

Athabasca Area Seniors' Memory Project
Transcription of Rosie Foster recording 2016.mp3
http://digiport.athabascau.ca/aasmp/people/r_foster.htm

Narrator: Rosie Foster
Interviewer: Mark Boersma
April 18, 2016

[Start of Interview]

Mark We are interviewing Rosie Wilma Foster, and it is April 18 of the year 2016. Rosie, how long have you lived in this area?

Rosie Gee, at least maybe 20 years.

Mark Twenty years, that's a long time. Did you live in this place all the time?

Rosie No, no. We moved from Calling Lake. My husband got real sick and the doctor told us to move to Athabasca so we could be closer to the doctor. We lived on the east hill. What do you call that place over there with the apartments and stuff?

Mark I'm not sure. Did you live in a lodge of some kind?

Rosie It was an apartment building; that's where we lived 'til we bought a trailer on that hill close to the Inn. That's where we were living when I lost my husband. I stayed there a year, but I couldn't stay alone. I sold my trailer and then I moved here.

Mark Okay. Who were your parents?

Rosie Francis Gladue and Mary Rose Auger.

Mark And how many kids were in your family?

Rosie There are 15. I was the middle one. Seven older and seven younger.

Mark That's amazing. 15 children. Wow. And you all lived in a trailer?

Rosie No, no; one house. This was in Wabasca. I was telling you about me and my husband when we lived in a trailer up the hill. My parents had already been gone, eh?

Mark Okay, right. Is there anything you can remember about your childhood that you want to tell us about?

Rosie In the summer we used to visit my sister who lived in this place called Bear Lake. They had sort of a little farm. They had a few cows, pigs, chickens, and horses. We used to have fun there. We rode horses and the food was really good. Well, they lived off the land there, eh? There was no store there, just a couple of families living there. I think there were three families living in Bear Lake then. We

would visit them every summer. On the way we would stop at a few places and camp over. My dad would hunt moose. It was quite a long trip.

Rosie We went to school, day school. We didn't stay at the Mission. We walked at least a mile or more from where we lived to the school. In the wintertime we'd walk across the lake. Well, not right across. From our place you could see the Mission, the church, and that's where we walked. In the summer it was farther because we couldn't walk on the lake. We sort of had to go around the lake to reach the Mission. In the winter, it was a shortcut because we walked on the ice.

Mark Did you have any good friends when you were young? Some good memories of friends?

Rosie Oh, yeah, they're good. We used to ride horses and go pick berries, supposedly. [laughs.] We swam. We were swimming and doing all kinds of stuff. We weren't really picking berries. But yeah, it was fun times. About three of us girls went to ... what was it called? There's a campsite there, now. I forget what it was called when I was growing up. It was quite a ways from Wabasca. Maybe 10 miles and sometimes we'd walk up there.

Mark So when you grew up, did you grow up in a house? A trailer?

Rosie A house. My dad made it. First, it was a one-room house. Well, that was when they only had a few kids, I guess. And then, when we were all growing up and some of us old enough to go to school, my dad built an addition to the house and that was our bedroom. There were beds all over, all around. Not much activities. We played outside. We were only allowed to play inside once in a while. The rest of the time we worked. We hauled water from the lake. My brother Joe went to the bush and chopped wood and would bring it out. We had a sled, and in the wintertime, us kids would take our sleds and go get the wood in the bush where my brother had chopped it.

Mark What was the wood for?

Rosie Oh, for our wood stove, the cook stove and the heater in the kids' bedroom. We had a little airtight heater in the bedroom that my dad kept going all night. That's for us to stay warm, eh?

Mark Okay. You had no electricity then, eh?

Rosie Oh no. No, no. And whatever we had, like the radio, was all battery. They had big batteries then. Well, I guess in a way, we didn't suffer but it was hard times, eh? My mom would make moose hides and then when they were done, she started to do the beadwork and she got us to help too. She taught us how to bead and make moccasins and stuff. Treaty Days was once a year in the summer. I forget the month, but anyhow she would sell a lot of her moccasins and other stuff there, eh.

Mark Did she make moccasins and things for your family too?

Rosie Yeah. Oh yes. For us, too. Because all we wore was moccasins and rubbers. That's when they had rubbers, moccasin rubbers. That's what we wore all winter and summer.

Mark Sounds cold in the winter.

Rosie Oh yes, it was cold. Yeah. There was a Hudson's Bay store. They really didn't sell many clothes but the good thing was that the Anglican Church would often have sales when they got used clothing. I remember they had warm coats and all the ladies had to race over there in order to get there first to get some good stuff. They would have clothes and sometimes footwear. Yeah, it wasn't that bad. We come out of it.

Mark Were most of the clothes you wore homemade?

Rosie Yeah. My mom would sew our clothes, dresses and stuff. You know what with? Flour sacks! She would bleach the writing off them, and then she would make slips and other things like that.

Mark So everything was used for something! What was school like?

