

Athabasca Area Seniors' Memory Project

Jean Barry – Interview Transcript

Narrator: Jean Barry
Interviewer: Irene Fitzsimmons
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Select "Eric & Ethel Brown Family" > Select "Jean Margaret Barry" > Scroll down to "Audio interview" > Play ►

[START OF INTERVIEW]

Irene: *This is still Monday, September 16th. It is Irene Fitzsimmons, the interviewer, and I'm here with the third individual interview of the Brown family. I'm here with Jean, and we're just going to start, Jean, from where you were, kind of toward the end of your school graduation, and you can tell us your piece from here.*

Jean: I graduated from Edwin Parr School. I was the valedictorian, and from there I went to the University of Alberta. I worked every summer. Then I went – where did I teach first – I taught in Colinton, I taught in Perryvale, then I taught in Athabasca Elementary School and I taught in Edwin Parr, and around and about. I loved every minute of it, just about.

Irene: *How many years in total?*

Jean: Thirty-three years in total, mostly math, a few years in phys ed, I really liked that. But phys ed did not work out with young children, because you were off coaching basketball or volleyball or things like that. So, then I went on to the elementary school where I taught in the classroom, and that was more conducive to having young children and teaching. So that worked out very well. Teaching for that many years was great. We had a farm and children, so there was lots of work at home, also. Then we bought a piece of lake property. So, we had to build a cabin. We got that done. After you build a cabin, then you've got to buy a boat. So, we bought a ski boat, and that was great fun. We loved every minute of that. The family, extended family and all, had to learn to water ski and then, of course, along came tubes, knee boards and all those things that go along with boats.

Irene: *Where was your cabin?*

Jean: Our cabin is on Crooked Lake, between Island Lake and Chain Lakes. We used that an awful lot. Not only us, our families, our friends and it was a great place, not only for all that, but for many, many family celebrations, barbecues and that sort of thing in the summer.

Irene: *Who are your children and how far apart are they?*

Jean: Oh, my goodness, one child is 49 and the other one is 46.

Irene: *What are their names, and do they have children themselves?*

Jean: Dion has four children, one boy and three girls. So, they're grown and away from home. One is an actor.

Irene: An actor, actor?

Jean: Yes. You know how it is, being an actor. I said to him one day "Are you going to live under stairs learning to be an actor?" He said, "Probably." But he's had lots of fun out there. Oftentimes, he's working as a waiter, a hostess or something.

Irene: *Do they live here?*

Jean: No, they've actually got a place to live in Vancouver, so that's good.

Irene: *Is that where your daughter is, too?*

Jean: No, This [the actor] is a stepson. This is my son's son.

Irene: *Oh, your son's son. So, your son's name is?*

Jean: Dion. This is Dion's family.

Irene: *Does Dion live here?*

Jean: He lives in Westlock.

Irene: *In Westlock.*

Jean: Yes. He works out of Sherwood Park and drives to wherever they send him. He's a safety boss.

Irene: *Oh, so he does monitoring of safety?*

Jean: That's right. He monitors safety. His daughter is just starting university, and she's wanting to be in education. She's in Edmonton at MacEwan University.

Irene: *Okay, MacEwan University.*

Jean: Yes.

Irene: *Okay.*

Jean: Yes, so we're watching her very carefully getting started. The little one is in grade 11, so, watching for her.

Irene: *And your other child is...*

Jean: Janeen.

Irene: *Janeen, and where does she live?*

Jean: She lives half a mile south of us. When things started changing and this farm came up for sale, well, we had to buy it because it was part of our recreation property. [Laughter] We skidooed on our property and their property. We rented it for about ten years before it came up for sale. We're enjoying having her there. She has two children, one 21 and one 19.

Irene: *Do they live on the property?*

Jean: They live on the property, yes. She works at Blue Heron and her husband works at Alpac. Both of their children have finished school. One of them is still trying to figure out what she's going to do, and the other one is at the golf course working at the Fox Den [restaurant]. We'll see, it'll last for this part of the summer and then I don't know what's going to happen for her.

