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MRS. AGNES RUSS #2
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HIGHLIGHTS:

- General reminiscences of her life.
Grace: Everything else here has been imported in. The deer,
and there's a few rabbits, and coons. What is the real name
for them?
Imbert: Raccoons.
Grace: Yeah, raccoons. There's lots of them here now.
Imbert: Well, I think that's about it.
Grace: Yes.
Imbert: I hope she's not getting too tired.
Man: Could you repeat that about the flood?
Agnes: She said that she could. It would take too long to
tell you everything she's heard about the flood. Regarding her
own family and how they've gone, some went to Alaska and some
went to the south end of the island. They still recognize the

family ties -- it isn't really family but it's her own tribe had scattered. Some went Alaska and some went to the south end of this island, and some stayed right in their own in Masset and she... (Indian) She said when she married this young chief he had a lot of slaves and there was eight slaves in his house too. (Indian) She said (Indian), that's the name of their potlatches. (Indian) Well, that's the name for it, when they give this big potlatch. (Indian) That's the name in Haida when they give away a lot of stuff. And she's the only living one that has taken part in one of those.

Imbert: The Haida potlatch.

Grace: Yes, one of that kind. I guess there's been some smaller ones since, but this one...

Imbert: But when she was married it was a great ceremony?

Grace: Yes. With her young husband. And that's when she had this fleet of eight canoes, guests from other towns that, while the receiving ceremonies were going on the slave had a rope to the canoe, each slave to each canoe.

Agnes: (Indian) Anything else you'd like to...?

Imbert: She was the, the ceremony would be in Masset in her father's house, would it be?

Grace: That would be in her young husband did this.

Imbert: Oh, the young husband. She would go to the husband's house?

Grace: Yes.

Imbert: Who was not here. Was it at Masset?

Grace: No, at Masset.

Agnes: (Indian) Steilta was his name. A young chief.

Imbert: And there would be much singing and dancing?

Grace: Yes.

Agnes: (Indian) She doesn't know exactly how long the guests stayed. (Indian) And they would build the lodge, you see, when they were doing this. And maybe raise a pole and

stuff like that. They would build a lodge and then raise a pole and give away all kinds of things. (Indian) She's going to sing you one of her grandfather's songs. You see each family, each tribe had their own songs and nobody else could sing them without their permission. (Indian) She forgets. (Agnes sings one of her grandfather's songs.) You want I dance? (laughs)

Imbert: She wants to dance too?

Grace: No, she can't.

Agnes: (Continues singing.) (Indian) A love song, I guess you call it, one of the lighter ones.

Imbert: Would the man be singing it to the woman or the woman to the man?

Grace: Yes, either way.

Imbert: What are the words about?

Agnes: (Indian) She said that this was sang when her grandfather was drowned hunting, you know, the first (name), with his son. The canoe came down into a submerged log and broke in two and everybody on it, of course, dropped into the sea. (Indian) Her uncle was saved but the grandfather was drowned and the other, the slaves that were on it, you know, had gone too. (Indian) She said those days there was no fishing. (Indian) No logging. (Indian) They just had a good time. They'd go around dancing and...

Imbert: What would they live on then?

Grace: Well, they put up food and trade food with other... They went to Alaska a lot from Masset, trading. They'd take what food they had over there and maybe exchange it for other foods that they haven't got.

Imbert: This song, just for a moment then, was really lament, wasn't it?

Grace: Yes, it sounded like a lament after her grandfather died, drowned.

Agnes: (Indian) She said her grandmother used to teach her not to say belittling things about people, not to tell falsehood, and it was her mother that brought her up -- her grandmother that brought her up, of course. And she used to talk to her a lot. (Indian) She thinks that is why she never offended anyone. She always tried to like people and get along with people, and then not to say any offensive thing about anyone. And she's always lived by that. She thinks that's why she has lived such a peaceful, long life.

Imbert: That's quite understandable.

Grace: Yes.

Imbert: Were there many... her own...? In her days, when she was young, did she remember that there were many old people too? That people lived a long time?

Grace: Oh yes. I think she has always spoke about old people. She always liked old people and used to feel sorry for some of them.

Agnes: (Indian) And she said that in her grandfather's house there was a lot of old women, relatives. They never did anything, there were slaves to take care of them and do things for them. They were so old they couldn't do much. So they lived long lives in those days by the sound of it.

Imbert: Anything more recently, anything about her second marriage and anything that she'd like to say? Any stories about that?

Agnes: (Indian) She said that that's my father's life that she's telling about. He went to Victoria as a little lad and she, somebody got a hold of him. He got going to Sunday school, day school and things down there. Someone took an interest in him. (Indian) And that's how he learned to read and write, and learned other things as a child.

Imbert: And did she ever meet Governor Douglas?

Agnes: (Indian) I guess my father would know him. Of course he was down there in those days when Sir Douglas was alive.

