

Oral History Collection – Section 2

Collected by Oral History Researcher Meagan Gough

Laura Parsonage Interview 2008-March-11

Catalogue No. 2.18 (U,R)

1/25

Location: Laura Parsonage home - 503 Walsh St, Maple Creek,
Saskatchewan

LP = Laura Parsonage: Interviewee

MG = Meagan Gough: Interviewer

SP = Susan Pridmore: Recorder – Camera and RCA audio recorder.

2008 March 11

RCA audio recorder starts before camera is set up.

LP: When he got down there, he found a car, and two skeletons on the seat! Now, Ray said that the one skeleton was sitting on the other skeleton – like the woman skeleton was on the man skeleton, sitting in the back seat. They were a couple whose parents disapproved of their getting married. He was an elderly man, and anyway, he talked her into goin' with him on a little journey and they went out to Elkwater and went down this big coulee. The way they figured when they found them is that they may have camped there a little while because there was a little clothes line strung out from one tree to the other with a few little rags of towels on it. But, eventually they must have decided to do away with their lives. Anyway, Ray said he got the police there and the police got the bodies out on the highway and put a tarp over them. Ray said a guy was left there to guard them for a little while and the guy said a little wind came along and lifted that tarp up and he said, "I just about fainted!" Would you blame him?! He was scared to death! But there are many things that have gone on in those old Cypress Hills that have never been accounted for.

MG: Wow, I can imagine.

LP: Never been accounted for.

MG: All sorts of mysteries in those Hills, I'll bet.

SP: Now, Laura, I think I'm going to set up the video camera if that's all right with you?

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LP: Oh, yes, I'm a poor old one to talk. My uncle had wild stories; he was always dreaming up some wild story. He had a great imagination is what he had.

MG: Oh, we just had such a great time with your journal – both Glen and I. When he was sick that day he read the whole thing.

LP: Now, how is he doin'?

MG: Oh, sick as a dog. Back to work today at the fire hall, but sick.

LP: Oh, dear, oh dear. My, what a talented sculptor he is!

SP: Yeah, did you get to see some of his artwork?

LP: Well, he drew some art for me; his drawings are just beautiful. I hope so much he comes back down.

MG: Well, he's hoping to. He's been offered to come down and work - he's hoping April or May like I would.

LP: There's some bad flus goin' around.

SP: Yeah, they still have the Lodge quarantined I hear.

(Camera began here which matches DVD-R.)

MG: Now, one of the things in your journal, one of the really interesting stories is about "Laura's gallstone." Glen and I thought that was the greatest story in there and it had a picture of the gallstone!

LP: Well now, Lena and I both had gallstone operations practically at the same time. Now that's odd, but it's just the way it went. Anyway, Lena said she was goin' to produce a diamond, so I said, "Well I want to get some extra nice stones, too". So, I got Joan to write this little label - But anyway, I had my operation in Maple Crick here and I told the nurse when I got up and around that I wanted to see that gallstone – see what it was like. So she brought that stone into me and I put it on something hard in the bathroom and gave it a hit and broke it into pieces to see what it was like

inside. It looked like sand. What it looked like was grey sand all clumped together. Just one great big gallstone, but I found out what it was made of!

MG: Such curiosity!

LP: Yes, and the nurse, she never said anything even though she never got to take it back to the lab after Laura got through with it!

MG: And then didn't you do something with it or, you guys made - there's a little picture of a bottle with a label on it and you made something?

LP: I sent the bottle out to my sister on the coast and she had it for a while and then she returned it to me. I don't know what I have in the journal, Meagan; I will have to check it out.

MG: That was one of many home remedies that your family had it seemed like.

LP: MM-hmm.

MG: You were saying last time that one of the things your mom used for a compress was bread soaked in milk?

LP: A bread-milk poultice. And you know that sure took the infection out of a bad cut or sore.

MG: Amazing.

LP: Well, back in those days, you had to have a lot of remedies of your own. In the spring, Mother made a funnel out of paper and blew sulphur down our throats! And another thing we had to take was black strap molasses with sulphur mixed in it. We had to have a spoonful of that every day through the week and that fixed us up for the summer. And it did, too. We were very seldom sick.

MG: I think molasses has a lot of vitamins in it, or iron?

LP: Yes, molasses has lots of iron in it.

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MG: Smart!

LP: I never heard Mother say anything about that, but it killed all the germs!

MG: That is something I sure find interesting - different remedies that were used to keep people healthy or avoid sickness.

