

CONSUL MUSEUM INCORPORATED
Oral History Collection – Section 3
Collected by Consul Museum Incorporated
Cliff Smith Interview 2013 March 21

Catalogue No. 3.1

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Conducted at the home of Ann Behrman in Consul, Saskatchewan

CS = Cliff Smith: Interviewee
AB = Ann Behrman: Interviewer
YL = Yvonne Leismeister: Camera
Date: 2013 March 21

CS: I guess I better start with the folks, why they moved to start with. Years ago, like in New Brunswick—probably was the same here, I think—the youngest in the family pretty well looked after the folks. And my grandma [Elizabeth Daly Smith] had passed away (I don't remember her at all) before I was born. Dad [Thomas Lee Smith], being the youngest in the family, we moved in with Grandpa [John Smith] and that's where I was when I was born, in Bathurst, New Brunswick. We were east of Bathurst, along the bay - Bay Shore. If you look at the map, Bay Shore is right by Bathurst and we lived along this bay. I would guess probably ten miles east of Bathurst at that time. Dad was on a little farm; it was only 40 acres. They farmed a little and then he fished, too.

I remember going fishing with Dad; I was probably only four years old then. When I go back, I can still show them where I used to crawl down the ladder to get on the boat at the wharf. I still remember that part of it. In the wintertime, in order to make a living for the family at that time, he had to go to the bush, so he was gone most of the winter. The Blakleys had moved here about '27. You know where the Blakleys live right now? Mrs. Blakley [Maggie Smith Blakley] was Dad's sister.

AB: Oh really.

CS: Of course, that was Grandpa's daughter. He came out to see how things were going out in the west. Of course, they hit that good crop. He come out in '28 and that was one of the bumper crops they had at that time, and '29 was a good crop. Grandpa come back and just told Dad—and he owned the place and all —"We're going west!" You know, just like that. Grandpa owned everything. Dad has told me afterwards, "What were we supposed to do?" You know, because it was his place. We'd either have to buy it from him or go along with him, and he wanted us to go with him. They decided that they'd move west. That was in the fall of '29. I can still remember when they left there. I was five years old by then, leaving, and all the relatives, and the boohooing. I still remember a lot of that. We headed west, and it took six days and six nights to get here. My brother would have just been. . . . Well, he was born in April and this was August. No, he must

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have been a year and that much. And Flora [Smith], so there was three kids at that time, and I can remember coming out on the train, and oh, quite the thing. The only way to get any air, you had to have the windows open, and then smoke from the old steam engine would come in. Of course, I can't imagine me like that, but I was laying on the couch with my feet out the window, like a five-year-old would do, and knocked the bottle off and out the window. We happened to be, at that time, in a town somewhere so Dad got the bottle.

We come here in the fall and they were threshing at Blakleys'. They come in and picked us off the train here with a team, of course. That was the only way they had to travel in them days.

AB: You came right into Consul?

CS: Right into Consul. Dad helped. They were threshing at the Blakleys'. Those days, the crop was all cut with a binder and then threshed with a threshing machine. Dad helped Claude—Mr. Blakley's name was Claude—haul grain. I can remember going up and crawling into the wagon. Harvel [Harvel Smith, Cliff's brother] wanted to go, too, of course, so I had to hide from him. I remember I'd crawl up on the wagon wheel and get inside the box and sit down until Dad got out to the field, so he couldn't see me.

Then, that winter, my Uncle Henry (he lived up at the Smiths—the big house there; he wasn't married then) developed TB [tuberculosis] so he was in the San [the Sanatorium] in Fort Qu'Appelle. Dad looked after his cattle. He just had two or three and the horses in the winter, so that's where we stayed the first winter.

Harvel was coming two years old then and my brother, Gerald, was born on the thirtieth of January. When it was time for Gerald to be born Mrs. Carman [Edna] Smith came and stayed with Mother [Edna Dempsey Smith] and us kids went down and stayed with Carman. We raised Cain down there. There was the three of them (well, two of them at that time), and then the two of us, Flora and I. We were staying down there, and Dad had to take a team to get the doctor. I can't even imagine it now, but it happened. He drove to Vidora to get the doctor cross-country because in the wintertime everyone was using sleighs. There were lots of sleigh trails from Smiths' into Consul, but not to Vidora. That was cross-country and there was quite a lot of snow that winter. Then he got another team at Blakleys', went the rest of the way and brought the doc back. He got back in time for the birth of the baby, if you can imagine. I'm guessing it would take at least six hours. Just think, all the time he was going what he had running through his head. It was something else.

