

Marion Acedo Interview – February, 29 2008

HR – Helen Raptis (interviewer)

MA – Marion Acedo (interviewee)

[continued]

MA: ...Going on, not the man I finally married, but anyway. [laughter] I went over to the Teacher Placement in, in Berkeley and looked for the nearest school to Berkeley and it was Woodland. So that's how come I arrived in Woodland. Woodland is, is near Sacramento. It's about as close to Sacramento as—my home town is New Westminster. And so New Westminster and Vancouver are about the same distance apart as Sacramento and Woodland; Woodland's about 25 miles from Sacramento.

HR: Oh I see. But the weather, I take it, is much nicer.

MA: Actually, it's going to be—in the, in the summer can be very hot, very, very, hot. Like up in the—but it usually cools off at night. But anyway—and my sister and my son and I have—well it's his house—have this whole house up in Point Roberts which is near Tsawwassen. And, and we go up there to get away from the heat because sometimes we can have up to, you know, 100-102, and mostly it cools off at night but sometimes you get—it, it's, it's a little overwhelming. But last year up there your summer wasn't all that great, it was too cold.

HR: No, it was not a very good summer. We are hoping for a better one this summer.

MA: No. How, how's your rain? In August—actually we, we were short of rain last year. This year we seem to be doing better. But you got all rain, too, last year.

HR: We're drowning in it. Were—it's still—it's raining today. It rains everyday. [laughter] It's terrible.

MA: Where did you grow—where is your hometown?

HR: I am originally from Victoria and left, when I got my teaching certificate I left. And then when my husband and I married after a few years we realized that Victoria was really quite a nice place.

MA: Oh it is.

HR: And we came back, we came back to Victoria. And so that—we've have been here for about, about 10 years now. So we...

MA: I hadn't even—my father worked for—was a railway clerk until we had, we had passes. But we didn't have passes to go up to—so we—I didn't get to Victoria until I, until I went to summer school.

HR: Oh yes.

MA: You know, in '42 I guess it was, yes.

HR: So you, you were a part of the 1940-'41 Vancouver Normal School?

MA: Yeah I went to—I graduated from normal school in '41, right. Went out teaching in '41. And I was glad when, when—all my American friends will be very, not very pleased with me when I tell them that I was glad that Pearl Harbour happened. [laughter]

HR: Oh.

MA: Because then, then I knew those Americans would enter the war. [laughter] And they actually needed them at that time.

HR: So where were you at that time?

MA: When Pearl—I was up, I was up there in Penny. Penny, B.C. which is spelt P-E-N-N-Y. In fact I was just looking—I've got a book I got when I went to Prince George a couple of years ago when we were having one of our reunions and one my friends said, "Oh there is a book called 'Penny for your Thoughts' and your name is in it." So I, I only taught for, until—I only stayed, I only stayed until the Christmas vacation because I wasn't—I, I, actually, I wasn't doing all that great of a job and the inspector that was suppose to help, he couldn't come. He was, he was ill, couldn't come. And so anyway, I was not doing—I had 32 children in this class, ungraded classroom.

HR: Yep.

MA: And there was somebody in each one of the grades. There were three, three little first graders, and their father was the man that owned the mill. He was—they were a nice family. And I had nice—a good boarding house, a room, room and board. And they didn't have electricity but they had, they had a thing which I considered—they had plumbing, indoor plumbing. You could take a bath and flush the toilet but the school didn't, the school had, had—we had to use those gasoline lanterns which I was, I was always—the ones that you have to pump up and light the mantle.

HR: Oh yes.

MA: I was always afraid of those darn things.

HR: That it might blow up?

MA: But the children knew how to do it.

HR: Were you afraid it might explode or...

MA: They always kind of—you had to pump them up. You had to be very careful about the way—have you had any relationship with one of those lanterns?

HR: Not myself I have only seen them in books and things.

MA: Yeah I avoid them. And, and there was a lady that lived in the—right near the school and she came over and had the fire all going. And then they used, for water, they used kind of a ceramic pot thing with little taps on them. I mean, they had no, no water in the school and no electricity and no plumbing. They, they had outdoor plumbing—a separate one for the boys and girls. [laughter] Yes.

HR: Even then.

