

# **NELLIE RIVIERE MURPHY**

**Oral History Project**

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**Interviewer: Leslie Robertson**

**Waterton Lakes National Park**

**in conjunction with:**

**Waterton Park Community Association**

**Alberta Historical Resources Foundation**



## Nellie Riviere Murphy oral history 1995

Nellie: [first of recording is cut off on the original tape]... near Pincher Creek, about four miles from the main ranch and the trees ... we looked in there and they were eaten right up to the tree. You could see the grass under and, of course, we've got a little more moisture now. The grass will come back, but all the other vegetation, like berries, they're eaten right up. You know, you can't go out and pick berries, like where my brother lives, on my dad's place. We had all kinds of blueberries, short ones, and huckleberries and strawberries and ... the country was full of berries. You can't find any of it now. It's all eaten up. And my dad used to ride to the forest reserve and bawl them out about overgrazing.

He said when the cattle start eating the rose bushes that was too much, yeah, but I first got acquainted and been around a ... park personnel, since 1919. Now Waterton was a baby then. I think there was one dance hall and that was [phone rings 00:01:43] not where the other dance hall is, and next to it was Dilatush, had a cafe, and on this side Nixon's had a cafe and George Baker had a garage, but there was very little there, and one hotel, old Jack Hazzard's hotel. They say he built it of scrap lumber.

[Note to reader: some of the facts about the hotels and proprietors in this paragraph are not exactly accurate]

Leslie: Where did that come from?

Nellie: I guess some old sawmill (laughs).

And the people mostly ordered [groceries] by the week, like there was a man from Hill Spring, a Mr. [Alvin] Caldwell that came in with meat every week and you'd order the week before and he'd bring whatever you want, eggs and meat, cream, butter.

Leslie: Where was that coming from?

Nellie: That was coming from Hill Spring, just below the dam, on that Belly River. Most of the people that lived there worked for the park. They worked in the summer and in the wintertime and then Waterton service was quite different to what it is now.

Leslie: Yeah.

Nellie: You know, they had a lot more work to do. My uncle [Wallace Gladstone] was a park warden there and then he transferred to Banff. But they put up their own hay now, which I think they should still do and not buy it, because there's a wonderful hay field. You know, where Waterton cabin was? You could cross there with water about up to here. There's one place where the river that is low. You can go across on foot

and the rest of it is swimming. But just this one place, and they used to cross there and go across and put up their hay – all their hay. And at that time they did all their work with horses. And where Kootenai Brown's house is... well, straight up from Kootenai Brown's, across from Kootenai Brown's was the Morris place.

I think [Mr. Sandon] built a house there after, but that was the Morris Brothers that ran an outfit there, of horses for the Great Northern. And across the road, that was Morris' and then Jack Gladstone's. He was an uncle to my mother. He was the barn boss and across from Jack Gladstone's was ... George Baker had a house there and ... just straight up the road from that was another building that housed the mechanic by the name of Foxy McKenzie ... yeah (laughs). I used to make my home with them and above that was the cook house and they fed all the men that worked there that didn't have homes, like outside workers. And across from there was a big barn where they housed their animals, horses, mostly work horses. The garbage man was a ... he had a two-wheeled cart with a great big horse, [Alixie Jarvey], gather all the garbage and take it to the dump, but it was nice up there and the people seemed to get along with one another.

There was no fighting or bickering or ... they were all friends. And in wintertime, every Friday night was a big dance and somebody would volunteer to look after the food business and the coffee and we'd get in a great big ... we had a big copper boiler, a regular wash boiler and we'd fill that up to about that far from the top and throw in a pound of coffee. When it boiled, about suppertime, everybody would have cake and fruit and sandwiches and we'd dance longer than that though, and Saturday night they had a lovely Bridge club with about maybe 60, 70 people in it, but that was one Bridge club we daresent say boo (laughs)! Serious players, you know!

Leslie: Really? So it was a very strong community.

Nellie: Yeah, very good community life. And they did have a hockey game one time [This was a common winter pastime through the 1920s and continued for decades]. I don't know who they played against but it was on Linnet Lake. They'd sweep the ice away. And I got an idea I wanted to skate but I didn't know how. And all the ... first part of the lake would be all ridgy. So I got these skates on, went down there. I finally ended up just about crawling up. And the Goble boys lived there then. There was two of them: Ken and Eddy. And you know it's just too bad those kids never had a chance, because they were darn good professionals then. They could do all kinds of things on ice. So, one of them came down and helped me up and he took me around the rink a few times. And my ankles would give out and I'd sit down again and he'd come and take me up. But about three times [around the lake] and I could navigate well enough.

Leslie: What was it like for women in the early days? What sort of roles did women play in the park?

Nellie: They mostly stayed home, looked after their kids. And dance nights they'd all make sandwiches. And we'd have, like Valentine's Day, a big dance and everybody would make these social baskets. And Andy Ford was a policeman there and in the summertime, they had one more. This Andy Ford was one of the team that was sent over to England and won a prize. I knew about three or four of those men. Don Forsland was one of them and Ticky Mowat [Constable A. Mowat] and Andy Ford and a fellow by the name of Bobby, but I don't remember his last name.

[Nellie may be referring to the 1928 winners of the Chief Constable's Association Revolver Championship Competition, Open Police Championship of Canada, sponsored by Dominion Cartridge Co. Ltd.]

Leslie: What sort of crimes would they be dealing with in those days, the police?

Nellie: Well, very little because there wasn't any crime there. I know one time (laughs) Andy Ford came down to McKenzies and he said well, "I got the culprits". Somebody complained that there was a light in a house that should have been vacant, you see, a summer home. In the evening, there was a light there and smoke coming out and so Andy went over. Somebody alerted him that the smoke was coming out again and it was a bunch of kids and his daughter with them (laughs) and they were having a great time. They were dancing around, just ... but they didn't destroy anything. They'd fix everything all up and go out again, go home. He says kids are having a ball. So, I guess he gave them a lot of good talking to and told them not to perform like that again (laughs), but as far as crime, there wasn't any.

Leslie: What sort of people would come to Waterton?

Nellie: They came from Calgary, Lethbridge, Cardston. They would start coming in there about three o'clock on a Sunday ... or for the 24<sup>th</sup> of May. We didn't have this 22<sup>nd</sup> stuff; and they would just go up to the campgrounds and put down their camps or go up to the Prince of Wales and stay. And a lot of people who had an extra room would rent it to them, \$5 a night (laughs), big money! But they were a nice bunch of people, not rowdy, and today, you know, you never know what you're going to get, from what's coming in. There could be big fights or big drunks and stuff like that.

Leslie: It must have been quite a big journey for a lot of those people coming from Calgary at that time.

Nellie: Yeah. I know one time there was an old couple with their daughter and son-in-law and they were from Calgary and they couldn't find a place to stay, so my aunt had two bedrooms. I said ... my uncle wasn't home. I said let's sleep on the feather bed in the kitchen with the kids and let them have the room so they don't have to go back. Well, that young girl had a baby and left it at home and she did nothing but holler and scream and cry all night. She wanted to go back to her baby. So they left about

three o'clock in the morning. But you find some funny ones too. But the Wardens were all good people, good workers. But I think a lot of the trouble now, with the superintendents is they don't know enough.

That's, you know, not a very good statement to make but it's true. A lot of them, now, are absolutely only fit for park wardens, but they put them ahead and make them superintendent. Well, they haven't got the experience. Now, I have a friend that used to be the superintendent of four or five parks. Well, when Bruce started he was a paperboy and they just worked right up until he knew the parks inside and out and that man before him, P. J. Jennings, knew everything about parks. How to handle them and everything. And an awful big mistake they made is when they turned over so much of Waterton Park to the Forestry [Branch], right up to Carbondale. That's a lot of [land]. And yet, the Forestry you see owns that Ya-Ha-Tinda Ranch, off to the west of Sundre.

We worked out there for 22 years and if the parks had had any sense they'd have kept that, because all the Forestry's done with it is graze it. And you take \$6 a head for cattle now, I think, and they made money out of it and yet they've allowed too much logging and those people down ... that have ... Alberta, that have these timber for sale, I saw a lot of the loads that are going up to Cranbrook and different places, to mills. All they could possibly get out of those trees is a 2X4. They're so small, and it's just absolutely a waste of timber. Also where pine trees and spruce grow, the earth is not very good, and pretty soon all they'll have is a bunch of dust left. And it seems to me like people sure don't use their heads, you know? They are better off with those trees and letting them grow than they are cutting them down and selling them for a small price.

Leslie: How did people live off the land in the early days, in Waterton?

