May Brown Interview – February 21, 2008

HR – Helen Raptis (interviewer)
MB – May Brown (interviewee)

HR: Interview with May Brown, February 21st, 2008. Okay. Let's see, where shall we start? How about we start a little bit back of some of the questions that I had.

MB: Sure.

HR: How about if we start a little bit about where you were born and where you went to school first. And then we move up into your normal school preparation and then, your experiences during the war.

MB: Yes, okay. Well I was born in Hardisty, Alberta. My parents were married in Vancouver so we are originally from here, but they went for a few years to Alberta and I was born in a small town called Hardisty, Alberta in December of 1919. And—But when I was in Grade 2 the family moved back to British Columbia and we settled on a small farm in Surrey on Scott Rd which was pretty rural in those days. There was no electricity and it was just a gravel road and we had a small farm. So I went then to elementary. Across the road was the Delta municipality and I guess the first elementary school was actually in Delta. It was a one room school. Conditions in rural education in British Columbia at that time, that was 1927, were pretty sparse and we actually attended this one room school which had one teacher, one room, eight grades, 42 pupils.

HR: Oh my gosh!

MB: And a third of the children were Japanese; it was quite a Japanese community and didn't speak much English. So my mother soon figured out that we wouldn't get much of an education because there were five of us all in school age and as my eldest—story of my eldest sister was told a bit here in the paper. She, she was in Grade 7 and she was determined to—my mother wanted us to get an education. But in those days you had to past a provincial examination in Grade 8; write provincial exams and if you didn't past then you couldn't go on to high school. So my sister was determined that she would go onto high school, and so she had nobody from that little school had ever pasted the exams and gone on to high school. But—so my mother mustered the community and the parents and got—persuaded the school board to bring in another teacher. And by Christmas they cleared the basement which was just concrete, concrete floors and so forth, and put the older children down in the basement and the new teacher came and took the older grades so that improved things. But as far as our family was concerned my mother discovered the mobile library of the Fraser Valley and she would go—she would walk about a mile every third week and she could get as many books as she could carry and she would bring the books home and she taught us in the evenings and we read a lot and my mother read a lot to us. So that's where we—how we worked on our elementary. Now that school became crowded

and of course it was in Delta, so then school board decided that the children who actually lived across the road in Surrey would have to go to a Surrey school which meant that we were on the Surrey side so we had to walk 2 miles further down the road to the Strawberry Hill School. That first school was called Kennedy, and that's where I went to get my elementary education. But because so many of the children, the students—we had an absolutely dreadful teacher down there a great man of about 60. He used to beat everybody up; it was awful.

HR: Oh dear.

MB: And so anyway, nobody could past the Grade 8 so then they would come back so the school got more and more crowded. It was a two room school. And so the school board then when I got to Grade 8 decided that we would go on that bus, the high school bus, which was on its way to Cloverdale to take the students to high school. And we would go to a slightly larger school called Newton and they would have—there were so many children not passing there and so there was one whole classroom of Grade 8s by that time. And so I went to, to Newton and got my—passed my Grade 8. So then I went on the school bus and did all my high school education at Surrey High School. I graduated from Surrey High School, up to Grade 12. And then for Grade 13 as we called it then, senior matriculation, I travelled into New Westminster to Duke of Connaught High School. And I had a good education there because it was a pretty large school in New Westminster and then went on to—stayed with my relatives in Vancouver and went to normal school and graduated in 1940. So I got my secondary teacher's certificate. We had to graduate from normal school, have 1 year of university or senior matric which ever you—it was equal. And then we had to teach, and then one year go summer school, teach, go to summer school, and then we got our permanent certificates for, for elementary teaching.

HR: Did you do summer school in Victoria? Is that where it was?

MB: Yes, it was in Victoria. Yeah we travelled to Victoria for the summer.

HR: Okay. Just before we get to the normal school is there anything you recall about your own schooling that might have inspired you to become a teacher?

MB: Well, in actual fact I really wasn't—my sister, of course, always knew she wanted to be a teacher, but I didn't know. I mean, that wasn't my ambition and I didn't really feel that I wanted, particularly, to be a teacher. But when I graduated from high school and then went on to senior matric I really—I wanted to go to university, that is what I really wanted to do. I was very good in mathematics and certain subjects and one of my friends had gone onto UBC, but the family couldn't afford it, so I had to made to make a choice of doing something. And my choices were pretty limited. So I could either work in a store, I probably could get a job in New Westminster but I didn't want to do it. And then, the other choice was nursing which I didn't want to do. So my mother persuaded me that why not go to normal school, and at least get a teaching certificate and then, you know, maybe teach for a little while and maybe I would find out if that was what I

really wanted to do. My mother was very keen for us to get education. So I didn't have a burning desire to teach. Interesting thing is that once I got teaching I loved it!

HR: So you, you ended up loving it!

MB: Eventually, not at first, but eventually I did like it very much.

HR: There's—that's a story I have heard from a lot of people because the choices were so limited for women that...

MB: Yes it was very limited is to what you could do.

HR: So your favourite subject was mathematics?

MB: Well mathematics and I was very good in geography. I loved school, I loved learning and my mother had given me great motivation, of course. But, and at Surrey High School I had some —I think it was partly the math as we had a very good math teacher, and we were sort of—we got so as some us excelled in the math. And, but we had quite good teachers at Surrey High School, and I just loved learning. So I really wanted to go on to university and take something there but that was out of reach really at the time.

HR: Do you remember the names of any of your teachers at Surrey High either the math or...

MB: Yes, one of my key math teachers was Mr. Stephens, S-T-E-P-H-E-N-S. Another one was, her name was Miss Graham, Maisie Graham, and I followed her. In fact her—they lived in Vancouver and up to about 2 years ago, she was still alive. But I haven't heard lately. There was Miss Mockeridge she was a biology teacher, quite a character; a Mr. Charles was our Latin teacher; Mr. Dashwood Jones was our French teacher; Miss Green became the principal of—but later when I actually went back to teach at that school for a short time. And Miss Green was , I forget what she taught, but...

HR: What made them, what made them good? What do you remember about them –what was it that made them good? They were...

MB: Well, they gave us a lot of information. We—you see, I had come through in the elementary where we didn't, particularly at Strawberry Hill, we didn't—usually the teacher just said; "Read Chapter 5 and then, and answer these questions." They didn't actually didn't have time because they had so many classes whereas when you went to these teachers they would—they actually showed you on the blackboard and taught you what the different elements were. Especially in the mathematics they had wonderful teachers, both math teachers were very good. It made it so interesting and you felt that you were learning and then when you went to do your homework you, you really got into it. It wasn't drudgery at all you just could hardly wait to get going on it

because you enjoyed it so much. And the geography and history, of course, was really interesting too because you felt you were learning something about the world. It opened my eyes. Going to high school was a good experience for me.

HR: So at the elementary then it was very seldom that the teacher would address the whole group and do sort of teacher fronted lessons?

MB: Oh, they just taught—in elementary you mean?

HR: Yeah.

