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Interviewee = BR: Bill Reynolds

Interviewer = AB: Ann Behrman

Camera = JP: Joan Parsonage

BR: I was born to Charlotte and Bert Reynolds on the 24th of April 1935. My siblings are Ron, who is five years older than me, and then brother Ken, brother Gene, sister Bette, Bob and Lyn.

I'm not sure what year Dad came over, around 1920 I think. Mom came over in 1930. They were married in England and came over here. For a few years they had to move in with a couple of bachelors, uncles. It wasn't very compatible I guess. They built their own place in 1932 probably, north and west of where Little West School used to be, where Dave lives now.

I don't remember a lot about my preschool years, but a little bit. I remember the old house; it was only about 18 [feet] x 24 [feet]. We lived in it with Mom and Dad. One bedroom, a pantry, front room about the size of this one of Ann's. There was a cook stove in it, kind of a cot where my brother and I slept and, I don't know, we survived in that for quite a few years, until 1942 I guess. I don't remember a lot about those earlier years. Well, I was just a young guy. I remember lots of snow. I was out with Dad to the old log barn in the wintertime to milk cows and feed horses. The old house, of course, there was no power, heated with an old wood stove, and a heater we had to stoke up every night.

I think then in about 1942, I was supposed to start Grade Two or Grade One. I wouldn't do correspondence like brother Ron did; he was very studious and he would do his correspondence. I wouldn't sit down and learn any of that stuff so we had to finally move. We changed places with our uncles who were living south of Senate and then we went to Zentner School from there.

We went to Zentner School from Grade 1 and then in 1946 they moved the school up to Little West and then we went there. While I was in Zentner School though I was with—oh there was one Zentner boy, there was a Paul kid, there were Messmer kids, and there was Wagner kids, Roshau kids, and there was Arnold kids. I was just talking about that to my brother this morning. Every one of those places there is not even a building left anymore except for one or two; they are all gone. Hardly anybody even remembers most of those families. So I started school there in 1942, started in Grade 1 and went there until '46 when the school was built in Little West. I think maybe I went to Senate for a little while. Zentner School closed in about 1945 so I went to Senate School in '46. Little West must have started in the fall of '46 or '47. Went to school there with the Sanderson kids, Jones kids, Eddy Hagle, Glen West. It wasn't a very big school. I think Irma Wilson was our first teacher, I guess. I only went there until Grade 9 and then I went farming.

In 1950 when I was 16 I did work for Roy and Jim Paterson that summer—stacked square bales, I guess—and that fall I come home and helped with harvest and I never left after that. I stayed there for a good many years, I guess.

In 1956 I was married to Marlene Bartz who was a - or Marlene, not Bartz, Marlene Graham—who was a sitter at Little West. We got married in 1956, I guess, and raised a family of four boys. We decided to split our ways about 15 years after we were married, I guess. I was alone with the kids for a few years.

family of four boys. We decided to split our ways about 15 years after we were married, I guess. I was alone with the kids for a few years.

Then I married Donna Jones and we had a son, Dave. He's taken over the farm now. Before that we adopted two girls, put them both through university. They're both well-educated now and now working at their chosen professions.

AB: And you farmed the same land from the time you started til now, just added to it?

BR: Yeah, I farmed all the land that Dad had and when my uncles retired we farmed that land. I kind of farmed with Ken there for years. In 1965, I guess it was, we bought the Dennis Place, farmed that with Ken until he sold out. I'm not sure exactly what year that was, and then in about 1985 we sold all the original place down there by Leismeisters where my uncles lived (we ended up owning that). Then we sold that to Peter and Tony Leismeister and then we bought Leo Jones' Place. The boys are still farming that today.

AB: And did you straight farm or did you raise cattle, too?

BR: No, we ran quite a few cows in a bit of a feedlot there for quite a few years. In fact, we fed over 400 head of calves there for a few winters. We acquired rights in the PFRA and Co-op pasture. Over the years I was on PF [PFRA] Boards, Consul Rink Board, Consul Curling Rink, Consul Hall Board and Consul Senior Citizens Board. [*Laughs*]

AB: Tell us about the feedlot, Bill, and the breeds you had in it and the diseases you had to fight.

