

Athabasca Area Seniors' Memory Project

Katie Kuzyk-001.mp3

http://digiport.athabascau.ca/aasmp/people/k_kuzyk.php

Narrator: Katie Kuzyk, assisted by Shirley Casavant

Interviewer: Carmen Pysyk

July 26, 2018

[Start of Interview]

Carmen Hi, this is Carmen Pysyk. It's July 26, 2018, and I'm here visiting with Katie Kuzyk and her daughter, Shirley Casavant. Katie's mother's name was Katherine Ilchuk and her dad's name was George Bahry. Katie was born on July 4th, 1922 on a farm in Forfar. So Katie, can you tell me where your parents came from and how they came to Canada?

Katie From what I understand, they come from Bukovina, Romania. That's somewhere in Europe. I haven't been there.

Carmen And do you know what year it was when they came to Canada?

Katie My parents came in 1912 and 1913. My dad came first. He asked mom if she'd come if he sent her what it takes to get here. They were married in November of 1913.

Katie Where my mom had lived at that time, it was a very troubled country. So, she was more than happy to come if my dad did send for her. But it took a visa to come to Canada. So that's how come she came here, and that's how come I'm here.

Carmen Where did they land when they came here, Katie? Do you know where they landed when they came here?

Katie I wouldn't know where they landed from out east, but they came right to Athabasca when they came to Canada. My dad had his brother Wasyl and his sister Martha already here in Athabasca. They had immigrated before he did. My mom stayed with George and Martha Babiak until my parents were married, shortly after my mom's arrival to Canada. My dad was expecting that they were about to call him for army training, because that was the targeted age group at that time, so he escaped to Canada.

Carmen Okay, and how many brothers and sisters did you have? Did you have siblings? And were they born in Romania or were they born in Canada?

Katie You're asking about my brothers and sisters? They're all Canadian, all born in Canada. If my dad married here in Canada, then they were all Canadians.

Carmen So, Katie, tell me what you and your siblings used to do for fun or your first memories as a child. What did you used to do for fun? Did you help out on the farm?

Shirley I don't think there was a lot of fun!

Carmen A lot of work, maybe?

Katie Well there was a lot of work involved with the fun. Yeah, we enjoyed doing it, but we were doing it on a farm. I really enjoyed doing what we did on a farm. Yes, I like farm work.

Carmen So can you tell me of some of the chores you used to do, or you and your brothers and sisters?

Katie Oh wow. Chores! What did we have to do? Oh, I can tell you, just everything. There's far too many chores on a farm. Milk cows and then milk cows again. And you bring that milk in the house. You have to separate the milk from the cream and sell the cream. You'd sell the cream; that's what helped pay the expenses on the farm. So, we pretty well earned our bread when we worked on a farm for my dad.

Carmen And what did your father do for a living besides farming?

Katie My father. He was just farming. We're all farmers.

Katie Oh yes. We picked rocks. You probably hear more about that than you want to! But there was no land broke. They had to chop all the trees down to clear that little bit of an acre of land so they could plant something. But first, they had to chop that bush, or whatever it is, to make yourself a teepee so you have something to live in. When my mom and dad first came, they didn't have a house to come into, but they wanted a house. They built their house to start with.

Carmen Do you remember living in the teepee or were you in a house when you were born?

Katie No, I was already in a house. When my parents came, there was nothing. So, they had to clear a little bit of land so they could build a house on it.

Carmen And tell me about your house. Do you remember how big it was? Was there a wooden floor or a dirt floor? Was there a basement?

Katie At first I would say it was a dirt floor. I still remember that part. But that was before they put the boards on the floor. And it was built out of boards, a board house.

Katie That's the first house my parents lived in.

Carmen And how many rooms were in this house? Did you have to share a room with your ...?

Katie Well, the family pretty well lived together. And there was an addition to the house, or a lean-on, to that house. There was an addition to that house, for extra room, if you needed it.

Carmen And your mother, was she just a stay-at-home mom or did she work?

Katie She was a stay-at-home mom. Yes, she was.

