

CONSUL MUSEUM INCORPORATED
Oral History Collection – Section 3
Collected by Consul Museum Inc. – Oral History Project
Mary Hanson November 2013

Catalogue No. 3.4

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Conducted at the ranch home of Mary and Sid Hanson near Maple Creek,
Saskatchewan

MH: Mary Hanson – Interviewee

AB: Ann Behrman – Interviewer

JP: Joan Parsonage – Camera

MH: My name is fairly long and convoluted. It's Mary Natalie Gilchrist Curry Hanson. There's a Mary Ann in there, too, because when I was christened I was at the ranch and I was eleven and I didn't like Natalie so I said it was Mary Ann, so I have got lots of names.

My parents were Rube and Mildred Gilchrist. They have a long history I don't have to go back into—everybody knows.

I was born in Shaunavon. My mom and dad and all the Gilchrist brothers were living at the Whitemud. It was 1927 and it was a tough winter so Mom stayed with Auntie Merle in Robsart, I don't know for how long before I was born, and then I went in utero to Shaunavon on the train. I was born in Mrs. Mackenzie's house. She was a nurse practitioner (or what do you call them in those days). I was there for however long until I could get back to Ravenscrag and stayed with Grandma and Grandpa Bacon for however long it took to get back to the ranch. I don't know; I was probably six weeks or a month old or something. We were there until I was nine months old and then we moved to Medicine Hat. We were there when Bill was born in September in 1928, my only brother, only other child. My folks lost 2 other babies with the RH deal. It was 1930 so I would have been three and something and Bill was two and we moved to the Q [Ranch]. We were there for 15 years.

It was a great place to grow up. Many many adventures, not all good ones, but interesting. Then Gilchrist Brothers sold the whole thing. I moved with them in the fall to Calgary. I met Don Curry through Irene Fleming because she was working in a store up there. This guy said he wanted to meet this new girl in town. I was looking for an out because to me when we sold the Q it was just the end of the world. No, I didn't want to leave there. But it [Calgary] wasn't a good place for Bill either, so I got married. My mother wouldn't sign the papers because I wasn't nineteen so at that point you had to have your parents, one or the other, sign, but Dad did because he thought this guy was—well, what do you do with girls when they don't turn into boys at sixteen? So that's what I did, and we spent the winter in Ottawa and that was interesting. Lots of interesting travel. Spent the next ten

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years travelling from Ottawa back to Alberta, back to Wyoming, then California, and back to Wyoming, and to Holland, and to Utah, and had four kids. Two boys and two girls.

Utah, that was the end of the road. I went to school for four years. The kids and I were on our own then. We came up to the Whitemud because the folks had moved back to Whitemud by 1951. We'd come up with ponies and dogs and the whole schmeer every summer and when we went down the hill to the ranch, the kids would all be singing, "She'll be coming round the mountain when she comes." It was 900 miles and you spent a lot of time on the road. We left at three o'clock in the morning and got to Great Falls and I'd say, "Maybe we should stay all night."

"No, no, we have to get to the ranch. We could get to the line. We won't fight, we won't this, we won't that. Everything's fine".

So we got to the ranch every summer for a couple of months. I got through school. I'd like to have taken Agriculture, but it was University of Utah so there wasn't much there. There was Economics and Accounting and I'd learned that at my dad's knee at the Q, kept the books and stuff out there from the time I was a kid. So I got into that and then into teaching because it went with kids and it was a good life. Got back here [Maple Creek] in 1960 and ever since have been in Maple Creek country.

Got married again in 1966 [to Sid Hanson] and we've been married 47 years. Have grandchildren, great-grandchildren like everyone else. So that's it in a nutshell.

AB: What were some of the things, when you were in Utah, that you did for entertainment?

MH: With four kids? Those ten years when we travelled around, home was the car. Because there was a year and a half between them, it was like a litter. So if you went for groceries you took four kids. If you went for a doctor's appointment for one kid, you took four kids. Whatever you did. We had a pony in the back yard and that was our entertainment. We used to play 'calf' with that Cricket that was a babysitter. He was two when we got him and he hadn't been really very well broke, so I kind of got him started bareback and worked him back and forth and around and had a lot of fun with him. The kids thought the best game was to play 'calf'. They would try to duck and dodge around and he would head them into the corral or into the barn or wherever we were going to put them. He got to be really well broke. He was just a kids' pony.

