

Athabasca Area Seniors' Memory Project

Eric & Ethel Brown Family – Interview Transcript

Narrators: Edwin Brown, Jean Barry, Philip Brown, Mavis Jacobs and Shirley A'Hearn

Interviewer: Irene Fitzsimmons

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Audio
Time
00:00:01

[START OF INTERVIEW]

Irene: *This is Irene Fitzsimmons and it is Monday, September 16th and I'm with the Brown family. We are doing this interview in Mavis Jacobs' apartment in Athabasca, and Mavis is joined by four of her siblings. We will start by asking Mavis to start with your name and your date of birth, how old you are, where you are residing currently, and how long you've been there.*

Mavis: Okay, I am Mavis Jacobs, née Brown, and I am 64. I was born December 24th, 1954 to Eric and Ethel Brown from Meanook. My dad, Eric, was born November 22nd, 1915. My mother Ethel was Ethel Hopps and she was born March 22nd, 1917. Mom was born in Meanook and lived her whole life in Meanook. My father was born in Vermilion in 1915 and moved to Meanook in 1922.

Philip: My name is Philip Allen Brown. I'm 70 years old and was born June 23rd, 1949. I lived in Athabasca all my life. I've lived south of Athabasca for the last 40 years and am married to Elizabeth.

Edwin: My name is Edwin Brown, born in 1944, so I just turned 75 in August of this year. I left Athabasca when I finished high school, moved to Edmonton. From there I went to Yellowknife, moved back to Athabasca, moved back to Yellowknife, and have resided in Athabasca since 1996. At the present time, I live on the farm where we were all raised, so it's home to us all and we enjoy it. I'm married to my wife Pat and we've been together for 50 years.

Jean: My name is Jean Margaret Barry and I was born Jean Margaret Brown. I've been married to Leonard Barry for 52 years and we live in South Athabasca. We've been happily married 52 years!

Shirley: I'm Shirley Eva A'Hearn. I was born November 17th, 1956. I moved to Edmonton to go to university when I was about 18, and I've been there for 44 years. I'm married to Gary Anthony A'Hearn. We've been married for 25 years and we live in Sherwood Park.

00:03:14 **Irene:** *Thank you. One of the first questions we're going to ask about is how your mother and father met, and any kind of story you might have around what you remember about that.*

Shirley: I'm assuming our parents met at church. They only lived a few miles apart and church was the main part of their weekly outing. I know Dad's parents moved to Meanook so that the boys could be closer to school than they would have been at George Lake, so they moved to Meanook. Dad was two years older than Mom, but Mom didn't go to school in Grade 1 because they didn't have enough warm clothes for her to go to school, and she was the youngest girl of the family. I don't think they were too worried about her doing well in school, because when she did go to school in Grade 2, when they had enough clothes for her, I guess she skipped Grade 1 immediately and went on to Grade 2. They would have been in the one-room school in Meanook together.

Shirley: I think their parents were both on the school board, and that was something that Grandpa Hopps and Grandma Hopps were very passionate about, as well as Grandma and Grandpa Brown, to have a school in the area and to get the funding for a teacher. So, it was interesting that most of our aunts on my mom's side are all teachers. Interesting, though, my mom wanted to be a nurse, but she wasn't really allowed to be a nurse. They had to become teachers, and the first one that went through normal school had to pay for the next one to go through normal school. So, Mom didn't get to go to normal school until she was about 24 or so, until they had enough money, and I think Grandpa was getting a pension at the time. Then her other sisters were paying for normal school. Even when she finished normal school, they wouldn't give her her marks because she hadn't paid her tuition. But they said, "Ethel, you know how well you did." So, I guess by the time September rolled around, she had paid for her tuition and she could go teaching in South Athabasca.

Shirley: They started dating before Mom went to normal school. After church one day, Dad asked if he could walk her home, and I guess that was a date back then. He was so worried about losing her when she went to Edmonton to live for that normal school year, and he was worried that he lost his love. So, he was very happy when she returned to Meanook and the South Athabasca area, and they were married a few years later.

Edwin: I think Mom's first teaching job, as mentioned, was in South Athabasca, and she had to walk to school in that very cold weather in wintertime and froze her legs many times walking. I believe it was approximately three miles on a north-south road, so the winds were very severe at times, but she persevered...

Shirley: Until they were married and then she quit teaching, I think.

Edwin: I think she quit teaching. When married, they lived in a granary that you could see out through the boards and the water froze every night. It was cool, but I guess they loved it. There was no difference for them than it was for a lot of other people, too, at that particular time. Cats froze their ears in the house.

00:07:18 **Irene:** *What were some of your earliest memories of growing up as a family and your parents? What were some of the fond memories you remember?*

Edwin: I think there's a lot of fond memories when you grew up in a household like ours. It was very warm. Parents were very supportive. But there was discipline and, you know, the wood box had to be filled every night in the winter. Things like that. You had to get water from the well. Different chores like that, that sometimes you had to be reminded to do. Milking cows was another chore that was morning and night, and we ended up milking quite a few cows at one time.

Jean: Yes.

Edwin: My last year of high school, I went to school half a day because I didn't pass all my subjects at first in Grade 12. I milked 12 cows before I went to school, and Mom was teaching school, Dad was driving bus, so that was my job for the morning, but I certainly did have help at night.

Jean: I was the help at night. I wondered why I never got a summer job, but I guess milking 13 cows was a summer job. So that's what I did, and the cream from milking 13 cows was an income for the family, and that was expected from you also.

Edwin: I think one of the things in milking a few cows was there was a dairy club started in Athabasca. Joey Eherer was the leader of it and there were a number of people that joined. We had got a 4-H calf, a Holstein calf. That calf that I got when I was in 4-H came from Edmonton, but it came to Meanook by train. In those days, we got our groceries on the train, people came on the train to visit, either the train or the bus, and a live calf came on the train. It was purchased from Standard Brothers, which are east of Edmonton, and I don't know whether they're still there today, but they were in the dairy business. Having dairy cattle for the cream cheque was very interesting to a lot of people in the area.

Shirley: It paid for their groceries, that they didn't grow or freeze or can.

Edwin: It did.

Philip: My name's Phil. It was certainly a change from what our grandfather was. Our grandfather was very much beef and grain-oriented. I think a big difference that I found was Mom and Dad being tradespeople, working, teachers, whatever, and dairy food instead of that, and I think that's caused a little bit of animosity, but I think the family did very well with it. I guess I can remember just the work on the farm. It's just been incredible. The good times, the hard work, you know. For me, I think the most fun I've ever had was hunting and fishing and trapping. That has been my life. Still is my life today, or it tries to be. I do notice that, though, there's quite a difference between the old Browns and the new Browns.

Irene: *And who taught you how to hunt and fish?*

00:11:26 **Philip:** Neighbors that couldn't afford to buy food, so they had to eat rabbits and whatever they could find, chickens. That's where we learned. Mom, Dad and Grandpa were never hunters at all.

Jean: No, they were businesspeople.

Philip: They were business workers, and Edwin and I were the workers. We did a lot of farming. Milking the cows is just the thing that happens. It's interesting, you know. It's hard to tell people about it because they don't understand it at all, but it was just something that was expected. You picked rocks all day, you milked cows, and you fed what, 100 pigs, most of the time—all the time by hand—and shoveled the chicken coop out. Hauled the hay all summer long. So, it was a really good life.

Irene: *As kids growing up, apart from the chores you had, what did you get involved with growing up? What kinds of activities did you like to do?*

Edwin: I think we all had some kind of activity. One of my first things was 4-H, and air cadets. I joined air cadets as early as I could, I think it was at the age of 12, and I stayed there until I was just about 19. Air cadets was very structured and you had a uniform, and we got to come to town once a week in the evening. There was camps that I got to go to in the summertime, so I didn't have to do any haying at that particular time or pick rocks, and see some of the world. I got to the Seattle World's Fair through air cadets, went to Sea Island with cadets, then to Ottawa different times with cadets. It was an organization that I really enjoyed and is really good for a lot of young people. We had the second best quadrant in Alberta one year, and we had some instructors there that were very committed – Don Corse who was a vice principal at the school, Frank Lockhart the teacher, Mr. Makar, Charlie Parker who was around town for a long time, Mr. Richel and a lot of people that had experience in the forces during the war. So, it was very good. I really enjoyed it and got a lot out of it.

Philip: I think everybody did sports, like I was in basketball and played a little bit of hockey. I think all of us did every sport that was around, like swimming. Every summer we had to take swimming.

Jean: Yeah, we had to take swimming lessons or teach swimming lessons, whichever.

Mavis: Or drive. Dad drove the bus to swimming lessons at Baptiste Lake. We all took our instruction in Baptiste Lake.

Edwin: Even I did swimming lessons at Baptiste Lake. And the other thing was curling was very big for Dad and farmers' bonspiels.

Jean: I taught swimming in Baptiste Lake. You stood on the pier in your winter coat.

Philip: That's right.

00:15:09 **Shirley:** I said to Mom once “Well, you just wanted to get rid of us for the first week or two of July because you finished teaching,” and she said “Not a chance. I had to get up early to get you off to swimming. You needed to learn how to swim. People need to learn how to swim.” I went, “Oh, okay.”

Mavis: Later in life, Mom went to the pool here in Athabasca. She loved aquasize, and that was really her outing of the week. Talking about curling, Dad really liked to curl, Uncle Harold really did to, and we all curled. They really supported us always with all of the equipment and bonspiels and things, but I remember Dad telling me that, you know, only Shirley and Philip have the attention span that's needed for curling. [Laughter]

Shirley: I didn't think my attention span was any better than yours.

Mavis: Well, he thought you were better curlers than me.

Philip: The thing we didn't talk about much was playing pool. Dad built this pool table and that was just huge. And then the parties we had were just crazy. You wouldn't even believe it now, but the Meanook Hall, where the dancing was, was just unbelievable. Hey, everybody was down twisting and learning how to twist. It was just a wild time when you think of it now, all night long, for hours and hours and hours.

Jean: Twist and jive.

Mavis: Well, Dad would dance. He would teach dancing in our living room.

Jean: I can remember getting whacked in the head with a record player.