Carmen So you had mentioned before that your father came here for some military training?

Katie No, he didn't come for military training. He was expecting that they were going to call him to do military training. But instead, he came to Canada. He was just a young man, about 20 years old. My mom and dad were both about the same age. I think my dad's birthday was in April and my mom's was in August.

Carmen And so how they made their living was just farming?

Katie Dad also did some trucking. He hauled people's cattle or hogs. He did some work outside of just farming. But mostly it was farming. Yes.

Shirley Were the bees part of the farming?

Katie Oh, the bees. Yes. He was a beekeeper. He had beehives. He had those beehives in boxes. He extracted the honey. And of course, he had one building just for that. He had a big extractor where he would put the flats of combs into a big barrel, which would spin around, and spin the honey out of it. It was called a honey extractor. So yes, he did raise bees and we had honey. My dad did; I didn't.

Carmen He never, ever made you go in there?

Katie Oh, yes, yes. Oh, yes. The bees got used to you, or you got used to the bees. They didn't like the horses or any animals – they didn't like the smell of them. They like pure flowers.

Carmen So, do you have any stories about when you had to go into the bee barn?

Katie They actually didn't bother me. They were used to me. There's a picture here of me with my mask on.

Carmen Holding a bunch of bees?

Katie Yes, but they didn't bother me. But my dad used to put a mask on; well I did, whenever he did.

Carmen Do you know how many barrels of honey you would get?

Katie No, no, I wouldn't know that. But we used to get quite a bit of honey, because he used to have the market for it. I wouldn't say they would barrel it, because you didn't quite have enough to barrel it but they put it in containers. The tea shop would sell it.

Katie Since people liked honey we'd sell some privately. People would come to the home if they wanted some honey.

Carmen And did you sell eggs and beef or any of that? Or just kept it for yourselves?

Katie Well, the same thing with bees – there was far too much honey to use up. We definitely raised chickens and we sold eggs. And raised chicks too.

Carmen So what did you and your siblings do for fun? Like were there baseball teams, or did you curl, or any sport, anything you used to do for fun? Play hide and seek in the barn?

Katie Well, they played hide and seek, I don't know if they used the barn much. But what did they do for fun? Just like they do now. They played ball.

Carmen You and your siblings. So you used to play baseball?

Katie We played ball. What did they call that, they used to throw a ball over the roof.

Carmen Red rover? No. Oh, you throw a ball over the roof?

Katie Yes and somebody else caught it on the other side. Yes, we played ball.

Carmen And what would keep you busy in the winter months?

Katie Lots to do. Did a lot of sliding. There's that hill by our place. We used to go up the hill. Take the big sleigh up there. We'd have to pull the sleigh up, but we always had a ride down.

Carmen So how old were you when you started school?

Katie Well, you know, they didn't have room for me. But when they did start school, the older children started first.

Katie I must have been about seven or eight. Oh, I was able to read, but not everything. I was able to read at home because my older brothers and sisters went to school. 'Cause there was room for them and they were admitted. And they used to come home with schoolwork and oh, it was so easy what the children were reading. So I'd just read whatever they had.

Carmen And can you tell me about your school? Like how many grades were in your school and how many kids were in your class?

Katie I don't think it was so much a class as it was the whole school. And how many kids were there... it could have been about 30 kids in that one room. I have a picture where you can count. [counting]

Shirley There's 34! You got it.

Katie Well, I'm trying to be as close as I can.

Shirley You're doing very well! Yes.

Carmen And what grades did it go from?

Katie Well, we did from grade one right to grade eight. And then later to grade nine.

Katie And after that, the children were bused to Athabasca. Myself, I went to school here until about grade eight, grade nine. And truly, my dad felt that I received as much education as he felt I needed. So they didn't insist on me going to Athabasca for more schooling or to university or anything. You know, they felt that what we had was good.

Carmen So how did you used to get to school? Did you have to walk?

