

Doreen Guillaume Interview – March 3, 2008

HR – Helen Raptis (interviewer)

DG – Doreen Guillaume (interviewee)

HR: Okay, so I've written down here, "Park Siding, 25 miles from Trail." Was that your first school?

DG: That was my first school. Actually, earlier, just earlier in the summer Mr. Woodward, who was our inspector around here, had phoned and offered a school out at Mincaster. I don't know if you know Mincaster.

HR: No, I don't.

DG: Well it's up from Rock Creek. Do you know where Rock Creek is? In this area. You maybe don't know our area. Anyway, that was fine. And we don't have a car—we didn't have a car in those days of course, my dad. But he was the head of the Trail Times, the paper, and so he used the Trail times fellow would take us out in the car. So my dad insisted that we had to go take a look at this school, you know, where his one and only daughter is going. Anyway, we drove up to Mincaster we thought. But we couldn't find the school and I really don't remember the ins and outs but anyway we came back to Trail and he said, "There is no way you're going up there, we can't even find the school." So—but anyway, we talked to the, once again, the inspector of schools, Mr. Woodward, and he said there was a vacancy out at Park Siding and so that's what I took, the vacancy at Park Siding.

HR: What year was that in Doreen? Do you mind if I call you Doreen?

DG: No, not at all. What was that 19—just a shake, 1939, 1940, '41, '42, '43. No '41. I guess that was in '40. I think—when did we, when did we all start to teach?

HR: So you were at the normal school in '39 to '40?

DG: Normal—Yeah that's right. So this was in 1940.

HR: And what was your maiden name at time?

DG: Curran, Doreen Curran. C-U-R-R-A-N.

HR: Curran, okay. So maybe we can just—before we get into the actual school at itself, can you back up a little bit and maybe give me an idea where you were born and where you went to school and if you remember anything from your own schooling that might of influenced you in becoming a teacher.

DG: Well, I was born in Vancouver. My mom and dad at that time apparently lived in a little spot at Tsawwassen Bay. And—but a few months after I was born or half a year or something we moved to Nelson where Dad had worked before. He was in the newspaper business and he had come back from the war. And so we were in Nelson until I was, I think, 7 years old and then we moved to Trail and I am a real Trailite so. And then, of course, I went to school here, and I always—when I got a little older I knew I wanted—I would like to be a teacher and my poor dad, I mean, he thought it was great but he was hoping I would be a high school teacher and go to university. We had never had anybody in the family to go to university. But I had no desire to be a high school teacher and so we had to—he had to go along with me. I said I wanted to be public school teacher. So anyway that is how it all happened and then people from our area actually were supposed to go to Victoria to normal school, to normal school. But I could stay with an aunt and uncle down there unless your parents (inaudible) you know, had people to stay with they made amends. And then my best friend also was going—from here had a grandma that she was going to stay with and they accepted us at Vancouver, so we were both in Vancouver that one year. As I say, I mean, at normal school naturally we knew some of the girls to say hello to but, you know, that's a big city for us coming to—from Trail.

HR: Oh yes, and what is—was your friend one of the women that you're still in touch with?

DG: Well no, poor Ruth, she died.

HR: Oh.

DG: She was one of three of them that have passed away.

HR: Oh I am sorry to hear that.

DG: Yes, so there were 13 of us at first. 13 I.I.S.C. Interested In Social Contacts. [laughter]

HR: What did you call yourselves?

DG: I.I.S.C. Interested in Social Contacts. [laughter] You know young girls looking around, having fun.

HR: [laughter] That's great.

DG: [laughter] Anyway gosh, some of the crazy stuff just makes me laugh. I'm just sorry I can't think you know of more things to tell you but anyway.

HR: Do you remember going to high school in Trail?

DG: Yeah.

HR: Where were you at high school, was there a Trail high school?

DG: Oh yes, oh yes there was a high school in Trail and yes. And then I took my senior matric in Trail and actually and we had a—actually it was quite a bit of fun too, senior high. We, well, you know, it was just a regular high school but we had—we were in a funny little room, long and narrow, because there wasn't a heck of a lot of senior matric people in school. But once again the group that we were with we had a lot of fun and intermissions we had sing songs and—but every once in a while you do still run into—I still run into the odd person who was in that class with me.

HR: Oh wow.

DG: I know. Not many, very few. But there is one fellow in Trail, that's not too well right now, but he used to be in the same class and he and I liked to lead the singing in intermission so we had fun.

HR: And did he go off to do some teaching afterwards? Do you know what he did?

DG: Oh, well the next year I went to normal school after I got out of Grade 13.

HR: Okay. And what memories do you have of normal school? Do you remember any of the teachers? Or the work you did?