Nellie: Most of the people had quite a time making a living. I know that ... like, the first book I wrote, it has a lot of that in it. Every family that I knew, how they lived ... see, there was no social welfare and there wasn't any, yeah, old age pensions, and when they did get their old age pension, finally, it was \$10 a month. And, of course, with \$10 then you could buy \$50, what you get today. But a lot of them grew big gardens and they pickled a lot of the vegetables in the fall. Like, they'd dig a pit and put hay in it and put their potatoes down in there and turnips, onions, whatever, and cover it over with hay and they'd put a small ventilator in and covered up with a mound. And the potatoes are just as fresh as if they'd been dug right out [of the garden]. And then in about June their spuds are gone so they dig out those. And they canned everything they could in fruit and most of what they went and canned was in four pound jam buckets. They would wash those buckets out and scald 'em, and like if there were cannings, whatever, poured in boiling hot, into the hot can and put the lid on and hammered. And it kept, never spoilt.

Leslie: Are we talking about the depression era?

Nellie: Depression years. And of course, game was different. They had lots of game, lots of berries and stuff like that and could grow their own vegetables.

Leslie: Where did people hunt?

Nellie: Well, if they had a farm and there was deer come on there and ... they wouldn't abuse it. Like they used every bit of it. Nobody killed anything for the head. And they'd always try and, you know, kill the older bucks. But when you take, when we were out at the ranch, the sheep had a disease and it was lung worm and jaws were rotting. And we used to see great big bands of big sheep, you know, up on the side-hill. Pretty soon there was hardly any.

Leslie: When was that around?

Nellie: That would be in the '30s, '35 ...no, later than that. About '38, '39. That was out at that Ya-Ha-Tinda. But that's a beautiful place up there.

Leslie: Did you notice changes in wildlife in Waterton that were that drastic?

Nellie: I think one thing is the change in the game. They seem to be getting meaner, you know. Like, when I was in Banff Park there was wardens that lived about 18 miles beyond us and I walked up there and walked through elk on the side of the road. They paid no attention to me. And now those same elk are, you know, attacking people.

Leslie: In Banff?

Nellie: Yeah. Even the coyotes have gone crazy (laughs). Seems like I said ... those animals must be getting into marijuana (laughs). Something making 'em change.

Leslie: What do you think it is?

Nellie: Marijuana (laughs).

Leslie: No, why do you think they're changing, their behaviour is changing?

Nellie: I don't know, whether they're too used to people, too used to them. Although the thing I saw in Banff once is this doe had a little fawn and it was just little, you know, it was still brown and their fur, it looks just like hair then and with little spots on 'em. And there was four or five little kids carrying that little fawn around. And she was just following them. And then we were going down in the car and there was this 10 or 12 year-old boy with his arms around a great big buck, running alongside of him. So the deer there are very used to people.

Leslie: Was it like that in Waterton as well?

Nellie: Well, not as friendly as [in] Waterton. I haven't seen that. We were there though and there's some sheep in there and took pictures of them.

But, you know, you could get right close to them. But some of the parks at Banff ... like, there was an old warden, Cyril Fuller, and he had oh, maybe 25 or 30 sheep that would come right up to the house and he'd feed 'em salt and bread or anything and they just looked like a snow slide coming down the hill when we came in one day. And I fed them a little bit of bread. They fooled around, looking at us, and left. That was at Stoney Creek. I think they've got that cabin in the park now, for show, in Banff, that's Stoney Creek cabin, Windy cabin.

Leslie: What would you say really characterises Waterton from Banff?

Nellie: The difference? I think Waterton is very beautiful, you know, and friendly. But I think the Parks are going to ruin the parks with charging [park entry fee]. People are really objecting to it. They say they can go out in their field and camp too. And the biggest bug is the wood. That's what they don't like. Oh, I've heard a lot of them complain.

Leslie: What do you mean?

Nellie: Saying that they don't think that they should pay for wood. But, you see, in Banff, of course, there's fire burns around there. But yet there's a good fire burn up at Oil City, where they could get a lot of wood. And it gives three or four men work in the summertime to put in any of the shelters, to put wood in there for the people. But if they keep on overcharging, the people are going to quit coming and that's not going to be too good for the park.

Leslie: You must have seen a lot of changes in the park's philosophy towards the environment through the years.

Nellie: Oh yea. Now, you paid a dollar, I think at that time, at the park.

Leslie: When was that?

Nellie: And that let you in.

Leslie: When would that have been, a dollar?

Nellie: That would have been in '20s, late '20s. And then it came up to \$2 and a little higher every year. One complaint (laughs) I put in ...there was a couple of girls at the gate asking what you could find ...change in the park. I said well, my only complaint is that they make such a fuss of old Kootenai Brown. He was really an old rascal! And then they have his grave down there and to get down there you could break your damn neck (laughs)! I said why don't they put a road in there so people can go in and turn around and come back. And I said we were up at the bridge at Cameron Falls and I think it needs a coat of paint (laughs). They said well, we marked that down. No, you could see the wood through it. Well, it don't take much to put a little paint on the bridge (laughs)!

Leslie: So Kootenai Brown, you think he was ... you say he was an old rascal.



Nellie: Oh yeah. My dad knew him real well.

Leslie: Did they work together?

Nellie: No, they never worked together but they were friends and a funny thing about Kootenai Brown, now, the name he ... you know, I read ... I had the book but it's full of lies (laughs)! There was a "Johnston" in BC, when I was living there, that came on every Sunday morning with different stories that happened, real stories, and one morning he came on with ... remember there was a robbery at the Pass [Crowsnest Pass], west of Pincher and there was a bunch of ... they shot a policeman.

Leslie: Oh, was it a train robbery?

Nellie: Yeah and they had that story in there and it was accurate. And he said well, I'm doing one next week on John George Brown, I think he said. So I thought boy, I wonder if that's the old man I had saw once. And so I listened to it. And it was, because my dad had told me that same story about Kootenai. And it was word for word just what he said. Now, Kootenai was a stable boy for Queen Victoria. And Queen Victoria took a shine to 'em. And she made him her carriage man. Probably a little love going on too! And the people were so mad that they put old Kootenai in the army. I think they sent him to India. And he deserted - came to the States. And he was wanted for murder down there. And, of course, at that time you could run to Canada and you were protected. And that's how Kootenai Brown come to Canada. Montana first and up to Waterton. And I think he had a pretty good education, and he was the first superintendent.

Leslie: Must have been pretty wild times, those frontier days.

Nellie: Yeah. He was married twice. Well, he was married three times, I think, because Mrs. Kootenai was ... the last one was a pure Indian.

Leslie: What was her name, her first name, do you know?

Nellie: Isabella, but he called her Nichemoos, which means sweetheart. She was a little short woman ...very homely. Quite ugly, but very nice. We used to call her grandma. I've known her all my life. And then when Kootenai died in 1916 well, the Park looked after her. They kind of, seen ... and she had a place to live and so much a month to ... I think they gave her \$50 a month for food and clothing. That time that was ample. Today it wouldn't buy her a pair of shoes. But she lived in different places - in tents all over the country. And she had a horse and a buggy and could visit wherever she knew people. And she could speak English. You know, she could make you know what she wanted. And it end up ... she was with Mrs. Charlie [Rose Marie] Smith in Pincher but she was very unhappy there. So my mother went to see her and she was crying. So mother decided to keep her at home. So we had a shack for her and took care of her.

Leslie: Was that in Twin Butte?

Nellie: At Twin Butte, yeah. And my brother, Charlie, was with her when she died. She just died ... she didn't know how old she was, but I'd imagine she was well over a hundred. But she used to do a lot of fishing and like that in the lake and do a lot of riding.

Leslie: I was reading through one of your pieces from your memoirs and you mentioned another grandmother of yours, Mrs. Spence.

Nellie: Yeah.

Leslie: Were there many Métis people in the area in the early days?

Nellie: Yeah. You know Leonard Gladstone?

Leslie: Mm-hmm.

Nellie: It's Leonard's grandmother.

Leslie: Oh, okay.

Nellie: That's who she was.

Leslie: Oh.

Nellie: A lady by the name of [Margaret] Spence and her picture's in ... I found a picture of her that ... she was with two grandchildren and she's smoking a pipe (laughs). A real nice picture of her. So I had it enlarged and it's in that first book I wrote. But she used to come up to my place. She was our doctor, you know. She knew herbs and [how to] tannin' hides and stuff like that. She was quite the old girl. We'd all cry when she went home (laughs). We were just little kids. We'd follow her darn near down to Butcher's, to Butcher's Lake. And then she'd tell us we'd better go home.