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AB: Was that Doc Johnstone?

CS: That was Doc Johnstone. That winter then, of course, Dad was looking for a farm. He'd seen that big crop in '29, too, so he was looking for a place. That's when he run onto the Tommy Watson Place we're on. Gordon and Bob Watson...his folks.

That's when we started farming. In the fall of '29, that's when the depression hit and everything was worth nothing. I hear the guys talking about the '30s. I remember Don, when we had no crop in '85, he said, "What in the world did you guys do in the '30s?" Because most people think we had no grain at all in the '30s, but there was some grain, but it was only worth eighteen cents a bushel. See the depression hit so nothing was worth nothing. It's hard to explain.

Anyway, we hit that. Then we got in the '30s, and Dad bought the farm. I can't remember anymore how much he paid for it. He couldn't pay for it because nothing was worth nothing, so then the government stepped in and paid [relief]. It wouldn't be much, but it at least gave the family something. They wouldn't let them foreclose because what good would it have been for Tommy Watson to take it back. He couldn't do nothing with it. And it wouldn't matter if he grew anything; it wasn't worth nothing anyway.

I remember Dad, in '34 or '35, we were hauling wheat to town, and I was only twelve then, and I remember driving a team behind Dad going into town with a load of wheat, too. I remember Dad getting eighteen cents a bushel. One load of wheat wouldn't even pay for a load of coal. We had to have coal for the winter. So that's why the depression; that's why nobody had nothing.

My sister and I came into Consul [by ourselves for school], and it's hard to believe, too. She would have been eight and I would have been six, and we drove a horse, and in the wintertime, a horse and a stone boat, not even a sleigh with sheives. You know what a stone boat was like, running up into the horse's heels going downhill at home there by the creek. I always hated that. We'd come in. This one day we were in here—you wouldn't remember the Bartletts, but you'd remember Dorothy Bartlett? You know Jim and Dave?

AB: Yes, yes.

CS: Ok, that's their house right at the corner there. There was a storm come up and we hooked up the old horse and we were going to go home. A real blizzard

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was on. Six and eight years old and we figured the horse would take us home, but Mrs. Bartlett sent Paul out and stopped us, wouldn't let us go. He said, "I'll help you put the horse back in the barn." Well, there's Dad sitting at home figuring these two kids are out in this storm so he had to hook his team up and come looking for us. He came in and found us at Bartlett's. She wouldn't let us go.

We drove that for two years then we quit. I don't know how come. I guess we figured we were too smart to go to school, or I was anyway. Mother started teaching us at home, and by that time there were two more. Gerald was born in January of '30, and then Ernie was born in '32, and then Hazel in '34, I think it was. No, '36 she was born, but she wouldn't have been there. There was us five kids that she taught at home and we took correspondence lessons. I never liked school too good.

In the summer I was always wondering what Dad was doing. When I got to be ten or twelve years old, I figured I was big enough to do anything. I was out helping him and school didn't mean much to me. Actually I only had the two years of school plus the little bit of correspondence, so I never got far in school.

The '30s were tough. Being young like that, we really didn't realize. I remember still that we had to get on relief. We had no money at all. We got \$17 a month for us six kids and the folks. \$17 a month, that's what we got by on.

But, like I told Don, in '85 when I was explaining to him, "We didn't have any money." [Don asked,] "What do you mean you didn't have any money?" "Well," I said, "we didn't have any money." "Well, how did you live?" [Don asked].

Mother always grew a garden, and they milked cows, then she'd sell butter and eggs; we always had chickens. You'd take them to town and you traded for sugar, salt and stuff like that, but as far as money, there just wasn't any money. That's all we got for relief, and that didn't start right away. I forget when it did start. That's how you got by. There were no phones, I told him, no power, and in the wintertime, the roads weren't good. You never drove a car in the winter. You just didn't have any money. You didn't need any money. It sounds crazy, but that's the way it was.

