

Celia Dowding Interview #1 – January 11, 2008

HR – Helen Raptis (interviewer)

CD – Celia Dowding (interviewee)

HR: There are, there are a couple of big areas that I would like to touch on. One is your own schooling and where you grew up and the other is your normal school experiences and then your experiences during the war. So maybe we can start with where you grew up and where you went to school.

CD: Alright, I grew up in Beaverlodge, Alberta which is just across, across, the the B.C. Alberta border in the Peace River country. Went to, to school, it was a four room—well it was a two room school to start with and then a four room school with Grades 1 to 12 in the four rooms. One two three, four five six, seven eight nine, ten eleven twelve.

HR: [laughter] Even in the rural areas?

CD: No, no, no. Well, this was awhile back.

HR: When was that? When were you born?

CD: 1924. I had my 84th birthday just a few days ago.

HR: Happy Birthday.

CD: Thank-you.

CD: Yes, so, so that was, that was my school except for 3 years when the family moved out here to, to Port Moody because my, my sister was, was ill and a doctor recommended a warmer climate and goat's milk.

HR: Oh!

CD: And so my, my father made bricks out in, out in Port Moody and had a little plot of land in Port Moody where there are big, big condos right now, where he could have a few goats. Yes, yeah. Worked very, very hard.

HR: And did the goat milk help?

CD: Well, she, she survived. She, she passed away. She, she wasn't well during her life and she passed away about 15 years ago now. She was 7 years younger than I was. So she, she and my younger sister who was 12 years younger than, than me didn't have as, as good health as, as I

have had. So just the, just the three girls and our home, the happiest most secure home in the world, there is a picture right behind you of my home. Of, of, of my home.

HR: Oh gosh. Very snowy, is that in Alberta or Port Moody?

CD: Yes, yeah, yeah Port Moody was just sort of a stop along the way to get, to get Sally, Sally better because we had a farm, a quarter section there, yes. And our home didn't have that addition at the back for, for many, many years so it was a 16 by 20 log, log home. It had been a granary and Daddy cut some holes for windows and then it was our, our home. So the, the, the school in Tate Creek wasn't nearly as shocking to me as it was to most of the people who, who lived there because they had been used to, to, you know, brick homes and electricity and all of those things and growing up I, I hadn't experienced any of that kind of thing. So, so I felt, felt quite at, quite at home in the little, little country boarding place where I, I boarded. Okay, so I, I finished Grade 12 and then I came with girlfriend out to Vancouver to go to normal school.

HR: After Grade 12, there was no Grade 13?

CD: Yes we took, we could take, it was called, junior matric or senior matric and we could take senior matric which was sort of a Grade 13.

HR: And you completed that?

CD: Yes, mm-hmm.

HR: What was the name of the school that you attended, do you remember?

CD: Beaverlodge, Alberta.

HR: Beaverlodge, and all the way up to Grade 12. Beaverlodge, Alberta. Oh it was all one word?

CD: Yeah.

HR: So you came down to Vancouver Normal School.

CD: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

HR: And what year was that?

CD: That was '43-'44.

HR: Do you remember where you lived and boarded when you were at the school?

CD: Yes, yes I do. The normal school was just across Cambie, Cambie and, and, and 12th there and I boarded three houses down from—down east from the, from the City Hall and Mrs. Green

was our, our landlady and she sort of introduced us to the big wide difficult world. An example of it was it was war time and nobody, especially Mrs. Green, didn't want to use too much electricity or too much water or anything like that and she made it clear to us that we couldn't have any overnight guests and so that was fine with us. And Kathleen's sister was a social worker in, in Vancouver and she came over for breakfast one morning and Mrs. Green saw her, her going out. And so she accused Kathleen of having her sister stay overnight and Kathleen said, "No that she had just been there for breakfast." And Mrs. Green didn't believe her. It still sends shivers down my back because nobody had misbelieved us in our lives. You know, we had never heard of such a thing. And I had an aunt who lived out here in Langley and so I went stomp, stomp, stomp, stomping down three flights of stairs to the telephone and I got on the phone and I said, "Auntie Thelma, I want you to come and stay overnight." And I stomped up the stairs, Auntie Thelma came and stayed overnight and that was that. But that was, that was—you know, it sounds really silly now but you just can't believe how, how terrible it was not to be believed, you know. We had never not told the truth and never been accused of not telling the truth.

HR: And to be away from home.

CD: And lonesome, you know, lonesome and, and all these things. But, but that is kind of an example of what, what our, our year was like. We would get letters from home and cry at each other across our little table. Yeah, yeah. But...

HR: What, what do recall about normal school itself? Do you have recollections about your teachers or about the work you did, what you were learning?

CD: Not as much as I should as far as how it related to, to, to my teaching or my preparation for school like I, like I, I had. I can remember the teachers being wonderful, especially one man and my, my friend that, that I, I lived with is still in Vancouver. She'd be able to tell you some of these teachers' names. I remember things—I was, I was not very—well I was certainly not the least bit bold or outgoing or, or I guess you could say shy or stupid, or something like that. But I remember one teacher, a man teacher, and I was talking to him in the hallway and I leaned against the fire alarm and the fire alarm went off in the normal school. He didn't blink an eye, he turned around and he leaned, against it and carried on talking. Took the whole blame for the thing. That, that characterizes what the teachers were like at normal school. They were wonderful!

HR: You don't remember his name? Do you recall him?

CD: No I could phone and if Kathleen was home she could tell me, I am sure.

HR: Do you remember what subject he taught?

CD: I remember he was one of the least handsome men that I know and, and the nicest. You know, he was just such a wonderful, wonderful man. Also, I remember the health, I guess, health, health teacher because at that time neither Kathleen nor I, nor I am sure quite a few other, other girls of that age, really didn't know where babies came from. We really didn't. And farm, farm kids, you know, you'd, you'd think that we would know all the facts about everything but our parents for the most part sheltered us. So our mothers didn't talk to us very much about, or at all, about sex or things like that. And, and so this health teacher assigned a page in the, in the health book that we were to, to read, you know, before the next day, "Where babies came from" and fairly specific as I remember it because we were shocked and, and, just, just really, really enlightened. About that, I don't remember any discussion about it or anything it was just read this page, you know, and that was sort of our sex education.

HR: Background knowledge.