LP: Another remedy my mother brought up with her from West Virginia – she used it on me once when I was out on the coast and had a terrible sore throat. I had bad tonsils and my neck was all swollen up and Mother went over to Uncle’s house and got a chunk of pig rind and wrapped it around my neck. Do you know it was only a matter of a day or two and my neck was all right. Now Mother wasn’t raised in the backwoods, she was an educated woman, but that was one of the cures they brought up from the south with them - any cure they could bring.

MG: A lot of practical wisdom they had.

LP: It was bad back in those days. There were no cures for many things. Lots of little children died and they just died from a fever. Abraham Lincoln lost his first little son he was so fond of from a fever. Now it’s hard to say what killed that little fellow, if it was just from a fever, they had no idea.

MG: Did the flu hit hard here, like in the nineteen...?

LP: No, I don’t remember too much about the flu business, only a little bit. I know my mother was terribly ill with it and so Dad went to the neighbours - my mother was prejudiced against any liquor of any sort – she wouldn’t touch a morsel. But Dad went to the neighbours and got some, oh dear, some liquor of some sort, I’ve forgotten the name of it now. Mother had a good drink of that and said that was what really saved her life. But my, people died in the hundreds from that flu. Now, I read a little bit about it, and it said that flu congealed the blood in your body so it wouldn’t even flow.

MG: Oh my gosh!

LP: Now, wouldn’t that be terrible? Just terrible! And you maybe saw it on TV when some special scientists came up from the States hoping to find

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viruses of the First World War flu that killed so many people. Well, they went up into Alaska where they knew there were people who had passed on and they had their labs and the like. Well, they dug up these graves –got permission – but they never found the virus in even one of those bodies. But someone was looking around in these clumps of earth, so they dug up that grave and there in some fat were all these viruses of that flu. They said it had to be a great huge big woman that was buried in that grave to preserve that fat like that! Now I suppose they take that virus back to the States and you heard no more about it! Not a thing! But if that type of flu comes up again, it would sure help to bring around some special flu shot.

MG: Yeah. That's a lot of times what vaccinations are, right? A dose of the virus itself?

LP: Yes. I sometimes wonder where these new viruses come from. What starts them?

MG: I wonder, actually, what starts them?

LP: There's all these new ones comin' up. They say if you go to Africa and went to jungles and got a shovel of earth and took it out and looked it over, there's thousands of viruses of one sort or another in there. Now, I better shut my mouth up here and answer any questions you want me to answer.

MG: Oh, no! These are just your stories – in reading your journal, though, I found it so neat – I just loved all the stories in that! Like the gallstone story!

LP: Yeah, we had a big laugh over that.

MG: There's one story in there, too that I wanted to ask you about where it talks about women taking lover boys? Like women having a boyfriend?

LP: I forgot all about what I wrote in there.

MG: It talks all about how sometimes women, even though it was not good to just live with someone without the idea of getting married to them, sometimes women ended up having kind of a boyfriend? Which is different than people maybe think was going on.

LP: Well, they don't think nothin' nowadays of a couple livin' together. I

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don't see a thing wrong with it, I'm not against it! They can live together and get to know one another; I'm not against it at all. Back in my day, you might just as well have taken a jump in the crick if you wanted to do that. I read an article a while back about a teacher who taught school, and anyway, she got pregnant and apparently she didn't show it up too much. This place where she was working they were never any the wiser. It was in the winter time and one night she gave birth to a dear little baby. She went out and buried the little fella in a snow bank. The next week the people she was boarding with found the little baby. Now, if that would have been today, that baby would have been looked after and somebody would have had it. But it was such a disgrace then that she couldn't bear to keep the baby.

MG: So, back then you would get in big trouble for that? It would be frowned upon to have a baby?

LP: Oh yes, you would have been a disgrace if you'd have had a baby out of wedlock, but nowadays they don't think anything of it. And it's a blessing for the little children, isn't it? They get looked after. Things have sure changed in my life, I can tell you.

MG: One of things I never asked you about was you and Graham getting married – I never asked you about your proposal, your wedding – where and when?

LP: Well, Graham went over to Havre (Montana) with his relatives and got a nice diamond ring, which is right here (extends her hand so we can see).

MG: Oh! He got you a real beauty! It's a beautiful ring!

