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Memoires

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Rolland Alain

March 7th 1985

Memoires of Rolland Alain from birth 1913 to 71st year 1985

I was born in Delmas Sask. on October 27th 1913. For a number of years I was the only redheaded boy in our town and needless to say I was spoilt by nearly all the people in our town and was pretty good at telling little fibs. When I was three years old my Dad and Mom and Yvonne went down East and the rest of us were placed in different relatives' homes. They sent me to Uncle Archie's but never told me that I had to sleep there. At night I cried and wanted to go home but after they gave me a few candies I stayed and liked to stay there afterwards. I was young but I can still remember when they got off the train and Yvonne had a nice little fur coat.

I just loved my Aunt Malvina Bellavance and went to their place a lot. She always had little treats. Her bread was never as good as Mom's but to me it tasted a lot better. Her butter was real salty and I just loved it. Uncle Frank Bellavance was a cranky looking person but his looks were worse than his actions at times. But, boy, if you riled him up, he'd tell you off pretty good. When he went to water the horses, I was right there alongside old Topsy, my special horse. She was so nice til one day she finished drinking and stepped on my foot and took my big toenail right off. I cried and jumped up and down screaming. Uncle was scared and mad. He hollered "Get to Hell home, you little bugger!"

At that age I was very gullible and one day Mom bought me a nice new pair of high top rubber boots and I was really proud of them. One day Mom and I were at Heon's and Mr. Heon saw my boots and said they were really nice but how would I like to trade them for a little calf. He warned me that if I traded I'd have to take the calf home by myself and I assured him that I could do it. I was all for the trade because he told me after the calf got big I could sell it and be able to buy lots of rubber boots. He said the reason he wanted my boots was because his son had to have them now and didn't have time to wait for the calf to grow up. I said OK I'd take the calf but he said I'd have to come back tomorrow because his boy wasn't home right then. So the next day I went there but Renee wasn't home. So when I went back two days later he said I should of come the day before. He thought I had changed my mind so Renee bought another pair but he told me to go and see Mr. Douville because he had a boy and maybe he'd trade a calf for my boots. But Dad thought the joke had gone far enough and said he wanted me to keep my boots.

A few miles south of Delmas lived a bachelor who was a little retarded and certain times of the moon set him off. When that happened he'd come to Uncle Bellavance's to see Marie who was really scared of him. She'd run upstairs and stay there til he left. I'd talk to her and she'd tell me not to talk because he'd know she was at home after being told by her parents that she was out. Uncle Bellavance had an awful temper and he had a three year old steer that would go around sucking the milk cow. One day Uncle grabbed a big stick and he was really in a rage and was beating the steer over the head. I hollered that I'd tell Gramma if he didn't quit so he

told me, "Get to the house, you little buggler!" That seemed to be his favorite word for me and said if I didn't beat it I'd get the same treatment as the steer was getting.

Two of my best friends were Jean-Paul Schiller and Alfred Duvall and they were at our place a lot because we had a shallow ravine and some bush not too far from the house. We'd play ranching like Grampa L'Heureux was doing. We'd go and find stones. I used to pick blue ones, the biggest ones would be the bulls, the cows a little smaller and little ones for the calves. Alfred would have white ones and J-Paul maybe red ones. We built corrals out of little sticks and used string for the wire. We'd trade cattle and sell and buy. We would play at that for hours and hours. We had few toys but made up for it by making our own.

Yvonne was a few years older than me. One day it was raining outside so we were playing in the house and she said, "Let's play Lady and her dog." Of course, I was the dog. We had a little yellow fuzzy coat and she put that on me. Then she put a rope around my neck and she was holding the rope. I was a pretty wild dog and jumped at the other kids trying to bite them and she'd pull me back. I'd lift my leg at chairs and she'd slap me and pull me back. We had a high chair and before she could stop me I crawled just about through it. I got stuck so tight that I couldn't get out. I started to cry and Mother had to saw off a rung to get me out. Then she used her stick on me pretty good!

Mary-Paule was two years younger than me and we believed everything Yvonne told us. When Mother would be gone to the store, Yvonne would brag us up so much by saying we were so nice that she was sure if she went upstairs for awhile that the dishes would be done by the time she came down. So the two suckers would have them done. One time Dad, Mother and all the kids except Yvonne, Mary-Paule and I went out. We were going to stay at home. Yvonne had taken money out of Dad's pockets and had hidden it under boards, sticks, rocks etc. After they left Yvonne said, "Let's look for money. First, let's go and look in the basement." She said to me, "Look under that board"...and, Boy!...I found twenty-five cents. Then in the yard we found some in all kinds of places. Altogether we found around two dollars. We went to the store and Mary-Paule and I bought some candies with our share. Yvonne bought a doll and I can remember her crying because she had to take her doll back to the store when Dad found out what she had done.

When I was about six years old, Mother went to Saskatoon for a serious operation. One day Dad and the priest went there to see Mother and they took me along. I was to stay at one of my cousin's - Anna Bellavance who is Mrs. Best. I guess things were arranged ahead of time because when we arrived in Saskatoon and drove to Anna's, she wasn't there but Dad knew where the key was. We went in and they told me what was what. I was to stay at Anna's til Mother was ready to go back home and take me with her. They said I'd go to see her with Anna. Then Dad said, "Here's four dollars and you give two to Anna and keep two for yourself." After they left I loomed around the house for awhile and then went outside. I saw a woman walking by with a real bad limp so I started following her and walked for a long time and never thought that I might get lost. Dad had parked the car on the street where I was walking. He picked me up and told me not to do that again. When we got back Anna was back so she kept an eye on me. Dad and the priest then took off and went back home. I didn't give Anna her two dollars right away because he only gave me three pieces (dollars) and I thought, "How come he said four dollars?" So I thought I'd give Anna one dollar and keep two, then I got scared and thought that maybe Dad had told her how much I was supposed to give her. I went to the bathroom and took

out the money, then I noticed that one of the bills wasn't the same color. One had a two marked on it and then I realized that one was a two-dollar bill so I gave Anna that one, just in case there was a mistake with it, and I kept the other two for myself. Anyway, Anna and I got along real good and when Mother came out, we went home together and that was another thrill - my first ride on a train.

