Marie Bengston The Best Things in Life

I always made it to work.

That’s something my dad taught me.  I grew up with five sisters and two brothers, and if we had chores to do around the house, my dad made sure we got them done.  Whether we were sick or not, he had us up and at ’em.  That’s a good lesson we learned, and I can thank him for that.

Some of the other things my father taught me were how to trap and hunt – things I could do with him out in the woods.  I was never good at doing things inside, like taking care of the house.  I preferred to be outside.

We would go pick berries, and I still do that today.  Whatever I find, I give some to the older Elders who can’t pick berries for themselves anymore.  My son does the same:  if he shoots a deer or catches a fish, he gives it away or shares it.

Growing up during the Depression, we were also taught that you should take good care of what you have.  Everything we had, we hung onto because we didn’t know when we would get it again.  We only got one pair of shoes a year.

As I said, I was expected to help with chores and other things because that’s part of family life and you had to do it.  We learned discipline that way.

My dad was a logger, and we would go and help him.  We were given a quarter at the end of the week, and that was enough.  But he also made sure to take us to the fair.  I never thought we were deprived; we might not have had a lot, but it was enough.  You can’t miss what you don’t have.

The kids today expect so much.  I always tell my kids that if someone gives you something, you take care of it and don’t go and wreck it.  If the Band rents you a house, don’t mess it up.

I think the Band has been good to us.  It is good to see the progress the Band has made when I look back over 20 years.  We have a community center, clinics, new houses, and paved roads.  The programs the Band has for Elders are good, especially the energy assistance program.  But the best things I’ve gotten in life are those lessons I’ve learned.