MA: But anyway it was, it was—it's a beautiful country and, and I had—the, the boarding house that I had was, was very comfortable, it was warm and comfortable. No, no electricity and I had taken—you know, you couldn't even plug in your—had a radio. Also I also took a lot of books that I, I, I used to read a lot when I was, when I was a teen or growing up and so I took a lot of my books. But that school up there which had those 32—and it was—they had—it was a lumber—they were lumbering spruce, white spruce, it was a white spruce. And spruce during World War 2 was quite valuable; they were making those lightweight air planes, spruce planes.

HR: Oh.

MA: That, that, that were doing a good job and—but anyway, that school has been closed. It's, it's—since '85 because the mill closed.

HR: Oh wow.

MA: Once the mill closed everybody left. And the people I lived with were from, were—there was the family: the mother, and the father, and his sister, and they had two children that weren't theirs, they were relatives of theirs that were in the school. But anyway, they were Norwegian and all spoke Norwegian, I don't speak Norwegian. [laughter]

HR: So most...

MA: They spoke Norwegian between them because they were from Norway.

HR: That was the family you boarded with?

MA: Yes, there name was Mellos, M-E-L-L-O-S, Mellos. And, and, I read in this book that I have about “Penny for your Thoughts,” that she moved to Prince George. And she was, she was really nice. The husband; I thought he was—I was only 20 at the time and he thought he was an interesting person. At the time he was—must have been only about 40; He lived to be 90 or something. But I thought he was an old man because I was only 20. [laughter] And I wasn’t interested in him. [laughter] But anyway, it was—it’s, it is—I don’t—the train that goes is the, is the CNR and it was called at one—at that time, I guess, the Grand Trunk. It ran between—I went up to Jasper, got off the main line of the train at Jasper, and then the train went from there all the way to Prince Rupert. It was taking quite a bit of materials because that was one of the ways they were getting up to Alaska, was from Prince Rupert. And that’s where the train ran from; from Jasper to Prince Rupert.

HR: Wow, that was a long way to go to get, to get there.

MA: Oh actually one of the ways was, was—you know, they were paying at that time—of course, I know nobody was making all that much money. I mean, we didn’t think—we thought it was a terribly poor salary but not very many people were—it was—Depression was on anyway. But, but this school their contract, their contract was for \$900, that’s a year you understand. And my sister was, was coming right up—coming behind me. She went to normal school the next year after I did. And so anyway, they did charge a fee for going for to—I went to senior matric in my high school which was the Duke of Connaught by the way.

HR: Oh.

MA: He was also—but the reason the school was called that was he was actually the youngest son of Queen Victoria but he also was Governor General of Canada and he laid the cornerstone of the high school. The high school has long been—they had, they had a 50th year reunion a couple of years ago and it’s long been closed. They have a school further of the hill and I guess the, the population changed from one place to another so that’s why they closed that one, that one up and tore it down, actually. So the cornerstone is now—they moved it over to the city hall which is where the high school used to be.

HR: Oh, I see.

HR: So you, you attended the school in New Westminster.

MA: Yes, and when I left Penny I, I taught—I was—I taught in, actually in New Westminster in—oh God, they were quite, quite posh names actually for the schools in New Westminster. There

was Lord Calvin, and Lord Lister and the school that I went to was, was Herbert Spencer. And he was a scientist too, I looked him up. He, he believed, he believed that all, all science was integrated: physics, chemistry, and biology. Anyway he was right because it is. [laughter] I notice, noticed your, your logo for, for University of Victoria has little, had little birds on it. I guess that's because you follow the birds to Victoria, is that why they got birds on there?

HR: Well, no they're little martlets. And when Victoria College opened they weren't able to grant degrees so they, they were an affiliate of McGill University in Montreal.

MA: Ah yeah.

HR: And that little martlet is on the McGill crest because those birds apparently are very common in, in Montreal. So when the, the crest for UVic, at the time it was Victoria College and then became a university in the '60s, so our crest looks very much like the McGill crest. And that's why it's...

MA: When we went—there was no—when we went to summer school we went to—it was a high school, Victoria High School.

HR: That's where you did your summer school?

MA: That's where I went to summer—and we stayed—and my friends and I all stayed in St. Margaret's School which was on—which has been moved since then. But we—I spent both of the years that I went to summer school in St. Margaret's which was a, a posh boarding school for people. For girls, actually it was a girl's boarding school, yeah. But they still have the school.

HR: They do. It is not the same one though. A number of people...

MA: No I know it isn't.

HR: Yeah, a number of people have told it was in the downtown area on Fort Street.

MA: Right.

HR: And now it's a little further out; they have a beautiful property it's several acres of land and its out in the—out further in the outdoors.

