

Tuesday July 23/85

Interview with Vi Smith

Side B

Canoes were a common thing people, there were a lot of people living down here at the time they just went back and forth in canoes just trying to watch their houses and I can remember houses from Kispiox used to go down as far as the river, and watch the houses, we say oh there's SO and so house she didn't recognize the houses going down, in fact I suppose they rook somewhere down the line as they went down here they were in fact.

MY GRANDFATHER SAID THEY USED TO TIE THE HOUSES UP WITH ROPES, JUST TO HOLD THEM DOWN?

StEY together.

THERE MUST HAVE been quite a few then?

There were floods from Glenvowell and Kispiox that was how Kispiox that was how Kispiox started to move up on higher ground, all the houses were along the river, because that's the way habitation was a long time ago. People lived closer together they started to move up. That's when there was a big flood. Then I think the other one was in 1940

IS THAT WHEN THAT BRIDGE?

Yes I think that's where it went but then the next flood it didn't come up as high but it was really, the river was swifter I guess, maybe the those things underneath the base of the bridge, I guess when that bridge went out it just sort of felt you were cut off you know we got used to it after awhile going around New Town way we didn't have to go that often not like today. There were times where we had to go like to catch the train if you were going to go to Rupert you had to go to New Town instead of going across the old bridge.

SO WHEN DID HAGWILGET START TRANSPORTING? IT WAS MORE LESS A WALKING TRAIL?

Oh yes, way before that, as far as I can remember Hagwilget was always there but we did come up with a date when we were doing research.

As far as I'm concerned it was always there and it was sort of a summer, we used to spend a lot of summer time, you know just spend time up there because my dad had a fishing hole on the side of the river, on the Hagwilget side and my mother spent a month there they had fish. Although we didn't stay with her. Somebody had to look after the garden. We always had a garden. But we used to go up there. She would spend a whole month there. Putting up fish for the winter. Smoking. They had a regular two big smoke houses there. My dad would gaff fish. I think if I went up there I could find his gaffing hooks by his fishing hole.

WHERE ABOUTS?

It was, it's not quite underneath the bridge. It's sort of half way between bridge and where the; do you know where the old smoke houses were? It's just on that little flat on the Hagwilget side of the Bulkley. I can remember there was totem poles there. But apparently the first Hagwilget village was there. They came on Gitksan people just let them stay here. And of course the DIA came into power they just gave it to them, but there was a lot of people that fished there. Like Jessie Sterritt used to go up there and fish cause they used the same hole as my dad because we were the same family. And there was Peter Muldow who is Arnie's grandparents I think maternal grandparents they lived down by the river here. They fished up there and Dan Skawill they fished on the other side of the flat there, they had smoke houses there. And then on this side all I remember is the Frank Clarke's and the Mowatt's you know Sophia Mowatt's family. I don't know which side of the family owned the fishing hole, but they camped on this side. Not on the first level, the next one. It seemed to me that their fishing was very hard to get too. because they had to go down___drop. Where as ours really wasn't quite that bad.

THERE WAS A ROAD THAT WENT THROUGH THE VILLAGE AND CAME DOWN TOWN AND A ROAD GOING UP SMITH HILL AND A ROAD HALFWAY UP SMITH HILL. SO THIS BLOCK IS CUT OFF LIKE THAT? Fig 1-1

Actually it was scary watching the flood, watching the river it kept coming up and coming up and flooding the roads. It was really scary for the adults you know with the younger people you know it was just a lot of activity. I know now that the older people were afraid they were going to get flooded off our land. Probably had to move up like Kispiox did. Just move farther back.

WAS IT HARDER LIVING WITHOUT ALL THESE CONVENIENCES WHEN YOU WERE SMALLER?

NO, see you because if you never have it you don't miss it. We didn't have it so we didn't miss it. It would be hard living without it now because we have it. But when I was younger everybody was in the same. Water we packed from the river go out and pack wood and it kept a lot of the younger people busy. Even if they didn't go out and have what we would call a paying job today. A lot of the native people didn't work, except for fishing and trapping but they were working it doesn't mean they were idle. We were never never idle even though we didn't have an outside job. We were just busy all the time, there was the garden to put in, harvesting your vegetables and fruit. That all had to be done and still go out and do your harvesting, the berries on the mountains. We were busy we didn't especially in the summer time we were busy and yet in the spring time we had a lot of fun because we had all the sports days and they had beautiful sports days in those days. It wasn't just soccer and softball that's what it has boiled down now soccer and softball. But they would have family days. Where the whole family participated in one

form or another. It was something we looked forward to we'd have the parade baseball players, softball players the races the mile racers, they would parade with the band. Behind the band we had a real good band. It was just something we really looked forward to. We'd go out to Kispiox sports days and spend a whole day, just take our lunches with us. Even when my children were still small we were still doing that. But I remember we'd do it when we were young.

SO THAT WOULD BE LIKE A SPECIAL DAY?

