

**Jim Clark**  
**Narrator**

**Karissa White**  
**Minnesota Historical Society**  
**Interviewer**

**August 23, 2006**

**KW** = Karissa White

**JC** = Jim Clark

**BP** = Ben Petrie

**KW:** Today's date is August 23, 2006. We're at the home of Jim Clark and my name is Karissa White. Ben Petrie is running the equipment and we'll just say Elisse Aune is sitting at the table here with us. (spelling) Elisse Aune. And Jim Clark is...Clark is spelled Clark, right? No E.

**JC:** No E.

**KW:** Okay. What is your full name?

**JC:** James Edward Clark.

**KW:** James Edward Clark. Okay. And your date of birth?

**JC:** 9-18-18.

**KW:** Okay. And where...what were your parents' names?

**JC:** Clark.

**KW:** Clark.

**JC:** My dad's name was John.

**KW:** John Clark?

**JC:** Yes.

**KW:** What was your mom's name?

**JC:** Susie.

**KW:** Susie.

**JC:** Kegg.

**KW:** Kegg?

**JC:** Kegg.

**KW:** Kegg.

**JC:** (spelling) Kegg.

**KW:** (spelling) Kegg. Were they fluent Ojibway speakers?

**JC:** They didn't know any English. My dad did but my mother...very little. She knew her name. That's about it. In fact all the people where I grew up were all Ojibway speakers. Exclusively. You know. They didn't use any English at all.

**KW:** Where did you grow up then? Which part?

**JC:** Ajomug (sp?).

**KW:** What is that? What does that mean?

**JC:** Crossroads.

**KW:** Crossroads?

**JC:** Yes.

**KW:** What is it?

**JC:** Ajomug.

**KW:** Ajomug. Okay. Where is that about?

**JC:** I would say about (break in tape). I was one of the curious guys that used to be over there. See, I grew up over there. I had a car. Had a speedometer on it. I tried to see how far from where we lived to trading post. It was eighty-six miles. According to the speedometer on the car. I was one of the curious guys who wanted to find out how far it is over here.

**KW:** Yes. It's pretty far. Is that northwest of here then?

**JC:** No. It's straight east of here.

**KW:** Straight east. Oh. Okay. Okay. And did you ever get out this way when you were a kid?

**JC:** Oh, yes.

**KW:** Yes?

**JC:** I was born here.

**KW:** Oh, okay.

**JC:** Born down south.

**KW:** Where were you born in? A house or hospital?

**JC:** Wigwam (unclear).

**KW:** Oh. Wigwam. Was it in a rice camp or...

**JC:** A dome wigwam. Ricing time.

**KW:** Yes.

**JC:** They were camped. They were ricing on Shelby (?) Lake and so I was born right where...we go by that....Onamia boy's camp or camp. Just to the northeast end of that area. That's where I was born. My dad felt real good. He was driving down there one time. He took me and showed me where that was.

**KW:** So you saw where you were born.

**JC:** Yes.

**KW:** Yes. So did your family rice every year then?

**JC:** Yes. In fact up until just a few years ago. I quit. Couldn't go anymore because I gave out on the lake one time and somebody...had to have somebody pull us in from the rice bed. I was pulling Karen. She was working.

**KW:** Karen is your wife?

**JC:** No. Jesse is my wife.

**KW:** Oh, Jesse is your wife. Who is Karen?

**JC:** My daughter.

**KW:** Oh, your daughter. Okay.

**JC:** And she liked to rice. In fact she likes to everything. Likes to fish, likes to hunt, pick berries, (unclear). I guess maybe it's in the blood.

**KW:** So you always did that then.

**JC:** Yes, yes.

**KW:** All the activities.

**JC:** Yes. Ever since I learned how.

**KW:** Did you have a sugar camp too? Sugar bush?

**JC:** Yes. We had a sugar camp even. You know, those days when we were out there, when we wanted to sugar which was only about a mile from where our house was, we went out and camped over there instead of walking back and forth each day. So we camped. That's one of the things that...you've probably read that thing too, how the Ojibway moved around. All of them. Some peoples said they were nomadic. Moving around. Sugar camp. After sugar camp we camped down where there were people and they had ceremonies down there. We went out...my dad went out and worked, camped out. Blueberry time we camped out. Blueberry, ricing time and all summer long we camped out. We never got home until maybe the latter part of September. Always camping. He even...over here, that mile down to the trading post we were...used to have a little cabin there. Oh. My dad and them used to come up and stay in summer. And he used to work for Ayers. Even moved down by the lake so he wouldn't have to walk every day. So he worked and he camped down there. Half mile from home we had to go camp.

**KW:** Where did he work at?

**JC:** He worked for Ayers. Harry Ayers.

**KW:** What's that?

**JC:** Trading post.

**KW:** Oh, a trading post. Okay.

**JC:** Yes. He started that you know.

**KW:** Oh, he did? Did he do that his whole life when you were growing up?

**JC:** No. He worked out in the woods. This was summer work, you know. That's why we were moving so much because you had to go and find work and go there to work.

**KW:** So do you have any stories that you remember about being in the ricing camps or sugar camps? Is there anything that ...funny that happened to you when you were a kid or anything like that?

**JC:** I went and got her out of the hospital one day. We were living down (unclear). She had strained her back and we up to see a doctor. When we got home took her to the doctor. The doctor put her in the hospital and tried to straighten out her back with traction. She stayed there and when we came down here and Karen came along. We were trying to rice over here. She wanted to rice too. So I went up one night. Brought her back...got her out of the hospital, brought her back up here. She wanted to go out and rice. So we went out. Camp Blake out here. Just come out of the hospital. We were out there. I did a no no on that canoe and I tipped it over. Soaked her in the water. It was the day after she got out of the hospital.