MA: I know my sister met some—we met some of them, we could tell they were from St. Margaret's because they had their uniforms and they told her and she, she was telling them about staying. My sister taught school—we are all—we have a lot—even my mother-in-law went to—although she was born in the, in the—in Illinois. She lived up in, in Armstrong and she went to the normal school before she teach—she was—you only had to go for 3 months at one time and

she went for 3 months and came—and then they moved down here to, to Woodland. And they told her that maybe she should take another year in high school so she'd know more US history or something. So anyway, we have a lot of teachers in our family.

HR: That was your mother-in-law? Your mother-in-law?

MA: That was my mother-in-law and my sister taught school. She now—she lives in Bermuda, and she and her friends went over there for summer and then just decided to stay. And she got a job as a—in a pre—4 years olds and she taught until she was 65 years old. So she's—and then she's now in a, in a care centre, a senior care centre, which she seems to like quite well. And she is, is—been there ever since, as long as I have been in Woodland.

HR: Wow.

MA: So we got lots of teachers in our family.

HR: That's a good thing, that's a good thing. [laughter]

MA: [laughter]

HR: So maybe you can tell me just a little bit—let's go back a little bit here to your experiences when you...

MA: Oh in Penny?

HR: Yeah, well not—let's go back even further for a minute and let me know a little bit about you when you were at the Duke of Connaught High School. When you attended high school what do you recall about it? Do you remember any teachers or classes or activities that you were involved in that might have been influential in your decision to become a teacher?

MA: Actually, there weren't an awful lot of, of—I was a pretty good student, actually. And quite—and, and if, if you wanted to have a, have a professional—and actually the Duke of Connaught was a—there was also another, another high school in New Westminster at the time, The Trapp Tech. And if you, if you, you know, wanted to go and be a, a bookkeeper or know how to type or even do home ec. or that kind of thing you went to Tech. If you wanted to be a—or do more a professional you went to the Duke of Connaught. And so most—and there weren't all that many—now there's more, more things that somebody—that, that even an, even an upscale female can do. [laughter] At that time you could either be a teacher, nurse, and then, and then if you couldn't make either one of those you could be a telephone operator. [laughter] Or a bookkeeper maybe even.

HR: Did you want to be a teacher?

MA: Yes, actually my sister was—she, she started school the next year. Actually you used to be able to start school in January. When she started I had already been in school a year and half when she started. And I came home from, from going to school—I liked, I liked my first grade teacher, her name was Miss Squires. Everybody loved Miss Squires. And anyway, I would come home and teach her everything I'd, I'd learned in school and so she, she was—she only had to go to, go to first grade for half of the year because she was ready to go into the second grade because she'd—I had taught her everything I knew. [laughter]

HR: Oh, goodness! That's great.

MA: So anyway, I've been, I've been—yes, I've been teaching people for a long time.

HR: You're a natural.

MA: Well we had—We used to set up, Peggy and I, would set up—we had a—at that time we were living in our, in our old house in New Westminster and we had a room that we—a playroom that we set up as a school room and we had, we had a register and registered all the children. Yeah we, we played being school teachers, right.

HR: Wow. Isn't that interesting, that's very interesting.

MA: Well, you know, it, it, it was, I guess. I, I, I guess, I have been teaching for most—ever since I was 6 years old, would you say? [laughter] Six or seven, yeah. My mother says that when, when she took me to school in the first grade she said that I could hard, that I could hardly wait for her to leave. Would she please go and leave me, please. And when she took Peggy, Peggy was crying and hanging onto her skirts. But anyway, Marion wanted to get going on this whole project. [laughter] I was the older sister!

HR: Yes, you were competent on your own. [laughter]

MA: Oh boy. Well anyway, so you, you, you went to high school in, in Victoria, too?

HR: I did at Victoria High School where you did your summer schooling.

MA: Oh, okay. It was—and we had, actually, we had very—because we had live music and, and, and we had—it was, I shouldn't this because it sounds—it doesn't—it sounds very bad. But for, for us group of girls going over there it was a lovely war we had, we had, we had about seven—because they sent all those—the, the Englishmen and the Australians and the Canadians. There was about seven lovely looking soldier types for every girl and we had live music so they wanted to come to our dances. [laughter]

HR: Where were the dances held?

MA: The dances, there was a, a, a big—at the—right in the Victoria High School I thought there was a big gym or something.

HR: Oh I see.

MA: A big room I think.