Leslie: Was she a midwife?

Nellie: Yeah, she was a midwife. She looked after my mother quite a few times when she had a baby. And I know one time my mother had an abortion - up at the ranch, not brought on. Natural.

Leslie: Miscarriage?

Nellie: And James was just a little kid then. And she told me what was wrong. And my brother, Henry, was working at Butcher's Ranch, where the sulphur mill is now. And I wrote a note to Henry and told him that mother was very sick, to go down and get grandma. So he just got a team and beat it down there and changed horses and brought her up in about two hours. And mother said to me put on a big kettle full of water and just have it boiling when she gets here. So they went in the bedroom. I don't know what happened. But she was quite the doctor.

And I used to go around the woods with her when she was digging different roots out and she always put some tobacco in the hole when she left. That was paying the plant for taking it (laughs). They had quite different customs, you know?

Leslie: Did she go into the park to collect any herbs or were there special plants that are quite rare in the area?

Nellie: Well, you take a yarrow, you know what that is eh?

Leslie: Mm-hmm.

Nellie: Well, that plant is used for bee stings, cuts or diarrhea. And you boil it for diarrhea and drink it. And for cuts you just chew it up and put it on the cut and that'll... When I was working at the CPR I had a bull cook, an old guy, bald-headed, and he come running into the kitchen. He said Nellie, I'm going to die in five minutes. I said well, don't come into the kitchen to die (laughs). I said what's the matter with you?

He said I got stung by a bee. So I said never mind. I ran outside and found a yarrow plant and chewed it up and put it on top of his head and held it and he kept watching the clock. Five minutes [later], he says, I'm going to live (laughs). I guess he'd got stung at home, with a bee. And, you know, he was stretched right out inside of 5 minutes. And they phoned for the doctor to come and they gave him a shot and brought him around.

So some people are really allergic to bees. And yet I was listening to this guy said, if you have arthritis let the bee sting you and it helps your arthritis. I've had arthritis for about 40 years now and my hands are getting quite crippled up. But I know a lot of people that have had it less than that that are worse off than I am. So it just depends ... I think if you keep mobile, don't lay around, and walk if you can. It bothers my knees a lot. I'm not a very good walker.

Leslie: Did a lot of people then, in the early days, have quite a good knowledge of using the flora around them?

Nellie: Oh yeah.

Leslie: As far as remedies and medicines?

Nellie: Oh yeah, but everybody feared pneumonia. It was the bad one, because it killed most people that it attacked and now, today, pneumonia is nothing.

Leslie: How did they treat pneumonia in those days?

Nellie: Well, I had a brother with pneumonia. He almost passed away. They gave him cough medicine and lots of fluids and the ninth day then they gave him weak shots of brandy but today I was up in Kimberley, a year ago now, and I wasn't feeling very good so I thought it best to come

home here. So I came home and I was in bed there and I had a bottle of cough medicine and I kept drinking that and oh, I was really sick. But I didn't call for any help. I had just been ... wet with sweat and get up and change my nightgown and go back to bed and it'd be all over again, and on the ninth day ...I know what pneumonia is like and I was going ... taking little short breaths, so I called my doctor and I told him what had happened.

I said well, I know now that I've got pneumonia. So he said well, the ambulance will be right down there. So just let them take you out of bed and come right up here. Well, they had it checked in four days. And they have a cold mist that they put over you, that you breathe it in. And they gave me that adrenaline.

Leslie: Was there a nurse or a doctor that was close to Waterton?

Nellie: No. Well, you see, when Andy Bower got killed that time, well that was a horse ...a spoilt horse. And Andy had been an RCMP [RNWMP at that time] and quit and joined the wardens. And they were up at Belly River station and Andy's wife phoned my uncle. We were at Waterton Cabin. And she said, did Andy get down there. And my uncle said no. And it was getting dark.

Well, she said, he left here early this morning. He should be home by now and that's just a wagon trail going up there. So my uncle said well, he must be in trouble because he would've been here and home by now. But he's riding that crazy horse. And he said I'll phone the park and get them to get in touch with Doctor Mulloy. Have him start up here and I'll saddle my horse and get up there right away, go up the trail and see if I can find him.

Well, he'd gone about six miles, I guess, when his horse ... it was dark and it just stopped and Andy was laying on the trail, right out. So my uncle took off his wet clothes and put [dry ones] them on Andy and got him up on his shoulder and was carrying him down to meet the buggy. And they got into Cardston and I'm not sure whether Andy made it into the hospital or not but he died of exposure and head injuries. A real nice guy.

Leslie: Were there many accidents?

Nellie: Yeah. There was one shootin' once. This little old Englishman and his wife lived on Yarrow Creek and they had a nice little place there. But in the summer, you see, he had to get out and work to make a living. So most of those people that lived there would go up to Waterton and work for the summer. And then with their gardens and everything and this game, they could live. And they reaped all the berries they could. But he was cooking on a trail [crew]. My uncle had five men or six men out cutting trail and putting in culverts where they needed them. And they had this camp, west of Waterton, I think. And the men heard a shot, just

about dinner time. And they thought oh, a bear must have come into the camp.

So they ... when they got back the table was all set with the food on it and in the bush, a little ways, he had shot himself. Well, that just spoiled all her dinner and everything. But he was just depressed. His wife was alone, you know and... so then she sold the place and went back to England.

Leslie: Was there much depression or mental illness?

Nellie: Not mental illness, and not too much depression. Like today, an awful lot of the people are stressed out.

You know, they've gotten so much [audio cuts out 00:46:05 – 00:46:10]

[This next page and a bit has been added from the original transcript. It is not on the existing tape or digital copy. It begins below at “and for \$5 he'd saw that wood”]

....on their mind. And I think it's this cutback. There's people right here in this town that are on welfare and it's not enough to keep them. And they are going around stealing everything that they can, robbing people.

Leslie: Very different to what I hear about the depression, when people really had no money as well.

Nellie: Well they didn't go out and steal anything. You could leave your place open and everybody knew if you were hungry you could come in and fix yourself a bowl of porridge or something. You hardly ever pass by a place where they didn't want you to come in and have something to eat, even if it was a dish of porridge. They would share everything. You never heard them kick about you know, the way they were living. They were happier than what the people are now.

Leslie: Do you think it's where they are living or do you think it's...

Nellie: I think it's just a main... look out of life. They knew they couldn't change it so why worry about it. They were born poor and they got along and their grandmothers and their grandfathers worked and then they [interruption in recording]

So in the old days I guess people would have had their extended families around them? In the old days, it wasn't thought of sending grandmother away to any place. She was needed in the home. Like she was mostly the one that took over the kids and talked to them. You know, showed them what was right from wrong. And did it in a nice loving way that the kids would listen to her. And the father and mother were busy probably in the garden or out hunting or doing something. And at that time, like you could go to, you didn't have to worry about the wood. You could, for fifty cents you could go out on to the school

sections - it was mostly all poplar, big poplar - and cut all your winter wood.

Leslie: In Waterton?

Nellie: Out of Twin Butte area. And my mother used to hire this man for ten dollars and he would go out and cut all the wood, all the trees and put them down. The boys would haul them in. And Steve Harwood, you know Steve?

Leslie: I know the name.

Nellie: He used to come with his sawing machine, a buzz saw of some kind, and come from their place up to Yarrow Creek somewhere.

[recording starts here again]

And for \$5 saw that woodpile. Five dollars was a lot of money. And our neighbours - there'd be about six or seven of them - come and help cut the wood and stack it and all they got out of it was a real nice meal. So people helped each other. You know, if anything was wrong we all catered to them. And \$10 in a house was pretty scarce. That's a fact. Now I was about 12 years old, I guess, and we lived on Yarrow Creek. It was Yarrow Creek ... I guess it's the Yarrow Creek, and there was an oil well over there and they ... I had an Uncle Dave Carpenter and he said I want to have a bag made for me, I'll get the material, to put over my clothes, just like a ... this square thing, you know? Like, we have them now.

And if you'll do that I'll give you \$2. So I said yeah. Well, he came and I had four more to do. The other men wanted some too. Their crews weren't very big. So I had this \$10 and there was this little girl who died, those people didn't have 50 cents in the house, and my mother said to me you've got \$10. Could you give it to them? I said sure. They can have it. And she thought they needed clothes to bury the little girl in, you see. And we rode in to Mrs. Jack Kettles at that time. I wrote a note and told her how big the little kid was and buy some clothes for her. Well, she just went to her friends and got brand new clothes and sent the \$10 back. So I said well I'll give it to them. They can use it.