Rosie School wasn't that good sometimes, you know. I don't think we learned very much because the nuns made us work. In the summertime the boys had to go clean the garden, and dig the potatoes and vegetables. You know, we did a lot of work and we cleaned that classroom 'til the floor was shining. We had to get on our hands and knees and put the wax on and then polish it with other rags. It had to be shining. I don't know why.

Mark It sounds like they were more interested in having a clean place than actually teaching.

Rosie Yeah, they taught us how to work. School was only a few hours a day because the rest of the time we did work. Yeah.

Mark So, you worked at home, and then you went to school and you worked there, and then you went back home and worked some more there?

Rosie Oh yes. We worked hard. Yeah. Scrubbed clothes by hand in a tub and washboard.

Mark Did you guys have get-togethers on the weekend? Was there a special show on the radio or something to do that you liked?

Rosie We had no radio. We had a radio, but my dad didn't let us listen to it. He just used it for the news and sports. Poor guy never lived to see a TV. He would have enjoyed hockey and stuff, eh? Never lived to see a TV.

Mark So, do you have a good memory from school?

Rosie At times, no. The nuns were quite mean. Like for one thing, they wouldn't let us go to the toilet if we needed to go, you know? We had to wait till recess time and that's not good. At Christmastime we had to do plays; act out some plays and had to memorize that. Then the parents came and watched us. It was good then.

Mark/Rosie That sounds kind of nice. [Yeah, it was nice.]

Mark Can you tell me more about your family, some of your brothers and sisters maybe?

Rosie Yeah, like I said, one of my sisters, after she got married, moved to Bear Lake. Her husband's parents were already up there in Bear Lake. His parents and another old couple. A few people were there already when my sister and her husband moved. She had about three, at least two babies, born up there in Bear Lake. My oldest sister got married and had about 12 kids. And my other sister; the third one, was blind, poor thing. And, you know, she was so independent. She wouldn't let us help her with housework. She wanted to know where this was, and where that was, you know. She did everything by feel.

Yeah. We all pretty well left. I left when I was done school. I think I was maybe 16 or 17. One of my sisters had moved to Calling Lake. Her husband worked in a sawmill and I had to go help her with the kids. I babysat. She had to go to the hospital one time in Edmonton and I got to babysit. It's a hard job. But that's where I met my husband, in Calling Lake.

Mark And what did he do?

Rosie He was a truck driver when I met him and he was also a mechanic at that mill. There was a mill there, a sawmill where the men could work. That's why my sister and them moved there.

Mark/Rosie/Mark So that's where you met your husband? [Yeah.] Did you get married there, too?

Rosie Yeah, we got married in Calling Lake Church.

Mark/Rosie And you have quite a number of children yourself. [I only have four.]

Mark Oh, quite a bit different from your family, eh? So how many boys and how many girls?

Rosie Two boys and two girls. I didn't think that was many—I wanted more.

Mark That's pretty good, still. So, can you tell me some memories about your kids?

Rosie I remember them being bad; you know, a little bit. Nothing too bad. [laughs.] We moved when our youngest daughter was maybe four or five years old. We moved to High Prairie. That was the first place my husband was sent. He was a mechanic in these places, eh. And High Prairie was good. The kids went to school there. Two of my boys graduated there.

Mark You lived in High Prairie?

Rosie Yeah. And then after that, he got transferred to Slave Lake. He was teaching there. They started the Opportunity Corps there in Slave Lake. I guess they were teaching all kinds of stuff like mechanic work and other things, you know.

Mark Perhaps they were teaching how to use machines and stuff like that.

Rosie Yeah. I had a good job there, too. I worked in a couple of restaurants at first. And then I met this lady who told me about this youth assessment center that always needed staff. So, I applied, and I got it! I got that job.

Mark What kind of job was that?

Rosie It was supervising the kids at night. I worked the night shift. Me and another guy. There had to be a man with us. Two of us ladies and one man in case they AWOLed, or something, you know. We had to take a test—it wasn't hard—it tested us on what we were told to do. We had to pass it. If they AWOLed, for instance, we had to let them go because they might fight us, eh.

Mark/Rosie Okay. You weren't allowed to get physical with them. [Oh, no, no.]

Mark So, if they wanted to leave, you just let them leave.

Rosie We had to let them go and call the police right away. But they were not too bad. Just sometimes.

Mark Does one specific kid stand out in your mind?

Rosie Yeah, I guess so. There was one girl. I got to know her and I felt sorry for her. One time they were fighting and she grabbed a knife. I don't know where she got it but probably during a meal as it was not a sharp knife, just a butter knife. She was going to hit some kid with that. And I gently talked to her nicely and she gave it to me. I was surprised.

Mark Sounds like you were good at your job.

Rosie Yeah, I was sorry to leave it. It was a good-paying job, too, and I liked it. I felt sorry for the kids that were locked up in there, eh.

Mark/Rosie How long? How many kids? [Oh, we had up to 20. And three staff.]

Mark And how long did you work there?