CF: You mentioned the Brethren Church. I don't know when that started, only what I heard. The Swiharts, the Reesors, the Stryckers all come to this country out of the Dakotas, and they were all Brethren people. Also the Palmers and the Zieglers. Ira and George Ziegler's dad was the minister of the Brethren Church.

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AB: Was it an Evangelical church?

CS: Yeah. Well, I don't know a lot about it. Mary and I were married in it. They come in here, I'd say, in the early '20s maybe. No, they come in here long before that. I'd say they come in around 1909 or 1910, so they probably built that church shortly after that. That would be my guess. In about 1932 the Church of God. . . . A couple of gals from the states, the Soderbergs, had belonged to this church in the States and they come up here. That's Charlie Soderberg's house you go by every time you come to town; the other one was about one-half mile straight west; I think there's some trees there of Sandersons'. That's where the other family lived and they got a couple of lady evangelists, they called them, to come up. That's when they started holding services here in Consul and that's where the Church of God got started. Some of them left the Brethren church at that time, but it carried on. Well, we were married in '44 and it was still going then. I don't think it was going much longer after that. Stryckers and a lot of the people started moving away. The older ones were starting to die off and the younger ones just didn't bother. You know how it goes. That's when the church started here.

AB: Wasn't there a Bible college here too?

CS: Yeah. The building right by the bakery is where it started. That was in the winter of '36-'37. There must have been 25 or 30 going there. They stayed at some of the homes around, but a lot of them boarded upstairs. Mr. and Mrs. Pettyjohn - she done the cooking and he was just handyman around there. Did you know Mose Pettyjohn, Ernest Pettyjohn's dad and mom from Merryflat? They came and done the cooking; that was in '36. Then from there it moved to Robsart where the hospital is (it's still standing there), and it was there for four or five years, and then it moved to Moose Jaw to some big house on the hill there, on the south hill and east. There was two houses just alike built there, and the one was used for the Bible school at that time.

The '30s were tough. We never had no crop until '42. Dad started in '30 (he had some crop but it wasn't worth nothing, maybe fifty cents per bushel), but in '42 they had a bumper crop, grain piled everywhere because nobody had any granaries so it was all piled outside. Then we got a wet fall and a lot of it rotted.

I started working down at Reesors' in 1940; I was just fifteen years old. I did a little thinking then. I knew the folks were hard up, but we were never hungry, never hungry. I figured it would be one less to feed, so I went to work at Reesors' there. I worked there for four years and it was just like a second home to me.

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They had a lot of pigs and sheep. At one time they had 500 ewes there plus cattle and pigs. I hauled a lot of that spoiled grain from McLuhans' to feed the pigs. That was with the team and sleigh in the winter.

In '43 Joe [Reesor] got called into the army; they went into the Air Force so I was staying here, and I got my call. I got off because Reesors delivered the milk to Consul plus Pete [Reesor] was getting up in years then. He was all alone so I never went to the army. I was too young to start with, but in later years, like in '44, I was old enough then. I was old enough to get married so I must have been old enough.

In '44 Mary and I were married. I was twenty. I was a big boy then; I had been working for five years on my own.

I took over riding the PF [short for PFRA, which stood for Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Association] pasture out here. Joe rode for that pasture when he got called so I took over that. I was running that pasture. We got the big sum of \$35 a month. When I went to work at Reesors', the government paid them \$5 a month for keeping me. He gave that to me and then gave me \$5 a month so I got \$10, but I worked like a horse. I used to be able to work. I can't imagine. I was only 15 years old, and I milked 6 cows, fed all them sheep and cattle. You worked all day. You forked hay on and forked it off, but it never hurt me any. We were married in '44 and that winter I went down to Retteraths'. Everett Blakley [and I], besides breaking horses, we used to unload carloads of coal in town for Lief Helmerson. We got \$10 for unloading a carload of coal. We thought we were really in the hay in those days. That's the way we spent that winter.

Russ Kennedy was looking after land for this Dick Russell and that's where James Blakley lives now. Northeast of that, that's where we used to live; we used to live a mile from where we live now, a mile west. There's a couple of granaries, just on the other side of the creek there. There's two granaries there now.