LP: Oh, I've even forgot what year we got married! We came into Maple Crick though and got married, not a big church wedding. Then we went to Merryflat and there was a dance for us and then we went to live in our little log house. We lived there eight years – eight perfect years. I had Bertha and Wilkes there; they were my babies. Oh, I lived a great life! I would live it all over again, every bit of it, even through those terrible dry thirties when the wind blew night and day. It was just a cloud of dust.

MG: You could see a cloud of dust outside?

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LP: Oh, yes, you could just see it rollin' in! Great dust storms. They were terrible! I got a reminder of that, oh a long while ago. Graham and I called at a place by the name of Mackels down in the West Plains District. We were walking around a bunch of trees and we came upon a fence and all that was sticking out was the top of this post. The posts were buried in earth!

MG: Oh my gosh!

LP: Imagine the amount of earth that went into covering those fence posts!

MG: It's almost hard to imagine, isn't it?

LP: Yeah, and I saw many families moving out. They came by our house because we were close to the creek and they'd stop there. There was a bridge there, so they'd stop there overnight and water their horses, have a rest and move on the next day. I don't know if some of them knew where they were goin'. I do know one family, by the name of Weishuhn - their autobiography is in that book- they went to Nipawin. When Graham and I went to up to Dore Lake bear hunting, we went to visit the Weishuhn family. They seemed quite happy – they're long dead and gone now. I sure wondered though, where they were going. Well, there was some of Jim Pridmore's relatives moved out by covered wagon – now where they went, I don't know – I will have to ask Jim sometime. Now, wouldn't it be something to pack all of your things in a covered wagon and head out? I wonder what they ate along the way.

MG: I wonder. Did they pack jerky and things like that?

LP: No, they wouldn't have that, no. Maybe canned meat or something though. When Graham's parents came up from Ontario Grandma made bread and they milked cows.

MG: Wow! A travelling kitchen! Imagine that!

LP: But now, wouldn't I like to have a visit with the Weishuhns about their trip north. They could have taught me so many things, but you never think about that when you're young. You do not! When you get old is when you think about a lot of these things and by then it's too late! It's just too late. I

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know there are many things I would like to ask Graham about; I think about it now, but Graham's gone so I can forget about it. Even my parents - I would have liked to find out a few things from them, and I guess I figured my mother and dad would not get old!

MG: That's why it's such a blessing for us to be able to talk with you and you can then have these CD's and write-ups for your family so that some of the things that maybe they get curious about as they get older will be in those pages! And your beautiful journals that you have always kept make history alive – living history we call this!

LP: I was reading a book there, it was so old – it is sad to handle it – and I found a little marker in there that says “1914”. Now that's a long time ago!

MG: Wow! Where did you find that?!

LP: A book store here in town! 1914. I was just learning how to walk good then.

MG: Did you read westerns growing up?

LP: No, no, I didn't read those books.

MG: What kind of books did you enjoy?

LP: Oh, I like *National Geographic* and the topics of world history, or royal families in Europe – there's a lot of different reading I like. Yes, I am fond of reading. But my eyes are not all that good now, so I can't sit down and read for too terribly long.

MG: So, those early years when you had Bertha and Wilkes at home – do you maybe want to share a little bit about those years? You were saying how wonderful it was when the kids were little?

LP: Well we just lived in a little log house not much bigger than that living room would be and we lived in that house for eight years. I had my two little dear ones there. Then when Grandma and Grandpa Parsonage passed on we moved up to the old place and Wilkes, as little as he was, he wanted to

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go back home. He wanted to go back to that little log house that was home to him. That was home to Wilkes.

SP: Moving from the old place, did you have things at the new place you didn't at the old log house?

LP: No it was no different, it was the same! We lived in Grandma and Grandpa's old place until the dirt roof started to leak and we had to build a new house.

MG: A little leak, or a big leak?

LP: Well, a man by the name of Barney Montour spent a night with us in the dead of winter and he said to us, "The snow was fallin in on me last night." Graham looked and sure enough there was quite a hole, right up through the roof of that place. But you know, they put down poles on the frame of buildings for a roof and then they covered that all with tarpaper and then on top of that tarpaper they'd put the earth. I asked Graham once how they put that earth up there and he said they did it with a crane and a scraper.

MG: Wow!

LP: Yes, that's how they put the dirt on top of the old house. One time, old Grandma, she wanted the sod roof taken off and a board roof put on. The dear old soul bought the lumber from the sawmill up there and got that lumber all down there and stacked up and Grandpa said, "I don't want no roof put on this house, I want my shanty the way it is." So the board roof was never put on. And you know, I've thought many times, the dear old soul wasn't thinking because all that sod had to be taken off in order to put this other roof on, and where would Grandma be?