DG: Well, yes, oh what are their names? I do, I can still see some of them. Miss—you know, I haven't got it written down so there not coming out. But anyway there was—I can remember two of them were coming up to Trail on some sort of business and you now, you're young and foolish and I can remember Ruth and I, my girlfriend from Trail, wondering if they were going for the week and maybe we could get a ride home. [laughter] Anyway it didn't work, they were going to be gone some of the time we should be in school.

HR: Oh.

DG: But nothing like being gutsy, you know.

HR: [laughter]

DG: Oh gosh, and—but I enjoyed the normal school very much and it was close to where my aunt lived. So it was up, you know, right, right across from city hall in Vancouver, the old normal school, yeah.

HR: Yes.

DG: And oh Mr. Weston was one of ones that I remember because he was an old, old family friend who had come out from England and stays with my grandparents first before his wife and family came out. And I used to—he taught art and then he'd take us over to the, the, to the City Hall, you know, under the trees and what not to do some art work. Well I am not an artist and I used to say, "Oh God if I hadn't know Mr. Weston I never would have passed that exam." [laughter] That was my feelings and I think it was true. I could never make a tree looking like it was growing out of the ground, it looked like it was there flat, you know. But anyway, no I liked Mr. Weston and well I like them all really. Miss McManus was another one. I don't know, probably the girls have told you most of their names. And as I say, I don't know how many people were in the school at that time. I think there were two classes of us and we got to know them but we didn't get to know them well because where I got to know them well was when we were at summer school.

HR: Oh.

DG: In Victoria .

HR: So did they come over or were there different instructors for summer school?

DG: Summer school?

HR: Yes.

DG: Oh no. We had to go to summer school for 2 years after we graduated from normal school.

HR: Okay.

DG: And we had, we had 2 out of 3 years—there were 3 years there, you, you could wait for a third year and, you know, take two of those years. You know what I mean?

HR: And, and what...

DG: Like when we graduated—when we had our first year of teaching, then the next year—there are 3 years that we could have picked to take two to go to summer school. You had to go to summer school before you got your proper certificate.

HR: Who taught the summer school classes?

DG: That I can't tell you. That, it's just gone. But all I can think about summer school is the fun we had especially the second year because that was when we were all living in the dorm at St. Margaret's School.

HR: Yes

DG: Do you know Victoria? Are you in Victoria?

HR: Yes, I am in Victoria, yes.

DG: The old St Margaret's School and they opened it up to us. So we had a couple of dorms upstairs and it just happened and we always became friendly and hit it off well and that's where the interested in social contacts and our letter began.

HR: Social contact?

DG: Social contacts. That means, you know, meeting new people, especially the men.

HR: [laughter] So do you remember any of what they taught you at normal school; any advice they gave you or any of the learning that you did?

DG: Not really. I'm afraid it is all gone.

HR: Okay.

DG: Yes. It is funny when you mention that you know you sort of feel ashamed. You think, "How could it be gone?" But it is, you know, I can see my teachers and I like them but I really—the only one is Mr. Weston and the art and I'm thinking that, "Oh good gosh, thank goodness Mr. Weston was there."

HR: [laughter] What do you remember about that first year heading out to your school near Trail? Do you remember what the name of it was?

DG: Yep, Park Siding School.

HR: Park Siding School

DG: Yep, two words. Park Siding.

HR: Okay.

DG: Once again the fellow from the Trails Times took me out and I lived—oh I thoroughly enjoyed the year. I mean, it was a different type of my life—in my life but I did have a nice time. I lived with a very nice family. Edith and Sandy Bell and they had six children but they were the nicest kids. Four of them were in my school and two little ones at home and an outside toilet, I can certainly remember that. That was new in my life. And then the bus used to go by, I think

that they called it, the mail bus, sort of the mail bus, a bigger bus, it used to go up to Salmo periodically. And I knew most of the bus drivers; they honked once and while if they were going up late in the afternoon. And so then, you know, they'd honk to see if I might like to go for a little drive up to Salmo and back and which I did once and awhile. But I really enjoyed living with Edith and Sandy Bell. They were just, they were so nice to me. And as I say the kids just fit in well I wasn't, you know, they didn't feel like—I didn't feel like they were a nuisance.

HR: So you lived—did you have your own room?

DG: Yep, oh yes. I had my own room and I was glad those that worked that they—when you—like now when your older age, like, now I like to get up usually once in the night to go to the bathroom. Well I didn't have to do that there.[laughter]

HR: [laughter] Thank goodness because it was outside.

DG: I was younger and more sensible. [laughter] I was 19 actually I think, 19 or 20 .

