

**Westman Oral History collection**

**Interview Date:** 1983-06-17

**Narrator (interviewee):** McLeod, Gerald Norman

**Interviewer:** Brown, Irene

**Location:** Home of Irene Brown

**Transcriber:** Bee, Richard

**Date Transcribed:** 2014-09-24

**Introduction by Interviewer and first question, start of clip 1 of 2 - (00:00:07):**

This is the seventeenth day of June, 1983. "Root, Hog, or Die" is the interesting title Gerald McLeod of Glenboro has chosen for an interview he will have with me, Irene Brown, at my home in Glenboro. He will share his youth, the hardships of the 30's, many of his life and work experiences, and even some of his poetry, with the Westman Oral History project "Voices of Yesteryear". Let's start Mr. McLeod with where your ancestors were born.

Answer (00:00:40):

They were born in Renfrew[?] County, northwest of Ottawa, eh where I too eh, was born.

Q. (00:00:48)

And you're a real Canadian.

A. (00:00:50)

I would say so, and whe, when we remember when my mother's side were in the War of 1812 against the Americans.

Q. (00:01:05)

And are you going to tell me about your boyhood?

A. (00:01:07)

Oh, yesss, and eh, childhood at least and eh, in Ontario was comfortable and very satisfactory without any trial or hardship I would say and, uh, until, uh, wh we moved west at that time, that was eh when our hardships began. And I think of, uh, initially, first year or so things were quite alright until we began to try farming ourselves. Hitherto my father had worked, as a hired man for his brother, and brother in law. But when we began to farm, on our own, and to borrow, money to, pay for, horses and harness at post war, prices, when wheat had dropped to 63 cents a bushel, that was, a different story from the wartime price, and, you have to remember machinery and the, harness and horses that we bought were at wartime price, and just after that the 63 cents for wheat, became, the standard return. And, uh, we did, suffer as youngsters, and uh, it was a matter of circa, of many circumstances that were against us, illness, and uh, my sister died of of hermatic[?] fever and subsequently, ah, another sister from, an a burst appendix and in those days they would not operate, so there were two deaths.

A. (00:03:08)

And, when I say "Root, Hog or Die" I'm thinking in terms of, the poverty, was, your own, the, there was no state aid, and you just had to root, as it, were, in order just to live, and I think of, benefit dance which is quite common now but at that time it was felt to be the uh ultimate in charity, and I think of wearing handmedown clothing I remember from the local town wearing shoes that were far too heavy for me

but they er I had to have something, and, uh, I remember that we would be, at times, out of sugar, for as much as two weeks we would be, out of coal oil and so, no, means of eh light at night, and uh, patched, clothing, and nowadays I see that they patch them to be stylish we patched them to cover our notity, and um I think of, em, poem, that uh, probably helps to illustrate it which is entitled "30 Cents", and I give it to you now: "Two lads, shoeless, poor in bib overalls of cotton made, much washed, patched, poor, reflecting the poverty of 1922 not '72, making the routine trip to the village in western Saskatchewan in a two wheeled cart shafted to the bronco, Chub, to trade the butter their mother made, to trade the eggs laid by eccentric hens in straw stack and the horses oat boxes, to trade for tea, sugar, salt and golden syrup, baking powder and a yard or two of fenelet[?] and five cents their mother calculated over for a treat of hard candy from the wooden pail on the floor, and entered the CPR station to get the parcel from Eatons. In the station's office farmers stood, talking, the lads were shy, meek, knowing their poverty and barely audibly asked the agent, briskly he said "It's here and the charge is of 30 cents." The lads, answered more quietly still "We haven't got 30 cents". And the agent snapped "Well, you can't have it." Stunned, humiliated by the public rebuke, hurt and crushed they turned slowly from the wicket to the door when a farmer with compassion, and who saw the fitness of things, said "I'll pay it son, and your father can give it to me.""