MB: In elementary my experience, you see, wasn't good except in Grade 8 where we had very good teacher when the whole room was full of Grade 8 pupils. She just had the one, one grade because there was so many of them, many pupils. And she was very good and she would actually teach. You know she'd take a lesson on say some country and we'd hear all about and she would tell us which chapters to be studying and, you know, she made it interesting; maps on the wall and things like that. Well we didn't have any of that in elementary school, we just were told to read the book and answer the questions or if you made a spelling mistake you wrote it out 100 times until you knew it. You know, it wasn't really—it was just poor education. Looking back it wasn't good at all. But Surrey High School did have a few resources, you know, they had maps, and books, and the library, and things like that whereas we didn't have anything like that in elementary school.

HR: At the high school were you involved in any other activities outside of...

MB: Well the trouble was we all—there was just one high school in Surrey and we all went by bus. There were eight buses ran into Cloverdale and so we—I caught the bus where I lived at 8 o'clock in the morning and we got there about 10 to 9:00 and then as soon as school was out we couldn't wait around we just had to get on the bus to go home. The bus left at 3:15.

HR: Okay.

MB: So you couldn't have extra-curricular. At noon hour there were not particularly organized activities but we did have a shed out of the back where we could play basketball and I was—liked sports so after we had eaten our lunch we could either go out to the shed. It just, it just had a roof on it, it didn't have—the walls weren't filled in and we could play basketball and in the spring there was quite good yard and we could play softball at noon hour for half an hour. And then—but after school no. And then about twice a year they had a dance of social activities in Cloverdale but only if the school bus picked us up could we go because it was too—you know, we didn't have cars or anything. So when I was in, like, Grade 11 or 12 I think I went to two or three functions. We did most of our recreational things in our own communities at home where we had a hall but not, not at the school.

HR: So what kinds of things were those?

MB: Well at Strawberry Hill where we lived we had a hall and we played a lot of badminton, and basketball, and softball in the summer. And then we had activities at the church. The local church had young people's activities where we would go and at the community hall on about every second Friday they had a Saturday night dance where somebody who played the piano or, you know, somebody might have an accordion. So in our, in our little communities we had quite a social time when I was a teenager.

HR: Oh that's lovely!

MB: Mm-hmm, yes Strawberry Hill was a nice area. It was a farming community but we—the young people did have quite—you know, there were lots of us and we mixed very well with the Japanese. Our neighbours were Japanese, and although they had a separate hall, but we all went to the same dances and things.

HR: So you also went to their dances held in their hall?

MB: No, we didn't tend to. It is really kind of interesting because it was deemed quite acceptable to, to go out with a Japanese boy. If he asked you to go to a dance you could go. But it was—our families made it abundantly clear that that was as far as it was to go. There would be no such thing as you going steady with a Japanese boy.

HR: And I guess marriage was definitely out.

MB: Oh that would, oh that would be, that would—but as far as the young people were concerned we certainly were all, you know—did things together, we played together, and hiked together and they were our good friends. And their parents didn't speak English just generally but they all did of course and so the community—my mother was very good at helping the, the neighbours with their official papers. They would come over if they got anything from the government. So when they were notified in the '40s, beginning of '42 to be evacuated my mother had to read this letter to them because they didn't—their children could read but they never—they wanted to be sure they had it right and they would come over to mother to read these. And she nearly broke her heart reading them the letter to tell them they were going to be evacuated.

HR: What else do you remember from that time?

MB: Well, as far as the community is concerned?

HR: Yes, and the evacuation too.

MB: Oh the evacuation was very, very heart wrenching. I was—I haven't got to where I taught but that was '42. They were evacuated in the spring of '42 and I was teaching up then at high school up in Cloverdale for 6 months. And of course, the students were—all the families had got their notification that they would be evacuated on, like, a Saturday. So of course, they had hoped that they would just be gone for maybe 6 months and they would be back. And so they—the teachers felt that too that, you know—so they didn't want them to get behind in their studies. So here they were when it got towards the end of the week the teachers were giving them extra work to do and books to take with them and, you know, telling them what they should study and so forth and so on because we thought they would be back. And so the day they actually left, the last day of school, it was just very, very sad, everybody—they cried, and the teachers cried and we all cried and hugged them and so forth and so on, it was very emotional. So they left and, of course, they never did come back.

HR: What grade were you teaching then?

MB: Pardon?

HR: What grade were you teaching then?

MB: I was teaching—I had, I had started teaching—you see in 1940 I had graduated from normal school and I got a job in Surrey not too far from where I lived. My mother didn't want me to go—most of the girls that I graduated with were going to one room schools all over the province like, you know, Faye, and Margaret Long and all these different ones. That's where the jobs were but my mother didn't think I was old enough. I was small for my age and I was actually almost 20 but I didn't look it. And she thought I should teach at home for 2 years and then go away. Anyway, so I applied in Surrey and, of course, there were, you know, in those days it—to get a job, because this is just at the end of the depression, jobs were hard to get. So at the end of when I graduated I applied in Surrey and that's where my mother that felt if I got that job then I could live at home and help pay her my room and board and that would help her and then also I would be home and she could—for support. So Surrey gave preference to people that lived in Surrey. If you lived in Surrey you were on top of list to get the job and I got the job. Two or three of us got the jobs in Surrey so I was pretty lucky and I could—I wasn't—I had to get a lift from somebody, get a ride from somebody going into New Westminster in the mornings to get to the school. I couldn't walk there it was too far and then I arrived to get a ride back home. So I taught there for a year and half in elementary school and then at the Christmas of my second year there was a—I had become fairly qualified in physical education and by taking extra courses and things. And so a job came open in the high school and they were for a women's physical education teacher. The teacher had married and her husband had been transferred, he was in the military by that time, and he had be transferred to an army camp and she wanted to go with him. So they were advertising for a teacher. Now I was really not qualified but I applied for the job and it was in physical ed. which I liked and it paid more money and it was up in Cloverdale which was then called Lord Tweedsmuir High School because then they had a couple of high

schools. It was the same school I had attended and so I got appointed. And so I, I was when the —I was there for the spring of ’42 when the Japanese were evacuated and so I taught there for 6 months.

HR: So it was, it was Surrey High School and then the name had changed.

MB: Yes the name had changed, it was the same building. See, when it was just one high school they called it Surrey High School and then when they got more than one they changed it; they took that name away and give each of the schools—like, one was Lord Tweedsmuir, one was Queen Elizabeth. You know, they gave them separate names.

HR: I see.

MB: But it was actually the same building. And I boarded up in Cloverdale during the week and taught.

HR: Who, who did you board with?

MB: I boarded at a house quite close by where, where they took in teachers. And there was two of us boarded there. It was like they used to have boarding houses, like, somebody would decide take in boarders. And you had a room, your own bedroom, and then you got your meals and it was quite a good arrangement actually for single women. But it was,it was the custom in those days.

HR: Was it a family or just?

MB: Yes a family. I forget the name, Mr. and Mrs. Boyd I think their name was. But it was quite good because it was just about two blocks from the school and I could walk.

HR: Oh, that’s great.

MB: Yeah, I could walk over to the school from the boarding house. And then I went home on the weekends.