HR: Do you remember doing any activities in the community at the time? Were you—did you feel a part of the community or...

DG: No, oh no. No there was anything much that you would do. Like the Bells had a chicken ranch and they candled eggs, you know. But, I mean, I wasn't out horsing around in the community, no. And once in a blue—well once in a while I would help them with candling eggs at night. I don't know, I didn't seem to have to work too hard; all the book and thing were in the school, they had a little school there, you know, for years. And anyway, I'd help them candled eggs and once in a blue moon I talked them into going up to Trail or to Salmo to go for a show for a change and I candled the eggs.

HR: Candle, what—I am sorry. I am not sure I know what candling eggs means?

DG: Well you have to put them in this certain kind of a glass to make sure there's no blood spots in them.

HR: Oh.

DG: Yeah, I don't know what they do these days but that was what they called it there, candling the eggs.

HR: Oh.

DG: And then at the end of the week Sandy, the husband, used to drive into Salmo with the whole slew of eggs that they would be selling out of Salmo. And a couple of times Edith and I

went instead, one afternoon after school. And one of the days I can remember that, it was rainy day and she and I got in the car and the wind shield wipers wouldn't work. So she was drive so we got a rope or string or something, something solid, and my job was to pull, I did the wind shield wiping all the way to Salmo and back. [laughter]

HR: You had your arm out the window?

DG: No, well just—the window had to be open though, yes. [laughter] I would just pull and it was strong enough that it wasn't going to break. And I can remember that distinctly and I thought, "Oh my gosh if somebody could see you today it you'd go to jail." [laughter] But I did, as I say, once in a blue moon, oh I guess that was—yes, I did, it had to be during the week because I went home every weekend to Trail.

HR: How did you get home?

DG: Well, I'd catch that bus.

HR: Okay.

DG: They usually—the bus drivers knew that I'd be around and so they'd sort of look for me and I'd get on the bus and then they'd go to Fruitvale and then into Trail. And in the mornings, Monday morning, my dad always had the fellow from the Trail Times would drive me out again.

HR: Oh. On his delivery, he would deliver?

DG: No, no, he just did it as (inaudible).

HR: Oh I see.

DG: Time off, take my daughter—will you take my daughter out to this Park Siding. And so every Monday Bill took me out to Park Siding, Monday morning. And I can remember—these are the kind of things I remember, it doesn't seem like I remember that much about what I taught or how I taught. But it, you know, it was nice. Well then come early spring, see the roads weren't paved then, the roads were dirt roads. And then they got very rutty and then buses couldn't go, there was no bus for, you know, maybe several weeks. So I arranged with the little all my kids that we would eat our lunch. We get 15 minutes for lunch, I hope the inspector wasn't going to come around. And anyway, and then I told them that we'd let them out at 2:15 or whatever because I had—I was to going to—I walked along the tracks to Fruitvale and then I got a bus at Fruitvale into Trail.

HR: So on Friday afternoon you would let them go a little early?

DG: Yes, not every Friday but this was when the, when the roads weren't—when buses weren't running on the roads and it was so muddy, you know, they would get stuck in the mud and they couldn't do that so I would just have little bag at Edith's where I lived. And I—so I'd leave the school and get the little bag with my few dirty clothes and walk along the tracks. You know, I think about today, I'd never do it today but I never thought of a thing in those days, everybody seemed so nice.

HR: That's, that's very, that's been fascinating for me. I've had people tell me that they rode—one woman told me she used to leave her school at 3 in the afternoon and ride her bike over to the Alberta border and arrive around 11 at night.

DG: Oh, horrors. I know some of them had a real rough time.

HR: It is amazing to me that somebody would do that. My whole life has been one of always being aware of the danger out there.

DG: Yes, yes.

HR: I found it amazing.

DG: But I never—I mean this time, you know, everybody seemed nice. The people I lived with were, were just ordinary, you know, white people. And there were two other families that were related and then there were farther down there were a lot of Russian people. A lot of the little kids that came to the school were Russians.

HR: Were they Doukhobor?

DG: Doukhobor.

HR: Yes

DG: Yes, so but they were nice little kids and sometimes they didn't turn up of course because—but sometimes their dad would bring in a buggy of some sort and, you know, they did miss a bit. But I will say the ones, like the people that I lived with for instance and their one set of relatives, Sandy Bell and his brother, he and his wife had 2 boys that were in my school. And they both got, you know, graduated from high school, I know, and got good jobs. They both worked and had good jobs. And the Bell family had all these kids but girls were mostly—went into school teaching and the boy, one of the big—the older boy that I was teaching, Jerry Bell, he eventually graduated from university. I don't know just which university but I know he did very well. So, you know, the family were all bright and wanted to be educated which was nice. I mean the other little kids that I had, well some of them were. I can still—I still read you know McKeys all these different Russian names or Doukhobor names and I think—and every once and while I see one

and I say, “By golly he was in my class way back when.” And it’s kinda of fun, you know, but you don’t know them to see them anymore because they’re—you haven’t seen them for ages these people.

