Margaret Long Interview – February 27, 2008

HR – Helen Raptis (interviewer)
ML – Margaret Long (interviewee)

HR: Okay so, I'm wondering if you'd like to start, Margaret, by just telling me a little bit about your childhood: where you were born and where you went to school? And anything you remember about your own schooling, any influential teachers or anything about school that you recall or stood out for you.

ML: Okay. Well I am, I am quite ancient so this is a long time ago. I'm 86 and this was—I was born in 1921. And I was born in Quesnel; my dad had served in the Canadian army in WWI. And he had been given a job in Quesnel; I think it was sort of reward for service or something. Anyway Dad went up there and worked, I forget what he did. But, my mother was a city girl and after I was born it wasn't long before they moved back down to where she came from, which was North Vancouver.

HR: Oh yeah.

ML: And, [coughing] excuse me, I lived in North Vancouver all my school life. And I attended Ridgeway Elementary. And Br—Burns Lake listen to me, and North Van High, as it was called then, up on 23rd Avenue. And I had a very happy childhood I think. We weren't rich at all, we lived quite carefully. And I —we never had a car. We walked or we took the streetcar. And we lived in quite a nice part of North Vancouver in—there's something called The Boulevard which the streetcar line went right up the middle of. And we lived on 9th Street, about a block away from The Boulevard which was a very nice area. And we had a nice house, our mom and dad had saved their money and we got—we built it, it was built for us. And I took piano lessons from the time I was 7 years old from Muriel Stewart, and she lived down on 5th Street. It was quite a hike out, I'm sure it was about a mile and a half down there. And I would go down for my piano lessons. And I started when I was 7 and I took lessons until I got my, what at that time was called ATCM Degree. That was Associateship of the Royal Concer—no of the Toronto Conservatory of Music. And then later there was something Royal attached to it and it became The Royal Conservatory of Music so that the, the degree that you get now is ARCP and that's Associateship of the Royal Conservatory of Music. And what associateship meant was that you took lessons from your own teacher, and you were examined by, [coughing] excuse me, by examiners who came out from the conservatory and you did those periodically every year or every couple of years or something. And then as you went up through the grades you finally got to the ARCP which was quite an advanced degree. And you had five subjects. Not only playing the piano but also music theory, and harmony, history. The—these are music, music harmony, music history. I can't remember what the others were. There were five subjects, anyway, in it, five theoretical subjects. So, when I had passed that I was 18 and I taught—I had to be able to teach music and I had pupils from the time I was about 16 I think. And so I got into music teaching quite early in

the proceedings. And I didn't teach right through, but I taught up until about 20 years ago I quit.

HR: Wow.

ML: Actually, the most enjoyable teaching I did was the last 20 years where I, I was married and I was living In Burns Lake, and I taught adults who wanted to play the piano. And it was just heavenly, because they weren't taking lessons because their mother wanted them to they were taking lessons because it was a desire they'd always had. It was like any night school course, adult education. It's just amazing how rewarding it is to teach that to pupils who are anxious to learn. So, I...

HR: And so motivated.

ML: Beg your pardon?

HR: They're very motivated then.

ML: Oh are they ever! I mean they do their practising and they, wh—they arrive for their lesson prepared, you know, it's pretty impressive. And I had pupils who got their ARCP as well. And it was extremely rewarding for me. Not really financially, but just was good for me to do something that made people so happy, I think, you know. And I have jumped quite a long way, haven't I? I attended Vancouver Normal School to learn to be a teacher.

HR: And had, had you always wanted to be a teacher because of your piano? Your, your...

ML: No, no I loved kids.

HR: Okay.

ML: It, it was my—we lived in a neighbourhood where it just happened I was the only older kid, and there were a lot of little kids. And I just loved them and I was always playing games with them and, you know, that kind of thing. And so I—when I had got—you see it was Depression and people didn't have money and so there were programs in Education where people could qualify in a sort of limited way. I couldn't afford—my parents couldn't afford to send me to UBC when I graduated from high school. And they, the government, had set up a program of what was called senior matric. Grade 12 was junior matric and then you were supposed to go into university. But, we went back to our high school, to North Van High, and I think there were about 15 or 20 of us, and we took senior matric. We got university subjects but we weren't taught by professors, we were taught by our high school teachers.

HR: I see.

ML: And then when, when we had—I, [coughing] I was 16, I had skipped a grade. I was 16 when I graduated from high school and I was practising 4 hours a day on piano because I was taking my ARC—my ATCM exam. And I had to study for school exams as well. So fortunately that year, which was 1938 when I graduated from high school, that was the first year they had instituted recommendations. And if you had a C+ average in any subject you didn't have to take the written grade 12 exam. And I was recommended in everything. Praise the Lord, because I don't know how I could have done all that piano practise.

HL: [laughter]

ML: And studied for school exams too. So, it really worked out quite well and I passed okay. Not spectacularly because it was pretty hard when you were dividing your attention all the time, but I did it. And then I went to normal school in Vancouver. We were North Van kids and we had to take the ferry. There was no Second Narrows Bridge. The bridge had been knocked over by some...

HR: Oh.

ML: ... I don't know, a boat breaking. I forget what year that was, in the early '30's I think.

HR: Okay.

ML: And so the only way to get to North Vancouver was by the North Van ferry. And so going to normal school—the normal school was up near where—it was on 10th Avenue I think, 10th Avenue East.

HR: Mm-hmm.

ML: Anyway it was near—oh blast, I...

HR: Near Cambie, up near that area.

ML: Yes! Up there. That's right, it was up there. And so we had to take the ferry over to Vancouver and take another streetcar up to 10th Avenue to go to normal school.

HR: And just before we go into the normal school, do you remember anything about your high school experiences? Any outstanding teachers or any activities that you were involved in that sort of...

ML: [coughing] Let me think. I had some funny friends. We were all funny, we thought we were hilarious.

HR: [laughter]

ML: And four of us went to normal school together. It was sort of nice, you know. We were going to this new establishment but we weren't alone because we had people with us who—there, there were some of the guys went to but this was girls. We—I, I was this—a late, a late bloomer or something. I didn't collect boyfriends in high school. But, normal school was more, more of social. And after we—oh at normal school we were quite brainwashed to want to go to a small country school. Yeah, it was very interesting. I think it was because they knew that a lot of us were going to have to because there weren't enough city jobs available. And so we were taught that teaching in a country school was a great thing and good experience. Which it was because you had to learn how to organize yourself and organize your pupils because you were teaching—I know I had, I had four kids in Grade 1, this is my first year of teaching.

HR: At Burns lake? At Burns lake?

ML: No, it wasn't in Burns Lake.

HR: Oh.

ML: It was 12 miles outside of Burns Lake. In a tiny—oh I must tell you something interesting too. We, we got our jobs and Pauling, which was where I was going to teach, had not been able—the community had not been able to maintain their own school board because they fought too much.

HR: [laughter]

ML: So the government in that case did have an official trustee who looked after business affairs. And that was the school inspector.

HR: Oh.