When Dad, Mom and Yvonne went back to Eastern Canada they invited one of Dad's sixteen year old nephews to come and work for Dad. His name was Armand Hardy. He used to spend all his money on punch boards and they were cheap to play and paid out a lot of chocolates. He gave us all the chocolates we could eat. He would watch the punch board real close and when there was only about thirty punches left, he'd buy them all and get a ten pound chocolate box. One night there was a dance in our house and my two friends and I found the big box of chocolates and we each took a couple. I was just putting the box back when I heard somebody coming up the stairs. It scared me and I dropped the box and stepped in it. It was Armand coming up and when he saw the mess, he found us hiding in a walk-in clothes closet. He was pretty near crying because he was going to pass that box of chocolates around to all the people. He told me he'd never give me anything anymore and I didn't blame him as that was an awful thing to do. He left shortly afterwards and went back East.

My two chums, Jean-Paul and Alfred and I were crooked little devils. We'd steal eggs from our place and sell them at the store but that didn't work very long because the storekeeper, Mr. Roy, asked if I had permission to sell those eggs and I said, "Not always." So he told us not to bring any more.

In the summertime my Dad and Mom often went out. Before leaving they would tell us if we weren't good and behave, the "Croc Mitaine" would get us. As soon as it got dark we'd go in the house and all go to bed in one bed, scared of every little noise we'd hear; thinking it might be the "Croc Mitaine". At our place that seemed to be the thing to do to keep us good.

We had a lot of fun at home because we were never alone. Desjardins lived about six miles from our town and asked me to spend a weekend at their place. I had a good time, went with Mr. Desjardins to haul a barrel of water. He upset the barrel when the clevis broke and the sudden stop caused the barrel to fall so we had to go back for another one. What I liked is that he let me drive the horses. When night came though I was so homesick that I couldn't eat my supper. The daughter, Rosa, gave me candies and she'd tell me to hurry up because she'd take them but it didn't work. They took me home the next day.

When I started going to school at the age of six or seven, I had it in my head that I'd take a lunch to school every day but we only lived not quite a half mile from school. The only time we took our lunch was in the spring when Dad had to use horses and stoneboat on account of too much water on the road and in the ditches.

I didn't like school very much and in the summertime I'd daydream a lot about catching gophers and selling their tails for two or three cents each. The gophers were so plentiful that they'd destroy crops. We used to carry water and pour it in the holes and drown them but it took two or three pails of water to get one of them out. One day Dad said, "I'll show you how to get a lot of gophers with very little water." He heated a half barrel of water real hot and put it on a stoneboat. He'd drive us close to the hole and one cup of real hot water would pop the gophers out so we made a killing that day.

We went to a Catholic school and the nuns were teachers. One afternoon we went to church to go to confession. I had forgotten my rosary and I saw that Sister St. Aubert had a rosary about four feet long. I went to her and said that I had forgotten my rosary at home. Before I could ask for hers, she smiled and said, "You're not getting mine...you can recite your penance at home."

One year people got together and made a skating rink. It only had one board around but was a lot of fun. We learned to skate in no time and were pretty good skaters. I think there was only one English family in town and their name was Holgates. One of the boys, Lawrence, was a real tall man but a very poor skater. One night I was skating with a friend of mine, Armand La Coursierre. I didn't speak English and Armand said, "Tell Lawrence, 'Hi, Jackass' and he'll like you because it means 'How are you?'" When I said that, he looked mad and started chasing me but he was such a poor skater that he never caught me. I kept out of his way after Armand told me what it really meant.

The janitor at our school was a cranky old man by the name of Gieppe. They used coal for fuel and I guess some of the boys were using one side of the pile of coal for a bathroom because they'd pee on the coal. One morning all the windows at school were open, the old man was mad and the teacher was mad! I guess he used that side of the coal pile that had been "treated" and the smell was terrible. Boys had no recess for quite a while.

About five families had to use cutters or buggies to go to school and had an oat sheave to feed their horses. As the Convent was close to our school, the chickens would come over and eat all the oats on the sheaves. So four or five of us would herd the chickens in the barn and two or three of us would put the chickens to sleep. You put their head under one wing and pick them up with both hands and hold them tight enough so their head can't slip out. Then rock them back and forth a few times and put them down gently. They stay there quite a while. The barn had a sliding door and we'd open it about the size of a hen and Walter Barry was the official kicker. He'd kick them in the rear and put them through the door and they'd wake up and run to the Convent. In a few days, some of them died and the teacher soon saw what was going on. So there were more days without recess and no more fun.

I was just in the first grade at school so I wasn't very old when my Mom told me that an old hen was setting on a bunch of eggs and told me to break them all so that the hen would quit setting as it was too late in the summer. I heard Louis and our cousin, Phillip, saying that if a person sat on the eggs, they would hatch. I told Yvonne about it and we went at it right away. We made a nest in the old house and fixed it so I wouldn't break the eggs. I sat on them and was going to stay on til they hatched. Yvonne brought me bits of bread and soda crackers and we were all set. That was til Mother walked in and I got another session with her famous willow whip.

One year I was in a play at school and my Grampa L'Heureux said he'd give me a real live lamb that we needed for the play and that I could keep the lamb after. Either he forgot or was just teasing me but I never got my lamb and was really disappointed.

We had to go by Bellavance's to go to school and I pretty near always stopped on the way back from school and Auntie would give me cookies or candies. A new family had moved close by and the girls used to play with

me and they taught me songs. We had fun. Their names were Marie and Memie Dumoullin and they were about twenty years old. Memie had a real nice horse and I'd go with her when she'd go to the barn and put the saddle on. She'd go for a ride and I'd wait for her.