AB: Is that where Paddy and Saloma [French] lived?

CS: No. They lived across the creek from us. This was before we moved here. In '52 we moved over. That was some of Dick Russell's land. I bought this land from him, but Russ Kennedy was looking after it for him. I bought that land then and went farming in the spring of '45.

We moved back to that house; I don't know why she ever stuck with me. That shack of a house. They used to store wheat in it. In '42 they had filled it with

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wheat, and, of course, the mice were playing hide and go seek up in the attic all the time. I hate to even think about it. Anyway, we thought we had the world by the tail. It sounds bad, but everybody was in the same boat.

In the spring of '46, I had the misfortune of my horse falling with me and broke my leg. We were up by where Howard McKelvey lives now, and Henry [Smith] on the hill. In those days everybody's horses ran loose, so I was rounding up my own horses because I had some to break in the spring.

I was up by Howard McKelvey's there and they headed north on me. My horse—she was a real good horse—was trying to get ahead of them. That spring was really wet; that was the 4th of March. There was water everywhere in the sloughs, but the roads weren't open so they had trails through the fields. I went through a slough which probably had a foot of water in it. I did not know until afterwards that Walter Holeha had got stuck in there with his dual-wheeled truck and there was a big hole. My horse hit that—it wasn't the horse's fault; she couldn't see it—and down she went. It was really greasy in the morning (you know how the ground freezes up at night); it was already thawing out so down she went. She went flying by me, and about that time there was a rock sticking out of the frozen ground about that far, and I just hit that and broke. I don't remember now. My uncle had seen me go by, then he seen the horses turn and go north, but then there was a hill so he couldn't see me. Here I was on the other side of this hill, so it's a good job he was still looking for me. The horse came back. I thought I could probably get up, so I got a hold of one of the strings from the saddle and got started up, and then my leg bent here. So I knew that was out. I threw my cap in the air and he seen that, otherwise I don't know if I'd have still been laying there or what.

That was no-man's land. He came down there and he said, "Well I can't do anything." And I said, "Well, go get Alec McKelvey." They never got along; they fought like cats and dogs. And he did. They forgot their differences; they got me in the back of Henry's truck. I got as far as where we used to live then, straight west there through the fields, and then Dad came over. I was just lying in the back of Henry's truck trying to get through these mud holes and it wasn't good. Anyway, we got there and they got an old couch. They put me on that and that was worse. Then there were no roads across to the highway, so we had to go to Consul and around and then to Swiharts'. I said, "I can't stand this any longer." I was bouncing around in the back of that truck. "Well, what are we going to do?" [they asked]. I said, "Get Wilson to drag me" (he had a four-door car at that time), "drag me in his car." Wilson was there. "How are we going to do that?" I said, "Just grab me and pull me in." He did and then I passed out, but not for

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very long. It would have been nice if I could have stayed there but I didn't. We headed to Maple Creek and the roads from there to the park were all blocked, too, so we went out through the fields, and crossing planks over the ditches. Finally they got me there in eight hours. I got over it after that. They put a body cast on me.

AB: No maggots.

CS: No, no maggots. I was in that for nine weeks.

AB: Who helped out at home?

CS: The neighbors. They come and put my crop in for me. It was all done before I got [home].

So we were in the farming business then. '45 was the first year until '50. Boy, we had a beautiful crop; another of those 40 bushel crops! It just waved in the wind. Then we got a frost on the 13th of August and it just cooked it. It wasn't worth nothing. I thought there's got to be something. So I cut some with the binder, and got my father-in-law's threshing machine and threshed some and it was nothing but bran. Just nothing but bran. That didn't help. That was six years we had nothing.

In '51 it was a fair crop, but we never got it off until the 7th of December. It was raining all fall. I remember Mary out there hauling grain with that half-ton truck with them two little kids, but we got by. Then '52 was the big one! Of course, I worked out. I worked for Seifert for two winters to put food on the table; we were never hungry.

The kids start coming along. Doreen was born in '47, Don in '49, Deb in '54. We had three children. Life went on and kept improving a little all the time.