ML: So the school inspector not only inspected the teachers and made sure the school was properly run and everything like that but he also looked after hiring the teachers where required, you see. And so I was hired to go to this little school: Pauling. So, when I was getting—just the couple of days before I was leaving Vancouver to come up North to teach I got a phone call from the inspector and I can't—oh, no I can't remember his name but he was just a lovely man. And he said, "Your school burnt down yesterday."

HR: Oh my goodness.

ML: So, no he—I know, excuse me. I arrived on the train and he said, "Don't get off at the Pauling Station. Get off in Burns Lake, and I'll meet you there." And he did. And he said, "Your

school burnt down." That was where I got the glad news.

HR: Oh.

ML: And said, "I'm going to take you out there, to where the school used to be, to the community. And hopefully some person will be able to have a big enough living room that they could have the school in their house until we can build another one."

HR: Oh goodness!

ML: Yeah! So, I got off the train in Burns Lake and I was met by the Anglican minister's wife because I was Anglican and they had—there, there was not a church. Pauling, where I was going to teach was a very small community. Completely spread out, there was no central town at all. But the school was in the centre of the community. And I got off at Pauling and the Anglican minister's wife met me and took me to her house and said, "Mr," oh what was his name? Stanford? It was a name like that. His first name was Harold, but of course I never called him that. Stafford! S-T-A-F-F-O-R-D. And Mr. Stafford came along in due course and I got into his car and he took me out the 12 miles to Pauling. And he went west along Highway 16 which was not even paved at that time, it was gravel. And we went as far as Decker Lake. And then we went past Decker Lake. And there was a lovely lake, it was very pretty. Low mountains and lots of lovely lakes in this area. And it was just very, very pretty. And in September the leaves hadn't started to turn but they were looking as though they were going to, you know, it was really nice. And so we drove up the Pauling road, and found—where did we go? We didn't go right—Oh yes! We drove, he said, "We are going to drive to the house where you are going to board. I hear it's quite a big house. Maybe Mr. Long will allow the school to take place in his house." So we drove up the Pauling road and went in at the gate. And there was a guy on a horse came riding down the Pauling road to meet us and open the gate for us. A cute guy.

HR: Ah.

ML: And I married him later, but that was later.

HR: [laughter]

ML: Anyway, that was Art Long. And we went in up to the Long house. And it was a brand new house that had just been built because the other house had burnt down. You know, there were a lot of fires in those days.

HR: What, what caused it to burn down? Did they ever found out what caused the school...

ML: Oh yeah, it was it was over heating a heater stove.

HR: Oh I see.

ML: Oh, or, or, or piling the wood too close to the stove or something like—that sort of thing. But, it's because the climate was terrible, you know. It was *really really* cold. I think the latitude is about 52 or 54 degrees.

HR: Oh yeah.

ML: You know, it's long winters and stuff. Anyway...

HR: Were, were you prepared for that? Were you prepared for that Margaret?

ML: Yes at Normal School they, they gave us a lot of savvy about, you know, "You may get into a very small place, you may not have running water, you may have to go outside to the bathroom," and all this, you know. We we were expecting this. And so we, us girls, it didn't bother us all that much. I mean, it's not so bad when you don't have conveniences if nobody else has them either.

HR: Hmm that's, that's...

ML: I mean the thing was, they used Eaton's catalogues for toilet paper.

HR: Oh gosh.

ML: And I—my father was a salesman in Vancouver for a wholesale paper company. And I had brought quite a bit of toilet paper with me.

HR: [laughter]

ML: But, I was ashamed to take it out. Well I would, I would just take some out in my pocket. [laughter] Because...

HR: Because no one else would know.

ML: Because nobody else had toilet paper.

HR: I see.

ML: I mean it's like that.

HR: Yeah, you didn't want to stand out.

ML: No, no, no. You have to fit in if you're going to get along with people. And, and you—they have to like you or they won't learn from you.

HR: Yes.

ML: You know.

HR: And did you fit in? Did you fit in?

ML: I fitted in great. Because I'm a piano player you see.

HR: Ah.

ML: And, [coughing] excuse me, Mrs. Long had a piano.

HR: Oh goodness.

ML: And wasn't that nice? Because that meant they had quite a big living room. There were only 13 kids in the school. And whoever had been there when the school burnt down had saved a few of the desks. The desks weren't screwed to the floor, they were screwed to a piece 2''x4'' I think.

HR: Oh so they were able to pull them out?

ML: So they could slide them in and out, you see. If the—the, the Pauling School was used for a community hall.

HR: Oh I see.

ML: So, that if you there were going to be meetings or if there were going to be dances or social events at anytime, they could move the desks away.

HR: I see.

ML: To one end of the building and, you know.

HR: Right. So they could move them all along that 2''x4'', and...

ML: Yeah, they'd slide them out, you see.

HR: Okay.

ML: There'd maybe be two, two desks through every 2''x4''.

HR: Okay.

ML: Maybe six desks. No, no more than two, yeah. But, you know, the big boys in the class could move them. And the thing was the children did not start school at 6.

HR: Oh.

ML: Because distances to walk were too great.

HR: Oh.

ML: But because the school had burnt down it wasn't located where the school acre was, down in the centre of the community. The school was up at Long's, at the back end of the community and that meant that I got two 6 year old pupils to join Grade 1. Because it wasn't too far for them to walk.

HR: Oh. Oh great. So what, what ages did you have, Margaret?

ML: Well, the, the, the original before the fire, the the kids that were supposed to start school were, Thelma Wessel and Marion Long. That, just those two.

HR: Oh.

ML: And then, because of the 6 year olds starting, the Grade 1 class al, also—oh, and by the way, Marion and Thelma were 7. That was the age that most of the kids started school. And they were nearly 8. They were 7 1/2, both of them. Along came these two little tadpoles who had not been expecting to go to school. A little boy who was Thelma's little brother, and his name was Henk, H-E-N-K. The Wessels were Dutch, Dutch immigrants from Holland. An, he was 6 and a little girl called Patsy Lindus from up behind Long's, way back back in the boon docks. Her father was Norwegian. And she was only 6, but fortunately she was a very clever kid. And she caught right up to the two older little girls.

HR: So did he speak Norwegian? When she started or...

ML: No, she spoke English.

HR: English?

ML: Her father had an accent. But he mother was Canadian.

HR: Oh okay.

ML: And I think I must have have five Grade 1s, because there was also another little boy called Bobby Long. Marion's younger brother, and he was very immature. He was 6 years old, but they had sort of babied him as the youngest of quite a big family. So, he was like a 4 1/2 year old kid, you know. And both he and Henk ended up repeating Grade 1. I mean, they were just not re, re—you the reading readiness they talk about in teaching, reading.

HR: Yes, yeah.

ML: Well they weren't at reading readiness. For many reasons. One of them was their age and the other was just the life they had lead.

ML: Which was playing out in the dirt and running around and chasing animals, you know. They had, they had...

HR: Right.

ML: ...no conception of reading, nobody ever read to them or anything.

HR: Right.

ML: So, they—my Grade 1 class was pretty divided, divided, you know. It was like two different classes.

