

Footage	Subject headings
0 -:20	Introduction
:21 – 1:53	<p>Personal information: Sten was born in 1953 in Denmark. He and Kirsten were married and had three children when they immigrated to Canada in 1988 and they bought the Bremner House in August that year. Bremner House was the first place they bought when they moved to Canada. Sten had worked in Strathcona County in 1975-76 and had some connections in the area and looked up the contacts when they moved here.</p>
1:54 – 3:57	<p>In Denmark they had had a pig farm but started out tree farming here. They had a partner, Rita and Dick Jackson, and they lived with the Jacksons for the first three months after they immigrated. Rita and Dick Jackson helped the Nielsens finance the Bremner place.</p>
3:58 – 5:35	<p>Buying Bremner House: They had sold their farm in Denmark in 1987 and they arrived January 1988 and Dick Jackson took them around. Kirsten had not been to Canada before and wanted to see what she “was being talked into.” Dick showed them the Bremner House and Kirsten “said right away, ‘That’s where we’re going to live.’” The house seemed so European to them, brick construction and high ceilings. There was “such a nice feeling to the house.” When they came back to Canada in May, it was still for sale. Dick and Rita purchased part of the land and the Nielsens purchased 80 acres and they bought the place. 240 acres was for sale with the buildings. So, the purchase was split between the Nielsens and the Jacksons. The Jacksons are still farming the other 160 acres. The Nielsens took possession 15 August [1988]. Their children went to school in Ardrossan.</p>
5:36 – 13:30	<p>The Nielsen farm: Dick and Rita had planted some trees at their farm and they were looking for a partner to invest in a tree farm with them and to market the trees. They approached the Nielsens and they were interested and that’s how the Nielsens got started in the tree business, besides farming the 80 acres. The Nielsens grew canola, wheat and barley [on their 80 acres]. Later, they bought a herd of cows so they grew hay. They also bought 130 acres across [Sten does not say where] that they used as pasture. The herd was a mix of Charlois and ? At the same time, they bought piglets and fed them. They had sheep for a while. There were lots of buildings on the Bremner property at that time so they had lots of room to house livestock. They also had ducks and chickens for themselves. They had 30 Finnsheep ewes and the neighbour’s dog attacked them and they never settled down again. It takes a long time to start a tree farm so when they knew they were going to go into the business of tree farming, they planted six acres of seedlings in 1989. Some of those trees are still on the property. They had the sheep for three or four years. They had the cows for about five years. They were kept at a neighbour’s at first. When the neighbours wanted to get out of farming and moved into town, the Nielsens bought their land, 130 acres. They sold that land after they sold the Bremner place. The Nielsens had the sheep, cattle and poultry all at the same time. The ducks and geese ended up in the freezer in the fall; they had four children so a big help. Kirsten grew up on a farm so growing own food was natural. They had 50 – 75 cattle and they calved them out in January when prices were good. He wanted to be finished with the calves before April when tree season started. But it was just too much work. Then a drought period for almost three years, 1999 – 2000. Then they sold their cattle and the drought was even worse the next year [2001]. And the next year was the BSE disease and prices plummeted. They were lucky when they sold their cattle. Prices were reasonable.</p>

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	<p>Meanwhile, they had fixed up the barns and had good fencing and that is when they sold. They were so busy with tree moving, they didn't have enough time for the cows. Their children did not like the cows. The Nielsens were in the Bremner House until 2005, 17 years.</p>
13:31 – 16:13	<p>The tree farm: The tree farm was located west and south of the house, beyond the lilac hedge and south of Alex Schroter's white house. They grew about 3,000 trees, mostly evergreens, mostly Colorado spruce. Once established, the spruce were not affected by the drought. They sell mostly to acreage owners, some farms, some to commercial and some to the County [of Strathcona]. The county has been a customer since they started out in the business. They get their seedlings from a wholesaler called Tree Time; it's out of the city. They grow them in Smoky Lake. They start some of their own seedlings in a greenhouse. It's not worth growing their own seedlings. You have to transplant them too many times, too. The greenhouse at the Bremner property is part of the shop, the slanted glass wall facing south.</p>
16:14 – 28:44	<p>Bremner House: Changes to the kitchen were made in 2001. Coming in the side door you walk into a small room that they used as a laundry room, to the left there was a small bedroom from "there you walked straight into a cold room which was turned into a kitchen." That was just before you walk into the dining room. They combined those three rooms to make one big room. They took down the walls. The bedroom was useless to them, and the old kitchen was very outdated. The kitchen had only small, high windows and was dark so Sten put in new windows. Also insulated down to the brick wall. Framed the kitchen and dry walled. The floor is original but Sten stripped and cleaned the wood and then re-laid. Put in new wainscoting to match the rest of the house. They used the room in the northwest corner [of the main floor] as an office. They renovated the main floor bath. The new baseboards in the hallway were there when the Nielsens moved in. Walls covered with a fabric rather like burlap, but Sten is guessing. They removed a walk-in closet to make a doorway from the main floor bedroom to the main floor bath and put the closet in the bathroom. They couldn't use the old fireplaces so they put gas inserts in them. They wallpapered the dining room. They installed a crystal chandelier light fixture over the dining table that they removed when they sold the house. The only carpet they laid was in "the blue room", the main floor bedroom. All other broadloom was there when they moved in. They used the conservatory for parties, to have suppers if the weather was nice. The verandah had no railing and had a built-in hot tub. The Nielsens took out the hot tub as it was leaking. The renovations were all done within the first years of living in the house. They also re-shingled the roof.</p>
28:45 – 30:48	<p>The basement: It had a number of small rooms and the Nielsens made some changes. There was lots of coal dust in the basement. They put in a wine cellar in the basement. On the west side, there were three small rooms that they opened into one room. There was a long hallway "when you took the outside door in which was in the way and we took that out too." None of the walls were load bearing. They also put in the basement door because they couldn't get downstairs. There was a trapdoor in the floor of the vestibule at the side door and that was the access to the basement. So, they put in the outside entrance to the basement. They used the basement as a mudroom when they came in from the yard. They moved the old kitchen sink, etc. down into the basement for this purpose.</p>