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AB: What was it like when you were living on the Q when you were just a kid growing up on a ranch?

MH: It was a great life! We never wanted to spend much time around the house. We'd eat and be out and our ponies would be tied right at the door. We were into everything, watched everything. There are lots of stories. Once when we were little I think it was Shorty Ziegler that was working with some horses in the corral and Mom couldn't find us. We were maybe three and four, I don't know, or four or five. There was a year and a half between us, too, so we were just a pair. She scoured through the yard, didn't find us anywhere. She found Shorty down at the corral at the barn and it was quite a ways from the house to the barn and she said, "Have you seen the kids?"

He said, "Yeah. I locked them in the granary. I couldn't keep them out of the corral." [*Laughter*]

She said, "Well, when you're finished, let them out." [*more laughter*] And went back into the house. So we spent the morning in the granary.

AB: But you were allowed to be out, at brandings and all?

MH: Oh yeah. My mom was really busy. She kept the books, groceries and was always the cook and sometimes the helper. In those years, in the '30s there would be 30 people at the table. There was a table for twelve and you would have two tables always, and lots of times three. So you were cooking and doing dishes and cooking and doing dishes. I wasn't in on the cooking, but was in a lot of the cleanup and a lot of dishes. You ate at the third table if you were the kids. They'd be up at 5; you ate at 6, but you fed the horses and everything before anybody ate. Nobody got to eat before the animals that could not feed themselves. And then we ate. And then there was the cleanup. If you were lucky you got away like we did. When you got bigger you had to do dishes first or something. And then it was cleanup, it was dinner at 12. It was supper at 6. There were no long coffee sessions in the morning or at night. If you missed a meal you were on your own until the next meal.

So it was not like it is today. And the cooks would be getting dinner as soon as they were through with the breakfast, and getting that stuff organized. In the afternoon there was maybe an hour because every afternoon they had to wipe the kitchen floor. That was another thing that you had to have done. It had to be clean and we kind of thought that was a pain, but we had to do it. Quite often we were the wiper-uppers. So they would have from three to four in the afternoon maybe to have some downtime. And then it was supper.

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AB: And they were full meals; they weren't soup and sandwiches.

MH: Breakfast was porridge, bacon and eggs and pancakes. Meals were meat and potatoes and a dessert of some kind. I remember the cook one time getting a cake ready and she forgot some ingredient; I think it was baking powder. She reached down and pulled it up, went around to go put it in and the cake batter just went around the whole kitchen so she had to clean up everything and there was nothing left of the cake. All those kind of things. It was a matrimonial bureau; every new cook that came there would be bets on who was going to be the next bridegroom because whoever was working there, they would have bets on who would be the next one.

Bill and I spent a lot of time around the men and listening to everything that went on in the bunkhouse and in the shop and everywhere. We were really nosy kids! We got into lots of trouble. We cut up a good set of harness one time to make harness for our Shetland ponies. Cut it down so it would fit, and it did, but we weren't too popular.

There are all kinds of stories that go on forever. What kind do you want?

AB: What was it like to be out there and be isolated? Away from a town or other people?

MH: We didn't know any different. It was the whole world to us. Kids, wherever they are, however they are, wherever their parents are, their surroundings and whatever, they think is normal. We just thought this was the way the world was. It was a great world to us. We had a lot of freedom. They had a bell they rang at meal time so everyone showed up at once. And if you did not show up you missed the meal. She also rang it for us when she wanted us. Otherwise we'd be out and around - we had a dog and he babysat us. She said as long as she saw the dog somewhere she knew we were okay because he was just a babysitter like a person and he did sort of keep us out of trouble a few times.

One time we came to the house after we'd heard the bell ring maybe three times. We didn't come right away. It rang again and it rang again and we thought they must really want us for something so we'd better show up. Mom said, "Why didn't you come when I rang the bell?" And I piped up and said, "I didn't hear it the first time." She said, "Well, I didn't say it was the first time."

They were pretty hard to get ahead of. With anything. *[laughter]*

We had our ponies to ride. We had chores always. We had to do something. If you were good enough at something you got a chance to do something else that was a little bit more challenging.

AB: Did you work alongside the men? Did you ride and do that kind of stuff?