HR: So...

ML: And then I had a couple—oh I had one kid in Grade 2, and then I think I had three Grade 3, and nobody in Grade 4. I mean, it sort of went like that, you know.

HR: Mm-hmm.

ML: And I, as I say, I had 13 kids and then we added the two little 6 year olds, and so then we had 15. But that was my class for the year.

HR: Okay.

Ml: And there were two Grade 7s. Nobody in Grade 6 I think if I remember rightly. And there were two Grade 7s and nobody in Grade 8. And so there I was. I mean, you were just there and it was sink or swim, you know. There's nobody to hold your hand.

HR: And you just...

ML: And you carry bravely on as best you think you should.

HR: And with the fire, did you have any resources? Did you have, did you have books?

ML: Yeah, yeah, the, the, the—it, the—Mr. Stafford, the inspector—yes, they paid somebody to bring wood for the fire. And there was a wood shed in the school yard and they filled it full of wood.

HR: And, and what about books?

ML: Well the Department of Education provided readers.

HR: Okay, so they weren't, they weren't all lost in the fire? Or did they replace them?

ML: Oh yes, they were all lost in the fire, but they got others from other schools.

HR: Okay. So, you, you had enough in the way of resources?

ML: Yeah. Limited, when you think the way it is now that teachers have supplementary readers and all this.

HR: Yeah.

ML: But I wasn't able to have any of that. And, it was a big advantage that Mrs. Long had a piano.

HR: Mm-hmm.

ML: Because I could play and they could sing. And many kids had never heard a piano much, you know.

HR: Mm-hmm.

ML: And for them it was quite thrilling to have a piano playing and they always sang good. I think we sang "Good Morning to You" or something in the morning, you know.

HR: Yes, yes.

ML: But they sang with accompaniment.

HR: Wow, that...

ML: It was, I mean it was, it was pretty good for them, you know.

HR: So what, what was your day like? Tell, tell me about a a typical day.

ML: Well, I, I would get waked—I had an alarm clock, I guess I got up, I had a bedroom to myself. And I didn't have many baths. I had about one a week because—They had, they, they had grandly said, "You're going to board at Long's. They have a bathroom." But what they didn't tell us was they didn't have a toilet. [laughter] The toilet was outside.

HR: Oh. [laughter]

ML: The bathroom literally had a bathtub in it...

HR: [laughter]

ML: ...with a drain. But you had to carry buckets of water and you'd heat the water on the kitchen stove and then you pour the water in the the tub, and then you had your bath.

HR: Wow.

ML: So, you see, for a family with chil—a number of children, many of them used the same water for several kids.

HR: Right.

ML: It, you know, it was pretty primitive. But everybody seemed to be clean, you know.

HR: Right.

ML: And with no—nobody had anything any better than anybody else. That's about the size of it. It was, everybody struggled with the same inconvenience. And it wasn't a big deal for them, it was for me because I was a city girl. But I didn't mind. I, I sort of threw myself into the community and I tried to do everything like they did. You see everybody rode horseback.

HR: Oh okay.

ML: Everybody had saddle horses. The Long's in particular had nice saddle horses. Many of the kids rode work horses. But nobody had much in the way of tractors they did most of their farm work with horses, you see.

HR: So you learned how to ride?

ML: I learned how to ride. I had a saddle horse of my own.

HR: Oh, goodness.

ML: Yes. Mr. Long was a great horseman and he had had a stallion called Spider. And so all the colts, foals, or whatever they call them, the young horses that were born were given the names of insects.

HR: Oh.

ML: So, the Long's had a daughter called Jean who was 15, she had finished Grade 8 in the spring and she wouldn't be going back to school because it would have meant going to high school in town and they couldn't afford to send her. And there was no accommodation or anything for students from out in the country to come into Burns Lake for high school. It was really quite sad. But anyway, Jean became a very good friend of mine. We, we were—she was 15 and I was 19 because I was 19 when I started teaching. And she was a wonderful horse woman. And she had a horse called Wasp, and I rode Wasp's sister whose name was Fly.

HR: Oh. [laughter]

ML: And there was—what else did the—oh they had a number of of horses called, horses called by names. They didn't have any mosquitoes. [laughter] But we had lots of mosquitoes anyway. Pauling was full of mosquitoes, real mosquitoes. But anyway, I had a saddle horse of my own which was pretty nice. At the school they had a little barn for the kids to park their horses, because the shelter was needed for the horses to stand during the school hour periods. For 7 hours, you know. And I'm not telling this in very good order, am I?

HR: Yeah, oh yes you are, yes you are I'm interested…

ML: Are you all right?

HR: Yes I'm fine. Yeah, so everyone would come to school with their horses and then—so, you were talking about fitting in, and one of the things you did was you rode your horse. Were there other ways that you tried to fit in to the community?

ML: Oh yeah, because the community had—it was wartime. The war had started.

HR: Mm-hmm.

ML: It was 19, what did I say, '46-'45? No, no that was the end of the war.

HR: Yeah.

ML: I, I started teaching in 1940. There I was a 1940 graduate of the normal school.

HR: Okay.

ML: And I started teaching then. I wrote so many letters of applications to get a job and that was my first sentence. I am a 1940 graduate of the Vancouver Normal School [laughter]

HR: Normal school. [laughter]

ML: So, I've got that one memorized, and I remember it even now. But, I'm off the topic now. What— where am I now?

HR: How else, how else did you try to fit into the community?

ML: Oh yeah, how else. Well it because it was war time we started a Women's Institute. That was the Country Women's Organization for British Columbia.

HR: Ah.

ML: And it was centred in Victoria. It was, it was a government sponsored organization. And we did good things for the troops and sent, sent boxes of goodies, to the army and all that.

HR: Like, like what? Socks and, did you knit socks?

ML: Oh yeah. Yeah, we knitted, we knitted and we sewed things and, oh it was everybody—you see, when the war started it took quite awhile for things to kind of get going. If you get what I mean.

HR: Yeah, I guess the impact was not immediate.

ML: No. it wasn't, it wasn't. And Art, this boy that I had met riding horseback the very first day I arrived, he had already joined the army. The Long's were very patriotic. And he had joined the army and he—I met him and we liked each other right away. And I had a couple or three very nice dates with him, just going for horseback rides and things like that. And then he was out of the picture because he went to Prince Rupert where there was an army base.

HR: I see.

ML: And it was the Search Light Battery and it was Royal Canadian Artillery. And Art joined the Royal Canadian Artillery in the Search Lights.

HR: Okay.

ML: In Prince Rupert. And he came home at Christmas for four days I think. And I think he had

embarkation leave about 6 months later, and he was gone! Embarkation leave was 2 weeks. So I didn't see that guy very much, but did we ever write letters.

HR: Oh lovely.

ML: We wrote letters for 6 years.

HR: Wow.

ML: And then he came home and we got married right away, without a delay at all.

HR: Oh lovely.

ML: Wasn't that romantic?

HR: Yes. [laughter]

ML: And lived happily ever after, sort of.

HR: How old was he when—how much older is Art than you? Or was Art?