A. (00:05:56)

So that probably, and, gives you, some interest and eh er rather I'm sorry gave you some insight onto what I was trying to, speak about and I said a while ago that we didn't have any, light I can remember that my mother weaving a wick out of string, and then melting tallow and putting it in a bowl and letting the, letting the knitted wick, eh down into the tallow and that was our lamp, in the times when we didn't have any coal oil. So, eh we had also, becau, because of those hard times we, we, we never learned to play. We had no time to play, so that by the time I was 14 or 15, I, say this without bragging

but I was fully capable of handling a half section of land I knew how to hitch up six or eight horses, and I knew how to, eh, what the routine was, I knew what, eh, the, cropping arrangement was, summer fallowing, and wheat, and stubble wheat, and oats or flax, and eh, I could have, I could of ha handled it easily at 15 years of age.

A. (00:07:17)

Well all this timemm my parents, were weary, of, all this hardship. And they were never contented. They tried and eh he as I indicated, it was, too rough. And they were anxious to get, to return to land where, eh there were trees and water and lakes and rivers and the like. And one fall 1926 the harvesters came out from, eh Erika[?] Falls, in Ontario. And eh they spoke in some adoring terms of what Erika[?] Falls was like, and since fathers' training and his experience had been in with the lumber woods mainly, he set his mind on going to Erika[?] Falls. But in the meantime the Free Press Prairie Farmer were highlighting the development of the paper mill by the Spanish River Company, ah in Pine Falls northwest of Winnipeg, and he followed the reports, closely and, hin the spring the decision of 1927 the decision was made to, go to Pine Falls. Now [throat clearing] we had to, gather up money, enough money to do that, which sell our equipment of course, and we were always on a rented farm so we had no land but we would sell our equipment and then each of us worked out. In the, em, in the spring of 1927, were hired out and to get enough money to buy a Model T Ford and to have enough money to travel east.

Q. (00:09:08)

Before you go any further...

A. (00:09:10)

Yeah I'm sorry.

Q. (00:09:11)

No that's just fine! But before you go any further than this, em, what was your early education like?

A. (00:09:19)

How much, do you mean? By how much was my education? That I mean what degree was I educated?

Q. (00:09:25)

Whe, No, I don't mean that. I mean where did you attend school? What was your school like?

A (00:09:29)

Well it was, eh, it there was two schools within the Bounty area that was Glenhurst and, eh, Le Cabre[?] school districts, and eh, that's where I [smacking sound] I finished my eh finished my wrote my entrance to high school and except for, a couple of months, when I took sick with isret I studied grade nine eh material and then I took sick with scarlet fever and eh that, eh finished it off once quarantine was lifted then it was time to get ready for this sale I just mentioned a moment ago and prepare for leaving so that was the limit of my formal education.

Q. (00:10:10)

Well its, its brought back a lot memories for me because I too lived in, in the same era that you did. And em, eh I was quite interested in all the hardships you described. And so after you had reached this decision what you were going to do you went to?

A. (00:10:28)

Pine Falls

Q. (00:10:29)

Pine Falls. Now, let's go on from there.

A. (00:10:32)

But I was thinking that, we bought this Model T and rigged a tent on the side and there were eight of us in the Model T and I call it the Covered Wagon Going East. And ought you remember Emerson Huffbolt[?] the covered wagon in the United States uh ours was the Covered Wagon en Going East and we attracted a little attention but em, and that we, we eh, eh got to Pine Falls, and it is a little interesting that employment was comparably easy there at the time, because eh, we didn't have much money but we knew we would get work you couldn't do that now but we knew we we would get work and em we couldn't drive all the way in to em, Pine Falls cause there's no road! We sold the car at a little community called Stead[?] and my father and I went up, on in the morning train, we gu got a ju, job eh between the time that i it arrived and when the train returned and we had a job and next day we took tent and all moved up on the train, you couldn't do that now there'd be no job you couldn't go through that kind of manpower etc. etc. but, however then we were, we had arrived at the industrial town Pine Falls. And em, that was hirst operated as I intimated a moment ago by the Spanish River Paper Company, and in 1929 was bought out by Abbot Tibby[?] and known as the Manitoba Paper Company. And eh, I worked, at the plant and as, semi-skilled and un-skilled many jobs throughout the plant until it was closed in 1932 as a result of the Depression.