Shirley: The kids would come to our place to learn to dance, wouldn't they?

Edwin: Sure, learn to dance and play pool. Speaking of playing pool, one time there was a few of us boys, and Archie Ryan used to have the pool hall in downtown Athabasca upstairs. In those years, you had to be 21 to go into a pool hall. So, there were a few of us boys, we snuck up the back stairs and we were playing pool and got caught. My dad was there and there was a bit of an uproar about it, about letting underage people in the pool hall. I remember Dad telling some of the schoolteachers and the police people “I would far sooner have my son up here playing pool in the pool hall than out running the streets.”

Shirley: Girls weren't allowed in the pool hall and Dad would be in the pool hall. You were shopping and you'd sneak in and get him, then sneak out really fast. [Laughter]

Edwin: I think nothing was really mentioned about Dad's bus driving career.

Philip: No, that's true.

Jean: That was a long career.

Edwin: It was, and then very important to him, and the family too, and Mom.

00:18:20 **Irene:** *How long did your dad drive bus for?*

Shirley: He started in '56 when I was born because they needed extra income. This is Shirley speaking, and I think he retired in '84.

Mavis: He was 66 in June. He could drive right through to the end of June. He was 66 and Mom decided to retire then as well. So, she was 64. She had been teaching Grade 1 since Shirley started school. Well, she started teaching when I started Grade 1, in 1961...

Jean: Because you [Shirley] got the babysitter. You're the only one that ever got a babysitter.

Shirley: I really didn't want a babysitter. My first babysitter was my Grandma Brown. She wasn't a lot of fun. I had to weed the garden and pick eggs from angry hens. Oh, it was work, work, work. So, I was pretty happy when I had Mrs. Thomas as a babysitter, and she was a lot more fun, and I had a pet lamb. We'd walk to her place on the railroad track. She'd buy me bananas. Oh, bananas were a hit.

Jean: That was after you'd waxed the floor.

Shirley: Oh, no doubt. She worked really hard, but she had fun. Then Dad would pick me up after school on the school bus. He loved to visit, and I was always so anxious to get home to see everyone else. Dad would be there visiting, and I would just keep nagging him "Let's go home."

Mavis: Talking about Dad and bus driving, I think socialization was a big part of what Dad enjoyed from bus driving and the friends that he had, the LeMessuriers and Lloyd Lachance.

Jean: Curling, he got the socialization out of curling, too.

Mavis: I think of Dad as kind of an extrovert, whereas the rest of us are introverts, and I think Mom was, as well.

Jean: Yeah, she liked being at home.

Shirley: But she loved going back teaching. When they asked her to go back, after 17 years being at home, she loved the stimulation and the students.

Edwin: The only thing she didn't like about it was the drive.

Jean: Well, that first year she drove to Colinton and then she drove to Perryvale at noon.

Shirley: Our Mom wasn't known as a good driver and Dad would always say "Ethel, if you're in trouble, go in the ditch." Well, Mom was always in the ditch, wasn't she? [Laughter]

Mavis: Well, I remember, I was probably in Grade 11, driving on ice and I ended up doing a 360 right in front of where Ron Gordon's old house was on the highway.

00:21:24 **Well**, Mom decided to drive after that into town. They weren't ever mad at us at anything. But one funny incident that I always remember is Jean backing up on our driveway. We had a tremendous driveway and Edwin still does. I remember Dad saying, "She doesn't know any more about driving than the man in the moon."
[Laughter]

Jean: Well, how can you drive like the man in the moon?

Shirley: You'd be doing a semicircle up there with glare ice. We would always start at the bridge and just gun it. Remember, in winter, you'd gun it for many yards. You're gunning it as fast as you could, so you could make that corner and whip up the hill to the house. Except once, coming back from the hall, where you guys were dancing, I remember I was on the front seat, and Mom hit the embankment because the steering wheel came off the car. She should have let Leonard drive, but he was in the back seat. I remember going up and telling Dad the steering wheel came off and he said "Well, what did Ethel do now?" [Laughter]

Edwin: The horn was honking.

***Irene:** Now you mentioned about the dances. How did each of you meet who you ended up meeting in life? Did you meet here? Did you meet somewhere else? If you just want to introduce who's speaking and talk about how you met your spouse.*

Jean: That's where I met my spouse, was in the backseat, not quite dancing. No, we'd been dancing. [Laughter]

***Irene:** So, this is Jean speaking, right? You met Leonard.*

Jean: Well, I guess we'd been dancing.

Shirley: You must have known him from school.

Jean: Yeah, I knew him from school.

Edwin: Kind of.

Jean: He always came down to Meanook anyway. He had friends there.

Shirley: He was probably coming down to play pool.

Jean: Well, sure.

Edwin: There was Roddy Rogers and Jimmy Faragini.

***Irene:** So, is that where the pool hall was, was in Meanook?*

Edwin: No, the pool hall that I talked about, where we got to go, was in Athabasca, but Phil mentioned that Dad built a pool table.

Phil: And a room for the pool table.

00:24:01

Edwin: It had really neat painted walls. There was a two-foot section of red and a two-foot section of blue, and yellow. Do you remember that?

Philip: I do, very well. Old Donnacona on the walls.

Shirley: When Mavis and I needed a bedroom, the pool table went to the hay loft. So much for your pool.

Philip: My name's Phil, and I met my wife in Perryvale at a country dance. That was all we did then. That was as far as you go. You'd go to Grassland, you'd go to Clyde, you'd go to Perryvale, you'd go to Rochester. We were quite young. I didn't have a driver's license, but still managed to get to the dances and back.

Mavis: I was first married to Leo Jacobs and I met him in 1969 on the stairway at Edwin Park Composite School. He was dressed really handsomely. We were in the same grade and he just stood on the stairway and looked at me. He came from Calling Lake, and he'd never seen anybody with red hair before. He was rather persistent, but I enjoyed his, what would I say, charismatic personality. So, we went together a bit through high school and then later married.

Edwin: I met my wife Pat through a friend that I had worked with. My friend and her had gone to high school together.

Shirley: I met my husband Gary at a singles dance in Edmonton, and it was both of our second marriages. My first husband, Andy Hladyshevsky, I met him at a debating camp at Camp He Ho Ha. We were both in debating, and Mavis and I were both in debating. Mrs. Sequeira and Mrs. Coy got the club going at Edwin Parr.

Mavis: We were very involved in debating, which was great in high school. We were also in 4-H quite a bit, and we were in many clubs at the school, like students' union.

Shirley: Band was important for all of us. Didn't we all go into band?

Edwin: Yes.

Shirley: Music was a big part of our life.

Irene: *Did they have a big band program at the high school?*

Edwin: Yes, they did when I went to school.

Mavis: Very successful, Mr. Dahm.

Jean: John Dahm.

Philip: We all had our own instruments. They [Mom and Dad] always made sure we had instruments.

Edwin: When I lived in Yellowknife, I joined the Yellowknife City Band and we played for Prince Charles when he arrived at the airport.

00:27:16 **Philip:** Wow.

Irene: *You spoke about the pool hall in Athabasca that is no longer here. Were there other businesses or other landmarks in Athabasca, growing up in and around this area, that you remembered, but are no longer around, that were really important as young people growing up or to your parents?*

Edwin: Shaw's Meat and Groceries. It was kind of like a butcher shop, but they had freezer space that they rented because there were very few people that had deep freezers or fridges originally. We never had power at home.

Jean: They were called lockers.

Edwin: They were called lockers that you would rent in different sizes. So, when you came to town to get some groceries, you could go there and take home your frozen roast from an animal that you'd probably butchered at home and taken there.

Philip: The pool hall downtown was great for the rest of us. We spent a lot of time there. You girls must have been when Uncle Harold and Dad used to shoot pool with Philip. What was Philip's name, at the old pool hall?

Mavis: Lashuk

Phil: Phil Lashuk had a big pool hall and we just had to go there, and you had to be with Dad. Dad always enjoyed it. The other thing I think everybody remembers was the creamery, and I don't know why, but that's where the locker was. But that's where you delivered the cream during the day, and the other one is the old Chinese restaurant. I think everybody went down there, the Royal Café, and that's where your girlfriend went down and had chips and gravy, and sat there and put salt in the ashtray and really neat things.

Edwin: I played hooky one afternoon and went to the Royal Café. Guess who came in? Dad. [Laughter]

Irene: *Short lived.*

Mavis: Two buildings that are standing are the United Church but also the Union Hotel. Our grandfather built the chimneys in both of them and that was Jack Hopps. These are some that were built in 1913 that are still standing that we remember and have a connection to. Two no longer used as businesses, that we had an even closer connection to, were the stores in Meanook, because there was Demski's store and the Hunter and Hopps' grocery store, too, and wasn't there a gas station at one time?

Edwin: There was also another grocery, Jack Bird's.

Mavis: Oh, that's right.

Edwin: A gas station and café.

Shirley: Elevator.

00:30:07 **Edwin:** There used to be in the elevator there.

Philip: School. The one-room school. I think there were 17 of us in nine grades, and we went from Grade 1 to 9.

Jean: Well, wasn't there 51 of us that one year when they divided it?

Philip: Maybe.

Shirley: Did Auntie Laura or Auntie Hazel ever teach you?

Philip: Not me. Not down there. They were in the elementary school when I was in there, but no, Mrs. Klaczek, who died not that long ago, and a couple of other ones.

Shirley: How old were you when you had to go to Athabasca?

Philip: Grade 4, I came to Athabasca in Grade 4, so would have been ten years old.

Shirley: This is Shirley. I started in Athabasca at the Brick School, as you did Mavis, as well. So, that gives us very fond memories of that Brick School.

Jean: I started in Meanook and I went to Athabasca in Grade 4.

Edwin: I went to Grade 5 in Meanook, I went to Grade 6 in Colinton and then Grade 7 in Athabasca. That was the year that Dad started driving school bus. On the first day of school it rained and we met the Greyhound bus on the road.

Jean: And my beautiful pink skirt hit the mud.

Edwin: Of course, we had to be out there to help Dad get out. [Laughter]

Shirley: He went in the ditch. What about the Greyhound bus?

Edwin: We went in the ditch.