ML: He—4 years.

HR: 4 years.

ML: Yeah. Well he's—he was, he he died in 1985. He—when we got married I was 20 maybe, no 21. No, I was more than that!

HR: So if you wrote letters...

ML: I was 23.

HR: Yeah, and if you...

ML: I was 23 when we got married and was 27, I think.

HR: Okay.

ML: Or 28. His birthday was in February and mine was in August. Anyway, it—we had a very—Pauling was a very good community. It consisted of some immigrants. There was, there was this Dutch family, the Wessels. And there was—they had a brother-in-law who came over with them, called Charlie Metrath, and Charlie was French. Mrs.Wessel had been what was French and her

brother Charlie came over kind of to keep an eye on his sister, I think. And he was a mover and ended up a big sawmill operator in Burns Lake.

HR: Ah.

ML: But he was just a farm worker when I met him. He worked for Mr. Long as a farm worker and he was a good worker and he did and all that. Jean and I got to be good friends, and while I had a bedroom to myself, I wanted to sleep with Jean because she was so warm and it was so cold. [laughter]

HR: [laughter]

ML: And so we, we slept together and talked about boys and so on and so forth. You, you can imagine, you know. But anyway, we went to a lot of dances. That was the social event that we went to. And the dances took place—there were some took place in Pauling. But we—they took place in the school. And of course the school had burnt down. So...

HR: So, where were they held when the school was not...

ML: I, I can't remember.

HR: Ah.

ML: I think we, we had one, one or two little dances in Long's living room.

HR: Mm-hmm

ML: And, oh, I must tell you. Of course, Mrs. Long had her piano in her living room so I had a piano in the school for the first year I taught. And I went—the rule at that time was that you went to normal school, went out and taught for a year, went back to summer school in July and...

HR: In Victoria.

ML: ...two months in summer school. Taking more courses in teaching procedures. Then you went to back to your original school or to another, whatever, and taught for a second year. And then you went back to summer school and taught and learned another bunch of stuff about teaching. And then you were a qualified teacher. Are you exhausted?

HR: [laughter] And the summer school was held in Victoria, was it?

ML: Yes. And wait until I tell you about Victoria.

HR: Oh.

ML: You may have thought that was a, a, a burden for us poor girls. We earned as country school teachers, 78 dollars a month.

HR: Oh wow.

ML: And out of that we had to save up enough to travel to Victoria and pay board in summer school. You know, it's un, unbelievable.

HR: Wow, wow. [laughter] Where, where did you board?

ML: My parents were not in a position to finance me much, you know. And it was really hard.

HR: Do you remember where you boarded in Victoria?

ML: Do I ever. Let me tell you. We, because it was war time, we were in St. Margaret School.

HR: Oh yeah.

ML: You know where St. Margaret's School is? It's on Fort Street.

HR: I know where the new one is but a number of teachers that I've spoken to have referred to the Fort Street school, and I'm, I'm not sure…

ML: Yeah, that's the one, yeah.

HR: Yeah.

ML: And we went there and we boarded at St. Margaret's School. And there were 13 of us in the top floor of St. Margaret's School. And do you know that was 65 years ago and the 13 are still in touch with one another. Isn't that remarkable? We have a what we call the Round Robin. And it's a letter. It's a big envelope containing—well of course, after all these years, three of us have died. But only three, there are 10 of us still alive, and we're all in our late 80s. And we receive the Round Robin about once every 3 or 4 months and we'd take out our old letter and of course read it, and read everything, and pass it on to the next—you know, we have order of—like somebody called May sends it from Vancouver to me and I send it to Ivy in Prince George, you know, and she sends it on to Kate in, in—she lives in California. Two of the girls live in California.

HR: You began this round robin writing in your first year of teaching?

ML: Yeah.

HR: And you've carried it on, that's fantastic.

ML: Yeah, and it's still—nobody would dare let it go.

HR: Wow.

ML: It, it, it's a point of pride that we keep it going.

HR: Wow that's fantastic!

ML: Yeah. One of the girls is in in Kelowna and one in the Kootenays somewhere, I forget. And Ivy's in Prince George, she's the closest one to me and I'm in Burns Lake. Oh it's—we have reunions quite often now. We used to have reunions every 10 years. And then as we all got older we decided to have them every 5 years because you never knew when someone might die or something. And now we have them about every 2 years.

HR: Wow. So I, I hope that you'll put some of those letters in an archive or something when you're done. Because it's, it's a fantastic piece of history your, your letter writing to each other.

ML: Yeah it is. And this is why I can tell you so clearly about what went on because I have been with these girls and passing—you know, going over things and talking about—reminiscing and stuff, you know.

HR: Yes. Oh well that's wonderful. Margaret I have a meeting to attend at 11 o'clock today. So it's about 10 to 11 we've been talking...

ML: Oh well maybe we'll just—I can't think of anything else anyway.

HR: Well we've been...

ML: If you want any more information call me back.

HR: I do, I do want more information. For example, I would like to know a little bit more about the kinds of things you did with the students and how the war impacted...

ML: We—oh I'll just tell you one more thing. With my first month's pay I bought a piano accordion. No that's a lie. I bought it is the spring of my first year teaching because I knew I was going to be teaching where there was no piano.

HR: Mm-hmm.

ML: I planned on coming back for the second year. And yeah, I guess it was in the summer holidays, I managed to get the money together to buy a 48 base piano accordion. And I taught it —taught myself to play it in the summer holidays so that when I came back the second year and was teaching in the brand new school, which didn't have a piano, I had an accordion. And I played for dances too.

HR: Oh wow...

ML: I played piano for dances too at Long's house.

HR: Oh really?

ML: So, I'll let you go. Goodbye, goodbye.

[continued]

ML: Towns, you know, and so it was important for the good of the country schools that they had decent teachers out in the boondocks, you know. And so I really—we all felt that this was happening. But it was adventure, you know. I was 19 years old when I went out there. And it, it was something that was sort of like summer camp. I was a great summer camp kid and I loved the outdoors and I loved to swim and all this, you know. And the camp comradeship you got in summer camp, and I was an only child and that was important for me too. So that going to summer camp with my buddies and then learning that when I went to the educational place I was going to that we were needed it was just sort of—we didn't feel pressured. It wasn't pressure. It was just—well of course we'll go out and teach in the country for a couple years.

HR: Okay. All right

ML: I mean I, I think that was about as much as they expected of us. That we would teach for a couple of years out in the country and then when we had a couple of of inspector's reports that weren't too bad to use in writing our applications, then you could afford to go somewhere else. Hopefully, you know.

HR: So, so you got the impression that it was a, a temporary thing?

ML: Oh yes.

HR: Yeah, okay. So that, that kind of was communicated by the people at the normal school?

ML: I, I don't think they actually got up and said, "Come on all you guys, you've got to teach out in the country." It wasn't like that.

HR: Okay.

ML: But it was just sort of a foregone conclusion.

HR: Yeah, okay.

ML: And I mean it was a good idea because to inflict a bunch of inexperienced teachers on a whole classroom of city kids was not appropriate either, you know.