In the wintertime we used to get a ride to school with Michaud's. There were three of them and five of us so the poor old horse, "Major", had quite a load. Smokey had built a little caboose that we put on top of their cutter so we'd be warm but we had to take it off on the way back because their dad would be mad if he found out about it. A little later I had a little dog called Buster and I broke him in to pull me on the sleigh so I'd go to school with him. We only lived not quite half a mile from school so walking to school was no big do.

I wasn't very old when I broke in my first sleigh dog (Buster). Later a family by the name of Normandin moved in and he started a tannery in our town. On Saturdays I could get a job from him straightening nails. They used barrels of nails to stretch hides on the wall. He had a big dog called Woppy and told me I could break him in and if we ever moved away, he would give me the dog. A few years later Dad sold out in Delmas and moved to Veillardville. When I went to get Woppy he said he had changed his mind because my Dad had not sold to his friend and he hated the people Dad had sold land to. After we left, Woppy and his brother (another big dog) killed a horse and had to be destroyed. It cost him quite a lot of money.

I remember at a Christmas concert I noticed that Santa had a big middle finger so I hollered out, "Hey, that's my dad!" The teacher hushed me up and Dad knew that I wanted a sleigh so bad. He didn't call my name but said, "Who wants a sleigh?" I ran and got there first and got the sleigh. Sad ending for that sleigh episode as I dragged it on top of a straw stack and I'd slide down the stack. I left it there and in the spring my dad burned the stack, so I lost my sleigh.

Dad had bought quite a few head of cattle and thought he had a good scheme to get me to help with the chores. He told me I could have the calf of my choice and the next year he'd trade me a little calf for a big one - so I never got to sell one.

Our town was ninety-eight per cent Catholic and one year we had a big procession. The priest was on the lead and another boy and I were carrying candles. The rest of the people were behind. Right where we passed there was a ten-cent piece on the road and I didn't have time to pick it up. As soon as the do was over I went back there and looked all over but couldn't find it.

Going back a little; the Dumoullins' uncle was a doctor. When he passed away my two chums and I went to the wake. We were the only ones there and all of a sudden, we got the giggles. We were laughing so hard that Memie came in and kicked us out. She said we were three little bums!

Dad had an old man staying in a little house on our place. One day Yvonne and I decided to play make believe and we were going to put a staple in the old man's nose. He woke up, gave Yvonne a good kick in the seat and I hid under the table til it was safe to get out.

One night Yvonne and I and some kids from town were playing Branchy Branch and we noticed a whole flock of sheep near the stockyard; also, a covered wagon and the horses tied to the stockyard. One of the kids said the owner was gone to Battleford on the train so we went in his wagon and ate all his food and raised heck. Next day he came back and offered a

eward if he could find out who done it. A good thing that Dad didn't hear about it and nobody told on us or Dad would really give it to us. He didn't like little thieves like us.

Dad and Mom were away for a couple days and Smokey and Louis were going to make me carry the wood in "their chores". They said they would give me a good beating but I wouldn't do it. Louis got his .22 rifle and was going to shoot my dog so I carried the wood in.

As Delmas was ninety-eight per cent Catholic, the church was pretty near always full on Sundays. We had nuns for teachers and they saw that we went to afternoon service. One day, one of the choir boys, Wilfred Barry, didn't know the priest was right behind him. As the statues of the Virgin Mary, St. Joseph and Our Lord Jesus were on the floor, he grabbed Jesus by the throat and made believe that he was choking him. We thought it was funny but the priest didn't...and then, neither did Wilfred!

We had a whole bunch of relatives in the Jackfish country, about fifteen miles north of Delmas. When they came for a visit, we were so excited. We could hear them coming a while before we could see them as they had strings of bells on the harnesses of the horses and big chimes bolted on the shafts of the cutters.

In those days horses were plentiful and cheap. We all had a pony except one boy in town called Alfred Gagnon. His parents were poor and had a hard time earning a living. I don't think Mr. Gagnon was in good health and Mrs. Gagnon took in washing to help out. One day, Dad went to an auction sale and bought a nice little horse for six dollars so he gave it to Alfred. Boy, was he pleased. Now he could go where we went for rides.

I always have to go back a little cause I keep forgetting things that happened. When the Schillers moved to Delmas from Montreal, they had four girls and four boys. One of the girls was named Jeanne and to me she was a real queen. When I'd meet her, I'd lift my cap and say, "Bonjour" and she'd smile. I often thought that she must have found me a little silly or doing that. I bet she had quite a laugh with her sisters when she'd tell them.

Joseph Bellavance was about eighteen when he bought some land south of Paynton and eighteen miles from Delmas. He didn't like staying alone so he asked Mom and Dad if I could stay with him during the summer holidays. I was about ten years old then. So I went with Joe and, boy!, was that the life. I was so excited cause we lived in a tent and Joe would make bannock instead of bread with lots of good old cheese, butter and jam - food fit for a king!

I had my very own pony while I was there. Her name was Jennie and I just loved her. Joe had a cranky dog and he didn't like me. He'd growl at me but Joe said that he'd like me after awhile. When I'd wake up in the morning Joe would be gone breaking land and I'd fry a couple of eggs on a little stove outside. The dog would be close-by and if I talked to him he'd growl and show his teeth. But after a few days of his being quite cranky, we became good friends and he'd follow me all over.

There was a rancher named Mr. Paynton and he liked little boys. He had none of his own. He told me one day that if I could herd his bull home he'd give me ten dollars. I chased that bull so often but every time I'd try he'd run into the lake on the corner of Joe's land. There were soft spots in there and Joe had told me to watch that I didn't sink my horse in there and lose her. So I never did get that bull home.

The people around there had a beef ring. Every week they'd butcher a beef and divide between all the members of the beef ring. Each member had to supply a beef when their turn came. So when it came to Mr. Paynton's turn, he hired me to help one of his cowboys to herd the steer where they were going to butcher. Mr. Paynton paid me two dollars for my help.