Jean: We went in the ditch.

Shirley: You were pushing this bus.

Edwin: No, the school bus.

Jean: The school bus.

Shirley: It was a small panel bus then, wasn't it?

Jean: Yeah, it was a panel.

Edwin: Oh, it was muddy.

Irene: Sometimes we talked about those early memories, of fond memories of growing up in a family. Sometimes there are challenging memories, too. There's things that happen that kind of leave a family with the legacy and things change. I know that in your family, with your father, there was something that happened that

00:32:22 *kind of changed things. Do you want to talk a little bit about that and what that meant for you guys growing up and for him?*

Jean: The fire. Oh gee.

Philip: I grew up really quick. I was kind of a bad guy at that time.

Irene: *So, this is Phil talking and how old were you at the time, Phil?*

Philip: I guess I was 17/18, I would be. Dad got burned and so Jean and I, we started doing everything. Yes, we milked the 13 cows in the morning, got up at 5:00 o'clock and milked. I drove the school bus, then hayed, planted the crop, took the hay off, then hauled firefighters all summer, and milked cows. It was a real wake-up call, but the best thing that ever happened for me, not for Dad of course.

Edwin: Then you had to drive the school bus for a year and taught school.

Philip: Then drove the school bus.

Jean: Yeah, drove the school bus until November.

Philip: It kind of put me into the work ethic, which I still have today, which is good.

Jean: Yes.

Shirley: You were to start apprenticeship?

Philip: Then I started right after that. Well, I was in the middle of an apprenticeship and I had to quit and come home. But that was good. It was well worth the effort.

Jean: They let Dad start driving again on his birthday.

Philip: Was it his birthday?

Jean: Yeah, November the 22nd, so I didn't have to drive after that.

Mavis: The fire was May 31, 1969, and Dad was just finishing up a renovation in the kitchen. He built new cupboards that were U-shaped. We had a galley kitchen before. There was a propane leak, and he opened the cellar door and the propane exploded from the pilot light on the hot water heater. I was in one corner of the house and got out through the window along with my niece, Tracy. I was 14. Shirley was 12. Shirley and Mom were outside. Shirley was complaining about a stomach ache.

Shirley: I was always complaining about a stomach ache, and lo and behold, a year later, I had my appendix removed. But thankfully I had a stomach ache and Mom was throwing out the dishwasher, because we didn't have water right then. Mavis was making me a can-can outfit for the spring pageant.

Mavis: I had a sample can-can dress from Nancy Appleby that I was following, but got out safely. Dad got a fire extinguisher and he asked us to get water. It didn't work. The house was far too far along in the fire. But he was burned very severely. He was burned 55% of his body, he was 53 years old and the factor is 108 [55+53], and

00:35:36 apparently at 110 it's almost always fatal, but he was in good health and I would think he had a real will to live. He was a positive person, and he was in the U of A hospital for four months'ish, and then the Glenrose. He was very severely burned on his upper body and arms because he had a synthetic shirt on. Fortunately, hair follicles protected his face and his head, for the most part. His ears burned off and he had many skin grafts. He was a little bit more emotional afterwards, but he lived another 30 years and he called them his bonus years.

Mavis: Mom and Dad rebuilt on exactly the same spot. There was \$12,000 of insurance and the house was rebuilt by Richards' [Lumber] at \$16,000, and they carried some of the difference for years. Mom had always really wanted a new house, so she did get it, but she really didn't want to get it that way.

Shirley: The community really supported us through that period.

Irene: *How did they do that? What did you find happen then?*

Edwin: Well, there was a supper to raise funds. And there were hundreds of people there, it seemed like to me.

Mavis: There was a lineup all the way to Faragini's. At the end, they went to Colinton and bought the Colinton store out of brown beans. I think there were 400 at that supper. As well, cheques came from some relatives.

Philip: Family helped. Uncle Harold and Auntie Laura, I lived with them. I think you did too, did you? [Shirley and Mavis] No, you weren't up there.

Shirley: Mavis and I lived with Jean and. Leonard.

Jean: We had two teenagers, along with the other 16 people that were on that party line.

Philip: Interesting times.

Irene: *So, talk about the party line.*

Jean: Sixteen people were on the party line. It was not bad because lots of them were two of the same, like there was Hunter's Store and Hunter's house, and there were lots that were a business and a house. We worked all day and were at home in the evening, that sort of thing. So, it didn't make the party line seem that bad.

Mavis: But you're trying to coordinate with Shirley and I who were in Colinton. We were finally living in a big metropolis and we had a social life in Colinton. [Laughter]

Shirley: It was nice. It was fun that summer, and we had a great time.

Jean: We had to drive back and forth to Edmonton. I went to summer school that year and I was pregnant.

Mavis: Yes, that's right. Talking about summer school, the second time that I saw Dad was July the 20th, and it was the day man landed on the moon, and I watched it

00:39:16 in his hospital room. Now he was very sick leading up to that point, but he turned around about mid-July. There were points at which he did not recognize any of us or Mom. But, he pulled through with drinking a lot of beer and stout.

Shirley: So, you know, the man that wouldn't drink anything. [Laughter]

Jean: Stout and grape juice.

Edwin: Ice.

Mavis: Ice. Yes, Mom fed him.

Philip: He was on a hospital bed that tipped upside down, I remember. We had to build this stupid house, and of course I knew a little bit about construction, but he had his own ideas how this house should go. So, he was laying upside down in the hospital bed with all the plans, saying this is what we're going to do.

Jean: Yes, he had plans for that house.

Edwin: That circle electric bed, that he was in, the money was donated by, was it the WI [Women's Institute] from Meanook?

Jean: I wouldn't be surprised.

Philip: We should talk about that.

Edwin: Mom was very active in the WI and Grandma Brown.

Jean: Yes.

Philip: We never did really know all about it, but I think it is a kind of a secretive organization, is it not? [Laughter].

Edwin: WI is Women's Institute, and the women did a lot of great things for the community. They would get together and have suppers to raise funds. They would sew things and sell them.

Shirley: They did a lot of catering for weddings. We were always serving weddings, it seemed.

Edwin: Yes, you were. It was a very active group for the women.

Shirley: For farm women.

Mavis: It was really important to Mom's mental health.

Irene: *How was your mom through all of that?*

Mavis: The fire or the WI? After the fire, she stayed in Edmonton for three months – June, July and August – and went to the hospital every day.

Edwin: She stayed at the hospital quite a few times over night.

00:41:34 **Jean:** She would stay at the hospital, and I would come home. Then, I would stay at the hospital and she would come home and feed Leonard...

Mavis: When you were going to summer school. We had an aunt that lived in Edmonton, so she could stay there, as well.

Jean: She [Mom] learned to drive across the Groat Road. That was big.

Philip: I'd have to say very, very strong. She was just incredible.

Jean: Oh, yes. I had Leonard at one end, and Mom at the other, so I was fine.

Shirley: Mom was a very spiritual person. Probably she never really pushed religion, but certainly the Anglican church was a key part of her life. Supporting the Colinton Anglican church, and trying to keep it going as long as she could, making donations. So, prayer was a big part of her life, even though it was never really pushed upon us.

Philip: That's true.

Shirley: She was very happy when we went to church, but we weren't always expected to go to church. Did she kind of give up on you Phil? [Laughter]

Irene: *Oh, Phil gets singled out.*

Mavis: We did the "Now I lay me down to sleep" every night. We had to kneel beside the bed, and Mom knelt beside the bed and prayed at night.

Shirley: Interesting, our parents didn't go to the same church, and that was quite okay. Dad would go more towards Apostolic.

Jean: One church was in this town, and one church was in that town, and what you went to, you went to.

Mavis: Vacation Bible School was in Meanook, so it was all Christian.

Jean: Yes.

Edwin: There was a church in Meanook, too, a United Church we went to.

Jean: As children we went to that all the time.

Philip: We walked to two weeks of summer school there.

Shirley: Summer school or Vacation Bible School. [Laughter]

Mavis: And did crafts.

Jean: Our children went down and stayed at Mom and Dad's and went to Bible school.

Edwin: Church was a big part of the Brown family, both sides, and the Hopps. Grandma Brown played the organ.

00:44:12 **Jean:** She was not a good pianist, but she played, so you thought, well somebody better play.

Shirley: So, you or Mom had to play, then. Mavis played the church organ, and Jean did. Probably Mom did.

Mavis: Yes, for the Anglican church. Piano lessons were also important for us.

Edwin: I took piano lessons from Nancy Appleby in Grade 7.

Mavis: And I took from Nancy Appleby in Grade 2.

Jean: And I took from Nancy Appleby, I must have been in Grade 2, in Meanook. She taught in Faragini's house. She taught piano and tap dancing, and other kinds of dancing, too. Then, I took from her once we got to high school. I took from her until I was in Grade 10.

Jean: But I just didn't learn like Alma did.

Mavis: Our cousin, Alma.

Shirley: Beautiful pianist.

Mavis: A professional pianist, yes. But Alma would lose track of time playing the piano, whereas we had other things to do outside.

Irene: *Talk a little bit about where each of you then went with your worlds of work, or where did your passions go, with what you either studied or what kind of trade you went into? Where did you find yourself for work?*

Mavis: Well, workwise, I am an accountant, but it started even in preschool. I would get up and sit at the little children's table beside Dad, and he would play crib with me while he ate breakfast, before he went bus driving. So, I loved numbers, and I love number patterns, and that just stayed with me. Then I eventually became an accountant. Jean taught me math. She gave me a good grade in math, but she didn't give me as good of a grade in phys ed. Anyway, math was a real passion, and then I went to university and took business and became an accountant.

Philip: I was a tradesman, electrician, a lot in Athabasca. I spent a lot of good years here, did sawmills all over Alberta. Got into a little bit bigger stuff and started doing heavier stuff in Drayton Valley. We did the original OSB plants for Al Owen with Pelican Spruce Mills. Then I got doing Saan Stores and we did Saan Stores all over Canada, actually down in our hometown in Ontario, close to our hometown, and all through Saskatchewan and into BC. I always liked being a tradesman, but I think the biggest thrill of my life was certainly the big pickers, oil patch, bed trucks, chrome and diesel smoke. They were my life, and have been my life for the last 20 years. Not a good place to be today, but it certainly was. Between the farm and the electrical and the oil patch, I've had a very round education, financially and physically.