A. (00:12:21)

But I should mention that when we arrived at Pine Falls we did not have, eh what you might say a clean sheet, from the standpoint of, being in debt we owed, stilled owed for the harness and the horses back in Saskatchewan and we owed the doctor, and em, so, we just had to buckle in and get those paid

off and as a result, I handed in my cheque for two years to my mother until I was 19 I didn't, I I, I would get perhaps a little money now and again to go to a show but otherwise, and we lived in very primitive conditions, and until we had eh got this, debt cleared away. In the meantime I, I they did give me enough money to take a correspondence course, in electricity, towards, an journeyman's em certificate, and I did complete that course, and also, eh, I had always been, absolutely nuts about radio. And my brother and I, built our first set, one to a regenerative circuit and we had all over the continent. W, w, w, an exciting thing I shall always remember and erh I, think that the highlight of my, one of the highlights of my life is that I first, hooked it up, it wouldn't produce a sound or a tune and then I found out from an electrician friend of mine that I had used the wrong kind of solder and thus the connections, the connection were all corroded and I had to to er eh use another eh Rosen[?] solder, solder I had to get it all apart and do that and em on a Saturday morning, it was all together, and eh I remember, I heard Jack Thompson from CJGX given the Yorkton, giving the grain prices. I don't care what you say there was nothing as dynamic in my life as hearing Jack Thompson giving, the grain prices from Yorkton, Saskatchewan.

Q. (00:14:32)

Yu, you're even make me feel excited listening to you talk about it.

A. (00:14:35)

Well eh, heh I I I shall never forget it anyway, I eh, I thought it was an dynamic occurrence for me anyway.

Q. (00:14:44)

Eh, when you were speaking about the Depression part of your life eh you em, i in your notes you had mentioned something about eh forest fires and cutting cordwood I don't think you mentioned about that.

A. (00:14:55)

Well no I haven't but because that was coming up because you see it em the mill shut down in 1932, and that made meant that first of all, eh, we tried my father and I were trying to buy land, and because there was some, good cu, cutting wood on it, and the government wh, fooled around with us all summer and gave us a dis, eh an answer in September that they couldn't sell it I wasn't married and I had, kept, eh, pretty well to the straight and narrow but they said they wouldn't give it to me because the they would have to pay for the education my children would, eh say I didn't have any children. [laughter from interviewer?] And eh...

Q. (00:15:36)

They kind of got mixed up there didn't they?

A. (00:15:39)

I think so nd anyway we, we em, eh then that fall wh, we we cut cordwood, and eh at a dollar and a quarter a cord nd cut the roads to it, and boad yourself. And eh, en eh in the summer time, well we, there were twice that went up the east side of Lake Winnipeg to fight forest fires, and eh, I I think of the modern commedication, tha today, its it's astonishing because, from one end of the train to the other they were in communication with each other and a farmer on his truck is in communication with his, house and his wife. And eh we had pigeons, em hom carrier para, home homing pigeons they call them isn't it, we had them and I remember getting up at th, at the to the fire and we had were about 40 miles

upstream, and the foreman hadn't managed to get his eh, men deployed. And eh as they should have been, and eh we had big sharp double bitted axes, and this, gent, was rubbing with his hands on the ground, when em another fellow brought an axe down and cut his wrist. And em, they immediately got two fellas who were capable in the canoe and we paddled up remember we paddled we weren't flown in we paddled all up that 40 miles in two canoes, two fellas who were capable in the canoe and em, took the injured man down, sent a pigeon to Lac du Bonnet and the the when the fellas got to the mouth, the message had gotten there and the plane was there to take the injured man home so, and we had the, we had them in cages, and were wh on top of our eh, eh equipment. Anyway that's so much about the, communication of, of yesteryear.

Q. (00:17:43)

Uh, that's the first time I've ever heard a really true story about the homing pigeons.

