

Voices of the Valley

A Lorne Mountain Community Association project, collecting oral history of area residents

On June 12th, 2013, Claire Desmarais interviewed Marie Rose of Tagish at Claire's home on the Annie Lake Road. Diane Parenti was the recorder. Marie Rose lived at her father's farm on the Annie Lake Road from 1971 to 1977. Her father, Joe Chouinard, lived on the farm from 1971 to 1978.

Claire: Okay, welcome Marie Rose, to our place here on the Annie Lake Road. It is June 12th, around two thousand thirteen, around one o'clock in the afternoon, and, I'm going to be interviewing Marie because she was once a resident of the Annie Lake Road. And we want to know everything you can tell us about being a resident on the Annie Lake Road. And maybe Marie you can start by telling us who you are, where you were born, all those kind of details.

Marie: I was born in Whitehorse, in nineteen fifty eight, when the big forest fire was going on. My parents had a lodge in Burwash Landing, so they had to drive me in for that and stuff. My one older sister was born out in Burwash, so that's kind of interesting. We lived in Whitehorse after awhile and then my father bought the place on the Annie Lake Road and he traded it for a piece of cat, (laugh) back then...

Claire: Ah, wow!

Marie:which was interesting, and we all laugh about that (laughter). Back then, land wasn't very expensive, you know, the acreage, and he always wanted to do something different and that was one of his seeing of different things. My dad was into black dirt when we lived in Porter Creek when we were younger and saw the same aspect when we came to Annie Lake. And it was always black gold to him and he always had a vision. And the visions were, you know, to live in the country and to see other things and do other things. Yeah, it took quite a few years for him to do it. I didn't probably move out there till I was about thirteen. So yeah, it was interesting. No water, no power, you know, coming from the city. It was hard I think, as a young kid, not having that but it's taught me lots, I can do without, you know.

Claire: Yeah

Marie: Probably better than the younger generation.....

Claire: Yeah

Marie:um, leant how to do things you know. The farm was a huge huge huge work force, lots of work.....

Claire: yeah. Just, what was your dad's name?

Marie: Joe Chouinard

Claire: Okay, yes, and he, was it a farm when he bought it, was it a working farm?

Marie: No, no. Collisons and them used to bring their horses through and go up to the Wheaton and Alligator and all that and.....

Claire: And Collison was a....

Marie: A big game outfitter, yeah. And Dad built the house. He got the wood from the Mayo Road. Poplar and got it all planed and everything. It was all burnt wood, I remember us being so black all the time, handling it and stuff, taking it and stuff. Yeah, you know, it took him quite a few years to build and stuff. We didn't have much of a road. It was, we were stuck on it many times (laughter) over the years, cause there was really not much of a road. It was windy and you know, the best part of the road, we used to laugh about it, was the big dip over there after the railroad tracks, (laughter) and "lets hit that so we can go fast" (laughter). But yes and Dad used to plough all the road all the way from our place, all the way to the cut off of Annie Lake back then, when....

Claire: And who else was living on the road at that time?

Marie: Um, later on came Broswicks and Browns and Burls and that was about it, yeah, yeah, so you didn't really see too many people. Veirmans came to our house lots, but they were at the cut-off. Mainly because their horse was always stuck in the middle of the road, and Dad would have to lift it out of the road with the loader and bring it back home. So that was always a chore that we always had to look after and stuff. And his cows you know. And we did have 51 head of cattle. Dad had built a huge slaughter house on the farm.....

Claire: Oh, I never knew that.

Marie: We had chickens and rabbits and dogs and cats....

Claire: And so, what year would he have had that slaughter house?

Marie: Um, it would have, I would have to say in the seventies, seventy-three or seventy-four, something like that.

Claire: And then he would sell the meat to.....

Marie: Yeah, yeah.....

Claire: To the stores in town?

Marie: No, no, it was just people, yeah, people came and bought.

Claire: He was ahead of his time!

