

Transcription
Charlie Umpherville
- Interviewed Mar. 9, 1993 -

Dave: Okay, what I'll do is I'll just ask some basic questions about where you were born and that sort of thing and where you're from, and then we'll get into the military stuff. I'm here with Charlie Umpherville, and Charlie has agreed to have an interview with us for the Métis War Veterans book. It is March 9, 1993. Charlie, when were you born?

Charlie: January 6, 1924.

Dave: Where?

Charlie: Glenmary

Dave: Right in?

Charlie: Right in Glenmary in an old log house. Not up there now, they tore it down about 10 years ago.

Dave: How long did you live in Glenmary for?

Charlie: My dad was in the first World War, and he got some land there and he's still there. My brother is living there now. So we're keeping up the old church, so we're still.

Dave: Still there?

Charlie: Well, more or less, just the church and the farm. Since I've been in the army, I've never been around here. Then I moved here in 70. Pulp mill, DNS, ended up with KeyLake at my retirement.

Dave: What was your father's name?

Charlie: Horris Umpherville.

Dave: Okay. Lawrence was talking about him.

Charlie: Yep, Horris Walter.

Dave: Right, okay. When did you enlist?

Charlie: September 5, 1941.

Dave: Where did you go to enlist?

Charlie: Right by P.A. here. Next to the Broadway hotel there. Use to be a recruiting place there. Right across from the tracks, CN station.

Dave: Why did you enlist?

Charlie: You ask me. (laugh) They ask me when I was going to join and I said I don't know. I just come from the sticks. _____ or something. They shipped me to Saskatoon that night. I got to Saskatoon about 11:00 that night. A friend of mine, my cousin, our older cousins were up there already. Some of them 10 years older than me. I was 17 yet. Road our bikes to Kinis now and left them there with my aunt. Caught the freight train to P.A. straight to the recruiting office. My cousin failed and I passed. I was a little out that time actually. I wasn't treated to the city and stuff like that. I met a lot of guys from up north afterward so I got along pretty good after that.

Dave: So you joined basically because a lot of your relatives were joined?

Charlie: No, no. Adventure, yes.

Dave: Adventure? Yeah, that's what Roderick Bear was saying too.

Charlie: In them days it was a little rough too. Times were hard. I had to quit school pretty early and work out. Making \$2.00 a day stooping. Way back.

Dave: So that was a part of the whole thing too, was the fact that...

Charlie: No, serve my country I guess. It's a way back. Like I say I was green in them days. I didn't know exactly what I was going to do.

Dave: So where did you go for basic training?

Charlie: Along Saskatoon about a month and a half. I thought maybe they got caught up to my age. Finally they sent me to Regina and that's where I took my basic. From there to Dundurn. And the _____ is 3 Rivers, Quebec. And then I went over. It was in April 1942 when I went over.

Dave: What regiment were you in?

Charlie: S-Alive. Saskatoon regiment.

Dave: Do you remember your regiment number?

Charlie: SL2952. I'll never forget that number. Never.

Dave: So after you went overseas, what happened then?

Charlie: I don't know. Lots of training. Lots of moving around too. They don't keep you too long in one spot. Mostly in Southern England. Beck's Hill and Hastings and just East of. But I ended up in Scotland and then I went over after that and assisted. Well there was an invasion on the 10th and I was 3 days later. We went in July 13, 1943. _____ I wish I hadn't joined the army, this is pretty rough.

Dave: Where did you first see battle when you went into?

Charlie: At First _____ right there I assisted. It wasn't battle really because they were moving there part, but bombers flying over.

Dave: German?

Charlie: Yeah. Dropping a couple of bombs. I think they were starting to use there airforce that time.

Dave: What happened after that you just moved slowly more into?

Charlie: Yeah, right up to Bow River. That's where they held the line. This is winter time. We pulled out in spring 1944. Spring of 45 it was. We moved from there to Holland. We ended up there in Holland.

Dave: What was happening in Holland at that time?

Charlie: Well, end of the war. We're pretty well, it was in April. That's when Hitler quit. We met a lot of troops heading East into Germany. Germans surrendered hitting for home with whatever they had.

Dave: So were there any experiences that stick out in your mind as unusual or even out of the ordinary for a war?

Charlie: Oh, that's hard to say. Unusual, I don't know. War I guess, that's about it.

Dave: Were you ever wounded at all?

Charlie: No, wasn't scratched at all. One of the lucky ones. Well okay, I'll bring this up. I drove a bren gun carriers. We had 3 groups in the S-Alive. Machine gun, _____ and mortars. So we stopped for dinner and we heard these. I was sitting in the back against the tracks there and I heard these 88 _____. One landed 50 feet 100 feet. The chrapnel went right by us. And there was officers standing eating too. Standing up though. Chrapnel bounced and that was it. It come close to me too. Cut my legs. I was sitting in the right place. Stopped in the right place. Like I say, I never got scratched at all.

Dave: So you were in Holland when the war ended?

Charlie: No, well yeah. See they took out of Italy in spring of 1944. We landed in Mercier, France to go, but we ended up at Licefall Forest for 2 weeks there in Germany. Like I say, I seen the Eiffel tower. We're on the westside going by there on train. We're on flatdecks. Sleeping right on the machines there on the train. I can see the Eiffel tower it was quite a ways, maybe 10 miles, 5 miles I just forget. It was in the distance. We didn't go through Paris though. We went to the west side of it.