CD: And she backed that up by, you know, we were expected to be ladies and the teacher in the community was a very, very important role model and, and how, how ladylike we must be, you know, what a responsibility this was. I remember her telling us to keep our seams straight. You know, stockings had seams up the back then so that was one of the, the things we certainly had to know was to keep our seams straight. And when we got our first school, and she always used Lac Hache, when we got our first school up at Lac Hache, "Don't marry the first cowboy that asks you. Take him, take him home first, you know dear, to your parents before you make any such, such move as that." That's really about all I remember about, about normal school. We, we had drills. We had to march and turn and all that kind of thing, you know, like army—sort of army, army, army training that was, that was kind of out, our PE at that, at that time.

HR: And you, you did PE at the normal school in preparation for teaching it?

CD: No. Not that I remember at all.

HR: No?

CD: This was instead. Everybody else was in the army and we weren't and, and, and so this was, this was, was, was sort of our, our little...

HR: Contribution to the war.

CD: Yes, yeah, yeah.

HR: Isn't that interesting.

CD: It's funny, isn't it, how little, how little I remember about the teaching the practicums. I remember, I remember that because we weren't, we weren't much older than, than the kids. I, I guess I was 18 or 19, 19 I guess.

HR: And did you—were you going to be teaching elementary or secondary or was it all...

CD: It didn't matter.

HR: It didn't matter, okay.

CD: It didn't matter, no, no.

HR: And where did you do your practice teaching?

CD: In Vancouver.

HR: In Vancouver.

CD: In Vancouver. The schools, I could take you there. One of them was the school at the corner of, of Main Street and Fraser, Fraser. And I remember Kathleen and I went together on the—the two of us for the same practicum. And it was a big class, second one was, I suppose, it was Grade 8 students, 7 or 8 anyway they were bigger kids and the boys would flirt with us and, and we'd blush, you know, we couldn't help it. And they promised—and then of course the people from the normal school came to, to evaluate our, our lessons that, that we were teaching and so these, these same kids promised to behave themselves as long as we'd tell them our first names the day that, the day that we were finished our practicum.

HR: Oh really!

CD: And they were, they were—they just, they just behaved perfectly when, when the, when the normal school teachers came. We, we completed the arrangement the last day by telling them our first names.

HR: Did you have one or two practicums or...

CD: We had the lower grades and the upper grades.

HR: So you had one elementary and one intermediate?

CD: Yes, yes, yes.

HR: Do remember having a liking for either of the two? A preference?

CD: I loved the little ones. I loved the little ones, yes, yes. Later on—well, I won't go into that—but I, I specialized and got a Masters in, in Learning Disabilities in EMR and TMR.

HR: I don't know EMR and TMR.

CD: Educable Mentally Retard it was called and then Trainable Mentally Retarded. And It was those language delay kind of, kind of children that I, I got the most, most satisfaction.

HR: Did you do that in B.C. or when you were in California?

CD: I did—I started taking courses in California because normal school was no good anymore by then. I went down to California in, in 1956 with, with my husband. And so you needed a university degree by that time and so I had to—and he was, well he was clinically bipolar and so we had rough times. About every 4 years he, he was hospitalized for, for 6 months or, or so. So I did need to teach. And, and so I taught in a, in a private school. I remember in about 1967 getting about \$400 a month. So I needed to be able to get into the public system and so, and so I would put my little one in, in a day care after, after school and take whatever courses at whatever university I could from, from 3:00 to 6:00 or something. And I had to pick him up and gradually, gradually got my BA and then I finished a Masters years later in, in Alaska.

HR: Where were you in California when you were doing that? Was it a large centre or were you in a small centre?

CD: It was about, it was about 35 miles, about the same as from here to Vancouver, out of, out of L.A. towards Palm Springs Way on number 10. It was called West Covena, yes. So there's quite a few, likely 20 different colleges and universities around and they allowed me to gather my, my, my courses together to get the degree and I, I graduated from Azusa Pacific. And it, it meant everything from A-Z in the USA, Azusa, yeah, yeah, yeah. It was north of, north of Covena. So, so then I was able to get into the, the public, public system again, yeah.

HR: And that's how you made the transition.

CD: Yeah. And then I got really interested in, in the troubled, troubled children and, and so I kept on taking courses and then when I was able to I came back to Canada, came home and, and I taught in, in the Yukon and finished my, my Masters over in Anchorage, Alaska.

HR: Oh.

CD: Yeah, yeah, because I could do that in the, in the, in the summer in Anchorage. Yeah.

HR: Was it a specific emphasis on kids at risk?

CD: Yes, yes, yes.

HR: Little ones?

CD: Well sort of general, general learning disabilities but really elementary level, yes.

HR: So when, when did you retire from teaching?

CD: In '89 I went to—I was 65 and a half when I, when I retired and I, I taught in Langley the last, well the last 9 or 10 years. Because my mom lived down in, in Abbotsford and I needed to spend some time with her. Yes, yeah, yeah.

HR: So you left normal school, was it your choice to return that region?

CD: Yes, yes because my home was, was about 50 miles from, from there.

HR: From Tate Creek.

CD: Mm-hmm.

HR: And how—what was the process when you graduated from normal school? Did you put in a request to be placed or how did that work? Do you remember?

CD: Yes I applied, I applied to the North, North, North Peace River District. Yeah, because I wanted to be close to home.

HR: And then you got it?

CD: Yeah.

HR: Which would have been a nice...

CD: Yeah, I didn't know, know what I was getting into. I, I got that, that position because I was so trained, I had normal school. And a lot of people were teaching with Grade 10 or so then up, up in that area. I have no idea what these other, other teachers before me had. But the fact that I had the normal school meant that I could handle this school with 37 children.

HR: It was hard to attract people to the rural areas?

CD: Uh-huh, yes and it still is in the Yukon and places like that, you know.

HR: And B.C. also.

CD: Yes.

HR: The further north you get.

CD: Yeah, they can attract teachers with higher salaries and, and things like that but then they leave in October or November when it starts getting cold.

HR: And so at the time were you—was, was Miss Hinky there at the time? No?

CD: No. She was before me.

HR: So there were—so then—so goodness. When I spoke to Amy Brown, Amy was given the younger children—given the older children, the 12 to 18 year olds and Miss Meade originally had the, the younger children. So there were two teachers.

CD: I know and then it got to me and they just had me.

HR: And then you for the whole group.

CD: Uh-huh, yes.

HR: From Grade 1 to 12.