HR: How did you get home? Did...

MB: There was a Chilliwack Tram. There was a tram that ran in from New Westminster to Chilliwack. It was called the Interurban, Chilliwack Interurban. And I could catch that in Cloverdale and go down to Kennedy where I got off and then I walked about a mile home. So I taught—I was teaching at Lord Tweedsmuir when the Japanese were evacuated.

HR: So that must, must have been a very difficult time. Did the population of your school go down considerably or were...

MB: Yes, yes the schools all of course, when the Japanese left the population of the schools dropped. But we were heading into the summer and then they adjusted by the fall because, of course, they did not come back. They weren't allowed back at the coast for many years.

HR: Right, that's right. Not until after the war.

MB: Yes.

HR: Oka,y, so let's, so let's back up a bit because we have got ahead of ourselves here. So when you, when you went normal school it was the Vancouver Normal School that you were at?

MB: Yes that's right. I stayed with my—at my grandmother's house where my aunt was now living and I could, I could go in on this tram that we went, that I spoke of, to New Westminster and then catch another tram to Earls Road and then I could walk to my aunt's place and I stayed there and just went home on the weekend.

HR: And your aunt's place was in Vancouver?

MB: In Vancouver. But as soon as I graduated from normal school in June I immediately started to take—I knew that I loved the physical education and so I spent the summer taking courses in Vancouver. I don't know if you heard that we used to have what was called Provincial Recreation?

HR: Yes, the Pro Rec Program.

MB: Pro Rec yes, I took a whole summer, that summer 1940, of getting my instructor's certificate in Pro Rec.

HR: Okay.

MB: And so I got—so that added to my qualifications. And then in the winter when I was teaching I went every Saturday morning into Vancouver to where the Vancouver School Board was giving classes. Mr. Brandrift, who was the school superintendent in Vancouver, gave physical education classes and we got credits for those too. So I went in the winter on Saturdays and then in the summer, of course, then I would go to the Victoria for my—so I had picked up quite a few credits, you see, on physical education.

HR: And the Pro Rec program, who was that offered through?

MB: Through the provincial government.

HR: Through the government and where did you take your classes?

MB: I took the classes at the, at the normal school.

HR: Oh, okay.

MB: It just happened to be at the same building, yeah. But they gave them lots of them of places, yeah, and they were run by the provincial government. To get your instructor's certificate you had to go to the regulation training courses and then you got your instructor's certificate. I had done it because I thought I might pick up extra work teaching the Pro Rec in my—when I teach during the day and then teach that at night. But I never did do it because it was too far to go and I didn't ever do it but I got the certificate.

HR: Okay. And what do you recall about the normal school, about your year at the normal school?

MB: Well of course for me it was wonderful experience because I had never done anything like that before where you went and—you know, although I had a good Grade 13 which was at Duke of Connaught High School in New Westminster. But that was a very, very, tough course, and, of course, I had to travel in each morning, had to get a ride with somebody who worked in Vancouver. So I pretty well—although I did make the basketball team, but I worked awfully hard so I didn't have a lot of time to, you know, do much recreation. So normal school to me was just a wonderful experience, I just loved it. And we did so many interesting things and the classes were—you were in classes of women or men, they were split and, of course, you went alphabetical so I was in the ABC, my name was Adams in those days. And so I was in that grouping and we, we had good instructors and we learned how to teach. We, we had a very—and next door, of course, was what called the model school and it was an elementary school where we went to observe, and they had very good teachers. And then one of the classes there was set up like a one room rural school.

HR: Mm-hmm.

MB: And there was teacher called Miss Manning and she taught the rural school, and we would go to observe how you handled, you know, 20 children in a rural school. Then we would be assigned to teach maybe, you know, a lesson or a morning or an afternoon or something. So and at normal school we had what you called the practicum where we went out went to schools and practiced our teaching.

HR: How many practicums did you have?

MB: Pardon?

HR: How many did you do? One? Two?

MB:Oh I think we did two practicums.

HR: Two. And then how did you fit in the, the teaching at the model school? Did you go one by one to observe?

MB: No, there would be two or three of us would go. Two or three would go. You would be assigned to a, say a Grade 2 and you'd sit at the back of the classroom and watch. And then you'd go maybe—you'd be assigned there for maybe, say an hour on a Tuesday and then after awhile the teacher would give you an assignment and then you'd teach. She'd give you something to teach and you'd would have to get ready for it and then you'd have your big moment. And then we did the same in that little rural school too, but I think—you see, what they did—the other nice thing about the normal school was that they—there was a lot of sociability. You know, there was lots of clubs you could join this club or that club and what they were demonstrating was how you were suppose to do community work. Like, if you went—I didn't go but there was a photography club and they would say, "Now when you're teaching way off in a one room school up in the Peace River you might start a photography club and this is how you would do it, you know." And—but we had many clubs. I joined the modern dance club and we had—Margery Lee was the instructor and she was very good. And we practiced and then eventually put on a display and so forth and that was to show you how you could put on activities at your school. I mean, it was—we thought it was just great fun but looking back I realize that they were showing us how to organize and how present. You know, it was really run so that you were demonstrating all the time how you would teach. It was very, very good.

HR: That's good to hear. It's very interesting how much things have changed since the university took over the teacher preparation.

MB: Yes. Well I followed the change quite closely, you see, because I had taught and my husband had taught and then he—when I first met him in 1947 he was teaching at the normal school. And so then I, when we got married, then I was the wife, one of the wives. And, of course, and so we went to all these social activities that the normal school had and we got quite involved with it. And then, of course, Lorne was moved to UBC in 1956 and, of course, it was totally different from then on and you saw quite a change.

HR: Right. Yeah I have a feeling we have lost a lot of very important things.

MB: Yes, I thought we did. We lost that kind of close touch with people training to be teachers.

HR: Yes.

MB: But, of course, the numbers were so different. You see you didn't have—I wouldn't—I could go down one day look and see. I have a picture of everybody that was at the normal school. We would all line up outside on the grounds with a photographer and they took a picture of the whole school. And I have it somewhere. But the numbers would be nothing like you'd need now you might have maybe 150 or something I'm guessing, but you wouldn't have a whole lot. You know, it was small so you could produce—you could get the close touch. We knew the teachers very, very, well and they knew every name and they knew all about us and you could go and get help and when you had your classes to do you'd went after school. And if you were assigned something for your practicum you could go and get extra help, it was very good.

HR: And what do you recall from 1956 when they did move to the normal school? What do you —I mean when they moved to UBC, what was the impetus for it from what you remember?

MB: Well, the, the thing was they wanted to upgrade the teaching. You see, you could go to normal school with just one year of university. And in fact, right after the war they were so short of men physical education teachers that my Lorne, my husband, he actually was assigned to teach a, what he called a crash course of veterans coming back—could actually get a certificate without their senior matric. They could come right—if they had, if they had a high school certificate but they were veteran they could sign on at the normal school, I think it just was for the 1 year or maybe even less. They took long days of extra hours of classes, but they, they were getting their certificates on this crash course just to get some teachers into the schools. So they really did need to upgrade and the, the impetus for changing was to bring under the university and to get the university degrees. It was getting to the—you see, it was a little bit like you were almost being second class teachers because you didn't have your degrees. You just came—you just had 1 year university and then you went straight to normal school.

