

CONSUL MUSEUM INCORPORATED

**Oral History Collection – Section 3**

Collected by Consul Museum Incorporated – Oral History Project

**Saloma French and Pauline Pelkey Interview April 8, 2015**

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Conducted at the home of Saloma and Jim French in Medicine Hat, Alberta.

**SF = Saloma French: Interviewee**

**PP = Pauline Pelkey: Interviewee**

**JF = Jim French: Interviewee**

**TS = Terry Stokke: Another voice**

**AB = Ann Behrman: Interviewer**

**JP = Joan Parsonage: Camera person**

AB: Okay, we'll start out with your full names and your birth dates.

SF: Saloma Ida Schroder French. I was born October 1st, 1936.

PP: Pauline Marie Schroder Pelkey. August 23rd, 1938.

PP: We were both born in the Vidora Station [Canadian Pacific Railway Station].

SF: Not really, Paul. You were. I was born on October the 1<sup>st</sup>, but Dad took over as caretaker for the station on the day I was born; there was a house that was in behind Webers and the hotel there. There was a house and that's where I was born. Our dad was Hubertus Peter Schroder and my mother was Caroline—

PP: Ester.

SF: Ester.

PP: Caroline.

SF: Ester Caroline—sorry—Christianson, and we had one brother that was older and he was born in '34. Conrad was his name. He passed away in '48.

AB: Where did you go to school?

SF: Vidora. I went there until Grade 10 and I took a year my Grade 11 in Weldon, Saskatchewan; I stayed with an aunt up there, Mom's sister, and took my Grade 11 there. That was the end of my education.

AB: Pauline?

PP: I went from Grade 1 to Grade 10 in Vidora and then I went to Maple Creek for Grade 11 and 12. I graduated from there and I went to Moose Jaw for Teachers' College. Then I went to university in Saskatoon for summer schools and I completed my B. Ed. in Calgary at the University of Calgary.

AB: And where did you teach?

PP: I started out my very first was south of Shaunavon; the district was called Chambrery. I had 17 students and two of them were older than me. So I went from there

PP: I started out my very first was south of Shaunavon; the district was called Chambrery. I had 17 students and two of them were older than me. So I went from there into Eastend, taught in Eastend for a year and then I went up north to Cumberland House because I could make a little more money up there. I taught there for a year and then I came back and got married and went to Calgary and I have been there ever since.

AB: And when did you retire?

PP: In 1998.

AB: What about you, Saloma? Where did you work?

SF: Well, when we were in Vidora we always helped Albert Arnison out; he was the Imperial Oil Agent so he always delivered gas and Blod ran the post office so he needed somebody. So I worked in there and then we would always help out in the café. What was his name? Not Fred. Frank.

PP: Frank and Rosie.

SF: Frank and Rosie. *[Laughing]* In the cafe.

PP: People remember her.

SF: So that was it until I got married and then I never worked until I started working at the switchboard for Consul Hotel for Agnes Johnson. I think I just worked there maybe a year and then they put in the phone lines and took out that.

Then I started in '68 and worked at the Co-op Store for 20 years and then I worked five years at the Credit Union. Then I came up here [Medicine Hat, Alberta]. We moved up and then I started working at K Mart; I closed it down. I was 20 days short of five years there and I was very disappointed because you didn't get a very good buyout if you had not worked over five years. So I thought that was it then I started working at Walmart. So I thought when I had my 70th birthday I should quit, so I quit. And guess what? I started working in the bingo hall for five years. *[Laughing]* So I worked there and sold Nevada tickets which I enjoyed and got to meet a lot of people. Now when you walk around you can always meet somebody. I don't remember their names, but we always have a chat.

AB: Can you tell us what Vidora was like when you were young? Some of the businesses and some of the people.

SF: Okay.

PP: I think the only businesses was the cafe, Jack Sanderson's BA [British American Oil], Albert's Imperial [Oil].

SF: And the store.

PP: And the store; he had the store as well.

SF: But to start with it was run by—. I don't remember who owned it before. It was Harry; he was a Chinese fellow. He ran the store and I think that's who Albert Arnison bought it from.

PP: I think it was Paul Bartlett that had it and when Albert came back from the war he bought it from him.

SF: And took over the post office.

SF: And took over the post office.

PP: And took over the post office.

SF: In '48 or around there. '48.

SF: There was Webers.

PP: There was a lumber yard, too. Behrmans had that.

SF: Oh, and Behrmans had a garage. You know where Bert and Velma [Richards] live now. Right beside it, there was a store, but I was too young to remember that it was a store. Can you remember what the name was?

PP: Jack Staffins.

SF: Jack Staffin.

AB: When and who did you get married to? Start with Saloma.

SF: Okay. I married Paddy, Patrick French; we were married December '52. We had two children, Jim in '53 and Terry in '59. Teresa Ann. [*Laughing*]

TS: Teresa!

SF: Which she likes to be called. [*Laughter*] And James Phillip. Paddy's middle name was Patrick Richard Phillip.

PP: We were married on July 27<sup>th</sup>, 1959. Then I moved to Calgary. We have four children—Kim, Rod, Shelley and Gayle (got to keep them all straight). They are all married. Kim's married to a Shelley, Rod is married to Sue, Shelley is married to Dennis Relf, Gayle was married to Chris Stremick.