I had been with Joe about a month, I guess, when things turned real sour for me. I was riding around the lake when I noticed a young colt with the longest legs I'd ever seen on a horse. So I started chasing him with Jennie and we were really going all out when Jennie stepped into a badger hole and went head over heels. I shot off her back like a bullet and my arm went into a gopher hole and I spun around and the wind was knocked out of me. When I got up I looked at my arm and I pretty near fainted. It was broke real bad and was twisted right around. It didn't hurt "atall" but I was so weak that I couldn't get back on my horse. So I started walking back to the tent but was scared of the cattle I had to go close to because of one bull that looked real mean. But I made it to the tent. Joe had just turned his horses loose in the pasture and was just going to get supper ready when I walked in, white as a sheet and weak as a lily. He asked me if I could ride to his brother-in-law's place if he helped me get on Jennie but I was too scared and weak. He laid me down on some blankets and went and got a couple of work horses and hitched them on a wagon. He lifted me in there on some more blankets and took off but by now my arm was real sore and I think I vomitted and was sick. Poor Joe was so worried but we arrived at his brother-in-law's place, got in his car and drove eighteen miles to Delmas. The doctor took a look at my arm and asked one of my Uncles to grab my arm above the elbow. The Doc took the bottom part of my arm and pulled. I was crying and in no time "atall" it felt pretty good but as they had no ether, it was pretty rough treatment. He never fixed my elbow so I have a crooked arm and in damp weather it can get pretty sore. When I got out of the doctor's, Mother was going to take me home but my old Aunt Malvina said the kids at home might hurt me so she had a big bed ready for me and I was treated like a king. I missed about a month of school on account of my arm. Today I would probably miss a few days only.

In Delmas, the young people had a habit of meeting at somebody's house for a few drinks before going to midnight mass. One Christmas one of my friends and I didn't know what power wine had and we each drank too much of it. We were so intoxicated that my uncle missed mass cause he had to stay home with me as I was so sick.

One year Yvonne and I decided to put on a picnic for the kids. We built a booth for food and a fish pond made out of a few pieces of lumber and some canvas. We put in all kinds of little prizes. Then we had prizes for the foot races, jumping, sack race, and the three-legged race. In the afternoon we'd have a bronc riding show with a young horse and a couple of steers. Louis was the cowboy and he could ride pretty good. We had a boxing card at night after supper. I was supposed to box with my cousin from Edmonton and tried him in a bout the day before but his Dad was a boxer and his boy was too good for me. So I asked a kid from our place if he'd take this boxer on. He asked if he was pretty good and I told him that he was no hell. So he boxed with him that night, put on a pretty good show but had a bloody nose and earned his share of the money - fifty cents for him and a dollar for the winner. We bought all our stuff for our picnic - bars, gum, candies and a few prizes - on Dad's account at the store. We always made enough out of admissions and sales to cover our expenses so next day we'd go to the store and pay our bills.

While we were still in Delmas Dad had a young bull that went berserk

one day. It bawled and jumped over the gate. As we were watching, it ran to the railroad track and my Uncle Archie, foreman, and his men were coming with the motor car. The bull took after them and good thing they could go faster than him because it could have been serious. Anyway, the bull stayed on the track and looked around to see what he could tackle next. The noon passenger train was coming and the bull stood his ground; the train didn't stop so you can imagine what happened to Mr. Bull!

The Saskatchewan River was only a mile from our place and to get to the river, you had to go down a hill that was about half a mile long. In wintertime, a whole bunch of us would slide down the hill and on the river for about an eighth of a mile. It was real fun but tiresome going back up, pulling our sleighs behind us. Louis had a little bobsleigh and he put a ten-foot plank on it with one bob on front and a bob at the back. About eight of us could get on that. The hill had about three curves in it so Louis had to steer it pretty good. Some of the kids had homemade runners with a cross bar for a seat and another for their feet. Smokey put runners on a bicycle and used that. The only trouble was that we made the hill so icy and the people that lived across the river had to use the hill to get to town and had a lot of trouble as the horses would sometimes slip and fall. We were cursed plenty of times for icing the hill with our sliding.

About four miles from Delmas was a real nice shallow lake. It would get real warm in summertime because the water was not deep. It had a nice sandy beach too. In the summer months, on Sundays, our dad and other people would take us to the lake. We'd leave after mass. Dad would hitch a team of horses to a wagon with a low box. We'd take lots to eat cause we would come back late in the day. We'd have so much fun and we'd dream all week about going back. Some of the older boys would go to the lake on horseback and one day my brother, Smokey, drove his horse into the lake so she could have a drink. She layed down and started to roll. Smokey had to jump in the water with his clothes on. It gave everyone quite a laugh. One day, I went back to the wagon to get a towel. It was under a blanket and when I pulled the towel out, a garter snake scampered out. It made me jump - not because I was scared because we used to catch snakes and play with them. This lake was named Caplete Lake cause they lived the closest to the lake.

When we were a little older, my two chums, Jean-Paul and Alfred and I were given permission to go to the lake for a weekend but something happened. I can't remember what it was, but we talked a lot about it but never made it there.

I was about nine years old when Phillippe Sousa's band came to North Battleford. I read a poster on a storefront and thought, boy, would I like to go and see that. The day the band was in I found out that Mr. Barry was going to Battleford and I asked him for a ride. He said I could go with him so I jumped in his car and away we went at the wild speed of about thirty miles per hour. I thought, boy, that Mr. Barry is a pretty fast driver. When we got there, he let me out and said that he was going back around five o'clock. He said that he'd pick me up at the Hotel. As it was about one hour too early for the show I decided to go and eat. All I had was thirty-five cents; the show cost twenty-five cents and I had ten cents to pay for my dinner. So I ordered two corn on the cob and that was my dinner. Then I went to the show and did I ever enjoy it! On the poster it said that the band numbered three hundred and one vocalist - a real good singer. When we got back to Delmas I had a lot to tell my friends at school.