MH: Oh yeah. I could not go to the branding camp because I was a girl. And I was pretty put out about that. Other than that you were treated the same. I think the Second World War is the thing that changed a whole lot of things for women. If it hadn't been for the Second World War I probably would not have gotten out of the kitchen. There are lots of girls who are treated sort of like - they get to ride a horse, but they don't get to work along with - and because of the war there was no help. So you got drafted [to work on the farm] and we got to do, as kids... In '39 I was 12 and every summer I got to work all summer long out of school. I took correspondence some years, so I was home a lot of the year and then I didn't do much school work. I just crammed and got through it in a couple of months without fiddling around with it, and got to be doing a lot of [ranch] work. One time, and I don't remember what year it was, maybe '38, maybe '40, I'm not sure, it was a bumper crop of oats and there was about 800 acres of oats. Joe [Gilchrist] was on one binder and Hans Koenke on the other. Bill was Joe's driver on the little Fordson and I was Hans' and we had a contest going all through the whole thing. You know, who can do the best corners, who can do the best this, how long you could stay at it; it was always a contest. If it wasn't with somebody else, it was with yourself. I think it was 800 acres and I don't remember how much time, but it was - we did a good job of getting it done and it went up without any rain or any wrecks. So that was a big thing.

AB: Corners?

MH: Yeah. You didn't leave anything. You cut the corners without leaving any grain standing and every time you turned around there was another corner coming so you had to pay attention.

AB: Did you find it difficult when you moved to Calgary? The commotion and the people?

MH: You see, I, being a girl, my dad told me, "It's too bad, but - girls can only teach or nurse, be secretaries or marry a rancher." And I said, "Be damned if I am going to do that." So I just wasn't going to follow in those footsteps. At the end of Grade Eight there was no school down there so you had to go away to school, somewhere. And I took correspondence up to that time, but because you had to have a foundation to build on if you are going to any of these other things, my mother was definitely going to have me get that foundation so I had to go

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somewhere. I had a choice. She said you can go to this girl's school in Virginia; they've got horses and they had a big catalogue of how fancy this place was. And I thought, 'Oh my gosh, I can't do that'. That other alternative was to stay with my dad's sister in Nova Scotia for Grade Nine. So I went across the country on the train, had a ball, all dressed up. Thought I was 21, and in the fall of '39, I was 12 or 13. Visited some people that Mom knew in Montreal and they switched me on to the right train to go to Nova Scotia. Got to the train station in Truro. I didn't see anybody that looked familiar, anybody looking for anybody like me and I wasn't going to be standing the last person on there. I knew where I was supposed to go, so I got a taxi and went to the place. When I got there they thought because I had heels on and I was looking older than I was supposed to be.... Anyway I got there.

I learned a lot from Aunt Annie; she was a wonderful person. And she was the most organized person I ever knew. She'd been a doctor. She had an acre of glads [gladiolas], and I don't know what all else, in her backyard. She had roomers; she took care of three families of soldiers and their wives and all of us. She had three kids. One boy was in the Air Force. Archie and I and Jean were the ones at home. We all had jobs. She volunteered for bacon and eggs for evenings with these soldiers from the west that were all homesick. She kept everyone organized. She washed sheets by hand in the back place every morning and hung them on the line and never looked ruffled. She was an amazing person to me, but I learned lots. I didn't like polishing the stairs and the porch and all those things, and the hardwood floors and doing all the chores that had to be done. I never did really like Nova Scotia; there were too many trees.

I came home in June and hit Winnipeg. It had been a great trip home because I got back on a boat across the Great Lakes and a big storm and we danced, a bunch of people and the orchestra was nailed down in one corner and you'd be dancing up here and then you'd be sliding right down to the other side because the boat would be doing this [*indicates the rocking of the boat*] all the time. It was great fun!

When I got to Winnipeg and saw the open skies I had tears all the way back to Swift Current. I don't ever remember being homesick because I knew my folks were there; we got letters once a week and you had to write letters once a week. I didn't expect it was going to change; I just had to do what I had to do because those parents were fairly definite right from square one that if you were in a wreck, what did you have to do with it; look in the mirror; what can you do to fix it? What's past you have to let go, but you learn from mistakes; only darn fools make them over and over, the same mistake. You had no outs, ever. There was no way of feeling sorry for yourself. You watched Dad—couldn't walk, didn't seem to affect his life as far as we could see. We used to as kids wonder what

we would do if we could not walk. When we were kids he would get on a horse once a year, just to do it. It would take three or four people to get him up there and keep him up there, but he would still do it. When we were kids he would lean against the front of his car, which was wheels for him and legs, and rope us as we ran by. We'd say which leg or which arm and he would pretty much always catch us wherever we said he was supposed to. One of us or both of us. He did that kind of thing; he also taught us to listen to music for dancing; he loved dancing before he was crippled. We'd listen on Saturday nights if it wasn't after February when the batteries got too low and then you could only listen to the news or some very important stuff.