HR: Right.

MB: And although the training was excellent, they didn't feel they had the educational background. That's what prompted it all.

HR: Hmm, okay.

HR: So everything went well at normal school. That's interesting, I've heard that from many people how much they enjoyed it and also that personal touch and the social aspect.

MB: Yes.

HR: I had one woman tell me that when they were in Victoria, at the Victorian Normal School, they used to bus them down into town so that they could go to dances with the servicemen who were in town.

MB: Oh yes we did that at summer school. That was our big activity at summer school.

HR: Did you? Yes? Yeah.

MB: When we—this group that I've given you the names of we've kept—that's how our group started. We, we in 1942 we were at summer school and we all stayed in—it was a private girls school called St. Margarets in Victoria, and we were all on the top floor living in these dorms and we got our meals, of course. And the phone would ring and it would be a recreational coordinator from one of the bases around, the air force bases or the, you know, the navy bases or something. And the fellow would say, "Gosh, could 20 girls come into the camp tonight, we'll send a bus for you. And for a dance we are short of girls." And they would get off the phone and call up the stairs to all of us, "Who wants to go to a dance?" And so they would get their 20 and they'd send the bus from the navy base and pick up the 20 girls and then they would bring them back at 11 o'clock and they've had a great time. So yes, that was, that was fairly typical of the, of the army camps.

HR: What—where was St. Margaret's located at that time? Do you remember?

MB: It was just off Fort St.

HR: Oh Fort, okay.

MB: Yeah, I'm trying to think what happened to that school.

HR: It's, it's very far north now, it's in the northern part of the city. I am wondering where the original school was.

MB: We, we used to go just off Fort Street and it was quite an old wooden building. But it was a private school.

HR: Okay, I can find that out from the school. So you had a wonderful time and your first—where, where was your first teaching experience when you left normal school in 1940?

MB: I went to—I got this job in Surrey and I taught at South Westminster Elementary and that was a very great shock to my system because it was my first job and I had—it was a four room school, no let's see, one two three, five, five room school, five to six room school. And it was in a very poor part of the municipality because it was just across the bridge from New Westminster and people that couldn't pay their rent in New Westminster would move across the bridge and live in these shacks along the river and so forth. They were very poor and I went there in 1940 when things were quite tough. I we had—I had 45 in my first class, a pot-bellied stove in the middle of the room and thinking back to it now I had—you see, the children used to be register—you could register in Grade 1 in September or January.

HR: Oh goodness.

MB: Yes, so you could start in January. So the Grade 1s you had Grade 1 A and Grade 1 B and then you had—I had Grade 2, we'd have all these split classes, so I had Grade 2 B, Grade 3 A and Grade 3 B. So I had these split classes but I had 45 and looking back at it these children weren't very old I assigned but I two or three of these little boys who were keen and they would go into the cloak room and get a big chunk of wood and come back and they were the—looked after the stove. They would—I think about now and these little kids who opened this door and threw in the block of wood and then put the damper down and so forth but they were good at it and they loved doing it, of course. But I had some children there who were definitely—we would have called them quite slow because they just didn't have enough to eat. It was—they were, they were desperately poor and, of course, they failed their grades and then they had to repeat and then, of course, they were very big for their age and it was not easy. So I had all these classes to teach and it was just—I was almost overwhelmed.

HR: What, what grades did you have? From where to where?

MB: Well I had all these sub grades, you see. I had grade, I had Grade 2, I think it was Grade 2 B, and then Grade 3A, and Grade 3 B. You split the classes because they had started at different times.

HR: Goodness. Was that, was that common, May?

MB: Oh yes, oh yes. That was very common because the children could start in January.

HR: Wow.

MB: You see, you had an intake in January so you had to—Grade 1 was always split. The ones that started in September were Grade 1 A and if then you started in January you were Grade 1, Grade 1 B.

HR: I didn't know that.

MB: Yeah, I don't know how long that went on, certainly did—I just, as it worked out, I just taught at this elementary school for a year and half. But I was pretty well overwhelmed when I started to teach with all these children and having to try to handle 45 and split them into these classes and some were not very quick at their work. So every night, and I was living at home fortunately, my mother would say—clear the kitchen, clear the table as soon as we'd had supper and my sister who had been a teacher but was married and wasn't teaching, because you had to give up your job when you got married, you know. And she would—she lived close by. She would come and we'd start by 6:00 and we'd work until 8:00 or 8:30 with—you see, we had no resources, this was our problem. And so we would, we would, they would collect magazines and

they would cut out pictures from the magazines and make flash cards for me and make—you know, get my materials ready so by the next day I'd have my lessons kind of lined up so that I could manage. I lived day to day, I might say, until I got going. But my mother kept saying, "Well just, you know, just think about Christmas, you're going to have a break." But every day I would struggle with all these classes and materials. And my sister had been a teacher which was a big help because she knew how to get the lessons ready and then my mother would help with the materials and then we would get books and things to take. But, you see, the schools, schools had very little.

HR: So the schools didn't provide textbooks or...

MB: No. We had a few textbooks but they were very old and very worn out, but we did have a few. And we would—they would be passed around in the school. We had a good principal, very good principal, Mr. Moore and he was—had taught in Prince Rupert and had been brought down to this school because it wasn't an easy school with these very poor children. But he was a very, very human type of person who had a real empathy for these children and he, he was very much a guiding force in the, in the school and very good. He was the only man. There was four other women teachers and myself. So he built a lot of spirit and, you know, in the school. And he gave us all the help he could; he would get out and get all the resources he could get for us which were pretty sparse. I was, of course, was keen on physical education and then we didn't, we didn't have any space for it so I asked him if it would be possible—and I had these big boys which I wanted to give them something they could excel at because they certainly weren't academically good. And they were very keen whenever I could get them outside playing games so I asked if he could—I was good a gymnastics and I knew they would be very good at that so I asked him if we could work on that and he said, "Yes." So, I laugh about it now, we found an old mattress and these boys who were strong they were, you know, good kids. They got the mattress and we put in the cloak room during the day and then when we were—near the end of the day when I was going to—we were going to have our physical education in the room we would bring this mattress into the back of the room and we would do tumbling and, you know, all sorts of things on it and these boys loved it, of course. Then I got them going on these pyramids cause they were big boys and they could hold the young ones up, you know, making a big pyramid and everybody had just a great time, they just loved that. And we actually one year put on a display at the Christmas concert with our tumbling and with our mattress that they carried around. And then we made the big mistake, when the spring came they wanted to go outside so they could do more of a run up for their tumbling. And so they carried the mattress outside but unfortunately the ground wasn't dry enough and we got mud all over it and we had a awful time.

HR: Oh, no.

MB: But anyway, that was my introduction to physical education. [laughter]

HR: That's a great story. I can just see this mattress.