Doreen went through as a nurse. I don't know what year she graduated, but she graduated and nursed for quite a while. She married Larry Kohls.

And then Don - Kathy come on the scene.

And then Deb and Garth. She met Garth in Bible School. Garth Reesor. So anyway, Deb and Garth were married.

Doreen had two boys and they lived at Golden Prairie until they separated.

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Don had the three girls. Deb and Garth had two girls and a boy. They live at Wetaskiwin. He was in the ministry; he was a preacher when they were married. They served over in Haiti for seven years.

AB: In the twenties and thirties, what happened when somebody died? It wouldn't be the same way it is now.

CS: I'll tell you the story about my grandpa. He died in '32 in Shaunavon Hospital; he died of pneumonia. Dad had a Model T at that time. He probably went and got him, I guess. He brought him in [our house]. There was only one bedroom in that old house and the rest of us slept around wherever; there were six of us kids. They put him [Grandpa] in this one bedroom in the coffin. We always put up ice in the fall. You had a tub of ice under the coffin to keep it [the body] cool. You couldn't keep the body too long. Then you went and dug the hole. (I didn't for him, but I dug lots of them). You dug it yourself. Elmer Palmer, Jim & George Palmer's dad, was sort of our undertaker; he organized the thing. You had a service, you had a preacher. We had a democrat, a light wagon is what it was; you put the coffin in there. Old Jim and Gyp was the team. I felt so sorry for those horses because they trotted them all the way to town, which is nothing now. I was just a kid and I thought oh, those horses are going to be so tired. All I was thinking about was the poor horses. That's how they looked after them [the dead].

AB: But they didn't have undertakers like they do now.

CS: No, no.

AB: What about farming? How has it evolved since you started?

CS: It started with the horses and harrows and the way the wind blew.

Now the technology, besides the sprays and equipment, and they farm better. They don't work [cultivate] the fields so much and it holds the moisture so much different. I can see a big difference. Like at home there, when he [Don] breaks up the grass he has to work the field some to get it going again. A field he has just sprayed, and not worked, always has a better crop. It holds the moisture a lot better. When they started that at first, I thought *forget it; what a mess!* There was the old stubble on there. I said, "How do you grow a crop like that?" But that's how you grow it.

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CS: At my grandpa's funeral, they sang that song, "Where you Lead Me, I Will Follow", and something spoke to me. Down the road a few years I know who it was; it was nothing but the Lord told me.

AB: Do you find that your religion has carried you through good times and the bad times?

CS: Oh absolutely. I know many times, but I'll tell you a couple of them. We've all had narrow escapes. When I was riding the lease out here, I was riding the same horse, this good horse (but everything had to work right for her). They always put all the cattle in the lease and we had to mark every calf; every owner had a different mark on the calf. I had roped this calf by the hind legs. I pulled my horse up to stop and the one line broke. She turned around and took a look at me and took about two jumps and off I went backwards. My foot was caught in the stirrup and away we went, wide open. She kept kicking at me, but the rope that I'd caught the calf with was on the outside of me and kept me right in against the horse, so she couldn't get a good kick at me. Finally, nothing but the Lord told me, "Grab that rope that's coming behind you and pull". I grabbed the rope that the calf was still on and pulled my shoe off and got off, but I had lost my glasses and my cap. She ran about another half mile. My brother was with me, but he couldn't do nothing about it. I grabbed his horse and took after her. She finally stopped and turned around and looked at it like she was supposed to. Here I was taking the rope off the calf and I seen him blink. In about five minutes he was up and going. She had drug him that long by the hind legs, so maybe I'd have lasted about that long, too.

AB: How did irrigation get started and how did it change?

CS: That's a big story; well, not a big story but it just changed this country. Old Jimmy Gardiner was in at that time; he knew he had to do something. He was a good old premier. He decided we needed to do something for this country; a lot of it was still grassland. We could have had the cattle, but we didn't have anything for them to eat, so that's when the irrigation got started. He decided to build those two dams on each side of the lake [Cypress] and then dump the water back in the creek again and then take it out. Like at the Reesors here; these old ditches were in at that time and so were the ones on the other side, too. That's an outfit by the name of Richardson. Richardson and Gilchrist. You probably don't know that, but that's where Gilchrist homesteaded when they come to the country first is the half section on the creek where we live.