AB: Did you ever live at the AX?

MH: No. We lived at the Q, visited at the Whitemud, visited at Pincher Creek. I stayed at Grandma and Grandpa Bacon's and went to school and stayed at Auntie Merle's and went to school, stayed with Mary Lee in Consul one time and wrote exams; I can't remember what grade that was. We went to school at Wildhorse whenever there were enough kids for school, and it had to be five or you didn't have a teacher. And so the Simpson kids and us were it finally, and Dolores Hester. Lots of times there weren't enough kids for school so then you had to have correspondence.

We had mail once a week. Mr. Traynor came from Manyberries with a horse to start with and then the car when the roads were good enough. We'd go down to Wildhorse Crossing and that's where we got the mail. So that was a big trip. We'd go down, Mom—lots of times we'd get it by car, lots of times we'd go with horses. Bill and I had a thing as kids. When we got home with the mail we would have whoever said 'Free Press Prairie Farmers Funnies first' got to read them first.
[Laughter]

But they always had lots of reading material; we got lots of mail. You got magazines and you got papers and we had an encyclopedia and anytime there was an argument both Mom and Dad would say, "Look it up. Go find the answers. See what you can find."

I don't remember ever feeling bored; I don't remember ever feeling isolated. To me I wish it was still the way it was then because everybody in the world came through in the summertime. It was busy; people all summer long, whether it was all the people that were working like in the '30s, or down to just a few when we left because through the war there just weren't that many to help, but there were still lots of people always. In the wintertime there were no roads, no 41 Highway. You know it was 25 miles to Govenlock; it was 50 miles to Havre; it was 50 miles to Manyberries; and there were no roads. Dad used to make a new road through

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the sagebrush every time. We thought it just got smoothed down it would be another trail somewhere.

AB: So for winter would you go to Govenlock or wherever and buy up a winter's supply of groceries?

MH: No. We would trail down from Bayne on the railroad. We would have a carload of stuff and it would be with horses or trucks brought down in October. We had an ice house and all these things stored, cases of stuff. Have you eaten water glass eggs? We ate those all winter if our chickens did not lay. We had chickens, or most of the time we did. What wasn't canned, what wasn't cooked so that you could keep it! We'd always have sauerkraut behind the stove and all that stuff.

AB: Your mom canned meat and chickens?

MH: All kinds of it. All the time. Then there were enough people that we ate - I don't know - a ewe would last a week maybe. Food didn't spoil because there were just too many people to eat it. It was gone. They butchered an awful lot of the time. I don't remember ever being short of food, but I remember not liking what you ate a lot of the time. You just got in there and ate. It wasn't like having your mom say, "What would you like for supper?" You ate what there was and you didn't complain.

We sat one on either side of Dad at the table when we were little kids, and if we got out of line he'd reach underneath and grab your leg above the knee and squeeze, and you would sit up a little more and say nothing. [Laughter] But you got the message. You listened to everything else that went on; you heard all kinds of stuff.

I just don't remember being bored. In the wintertime we had lots to read and we had some time to read or play or just fool around. We had the piano; we could play away at that. Even if I could not play, I could make noise. We could dream up all kinds of things to do that they tried to keep us from doing—jump stooks and sagebrush—

AB: Did you have to work in the field to hay?

MH: Yes, and I always loved that. The one I didn't like was summerfallowing. On an old D2 Cat and going around and around and around and the darn thing was so slow and you spent all day on it. I could never like farming, but I always liked haying and I always loved working with the cattle. We had some purebred cows and raised our own bulls for a long time and I did work pretty much by myself

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with those cows. I could move them and fiddle around with them and keep track of them, keep the records; that was a lot of fun.

I can remember one time bringing two yearlings from the Cross Z to the Q and I think it's 12 miles. It's through the field that we left from the Cross Z, into the big Sage Creek Field, then into the Wrangle Field at home - so I had to go through two gates, and just these two yearlings and they did not want to go together. That was an all afternoon job, but I was really proud of myself because I'd got them both in there. I was maybe 10 and we had quite a day, but we got them and it was fun.