Katie We walked most of the time. The neighbours, they also had children. And when they'd go with a sleigh or with a cart we'd all get in on that and get a little bit of a ride. But we walked most of the time. I used to walk across the field and head for the road to the school. That's where the school was at that time when I went to school.

Carmen How long did it take you to get from home to school? How much of a walk was it?

Katie Well, if I had to walk, it wouldn't take very long. A good half an hour to go that one mile. That's about all it would take to walk it.

Carmen So what did you do after grade nine?

Katie Stayed home and worked. I didn't go out to get another job or anything of that sort. We were home, we worked at home. Like you'd want to go and work for wages. But we worked at home.

Carmen So just on the farm, with your parents? So how did you meet your husband?

Katie Oh, I've known him all my life.

Carmen So you went to school with him?

Katie No, he was a little bit older than I was, so he was finished school. Yeah, I've known him all my life, pretty well, because he was a neighbour, a close neighbour.

Carmen Oh, okay. And how did you guys used to get together?

Katie Well, we used to all attend party dances at local schools, like Narrow Lake. We didn't go to the city or to St. Albert.

Katie No, it was just in the neighbourhood. We didn't travel too far.

Shirley How did you and dad end up together?

Katie You're getting me to think too far back there. I was going to go to work in Edmonton, as there was nothing at home for me on the farm.

Katie So, we met up downtown in the city and talked about getting married. Pete went to see his dad to tell him that we're getting married. At the time, his dad was trucking

and so was my dad trucking in Edmonton. Rather than stay in the city to work, I changed my mind and I guess I married him.

Carmen How long did you date for? Like I know you said you had known him your whole life, but how long did you officially date for?

Katie I know we used to go to dances, so I can't say for how long we dated. I've known him all my life. He was in the neighbourhood. So when I was old enough, my parents allowed us to go to dances. We all enjoyed it. I didn't just go with him; there was William Kiselyk.

Katie I had a number of friends, neighbourhood friends. Yeah.

Carmen And how would you get to these dances? Would you guys have to walk or did somebody have a car?

Katie There were times that the boys and men had cars. I still remember Bill Kiselyk – not this William Kiselyk. He was a brother to Mr. John Kiselyk. Us younger people would go with him because he's a master, he's older, and he knows everything. So he'd make sure nothing went wrong.

Katie We all went together as a family. That's how far I can remember. Yeah.

Katie So that's how we got to the dances. Somebody always had a vehicle. Our parents didn't just let us go. No, the parents made sure that we were safe getting there and safe coming back.

Carmen Okay, and tell me about how did you guys used to get to town for groceries? Or how often would you come to town?

Katie Well, we used to go with the wagon, with a team of horses, that's to start with, years back. They used to go with a team of horses, because, not everybody had a vehicle. Some people did and some didn't. And they'd go to Athabasca and get groceries.

Carmen Okay, and what was your first car? Or how old were you when you got your first car?

Katie Yeah. Our first car got us around, I guess, good enough, yes. I don't really remember the make of it. Would it still be in the yard? No, not that little car. The big car is still in the yard, I think – in the yard on the farm.

Carmen So tell me about your engagement.

Katie I didn't know what engagement was, really. I didn't walk around with an engagement ring. Not this ring.

Shirley It wasn't traditional like it is now. I think you've kind of shared the story with her, but you've got to bring home the message. And that is when you and dad were dating, it was a very casual friendship. But then you went into the city for work and he

got a little panicked that he was losing out on a wife. So he tracked you down. And now this is the part where she's asking about the engagement. How did he asked you to marry him, and then how long did it take for you to get married?

Katie It took no time at all.

Shirley It wasn't a long engagement.

Katie Not a long engagement.

Shirley How many days?

Katie Just a couple of days.

Katie Oh, that's our wedding picture.

Shirley There you were with dad. February 3rd, 1944.

Katie Yeah, we got married in 1944.

Katie Well, she's got more for you to see there. That is my sister Nancy Korenda. And that's her daughter and our flower girl, Joanne. Pete Haley was our best man. He lived and worked in Edmonton at that time. And here, yes, this is Sephina Wensak, our bridesmaid.