Shelley had three children—Kortney, Mathew and Jenna. Rod took a long time, but he has two kids—Caitlin and Zack. Kim married Shelley who had two children and they have their own child, Beth. Gayle has Hannah and Emily. We just got our very first great-grandchild.

AB: Congratulations. What about your grandchildren, Saloma?

SF: Jim never married as we all know; Terry married Randy Stokke and they have three boys. Monty is married now to Pamela Pearce, and Garrett is married to Lorelei, but I should back up they have two children—Monty does—Savana and Chace. Garrett married Lorelei and they have a little girl, Chloe. And Jay, well, it's still a question mark. [*Laughter*]

AB: Okay, when you were growing up in Vidora what were some of the clubs and things that you had.

PP: There was no 4-H.

SF: No club. You can start with Erna's.

PP: Erna Anderson set up a Sunshine Club for girls and we did all kinds of crafts; she taught us to embroider with silk, and we did shell pictures, and painting pictures.

SF: Knitting.

PP: Knitting. Nobody could succeed in showing me how to crochet, so that never

PP: Knitting. Nobody could succeed in showing me how to crochet, so that never happened. And then Edna Behrman, when she came after, she taught us. She stayed in Vidora and she did the sewing part, so we all made aprons over at Edna Behrman's. Can you add anything to that?

SF: Whatever our craft, we would have a—. Vidora Women's Club—they had their community club—and in the fall they always had a bazaar, and we would take our things there and sell. That evening they always had—well, then it was a fowl supper; it was chicken—a beautiful fowl supper, those ladies.

AB: What other things did you do for entertainment?

SF: We were just talking about that. We would gather in the summertime, gather around the hall, because we only had a few lights around town, but there was always that main light right beside the hall, and we would play games. "Run, Sheep, Run" and whatever. Games, that was our [entertainment]. And then the skating rink was down by the station, just right where we lived, and we had the flowing well.

AB: When did they dig the flowing well?

SF: It was there when—

AB: When you were kids?

SF: Yup, it was always there.

PP: Behrmans also had a flowing well on their place.

PP: Friday afternoons we got to play baseball in the afternoon; that was the summertime thing. The teachers never came out; they stayed in the school. I think they peaked out the windows, and that was it.

SF: But you would go out and you would choose up sides.

PP: You probably did that, too, right?

SF: And anyway, so it always started with the older ones. You had two captains and you know how you would go down. Of course, us being the littler ones we were always the last ones picked. Pauline and I must have been on the same team.

PP: I can remember the incident, but not the [details].

SF: Of course, you would hit the ball and it would probably go four feet or something. Whatever, we were kids. So anyway, Pauline was always the last batter.

PP: I was the shortest.

SF: She was short and, of course, the smallest. So anyway—I can still see it—for some reason she did hit the ball, but probably two feet or three feet. Of course, they were being smart (whoever was the pitcher and first baseman) and they were fooling around, and she ended up getting to first base. Well, the next batter was the captain, so it was Jim Lane, so, of course, he hits a home run. There is Pauline on first base. She is starting to run and he comes and he picks her up and takes her all the way around the bases. [Laughter]

PP: I made my first homerun.

SF: I can still see that.

PP: I made my first homerun.

SF: I can still see that.

PP: As soon as she mentioned it, I can remember that.

SF: He just picked her up and ran around the bases with her. She was probably only about so high.

AB: Okay. Can you tell us about some of the people in Vidora? Like Mrs. Sankey for example.

SF: Pauline can relate to that.

PP: Well, I'll always remember her in her garden; she had a big garden. And a big dog. I never liked to be near dogs. So you skirted their place because she always wore this pointed hat with a big brim and long dresses, and everybody thought she was a witch so they didn't go near her. Tom Lewis used to take up all her mail and get her groceries—she used to walk to the store once in a while—but anyway, when they [Lewises] moved to Maple Creek they asked me if I would do it. Well, my first trip in I thought, “Oh my gosh”, but she was the kindest, nicest lady that you could ever meet, and I got paid \$2 a month for getting her groceries and mail for a month. Then when I worked at Albert's store I got \$2 a week so I was rich then— after schools and Saturday. No, she was really a nice lady, but everybody was afraid of her. She was a very nice lady when I got to know her, and she'd give me a cup of tea and I always had a cookie.

AB: What about John Rossall? What kind of a man was he?

PP: I kind of forgot about him. The blacksmith.

SF: He was a kind man. He more or less stayed to himself.

PP: He had been married. I'm sure his wife probably passed away—most of them did back then—from childbirth. He had angora rabbits and we used to go over and check out the rabbits. [*speaking to Saloma*] You said something about what did we do? Helping him at the blacksmith's?

SF: We helped him in the shop, you know to get the fire going. [*Saloma indicates a cranking motion.*] What do you call that?

PP: The fan.

AB: The forge. Yeah, we loved to go in there and help him. The excuse was we were going to look at the rabbits.

SF: We were always busy busybodies, I think sometimes. And Erna and Jack [Sanderson].

PP: Erna and Jack were so good to us.