CD: Yes, yes.

HR: And what do you remember about that time? About the kids? About the community?

CD: Well, I don't know how much, sort of, politically she, she told you about, about those, about the the people there.

HR: She told me the background and I have done some reading on the back ground, their Social Democrats background and their trade union background. She also alluded to the fact there was some divisions within the community.

CD: Yes.

HR: People were conflicted about how to deal with the settlement organization.

CD: Uh-huh.

HR: About whether or not to follow closely what they were asking or to break away on their own and the coop. So I have some background but your perspective on what was going on is very much welcomed.

CD: And then when you, when you have time and you read Walters, he, he, he went through it pretty, pretty—from his perspective and including about the conflicts and, and, and what not.

HR: Did you experience that? How close were you to the families in the community?

CD: Well, I boarded a mile and half from, from the school with the Sidles who were, who were wonderful, wonderful to me. But Mrs. Sidle spoke very little English and I spoke no German, a little bit of high school was French what I had, you know, no German at all. And so our conversations—her, her daughter was away working in Alaska while I was there and she came home at Christmas time and she said it was just hilarious because her mother spoke broken German and I spoke broken, broken English and we were waving our arms around and making faces because you'd think it would be easy but little things like did I want to be a school at 7 o'clock? Did I want to—you could tell 7 o'clock on the, on the clock no problem, but what did you want to do at that time? Have breakfast at 7 o'clock? Have—you know, leave for school at 7 o'clock? Or, or what in heck did I want to do at 7 o'clock? And then all of these, these kinds of, kind of things were, were—the language in other words was, was, was very difficult. And they would—my room, my room, as I say, after living here wasn't a shock. But a little, little tiny room sort of room for a bed, a bench, a bench bed with boards and a straw straw mattress. And a feather bed sounds, sounds wonderful but, but the feathers would sort of disappear at the sides and sort of not be over you, so, so feather bed is not as good as it sounds.

HR: So the straw, it stays in place better?

CD: Well no, the straw was underneath you.

HR: Oh I see.

CD: And then the feather was on top of you. Yes, yes, yes.

HR: Oh I see, okay.

CD: And there was—the door, I had a door to this little, little room but it was like a barn door kind of cut in half so you could open, open the front—the top of it and supposedly keep the, the cats away at the, the bottom.

HR: So were they managing as farmers?

CD: They were managing, they were managing but, but the, the Sidles barn was one of the first barns because they went together on things and, and helped each other to, to build the basic, basic things. So they were look at Sidles barn and it was, it was swayback, it was like the, the Calgary Saddledome.

HR: Oh yeah.

CD: [laughter] Not quite that much but they would look at it, the men, and hear them—see them shaking their heads and saying we learned a lot on that barn.

HR: Oh no.

CD: So, so they, they seemed to have very little supervision or, or help on things. They were, they were up there and they were given some—well they weren't given money, but the organization was given money. And, and Walter mentions in his article that they had trouble with, with whoever was the, I don't know, the superintendent or so. He would ride around on a, on a white horse and, and issue orders in, in English that weren't understood and weren't helpful so, so...

HR: I can't remember the fellows name. If it was the same fellow...

CD: It would be, it would be.

HR: Yeah, that's the same thing that Amy spoke of, that he was most unhelpful and not a very warm person.

CD: No. Did they, did they tell you about when they, when they first got there that they lived in box cars on the siding?

HR: Amy didn't tell me that but I found that in a newspaper article. Because the housing wasn't ready apparently they lived in tents and box cars, railway box cars.

CD: Yes, and see there was nothing getting ready for them, they, they got ready themselves. They, they—there was nobody doing things there or anything for them they, they were, they were doing it all themselves and learning as they, as they went. One of the, the ladies at one of the parties, or something, read a most wonderful poem that she had written about this experience and sitting in these cold, cold box cars or, or their equivalent as they, as they moved along with an umbrella over her head, things like that.

HR: Quite remarkable...

CD: It was remarkable.

HR: ...they survived as well as they did.

CD: Yes, yeah, yeah. They, they, they really, really did, did very, very well. Yeah, so where I am? What am I talking about?

HR: Well when you, when you left normal school, I guess that would have been in June, then you applied to go to school. How did you get up to the Peace...

CD: By train.

HR: By train first to Alberta?

CD: First to Edmonton and then from Edmonton back to, to, to the northern border again, 'cause the border goes right through, through, through Beaverlodge where my home was and, and Dawson Creek, Pouce Coupe, and, and Tate Creek which was just, just south of Pouce Coupe.

HR: And so you were about a mile and half away. Did you walk to school or...

CD: Oh yes, yes, yes. In all weather, in all weather and roads, roads not cleared and mud and snow and, and wet. Yeah, but you see I was used to that because I grew up here.

HR: When you, when you went up I guess it would have been late August? Was it late August?

CD: Yes, yes, yes.

HR: And then you got settled in and do you remember the first time you met the children? Or your first experience of the school?

CD: I do, I do. The school sat on, on a kind of a rise and there were fields especially south of the school. And, and I can remember children coming at me from all of these directions and just coming and coming and coming and I thought, "Oh my goodness, you know, what am I going to do." I was prepared as much as I could possibly be prepared but I just felt sort of an invasion, you know, with them all coming and lack of confidence and...

HR: How many of them did you have that year?

CD: Thirty-seven.

HR: Thirty-seven, thirty-seven, all grades.

CD: All grades and six little beginners didn't, didn't speak English and there seemed to be so many dialects that even the older children found it difficult to translate so, so that the little ones could understand me and I could understand them, yes. There, there was no absolutely no

discipline problems, no discipline problems at all. They were so intent, they and their parents, so intent on making every use of education. They really respected education and wanted, wanted to adjust to the new country and to, to learn, you know. And so the, the older ones would help the younger ones. I had to—I, I had a, a curriculum, I forget just what it was, what it was. But I knew what, what each, what each grade should, should try to accomplish and, of course, you can't accomplish it all in the 1 year. And so what you would do, or what I would do, and whether they mentioned in normal school I have no idea, but just common sense, you know, is what you go by. And was in science and, and, and social studies and, and, and those kind of things you would take one grade one year and sort of do that. Then the teacher the next year would, would do, you know, the opposite one so that, so that say in in three, four, and five you would eventually cover whatever you were supposed to for, for, for, those, those three grades whether it was different countries or different, different, you know, parts of the, parts of the curriculum.