Carmen So, Katie, I just wanted to know what made you leave Athabasca and head to the city?

Katie I was old enough to do that – I was 22. My dad said, you can't leave home until you're at least 21. My dad had a lot of work on the farm. We all loved the farm, but I saw no future in it, not for myself. It was good for my dad because he had a family there. We all worked. But I just decided to go and see for myself.

Carmen And what did you do when you went to the city? What kind of job did you look for in the city?

Katie At that time, there was not much available other than washing dishes, I guess. I didn't have an education to go into an office. But it was anything you can do physically. I've been there.

Carmen So where was your first job? Do you remember the business name?

Katie I didn't get a job.

Shirley She went into the city to get a job, but dad followed her that same day.

Katie I went into the city with Nick and Mary Philipzyk, my sister. And in my mind, I was going to get a job and work. But Pete knew about it. He knew that I was going, and he didn't want to see me go and not come back.

Katie So, what else? The night before that, he told me that he's gonna meet me in the city, one way or the other way. I didn't know if we were going to break up or what.

Katie At that time, men were being called to the army. Pete's parents needed him at home to do farm work. They believed that you could avoid service if you farmed with your parents, but not if you were married. Pete went to see George Godel, the District Agriculturist at the time. George told him that as long as he farmed and had a couple of cows, or a couple pigs and chickens, he didn't have to go to the army. He would have enough farm work to stay at home.

Katie But I didn't know that when he said he'd meet me in a city.

Katie When we met in the city and he said that he was going to go meet with his dad, I just about told him where to go. Because, what does he want his dad for? He wanted to meet me. At the time, I didn't know he just wanted to tell his dad that he didn't have to go to the army if he got livestock and farmed after we got married. So we got married. That's about all there was to it. So that wasn't a long engagement. We knew what we wanted, but we couldn't do what we wanted because his parents needed him on the farm and they didn't want him to go away.

Katie When he saw the fella from the Department of Agriculture, there was no longer any fear of going away to the army. They won't take you because you've got enough work at home.

Katie When he wanted to go see his dad, I almost told him where to go. But somehow, I held back. But he came back to me. So there it was. I've known him all my life, so I wasn't going with this stranger really.

Carmen So what happened? What did you guys do next after you went to the city? Did you stay in the city or did you come back?

Katie Well, we came home. Oh, yes, we came home.

Katie He went to his parents' home when we came home. And I went to my parents' home. Soon after we returned home, Pete talked to his Uncle Sam Kuzyk about buying his farm. Uncle Sam worked on the railroad and had already moved away, leaving behind his farm and house. The house was vacant. And that's where we went, and we lived there in that house. That log house is still there. We got married. After we got married, like they say, what did we do? We came back to the farm and farmed!

Katie We had enough to do. We still had animals on a farm and all types of things. So I didn't get away from farming.

Carmen So how long after you're married did you have your first child or how many children did you have?

Katie If I told you whole dozens [laughter]. I had two boys and two girls.

Carmen And who's the oldest? Who was born first to who was born last?

Katie So there's Pat, Allan, and Ernie. Well, Shirley was the last one. So that's four children we had.

Carmen And did you just keep on farming or did your husband go trucking? Or did you come work in town or anything like that?

Katie Well, I don't know if he did much trucking himself, but he did help his dad with a lot of that.

Katie He didn't work away from his parents. He always worked together or helped his parents. Even after we got married.

Katie So after all these years, we actually didn't go to city life. We lived on a farm or farmed.

Carmen And what did you used to do for fun once you had your kids? Did you still go to dances or you just stayed home?

Katie What did we do?

Shirley What did we do for fun as a family?

Katie Oh, lots.

Shirley We were in lots of clubs. What did you get us into?

Katie Oh well, they were in the 4-H club. They had animals to raise. They had to show their animals off, to hold meetings, and to bring the animals out for weigh-ins. There was a lot to do with the 4-H clubs.

Shirley And what were the boys in?

