And the little profit I made I kept as a wage and put it away. And then I bought a piece of property at the corner here in Eagle River beside the station here and built a new store -- it's the big one -- and that's how I worked myself up all the way through, on nothing.

Adeline: When did you start this school vehicle you have for a school bus?

Jake: 1954. Drive taxi and school for kids on the reserve to Eagle River to school.

Adeline: Did you have to pump gas by hand?

Jake: Well, the first gas pump I had had to be done by hand, ten gallons at a time. Some guy wanted a barrel of gas so I had to keep pumping by hand, ten gallons at a time.

Adeline: So what year did you get married then? No, wait a sec. How many was there in your family, Jake, how many brothers and sisters? Oh, you said you had...

Jake: There was sixteen of us.

Adeline: How many is there left now?

Jake: They're all married and working.

Adeline: Do you still have all the sixteen left or is there...?

Jake: No, there's a couple died. One died when he was about eleven years old, going to school. He just passed out,

like an attack, eh. See, my mother left us kids, we were all by ourselves to work. And they brought my dad -- he died about five, six years ago now. My mother she left us and she never came back, so we stuck between ourselves to look after our own selves.

Adeline: So your mother more or less left your dad and your family then?

Jake: Yeah, we were just like orphans.

Adeline: What year was that, Jake, can you remember?

Jake: It must have been around 1920s. That's the time I went to work myself, eh. Took a job myself, took anything at all, like \$5 a month or board and room, whatever we got, see.

Adeline: I see you're carrying blueberries here in the card.

Jake: That's my first store there. We had no trans-

portation so there's a partner of ours, he had a pony and a little cart. We'd have to haul, take... Well, it's only three blocks away from the station to the store at that time, so we'd have about maybe 200 baskets a day, sometimes 150 to 200, and we had to transport that. Make about four trips to the station on the wagon, load them up by hand.

Adeline: Was that mostly from the Indian people picking?

Jake: That's all Indian blueberry, everybody. Them days the Indians they lived in little log houses at the reserve. And they do the trapping and they come to town and sell fish with a horse. Well, Alex Singleton used to do that. Buy

everything off the Indians, you know, to keep going -- blueberries and stuff like that, and fish. Sometimes they'd give us a little moose meat them days. They sell that to us to make a living. They had a tough time too down there. There was no roads, just a trail.

Adeline: Can you tell me something about this train in the picture, where it's going through? It looks like a lake.

Jake: That's around near Minnitaki, when we had a awful storm here. It rained here for pretty near half the summer. That was in the '50s, yeah, eight miles from Eagle here.

Adeline: Did you used to have a theatre too, Jake?

Jake: Yeah, I had a theatre too. I had that for a few years, but the town was a little too small to make any money so I changed to a garage and gas station. Then I rented it out and then it got burned.

Adeline: There's this Eagle garage, I see.

Jake: That's my brother Angus. Yeah, he had that.

Adeline: I think there was more long ago than there is today now. You only see two stores now, nothing else.

Jake: Yeah. We used to watch these coal docks they had in Eagle River. They used to run on a ramp like, you know. They'd have a local come in every day and they'd put three box cars up there to keep the coal, you know. That's the old style coal docks they had there. We used to watch them all the time, had fun watching them try and make it up the hill like, you know, and try and stop dead there. Some of them cars would run

there and smash up on the other end, get wrecked like, you know. We used to have a mill up here and it was busier them days than now.

Adeline: Now they only have the dam, eh?

Jake: Well, they have two power houses here and two dams. Well now they got all tourist camps here now, so that's what

keeps this town up now. There's nothing else to do in the wintertime here now. Most of them have to go out to work or they're all on welfare or unemployment insurance right now. We used to buy wood too them days for \$3.25 a cord. The guys would have to haul it and bring it to the box car, all for \$3.25, cut it and haul it. That's not very much money, but they all lived and all were happy about it anyway. I cut wood.

Adeline: I was going to ask you about the Metis people around Eagle. How did they manage to survive through those days?