**KW:** Your wife. She was in the hospital.

**JC:** Yes.

**KW:** Jesse. Did you have to swim back?

**JC:** The water wasn't that deep. I could almost reach bottom. She couldn't but she had hung onto the canoe. She got footing somewheres and she pulled that canoe.

**KW:** When was this? Do you remember? How many years ago?

**JC:** Fifteen, twenty years ago.

**KW:** Oh, yes. That's funny. Well...

**JC:** We spent better than fifty years down ...about fifty-four, fifty-five years down in Minneapolis.

**KW:** Oh, yes?

**JC:** Yes. All the kids were born down there.

**KW:** Yes.

**JC:** Grew up, through school and when that casino came up then she wanted to go so we bought a trailer house and lived on that until we got this one.

**KW:** Did the tribe build this for you guys then? This house?

**JC:** This is one of the Redi-Builts. This was the office for the housing authority. It was an office. A lot of changes. They were going to ...when they built the government center this was sitting right across the road from that and they wanted to get rid of it. They were wondering what they were going to do. I said take it over to my place over there. So they brought it over here. Didn't cost me anything. But they said they would have it...okay, we'll have it out there in a couple weeks and you'll be living in there in about a month. To finish.

**KW:** Where were you living at the time then?

**JC:** Right there. In the trailer house. In the back. Trailer house.

**KW:** Oh, that trailer house back there.

**JC:** I bought a trailer house.

**KW:** Okay. Who lives in there now? Anybody?

**JC:** No. One of the girls...Pat used to come up and sleep there. She used it. And then one summer a lady came. She worked at the casino and she wanted to live there. And she stayed there all summer.

**KW:** When you were little you said that you were at ricing camps and you did all kinds of traditional activities. Were your grandparents involved? Did you know your grandparents?

**JC:** Yes. I remember my dad's parents but I don't...only remember my grandmother on my mother's side. I didn't know my grandfather on that side. I remember...what do you call them...paternal grandparents? I knew them. I was still in the service when my grandmother died.

**KW:** What were your grandparents' names? (chuckles) That coffeemaker is pretty loud. It won't stop.

**JC:** My grandfather on my dad's side, his name was Clark Stevens.

**KW:** Clark Stevens?

**JC:** Yes.

**KW:** Is it (spelling) Stevens?

**JC:** Yes. It's not (spelling) Steph.

**KW:** I never got that because...

**JC:** No?

**KW:** Well, I mean just the ph sound. It really...it's always a v sound.

**JC:** Yes.

**KW:** Was he Indian too? Were they both Indian?

**JC:** Yes. They were full-blood.

**KW:** Full-blood.

**JC:** Yes. My grandmother, she...my grandmother's...my great-grandfather's name was Sam Pike. I didn't know him but you know, my dad used to mention him.

**KW:** Pike?

**JC:** That was his grandpa.

**KW:** Sam Pike?

**JC:** Pike.

**KW:** Pike, like the fish?

**JC:** Yes. Yes. In fact my dad used to make fun of him because they'd ask him what his name was and he would Sam Pike and then he'd tell them he was from Fish Lake. Fish Lake. That's where my parents originated. Down by Mora. Fish Lake.

**KW:** So there are people kind of spread out all over in different little villages here.

**JC:** Oh, yes. Yes. It's something to realize. I don't think very many people thought about this thing. You know these little villages at that time or earlier when...early 1900s or later, 1800s, people lived in villages and just thinking about them. Even today they live in family groups. You know? Because where we...where I grew up that was my grandfather's. All his children and ...you know...were in that village. His children married and then the people that married into the family would move over there and stay. So most of these villages...I think...and the village Ajomug, that was my grandfather's brother. My grand-uncle. His family...they were about three miles away from where I grew up. So a lot of people lived in family groups. I don't think anybody realized that. But just thinking about. There's....thought about it and sure. They're all in the family.

**KW:** So there were, you know, villages of people related to each other.

**JC:** Yes. Extended families.

**KW:** So everybody in Ajomug was family related?

**JC:** Yes. Yes.

**KW:** So that's who you grew up around was...all the kids you played with were relatives?

**JC:** Yes. We knew all of them.

**KW:** Do you remember any stories about when you were kids? What you used to play and what kind of games and things you did?

**JC:** Yes. We tried to play, you know, adult games. The stuff laying out there. Toys. We never had toys. What toys we had we had to make. They were all handmade and nobody could buy anything. Money is for food and living. Couldn't buy...couldn't go out and buy toys.

**BP:** What types of toys did you make?

**JC:** Oh, we had sleds. They were handmade sleds. There used to be people would make sleds and they would make good sleds and if there was a piece of metal on that sled it wasn't any good. So everything was tied together or pasted together with...you know. They had regular glue that they made from different kinds of material. Tie them together with leather or (unclear) or something. But if there was any metal on that, any metal on some of those toys, they weren't any good. Because they had metal.

**KW:** Who made them for you?

**JC:** My dad made them. Mother made them. Girls things and grandmother, uncles. My uncle used to make me some good bows. Bow and arrow. Play with.

**KW:** How many brothers and sisters did you have?

**JC:** Not remembering some of the....they had lost I think a couple of siblings. My dad and mother. But there were five of us in the....my dad's family. Now he had a second family with four kids.