Katie Well, the boys were in the cadets, as well as 4-H. And they liked it; they traveled with the cadets.

Carmen And when you started having children, did you still live in the Forfar district?

Katie Well, that was our home. Still is our home.

Carmen And what year did your husband pass away?

Katie That was a few years ago. He was 77 at that time. When was it?

Shirley 1992. Why did he pass away?

Katie Well, actually, when he did pass away, it was a heart attack.

Shirley Right. And previous to that, what was his ailment?

Katie He had kidney failure and was on peritoneal dialysis. I don't know if you know about dialysis. Nowadays, people go on a blood machine, but he didn't. How he took dialysis – that is a lot to say in one day.

Shirley That's okay.

Katie He was on what they call the bag system. They started him out at the University Hospital and showed us how to operate it. A bag of solution was hung on an IV pole and was drained into his belly through a catheter. A few hours later the waste solution was drained out into an empty bag.

Katie This one goes out and another bag comes in. And we did that exchange four times a day, that's every six hours we had to do an exchange. But when he did pass away, he passed away of a heart attack right at the hospital. And it's funny because the doctor had just checked him out and said everything's fine. The doctor just walked across the street to the nurse's ward and my husband went of a heart attack. That's how it ended him.

Katie So I wouldn't say he didn't suffer. It wasn't the easiest life he had near the end. But still it kept him going. That dialysis system kept him alive for another five years. I think it was a good five years.

Carmen Yeah, that's interesting for me, because dialysis is different nowadays from having that procedure.

Katie I don't know if they still would really recommend that or if they still use it. But you know George Philipzyk? He's my nephew. He was on this dialysis machine, with the tubes, and had to watch his blood circulating. And when his sister – Rosie McKenzie from Vancouver – was out visiting, she mentioned that he didn't like being on the machine. He actually asked the doctors, "What would happen if I don't go on a machine?" The doctor said, "You're gonna die." George said, "That's just what I'm gonna do." That's exactly what he did. He just quit. He didn't want to go on dialysis anymore.

Katie I felt so bad for him. He was about ten years younger than I was. I used to babysit him when we were little kids. I just loved that kid. He was such a sweet kid. We lost him. Yeah, he just decided that if that's all there is to live, he didn't want to go any longer.

Shirley How was dad's quality of life during those last five years?

Katie Dad's dialysis was different. It was the exchanges that he had to go on.

Shirley And did he do it by himself?

Katie No, he needed help. We had an IV pole set up in the house. It didn't matter whether we had company come or whatever. When the time came to do it, we did it. You know, we did it regardless, the family would go on with their dinner or what have you. They accepted it because they knew that was his life.

Katie So, yes, he continued with that at home. He wasn't too old to pass on when he did. Because I know, like Uncle Fred, he still went on for some time after dad passed away. That's my husband's brother, Fred. His wife, Anne Kuzyk, is around here. She's here now at the Lodge with us too.

Carmen So were you still at home when all this was going on? Or did you guys eventually, towards the end, come to Pleasant Valley Lodge to get some help?

Shirley How long did you stay on the farm after dad passed away? And what did you do on the farm when he passed away?

Katie Well, we just tried to continue to do the best we could. Oh, yes. We couldn't just drop everything and go. We still farmed. The children came around and also helped work. They all pitched in and worked. It wasn't just myself. No, we still farmed after dad passed away, oh for a number of years.

Katie But just recently, it seems to me, I applied to get in here to the Lodge. We had that farm for quite a few years yet and we worked. I don't know if there's anything much more to add to that.

Shirley How much land did you have? Did you have cattle? What kind of farming operation was it?

Katie Well, it was both. We did some cow milking. And of course, farming the cattle. We produced the hay and hauled feed for them for the winter.

Carmen How many acres did you have on the farm, Katie?

Katie Well, there's 160 acres in one quarter. Approximately. At least that's what it is supposed to be, 160 acres. I still have that farm out there.

Shirley So how many quarters did you have when dad passed?