MG: Wow. She went and bought all the wood.

SP: I bet it all got used for something!

LP: I haven't got a clue what it got used for, but probably something.

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SP: It wouldn't have gone to waste.

MG: What was Grandma like?

LP: Well, she was a big, big woman. In her early days she wasn't, but she was a big, big woman. She had the brownest eyes and she was a very, very smart person, a nice old lady. She had fallen one time - went to the henhouse to gather the eggs and slipped and fell and apparently whether she broke her hip or what I don't know, but she spent a long time here in the hospital and her hip never healed properly and it left her a cripple. But now one day I remember meeting up with, I have forgotten her name, she told me that she wasn't surprised that Grandma's hip never healed properly because she's forever reaching up and grabbing a hold of the bed and pulling herself up! She figured that pulled the hip apart! I don't know, maybe it never, but she felt that was what happened. But Grandma was left a cripple and her old chair is left out there in the old house. She pushed herself around in it doing things. Dear, it was quite a life for her and eventually, she retired here to a little white house over on the east side of town. One time Graham and I came in and Grace Parsonage was staying with Grandma. Grandpa was gone, and Grandma said she'd like to go out to her old home. Well, Grace said, "You might die out there Grandma" and Grandma replied, "There's no better place I'd like to die than out at the old ranch." It was shortly after that that she passed on. She was a very smart woman.

SP: That was Bethea?

LP: Yeah, Bethea. Bethea and Everett. Grandpa was a great old fella, too, but he was a real old – you know what I mean! He wasn't anything much for improvement! (Laughing!)

MG: He liked things just the way they were?

LP: Yes, the old shack was good enough for him, with a dirt roof. Well, it was a great old house in the summertime. That dirt roof made it always nice and cool and in the winter it was warm. Every summer they'd get Gladys and Mary Lebarge to whitewash the house. They would call it "Dobbing." They'd come down and "dob" the house.

MG: Like a spring cleaning kind of thing?

LP: Yes, like a spring cleaning.

MG: Well, that's nice, to do that!

SP: The sod, would it not wear out and need to be replaced every few years?

LP: Graham and I lived there and never heard about it getting replaced before – it was loose earth! It wasn't sod.

SP: And was anything added to it before it went on the roof?

LP: No wonder it started to leak, them sod houses. They cut the squares of sod that they used to build their homes.

MG: Who built the home?

LP: Well, all the family. They came here with quite a big family and they all had great interest in the work around the place, they sure did.

MG: Sure was smart to build it so it would keep you warm in the winter and cool in the summer.

LP: It sure was, nice and warm and cozy.

MG: What was it like inside? Was there a fire area or a woodstove?

LP: There was one big living room and there was a heater in there. Then there was the kitchen with the kitchen range and then there was what we always called the big back bedroom. It never had any stove in it. Gracie Wagstaff – you've heard of the Wagstaffs? Well, she was down here to visit me and it was about four o'clock in the afternoon. Roger came over to visit Gracie and I, so the three of us decided we'd go have a look in the old house. The door's shut, too. Roger had his dog with him. Roger was right beside him. Well, when he opened that door, his dog made one terrific lunge! He was absolutely furious, and now why he did that we could never figure out. Whatever disturbed him, he seemed to follow it into the old back

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bedroom. Finally Roger got him straightened out and Roger went back there and looked around and there was nothing there. Now, what upset that dog I'll never know! I think that's the closest I ever come to something that was ghost-like!

MG: You know how they say sometimes animals see things people don't.

LP: Yes, they sense death, dogs do.

MG: Now they have dogs sniffing people for cancer!

LP: Well, for Pete's sake!

MG: They just did tests that show that certain dogs, I think it's black labs, if they are trained a certain way, they can actually sense cancer, so they are using these dogs in a medical way because the dogs will react to people as early cancer detection!

LP: My, isn't that wonderful!

MG: Isn't that amazing? And they sense it apparently, especially with their owners! There are stories of the dogs knowing when their owners are sick.

LP: Well, I don't remember what breed the dog was, but the fella said, "I'm gonna show you something." Well, he had something and said, "I'm gonna hide it somewhere and then I'll come back out and tell my dog to find it". Well, that dog went and found it, just from smell. He was gone a little while and came back and showed us his find.

MG: So, that dog sensed something in the big, back bedroom when he lunged?