**KW:** So you grew up around with a lot of siblings then.

**JC:** Oh, yes.

**KW:** Were they close to your age?

**JC:** It wasn't all the time. Siblings...they different. You know. They lived in different areas. We had to go visit.

**KW:** Were there any close in age to you?

**JC:** What?

**KW:** Were there any that were close in age, like close to your age?

**JC:** Yes. We were all about three years apart.

**KW:** Were you the oldest then? Or youngest?

**JC:** No. No.

**KW:** In the middle?

**JC:** Second one. The only boy in the family. (chuckles)

**KW:** Grew up around mostly women.

**JC:** Oh, yes.

**BP:** Did you antagonize...did you tease your sisters?

**JC:** You asked about funny stories? You know they used to make us fast. You know. When we were little kids. Make us fast. Go without breakfast. I guess maybe they did that for...well, that's a cultural thing. They wouldn't let us eat in the morning. You fasted. Well, when they were little they would fast until noon. Then they'd give us something to eat. I used to...when I was little I used to get hungry. Even the girls were fasting. I'd get hungry and I'd go...try to fight them. They'd fight me and they made me cry and I'd run home and my mother would take pity on me and give me something to eat. (chuckles) Even then I was smart for...to live on something.

**KW:** Yes. You maneuvered to get some food.

**JC:** Oh, yes.

**KW:** Do you have an Indian name? Were you given one?

**JC:** I have to go here and make a couple...(break in tape)

**KW:** Nowageesas....

**JC:** Right.

**KW:** Something about the sun?

**JC:** Yes. Moon.

**KW:** Moon. Okay. Oh, yes. Center of the moon. Oh, okay. It's right here. (laughing) I just had to read further. Nowageesas. Oh. Oh, okay. Yes. I forgot. I'd heard about this but I didn't know. When did it come out? Three...it's a book called Nowageesas, Memories of Center of the Moon. Jim Clark of Mille Lacs. An introduction by Louise Erdrich and edited by Keller Pap, Lisa L'Orange and Hyde Erdrich. Keller and Lisa are...Lisa is from Lacouderay (?). So I know Keller and Lisa. Yes. I'd forgotten. There's all kinds of stories in here.

**JC:** I haven't talked to...I haven't seen (unclear) for a year.

**KW:** Yes. I think they're busy with that school.

**JC:** Yes.

**KW:** Immersion school. Yes. They come up here for the immersion camp.

**JC:** Yes.

**KW:** Yes. I completely forgot. Yes. There are some stories in there and we could probably perhaps get a copy too. So. So you speak fluent Ojibway and that was...did everyone in your home speak that when you were growing up?

**JC:** Oh, yes.

**KW:** Anishinaabe?

**JC:** All of them. All of them. Very few. Now my dad spoke some. I started English maybe about six or seven years old.

**KW:** Is that when you started school?

**JC:** That's when I started school. I didn't start school maybe until about eight. Seven or eight.

**KW:** Where did you go to school at?

**JC:** Well, the first time I walked into a schoolhouse was in here. My sister, older sister went there. I went...they let me visit there. I guess maybe when my dad or my mother...to go take my sister there. But there was a little grade school where we lived over in Ajomug where our home was. There was a little grade school down there. A public school. That's where I went to school for first three years.

**KW:** The first three years. So until you were about nine or ten?

**JC:** Yes.

**KW:** How did you get to school? Did they have a bus? Or you had to walk?

**JC:** (laughter)

**KW:** No bus?

**JC:** We walked.

**KW:** They didn't have busses back then.

**JC:** No.

**KW:** Well, some people we talked to, they had busses and I was surprised. How far of a walk was it?

**JC:** Two miles uphill to the school. We had to go home uphill two miles too. (laughter)

**KW:** It was all uphill.

**JC:** It was. Four feet of snow in the wintertime. Oh, yes. It was about two miles.

**KW:** Two miles.

**JC:** Yes. And there were times when...my dad had horses. There were times when he'd hitch up the horses. Take us to school.

**KW:** So you just had horses around here. Did anyone have cars?

**JC:** Yes. But my dad...he got a car when I was about eleven.

**KW:** What kind of car was that?

**JC:** A limo.

**KW:** Yes.

**JC:** No. They had those old Model Ts.

**KW:** And that was in the '20s?

**JC:** Yes.

**KW:** Were there pow wows back then when you were a kid?

**JC:** Oh, yes. More so then. Now...I would say from oh, '27-28 they started dying down. Because that's when people started buying liquor and they started going to these pow wows all liquored up so people that didn't like liquor, they didn't want to go where there were drunks. So it kind of died down to maybe like about just a little before the war. Well, during wartime I think they started because they were doing that...using the drum to bring the boys back from the war. That's what brought this back up again. But they were pretty scarce during...before. The ten years before the war.

**KW:** Do you think also because that was when there was that Depression?

**JC:** Oh, the Depression. Didn't hit the Indians too much.

**KW:** No. Okay.

**JC:** No, no.

**KW:** That was my next question.

**JC:** We fared a lot better than people that lived in the cities because people...my people, older people, my grandparents and all those, they had a lot of ground. They could grow stuff and we had...grow vegetables to eat. They'd pick berries there in the summer and you could go out and hunt. Beef and pork were....beef, pork and chicken were something that was a treat to eat. Of course we ate all wild food. So we had...the only thing that I think we lacked during that time was clothing and stuff that you have now.

**KW:** What did you have to do for clothing then?

**JC:** My mother was a good seamstress.

**KW:** So she made the clothes?

**JC:** Yes.

[End of Side A, Tape 1.](#)

**KW:** We're back. So this book here Nowageesas, Jim was just telling us that he wrote these stories down. And then there's a part in here about the times of the Great Depression. There's a little chapter here that we can make reference to. Yes. There's some really good stories in here.

**JC:** I got called on...

**BP:** What are your favorite stories in there?

**JC:** I can't remember. Too long. The stories that are in here...it took me about...actually I started this in about '70, 1970. I had....I started teaching Ojibway

about that time. Evening classes. And I was working. And so whenever I had a little couple minutes from work I'd sit down and write some of these stories.