Imbert: She didn't meet him then?

Grace: No, no she's never been away from the island a lot. She's been to Vancouver once and that was after all her children were born. She went down to visit a daughter that was living down there.

Imbert: What about Reverend Crosbie? Could she describe him as she remembers him?

Agnes: (Indian) She went there to live... (Indian) She was telling about the banns were called three Sundays before they could marry. That is, instead of getting license like they do today, the banns were called in the church. (Indian) And Mr. Duncan and Mr. Crosbie approved of the match -- my father and her getting married. They knew that they would be useful in a lot of ways to the church and things.

Imbert: Does she remember much about (inaudible)?

Agnes: (Indian) It was the one that baptized her into the Anglican churches. (Indian) Her and her grandfather -- that is over in Masset. (Indian) And they approved of the marriage and Mr. Crosbie married them. She has the Bible if you care to see it, would you?

Imbert: Yes. Could I ask what sort of a man was Mr. Crosbie? How does she remember him and his wife?

Agnes: (Indian) She always talking by praising him. Him and his wife was awfully good to her. (Indian) She said it was Mr. Crosbie that got them to come back here to their own people, and my father to interpret for the missionary that came here. And she thinks that that is why the people here are better off than in Masset, and because it is through the Methodist church coming here that they have the church, I mean the church and the hospital and other...

Imbert: Did the Methodist church do much to get the village organized economically? That's to say, you know, the way Duncan did it, to some extent. He got the village sort of to be dependent on itself. And that was a sense of progress too.

Grace: Yeah.

Imbert: Is there something of that in...?

Grace: Yes, and Mr. Freeman, as I remember in my day, Freeman organized a company, a fishing company. He and Mr. Oliver, Captain Oliver, who was married to one of the native women. They organized a company for the dogfishing and they run that for quite a few years. They had a store and they handled their own fishing.

Imbert: Was that the beginning of the dogfishing?

Grace: No, that was later on. Sort of a branch of this one up here.

Imbert: Oh yeah. Does she remember who the first person was that started that here?

Agnes: (Indian) Oh, his name is Mark MacGregor, was here before the Tennats.

Imbert: He started this business?

Grace: Yeah, he started the dogfishing plant in Skidegate.

Imbert: Yeah. Well then, this dogfishing later on that was organized here, that was a offshoot of this?

Grace: Yes, but that was their own that did it.

Agnes: (Indian) They started on their own. They had a store that went on for some years and then when Mr. Crosbie... (Indian) When Mr. Freeman left here and Mr. Oliver moved away -- got too old, I guess -- the company went haywire.

Imbert: Does she remember Bishop Ridley at all?

Agnes: (Indian) He's the one that baptized her.

Imbert: She remembers him...

Agnes: (Indian) When they baptized her Duncan was there, and Bishop Ridley. I think there was a split between... (Indian) ...between he and Duncan. (Indian) And when Duncan took some of the people and moved to Alaska.

Imbert: But she was baptized by Bishop Ridley? But Duncan was there at the time?

Grace: Yes, yes.

Imbert: Does she remember what Duncan looked like?

Agnes: (Indian) She says he was a short man and he was getting quite old. (Indian) He used to go around and preach on the streets in England when he sent up here. (Indian) They were still killing one another when Duncan came there; he heard about it. He used to go around on the streets preaching, and he had a little accordion, I guess. He used to play that around the streets. And when he came out here he started this up in Metlakatla. He heard about how they were still killing one another and need some guidance and he came out to do that.

Imbert: Does she remember if it's at all the incident that Duncan was supposed to have...?

Agnes: (Indian) She wants you to see that Bible that Crosbies gave them as a wedding present. (Indian)

Imbert: Does she remember the incident in which Mr. Duncan was supposed to have cursed Metlakatla when he left?

Agnes: (Indian) She doesn't know. (Indian) When they were... (Indian) She says that when he first started to teach school in Port Simpson people were... fired at him, took shots at him. And he had one of the chief's daughter -- secretary, I guess, writing things for him -- and they got her in the hand, but they never touched Duncan. (Indian) That's when he moved to Metlakatla from Port Simpson. He started a big town then, he had a saw mill. (Indian) Started the English church there, the Anglican church there, and sort of moved away from Port Simpson.

Imbert: Is there any other incident now that she'd like to talk about? It's so difficult for me to know, you know, what she can talk about best, you know. I hope she's not getting too tired.

Agnes: (Indian) She said there's a lot of things she could tell you but it would take too long. (Indian) She said she could talk to you all night long and then she wouldn't be through.

Imbert: Well, I'd like to listen all night long. (laughs)

Agnes: (Indian) She said she can't talk too long either, she gets tired. She has a bad stomach.

Imbert: Yes. Would she like to rest now?

Agnes: (Indian) She would like to know if you would like a cup of tea. (Indian) She says she would like something to eat now and she wants to know if you'd like to join her.