MB: But, I must say that these boys they really did—you know, they, they loved doing something where they could excel because they had so little success really. We were so concerned about a couple of the families that my mother—at Christmas I was convinced they weren't going to have any kind of a Christmas at all. And my mother made up hampers with different kinds of meats and fruits and we wrapped presents. And my sister and I, she, she came with me and we walked way down to the river carrying, each of us with our packs on our backs, carrying these hampers for two of the families. We knew just about where they lived. And so this was the Christmas holidays just before Christmas, we got there and so we found the two families and each gave each of them a hamper. And really the conditions they were living in was just so sad really it was just, it quite tragic. But they had no jobs you see so they—but anyway, we got hampers there and the gifts and they, they loved it.

HR: How, how did they make ends meet?

MB: Pardon.

HR: How did they make ends meet if they...

MB: Well they didn't, they just scrounge for food.

HR: Oh gosh.

MB: The mother used to, the mother used to walk across the bridge into New Westminster and go to the restaurants to the stale food, stale bread and stale anything the restaurants could give her. That's how they, that's how they ate. You see the rest of us, where we lived were around farms so we could—we had gardens.

HR: Right.

MB: But these people lived on the, on the edge of the river on these shacks.

HR: Right and there was no land.

MB: They were squatters, you see, and they had no land and that's how they survived. Even the men would just go out and try to get a day's work somewhere to earn a bit. This is when—you know, they had just come through the depth of the Depression, so it was pretty rough.

HR: Mm-hmm. That is, that is incredible. Do you, do you remember at that time how the war impacted your day to day life at the school? Did you do any kind drills or any...

MB: Well, as soon as I—by the Christmas of '41, you see, I got this job up at Cloverdale, at the high school because the teacher had gone off with her husband. And I was hired to teach, I went

into a high school. I wasn't really qualified but I did have the physical education and I was—knew a lot on the health education side. So—and I could teach Grade 7 Math because I, I was trained, I mean, I was qualified up to Grade 8, you see for elementary. And this was a junior senior high school in Cloverdale so I could teach mathematics for Grade 7. And so we had a big impact in that school because, of course, all the men teachers were leaving to go to the war. And so we had—you know, we were very short of men teachers at that school. And then after that in '42 I left Surrey. My mother said I had to stay home for 2 years which I did and then I wanted to try to, you know, try to go somewhere else and I went to Fernie, B.C. I taught in Fernie for 2 years.

HR: And that was in '42?

MB: '42-'43, '43-'44, yeah. And so I taught—I was qualified by that time by going to summer school and what not and so I was qualified with a diploma not a degree. You could get a Physical Education Diploma from the government if you were qualified and I got the job at the junior senior high school. The way they worked it is we were hired by the junior high schools in physical ed., but we could teach in the high schools so I taught 7-12. And there, of course, we were the same thing, there were no men physical education teachers so the second year I was there, believe it or not, I taught most of the men's physical ed. too. I was teaching senior boys physical education at Fernie when these Grade 12s were—towered over me. They were great big tall fellows. But, you see, they—if, if there was no teacher for physical ed. they had what they call the home guard. That was the—you know, in the communities here we had the men who weren't going to war or they too old to go or they were not physically fit or something they joined what was called the Home Guard. And they went on as volunteers, usually in the communities to make sure we—when we had the black outs that we covered our windows and they did all that sort of thing. And they did army drills because they were supposed to be getting the communities ready in case there was an invasion. And so in the schools they did the drills for the boys and, of course, the boys hated it. So when they—and we did a certain amount within the girl's programs too. We used to march them in squadron formations up and down the streets of the town and—but not so much. If there was no physical ed. teacher the boys did this for their whole hour. So, of course, the principal would say to these, say to these senior boys, "Well, you know, you're going to behave for Miss Adams or you're going to have a drill." So they were kind of threatened. But they were good. I enjoyed them very much. They were great. So I—but I taught physical ed. in Fernie for 2 years.

HR: And during that time, aside from the drills, do you remember having to collect stamps or...

MB: How which?

HR: Do you ever remember collecting stamps or...

MB: We were always saving everything. We saved string.

HR: String?

MB: String, you had to save string and put it in a ball. You saved tin foil; you got tin foil off the —people smoked a lot then and they had their cigarettes were in little packages with tin foil.

HR: Mm-hmm.

MB: And you saved that and you smoothed it out and made it into a ball and anything that was tin foil, anything that was—you know, there were various things we were told to save and that would be one of the projects in the school. And the tin foil, we would collect these balls of tin foil and then the children would bring them to school and we would collect them and, and the depot in the town would take them and I don't know where they went. But, oh we collected quite a few different things for the war effort. And, of course, most of us had relatives overseas so the big thing was you were always knitting socks. We became—when I was teaching in Fernie one of the woman that we lived in, that we lived in at the house, her husband was overseas and so that's how we—we used to all help with knitting the socks to send to him and to his buddies and so forth. But oh yes, everybody was working on something.

HR: Wow.

MB: Or you would go, the women would go to the Red Cross station volunteers and you would roll bandages. That was the other thing women did. They cut—say you had to make up—they were always getting ready for in case there was an invasion. And so the Red Cross would prepare these packages and so you'd get this cloth which you'd cut in strips and then you rolled it for bandages. There were jobs like that to do at the Red Cross stations. And, of course, that was all reflected in the school where you had—students were always helping with that sort of thing too. You'd have programs, you know. The war effort, it was called.

HR: And was it during class time or after class time?

MB: Oh well, usually it was after school extracurricular. But often you would have an assembly to do with the war. But I think, I think really the—my recollection is that the Depression had a huge impact on education and then the war, the main impact of the war was the fact that they were short of men teachers. The schools got so you just rarely had men around to teach. And it meant the women were, you know, the women teachers were taking up the slack really.

HR: Did, did you work with any that came out of retirement? Any of the women?

MB: They, they didn't seem to at that point, in our era, bring the women out of retirement for teaching.

HR: Okay.

MB: I didn't teach in a school where anybody came, came back to teach.

HR: So there was enough, there were enough...

MB: Well, they were making do and then we were, as I say, we were covering also for the men and I suppose when I think about it they probably were starting to recruit women to come. You see, the women then began to work even if they were married. It used to be that you didn't get a job if you married.

HR: Right.

MB: And then they started different factories and, of course, they were recruiting women. So women began to leave the home if they could, if they didn't have children, and go into the work force. So it became acceptable and I think that that stage is when they started saying, "Well, we can go back to teach we are trained." And they began to get back into re—get back into the work force, into the teaching.

HR: I see. And when you said that the Depression had a huge impact on education...

MB: The which?

HR: The Depression.

MB: Yes.

HR: Most people that I have spoken to have said, "Well, the war was not a hardship, the Depression was a hardship."

MB: That's right. I would say that's true.

HR: And why would you say that?