HR: I see. Yes. There—They, they have two very big gyms, well, they had two when I was there. One was older than the other. But, yeah, they are a very good size.

MA: And then we had—there was also, there were different forts. And where your airport is was Pat Bay and that was a very—had another live orchestra there. But, but the, the, the fellows that came from England, the RAF, somehow or other they were wonderful dancers. They must have taken—they took—I think they take dancing in school or something. But they were the best dancers and the Australians were, they weren't interested in girls. They were interested in getting drunk I think, they were. [laughter] Anyway, but these fellows from the RAF were wonderful, they could all waltz and fox trot and do all those intricate kind of dancing, they were very good at it. [laughter] But anyway, it, it, it was summer school. I think they were just 5 week sessions, but you had to do two summer school sessions and you had to have two positive inspector's reports. And I think you had to teach 2 years too before you got your permanent certificate, your—to, to teach. Now I think everybody has to go to—have a university degree before they teach.

HR: That's right, yeah. So when you went to Penny, you stayed until Christmas of 1940.

MA: That's right I, I, I—because I was not doing a good job. (inaudible) Actually, they, they were—they had—I didn't know that the teacher was—actually the school was the centre of the community and one thing that they did was that you—that the parents all gave a certain amount of money, not an awful lot of money, but enough to buy a Christmas present for their child. And I had to make up these—this long list of presents and it wasn't just for the children that were in school, but it was for their younger brothers and sisters and so on for their big, for their big Christmas tree. And anyway, I, I could—the children that were in school could tell me what they wanted for their presents but some of the ones that were little, apparently they weren't happy because some of them had, you know, they had donated money for their, for their younger children and they—and the younger children weren't getting anything very interesting except maybe a scarf or some mittens, or something like that. And they weren't happy with, with the way that was done. But anyway, it was, it was—the train doesn't even stop, it doesn't stop there, now. But it's—it's in the foothills of the Rockies and I remember the rushing—I could hear this stream from my bedroom at night. And it was a beautiful area and there also were the lady, Mrs. Millice, she, she did a very, you know—set a proper table, knew how, how to, how to set a proper table and her meals were good. And I remember there were a couple of trappers that came, fur trappers, to stay.

HR: Oh yes.

MA: And oh, they hadn't, you know, they hadn't shaved for I don't know how long or had a bath. And I, I, I was scared to death of these guys because they were eyeing me up and down. So I, I had—I pushed—I had to push a trunk I had brought against the door because I was afraid they might come, but I don't suppose they would have. [laughter] I was afraid of everything. [laughter] I would walk on the tracks to get to school and there would be cows on the tracks and I'd go, "Shoo," at them and they wouldn't shoo. So I hadn't, I hadn't—I wasn't a rugged type. I had always gone to a city school and my father didn't even like picnics, so we—[laughter] I wasn't the rugged outdoor type. [laughter] But it was a, it was a—it's a beautiful, you know, if—I think that the only thing that they have going for that part of the country right now would be tourism. People, people might go and put up a tent or something because I am sure all those houses are all just sitting there rotting away, you know, all these years, there is nobody in them. There's the school too.

HR: It's interesting that throughout B.C. there are a lot of abandoned towns that are just rotting away.

MA: Right. I am sure that—I think you had to have, you had to have 10 children, I think these are the rules. It's so long ago, more than 60. You had to have 10 to start and, and eight to keep a school going. And in this—I just read over this stuff in my, in "Penny for your Thoughts." They were short, they needed one more student in this one school so the, the school superintendent or whatever he was asked them if anybody had a dog. And so one kid sitting there, they all—and they put the dog's name in as the other student. [laughter] Do you believe that one? It's too bad, it's too bad you can't—I don't think Dolcie MacCallum is going to be very good at answering your questions, she's, she's, she's had some problems. But she went off to Masset to on the Queen Charlotte Islands. That was her first school.

HR: Oh.

MA: But I don't think she—she's not with it quite well these days she's had problems with her memory.

HR: She hasn't—unfortunately, she hasn't contacted me. So I am wondering if maybe we can piece her story together from other people. I'll, I'll have to see what we can do because I'm assuming that if she went to Masset she had some Aboriginal children at that time.

MA: Well, I don't know. She—her, her daughter is in Victoria, Judy. but I don't know Judy's last name 'cause she's, she's married and, and she, she might be able to—because she works for—maybe I, guess, is Gordon Campbell still the prime—the premier of British Columbia?

HR: Yes, he is.