HR: Did any of them come not speaking English?

DG: No, no. They all spoke English.

HR: They all spoke English.

DG: Yes, yes.

HR: So when, when you got to the school how many kids did you have in each of the grades?

DG: There was a total of 17 that could be there, you know, if they were all there.

HR: That was all Grades 1 to 8.

DG: Yes 1-8. Outside toilets of course

HR: Did you have a stove that had to be lit?

DG: Yes, they had to light the fire in the morning, sometimes the, the older, you know, the older boys, the Bells, would get up early and light the fire. But otherwise I would light the fire when I got there and get that placed warmed up a bit and then we carried on. But son’t ask me what we carried on with but I know they graduated because these kids eventually had jobs in the world.
[laughter]

HR: Do you remember anything about the war during that time? Did you have to do any drills with the children like duck and cover or anything like that?

DG: No, no. Now mind you—oh when I talk about me it was after—because I only was there one year and then I got on in Trail, my home town. And I was doing—I belonged to the, air, what do you call them. We had grey uniforms and anyway we worked in the hospitals and did all sort so of things; met the trains with boys coming home or ones that were injured or played cards with them on certain nights, you know. Yeah, I did a lot of things during the war years in Trail but not out of, not out of Parks Siding, no.

HR: So in 1941 you went to Trail?

DG: Yes.

HR: And what was the name of your school there? Do you remember?

DG: Trail Central.

HR: Trail Central.

DG: Trail Central School.

HR: That was an elementary as well?

DG: Oh it was just an elementary school. Yes, it was up to Grade 8 and I taught my first, let's see, the first year at Park Siding. The next two years I taught in Trail, next three years I taught in Trail but the first two years I was in Trail it was Grade 2 class and the third year in Trail it was Grade 3 class. And well, I can remember the, you know, that all that stuff worked out very nicely. I can't think of how many were in the room. But there was around, I think there was around 36 or something in that room. But I know what I was going to say. It was out in the country I, I—oh I used to enjoy telling this to my two daughters as they were growing up, you know. Oh yes, you remember I, I used go in to start looking for a job. I said, "Well I while I made \$780 a year," and they said, "\$780 dollars a month you mean mom." I said, "No dear I don't It was \$780 dollars a year." [laughter] Of course, they just about dropped. Then in Trail I was teaching there I made \$1160, so that was a big jump. Anyway, those were the, those were the old days eh.

HR: Wow

DG: Yeah.

HR: Things have changed. Was it enough money to live on?

DG: Well yeah but then, you know, I lived at home with my mother and dad, kind of a spoiled brat. But anyways it was very nice and they loved having me and I loved being there and so I—actually we were right behind the school, just up one street, and I could whip down there to the school. And if I was on lunch room duty I could be on lunch room duty and still get home to Moms and have a sandwich for myself.

HR: Oh wow.

DG: (inaudible) It does sound kind—the whole thing sounds sort of silly doesn't it in this stage in your life, you know, when things are so different.

HR: Well it's, for me, it is nice to hear because these are the kinds of things that I've never experienced. It gives me a sense of some of the things that we've lost.

DG: Well, yeah. So we did—as I say we had this group of us, you know, just meeting each other through this teaching deal. It was so wonderful because we have had such great times, I mean three of them are gone but, you know. First we would start and try to meet every 10 years and it was usually in Vancouver and, you know, if you were married you had to take the kids and we would all try to get together. And it happened several times and that of course as we got older and the kids had grown up we started meeting, trying to meet every five years. And then all of a sudden I know someone, I can just hear them saying, “Oh look you guys time is running out let’s meet every second year we got to get together.” So I haven’t—we didn’t this, at least I wasn’t there, last year but we still get together but the ones in the Vancouver.

HR: Oh I see.

DG: Yeah, Marge up North she doesn’t get there too often, well she does get there sometimes and Joan isn’t well there, she’s in a home now and there are different ones that don’t. But they, you know, that group did stick together in Vancouver and we still have our round robin that goes around, we probably get it two or three times a year now.

HR: That’s incredible that you have kept this up for so long. I think it’s wonderful. I am hoping you’ll put your letters in an archive one day. [laughter] It would be a very fascinating 60 year story.

