

Tape Transcript

Title: Louis Nolin

Media: DAT

Interviewer: John Leclair

Text

John: When Moses lived up north Louis, up at that tracking camp there by Height of Land, where did his wife come from?

Louis: His wife? From Maidstone. She was a school teacher.

John: She was a good cook too?

Louis: Yeah, oh yeah. Nice woman. (inaudible) in Saskatoon he died. He died about three years ago, three or four years ago. Moses has always been my idol. I loved Moses. Could he ever play that fiddle. He made it so easy. He used to play with him down at the tavern when I was looking after the school at Meadow Lake. (inaudible) he would stay two or three days with me.

John: Yeah, we used to spend a lot of time at Moses' cabin up there. Where was your grandfather from and your grandmother?

Louis: My grandfather is from on the other side of Quebec. (inaudible) My grandfather was John. He said, if there was little boys he wanted to give them my name. But (inaudible) Delorme, he come from Quebec.

John: Yeah, but they must have stopped at the Red River at one time too?

Louis: Yeah, Grandpa Delorme, yeah.

John: What about Nolin?

Louis: That was my uncle, (inaudible) Nolin.

John: What was your dad's name?

Louis: August Nolin.

John: And your mother?

Louis: My mother Eleanor (inaudible) Delorme.

John: You're related to Gary Delorme then?

Louis: Yeah.

John: Yeah, so is my mother.

Louis: Is that right?

John: How were you related to Eli Delorme?

Louis: We were cousins. Eli, that was (inaudible) Delorme's boy.

John: He used to fish on Turtle Lake.

Louis: Yeah. (inaudible) He was a nice guy and a good singer too.

John: And where were you born? In Cochin?

Louis: In Cochin, yeah.

John: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

Louis: I got, I used to have nine brothers and five sisters.

John: That's a lot, a big family. Did they have their own home and stuff? Your dad, did they have their own home or did they rent a place?

Louis: No, he had his own place north of Jackfish.

John: And they had their own farm?

Louis: Yeah, we got a section and a half in there.

John: Does any of your family live on the land now?

Louis: No, he sold all that. Dad, he sold his place. He bought that half section down the hill by Jackfish in the swamp there. Have you been that a way?

John: Yeah, I think I know.

Louis: It's swamp in there (inaudible). Dad bought the land in there too and then (inaudible) north and we used to keep the old (inaudible). We had our own.

John: So, there was no power, no nothing and no running water?

Louis: No, no. No power, nothing. We'd burn wood.

John: And you made your own furniture and stuff?

Louis: Yeah, we had to load his hay and everything, whole bales. And work on the land with horses.

John: That's how you made your living?

Louis: Yeah, farming and dad used to keep a bunch of pigs you know and we had a few head of cattle but the horses were a bit of money. That's why they would have to be chained. And we had more cattle then. But the cattle started getting up, it was only just ten dollars. Eighteen dad got. You'd leave one heifer out there somewhere and in Jocelyn (inaudible) well, John, he had his store there. Anyhow, dad sold to him the cow for eighteen dollars for that heifer.

John: Your family hunted a little bit?

Louis: Oh yeah, dad that's what he used to do, hunting.

John: And trapping a little bit?

Louis: Hunting coyotes with the hounds. He killed 150 coyote that winter with that dog. That (inaudible) had a set of dogs, and (inaudible) he had a good set of dogs too. He had a female coyote just come along there, when you go out to snake like this there, the son of a gun is (inaudible) and look, he was far. Old (inaudible) untie his dog and he quit. (inaudible) and they quit. They come back the dog, and the coyote two days it was back again, and he phoned and he says (inaudible) well, the coyote attacked his dog. He says, my dog don't work. They stopped. (inaudible) old man, all dirty and he put his dog after, he can't stay close. He tried to go out with the team and go slow that way and when he gets close (inaudible) like that they were over the next hill. Son of a gun. When he saw that he said, "I'll try my dog." "That old boy was there," he said. Well you just gonna let him go till you never go closer so he (inaudible) with me and he let his go his dog. Oh, they were a long ways away. They stopped, the dogs stopped. They come back and when I phoned that guy I'll go (inaudible) we have no phone, you know (inaudible).