00:47:44

Edwin: I've done quite a few things in my life. I guess everything that I have done, I've certainly enjoyed and have gained quite a bit of experience from it. I left high school and I worked for Northwestern Utilities in Edmonton and read gas meters. From there, I ended up in Yellowknife. I kind of managed and built a mobile home park. These people wanted to hire me and I said, "I don't know anything about construction." One of the owners was in the plumbing business, the other was in the electrical business and the other one was a road builder. So, they just wanted me to kind of manage it, which I did, and got involved in another mobile home park in Grande Prairie. Then, from there, I thought, well, I'd like to try farming. So, moved to the farm and spent all the money I ever made, and went back to Yellowknife again.

Irene: *What were you farming?*

Edwin: Cattle, but it was back in the years when the interest rates went very high, and the price of cattle, at that time back in 1980, they were more expensive than what they are now.

Philip: Very nice cattle, Simmentals.

Edwin: Yes, nice cattle and we enjoyed that. We were involved in 4-H, but went back to Yellowknife and worked for a GM dealership for awhile. Then, we had our own gas station there and then we ended up moving back here. After that, a friend of mine had a camp up in northern Alberta, and I went up and worked for him for a while. Then, we had a hotel and I had a share in that. I sold my share in that in 2010 and came back here, kind of farming. I look after these two facilities for that friend of mine who has some health issues. We've got some cattle, again. Doing a bit of farming. Just kind of enjoying life.

Irene: *Always back to the farming.*

Edwin: It seems to be. Farming was tough. Like Phil mentioned, lots of rocks to pick, bales to haul, but don't milk any cows. Let the calves do that.

Jean: I went to university out of high school and then I taught school for 33 years. Then, during that time, we bought the farm that my husband was raised on. So, we've been doing that along with our jobs, too. He likes farming and he liked his mechanic job, so we've been farming and mechanicing and teaching, and that has kept us busy raising our two children, and all that sort of thing. We traveled the world, bought ourselves an RV and cruised around, and flew around a little bit, too, so had lots of fun.

Shirley: Like Mavis, I went into business at the U of A, and then Mavis said well, a business degree is nothing, you better get your CA, as she was doing it. So, I got my CA/CPA and worked in accounting firms for about 12 years. Then I was getting bored and I went and worked for ATCO, and I stayed there for 29 years. I had quite a varied career. I started in finance, did a lot of information technology, did customer service and business process outsourcing in the call centres here in Edmonton and the Philippines, and then went back to information technology, and even started ATCO

00:52:18 Energy, the retail company. Then, I retired and I just went back recently to do some system changes for the finance system when they sold the generation business. Yeah, a good career, a lot of work, a lot of travel with it, to the Philippines and Australia, and a lot of back and forth to Calgary. Now we're traveling now that we're recently retired.

Mavis: Thinking about Mom and Dad, bringing it back to them, education was certainly important, but we could follow our passions. You know, Mom always told us, Shirley and I anyway, "It doesn't matter what you do, but be able to support yourself, particularly as women, because you never know what life is going to bring to you and what responsibilities you will have." You didn't have to go to university, you could go to technical school, you could become anything that you really wanted to, but just do it. Furthermore, "I will pay for your education, don't expect anything when I die" was her message. [Laughter]

Mavis: Mom had those little gems that she would share with us about important things in life. In addition to education, having a social life, being connected to community and also being really involved in family and making the very best of your family. As siblings, she wanted us all to get along all the time, and they would facilitate that, too.

Irene: *Talk about that. What does that mean? Because that's interesting that parents have that vision of you needing to be connected as they grow older, and you are going to be here left as siblings together. How did they do that?*

Mavis: That's a really good question. One thing she would always say is that there won't be an estate for you to fight over, because she had seen too many families torn apart by estates. So that was really important. I think looking on the best side of everybody. Then, there was kind of an implicit expectation that we will go to weddings, we will go to birthdays. You don't always have to go to all, but make an effort to support each other.

Edwin: Mom was never really critical. I feel very fortunate for our family. We've been able to get along through these things. Like, when Mom and Dad both passed, you know, Shirley and Mavis with their education and Jean looked after the accounts, and I never questioned anything, because I trusted them.

Irene: *That's being raised in a way that generates that. That's really special.*

Edwin: What is that secret?

Shirley: I think drawing you together. Oh there's a birthday, oh there's Christmas, there's New Year's, this Meanook reunion, there's South Athabasca reunion, Jean and Leonard are at the lake shouldn't you go visit them? [Laughter]

Irene: *You've all been instilled with that very strong work ethic.*

Mavis: Do your best. There was a lot of positive reinforcement for doing well. Something else that Mom always said "I watched my sister nag her children. I

00:57:00 decided never to nag my children.” You know, she didn’t. It would be us wanting them to go for parent teacher interviews. They didn’t feel they needed to go.

Philip: We wanted them there. Very positive affirmations and positive things when you did well in school or work.

Irene: *What were their latter years like, for your mom and dad? What were the kind of the end years like for them?*

Shirley: They both died very quickly, which in a way was a blessing because our mother had to take care of her mother for many years of her life. From Grade 9 through until she went teaching, and then after she got married, she was caring for her mother, so she never wanted to be a burden. She died very quickly, was probably diagnosed in July or August of 1990 and passed away October 1st, 1990 with mesothelioma from asbestosis. We don’t know how she got it. Was it a renovation in one of the schools or where they lived in Edmonton. Just out of the blue, she died quickly.

Shirley: Dad passed away in 1999, June 3rd, from colon cancer and, again, very quickly. He was very lonely after she passed, but we were so happy when he found a girlfriend, Berna Turner, in Westlock, when he went on a bus trip and a cruise.

Jean: Bus/cruise/bus trip.

Edwin: Mom and Dad certainly enjoyed their life.

Mavis: They were very devoted to each other, I thought.

Philip: Square dancing.

Mavis: And traveling, and community events, they went to them all. At a community supper, they were there. It was a very enjoyable retirement for them.

Jean: Yes, they had the energy every night to be gone somewhere. Just let me stay home, please.

Irene: *What’s it like for you as a family to have Edwin living on the family farm? What’s that like to still have that in the family?*

Shirley: They’ve done a great job with it. The landscaping, it’s beautiful what they’ve done with it. I think it’s tremendous that he has it.

Jean: When they first moved there, Pat said to me. “Do you think anybody would mind if we renovated?” It’s yours, give it, renovate it. [Laughter]

Philip: Very happy that it’s in the family, for sure.

Edwin: Yes, I look back on it and some of those buildings are older than I am, and kind of falling apart. Right now, I’ve spent some money on the hay shed, probably \$10,000 fixing it up, and new walls on the east side and the north side, two-by-fours. That was a building that Dad did. You really have to look at these older buildings and

01:01:16 realize what they went through to construct them. They didn't have the loaders and things like that, that we have today to work with. The time that they spent, like getting the poles and peeling them and digging the holes by hand. It's 16 feet high, how do you get the material up there, for the roof or the barn? You really have to admire the hardship that people went through.

Philip: Him [Dad] and Grandpa were sort of the same, too, because I remember building the hayshed very well, and I remember digging the holes and stuff, and Dad saying "Now when this pole rots, it's tamarack and it won't rot. But, when it does rot, all you do is you put cement around it and it just keeps staying up there," and you just remember that today. It's a couple of things like that, you don't know why it stays with you, whatever it be 50 years ago or 60 years ago, and here you can still see your dad telling you. I don't have a son to tell him about that stuff, but I don't know whether people do it now with their kids or not. It's so different growing up. Grandpa, too, and Grandma, what you said about Grandma is true. She sewed a red strap on my coveralls, so I could have coveralls like Dad and Nelson had. She said "You better go out there and go to work now" and I'm five years old. [Laughter]

Irene: *You had the uniform.*

Philip: You go out there and do it, whether I carried the hammer or a pair of pliers or whatever.

Irene: *Did you know both sides of the grandparents? Were both sides of your grandparents alive and around?*

Edwin: Mom's parents lived with us, and I'm not sure how old I was when Grandpa Hopps passed away or Grandma Hopps. Grandpa and Grandma Brown just kind of lived across the river,

Philip: Five hundred yards away.

Edwin: Dad's parents and his brother, they farmed together and shared the same machinery for pretty well the majority of their life. So, it's been close on both sides of the family.

Irene: *If there were life lessons learned that you would want to pass on from your parents, from your grandparents, from growing up the way you did, what would be a couple of life lessons that you'd take? I mean, it's a rich history, but if you remember a couple, what might they be that have stuck with you?*

Philip: For me, it's work ethic, and then the second thing we have is family, it's just incredible. I can talk about my wife's family, I can talk about everybody else, but they fight and they battle and they're mad and they're pissed off about this and that and money. There's just nothing here, like if somebody does well, then goes to Portugal, we're happy. We're not saying, god, you don't deserve it or something like that. Those two things—work ethic, certainly for me, and family.

01:04:31 **Edwin:** I agree.

Shirley: I don't know how we garnered the confidence that we do have, to do what we've done. To me that's a bit of a mystery, that we tackle things that you weren't afraid to tackle.

Edwin: I think Dad would always, in doing something, as an example, you learn respect and to do as you're asked to do. I can remember Dad sitting me on a small caterpillar to drive over to Uncle Nelson's. I was probably about six years old. He started me on the road and he said 'Okay, you pull this lever to go left, you pull this one to go right. We're going to put it in low gear. It's going to take you a little while to get there. When you get there, you turn the key off.' There you go, you pay attention, and do as you're told, and I did exactly that.

Irene: *Given the opportunity...*

Edwin: Given the opportunity, he had to trust in me to do it. When I was 10 years old, I was up plowing on a field, probably a mile and a half away from home. Mom wasn't very happy about that, really, but Dad felt that, I guess, I could handle it. It was a level field, and it was half a mile long.

Jean: That was the rule. If anything went wrong, turn it off. You didn't start trying to do other things.