HR: So you'd integrate the grades. The children would work together in three, four, and five for maybe the Grade 4 curriculum that year.

CD: Uh-huh, yeah, that's right, yes, yeah. And the, the students today would, would be completely shocked at what you had to do because there was, there was no duplicating machines, there was, there was no library, there was, there was, there were some workbooks, and there were some, some textbooks. I don't remember there, there being, you know, a shortage of essential things you absolutely had to have. Things like math you would have to, to work gradually, gradually up the, the scale so you, you did, did things in order as much as you could with the, with the different grades, you can't expect a Grade 1 student to do Grade 7 math or like that. So, so I, I don't remember what was left over by—from the teachers before me.

HR: How did you find what grade the kids were in, was it generally by their age or did you test them first?

CD: No, no, no. I made sure that they had their report cards because I wasn't the first teacher, you see, I, I followed the other, other teachers so I don't remember there being any problem about who was in which grade. I knew which grade everybody was in and not necessarily that they could accomplish what they should.

HR: [continued] The curriculum how you divided them in a group.

CD: Yes I, I, I had guidelines on that I didn't have to, to make it up I just tried to—the problem was covering it all and, and trying to, to teach at every body's grade level. Oh and I was saying that there was, there was no duplicating machines or anything like that. I made myself a jelly pad.

HR: I have heard of them but I have never seen one though.

CD: It was in a, in a cookie sheet and somewhere I got the, the ingredients to make it up. But it was just like a big cookie sheet full of, full of jelly. And then you made, you made your copy on a piece of paper with a special pencil and then you put that on top of the jelly pad and then one sheet at a time you could, you could duplicate it. And after you, you did four or five sheets then it would sort of get kind of covered with kind of fuzz so then you'd have to wipe it off and then you could do a few more sheets. So understand that you essentially did not copy anything.

HR: [laughter] It was too much work.

CD: Too painstaking. There was, there was blackboard space but for that many grades to, to have everything on the, on the blackboard—because you did have to keep everybody busy and interested and, and happy, you know. They were, they were wonderful little kids and you wanted them to, to get some success everyday so it, so it was, it was quite a chore to, to keep, keep them all busy.

HR: The school had how many rooms in it?

CD: It was a two room school but they were just using the one room for this year.

HR: So were you able to group them and have them leave the room?

CD: No, no it wasn't, it wasn't, it wasn't heated or anything, the other room was just closed off. Yeah, yeah, so we were all in the same room, yeah.

HR: So how much time would you say you spent preparing for each day so that...

CD: One hundred percent, one hundred percent of the time. I didn't do anything else, I didn't do anything else, no.

HR: Did you stay at the school to do your preparing or did you go back home to the Sidles?

CD: Yes.

HR: Did you take any work home with you?

CD: Oh yes, yes, correcting and that kind of thing because, because getting, getting the next day's lessons on the board and everything took, took as much time as I had especially in the winter because it gets, it gets dark very early up that far, far north. And so I'd want to get home if I could before dark. So, so I remember doing, doing papers and workbooks, not workbooks because they were heavy to carry, but trying to, trying to get that done before school and, and after school, yeah.

HR: Very long days.

CD: Very, very long days, yeah.

HR: Did you make any friends? Were there any community things that you were involved with?

CD: Yes, yes. Father Goetz, I am sure that you've, you've heard of him?

HR: No, no I haven't.

CD: Really? Spelled G-O-E-T-Z I think it is. He was a young man, Catholic, Catholic priest, and I don't know if it was his first pastorate or whatever you'd call it or not, but he was about my age and he was my salvation. He spoke German for one thing and he had been there I think at least a year, a year before I was there because he knew the ropes a lot, a lot more than I did. And he was very, very helpful about anything that I, I needed to ask and did things—I tried to—I had a sports day and I invited another, another little school to the sports day. And he dug, dug jumping, jumping pits and, you know, helped me line out the baseball diamond and, and all sorts things like that. He was right there to help in any way he could. And he came up to the school on Wednesday afternoons and taught Catechism to the, to the kids. And one thing that I mentioned in that little letter that I wrote there was that one of the children said, "Father Goetz, why isn't Miss Stickney a Catholic?" And so I, I was in the other closet or something marking, marking papers so I perked up my ears to see what, what he would say and he said, "Oh she can't help it." And then he went, [laughter] then he right on with his lesson, yeah.

HR: How did they know that you? weren't How did the children know?

CD: I suppose I didn't go to church for one thing. They had, they had bingo at the church and, and they had dances and I, I went to, to those, those kind of things.

HR: Was the community, the majority, were they Roman Catholic?

CD: Walter Shane and I, that I am talking about in there so much for some reason, were the only non Catholics and he was, he was Jewish and I was whatever I was. And so, so we were, we were the only ones that weren't Catholics. But it didn't make any difference, you know, to any of us or anything that I could ever see.

HR: That's interesting because that's something Amy never mentioned at all. So that never came into it. One thing she did mention, though, was that she spent quite a few of her evenings a group of adults who wanted to learn English.

CD: Yeah that's, that's—I've a whole, whole, whole little section on that.

HR: Oh okay, alright.

CD: Yes, yeah, yes, 'cause, 'cause they, they travelled as much as 5 miles or so to, to learn, to learn English. It was called—now it is called ESL and you need at least a Masters degree to teach it.

CD: There we were, you know, doing our best and, and there was some kind of a little booklet that I remember that, that we went by so it wasn't, you know, completely, completely on our own there was, there was something. But it was magazines and it was newspapers and...

HR: Was that for the children or for the adults?

CD: For the adults, at night.

HR: So you did you do a night school?

CD: Oh yes, yes.

HR: How many nights a week?

CD: Once a week, once a week, yeah.

HR: Do you remember where the booklet came from, was it from the government?

CD: It was the Department of Education I think, yes, yeah, yeah. Those kind of things you could, you could check up on. But there certainly wasn't the help that there is now. And, and one, one thing that, that was very interesting to me was that they could sing the, the words to a song with no accent but if they read those same words then thick deep, deep accents. Now I am sure that that, that comes out in teacher training with ESL these days because it's quite, quite a known fact now but I didn't have any facts and I am not musical at all. I cannot sing, I cannot sing. And they tended to be, to be very musical. I can, I can do enough to know I am way off key, you know, so I just don't try. But, but they were musical and, and so I got all sorts of songs and, and, and they could, they could read the notes and sing and thereby learn, learn the English that way and it perked up the classes and very interesting. Sometimes we would get into things that were political or mildly political, at least critical, critical of government or something like that and they'd say, "Oh Miss Stickney I don't think we should discuss that." And I'd say, "Oh yes, yes we can discuss that, you know. It doesn't matter what you, what you think or what you say, you know, it is perfectly alright to discuss that." But, but very reluctant to and no wonder.

