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2* ...about your family, you know, about Barkerville really, and how they got to Barkerville. Because this is a, we haven't got too much about Barkerville, you know. I'd like you to tell me something. This is of course before your, your day that you'd remember too much or anything.

** Oh, yes. My mother went there a bride, you see, in eighteen seventy-nine. Yes, eighteen seventy-nine.

* Where did she come from?

** She came from her mother's ranch on the Cariboo Road. But, she was born in New York.

* What was her name?

** Marianne Vezie (?).

* And how did she come out? Did she...

** She came out with her parents, and they came out to the gold rush from New York. There were four of them in the family, two boys and two girls. And they came out by way of San Francisco, and landed at Westminster, you know, and the small pox was raging then, and they were stuck there for nine months. And the oldest girl, she was twelve, she died, and there was another little girl born there. So in nine months time they started up the Cariboo Road, and when they

got to about, sixteen miles out of Ashcroft, there was an old log cabin on the road and Grandma said, "I'm not going another step." They only had fifty cents left in their pocket. So they just stayed there and they had some trading stuff with them you know, and she had lots of nice Irish linen sheets and they lined this cabin with the sheets. And they stayed there all winter, and in the spring I think it was, they went down across the road and pre-empted the land there, and that was their Bonny Part Ranch (?). And the people next door to them, the Walkers, there's a grand-daughter living here now, her husband's the postmaster, Mr. Lee. She was a, it's funny how the people, meet and connect.

* So that was the beginning of Bonny Part Ranch, was it?

** Yes, that was the beginning of the Bonny Part Ranch.

* Mr. Beatty was with them.

** Yeah, oh yes, oh yes. Grandpa was there, and they had no money, and there was no people, but they'd sell anything to if they could raise things...you know, stuff on the farm. Well, Grandma used to go out nursing, and that's the way she, earned a little money. She went from Clinton, to Kamloops, and Ashcroft, and (inaudible). She was the, the

midwife of the country. Oh, I could name so many of the old-timers that she nursed, you know.

* Such as?

** The Harvey-Bailey's in Ashcroft, the Harvey's and Bailey's, and the Haddock's, and I can't think, remember the name of that...Judge in Vancouver. His people used to be in there. And so many old-timers I...

* They were really on their way to Barkerville, were they?

** Yes. They were on their way to the gold vein.

* Just on up a little further.

** Yes. Grandma was just tired of all that. And they just stopped there. And then...

* Do you know anything that happened at the Bonny Part Ranch, in her young days, in your mother's young days, anything like that.

** Well, I wouldn't know that part of it because she, she was going to school in William's Lake, the convent there. And that's where she met her, future husband.

* How did that happen?

** Well, he was on his way to Barkerville from...Skwawkeegan (?)...Wakeegan Illinois? And he got to William's Lake, and he was a Catholic, and he stopped at the sisters' there, and the priests', and helped them build, add an addition onto the school at William's Lake, and when that was finished, ^{FUTURE HUSBAND} he was on his way to Barkerville, but he had met my mother then you see, she was a border there, and that's where the romance started. And then, it was a year after something like that, and they were married, from the (inaudible), 1879. And they went to Barkerville, by stage, and the stage broke down at Stanley I think it was, and they had to walk in on snowshoes from there to Barkerville. And then 1880, my sister Mrs. Boss (?) was born, Mattie O'Neill. And then Wiggs was born two years later in 1882. Then I was born, another two years, 1884. And I was three years old when my father died, and he's buried up at, near the old court house you know, have you ever been there, at the old court house? And, the graves are gone, though. Surveyors were trying to locate the graves, and the little Catholic church that was there, but I don't know if they ever did or not. Mr. Bucken (?) was the engineer.

* What was your father's name?

** ~~Veesie? O'NEILL~~

* No, your father.

** Oh, Charles Patrick O'Neill. Charles Patrick O'Neill.

* Did he come from the states originally?

** Yes. His people came from the Old Ireland, but he came from the states.

* What brought him up into this country?

** Well I think the gold rush. Yes. He was an only child and his father married again, so he left home and went out seeking his fortune.

* What was he doing in Barkerville?

** He was a blacksmith. Yes.

* Was he one of the first ones there?

** I don't know that. I don't know that.

* Anything about him, any incidents or that happened about him, in Barkerville or anything like that?

** Well, I wouldn't, of course I wouldn't remember, I was only three, but I don't remember, any, Mrs. Boss or Wiggs might have remembered things, you know, like that, but I wouldn't, too young.