Jake: Well, they all... like guiding, then they go and pick blueberries, and they cut wood and, you know, keep going the year around like that. See that's what they all do around here mostly.

Adeline: So what year did you get married in, Jake?

Jake: 1941, July, yeah.

Adeline: You married Frances...

Jake: Well, I'll tell you how that worked. When I had the store here, so I put an ad in the paper to get married like, you know, in the Free Press Prairie Farmer. And then I had so

many letters I just picked one out from Alberta and that was how we started. And then she said that she'll come down and see what things are, you know. She came down and she stayed and then we got married in a month's time. (laughs) Just like that.

Adeline: And you're still together, eh, after all this time?

Jake: Yeah.

Adeline: That's pretty good. Did you have any children?

Jake: We got three of us here, three children. So we worked together and struggled together and built our business up. Been in the store business for 36 years and then finally I got sick and the doctor told me I had better quit, I had ulcers. So I'm still driving taxi now and that's what we're living on that way. We have our own house and, well, we don't say we're well off, but we got everything we need. I don't think, I didn't have any holidays in my life, just about none, only one month sometimes -- a couple of years ago, wasn't it? That's the first holiday I took was a couple of years ago. I worked every day, every day all my life since I was a kid at seven years old, which is true.

Adeline: I know a lot of people call you Uncle Jake. Do you know why they call you this, Jake?

Jake: I don't know.

Adeline: I think I know why, because you help everybody.

Jake: Because I'm with the people all the time, and I help them.

Adeline: I know if it wasn't for you most of us Metis people wouldn't have any cars or any houses that we do have now. I know that if it wasn't for you signing for me I wouldn't have my car, and I think a lot of Metis people can say the same thing around here, that you have helped them out a lot.

Jake: I did, I still help them out right today yet. They want a loan or want a few hundred dollars, they go to the bank and I have to sign for them and take the chance that they pay.

Adeline: They've been pretty good though, eh? I mean has everybody been paying for...?

Jake: Oh yeah. The fact that all my life in Eagle River here, I think we're just like brothers and sisters here.

Adeline: Everybody, yeah. How many is there left in your family, Jake?

Jake: I think there's still fourteen of us left, two of them died. My brother Angus -- he was in the army -- and he come back and he died pretty young, at 54. And my little brother in Minnitaki who died at 11, so that's the only two that died.

Adeline: And your mom and dad are both living?

Jake: Well, my mother and dad, they're both dead now.

Adeline: Then you got your grandchildren.

Jake: Oh yeah.

Adeline: You only have one kid up here now, all the others went away?

Jake: Yeah, they all... Two married and (inaudible) went away to high school.

Adeline: Well, I don't know anything else we can talk about, Jake. Do you know anything else we can talk about?

Jake: Nothing much I can think of right now.

Adeline: I'll just ask you about Dryden. That must have been a pretty small town then too, not as big as it is now?

Jake: Well, Dryden was just very small. When Dad used to go to Dryden we had to go on a mud road and get stuck in the mud. We had to get logs and lift the car out of the bush, get some logs out of the bush to lift the car out to get going again when it's raining. I remember the trail there them days.

Big River is the same thing, there was no roads. And we got our first houses in the bush, it was all bush there. Now it's all cleared off, no more wood left. In the town here it was all wood right in the middle of the town.

Adeline: There's another fellow too that...

Jake: There's only, I don't think there's any old people left here that I know of.

Adeline: I was going to ask you about Pete Morris, how you used to help him out and that.

Jake: Oh, Pete Morris, yeah. He was the nicest guy around, Pete Morris. He always come to me and just like my father.

Adeline: Like what were some of the things that you did for him, like everyday things? You seen him every day, didn't you?

