

Jessie Sterritt

When did you arrive here in Hazelton? Have you lived here all your Life?

All my life.

Were there lots of people or just a few?

Oh there were lots of people in Hazelton before, a lot of white people

When did they come?

I don't know when they came.

Were you born in the hospital or at home?

No. There was no hospital then days when I was born.

When was the hospital here do you know?

I don't really know, I remember, I was really small then, Dr. Wrinch was our doctor.

He was the first one wasn't he?

Yes I think. He's the only one I remember.

Did you watch everything grow? Like the hospital get built up and all the stores, you saw all that happen?

Oh yes, the first hospital was just a wooden frame.

Was that up where it is now?

Yes, the second was...but I just can't remember the year.

Did you attend school at all?

Yes our school was down here.

Was it the one next door?

Oh no, down on the corner where the mission house is now, on the street down there.

Do you know anything about the Indian Day School up there?

There was an Indian Day School down here next to the church.

Oh I see, cause they said it was up on the bench.

I don't...maybe, maybe before my time maybe.

Oh I see, what grades did the school offer?

I was only small, I was only eleven years old when my mother died

Did alot of people go down for fishing?

Alot of people from Kispiox, from Hazelton; all along the river, all along the Skeena. They go down there during the summer and work in hte cannery. But not right now. All the women they all, they all had had jobs down there. In the cannery, but not now. Just very few that worked on the machine that goes. Them days they washed by hand, you know, the fish by hand and they filled the cans by hand. But now they use machines.

There must have been lots of canneries then?

Oh yes, lots of canneries on the coast. But all them are rotted down now. They are all condemned; like Berrymore and Port Essington and Hayes Port and Carlisle and Clarkson and Sunnyside and N.P., Sunnyside Cassiar and Inverness and Prince Rupert.

There wasn't a Port Ed then?

Oh yes, It's not too... Just started up lately. Cora was born in the Oceanic. A Carrier word for 'Elk on the Island' That's where Cora was born.

You only went down there for the summer and you came back here?

(Started fishing, I go around started canning and working in cabs).

That's for Salmon though. You guys didn't have any, didn't work when the herring run was on?

Oh yeah, some do just lately. I only went there once. I didn't like it. It's too cold and really stink, worse than salmon.

Did you camp down there or were there places to stay?

No there was places to stay. The cannery, the Company would have cabins for the workers.

Did Prince Rupert have anything special going on during the summer? Now they have Seafest in June.

There must have been other fisherman that came to Rupert like from Vancouver or something?

I don't really know, cause I don't go. I only went there once. I can't tell you much about that.

How about the Chinese people up here do you know when they first came up here do you know when they first came up here.

No, they're lots there and I remember them.

Cause there are lots of people buried upon, on the hill.

My father is a Chinese too. They they they go to Mason Creek for gold. That's where my dad works. He's got a claim of his own at a place they call Tri-tal around Mason Creek.

Where's that, is that up in the mountain?

Yeah, you pass Prince George I don't go, just him goes.

Has Hazelton grown much.

Not too much, there were alot of white people here before. But not now they all moved away.

More Indians then, eh?

Remember a man that that owned the same house that Ward Marshall is now his names' (Hexspeach)

What's his name?

Hexwspeach

Hexwspeach?

Yeah.

Is he old?

1953 he's when they moved away.

What did he do for a living?

I think he's...No I don't wanted to say that, if he's a judge. I just can't remember now. But he's doing something.

What were the winters like?

The same.

Not cold out.

Oh. Yes there'll be no no flowers all over town (laughter).

Did you ever skate on the river when it was frozen?

No not me my brothers.

What did the girls do if they didn't skate or play baseball?

They skate my brothers when there small they had a rink down here.

Did you play any sports?

Right in town here.

Did you?

Not me, I used to watch sports. Hors race, one street, no the next one.

They didn't have soccer then?

No, not whne we were small, just lately when they started up. We

and that's the last I went to school. My auntie, I stayed with my auntie after my mother died. She married to a trapper and we're out in the woods all the time. So I don't even go to school. I'm lucky to write my own name now.

Did you trap? Did you set traps?

No. No, I just go along with them trappers.

What kind of stuff did they trap?

They trap beaver, martin, weasle an'...

Did he bring it here himself?

Oh they bring it in to town here and sell it to the Hudson Bay. Hudson Bay store.

Is that how you made your money, your living?

My aunt, yeah.

Just trapped and nothing else?

We put in a big garden.

Were there rules and regulations when you did your trapping? Did they have rules or did you do whatever you wanted to?

Anything you wanted to.

You didn't have to have a license or anything?

No. Not them days.

What types of businesses were there, like the bank or store, police?

There was a police station where the Inlander Hotel is now. We lived there when I was small we had the same lot.

Was that before the Inlander was built?

Yeah, oh geez. It's only lately the Inlander was built.

What churches were involved in the community?

Just one. Just the Anglican.

Just one?

Yeah. That's all I remember. Then the salvation Army started up.

That was just recently then?

Yeah. All the people, the old people belong to this church and moved out when the Salvation Army came.

Did you or anyone close to you go off to the war?