John: Did you go to school?

Louis: I went to school in Marlin. In Jackfish Lake we went to school in Marlin.

John: You weren't too far from there then?

Louis: It's about four and a half miles. You had to walk back and forth. It took me all day then. Anyhow, then John's dad said well, we'll try it on them (inaudible) and the other big white one, he's a killer that one. They run after that coyote. They went (inaudible) down there, back, (inaudible). They went around like that and they run after that coyote and he pass his dad, and he was going, he was young, and by that time he was good - two. And it was all like that and when they brought it back (inaudible). They caught the coyote but they can't kill him. It was just like that. They said (inaudible) and there's old Jack, he comes across and he come (inaudible) and he come over top of the bridge. (inaudible)

John: Getting back to school here, you said your travel was four and a half miles to school?

Louis: Yeah, we went to school in Marlin. Then after that when they sold the place, dad, then we moved down the hill, still north of Jackfish. Then we went to Jackfish school. Me, I just went one year then dad, he was on the relief that time, ten dollars a month and I went to work. I worked for Joe (inaudible) I worked that job when I was 15 years old. I was 16 in the spring.

John: So, you were quite old when you went to school then?

Louis: Yeah, well I went to school, I was seven or eight years old. I went to Marlin. We moved there and I should have went one more year and I could read today.

John: Oh, you can't read?

Louis: (inaudible) Everything I know are my initials. I could learn fast if somebody showed me.

John: What did you guys do for dances and stuff?

Louis: Well, a long time ago we went north of Jackfish like that just to make dances at New Year's, every New Year's. And we danced, step danced, and me I could step dance. My brother Charlie would step dance and me I would step dance in the barn. I was learning. I just looked, that step (jigging). It took me about a month before I learned that (inaudible) one way, one side you know. (inaudible)

John: You had dances for weddings?

Louis: (inaudible) and after that we step danced and then after that one I did little (inaudible) and I started (inaudible) and go to dances and then they had the step dances there. I did that when I was six years old when I started to step dance.

John: Did you ever compete with anybody?

Louis: Well, (inaudible) used to bring it every dance they can step. But they didn't bring me and I was step dancing with a pair of moccasins. Couldn't afford a pair of shoes and they bought some new shoes for Charlie you know. When they saw me at the step dance they bought me a little pair of shoes too, then I had to step dance after that. My dad he said I can't (inaudible). I was shy you know.

John: Did you ever go in where there was competitions for money or buckles?

Louis: Oh yeah. Well, I went to (inaudible).

John: Did you win there?

Louis: Yeah, in Meadow Lake and then I went to Bear Creek, five times there I step danced and then I go to Green Lake and then after that, years ago, I used to step dance and I went once in Battleford. I would step dance there.

John: Do you remember the Caplettes (inaudible)?

Louis: Yeah, the Caplettes won (inaudible).

John: Yeah, they were some good jiggers too.

Louis: Yeah, you mean (inaudible). We used to call (inaudible) and then he got killed with the car. He was drunk. He drink at Battleford and Wallace (inaudible) didn't want to let him go. He said, "No, you don't have to go." He said, "My family (inaudible). He walked on the highway and he was going like this and the car went right over a dead end and it hit him. He (inaudible) right back and that woman lost it for a month (inaudible).

John: Which Caplette (inaudible)? Is living in Cochin yet?

Louis: Oh, that's Paul.

John: Yeah, he's supposed to be a pretty good jigger.

Louis: No, not too good. (inaudible) got killed and that's when he was a good step dancer.

John: What about Bobby?

Louis: Bobby, he's not too good either. No, that was the best there, Raymond.

John: What did your mom and dad talk at home, in French or Michif?

Louis: French. My dad can't talk English. So, French, just French. The last few years he learnt from us (inaudible).

John: And you had to go to the church every Sunday?