SF: Every Christmas, Erna—or Jack—would bring it, but we got a little gift from her and some Christmas baking. We lived at the bottom of the hill and his garage had the gas pumps there. If you were walking by he would holler your name and when you turned around, “Here's a nickel,” or “Here's a dime. Go buy yourself a chocolate bar.” It didn't stay long in our hands. [*Laughter*] Just out of the blue he'd be walking by. I know we would not dare ask for things like that or we would have been whipped when we got home. They were very good. And Edna and Bill—the Behrmans—were always good to us. They would bring things in to us.

AB: Then there would be Crowsons and Ellingsons

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SF: We were all just a big [community family].

PP: We had a lot of fun, though. Kids don't know what it is like to play anymore. We were never in the house. We used to play "Anti-I-Over" [at] Jack's tin shed—the BA where Lloyd Darling delivered—by the hour until you couldn't see the ball coming over, but then there was that nine o'clock curfew so you would run like heck for home.

SF: There were other people—Mr. and Mrs. Hanson, Paul Hansons. I don't know if you would remember them. They lived across the road from Rabes. We would go up there a lot of Sundays. Of course, Pauline and I would go out and ride everything that was out there, pretending. [*Saloma indicates a steering motion.*]

AB: Is that Halvar Hanson's parents?

SF: Yeah.

JF: Tell about the waffles.

SF: Oh, and she made waffles.

AB: Mrs. Hanson?

SF: For supper. Well, she was the best cook. I though she was.

PP: She was a good cook, I'm telling you.

SF: She would make waffles and, of course, us greedy little kids, we each had to put a waffle on our plate, and I would try and fill every hole with butter. Now when I think about it—that poor lady. She had to churn this butter, and milk the cows, and here I am! And pour the syrup on it.

PP: She made the best white cake that you would ever want to eat.

SF: Oh, her baking was great.

PP: And we were told, "only one piece" and Saloma and I wanted a second. I would look at Saloma and Saloma would look at me, and nobody would take the second piece. We were told one and that was all you got.

SF: But those waffles were something else!

PP: And then she made those Norwegian—

AB: Kumkaka?

PP: The roll up things. I never knew the name of them, but I sure liked them. But then we had to do the dishes, and clean the separator - we'd do all that for her.

SF: We helped. We always helped.

PP: That was our chore.

SF: But we just loved going out there, on Sundays.

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PP: [*Speaking to Saloma*] And you can tell about the women in Vidora. The women had that birthday thing going, just the ladies. If it was Mrs. So-and-so's birthday they would all throw in a quarter and they would buy—I can remember them buying—. Like, if they needed dishes or something, they might get plates or a casserole dish. It wasn't much.

SF: Weber's store had all these nice [things].

PP: That was a little spooky place at times.

AB: I loved that store.

SF: It was! It was a good store.

PP: And speaking of Mr. Sankey—he had that long beard which was sort of scary, too, and he wore a black hat, like a Pilgrim almost.

AB: What about electricity, like the power? Did they have a power plant or how did they do that?

SF: Yeah, the power plant.

PP: Yeah, they had the power plant. [*speaking to Saloma*] You can tell because you remember. I don't remember the times it came on.

SF: I don't remember what time it would be in the evening. I suppose they went with the weather, like if it was dark. They went with the weather [the seasons]. I thought it was turned off at nine o'clock, but Pauline thinks maybe it was ten. Then on Monday morning it was turned on for those that had power to wash clothes, and Tuesday afternoon to iron. They could do their ironing. [*Laughs*]

AB: And then there was no power any other time of the day then?

SF: No. And dances, or anything in the hall they would turn on the power.

PP: The reason I remember it was on a little longer because at nine o'clock we had the curfew, and at first it was John Rossall that used to come up and had this triangle thing, and they would bang the liver out of it, and we'd all just break what we were doing and run for our lives home. But then she said Jim Palmer did it after that. He did the plant, started the plant.

SF: When they moved down there where Elmer is.

PP: But the station never had power. We couldn't even use a gas light; we had to use coal oil lights. It was a rule. And the flat irons; that was it.

AB: What would have happened had you not gone home at nine o'clock?

PP: Oh, there was a fine.

AB: Oh.

SF: I can't remember just exactly, but there was nobody out after—

PP: Nobody walked the streets after nine.

SF: And another thing was, in the wintertime we had the hill for sleigh riding and skating which we enjoyed

SF: And another thing was, in the wintertime we had the hill for sleigh riding and skating which we enjoyed.

AB: Did you have an outside rink? Did somebody make a rink?

PP: Yeah. That had to have been there for quite a while.

SF: It was there as long as I can remember there was that skating rink there. Then finally they moved in an old—

PP: Behrmans moved it.

SF: —building and they had a wood stove in there and at least you could go in and [warm up], but we lived just across the way from it so it was okay for us.

AB: Was there a dance hall or a theatre in Vidora?

SF: Dance hall.

PP: Yes, the hall that's in Consul is the old Vidora Hall, the Senior Centre.

SF: The Senior Centre. That's Vidora Hall. Lots of Christmas concerts in there. Dances.

PP: Dances. I think we gave you the orchestras that used to play there.

AB: Name them.

PP: I don't remember the ABC one, but I should have.

SF: Archie Smiley, Bill Brown and George Cunningham. He lived in Robsart, but I can't remember what his occupation was there. They called themselves the ABCs.

PP: Shepherds always came down to play for our Saturday night dances. It was Tommy Shepherd, right?