Katie Well, Allan got that quarter. And Ernie got the one from Kiselyks.

Shirley Ernie bought some land from you guys.

Katie Well, he got the one across from home. Yeah, Ernie bought that one.

Katie Well, he needed it, and he had the equipment to work with. It got to the point that I'm not gonna go drive the tractor anymore. Or anything of that sort. No, I just worked from the home, around the farm. What was there to do with Shirley's help and some of the other children? We had to cut grass, cultivate the garden, and lots more.

Carmen So did you still raise cattle and chickens and all that?

Katie Well, I sort of laid off from chickens already. I, we quit raising chickens and selling the eggs. We didn't do that, but the cattle were still there. So, whenever there's cow calving, that's an extra chore too, you know, taking care of the small calves and so forth.

Shirley When did the pigs go?

Katie All the pigs went, yeah.

Shirley Was it before dad passed or after?

Katie It's after dad passed away. We still had pigs. Oh, yes, 'cause we had that guy hauling the pigs in and out of the hog barn. So that sort of ended the farming, from what I did.

Katie I applied to get into here. Luckily, I got in. They told me when I applied to get here to the Lodge that there were 40 people ahead of me. That I wouldn't have a chance to get in, but I guess those 40 people weren't prepared to let go of what they had. But I let go of what I had, just to get here. Because I was alone on the farm, that might be a few points that really got me in here. And it's cold, and we have to do all the shoveling, and so forth. So I managed to get where I'm at now, at the Lodge.

Shirley How old were you when you left the farm to come here?

Katie How many years ago is it now?

Shirley Three and a half.

Katie So, what, I was pretty close to 92 years?

Shirley How old are you now?

Katie Well, we gotta count. Ninety-six. Well, I could still count, and I can still add and subtract.

Carmen That's a pretty good age, to keep doing all that farming until your 90s. That's quite impressive.

Katie I didn't do all that farming myself, because like even right now, Shirley's part of my farm there somewhere too.

Shirley She hasn't really left the farm. No, she's still farming.

Katie My son and daughter-in-law, they're putting all the crop in. They decide for themselves what to put in because they're gonna do it. If they want to put canola in, or what have you? I haven't the big equipment. We got the small equipment like cultivators and stuff with that. So I guess that's where I stand now on it. I'm living right here at the Lodge and I like it very much.

Carmen Do you quite often go out to the farm still to go look at it?

Katie We do quite often.

Katie Yeah, she drives me out there quite often. Well, Diane and Ernie, they're busy working. I couldn't wish for a better daughter-in-law. That's one nice thing I could say, she's a wonderful person. Yeah, she is.

Katie And my son is lucky also. If he's lucky, then so am I! Well, see Shirley's in Sherwood Park. She can't come here all the time. Diane is closer, so she brings me the mail and what have you. And many things outside of that, eh. So that's my daughter-in-law, Diane. She's a wonderful daughter-in-law.

Carmen So Katie, I was just wondering, how many grandkids do you have?

Katie How many grandkids? Oh, 12. And 22 great-grandchildren. Yeah, I knew there was a dozen grandchildren.

Carmen And a lot of them live close to Athabasca? Or do you have some far away?

Katie Well, Shirley's in Sherwood Park, Pat's in Morinville area, and Allan is in Lundbreck Falls.

Katie So he's also farming, can't take that away from him.

Carmen And so since you have such a big family, tell me about how you guys all get together? What do you do for the celebrations for Easter, and all the special holidays?

Katie We always celebrated in the family farm home. But as the children were growing and there were more grandchildren and more great-grandchildren, the house got small. Now, if it gets to be a special occasion, we book the Lodge here, and we have it at the Lodge. And it's sure nice, we get good service. Very nice. Whenever we have more children and friends coming in, we celebrate in here now. It makes it a little easier. Because it is quite a chore to have it in one house, the farmhouse. We all have comfortable homes, but now as the families multiply, we need just a little more space. So we have it at the Lodge here.

Carmen So when your husband passed away, Katie, what are some of the things besides farming that kept you busy?