Marie: Bobo Roc came and helped him slaughter and I can't remember others from the Carcross Road, came and helped and stuff. And when we had the chickens and everything, everybody came around and things like that, and Dad would give them stuff. Yeah, it was kind of interesting you know, yeah. No, no, it was, I mean, it was a lot of work over the years. We had a huge huge garden, you know. And then he sold the black dirt out of there. He did all that stuff, and we hayed, he had a silo thing, he made all this smelly silo.....

Claire: Silage?

Marie: Yeah, you know. Yes, five o'clock and I'm still a five o'clock person which is really interesting cause I still do get up quite early and.....

Claire: Did you have milk cows?

Marie: No, no milk cows, but we had chickens and stuff and that, you know, and I'd do all my stuff before he drove me to the Carcross Cut-off to school, every day....

Claire: And he had to drive you to the Carcross Cut-off....

Marie: Yes.

Claire: Not the Carcross Road?

Marie: No, it was the Carcross Cut-off. And I would catch the bus. And that was probably about a year and a half until I got into about nine, half of grade nine, that they let me into the dorm.....

Claire: Okay.

Marie: Yeah, and that was where the old Government building is today, what used to be a nursing station.....

Claire: Yeah.

Marie: Yeah. No, it was interesting, you know, the running water and stuff and the power came later. And I remember hauling water into the bathtub and using one of those probes to heat it up. You know, run a generator that we got from, that he bought from Jakes Corner years ago, yeah.

Claire: So, and how long was he at the farm, how long were you at the farm?

Marie: I was probably from fourteen to I was about eighteen, nineteen and then I moved to town. I was off and on. I'd still come out quite a bit, you know, cause I had to get a job and stuff like that. And then Dad did sell it, I believe, I'd have to look that up, in seventy eight he sold it, if I remember correctly

Claire: Yeah, we moved here I think in seventy six and he was, your Dad was still living there then.

Marie: Yeah, seventy eight he sold it. But you know, I think because just about everybody was gone. My brother had left, my sisters had gone, and I was still the only one that stayed. But yeah, he wanted to see some different country. And it was, I think, pretty lonely, after I left, yeah, you know, and that aspect. Yeah, and I did have a step mother, but she wasn't always there full time, so I think he found it lonely. Um, mind you, not having to work as much as he used to, and the age kind of got to him I think.

Claire: Well it's a lovely spot there, maybe you can describe for people who have never been in the area, just describe, to you, what the land looked like.....

Marie: When we first came out, it was this windy trail road and it was really interesting because there was lots of game. We saw everything and anything. From wolves in our yard to moose all the time and to, you know, I mean, there was always interesting something going on, whether it was coyotes or foxes. Nobody around, very peaceful. No noise. I think I still cherish that if anything. Yeah, the scenery, the mountains. I mean, Dad and I would go on his ATV the all terrain vehicle, we'd go up to Alligator, you know, just the two of us. And we'd get stuck and, oh yeah, we'd have to get it unstuck. It would take us a long time sometimes. But it was always a good memory to remember, to know how to do it yourself if it ever happened you know. And it was, he did teach me a lot and I probably will cherish it because I've used it quite a few times. Where I don't think a lot of kids nowadays have that challenge you know, to see and stuff. Yeah, the beautiful fields and when the hay came up and stuff, was unbelievable. The garden, you know, was huge, huge, and it was always a big job....

Claire: And you were.....

Marie: And we stored a lot of it in our basement, cause it was sand and we kept it all in there and stuff, and.....

Claire: And yeah, cause you wouldn't have had freezers....

Marie: No, no.....

Claire: At least not till you got the power....

Marie: Not till we got our power, till we got the generator later on and stuff. And I mean, we had the old wringer washer outside and we had two wringer washers and one was the

rinse and one was the wash and that's was how we did it. And it doesn't bother me if I had one today to do it the same.

Claire: Not unlike, I mean, unlike a lot of other people who have never experienced it.

Marie: Yeah.