Rosie/Mark/Rosie Oh, I worked quite a few years there. I'm not sure. Eight, maybe ten. Well, we had to move to Slave Lake this time. [Okay.] But my husband got transferred.

Mark Because that's where the work was, right?

Rosie Yeah.

Mark So, when you went to Slave Lake, where was he working, then?

Rosie He had the Job Corps; they had another one like High Prairie.

Mark/Rosie So, he was training people again. [Yeah. Mechanics. Yeah.]

Mark Where did you live first after getting married?

Rosie After I was married? Calling Lake. We bought a little house in Calling Lake from a lady that happens to be living here too. We bought the house from them and I babysat for her when she went and had her last baby. It was amazing we met here after working for her years ago.

Mark Yeah. What was a normal supper meal when you were a kid?

Rosie Usually, whatever we had available. We had fried fish, potatoes. My dad always had enough vegetables to last all winter. We had a cellar in our house and that's where he kept the vegetables. We couldn't keep fresh vegetables, you know, but we picked berries and that's what we had for dessert—blueberries, cranberries. Usually, we had something like that. Sometimes we had rabbit stew with bannock. That was really good! We had duck soup if we had ducks in the summer.

Mark You made bannock for church, right?

Rosie Yeah.

Mark Yeah, it was good. I remember. So, what kind of chores did you have?

Rosie/Mark Oh boy. Sometimes we'd sneak to a dance. We were never really allowed to go dancing. And the next day my mom somehow found out that we were out dancing. She gave us hard labor like scrubbing my dad's thick underwear. She would send us down the hill to wash clothes, my sister and I. We thought she wouldn't come there so we snuck in a few naps because we didn't sleep much. She would wake us up to come and do...

Mark/Rosie More work, eh? [Yeah, that thing she prepared for us.]

Mark/Rosie So, you weren't allowed to go to dances. [No, no. Not much, no.]

Mark Were there any activities, social activities, that you were allowed to do with your family?

Rosie At home? Well, in school we had baseball. At home we had a ball, I think, and we would slide on that hill. We had fun in the wintertime sliding. Yeah. My dad made us sleds and my brother Joseph, that was next to me, he used to make us sleds, too.

Mark You made your own toys.

Rosie Yeah. Yeah. And a five-pound pail; the cover? He would nail it on a stick and use it to just push.

Mark To push along or steer?

Rosie Yeah.

Mark Well, what advice would you give to your kids growing up?

Rosie To work, to keep a job and look after their family. But they're all doing good. I must say, I'm lucky.

Mark Okay, so you've got four kids; two boys and two girls. Can you tell me what jobs the boys and girls have now?

Rosie Oh, my oldest son is a cook in Edmonton. He's cooked there for 16 years in a pizza place called Brado's. That's where he cooks. He has never quit, and he still works there. My other son was working for an insurance place here in Athabasca called Brokerlink. But he quit that and moved to Slave Lake where he's doing the same thing; insurance. My oldest daughter also works in insurance. She's working at JDR. And my baby, my youngest daughter, works in the water plant looking after generators. She's a mechanic! Her dad taught her lots. He used to sit with her and tell her about stuff, and she picked up a lot from her dad.

Mark So how long were you and your husband married?

Rosie Oh, gee. Well, at least 50 years. Yeah, my kids are all doing good. I must say I'm very proud of them. I only have one great-grandchild. Oh, he's in my heart.

Mark What's his name?

Rosie Duncan. He goes to day care.

Mark Oh, okay. Here in town?

Rosie Yeah. Up the hill. And my grandchildren, well, they are 11 and five. I went to visit my daughter in Edmonton. My son Dean and them picked me up. My daughter's youngest son, who is five-years-old, will be starting kindergarten, you know, preschool. They grow up so fast!

Mark Yeah, mine too. Can you tell me about your wedding?

Rosie Oh, we had a small wedding in Calling Lake; one bridesmaid, one best man. And we had a little party at our place after. Not a great big dance like nowadays they have, eh? That's about it. We didn't go on a honeymoon either like now they do.

Mark Tell me about your first car.

Rosie I think our car was a '56. It was very nice. And my husband also had an old pickup. I don't know what year it was. But anyway, I learned to drive on that old pickup. We always had a good vehicle. We'd take the kids to Jasper for a little holiday. We would also go to Edmonton for Klondike Days. What a job keeping track of three kids!

Mark/Rosie/Mark At Klondike Days? [Yeah.] I imagine that's a bit much. They're all running in different directions, were they?

Rosie Yes. One wants to go here and one wants to go there.

Mark Probably good memories for them.

Rosie Yeah. Yeah. I know I didn't have that much stuff when I was married... All the junk.

Mark/Rosie Do you have now? [Yeah, I have lots of pictures, eh.]

Mark Yeah, I collect stuff, too. I think you're probably done with our interview now. Is there anything else you'd like to add, or should we call it?

Rosie I don't think so.

Mark Okay, we'll stop there then.

[End of Interview]

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