

Road Allowance Interview, Elizabeth (Whiteford) Aplin, 2014

Conducted by Kori Taylor

My name is Elizabeth Lorraine Whiteford, now I am Aplin (married name). My nickname was Fee, it was just what my dad called me, my mom's brother called me foot. My parents were Violet Sadie Trotchie and Irvin John Whiteford, they were from Baljennie, Lizard Lake and Biggar area. My dad's parents were Adeline Pritchard and Daniel Whiteford. My mom was born in Willowfield, her dad was George Trottier. I had 4 brothers, one is deceased, and I have 8 sisters, I am the fourth oldest. There were 13 kids. We grew up in Willowfield before Mavis was born and then we moved to Babe Cadrain's farm where my dad worked. Then we moved to Jack Pine when I was 13, and we lived in a tent in the summer and a house in the winter when my uncle built one. That house burnt down after I already left home. Mom and everyone was in Lloyd[minster]. My dad was working there. The house caught fire while they were gone, someone set it on fire I heard. When they came home, they had nowhere to come home to. I was 16 in Lloyd. My sisters all came and stayed at my Aunties until my mom and dad got a new place.

I remember living in the tent, mom had a bed set up for them and the babies. The rest of us slept on the ground on a mattress 5 or 6 of us. We had a grub box. It was wooden where all the dishes and groceries were kept. There was no fridge, but we didn't have food to keep in it. We had powdered milk and porridge for breakfasts. To keep the butter hard, mom would dig a hole and put it in there and cover it. She even put Jello down there. We never had meat hardly ever, unless dad killed something, like deer or ducks or fish. We would go to the creek in the spring, stand in it with pails and catch fish and throw them to shore. We had nets sometimes.

On Cadrain's farm, everyday when I was twelve, we would pick rocks or stacking bails. Pick them off fields and stack them on the farm. We would have to push hay off the wagon to feed cows too. We would always try to go with my dad because his boss would bring apples, so we would ride around till midnight just for apples. We never went to school when we first lived there. Then finally the government got them to send us to school in Glaslyn. We walked a mile and a half to catch the bus on the highway. We were very poor, so welfare bought us clothes, new winter jackets, boots, 2 pairs of pants, 2 tops and socks. We would have to walk on a road through the pasture, and we were scared of the cows, so we would walk through the bush because we were so scared of the cows. I was 12 years old when I started school, I had to start at grade 3. It wasn't too bad; there were lots of kids like that. It was hard sometimes and younger kids would look at you and wonder why you're so old in grade 3. I went to school until I was 13 and we moved back to Jack Pine.

We had lots of good times and stuff. That one story I always tell when I was born. I was born in March, and they were on the sleigh. I could see the water running along the roads because it was springtime. I was born and I could see it.

We would do lots of stuff without letting our parents know. We would go play in the barn and slide down it. It would tear our pants, and mom could never figure out why our pants were all torn.

When they went picking berries, they left me with the babies. I was twelve. I made them go for a nap in the afternoon. I took the can of tobacco and rolled cigarette after cigarette. I sat behind the house and smoked them all. I was so sick after, just throwing up sick. To this day that is why I don't smoke. I don't know why I did that. I was just bad, I guess.

My Uncle Dave would come over and watch us when my parents went to town. We would tease him lots. I told my sisters to ask him to come outside, I climbed on the roof and dumped muddy water on him when he came out. He kind of fell when it hit him, so we dragged him through the mud. Oh, that was funny. I was an instigator. He was sitting at the table one time, I got him to take his hat off and I started rubbing his head "Uncle Dave you have a nice bald head." And then I smashed an egg on his head. I was so bad. There was also Aunty Lucy, they lived down the road, they were Carons. She walked with a cane, and she liked to drink. So, when she would come over, I would give her the vanilla. She could barely talk. One time I took my dad's 22 and wanted to hunt rabbits or something. I went to the bush and tried to shoot a fox, but the fox could run faster than I could, so I never got anything. If we were out or around vehicles, I would jump in the front seat and start it and take off and drive around the yard. I was crazy.

In the summer we would go south and stay wherever the farmer would let us. Dad would pick rocks, around Brock, Eatonia—I remember we lived in a granary there. Mom would cook outside. We were poor. Until I left home at 16, I had enough. We were so poor and I was tired of it and decided I wanted to go to work. I only went to Grade 5 for my whole life. In the spring we would pick bottles, sell them and then go to the fair in Lloyd. I decided that year I wasn't going home, mom was upset she tried to get me to get in the car and go but I had it all planned before. I put all my clothes in a box and stayed at my auntie's in Lloyd when they left. That day I walked downtown, I was DUMB, I walked into one café and asked for a job. And he hired me. An older Chinese guy, Harry Choo, he hired me. I was so dumb as a waitress; I didn't know what people were ordering because I never had any food like that. I had to get my boss to help me all the time. Harry helped me though. Him and the cooks trained me and taught me what the food was. I didn't know what veal cutlets were. I worked there until I met my husband when was 18. I worked there for two years, and when I think back, I can't believe it. I didn't know what veal cutlets were. I was dumb.