Claire: You talk about the quietness, and you know I've hiked back in that area and there's some pretty good trails there and I think it's used a lot by ATVs and hikers and stuff, but, when you used to live there, was it pretty quiet?

Marie: The main road used to go through our property, by our house, and....

Claire: This is the, what is called the Alligator Lake Road?

Marie: Yes, and Dad rerouted it to the back of the property, just because there was so much traffic going through, back then, especially when it was hunting season, you know. And the horses were let loose in the winter. He kind of really, you know, moved the road and then put new fencing up and stuff, and changed it around. Which stopped a lot of it coming through. I mean I think on the grounds of once the road was built, everybody came faster and stuff, and that's normal in anything in life, so it kind of stopped a lot of that. And most people knew where we lived and came to visit and. Everybody knew where the new road was, yeah. And, you know, Alligator, it's gorgeous up there, it really is. Yes there's changes, and there will always be changes. We've all changed, so, you know and it's not a bad think and it's not a good thing, and it's a positive, as I look at it, you know.

Claire: Your back yard, your wonderful back yard, for quite a few years.

Marie: Yes, yes it was. And great memories, cause we still talk about it a lot, you know, when our brother and sisters get together. We talk about the farm, and who came out, like which of my, Dad used to come out with the kids. My sister when she finally came up from Vancouver and thought it was the longest place in the world to drive to (laughter). Its still when we laugh about it and she says about me too now, where I live, so it's kind of interesting.

Claire: Depends on what you are used to.

Marie: yeah, yeah.

Claire: Do you know any of the, like, former history, of why that was a farm, like, before your Dad, or the outfitter used to use it?

Marie: No, none of the history on that aspect, I don't know. And how my Dad purchased it is beyond me, how he met somebody, or how he knew how to buy it. I have no idea on that aspect. Yeah, it's always been a joke, (laughter). If we only knew!

Claire: Yeah, I don't think those kind of deals happen today.

Marie: And it was a shake of a hand, back then, you know. My Dad worked very hard at it, because, you know, to be building it himself. Digging up the black dirt and hauling it to town. And everybody had that, everybody knew about that.

Claire: And once he left it, when he sold it, to Holly's I think....

Marie: Yes, yes.

Claire: Did he ever come back?

Marie: No, he never came back to visit. He went to Dawson Creek, for a year, and then he had bought a farm there, a smaller one. And then he said nah, he wanted to go to Smithers. He loved Smithers, the mountains and stuff. He bought a place there also, ten acres. Yeah, and passed away there. But loved it. Not as much as here. I mean, we have a lot of family history in the Yukon, you know, from when he first came up in the forties, to Burwash.

Claire: Where did he come from?

Marie: Quebec, Montreal. My mom was from Edmonton.

Claire: Did she speak French too? I assume your Dad spoke French.

Marie: No, no. Yes, he was fluent in French. He would only speak, we never learnt French as a family. He wanted to, he always said he came to the Yukon to be Canadian when he first left home, and he wanted to learn English, and to be somewhere he, was way back from another country, that was not really, that he'd never seen. And he learnt how to, English from catalogues and phone books and stuff. And when he went into camps. And it was always funny cause he said some words and we would always give him a hard time, as he grew older those were the words he used to use, and we'd laugh about it. No, no, and then bought a lodge at ten ninety five (mile 1095) at Burwash. My Mom was from a well to do family, and was kind of devastated coming here.

Claire: It was tough on her?

Marie: Yes, cause she did leave when I was two. So that was kind of hard from very high society to out here, in those days. Yeah, you know, it's interesting. And you know, I give all my Dad the credit in the world, for raising us four, you know, as a young man, he too, in the sixties, it wasn't heard of back then. And he did a great job. You know, I have no regrets of any of the stuff we didn't have, or couldn't have, it doesn't matter. And we've learnt that.

Claire: You had other things that were more important.

Marie: Yeah. It was always, I think, as a father, he was, you know, we didn't have very much money, but he always made it special. If it was only Christmas, and we only got one present, that was fine. He always made everything exciting for us.