So people shared everything. But there's a lot of people pretty hard up. People were buying their kids big shoes so they'd last longer (laughs). This old farmer, old rancher that lived next to us, he said, Bernice, what size shoe you take? Size 6. Okay, I get 8. Last you another year (laughing).

Leslie: Did you have much to do with the Blackfoot people?

Nellie: No.

Leslie: Did they come through the area or was there trading?

Nellie: They used to come through, mostly the ... they would be Bloods. And the Stoneys, would pass by the ranch [Ya-Ha-Tinda] after Indian Days in Banff. One time they passed by. And there were two creeks there, like that - full of fish. And I fished maybe twice a week and just get enough for our meal. And those Indians camped and they fished out both creeks. There wasn't a fish left.

Leslie: How were they fishing, do you know?

Nellie: In the Bighorn and then the Scalp Creek. And I went down ... I couldn't get a bite and then I saw there were forked sticks you know, they'd been carrying and gutting the fish. And they were camped down about three miles. And there was a stray dog came in there - great big hound. And it wouldn't come to the house but I had put food out for it. And I looked out the window and there was this darn dog jumping in the air and he'd leap up and smell and he took off. It was an Indian dog and he smelled them Indians down there. Next day I watched and he was in with their dogs. He knew where they were. I guess he took off on something, you know. But we had a lot of lions at the ranch.

Leslie: Lions?

Nellie: Mountain lions.

Leslie: Is that on Yarrow Creek?

Nellie: No, no, up on Ya-Ha-Tinda.

Leslie: Oh, right.

Nellie: There was some at Yarrow Creek too. My uncle heard them several nights but we never saw any of them. In fact, we never even had bears, you know, try to break in or anything. But they were around but there were lots of berries then and they could, you know, satisfy themselves on berries. But it's kind of tough with bears now, since they know we're edible. You know, they're starting to eat us (laughs).

Leslie: Did you ever have any bear encounters in your younger days in Waterton?

Nellie: Not in Waterton.

Leslie: No?

Nellie: But out at the ranch [Ya-Ha-Tinda] there was quite a few bears. One just about scared me to death (laughs), but my husband said it's a heck of a good thing you didn't hit him. Well, this great big shiny black bear ... I was painting the house, that's why I stayed home. And we had a lion hound, the park's got five of them, and I could hear *Spot* barking at this thing but I could tell he was scared of whatever he was barking at. So I was cleaning the paintbrushes and I took a peek around the corner

to see what he was barking at. It was a huge big black bear and the prettiest thing, just sparkling, you know.

And he went over into what we called a slop bank but there was nothing but dish water ever put out there. We never ... I always burnt all the food, you know, that was left over. We never scattered it around to attract bears. And he kept coming over towards the house and we'd had our ventilator pulled off the chicken coop and he was pretty brave ... coming back to the house again. And I said to Cliff, before he left, I want you to load up all the guns, ready to shoot (laughs). He had this one 270 - it was a big gun. And when the bear started coming towards the house there was a rail around the house, a platform and then a rail around it and it was coming right towards the house and I thought I better take a shot at him. And by the time I got the gun down and went to the veranda he wasn't any further than the radio from me. And I guess I was really shaken, you know, and I pulled the trigger and bang, the gun kicked me in the shoulder and this great big noise. Scared me worse than the bear, but I'd left the door open.

I don't think anybody ever moved faster than I did, to get back in the house. And I slammed the door behind me. And I stood there for quite a while and I thought the window is directly ... I could look through the window and see where the bear should've been dead. And I sneaked over and took a look. There was no bear there. I thought I must've killed it. So I waited quite a while, maybe 15, 20 minutes and I opened the door. I had the lion hound shut in the kitchen and we both went out there and those lion hounds, you put them on a track, they figure they're there to take after it, and that bear dented the ground about that deep, where I felt and looked for blood but there was no blood. So I missed him, slick and clean (laughs). And here goes this lion hound right after the bear and then there's a summit about five miles and I could hear the lion hound up there. So I thought that bear never stopped. I don't know who was as scared ... me or the bear! So that's the biggest encounter of a bear I had.

There's some around there, you know. A funny one was a great big cinnamon [colored bear] came around the corner of the barn and I was washing dishes and Cliff had gone down to get the horses. And I turned the hens out to go and get a drink of water and they were great, big fat hens, you know, laying hens, and I looked out and here's this bear, sort of, hopping through the chickens and slapping them on the butt. He would just ... the hens were just cackling, you know, and fly! And he'd give them another swat, you know, and I start hollering at him and waving my dishtowel and he just looked over at me and walked across, around the barn, and I told Cliff, when he came about two minutes after, he was around the corner with the horse, take a shot into the trees just to scare him so he won't come back. But we never saw him again. You see some funny things out in the woods, but it's a grand place to live. You know, I've read in that *Silent Partners* [*Silent Partners: Wives of National Park Wardens* by Ann Dixon] the women that were out in the park, up where I was, were so bored. I never was board.



Leslie: How did you fill your day in Waterton?

Nellie: Well, most of the time I could always ride but I never liked boat riding. I didn't like that and a lot of times we used to go on that boat up to the head of the lakes [to Goat Haunt Chalet].

Leslie: The International?

Nellie: Yeah and they had a Negro couple up there that would sing and play music for the dances and everybody dancing and they'd go direct down. Presley had a boat then but it had no top on it and if it was rainy you just came back soaking wet.

Leslie: So where were some of your special places in Waterton?

Nellie: That I liked to go?

Leslie: Mm-hmm.

Nellie: Dance hall (laughs). Then when they built the other dance hall [Waterton Pavilion] across, the big one, the MacLeans run that, Pat and the other two boys. And they used to have jitney dances, 10 cents a dance.

Leslie: What's a jitney dance?

Nellie: You pay 10 cents to get in and they'd let you through the ropes. They call them jitney dances. Instead of paying at the gate you just paid 10 cents for each time you dance. That was a huge hall, the one that burnt down. It held a thousand couples, yeah. You could only make about one round and the music would stop.

Leslie: And people would be coming there from all over the area?

Nellie: And they ... like, most of the time the bands were from the States. They had famous bands in there. I think they had Mart Kenney one year. And they had a Negro band. Well, they had some real good music.

Leslie: How about the dancers, where were they coming from?

Nellie: Well, you didn't dance a mile away from your partner and just shake all over. You know, they were pretty good dancers then.

Leslie: Were people coming in from the Crowsnest Pass?

Nellie: Oh yeah. They came over from all over ... like, driving, so they didn't have to drive too far ... Calgary. Not too many Edmonton people. Calgary, Lethbridge, Cardston. Their towns were just about emptied. They would all end up at Waterton. But it was nice in those days, you know. And nobody dressed up. You know, you could go in your house dress. There was no evening gowns. The only time I had an evening gown I had a big embarrassment. I was in Banff and I saw an evening

dress that I wanted. And my brothers had the ... George had concession of the hotel for horses and I was cooking for them. And ... just close to Annand's. And I told 'em, I said, I've been doing all you [guys's] shirts and everything ... cooking for ya. I've got a COD parcel coming in and you just dig down in your pockets and go and get it.

They went and got this evening gown (laughs). Friday ... I was saving it until Saturday. But Friday Charlie came down in the car. He said they sent me down here to get you and you get that evening gown on and come up there. They paid for it now they're going to see you in it (laughs). So, I had to get up and get dressed and go up there. And when we got up there Pat MacLean just opened the ropes and Charlie and I were on the floor alone. And imagine everybody looking at ya! And that evening gown was lace and it was open from here, like ... and it had a long tail on it. It was shorter in front and that damn thing would fly out. I guess my face was as red as a beet! And Charlie was two shots in the wind, as lively as anything, and he was just a doing all the capers and me trying to keep up to him. I said well, I've paid for that dress tonight, making me wear it!

Leslie: Did you have ... were there natural places in the park? Sites that you liked to visit that were special to you?

Nellie: Yeah. Well, a lot of times ... of course the falls was always a nice place, to go up there for a picnic, you know, and –

Leslie: Cameron Falls?

Nellie: Then right in, like up at Twin Lakes. My brother was short a guide so I took several girls, several times up there, guided them up to Twin Lakes ... a beautiful place. And I was there the night ... these people, in fact, have a drugstore here - [Holtman]. They came in and they had two kids, a girl and a boy. And they camped below the falls, like there was a camping ground there. And, you know, they were only in the park an hour when their son drowned in the park. And he climbed up on the rocks to put his name on there and fell in.

Leslie: When was that? When would that have been?