MB: Well, you see, the Depression was a hardship because first of all in our case, now that wouldn't be in every school because there were farms, but in my case in South Westminster the children were actually hungry. And so you had children who were very, very deprived. The second thing was that the schools didn't have the resources and the schools themselves were not great buildings, you know. I mean, they were built to minimum standards. I am sure this school I taught in, my first school in south Westminster, was three separate buildings. The first one was a fairly substantial building and then—that had two rooms in it. But then where I taught where the Grades 1s and 2s was very, very, sort of—had been put up with not—there was no basement or anything it was just a wooden building sitting on blocks. And then this third one was just a little, another little building that when they needed more space they put up these little tiny buildings;

there was nothing much to them. We didn't have a gym or library or anything like that. Didn't have an office, the principal didn't have an office, or, you know, you just had the classrooms. And the grounds were just gravel. There was no attempt—we did have some grounds there. So your resources were, looking back, were very, very minimal.

HR: Mm-hmm.

MB: And I think those standard—and my own education, of course, from when I was in school in the middle of the depression, was the same. We had no resources at all. But the war, the main thing was the lack of teachers: men. But in terms of the people then, you see, we were getting jobs because of the war. Or maybe somebody in the family had gone overseas and they were sending money home. And so you began to see money flowing and you didn't feel the hardship the same.

HR: I see. Yeah that's interesting and it's an interesting misconception on my part when I began interviewing people that the war was a time of hardship.

MB: Oh, I see.

HR: But, of course, it didn't dawn on me that it was actually in some cases an improvement for people over, over the Depression.

MB: Yes, it was an improvement.

HR: Yeah, that's been very interesting to me.

MB: And actually that is—if you look back the young men of the day, many of them looked upon the war as an opportunity (a) to get training (b) to get a job and (c) to see the world. You know, they had come from small towns. They hadn't been travelled more than 100 miles away from home and so they, they, they gladly joined up. You know, they just thought this was a wonderful thing that had happened that they were going to get this chance and the fact that they got some clothing provided and they got training, they could learn all sorts of things and get a bit of education. And, of course, they were told that they would—when they came back they would, they would help them finish their education.

HR: Mm-hmm.

MB: And, and they were going to go and see the world too. So it was, it was quite upbeat in that regard except for the, you know, the families left behind it was very difficult when the men were away.

HR: Right. Do you—did it leave an impact on do you think on the children? On the kids that you worked with having their fathers away.

MB: Yes, I do. I think it had a quite an impact. Yes, when the men went overseas. You see, there was a—we knew so little, none of us had ever travelled, you know, back east or overseas or things like that. And see my brother went overseas and I can just clearly remember the anxiety that my mother went through and all of us. You know, you waited everyday for a letter. You waited everyday to—the papers would come with a list of people that had been killed and you almost dreaded it coming because every day you would look at it to see if there was somebody that you knew. And it was—I think it did have a big impact on families, yes, absolutely because their whole life was geared towards the, you know, the, men that were away. They did have good community support. People were great for helping, but it did have a big impact.

HR: And, I guess, the kids were anxious.

MB: Pardon?

HR: Did it make the kids anxious, do you think?

MB: Yes, they were anxious. They knew their fathers were in danger, yes.

HR: And the kids in Fernie what—how did they compare to the kids that you had had before? Were they—was it more of a farming community or...

MB: No, Fernie was a coal mining town.

HR: Oh, coal mining. Okay.

MB: Yep. That was coal mining, and they been through a—when I went to Fernie in ’42 the town was bankrupt, it was in bankruptcy. The town had—the coal, coal industry had slumped and that was their main source of income. The town in the ’20’s had been quite large, a booming town, and it had shrunk down and then through the Depression and so forth. So it finally in desperation declared bankruptcy.

HR: Wow.

MB: And so they put in, the government put in, a commissioner to run the town and his name was Dr. Fisher. He had an office in Victoria. And I was over in Victoria at summer school in the spring of—summer of ’42 and I had resigned from Surrey because I wanted to go away and my mother had said I could and so I was just looking for a job. And my instructor, who was a normal school instructor from Vancouver was teaching over there, Bernie Lee, great physical ed. people, and so he heard about this job up in Fernie. Well, it—the interesting thing was, you see, we had

—our salaries—when I first started teaching I earned $780 a year and then when I went to Cloverdale to teach in the secondary school I got $1100. And then this job in Fernie was going to pay $1582. Well, that was almost double and so, of course, I was quite keen to get the job, but first of all to go away and second to earn all this money.

HR: Right.

MB: And so Mr. Lee, my instructor, said that he would recommend me for the job because I knew him quite well, I had had him at normal school. And so he—I got an—I made an appointment. Dr. Fisher was down in the government buildings and I made an appointment. And he ran the town, he hired the teachers, and he hired everybody and all the rest of it and so I went down and had an interview with him and I got a recommendation as I say from my instructor and I got the job. So that was great. So—now what were we talking about? The...

HR: The coal mining town and...

MB: Oh yeah, and so when I got there it was a—the town was a coal mining down and so they had gone through very hard times but they were just beginning to pull out of it and that point and a number of the men had gone to the war. The mines were running, one mine was running but several of them were closed and so it was quite difficult. So, it was an entirely different population then I had taught in Surrey because it was quite Italian, Polish immigrant families, long established, you know, they had lived in Fernie for many years these established families. But they were quite a different type of population then I had, had taught before but it was great. I enjoyed it very much.

HR: And were the kids mostly English speaking or did you...

MB: Yes they spoke English they was no problem. No, all spoke English, mm-hmm.

HR: Because they were several generations at that point.

MB: Yes that's right. Yep, all second or third generations, yes. Whereas in Surrey we had the big Japanese population.

HR: Right. Well that sort of ends my, my official questioning and I am just wondering if there is anything else you think that I should know?

MB: I think—I don't whether the fact that I went on after I taught in Fernie for a couple of years, I'll just briefly see if it is of interest I worked in, I worked in Vancouver then. I stopped teaching because I had trouble with my arm and the doctor didn't think I should do the physical ed.

HR: And when, when was that? When did you stop?

MB: That was in the spring of '44.

HR: So you stopped in the spring of '44.

MB: I taught in Fernie for 2 years and came to Van—back to Vancouver and worked for the YWCA in youth work and then at that point they were going to put in—I, I had a very good friend at the Y who had gone to McGill for 2 years but she had a diploma but not a degree. McGill at that point was putting in a degree program for physical education. Toronto had put one in the year before but McGill was just going to start. And when I was teaching in Fernie in the summer I had—I was usually in the summers I took courses and I had gone to the University of Washington for the whole summer and picked up some more credits and so forth. So I decided to go east to try to get into the McGill program and because my friend Betty was going to go and upgrade her diploma a degree. And so in the spring of '45 we got on a bus, believe it or not, and we went to Montreal to her family's place. I had got a job for the summer with the YWCA in their girl's camp in the Laurentians so I knew I had job for the summer. And so I went and immediately got my appointment with Dr. Lamb who was the, the doctor. He was going to be the head of the physical education school and so he was a wonderful man so he interviewed me. They were actually looking for students. They knew that they would have a substantial intake of veterans who would probably come into second year and some into first year but they didn't have people who would come into third year, you know, yet, you see. So they were pretty confident they would get there you know 40 students for the first 2 years with the veterans and then that was '45 and the war was ending. And so I got interviewed and with all my qualifications of my normal school which counted, my senior matriculation which counted, my university of Washington, my certificates from summer schools and so forth they give me enough credit that I could go into third year. So that was a very small class, there was only six of us in it and they two or three that went into fourth year. So anyway, I got interviewed by Dr. Lamb and he said I could go into third year which mean I'd just have 2 years to go to get my degree.