A. (00:17:48)

Yeah eh that's, eh, we had them both expeditions we had, we had the pigeons with us. And the other communication we had was if the, eh the first time went up the plane, came, over that is the fire patrol plane from Lac du Bonnet came over and we carried rolled up, narrow strips perhaps they were 12 inches wide, rolled up eh cotton that we had to lay out, and eh, and eh it would identify ourselves so that the pilot would see and then he flew off in the direction of the fire, for our benefit see. So that's the communication we had in in yesteryear.

Q. (00:18:28)

Well after all the people in those days were pretty smart to think of those things. They had nothing...

A. (00:18:32)

Well they had to have some way I suppose to eh, eh, for to communicate ah in lieu of eh em CB.

Q. (00:18:39)

Our modern conveniences!

A. (00:18:41)

Yes! Well now I think that I have pretty well, I would one thing that I did have, that I haven't mention rather than that is that, eh, sometimes I'm, I'm a little concerned about the fact that we have to, hire people to come and tell us how to play and we have all kinds of time and all kinds of things to which to play and those times we made our own recreation, and made our own play and eh, and during that time this when the plant was down there was, ample opportunity to, to study and to think of a situation in which wh, we were in I remember a saying that was prominent at the time, I didn't originate it I should, I wish I had, " A breadline, knee-deep in wheat is obviously the handy-work of foolish men", and, that seemed to be, sort of a gave us the impetus that philosophy gave us the impetus to study. And oh, so that we had study groups, and that turned me towards the idea of eh, supporting the CCF. And eh, th tha and eh we we um, from then on I was active in the CCF, and eh and I'm not now. But I was then.

Q. (00:20:03)

But before you go any further perhaps some of the people that are listening don't know what the CCF is.

A. (00:20:08)

Oh the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation which is the predecessor of NDP or quite right because NDP an and the National, em, Democratic Party is that ism is that what it is? New, New Democratic Party, New Democratic Party that's what they've. And ah eh em but to me I think in terms of what it's

worth and um, and em, and Stanley Knowles people like that that that's the CCF. That's the father or uh the foundation of the movement. [throat clearing]

Q. (00:20:44)

But you wert, an and then you were of speaking of you making your own recreation do you want to say any more about this?

A. (00:20:49)

Not particularly except it was probably a little unfair in that we were in an ideal place for recreation because the lakes and rivers were there and somebody had a canoe so we hiked, wh we canoed, we made picnics, but we didn't think anything of walking, eh there were people who lived away down on the lake shore we didn't think anything of walking 14 miles down there and 14 miles back in the daytime one day, and now they won't walk for the mail!

Q. (00:21:20)

You're quite right there. And but you also took an active part in, in eh, eh church work, and, and young peoples' work.

A. (00:21:31)

Yes I did. Yes I'd say ah, em, we eh er I was the first president of the, of the young peoples' group. We organized a young peoples' group, along non-denominational lines we used the United Church which I'm a member and was then too, and em, we used the, er church eh the United church as sort of our basis of it of eh, operation. But eh we didn't em we didn't bar anyone anyone wha, anyone, and also I was active in church work as you intimated I, I was eh em the em, superintendent of the Sunday school as well as having taught Sunday school. And eh, ne I, where we had a kind of what was regarded then was a bit of

a radical idea what Christianity was or should be, and em because I felt, I felt that religion should be very vitally concerned or interested about, social issues. That eh that you, you whe you couldn't talk very much to a person about eh his soul, ah eh if he had an empty stomach. Or she, as the case might be. So eh, now that I have changed, but at that time I subscribed very strongly to that idea and this was how, for example, my was em, after the mill reopened of course ind eh in 1935 but my work eh, eh and my interest in this direction continued. And it was [unclear] in the shutdown period but it continued after that. But I'm perhaps we should, can we say now that, that it did begin that the machine eh in 1934, they began to em, eh, cut pulpwood. And eh...

Q. (00:23:34)

That's by machine that was when, in 1934 they started to cut pulpwood by machine?