Irene: *How long have you and Leonard been married?*

Jean: It was 52 years in June. It's been forever. Like, there was something that happened down at the farm and Shirley said, "Well, Leonard's been here forever," and he kind of has been. He was part of the group that was...

Irene: *On your family farm.*

Jean: Yes, the Brown family farm, along with the group that we were talking about earlier.

Irene: *Yes. So, you've known him an awful long time.*

Jean: A long, long time, yes.

Irene: *Do you farm at all, still?*

Jean: Not anymore.

Irene: *What did you farm?*

Jean: Oh, cattle and grain. A small amount of each, and he [Leonard] really liked it. He really enjoyed farming because that's what his parents did. That's what he took over when he quit working out, because he worked for Nova and TransCanada Pipeline. All the years I was teaching, he was working out, too. We sort of did everything together all of our lives.

Irene: *Have you been able to travel a little together?*

Jean: Oh yes. We bought a motorhome and took that across Canada, and took that up to Yellowknife and all that sort of thing. We travelled with a lot of other couples and enjoyed that an awful lot.

Irene: *How has it been for you to be part of this, chatting with your siblings about your family and your own story?*

Jean: We do this occasionally and you get these stories. Lots of the times you don't get as many stories out of Edwin, as you do Mavis and Shirley. Yes, it's good. We can always visit together and every time find something new, which is just great.

Irene: *And a really a lovely rich family history.*

Jean: Oh yes, it is. We don't sort of ride on each other's backs for stories. Like we don't travel together a whole lot. I don't know why. We just have different interests and that sort of thing. But we do meet at the lake an awful lot.

Irene: *So, the lake is a meeting place.*

Jean: Very much so. Yes.

Irene: *Is there anything else, Jean?*

Jean: Well, the other part of our life, that we haven't mentioned yet is the community club. We've been part of the South Athabasca Community Club for quite a few years, and that means a lot of service work.

Irene: *That's a real thriving community club.*

Jean: It is. It's a very busy community club.

Irene: *What kinds of things do you do there?*

Jean: We just finished building a playground there.

Irene: *Wow.*

Jean: Yes. We've been to casinos quite a bit. So, there was casino money that we needed to spend. That meant doing something worthwhile. So, we got the playground built. The playground goes along with the summer kitchen that we built, oh, maybe, I don't know, ten years ago.

Irene: *How many members of the club are there? Is there a core group?*

Jean: Probably a core group, between 18 and 25 members. Yes, a nice group of members. You know, a few that are 80 that have been a stable group for quite a few years, and this young group that wanted the playground so badly, and they really went out and worked at it to get it.

Irene: *So different generations coming together.*

Jean: That's right, yes, and we're so glad to have that. We've had that going on for years and years, because it was the old school there.

Irene: *When did it stop being the old school?*

Jean: I guess when they closed it as a school, and in order to keep it, they had to open it as a community club, and that would have been the late '50s.

Irene: *Was that schoolhouse from kind of kindergarten to all grades there?*

Jean: Yes, all grades until early to mid '50s, when it was shut down as a large school. Mary Olson may have been the last teacher there. She and Leonard and Lorraine Kwasney had many memories to talk about last night when we had a meeting. It was sort of about the new playground and how everything has been coming and going as it has grown from just a little, old one-room school to a community facility.

Irene: *An important community facility.*

Jean: Oh yes, really?

Irene: *Kind of the heart of your community there.*

Jean: It is, yes.

Irene: *Well, it's been a real pleasure and it's lovely to see all the siblings together, to be able to share in a story and thank you for that, for the time and also thank you for your individual story of you, Leonard and your children, where you're living and your life right now.*

Jean: Oh, thank you very much, Irene. It's so nice to chat with you. I've known you from back when your children came and went to school.

Irene: *Yes, we do. Thank you, Jean. You bet.*

Jean: Yes.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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