Edwin: I think having the confidence in them, and we spent a lot of time together, so parents can kind of gauge that. Maybe this person at 6 years old can handle that, but maybe this person at 10 can't handle it. They knew what we could handle and what we couldn't handle, and if we couldn't, they would certainly be there to help out.

Mavis: I don't know what you were thinking of, but I think Mom and Dad were themselves very progressive, really. Mom pursued an education. They were curious. We had some appliances early that others did not have. The trust, absolutely, but of all of that, we had total security in our family – we had a roof, we always had food, Mom and Dad were always together, they never fought. It was just an extraordinary, conducive environment to the pursuit of anything that you wanted, pursuit of excellence, quite often.

Edwin: We didn't have a lot of conveniences, either. When I left home in 1963, the only thing that we really had was power. We never had telephone, we never had TV.

Mavis: That came later.

Philip: We hauled the water from the river with the minnows in it. It was an interesting life. Mom watering the cattle with the little pail, to dig the water out of the tray so we could water the cows. Laying on the ice at 40 below.

Jean: Yes, you know, she must have been just petrified leaving you two girls up there in the house, and dipping water out of the creek to water the cattle.

01:08:26 **Philip:** Yes, and me and her would go down there. Just incredible strength. As we've referred to quite often, they just expected you to do it. You'd pass school, you'd do your homework. When you go curling, if you didn't do well, so fine. It was not so much expectation, but they just gave you the confidence.

Edwin: Participation.

Philip: To answer that question of yours. To me anyhow, there was never a question. We would never worry about whether you could or couldn't do it, just how well you were going to do and when you got through it.

Mavis: They would make every effort to give us any of the tools to do it, too. You know, pay for the fees, give us the instruments or find a way to get the instruments. But another thing, particularly with Mom, she had an amazing way of getting us to do what she wanted us to do, and making us think that it was our idea.

Edwin: Is that called manipulation? [Laughter]

Irene: *Give an example of something like that.*

Shirley: I know Mavis and Jean did a lot of cooking.

Mavis: Oh, they would eat anything and it was wonderful. Even if it was radishes in stew, which wouldn't ever get soft, but, oh, it was excellent food.

Philip: We never talked about Dad and his music, and Mom and her music. Dad and the accordion and playing fiddle. It was just a normal thing to do. I think that has something to do with the continuity of the family.

Mavis: All singing around the piano.

Irene: *So, music was a big part?*

Philip: I don't think we've talked about it much here, but when you think of the accordion.

Edwin: I sang in the United Church choir, I don't know how old I was, for one year. I must have been going to school in Athabasca, probably something to do with Mrs. Appleby.

Jean: After you were old enough to drive, then we did a lot more, because you took us back to Athabasca after school or after supper, or something like that, and we did more band.

Edwin: Speaking of that, too, when I was in cadets, I maybe didn't have a driver's license, but Jimmy Faragini did. Dad let him drive the car, to take the car. There were times when Mom and I'd go to Athabasca, and the roads would be bad, I drove to a mile out of town and then Mom would drive the rest. [Laughter] I don't know really why that was. I think that I was about 13.

01:11:42 **Jean:** Dad knew.

Shirley: You were still a better driver.

Irene: *Is there anything else about the family, your grandparents, your parents or your own lives that you want to share? There doesn't have to be one particular theme, but just to make sure that we get anything that you might want to share about growing up.*

Philip: Jean had some stuff, did you not?

Jean: Well, I just wrote down that Dad made a lot of our Christmas presents. He made me a doll crib and he made me, I don't know what you would call it, I guess it would be called a dresser. It would just be small pieces of plywood. The major piece was an orange crate from Jap oranges, and that was the two drawers that held the biggest part of it and the two cigar boxes held the other two parts. And, it had this beautiful carved dresser. It hung on the wall and it had all kinds of drawers.

Edwin: That was for all your makeup.

Jean: That's right, that the girls took and used all over their face, and this red lipstick was everywhere. Anyway, it was very nice when I got it for Christmas and hung it on the wall. I don't know what he made for you two girls.

Shirley: Probably cradles for our dolls.

Mavis: Yes, for the dolls. Later on, he helped us with our 4-H projects, and he and I built the bedroom down under the kitchen. I think his passion, aside from socializing, which was positive, was finishing carpentry.

Edwin: He was creative in that respect, you know with the doilies, things for pots and those designs. He took a course in carpentry and built that one bookcase over a period. He'd come to Athabasca, and it was probably Mr. Richards that was teaching it at the high school. He would come once a week and over the winter built a set of cabinets, for the books, that fit in the corner.

Philip: He built all our cabinets for our bathrooms, and they're still there, out of cedar, tops and the whole thing. Incredible stuff.

Mavis: He built campers.

Jean: We went on our honeymoon in one.

Philip: Oh, you and Leonard did? He built three of them. He built a shell and we went to Ontario...

Mavis: In 1963.

Shirley: In 1967, he built one for the Canada Centennial that we took to Yellowknife.

Philip: Oh, is that right?

01:15:21 **Mavis:** Then he built a lighter one after that. But, he built this one using the best material possible, but he didn't think about the weight, so the next one was extraordinarily light and they used it a lot. Then, after that, they got a motorhome.

Irene: *Where did they go in their motorhome?*

Philip: Yellowknife.

Irene: *So, they liked the north?*

Jean: Well, I think they had relatives there, didn't they?

Edwin: We were up there.

Mavis: Before that, it was with Uncle Bill from Beaverlodge. Daisy Brown, no relative, from Beaverlodge, had a son that was living in Yellowknife and running a creamery up there. They'd [Mom and Dad] always wanted to go to Yellowknife, and it was his 1967 project, so we did. After that, with Mom and Dad, we would often go to the mountains or to Powell River, BC. The very first time we went to Miette, I think was about 1962, Philip was still at home living with us. Do you remember that trip?

Philip: Kind of, I do.

Mavis: Shirley, Philip and Mom all got sick on the hairpin turns going up to Miette, but it was so magical seeing the mountains for the first time. We stayed in a little log cabin with bunk beds.

Philip: With a canvas top on it.

Mavis: Oh my goodness, it was just sensational.

Shirley: Dad got Philip to run down the mountain. You thought you could run faster than he could drive the hairpin curves. [Laughter]

Philip: I remember that. I remember getting sick going up there, too, but it was magical. That was really something to see. We were country bumpkins.

Edwin: Something else has just come to mind when one of us children wanted to do something. Philip wanted a goat. So, Betty Pushor, who lived east of us probably a mile and half or so, said "Yeah, I'll give a goat to Philip." So, he's got a rope, he's packing it, and he's about 5 or 6 years old. The big rope, it's dragging on the ground and hanging on his arm and he's going to bring this goat home. He comes home, packing the goat and the rope...

Shirley: Goat like a baby.

Jean: I had to drag, I had to carry the rope all the way home.

Philip: It's going to be wild goat.

Irene: *How did that business, Phil, go for you?*

01:18:22 **Philip:** That's kind of interesting, but It went really well. We had a lot of fun with it.

Edwin: Eating clothes and jumping on cars.

Philip: Dad had to fix it, because it was a male goat, so it was doing some crazy stuff. The preacher bought the goat and ate it.

Mavis: And put it in the back of a Volkswagen.

Philip: He took it away while it was still alive, but he liked goat meat. I wonder about that and kind of remember, but I don't think I really shed a tear, but I thought, well, that's kind of strange. I don't really tell that story very often.

Irene: *Off went your business venture.*

Philip: I think I had \$5 if I remember.

Jean: I think so.

Philip: Huge, huge amount.

Jean: Mom really didn't love the goat, though.

Philip: Squirrels were worth about 10¢ apiece then, so trapping wasn't that productive. Grandpa used to pay us I think 50¢ a day to pick rocks, and that \$5 was a huge, huge thing.

Shirley: You guys were always riding animals. There's pictures of you riding pigs and calves

Edwin: Horses.

Philip: Horses and cows and anything we could get on, we'd ride.

Mavis: Rodeos, regularly, in the corral.

Philip: Knocked off and breath knocked out of you.

Jean: You don't remember the lynx and the goat?

Philip: Oh, yeah, I do, definitely. I don't know, I don't think it was a lynx. I think it was a bobcat.

Jean: Well, whatever.

Philip: It was pretty bad. It was 10 feet tall and ugly.

Jean: It must have been, but we had the rope. So, Philip got ahold of one end of the rope and I got ahold of the other one, and we ran all the way home from this lynx, and the cows would stand there and look at the lynx.

01:20:17 **Philip:** We used to have to get the cows and bring them into milk, and so we go down there and we see this monster standing there looking at us, and it is hairy and it's wild and it's big and it's tall. And where am I, half a mile from home.

Irene: *And how old were you?*

Philip: I was about 5, I guess, and Jean had a little longer legs and she tied a rope to me and drug me home. [Laughter]

Edwin: We went back another time, Philip and I went for the cows, and saw it, and he couldn't run fast enough, so I took my belt off and tied around him and drug him home.

Irene: *You've had a lot of dragging.*

Jean: Well, he wasn't very big. He was just a little boy. [Laughter]

Philip: I was always out there, though.

Irene: *And taking care of each other.*

Philip: I guess so. That's true, looking after each other.

Edwin: Dad had a horse that he wanted to break to drive. He had a democrat [wagon], so he hooked it up. But, he was pretty smart. He hooked an older horse with it. So, when I saw him out in the field, the older horse was just kind of going around slowly and the other one he was trying to train, they went round and round and round in a circle for an hour out there.

Philip: Luckily, it was circle. It was a big field. Nobody ever did break it. Oh, it was a wild thing. Yeah, the democrat hung together. [Laughter]

Mavis: You [Philip] had a way with horses. Much later, for Shirley and I, we had a horse that was yours, that was Steel.

Philip: He was a really good horse.

Mavis: Well, you had trained him really well. Steel would take us to the Colinton road and no further. But you could get Steel to go anywhere.

Philip: He was a really good horse, that one was.

Mavis: Oh yes, it was our main mode of transportation growing up.

Shirley: Yes, we'd use Steel to go down to see friends.

Mavis: I do remember the one horse, though, that got caught in roots, and was over on its back on the riverbank.