DG: Yeah, well it is it, it, it, you know, you look back I think it is marvellous the way it’s all worked out that—and our, you know, our husbands always seemed to quite enjoy each other and meeting the other fellows. That’s good, they didn’t know them from a load of hay but I think they would all stand back and they’d see all these crazy women. But we always have a, always have a picnic in Stanley Park and, you know, that was one of the big occasions and especially when we had our kids. So well, we had a lot of fun but then that isn’t, I know, that isn’t teaching—what you’re saying teaching.

HR: That’s okay, that’s okay because it’s—I am interested in history in general. So, so you said enough resources to cover the curriculum, do you remember anything about the inspector?

DG: Mr. Woodward was the inspector. Yeah I knew him, I knew him well. I think he only arrived out there maybe once. But he was also the Inspector in Trail of course when I was there. Yeah, he was a very nice man. You know, I don’t mean he put me to the top of the class or anything, but he was easy to get along with.

HR: And so did he help you out in anyway? Was he the kind of person who helped or did he just come in, observe and go?

DG: Well no, he’d tell you that you should be doing more of this; why aren’t you doing more of this? You better start to do a little more of, you know, mathematics or once and a while. But he

was very, you know, very kind about it all. And you can rest assured he wasn't coming back to make sure you were doing it because he's, as I said, I think he only came out once while I was there. And I, and I can't even think of it in Trail. I am sure the inspectors usually checked into your room periodically. But I never was in any trouble.

HR: Did you ever need to confide with anyone for help or did you have—you know, if there was something you couldn't do and needed ideas for was there anyone you could turn to?

DG: I don't think so. No, no.

HR: No. It was sink or swim I guess. [laughter]

DG: Yes, yeah. Well I can remember—you know, I don't remember all the stories that the other girls had, maybe the next time we get together I'll say, "Hey, tell some of stories that you—they told you." And but I know some of them you know had a quite an un—not unhappy time at times when they first got out in the country. And of course they lived—most of them lived in the city, you know, Vancouver and North Vancouver. So I guess it was a real shocker to them and they weren't coming—like mine, I felt like I was spoiled, you know, go home for the weekend and get out to go to dances and do all these things with my friends. So..

HR: Yes Marion—actually Marion was quite blunt in telling me that she, she really found it difficult up where she was and left after a very short time.

DG: That's right. I can remember Marion telling something there, yeah.

HR: Yeah, and it was quite funny though as she... [laughter]

DG: I forget what it all was about but anyway I know she—I remember she had trouble but I think some of the others, you know, well, it wasn't something they wanted to do forever.

HR: Mm-hmm, yeah.

DG: I guess.

HR: How long did you teach for ?

DG: I just taught for four years and then I was married and in those days, you know, married girls you see quit and my husband said he felt he was quite capable of support me so I quit teaching and as I say, did a lot of volunteer stuff then for the next 2, 2 1/2 years and then I had a daughter; I had two daughters before it was all over. But no I had a couple of free years there that I—teaching wasn't one of them but I was working with the Red Cross and all these different, you know, doing different war things, yeah; helping.

HR: Were you happy to leave teaching? Was that okay with you that women, married women, didn't carry on?

DG: Yep, I was, you know—it didn't matter to me at all. No, I didn't mind. I, I enjoyed the teaching, actually it's kinda of funny I was—this is just an extra, I'll tell you. As I said I was an only child but when I was 14 years old my mother had another baby and she wasn't—like, she had a hell of a time when I was born and we were in the hospital for a long time and, you know, it's, you know, one of these babies that they didn't—well they today they take the baby early. But I had all sorts of funny things the matter with me but they all went away like they said I had no forehead and foot was up against my leg and was a bit of freak baby but these things turned out okay. I was into sports and everything before, you know—when I got older. But anyway she was advised not to have any more children because, because she had such a tough time. And however, something flipped there and so I had a sister and I was 14 when Joan was born. And anyway, when I went to my first Grade 2 class—there were, I think there were four Grade 2 classes or three. Anyway, at least three Grade 2 classes, my sister was in one of them.

HR: Oh my goodness.

DG: I wasn't—of course I had another class but I used to kid the life out of her because she was the sweetest thing and I used to say—well, she had a new teacher I can remember that, Joan I forget Joan's name. But a brand new teacher who was very nice but just sort didn't step on them enough and Joan was sort of look the, you know, she'd look out the window and dream and stuff. I said to her—well when she was older I was kidding but I did say to my folks, “If I didn't—if we teachers didn't have to have a meeting with the principal, and my sister hadn't been in my grade”—in those days they used to fail people even in Grade 2. I said, “I think she would have failed.” But poor old Jeff, that was our principal, I said, “He'd be afraid to fail my sister while I was sitting at the meeting.” But anyway Joan managed to get through school fine but she was a, that year kind of a daydreamer, you know.