Nellie: That would be in ... I'd say about 1926, '27, that area. And the fathers still running a drugstore here. But it was real tragedy and the falls you see, has a backlash on it. It goes way in there and back out again. And there was a policeman and my second uncle, like, was out there all night in a boat. And the kid would come out but he'd get sucked back in again. 'Till it was daylight and they could see him. And I think they finally got a hook, see like a fish line, and managed to hook his clothes and drag him out.

Leslie: So this was Cameron Falls?

Nellie: Right in Cameron Falls. But you see you warn the people and they're so stupid, they won't listen. Like they got a fence along there now. And the same with I think it's Marble Canyon, up towards Radium. There's been two people fall in there. And there was an old man and a young girl. And this old man was standing, you know, on jagged rocks. And the old lady says "back up"! And he went to back up further, and went over backwards right in to this. And that falls goes right in. And this girl was a strong swimmer. And she'd come out, and you know it would only be about two feet, if she could've made it another two feet she could've grabbed a bush. But I don't know why the people couldn't have thrown down a dead tree, into the falls, over the bank and let it fall down in there and that could've saved her, maybe. Because it could've ... because when it'd come out it hooked into the other tree. But it's funny, in an emergency and nobody seems to think, eh? That's when they should really get their thinking caps on.

Leslie: What do you think it was like for these really early pioneers? I guess your father, who came out, would he have known about wilderness before he came here?

Nellie: Yeah, my father?

Leslie: Mm-hmm.

Nellie: Well, my father, you see, was a Frenchman and from an aristocratic family. His father was a Baron. And my dad didn't ever want to live that kind of a life. What he wanted to be was a cowboy (laughs). And well, he did get his wishes. But his mother, they had a plantation in Mobile, Alabama. And they had negro slaves at that time and then they also had another place where they lived, in Martinique, on that French island and my dad used to sneak out and go with these sailors that went down this treacherous canyon to get a certain kind of a fish. And my grandmother knew about it so she put him in a boarding school. They had tutors to teach him. And he went to this boarding school and there was a professor, you know, big fat old man, this professor, and they had day students and students that stayed right there.

So at noon my dad all he said he did was to find a way to escape, to get out of there. He wasn't going to stay there, that's all. And come noon he stood up and they said Henry Riviere, you sit down. But he made a run and they couldn't catch him, so he went up to the station, got himself a ticket and was sitting down there. And all at once the professor caught him by the back of the neck, took him back. So dad said I just wondered what in the world I could do to get away from them again. And they had cobblestones there, piles of them piled up, you know, for repair work.

Leslie: Where was he in boarding school?

Nellie: This was in Martinique.

Leslie: Oh, right.

Nellie: And he said I was apologizing to him all the way down and telling him how sorry I was that I didn't behave myself, that it was a nice place to stay and since my mother paid six months I should stay. And he said I could feel his hand loosening up a little bit, but he just had me in a death grip before. He said when we got really close to the door I just made a sudden jerk and got away from him and we raced around these buildings, him chasing me, and he said pretty soon I got so far ahead of him I hid behind the cobblestones. But he said this time I went to the station but I walked down the track. And he said at night I'd go and sleep in the haystacks. He said I got pretty hungry and when I came in boy, he said, my mother was mad.

She said Henri you have disgraced us. You were dismissed from the school (laughs). And she said here I paid six months and I lose that now. So he said I said well no way would I stay down there. He said you shouldn't have sent me. And then she told him, she said all right, you like sailors so much, I'm going to enter you into the ... you can be a sailor. So I guess he was a sailor man finally. It was so abusive there. He saw a whole lot ... what do they call those old ships that are just, kind of, flat?

Leslie: A barge or something?

Nellie: Freight ships and he said those old captains were drunkards and they'd vomit all over the floors and make us kids wipe it up. And he said another kid and I were finally put in chains on those boats. So he said we did go into a harbour and we both jumped board and swam out and ran away. And then when he got back to New York, I guess his mother wanted him to go in some kind of business. So he said no, I'm going to be ... go up into the western country and be a cowboy. So he kept moving on and moving on and he said I found myself in a coal mine and he said hell, this is not what I wanted. I want to be a cowboy, so he quit and finally he got on with a gang called the Dooley Gang.

They were a bunch of horse thieves and a real bad outfit and he said they had a lot of trouble with the Mormons at that time. You see the Mormons were trying to bring in sheep, and cattle and sheep don't get along. Like, they stink up the waterholes and then the cattle won't drink. So he said he had a lot of trouble with them. There was even shootings going on, you see.

Leslie: Really?

Nellie: Yeah.

Leslie: And that was in this area, specifically, or Cardston area?

Nellie: Yeah parts of Alberta, here, you could ride for a hundred miles without a fence and you could buy any amount of land for 50 cents an acre.

Boy, if people only had that oversight, you know, to have bought up sections of it. Now look what they pay for an acre of land, yeah.

Leslie: So this Dooley Gang, what...

Nellie: They were horse thieves and robbers and pretty bad.

Leslie: Were they American or were they...

Nellie: American.

Leslie: Oh, so they would move across the border...

Nellie: Yeah.

Leslie: And steal horses?

Nellie: My dad stayed with them until ... they were being shot down and the last of the two, Dooley said to my dad you get out first and I think he was shot trying to get out. And then dad kept coming up into Alberta.

Leslie: It sounds like pretty wild times.

Nellie: Yeah. We met some of our French relatives. I guess it must be five years ago now. At a big reunion up at - by dad's [the Riviere family ranch, then owned by son James]. Her husband is Chantelle - is a scientist, and they were in Denver. I don't know how they got wind of where we were but they came over to see us and we had this big reunion up at the ranch but it was family affairs but I bet there was 400 people there. Everybody came and we wouldn't let no reporters in. There was no advertising it. And then, when her mother flew out here, and dad's cousin, I didn't get to meet them.

Leslie: Oh.

Nellie: But I met Chantelle, very nice people.

Leslie: Would there have been many other immigrant people in that area, in Waterton area, people who spoke other languages besides English?

Nellie: Yeah.

Leslie: Who settled in the area?

Nellie: Well, most of them spoke English.

Leslie: I think about the Crowsnest Pass, you know there were a lot of eastern European people there.

Nellie: Well, there were very few of them that came up to work in the park, like Polish and Ukrainian and stuff like that. They were most ... all were English-speaking people. And they had quite a setup up there. But it was nice, you know, because everybody knew each other and nobody

ever had to lock up their lawnmowers and stuff. You'd leave them out, nobody would touch 'em. But today you want to lock 'em up and have a chain on them. It's the same with break-ins, you know? Breaking in or raping old ladies, you know, the young kids ...and there was a girl standing in front of this little store up here the other night, grabbing all the men and asking them to go and get her a package of cigarettes. She's about 14 years old. But you know it would be nice to have a country like it was before but it doesn't matter how much money they get they can't, you know, undo the damage they've done to it.

Leslie: What do you think would be the main thing that's changed in that country, in Waterton, thinking about the land?

Nellie: I don't think the land has changed so much. And there could be more game now than there used to be. Like you never saw any wild game right inside the park. They were a little wilder. I know that country pretty good. And there were lots of fish in the creek.

Leslie: In all of the creeks?

Nellie: All of them. And more water. Like Pincher Creek, you can ... up at my dad's now when I was up there the last time, you could almost step on rocks and cross it and when we were kids it was hitting us up here. In some places, you didn't cross because it would knock you down. But today ... it's too many dry seasons. And now I don't know if they're going to get a wet one or not this year. So far we got enough moisture but –

Leslie: Were you in Waterton for any of the floods?

Nellie: No.

Leslie: No? You know very much about Oil Basin?

Nellie: Who?

Leslie: Oil Basin in Waterton.

Nellie: What does he do?

Leslie: Oh no, it's an area, Oil Basin.

Nellie: Oh, Oil City?

Leslie: Oil City is one place, yeah. There's another area called Oil Basin.

Nellie: Further up?

Leslie: Mm-hmm, in around, like Horseshoe there.

Nellie: Well, I'll tell ya, when you go up to Oil City, about oh, I guess 10, 12 miles further, there's a camp [sawmill] along ... that Carl Carlson ran. I cooked up there.

Leslie: Oh yeah?

Nellie: For about oh, maybe 20 men or more.

Leslie: When was that?

