

Norma and Joe Welsh, Sherry Farrell-Racette
Video 2

Start 6:05:00 Sherry Farrell-Racette: When did your family move to the Métis Farm?

Norma Welsh: Oh boy, you're asking me something I can't remember. I don't remember the year, but I remember we were there for eight years and we moved off there from, in 1948. And I was, actually, I was only four when we moved, but at the same time I can remember us going up the hill to the Métis Farm and our cows were tied to the back of the wagon. And we're all sitting around and all our, what little stuff we had on the wagon and the team of horses. And I guess I don't remember much after that, you know, until I was a bit older and my dad worked, all the men worked at the barn where they, they, we had cows and had pigs and chickens. And so we always had meat and chicken, and we always had, there was also farming done, and because I can remember making stooks.

Sherry Farrell-Racette: Oh, right.

Norma Welsh: Yeah, we used to have to do that by hand. But the houses, I can't remember how many houses there were up there, but I remember this big fabulous house, and I thought I'd never see anything like it in my life. It was a mansion, and it had four bedrooms upstairs, and it had a kitchen and a separate living room downstairs. And, of course, old wooden stove and that kind of stuff. Cupboards—that was unheard of, and it was just wonderful. A big yard and, I think, all the houses had sand, sand boxes in their yards.

Sherry Farrell-Racette: Oh, really?

Norma Welsh: Cause, we remember playing with the sand. And all the men worked at the farm and the women just visited and gossiped, and occasionally we would have a, I think it was once a month, they had a hall

where we could have a party, and about once a month they'd have a square dance. My mom and a lot of the women around would bake and make soup, and we'd have a big feast up there. But it would just involve the people who already lived there. There was Blondeaus, there was Desjarlais, there was Morins, there was Kellys, and I think there was about three families of Blondeaus up there.

Sherry Farrell-Racette: Yeah.

Norma Welsh: And who else? Did I say Desjarlais?

Sherry Farrell-Racette: Uh huh.

Norma Welsh: There was two families of Desjarlais, too. Actually, the one family had about, the lady there had kids from a Blondeau, and then her husband passed away and she married a Desjarlais, so that's Mary Louise.

Joe Welsh: Oh, yes. Ok.

Norma Welsh: Yeah, who else was up there? Sarah Blondeau.

Joe Welsh: Sarah Louis.

Norma Welsh: Sarah Louis and John Morin and his wife were the next ones. Mary Louise was the one, next one. Auntie Clara was there. I think they built a couple houses after we left there, but Maurice Blondeau, **(Unknown Name)**'s dad, lived up by the barn where all this all the activity was. They lived up in the, what was called the main house. And we had a baseball diamond, and what else?

Yeah. Well, like, I say, once a month, I believe it was, they would have a party—square dancing and jigging and every, all families would take part,

but Mom and her and, and the women made the meals, baked the cakes and the bannock and all that kind of stuff.

We would, some of us, my cousin and I were two of the people that had to milk cows every morning. I started that when I was eight years old. We'd go up and milk the cows and we'd gather the eggs and, well, we weren't the only ones milking. There'd be several children, our age group, anywhere from eight to fifteen, whoever could get there in the morning to milk the cows. That before we went to school, we had to do all that. Then we'd gather the eggs and we would be required to go and help clean the barns, you know, that kind of thing. Horse barn, and the cattle, and there would be, once a year, butchering, couple of cows and pigs. It would be enough to feed all the families that were up there at the time, and all the meat would be cured because certainly nobody had fridges, you know.

Sherry Farrell-Racette: Oh, right.

Norma Welsh: We had root cellars, though. And every summer we would get these big blocks of ice. Actually, my dad worked on the, on the lake, making these big blocks of ice and delivering them to families so that they can put them in the root cellars, and then they were covered with, what is it they were ...

Joe Welsh: Sawdust.

Norma Welsh: ...covered? Sawdust, yeah. The ice was covered with sawdust and, and they would last for the summer usually.

Sherry Farrell-Racette: Really? How big a chunk would it have been?

Norma Welsh: Oh, big, huge chunk.

Joe Welsh: They uh, well the, that's they, they used to have ice haulers into the, into the '60s in, well, I know in, in PA they used to have ice wagons, but did they have them in Le Bret too?

6:11:25 Norma Welsh: Yeah, and they would deliver the ice up the farm once a year, and they would have baseball games. You know, those kinds of outdoor activities and all the kids would, excuse me, in the community would get together, and we do have other games as well. Like, we'd play tag and red rover red rover and all those kinds of games. We used to have one called **(French word)** de marmot.