Katie Oh, we used to have clubs, different clubs, eh.

Katie As a hobby, there was pottery. It takes a lot of work to do that pottery. You have to first dig the soil up. Soak it in tubs. Drain it. Process it. We'd have a bunch of pottery made up already and then we'd lock it in that kiln – that big barrel -- and they fired it. This is the final stage after being painted. And it was great just to know that it comes from the soil. It was rock clay. But we built it up. I spent a lot of time with pottery. I enjoyed it. I had so much of it!

Carmen What did you do with it?

Katie Shirley brought it all upstairs in the home and said, "How about giving it as gifts for Christmas?" And that's exactly what we did. Of all of that work, why keep it? Basement was full of it. So we selected pieces for each member of the family for

Christmas. There's still a lot of pottery left, but at least everyone has some. It's made out of clay, out of the soil. That's important.

Shirley Did you do any traveling in your life?

Katie Some. Yeah, if I can remember. We did go way out east there. That's where I got that doll – from Prince Edward Island. I'd like to bring that doll here, but I think that monkey might be what would kill it! [laughter]

Shirley We can go get Anne of Green Gables. She's at the farm.

Katie I know. I'm afraid that monkey would kill her. [laughter]

Shirley So where else did you go? You went to eastern Canada. Where else did you travel? After dad passed away you traveled quite a few places.

Katie Yes, we did. We did go to Hawaii that one time.

Katie And Disney World. That was nice; the kids sure enjoyed that. They were big enough that we could take them all. When they were a little smaller, Sheldon would say, "Dad carry me!" It was too much walking. So Robert, his dad, had to be carrying him part of the way. He's a big boy now. Oh, yes.

Katie My grandson, Sheldon, he's a magician. That's somebody you'd love to meet. I wouldn't say he could make you disappear. But he could sure get away with things, you know.

Shirley Mom, one thing we haven't talked about, which was important, is also hunting season. Do you have anything that you'd like to share about hunting season? Why did it exist in our household?

Katie I guess we shouldn't pass on that, should we? There would maybe be a good dozen hunters come out with their packsacks and whatever they needed to carry to keep them alive. I did make some meals, but they did bring whatever they chose to have for their meals. It's up to them. They would take turns in making a breakfast or supper. It wouldn't be fair for me to go and cook for all those men. Yeah, the guys do come out; they love to get out and do some hunting.

Katie And when they get game they definitely have to dress it. I don't know if you've ever seen guys hunting. They have to dress those animals. Hang them up in the garage till they cool off. And then they share their meat because they aren't all lucky enough for each one of them to get a deer or a moose. When they all go hunting together, they're going to share whatever they get. So, yeah, they are coming out; even this year they'll be coming out. But I don't go and cook for them. They do their own cooking now.

Carmen But did you ever do any hunting?

Katie I've been going out with them to help them bring something home or help them drag it out of the bush or muskeg.

Shirley She might be interested in this hunting picture. What happened in 1945?

Katie You know, I thought it was the family's farm dog. And he's been walking down my yard, around a chicken fence and everywhere else. And honestly, I'm truly not kidding! He walked past me so many times and I never looked at him. I thought it was a dog.

Katie It wasn't a dog. It was a bear. Well, I didn't know it was a bear. I really didn't. I never used to shoot with a big gun. I did shoot with a .22 and even a shotgun to get the owls or hawks. But they loaded up the gun and they said, "When that bear comes around again, the gun is loaded. Shoot!" So what the heck was I gonna do?

Katie He must have been around different times because the bark on those trees in the pig pen were all scratched up. One day I saw him. He was going to go into the hog fence. They told me, if he comes, shoot him. I had such a good target. That animal there, he stood up by the fence. The gun was loaded. I had no problem to see him, just pulled one time. The bear went down.

Katie So there he is.

Shirley One shot.

Katie One shot.

Shirley To the chest.

Katie Yes. That's what I say, he was such a good target. Yeah, it just stood up. I didn't know that that picture still lived.