**KW:** Is that when you were...were you working down in the Cities?

**JC:** Yes. I went to school with a girl, a lady...she's over...maybe you'll remember a Corbine? Rita?

**KW:** Oh, yes.

**JC:** I sent her one of these and she read it and she got into this part here. We went to school. She says how come you didn't write more about me? She says that was a good place for us to remember. And she said I don't like that book. She said you didn't write too much about Hayward in that.

**KW:** She didn't like your paragraph.

**JC:** She said you wrote more about Wahpeton than you did Hayward.

**KW:** Did you go to Hayward first, before Wahpeton?

**JC:** Yes.

**KW:** Yes? When did you go to Hayward?

**JC:** '29-30 to '34-35.

**KW:** So you were about eleven, twelve until you were...

**JC:** I was fourteen when I left.

**KW:** Fourteen? Okay.

**JC:** We stayed there for the winters.

**KW:** How come you...did your parents send you there?

**JC:** My mother was sick. She had...she was ailing for a long time. I guess my dad figured she couldn't take...he didn't want to put her through all that labor taking care of us. And she passed away that winter. And we kept going there. Dad was a single parent. But he had...there were kids there that hadn't seen their parents from the time they went into kindergarten to the time they went through the eighth grade. That was K-8. I guess there were people in Reserve even. That kids...and they wouldn't see them all year. So I was gone...it was only twelve, fourteen miles from Hayward.

**KW:** Yes. I know my grandpa went to Hayward and he was from Reserve. Well, he was...he probably went there in the early 1912. Probably around there. 1915. Maybe. I don't know. I think he was ten years older than my grandma so he was born in 1906. So he would have been there 1916, 1920. So before you. Before you went there.

**JC:** Yes. Louise...her folks worked in Wahpeton. I didn't know them. I guess they went to work there after I'd been there. But she remembers...in fact her mother and father still live in Wahpeton. Yes. I called her the other day. She brought me some more books.

**KW:** That's nice. We'll have to go to her. She has a bookstore down in...

**JC:** Yes. Birchbark House.

**KW:** Yes. Down in the Cities. Yes. We could probably get that down there. Buy it there.

**JC:** I've got order blanks someplace in here.

**KW:** That would be nice to have.

**JC:** And the best part of the book is the forward which she wrote.

**KW:** She's a good writer. Louise Erdrich.

**BP:** What does she say about you?

**JC:** (chuckles) That's what I like...

**KW:** Nice things I'm sure.

**JC:** Yes. Nice things.

**KW:** Yes. Well, I'll have to...

**JC:** I didn't know her and I was teaching night classes of Ojibway and she was one of...her sister and one of her little girls used to come there. The lady I was working under in school...looking at my student list. I had it on my desk and she come over and she was talking about something. She was reading that list. She says do you know who this lady is? I said yes. It's one of my students. She says and you never....and I said no. Nothing more. She's a great writer. Since then I've got most of her books. Yes. Every time she gets one she gave me one. And she's fluent now. Almost. Almost as good as me. She's still having a little problem so just talk to her on the phone. She's...we converse in Ojibway.

**KW:** That's good. I wish I could do that. (laughter)

**JC:** Yes. She...we really got acquainted when she'd lost her husband. She was kind of...doldrums or something. Feeling bad. Yes. She used to come to it. That air thing there. There by the lamp. That air purifier.

**KW:** Oh, yes.

**JC:** She brought that over here. That's been about five or six years. Probably longer than that. I tried to lift that thing. It's on wheels. Tried to lift it and I couldn't even lift it. She comes barreling in here one day and she said I've got something for you. She went out. She come back. We had no gravel or anything. She come walking in here with that thing in her hands. Come walking in here and put it up. She carried it over here and I couldn't even lift that.

**KW:** She really wanted you to have it.

**JC:** Yes. I don't know. She spent a lot of money too. Yes. Because we had to change a filter here a while back. A hundred and seventy bucks for that filter.

**KW:** Yes. Those are expensive. Those air purifiers. They're nice to have though.

**JC:** Yes. Talk about second hand smoke. Karen smokes and they all smoke when they come in here. The smoke goes away right away.

**KW:** Yes. You bet. You said you went to Hayward. How was that different than when you went to school here? Was it more strict?

**JC:** Right. Yes, because the first two years I was over there...the first two years I was there we couldn't speak our language. We had to speak English. And I didn't...I wasn't very good at English. Kids used to laugh at me because I couldn't...I didn't speak good English. Yes. It was strict. We had...you know another thing that helped me there was we had...there was kind of a military thing, you know, where you get up in the morning, go to meals. The building was away from the dormitory. We had...we'd march. Military style. Even to school. And food and everything that we done...did for the school. We had to do it military style. So when I got in the service I was...I knew all the commands and all that. (chuckles)

**KW:** You knew how to march.

**JC:** Yes. Knew all the commands.

**KW:** Did you write home a lot? Or go home a lot?

**JC:** From Hayward?

**KW:** Yes. From Hayward.

**JC:** We had to write home once a month. They'd give us a stamp. They censored our mail.

**KW:** Did your dad tell you they censored your mail or did you just see it crossed out?

**JC:** They did cross some out. But we didn't...you know. They never did anything....the only time I remember censoring mail is when I was in the service when we went overseas. I used to write my dad in Ojibway. We wrote in Ojibway. When we got ready to go overseas we were in Boston and they told us...we were there for about a week and they told us well, you ought to get ready. Now we're going to go. That's what they said. So they told us tomorrow is your last mail that you send home without being censored. After that we're going to censor all your mail. So I wrote home. They said one more letter. So I wrote my dad a letter. I got called to the...we had a censor. He was a Greek fellow. I was doing something...working on something. Somebody came over and they says hey Trabotis wants to see you. So I went over there where the censor was. He had my letter in his hand. Threw my letter on the table. I was wondering what's going on. And he was looking at me. He says what kind of shit is this? I said, Sir, that's not shit. That's Ojibway language. He said well from here on out when you write to your dad you write Ojibway on the other side of the envelope. We'll seal it. Nobody's ever going to see that letter. So they never censored my mail. (laughter) Yes. My dad knew where I was all the time when I was overseas. Told him everything I knew. Nobody ever censored it.