Louis: Oh yeah, we never miss. Oh yeah, we had to get up in the morning and in them years you had to start one before you could go to communion. Now, they eat and they go in there and they sing all different and women stay with men and they go there and communion sin (inaudible). The goddamn years when they're there

(inaudible) with a short dress was despised and Father (inaudible) and the others and that gut in the box, he watched people. (inaudible) was a good girl (inaudible) and she come up with a short dress. The priest, "Take that girl out! You don't respect the God, take them out!" (inaudible). We were scared every time we go to confession. The priest used to come at home and have dinner and all that. You know, they had to go on horseback to tell the priest. The priest had a Model T. "Mom is going to cook some turkey, we want you to come up for supper." They talk just like they were friends but us big boys, we just stayed outside because we were scared to come back in.

John: Talk about that Moses Decharme a little bit.

Louis: That was a nice man.

John: You danced to great music lots?

Louis: Yeah, well, my dad there he used to come and sit down and serve that place (inaudible). He used to like (inaudible). Old Albert got back home with a big tent. He come stay two, three days. (inaudible).

John: Moses' family all played too?

Louis: Oh yeah.

John: One girl was blind?

Louis: Yeah. Well, that one my nephew got married to one of his daughter's you know.

John: Moses' daughter?

Louis: Yeah. Angus Lavallie lives in Saskatoon.

John: There's two girls that live in Saskatoon.

Louis: Yeah.

John: The other one is the one that gave the tape. She made the tape for me.

Louis: Yeah, that's her. That Angus Lavallie, she's the one that played with the fiddle. That's the one that used to play with his dad.

John: One was blind too. She sings now in a choir.

Louis: She's still alive?

John: Yeah, she's still alive.

Louis: We went to the funeral when they died. We'd go to Saskatoon.

John: How long ago did Moses die?

Louis: Oh, close to 15, 16 years.

John: Yeah, that sounds about right. We guessed about 15. He's got a nice monument in (inaudible). Louis, what's your full name?

Louis: Nolin.

John: When were you born?

Louis: I was born in 1919.

John: So that makes you what now?

Louis: I'm 81. I'm gonna be 82.

John: You're in really good shape for your age.

Louis: Yeah. I pick a lot of bottles. That's why my legs work.

John: Anyway, talk about the war?

Louis: Well, I've never been overseas. I was here in Regina. I learned there all my army, then they draft me cause I have to be over 155 pounds before they sent you overseas and me, I was too light. I was small. I was only a fifteen and a half shirt. 30 pants. I was small. Now, I'm 36 and a 17 shirt.

John: Why would that be I wonder?

Louis: (inaudible) That's where I turned there to come home. The war was finished so I come home.

John: You were lucky.

Louis: Well, I was lucky one way and in one way I wish I could go across. Then I could draw pension. If you went that place overseas then you're okay. See, you

was going to the war and you just got a little wee cheque. Like (inaudible) brother, he went overseas and he gets pretty near a thousand dollars a month. I don't have a big cheque, I don't.

John: You look like you're well anyway.

Louis: We had a lot of fun anyhow in the army. A lot of girlfriends. One time there was five us on the street, we had to take a leave pass, so we had to go to town and there were five Canadian girls ahead of us. And they said, "The way we are that's what we have to take." I said, "Okay." They all laughed. I don't care the report that they gave. Yeah, the report that they gave you, you could go to jail you know and I have the report today. Then we were under the bridge there worried about our jobs and all the girls want is our tails. "They were damn better than the white ones," I said. They laughed. Anyhow, we come back and then we had to go to (inaudible) to report and we took late pass. And there was a guard there, you don't (inaudible) you have to report. One time we sneaked. We didn't have no pass. It was six of us and we went under the fence. We made a hole, we sneaked. When we come back, they called for (inaudible) bed and they didn't have my name. I didn't say nothing. I was not there and all them guys too. There was a guard that was watching. He saw that move and he stand there and we didn't say anything, it was dark. We didn't get in our bed, we went in jail for three days. Three days in jail and then the next day, holy smokes, I said, "No more of that." They trained you with 75 pounds on you and have to go back and forth and back and forth.