SF: Well, Tommy was one of them, but I don't know who the other ones were that played.

PP: The Senators played occasionally.

SF: Carl and Margaret.

PP: And then Carl and Margaret did theirs.

SF: But we can't remember - I know Kurt Browatzke played with them, but they always had different people playing. They played for both of our wedding dances, Carl and Margaret.

AB: And both your wedding dances were in Vidora?

PP: No. Saloma's was in Vidora; ours was in Consul.

SF: But I just can't remember. I know Kurt did, but I can't remember. There were probably other people.

SF: Oh, I know the other one, was McKelvey.

PP: Merle McKelvey?



PP: Merle McKelvey?

SF: Merle used to play with them.

PP: That's right, he came; Bunty [his wife] was always there, at the dances.

AB: What about church? Was there a Catholic Church in Vidora?

SF: No. Senate was the closest.

AB: So you would go to Senate to church?

PP: Oh yes.

SF: In our little Model T. [*Laughing*]

PP: The old Model T.

AB: Where did that church get moved to?

SF: Larry Sawden bought it so I don't know what he did with it.

PP: But there was a Brethren Church in Vidora and that's where all the weddings, funerals and that were; we never had a minister as such.

SF: Not that we remember. But then eventually these student ministers came up from the states; they actually boarded with us and stayed there.

PP: If I think right Roger was from Chicago, wasn't he? Around that area?

SF: They were all down more in the eastern part there.

PP: Well, Ella Crowson married Richard Nolt; he was one of the student ministers that stayed with us and I think he came from Indiana if I remember right. Anyway, we had another student minister; he only lasted about, we're saying it's lucky if he stayed three weeks. He was homesick. [*Laughing*]

SF: Well, can you imagine!

AB: Oh yeah.

PP: But that Brethren Church was moved out to—

SF: Melvin Ziegler's, I think.

PP: Melvin Ziegler bought it.

SF: Wherever his place is.

AB: Didn't that turn into the Church of God in town?

SF: Those people turned to— They were all Brethrens. All of those—the Zieglers, Swiharts and them were all Brethrens. I can remember there were still some. Like the Zieglers were another one; their dad, the Zieglers' dad, was a minister [*Ira Ziegler*].

AB: Oh really.

PP: I'm pretty sure you're right about that.

PP: I'm pretty sure you're right about that.

SF: Yeah, and Elmer Palmers; they were Brethren.

PP: We could go to their Sunday Schools in the summer.

SF: We would go up there for Sunday School.

PP: Well, Stryckers, where Eccles lives now.

SF: Or they did live.

PP: Or where Eccles lived. That's who used to come over and she used to teach us Bible camp. Oh, and we had Charlie Gibbs; that was the other one.

SF: Yeah, that was another one.

AB: What about the Christmas concerts?

SF: We would practice, you know. We would practice, and then the last week or so we would go to the hall. That's all we did was practice. We always had that drill, you know, where we had the long gowns and—

PP: Crepe paper gowns.

SF: Crepe paper gowns. And we always had little plays, and we recited poems.

AB: Santa Claus came.

SF: And Santa Claus came.

PP: Who I was frightened of from the day they walked in. We knew who they were, but them bouncing up the middle. [*Laughing*]

AB: When you were kids was Vidora a very big town? Like, were there quite a few people living there?

SF: Yeah there was, to us, for a village. I can remember there was Cora and Bill McGee lived there, and Jack and Erna [Sanderson]. There was a bachelor, Martin—

PP: Martin Martinson. Your Mom would probably talk about him. I have no idea where he came from, (how many years we talked about this) and how did he come to live in Vidora?

SF: And where did he go?

AB: He died in that house.

SF: Oh, is that what happened?

AB: I remember my grandpa saying, "Well old Martin Martinson died last night." And that is all I remember.

PP: Well, Doc Johnstone, that's the house you're grandpa lived in. And he is the one that delivered me.

SF: Doc Johnstone.

PP: Doc Johnstone. But you said he lived in "15..."

SF: Doc Johnstone.

PP: Doc Johnstone. Put me in a shoe box and said, "If she lives until morning she will make it". [Laughter]

AB: You were premature?

PP: I guess so. Well, by the fish scale I weighed four pounds. They always tell me they put me in this shoe box, wrapped me in cotton batten and said that if she makes it 'til morning she will make it for the rest of her life and here I am.

AB: What other people were there that had kids your age that you played with? Who were some of the families?

SF: There were the Watsons.

PP: Lewises.

SF: The Lewises. Well, Janice lived out of town but we were always—.

PP: Behrmans,

SF: And then the Browns moved in.

PP: And the Ellingsons.

PP: Madeline McGee, she came to school there. The Crowsons. Ronald and Olivia Fjeld were there for a while until they moved to Robsart.

SF: Their dad came out of the [military] service.

PP: I gotta go up and down the street. Oh, Ken Sanderson and Jerry McGee. [Speaking to Ann] Well, you would know the McGees. That was about it. There were 30 students in the— What did we read today? 30 students in the late '40s.

SF: The only ones that lived out of town were the Swiharts and Behrman kids.

PP: Oh yeah, and Rosemary Palmer [Sawden]. She came up the hill.

SF: Rosemary and Edward came to school then.

AB: When did you move to Consul?