Dave: Did you ever get time off, any rest time?

Charlie: Oh yeah. Okay I'll bring one up here. I forget what part of town, Italy. But I had a friend who lived 2 miles from me in Glenmary, Mac Horn. I use to talk to him he's in Birch Hills. Mac Horn I seen him, he was a dispatcher you know, bike. You know I says I seen Jerry Umpherville just marching up to the front. Oh he said, but he was a different outfit. So at restperiod, I forget how long, I think a week we got. Sometimes 2 weeks, I just forget. But the first thing I done when we got settled down there. I went over to this guard there and I said, do you know Jerry Umpherville. Yes he says. I've come to see him. Well Charlie he says, he died. _____ never even got to the front lines, he was just marching through the front lines. One of these motor bombs got him.

Dave: Is that your brother?

Charlie: Cousin.

Dave: Oh cousin. So how many, you had quite a few relatives?

Charlie: There was 3 Umpherville's who died over there. Robert. I seen him in Italy too. We were in a bath raid. He was a different outfit. He was coming out, he just had his bath, and I was going in, and we met. We talked, but we didn't have much time. But, he got killed 2 weeks later.

Dave: And that was Robert?

Charlie: Robert Umpherville, yep.

Dave: Also a cousin?

Charlie: That would be about 3rd cousin, a distant cousin.

Dave: Right. Are you related at all to Kenneth Umpherville.

Charlie: In Saskatoon?

Dave: No, there's one in Settele, one in Settele who was over. He's a Korean vet.

Charlie: I don't think so. Where does he live?

Dave: Settele, which is outside of Regina.

Charlie: North, eh.

Dave: Yeah, a little bit.

Charlie: Yeah, when you come to Melfort you go through Settele, number 6 highway. No, I don't know him. There's a lot of Umpherville's I don't know. They come out east. Paul Umpherville. I don't know.

Dave: You said a man by the name of, is it Mac Horn?

Charlie: Yeah, that's his nickname. It's Larry Horn.

Dave: Horn, is that how you spell it?

Charlie: Horn, yeah. S-ALIVE too, he's in mine.

Dave: Is he Métis?

Charlie: No, I don't know what he is. Irish or Scottish or something.

Dave: Any other. Did you have brothers who at all?

Charlie: No, I was the oldest in the family, and still a little too young.

Dave: Yeah, same thing with Lawrence, he was the oldest as well. Aside from your father, do you remember the names of any other Métis World War I veterans?

Charlie: Well, they all died in World War I.

Dave: Yeah, most of them have, I just.

Charlie: Well, my uncle Douglas Bear. That's Roderick's dad, you were talking too. Did he mention that. He's buried in Dundurn. My dad is buried in Dundurn church. Cemetery.

Dave: Okay. Any others that you can think of?

Charlie: There might have been some of them Umpherville's but I don't remember?

Dave: Right. So what's happened. When were you discharged?

Charlie: 45. November 13, 1945.

Dave: What did you do after that?

Charlie: I went logging.

Dave: You went logging?

Charlie: Yeah, B.C. From the army to logging in B.C. I was there about a year and a half, come back. Couldn't stay home, just restless. All them days were logs there. I went from one job to another.

Dave: How long were you in logging?

Charlie: Like I say, about a year and a half there in Prince George.

Dave: What did you do after that, do you remember?

Charlie: Oil rigs. From Prince George I went to Edmonton. No, I come home first, then I went to Edmonton. Edmonton, that's where you can get your work, jobs, oil rigs. Oh, I don't know. Gee, that was in. The early 50's, after that I went to Flin Flon. The exploration there for 12 years, till 67. I quit 3 or 4 times. I had enough of the bush. Finally 1967 that was it. Then I got a job at the pulp mill here in 1970. So I had different jobs. I ended up as, then I went to DNS, highways. Building roads. It wasn't highways, it was DNS them days, natural resources. For 10 years. Then they disbanded in 82, then I got on here at KeyLake. Started out in 82 with construction then the mine started up in 83 and I worked there till I retired in 89.

Dave: Lots of different jobs eh?

Charlie: Oh yeah. I got my _____, here I'll show you. When I finished up in KeyLake. (walking away from mic) (possibly looking at pictures) I brought her up, eh,

Dave: So when all was said and done and you came back from the war did you have any regrets at all about having gone?

Charlie: Well, not really. I was happy to get back, that's for sure. Happy to come through it. No, not really. Fact, I was happy that I done a little part. Got rid of that old, what do you call him?

Dave: Hitler.

Charlie: Heil Hitler.

Dave: Yeah. What do you think about the way things are going today?

Charlie: Not very good. All having problems right now. No good. I don't think, I don't know why they can't control them Africans over there, fighting.

Dave: There's a lot of violence.

Charlie: The army is moving back and the rebels are pushing. I just saw that this morning. That's crooked. Italy there. All them politicians there. This one guy can't prosecute immunity, but they're going to drop that charge. What do they call that head man there,

Dave: President.

Charlie: Something like that. He's in for it.

Dave: And he was trying to claim immunity from prosecution.

Charlie: Well, he did. But now they're going to...

Dave: Overturn that.

Charlie: Overturn that.