* You don't remember Barkerville at all, really, hardly, or do you?

** Not when I was there first, just going back to it. I expect to go back and see it like I see pictures of it, with all the, you know, the stumps of trees all over the hills, when I went back the trees had all grown up.

* (inaudible), is there (break in tape)

* ...baptized there?

** Father LeJack (?). At Grandmother's farm. Because I sent to, Barkerville for my, I sent to...about my old age pension. I wrote to the priest at Kamloops. And he sent my letter to the priest at Queensel. And he passed it on to the Government Agent, up there. And, I got it back, signed by Mr. Bryant, who used to be our Government Agent here.

* Mr. Bryant. What was he...

** Mrs. Bryant, she lives here now, you see, she works in the Bulkley Hotel at the desk there, and her son's a schoolteacher here. But Mr. Bryant was at Barkerville, when I sent for the...

* Now, then what way did you go after Barkerville? You said your dad died there...

** Yes, he died and was buried there, and then my mother married again, and we went over to the Queen Charlotte Islands.

* Who did she marry again?

** Mr. Alexander. He was Hudson Bay man, in Quesnel.

* What was his first name, his full name?

** James Marsden Lyndsay Alexander. Yeah. It was Hudson Bay...factor.

* You didn't live in Quesnel, then, at all.

** No, just a, oh, I think we were there two years. Yes, two years. Yes, and from there, then when he was going into raising cattle on the Queen Charlotte Islands, we went over to Masset.

* What was the story of that, of the cattle business, on the...?

TP You're (inaudible), every time!

* I know that, I'm sorry, I'll try and hold on.

TP Try and hold on.

* Yes, the, the, tell us the story of the cattle, whole business, you know, why he wanted to raise cattle, what happened and so forth.

** Well, he and another Hudson Bay man, R. H. Hall, were going to go into this, I don't know why they picked Masset, Queen Charlotte Island. Anyway, they were very, enthusiastic about this business they were going to work up, so my stepfather went over there and took the whole family, and Mr. Hall didn't resign, he stayed on with his good job! And we were only over there three years when, we were going to come over to Port Simpson to live, when he got word from the Hudson Bay, would he take over the post until they could get someone else there, so he was in the Hudson Bay there, right in Masset for a year. Then from there we went to Port Simpson. And well, he didn't do anything there, he was, he had the post office for a while, and he was custom officer during the Klondike rush, and that's where he died, in 1900, and one, he died there. And we lived down there until the family started to scatter, and...

* You were quite young then, when your stepfather died.

** Yes, he died in nineteen-hundred and one. I would be what...I was born in '84, he died in nineteen-hundred and one.

* You were seventeen.

** Seventeen? Yeah.

* Tell me about, you remember Masset at all, and what it was like there, living there, how they were living, how we were living, and so on?

** Well, we went out to this farm, this ranch, out at a place called Seewot (?), and that was just an ordinary farm house, and a lot of cattle around, you know, and a beautiful beach there, oh my it was a lovely beach, miles and miles of beautiful sand that they could, Mother and Father used to go horseback riding on, you couldn't see the print of the hoof in the sand, it was so firm you know, so hard, like cement. Well that's all there was to that out there but when we came back into Masset we lived in Hudson Bay house... I thought I had a picture there. Of the old Masset house, Hudson Bay house.

* Were the Collins's, the Collins's there at that time?

** No Keene, the Collins's had left quite a while before that, the Reverend Keene was there, and, but before that there was a Reverend Harrison, but he left the ministry and went off ranching himself, but, near Seewot, and..

* Was, what had happened to the cattle ranching, why did your stepfather get out of it?

** There was no market for the cattle, no place to sell your beef. Like the Caribou was no place for Grandma and Grandpa to sell their vegetables. Yes, they had to, there was no place to sell the cattle. So they, I think they were bringing them back, and going to put them on some island near Port Simpson there and they dumped them over off the steamboat, and they lost them all. They were killed, or drowned, or... So that was the end of the, the, the ranching. 'Course, there's nothing like that at Port Simpson. Wasn't a farming country.

* How did you find Port Simpson after, like there after...?

** Oh, well of course I was so young when we went there first, but after we started to grow up and go to school, oh we just loved it. Oh, just a lovely spot. And we lived right on the beach. At high tide the water would just splash up on our, windows. And the boats coming from the south, you know, we only had, was it one or two a month, used to come in, just pass in front of our house into the dock. Or we'd see the boats going to Alaska, they all had to come in there to clear, you know, support of clearance.