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30:49 – 31:40	Discussion about photos that they took during all their renovations (Sten leaves to get some photos.)
31:41 – 32:15	Main floor: They did not paint the walls downstairs.
32:16 – 35:24	The yard: (Sten returns with two aerial framed photos.) The 1953 photo: Sten found the photo “at a show”. The photo shows the old kitchen. Discussion about the piece of land now enclosed by the circle drive. It was full of bush right up to the house and no one could see the house from the road so they cleared out the caragana. The lilac hedge on the west side of the property was there when they moved in. There was a laurel leaf willow on the northwest corner of the house that was interfering with the basement so they took that out as well.
35:25 – 41:49	Looking at the 1953 photo. In the lower right, there is a small house that the Niensens say was the original Bremner house [This cannot be, but is part of local lore apparently]. It had been moved to that location from elsewhere on the property. Discussion about the succession of Bremner houses. Sten says the cow barn in the photo was built in 1914. Sten might be able to get a photo from Barry Fraser. Fraser’s mother had the photo. Sten was offered a copy of the photo about 10 years ago by Barry Fraser but did not take it, but is willing now to do so. Discussion about Bremner’s horse barn.
41:50 – 43:00	Kitchen windows: “We make the window above the coal chute windows to match the rest of the windows. Sten agrees that the second storey wall shingles had been painted dark green. Sten and Kirsten tore them off. The roof was leaking like a sieve.
43:01 – 47:00	The yard: Discussion about the Schroter cow barn. When the Niensens moved in, the chicken house had been demolished but the foundation was still there; Bremner’s apparent first house was gone, used one building as a workshop. Maurine and Dick Schroter’s house was there. Built in the 1960s. In front of the dairy barn are some outbuildings all connected to the dairy operation of the Schroters. It was renovated by Alex and Dick so that they could expand their dairy operation. The Niensens put in the metal silos. The ones that were there when they bought the place were smaller. The Quonset hut was already there when the bought in 1988. They put in a new shop; now the biggest building. Tree farm was on the west side of the house. Sten says that the county took photos of his framed 1953 aerial photo and the other aerial photo.
47:01 – 51:02	Kirsten says that they took photos during their renovations and promises to go through their photos. Discussion about Ross’ contract. Sten suggested that she contact Rita (McGhan) Jackson. Apparently, Rita’s father could tell stories about Charlie Bremner, but he died a few years ago. Sten remembers a story from Rita’s father that they would be traveling in a horse and buggy and Bremner would drive by carelessly in his car, sending them into the ditch. He blew his horn and kept going and he was usually drunk.
51:03 – 51:30	The Niensens were still cleaning up ashes from Bremner’s coal furnace. The ashes were dumped into the back yard by the side door.