HR: Mm-hmm. Right, okay. And you talked a little bit about the war time, your husband, or before he was your husband went off to war and you started a Women's Institute where you were. And I'm just wondering if you can remember any—doing any war time activities with the students? For example, did you do any drills, did they get under the desks to protect themselves, or did they collect war stamps? Do you remember helping any...

ML: Oh I think—wait now. You see, I taught 2 years in Pauling and then I—the Vancouver school Board actually hired me, although I was on on only a beginning teacher with only 2 years experience. But they hired me, and how they did it, it was quite sneaky. I was told the first—or the day before the first day of school that I was to substitute at Sir James Douglas School for Miss Bryden. And it was a Grade 3 class and I went to Sir James Douglas School, which fortunately wasn't all that far from where my parents lived. My parents lived at 37th and Victoria Drive—or along in there. And Sir James Douglas School was at 59th and Victoria. So, every morning I arose at the crack dawn and walked to St.—Sir James Douglas School. Away—it was on the hill going down to the Fraser River, at Delta.

HR: Okay.

ML: And it was the farthest out school in Vancouver, one of them, you know. It was sort of—the kids were very nice out there. It was—they weren't like city kids because most of them lived on little farms and that, you know, they weren't really farms. But, they had a country feel about them, you know. They, they weren't—I, I just can't describe it. The children were just lovely out there.

HR: Well that's good to know. That's—a lot of teachers have said that about the kids out in the country.

ML: Oh yes. They're more innocent or something. Well they know more about sex and all that because they have cows and horses and, you know, they're always breeding things and all this. So, they know a lot more about sex than possibly the city kids do. But, the city kids know it in another way too, you know.

HR: Yes.

ML: And it seemed that you could trust them more.

HR: Mm-hmm.

ML: I didn't—like in the—I, I can't describe it really. I just felt at ease with those kids. Because I had been teaching country kids for 2 years, you know.

HR: Mm-hmm.

ML: And then I came to Vancouver and low and behold the kids I had were kind of like that too, you know.

HR: Hmm.

ML: And you see what I was starting to say about being hired by the Vancouver School Board. They hired me as a substitute.

HR: Oh yeah.

ML: And then they, then they indicated that I was I was a long term substitute. Miss Bryden had been very ill. She was just about ready to retire. She was an older teacher and they really didn't expect her to come back.

HR: Oh yeah.

ML: So they hired me as a sub. It was quite—it was a, it was a defensive measure on their part. They didn't want to hire an inexperienced teacher who was going to let them down. But I had talents that they wanted because I'm—I had a music degree and I was kind of—I got along well with the kids and this sort of thing. And so, if I didn't work out it was easy to say, "We won't be requiring you after such and such a date."

HR: Mm.

ML: They could have done it right away if I didn't turn out, you know.

HR: Right, with a substitute you're always tenuous.

ML: Oh yeah, yeah. So, it was, it was fair, I didn't think I was being taken advantage of or anything like that. It wasn't until I'd got my permanent, permanent position that I realized that I really had been teetering, you know.

HR: [laughter] How long did it take to get a permanent position?

ML: I think I taught the first year and then they gave me the permanent position. Because I got the kids through the course, through the time table for Grade 3. I had Grade 3 and a group of Grade 4s as well. And I taught quite a lot of music in the school to other grades.

HR: Do you think that having a a strong music background was helpful?

ML: Oh yes. It was a thrill.

HR: And they looked for that?

ML: Oh yeah. I mean, if a school didn't have music there was something lacking, you know.

HR: Mm-hmm. Yeah, okay. And either at—in, up in Pauling or when you were down in in Delta substi—or down substituting at in the Vancouver School District do, do you remember doing any collecting, for example, of metals or paper or anything for the kids to help with the war effort?

ML: I think we did, I think we did. It was a very patriotic time, you know. I just can't tell you how we all felt about the war. It was so over pervading everything, you know. And we—certainly we did do things like that, collecting metal and especially in Vancouver. Don't think we did in Pauling. It was too small a school. I never had more than 15 kids. But, certainly in Vancouver we did that sort of thing.

HR: Okay. And you saw that as being just part of your job?

ML: Oh yeah.

HR: Yeah, okay. tThere was something else I was going to ask. Oh first of all, when you in were you substituting at Sir James Douglas, then they kept you on at Sir James Douglas?

ML: Say that—the last part of your sentence I didn't catch.

HR: Oh you substituted at Sir James Douglas and that was in Delta.

ML: No it wasn't in Delta.

HR: Oh sorry.

ML: It was in Vancouver. It was a city school.

HR: Okay, sorry I, I misunderstood where it was located.

ML: Oh no, no it was on Victoria Drive at 59th.

HR: Oh Okay.

ML: The, the city street cars went as far as 54th and turned around and went back. And we were five blocks past the end of the line.

HR: Okay, and so you stayed there, when they hired you full time you stayed there?

ML: No. I lived with my parents.

HR: Oh, but what I mean is did you teach there the second year when you got the Grade 3 and 4 class?

ML: I got the grade 3 and 4 class the first year.

HR: At Sir James Douglas?

ML: Yeah.

HR: And, and then when you were hired full time, permanent, you stayed at Sir James Douglas, or did you go to...

ML: Yeah, I stayed at Sir James Douglas all the time, yes.

HR: You didn't go to another school?

ML: No I didn't. I got along really well with the principal in, in Sir James Douglas. And the other teachers, we were a group. We, we became a, a group, you know, a connection. And we had a very, very good school. And everybody liked each other and it was really pretty nice.

HR: How, how many teachers were there? Was it quite a big school?

ML: Not really. Not as big city schools go. Because it was serving more of an outlying district, you see. I can't tell you how many rooms it had. Really I...

HR: Okay, that's okay.

ML: But it, but, but there was a teacher for every room, every grade.

HR: Okay. And when you had Grade 3 and 4 were they in one room together, or did you go between two rooms.

ML: Oh no, no, no, I was—they were all in one room.

HR: All in one room, okay.

ML: Oh yes, you never did that.

HR: Okay. Now, how, how long did you stay in the teaching force?

ML: Well I taught 'til the war was over.

HR: At Sir James Douglas? Were you at Sir James Douglas?

ML: Yeah I, I stayed there the whole time.

HR: Okay.

ML: You see, it was so handy because I was living with my parents. And they were on Victoria Drive and the school on Victoria Drive.

HR: Oh yeah.

ML: And I got lots of exercise which I always like. I still walk a lot. And it was—it just suited me very well indeed. And I never got rich enough on the teaching to buy a car in Vancouver.

HR: [laughter]

ML: [laughter] And so I was always taking the street—the bus or it was, it was all streetcars in those days, you know. Electric trams.

HR: Mm-hmm

ML: And as I say, the end of the line was at 54th Avenue and then we walked, we'd have to walk where ever.

HR: Okay. So you taught there until the end of the war and the your, your fiancée came back, or...

ML: Yeah, he came back and I quit. Bingo!

HR: [laughter]

ML: He came back for Christmas of 1945 and we were married in January of '46! So we didn't lose a lot of time.