SF: We moved in '55, the fall of '55. The only way I can remember is Jim was two years old.

AB: Where did you live when you moved into town?

SF: We lived where Fairbrothers [live]. That belonged to a Backman, I believe, where Fairbrothers moved into. We lived there for the winter and then we moved over to what was the Schmidt house beside Joe Kisell's, in there. We did a lot of moving in Consul. Wherever you could have an open place you could have a place to live.

PP: You lived down at Ebner's.

SF: Out at the creek [Battle Creek]. I really enjoyed that. The house was not much, but I really enjoyed living out there.

PP: That was Austin Pettyjohn's.

really enjoyed living out there.

PP: That was Austin Pettyjohn's.

SF: Austin Pettyjohn had bought it, so Paddy fed the cattle in the wintertime and we lived there.

PP: Yeah, but you lived in that Ebner house at one time down by the—when Terry was little. I have pictures of her.

SF: Yeah. We lived quite a few places in town. I never threw the packing boxes away, put it that way.

PP: You moved more than we did and you only had a small place to move to.

AB: What did you do in Consul for entertainment? What were some of the things that went on?

SF: Well, back then we did play the ball in the summertime. We did play ball. And then there were the shows, Saturday night shows, and dances. I did join the Consul Women's and we put on plays. We put on two different plays there; I was in them. I don't know. You were always busy but—

AB: Yeah. What about you Pauline when you moved to the city? What did you do for entertainment?

PP: We would go to movies. If there was something special on we would go down to the different venues that have them, go to the [Calgary] Stampede, but there were no real clubs because if you were in a club it was either way up somewhere in this level [*indicates a higher class*], and us poor little people, we just couldn't go in them. Mount Royal people. But there were not many clubs. Now we belong to the 50 Plus Club. There weren't really [many clubs] because everybody just seemed to work. If you weren't an Elk or you weren't a Knights of Columbus or Kinsmen— Well, Scotty belonged to Lions Club for years. Those were the things. There just wasn't that much because it was all city. It is quite different than here.

AB: Yes, yes. Can you tell us a little bit about Paddy's folks, Mr. and Mrs. French?

SF: I don't know when Paddy' folks came from Ireland, like Paddy's dad. Jim, now this is where you could come and—

PP: Where's James?

AB: Jim, can you tell us a little bit about Grandpa and Grandma French?

JF: They came from a very complicated family, a very big family, obviously one that never wanted to leave Ireland. They went from the south of Ireland to the north of Ireland where they worked on the Titanic.

AB: Oh really!

JF: And some of the family may have moved to Liverpool. Their claim to fame may be that they are McCartneys and related to Paul McCartney. But anyway, some of them did come to the States. Grandpa and his brother, John, who was older than him and had kids the same age as my grandfather, came to Consul and they both homesteaded. Billy's [French] land is John French's homestead, not my uncle John, but my grandfather's brother.

My grandfather was married to Jim Murray's sister. [*Looks to Selma*] What was her

My grandfather was married to Jim Murray's sister. [Looks to Saloma] What was her name? Ellen. My grandfather actually had a picture before the flood in Maple Creek [in 2010]. He was a bartender in the Commercial Hotel [in Maple Creek]; he is the bartender behind that beautiful bar that they have that picture of. He was there and somehow connected with the CPR. Some of his brothers from the States—most of them—came and they worked on the CPR, but only this John and my grandfather homesteaded for whatever reason. They worked on the CPR. My Uncle Tom always claimed that when he came to Vidora the grass was three feet high. I don't know if the grass was ever three feet high, but being Frenches sometimes they looked at the grass from the down up. [Laughter]

Where they homesteaded on the south line of the railroad and being the fireman and engineers as well as the crew they would go to Senate to church, so they were there. This John French had a son named Joe who married a Zentner [from Senate], and another woman named Annie—another sister named Annie—who married a person in Merryflat named Bowen, and another sister that married my grandmother's brother—which may sound like Arkansas, but it was legal—named Bell. The lady at Merryflat was always known as Annie French, so Grandma was always known by her maiden name, Annie Bell. She came over with this Teena from Ireland in 1924 or something, and they came here. Meanwhile the older John French and all the other Frenches moved to Trail to work in the smelter, and Grandpa French moved his homestead to where John French is and that is where Billy [French] is. His land was there and the PFRA Pasture. What is it? Number One? Arena. That's where his land was, inside of there.

TS: Reno.

JF: Reno?

TS: Yes, it's Reno.

JF: Okay, Reno Pasture. So that is sort of how they got up here. They had three boys, beginning a pattern, I guess, for Terry. They are all three years apart—Paddy, Joe and John.

AB: Was this his first wife that had the three?

JF: No, this was Grandma French. She [the first wife, Ellen] died in childbirth, somewhere in there. Grandma actually came, supposedly interested in a brother named George, but Grandpa French went to meet the train at wherever they came to—Lethbridge—so he ended up married to her. And George became a priest. [Laughter] Eventually the old Grandma French came over and she is the one that had the French look. So whatever the Frenches look like, she is the one where they got those genes from. Her name was McCartney, so there may be some credence to my cousin's story about the Beatles. They had a pretty rough life. The school there was closed in the winter, and they went in the summer. But they did snowplow the road and they went to the Govenlock dance every year. There is a story, and apparently—someone recounted this to me—that as the people came in to Govenlock the three Frenches, Grandma French, this Annie French from Merryflat and Teena, would all get in a corner of the hall and once they were there the orchestra would know and they would play an Irish jig and they would Irish jig for the crowd.