HR: Oh, that's great.

MB: And then so he said, "I hope your family has got lots of money," [laughter] and I said, "No, I am hoping to work my way through." [laughter] And he just looked at me and laughed. And he said "You are?" So he was great so he said, "Well"— I said, "I've had teaching experience and I have worked for the Y and I think I can get part-time jobs, you know, at night." So he said, "Okay if you're that keen I'll (a) I'll get you a bursary (b) I'll hire you to teach in our first year program, recreational program, that will give you, you know, so many hours a week," and it was just great. And then he said, "You'll pick up your other jobs at the Y and so forth." So by the time I left the office I felt I was pretty well set. [laughter]

HR: Wow. Where were you living when you were in Montreal?

MB: Well, the—this girlfriend that I went back east with and another friend whose husband was overseas we decided that we would—housing was desperately difficult to get in Montreal in 1945. And we were going to be at camp all summer so that was no problem. But in September we had to start to try to find something and actually for 3 weeks we lived out of car and sleeping on people's chesterfields and running around everyday with the newspaper. And we actually found a two rooms in an apartment on—out in Westmount in Montreal and that's where we, where we could cook our meals, we had kitchen privileges as they called it. And we lived there the first year and then the second year Betty and I got a kind of a room, there was a quite a dreadful place but it was close, just a block from the campus on Shooter St. And it was one of these places where you had rooms and then you had a common kitchen on each floor, it wasn't great but it was cheap. And so Betty and I took that with some—another other rooms girls from Toronto took and we had a, you know, a group of us and so we—it was inexpensive and we cooked our meals so we managed.

HR: That's interesting because well, I spent some time in Montreal. I went to school at McGill and so I have fond, fond memories of Montreal but of course it was not 1945 and it was quite different.

MB: Well we roomed—we were out in Westmount at first in quite a nice apartment and we had two rooms between three of us and we had kitchen privileges, we could cook. And the next year we were just a block east of Pine quite near the campus, it was very handy. And near the Curry Gym and then we had most of our classes down at RVC and—which I have discovered since is a music school now.

HR: Oh the—where the, the conservatory?

MB: Yeah. It used to be a physical education centre and a women's residence and I think it's still a residence. I was in Montreal and I wondered up there thinking I would see the gym and it turned out it was a music school.

HR: Yeah the gym is further back, now further up the hill.

MB: Yeah and then further up the hill we took a lot of classes up near the Curry Gym where the stadium was.

HR: Right.

MB: Up that way that's was where there was one of the centres was, yeah. But the—it was—the school was just getting started, the physical education and it was closely associated with the athletic department but it was separate. We got—because they weren't of our quite sure what courses we would need to take we took everything so we got degrees in Bachelor of Science and then what they said—and then in physical education so we sort of had to take a double load until

they sorted it out but it worked out. We took a lot of classes with the medical students and the physiotherapists and it was a very good program it was excellent but we worked awfully hard.

HR: And did you end up coming back to Vancouver after that?

MB: Yes, as soon as I graduated from McGill then I had—I was 27 and I had my degree and I got hired by the University of British Columbia and I came back on to the faculty at UBC.

HR: And which department were you in?

MB: I was in physical education, women's physical education.

HR: And is that where you remained until you retired?

MB: Well, I stayed there—no, I just taught there, I taught there for 8 years in coaching the athletic department and teaching physical ed. And I used to do some teaching in the Department of Education for secondary teachers and then I had—by the time I had my first child in 1950, I got married, you see. And then when I asked for a leave of absence because I was pregnant, [laughter] the president sort of looked at me and said, "We don't know what to do with you. We have never had anybody ask before." So I said, "Well I'd like to keep my job." And so I thought I was going to take 6 months off and then go back which I did but I had—I was on the—when I was hired I was hired as a what was called—oh what was the name of it. It was the bottom rung, you know, the bottom of the rung but I was on the, I was on the tenure track. And so my next move I expected to be an assistant professor, not an associate, but just an assistant. And so when I came back from, from this maternity 6 months where I didn't get paid but I was off for 6 months they had—they wouldn't let me do that and they put me on as a lecturer which meant that I was really tired each year and I had no benefits at all. I lost all my benefits. And I had to be—they didn't—you know, it was assumed I would teach each year but technically speaking I was lecturer and I was off the tenure track. So, however, I stayed and stayed there until 1955 when I had my second child and then I stopped.

HR: That, that raises an interesting issue. Do you think that would have happened if you had been a man? Was it because you had children?

MB: You see, I think if a man had asked to be off for 6 months they would have assumed they was going to improve his education or, you know, travel and be educated and, you know, you would assume, the assumption would be that he was going to improve himself. But with me they said, "Well, you know, you're going to be raising a family." It was quite an issue at the time because I went to—I actually spoke to the president. Larry McKenzie was one of these folksy presidents and the university wasn't nearly that big, well it was 9000 but, you know, he, he knew us. And I went through the head of the department and everything but they didn't have a policy, you seem and so they waffled all over the place about it and I—so then they said, "Oh well we'll

look after it.” I assumed when I was going back that would be back to my tenure track and that maybe I would get moved up because they had said if I taught for a few years I’d move up to an assistant professor. But anyway, there was nothing I could do about it and I should have really pursued it more I suppose looking back but I didn’t. But I, I was at the university until ’55 and then after I’d stayed home with the children for about 4 years then I went and I got help at the house certain days and I went back to UBC and got my Masters, which I got in ’61. I got my Masters in Physical Education at UBC. And then the only time I’ve taught since then—as soon as I graduated got my Masters in ’61 I did teach for secondary school in Vancouver for 2 years. We, by that time, my husband and I started a boy’s camp in the Cariboo and I, because I had this new found knowledge and what not and we needed the money, I felt well I could teach for a couple of years. I had a housekeeper for the children and I did teach for 2 years at Gladstone High School which I enjoyed but we found with running the camp, and Lorne by that time had gone to UBC, that it was too much. So I, I gave it up. So I haven’t taught since.

HR: And when was that? What year was that?

MB: I taught from ’61 to ’63 at Gladstone High School.

HR: And that incident at UBCm would you say that was the only time that—I mean, that was a very discriminatory thing that happened.

MB: Oh it was very discriminatory.

HR: Would, would you say that that’s the only time that you experienced that kind of discrimination from being a woman? Or were their other incidents?

MB: Well, I don’t think I—we certainly—you know, it was always assumed that men were going to be the heads of the departments and all that. I mean, it just kind—when I, when I went to UBC I don’t think there was a woman dean in the whole place. I mean, it just was—that just—you just didn’t have them.

HR: So you just didn’t question it?