Nellie: It would have to be in, maybe, '28, '26 or '27, right around there. That was depression time and I was off work and I was at my aunt's and Carl's cook got mad and quit. And he came over to see me, if I'd go. Well, it didn't matter what kind of a job it was, if it was a job well, I'd never turn it down, I'd go, and ... so I told him okay, I'll go. And I borrowed some blankets and stuff but when I got up there it was lumber and tar paper shacks, cold as blazes too! And they had all these men up there. And we never had any vegetables that weren't frozen solid, everything froze. I took a hot water bottle with me and I'd have to kick it out of bed about two o'clock in the morning because it would be freezing (laughs). Plunk, and I'd hear her falling on the floor and it would be frozen stiff in the morning. So Jack Hazzard, the old guy that built the hotel up there in Waterton, the first hotel, he lent me a great big wool blanket because I was ... had a bedroom off the kitchen and no stove in it. And just a ... working little kitchen stove there, and of course they'd go out. And the men, they had these barrel stoves, three or four of them, to keep from freezing. And hot cakes and Mrs. [Inez Stratton the former cook] must've ... well, they bought their bread. They must've, of course. She couldn't have cooked that much bread. And Jack gave me a little dish to make the hot cakes in. I said that's not big enough. Get me a good sized pot. And she was making toast mostly for them. So I start in with hot cakes and I ran out. I didn't have enough hot cakes. So I ended up with a white enamel water bucket and no toast, just hot cakes. Hot cakes and porridge is what they had every morning and raisins. Thank God for raisins (laughs). Raisin cookies, raisin pie, raisin puddin', everything was raisins!

Leslie: How about meat?

Nellie: Very little meat and what we did get well, we could keep frozen, you know, and it was mostly stews. Make a great big pot of stews and put a bunch of dumplings on it.

Leslie: Is that beef?

Nellie: Dumplings and ... you know, as long as it was filling and it tasted all right. They were easy to feed. They never kicked.

Leslie: What sort of men were coming in to work at Oil City?

Nellie: Mostly the people that worked at Waterton, like Bill McEwen up there and some from Twin Butte, the Eklunds, worked up there, Cox. A lot of

people that ... my brother, George, worked up there. They got \$60 a month and were tickled to death to get it, with their board. I got \$60 a month. But you earned it. And talking about that oil well ... one day we had a man come in there, by the name of Eustis from Edmonton. And he was, sort of, the head guy on this oil well, about 12 miles past where Carlson had his camp. And he wanted somebody to take him up there. So Carl, Bill McEwen and George and I went up there. Because there was a cook up there that I knew, Ethel [Hollenbeck] was working up there. So I went up there to see her. And, like right along there is a bridge here and you'd come around here to go up to the kitchen door, when we were leaving, and this bridge had no sides on it. And George, I don't know what he was thinking about, put a box on there for Eustis and I to sit on.

Well, they turned the corner there and the box flew off and Eustis and I ... Eustis went head first into the snow. And I managed to keep myself from going on top of him. And when I looked over, all up to here is a guy with a great big tummy. There was one button sticking out. I hollered, jump down there quick and pull him out of that snow or he'll smother. And they had to get down and jump over the bridge, down in below, and rescue him because there was a lot of loose snow down there. He could never have got out on his own. And I couldn't quit giggling all day (laughs). I must've made him awful mad. I told Ethel what happened. She sure had a laugh. But that, I don't think that [oil] well ever produced anything, eh?

Leslie: What was people's feeling about striking oil in Waterton?

Nellie: What would they want?

Leslie: What were their feelings about it?

Nellie: [Note: Nellie is confusing the oil camp with Carlson's sawmill camp. Carlson had nothing to do with the former]

Yeah, that oil well going up there, they didn't care, nobody cared. And when we left that camp [Carl's sawmill camp] we had seven feet of snow up there. I was afraid to go to the toilet. You know, you could drown to death in that much snow if you fell down. And the gang had gone out to Waterton for the dance on a Friday night and then Friday before I was out with them, but coming back Carlson's truck broke down and I had to walk up that slippery hill with shoes on and slipping back one foot and then the other one and finally somebody holding onto me to walk home and I thought I'm not going out again to suffer that. His old truck had broke down many times.

So they all went out and when I got up Friday there must have been 18 inches or more of snow and they're stuck down there and it just kept on snowing and I said ... there were two men in camp, one was sick and the other one was one of the drivers and I said to Fred Green, you better build a snow boat, a snow plough, because they build them in a V, you



see, and drag it and it spreads the snow out, and keep the road open to Little Prairie. So he said okay and he built one and in the afternoon I went with him to give it weight, you know. So I was standing up on this thing going down the hill, it was this deep and we had two ... we had two grain-fed team [horses] there.

Take one in the morning and one in the afternoon. So Bert Knight was the superintendent then. Well, I guess I knew Bert practically before I was born, because they were Englishman that came... [audio cuts out].

Leslie: Like, how did they compromise that or what did they use on their feet to keep themselves warm in the harsh weather?

Nellie: Mostly what they, used to call, on their feet ... I was thinking about ... they were big heavy socks that were, kind of ... I think they called them Mackinaw socks and they had string around here and they put them over the top and their feet wouldn't get wet and the lumberjacks all used them. And then they had ... they didn't dress so much in the buckskin, mostly wool, heavy wool and pants and itchy underwear, you know, those real old Stanfield underwear, combinations where they have two piece ones. And heavy wool shirts. But our weather, you know, got pretty cold then. You know, it could be 50, 60 below, but they say they never got that cold. Well, when your temperature is 50 and it's way below that, you know, it goes off. It can be pretty cold.

Leslie: So a lot of people used snow shoes and skis?

Nellie: Oh, yeah. I have been on snow shoes and skis. I guess there's not much I haven't done.

Leslie: What's the most exciting adventure you had in Waterton?

Nellie: Well, I think one time we decided to go across the lake in boats to go to have our picnic. And the lake got rough and coming back ... we were lucky we got back. You know, it wasn't worth it to go up there and eat a few burnt marshmallows (laughs).

Leslie: Whereabouts were you crossing?

Nellie: We went just about straight across and there's a cave up there.

Leslie: Straight across from...

Nellie: From the second lake [Middle Waterton Lake], like the lake down where the ... where Kootenai Brown's house is and you just go straight across and there's this ... you climb up the rocks and there's quite a big cave under there and make camp fires underneath there. So, I don't know why I ever went. I didn't have a lifesaver jacket and couldn't swim, but you couldn't swim against that anyway. That lake can get treacherous in 10 minutes. You'd get up and look through Uncle Jack's window and it would be just like glass and another 10 minutes, when the wind started, it would be so bad, you know, white caps.

Leslie: Were there many drownings in that lake, in the lakes?

Nellie: No, not that I know of while I was there. People are, kind of, scared. You know, Mr. Morris, the old man, used to take out parties and he'd have these dudes in the car and in the boat and he had a ... they'd throw the fish in and he'd clean them and he'd stick his knife in (laughs) ... he had a wooden leg and he'd just take his knife and stick it in the wooden leg (laughs) and he'd just about make them fall over, you know (laughs). That was his joke. Oh, there were some funny characters there.

Leslie: Did you fish on the lake?

Nellie: I never did fish on the lake. I tried the river one time, never got nothing. But I used to go with Annie Ford sometimes and some other people to the Maskinonge and they'd get pike. But my, they're ugly, hey. But they say they're good eatin'. They're like those other fish they get up around Inveremere. They're just like snakes. But they say they're wonderful eating. They got hair inside their mouth. But I like a clean looking fish. I like Dolly Vardens the best. And when we were kids my dad showed us how to catch a fish without a hook or a line, to just take them out of the water.

Leslie: How did you do that?

Nellie: Well, you see, a fish has to rest and each one of 'em have, like, their own little house. They get behind a certain rock that has an eddy. The water don't move. And they go in there and that's where they sleep. And if you scare them out of that and you stay there they'll come back and just swim ... float back and go in there again. And you reach in and touch them and just tickle them. Just, you know, kind of, fuss over them and as you tickle them they won't move. They just stay still. And pretty soon you work up towards their gills. And you just squeeze in like that and lift them out (laughs). And I told these friends of mine in Sundre I could do it. And Ed said that was sure one of the biggest fish stories he ever heard. And his wife used to come up and see me at the ranch ...ride up.

We'd go and meet her and she'd come part way with the car. And we were crossing a creek and I noticed this fish in an eddy. I said now Betty, I'm going to show you that I'm not lying. I can touch that fish. So I went over and he swam away but he came back. And I reached down and finally pulled him out of the water and showed her and put him back down in. She says now I'll tell Ed that's no fish story because I saw you do it. And my husband wouldn't believe it. And we were going up to Scotch Camp from the ranch. And there's a spring there. And I guess this fish went up to spawn. But it looked about that long in the water. But there's about that much water.