Philip: That was that black one.

Jean: On the river, oh yes.

01:22:33 **Philip:** That was pretty tragic.

Mavis: Oh, Jean, Philip and Dad looked after it for it seemed like two or three days, until finally it succumbed.

Philip: Dad made it succumb, but yeah, it succumbed.

Jean: That river was not good for some animals.

Mavis: In talking about horses, Dad and Uncle Nelson loved working with horses, and breaking land with horses when they homesteaded.

Edwin: They were raised that way. They couldn't afford a tractor, so they used horses.

Jean: Nobody has talked very much about the railroad track, and how things went up and down the railroad track. You walked down the railroad track to meet your friends.

Philip: It was a community.

Irene: *Where was the railroad track from where you lived?*

Philip: A quarter of a mile, going right through the centre of town.

Jean: You'd walk down the railroad track with your friends.

Edwin: The railroad, like I've mentioned, was a necessity for communities. We got our groceries for the stores, the mail, too.

Jean: Your neighbors got their groceries through the railroad track, and you would visit and walk with your friends down the railroad track.

Mavis: We'd put pennies on the rail...

Shirley: Trying to derail the train. It was always cleared, you said, in the spring. It wasn't muddy, and you could get places on it.

Jean: It was snow-plowed.

Philip: We'd walk to the babysitter's place from school to Mrs. Thomas's down the railway track. You'd go down to Burge's on the railway track. It was a community get together.

Jean: Go down to Rogers.

Philip: Our cousin met her boyfriend on the railway track, Alma and John, and he was a bad guy and she was a goody churchgoer. They met on the railway track.

Irene: *The rest is history.*

Philip: The rest is history, you're right, and they're still together today.

01:25:00

Edwin: For all communities, it was a part of any community that survived at one time, the railway was. It doesn't matter here, or any place, Saskatchewan or whatever.

Mavis: Transportation was really important – the railway, vehicles – living in Meanook, especially. We were allowed to drive, too. We would even go to Edmonton to shop when we were in high school.

Irene: *And everybody drove in your family?*

Jean: Yes, ASAP. You had to.

Shirley: Before your birthday you already got your license and, so, on the day of your birthday, you just had to go and get it stamped.

Philip: Before your birthday, exactly, just had to, good point.

Irene: *It was your lifeline out, right?*

Mavis: Well, we would practice parallel parking between bales.

Jean: Our kids did, too.

Philip: We always had a vehicle, whether it be a truck or a car, but we always had a vehicle.

Edwin: The school bus.

Shirley: Dad would monitor the mileage, particularly Philip's use of the vehicle.

Philip: My girlfriend was a long ways away, and I happened to make a lot of miles and borrowed a couple of trucks. [Laughter]

Mavis: Dad would even allow us to drive the school bus if there were no students. So, when I was learning to drive, I would go to the end of the route at the end of the day with him, so that I could drive back home.

Shirley: I was never tall enough to see over the steering wheel. He didn't let me drive. [Laughter]

Irene: *You use the word progressive and there was lots of progressive child rearing that went on. As someone sitting listening, lots of progressive ways that your parents gave you freedom and opportunity, and instilled lots of ways for you to learn and take chances.*

Philip: That's a good way of putting it, because it obviously worked very well. No smoking, no drinking type of thing. Although we had a couple people just take the car out and smoke cigarettes in it all day long, and the odd time a beer can would be found in the truck the next day. But, no drinking or anything in the house or smoking.

01:27:44

Philip: I got my first lesson on smoking in the Meanook Hall, and one of Dad's friends gave me a cigarette and put me up on a chair and lit up a cigarette, and it was not a good thing to do.

Edwin: I can remember that very clearly

Philip: I bet you can.

Mavis: Who was not very thrilled with that?

Philip: Dad. Probably the one time he hit me and that was the only time. So, it was pretty interesting. I think that has a lot to do with being brought up. Each and every one of us will drink wine and beer and Bailey's in the morning, which is a good thing. We were brought up the other way, for sure.

Mavis: Progressive, I think of, was later on when there was income in the family. They could afford a dishwasher and that type of thing, and the phone and the TV later, but TV was never a big thing

Philip: Except for Bonanza.

Mavis: And Hymn Sing on Sundays and Disney, of course that was important. It was the income made for a big difference in the lives of Shirley and I, compared to the other three, I think.

Irene: *That was when your Mom went teaching?*

Mavis: She went back, yes, when I was in Grade 1.

Philip: It was constant. Every time they come to your place, what are you doing? Oh, I'm drilling a well, well here's \$200. They probably couldn't afford it, but they did. It's just pay for the well. Pay for, oh, you got a new car, you better get it insured. You need a windshield?

Edwin: You've probably got insurance coming due.

Philip: Very financially supportive. Not huge. Like they said, you know, in the end, we got a bit of money out of it, alright. But they supported everyone, me especially.

Edwin: They knew if there was something coming up, like land taxes, that you know is going to be due at the end of June or whatever the case may be, you might need \$100 to help pay for that.

Mavis: Curiosity, too, in terms of being progressive. Mom read and she went to university when we were in junior high, and got two extra years of university. There was a lot of learning then. I remember her taking that first, was it an anthropology or sociology course from the University of Saskatchewan by correspondence? That was a real challenge. Her very first one.

Edwin: She really found it difficult to start off with.

01:30:45 **Mavis:** She really did, but then kept going, so I think that learning really helped.

Shirley: To keep teaching, you needed to get three years, right, Jean?

Jean: Two more.

Shirley: Two more to have three years. The one year of normal school wasn't good enough.

Jean: No, it wasn't.

Mavis: She would research, though, and she would research any topic, for any of us, for any research paper that we had. And she would help us write papers if we really needed help.

Shirley: And poems.

Jean: That started in Grade 10.

Shirley: Oh, yes, she'd write your poetry.

Jean: She'd write your essay for you, and then you'd get to school, and it was such a good essay. She [the teacher] read it to the class and you'd go hide your face.
[Laughter]

Mavis: She [Mom] wrote a book report on Huckleberry Finn for me, and I'm sure I got top marks. Then, she wrote a Christmas play for me, and incorporated all these hymns in it, and so then we had to produce it in Grade 6.

Shirley: She wrote a poem for me called "Reminiscing" and the teacher said "Shirley, how do you spell reminiscing?" I said, well, I checked it in the dictionary, it must be right. [Laughter]

Mavis: So, she paved the way for us to excel.

Irene: *Very supportive.*

Mavis: Homework was always okay. You didn't have to do farm work, although you did. If you were doing your homework, then you didn't have to do as much in the house. They were quite supportive and we were blessed.

Irene: *I know that your story as a family is in the Colinton book. So, from the time that you had that story put in the Colinton book, what's not there that you would want to highlight? Is there anything that you feel wouldn't be in the Colinton book that you'd really want to highlight and say that wasn't there, but I'd want to emphasize this piece about our family or our parents or grandparents?*

Edwin: I read the book, but I don't remember it at all.

Philip: I can't say that I remember it either.

Mavis: The last one was in 2007.

01:33:29 **Irene:** *What about the last decade?*

Mavis: Well, I don't know that this is so much the last decade, but what was really affirming for me was Dad carrying on after Mom passed away, as he did. He was very depressed, then met Berna. We loved Berna. Berna's family loved us and acknowledged all of us. In the end, Dad did come around and you know he was really missing Mom when he was very, very sick. But that moving on is, I think, what stays with me. You just carry on, it's part of the life cycle.

Irene: *You keep living.*

Mavis: Yes, and also, for me, do things. Go out there if you want to travel. There's really no barriers for any of us.

Jean: I think we really encouraged him to get out and get going, didn't we? We didn't let him stay at home.

Mavis: Jean and I booked that trip. [Laughter] He was extraordinarily depressed. He would land at our place for meals when meals at my place were never exactly at 6 o'clock.

Edwin: I can remember Dad coming back and mentioning that he met her. It didn't really sit all that well with me at the time, but as time went on, it turned out to be the best thing that ever happened to him.

Jean: Oh my, yes, that was.

Edwin: I guess there it is, you have to give him the chance, so to speak. It doesn't matter where it's coming from, but it was certainly the best and the greatest thing.

Jean: It was a tough winter.

Irene: *It kind of connected him again back out there.*

Edwin: Just doing things. Going golfing and playing the violin and going to seniors' meetings and dances.

Philip: Living life.

Edwin: Yes. just really enjoying it.

Mavis: Oh, very much so, and the Anglican Church.

Jean: Buying a new motorhome.

Mavis: There, that's an example where there were just no barriers. He didn't see any barriers. He decided he needed a new motor home. Jean and I had to figure out a way. All of the bank accounts were not all settled and pool this stuff [money] together. Then, Shirley, you were the one that helped him...

01:36:28 **Shirley:** Negotiate. He didn't want to negotiate. He just wanted to buy a motor home, and he wanted it now. [Laughter]

Philip: And that was the one.

Shirley: Yeah, I want that one.

Mavis: That's right, and I'm in love and just make it happen. [Laughter]

Shirley: He wanted to write that cheque so badly.

Mavis: We were behind him, and it was a lovely motorhome. We also feel that way, we can call on anybody to help if we need, it's just a phone call away.

Jean: Yes.

Mavis: That is a legacy, too, I think.

Irene: *Very fortunate. Where was his final trip in the motorhome?*

Shirley: Probably golfing. I don't know exactly. They were golfing around Alberta, right? I don't know if they had gone out that year.

Philip: They did the plowing matches every year in Peace River, places like that. That was big part of their motorhoming.

Jean: And golfing.

Mavis: Caravans. They went on several caravans from Prince Rupert right through to Winnipeg together.

Irene: *They hooked up with others?*

Jean: Yes, the Woods & Water, whatever that caravan is, where you join up with another bunch of 35 motor homes.

Irene: *Like a circuit.*

Jean: I don't remember where the last one was.

Mavis: I don't know the year before. He had surgery April 30th of 1999, so it would have been the previous summer. They did golf a lot the previous summer and they actually parked for a while, was it at a trailer place? They would go up to that little golf course...

Philip: Up by Barrhead.