HR: And that was...

CD: Oh yes.

HR: Your, your, your desire to discuss those kinds of things was that because of your personal interest or were you—was it something that you were taught to do or shown to do in normal school?

CD: No, no, no.

HR: Were you—did you follow politics as a hobby?

CD: No, no. I am still not, not very politic at all. No it was just something to talk about in English. I, I made sure as each person came in that—my rule was as soon as they stepped over the threshold to, to, to school that night that there was no more German. It all had to be in English. So, so just anything we could talk about so, so you naturally picked up what was in the paper and, and what was in magazines and that kind of thing that they were interested in and just something to talk about whether it was the weather or snow falling, or farms, or animals or anything there was sort of nothing off, off limits. Just let's talk, you know, in English.

HR: Did you have a radio, did you have a radio that you could listen to broadcasts with?

CD: I think the Sidles had a radio. I didn't have a radio but I don't really remember listening to it or anything. I never had a radio until I was 16, yeah. And then it was a radio with the big battery like a great big car, car radio.

HR: Oh yeah, yeah.

CD: Yeah, and a big antenna up on the, up on the roof. Yeah, yeah.

HR: How are you feeling? Are you getting tired?

CD: No, I'm fine, I'm fine. Yeah, yeah.

HR: So what other things that struck you about working with the children? Can you remember anything particularly that you felt successful with or that was challenging that you felt you weren't successful with? Do you recall...

CD: I, I had a real struggle to keep up to the marking and to make sure, you know, that I understood what they didn't understand so that I could work with, with each one. I felt I liked the kids and the kids liked me. There was, there was no doubt about it. There was no conflict. I don't remember the children being—you know, having any difficulty on the playground or there, there—I, I think I would remember the negative if it was there and it wasn't because I was pretty sensitive. As you can tell when they thought I was lying about the, the sister staying overnight, yeah. No, no it was a good feeling and, and the older children were, were so good with the little ones and when they finished what they were doing, they would sit with the little group and, and

hear them read or, or, or do math or something. Sort of little, little, little groups off in this corner and that corner so that, so that it was, it was pretty cooperative. I don't think I was away sick, only maybe once or twice and, and one of the older, older students kept school those days. Yes, it was likely only about two days. I remember her name was Inga. And, and, and so they carried on, isn't that marvellous. I don't—can't imagine that happening in a school today.

HR: No not today, definitely not today especially with the responsibility of the younger children.

CD: Yes, yeah, yeah. But there was no, you know, there was no electricity, there was no plumbing, there was no—we called the, the outhouses Russian, Russian outhouses. And as the saying goes, "If it is 45 below and you're out there you know why you're a Russian." [laughter] That was a silly jokes. But one, one example of, of no, no telephone or communications or anything was when one my little girls began her menstrual period and, and another little girl came in terribly upset because this other little girl was out in the, out in the outhouse and she thought she was going to die.

HR: Oh gosh.

CD: Yeah, her, her mom hadn't prepared her at all. And, you know, there was no facilities, there was no, no extra, extra equipment around, there was, there was nothing there was just the school there. And when I, when I started mine I fainted. And part way home my mother saw me about a mile away just weaving, you know, back and forth from side to side of the road and came running up to, to get me and, and, and bring me home. So knowing this I was afraid to let this little girl go off home by herself. And she was the opposite way from the school and so I walked, you know, likely a couple of miles to, to take her home and make sure she got there and, and, and then back to school and then from there a mile and half to, to where I was, I was boarding. But that's the kind of thing that happens when you, when you have no, no means to getting in touch with anybody or anything.

HR: Right, everything had to be done on foot.

CD: Yeah, yeah, yeah. And just think how it would of been if, if she had passed out on the way home and, and I hadn't, I hadn't taken her. You had to careful.

HR: That is a very motherly thing to do and I wondering how you make the shift when your only a young person yourself. How old were you about? About 19?

CD: I'd be 20.

HR: Twenty?

CD: Because '24 and this was '44.

HR: So to, to make that shift to be in a motherly role at such a young age do you remember having to take on a role?

CD: No, perfectly natural. Because my sister was, was my baby she was 12 years younger than me, you know. And, and so I, I—my middle sister too somewhat but this one that was 12 years younger than me she—I guess, I just felt motherly to her, you know, my whole life. I still do I think. She lives up in Salmon Arm. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

HR: So I think one of the things that my preservice teachers and I also remember that feeling. I was 22 when I began teaching and it's a very different role. I had one younger brother but very close in age so for me it was quite a shock to go to take on a motherly role for children who were not much than them self.

CD: I think that that and living in that country, living kind of those conditions made it a lot easier for me then it would for a lot, a lot of other people because it just, it just came pretty, pretty naturally.

HR: But you were still lonely?

CD: Very lonely, very lonely. I, I don't know if you ever find out how, how much I was paid that year. You must, you must, must tell me because I can't—have no remembrance.

HR: I can find out because it's recorded in the annual reports so I will do that.

CD: Yes, yes. But I saved enough to buy a bicycle. And as we've, we've said the roads weren't paved or, or gravelled or anything very much and it was 50 miles home from there. And after I had saved enough money for this bicycle I got at one night after school on a Friday night I was going home. And, and so I, I rode, I got to Hythe which was about 35 miles away sometime before midnight. You know, following, following train—tire tracks and, and, you know, crooked, crooked muddy things can you imagine on a bike? Thirty-five miles, yeah! And then I thought, “Well there's for sure there is a dance at, at the Hythe Hall on a, on a, on a Friday night and there'll be somebody that will take me home from there.” So that's what I did I danced until four o'clock or something and then, and then one of these, these boys took me, took me home to Beaverlodge.

HR: Oh my goodness.

CD: And then how I got back was that—there's very few cars. And the RCMP worked the Alberta-B.C. border because that part of B.C. is quite isolated from the rest of B.C. And, and so whenever, whenever they were going by, I didn't know them or anything, but whenever there was an RCMP going by they'd stop at the school to see if there was anything I needed or I needed a lift or something. So, so they, they took me back, back home then afterwards.