That to me was just fun—working with the cattle, working those little old Fordson tractors—it was just fun. Dad was always giving us the gears about driving too fast, but we did anyway. The trip Lillian Thompson and I made across to Consul to your folks place [*referring to Ann Behrman*]. We really enjoyed that; I think we got them up to 22 miles an hour or something like that [*Laughter*]. We weren't supposed to go over whatever it was, but we did. Your mom and dad were really fun to be around because your mom would talk to us and fool with us and it was just a lot of fun.

AB: Didn't your dad and Sandy, weren't they in partnership on that place down there?

MH: I think they were all kind of that way, yes. They were all involved in it. I never did know the details of all that stuff. They used to have company meetings once a month. There were four hardheaded brothers and you could hear them clear across the yard. By the time they got it settled, whatever it was, that's the way things went. They each had their own talents. Dad was the manager and the politician and the guy that had the vision. But it started with how they came out [west] in the first place because he came first. His mother wrote to him and said, "*Your dad isn't seeing well enough to be able to go back to sea and I think you're the oldest son and you should come back and be the head of the family.*" He wrote back and said, "*I don't see any future for me back there or for anybody really.*"

AB: This was Nova Scotia?

MH: Yes, because that is where they were born and raised. He came out and you've got lots of stuff about that [*referring to Gilchrist History*]. I think he got as far as Manitoba before 1900, and then he came to Maple Creek in the spring of 1900 maybe, and that's where he thought was the best place to be from there on. He wasn't going to go back, but he said, "If you all come out here we'll sink or swim together".

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So in 1904 they did all come out here, except for Chay who was still in Boston, but he came sometime that year I think. And Joe was four years old. The whole bunch came. And Grandpa Gilchrist learned to ride a horse when he was 65. They lived in a part dugout, part shack-deal down - their first winter down there in that place at Consul, I think. But they stayed at Stirlings and different places before they got there. I'm not sure about all that, but it's in some of that stuff [*referring again to Gilchrist History*]. Anyway he was the chief of the clan and everybody knew it. Nobody bucked him too far. I can remember the first time I did.

AB: I remember doing it once, too.

MH: I was 16.

AB: I don't know how old I was, but he just reached out with his cane, like that, and caught me around the ankle and I went ass over breadbasket. [*Laughter*]

MH: He did that to us when we were this high and you didn't try to run away.

Well, I was 16 and I wanted to go. Mabel Henley and Jack Henley were living on the Butz Place, and Mabel was down there with him and we were doing this play of some kind, just for the heck of it, in the middle of the winter. They had been coming to the Q for, I don't know, whenever we could get together to practice, for quite a while. I said I thought it was our turn to go there. Dad didn't think that was a very good idea. And I just was 16 and said, "I think you think you're the little king of the castle and that's not right, and it's my turn, and I don't think that you should have that kind of power just because you've got the biggest joint in the place."

And then I sort of realized what I'd said and I was quaking in my boots. He was on the couch and he swung off the couch, sat up, didn't say a word. Then he said, "I guess you're right."

That just blew me away. I was all set to be really in trouble. But if you were right and you stood up to him and you could prove it or if he could see it—and he was fairly reasonable if you did—he was big enough to do that. So I went. But it was a shock when he said, "I guess you're right."

But then he could also do the other thing. One time we were there. I spent overnight down there because Mabel was there and we were having a visit and I was supposed to be home by 7:30 to go to Lethbridge with him, to drive him to Lethbridge. I was there by 8:00 maybe. When I got there Mom said, "He's gone."

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So you just didn't fool around. If he said he was going to do something, he did it, and if he said you should do something, you better darn well do it, too.

With all that, we had all kinds of leeway. We didn't get too many instructions about how to do, but every time you went for a ride when you got back he would say, "What were the fences like? What was the grass like in that corner? Did you see any cattle?" You know, what are you looking at? What are you seeing? What's going on out there? So you were always aware that you were going to be grilled when you got home. You better keep your eyes open. [*Laughter*]

AB: What are some of the big changes you have noticed or that you know of over the years? Like big changes in technology. Has it really changed how you look at stuff?

MH: You know I don't see that it's a drastic change. There have been changes, but there are some things where there is nothing like a horse to do the job. You can go out with a Gator and cover the field in a fraction of the time, but you can't really do the [job]. But you didn't always have a horse that was a good cutting horse always, you had one that would cover the distance.