**KW:** Well, that's good. But he was happy to hear where you were at.

**JC:** Oh, yes. He wrote. He wrote.

**KW:** You were able to come home during the summers from Hayward?

**JC:** Oh, yes. Yes. That's how we kept our language. See a lot of kids stayed there year round. When we first went there, even my sisters, they were having a hard time with English too. When we'd get home we'd try to practice our English, you know, and try to speak to each other. Grandma would hear us. She'd say you aren't doing that language to use. Use your own language. So we to use Ojibway.

**KW:** That's good.

**JC:** Yes.

**KW:** You said you went to Wahpeton for...when you were fifteen, fourteen?

**JC:** Yes. I was sixteen when I went there.

**KW:** Sixteen? How long did you go there for?

**JC:** Just one year.

**KW:** One year?

**JC:** Yes.

**KW:** What did you think of that?

**JC:** That was the same thing as Hayward.

**KW:** Yes.

**JC:** Yes. Same thing.

**KW:** Military style? Were there other...in Hayward there were probably more Ojibway kids.

**JC:** Mostly. There were a few ...I think there were some Oneida kids there. I think those were the only non-Ojibway people that were there. But we had one teacher that was ...I think she was Dakota...So we didn't know too much about other tribes of people. Well, we heard about them. But when I went to Wahpeton we had Sioux. We had Ojibway. We had Blackfeet. We had about five or six different tribes.

**KW:** Yes. Quite a lot. Did you like it there? Did you like it at Wahpeton or Hayward?

**JC:** Wahpeton was better. Of course I was older. Money was hard to get. That's the thing I missed when I went to Wahpeton because when I was in Hayward the last three years they'd give you something to do. After school. So I worked for a lady that was cooking for the employees. Separate employees dining room. I used to go work for her. Put up and bring in...you know, they used...no gas. It was all coal and wood. So I used to go put up wood for her. Saturday come around when we'd go to...we were able to go to a show in Hayward. We had to walk from the school to the town. A whole bunch of kids walking down the road. She used to give me a quarter a week. Twenty-five cents. And I had enough to...ten cents for the show and maybe ten, fifteen cents for candy or whatever. When I went to Wahpeton I volunteered for the job working on the farm. So I couldn't work in the...wouldn't get anything done. I also didn't get any money. (chuckles)

**KW:** Yes. I suppose if you were used to going to the show...

**JC:** Yes.

**KW:** What kind of shows did you go see?

**JC:** Mostly cowboy shows. That was about the only thing that they had. You gotta read some of these.

**KW:** Yes. Definitely. I'll go to Louise's store and pick up a couple of copies.

**BP:** Are you looking for a story on movies?

**JC:** No. There wasn't anything on there.

**KW:** But when you went to those shows did you...you said there was a bunch of kids that would walk there. Did you ever experience any racism or would like the non- or the white people there....

**JC:** There was some. When we went to shows in town kids, you know, didn't know too much about Anishinaabe kids. Sometimes some of the kids used to get in fights with the white kids in town. So those they had to restrict. The last year I was there they didn't have any teachers for the Indian school so we had to go to public school in Hayward. In town. And we got along with the kids. Made some good friends over there. And the service we didn't notice anything.

**KW:** So you didn't really see that much of it when you were growing up?

**JC:** No. No racism I know. We didn't know what it was until...I was able to read.

**KW:** How did you see it then?

**JC:** I think the hardest part was when we went down to Minneapolis. We moved down there.

**KW:** Is this after the war?

**JC:** Yes. I went down there in '47.

**KW:** Is that when you got out?

**JC:** I got out in '46.

**KW:** Okay. So then you came back up here?

**JC:** I went to Ajomug. Lived over there for a couple years. Then we went to Minneapolis. I got...I worked out in the woods after I got out of the service. Lived out in the woods. That's work. And I knew something about medical stuff so I went down there and over to one job which got to be heavy too. Building materials. I kept thinking about hospital work. Hospital work there's no labor, no hard labor of any kind. I know a little bit about hospitals. So I went to the hospital and talked to a guy there. The next day I was working. 1953.

**KW:** Until 1953?

**JC:** When I went there.

**KW:** Oh, when you went there.

**JC:** Yes.

**KW:** What were you doing from '48 to '53?

**JC:** All different things. I worked out in the woods. I've worked in Sturgeon Lake for a couple years.

**KW:** Cutting trees?

**JC:** Yes. The first...worked out in the woods and then I went and got a chauffeur's license. I started hauling lumber from Sturgeon Lake to Duluth. I went down to the Cities and I still had my chauffeur's license and went to work hauling building materials. And that's hard work. Hundred pound sacks of cement. Fifty pound blocks of cement. Hospital work was easy. I know quite a bit about it. I left the hospital work in 1983.

**KW:** So you did that for thirty years.

**JC:** Yes.

**KW:** Which hospital did you work at?

**JC:** Nearly all of them.

**KW:** All of them? Down in the Cities.

**JC:** Yes. You know there was a time there when the larger hospitals were merging and buying the small hospitals. Like from Fairview and Deaconess to Itel...from Itel to Northwestern. Then I left Northwestern. I was working out of Children's Hospital after that was built. Worked out there for a couple years. Then they called me from...we had a warehouse where we got material from, you know. They called me from there to...a guy I got acquainted with, he was my boss in Fairview. When he left, when he got transferred, about a year later he says come on over. He says let you go over there. So they...I left Fairview and went to Deaconess. I followed him. Every time he moved I moved. (chuckles)

**KW:** So he was nice.

**JC:** Yes. He wanted me to work with him.

**KW:** What did you do in the hospital?

**JC:** Handling material. Supplies. Everything. Then I went to...I left Northwestern. He went to buying stuff for...material stuff for the hospitals. About six months later he called me. He says, come on. So I left the hospitals and went to the warehouse. Warehousing. Worked there for a while and they got me an office. Told me to start buying. So I'm buying. Buying materials.