BR: I think back in about '72, I guess, quite a few of us took AI [Artificial Insemination] courses in town here. We went through the AI bit and tried exotic cattle; they were okay in the feedlot. We fed just about whatever we had; we had mostly Herefords at that time over at Leo's. We bought a few, always came down to Consul sales here and bought them. Pretty well bought what we could get a bargain on because we were feeding them up to finish; they would all grade. We fed four to five hundred head, not for a lot of years, but probably for 10 years we did that. The cows, we tried the exotics; they did not pan out that good then we got back to Herefords. There is probably a little Hereford in them yet, but mostly Black and Red Angus now. They don't, at the farm there, they don't fatten them anymore, but they still do winter the calves. They sell them to a guy who sells natural beef, so the boys don't do any—well, they do vaccinate—but no Ralgro or no antibiotics in them.

AB: Why do you think that Red and Black Angus have got to be so predominant?

BR: I know why the Black Angus got so predominant for us, because there was a feedlot we used to sell them to in Alberta, and he said one year if you have a red cow with a white face don't send it to me. He really didn't give us any choice. It was the buyers that told us where we were going.

AB: I wonder why?

BR: I don't know. They were into that marbled beef, I guess. I guess all feedlots weren't that way because there is still red/white face cattle, but he was buying our cattle and he didn't want them so that pretty well forced us to change or else we had to go somewhere else.

AB: Did you have trouble with disease in the feedlot?

BR: You always had a little bit of trouble, but nothing very serious. I think some years we would lose one or two, but we always kept our loss down to 2% or something like that. Some years probably a half a percent, maybe some up to 3%. We never had a lot of trouble with disease.

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We had pneumonia the odd year, not that often we'd have to take the whole bunch and just put them through and give them a shot of long-acting antibiotics. We usually would start feeding them pretty heavy sometime in the winter, about in January. Usually by June they were gone at 1100 to 1300 pounds so we pushed them pretty hard, but we made good money there for a few years doing that. Then a lot of things changed, and they wanted us to contract them. We tried contracting them, but that didn't work out all that good for us because they wanted them a certain weight at a certain time and certain everything and it just didn't work. We didn't want to comply with all those things so we kind of got away from it.

AB: When you were AI-ing what breeds did you use?

BR: We experimented with everything. We tried Simmental; we had mostly Simmental, but we did the other breeds. What we did like when we were AI-ing were the Simmentals and the Simmental Crosses. We got out of them; we still had Simmental cows and we really liked crossing them with Red Angus. They sure made a good cross. In fact if we could still get Simmental Cross Red Angus cows we would like to have them.

AB: When you were a kid, or a young man, what were some of the things you did for entertainment?

BR: In my really younger days we were so far apart. Where we lived there, there was mostly bachelors, not many little kids to play with that were very close. We played lots of ball, then played lots of shinny hockey on the lakes. The Sandersons always had a rink their dad made for them. We used to go there to skate. After that we played a little ball in leagues and hockey. Then I've curled continuously since 1958, I guess. 50-how many years?

AB: Lots of dances?

BR: Lots of dances. Yeah. Done lots of dancing.

AB: When was the rink first built in Consul? And what was it like?

BR: The rink was a Centennial Project; I think it was finished in 1968. There was a lot of Minor Hockey back then. There was up to about 70 girls figure skating at that time. I should just mention who the original— As well as I remember, the original rink board that got it started was Raymond Stirling, Leo Jones, Joe Geiger, Victor Fandruck, myself, Ken Wagner, and I am probably missing somebody, but that was some of the main ones that were involved. Raymond Stirling was secretary for a good many years and then Joe Geiger took it over. I forget who the chairman was at that time, maybe Leo Jones. I don't remember the curling [board members]. The curling rink started in 1958; that was the first year they curled, 1958. I got in an argument about that, argued with Cliff Smith and he knew what year it started because that was the year that Kit Stirling died, and they had to drive up to the cemetery and look at the date on her gravestone. *[Laughter]* It was either '58 or '59.

AB: And that was when they started the rink?

BR: That was the first year they curled in it. Yeah. It was years after that they put the artificial ice in. 1960-something.

AB: Tell us about your kids and what they are doing and where they are at.

JP: And you can also think of just some stories, too.

BR: My kids have pretty well travelled all over, well, not too far away, actually. When is

JP: And you can also think of just some stories, too.

BR: My kids have pretty well travelled all over—well, not too far away actually. Wynn is the oldest one; he's in Eastend. He's in construction, married to Laurie. She was Laurie Cooke and they have been married for over 25 years which is hard to believe. Jerry is on the farm, part of the farm. Brett works for CPR; he's in Gull Lake. Neil is in Calgary with two daughters and a son. He had two daughters. He lost one daughter to cancer when she was only 12 years old, and his second daughter is 26 and she is fighting cancer right now. [Editor's note: She passed away in 2015.]