Yeah it was it was something we looked forward to, you know we'd talk about it for months before it happened, you know I can always remember cause that's when we got our brand new running shoes for the year and new clothes in anticipation for sports day. It was a special event and everybody went. It didn't matter the ones that had the wagons and the horses they went out. Those that had vehicles would go out. I know of some people younger people would even walk to participate it was one of my good memories. I have good memories of that, it was lots of fun. Although as younger people we just participated in day time activities. They would have their dances too. When I was allowed to go, they are enjoyable times. They're not like that drunken br wls they have today There was drinking yes, but it was kind of controlled hey.

DID THE INDIAN GAMBLE?

I don't remember that but I remember my dad talking about it. I remember he used to tell us about it.

WAS IT HARD TO LEARN?

I don't think so, I would imagine native people are gamblers I'm a gambler at heart but I had to make a choice somewhere You know I choose not to. But if you look at most Indian people they gamble otherwise why is bingo so successful in this area hey. They're gamblers at heart. And I could be too if I allowed myself. But I reached a stage where I set priorities. For one thing I don't have the funds for bingo I think I could easily get into it. No problem at all.

WHAT ELSE DID YOU DO WHERE DID YOU HANG AROUND? (WE USUALLY GO UP TOWN AND SIT AROUND THERE MUST OF BEEN SOMEPLACE?)

When we were allowed to go out. I must have been 16-17 I was still pretty well controlled at home. We used to, all the young people used to come together on the hill here. Just up this next ledge here. It just seemed to be a real grain down on the road there. We just use to congregate there and and just maybe some of them would play games, you know until it was time for us to go home. We were always under time limits. We have to be home at 10:00 at a certain age when we younger. It was no problem with us cause there was a path up here that was really well used you know everybody used it it's not used that much anymore but we used to run down the hill we were home in a couple of minutes but its the same all the young people congregate and talk, discuss things

you know. Smoking cigarettes I guess was the worse thing we did. And later on we go into drinking too. But it was never like...it was something you tried because if you wanted to be one of the crowd you know. They say chicken if you don't drink. You went along to a certain extent. You always knew there was limits, that your parents would only allow you to do so much and you didn't dare step over the line. You always knew when to pull back I think that's difference in my childhood. Now the young people don't seem to know when to stop. They do obey the parents more to help them set limits.

WHAT KIND OF GAMES DID YOU GUYS PLAY?

The first game that I remember that my older sister that was the same age as Mr. Wale and Maggie Smart, Sara Marshall and then there was Fanny. They used to have home made black bonkers. They would play it similar to volleyball, I guess except you had a small ball. But they used the palm of the hand, where they'd hit it. They called it a (clap hand together) That was what they called the game. I guess you can compare it with tennis. As long as it was going they would say the ball was asleep, they would say. Do you speak the language? As long as the ball was going back and forth and not hitting the ground they would say the ball was asleep. And I'm not too sure what the point of the game was. I guess when they missed it they lost a point or something. But I can remember watching the oldest girls play. This was a native game. And then they used to play a game they called I'm not too sure what they call it now. They used to call it pussy. I really forgot how to do those. Oh well played silly games, you know, just anything that, hide and seek. Even when we were older we played it. And then we played this ball game we called Old Tom. Actually it was a real big thing because when Sargent's. Before that store was built, Sargent's store was at the back. It was about where close to where the bank is now, this side sort of in between. That was where I remember a big opening. There was a hitching post there I guess from by gone days where they would hitch their horses. Anyway it just a great big square yard or place. And I remember the men used to play there. And it was both natives and whites there was no, they got along well together. And every night there was this game on Old Tom. No matter what time of the evening you went there it was a game going on, and it just went on continuously. Maybe someone would go home and someone else would take their place. It was a favourite game of the...well not just the kids, it was played by the young men (like now too) It wasn't a game where you played a certain amount of innings, it could go on and on forever and change your players. The whole point was not to get hit when running that's the part of the game. And they would pitch they had a regular horseshoe thing there up in Sargent's field.

THAT'S WHERE THEY USED TO PITCH HORSESHOE?

Sargent's they were very community minded people. He built

the skating rink here on his own cause he had a water plant hey, the power plant was here. That was before, you see hydro came into the area. And he built a skating rink for the town. There were masquerades, where everybody wore costumes on skates. This is where the Happy Six would play. They had an orchestra. They would have moccassins dances. But they were very community, they did a lot of things for the community. I can remember when Mickey and them were young then and they wanted to skate after they built something on that. The school said we can use some of the grounds so Mickey and them built it up, the rink there. And it was young Bill the Sargent that's here now, supplied them with the boards. They built their own rink. They supplied their own fun. They didn't wait for no organized sports at the time except maybe baseball for the men. The kids themselves if they wanted to do anything they had to make it happen. They were good at it. They had a few leaders like Mickey and Roger. And they could only start when it was cold start when it was cold because I remember when we were close by Jeanie and them used to make hot soap for the boys in the middle of the night cause that was the only time they could flood the rink. They spent more time flooding the rink and scraping the snow off than playing hockey. But it was worth it for them to have that odd game. Same way with baseball they had to organize themselves. That was in my peoples, my childrens time, sports wasn't really organized like it is today. I somehow think it was better for the kids. They have more initiative to go out and do things. Now they seem to wait for adults to organize for them, minor league. I'm still not too sure if that's...maybe...they don't give the young people to do. Don't let them participate in the preparation is important. Making it work and that's what my children were still a part of that. I think it builds your it helps to build your character and make you realize what was going on.