Shirley Yeah. I have that picture. I thought that was neat. That has to do with hunting.

Shirley Right after I got married, or around when I got married, you went and worked someplace. Where did you go to work? That was the only time you actually left the farm to work.

Katie Where did I work?

Shirley You were a housekeeper.

Katie Oh, well, I did work at the Inn, at the Athabasca Inn. It was a nice place to work. Yeah.

Carmen How old were you when you started there?

Katie Well, I was already on my own.

Shirley It was in the 70s, because I remember you said with me gone, what were you going to do at home?

Katie So I got a job at the Inn.

Shirley Right.

Katie Really, what I was doing? Our main job was to make up beds. So if the people stayed there one night, we didn't change, didn't have to change the bed. But if they stayed there more than one night then we had to change the dressings and all that. Do the laundry. That was the job all right. And I liked it. I missed it after I went home, back to the farm. I missed the company, the people, 'cause you're used to working out. So I really did miss my job.

Katie But I guess the farm was more important. My husband wasn't feeling very well, so it wasn't fair for me to leave home and go to work. Although I'd prepare a meal and he'd have it in that crock pot. I'd have the food all warmed up, and the food was there for him, so I never left him so that he had to scramble for a meal.

Katie But then when he wasn't feeling well, I decided it was time to quit.

Carmen So how many years did you work for the Inn?

Katie I worked a few years there. Well, it would be what, about seven years or so? A number of years, yes, I did; I must have worked about seven years.

Carmen And who owned it at that time?

Katie My nephew George Philipzyk. He owned that place at that time. Yeah, and his wife worked there too. Yvonne used to work at that time also.

Katie And we lost George. George quit dialysis and passed away. He decided to quit, and that was it.

Katie Well, the Athabasca Inn got larger as the business kept going on. They do more now too, and I guess that they still do have a business. They still have people staying overnight and have people coming in for meals.

Shirley What's life like for you now here at the Lodge? How do you feel about being at the Lodge, at the Pleasant Valley Lodge?

Katie I love it.

Shirley What do you like about it, or love about it?

Katie What can I say? We can come and go and do as we like; you're free to do as you please. I mean you're not tied down and that you can get out. We still got our freedom. And I like it in here. Yes, I do. Well, what do I like? I should say I like everything. I like the people, the company, the meals.

Shirley How hard was it for you to make the decision to come to the Lodge?

Katie Well, it was hard in a way, because I couldn't really decide that I wanted to leave the farm. And you know, the best part or worst part is, they told me that there were 40 names there before me. I didn't think that there was a chance in the world that I'm going to come in here and live in here or anything else. For whatever reason, nobody else picked it up. It was there open for me. So it wasn't too hard to get in.

Shirley How did you adjust? It's a big change from the farm.

Katie Well, I just did. Because if you make up your mind you're gonna do something, it wasn't hard.

Katie And I still like it. There are people in here at the Lodge, to be honest, they're all like a family. If somebody didn't show up for dinner, the rest of us are thinking, where's that person didn't show up for dinner?

Katie Yeah, it's a lot like a family now. I'm living in there and that's our room. I like it. I have nothing more to say. I like it.

Carmen You're very fortunate, too, because you still have your farm, so you go out to the farm still.

Katie I still have the farm. My son and my daughter-in-law still farm it. My daughter-in-law, she's wonderful. Did I say that once already? I'll say it again.

Shirley That's okay. You can say it again!

Katie She does a lot of little things for me and the big things too. Besides Shirley, of course, but she's in and out. She's a long ways from here.

Katie So I like it here. Yeah, I do. This is my home right now. What more do I need? I got that bed. The women are all making up the spreads, they change things regularly.

Katie That bed was here when I came here. I don't need a big bed, why should they bring me another big bed? I like every bit of it. I like the people, I like the care.

Carmen That's good to hear.

Carmen Okay, so Katie, thank you for being part of the Seniors' Memory Project. It was very interesting visiting with you. And thank you, Shirley, for being here.

Shirley You're welcome.

[End of Interview}

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