LP: I don't know what he saw; he certainly had a reason for it. And the sad thing was a couple of weeks after that little dog got killed. Roger ran over her. She had bedded down on a warm day under the front tire of the truck and Roger didn't know she was there and ran over her. That was sad.

MG: Aw. So, that house sounds very cozy. I can almost get a picture of what it was like inside.

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LP: Well, like I said the other time, when you come out sometime we'll go out there.

MG: Oh I can't wait. I am looking forward so much to that – when the weather gets nicer. I am looking forward to that.

LP: Well just let me know.

MG: So, did Roger live in that house as well?

LP: Roger wasn't born until we were moved out of the old Parsonage home.

MG: Ah-ha! What was that like having three little ones?

LP: It was nice. Roger always liked horses and Wilkes was a little tiny boy who liked following Graham when he went hunting or trapping. You see that instinct is in both of them still. That's what Wilkes is like today and Roger's life is his horses!

MG: Isn't that amazing.

SP: They are both things that they picked up from their dad.

LP: Yes.

MG: How did you believe in raising your kids? What was your approach to raising kids?

LP: I never thought about that – kids back then were all raised pretty much the same. There was never any rough stuff or anything that ever went on with my children when the kids went to school. Never! And at home, they were good kids; they didn't need any spanking or anything.

SP: Did they go out and enjoy nature?

LP: Well, sure, right. They had ponies to ride, and they rode to school – they were kept busy! There were lots of things to do – yeah, it's been a great old life. I think I've seen the best of it. I feel that way within myself. I

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don't know how all the troubles of this old world will pan out. I hope for the best, anyway. That's for sure.

MG: I remember when we were talking one other time you were saying how important work was for kids to do and how maybe this generation has maybe lost that a little bit.

LP: My children always had chores to do – go out with Graham and feed the cattle, or different things, but they were always busy. Roger started out to high school in Maple Creek, his Grade 9. Well, he went a while and then complained he hurt his back. Well, it went on for two or three months and then he quit. I kinda figured it was never any back trouble at all – it was school! Anyways, he made out great even missing a lot of schooling, but school is wonderful, it sure is!

MG: Oh, that's good – a sore back! I should tell my little brother about a sore back – he's about tired of school at this point, too. He's the 19 year old I was telling you about. I would like him to come out and work on a ranch here for the summer, give him a different kind of experience that would maybe make him feel pride – he's very physical. He's not a books guy, he's a worker kind of guy.

LP: Well, that's great!

MG: Well, it's not for everyone - school. It's hard for some people just to sit.

LP: What does he want to go to school for?

MG: He's not really sure right now; he just got out of high school, so he will take the year.

LP: Yes. Is it just the one brother in your family?

MG: Another brother, younger.

LP: You're the only girl? Are you spoiled?

MG: I don't know!

LP: Oh, I bet your mom and papa spoil you – we did our only daughter.

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MG: I was lucky to grow up with my grandma in the house, so that's what I cherish. I was her last grandbaby – my dad's sons are from his second marriage. The house I grew up in had my grandma, she lived with us, so I was her youngest granddaughter. I got to follow her around and she was very active, but I got to live in the house with her, so I was spoiled getting to live in the house with her. Very lucky

LP: She's gone?

MG: She's gone, but still close by.

LP: You bet.

MG: I carry a little thing of lavender – she used to always go pick lavender from our yard and crush it up and wrap it in a napkin and tie a little ribbon on it like a little sashay.

LP: Aw.

MG: And then whenever I went anywhere, she'd hide it in my bag or purse and it was good luck because when you smell lavender at night it's supposed to sooth you and put you to sleep – and I even have that lavender with me here on this trip.

LP: Oh, for goodness sake, now isn't that nice!

MG: It's 12 years old and it still smells, so it's her hands that made that so I carry it with me. She was a great lady.

LP: Good for you! We had an old friend by the name of Louis Dumont and he carried a snoose box with the tiniest little rabbit in there; it sat in the snoose box just right. Now he said that his mother caught a rabbit, a female rabbit and between the flesh and the hide was that little baby rabbit. That's unbelievable. Nature must have meant – maybe when it was in the womb, that little rabbit was on the outside and got mixed up and got attached to this other rabbit. That's the way I figure it out. Anyway, Louis carried that little rabbit around in that snoose box. My kids, when he would come to visit us, which he did often, they had to see his little good luck charm. And there was that tiny little bit of a rabbit – the tiniest thing you could lay eyes on in that snoose box. Now you know it had to be little to be in a snoose box. My,

I'd have loved to have had it. But the people who looked after Louis, I don't know what they did with all these things. Probably the little rabbit in the snoose box is gone. Should have been put in a museum with a story written on it. It sure should have. But why would that little rabbit have been attached to the flesh on the hide outside of its mother?