Where did I get to? Neil. April and Lee, we adopted those two Metis girls; they both got good educations. April is down in Virginia; she is a Nurse Practitioner. I was down to visit her this fall [2014]. Lee is in Saskatoon. Dave lives where I used to live on the farm. He's a farmer, rancher, handyman, truck driver, whatever, trying to make a buck. Jerry is married to Colleen and she just retired from teaching last summer. Dave is married to Tami and she is still teaching. They have two kids.

After Donna and I split, there was still kids at home, so I had kids in school for 36 years. I don't know if that is a record or not, but that's a long time. There were still kids in school after Donna left, just Dave I guess. I farmed there for a few years by myself and then eventually when we bought Leo and Irene's place, and Dave and Tami got married they wanted my home place, so I moved over. I lived in Leo and Irene's trailer where they were for a few years until Shirley [Sanderson] and I got married in 2005, I guess.

AB: Can you tell us some of the changes you have seen in farming since you started?

BR: In about '46, Dad finally bought a tractor; before that he farmed with horses. We had one of the first threshing machines in the country. I can remember threshing; we used to thresh bales and bundles and stacks. I hauled grain to Govenlock when I was 15 years old with a 1950 Dodge truck. I remember that—the year before I had my driver's licence.

My earliest memory is our dad farming with two horses, mostly I guess, and an old 1530 International tractor that he shared with his uncles. It had lugs and steel wheels. I used to move it back and forth, eleven miles. I don't know, it must have taken him all day. In 1946 he bought an Allis Chalmers tractor; it was on rubber and that's what he farmed with. A six-foot one-way [disc plough] and a twelve-foot press drill [seeding implement], I think. He only farmed 200 acres, I guess. From then he advanced to a Cockshutt 40. That was about the time I started helping to farm, I guess. We farmed with that. We finally advanced to fifteen-foot discer. I think our first combine we bought in '48 or '49, maybe '50 or '51. In '52 there was a real big crop; I remember we had a good crop then and had to hire some help to combine it. Then as the years went by we got a little bit bigger, and bigger tractors. Now of course, the boys are farming with a tractor that's damn near 300 horsepower and pulling 40 feet. But they have all got into chemical; there is hardly any summerfallow, mostly all chemical farming. I don't think my family need to farm anymore [land]. But, man, the farms are getting so big anymore. They talk about these guys that are farming 20,000 acres, and my god, I don't know how they keep up to it or even know what they own for land. Even around here, there are guys farming six, seven thousand acres.

The grain handling has changed so much. We don't have an elevator anymore, or a wheat board or a wheat pool. My dad would turn over in his grave if he knew there was no more wheat board, no more wheat pool and everything had to be trucked somewhere, to Maple Creek or beyond. And there are so many different crops anymore, like canola, peas, chick peas, coriander or whatever it is. They're getting into different stuff than that, too.

JP: What was the machine that you thought that made the biggest change in your life?

BR: Oh, I guess the biggest change in my life was probably just the tractor. I remember Dad getting up in the morning, going and getting the horses in, harnessing them, came in for breakfast then he'd go out until maybe ten o'clock. He'd come in, say the horses had to have a rest, then go back out again until noon. And then if it got hot in the

Dad getting up in the morning, going and getting the horses in, harnessing them, came in for breakfast then he'd go out until maybe ten o'clock. He'd come in, say the horses had to have a rest, then go back out again until noon. And then if it got hot in the afternoon he would quit for a while and go back out in the evening. The tractor could just go. I think that probably when the tractor came in, it was the biggest change that I saw.

AB: Vehicles in general, too.

BR: Vehicles. The first vehicle I can remember Dad having was an old square-backed thing; it was an old Pontiac or Chev, I think. The road to town was just a wagon trail when we started driving it. It was very rarely they ever went to town, maybe once a week, not even, to get the mail. In the wintertime, maybe twice in the winter with the sleigh. I remember in the winter there was no place to shop for kids' clothes. In the winter sometime he'd bring a great big parcel from Army and Navy. That's where all the kids' overshoes, parka coats, and coveralls—all that stuff came from the Army and Navy back then because there was no running to Medicine Hat to buy clothes. I remember us kids really looked forward to our new pants and our new socks that were coming from Army and Navy.

AB: And the four-buckle overshoes.

BR: The four-buckle overshoes. We went from that vehicle to I remember he had a '42 Coupe Chev; we drove that for quite a while. Then about 1948 he bought a—I don't know why; I think it was because he was an Englishman—he got an English Chev or an English Prefect. It wasn't a Chev. It was a small car; it had no heater in it. Oh, what a pile of junk that was! In 1950 he bought a four-door Pontiac. No, it was a Plymouth and he went from that to a '57 Plymouth. We drove those cars until we wore them out, I guess.