Sherry Farrell-Racette: Tell us about that.

Norma Welsh: Run around in a circle, and, and you'd stop behind somebody, but that person isn't supposed to know you stopped behind them, and they'd have to have their eyes closed, and, and they had to guess where you stopped, and it was such a fun game. Well, we made up most of our own games anyway.

Joe Welsh: What was that marmot, is that a weasel or a ...

Norma Welsh: A marmot is some kind of animal.

Joe Welsh: A mink or a weasel or something, yeah.

Norma Welsh: Yeah. But what we call them, **[French word]** de marmot, was an old cast iron pot, soup pot.

Joe Welsh: Oh, Yeah.

Norma Welsh: So I don't know where the name of that game came from, but we would play that and drop the stick. And in wintertime we would make

angels in the snow and go sliding, like we'd come off the Métis Farm and of course there was all kinds of hills there, so we would have big sliding parties and stuff, and it was, I don't know, just a wonderful time of my life, that I thought, anyway. And just visiting, you know, women getting together and visiting. They'd make a lot of embroidering of tea towels and pillow slips and table cloths and that kind of thing. And, of course, the kids, once a year it was, wasn't it, they'd have a little circus. They'd have rides and a merry-go-round of some sort, or, you know, different, like, a fair...

Sherry Farrell-Racette: Uh huh.

Norma Welsh: ...you know, and I actually, I don't know where that came from, like, if it was, had to be have been paid by the government, I think. But so we, we used to have that once a year and, of course, there was our picking berries every year, but we did that all our lives, so that wasn't ...

Sherry Farrell-Racette: Nothing new.

Joe Welsh: ... anything new, but there would be oodles of people going out picking berries. And we had two or three different managers up there. I remember Falloons for one that was managing the whole area, and I guess I, I was twelve, I think, when we moved off there.

6:14:34 Sherry Farrell-Racette: So you would have spent the better part of your childhood there?

Norma Welsh: Yeah, but it was a wonderful, wonderful up there 'cause we'd never lived in, in that kind of a house. All we lived in were shacks and, and log cabins and that kind of thing, and, like, a lot of our relatives were there, too. Some of us were related to everybody there, you know. And uh, actually, my dad became ill and he, we had to leave in 1948 because he was no longer productive.

Sherry Farrell-Racette: Oh, so he couldn't work?

Norma Welsh: Yeah, he developed emphysema, and I believe a lot of it was...

Joe Welsh: Working in the barns.

Norma Welsh: ...working with the pigs 'cause he's the one that, that looked after the pigs, and he'd castrate them and butcher them, and you name it.

Joe Welsh: Yeah, he was also small, so they used him if the, the threshing machine got bunged up, he'd be the one that'd have to go in the straw walkers to unbung it. Or in those days, too, they, the grain leaves, you had to mostly shovelling and ...

Sherry Farrell-Racette: And so the dust ...

Joe Welsh: ... grain dust and all that kind of stuff and ...

Sherry Farrell Racette: So they wouldn't have had any kind of ...

Joe Welsh: No pension plan, no ...

Joe Welsh: Yeah, you know, so if someone became disabled when they were living there then they had to leave.

Norma Welsh: Yeah and he was relatively young at that time. You had to do, you know, but and not only that, like, we took our horses and our cows with us. We had our own when we moved up there, and when we moved off we weren't allowed to take them.

Sherry Farrell-Racette: Really?

Norma Welsh: So I, I don't know what happened there, like, I imagine, I don't know if the cows would have been too old by then, anyway, but 'cause ...

Sherry Farrell-Racette: But the equivalent when you contribute.

6:16:30 Norma Welsh: Yeah, yeah, but we left there with nothing, just our furniture and the clothes we had. But we had a lot of fun there with all kinds of relatives and friends. And there was one occasion, I think Ernie, my brother Ernie, was out in the field making stooks, or he was helping Dad do something, and he would have to take his lunch. I guess it was past Charbonneau's out that way where, where he was working on some farm. But, anyway, he used to take his lunch, and Billie would make the lunches for him. And one day he came home and he said, "Oh, what an awful lunch," he said. "My sandwiches tasted like wax paper, you know." So, low and behold, the next day he went to work and he had wax paper sandwiches for lunch.

End 6:17.27.21