HR: Oh yeah.

DG: Yeah, yeah. But anyway, I knew the principal and he was very nice and, and I knew some of the teachers. Gosh they were in that school I think when I was there some of them, the older ones, you know. Yeah, so—because I went through the school, you know.

HR: Yes, that's right. You're not the only one, there have been several people who were able to go back and teach in their communities.

DG: Is that right?

HR: Yeah, which has been interesting for me. But they were able to do that and were very happy about doing that.

DG: Oh yeah, I was very happy. I really was because of course I had lots of friends in Trail and, you know, the ones I'd been—especially in high school together and so it worked well. And then I did a lot of skiing and we used go up skiing, a gang of us from school, from high school. And oh, we had a lot of fun together, we really did.

HR: So skiing during when you were, when you were teaching or—was that...

DG: Oh I skied up—I skied then too, yes, yep. But even in high school before I ever got out of high school we were about grade, maybe third year or something, I can sort of still name some of the boys and gals; we all decided we wanted to go up skiing. We didn't even have any lifts in Trail at that stage but we went up to Rossland on the bus. We carried our skis down to the bus and get on the bus and then we'd all hike up until we reached snow and then we'd put our skis on. But the skis and the harnesses were different in those days, you know, I mean, you could move, you could just walk, kind of with the skis. Today, you know, you get tight harnesses so you can turn and do all this stuff.

HR: Yes, it's very awkward.

DG: Anyway, but we had a ball. We'd get up there and we'd have a—there was a little cabin and we could go in there or else we just stayed out and went down the hill two or three times and had our lunch at the bottom in some trees. And then it would be time to go back to Rossland, ski back as far as we could and catch the bus and come home and hike up the stairs carrying your skis. Yes I skied then, too.

HR: So you took—did you ever take your kids or did go on your own or did you take your class?

DG: Oh no, I just went on my own.

HR: On your own.

DG: Oh yes, Oh no, no. No, nothing like that. Not in—especially, you know, the kids in Trail they would do their own thing.

HR: So you would ski on the weekends or during holidays.

DG: Yes I would ski on the weekends, yeah. I have done a lot of skiing. I skied until I was 80 and then I decided I better quit while I was winning.

HR: Good for you. You must be in very good shape.

DG: Well, yeah, pretty good, yep. But, you know, you—I used to—mind you when I was—when I say I skied until I was 80 I had no one to ski with in particular and I would go up and a

lot of them I knew and they'd say, "Come on and join us." Well I'd say, "Well look, I'll see you at the bottom, because," I said, "I just like to go my own speed." As I got older I, I knew what I wanted. I liked to ski but I, I didn't want to try to hurry to catch up to them and break my leg or something. I have been very lucky. All the years I've skied, which is a lot of years, and never got into any trouble. You know, didn't break anything.

HR: Well, that's good.

DG: That's one of the lucky things.

HR: Do you—You did a lot of work for the war effort; do you remember doing any of it with your students in class?

DG: No, no I don't, I really don't. I don't—I can't remember the big discussing things or busy things at all.

HR: Okay.

DG: Mm-hmm.

HR: Alright.

DG: As I said, I belonged to the Red Cross, Canadian Red Cross. We did a lot of volunteer work and First Aid as well as home nursing courses that I took up there and. But then the Volunteer Auxiliary Drivers course that they put on, eight week courses at Cominco. Well, I did that, you know, in the 3 years that I was going to—while I was at school teaching and...

HR: In evenings, would you do that in the evenings?

DG: Yeah or the weekends. Yeah.

HR: Your the first one who has told me this. I'm interested in that.

DG: Oh yeah, I did a lot war effort stuff. We worked in the hospital, we had, you know—now this is like—I couldn't do this when I am teaching; this is after I taught that I worked sort of volunteer work. But we'd be down there helping carry trays to people in their rooms and dumping bed pans and all sort of things like that. Yeah I've had a real variety of things during the war years. But, you know, we all took it—we were a group, just like a big group together and you did have fun doing these things; you felt good about it, I know that.

HR: Yes. So it was...

DG: With the service men, as I say, we helped entertain the service men when they came home and their families at dances and whist drives. When I say that I think I wouldn't know how to play whist now if you asked me but It is amazing what you can do when the right time.

HR: So that's a card game?

DG: Yeah, yeah.

HR: I don't, I don't know it.

DG: Oh okay. Well, I can't tell you now. [laughter]

HR: So You would play cards with them to help take their minds off things?

DG: Yes, yeah. That's right, yep.

HR: Okay, so...