**KW:** It sounds like it was a good job.

**JC:** It was. I retired in '83 from the hospital.

**KW:** And then that's when you...did you move up here then?

**JC:** No.

**KW:** No.

**JC:** He told me when I quit, he came to me and he says can we call you and give us a little help when you're home. I said yes, call me. The first year I was off I said geez, I wish they'd call me. I wish they'd call me. The next year I didn't care whether they called or not. The third year I was hoping they didn't call me. (chuckles) Yes. The third year I was already working again. I went to school. I went to the Minneapolis Public Schools. Worked there for eight years. Finally retired and that's when I came up here.

**KW:** When you worked for the Minneapolis Public Schools, that's when you were teaching Ojibway?

**JC:** Yes.

**KW:** That must have been fun too. Was it?

**JC:** Yes. Oh, the school I went to there were kids from...even from here.

**KW:** Which school was that? Was that...

**JC:** Anderson.

**KW:** Oh, Anderson. So that would have been in '90...early '90s you came back here.

**JC:** Yes.

**KW:** I just have a question. You said you went to Hayward and then you ended school there when you were fourteen and then you went to Wahpeton when you were sixteen. What did you do for that one year? Or did you go right to...

**JC:** No. We went....I think there were five winters I spent in Hayward.

**KW:** Okay. Okay.

**JC:** Because there were four at the Indian school and then we had to go to public school in Hayward.

**KW:** And then you went to Wahpeton.

**JC:** Yes.

**KW:** Did you graduate? Did you get a degree there?

**JC:** No.

**KW:** No.

**JC:** I was eighty when I got my GED. (laughter) No. No. Never went to high school. Had to get a GED. I got it when I was working Fairview. Then when I had time off I used to sneak over to the University and got in with some people over there. So I did that for a couple years.

**KW:** That's good. What did you do then after Wahpeton? Did you work? Between that and the war.

**JC:** Picked berries. Worked out in the woods. Picked rice. Picked everything.

**KW:** Were you in the WPA or the CCC?

**JC:** Yes.

**KW:** Yes. So you were in the CCC?

**JC:** I was in the CCC. I spent two years in Grand Portage. About a year and a half in Nett Lake.

**KW:** So you were in the Indian Division?

**JC:** Yes.

**KW:** It was all Indian?

**JC:** CCCID.

**KW:** Yes. So it was all Indian. Other Indian guys.

**JC:** Yes. There were a lot...they were all Indians there.

**KW:** So you did that for about three, four years?

**JC:** About three years.

**KW:** Did you like that?

**JC:** Yes. That was nice. It was...they were building...when we were in Grand Portage they were building the park in Itasca and there's some stuff there that they needed and I guess...money was that hard to get so they had the CCCs. They cut...we went along and helped them build. They had cabins over there. All for thirty bucks a month.

[End of Tape 1.](#)

**KW:** Jim, you were talking about the CCC. You said that you built cabins in Itasca State Park.

**JC:** Went along...yes. Went over there. Maybe stayed about three or four days. And that was traveling on the highway from Grand Portage to Itasca. Traveling about thirty miles an hour.

**KW:** Seems slow now.

**JC:** Yes. You could almost run that.

**KW:** Was that on a big logging truck?

**JC:** No. Yes, it was a truck but...

**KW:** Not logging.

**JC:** Not a logging truck.

**KW:** Did you have to wear a uniform?

**JC:** No.

**KW:** No.

**JC:** We had to furnish our own. Our own clothing. The only thing they furnished us was the food and lodging.

**KW:** How was the food?

**JC:** The food was good.

**KW:** What kinds of things did you eat? Was it canned?

**JC:** No. They cooked all of the stuff there. There were cooks. There were cooks there. When we were in...I think it was Grand Portage...they...I don't know how it came about but they...we were in kind of a rotation program. You know, you work here so long. You work at this job so long. One time we got in a job working in the kitchen. And all I did...I was a pastry man. I had to cut up pies, butter bread, work on pastries. It was kind of a rotation program. So everybody had...all the guys there had different things to do. Learn different things. I think a lot of that we were...was for teaching too.

**KW:** You mean like reading and writing or...you mean just how to...

**JC:** Different occupations.

**KW:** Oh, occupations. Okay.

**JC:** There was an old...we were there about five years...no it wasn't even that. Three or four years ago...Itasca. There was one cabin there yet that...I remember that cabin. Right by where the outlet is. I remember that cabin. Close to the lake.

**KW:** What did you do for fun there? Did they let you do anything?

**JC:** Well, we used to go down and...see the camp was about five miles away from that boys village. We used to go down there. They had...movie people come there once in a while. Bring movies.

**KW:** More cowboys? Cowboy movies?

**JC:** Yes. Different kinds. I was in Nett Lake when...what is that Clarke Gable thing? Gone With the Wind. Yes. I was in Nett Lake when they brought that out. And boy, that was expensive to get in there. Had to pay thirty-five cents to get in that.