Yeah. My...my...a fellow; Ward Marshall.

What was it like here when the war broke out?

Everything was rationary.

Did you have to get stamps for food?

Yeah. Not...not on the first World War. I can remember we were in the woods all the time.

Who gave out the stamps?

Ah. This is ridiculous. I'm so forgetful. Yeah, I remember using stamps. No I just can't remember.

Do you know when the steamboats quit coming?

Oh yeah. We lived down by the river here. I remember the first canoe come up...up...the river, just...just when the ice melts. When the ice goes away the big steamers come up. We have no fresh food all winter. When the first canoe come up we soon had fresh food. Apples and oranges just...three apples for twenty-five cents and oranges just...three apples for twenty-five and oranges two for twenty-five.

Lots of money then hey? Twenty-five cents for two apples.

We pay fifty cent a pound. I don't know. The boat used to stop at; below our place. When the other boat stops where the old totem pole is now. That's the landing there. And at the Bay down here, there is another landing for a steamboat.

That's as far as they came, right here to Hazelton? Hudson Bay moved didn't they?

Yeah. They used to be down by the river there. It's all washed away now eh. 1950...now when was that? That's when...a lot of land washed away. Along there.

That was one whole street that washed away?

The house that Jeff is in now used to be down on the other side of the street. But they pulled it away.

The very same house he is in?

Yeah

The Sunrise Cafe too was pulled up?

Hmmm. The Sunrise...I don't remember that. Ellen Johnson, your grandmother, we're both the same age. Her mother and my mother were cousins. And they used to come down when Ellen was small eh. They used to stay with us; my mother, maybe one or two weeks. And they go back to Kispiox. And Ellen and I are really close.

used to have a ball park down across from the old police station.

The high school field now?

Yeah, the next lot from where Freddie...Freddie Wales' house.

Can you tell me any more about the race track? Were they betting on anything on horses?

Never bet they just used that street, that street down here from down the old stable up to that old school.

Was it just for fun?

It's racing.

Just the men raced the horses. No women.

I don't remember any women, we were so small.

What else happened there was hors racing.

I don't remember it at all.

Baseball.

Not them days. I was small then, it's not like today.

Did they have outside people come in for horse racing.

Oh yeah, ther was lots of people along this side of street and the other side because there's Hudson-Bay store along the other side street and theres Cunninghams' store.

Beside each other Cunninghams' store?

No, Cunninghams store right where that totem pole is now, that's Cunninghams store.

Was it a pretty exciting day? Does it happen only once a year when the horses race? Or do they race?

Once, once in July.

Did they have liquor then?

Well, it's more open to everyone, just white people. The Hudson Bay built a roch house where he kept the liquor beside the store. The old people, you know, they're sitting in, the Hudson Bay store drinking rum, old Cataline, you remember Cataline, and there was a lot of old people. They sit around and eat here.

Was there a bar, or was it that they sat in the warehouse.

Just, just in the store, it was funny, eh! It was funny! (laughter)

I rember one time they try and locate where he was buried, but no, trace because there's no markings. I guess that marking there

once, when they tried to clean up the yard, it's all rotted off.

What was he famous for?

Catalone, pack train, he's got his own pack horses, and that's his business, pack train.

What did he do, go down to Prince Rupert?

They go up to Aldermere, up that way and further on, on pack horses, there's no road or cars and trucks them days. Just pack horses and wagon. They don't have no roads, they don't need roads for wagons, or....Just trail, just lately they had to build, they build a road for wagons and this pack train, went up to Telegraph Creek line, they follow the Skeena river.

probably takes them a long time then

Oh , yah.

Did they go up in the spring and come back after winter?

Ah, no, no they do it in the summer.

They made the return trip in the summer?

Yeah. They can't feed the horses in the winter.

What were they going up there for?

Packing food out.

Was he the only one that did that or were there others?

A few people work for him, put it on the packs on the horses. The same way with George Burns when they the pack train going up the line, here.

They had the first cabin up at the, Kispiox Valley. That's the first cabin there. And further on is the second cabin. I don't know how many miles between the first cabin, second cabin, third cabin, fourth cabin, fifth cabin.

How far north did you go?

Well, of course I remember it when we went out trapping. To my uncle's trapline I was young then. And we were really close to 99 cabin. It goes further on to Telegraph Creek, eh.

Is that why they call it, the Telegraph Line, because it goes up to Telegraph Creek?

I guess so, yeah.

It had nothing to do with sending messages telegraph?

Operator, yeah. Yeah, that's why they have those cabins. Each man stays in one cabin, looks after the Telegraph line. They didn't use a phone. In them days, just...just those machines.

George Burns and (someone else)?

George Burns died not too long ago. I guess you heard of him.
He has a farm up by _____.

Were they building the four mile bridge?

Up here; just lately.

About thirty years ago, it was built, wasn't it?

Yeah, I guess so. I don't really know. They bring. No they don't
hire people from the local people. They always bring in bridge,
no how.

How long ago did that bridge across to South Town wash away?

It was washed away in 19..., when was that big flood?

That was the year of the big flood anyhow? They never replaced it
ever?

No

Is that why they have the Hagwilget bridge now?