A. (00:23:40)

Pulpwood before yes cut pulpwood be and the next year me the first machine operated, began to operate. And eh I got a job I wasn't cutting pulpwood but I got a job em, ehm, fixing roads cause the, what you call fixing roads is that you the had er a road cut out of the bush which, had double width, one side they iced, at night, and the other side was a return road. But it eh the ruts would break down under pressure so I had to, my job was to put cut little sticks in, in shore it up. And em...

Q. (00:24:20)

When did they ice it?

A. (00:24:21)

Well just because the loads were so heavy that eh they were such big loads that no horse could pull it, on eh on a snow surface because then...

Q. (00:24:29)

The loads would slide easier.

A. (00:24:30)

...pull with that much resistance there is the snow and the ice and the steel. So they iced it for that reason cause they were enormous loads, huge affairs.

Q. (00:24:38)

And where did they get the water to ice it?

A. (00:24:40)

Oh that was no problem, get it from the the lay, from the river the Winnipeg River and because it was all of this was coming down all the cut wood as it was cut was coming down and being deposited on the ice. Ne meanwhile, the boom timbers had been scattered before the frost, or before the freeze-up, and eh they were dumped on the in the, on the favourable side of the boom timber so that when it thawed there were, the winter's work was all, eh corralled.

Q. (00:25:08)

I wish I our listeners could see your hands moving, because they helped describe this even more vividly!

[chuckle]

A. (00:25:15)

That's regrettable. [chuckle]

Q. (00:25:17)

Oh no! That's, that's just fine! It's...

A. (00:25:20)

I em, one other event work that I sorry if I, I failed to mention it was just before we began to cut I got a job going up on, on eh, eh a mining expedition near em eh Bissette[?]. And eh, I recall eh, that experience as being all Fall or one Fall and we, we I was with the assisting, assistant um, engineer, and we took assays, and eventually we took it down and sent it to Winnipeg for, eh to be assessed. And um, I wha I perhaps it is hard to mention but it was a mick to give it a description which is worth bothering about eh on em an occasion such as this, but eh, there was a certain amount of freedom about it there was a certain amount of eh, the weather was magnificent, and eh we were a mixed lot eh, half the crew were of eh were Indians and eh, and I remember one funny little thing when we were, eh moving in, one of the chaps who had backed it eh as far financially, was from Winnipeg and I remember that whe when we were portaging right about a mile portage when all this stuff had to be hauled over from the boat that had taken us on in eh at English Brook[?] and had to be taken to Lake Winnipeg ow where whe, we had about a mile and a half to portage this stuff on our backs, drill steel and forge and me eh our supplies...

Q. (00:26:58)

The loads would be heavy!

A. (00:26:59)

It was heavy and eh this chap, eh picked up this book and he said my he was going to be the cook and he said, my, he he the book was a cookbook and he said "My wife, thought I would use that" and she was certainly right he couldn't cook. Eventually one of the Indian chaps, made a swell job of it but not this

lad. But we used to bake ban, bannock by he used to bake bannock, by holding the pan, towards the fire the open fire, and then after that side was baked he turned the pan the bannock around, and, get the heat on the other side. And sometimes it got a little heavy but it tasted good. [chuckle from interviewer] But anyway I I'm sorry for that, scattered arrangement but eh coming back to, eh, once the, the pulpwood operation was finished as it was in the spring, eh, then I was hired on to help, the, millwrights get it, the equipment ready to run which it one machine at least was put into operation in July the first 1935, and then the next, year, eh the second machine and by, by 1936 eh August 1936 it it was in full production. And eh, [throat clearing noise] so, but as I intimated a moment ago, there were important items I think at that time, I was as I say I I was concerned about, the, poor distribution, of our wealth. And it did exist it it doesn't exist to that degree now, but it did exist then. And so that why why I allied myself with the CCF, because that was part of their program at that time.

Q. (00:28:51)

Ehm mem, just a minute before you go any further there what do you mean by the poor distribution of our wealth?