About that time I started buying my own vehicles. I had a '72 Dodge truck, I guess. I think Dad went to some kind of a small Chev after that. He drove that for years. I changed a few times since then, quite a few times.

AB: Was Senate your main town? What was it like? What was there?

BR: Senate was our main town. For a while there were two grocery stores. There was a little Co-op store; it had a Credit Union in it. There was Kalmrings store; it was Finkles at first. There was a hardware store, too. Finkle quit and then Paul Kalmring bought that store. Co-op eventually closed. The hardware run after that; that was Paul's dad.

Eventually they moved it all into one store and they operated there for many, many years. Now Senate, there is absolutely nothing left there.

We did part of our business, too, in Govenlock because we used to go by Govenlock.

Andy McCrae was there and we always stopped to see Andy. We hauled some of our grain to Govenlock; there was an elevator there. There was an elevator there; there were two elevators in Senate. We never came over to Consul with grain but there were two elevators here, different grain companies. And now there is nothing but the dance hall in Govenlock, and there's nothing at all in Senate.

Well, Consul has changed. I remember two stores in here. They were Co-op; they were both privately owned at that time. They both had gas pumps and they both had big machine agencies. You could buy new vehicles, new tractors, new everything from Consul Service Station, [owned by] Warren Seifert's dad. And the grocery store. Well, when I remember it was Chuck Lightfoot or Lightfoots, but earlier than that across the street there was Dave Bartlett's that I remember, and then they built a little piece on it and it was actually a Robinsons Store. Dorothy Mae ran that.

BR: In Consul here there were two cafes at that time, too, and then another cafe. The biggest cafe burnt down the 17th of March in 1957.

AB: Why do you think Consul survived and Senate and Govenlock didn't?

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AB: Why do you think Consul survived and Senate and Govenlock didn't?

BR: I think probably the reason or part of the reason Consul survived it was more of a central point and on account of the school. All the kids were coming here for school. There were over a hundred kids when my kids were going here and now they are down to about 60, I guess, or between 60 and 70. I think the school was the big thing.

AB: And the pub?

BR: And the pub. Oh yeah, the pub. *[Laughter]*

AB: Because there wasn't a bar in either Govenlock or Senate, was there?

BR: *No. Not really. There was a China-man in Senate, Charlie Wing. He done a little bootlegging, I think, and had a little poker den in the back. I remember in wartime you couldn't buy chocolate bars anyplace. We used to walk to town on Tuesday mornings because the train came in and he would get a case of chocolate bars. The only damn place you could buy chocolate bars; that was in the war years. So we would walk to town for a chocolate bar. [Laughs]*

JP: How many miles was that?

BR: A mile and a half is all because we were living south there.

BR: The bar was so much different than now. I couldn't get in the bar until I was 21. Until I was 21, imagine! Especially Saturday nights, as I remember, if you didn't get in early you couldn't even get a place to sit. We used to come in Saturday nights. There were Saturday night shows. The kids would go to the show and we would go to the bar until they come out of the show. They'd be tapping on the door, and then you would give them a bag of chips and then you could stay a little longer, and then you had to go home. It was a busy place, the bar.

AB: There was for a long time the women couldn't go in the bar though, could they?

BR: No, not when I first went in the bar. I don't know what year the women could start going in, but I remember being in the bar the first day the women could go in. I guess Vic Fandrick had it then and every woman got a free glass of champagne. I bet the glass is still in the cupboard at home. *[Laughter]*

JP: So I guess the jukebox would be playing, would it?

BR: I don't think there was a jukebox in there. There were so many people, so many people talking, I don't think you'd have ever heard a jukebox. It was pretty rowdy back then, especially before the women came in. That was the best thing that happened. When the women came in, it kind of quieted down a little bit. When they first came in the women were all on one side, the men on the other side. It wasn't all together like it is now. The women were on the west side and the men were on the east side.

AB: Was there a partition between?

BR: No. No partition; there was just an imaginary line, I guess, that you weren't supposed to cross.

BR: Some of the sports—well, I took part in some of them—back then there was pretty good hockey in Consul here. Well, there used to be kind of scruff hockey in some of the other towns. We used to go up to Battle Creek to play hockey. I remember in baseball, there was a baseball team in Merryflat; there was a baseball team in Govenlock; there

other towns. We used to go up to Battle Creek to play hockey. I remember in baseball, there was a baseball team in Merryflat; there was a baseball team in Govenlock; there was a baseball team in Consul; there was a baseball team in Vidora; there was a baseball team in Robsart. About every Sunday you went to a ball game somewhere. Everybody had tournaments and they brought their kids and there was always a booth at every ball grounds. It was a Sunday thing that everybody did.