Imbert: That's very nice. (Break in tape) ...detail in the beginning and then anything you wanted to ask her as we go along, or we could, you probably, you'll probably be able to remember it yourself. Could you tell us the story then, from the beginning, as she remembers?

Grace: When Judge O'Reilly and his party come to survey out the reserves on the Queen Charlotte Islands? Is what you're wanting?

Imbert: That's the story, yes.

Agnes: Yes, my father joined them. They got my father to come with them as an interpreter. There was Judge O'Reilly, and there was a Chinaman cook, and she says that there were five or six surveyors that did the surveying of the reserves. And here they camped on this little first beach here, and so my father had to talk with the Judge and the... (Indian) And asked him to make this reserve a little larger, if he could, which he did. Well from then on... (telephone rings)

Imbert: What was the sort of feeling at the time, when this happened, when they came over?

Grace: They gave him quite a welcome when he came here. So... Of course they didn't understand all the ins and outs of everything. They gave him quite a welcome. They fired up cannons... all the flags they own in the village to welcome him, and he was very pleased with that. So he told my dad that

he would make this reserve larger. And they've sold the timber off of this reserve which helped them to lay, improve their village, you know. The water line and other things they have done, the hall, the town hall is built from the revenue from the...

Imbert: The reserve goes way back there?

Grace: Yes, they gave him quite a welcome when he came here. The chiefs put on their best clothes and they gave him quite a welcome, and he was very pleased with that. And he had a Chinese cook, did I tell you that part?

Imbert: You said as far as that.

Grace: Yes.

Imbert: He came over, and how did he come over?

Grace: He came from Masset in canoes. He did Masset first

and then came down here and on down south.

Imbert: Did all the other reserves?

Grace: Yes, little...

Imbert: Other villages. Well then, was it because this was made such a big reserve that it became a little more prosperous than the others?

Grace: Yes. In one way, yes. They sold the timber off the reserve and realized quite a bit of money from that.

Imbert: Would that be why the other reserves eventually amalgamated here?

Grace: It may have been, I couldn't tell you that, or why that. Only they came, they came scarce, you know, the people died off and went away and there wasn't enough keep up villages, I suppose, and they decided all to come here. Clew people came here first -- I remember that -- and then Maude Island people came here, Gold Harbor village came here. Of course they asked permission to come first and they were invited by the chiefs, that it was all right to come. Brought their houses and everything.

Imbert: Let me see now. Is there any event, other event like this sort of historical thing where some change happened or something like that that you remember, or your mother remembers about? Any of these things that...

Grace: No. Only very recent ones during the War, because the boys from the village, all that were eligible, joined up and was called up and some went overseas. One made a name for himself, like he was eligible for a medal in London, but he never appeared at Buckingham Palace to receive it. Well, he's dead now, poor fellow. He died after he come back here, drowned.

Imbert: Did he do that deliberately?

Grace: The drowning?

Imbert: No, I mean...

Grace: Oh yes, I guess so. I don't know what happened but he never turned up to receive it. He had a gun, machine gun, what do you call the machine guns?

Imbert: The sten guns?

Grace: Yes. Helped to take a town or something. He was running up and down the street with this thing under his arm.

Imbert: Did the First World War make any difference here?

Grace: Yes.

Imbert: Was there much of a depression around that time?

Grace: Yes, the depression was very big. Nobody went hungry but there was no jobs, no work of any kind here.

Imbert: There was always food on the...

Grace: There was always food, yes. And the deer came then and that helped everybody over the depression.

Imbert: When you say they came, did they sort of...

Grace: See, they were brought here.

Imbert: Oh, the deer were brought here?

Grace: You weren't allowed to shoot them for a good many years until they got so plentiful that they opened season on them.

Imbert: That was just at this time, around the First World War?

Grace: Yes, yes.

Imbert: Wasn't there, what stories are there of Captain Cook coming down here? Does your mother remember any of those?

Grace: No, she wouldn't know.

(END OF SIDE A)

(SIDE B)

Imbert: He was supposed to have put pigs on the island or something like that.

Grace: Oh? Never heard of it.

Imbert: There aren't any wild pigs, are there?

Grace: No. There's caribou somewhere up in the interior that was seen, but we have never seen. And there's been some moose been put on the island and there's still closed season on them except just for a week, I think, a year.

Imbert: There'd be lots of bears on the island?

Grace: Yeah, the bears are natives, of course.

Imbert: And cougars too?

Grace: No cougars. There's just bear, marten, and land otter. Everything else here has been imported in. The deer,

and there's a few rabbits, and coons. What is the real name for them?

Imbert: Raccoons.

Grace: Yeah, raccoons. There's lots of them here now.

Imbert: Well, I think that's about it.

Grace: Yes.

(END OF SIDE B)

(END OF TAPE)

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