A. (00:28:56)

[draws breath] Well I I felt this way it it now I think differently, that I think whe in some cases wages are WAY out of proportion but they were certainly the other way around at that time when, when I felt the distribution of wealth the same with farming farming, eh, eh, turns to the farm well oh, but look what you paid for, what do have they got it and refined it and you bought flour from them from the manu, the factories and from uh, and um, so I felt that it, it was far too uneven and eh, when you think it now eh wages now which, I think are out of line we were getting, we were getting eh, after the mill opened up and run for about, two or three years then we got 56 cents an hour. Ism, and, we we were well off! We

were well off. The people who worked in the town site, as the they were not organized they were not union they had no contract.

Q. (00:29:53)

I was into a place this morning to get a job done and I noticed the sign on the wall said 16 dollars an hour.

A. (00:29:59)

Yeah! That's what I mean! I thinks its it's...

Q. (00:30:02)

Just compare the two.

A. (00:30:04)

It's out of, out of, out of line all altogether. And em, eh, we we we considered we were getting good wages 56 because prior to that all through all through the before the shutdown we were getting 43, first we started 40 then 41and then we got a real raise to 43! So uh, anyway eh that's by the way.

**(End of clip 1 of 2 - 00:30:28)**

**(Start of clip 2 of 2 – 00:30:49)**

Q. (00:30:49)

Now we have turned the tape have you got any more you would like to say about study groups?

A. (00:30:54)

Perhaps I should mention that eh, as eh, as it went along, our study groups began to be more politically aligned and we formed the CCF study club. And, eventually then we began to identify ourselves a political action, which meant that we accepted, in Pine Falls at least, our group accepted the responsibility, of eh, em, for the executive, of the Springfield constituency so that eh one of our members, became the chairman of the constituency association, I was the secretary. And eh, after about a year's activity, and various, meetings and coming together, I was asked to, run the Springfield constituency in the coming election. And eh, was considering it when eh, eh Stanley Knowles became available and I bowed out in favour of him because he was a far better wha candidate than I would have been. And so, eh, when then we assisted him in his campaign.

A. (00:32:09)

And eh, em, I I perhaps should add that this, subsequently I, I'll mention it later but I did go in to Winnipeg to take a business course. And, the study groups I continued with study groups in Winnipeg, and I joined the LSR which was, the League for Social Reconstruction and the youth arm of the CCF the national youth arm of the CCF, and I, later on in the winter we took on a, a project, the eh, boiling down of the ru, Roulegh[?] Ciriwah[?] Report. Roulegh[?] headed up the eh, the commission, the Royal Commission, which was to examine the inequities, of the tax system nationally, er eh as compared to the tax base that Ontario had, and the tax base that Manitoba had. Eh for example everything went to the east, where the factories were, and then Ontario [unclear] could tax that, and all of our stuff went

down there and could be an an its processing could be taxed, and we couldn't so this applied to other Saskatchewan and the Maritimes. Now, it was an excellent report and after all was the foundation, of the, of the, eh distribution that we have now where Ottawa du contributess so much money to the provinces this all grew out of the Ciriwah[?] Report. But in all its, its terminology, who would understand it? So our project was to boil that down into understandable, language. I was chairman of the taxation committee and, and su and of various committees, and a book was entitled *Pioneers and Poverty* and I'm sorry that I haven't got a copy of it anyway that, that was all I was wanting to say about study groups. I did say, I suppose, that it brought me in contact, with a great many of the people at the time and eh, King Gordon and eh Mister and Misses Woodsworth we met regularly in Mister and Misses Woodsworth's home, so we became friends with them. And eh...

Q. (00:34:15)

That's a wonderful experience for anyone!

A. (00:34:18)

Well I think so. Em, eh, and eh, I remember one time my friend and I were invited me to dinner, at Woodsworths just the two of us and we had a remarkable from him about, his experiences in Ottawa and eh, and his early experiences on on when he was under persecution and in jail and all of this. So, eh that that I think is em, eh, about all that I have to say eh en, about study grups, clubs.

Q. (00:34:48)

Yes, well en then you went on to a promotion to the superintendent's office?