MB: Well, we did. We were, our—in physical education we were pretty feisty. And we—Marion Henderson who was the head of our department had come from Ontario and she was very much for equality of women and so we, we used have some pretty good battles with the men’s department in physical ed. And Marion used to go to a number of meetings and she kind of teamed up with several women in other departments and I know they were always fighting their little battles. She’d come back from these meetings and tell us. [laughter] We loved it.

HR: What kinds of things would they fight over?

MB: Well, she was trying to get—they were trying to get women on to committees and things like that where they didn't feel that they were equal. And there was a group of them that kind of unofficially banded together that were conscious of this, much more so than many.

HR: Mm-hmm.

MB: And so they would, they would go and come back with these little tales about how they were making progress. But you see in physical ed. the, the men's athletics was taking much more of the proportion of the money than the women's athletics. We were, we were scrounging for our, our teams and the men were getting the budgets so in athletics it was very lopsided. And, of course, they were—we were—I was on the coaching staff too, you see. So the men coaches were given much more time on their coaching and travelling with their teams than we were.

HR: I wonder how much of that has been ironed out or if people are still struggling?

MB: Well, at UBC now they have down better but not—it's no way near equal I don't think. I was on, for a few years, on the athletic council out there not too long and they were still debating that, of how much of the athletic money was going to the men and how much to the women. Of course, they have expensive sports like football and the women they claim—but we, we were, we were always trying to get meagre budgets for our sports for the women.

HR: Mm-hmm.

MB: But we, we—our head of our department, Marion Henderson, was very good at speaking up for us and, of course, as I say, there were two or three of us that were quite feisty about it and we would fight our little battles with the men. But we got along well with the men in the department.

MB: Now if there is anything that you need filling in or what not, Helen ,don't hesitate to call me.

HR: I won't. Thank-you so much, May. This has been so fascinating. I have learned so much. I can't tell you how much I've learned. It's been wonderful.

MB: It's, it's all very interesting to us and I must say when I was researching my little talk for my sister's service I was—the thing that I was going back in my memory of all our early schooling and what struck me as I would reflect on it: I thought, you know, if it wasn't for our mother who was determined to—that we were going to get an education, and what she had to do to, to, you know, manage it was really quite something and I was kind of—it was all brought back to me just the low level of education we had in these rural schools in British Columbia. [laughter] And, and one of these—one teacher who was particularly dreadful, who—this man who used to hit the children, and he used to—especially the boys and things like that that were quite outrageous really. But, my sister managed and prevailed in hers to be the first one to

graduate from the school to go to high school because of a young teacher that helped her and my mother getting the books from the libraries and so forth. But usually you'll—I think, I think when you go back and somebody has managed to overcome something it's usually because they have got support of their parents or their sisters or something like that. Isn't it? I know my sister who was ahead of me, you see, she paved the way for me a lot.

HR: Right.

MB: In terms of, you know, high school and she helped me pay my bills to go to McGill and things like that. So there is usually somebody who is the big helper and support for you along the way.

HR: Right. And you, you didn't mention your father a lot.

MB: No, my mother was—pretty well raised us. My mother always—my father was with us when we were young and then my mother always said, "He was a victim of the Depression." When the Depression hit and he lost his job and he had been with the CNR railway and then we were trying to establish this farm in Surrey, and he was staying on at his work until they got settled and got the house built and that kind of thing. And then, of course, the Depression came and he lost his job, he had five children, the farm was not established, and times were really tough, and there was five of us, all within 7 years of age. And so my mother never spoke badly of him but he just left us, he just walked out. And my mother just said, "He was a victim of the depression. He couldn't, he couldn't face it."

HR: Oh, wow.

MB: And so she raised us. She was a single mother with five children.

HR: Wow.

MB: Yeah, not easy.

HR: No.

MB: But she was a very strong individual and as I say we were on a small farm and we had chickens and a cow and a garden and so she could, she could feed us; that was the main thing. You didn't need a whole lot of cash.

HR: Mm-hmm.

MB: But she sold milk to the neighbours and the Farmer's Institute had—they used—people had to clear the land they used to sell these sticks of dynamite and the Farmer's Institute would bring

boxes of dynamite and store them. And they stored them in a shed on our farm and my mother did the paperwork of selling the dynamite to—when the people were clearing the land and she got a little bit of money from that. And my brother got a newspaper route and so we managed until some of them got through school and, as I say, my sister got teaching and so forth. So, yeah. But not easy times. But as a kid, I mean, it didn't seem—I didn't think things were that tough. [laughter] I didn't seem to—my recollection is that we always had plenty to eat and we always had a happy home and we always busy studying and, you know, I don't have bad thoughts about it at all. But listening to my mother and my sister talk about I guess it was pretty tough.

HR: That's a credit to your mother I think.

MB: Yes really, yes she was a strong individual, yep. Oh I was just going to say this one thing and I better not go on here because I am going to have to go. I was telling my family the other day about how we used to make copies.

HR: Oh.

MB: How you did copies?

HR: The jelly? The jelly...

MB: The jelly pads. Oh you've heard that.

HR: I, I've heard and I have never—I've heard it from a few teachers and I have never read it anywhere.

MB: I don't—I've never read it. We used to get a cookie sheet that had a little edge to it.

HR: Uh-huh.

MB: And there was a formula that you used. You got gelatine...

HR: Yes.

MB: ...and you you got hot water and I don't know what else you put in but I think you put some colouring stuff and you mixed up this mixture and then you set it in the cookie, cookie pan and let it set overnight until it was firm, like, it was just like jello but spread out. And then you had a special pencil that you used and you wrote out the, the questions. Say you were going give somebody 10 questions, you wrote them out on a piece of paper with this special pen and then you would turn the pen on top of the jelly pad, now I think you moistened it or something and so the writing would go into to the jelly, you know, the it would be in there.

HR: Right.

MB: And then you could make, I think it was, 20 copies. You pressed the paper down on the jelly pad and then pulled it off and then you made the next one. And to get rid of that you had to scoop the jelly back into the pot put it on the stove and heat it again.

HR: And start again.

MB: And then you started again.

HR: How did you learn how to do that?

MB: Well, we used to do it; that is just how you did copies. I don't know. We all knew how to do it.

HR: Did, did they do it at the normal school? Do you remember?

MB: Oh I think so. That's how we made copies.

HR: Yeah, nobody—so far I haven't spoken to anyone who quite remembers where they learned how to do that. But if it was at the normal school, then yeah, that's very interesting because I have never seen any reference to that.

MB: I have never seen it in writing but we all knew how to do it and that's how we did, how we did the copies. And I always remember you had a special pot that you kept just for that because sometimes the ink, you see, would you see would get onto the pot. I mean, you wouldn't put the pot back and use it for eating or anything because you had this—and you had to heat it to melt the jelly, the gelatine.

HR: That's very interesting.

MB: I was telling the children about it, my family, when I making up my—talking about my sister and so forth and they, they had never heard of it, you know, they were,they were fascinated.

HR: It is, it's fascinating.

MB: Yeah, okay.

HR: Well, it's been wonderful. Thank-you so much.

MB: Okay, fine Helen. We'll be in touch.

HR: That’s great. Take care, bye-bye.