The circus train went through our town and it used to stop to take on

water for the locomotive. We knew that the day before the circus started, the train would be in our town around noon. Our teacher would let us go to see and hear the animals in the colored circus cars. Boy, that was a big event and the stories you'd hear from some of the kids! Some had pretty wild imaginations. Like, one lion had his head out of the car - not true - or another could hear fighting or people screaming in the cars. Some kids thought that they were maybe being attacked by a tiger or lion.

Dad always seemed to find enough money to take us to the circus for at least one day. That's all we could talk about for weeks to come and we had our own wild versions of what we'd heard and saw.

The year that the drayman's wife, Rose Bousquet, died, our teacher let us go to see the body. In those days there were no undertakers so she was laying in her bed. As it was a real hot day in July, the flies were buzzing around her face and there was froth coming out of her mouth. Her husband, Mike, kept shooing the flies away and wiping the froth coming out of her mouth. We were all around her and staring; finally, Mike told us we'd better go back to school.

I forget what year it was but my dad had an auction sale. He had a surplus of machinery and a lot of stuff that he wanted to sell. He thought that would be the best way to do it. I thought that we were selling everything and moving for parts unknown, so I told my teacher and she asked me where. I said I wasn't too sure but I thought it might be a long way; maybe the Old Country. I had seen a poster talking about the Old Country. I guess my teacher must have asked my dad. He told her what was what - but it made me feel important just talking about it.

The old man that lived in a little shack on our place lived there for about ten years. He was a little queer and our neighbor across the road from us would tease the old fellow. His name was Renaud and the neighbor was Richard Prince. He had big beautiful horses and the team that Mr. Renaud used to do the chores was small. But old Renaud would claim they could outpull Prince's horses and a fight would be on. Richard would laugh and argue with the old man; that happened just about every morning!

Mother was against hiring this man because we didn't need him but Dad felt sorry for him. He did a few chores around the barn but never worked in the field and never worked in the garden. He'd buy stuff at auction sales and Dad would sometimes have to pay for these things. One day he bought two horses and Dad was mad because we had all the horses we needed.

We had a dog named Bas Blanc and he followed the old man all over. The old man taught the dog how to howl when he'd tell him to. He'd say, "Fait donc, Petit, Petit, fait oo oo oo". The old man would make those noises and the dog would howl. Mr. Renaud had a sister that lived across the village from us and he'd go and play cards with her til one or two o'clock in the morning. He'd tell the dog to howl all the time they were coming home and he'd wake people up. He made a few enemies that way.

He never missed going to church. Sometimes we'd grumble cause we'd have to go and he'd tell us, "Bas Blanc doesn't go to church and he seems to be alright."

A stranger came to our place one night and asked the old man the way to a person who lived a few miles from town. Old Renaud could understand a little English but could hardly speak but he told him with a lot of hand pointing. He said, "You go to corner town (moved arm in the direction of town); en route un boue then pick right trou." We were listening to this

and when Dad came home we told him what he'd done. Dad laughed and said the man would probably ask somebody else how to get there.

My Dad hired carpenters and stone masons to build a brick house in 1917. I remember the date because when we moved in the new house my sister, Edithe, was a baby and she was born in 1917. One of the men working for Dad was named Blue. He was a cranky-looking old man and if I was bad at home everybody told me old Blue would take me with him and whip me and all kinds of wild stories. I was so scared of him that when he came in for meals I'd run into the bedroom and hide until he went away. Another man working for Dad in the house was named Lefebvre and when the house was finished he left for home in a caboose on a wagon. The caboose burned on the road but I forget if he got hurt or not.

One day a little dog followed me home and Dad said I could keep him. Mom said she didn't want to see him in the house. I named him Little Sam and at night before going to bed I'd open the door in the hallway that we seldom used and I'd call Sam. He'd sleep in my bed and it was a long time before Mom found out.

Dad went to an auction sale in Meota one year and came back with a balky black horse called Donegan. He hated people and he gave us many a scare. If he caught you away from a fence, he'd put his ears back, open his mouth and come at you as fast as he could run. I guess if he'd of caught us he'd probably hurt us pretty bad. He went after Dad one day but Dad was ready for him with a good club. Once across the nose made him into a coward when Dad was around.

Across the road from our place lived the Richard Prince family. They hired two men to stook one fall and at night they'd play a little game. They'd hop on one leg and they'd hit each other and try to knock one another out. They were Swiss and they'd yodel. That was the first time we'd ever heard anything like that and we really enjoyed it.

Mr. Prince was a great big man that weighed about three hundred pounds. I'd often go with him to go and check on his cattle in a pasture about four miles from home. He'd let me drive the horse and I liked that but his singing was terrible. When he wasn't singing, he'd hum and always the same song.

In the fall, the threshers were working at Prince's place across the road from our place. One of the men had a team of white mules. We just followed those little mules pulling big loads of sheaves and they seemed to pull the load as easy as the horses, so we thought they were something special. My chum, Paul, said, "We're seeing new things every year."

The year they built the first highway close to our place must of been in the nineteen twenties. They were camped right close to Walter Barry's place. He came to school the day they camped and asked me to go with him and see some new things. So after school we went there and, boy, we saw a jet black man for a cook! I couldn't take my eyes off of him and I guess he was used to being stared at. He smiled and said, "Have a cooky." They were good; had lots of raisins in them but were a little heavy. Then we went outside and I asked what they called that kind of a man. He said in French "un negre". Walter said that he had something to show me and he took me to a little shed. There was a little buggy near it and inside the barn was a wee little black horse. Walter said that they called that a Shetland pony. The cook came to the barn and said that we could ride him but not to run him too much. So we really enjoyed those rides. The cook said they bought him that little horse to go and get his groceries. We

drove along the stretch of road they were building and would hardly believe the number of horses and men working. When they moved the camp further along the road, it stopped us from going there as it was too far from home. We missed it but had some happy memories of those days.