He was just sitting there, still. So he was in a kind of an eddy. So I said to Cliff, we were having lunch there, I'm going to get that fish. So I

went down and I stood straddle of the stream, and reached down and pulled him out. And he was about that long ...nice big one. And I stuck him back in the stream. Cliff said what the hell do you do that for? That was just enough for supper. I said, well look, he trusted me and I'm not going to break that trust (laughs). I said he trusted me and I wouldn't ... I said my dad said turn the fish loose because he trusted you and don't break his trust. I said dad showed us, but he turned the fish loose. And, of course, I said well, never mind, I got some sardines, you can eat this (laughs).

Leslie: Do you think there was a different relationship between people and animals in the older days than there is now? You were talking about that respect thing.

Nellie: I think...

Leslie: Trust.

Nellie: Same as what my dad told me. If you see a moose now ... run on to a moose, and you're scared of him you're very apt to get attacked. A human puts out an odour when they're scared that the moose gets and the moose don't trust you then and he'll attack you sometimes. But if you're not scared of them they won't hurt you. And I found that out with moose. Like, I was going across a field, it was all Nigger-heads, and that's –

Leslie: What are they?

Nellie: It's like a swamp that's dried up and there's clumps of dried dirt on it ... rough to walk in. And I looked up and there were five moose watching me. And I had my dog with me too and he always stayed right behind at my heels. I just taught him, when he was little, not to get in front of me or chase anything. And we just kep' a goin' and they just looked at us. And I've crossed, on the ice, where a moose wasn't any further than that red truck out there and she was eating, you know, the little twigs that come out fresh. She was eating that. I just kep' a goin'. Mind your own business and they'll mind theirs. But I think if you stopped and tried to get a picture of her she might attack ya, but just keep a goin'. Don't stop and look.

But an animal that I really don't trust is a buffalo. And we had some out at the ranch (laughs). Whoever thought of the idea had to be a stupid person! They sent them out there to eat the bunch grass. The buffalo was going to eat up all the bunch grass. They never ate a drop of it! They eat the very best. But we used to keep it down by haying. We'd cut it with the hay, you know. And it was easier to handle the hay too, because it was bunch grass. And it made good bedding. The horses wouldn't eat it but then you could use it for beddin' with some of that hay. They're real Indian cattle is what they are. The first summer we had them we went up to the head of the Red [Red Deer River] and coming down I said to Cliff, I think those buffalo are ahead of us.

I can see the tracks. Cliff said they must be elk tracks. And when we crossed the creek I said well, it is the buffalo because they shed water off ... you know, their fur, hair. And I said it is the buffalo and we pulled into Scotch Camp here was three of them. Just wandering Jews, followed us up there. And Cliff yelled at them and away they went. When we got home they were laying in the yard ... their home. And then they went down to Sundre once. Just went into the hay fields. And where they were feeding cattle and stampeded the animals. Animals were scared to death of them. Those people had a hard time and Tom Harvey, the ranger, came up and he said did you miss your buffalos? I said yes, for two weeks. I didn't see nothing of 'em.

He said well, they took a trip down to Sundre and the people are sure mad. They have stampeded all the animals all over the bush and moved right in and then just decided to leave. Well, the following summer they went down there again and the people corralled them. They went into the corral, they shut the gates on '. And the superintendent ... well, they called him the supervisor, from Rocky Mountain House phoned me up and he said Mrs. Murphy, those three buffalo from the ranch are in Sundre, locked in. And we would like to get them to take them to Rocky Mountain House and put them in a cage for the people to look at. I said well, I don't know whether they'll give them to or not but you could try. I said phone Bruce Mitchell up, in Banff Park, and ask Bruce.

So he said well, I'll do that. Well, I rang the office right away. I said Bruce, Mr. Hall, the supervisor, wants them damn buffalos. For goodness sake, just give it to them. They're breaking all our fences down and I'm beginning to get really scared of them. They almost chased me the other day. I said pretend like you're not fussy about it and he'll take them. So Bruce hummed around and then he said okay, you can take them. So they took them down there. But there were two cows and a calf and a bull. But they never produced any calves. They had them there and I guess they hadn't shot them for a long time. But I wished we'd have shot one and ate 'em (laughs).

That's what we should've done. We were too stupid to ... I said to Cliff, gee, those buffalo, they're killing in Banff there, the boys used to, you know, kill them and let the Indians have them, but they'd always take out the tenderloins.

Leslie: Where was this?

Nellie: The tenderloin in an animal is underneath the rib somewhere and it's a separate thing and it's really the tender part of the meat.

Leslie: Was this up in Ya-Ha-Tinda again?

Nellie: No, it was in the Banff Park.

Leslie: Banff.

Nellie: And the wardens would take the tenderloins and Indians could have the rest.

Leslie: Did you hear stories when you were young, in Waterton, from old-timers about the days of the bison, the buffalo, when they were wild? Did people talk about that?

Nellie: Well, the buffalo were gone then. And I have a book here that Norman [Luxton] gave me. And they say there was a slaughter on buffalo until they were practically extinct. There was no more buffalo. There was too much abuse. Like sending them over that big cliff and then killing all those buffalo and drying the meat and sitting down and eating buffalo by the ton. Well then the white man got in on it too and pretty soon there wasn't any buffalo. But this one Indian, there was a great big buffalo hunt and he went out there and there were four little calves and they were all huddled together. And he rode up to them and just stayed there for a while and when he was going to ride away the little calves followed him and they followed him down to his place and he kept them and that's where the buffalo herd came from, those four calves.

Leslie: Where was this, do you know?

Nellie: Got the book here, I could show you. It would be in the States that he'd been, that they saved them, you see?

Leslie: Right.

Nellie: But the Canadians didn't.

Leslie: Did you see bison bones around still?

Nellie: Yeah. My brother found a buffalo head up at the ranch but it was pretty badly gone, you know. And then I think Cyril [Fuller] had a buffalo head. I was sorry when I was in Banff I didn't get a bunch of those horns, you know? Bert Davies had a lot of them. I should've asked Bert for some of them.

Leslie: What were they used for?

Nellie: Well, the Indians used to make ornaments out of them. Like, they would have a shape with two buffalo horns and then they'd cover that all up with velvet and make it fancy and these buffalo horns sticking up. I know Leonard's [Gladstone] grandmother had two of them. And the only one that I know of now is in Sundre and [Albert Helmer] has it. But I haven't seen any since I was a kid, but Albert has one, and they would've got those from the Stoneys [First Nations] I guess.

Leslie: Were there many ... do you remember meeting Stoneys in Waterton area?

Nellie: Yeah, there's very few Indians came up there, very, very few. And it was ... I don't know what nationality he was but he was Indian, a guy

that used to be a trapper, that used to hang around Waterton, and he had gold earrings.

Leslie: Oh, was it Joe Cosley?

Nellie: And he was a poacher, is what he was. But there's no disgrace in that.

Leslie: There were a lot of poachers then?

Nellie: Well, most of the people were poor and ones that knew how to trap would go way out in the mountains and poach, but they had to be pretty smart not to get caught.

Leslie: Were they poaching for the furs?

Nellie: Yeah. And yet the furs ... you could buy a martin skin, at that time, for about \$10.

Leslie: Again, is this the 20s and 30s?

Nellie: Well, people that had bought them, you know were making them into coats. And today I bet that you could get over \$100 for a good martin skin.

Leslie: Where would they take them to sell them?

Nellie: Usually there was people right in Calgary that would take them. Stores that were ... like Dippy McKay. He was in saddler. And you'd be surprised at people that would buy them and resell them.

Leslie: Do you remember seeing wolves down in the Waterton area?

Nellie: Not in Waterton area but we had them up at the ranch [Ya-Ha-Tinda]. We had ... when I was up there last there was a wolf pack of 14 and they're the real old northern wolf, not like these scruffy ones we see here. Those things would stand that high.

Leslie: Oh, that's a good four feet off the ground.

Nellie: You could mistake them for a deer and their heads were about that big. Great big ... and their feet, like that. They got a foot on them as big as a horse. Because I've followed them. And if you got to walk in their tracks you can't step in their track. You've got to overreach to walk in their tracks.

Leslie: Wow.

Nellie: They're very huge. And sometimes we'd wake up in the middle of the night and down on the Scalp Creek we could hear them howling and they actually just sent shivers up your back (laughs). They sound very bad (laughs). They sound as if you're going to get eaten up. But yet I've had them following me around lots of times and I never got to see one,

but I knew they were close to me and there were five of them then. And I've come on to kills and this one guy from Alberta wrote ... a wolf kills for pleasure. That's wrong, a wolf kills because he's hungry and he don't waste nothing. I came on when they killed this big stag and even the blood in the snow was eaten.