WHAT DID YOU EAT WHEN YOU WERE YOUNGER? WHAT WAS IN THE DID YOU HAVE A FRIDGE?

No we didn't have a fridge. I got my first fridge even 5-6 years after I was married. Some of the people had ice boxes. Sargent's always had an ice house they needed it to keep things cool at the store. They didn't sell fresh milk at the store. It was delivered to your house from farmers. But they needed ice for other things. In the summer time we can go there we didn't even have to buy it you know Part of the job when Marshall Brothers was running was to go out to the lake and cut ice. They would store them in sawdust, you know for the summer time. You could go there and get ice in the summer time if you want. They didn't sell it if you happened to be on good terms with the store keeper you got ice. After as eating it's very much like today except we didn't have the junk food. That was the only difference. We had our own Indian food.

HOMEMADE BREAD?

Oh yes, there was no they didn't sell bakery bread. In fact the B.C. sold bread and it was a luxury for us to go, they sold good bread. Everyone once in awhile if mom ran short and we had company, she'd send us up, we were able to buy bread for; I can remember paying a, I can remember giving me a quart and I got two loaves of bread at the B.C. here. Otherwise she had her own bread, she made her own bread. No you have the things we have today balogna. We didn't have the frozen food. You know, we didn't know what it was like to have frozen food. Very much like today but I know one thing I don't think as children we ever had store jam. It was there in the store but we didn't need to buy it because mother did up all her own. She had a cellar that must have been the size of this kitchen maybe not quite this big, but two sides of it dad had built shelves for her. We could go down there and see all these preserves. And on our side dad built bins. One bin was for potatoes one bin was for carrots, turnips whatever. You know that they got from their own garden and all the people gardened. As a child I remember that, all up along the hill they had huge gardens. Not just potatoes and carrots which a lot of people that was the ones; especially the ones that went down the coast; that was all they put in was potatoes and carrots, because they weren't home to care for them. But the people that stayed, I can remember the Clarks up on the hill that's above us. They had a strawberry patch that the road was so long that: I can remember we used to go up and it was harvesting time go and help them, they were quite elderly. I don't know why she had such a huge strawberry patch. You know we'd go and help them pick. Mother always had her own strawberries. But because our way of life was helping each other and it's still quite covenant in our time was to go and help other people, especially elderlys. We were always thought to go and visit an elderly person, see she needs or if he needs water or wood cut. That was just something we did because our parents asked us to do it. We didn't expect any compensation for it. Once in awhile the elders would buy us a gift. Or at a feast you know they would return something. But not always it was just something that we were taught to help each other. I remember picking these blasted strawberries, they were a back breaking job picking them all day and oh she had a huge patch. I used to resent my mother's big garden because it was such; you know when you were young you wanted to go out and play. Here you had to go weed the garden hill up the potatoes or harvest them in in the fall. But we did it because everybody else did. There were not idol youngsters in my day. Yet we had times for fun too. The church was a central part of our lives when we were kids. The school was there. Any organized social event was organized by our church, the same way with the Salvation Army we intermingled you know. We mix, if they had something special we'd go there, if we had something special they would come. But the church organized happening for the children. They taught the different holidays that they had. So it was very central when I was going up the church. It was a big influence and I think it was a good influence. They influenced

me a lot, but I think most of that came from my parents too, they were willing to make choices. We don't make choices, we sort of drift along. We didn't do that we were taught to make choices. Do we do this cause it's good or do we do this cause it's bad and you make a choice. I feel sad that I think we've lost something. There are still a few young people who have it and I think they're influenced by their parents. That's the sad thing that I see, that was better in my day.

ARE THERE ANY OTHER EVENTS THAT CREATED SOME EXCITEMENT?

Oh yes wedding, were very special, especially if you were apart of it. The only difference is they zoom around in cars now. If there was a wedding they would walk or even funerals they would walk too. They didn't have any cars and there was always a band in attendance. So a wedding was a special day. I can remember when Jow Smith and Mary Smith got married. I was one of the bridesmaid. We paraded behind the band from the church to the hall which was above our church. One of the things I remember which was quite different then was when there was a wedding it wasn't just the family that got involved it was the whole village, all the women. My mother had a big table we used in the house about 8 tables to go with it. It was a round table. But you know that they would pack those up to the hall. Can you imagine us doing it today. Several of the families had wagons and they would just go around and make their rounds. Mother always had a box, the table set 12, the cutlery, the table cloth, she always had it ready. When it was time for one of these events we would just pick it up, they were dishes we didn't use everyday at the house. Unless she was having a big do at the house. It was always ready and each one that went that reception and banquet whatever it was she provided dishes for her table. She served the guests that sat at her table. Gitanmaax hall would probably contain 300 people. They didn't have tables after awhile they had chairs of course. But in the beginning when they built that hall my mom was very active in raising; there was no grants then people raised the money.