**KW:** Was it worth it?

**JC:** Oh, yes. Thirty-five cents was a lot of money for that show. They even had an intermission. It was so long.

**KW:** You remember. Did you like that movie?

**JC:** Yes. I saw it again. About four or five years ago. The old one. They had new ones. Different characters.

**KW:** So were they strict in the CCC with what you could do? Did they allow drinking or anything like that?

**JC:** If you went the campus, yes, it was all right.

**KW:** But they didn't encourage it or...

**JC:** No. They discouraged it. Some guys got away with it anyway. Find a way.

**KW:** Yes. So I have a question about the '50s. You said that you were living up here until '48 and then you moved down to the Cities. They say during that time that after the war there was, you know, all these like technology came out and there was like an economic boom. Did you see that when went down to the Cities? Did you see people with more cars and TVs and stuff like that? Appliances. Did you notice?

**JC:** I know, one thing I remember, the first TV we watched. 1951 I think. I think her folks were down there. And she was about like so. And we used to go...her dad, Mike...down the street towards...you know, we were kind of on the south side and down the street about a block there was a store, electronics store. In the window, the window on the street side, was a...they had a television set in there. About that big. So there would be a whole bunch of people over there. Go over and watch. We used to go watch wrestling. (chuckles) A whole bunch of people standing around there looking at that little TV there.

**BP:** Do you remember who was wrestling?

**JC:** No, I don't. Some of those names. I think there was a Butch Levy. Some of those names come back once in a while.

**BP:** Vern Gagne (sp?).

**JC:** Vern Gagne. Yes. This was later he was on. And later yet his kid got in there. He used to have a realty thing down here in Milaca. Vern Gagne did.

**KW:** Was there an Indian community down there that you ...were you part of that?

**JC:** Yes. Right where we were was...it wasn't that big. And then there was another place on the north side around Broadway. In there. But it went down there like 8<sup>th</sup> Street and Portland Avenue. Around in there.

**KW:** Did you see a lot more Indians coming down there because of that relocation program?

**JC:** Yes.

**KW:** Yes? You weren't part of that though? You were there before?

**JC:** No. No. I went down to look for a job. I went down there on Sunday. Down there on Sunday. Monday I was working and everybody said you'd never get a job down there. We went down and found a job right away and sold my car the next day so I could have some money. I moved from Sturgeon Lake.

**KW:** So you were living at Sturgeon Lake and then you moved down to the Cities?

**JC:** Well, I was living in Ajomug.

**KW:** Oh, okay.

**JC:** From there I was working over at Sturgeon.

**KW:** Were you married by then?

**JC:** Yes. I'd like to find out...I don't know who that baby is. If I could find out what age...what year ...we goofed and didn't get the license plate on that car. If we had gotten a plate on that I'd know who that girl is. That baby.

**KW:** That baby.

**JC:** Yes. That's my mother holding her. Those are all three sisters.

**KW:** Your mother's sisters.

**JC:** Yes.

**BP:** Jim is talking about a cover photo from his book.

**KW:** What were we talking...oh, the '50s you said. What year did you get married?

**JC:** That's a secret. (laughter) No, like everybody else, you know, you both...for a while...and then get married.

**KW:** Yes. Yes.

**JC:** A lot of people do that.

**KW:** So you were already with your wife and then you moved...did you move...you said you went down to the Cities and got a job and you moved your wife. Did you have kids by then too?

**JC:** No.

**KW:** No. Okay. So then you lived in Minneapolis.

**JC:** Mostly south side.

**KW:** When did you have your first child?

**JC:** '48.

**KW:** '48. Okay. And then how many children did you have? Total.

**JC:** Just two. She's one. They're all down in the Cities. Randy is up here. He's the oldest. He built his house here a while ago. About eight, nine years ago. Built it. He built in Coon Rapids. And the oldest girl stays at...Jesse will be moving. Went back. She works down there. So she's got a house down there.

**KW:** Oh, okay.

**JC:** So she'll be going down there. She stays with...Patti stays with her. Of course Randy stays at his house. And Karen came up here. She lived in that trailer house when she worked at the casino when that started. Iona is still going to school. Iona went out to...lived over in Hawaii for a couple years. For school.

**KW:** Oh, that's nice. Did you ever visit her out there?

**JC:** No. Never been out to Hawaii.

**KW:** Darn.

**JC:** Yes.

**KW:** That would have been nice.

**JC:** Yes. They went over there just a while ago.

**KW:** Yes.

**JC:** They went over there for that wedding. They had a wedding over there. My nephew, he was here this weekend. His daughter got married and they sent invitations out. Jesse went. Randy went and Iona went. Two of the kids and Jesse and they went out to that wedding.

**KW:** That would have been nice.

**JC:** Yes. That would be nice.

**KW:** Well, I just have one more question about this project. Kind of one of my final questions that I ask about the...I have it here. The name of the project is called Minnesota's Greatest Generation. And it's people who came of...like yourself who came of age during the Great Depression and then went to war and then after that. I guess I'm wondering what you think about being called part of the greatest generation. Do you agree with that? Do you think that your generation can easily be seen as the greatest?

**JC:** I think it is because there are a lot of changes that came about in my generation. A lot of things changed. It's like I was saying watching that TV the first time and...when...those guys landed on the moon. You know. And I sat there for...I don't know how many hours I was watching that movie on that. My daughter was... I finally got up. I was sitting back up here. She said what's the matter? You got moon dust in your butt? (chuckles) Watching moon dust. A lot of things. And then a lot of...there has been a lot of changes. I don't think there's much more they can learn other than settle on another planet. I think that's...or something that they haven't been able to do is go down the bottom of the ocean, the deepest part of the ocean. They haven't done that yet. We've gone up but not down. I think it is the greatest generation.

**KW:** Do you've probably seen going from just maybe a radio when you were younger? Did you have a radio?

**JC:** We had to walk. We used to walk three miles to go listen to Grand Old Opry Saturday nights. (chuckles)

**KW:** But going from that and then you've seen all these changes in technology. Do you think that technology was positive or, you know, that it's...how do I want to say this? That it's more of a positive thing or what kind of changes did you see with the coming of different...you know, like the TV or the faster cars and...from when you were little.

