

Recitation: Life in L'Anse au Clair in 1940's and 1950's

Contributor: Myrtle Jones

Collector: Gertie Fowler

Myrtle Jones:

This is a reflection of the 40's and 50's and I'm doing it as a... as a tribute to my husband Percival Jones, my father and mother, Peter and Martha Letto and my father and mother-in-law, Samuel and Mary Jane Jones.

Gertie Fowler:

And your name is?

Myrtle Jones:

And my name is Myrtle Jones.

I was asked to do a... a...a story for the Come Home Year book and ah... it took me a little while to get in to this but I got to thinking and reminiscing and this is what I wrote for that, so now I am telling it to you people.

It's May, and late spring, the last trip to big pond. Beautiful trout 3 to 4 pounds, Willis Dumaresque thinks he caught the biggest one. The seals are beginning to trim the shores, a big haul at La Tabatia yesterday, The seal fishers are busy getting their twine in the water. It's dinner time now, the children are coming from school. "Hurry up and eat, you have to take your fathers dinner to him, he's at the seal fishery, and can't leave. " It's a long walk around that shore, when you have to get back in time for school, but we make it with our lunch pail in hand; A lard can full of food for the hungry men. "Listen - I hear a gun shot, someone's got a school in now". May is speeding along and its time to get the gardens dug up. The potatoes must be in by the end of the month, the other seeds will be put in later. Hurry and get the kelp.

It's June, now. The cod traps have all been mended and the trawl lines have all been stretched out by the children; right over to the boats, on the bank above the sands. Now they are being pulled back and a hook placed on each sideline and placed in a covel. (A covel is a three quarter barrel). Everyone eagerly awaiting the fishing season to begin, now the capelin are rolling on the sands, the cod traps are set the bait tubs are filled, and the trawls are put out. The community is a beehive of activity. There's fried capelin for dinner and a few barrels salted and spread on the flakes to dry.

It's early morning now, the trap boats are coming in the bay loaded to the gunnels and the trawlers will be returning a little later. Men, women and children are all busy. The cod fish season is here, there's a salmon for anyone who wants one, over at Uncle Sam

Jones wharf. There's also a scramble for the salmon rowe. These activities will continue for the whole month of July.

It's August now and time to start cutting the hay. The walk to Square Cove and Bear Head is quite a joint. But the outdoor fires, roasted capelin, boiled tea, homemade bread with fresh cows butter, seems to make everything a little easier. The children are picking blackberries now: two from moms special blackberry pie or dumplings. It's also bakeapple picking time. Not a moment... not an idle moment for anyone. It's time for the summer catch of fish to be washed, and sun cured. It's a beautiful morning and the flakes are filled and it's a site to behold. Spreading the fish is a job for the whole family.

It's September now, there's still a lot of work to be done regarding the curing of the fish and the making of the hay. It's also red berry picking time and the barrens are full of berry pickers. All these jobs combined, is keeping everyone quite busy.

October and November: wood cutting time. Early mornings and late evenings, no chainsaws here, only the old axe and enough wood has to be cut for the whole year. The fur trappers are also getting ready for the country they will be gone for a couple of weeks to a month. The only mode of transportation is their legs. They will come back with their hunting bags filled with muskrat pelts to be sold to the Hudson Bay Company to help toward the winters food. I can still see the marks of the back straps in my father's shoulders.

Its December now, the Christmas month. A cattle will be killed, pothead made, new sealskin boots and new clothing are getting made, mostly by hand. It's getting late in December now and it's Christmas Eve. The house is made speck and span. The baking is being done, enough wood chopped and stored in the porch for the whole two weeks of the Christmas season. The tree is cut, put up and decorated. Crepe paper streamers are strung along the ceiling. The smell of the freshly cut tree fills the whole house. Supper is over now, there's a Christmas tree at the school, carol's are being sung and Santa is here with a gift for each child. I can remember reciting the poem "It was the Night Before Christmas" when I was just eight years old.

It's Christmas morning, and everyone is so excited and thankful for the simple gifts that we've got. Uncle Bob Dumaresque is visiting every home and wishing us a Merry Christmas. The teacher, who was also the lay reader in the community, will be having a Christmas service. The next two weeks will be filled with visiting, celebrating and mummering. A happy time for all.

We are now into Winter. The dog teams are raring to go after a long rest, the wood is being hauled and piled. The hay is being hauled and stored in the stable loft. There is a church social, concert, Orangeman's Parade. People are coming by dog team to attend these functions right from Red Bay to Brador. The women are busy serving a supper of baked beans or stew. Aunt Maggie Jones is attending to the children. The auction is beginning. My father, Peter Letto, is clearing his throat getting ready for the sale of

knitted mitts and vamps, embroidered pillow cases, lunch cloths and bureau runners. The musicians are getting ready; Uncle Jack Swell, Henry or Hollis with their violins, Uncle Sam Jones with the accordion. The dancers are excited now and everyone is steppin' her down, Francis Jones is directing the cotillion. Everyone will dance until daylight – what a time!

It's caribou hunting season now, the men are gone to the country for a couple of weeks. We are awaiting, with anticipation, for their safe return, and looking forward to some of that delicious meat, and anyone who can't go hunting is sure to get a meal. Now it's partridge hunting season, another couple of weeks, a country life for the hunters. Another pot of partridge soup, as soon as they return.

Thus ends the cycle and it will soon be May again.

Gertie Fowler:

That's beautiful! Thank you very much, Myrtle for your memories.