Shirley: It was a gun club by Barrhead.

Edwin: Then also at Terrae Pines because there were no leaves there in the fall and it's flat. There's no poplar trees, so there's no leaves there, so you don't have any problem in the fall.

01:39:00

Edwin: There was always a method to Dad's thinking when he did things, I did it because of this. I did it because of that. He would make use of some of the natural resources, I guess you could call it. When they first had running water in the house, he put a tank upstairs in the attic, and then a pipe down for taps, so that was the running water, gravity fed.

Philip: Innovative, which you had to be.

Edwin: I know the first kind of sewer system that he had for a drainage system for the sink in the house, he took a garden tractor and got an auger on it. Put the garden tractor in the basement, took one wheel off and made a connection to run an auger to auger to the ground.

Philip: That's right. In that new basement, underneath the addition.

Edwin: Sure, there were exhaust fumes, but I'm sure he put a pipe on it.

Irene: *Vented it out.*

Philip: Now I remember that.

Edwin: He set the garden tractor up down there and he did all kinds of things that were very innovative to work.

Jean: Oh, yes, Mom had conveniences that other women never ever heard of.

Mavis: One funny one, though, that she saw and walked right past it, was that dishwasher. It was in the new house, wasn't it?

Shirley: No, we had a dishwasher in the old house. We would move it around and hook it up to the sink. A portable one. I remember that.

Mavis: He brought it in for Christmas or something, and set it up, and Mom walked right past it several times. Didn't see it at all. But that would be Mom. She'd be thinking. [Laughter]

Philip: I think I remember something about that. She was thinking all the time right, and had her own agenda.

Mavis: Her agenda, though, which was for us to be developed.

Philip: Yeah, pushed us in the direction and your comment quite often is that she seemed to be the one that said, "You can do it." So did Dad, obviously. We drove, we worked and we did everything from day one.

Mavis: A couple of things have come up with Dad, one of which was Dad and an incident on a Halloween evening.

Edwin: I'd like to tell that story. It was Halloween. I don't know the exact year, but it was probably 1952, in that era. On Halloween night, it was dark outside. We'd had some treaters come to our house, and Dad wasn't at home yet. It was in the fall and

01:42:38 they were still harvesting, and he was over at his brother's and father's place, because that's where the majority of the farm work was started and ended at. So, he was walking home in the dark, and there were some Halloweeners that had been at our house, and they were walking to Meanook. Dad thought, well, I think I'll maybe scare these kids a little. So, he jumped into the ditch and was waiting for them to come, but when he jumped into the ditch, he twisted his ankle and sprained it really bad, and he couldn't walk. I happened to be outside, wondering where Dad was, I guess. I heard him calling "Edwin, tell Ethel to bring the car and pick me up please." So, we did and brought him into the hospital the next day, and he just sprained his ankle, but it was a sprain that was very bad. The doctor said it was worse than a break, so he had it bandaged up and was on crutches. Grandpa Brown was an Oliver dealer and he had a John Deere tractor that he'd taken in on trade. For the farm work, Dad ran that the rest of the fall because it had a hand clutch. He couldn't use his foot.

Irene: *Thank you.*

Mavis: Dad had another injury.

Edwin: Philip was there when that one happened.

Philip: Some of our farm equipment didn't run as good as it always should, and in order to start this particular tractor, we had to pull the big belt pulley and it ran a welder on the front. In order to start it, you had to pull the belt. So, if you get a hold of belt and give it a good yank, then the tractor fires up. Well, he give it a yank. He was in a shop that was pretty tight, and it was our uncle's shop that was a mechanic and welder. He had this jagged piece of steel sticking out in front of the tractor, and when Dad pulled the belt, I think it was his right arm went against the steel and cut all the tendons, and just cut it really bad. It was just a case of a farming accident only because the tractor wouldn't start. He was laid up for a long time with it, but we all did the farming, and he still farmed. I remember him farming out there with that thing in a sling.

Mavis: He still had scars from that.

Philip: A big scar.

Mavis: It was pre-fire. Dad had many little incidents.

Shirley: I remember the sunstroke, for working outside and not taking a break, and working steady all day, not getting enough water. Then ending up in the hospital and I don't think he could farm for a week or two, he was so sick.

Philip: Yes, for working on Pushor's quarter. That's a good point. I remember that, too. Too much sun.

Mavis: And his hand in the porcupine in the bale.

01:46:03

Philip: I was there for that. We were loading hay into trucks. We used to sell our hay on the railroad, so we had to load it on a truck and take it to the railroad. We were in a barn, our uncle's barn, taking bales out one at a time. Dad said, "Look, here's a squirrel's nest" and grabbed the squirrel's nest. He brought his hand out and he had 42 quills in his hand. So, what are you going to do? Well, we got to pull them out. So, he always had a pair of pliers, just sort of like this. So, I started pulling them out. He said, first of all, you cut the tip of them off, then they don't stick so much. So, yeah, he always carried a big pair of nail clippers, so I started cutting them off. Oh, that's too painful, so I grabbed the pliers and pulled everyone of them out. His hand was just like you had chicken pox on it. It was literally up and down the fingers like that.

Shirley: You pulled them out?

Philip: I pulled them out, yes.

Shirley: How old were you?

Philip: I was young.

Jean: You weren't very old. I stood there and watched. He [Dad] finally sat down on a bale.

Philip: He sat down on a bale. I thought he was going to pass out, for sure. It was very painful. Took him to the hospital after that. Not sure how we got him there, but I was definitely there for that.

Mavis: He just had a tetanus shot, as I recall.

Philip: Yes. It was an incredible sight to see it. I think it was 42 quills.

Mavis: My goodness. Even before that, before any of us were born, Dad and Nelson would ride bicycles down the whole Meanook hill, without brakes. When you think about the dangers that they were exposed to...

Shirley: On really icy days, they would toboggan down the hill, by the graveyard, so they could really get going. You couldn't get the horses up the hill, it was so icy, they said.

Philip: We did that on a bobsled that we had. It would go so fast.

Mavis: Then you would just put more wax on it.

Edwin: Speaking of riding bicycles, they [Dad and Uncle Nelson] would ride a bicycle from Meanook to Baptiste Lake.

Philip: Nelson riding backwards, sitting on the handlebars, and Dad did too.

Mavis: Very agile, very athletic. That they were. Riding horses, athletic.

Philip: Partly with Edwin, definitely, horses have been a big part of my life. Actually, that's what Philip means is "lover of horses", supposedly. But horses have been a big

01:48:50 part of the farming all the time. We had work horses and used them to pick rocks on a stoneboat, load the rocks on the stoneboat and take them to the bush, and throw the rocks off the stoneboat. Ride all the way up two miles, up through the bush – did that hauling lots of wood. Grandpa had a sawmill and we used to have a horse that was smart enough, and I was really young, and Edwin was young too, but the horse would actually go to the bush and Nelson would hook up the log. The horse would go back to the sawmill, drop the log off without being steered or anything, but we'd ride on it just to keep a guy out of trouble. Then the threshing machine was more Edwin's time, learning how to drive horses. It was always a learning experience.

Edwin: Once, my grandfather was going to catch horses in the fall. So, I was all excited and he was going to stop by and pick me up. I rode my bicycle down this hill, as fast as I could go, to get home and be ready to go catch horses. I lost control of my bike, and I fell in the gravel and skinned my face from my forehead right down to my chin. So, I didn't get to go catch horses. But I did get to drive horses in the fall. We had a few runaways, where they'd be running around out in the field, and you're hanging onto the hay rack so you don't fall off and somebody would come and rescue you.

Irene: *And how old would you have been?*

Edwin: Probably eight or nine years old at that time.

Jean: So, you lost the straps to the horses and you were just hanging onto the wagon and the horses were just going crazy

Edwin: The lines are always tied together and you put them over, there's a post on the front of hay rack, so if you happen to drop them the lines wouldn't get on the ground, so you could always hang on to the lines. But if you weren't strong enough to control the horses, they did what they wanted to do. Until they got broke in after three or four days of threshing, then they were okay.

Philip: You never got hell for it, though. It was just this is how you drive the horses, and this is how you never go on a side hill, and this is how you go up to the threshing machine, and it was just something that you learned. It was part of learning, just like going to school. It was never oh you did something wrong, but it was dangerous, the horses, I mean. Tell them about falling off and going into the river.

Edwin: One fall, where we live there's a bridge that goes across the Tawatinaw River. On the north side of the bridge, there was roadway down where you could go through the water. So, when people came to Meanook in those days, there was a lot of people with horses to get their groceries and they always watered their horses there. We were going to water the horses one day at lunchtime, and there was Armand Whieldon and myself and Dad on the hay rack, and Armand and I were on the back of the rack with some bundles. The rest of the rack was clear and we pulled down into the river and the horses stopped to have a drink, but I was going to get up and watch them drink. Well, the hayrack, it wasn't completely blocked off on the front.

01:52:26 It was just two, two-by-fours crossing like an X. So, when the wagon stopped, I went out the front and kind of scared the horses. The rubber-tired wagon ran over me in the river, and Armand Whieldon jumped off and picked me up. Fortunately, I never got hurt because it was a rubber-tired wagon and it was in the river. There would probably be about two feet of water, so the wagon kind of floated, so things were okay. I just got a little wet.

Philip: I suppose you two girls weren't along, but when we used to burn wood, it was nothing to leave on a Sunday morning, load the horses and a sleigh, go up there and cut wood all day long and then skid behind the wagon, hanging onto it with your feet, and sort of sleigh ride behind the wagon. Then come home when it's dark and unload and cut the wood. That reminds me, my job was to fill the wood box. All of us did. Just like 4-H. Everybody was in 4-H, but I don't know if I ever spent much time in there. The back of the wood box said "Work and Play Do Mix." [Laughter]

Jean: They skied behind the hayrack.

Edwin: We used to have piles of wood and we'd have two or three days of sawing at Uncle Nelson's, at Grandpa's and at home. You'd saw wood for two days, you know five or six people at a time. When you went up in the springtime or summer, you took a wagon with you empty, you brought it home at night with a load of firewood on, you emptied that, unloaded that firewood, and by fall you had a pretty good pile. So, you'd saw wood all day long.