It was changed from Fort Simpson to Port Simpson, and all the Alaska boats called in there. And then we got one boat a week or something like that, you know.

* Did the climate bother you at all?

** No, it was nice. Lovely climate this, maybe a little more rain than some places but, we never felt that. Oh, it was nice there, lovely. Those beaches were just beautiful, you know.

* What was there of the town, and the city, I mean the village and so on, what was there there then?

** Well, there was Hudson Bay post, and the steamboat, headquarters for the steamboat, the riverboats, no Prince Rupert then, you see. And there was a government office, and then a hospital was built, (brief break in tape) I don't remember it being built, so I must have been quite young. Dr. Bolton was our first doctor there, there was a missionary, and then then there's the Anglican church was built, rectory was there, then on the other side of this road was the, there was a road divided the Hudson Bay property from the village. Big Indian village, you know, there. When we went there the Reverend Thomas Crosby was the first missionary, and...

* What do you remember about him?

** Well, I don't remember so much about him, because we didn't meet him, but Mrs. Crosby used to take, hold Sunday school every Sunday, for two months in the summer when Dr. Bolton went to the hospital in Port Essington. When the camries (?) were working, you see, Dr. Bolton would go to the Skeena, and then Mrs. Crosby would take over the Sunday school, whether Catholics or Anglicans or Methodists. She took over all the white children. She was a dear little thing, I remember her well. But we didn't have so much to do with Mr. Crosby, no.

* Anything happen while you were there, any incident, growing up there, that you remember, that would be typical of life there, or things that happened there?

** Why, I don't know. There was of course the excitement of the Klondike boats coming in, and then the excitement every summer of the riverboats getting ready to go to the Skeena, you know, they had quarters down there, it would be at Port Essington then. That's twelve miles up the Skeena, and, oh then when the mines started, you know there was a great activity the, the boats had to call in to the government office to do all their, you know, registering of mine, and their claims and all that, from Stewart, and Alice

Arm (?), and all that part, and then the ^{Cannery} ~~canry~~ boats would all be, always came into, to, to, I think it was the Indians, to go to their different ^{canneries} ~~canries~~ (?), you know, they, the ^{cannery} ~~canry~~ managers. And that, the harbour seemed full of boats all the time.

* Then where did you...?

** Tugs.

* Where did you go from Port Simpson, where did you yourself go?

** Well, after I left, when I left Port Simpson, I went up the, came up the Skeena, to Minskinish, to the Tomlinson's as telegraph operator there. And I wasn't such a good operator, but they couldn't get any, couldn't find anyone else to send up there. So I was the one that went to Minskinish, and I've always been so glad I met the Tomlinson's, you know. Lived so intimately with the family, and knew them, and all this talk about them being funny, well they may have been funny in a way, but it wasn't so strange, really. They had their little...but who hasn't got their little funny ways? Yes, oh I enjoyed them so much, they were so nice, and

* How would you describe the Reverend Tomlinson, the old man?

** Well, I don't know how I'd describe, he's, he's, he's so normal. He was very strict about the rules of his village, but they were his rules, and every city has laws, hasn't it?

* Did the...people in the village, like these rules? Did they respect them?

** They did. Very much so. They did. As Mrs. Moberly said, you know, the jail was only used once, in all the years it was up. So they must have.

* Do you remember it being used? The jail?

** No, I don't remember it. Must, perhaps, before I went there, must have been. 'Cause I never remembered it being used. It had a bandstand on it, I think it was a bandstand, looked like it anyway, on top. I'll give you a picture of it. Yes, but I'd enjoyed Mrs. Tomlinson, just...

* How would you describe her, and what sort of lady...?

** Oh, such a nice, motherly person. So nice in her own home. Well, both were. The older ones had gone when I got there.

* This telegraph business, how did you get into that in the first place? Did you, did you know something about it, before you...?

** Oh, well, my sister ^{Nattie} ~~Methie~~ (?) O'Neill, she was then, sent me to a place in Vancouver to learn the, code, you know, and that's how I... And then that summer I came up from, from Vancouver, and she and my mother went off to the Seattle fair for three months and I had the office at Simpson, Port Simpson for three months. And from there I came up the Skeena then. And...

* Well, who was running the office at Simpson before then?