HR: Isn't that nice.

CD: Yeah.

HR: You wouldn't do that again.

CD: No, no, no.

HR: Wow. So the dance was on the Alberta side of the border?

CD: Uh-huh. Yes, yes, yes.

HR: Did you ever attend any dances in Tate Creek?

CD: Yes, yes, yes.

HR: And who put them on usually?

CD: I think the Catholic Church did or certainly the community hall because it was, it was very, very much a community. There was, there was bingo, bingo games and everything. And I had, I had fun, there was, there was a lot of the boys my age were, were in the army or something. There is a list of them in there too.

HR: Yeah I saw that right. They enlisted very quickly after arrival.

CD: Yeah, yeah, yeah. They were very serious about getting rid of Hitler. And I had, I had a boyfriend that, that went away war too before I, before I went to Normal School. In fact he is the one that's in pictures that you see around. After, after 70, 70 some years we got back together again and spent his, his last 1- years together.

HR: Oh really?

CD: Yes when he got back from the war he married someone else and I married someone else and then after all those years we, we spent his last years together.

HR: How did you find each other again?

CD: Well, we'd always been in touch.

[continued]

HR: Essentially your first teaching position, I guess, and the war separated it.

CD: Separated it because he was over there for 4 years and 8, 8 months. By then I had taught a couple of years.

HR: And met your husband.

CD: Yeah, yeah, yeah. And he was in Vancouver. Yeah, yeah, yeah so, so anyway, let's see, what does that have to do with the school now. I guess it's being so lonesome and...

HR: So you stayed a year and then from there where did you go?

CD: And then during, during normal school I had become reacquainted with a, with a, well, a friend's cousin, anyway, when we were out in Port Murray. And there were very, very few, few men around at normal school for any activities there you can imagine so, so...

HR: So '43-'44.

CD: Yeah. So I married, I married this, this man and I came—he was just finishing university after that first year teaching so he persuaded me to get a school down here. So I taught, I taught just over the, the Pattullo Bridge, at the top of the Pattullo Bridge there.

HR: Is that Mission or...

CD: No.

HR: Surrey, it's still Surrey?

CD: It's in Surrey and it's not Guildford it's—I can't think of it. Anyway, that's why my, my second year teaching I taught here and then we were married and went to Ontario after that.

HR: So you—did you come back in the summer? You came back down here in the summer and that's how you met?

CD: Yes. At that time we had to, we had to have two success, we had to have successful inspector's reports and 2 years at summer school in Victoria to, to finish, to finish—to get your teaching certificate.

HR: So did you go to Victoria for the summer school?

CD: I did for the 1 year and then the second year I took in Ontario and they called it Auxiliary Education and that's when I got started with the special kids.

HR: And do you remember anything about the Victoria summer school? Where it was held or...

CD: Lots of sailors. [laughter]

HR: It's a port city, I guess.

CD: At the normal school, honestly, I can't remember those courses or what I took or anything. I'm sorry.

HR: That's okay. I find it very fascinating that people just don't remember that, they just don't. It left very little impression on them. One thing a couple of teachers have reminded me is they said that their normal school experiences were, were fun and interesting from a social aspect but when it came to the actual teaching in the classroom they found that a lot of their teachers read out of textbooks, were uninspiring. Do you remember that? Do remember not being impressed with your normal school staff or...

CD: As far as the academics go I remember practically nothing. I remember one psychology test, I remember liking all of the teachers and I certainly wasn't critical of them or anything because anything I was learning was new, how practical it was I don't know. But I remember this psychology test and the questions were: "How are many steps are there up to the front door of the building? What is the, the picture that you, that you see if you walk into the front door?" And, and all sorts of things like that sort of observances and, and, and things and, and what he had up his sleeve about, about those things I don't know but it was quite fun and quite funny. And then you got down to the, to the end of it and it said, "Answer only questions one and two." [laughter]

HR: Oh, oh my goodness. [laughter]

CD: Oh, yeah. I am sure it wasn't a meaningful test. But I, I remember that.

HR: I guess to see how thorough you were about meeting things and starting something or reading directions. Oh goodness, oh that's funny.

CD: Yeah. The things you remember and the things you don't. Yeah, yes, yeah.

HR: One of the things a couple of teachers have remembered was the emphasis on motivating the students. Do you, do you...

CD: I suppose, I suppose. Because that's, that's the whole thing, you know. When I, when I have been teaching later, you know, when I was teaching troubled kids and everything I just didn't care if I taught a single solitary thing for the first couple of weeks. I just wanted them to want to come to school, you know. To just like coming to school. And, and even in my, my last years teaching there was one little boy who, who had just—they didn't come to me until they'd gotten in trouble, you know, somewhere else and then they, they needed some special help. And so this, this little boy, darling little fellow I still remember him, had just cried and kicked and, you know,

his mom was just beside her self and dad—what to do with this little fellow. This was up at Murrayville in, in Langley, yeah this little boy. And so, so he came to school the first day and I have no idea what I did or what we did or anything but, but his mom was getting him ready for school the next morning and she said “Well,” she said, “I, I guess that you want to go today,” and, and, and he said, “Oh yeah, you know, that was fine.” She said, “What’s the difference with this school and your other school?” He says “I’ve got a grandma teacher.” [laughter] So I sure had that going for me, didn’t I.

HR: Isn’t that nice. So you’re kindness and your work showed through right away.

CD: I guess so, yes. And as I said I just, I just tried to, to do things that, that made them want school, wanted them to be there. And then from there on then I wanted them to, to accomplish something and feel proud of something, you know, that, that day. I had children, I had twins—I keep getting sidetracked—who they had their own language completely. Their, their mom—you hear of things like this—their mom couldn’t, couldn’t understand them.

HR: Really?