Philip: Grandpa talked about, when he first came up from Vermilion to Athabasca, he had a saw and a couple of horses and that's what he would do, go to various places and saw wood for people for years. He talked about having 25¢ or 30¢ and stopping at a place for supper and they would either charge him or take all his money, or give it to him free, and then he go to the next people's place and stuff.

Edwin: And crushing grain.

Philip: Crushing grain, too, that's right. We all had to have a crusher. Dusty, dusty.

Mavis: Grandpa Brown was an entrepreneur, wasn't he?

Jean: All winter, you know, you got on the rack and the horses, and went to the hillside and got a load of straw and came home, then you unloaded it. In the process, you got to sleigh ride or ski or something.

Philip: Chase mice. Chase rabbits. Remember the rabbits. We had rabbits, like thousands. I hate to say how many we did have, but there were literally thousands of rabbits in this straw pile. It was incredible.

Jean: Did the pigs eat them, too?

Philip: Yeah, the pigs ate them. It was a hayrack full of rabbits, in our own home place, right out where the hayshed is right now. In this big straw pile, we had all these rabbits and we would load them up. I don't know if they were diseased or what

01:56:10 happened. The stuff that you learn and live on the farm is just so incredible, like that wood thing. Now, it's fun, because you go out with the side-by-side with the power saw, and wouldn't even consider hiring anybody to come and load wood. [Laughter]

Mavis: Right up until the year that Dad passed away, he was chopping wood, and the colder it was, the more he enjoyed it, and he had cords and cords of wood.

Philip: He could tell you how much a tree weighed because he had cut the tree down, split it into four pieces, and weighed one piece, and then guessed the total. He built a shoot into the basement so he could burn wood in the basement.

Mavis: The logging...

Philip: I talked a little bit about. We had a sawmill.

Mavis: Then, I think about Shirley and I. There weren't the horses, but there was the tractor and the hayrides, and we would go and ride. It was a thrill, the higher the better, and that was fun with Dad. He also would make the bales smaller so that I could pitch them. I don't know if you [Shirley] ever did. It seemed to me that the ordinary bale would be four feet and he would make them three, so that I could pitch them. He tried so hard to train me to go behind the bailer to stook them into these triangle things. I would go willingly, but I'm sure that I wasn't nearly as proficient as you guys.

Shirley: I think they gave up on us. [Laughter]

Mavis: We just didn't rate in Dad's eyes.

Shirley: We couldn't even harrow a field straight.

Mavis: We could garden, so moving into food a bit. You know Dad, at the end, the weeds were always out of control it seemed. He would have a two-acre garden site because one acre you could summer fallow every year. Then you could garden on the other side. We could garden, and we could pick berries, and we could can. I know one year, I canned 50 jars of beet pickles while Mom, Dad and Shirley were on holidays, but I was home. And Jean remembered...

Jean: Peaches, I got to stay home and can peaches, while you guys went on holidays. [Laughter]

Edwin: What about all the raspberries that were picked?

Jean: Oh, my goodness, yes.

Mavis: Mom loved picking raspberries. If there was ever a therapy for Mom, it would be in the raspberry patch.

Edwin: But you ate too many.

01:59:31 **Mavis:** That's true. If Auntie Hazel was there, even the better, because they would talk. I don't remember her sisters picking so much.

Shirley: Auntie Laura picked raspberries, but she had her own patch. She always used to say, well, I'm sure the bears are watching me, but they don't bother me picking raspberries.

Edwin: I can remember Mom and Auntie Hazel up in brush piles picking wild raspberries. There were lots of brush piles, it was a lot of climbing over logs and everything to get them, and they would go all day long.

Jean: It was the same with blueberries. They would go all day to pick blueberries.

Mavis: Oh yes, we would go picking blueberries down by Perryvale.

Edwin: Well, I built a blueberry picker.

Mavis: Oh, you did?

Philip: That's right, with nails. Picked a few leaves with it.

Edwin: I'd clean them and take them to Uncle Arthur's store, and he'd sell them to the travelers from Edmonton. I picked a lot of blueberries, by the water pail full.

Philip: The one thing that Mom was known for, and you guys obviously must know, but she could find a four-leaf clover absolutely anywhere. I've never found one in my life. She'd sit down and give you two. Am I right?

Shirley: That's true.

Philip: I've looked for one to this day.

Mavis: I find them quite often.

Philip: You do, incredible.

Mavis: Yes, I'm pretty lucky. I think of Mom every time. Even in her eulogy, they talked about her walking among the clover and finding four-leaf clovers in the Tawatinaw Valley. Another thing that Elena, my daughter, really remembers Mom for, many of us do, is her buns and cooking.

Edwin: Dinner buns, really good.

Mavis: Oh, were they ever? Yeah, remarkable buns.

Philip: Edwin was known to eat so many that he got sick.

Edwin: Did that a few times. [Laughter]

Irene: *Only Edwin was known for that, though.*

Shirley: We'd eat the dough raw, right?

02:01:51 **Mavis:** With cinnamon and sugar was even better.

Philip: Yes, probably the best, though, was when Mom picked peas and then she'd shell them all and leave them in the fridge. Oh, man, would they disappear. Would we get in trouble, oh my goodness.

Edwin: She made some great pies, too. Raisin pies. Lots of pies in the fall at harvest times, for threshing crews.

Shirley: Our Auntie Laura would have too many eggs from her chickens, and we had to have chiffon cakes.

Philip: Always eggs from Laura. That's right.

Shirley: And big turkeys. She [Mom] always had the family for Christmas and New Year's, and 20, 30, 40 people, and kind of stressful, but we had to do that.

Philip: The table was full of people and full of food.

Irene: *And where did your Auntie Laura live?*

Jean: Near Meanook, 6 or 7 miles away.

Philip: About 1/4 mile from where Mom was born and raised. They [Rays] lived on the home place, in a little shack.

Irene: *So, they grew the turkeys?*

Mavis: Yes, so we had these 30 to 35 pound turkeys, and we always had Christmas dinner at 1:00, and even Easter and Thanksgiving. There'd be this massive turkey and Mom would be up at 6:00 o'clock in the morning getting it in the oven.

Jean: Auntie Laura didn't cook the turkey?

Mavis: No. Mom did it.

Jean: Oh, so it came from Auntie Laura's the day before?

Philip: Harold and I killed it the day before. Every day, he had to show me how to do that. Ugh!

Jean: Did you ever have to kill one?

Philip: No, I never did. He had that knife, he had that long knife. It is the worst thing to ever see in your life. Takes it [turkey] and hangs it upside down, and takes this long knife, he used to call it a fish knife, and put the blade up through the throat, and it bleeds out really nice. He'd done it 100 times. I've done it once. Scary turkeys. They were bigger than me and I would look up to them. The monster turkeys. I spent a lot of time up there [at Rays].

02:04:09 **Mavis:** I enjoyed being up there when they were killing the chickens, and then watch them run around headless. It was kind of neat, but I couldn't quite figure out the science of it.

Philip: You were never there when we had chickens? We did that.

Mavis: Oh yeah, we had chickens. Mom didn't really like the chickens, and then the weasels would get the eggs and weasels would get the chickens. Mom was so glad when we no longer had chickens. She was so relieved. Mom wasn't a farmer at heart, but she totally devoted herself to supporting the farm and us. She wasn't a mechanical person. She was scared of cows, yet she'd love to see them at a distance.

Jean: She didn't mind picking eggs, but that was the extent of chickens.

Mavis: That's right.

Philip: She never milked cows. I've never seen her milk a cow.

Mavis: No, very interesting, but Dad was fine with that. It wasn't as though the house is my domain. It was just their shared capabilities and interests. Delegation was very mutual, I thought.

Shirley: They had a clear division of duties. They really did. [Laughter]

Mavis: Very interesting. In terms of regular food, thinking of Mom, she was really happy when preparing food got easier, with the electric stove and with easier food. Ordinarily we would have cereal for breakfast and then we would have a full meal. Dad loved a full meal at lunch, and particularly supper, which would be roast beef, pork chops, a chicken, potatoes of some kind always, and a vegetable, and a dessert with every meal.

Irene: *And dinner buns if Edwin left any.*

Philip: We butchered all our own meat all the time, beef and pigs. I'd shoot them.

Mavis: Yes, you were always skinning something.

Philip: Cutting and wrapping in that old brown paper on the pool table, I think. Meat sauce. Growing up on the farm.

Mavis: Extraordinarily healthy and very self-sufficient.

Philip: Organic back then, they didn't even know it.

Mavis: We could go to the grocery store, when we were in high school, and buy anything we would want. Rice was just coming in and spaghetti was just coming in. So those were very new foods.

Shirley: We'd gets donuts. That was our treat Friday after school.

02:07:41 **Jean:** Hey, Leonard could get it [donuts] any day at 10:00 o'clock in the morning.

Mavis: Even right up until Mom died, we all celebrated with food. It has brought us together throughout. It's been fabulous.

Shirley: We took care of Mom the last month at home. She didn't want to be in the hospital any longer, and we all did our share, our shifts, as well as some support from the community, which was great.

Mavis: She still had to get up at 4:00 o'clock everyday for Jeopardy, so this oxygen pole would come out of the bedroom right on cue. She would watch it [Jeopardy]. She couldn't even talk, but she was writing down bank accounts and numbers.

Edwin: She would write the message what she wanted to talk to you about it, and she did it on a piece of paper.

Mavis: Totally lucid. Quite remarkable.

Jean: Four days before she passed away, she dictated four generations of births, deaths and anniversaries.

Mavis: Full names. Her memory was just remarkable.

Jean: So, I sat there and wrote.

Mavis: She was pretty special and so was Dad.

Edwin: Our life on the farm.

Mavis: That's right, and you three still have life on the farm.

Philip: Yeah, that's right. Doesn't seem like quite as much land as it used to seem, because it's a little tighter and a few more roads, and a lot more rules and regulations, but it sure is nice to look out the window and not see another window looking back at you. This is kind of like that so, so its nice, too.

Mavis: Looking over Tawatinaw Creek is beautiful. So, Athabasca will always be home, or Meanook and Athabasca.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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