AB: I remember your grandma Irish jigging. She tried to teach us.

JF: She was quite a hefty woman and her legs went or something, so she never—. Also that is another thing they said that they used to have races the 1st of July just so people could watch her run. She was supposedly a very fast runner. She and, I guess, Nellie Sanderson would race. So that was basically their family.

Grandma French lived in town or would come into town so the kids could go to school. She was very proud of working at the restaurant. She commented once to me about our mixed environment that we now live in, that a ship came into Belfast harbour with a Chinese cook and all the children were locked up in their houses. She commented how when she came over here she worked in the restaurant for the—you know what she

mixed environment that we now live in, that a ship came into Belfast harbour with a Chinese cook and all the children were locked up in their houses. She commented how when she came over here she worked in the restaurant for the—you know what she called them—and she was quite proud of how wide her world had been.

I always asked her if she would ever go back to Ireland and she said, "No, I'd never go back. I could not do that." But her voice had the Irish brogue and people loved her, loved to hear her talk. She swore like a trooper. She was quite the lady; she was the center of attention wherever she was.

AB: Okay, can you tell us some things about your parents?

PP: Mom and Dad.

SF: We were only 12 when Dad passed away, so you know your history is just [limited]. He was born in Germany.

PP: There were 14 in his family. They immigrated to Wisconsin area in the States, and then Dad, because of his asthma and the dampness, he could not live there so then he came out to North Dakota. I don't remember the exact [location]. He came when they were doing homesteads and they came up. When he came up he took out a homestead, in the meantime he helped build the—Saloma has a picture here—Moose Jaw Hotel.

SF: He was a very good carpenter. He used to build us dressers, but his health was -

PP: Yeah, his asthma. He used to paint the Post [Canada Customs], down at Willow Creek.

SF: He was a good painter.

PP: He would paint and fix everything there. When he felt good that is when he worked.

SF: Sharpened saws. I remember him sharpening saws. People would bring their saws in to be sharpened. I can remember that.

AB: What about your mom?

SF: Mom was—

PP: She was born in North Dakota.

SF: Yup, Kenmare, North Dakota.

PP: Grandma and Grandpa both came from Norway; he came first in 1909 or something, and she came in '10. They were married in North Dakota. Then they moved up to Robsart. They always lived south of the Robsart area.

SF: Old Man on His Back [a local land mark]. At that time you could probably have seen their place on the west side. There was a road allowance. We went there once and all we could see was where maybe some buildings had sat.

PP: Then our grandmother took off with Gunner Fjeld, and Grandpa moved up north, and Mom and Carl stayed; the two oldest stayed here. She married Dad in '36 and he passed away in '49. Then she went to Maple Creek. She worked out [housekeeping and caring for young children]. She worked for Tittles and she worked for all kinds of people. In the area if they needed somebody for a month or two they would call on Mom, often no wages given to her, but she would go. We were talking one day—we never heard her being upset with anybody. Everybody was good. Everybody was good. She married Elmer Taylor there in Maple Creek and when he passed away she was in the Lodge. Or, no the—

being upset with anybody. Everybody was good. She married Elmer Taylor there in Maple Creek and when he passed away she was in the Lodge. Or, no, the—

SF: Manor.

PP: The Manor. Gosh. It's the opposite in Calgary. A lodge is first and then— [*Laughing*] Whatever. Yeah, that was sort of our life. We had a good time, though. We were laughing about things. You'll have to tell them about the baseball game at school.

PP: Well, and Bill Behrman, when they would come in to skate—. Of course, our skates were so wobbly that the socks held them up, you know.

SF: They were second hand.

PP: So he would come and he would skate out and put me in the middle and skate me all around. It was one advantage of being little. They all look after me.

SF: I can still see that. It was so funny.

PP: We put down our wages because we were talking about that. Terry asked her how much she made an hour.

AB: What is the comparison for when you started to now?

SF: Well it was 75 cents an hour when I started working for Agnes at the phone and the store.

AB: 75 cents an hour. [*Speaking to Pauline*] What about you when you started teaching?

PP: When I started teaching I made \$1500 for the year. You were paid 10 months and with income tax and everything taken off, and then I had to pay \$60 for room and board. I don't know how I did it, but I managed to save money to pay my tuition and go to university in Saskatoon for the summer. And you did not get another paycheque until the end of September. But I got \$1500; that was it for the year. That is when I went up north and made more money. I got a whole \$3500 a year.

AB: What was it like working in the telephone office? Like when you worked for Mrs. Johnson –

SF: The switchboard.

AB: Like, the difference between the telephone then and the telephone now?

SF: They had the switchboard, and if the phone rang— er, if somebody would ring in— then you had this little thing you plugged in and then you had your ear phones, I guess you would call them.

PP: Headphones.

SF: Headphones. And you'd get the number. There was a few phones around in the community then.

PP: The business ones mostly, wasn't it?

SF: Yes, and some out of town, too. That's when they started.

SF: Yes, and some out of town, too. That's when they started.

PP: I remember phoning her, to Hester's, from Moose Jaw.