One day one of my chums, Paul Ayotte, told another chum and I that he heard that in some places you could go to a picture show and you could hear the actors talking. We both laughed at him and told him that he was going bananas. But a few years later when we moved to Hudson Bay Junction I heard my first talking picture and it made me think that Ayotte would of liked to be there so he could say, "I told you so!" It wasn't a very big success at first as it was records and not timed too well as sometimes you'd see the lips moving and then you'd hear the voice.

Before we left the prairies my Dad and a neighbour built a small sawmill in the Saskatchewan River hills. Saturdays, we'd go to play around there and had a lot of fun cause there was pretty heavy bush. We liked to think we could hear all sorts of wild animals and we'd try to act brave. But when it got a little dark we made sure that we were close to home!

My sister, Mary-Paule, was exactly two years younger than me but was stronger and tougher than me. Dad would make us box and I usually was on the losing end. But Dad would give us ten cents each so we were always willing to box. When Dad and Louis moved to Veillardville in the fall of 1927, he took me to Battleford and the doctor took out my appendix and I shot up in about a year. I was taller than Mary-Paule and we boxed once after we moved but I was too tough for her. That was the last time she would put the gloves on with me.

In 1928, Dad hired a neighbour to help Smokey, my brother, to load two carloads of settler effects and I helped all I could. I remember putting my football on top of a load of goods to load in the boxcar. I don't know what happened but my football never got to our place. I always blamed the town kids for stealing it. In one boxcar we loaded the pigs, big and small, and cows and calves. That filled one car; in the other car, we had ten horses in half the car and in the other end we had a bunch of oats. They sunk the furniture in the oats so it wouldn't get banged around. We had the gramophone near the door so we could play it when we wanted to. Then we had a good bed on top of all that and a bunch of oat sheaves. Two boxcars allowed two people to ride free. A cousin of ours wanted to go to Veillardville so he told me he'd take one of the passes cause I was too small to look after the horses. So they had a hiding place for me under the oat sheaves. Sometimes they'd stop 1 to 2 hours at bigger places (Division Points). Smokey and Joe would go to town and I'd be sweating in my hiding place. They said not to show my face cause the conductor would kick me off the train. Finally we made it home - what a change between Delmas and this solid bush country! We met all kinds of bugs but we liked it except Mother never did like the place cause I guess she missed all her relatives too much.

I can still remember when we were ready to leave Delmas; quite a few people were there to see us off and, boy, when that locomotive hooked onto our cars and tooted the highball, I was so excited about moving to a new place. I guess I was all smiles and would laugh over anything "atall". I think it took three days to get here and it was really a good trip except when I had to hide when they switched the cars so that animals could be watered and fed. When the train stopped at Mistatim, a man climbed into our car; said he was Jim Trail, and that he had come out to meet us. When the train stopped at that little shelter at White Poplar, later named Veillardville, Jim asked us to go into Veillard's house. Mrs. Veillard had

a good lunch ready for us and I had my big white cat with me so she gave her some milk. We stayed there a couple of hours then Dad said we'd better get to bed. We wanted to sleep in the car but Dad wouldn't hear of it so we went home. I slept with Dad and Mr. Bernier. They were both lousy so I didn't sleep all night. So the next night, I slept on the floor with Smokey and Joe Pichette. I didn't know that Joe would wake up at night. He'd light up his pipe and the smell would keep us awake half the night. I thought to myself, "Just wait til tomorrow night." I hid his pipe after he was asleep; when he woke up and couldn't find his pipe, he woke us up and I had to tell him I hid it. I had to go and get it so we could have peace at night once more - except for the smell of his pipe, but we got used to it after awhile.

We moved about two weeks before Mother and the rest came so Dad and four or five men were there already. Dad put me in charge of setting the table and all we ate was bologna, sausage, jam in 25 lb. pails, peanut butter and cookies. One day I found some split peas and I thought I might as well make some pea soup. At about a quarter to twelve I put them in boiling water and put them on the stove. At twelve I called the men in for dinner and poured the soup in soup plates. Mr. Bernier was the first one to try the soup. He took a mouthful and it sounded as if he was chewing gravel and his nose started to bleed. He pushed his plate away and the men started to laugh. Mr. Bernier said the nosebleed was not altogether the fault of the soup but Dad said not to try any more of my wild recipes.

Sometimes Dad would send me to town to get the mail and groceries. I'd go on horseback on old Bronc or with a team and wagon. The roads were so bad from too much rain that the first few years we hardly ever used the car. It was a very tough part of the country for horses and cattle as the mosquitoes and bulldogs made it very tough on them. The first few years we lost quite a few horses and blamed swamp fever. It never hurt the ones that were kept at home but we had too many horses so some had to be turned loose. Dad sold a few horses, otherwise, he probably would have lost more.

When we first moved here the land wasn't fenced and one Sunday, our cattle took off to the neighbour's. We had a young dog named Gyp. She took off and rounded up the cattle and brought them back home. Dad said he could hardly believe what he just saw that little dog do. Dad said, "Boy, she's going to be a dandy!" and she really was. She seemed to enjoy being around cattle and horses. One of my chores was getting the milk cows home at night so we could milk them. As there were no fences in those days, you never knew where they were but we had good cowbell on one of them so that's how we'd find them. Gyp always came with me so when we'd leave I'd say, "Gyp, let's go and get the cows," and after awhile she started running ahead and bringing the cows by herself. But she had them on the run. Two of the cows went through a little gate at once and broke one of the posts. Dad happened to be in the yard at the time so he said not to let her get ahead of me again. He laughed and said, "She's very smart but doesn't know the cow's speed limit." So that was the end of my easy way of getting the cows. Gyp must of had a hundred pups during her life. She was never mean except when she was nursing the pups. One day she bit one of our neighbours on the hand. In a way, I was glad cause he had borrowed our horse, old Bronc, so he could ride him to town. Bronc was a pretty keen horse and when you got on him you had to do it fast and hold his head up or else he'd give a couple of good bucks and throw you off. The man that borrowed him got drunk and when he got on so slowly, Bronc bucked him off and took off. The man had to walk so when he went by our place he was swearing and saying that he was going to give Bronc a trimming. When he got in the barn Gyp had pups and she jumped up and bit him. He was so mad

that he forgot all about old Bronc and giving him a going over.