** My sister, Mrs. Boss, Mathie O'Neill. Yes, and before that there was a little Frenchman from...Quebec, from Montreal. He had it for a while.

* What was his name?

** Koochoo (??). Mr. Koochoo. And before that was Mr. Trombley, I think he was the first operator there Mr. Trombley.

* What was involved in being an operator, shall we at Minskinish? Describe the, your, what you did during the day or night and so forth.

** Well, for certain from the hours of the day, from whatever the hours, I can't remember now, from the hour in the morning to the evening you had to be, where you could hear the key, if you had a call come in, you know. Every station has a call, hasn't it. And Minskinish was R.S. Hazelton was H. My sister at Port Simpson, that call was F. S, S. Kitsilas Canyon was K. X. So we knew if we were called for anything, you see. We, then the office, that's one of the rules, the office was closed all day Sunday.

* Only at Port Essington?

** Hmm?

* Only at Port, only at Minskinish?

** Minskinish, yeah.

* Other places were all...

** All open, all day long yes. Twenty-four hours.

* I guess you'd adapt to that, of course.

** I didn't care, oh yes.

* What, the, what, would you, would the messages go right through or would you have to relay messages?

** No, they'd go right through. You could listen to them on the, anything from Hazelton to Kispiox, or not Kispiox, there's nothing...at, to Kitsilas, or to Aberdeen, Wiggs was down there, and, or Hole-in-the-Wall (?). You could hear everything that went over the line, you know. Because, they'd call, and you would stop to listen to see what was being said, or you could hear everything that went on. There was no way of closing a...yes. From Hazelton.

* What years were that, that you were at Minekinish?

1906 - 1909

** Nineteen-hundred and six to nineteen-hundred and nine.

* Were those the years of the railway building?

** Yes, surveying. Yes. They, there was no Prince Rupert to start with, you know, and...

* What would be the...majority of the messages that would come across in those days?

** What were they.

* Were they personal, or were they business...?

** Some, well some personal and some business. Messages perhaps for the steamboat, you know. Perhaps to call someplace for freight, or...

* What was your ^{office like} ~~opposite~~ Minskinish?

** That was the, the, used to be the Tomlinson's sitting room. Right in the house. Yeah, they turned it into a little office.

* You lived at the Tomlinson's?

** Yes, I lived right with the Tomlinson's, yeah.

* Were any of their family working the telegraph before that?

** Yes, the daughter, Lily Tomlinson. She was the first operator there. And she married the operator at Kitsilas, Mr. Graham. And from there they went down to...I think they were at Aberdeen for a while. Yes, I think they were at...

* Can you remember any, did you carry news out, on the, at all? Or newspapers and things like that?

** No.

* Was there a newspaper at Port Essington that you...

** No, never at Port, I don't think there was ever a newspaper at Port Essington. There was one at...oh, at Kispiox, but that I think was out in Hazelton that. I guess there was one in Hazelton at the time, but I don't remember.

* Were you an operator at the time when the Mount Royal sunk?

** Yes. That, I went there in six and the Mount Royal was wrecked in seven. And Mrs., I went there in six, and that summer, Mrs., fall, Mrs. Moberly, Annie Tomlinson, went up to work for the doctor and Mrs. Wrinch at Hazelton. And Mr. and Mrs. Tomlinson were going over to New Metlikapla (??) then, and they wanted Annie Tomlinson, their daughter, to come back and look after the house while they were away, take over the village with one of the brothers. So she wanted a holiday before she left, so she got, came home, she'd been away the year, she came home and got ready and went down on the Mount Royal, and that's when it just wrecked in the canyon. Just about half and hour after it left Minskinish. You know, it travelled so fast, don't they? Yeah.

* What do you remember about hearing about it? Wouldn't you, the wires have something to say about it?

** Oh, yes, the wires were full of reports of the, they could see bits coming down the river, you know. Something coming down, and the next thing I, was the boat had turned over and it was floating past the, the, office, the village. Well, I don't know if I should call it a village or not, there was just a few houses there. And, most of the passengers, well, several of them, quite a few of them, well, I guess they all got off of, to, but I think it was, was it four or six were drowned? Something like that, I forget now. I know Mr. O'Keefe the purser was drowned, and he's an uncle to James K. Nesbit. Nesbit wasn't born then, but Nesbit's sister was, Mr. O'Keefe's mother.

* Can we hold it just a second there? (Break in tape)

* Thank you. Could you just start with about the, you went back to Port Simpson...?