I think maybe horse trailers changed things more than anything for ranches. You didn't make good horses because you didn't ride them enough. We are so unfair to our horses. We have them out here and they are too fat. They are not in condition. They aren't ridden enough and then you take them up in the hills and expect them to climb up and down those hills and do the job. They used to be fit and they used to be in shape all the time from spring until you turned them out in the wintertime.

My favorite horse bucked me off every spring just to prove he could do it and from then on he quit. [*Laughter*]

I think technology.... Mom was always the one that was.... They were a good partnership. Dad would ask how do you spell this or what did you do that for, because she was all over the US opening all those offices for Painless Parker Dentristry—you know, the first guy that did the Nova Cain for dentists—in San Francisco, in Spokane, in San Diego, in Boston, all over. She was 30 years old when she was married so she spent a third of her life single and on her own and was one of the first suffragettes, feminists, probably. She just never thought she wasn't as good as. She never did really push socially, making a commotion about being an equal partner, but when the two of them [her parents] were together nobody backed up at all. So we had interesting conversations. Mom was a Liberal, Dad was a Conservative, and they would be head to head on some issue and agree to disagree because they were both doing what they wanted to do,

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and they were going where they wanted to go, but they didn't think the way to get there was always the same.

AB: Tell us about shipping cattle and how you got them to market and where you took them.

MH: From the Q country we gathered them at the Cross Z; they all got moved and there were three different places finally. Joe's cattle - we kept the calves at the Q through the winter and they were trailed over to Milk River like on that thing [points to picture behind her] and they summered there and wintered there because they were sold as twos or threes, sometimes threes or fours in the early years. They got them gathered to where Chay was and Joe was at one time (what is Ross's now) and into the Cross Z field. So we would gather them there and then hold them at Bayne which is on the railroad line between Shaunavon and Manyberries, Lethbridge and Swift Current. Load them there and I think they moved them east pretty much 100% of the time in those days. So they would go through Swift Current to the mainline and then east.

I can remember one year holding them and warming up for a little bit in the car, listening to Dad and the cattle buyer argue over seven cents, and seven and a quarter, a pound for all these yearlings. I don't remember how many there were, but there were lots of them. We were cold. It was November. They were just all day long before they got agreed that they could load them, and then it was a long time it took to load them. They loaded in the stockyards there. So that was how they got there.

AB: And you trailed them over?

MH: Well, gathered them, trailed them from one place to the other. We always trailed them from the Whitemud over, back and forth all areas, but the calves basically were wintered at the Q. That was our primary focus. And raising grain. It was busy all year long. Something critical had to be done every week. No downtime.

AB: What about storms and that type of thing?

MH: The biggest one that we all remember was in 1938 on my birthday. Ten days before that - it was the middle of March - we had just turned out all the calves...

[Phone rings. Interview is paused.]

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MH: Okay. Well, it was 1938 and we were sitting out on the little knoll west of the Q with all these yearlings strung out. Joe had us stopped. Every time he got us moving cattle, we'd get them strung out and he'd say, "We don't want to lose the beef", so he would have us stop. We were eating frozen sandwiches and he was giving us a geography lesson on how we were getting the peanut butter in this frozen sandwich. It was because Sage Creek ran into the Milk River and the Milk River ran into the Missouri and the Missouri ran into the Mississippi and the Mississippi ran into the Gulf of Mexico and that's where they got the peanut butter. *[Laughter]*

Anyway, the cattle were all slicked off; they were yearlings and they were turned out in this field between there and the Government Camp and working their way further west. On the 28th of March this storm started. Our fence out there is further away from the house a little bit than the fence was at the Q. Dad sat in front of the window and looked out there and you could not see the fence for three days. It was just solid wind and snow and just piling up. To get from the house to the barn you had to go on the fence and they used a rope to string it from the corner of the fence of the house, to the shop and bunkhouse. You just couldn't see where you were even in the yard. So it was horrific! When it cleared up you just found.... Well, I think maybe there were 900 they lost all together in that storm.

They were piled up in fence corners, in sloughs, over cutbanks. They had just gone with the storm, anywhere, everywhere. The ones that were alive - they found some in snow drifts where they were just holes in the snow, but their skin peeled off. They killed a bunch of them that were just so badly frozen and wrecked.