While I'm on the subject of dogs, I remember Dad had threshed a big pile of straw on a poplar bluff. Under the straw where the trees held the straw up was like a big hall. You could walk inside and it made a good shelter. That fall we lost 2 horses. My chum, Gene Lessard, and I cut the two horses up in chunks and put them in a little shed that was on the farm. We had one dog besides Gyp and I broke him to pull a sleigh. Gene had a little dog and we hooked him up and broke him too. Then we started catching dogs from town; so when Gyp would get in heat, we had all kinds of dogs. Some were tame and on those who were, we put ropes and finally had a whole dog team - 2 huskies, 2 German Shepherds and 7 dogs of doubtful breeding. Like they were a cross between a Collie and a barbed wire fence! We had lots of feed. Dad said if they'd start barking at night we'd have to let them go but we tied them up under that straw stack. We put an old door over the hole and when you were outside you couldn't hear a thing. We never spent a happier winter and in the spring, people that owned their dogs came and got most of them so everything worked out real well. On Saturdays and Christmas holdidays, we'd go miles and miles in any direction "atall". Lessard's little dog was the leader and we called him "Suitcase". He could never learn "Gee" and "Haw" so one of us would grab him by the back strap and turn him. That's the reason for his name.

Gene and I used to like going to visit the bachelors around our district like LeBlanc, Jeff Dorman, Fred LaPlante, Noel, Plaisance and also a married man named Duchesne. They had all kinds of experiences to tell us and where they came from. We just enjoyed going to these many houses and it was also good for our sleigh dogs. But we always had to come home and do our chores and milk a couple cows. I remember Martin Lessard coming to school and he'd scratch his head with his pencil. I think he must of milked just before coming to school because in about half an hour he'd quit scratching cause cow lice only stay in your hair for about that length of time.

When Lessards and our family, the Alains, started going to school here, I was older and bigger than the rest of our gang. I got in a lot of fights on account of kids picking on Gene, Martin and Paul. But after awhile we got to know all the kids at school so we got along a lot better. I might have been tougher than the boys but the toughest one at school was Anna Gagnon. She was stronger than any of us and we were afraid of a rematch with her.

Our first teacher was a very strict, mean and smart alec of a teacher. In the morning, we'd say, "Good morning, Teacher" and he'd never answer; just brush by us and go in the school. He chewed a toothpick all the time and looked real mean. One of the girls at school named Lucy Gagnon sat three seats ahead of mine. She coughed and I did the same. She did it again and I answered. All of a sudden, the teacher asked who was doing that. I said I was and he asked if I had a cold. I said, "A little." I was about as tall as he was but a lot smaller and he looked me over for a little while. Then he said, "You had better quit that." I said I was sorry and at recess, Lucy thanked me for taking all the blame. She said I was lucky cause this teacher would grab a kid by the arms and swing him over the school desks and let his toes just hit the top of the desks. She said it really hurt so I made sure I was a good boy after that.

This episode happened in the spring and after the summer holidays, a new teacher was hired. His name was MacIntosh. He was a real nice teacher and he had us start playing baseball at the school. One day I thought the other team was cheating so I wouldn't pitch any more. The teacher said,

"Come on, Rolland, get in there and play," but I just pretended to play. So he told me to follow him into the school and he gave me a good talking to so he made a little better sport out of me.

But going back to springtime, my Dad bought Bertha a pair of shoe paks. They were real tough, stiff leather moccasins and were meant for boys. But Bertha was so hard on shoes that he was going to teach her to be easier on shoes. Bertha would stand in any water hole she could find during recess, hoping that it would rot her shoes.

My sister, Mary-Paule, and I were born exactly two years apart and were always together. So at school I was the pitcher on our side and Mary-Paule was the catcher. Mr. MacIntosh only stayed one year, then Miss Barteluk was hired as a teacher. Her and her sister, Annie, were boarding at our place. That year I quit school. My dad had me walking behind the harrows and four horses or fencing or picking rocks and roots. I still think he was punishing me for quitting school. If I happened to be working near the school, I tied up the horses and would join the kids during recess.

When haying time came I had to help my two brothers and Dad with the hay. Smokey had an old truck and at night he'd drive us down to the Fir River for a swim. We'd go pick up Jack and Frank Quinn. Two or three times I had to stay home cause Dad wanted to sharpen his mower knives. I think he had three of them. I had to crank the old grindstone and I was so mad I either turned too fast or too slow. Dad threatened to give me a darned good licking if I didn't smarten up. Another job I had that I didn't like was cleaning seed wheat. I turned that crank again; the slower the feed door was set, the cleaner job the machine would do. So when Dad would get another pail of wheat I would reach inside the machine and open it a little bit. But it didn't take Dad very long to wise up to that - so I had another bawling out.

There were very few fences in the early days and as there was no herd law, cattle were allowed to run at large. It caused everybody a lot of grief cause cattle would get in people's crops. Ours were just as bad as anybody else's but I was mad at Veillard's cattle one day. I jumped on our old saddle horse, Bronc, and chased their cattle all the way into the Spruceville district, across the Fir River. Old Mr. Walker asked what I was doing so I told him and he got real mad. He said that now they'd be in their crops over there. But he didn't have to worry very long for the cattle came back not too long after I did.

Gene and some of the boys decided to have stampedes with some of the cattle. The only thing that made it a little tough was an old blue roan bull that belonged to Bob Davidson. He was mean and would chase us so we had to make sure to chase him out of the herd of cattle. We'd hold our stampedes in Mr. Veillard's abandoned farmyard in a big spruce bluff. We had a lot of fun. None of us were real cowboys but we got better after awhile. But all good things had to come to an end. That was when the cattle owners started kicking about having their milk cows used as riding stock.