A. (00:34:52)

Well after the business course, you see, I went into Winnipeg to take this business course and I devoted far more time to Ellis Island than I did to business. But I got through in a kind of way and as long as, people didn't give me dictation too fast I could get by. But eh it was in my own hieroglyphics nobody could a else could have understood them. [laughter from interviewer]

Q. (00:35:11)

Well...

A. (00:35:11)

And so when I came back, not immediately but eh subsequently I went in, to eh to be the, eh, you might call it, the secretary of the general superintendent.

Q. (0035:22)

And then you tried another field.

A. (00:35:24)

[draws breathe] Yes eh, all this time I I think, I should be mentioned I was trying to find myself. Where could I best be of service to, to leave the country, a little better than I had found it. And eh I wondered, since by brother was in the ministry whether perhaps I should think in terms of that. And I persuaded the Home Mission board, to accept me for one term and I did try it. Eventually, after the four months are up I concluded, with all due respect, that I wasn't s, suited to it and I returned to the plant. And eh, then eh, I couldn't go back to my old job in the superintendent's office but I went into the engineer's office, and eh, with a kind of a flunky there in running the blue print machine and that kind of thing.

A. (00:36:10)

And eh, and it was at that time, that I made up my mind after much soul searching, I eh I didn't jump to the colours as it were in the beginning because I couldn't do that honestly, I I felt, that war was wrong, that there was no way that you were going to justify it. But as time went on, for example when I was in the superintendent's office, I, typed everything for the engineer, the civil en, the the engineering department. And th, the paper company had a contract with the British Navy, and wh and that was in the machine shop and there were certain castings certaing turnings jobs that were being done for the British Navy. I had to type all of the specifications for that now, ar I and I was getting paid for it was I not involved in it? Certainly I was, by all means and this came to me. And it was, eh, a lot of soul searching I quit all my church work for a year because, I I I was disillusioned you see because I thought that, surely after all the peace efforts that were being made in the 30's, that we would triumph and that war would not become a reality but it did. And so, I [throat clearing noise]...

Q. (00:37:22)

Enlisted.

A. (00:37:22)

Heh?[interrupts interviewer before they could speak] No, I, I I did yes but I, I th, the one little thing, one sentence, or title, sort of, gelled. [unclear] was a newspaper man and he wrote a book, at that time, *Only the Stars are Neutral*. And that's what I began to think about, he eh and I, also concluded that, it had gone this far and the only way that, that, that itd eh, eh a favourable decision could be reached, was to meet Hitler on his own ground. So that's what I, I, I when I did enlist I did it sincerely but I couldn't have done it before and that's what accounted for my late enlistment, which was not until 1943. And eh, so then I, I and I, I was, overseas as I mentioned to you, from April 1944 to February 1946. But, before I

went overseas and until I enro, I, I and when I was overseas I was determined that I was going to come back and work for the National Film Board if they'd have me. And I saw every documentary that the British had produced that I could, that I could to get a concept of the structure of a documentary film m, m, m, so that I had some preparation for it when I returned. And so the first thing I did, I went back to the paper company and I, was promised advancement and I had security of 19 years seniority an, no interruption, the war service didn't affect your seniority with the company. But eh, I applied for the eh, eh, in um May I applied for a job with the Film Board and I was accepted in 19, in September.

Q. (00:38:56)

So when you re, referred to NFB, that means?

A. (00:38:59)

The National Film Board

Q. (00:38:59)

National Film Board. And you were employed there until?

A. (00:39:05)

Until I retired in 19, um, uh 73. And eh, which meant that I had 27 years, eh, and I felt that you might say that I, I sa, said a moment ago that I was trying to find myself and I did feel that I had found myself, in eh, eh the film work.

Q. (00:39:25)

And an important event occurred in your lifetime about then?

A. (00:39:29)

Well just before, yes I got married you mean?

Q. (00:39:31)

Yes!

A. (00:39:31)

Yes I got married just before, em, just after I was employed about a month I, I, eh was married in October of 1946.

Q. (00:39:42)

And your wifes' name?

A. (00:39:44)

Eh, Joan Louise Wolverton[?].