HR: Oh yes, wow.

ML: But we had waited quite a while too, you know. [laughter]

HR: Yes, many years.

ML: Yeah, writing letters.

ML: Wow, that's wonderful. And what was your maiden name at that time?

ML: Seely. S-E-E-L-Y. I think it was—my dad was an English Canadian. No—yeah, he was English. His family were United Empire Loyalists from the States.

HR: Mm-hmm.

ML: And in 1861, which was when the Civil War happened in the American States, there were Loyalists who would—when when when the war was over in the States the members of the community who had been loyal to Britain.

HR: Fled. [laughter]

ML: Had to move out.

HR: Right, so his family...

ML: They were not welcome. And they didn't want to be there anyway. And they gathered themselves together, thousand—I think there were 40 000 of them. And they came up from—or maybe it was 60 000, there were a lot of them anyway. And they came up from New York State and my dad's family, the Seelys, were part of that. And they, they came by boat. And they came to St. John, New Brunswick.

HR: Oh yeah.

ML: And that was where my dad's family came—lived. That's where they settled. In Canada.

HR: And your mom was also...

ML: My mom. Well my mom's father came from Scotland and he emigrated probably in—oh gosh, I wonder when it was. My mother was born about 1904, I think, and she was the youngest of the family. And he had, he came over—anyway, he was aristocratic. Came from Scotland, from a good family in Scotland and...

ML: And the London had been a, London's had been an aristocratic family who had I think come to Scotland from France or something. Anyway, they legally hyphenated the name, London.

HR: Isn't that interesting. Because it's very uncommon for that time.

ML: Oh very, yes. But Brown is common you see.

HR: So she didn't like that.

ML: And when my mom went to elementary school, I remember her mentioning that in one class she was called Effie Brown. You know, they didn't use the London part. But the London part was legal. It, it was supposed to be used. But anyway, that was just some teacher who thought she couldn't be bothered with a double-barrelled name like that, you know. It was, it was an affectation. But it wasn't really an affectation.

HR: No

ML: It was a, a legal thing, sort of, you know.

HR: Right, and an attempt to keep the family name going.

ML: Yes that's right. And so what really—London-Brown brought to Canada was his musical talent.

HR: Ah.

ML: Because he was a piano player and a singer and he sang all the old Scottish songs. And his children knew all the Scottish songs and, my mother knew them all, and I learned them all. I mean it was a, it was a thing in our family that Scot songs were the best kind and stuff. And it was—I was an only child, there was just me.

HR: So you carried that on, you carried on that love of music.

ML: Oh yeah. And when I was—now how did it happen? When Willie came to Canada, my grandfather, when he came to Canada he came to Ontario and to the St. Catherine's area in—and I can't—oh yeah, he came bringing all his talents. Willie really—he was a very clever man. And he came to Canada, and I think he came and was a bookkeeper somewhere. And unfortunately he had—oh I know, before he came to Canada he was in the British army. I forgot that important thing. He was in the British army and he was in India.

HR: Mmm.

ML: And while he was in India fighting for the Queen, because it was Queen Victoria, he contracted malaria.

HR: Oh dear.

ML: Yes, it was oh dear because there was no cure at that time. And he came to Canada, but he was an invalid, practically. He was very, very weak. And he was—he brought—I think he had a very small income from the family estate or something.

HR: Okay.

ML: But he couldn't work, you know, he was just too sick. And he—but he, he was convivial and he married a girl called Elizabeth Prout, P-R-O-U-T. And she was a country girl in—outside of St. Catherine's somewhere. And they immediately had five kids. And the reason they could do it immediately, they had two pairs of twins!

HR: Oh gosh. [laughter]

ML: [laughter] And, like, just a few years apart. And then quite awhile later they had one more baby and that was my mother.

HR: My goodness, your grandmother was busy.

ML: But the pairs of twins consisted of two girls, the first two, the next two were a boy and a girl. But, unfortunately, the girl was deaf.

HR: Oh I see.

ML: And her mother became—no wait, I forgot to tell you that when Willie married a Canadian girl he married one who—and I think there was deafness in the family or something. Because when my mother was two and he died—no mom's hearing was all right. It was Auntie Mina, the one in the second pair of twins, who was born deaf. And she learnt to talk and learnt everything from her twin brother.

HR: Oh goodness.

ML: It was very interesting, I guess, you know. Because she had a twin brother, he taught her how to talk.

HR: And, and she spoke, even being deaf!

ML: Yeah. And she became less deaf. She wasn't completely deaf. You just had to talk loud to her.

HR: Oh interesting. Isn't that interesting that it came from her brother?

ML: Yeah. But my grandmother—hearing aids that were available in those days just weren't any good. And she didn't use a hearing aid or anything. But we just wrote everything down. She kept a scribbler right on the table and when you wanted to say something to her, you wrote it down.

HR: Oh I see.

ML: And that was nice because, you see, she, she got to be quite old. She lived a good age, I can`t remember old she was when she died, but she was in her 90s. And I would go and visit her every Sunday afternoon. I was quite faithful on that. And I would write down things to tell her what I`d been doing and about my boyfriends and everything. And that was very nice because she had this scribbler and she could read it over afterwards.

HR: Oh that`s very interesting.

ML: Isn't that interesting, yeah. Yeah she, she kept all those scribblers with me telling her all my wild escapades and...

HR: [laughter]

ML: ...the things I did and the dances I went to and things like that. And she sort of enjoyed them all over again.

HR: [laughter]

ML: Isn't that nice for you too, to have had your grandma to share that with.

ML: Yeah. Yeah it was good. But...

HR: Maybe we can just slip back into either Sir James Douglas or your school up at Pauling and do you remember ever thinking you didn't have enough resources or you couldn't cover the curriculum? Were you ever short? And wished, wished you had...

ML: Oh well we didn't have anything, hardly. Well it was, it was—I didn't feel slighted or anything, I wasn't—I didn't feel that I was suffering. I wished, I wished there was a piano in the school. Oh I should tell you, or did I tell you? That when, when I arrived in Pauling the first thing, the inspector met me at the train and told me that my school had burnt down.

HR: Yes, yes.

ML: I told you that.

HR: And so you taught in the home of the...

ML: Yes I taught in Long's—in the Long home and Mrs. Long had a piano.

HR: That's right.

ML: So, for the first year that I taught I could teach singing, you know. And we had a good Christmas concert because I was able to play for the kids to sing, you see. And that kind of thing.

HR: Okay.

ML: It, it was good. But the second year I taught, I stayed two years, and the second year I taught I was in the brand new Pauling School. But it was 2 miles away and I couldn't use the Long piano. So, with my first pay check, which was $80 a month. I was in an isolated school, so I got $2 a month more.

HR: I see.

ML: And these little schools I should tell you, had their own school boards believe it or not.

HR: Yes.

ML: But they—when they didn't get along, and the Pauling School Board did not get along, the inspector of schools took over and became the official trustee and in Pauling that was state. The people didn't have any democratic control of the school at all.

HR: When, when did that happen? When did the inspector...

ML: Before my time.