**JC:** Oh, that's a big change. Like I say, I grew up over in Ajomug and we used....my grandparents were here. My grandma, mother and my aunts. Because my mother came from here. I remember coming over here one time, horse and buggy. Horse and a wagon. I don't know. We slept a couple places along the way. Now I'll go in the afternoon and (unclear) a couple dollars and come back again the same night. Yes. My dad had a car. A fast car one time. He made a round trip from over there to here in one day. It's one of those things. Then a lot of things happened.

**KW:** So do you think it is a good thing, technology?

**BP:** Any negatives to it?

**KW:** Yes.

**JC:** There are negative things on what people are trying to do. You know. There's things...I think...actually trying to turn people's thoughts around. I think that's what...that's what I don't like. The Anishinaabe, they're grasping into the chimokiman (sp?) world. Now we're trying to go back toward Anishinaabe which is...I think is kind of late but it might take hold.

**KW:** Yes. Because your generation's pretty much the last one that speak fluent. There's people trying to learn but it's hard.

**JC:** Yes. And I can....I talk to people. If somebody learned the language and start talking to me right away I know if he's a book language or you know original language. I can tell when ...a book learning people. They learn. And that's what that's lady's trying to get away from.

**KW:** Yes. Because it's just...when you listen to people too it's different. You can tell when someone is...you know, grew up listening to it and can kind of ...just how they say things.

**JC:** See we had a student here tonight. Comes from St. Paul. He's part Ojibway, part Tonka from Oklahoma. He is fluent but why he comes now, he's coming every Wednesday. He comes over. He says what I want to do now is speak like you people. You know. He wants to speak the way we do. Because...like I say now...people know when he's talking to him that he's...it's not his first language. He says I'm going to erase that. He says I want to have people believe that I know the language. He's trying to speak the way we do here. And is he good. We have a lot of fun there. On Wednesday nights. But we can't nobody to go there. You know they go to school. They go to ...and they pay money to go to learn. It's just like somebody has to pay when they're down in Rutlege, you know. Somebody has to pay to go learn that stuff. Here we do it for nothing. We...it's...I don't know why they even want to go there. Because we...all the people that go there are fluent people and there's ten of us that started out in this thing. And we've never charged anything. We even...didn't want to take help from anybody for like paper and stuff. Material to use. We just go there and visit. On Wednesdays we'd have...the first Wednesday of the month we bring a little pot of something and we have a potluck on the first Wednesday. And nobody wants to...what scared them off, when we first started my brother was over here. And he...you know, we started at his house. We were all trying to use Ojibway exclusively, you know, the teachers and the ones that were there. So if we...like if I...if I'm speaking and I use the English word I gotta pay a nickel for the English word. And a lot of people got scared because they thought if they use English in their learning they would have to pay. So we had to do away with that. Scared away a lot of people.

**KW:** That's the only way to learn it though is to just...you know just speak it and listen.

**JC:** That's where this immersion comes in. You've gotta immerse yourself into the...

**KW:** Yes. So what would you...your last question here that I have.

**JC:** Oh, the last one.

**KW:** Have I said that before?

**JC:** The last one was the last one.

**KW:** Well, I was just going to ask what would you tell the generation of kids? What would you like...your biggest message for them to be?

**JC:** Learn to be Anishinaabe. You know. That's the only thing that's going to keep it. I said that yesterday. You gotta learn. Otherwise everything is gone. The language is gone. The culture is gone. Everything. You've gotta learn to be Anishinaabe.

**KW:** That's a good message. Well, do you have any questions for us, Jim?

**JC:** Yes. What kind of...what are we going to see about this afterwards?

**KW:** After this? It's going...what we're going to do is take the tapes back and get them copied and give...send you a copy. They're going to be transcribed on paper and we're going to give you a copy and then we're going to probably put a copy in the museum for the people over there. And then I think they're going to... You know more about it than I do because I'm just doing the oral history part but you're doing....

**BP:** We'll use the audio in the exhibit.

**KW:** So your voice might be used.

**BP:** Different stories.

**KW:** If you want...

**JC:** It would be something like...would it be something like...what do that call that? The one that comes out from...comes out on the radio? KKin. Do you ever listen to that?

**KW:** Oh, yes. That oral history.

**JC:** Yes.

**KW:** People talk about...

**JC:** Yes. Would it be something like that? No. It won't be.

**BP:** Well, it depends. There may be stations where you're talking about the Depression and somebody will push a button and there will be two and a half minutes of you talking about your experience in the Depression and before you may be talking about your later years. The boom. And here's Jim talking about his...how he saw things. How he sees things. How he lived it and what he thought about it.

**KW:** Yes.

**BP:** And there will be pictures. Pictures of you.

**KW:** Do have a camera? Okay. I forgot. We'll have to come back and get your picture.

**JC:** I was over to Aiken last Thursday morning. Had an interview over there. That was on radio though.

**KW:** Oh, okay. In Aiken?

**JC:** Aiken. Yes. KKIN.

**BP:** What did you talk about?

**JC:** About the same thing we did here.

**KW:** So just your life and growing up. Last Thursday.

**JC:** And different things.

**KW:** Yes. Well, we appreciate it. This is really good. And we'll send you copies too. And there's also... We're going to send you an honorarium of a hundred dollars. Except we forgot the form. But I think all we need is your address and your social security number. I hate asking that. But I don't know why they need that. Do you want the honorarium?

End of Tape.

Minnesota's Greatest Generation Oral History Project:  
Minnesota Native American Interviews  
Minnesota Historical Society