DG: Meet trains sometimes, when the guys were coming home, you know. Well, for instance I know one particular time, now this once again isn't having to do with skiing—with teaching though. But I can remember going—one of the fellows that got married overseas and they had baby and he is still overseas so this Italian family but I knew them very well. And so I went down to the stations with the mom to meet this girl that she didn't know and of course she wasn't happy about this whole thing so I sort of was happy to be able to go and make it easier for the girl that was coming over.

HR: From—was she coming from England or where was...

DG: Coming from England with the baby and her husband, like the Trail boy, was still over fighting the war.

HR: Oh my.

DG: Yes.

HR: And how, how did it go?

DG: Well, it went fine. I mean, he eventually got back and then they lived—well they were together for awhile, but quite awhile, but then they were divorced. And it was just one of those things. And then she has passed away since then but yeah, all these different little stories you know.

HR: Are there quite a few Italians in Trail?

DG: Yes, Yep. Yeah, we have quite a few.

HR: Did you...

DG: There well, you know, they are good hard workers but I mean a lot of them now are the second and third generation and they got very—they have done extremely well in business and, you know, they are not poor. They're quite a lot of them are very well off and own a motel—hotels and all sorts of things. Yeah, they are really nice, they are a great group.

HR: Did you teach those, those children?

DG: Yeah.

HR: And did any of them not speak English when they came to school or were they all...

DG: No, they all spoke English when they came to school.

HR: Okay.

DG: Yeah, and, you know, it is amazing; in Grade 2 I have about four or five guys—my next door neighbour—that I taught in Grade 2. And here we are all up here, you know, in Glenmary. And there's a Rino, and a Gino, and a—and they're all so nice. You know, we have get—every once and awhile we get together, we meet at one of the neighbours or something has a party and there'll invite you in. And of course they've had a few drinks and then they'll say, "Oh, she strapped me at school, you know." But this wasn't true of course. But anyway, they'd get a kick out of the fact that by gosh here's our teacher and she's still around. [laughter]

HR: [laughter] Well, that's great.

DG: Yeah.

HR: You—Did you feel like the war was a time of hardship?

DG: Well yeah, you felt badly because, you know, we were always hearing about somebody who was killed overseas. And oh God we lost some awfully, awfully nice kids, my friends and it's pretty upsetting. But nothing much you could do about it, just try and help the ones that were here or coming home, the ones who were coming home.

HR: If you were to talk to some 19, 20 year olds today who are thinking of going into teaching would you have any advice for them?

DG: No, I don't really think so. I have one daughter that went into teaching. She taught for years even after she was married, not like me. But the teaching today is different; I mean they—there is much more expected of teachers today than way back when I was teaching I think, I think.

HR: In what way?

DG: Well they just are better educated, shall we say. They seem to have been—gone to school longer. But, you know, I mean, just one year. You don't just go for one year, I don't think, anymore.

HR: No, that's right. You have to have a degree.

DG: Well yeah, uh-huh. So they're well educated and I don't know I think it is different. But yeah, I 'd say go into teaching; I think it is a good, a good profession.

HR: Is, is there anything you have thought of that you might want to add here that I haven't thought about to ask you?

DG: Gee, I know I don't really think so; it seems to me I told you more than you really needed—wanted or ask.

HR: Oh no. It's been wonderful. I've learnt—again I have learned awful lot; it always amazes me how every time I speak to someone I learn something different.

DG: Is that right?

HR: Yeah.

DG: Yeah. We all feel differently and some, I guess, didn't like teaching I don't know. But I think most of them have enjoyed it way back then, didn't they?

HR: Yes, yeah most.

DG: After they got settled, you know, after their first year maybe or so when they didn't—weren't impressed with the first places they had to go to; you just never know. But anyway, I must say I couldn't complain at all about the people I lived with and the, and the other little kids that came to the school; they were all—and if you ran into their parents once in a while, while some of the parents couldn't speak English but the kids could.

HR: Do you remember them coming to the school at all, the parents?

DG: No, not really, they did mostly, maybe a dad would bring them up in a horse and buggy or something, you know. But a lot of them walked. And no we didn't seem to have gatherings but I know we had Christmas concert but, you know, I really don't remember. I know I had a Christmas concert when I was there that one Christmas. But oh and I'll tell you one other thing I did that year that I first—really quite fun. I decided that we would practice singing and I was going to put them in the Kootenay Music Festival here in Trail.

HR: Oh yes.