HR: Okay.

ML: It, it was the start of my, of—it was the condition when I got there, that the inspector was the official trustee.

HR: Do you remember who the inspector was?

ML: Harold Stafford.

HR: Oh okay.

ML: How do you like that? Isn't that amazing? When I have no memory. [laughter]

HR: What a good memory. Do you remember anything about him? Was he a good inspector? A good...

ML: Oh yeah. He was very supportive and very kind and very nice and, and it was good. Everything I did about teaching in Pauling was good.

HR: Do you—did he ever have to help you out in any way with what you were teaching or anything like that?

ML: No, I don't think so. I think I thought I was doing a good job. [laughter]

HR: And obviously he did too.

ML: I don't know whether he did or not, but anyway I got quite good inspectors reports. And that was important because I knew I wouldn't be teaching there forever. I was—there was pressure from my parents down in Vancouver that I should get out of the boondocks and get...

HR: [laughter]

ML: I mean you see, my parents felt that when I had a piano—a music degree, I was sort of fit for better things than a country school.

HR: Mm, I see.

ML: Where I had to teach everything and where music was just a thrill, you know. So, that was how it was that I applied in my third year teaching to teach in Vancouver. And just about that time the Vancouver School board was finding it hard to get good teachers because so many young men were leaving to go in the army.

HR: Right.

ML: And getting called up and all this. And they really had trouble getting enough teachers. And they sort of got a lot that were warm and breathing, I think. [laughter]

HR: [laughter] Did you...

ML: But anyway, we survived.

HR: Did you work with any teachers that had been brought out of retirement to come and teach?

ML: No, I didn't.

HR: No.

ML: No, I didn't. Didn't see that.

HR: Okay. So the inspector was very supportive.

ML: Oh yeah.

HR: Do you—did you ever think that you needed help? Did you ever...

ML: Oh of course not! I thought I was doing everything right! [laughter]

HR: That's good to know.

ML: You would be amazed at the—what's the word? Audacity? Audacity?

HR: Yeah.

ML: Yeah, I mean I thought I was really doing okay. You know, I may have...

HR: [laughter]

ML: Well it was a very interesting situation because there you were, now I had four Grade 1s. And what was really awful was that when school opened the first day in September I had two Grade 1s. And they were 7 years old because it was the custom in that cold country for parents not to send their children to school at 6. They sent them at 7 because they had to walk long distances. There were no school buses in those days and they had to be able to walk to school and back every day.

HR: Mm.

ML: And therefore they didn't let the grades—the 6 years olds go, even if they were old enough to go to school. So there I was. I taught for about the month of September pretty well with two Grade 1s. And then the inspector showed up and he looked at the situation and he went and visited some parents that had 6 year olds and the result was that on the third week of September two little 6 year olds showed up.

HR: [laughter] Oh gosh.

ML: Imagine it? I mean, when a kid is going to start at 6, for practically a year before people were preparing that child for this wonderful event that they were going to be going to school. And these little tadpoles had not been prepared.

HR: Oh my.

ML: Fortunately, one of them—there was a little girl called Patsy and a little boy called Robby—Bobby, Bobby. Patsy and Bobby. And Patsy was clever, so she knuckled in right away. Bobby was a free spirit.

HR: [laughter]

ML: Bobby wanted to play. He was a great player. And he didn't want to sit in school. And the two 7 year olds who started in September, because they were 7 year olds and quite normal little girls, and they were girls too, They were just going ahead like a—it was wonderful, you know. I thought, "Gee I'm a pretty good teacher, these kids are reading already." [laughter] And they were, you know, I mean it was—it, it's easy to teach kids that are read—who are reading readiness and stuff like that, you know.

HR: [laughter]

ML: And so there I was settling in with, with these 11 kids, and all of a sudden I had 13, two of whom were babies who didn't know anything. And if it hadn't been that Patsy was clever little kid and learnt from the other little girls as well as from me, you know. And so poor Bobby, I remember one of Mr. Long's famous stories was that he, he was going down to the post office one afternoon and Miss Seely was chasing Bobby around the school trying to catch him to put him back in school again. [laughter]

HR: [laughter]

ML: You know, I mean this sort of thing. It was sort of cute. [laughter] And Bobby never did catch up, you know.

HR: Oh.

ML: It was too bad. He was—well the rest of his family were normal intelligence. He wasn't unintelligent so much as he was babyish.

HR: Mm.

ML: And the family had babied him.

HR: Mm.

ML: Because the family had girl of 13 and a boy of 8—no a boy of 9, and then along came Bobby. And, you know, it, it, it was really tricky.

HR: I, I know that sentiment because even with my own children I wanted my first to grow up so fast. Because you don't know what, what to expect. And then...

ML: Yeah, yeah.

HR: ...my son, who is second, I don't want him to grow up because I want to hold on to my children. [laughter]

HR: Oh gosh, don't you do that to that boy. [laughter]

HR: [laughter]

ML: I should take you in hand, Helen, and give you a stern discussion about little children and how impressionable they are and you can make them feel like they're big or not.

HR: Yes and I have to keep pushing myself to make him more independent. [laughter]

ML: Oh yes, yes indeed. And, you know, one thing about the, the country school system, the one room school system, it did make the kids very self-reliant. If a teacher had kids in—I didn't have them in every grade. The first year I had Grade 1, Grade—I had one Grade 2, I had two Grade 3s, and I think two Grade 4s, nobody in Grade 5, nobody—oh one kid in Grade 6. It was like that, you know. What are you gonna do?

HR: Right.

ML: You, you do—I'll tell you what you do. You combine grades for some subjects. Like in social studies the curriculum might say you did a certain area of the world in Grade 3. Well maybe you did it in Grade 3 but in a country school if there were only two kids in Grade 3 and three in Grade 4, well then you'd combine them and maybe the Grade 4 kids had already done the Grade 3 curriculum. So you'd do the Grade 4 curriculum with the Grade 3s that year and then the following year you would do the Grade 3 curri—I mean it was very confusing for the next teacher coming in. If you didn't make—keep good records. Because they didn't know what the kids had learned, you know.

HR: Oh yeah.

ML: And that happened in science too. And social studies and science you had to do the reading, you know, as—you couldn't double up curriculum that way for reading.

HR: So the work...

ML: And for math, for math that that was carved in stone as well.

HR: So math and reading you had to stick with the grade level and they worked a little more independently?

ML: Yes that's right, that's right. But there was always—it did make the kids independent because the teacher spent her time running around among the kids making sure everybody understood what they were doing and, you know, making sure were assigned enough to keep them going and that kind of thing.

HR: Mm.

ML: It was, it was a different thing. You see, in teachers that have a split grade now.

HR: Yes.

ML: Because they do that sort of thing in a limited way. But we had to do it in a very unlimited way. It was quite a challenge.

HR: Yep, but you managed.

ML: We had to. And I mean, you know, the inspector never came, as I say, 'til on in September. It was—it didn't—wasn't in the first week of school.

HR: Mm-hmm. Yeah so you basically had to get on with it.