I don't know why we lived in tents. We had no where else to live, I guess. Our kookum would live in her tent, and we would live in ours until our uncle built a house. There were four families that lived on Jack Pine, and there was always someone living with us too. Our parents' brothers would live with us lots. We were poor, lots of people lived together like that. Four or five kids to a bed. Not like nowadays, kids have their own beds. I don't know how my mom and dad managed but they did. I really left home because I knew my mom was pregnant. I was done with babies. I didn't want to watch another kid, so I left. They moved to

Waricks, after I left, by Midnight Lake. There was abandoned houses on Crown Land, so they would just move in where they could. My sister knows and remembers, and she was mad she had to start babysitting the little kids. We had bad days; I remember when mom had Robert. He was a sick baby. Dad had to stop a truck on the road to get her to Battleford when she had him, and she would stay in the hospital for a week and then come home on the bus. But Robert got so sick when he was a baby. They had to take him back to the hospital. They had to put a tube in his throat to help him breath and that's why he has a scar on his neck. He had pneumonia.

Every time she had a baby, dad would say she was going to the stork to get another baby. We had a book that said storks bring babies and we were dumb we believed it. We could never tell she was pregnant because of the dress she wore, and we just thought she was fat, I guess. We were so dumb, when I left home, I didn't even know how you make a baby! When I went to work in the café there, I was scared to go out with a boy because I thought if he kissed me, I would have a baby. I wouldn't go out with Art (Aplin, her husband) for the longest time. I was scared to get pregnant. How dumb I didn't know, but that's what mom and dad always told us. The old people hid everything from us. I don't know what was so bad about telling us the bird and the bees. That's why so many girls would get pregnant accidentally, they would hide it and then welfare would take it because the mothers were so young. You hear a lot about that. They would take our babies. It was a rough life.

We never had shoes in the summertime either. In the wintertime we never had boots, we wore three or four pairs of big socks. Then we would come in a dry our socks around the heater. They would be frozen like a boot! We only got shoes when we would go to school. I always tell my grandkids with their frickin 20 pairs of shoes each. I always say, "oh my god I was lucky if I had one pair" and they just go "oh grandma you're just saying that." They don't believe me about how poor we were. We never had a Christmas tree. We were lucky if we got Christmas dinner. Mom always managed to cook a supper and all the baking, and it would be set out on the table, and we would eat all day long. We would hang our sock and get an orange, some nuts and candy. That was our Christmas presents. I remember when mom moved back into the Glaslyn, they started putting up a tree. They made the decorations out of paper at school with the colored paper. They made bells and bulbs with string and put it around the tree, and no presents. Whoever left home started buying presents. When I left home that first year I was working and making a little money at a \$1.10/hour and I gave my dad money to buy plates for his truck. It must have been hard with all those kids and no food. We didn't know any different mind you. Every once in a while, mom would make a cinnamon bun.

We kids picked saskatoon berries every year and we would can them. Then if someone ate them, we would argue and fight because you're not supposed to. Take our pails home and mom would can them. We also had chokecherries and dry them and put them in bags and hang them and that is how they would keep. Fry them every now and then in the winter. I don't know how we ate them back in the day, I couldn't now. In the winter it was rationed,

we couldn't eat them everyday. I'm sick of them now. I don't care for Saskatoon berry pie anymore. Blueberries and cranberries same thing. We ate lots of berries for sure. I don't know why they never planted a garden. I planted a little one on Cadrain's farm one year with lettuce and radishes and onions. I was twelve or eleven. It was pretty handy.

We never had toys back in the day. I was a very good sew-er and mom would cut shorts or shirts for the kids and I would sew them. I made my sisters little rag dolls with button eyes and noses, draw a mouth with a pen. I remember sewing blankets for my mom with lots of rags and sweaters. Sew the sweaters onto an old sheet and that is how we would make a quilt. I still have an old blanket like that in my closet. We were poor even though dad was working, it was just going straight to food and groceries. In the fall we would go to cochin and pick corn, and we would have a corn fest. We ate a lot of potatoes and gravy too. We didn't have meat or anything like that, but if we had deer, we would slice it really thin and salt it and dry it on a rack in the sun so it would keep. That was our life, living off of the land. We never ever ate beaver, but some people did. We would eat deer meat or moose, but my uncle would eat rabbit, we wouldn't as kids because we like rabbits.

If I was younger, I would tell myself, I had a pretty good life after I left home, so the only advice I would give anyone is to go to school and get an education because I couldn't have that. To a lot of kids just go to school and before you think of doing anything make sure you can make a living. I wouldn't have done anything differently. I had a pretty good life.