CD: Yes, and they’d be, you know, 7 or something by the time they, they got to me. And, and so, you know, you just did whatever whether it was standing on your head or what practically, you know, to, to, to get them so that they wanted to be there and, and found something that, you found something they could do and something they could accomplish and feel proud of. Yeah, yeah. Teachers would say, “Oh how do you, how do you manage, you know, day after day with these little fellows?” And, and, and I just thought, you know, what tremendous, tremendous satisfaction and accomplishment it was, yeah. One little boy—I started a school in California for severely handicapped children that could not get into the school system at that time. Now everybody can get into the school system but they couldn’t then. So it was, it was established by, by the parents to try to upgrade their little ones to the point where they could be accepted into the school system. And I had an assistant for every five, five children so we had quite a bit of help. And I think there were four of us in the room and this one little boy passing around cookies and this one little boy said, “Cookie.” And there was tears running down all our, our cheeks, yeah, yeah. Just to think that he had finally, you know, broken through to the point where he said “Cookie,” he knew what cookie meant, he knew what a cookie was and said, “Cookie.” Yeah, yeah, yeah. A little boy who, who was in a kind of a little stroller thing, he couldn’t even sit up and he had to be strapped into the little stroller thing. Anyway, that’s beside the point.

HR: Wow.

CD: yeah, yeah, yeah.

HR: Had you always wanted to be a teacher?

CD: Yes, yes I think so. Your choices those days were, were to be a teacher, a secretary, or a nurse. You know, Now there is a million things you can, you can do. But that was really your, your choices those days in, in, in my mind and, and a teacher was definitely the thing that I wanted to do.

HR: Would you say that the first year—you obviously survived it and enjoyed but you were very lonely—would you say that left you with any lessons, anything that you kept with you as, as you went through?

CD: Well things were, were not downhill but easier all the rest of my life. You know, I'd survived that. Nothing was as hard as that, as that school. To keep, to keep everybody busy and everybody learning and everybody getting to where they were, where they were going, and such, such interest from kids and parents, you know, that, that your, your work was not frustrated really in, in, in any way. And, and one of my sons said one time, "Well Mom, you know, for goodness sakes why didn't you learn typing in school? If you could have typed it, you know, it would have saved you some time." And I said, "Earl, I never saw a typewriter, you know, through high school," and he said, "Well, the school secretary must have had one." "What school secretary?" I am sure somebody in town had a, had a typewriter and everything but I, I never saw it, let alone learn to type. I still can't type.

HR: A lot of hardship.

CD: Yes.

HR: Were there any conflicts in the community that you ended up encountering or was that?

CD: I didn't no, I know—I knew that they were having trouble but I was having enough of my own to keep me busy, you know, so I didn't, I didn't really encounter any of that. And I, I didn't account—I don't remember any negativism from anybody or, or criticism which I'm sure there was plenty of room for, for criticism. But, but certainly nothing, you know, everybody was just, just very respectful, I guess, of the teachers.

HR: Mm-hmm.

[continued]

HR: You were saying that the Christmas concert at Tate Creek was very important.

CD: Uh-huh, partly because it was very, very important for, for rural schools like that it was, it was the big entertainment. The children got a chance to, to sing or dance or—I don't remember any of them playing an instrument. But anyway, it was a real opportunity and, and I did manage to get records and so—and as I said before I'm not musical at all. And so I took my Hansel and

Gretel down to, to my little home for a weekend which is unusual when you think about of it now and all of the, the forms you'd have to sign and everything, you know, to do such a thing.

HR: Take it out.

CD: But I took Hansel and Gretel home and I don't know where, where—you know, I must have had couch or a, or a daybed or something for them to sleep and then I took them into town to a lady who gave piano lessons. And she went over everything with them and really helped them, helped them an awful a lot to get in, get in tune. And that was one thing the inspector said in fact when he came he said, "Well now what about music? Have you been giving the children some music?" So we sang some of the, some of the songs that we sang and, and he said afterwards, he said, "Well, they were very enthusiastic and they obviously enjoy it a little bit out of tune but they enjoyed it anyway." [laughter] But anyway this piano teacher lady helped Hansel and Gretel. And one of the really exciting things that happened at the 50th anniversary was that Hansel's, Hansel's wife came and spoke to me and, and said that that experience for him, and he had never done anything like that before or since, but that it had just given him such confidence and, and, you know, made him realize that he could do these things because he happened to be shy. And, and that through his life he'd often referred to that experience and how important it was to him. Yeah, so that was, that was just really, really lovely. He didn't speak to me himself but his wife did. Yeah, yeah, yeah, it was lovely. My mom and my sisters—Daddy couldn't because he had cows to milk and everything and he could never get away, but somebody that had a car brought them up for, for this concert and they were just so happy about it because they knew how I had struggled between the beginning of school and Christmas time because at the end of it, the end of the concert people just clapped and clapped and clapped and clapped until it was just, just embarrassing you know. Just the enthusiasm just sort of brought, brought the roof down they, they were just so pleased to see their, their children so, so happy and, and doing so well. And, and my mom and sisters were there to, to see it. It was a real, real high light. Obviously I'm mentioning it now so it has been an highlight of my, my life that little, that little Christmas concert.

HR: Wow. Where was it held?

CD: In the school.

HR: In the school, in the school. So the school was two rooms so did you do it in one of the rooms? or...

CD: Yeah we did it in the other, in the opposite room.

HR: And about how many parents then would have been in there to see it?

CD: It was full. I remember it just being full of, of people, people and horses and sleighs, you know, and, and, and just such enthusiasm. Unlike a lot of, of country schools I, I had a man that they shared the responsibility of teacher not only economically but, but the, the people were doing their share that boarded me. And then there was a man fairly, fairly close and he, he did janitorial things so that I didn't have to go to school to, to a freezing cold school or anything. He had, he had warmed up the, the school for me.

HR: Did the stove?

CD: It was wood, wood, a wood stove. He kept the wood there for us to, to, to add to it when we, when we needed to. The big boys would do that kind of thing.

HR: Oh nice.

CD: Yeah, yeah, yeah. So, so a lot teachers say that, that—you know, you hear stories of old teachers that had to do that kind of thing that we didn't have to do, I didn't have to do. Then when Maureen got there, my sister, there was a teacherage so that they, they had the teacherage to, to live in by themselves and, and together and so there were a lot, a lot of things different.

HR: Was it attached to the school? Or where did they put the teacherage?

CD: No, I am not sure but I think on the school grounds.

HR: On the grounds.

CD: I think so. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

HR: Do you remember having any sports activities for the kids other than the sports day that you talked about?

CD: Well, recesses and everything, yeah.

HR: And they had some equipment for them?