MG: And he was a fully formed little rabbit?

LP: Yes, just a tiny wee little rabbit.

SP: I've never heard of anything like that.

LP: No, me either, never heard about it either. But I think about it – and how would you figure it out? Well, that baby should have been a brother or a sister to the mother and instead, it just got some way or another attached to the mother's flesh and that's the way it went! Now, whether that's right –

MG: So, it would have been like they were twins? Maybe that was its twin.

LP: Could be! Separated from its twin brother or sister

MG: Maybe it just didn't get a chance to fully form.

LP: Just a tiny, weenie little thing.

MG: It must have been quite a sight.

LP: It was quite a deal.

MG: That was his rabbit's foot!

LP: Oh, I can remember when people were packing rabbit's feet around as good luck charms! If you had a rabbit's foot hanging on you, you had a good luck charm!

MG: What were other good luck charms? Just hearing you say that –

LP: Oh, I don't know of any other good luck charms, if I know, I've forgot! Now, how about some warm tea here?

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MG: Sure.

LP: I have one that involves my family –

MG: A superstition?

LP: When – who were they burying? Oh, they were burying Michael Riddell, my nephew, and that's not many years ago, three years ago. Now, down at old Wilkes' place, the Pridmore's' own it now, on a chunk of land, there's a nice little graveyard there and Michael was buried there. The family were all there, gathered around the graveyard and a bunch of kids got to ramblin' around. They went into a little draw, and they got the heads - each one got a horse head. Oh my, that made me feel terrible. I felt those bones should have never been moved! Now one of those horses had been shot right in the head with a .22. They toted them heads off to Medicine Hat, to the city. You know, there I was, tongue tied to say anything. I couldn't say anything to the family, but I was just deathly against what the whole works of them did. That was terrible. Old Mary Lebarge, she told me, "Never disturb bones" and I believe her. And horse's heads – they were old faithful's; they worked their lives out on that farm and why have someone tote their bones off to the city? Now that was a superstition I had - that those bones should never have been moved.

MG: Mmm-hmm.

LP: I still have a feeling that sometime if the opportunity comes up right for me to ever mention it again, I'm gonna do a little talkin' – tell them they had no business moving them bones.

SP: They wouldn't have thought of it the same way until somebody like you teaches them.

LP: Yes, they need a little teaching. Those bones were so nice in that little draw with the roses growing all around, just beautiful. Anyway, I haven't forgotten it! Maybe someone in the tribe will get a little thought from me.

MG: Yes, that's a pretty sacred thing, isn't it?

LP: They should have been left there and never disturbed. People have superstitions, but that was the one that lived with me – will live with me as

long as I live. Now the family don't know that I was ever burnt down about the whole go-around, but they may someday, if the opportunity comes up right. If they go blowin' about their dinosaur skulls, it's gonna be trouble! I made up my mind!

MG: Were there ever dinosaurs? One of your stories in your book is called "Big Bones" and it talks about the big bone that man brought down that was 5 feet!

LP: That was my brother, Ralph. He claims that our neighbours, they were ranchers, one time they came down to the place with bones – I don't know how big they were – they were tremendous! Well, the thing was, it never was true!

MG: Oh! This was Ralph, your brother, with his storytelling? (Laughing)

LP: Yes! That's why Gladys and Lena and I were so sorry when he passed on; we heard no more of these fantastic stories! These wild dreams he had!

MG: What a great story! I was picturing the big bones. And when you were talking I was thinking – wow that's big!

LP: It was only a dream- his dream.

MG: Oh, he must have been good to have as a storyteller, my goodness!

LP: Gladys and Lena and I missed his stories; no more listening to his big dreams. We wondered how he thought these things up so quickly.

MG: Maybe he had a captive and willing audience; he liked to entertain his little sisters!

LP: You heard about the Rock Pile up at Gaff's? Have you been there?

MG: I haven't heard about that.