Jake: Yeah, he come every day, he never missed. We'd have a restaurant in our store too, that's right. We had a restaurant there. Every morning he'd have coffee and I'd take him home every morning, or when he had no ride I'd go up and get him and bring him in again, take him home every morning, for 50 cents a trip. When I first started visits there the old people had their pension was \$15 a month, that's their cheque -- now it's \$242 a month. It's a lot of difference from years back, and they lived on \$15 a month, but they could pretty near buy half the store for the price them days. You buy a pound of lard for 5 cents, a broom for 29 cents, which I bought the other day paid \$5.29 for it -- the same kind. Coffee was 39 cents a pound. I remember when I was selling them in the store there you could buy \$200 worth and fill the store right up; today you put \$200 in there now, you'd only have what you put in your pocket and walk away. Meat was 3 cents a pound for beef and pork from the farmers, which is over \$3 now -- that's a lot of difference from them days. I remember how cheap things were, labor was very cheap, 25 cents an hour. But they bought just as much as they do at \$10 an hour I think.

Adeline: I'm just looking at one of these old pictures that you have of this hearse here. Is that where...?

Jake: Well, that's from Sault Ste Marie. That was my dad's sister from Sault Ste Marie.

Adeline: It sure is a difference now from what the hearses are now than what they were, eh?

Jake: They are like a square box. My dad's first car he got was no electricity in it. It was just a carbide lamp; you put the carbide in and light with a match. You blow the horn with your hand on the side there with a ball. And you crank it and it backfires and he'd burn his arm with it. It run by oil, there was no battery. There was no windows in it or nothing, he burned coal oil in the thing to keep it warm, to keep the radiator going in the wintertime.

Adeline: What did you do at this when you were pressing, or...? What kind of work did you...?

Jake: Well, a bee keeper he has to... It was quite an interesting job. It's not anybody can go and do that, you know, you have to learn. It's just like a history and it takes years to learn. You got to know the... See when you get in there, we uncap the... You had one queen in the hive like, only, you can only have one. Otherwise they'll swarm -- half of them will go up in the bush someplace in the trees and you go to chase them and get them down in a basket and bring them back in the hive again, make another hive like, you know. And then you put supers up there and you have wire excluders, they are called excluders, wires in there that the queen can't go up there. See the bees go on top and make the honey and the queen can't lay no eggs in them because she can't get up there. That's cut off, she lays in the bottom, see, and that's how they produce their bees in the bottom, see. And they can go up and make their honey. And when time comes when they are full, leave them there for a few days, let the honey get ripe a bit, then they cover it up with wax. Then we put the excluders in

and they have a little wire in there, like a "V", and the bees go in there and they can't come back in again. Then the hives get empty. Like the supers, they call them supers, that's full of honey and they are empty. Then we'd bring them in and take them into that honey house there and we have a steam boiler and a knife -- it runs by steam, it's warm, like it's hot. And we take these cones and scrape them down just take the wax off it. Then after that we'd put them in the machine and have about eight cones in there and they extract the honey and it goes in a circle like that, you know. And all the honey flies out and it goes down into a tank in the bottom. And we have a pump and we have a 2,000 gallon tank that pumps it up there and we keep it there for about seven or eight days. It has to ripen otherwise if you put that honey in a can right away it will get sour. You have to take the moisture out first. And then we can it and we have a little scale there and we put the pails on there, fill them up. And then as soon as the scale balances we shut them off, and then put the lids on them and pack them in the cases. It stays liquid for a few months and then it hardens up, see. But you can... like the honey is hard now. You take it and you put it in hot water on a stove and that honey will just turn back the same way as the day you extract it, and it stays like that for another couple of months again. You have liquid honey all the time. And I still buy that honey today and sell it here, same place where I used to work.

Adeline: You still get it from the same place?

Jake: Same place, yeah. And those people from here all buy it off me because they know it's good honey. Sell it all over, to Dryden and all over the place, and all the stores buy it too. It's really interesting. It's a nice job, but you get stung once in a while, when you're out visiting the hives.

Especially on a colder day, like you go out there and try to visit the hives. They don't like to get out and they pounce on you. But we use smoke on them and it just deadens them, just gets them stunned a bit and then they don't touch you. We used salt and gunny sack and boil it in salt. We'd cut it in pieces and we have a little puffer -- put that in and light it and it makes smoke, you know. Just puff on it a little bit and then they are all quiet, just like angels. They don't touch you.

Adeline: You must have had quite a bit of bees there, eh?