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51:31 – 52:25	Second floor: the master bedroom was not touched by the Nielsens – the blue carpet etc. all there when they moved in. They did not change the bathroom. The Nielsens painted the two other bedrooms upstairs.
52:26 – 55:18	Other renovations: Alex rented the house to the Zimmermans. Alex wanted to tear down the house and the Zimmermans did a lot of the renovations. Alex told Sten that he had gone to the bank to get a loan to renovate the house but the bank refused but was willing to give out a mortgage on a new house. So, planned to tear down the Bremner house. Then Zimmerman was interested in renovating in lieu of paying rent. Was done in the 1970s? The stuccoed walls and ceilings throughout the house were done by the Zimmermans and the upstairs bathroom as well. Under the stucco on the walls is the original fabric (like burlap). The Nielsens put in new windows on the second and third floors. The Nielsens did this at the same time as they changed the siding. Some of the old siding was cedar, some was vinyl. The original siding was sawn cedar shakes. The Nielsens changed the shingles on the exterior walls because their heating bills were so high.
55:19 – 58:50	Heat: The Nielsens added one-inch Styrofoam insulation on the outside of the second and third floors. They gutted the entire third floor. The only thing on the third floor that is original is the floor. The Nielsens put in the third floor bathroom. Their children when they were teens had their own apartment up there. When one moved out, the next moved up there in the one bedroom. The Nielsens put a roof on the balcony because it was leaking into the den below. Didn't use the den for anything. Did it just to keep the den dry. There was a bathroom on the third floor. They can't remember any stories about Charlie Bremner committing suicide in the third floor bathroom. They heard that it happened in the second floor bathroom.
58:51 – 59:58	When they replaced the windows on the second and third floors, they used the original openings. The kitchen windows were not the original windows when they moved in because they were the aluminum sliders that moved up and down. The window in the dining room has also been replaced. Now, it's just two big panes.
59:59 – 1:01:09	The Nielsens used the shop as their garage that is part of the greenhouse. Cows went in the barn. Chickens were in a house by the Quonset hut. Each outbuilding had power.
1:01:10 – 1:05:25	Used natural gas to heat the house. Allan Schroter remembered a propane tank near the side door. Bremner had his own generator. Sten says the Bremner house was the first to be hooked up to power when the line went through to Fort Saskatchewan. The transformer had two meters on it which is illegal. The transformer was oversized. One went to Alex's white house, and one to the yard.
1:05:26 – 1:08:56	Water supply: There was no windmill on the Bremner property when the Nielsens bought it. There were four wells. The water was very bad. There are two "wells" (cisterns) in the basement of the Bremner house, one drew from the north side (a manhole) that acts as a shut-off for the barn, and another drew from a well near the circle drive. Alex Schroter had city water put in when the line went through to Fort Saskatchewan. The water is very hard. Alex had said that some of the milking equipment had to be replaced every month due to the very hard water. The Nielsens think that the city water came in during the

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	1970s. The Vegreville Co-op? The well near the house could supply only the house; it also was the only well that had reasonable water.
1:08:57 – 1:10:34	Laundry: The Niensens did their laundry in the basement. The laundry chute is by the back door and the laundry fell on top of the washing machine. The basement was always nice and warm due to the steam heat furnace. There was no heat on the second floor. The Niensens put a “furnace” on the third floor. They used the wood (Kirsten means “gas”) insert in the fireplace in the big hallway on the main floor all the time. In the winter it was going 24-7.
1:10:35 – 1:13:52	The Niensens put inserts in all the chimneys. They did all of their changes in the 1990s. Discussion about the future of the house. There is only one small crack in the basement wall. They never had water in the basement. A well-built house. Other prospective buyers wanted to tear down the house. The Niensens had been in a big house in Denmark.
1:14:53 – 1:21:21	Sale to Strathcona County: They sold the house to the county because they thought the county would preserve it. It’s a big house and they had rented out the other two houses. The children had left and it was too big for the two of them. It was time to move on. The children have fond memories of the house. They listed the house and then they approached the country. Sten had already asked the county because of “words flying around” about talk to turn the property in a Spruce Meadows north. So Sten approached the country. And they showed interest. The county dealt with their realtor for 1.5 years. No one in the county was cognizant of the house until the Niensens brought it up to the county. The Bremner house was “hidden” for years. They have been back to the house a few times. “It stinks, it smells and is falling apart.” Kirsten varnished the woodwork and polished the brass knobs and hardware for Christmas. It was a lot of work to keep it up. It was their home and “it felt like home.” They rented out the other two homes to anyone. Some stayed for several years, others for only six months. They made no changes to the other two houses. They changed the road into Alex’s and Dick’s houses for privacy. Only had two bad renters.
1:21:22 – 1:21:59	They started out with 80 acres. They could not get financing but they could afford 80 acres through private financing [Rita and Don Jackson].
1:22:00 – 1:29:50	The Niensens changed nothing to the upstairs MB fireplace. Never used it. All the woodwork upstairs had been painted before the Niensens’ time. “That was a shame.” The windows too were painted. The fireplace in the den was never used. The chimney served the old kitchen stove as well. Discussion about some of the Bremner stories. Sten had heard that the Bremner house is like Rutherford house [a provincially designated historic site. Sten may be referring to Rutherford’s earlier house]. Discussion of other large houses in the area.