LP: Some claim that people went there and worshipped – well, there's a lot of stories. But the fact is, it's right there in plain English. Back behind the Rock Pile is a ledge of rock as high as the top of that cupboard still

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standing there and no doubt, a piece of that rock fell off and landed down over the knoll. Through the thousands of years of erosion, the rock split into stones –sandstone. It's beautiful to see! People have got their initials in the rocks that have been there for, I would say, hundreds of years. But anyway, one time, my brother and a friend of his went up to the Rock Pile and looking around, brother Ralph found a trunk with a set of drawers, perfectly made out of sandstone! Can you imagine? Pulling a drawer out of a cabinet made of sandstone?

MG: Like the Flintstones!

LP: Well, that's quite a thing to see! But no doubt the Indians camped up around there because I've picked up the odd bead, but they never worshipped that place. No.

MG: So what's the legend about people worshipping that place? What's that story?

LP: Oh, some of them think – I don't know – it goes back to a religion of some sort – I've heard that. Just what it's all about, I don't know. But I don't believe in any of it.

MG: But the rock is something you worship?

LP: Well, you should see it. It's quite a sight to see. There's a road from Fort Walsh up to the Rock Pile. The tourists can walk from the road up to the Rock Pile. It would be a nice walk, wouldn't it? It would be a lovely walk.

MG: So there were probably lots of Native people around there throughout history?

LP: Lots of them, lots of half-breeds. Lots and lots of them around Fort Walsh. Old Mary Lebarge told me that there were little trails from where they'd walked to see one another – they would use little paths to get from one place to another. I've got a list of the names of all of them. They are pretty much all put to rest up in the old Fort Walsh Cemetery. I've got the names of all of them.

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SP: Would you and the kids find lots of arrowheads and hammerheads when you would go walking?

LP: Oh, dear, we used to go arrowhead hunting- well for Indian artefacts for years. We would go pretty near to the Montana border and through the Sandhills. We've got some beautiful collections out there in the old log house. It was wonderful.

MG: Connected you to the history of the region, wouldn't it? Amazing.

LP: Oh yes, lots of Indian circles to look at. I told the power outfit when they went through there that they weren't to destroy no Indian circles. And they never – they obeyed me!

MG: Oh, is that ever wonderful that you said that to them.

LP: Oh, well, they are so sacred as far as I'm concerned. They are just something to hang on to and want to hang on to.

MG: I'm sure their ancestors are smiling on you for saying that, they probably appreciate that.

LP: And I'm sure when they built that Cypress (Lake) Dam that they must have uprooted hundreds and hundreds of Indian Tipi Rings to make that dam. But I don't know for sure, so I shouldn't think about it, should I?

MG: They had Tipi Rings – did they have burial sites, too do you think?

LP: Oh yes, the Indians had burial sites.

MG: Did they mark them?

LP: They usually went around some of them with a ring of stones. Some of them never had any markings on them. I know that.

MG: So, sometimes you could just stumble on them – like you wouldn't know they were there?

LP: Yeah, well. I don't know. There's hundreds of unmarked graves

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throughout this country – hundreds of Indian graves. Chuck and Kyley's property out here, just about three miles out of town, south – there's an old pasture field that's kind of flat on top and there must be ten or fifteen graves there, but the Indians in town here know. Some of their kinfolk are buried up there. They know all about it.

SP: And that will likely all stay pasture land?

LP: Yes, it's in the pasture field.

MG: What do they mean when they say "Native grass" or "Virgin Soil"?

LP: Well, it's never been stirred up or ploughed or anything.

MG: Imagine that.

LP: Soil with the Native grass on it.

MG: Wow. Sometimes when I'm looking out the window when I'm driving I try to imagine how that maybe has never been touched before, that soil, and it just boggles my mind that it's never been touched!

LP: Well, there's lots of land around here that's never been touched by plough, isn't there, Suzie?

SP: That's right. One of the few places left.

LP: In the world, maybe! Did they ever find out what started that fire in Braun's? Now we're getting down into the south country?

SP: No, not yet, not that they are telling people in general, anyway, I haven't heard.

LP: Well, as a rule those detectives that are looking at what started the fire can find out what started it.

SP: If they found anything out, they haven't let everybody know yet.

LP: That was a sad deal; Johnny did not deserve that, whatever happened. He didn't hurt anybody. I can remember when I was a young girl – now the

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Indians would be from Maple Creek here, from the reservation - they'd go down to Fort Benton in Montana to attend a Sundance. They did that every summer for a long, long time. There was one summer one came by home and got a _ from Mother. Stanley was his name and he knew Mom and Dad in kind of a way. Anyway, they'd go by there and have their old dogs and squaws in the wagons and it was a beautiful sight to see. That went on for quite a little while. And then, all at once, it stopped. I was reading in my diary and all of sudden thought, "White man's been up to something again!" Sure enough, the census went across that land they used to travel you see; that land had been bought. It was wide open spaces pretty much when they were travelling, and I was right. They were fenced out. Never saw that sight again, but it was something to see when they were going by home.