Hockey. When they started to play hockey, I think it was kind of organized and they had a league, too, but it was open hockey down here where Kisell Coulee is now. That's where we started skating. There were hockey games. I think there were organized hockey games there.

And like I said, there was a curling rink here and a curling rink in Robsart. Ours started in '58, I guess. It has slowly slowed down. There were over 50 or 60 teams and now we are down to 10 or 12. Just not enough people anymore.

AB: Robsart never ever had artificial ice, though, did they?

BR: No. Robsart never had artificial ice. I think they put artificial ice in Consul sometime in the '60s. I'm not just sure what year.

JP: What do you see is the future for Consul? Do you think it is going to be able to stay alive?

BR: I think Consul will stay here as long as they keep the school. There are lots of little kids in Consul, and thank goodness for a bit of oil industry! It really helps. A lot of local people are employed through oil and if it wasn't for oil it would be hard on Consul. A lot of young people are involved with the oil industry and there is a lot of business comes to town on account of oil.

There is one sad thing though. A lot of land that is being sold is being sold to the corporates that don't come here and farm it, and it is rented to somebody else. Or else it's somebody from Alberta that they farm it, but they never live here; they just go back. It is hard on the population. It's actually worse than having Hutterites come and buy because it is just absentee ownership, and it's really hurting the country.

AB: Do you remember when the gas ice plant started and how it got started?

BR: I remember it, but I really don't remember much about it. In about 19-what, 50-something, they thought it was going to be a boom for Consul. It was going to blacktop the road down there and they were going to ship how many car loads out, but it just kind of—I don't know—something happened to it or something happened to the money. And then there was going to be a second boom here, they put a whole bunch of buildings down there and then it was rumored that it was going to do great things and then it fizzled out. The buildings and tanks are still there, but I don't know.

AB: Do you think they will ever get it running? Doing whatever it's supposed to do?

BR: Well, I don't know for sure, but I think maybe they are still using some of that CO2 gas down there to recapture some oil. I think they are forcing it down some holes to bring oil up. I'm not sure about this. They never ship anything out of there that I know of. We never had any gas wells up in our part northwest of town there; there isn't very much up there. A lot of activity south—there has been in the past—not much activity lately although there's producers down there and they are still trucking oil out.

AB: What was the railroad like when you were young? Like, was it a main thing?

BR: When I was a kid everything came in on the train all right. When we were kids we used to put pennies on the railroad track to see how they flattened out. [Laughter] You did, too, hey?

Everything came in on the train—the mail, they used to drop the water off (there was no water in Senate). There was a big cistern there for the CPR crew and they would drop

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Everything came in on the train—the mail, they used to drop the water off (there was no water in Senate). There was a big cistern there for the CPR crew and they would drop water. All the groceries came and the mail came. I remember Dad even had a pig shipped in on the train. Every town had a CPR crew. Consul had a station agent. We didn't in Senate, but Govenlock had a station agent for heavy freight and they had freight sheds for heavy freight.

There were three trains a week, I guess, and then there was the odd special train came through picking up grain or something. Of course, cream and eggs went on the train. Shipped most of the cattle on the trains then. There used to be stockyards in Govenlock, Senate and Consul all had stockyards. Altawan, west of Govenlock, had a big set of stockyards; a lot of cattle went out there. I don't think there were ever many went out of Senate, but there was a lot went out of Consul because Consul started the sale ring here. Most of them went out on the rail, way back when they started.

AB: What do you think the future is for farming and cattle? What do you think will change in what we know now?

BR: Well, I think the way things are going the farms are going to get bigger; I think there are going to be a lot of corporate farms, I think that is where we are going. I hate to see it, but I think it's going to be a lot of corporate farms.

Cattle. It seems like these feedlots are getting bigger and bigger and bigger. There will always be the ranchers running a hundred or two hundred head, I think, but as far as the feedlots go, that is all going to the big guys, the big corporations. The little feedlots are almost all gone now, I think.

AB: Do you think that cattle can stay at the price they are this year though?

BR: Oh yeah, I think they are going to have to stay. When you have to pay \$80,000 for a truck, the cattle better stay up at that price they are. I think it will stay for a good long time. The herd has got to rebuild. Everybody is moving heifers and dry cows because they don't want to keep them when the price is so good. I don't how the herd is going to rebuild very fast; as long as the prices are so high nobody is going to retain anything, any more than they have to.

That's my prediction and it is probably as good as anybody else's.

[Laughter]