Q. (00:39:46)

And where did you live?

A. (00:39:49)

Wh it was first my assignment was in em Altona, an in a co-operative venture with the Co-operatives there. And eh in other words, I was a National Film Board, eh, representative. But my expenses were paid by the co-ops. So that they, we worked together as far as program was concerned. And I was that way till, eh, that broke up and the, they discontinued that, thing and eh, I wasss, eh a, assigned a territory from Red River rook[?], eh to the Saskatchewan boundary and that, eh, was a great disparity

between, eh, the home base and my most distant point. So, we moved we began to search for a place to move, and eh Glenboro set up a [unclear] for people who did it! Glenboro set up a committee, a little committee to find a house for me! And eh obviously, when there was indifference in the part of others but here they set up a committee, eh that was a very encouraging thing and eh so a decision was made, we they couldn't get a house but I had em, still had un, not touched, my VLA benefits and eh so the VLA house was built.

Q. (00:41:04)

Well three cheers for Glenboro!

A. (00:41:05)

Yes.

Q. (00:41:07)

And you had eh two children?

A. (00:41:10)

Yes I have two children, eh son and a daughter. Children...

Q. (00:41:14)

Any grandchildren?

A. (00:41:16)

Sheldon who is married and eh to Janice[?]r, Rouckly[?] of eh, MacGregor and eh they have two children yes two wh, wh, that means that I'm a grandfather.

Q. (00:41:25)

Pretty nice thing to be isn't it?

A. (00:41:27)

Yes it is! [chuckle from interviewer] Yes it is. Yes it is, indeed you, you you have to experience it to appreciate it.

Q. (00:41:34)

And you retired?

A. (00:41:36)

I retired in eh, 19 em, September of 19, eh, 73.

Q. (00:41:44)

And um, I have here another copy of a, of another poem that you wrote. And it's, written, it was written up in the National Film Board, uh pamphlet. And I wonder if you read that poem for us now.

A. (00:42:03)

Uh, yes I will! Eh this, by the way was, written in commemoration of the, eh, Film Board and what it was trying to do. And so it reads like this:

"Images of yesterday, images of today, images of tomorrow, these are Canada's furrows of history, stretching from the starting point down to this day, and thence to the dim haze of beyond. Thus today's report, yesterday's record, tomorrow's hope, springing from the minds of men to the mobile acetate strip, which flashing on a thousand screens, is reflected in the eyes of millions, stirring the minds,

motivating the spirits releasing the pride of Canadians, and binding with invisible strands the cord of nationhood.”

Q. (00:42:52)

Thank you very much. I wish I could read like, like you can. But um, even though I can't do that well I'm going to read a postscript that was written on this, pamphlet that whe, that produced this poem. And it goes like this:

“Of all the contributions received by this publication during the nine months we have been publishing, not one has been in the form of a poem. When we remarked on this to some of our colleagues, they agreed, to send our publication a copy of any poems they might come across which had been written, by National Film Board members. Several of whom are poets of considerable distinction, not only as a tribute to the person who wrote it, but also as an indication to others that poems would be welcomed. Such a poem has now come our way, thanks, to Jim, and I'm afraid I can't pronounce his name, do you...

A. (00:43:48)

Decision[?]

Q. (00:43:49)

Jim?

A. (00:43:49)

Decision[?]

Q. (00:43:50)

Of Information division. It is a word by Gerry McLeod, the boards' representative in Brandon, Manitoba. And he wrote it in, in October 1967, at a time when the board was holding numerous public screenings to commemorate Canada's centennial. Gerry may well be the most surprised reader of this issue, of if 69, since we've given him no prior indication that we planned this initial publication of his poem. We hope he and our readers will be pleased."

And it's signed editor. So that's something you should be very proud of Mr. McLeod.

A. (00:44:28)

I, I feel a little pleasure over it yes indeed.

Q. (00:44:31)

And I would like to say thank you very much for this mwe, interview I've enjoyed every minute of it.

A. (00:44:35)

It my privilege indeed.

**End of Interview - 00:44:37**