CD: Well I remember baseball diamonds or diamond and as I say jumping pits. That was other thing wasn't very good at but we did anyway. Fortunately, no catastrophes. I was lucky and I was lucky with a lot of things, things like not being able to be there a 100 percent of every recess and every noon. You know, things, things could have happened that didn't. So I was...

HR: There was so many of them, I guess, it would be hard to keep your eye on them all.

CD: Well yes, yes and just not having time to change what was on the blackboard and, you know, all of those, those...

HR: For the afternoon.

CD: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

HR: Did they eat in the school?

CD: Oh yes.

HR: They brought their lunches?

CD: Yes, yeah. That's where all the garlic came in. [laughter]

HR: Did they heat them up on the stove or...

CD: No, I don't remember them ever heating anything.

HR: Okay. Can you think of anything else that you want to talk about from that particular time from, from Tate Creek?

CD: Well let's see. One, one thing, several families invited me to their home and, and I would go and stay all night and go home with the child and come to school with the child the next, the next morning and nice, nice things like that. And, and the kind of, of games they would play and songs that that they would sing, you, you learned a lot more about their, their, their culture and what, what they did for, for entertainment. I can still remember some of the, some of the songs they would sing and, and, and as the song went along you had to imitate the different instruments and, and things like that.

HR: Oh.

CD: Yeah, yeah it was very, very different for me. When you talk about the global warming, it certainly got a little—lot colder those years. When I was going to school myself it definitely got 60 below sometimes. There was a big thermometer at, at Godand's Store on the outside and you, you got to, you got to the store and they had a furnace downstairs. You could stand on the grate and cool off and, and you would stand there and of course it was the same, same up at Tate Creek. You'd get to school and you'd have a, you'd have a scarf over your, your nose and your mouth and you'd have a cap that sort came down between your, your eyebrows so the only thing really exposed was your eyelashes and, and they'd be completely covered with frost. And, and it would take, you know, 15 or 20 minutes sometimes just melting the, melting the snow. You

couldn't pull out all your eyelashes, you know, so, so you would just gradually touch them and, and heat them up.

HR: I have never seen cold like that before.

CD: No I thought maybe you hadn't.

HR: The worst, the worst—I lived in Montreal for 3 years but it never got that cold.

CD: I never wore slacks and all the years going to school and certainly there as a teacher I never, never wore slacks. It really wasn't the thing to do to, to wear— women didn't wear pants.

HR: You always wore skirts. And in the winter what did you wear to keep your legs warm?

CD: Long johns, yeah.

HR: Under your skirt?

CD: Uh-huh, yeah and stockings. There was no silk stockings it was sort of cotton stockings, so your, your, your long johns came right down and you had socks and when it was really cold you wore moccasins, you didn't wear leather shoes or anything or you'd really freeze. I never froze anything. I didn't ever freeze fingers or nose or cheeks or anything. Amazing, yeah. So I've got down here it was minus 50, minus 45 and that's Fahrenheit and there's no wind chill or anything in that it was straight 50 below 0.

HR: My goodness.

CD: One of the really big, big things as far as the teaching went was that you, you just didn't have paper work to hand out, you know, to keep, keep, keep children going. The difficulty was keeping up to the, to the children so that you really felt you weren't, you weren't doing busy work or anything you were—maybe it was a good thing we didn't—we weren't able to, to duplicate pictures for kids to colour and colour and colour or anything like that. We tried to have something that was useful.

HR: That would be a welcome thing.

CD: Yes, yeah. The, the, the night school, what would be ESL these days, was, was interesting because I, I felt as if I was a, I was a little Grade 12 country girl and these were quite sophisticated people from Europe. And they would, they would test you ever so often by asking you if you knew how to find the cube root and things like that that I would have no idea and they knew I wouldn't it and loved to, loved to catch me at. But I never, I never pretended to know everything and so, so I would throw that kind of thing back, "No, I sure don't can you show us

how.” And, and in the English we have—our English is such a ridiculous language. I’m sure if you’re teaching it you’d know exactly what I mean.

HR: Mm-hmm, very irregular.

CD: Oh yes because they would see a word like C-O-L-O-N-E-L, colonel, you know that doesn’t make any sense and a million like it. And, and they—I have whole charts of, of spelling words that, that, that—you know, how many words abide by this rule and here are the words that don’t abide by the rules.

HR: The longer.

CD: Uh-huh, uh-huh. And so many things what does the “O” stand for in jack-o-lantern? And so many things that you’d just be completely puzzled. Your right it doesn’t make any kind of sense. I don’t know why you do it this way but that’s way you do it. Besides all the colloquialisms and, and—and now if, if people from other countries are just watching the news and the advertisements and what not, so many of them the grammar is terrible and, and, and the, the verb, the tenses and things like that are all wrong on, on movies and, and televisions and, and as I say ads and things. There’s just so many things that we don’t—were not as careful about doing as we used to be.

HR: I think a large part of that is because we don’t teach grammar anymore.

CD: Mm-hmm.

HR: It’s just been taken—I was in Grade 8 the last time I had a grammar course until I trained to be a teacher of ESL. But it came out of the curriculum back in the ’70s.

CD: You see, we didn’t have any training for ESL or anything so it would be interesting. I’d like to go to a course and see what they do.

HR: There is much more understanding about the language and also about how learner’s learn a language. But a lot of it is still hit and miss.

CD: Yes, yes, yes.

HR: But do—with the night school were you expected to do that or did they simply ask you? Were you paid by the community? Or did you...

CD: I was—I think I got some extra pay for it and, and they requested that I do that and it was obvious that it was needed especially for the women. The men, the men would be out with jobs. That’s one thing that I, I decided while I was up there, that wouldn’t I marry one of them.

[laughter] Because the men were so used to coffee houses and that kind of thing in Europe and they still did it there. The women would be left behind on the farms with all of the, all of the animals to look after and the gardens and, and, and all the cooking and baking and, you know, making your own bread and making your butter and etc. etc. etc. That—and the men pretty well expected it and they would go to Dawson Creek or Pouce Coupe, Pouce Coupe and, and stay there, you know, all day and the women would, would be home doing all the work and they just didn't get out places and do things except in their own community. And then of course then they would speak their own language when they were out on a, on a social occasion because—so there was a very, very definite and obvious, obvious need for the, for the adult's english class.

HR: So did some of the women come to those classes?

CD: Oh yes, yes they usually came as couples and with horses and sleighs and buggies, yeah. Didn't walk as much as the children walked actually. Yeah, yeah.