MG: Imagine not letting people go to pray? Imagine trying to stop people from going to pray. How awful.

LP: Well, the people who put up them fences wouldn't be thinkin' anything about that would they? They bought the land and they were fencing their land off for their own use. They never had an inkling it would interfere with the old Indians. No, they never thought that.

MG: Imagine that sight - seeing them all going.

LP: Yes, it was something to see. And another time Stanley and his wife and little kids came to our place and we were just having dinner. My dad had made a deal with Stanley for a horse and Stanley came in and had dinner – he sat in with us and had dinner – but his wife and little kids got out of the wagon – it was a hot day – and stayed under the wagon for shade. They wouldn't come in the house for dinner. So, my mother got busy and she took them out a nice dinner. I don't know why she wouldn't come in, but she had her reasons.

MG: They were a Native family?

LP: They were pretty much straight Indian. Well, anyway, Stanley bought this horse off Dad. It was a stallion and he took it home and only had it a while when it got into a swamp with niggerbobs – niggerheads – you know what them niggerheads are? They might come up like this and then there's a little grass on top, then there would be water then another niggerhead.

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Well, old Prince got mixed up in one of them and he died, and Stanley didn't have his horse for very long. No.

MG: Aw, that'd be a shame!

LP: One time I saw something out at the coast. I was down at the wharf with my sister and a boat came in and off that boat got a squaw and there must have been at least four little kids with her. They squatted down on a little old boat and I said to my sister Margy, "What's taking place there?" She said that they are gathering up a bunch of them Indians from way up north on Vancouver Island and taking them to where they think there is a better place to live. Now – why gather them up and take them away? Unless they were happy about it, but it looked like to me it was a sad deal.

MG: Oh, yeah, they moved them around a lot up there.

LP: They did! Just gather them up and put them where they want to. I think that was absolutely terrible!

MG: Like out west and here, they banned the Sundance and they banned the – the Government banned the Sundance and on the West Coast, the equivalent, the potlatch!

LP: Oh, I've seen some of them set-ups for potlatch!

MG: The government banned that from 1885 to 1950 before they lifted the ban!

LP: Oh, they had no business anymore than the Indian had messing in with our religion! They are praying!

MG: Yes and they drove all that underground – like when you were talking about them going to the Sundance - they had to do that all in secret – they had to creep around or else they could get arrested. The government would confiscate all of their goods, their sacred objects, their artwork, their HBC things and you know where a lot of it ended up? In museums and the Indian agents themselves at times took it! The Indian agents have bigger collections of those stolen things than you could possibly imagine!

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LP: Oh my.

MG: And those most sacred of things – medicine bundles, masks, they stole them and put them in their offices in Ottawa. It's heartbreaking.

LP: Well, it absolutely is – heartbreaking. Terrible! Did they ever give all those treasures back to the Indians?

MG: That's just what they are doing now.

LP: Well, they better.

MG: They are just starting to do that now – that's what my work in BC has been – I have worked with some of the elders to find their sacred objects, which they found in a museum in Washington – to help get them returned!

LP: The Indians on the West Coast even got a bunch of bones back!

MG: Yes, that's a real cause for celebration!

LP: That's years back, but I saw that on TV- that they got the bones back. What in the heck did the U.S. take them bones down there for?

MG: They took it because they saw it as art, or thought if they could study the bones of a Native person that they could see inside the mind of the "savage."

LP: They weren't savage! One man, when he came up to see Roger and I, he must have had three or four dogs with him. Well anyway, we weren't together very long before his parents came along to get him and he talked to them and he went home, but his dogs stayed behind. Graham sure put the move on them; he didn't want the dogs hangin' around.

SP: Was Roger quite young then?

LP: No, no! This was after we were married and it was at the old place – Roger Beirbach was just a young fellow then. You'd think that anyone with enough sense wouldn't have gone out into an electrical storm to ride like

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Roger did. You know, he was asking for trouble. He was a nice fellow and I can't imagine him ever treating himself that way.

MG: What a sad thing!

SP: I wonder if lightning came up when he was out, or..

LP: No, they say it was storming when he left the house. Well, I'd better go change my clothes if we're goin' uptown.

MG: OK.

END OF TAPE