Still on the subject of cattle - I summerfallowed about twenty acres on my brother, Louis' homestead. The next year I sowed it to oats. One day I went to see the crop and about fifteen head of cattle were just destroying those oats - a real mess. A couple were staying in a shack there and I told them about the cattle. I asked how those cattle could find that field of oats when there was a mile and a half of bush between them and my crop. The man told me that the owner and his boy drove them

through the bush and once they found them, it was the end of the crop. I won't mention that dirty man's name but I knew his cattle. So I thought, "I won't be threshing my oats." But that guy had about ten acres of beautiful oats on his place. It was fenced so I took my horse real early and I took about twenty-five head of cattle in his crop. Some of them were our cattle and some were the neighbours'. I'll tell you that he never got a thing out of that crop that year. He never mentioned it but I think he knew who'd done it because our cattle were in there. That same person bought two pigs from us and only paid for one so I wasn't a bit sorry about what I did.

I felt sorry for those neighbours as that same summer they were pretty near burned by a real bad forest fire. Enough people went out there to save the place. One of the boys still lives on that place and farms that land. It's one of the good quarter sections of land in our district.

My oldest brother, Smokey, played a funny little trick on Dad one day when they were cutting oats with a binder. They had the tractor on the binder and something happened to the binder. Dad hollered at Smokey to stop and Dad crawled under the binder. In a couple of minutes, Smokey opened the throttle on the tractor but didn't move ahead. Dad got out of there in a hurry. He was mad and told Smokey, "I'll tell you when to go!" Smokey said, "I didn't move. I just wanted to scare you."

One year or two a bunch of us went to Greenbush, a siding about eight miles from home, to pick blueberries. There were lots of them and lots of fireflies. We could hear coyotes howling at night as we slept under the wagon and the women were inside the wagon box. I was pretty scared but nothing ever happened, dangerwise.

The first winter we spent here had a lot of work for Mary-Paule and I. Dad had a logging camp six miles south of our place and two of the men hauling logs would come home at night with a load of logs. That meant we had to look after two more teams of horses and one horse was left for us to do the chores. We had a pretty full barn; we had to clean it, feed the stock and every night we had to haul three barrels of water from Veillard's, half a mile from our place. So going to school and doing all those chores kept us pretty busy. One night Louis told us he was taking our old chore horse the next day as one of his horses wasn't feeling good. We were not to use him so I asked, "How are we going to clean the barn and haul water?" He said, "Wait til I get back and go get water and clean the barn at night." I told him to go to hell and he tried to give me a kick in the rear. So I told Mary-Paule, "Let's give him a licking!" So one of us got on each side. Everytime he turned on me, Mary-Paule would hit him and when he turned on her, I'd hit him. We were fast and not scared so finally he told us to use his damned horse. After that there was no bossing around by Louis.

The first few years we were here, the school was real close to our place. The town people would put their horses in our barn and they'd fill every opening full of horses. So on Sundays, we had so much barn cleaning to do. As I was going to dances then (I didn't dance but went to them anyway), I told my young brother, Paul, to go to the barn and when a team came in, charge them. He done it and all he got was a dime, a stick of gum and a bawling out. So that was the end of that episode.

I took some awful chances in playing tricks. I tied Paul on a young steer's back. I tied his feet underneath and turned him loose in the barn. Paul started crying and fell under the steer. Lucky he never got stepped on. Paul was going to tell Dad so I had to promise a lot of good things so



and half miles from Veillard's. He told us he forgot about a stove pipe and something to make a stove out of. I think he said he used an old heavy tinned pail and went to his neighbour to borrow a couple lengths of stove pipe. Then he went back to start building his shack. On the way back, he met a bear in the bush. He ran back to his neighbour's who had a gun. His neighbour walked home with him. Maynard said he slept outside the first few nights and kept a fire going all night. He didn't hardly sleep til he had his shack finished. He said he heard strange noises all night long so inside his shack in one corner and right at the top, he built a strong box made out of green poplar poles. It had a door at one end that fastened from the inside. Before it got dark he'd crawl in there and lock the door. That's the only way he could sleep for quite a few years but eventually he moved downstairs and slept in a little bit of a bed made out of a few boards. Really, this man lived the life of a saint. He never swore, was really honest and was not scared to give a helping hand. He passed away last year and we really miss the old fellow.

Back in the hungry thirties, there were people living on pretty near every quarter section in our district, lots of them bachelors. Some of them moved before us and some after us. Like Albert Massey (real name was Abdo Mossa, an Arabian), Aimie Houle, Cundles, Blocks, Walker, Matt Rosten, Paul Bittula, Mignot McCann, Campbell, Jaszan, McCrea, Grzybowski, John Hamel, Wicks, Thrussells, Quinn, Elders, Strassers (they moved at the same time as we did), Gagnon (two families), Waltons, Griffiths, Marcotte, Cockwells, Bremners, Rothpletz, Bulls, Skippers, Morrisons, Sandhoffs, Hood, Koecks, Krawczyk, Cartiers, Coles, Sprackman, Black, Noel, Lessard, Plaisance, Trail, Wilcox, Passmen, Majerech, Homis, Krajics, Tessier, Piolat, Mounier, May, Menzies, Dorman, Smith, Carter, and Markley. There are probably a lot more that I've forgotten.

We had a couple of ponies and so did Davidsons and other kids. We organized a game of polo but only tried once. Every time you swung at the ball the horses would shy away and we'd pretty near get thrown off.

The year that I quit school my Dad had me harrowing with four horses. I had to walk behind the harrows but I didn't mind cause I was so glad to be out of school. But, afterwards, I often wished that I had gone on to High School. I worked pretty hard on the farm cause in those days, we'd milk cows, put the crop in and, in the fall, we'd put up a lot of hay.

This is as far as Rolland got before his death on November 13, 1986