** After Minskinish, I went back to home, to Port Simpson. And, just wondering what I was going to do when, they wanted someone in the hospital, they were short of help there, I think the nurses graduating, wondered if I would just go up and help them out. I suppose I would be like an aid nowadays. So I did and I was there a couple of months when Dr. Kurgen came and asked if I would stay on and train. And I did, I was there the three years, and every summer we went

to Port Essington for the fishing, you know, we loved it. Three summers I was there. Two summers we went there, and one summer I was sent up to the hospital at Stewart to help them out there, they were opening up a new hospital there, Dr. Kurgen and Dr. Richards. And I was there one summer, and after I finished training there, I down to Victoria and did private duty work there for years.

* What was there at Stewart when you went up there?

** They were just opening a new hospital.

* What was there, what was there at the place, though, Stewart?

** Hmm?

* What was there at Stewart itself?

** Well, the mine. The mines were booming then, up around Stewart.

* That would be before the First World War, I suppose, was it?

** Oh, yes. Because that, ¹⁹⁰⁹⁻¹⁹¹² nine to twelve, yes. It wasn't after I went to Victoria that the First World War, war was on. Yeah.

* Then there, you remember Emily Carr coming up into that country at all?

** No, that would be after my time because I don't rem, oh I think it was in the twenties or thirties that she came up the Skeena. Because I didn't meet her until nineteen forty-four, because she died in 'forty-five, didn't she. I happened to be one who was called on from the registry to, to nurse her. And I was with her I don't know how, a week, something like that. And, oh I'll never forget that dear little thing in this room, the most severe little room. It was sis, her sister's school. Her sister had a kindergarten, and Emily had moved in with in this great big school room that she had her pictures hanging in. And her little bedroom was off of that, just plain board walls, and she'd sit up at night and couldn't sleep, and she'd go over the different little stories that she had written in her book, you know, about her trip down to California and that experience down there. And over in England, couldn't stand the English over there. And then she, wanted to refer to something, she'd say, "Just bring over my..." she didn't call it a desk, but you know what it was, her little desk? An orange box turned up on end, you know it has a little shelf in it? That's, that's the kind of furniture she had. Everything so severe, you know, no comforts at all. And

over her bed was a picture of Ira Dillworth. He's the one
who got her books started wasn't he. Yeah.

* Was this a photograph?

** Photograph, yes. A photograph of me being so kind to her. Well, he was a nut. (Break in tape.)

** Well it was the French teacher at the high school that went and, and interviewed Emily Carr, or read the, read her manuscripts and then she referred, you know, wrote to Dillworth about it. }

* You don't remember her name?

** Oh, I can't remember it. But old-timers in Victoria would, you know, yes.

* Several people that were in on this, on this writing business from different angles...

** Yes, well she was the one that really, well, that was the start of Emily Carr's books coming, because she read all her manuscripts, you know.

* Did she have any animals?

** Yes. Well, when I was there, she just had a monkey and a, a chipmunk I think it was, that's all she had when I was there.

* Was she up and around, or was she in bed a lot?

** No, she was in bed, well of course I was on night duty with her, but I don't think she could move around much in the daytime even. She had some little woman she used to come in and help her in the daytime, but I was just with her at nights.

* What time would this be, what time of the year, what year? What date would this be?

** That would be forty-five, the fall of forty-nine, forty-five. No, she died in forty-five. Forty-four, that was it, yes. Forty-four. 1944

* And this was really her last illness.

** Yes, it was her last illness. From there she went into a nursing home.

* Did she talk to you about her pictures at all?

** Not so much about her pictures, as now her life when she went down to San Francisco. The different experiences

she had there. And when she was over in, in London, the funny little things she, humourous. And, what was the other now. And meeting the...

* Up the Skeena.

** ...Indian, no, not up the, well yes, at Kitwanga when she was going into Kitwancool. She wanted to go in there so badly and she went of course, the Anglican minister, the Reverend Price. He was so nasty with her, just horrid with her. And she went and interviewed some of the Indians, I think, well I think she tells that in her book, and they took her in there, and she just loved it in there. They were so nice to her. Yeah, she just loved it in there. Yes, well, she spoke of this girl she befriended, you know, I think her picture's in her book, but the different ones she met like that, she was so fond of, of them, you know.

* These Indian girls?

** Yes, yes. One especially, you don't have to get what her name is, or pictures in the book.

* Sophie?

** Yes, I think that was one. Yes, yes.