(Interruption: phone rings) Pause here. Interview continues.

Claire: So Marie, it sounds like you had a really good time growing up in the country. And you are now also living in the country. Different area of the Yukon. Maybe tell a little bit about that.

Marie: I lived in Carcross for awhile. Then moved to Tagish, where I am married now to Russ Rose, but everybody calls him Roby. And we live in the country on one hundred and sixty acres on a creek. It's beautiful, peaceful, quiet. It's not the same as the Annie Lake, as when I grew up, but it's very much the same in a lot of ways. I mean, it has grown lots too, just like Annie Lake has, so has Tagish. And there's the beautiful scenery, the White Mountain which I hike up. I bike a lot in the area, so I do a lot of biking and I see a lot of the area. Sometimes by myself and sometime, you know, we have a biking group that we go with. But its the peace and quiet when I bike by myself, its kind of interesting. People are appalled because you go by yourself, you might see a bear. But you know, if its going to happen, its going to happen. You lived in the country, you see it all your life, it's not a big thing. You still have the beautiful mountains, you have the water, you know. And we have a lot of the wildlife that we have there as I did as a kid here. And I think that's probably has stayed with me to live in the country. Because I cherish it so much and I see so much. You know, I'm driving down the road and we'll spot things everywhere. It's crazy. Where a lot of people just drive by and they won't even see it you know.

Claire: You're sort of in tune.

Marie: Yeah, because you know it, and its changed. On the mountains, you'll look and "that was never there, what's that?" My husband is really better than me at it, that's for sure. You know, you see the positives of it. And I think, over the years here, when I did come and hike the mountains and stuff again. About fire years ago I came back and I went up Red Ridge with some friends, and we hiked it. It brought back unbelievable memories. And it was great, you know. The positive about it, I think the funny things probably. We had an open beam house, the walls were eight feet tall, and I made my Dad bring in the hugest hugest tree, that he could ever find on the farm. (laughter) It took up all our living room....

Claire: Like a Christmas tree?

Marie: Yeah, yeah, it was at Christmas. And he just shook his head. And I said, you know Dad, it will always be something I will always remember. And of course, when everybody came, you couldn't even sit here, there a huge tree in the house (laughter). Well, the poor tree just about died because it was so hot in the house with the wood stove

in it and everything on it.(laughter). We had a manx cat, he just loved to go up and down on it. It took me forever to walk on the top of the walls, to decorate it. It was pretty interesting, it was always laughable. Cause Dad always had a sense of humour on different things. But the time I think, spent here, I will always cherish, for me especially as the youngest in the family.

Claire: Well, we think that the Annie Lake Road is a very special place to live on, and sometimes, I wonder what the new people who come to our area think about living here. Because a lot of times, now that there's a lot of people living on the road, we don't get to know them. Sometimes they only live on the road for a couple of years and then they move on. But if you had to say to a new person moving into the area, any words of wisdom about an old time resident, what would they be?

Marie: I would think cherish the air, what you see around you. The quietness, you know. The walking through the bush and listening to things. The birds, the animals. And, you know, what everybody's around you, you don't have to change it, just because you want change, just because you come from somewhere else. You know, I think that's the biggest thing. I think it's really tough when you see new people come and they want everything that they had in Whitehorse. And, you know, I'm from what not having anything to having, oh well, I can do without it, even though I have it now. But you know what? It's not such a big thing in life; it's not a thing you need. And its quite interesting how, I mean, I see it all over. And most of it is a lot of people who do move out and do want a lot of these changes, and they don't realize that people who have been there, they don't want change. Cause that's why they lived in the country, that's why they enjoy the beautiful stuff. That why, you know, I mean to me, I couldn't care if the roads ever got done. I mean, it was a challenge of learning how to drive properly.....

Claire: And the fun of helping your neighbour get out, and the feeling of community....

Marie: Oh yes.

Claire: you got. Oh, someone is stuck, well let's go help.