AB: Oh really. That would be Rube and Sandy's dad?

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CS: Yes, Rube and Sandy's dad. Rube was old enough. It's in one of the history books there. He would have been in his twenties; he was home. That's where it started. They built this weir; Richardsons did all the other side of the creek and it was all done with horses.

That was '45. First they built the dams, then dug the ditches. The ditch from the dam took a lot of dirt moving; it is really deep. You've been up to Brosts', and you know how deep that ditch is. By that time they were running Cats [tracked tractors] and scrapers. To start with all they had was dump wagons [pulled by horses]. They were giving all the farmers work and that's why they had dump wagons. All they had was a Cat and an elevating scraper. They elevated the dirt into the dump wagon and then they'd pull that old gumbo, a chunk the size of that, and then crawling over that with horses. It was terrible. I don't know how long the horses stayed with it, but they finally ended up doing it with Cats. They had great big tents and there'd be a hundred teams. I never worked on it, but Everett Blakley did and different ones around. The east end was the same. All the people from Robsart and Vidora, that's where they got work, and they never got much. Wages were poor, but it was something. You know in the thirties they had no money, so anything was worth something. It was hard on horses.

AB: Do you think the area would have developed the way it has without irrigation?

CS: Oh no. Okay, that was 1937 and they wouldn't have been able to grow any feed of any kind until 1940 when we had a good year. Grasshoppers flew in the fall of 1939 and cleaned this country right out. They darkened the sun when they came in. They left the same way; they decided it was time to move; they were starving and they knew enough to get out while they still had the strength. They came in from the southeast. Reesors always had gardens and they marched through and ate that garden and cleaned it out; you can't even imagine. It got so bad, there where Billy French used to live, the house that used to be Jack Scrivens at that time. He used to keep all his stuff in such good shape and they actually ate the paint off the house. I never figured out why it didn't kill them; they never ate all the paint, just speckled. The women couldn't hang the clothes on the clothesline or they'd eat the clothes. So then they laid their eggs; then in 1940 we had good rain and had a bumper crop, but then those eggs hatched. That's when they brought poisoned sawdust in that we spread on the fields; they thought they could stop them. They fought them I don't know how long. I remember hauling the stuff out. I worked at Reesors here. There were things you were supposed to spread it with, but some were spreading it with their hands. I

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remember old Mapstone trying to save crop, but the grasshoppers ended up eating it all anyway. Then they got so they starved themselves out, then they flew out. That fall, Ted, Wilson and I and Earl Palmer, with there being no harvest here, went up north around Fox Valley and harvested that fall, just to get a little money because there was no work here. The grasshoppers flew out early enough that the crop started growing again and even headed out before the frost came so we had oodles of feed that fall. So that was the first year we had any feed since they started building these dams. You couldn't have cattle because you didn't have anything to feed them. Even in the early '40s we used to put up Russian thistle before the irrigation really got going.

So then the irrigation got going and I was the first one on that ditch. That was in 1945. I had 7 acres I had seeded to alfalfa so I had hay. I must not have needed the hay or else I needed money worse, because I sold my hay to Olsons over at Robsart. They ran the dairy in Robsart and they wanted this alfalfa hay. You did whatever you had to do. Then the cattle herds started building up. At the same time they were building the dams they were fencing when the government started the PF Pastures.

The way things are going on today, well I can't believe it [this is in regard to the federal government giving up PFRA pastures]. Stanley Schmidt and Oscar and a bunch of them guys they'd have wished they'd have kept their land. They [the government] told them it would be so much better to get the PF, so they turned in all their leases. I don't know if they called it a co-op in those days (I don't think there was such a thing), but an organization they were running. Like Bob Murrays and Schmidts, they were running cattle down there then. When the PF come in here and wanted to take this land over, they turned it over to the PF. And then they come and put all new fences in, and they paid the guys for digging the post holes. You dug them all by hand. You just dug a hole and when you got it done then you kept walking until you found a stake where there was no hole yet and you dug one there. Most of the time it was with a crowbar and digging that dry old ground. Oh brother! But it was a job. They'd have a foreman there and he probably had, I'm guessing, thirty men under him. He probably drove them from one hole - I forget. I wasn't on there either. No, I was too young. No, they wouldn't have taken me then, even though I could have done it, but I was too young. That'd be child labour. They'd have you for it now.