John: Getting back to the Red River jig, how many steps could you have done when you were young?

Louis: There was 62.

John: That's the most I ever heard.

Louis: Yeah, 62 steps. My brother Charlie had two steps more than me. I can't do that one there. I don't do it right, I don't do it. That one too there, that step in there, is like that (jigging). That one too he knows and I don't do it right. But the rest I can do.

John: When you're dancing the Red River jig, you can't be stepping too high right?

Louis: Well, Charlie was a smooth dancer and there was (inaudible) because I was light on my feet. He was smooth. One step Charlie there, you could put a (inaudible) in his water and it would stay there. It would not spill. And Moses Decharme said, "I soon see you step dancing, Charlie."

John: Would you be able to do that step that your brother done? That one with the (inaudible)

Louis: No. That's the one they do there. Your foot like that (jigging). (inaudible) I can't do it. We always learnt lots from my brother. We learnt from my grandfather and we learnt from, they come here dancing, (inaudible) Russel Gianne, his dad he danced here. You know, on the street. He used to be a good step dancer.

John: And now he's gone?

Louis: That's him. He show us that (jigging). That's the one he showed us.

John: We'll start with the first one (inaudible).

Louis: I was only about five years old when I started to make steps but when I started to step dance in the house I was only six. I was shy, you know. (inaudible) went to them and he said, "Louis could step." (inaudible), my godfather, you know. So, (inaudible) was dead (inaudible). Four years younger than me, you know. He was young and he was (inaudible) and I would see him (inaudible) dancing in the barn. We danced lots of places, boy every school, pretty near every weekend. I stepped dance at (inaudible). One time we was with my brother Charlie. We were looking for jobs and George Mannix (inaudible) they knew Charlie. (inaudible) and they had a band, they were young and then they knew only Charlie, well they didn't know me and Charlie said, "Oh, it's a dance." So, we stopped and George Mannix

was there and (inaudible) and Charlie would go down and hear a big bang, bang. He was drinking wine. I said to Charlie, "Here, hold my horse I'll go and (inaudible) behind you." (inaudible) "What the hell you dining anyways you? Oh, that's you boy." He was (inaudible) that son of a gun couldn't drink and then he took off. There was somebody outside, they talked. (inaudible) Then Charlie said, "We're Nolin, Charlie Nolin." Oh all right, they opened the door right away and they said, "By golly Charlie." They gave him the violin right away to play waltz. He was a good fiddle player, Charlie. And then we started then and then Charlie he said, "You guys, you've never seen a step dancer?" "No (inaudible). He said all right then Charlie could play the real jig and he tuned the violin. "So, why have you tuned that anyway?" I said to him. "Well," he said, "They never (inaudible) and you're a good step dancer anyway. Well, holy Christ they was all surprised, clapping their hands and so darn happy. Well, I was young and I make about maybe 10, 15 steps like nothing. But holy smoke, they said they never seen a guy like that and they were talking to each other.

John: So, you had lots of fiddle players play for you?

Louis: Yeah, well now at home was my brother John played violin and brother Eli and brother Charlie. And, Joe he played the fiddle?

John: And Moses used to play?

Louis: Yeah.

John: Who played the jig the best, everybody that you ever danced to?

Louis: Grandfather Delorme. He showed Charlie and he told Moses if you miss a little piece, and then Moses he'd catch on right away. He was just as good as Charlie. Then (inaudible) Trottier, he learnt from Charlie there too. I step danced (inaudible). It was good. Grandfather was really good.

John: Well, which one of your brothers played the accordion?

Louis: No, my sister, Rosie.

John: I thought one of your brothers played too?

Louis: No. Me, I used to play basic guitar. I was young but then I never played since. (inaudible) wanted me to buy a guitar you know but I don't know. I'm too old now. (inaudible) singing to a nice song like the guitar.

John: Do you want to put a tape on, the Red River jig tape? Do you want to do a few steps?

Louis: Yeah.

Music playing and Louis jigging.

End of interview.