ML: Yeah you had to because you only had so long to pour all this information into these little heads. And make sure it stayed.

HR: Mm-hmm. So that was quite different from your experiences at Sir James where there was more—there were just the two grades rather than the whole gamut.

ML: Oh yeah. I mean, it was, it was a piece of cake. [laughter] It really was. I, I enjoyed teaching at Sir Ja—at Douglas School in Vancouver, it was a good school. We had a very good principal and the staff were nice and, and the kids were very nice. It was interesting, I know in some Vancouver schools I think kids are pretty rough, you know. But those kids were nice. Dear kids, I

thought of them lovingly. After I got married and left them I thought—I hoped the teacher that got them appreciated them like I did.

HR: Did you ever have to strap any of them? Or discipline them?

ML: Yeah, I did. Well especially in the Pauling School, you see, because there was no,there was no principal to take them to. You were the principal. But I—now what happened? They did something at noon hour, what did they do? Oh gee I can't remember what it was. It wasn't very naughty, I can tell, yeah. But when they should have stayed around in the area of the school, I think they went off somewhere and didn't get back in time for 1 o'clock, or something. And every child got one little whack. I mean, I think you have to do these things judiciously if you're on your own, you know. You can't be too easy on the kids, because then they take advantage of you. And then pretty soon the school's a madhouse, you know.

HR: [laughter]

ML: So I, I can remember whatever, whatever the misdemeanour was it wasn't all that dreadful, but it had to be nipped in the bud, you might say. So I—and the parents weren't—thought, they thought that was okay. It wasn't that a bunch of parents came down to the school and balled me out or anything like that.

HR: Mm-hmm. Were the parents generally supportive?

ML: Yeah. They were because I put on a good Christmas concert. And all the kids performed in it. Everybody did and everybody had a whale of a time. And it's what I've always done quite well. I can put on things, events like that. And in the spring we did something, I can't remember what it was. One thing that this area had was this Summit Six School Sports, S.S.S.S.S., how many is that? And that was the six country schools including Pauling, not Decker Lake, Pauling, Rose Lake, Topley and then there were two others the other side of Topley. There were six one room schools in Northern BC along the railway line. And we had a sports day at Topley. We called it the Topley Sports but it was officially called the Summit Six School Sports. And we had all the, you know, races, and high-jump, and broad jump, and relays, all these things. And we trained our kids for it. And it was a locally arranged affair.

HR: In the spring? I guess in the spring or...

ML: In the spring, yeah, in June.

HR: And how do you spell Topley?

ML: T-O-P-L-E-Y.

HR: E-Y, okay.

ML: It was named after a, an English town. As Pauling was. Pauling, we did a history of Pauling, or I did or somebody did. We, the whole community, worked on it. We had a history of Pauling which was entered in a Women's Institute competition, and we got first. We were tied for first.

HR: So the whole community joined in on that?

ML: Well yeah, I, I got them all working on it. I mean people—we did it through the Women's Institute. And various people looked after various aspects of life in Pauling. Somebody worked—you see, the men had one occupation—two occupations: farming and making railway ties. And the tie making industry was huge in this country. There was of lots and lots of pine timber, good pine timber. And in the winter that's what the guys did. They had camps and they stayed in the camps and didn't come out for a long time and made railway ties by hand.

HR: Hmm.

ML: And was the—besides farming, that was the only industry that was available for guys to work at.

HR: Hmm. So that, that was part of your history, I guess, writing...

ML: Oh yes. And they had to—what was interesting about the tie making industry was it was very dangerous. Because you had to stand on your log and use a broad axe.

HR: Mm-hmm.

ML: Do you know what a broad axe is?

HR: Yes, yeah.

ML: Okay. And you had to use a broad axe and take the wane edge off the log, so that it would lie flat. Like, two sides of the log had to be flat because it had to sit in its bed in the railway track.

HR: Wow.

ML: And two had the, the curved side.

HR: Mm-hmm.

ML: And you had to stand on the log with a very sharp heave broad axe. And swing the broad axe and not hit your foot.

HR: Gosh, I hate to think of how many people got injured.

ML: I—Yeah, I do too. And guys were chopping themselves. Not every day, but I mean, you know, it couldn't help but happen.

HR: Mm-hmm.

ML: The axe was so heavy.

HR: Mm-hmm.

ML: And when they got tired, you know, it was hard to keep—and you you swung it up over your head and then you came down and you made a flat edge, you see, on that side. Then you turned around and went the back the other side. Oh gee, and it was, it was so cold in those days. We got much colder weather in the winter then we get now. It would be -40, -45. And and people didn't have very good thermometers sometimes, the thermometers were wrong and they went out and worked when they shouldn't—didn't need to have, you know.

HR: Mm. How, how did you get supplies? For, for your...

ML: On the train. Everything came by train. There was no store in Pauling. There was a store in —there were stores in Burns Lake but not great. And Mr. Long—well Mr. Long didn't have a car. Mr. Long was a horsemen and he was a good horsemen. He had a, he had—I don't know how many horses he had but he had a a driving team of light horses and they were called Wasp and Fly.

HR: Oh yeah.

ML: And then he had, he had big horses for logging. For pulling the the loads of ties. But it was, it was primitive. Like, In those days it was like going back to about 1920, you know.

HR: Mm, mm-hmm.

ML: That's why it was so exciting for me.

HR: Mm.

ML: As a city girl.

HR: Well I, I can't believe this, but we've been talking for an hour. [laughter]

ML: No kidding.

HR: Yeah. How...

ML: Maybe we better stop.

HR: I, I just find—found it fascinating listening to you, Margaret. I'm wondering if there's anything else you'd like to add to wrap up with and...

ML: No, I don't think so. I haven't touched on the subject of immigrants. We got...

HR: Oh yeah.

ML: We got immigrants from Hungary. You know the Hungarian Revolution?

HR: Yes.

ML: Yeah. Well there had—there was a family from Hungary in Pauling already and then we got some other ones who came too because they were able to come to their relations, you know. It was an interesting community.

HR: Were there a lot of immigrants from...

ML: Oh no, oh no. But, but I mean every immigrant is important when the, when the community is so small.

HR: Were they well integrated or were they out...

ML: Oh yeah, yeah. They...

HR: Did the children speak Hungarian when they came to you or were they?

ML: They weren't—they were, they were young people. Like young teen, teenagers.

HR: Oh I see.

ML: Early '20s. You did— there weren't many.

HR: So they didn't—they they weren't families with children?

ML: No, no, no. There were Hungarians when I arrived, the Nestys they were. And there was a girl and two boys I think. But they were teenage, young teenage.

HR: Okay.

ML: Maybe we better stop, Helen. I had no idea I was babbling on like that.

HR: Oh no! You're not. It's been so fascinating for me. I can't tell you how much I've learned, Margaret. It's just—and I could listen and listen and listen all day long if I had the time. [laughter]

ML: Oh gosh. [laughter] You're so flattering, Helen. [laughter] But anyway, I hope that it will work out okay for you to get this all together and stuff. Okay, well have a nice day.

HR: Thank you so much.

ML: Bye-bye.