All that was left was the stomach. Every bit of hair was gone and they were just like a funnel, where they'd, you know, where they'd knawed at the blood and ate it too. So they don't waste. But a mountain lion is different. They kill oftener, I think, and they just have that one big feed and leave it and kill again. They're more destructive, I think, than the wolf. And then there's coyotes and stuff like that, pick it up after. But I like wolves. They're pretty. And I think they like humans too.

Leslie: Why do you think there's such a mythology about wolves?

Nellie: I don't think a wolf would attacked a person. I think they ... it's been proven, though. This guy went out to see if he could make friends with the wolves and there were two wolves following him around. And one day they were laying on their backs, acting silly, like some dogs do to make friends. And he would sit right close to them and feed them and they'd just follow him around like a couple of dogs. So I don't think a wolf is dangerous. And I think where there's lots of animals, you know, for them to eat, I don't think they want to eat a human. I don't think they attack for that. Like, where we lived, right below us was the Scalp Creek but there was a big black bank there and there were sheep there, always a little herd of sheep and you'd go over the bank and watch them. And I used to fish down there all the time. But there was a trail coming across below where it was full of these white willows and I think this old lion laid there a lot and would kill, occasionally, if the animals passed by and he'd jump out and kill a ewe.

I found the horns of a ewe there and I think he's the one that killed it. Well, I went down to fish and the water was high. And I was passing by these white willows here but the creek was all ripples here and I was holding the rod out to let that float when I just realized something was beside me, but I didn't know what it was. So I stood absolutely still and I start guessing what it was and I knew it was too small for a deer or a bear or a sheep. I had the idea, the size of it, and I thought well, it must be that old mangy coyote, because I saw a mangy coyote with the biggest part of his tail shaved ... no hair on it. He would be stupid enough to let me get that close. And I never moved. And finally I thought well, I'll just twist my head around easy, because it was just about here, and take a look and it was a full-grown mountain lion and I still never moved.

I just stood there. And he was trying to get up without touching me. Which is kind of hard, because their bum sticks out when they try to get up, you see. And finally he made it and the bank was about from here to that instrument over there and he leaped but he fell on this belly, halfway over, was scratching this Kinnikinnick to get up the bank. And

my husband and another guy was up above, building on that big barn out there. So I thought well, I'll run up there and they can put a dog on him and shoot 'em. And Cliff said take Spot down and just put him on the track. So there's just a clump of bush over here, where the lion went, but as soon as he got out of sight he crossed the creek and of course if they cross a creek the dog's lost.

So I put him on track and he went and I thought gee, that's mean. I think I'll just catch that dog and take him home, because that lion knows me or he'd have done something, and I'm not going to have him killed. So I took the chain and put it on the dog and led him home and then there was no more barking so Cliff came home and he said what happened? I said well, I put him on the track and then the lion crossed the creek. I could've gone across and put him on again but I wouldn't. He said why? I said well, that lion knows me. I'll bet he's laid in the bush lots of times and watched me fish. And he never did nothing and when he could've attacked me, when he's only about 12 inches from me, he never did nothing to me and I just didn't want him killed.

I said he can live (laughs). But I never got that close to those bushes again, without throwing a rock in. I'd throw some rocks in there first before I went in because, you know, they could kill a person so fast. You wouldn't last 10 minutes I don't think. Because my uncle up at Hillsdale, it's just west of Massive cabin ... he went up there and he just happened to take his 22 with him. But the road curves around like this, you know. And there's a big bank about that high where it's cut. And he just happened to look up there when this lion jumped off of there, right on top of a big bull elk's back. And the minute he got on that elk's back he hung sideways on it. He was chewing at its throat and with his hind legs, ripping its insides right out.

The lion was so busy killing that elk ... my uncle ran over towards the elk and him and he just stood up above it and shot the lion. But he said it wasn't five minutes, he had all that elk's insides dragging. And as soon as that happened the elk went down. So they're pretty wicked when they attack.

Leslie: Do you think that some of the old-timers, people who lived in the Waterton in the early days, had the same, kind of, an idea about wilderness that we have now?

Nellie: No. I don't think there were as many animals then. I think, like for years and years there were no moose around in Alberta.

Leslie: When was that?

Nellie: And when we were up at the ranch we were just kids. My dad came back and he said well, we've got another animal in the country. It's migrated here and he said I saw some moose tracks. Usually they were around Edmonton area, you'd see up that way, more north. And then after that there were moose sightings in several places, with calves. But



they're quite thick now, I think. I think there's lots of moose. There were a lot of moose up at the ranch and as I hear a lot of elk. But, you see, Bruce Mitchell wrote to me and told me that the parks figured on getting rid of the Ya-Ha-Tinda and moving their horses and everything to Stettler. And I sat down, wrote to the superintendent and told him, I said the parks have did some awful foolish things, but if you do that, that was the worst mistake you ever made.

I said why would you want to move from that beautiful ranch down there. But they made a very, very big mistake, I think, the parks when they opened up too much to the public. They put a bridge in there which, if I was the boss, I'd go and dynamite it and keep them out of there. Some friends of mine, one with those buffalo horns, went up there and there's at least 200 head of horses. People have taken their horses up in trailers and riding around like crazy, all over up there. And they won't let them bring ... eat the grass. They won't let them turn their horses out, so they're bringing hay up and you can imagine what a mess there is around there, 200 head of horses.

Leslie: That's a lot.

Nellie: So, it's crazy. We didn't have a bridge, you see, and [during] high water it was pretty hard getting out of there, unless you're very good at driving a truck, you could get stuck in those creeks, rivers.

Leslie: What do you think parks are for, national parks?

Nellie: I think that they should be kept for people's use to come in and camp and enjoy them and not abuse them. And that's one thing about getting wood out for them, they're not going out in the bush and chopping down a good tree to burn and spoiling the forest; and where there's a burn [forest fire] like Oil City, it would hire five or six men, give them work and cut their wood and put it in the camps. Like, up at Banff you could go anywhere there to the shelters and there was ... every place had a couple of those stoves, you know. And you could start them up and cook on them. But in those community kitchens you just about have to get to watch your pots (laughs).

We've ran up there and we've stopped at one, going to Jasper, and these Jews came along and I had started the fire and, of course, towards the stovepipes, where all the heat is, and I had the pots with the potatoes and some vegetables on, cooking, and I had to stand there and watch them or this old woman would come along and put mine all down towards the front and stick hers up there. So I just stuck hers all back down there and stood there watching. She wasn't going to do that again. Stick mine where I couldn't get them boiling quick.

Leslie: So I guess I've just got one last question here. We've been going at it for quite a while. It's kind of a fun question. How do you imagine Waterton Park in another hundred years?

Nellie: Well, if the people come up, like they do now, there might be nothing left of it. Because, you know, you could have beautiful tables for them to eat on and these punks come along and carve their name in there or spoil it some way. The same with cemeteries, they're doing that there too. I can't imagine, when I grew up, to have anybody go and destroy something wilfully. I don't know if it's the violence kids see on TV, the killings, stabbings and they don't have no feeling. You know, 10-year-olds killing another kid. And I think the biggest mistake that people are doing right now is if your kid is bad and you want to give him a slap on the seat, that they should put you in jail for it.

There's a couple here from the States and Ontario that they had a five-year-old girl, maybe you saw it on the air [TV], and I guess she was really being a real little devil on the sidewalk and her dad just picked her up and spanked her butt and they called the cops, some crazy fool called the cops. And they had him up on trial. And the judge said I can't see no wrong in that. If more people did that they'd have better kids. So they let him out. And he said well, I want to come back to Canada but not to Ontario, ever again.

Leslie: So when you say you're worried there's might be a lack of respect towards the land?

Nellie: There's a lack of respect now with kids. You know, you take three-year-old kids who just say no, I won't do it. Because I think if a kid does something [bad], right at the minute - correct him. I had to spank mine right on the street in Banff. He was getting ornery.... he was only three years old and he stepped off the sidewalk and when I went to grab him I had bought some new records and broke them all. So I just put my parcel down and knelt down and put my knee up and stuck him over my knee. There was eight deep walking up the street. They were going around me and I spanked his little bottom. Well, he never did that again. You know, you've got to make them respect ya.

Leslie: I'd like to thank you very much for your time Mrs. Murphy.

Nellie: Well, I hope it don't sound too bad (laughs).

Leslie: No, I think it will be great.

[End of recorded material 02:15:05]