DG: Because I'm used that—I was used to that sort of stuff because I had piano lessons as a kid and used to have to go and play for things. I don't mean for entertainment for passing your exams. And so anyway, and Edith Bell where I lived had did have a piano so asked if her if maybe it would be okay with her if I brought the gang down a couple times so we could practice there and then she could come in with us. And I arranged for three cars and I would take them to Trail this day to go to the music festival and some of them had never been Trail in their lives. And my mom was going to have the sandwiches and everything for them so we would get there for lunch—mothers and anyhow we—oh the kids were so excited while my mother, you know, when it was all over she said, “My gosh I didn't think that toilet would ever stop flushing.” [laughter] And they had—some of them had never seen an indoor toilet and so of course they were back and forth to the bathroom and this was a hey day and they were young, some of them were very young because it was sort of a school, music, you know, craft thing, Oh I can just hear my mother when the next time when I got home. But anyhow, we did that and we, as I say, we had three, I think three carloads or maybe it was four carloads. Anyway, the kids certainly enjoyed it and it was one of the big treats of the year to go to the music Festival. And no we didn't win anything, I think there were only two classes in it but my friend Edith, dear old Edith, she sat down and I said, “Is there some reason you can't play?” You know, festivals nowadays have somebody come and play for you if you want and, you know, accompany you

HR: Yes.

DG: But I said, “No, you played for us here at home Edith,” and I just thought, “Oh come on let's just make this a, a family group kind of thing.” And first we started and she was in the wrong octave. Of course she's nervous still being out there in front of all these people. Well it's not the biggest crowd but it's, well, you know quite a crowd. And so, but anyway, we sang our song and we got a good a adjudication but not the highest marks or anything. But it was a wonderful experience for the kids. But I can still hear my mom when I came home, “I can't get over that, you know dear that toilet was just going and going,” of course I was kind looking after the kids and I wasn't paying too much attention. But I think we had—yeah we only had one toilet in the house. So anyway they learned—that's what learned that day, all about, all about toilets. [laughter]

HR: Well, that's lovely. Did—when you got to Trail did—was there anything like that? I guess it wasn't as big of an adventure with the kids at Trail because they were in a town as opposed to a small place.

DG: Oh no, we didn't do those things. Oh well, I shouldn't say that. But there was a music teacher in the school that would take them, not just any old teacher. I had decided this was sort of a—I forget what they call it, you know. Sort of sometimes they have classes for 8 year olds or 10 year olds and this was a country, I think it was called for a country school.

HR: Oh I see.

DG: And that's why I thought, "Oh, why don't we do it. I think it would be good for everybody and the kids will get a kick out of it," and so anyway, it did work out very well; It was a good day.

HR: That's good.

DG: Yeah

HR: So here—you never had any difficulties with discipline or anything like that with the children?

DG: No, no I really didn't. They all seemed really very, very good kids.

HR: Oh that's good to know.

DG: You know you find that often country kids are, you know, I think anyway—you know, sometimes a city, cities, they sometimes get a little rambunctious. But nope they were all very good and I didn't have any trouble at Central School either, really, I kind of enjoyed it. And I was teaching with teachers that had been teaching when I had went through school there.

HR: How did that feel?

DG: Well, it was different. But it didn't bother me. I mean. they were all very nice, you know, most of them were very nice, yeah.

HR: Well, that's good. Well that, that sort of expends all of the questions that I have, unless you would like to add anything else?

DG: No gee I don't think so. I was having a fit with you, you know—thinking about you phoning. I though, "Oh God I'm not going to be able to give her much information on teaching," so I've talked about everything else but teaching and you wonder if those kids learned anything

that year. But I think they did. [laughter] We did—I did teach. And It all seemed to work out well with the—I don't know how some of them, the little Russian kids made out, but I know some of them have done well because I have read their names in the paper, you know, doing things here in the Trail paper.

HR: Right.

DG: And so it's sort of nice to know, I probably wouldn't know them if I met them on the street and yet it's amazing every once and awhile somebody will pass me and stop and say, "Do you remember me Miss Curran?" I was Miss Curran then and, "Oh my gosh you do look familiar but I can't put a name to you." Somebody who's been away for a lot of years, you know, and come back. Anyway it's always nice when they speak to you.

HR: Yes

DG: You know, you know.

HR: And so did the Russian kids struggle with the language?

DG: Didn't—oh no. They didn't seem to.

HR: Okay.

DG: Nope, you know, they seemed to—they had older brothers and sisters that they probably had, you know, used—been used to some of this stuff.

HR: Ah.

DG: Yeah, but they—well they did their best anyway, you know, and they seemed to know, they seemed to know what to do and how to do it.

HR: Well, that's great.

DG: Mm-hmm.

HR: Well, thank you so much for sharing all your, your information with me.

DG: Well, thank you for calling.

HR: Thank you Doreen and have a wonderful day.

DG: Thank you very much. Okay.

HR: Bye-bye.

DG: Bye for now.