Jake: One hundred and fifty hives. We used to load our honey by the carloads down there and ship it away. All we got them days we got 6 cents a pound.

Adeline: How much is it now a pound?

Jake: Now around about 60, 65 cents, that's what they get down there. Everything is expensive, you know, today.

Adeline: So one of these drawers are one hive?

Jake: You can put... Yeah, well sometimes they go as far as eight high, all full of honey. And that's the excluder right there. The screen that the bees go up there but not the queen. If you want more production you put another extra there and then the queen can lay on two boxes there, two hives.

Adeline: How can you tell if it's a queen bee?

Jake: Well, they're a golden color and they're longer than the bees, and they have no stripes. And the bees make cells... You have to go in there and visit those hives. That's why you go there for is to destroy all the cells, otherwise the queen will come and they fight and they take off, and you lose all your bees.

Adeline: I see this Roger's Fruit truck there. I guess you don't have no more Roger's Fruit, eh?

Jake: No. Used to deliver from Winnipeg mostly. They'd go by truck (inaudible). When I first started there I used to get all my stuff by carload. Carload of potatoes, carload of canned goods and pile up in that little store of mine there. But the town is too small to do that today.

Adeline: We used to even have a hotel here before, eh?

Jake: The hotel got burned, Cascade Hotel got burned.

Adeline: What year was that? That was quite a while ago too, eh?

Jake: 1940, '50s, I guess. It was about 15 years ago now, I guess, it burned. We got burned out too there in the 1940s there. It was a new house built and it got burned. That's

when my dad started chickens in the house there. I guess the brooder caught the curtain on fire and the house wasn't finished, and it got up between the ceiling. That's the time I was going to school, so I come home from school and there was no house. So we had to go to a neighbor's house and get some food to eat -- he had to keep us there. And then we had to live in a little garage there, pretty near froze in there to sleep on the floor. We had a tough time that time, no house.

Adeline: Was there some coal chutes in that water pump there a long time ago?

Jake: There was a water tank here. I used to run that myself too, help my dad out. Steam pumping down there and then they changed it over to diesel and then I couldn't run that thing. There was a big wheel on there and I couldn't get it going -- I wasn't heavy enough to turn it. Then he changed it around to electricity, automatic. And that's when my dad had to go down to work in Manitoba and other stations to pump water like, you know. We had lots of fun up here with all the steam engines coming here when I had the store here. They'd all stop here and take water and coal. And that's all gone down now, no more coal docks, no water tank, no pump house or nothing here now.

Adeline: How many years ago was that, Jake?

Jake: Oh, about ten, fifteen years ago, that's all, since the diesel started. We'd have two passenger trains a day and a local every day, both ways, trains at night. Now we only got one train, Canadian, one each way, that's all. There was no roads them days so we had to take the local. That's how the people got in and out, taking that train, that local in the morning.

Adeline: It used to run every day?

Jake: Every day. Sometimes it comes in, it's supposed to be nine o'clock in the morning and it's doing all the switching and the people would be sitting in the station waiting for this train, these women especially. Sitting there knitting and talking away. And then that Number One train used to come at two o'clock in the afternoon from Dryden. So sometimes this train here didn't get here till about twelve, near one o'clock, and then they'd get into Dryden, they'd get about half an hour shopping and try and get back again. Sometimes they don't get there at all -- they had to go back home again, because the local was too late. Maybe unloading ties some place along the line there, rails and stuff like that.

Adeline: And this is your first school vehicle I see in this, eh?

Jake: I had a station wagon then. I hauled eight kids in that from the reserve.

Adeline: How many?

Jake: Eight.

Adeline: How do you work that car? Was that a new car?

Jake: I think that's in the '60s, '64, '65, somewhere in there.

Adeline: It looks old though, eh, compared to what cars look like now? Well, is that about it, Jake?

Jake: That's all I can think about anyway.

Adeline: Well, I would like to thank you very much. And I will get these pictures sent back to you. I've got 23 pieces here so I'll make sure that you get them back. Okay, thank you.

(END OF SIDE B)

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