I mean that was a horrific storm and it just wiped them out, but for the ranch itself the biggest problem was that—the two years or whatever year it was that those yearlings would have been marketed—was the year the government said was going to be Excess Profits Tax because of the war. So they paid Excess Profits on that many head that they marketed from there until they sold it. It was a happening that has long term effects, and in ranching it always happens. BSE or Foot and Mouth or whatever it is, it's not just the immediate impact it's what long range effect it has on the whole business.

Dad was the one that had that vision of long-term view; that was his skill. Chay was the cow man; Sandy was the welder, the guy that kept everything running; Joe was probably the most balanced of all because he was the kid when he started and he said he didn't ever get as far as Piapot until he was 20 years old. *[Laughter]*

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AB: What about entertainment, like dances and Christmas concerts and that kind of stuff?

MH: We had lots of good times, but they were not like in today's world, every Saturday night or three times a week. My kids used to complain because I didn't let them go all the time and they'd say, "But you went." But we were lucky if we went three times a summer. We used to go to Christmas concerts; they were the Big Thing. Some teachers, that was the main thing they taught all year long was the good Christmas concert. My mom wasn't impressed with that, but we thought it was a good deal.

Old Bill Dumont used to play the fiddle and everybody danced in the schoolhouse. It was fun. Everybody danced with you as kids so you learned from the time you were little.

I remember one dance—we used to go when we were haying in the summers when we were teenagers—and Bill had a car with polka dots painted on the side, with lights - one went up and one went down. We drove to Fort Walsh to a barn dance, at the Fort Walsh barn, I think, a bunch of us in haying time. We came home, and I was driving. I always drove home and somebody always drove there. Coming down that hill into Mitchells (used to be then and before that Lindners. It was Lindners when we were there, that shortcut in through Govenlock) he'd say, "You're going too fast", or, "You're too rough", or something. "If you hit one more bump I'm going to get out."

He did get out because I was going pretty slow down this with no brakes on the thing either. They rolled him up in a buffalo robe and put him in the rumble seat in the back and that's how he got home. [*Laughter*] He's lucky we didn't smother him.

Whenever we went to a dance, when we got home it was always in time for breakfast, but there was twice as much to do that day. No slacking off because you went dancing.

We'd go to Manyberries maybe once a summer, go to Consul pretty often, or Govenlock whenever there was a dance. Mr. Henley used to play. I can remember going there and Mrs. Henley giving me heck because I went outside. Girls aren't to leave the hall. So I didn't.

AB: What about your family, your kids?

MH: What about them?

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AB: Well, where are they and what are they doing?

MH: They were all born going four different directions and they still are. Janey is in Mexico for the winter. She's just retired. She's 65, a couple of days ago. She stored all her worldly goods; she's homeless, she says, until she decides where she wants to be in Alberta next spring. She's going to spend the winters where it's warm and she's going to move somewhere closer around Calgary, she's not sure where. Somewhere that's close to the airport because she's got grandchildren in the States and she wants to be able to fly out, back and forth. She hasn't changed much. She's retired and lives in her head. Just who she is.

Gil is still working another shift to pay for another trip to fill his bucket list. He's been a doctor for years now. They're all in their 60s. They're trying to plan a trip to Patagonia this January, just he and his wife now because their kids are grown and don't go along with them anymore, like mine don't go with me anymore. He still skis; he's still trying to be fit; he wants to live to be 100, I think. He's doing okay.

Clay is right now in Alberta because he still has buffalo, but he's got a boat out at B.C. on the Sunshine Coast. His wife likes it there probably better than Alberta, but they go between the two. He's got a little of that Nova Scotia blood or something because he loves that boat. He goes fishing for all kinds of crab and stuff. Just in and out and up and down, enjoys it. Their kids are grown, too.

Deb is in Mexico and she will be there all winter, I think until May she said; she's not coming back until it's warm. Her husband is down there for three weeks now, but he is working in the oil field as an EMS guy and he kind of likes making the money because he'd like to travel more. He has a son in, I think it is Korea, so he wants to go do some travelling with him next spring before it's warm up here. So both of the girls are going to spend their winters where it's warm and be in Alberta in the summers. Deb would stay down there all year, I think, but she still likes it in Red Deer in the summer when it's warm.

So they are all doing their thing, but they are all in their 60s so what does that make me? Old. *[Laughter]*

THE END