SF: Hesters had it, yeah.

PP: And Dorothy, "It will probably be about an hour before I can get her, but that will be a dollar." And I'm thinking you could go out your back door and holler and she would hear you. *[Laughter]*

SF: Well, when I started there were a few local phones.

PP: I'll never forget that. I thought, 'It's costing me more than the telephone call.' But anyway. That's the way it was.

JP: Can I ask a question?

AB: Yes.

JP: What was the biggest change you've seen in your life?

PP: Pretty much everything, from the scrub boards to what we wash clothes now with, having the telephone, computers. It's amazing if you just stop and go through it. It is a big, big change in the world.

AB: Do you use a computer a lot?

PP: I don't touch a computer.

AB: Oh.

PP: I am totally turned off them. I don't know. We had a fellow come around and he was trying to teach everybody, but if you couldn't type, forget about it. And then he would say just push F2. That was the old, old computers. No, I have never had a desire for computers.

AB: Saloma? Do you use a computer?

SF: No, I don't. Actually because I am volunteering at the Red Cross I had to learn a little bit, but I did take a typing course—

PP: Advantage.

SF: —in Consul. I forget who taught it; I think it was Davis. He was the principal? But if you don't use it— You know, I did start to know where the keys were. When I started at the Red Cross I said, "Well I'll volunteer, but I've never touched a computer". *[The Red Cross people said,]* "That's okay, we'll teach you". And they have been very good with me. I can make lots of boo boos. *[I]* just holler at somebody, "I need help."

TS: What year did the power come into Consul, Mom? Do you remember?

SF: '50-?—we lived at that Schmidt house.

AB: '52?

PP: Is that when it came it?

SF: No, later. Don Henley had the power plant.



SF: No, later. Don Henley had the power plant.

JF: '58 or so.

TS: I thought it was close to when I was born, but I'm not sure.

PP: I think you're right.

SF: '56 or '57.

JF: There was still a power plant when I was little.

SF: That is when we got our first fridge was when we lived at that Schmidt house.

JF: That was one of the things I remember about the hotel in Consul burning down was they turned the power plant on in the middle of the night. That was more unusual than the fire!

TS: What about curling?

AB: What about curling; did you do lots of it when you were in [Consul]? Well, I know you curled, Saloma.

SF: I enjoyed it; I really did. That was the only sport I really enjoyed. Still love it.

AB: Do you still curl?

SF: No, I can't anymore. I curled up until I broke my wrist.

JF: Talk about building the rink.

SF: Yeah, building the rink. I was on that committee that helped and worked to get—

AB: How did you raise money to build the rink?

SF: We put on bingos. We did anything that we could think of. Suppers, and people would donate, and eventually we got enough money to build it.

AB: What year was that, Saloma?

SF: It was in '58.

AB: And that was natural ice then.

SF: Natural ice, yes.

PP: Yes, I remember because I was teaching in Eastend, and that French came to visit you. And they all had a little bit too much, and they were playing down in Eastend. [They told me], "Oh, you gotta come up and watch us curl!" [*Laughter*] That's how come I remember.

SF: Yeah, because it was '58. The fall of '58 was our first year of curling. They built it that year, too.

TS: Do you know when the artificial ice was put in?

SF: I can't quite remember when it came in. I know it was a blessing.

JF: 1997, University of Colorado, Boulder, Colorado

SF: I can't quite remember when it came in. I know it was a blessing.

JF: 1967. It was a Centennial Project.

AB: Was it?

JF: Yeah. So it was '67 or '68 along with building the skating rink.

AB: I don't know.

SF: The skating rink used to be down there in Kisell—they called it Kisell's Coulee. You probably remember that. Then when they built the rink, they put the— (but it wasn't closed in then). The skating rink.

AB: How did you meet Scotty, Pauline?

PP: At Consul. At a dance. [*Laughing*] I heard about him. When I was in Grade 11 he— Tot Jones—he used to be up in that area. They told of the tricks that they did to get Tot out of your grandmother's house because she was [strict]. "You don't leave the house." They would talk about those stories at school; that's how come I know them.

AB: What was his connection to the community?

PP: Well, his life was [changed] pretty much when his mother died in the fire [1944]. After the fire they were all scattered and then they came back. They went to Detroit. He did his Grade—I think—10. He loved his times in Consul, though, he did. He really liked Consul. He was in the 4-H. Uncle Hec [McRae] bought them each a calf from Mrs. Galster. He got the top prize and Donna, I think, got second or third (his sister). They went to live with their dad in Detroit, but that didn't pan out and he came back and lived with Lena [McKinnon, his aunt] and all around. He did all kinds of odd jobs there and on the oil wells. He did the pipeline that went through Maple Creek, the Trans Canada Pipeline; he worked on that. Then when he went to Calgary he worked in a plastic plant and then he went to the post office. That was his career. But no, they got pretty scattered. I said always, "We have to thank Aunt Lena; she kept that family. She always wrote; she always kept them informed of every one of the brothers and sisters".

AB: She was a special lady.

PP: If you think back, she wasn't always the most perfect person, but she kept them all together. She had her ways.

AB: She was special.

PP: Yeah. But I've always said we have to give credit to her that that family even know one another. That was great.

AB: Okay, and what are some of the things that you do in the city now? For entertainment, to keep yourself busy?