Yeah!

That used to be an old wooden bridge?

No. Well there's an old wooden one, way below. The road goes down
where the Minister of... United... Pentecostal...

Jack Williams?

Yeah, yeah. That's where the road goes, down, it goes down there.

Did it take long to get up there? Did you go by horse or walk?

Walk.

I never would have made it.

You two, are pretty luck,...putting around.

Public Works blew it up. Trying to clean the logs from under it?

You mean this bridge here?

Yeah.

They tried to save it, but they couldn't. There were a lot of houses
washed away along the river. I just can't remember about the year.
My little cabin was about that big. About that big salmon inside it.
Down by the river. Good thing we moved everything out.

Did it wash away finally?

No, it's a log cabin. It was just...just some drunks going to town.

Was there a ferry that used to go across from here going to there?
What was it for?

There were the people that lives on the other side... other side of the river.

White people?

Lots of farmers there, yeah.

When did that stop?

Oh, I just can't tell what year. The ferry; The high water washed the ferry away. And that's it... They didn't replace it.

And they put the road in after, the Kitwanga road?

Do you know anything about Temlahan

No. Before my time. Too many stories, I don't know which one to believe.

Has this place always been named Hazelton?

Yeah.

Why?

I don't really know. I think that it's Hazelton 'cause there's so many hazel bushes. I think that's why they call it Hazelton.

The Happy Six, were they all white people?

No, they were all native. No white.

Who were they, the Happy Six?

Oh, I can't remember their names. I think they all passed away.

They must have played at the dances then, eh?

Oh, no.

You had lots of dances?

Up at the old hall. You know, it's... that hall was just completely finished when it burnt down. They put in a hardwood floor, and the new kitchen range. Everything's new in there. They were just washing the floor when...

Do you know how it burnt?

They say they boiled something on the range, forgot all about it, and it boiled over. And then went up in flames. I don't know what kind of varnish he was heating, but he used the floor, eh? That's what they say anyway.

Did you live down in Hazelton area when they built Gitanmax Hall?
Did you live down here?

Yah.

When was that built, do you know?

The old Hall?

Yah. The one up here

Oh no. I just can't tell you what year.

It was preety exciting what happened there?

Well this is long long time ago.

They must of had a big celebration when they built it eh?

Oh yeah.

Dances and stuff?

Yeah.

Did they have entertainment at their banquets, like Indian dances or anything?

No. I just don't remember. Like I know they had an opening.

Do you know who built the hall? Was it the people from the resreve who built it?

The resreve. The old people. People like Tommy Muldoe, his brother Bill Muldoe, Tom Campbell, Johnny Smith, Alfred Danes...is lot more. Is alot of people in them days. I can't really mention all their names. There is really lots of them. Charlie Clifford.

Did the coming of the railway make a big difference here? When the railroad first come. When they built the railroad did it make any difference?

Oh oh yeah.

What changed?

People can go anywhere they want; down the coast. Along time ago they use the boat, the boat to the coast. But when the train goes through they went by train.

Did you travel by train anywhere? Was it expensive?

Yeah, well them days they're not too expensive.

Did you go fishing down on the coast?

Yeah, I worked in the cannery for a long time.

How did they travel back and forth?

Walk, sometimes canoe.

From Kispiox? Were there many cars?

No cars. We never knew what car is them days.

They didn't have taxes or anything they have now?

No, just Dr. Wrinch had a little car for him, two wheels and one horse. To go to visit the house of sick people.

Did he have to do that all the time; go out to where the people were sick?

Yeah. He come to visits the house. When the boat landed below our place and they cleaned out that...you know that oranges. They have little spots and they would just get spoiled. They throw them out in the river. And we go out take our shoes off. We don't wear no pants in them days. We wear dress, pull our dress up to our waist and go out to the water and gather the oranges. I used to gather most cause I was taller than her (laughter). I'd come home cut out, the rotten piece out and sit there and enojoy our treat.

What were the events surrounding a wedding? Were there receptions or honeymoons or anything like that?

Oh no, but they always put up a feast eh. Is when they put up a feast when somebody dies, that's what they do.

Did the people marry younger? Or older?

Yes I'm here. I...

What types of entertainment was there? Sports, dance.

Just lately when they do a wedding dance. Just lately but in the olden days I don't remember any dances or anything.

Do they do the some thing at a feast as for a wedding as when somebody dies?

Yah some thing.

Do they have the couples by themselves or

Yah they have a special yah.

Do people give them stuff? Or do they feed everybody, like they do feasts now they give out food. Do people bring stuff to have like pots and pans? and dishes and that?

Oh yes. Yes there all the same thing you know your tribe they help out. They all bring their wine.

Was she an Indian? What was her name?

Esther.

Esther who?

Esther Joseph.

That's not from Hazelton though?

No. Her dad is from Hagwilget. Related to Sylvester George.

What happened to your dad? Is he buried up on the hill?

No, he went back home to China. He came back and went back again. He wanted to take us, my brother and I back with him. My brother wouldn't go, so he didn't go. He didn't want me to go by myself. I'd be too lonesome. And he went back once again to visit us and that's it.