CS: No. You couldn't borrow then. I remember a guy, Jim Maxwell, wanted to go to B.C. for the winter. He had 5 head of cattle, one was a yearling and one a calf. He said he needed \$500. He would sell me two cows and wanted me to winter the other ones for him. We had a deal made, but I needed \$500. I went to the

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Bank of Montreal in Eastend and asked if I could borrow \$500. I gave him what I had. I had two or three cows and farm land, but that did not mean anything. You could not borrow five cents on land in those days. The banker asked, "Can you get your dad to sign for it?" I said, "I probably can, but I'm not going to do that." "Well," he said, "you've got to have somebody to sign for you." "No," I said, "if I can't get \$500..." I told him what I had. I had a calf and a yearling. I was going to put the calf in 4-H as at that time seniors could put a calf in, and I was going to do that. I'd fatten him up and he'd be worth so much in the spring. He wouldn't lend me \$500 unless Dad would sign for it, so I wouldn't do it. Jim must have had enough money because he told me, "Winter my cows and you can pay me in the spring." So, I did and I got enough for that 4-H calf to pay for that thing, and I had another one or two left over. No, you couldn't borrow nothing.

Even south of town, and that was '63, all the government would lend us then, when we bought that seven sections of land from Roy Gold, was \$20,000. He wanted \$30,000 for seven sections. All I could borrow was \$20,000, and I was well-established as far as my land here and I had some cows. That's what we were buying it for was to run cattle. That was the limit that you could borrow was \$20,000, but he wanted thirty. I had to go and find a partner, so that's when I got the Swihart boys.

Oh! I knew I didn't have enough land at home. I had to do something. It figured out to \$9.85 an acre; that's what that place cost us. Now one quarter [section] of it is worth that. You need a few shots in the arm like that when you are in the farming business or cow business or whatever.

When looking back at all the guys in the Robsart lease that moved up to Rolling Hills to the irrigation.... They went to the church over in Robsart and we got to know them really well and visit them up there. In later years they wished they had never moved. They moved in '39 and left this country, and that's when things started turning around. All they got was a bunch of raw prairie and hard work; they worked like dogs up there, irrigating.

Not everyone made it in this country, but anybody that was willing to work and buckle down and not spend (that's what scares me today, the spending that is going on when you are not sure where it [your income] is coming from; you hope it's coming from there). As long as you know where it's coming from, it's all right to borrow money, and you better be careful because everything doesn't always pan out the way you want it to. Anybody that stuck it out here, and was willing to work and plan, are still here and turning the farms over to the kids.

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YL: Can I ask how you met Mary?

CS: Well, of course, we went to the church together. They were only five miles away. I have to say she is the only one I ever went with. I sort of fell in love, or whatever you call it, when I was about sixteen. It seems she was the only gal I had any interest in. I was only twenty and she was twenty-one when we were married. It's been a good life. I told her different times I did not know why she ever stuck with me.

She was born in Vidora, right in the house. In fact, she just about didn't make it; she was only three pounds when she was born. The old doc there, Doc Johnstone, I don't know if he figured she wasn't alive or what. He just set her down, in a shoe box, on the oven door. I guess he thought she was dead. The midwife, the lady that was there to help, said, "That baby's not dead. I saw her move." So they pushed her into the oven a little farther where it was warmer and, anyway, she made it.

Last year somebody asked if I knew how to irrigate. "Well", I said, "I should because I started in 1940". So what does that figure out to, sixty-five years? I've irrigated every year except one when we did not have any water in the lake [Cypress Lake]. I've irrigated every year since.

Two years ago I had a young couple who were just getting started say, "Cliff, if you were starting over again, what would you do?" And I thought a minute, "Well I don't know nothing else, so I guess I would come right back here and start farming again. We have never been hungry; we've always had a roof over our head and it's a good place to raise a family, so what more do we need?"

The End

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