SF: I started bowling the fall we moved up here and I am still bowling. It's 30 weeks; it starts in September to April. I have enjoyed it. I'm not a good bowler, but nobody cares. Nobody cares; it's the fun.

After I quit working at the bingo hall I had a year at home and then I started volunteering at the Red Cross. I do Monday and Tuesday mornings; I like mornings to volunteer and I have enjoyed it. They are always good people to work for down there. And there again you get to meet a lot of people.

I play cards with these ladies once a month, get together. There is Meda [Paterson], Luella [Pedersen], Francie Johnson, Marj Johnson, Barbara Olson and myself. Six of us ladies.

I play cards with these ladies once a month, get together. There is Meda [Paterson], Luella [Pedersen], Francie Johnson, Marj Johnson, Barbara Olson and myself. Six of us ladies.

AB: That would be fun.

SF: We play rummy. Of course, with Meda, you do two bits a game, sometimes a very short game. You lose a lot, but just quarters. Then they have to have their little showdown, and I sit and deal the cards and say to the ladies, "Well, who has the best hand?" I still don't know poker. All these other women do.

AB: What about you Pauline?

PP: I belong to the Teachers Association and they have all kinds of activities. I don't go to all of them, but I sort of pick and choose. And then they always have meetings and luncheons and I go to those. We joined the 50 Plus Club and we meet every Friday morning except for summers. It's just a group of people down at the Rec Centre. That's where we go. Scotty hasn't been able to do too much so we have to sort of restrict that. And we go to movies. We play cards. We did have a good card club, but sad to say, a lot of them passed away. That's where you're at. Trying to get people together is hard, especially when they get older because they don't like driving at night. I don't mind. We're busy. Then we have the grandkids there in Calgary. It keeps me going, going to their events.

AB: To close it off, what is the biggest change that you've seen over your lifetime? What is the biggest thing? And what do you think is going to happen in another 50 years?

PP: I say, "Good luck to the country." I really do.

SF: I always think of the next generation. It bothers me really. [For] our grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

PP: I think technology has gone [too far]. It's wonderful, but nothing is private anymore. Your life isn't private. Nothing. I don't know. I think we have lived a good life. I think we have been a good generation. No complaints. But that is one of the things. I wonder what the world is really going to be like in 50 years. It's just too much violence.

AB: Do you think there is more than there used to be or do we just hear about it?

PP: We hear about it. No, I agree. They've always fought—

AB: There was crap before, but you didn't hear about it; it wasn't in your face.

PP: No, that's what I'm saying. It's becoming that they don't care that they come over here. They have no value of life, some of them. No, that's what I'm saying. It's wonderful, but I do get concerned.

SF: There's a lot of advantages that we like.

PP: Oh, I love all the advantages. I can wash clothes and not iron them, and do all these things in a day.

SF: And power. It's really great!

PP: [*Speaking to Saloma*] Okay, tell about your Consul birthday party.

SF: Which one?

PP: The one you started with. You and—

PP: The one you started with. You and—

SF: Oh, that first deal we had in Consul. We decided we would have a community thing, so Iva Jean [Wagner] was with us, and Jim and I. And we started and we thought it would be a pancake breakfast. I was working [at the Co-op] and Art was the manager then—Art Read—so talked him into making the breakfast. [*Speaking to Betty Stokke*] Would you remember going to that Betty, in Consul? So then we got to a parade. (I have pictures of it, that parade). You know, we weren't that organized and at the school we put some museum—sort of old—things in there, and histories and that, but people would not cooperate; they didn't know what was going on. But after they got there, "Well, I could have done this and I could have done that", but it turned out to be a nice day.

AB: When was that?

SF: It was in—

AB: '67 or '65?

SF: In there. I have the dates, too. '65 maybe.

BS: I remember there was a parade, but that's it.

SF: But there were a lot of people. Even some came from out of town to it.

PP: Well, I think it was a little later than that maybe, Saloma, because our Shelley was down visiting, and she got to ride in the parade on a slide, and then Gayle had to be in the parade, too, so that was when they had it at the lake. So the Co-op had a thing [float] and she was the shopper. I do remember Shelley came home all excited about this. She was in the parade and Uncle Paddy rode a horse in the parade! They were all excited.

SF: At the hotel, of course, Elizabeth Ebner was always a bartender in there. [*Speaking to Ann*] You remember that? "If you ride your—whatever her horse's name was—they led the parade, Paddy and Elizabeth Ebner.

PP: I remember our Shelley coming home just thrilled over it.

SF: I just can't remember.

PP: They loved going down to Consul. That was freedom.

SF: That open space, they just loved.

PP: I can remember Harold Brown trying to pick them up when they were walking from Helen and Buck's [Schmidt], and they wouldn't ride with him. Cliff Brown offered them money and they wouldn't take it. He said, "Those little so-and-so's of yours are terrible. They won't even take a quarter. They called me a stranger." [*Laughter*]

SF: You don't ride with strangers. They loved coming in the summertime.

PP: Shelley was older then because she was down there by herself.

SF: No, I think Scotty came. I knew you couldn't [come]. You were going to summer school. It doesn't matter.

PP: I was in summer school.

PP: I was in summer school.

SF: I know Shelley rode the float and she was so happy.

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Interviewer =