Marie: Yeah, you know, the friendliness and the, yeah, not to be the big society of what the big towns have become. I mean, that's why the country is the country. It's your own perceiving of your own world, and your own well being of it, really. And the love of it, you know. You've got to love the country to enjoy the country. I mean, in a city, you just go all the time, you're not really enjoying what you enjoy I think sometimes. And you don't realize that.

Claire: So, sounds like you have a good place there in Tagish, and you're going to be there for a good long time. And you have a good sense, a good community there?

Marie: Yeah. It's growing. But it's the same with any community. It's the same. New people come and they want a lot of change, and people don't like change. But, there's good change and bad change, you know. But I don't think that they have to bring a lot of

the city to the country, and I think that's the biggest problem that we have. I think in any little part of anywhere, you know, especially in the Yukon. Everybody wants the big changes. Which, to me, I mean, I'm fine if they don't pave the roads or have gravel on it. Grade it once in awhile and so be it. I mean, I grew up without being there. Yeah it took you longer, so what? I didn't need to get to town that quick, you know. To me, it's not such a big hurry. And I think that's the problem with the next generation. You know, once you move into the country, you want to get to town quicker cause you need to do this that and the next thing....

Claire: Yeah, or you want to make the country more like the town so maybe you should stay in town?(laugh)

Marie: Yeah, and that's probably my biggest thing. You know, everybody wants a lot of changes. I mean, there's good changes and bad. You've got to look at both sides. And I think some of the new ones don't. Yeah, which is sad. I mean, yeah, Tagish has changed lots too, over the years. I mean my husband has been there for fifty years. And he's seen lot of changes. And he's developed Tagish over the years himself, you know, but, you know, like he says, you take it with the good and the bad. But it's also the new ones who have never lived in the country long enough to realize until they do, and then all of a sudden, it dawns on them. They stay or they go, and that's what happens quite a bit. You know, they come for two years, like after two years, they say, "oh this isn't quite what we want>" And some of them do go back to the city, and some don't. They find out that reality is reality and it's totally different, yeah.

Claire: Do you have any closing things to say that you would like to say to the group, the "Voices of the Valley"?

Marie: I think, to cherish what you have. The beautiful, still, clean water, the clean air, the animals that are around that you see and stuff, and to enjoy it. It's not such a big thing that it has to be paved. It doesn't have to. Oh yes, there's development and let development. Development wouldn't have happened and we wouldn't be here today, you know. And yeah, there was only three families when I lived here, but, and it's not such a sad thing that it has developed, because it has given other people being able to see the country and to enjoy it as much as a kid as I did. Probably not as when I was younger, I would probably not have appreciated it as much. But as I got older into my teens, I saw more of it you know, and then cherished it even more. I mean, yes, you see the city and you see country, and I fall back on the country....

Claire: You'll take the country over the city any day.

Marie: Yeah, yeah.

Claire: A true country gal!

Marie: I would say so! (laughter)

Claire: Well, its been a real honour to be able to interview you Marie. And thank you so much. And I'd like to thank Diane Parenti, for being the techie this afternoon. And we will be giving you a copy of the transcript. And I'm sure the community will be very happy to hear your words, and to read them.

Marie: I hope so. You know, I hope a lot of people see both sides of what, I mean Annie Lake has changed. I mean so has the Carcross Road, you know, it has really really changed. And its not such a bad thing, it really isn't. But people got to realize you know, you're still in the country.

Claire: And I think it's good for people to know the history of where they are coming to, so they can understand it and get a sense of place, a sense of what happened before them. I know I certainly want to know. I really enjoyed hearing your story. And I would really like to go back and back and back to, you know, what happened in this valley, two hundred years ago. I'd love to know that.

Marie: There's still a lot of history in the valley, and everywhere in the Yukon, really. But, to see the growth, is interesting even in my eyes. And I don't see it as a negative, I see it's a challenge and everything in life is a challenge, so, it's a good and bad. So, you take it as it is.

Claire: Yep. Thank you

Marie: Thank you very much.