MA: May has, has campaigned for him. She goes, she goes over there quite often so maybe she might—she knows more about Dulcie. She, in fact she lived with Dulcie for, for quite a little while.

HR: Well, I'll ask her.

MA: She might, she might—she knows more about it than, than I would.

HR: Okay I'll ask May about Dulcie.

MA: Yeah cause May, May is the most go ahead one of us all. She wants, she wants us to have another reunion this year. I don't know how many, how many want to do that although. (inaudible) Who lives in, in up near Prince—she lives in Burns Lake actually. She has a son that has a house near where I have my summer house in Tsawwassen. So we might be able to get a reunion going this summer I'm not sure. May wants us too.

HR: If you do, would you mind if I came and meet with you? Because May, May has given me the names of all of you that have been in that round robin letter writing group.

MA: Yes, I know. She wrote a covering letter that came in, in the envelope, right.

HR: Yeah. And it's, it's just fascinating to me that you have kept in touch for so many years. That your friendship is still strong after all this time.

MA: Right, well actually, we we went to the—I get mixed up with my, with my government terms between the US and Canada. But we did go to the legislature in, in Victoria, and actually shook hands with Gordon Campbell for heaven's sake. And anyway, they, they announced all of us and where we were all living, from, from their speaker's table in the, in the legislature. And, and they said we were a group of remarkable women, so I always address us as, “remarkable woman.” [laughter]

HR: I think you are, I think you are.

MA: We went out—actually, it was promoted in normal school. Mr. Lord was the principal of the normal school. In fact there is a good book. I've got it somewhere. It's called “Mr. Lord's British Columbia.”

HR: Yes, yes I have seen it.

MA: Yeah well, it's a good one for you to look at for your paper actually because he talks about going to teacherages and how this, this young teacher was so proud of his nice clean sheets and, and his cooking abilities that he could, that he could make Mr. Lord a nice dinner and so on. So

that's, that's kind of interesting too. I think what we were most, at the time—he used to talk about Lac la Hache and it all was great to go out to the country, so what we were were a bunch of missionaries. [laughter]

HR: Oh, isn't that interesting.

MA: Bringing, bringing education to the wilderness. [laughter] They had a normal school here, too, in—up in Chico. Chico is north of here, means—actually it means little boy in Spanish.

HR: Oh yeah.

MA: And Bidwell was the name of the, of the normal—they don't have normal schools in the U.S. anymore either. But they had normal schools—actually it was a very good program, they had a very good program but they don't need it anymore, I guess. Everybody goes to university.

HR: Well we've, we've have retained some of the program I think because what happens is they get a university degree but then they do get a similar array of courses in their last year that prepares them for teaching. But I don't know that we prepare them in the same way you were prepared. I don't know that we give that sense they are missionaries on their way out. [laughter]

MA: [laughter] There are a lot more people in British Columbia then there used to be but there is still, there is still plenty of room, you know, compared to some places that are jam packed.

HR: Did Mr., did Mr. Lord actually use that word? Did he use that word “missionaries?”

MA: No, no. No, but, but it, it, it sounded like—he, he was, he was always promoting, you know, that it was good to go out into, into the, into the lands to teach. I don't know, I don't know whether he actually said “missionaries” or not. But—and then but he said, “If you, if you, if you meet somebody that you think that you want to marry,” he said, “bring them home at Christmas time. Bring them home and see how they fit in with, [laughter] with, with where you came from, you know. And decide—don't, don't marry them while you're off in the woods.” [laughter]

HR: [laughter] That's good advice.

MA: But I think he, he—it must be a long, long time—oh good night he's got to have died. But Miss Bower too was—she was, she was influential and she and her sister were both teachers and they, there's a—isn't there a—one of them taught at UBC and I think there is a—they both have got to be over a 100 by now. But anyway, there is a wing of the—at the university or at least some kind of place for the students to stay that's got that's got Bower name on it I do believe.

HR: And were they instructors at the normal school?

MA: Yeah one of them was. One, one was a teacher at normal and the other one was at, at, at UBC. Actually Faye—you're going to call Faye Burtrahm-Eccleston?

HR: That's right.

MA: And she, she taught at the normal school. She taught PE at the normal school in, in Vancouver.

HR: Okay. Yeah, actually that's right. I have spoken to Faye. Now I am losing track of who I have spoken too. [laughter]

MA: Faye, Faye, Faye is the one that's mentioned—it's Faye and May are the ones that were interested in, in, in getting in touch with us.

HR: And in PE both of them, I think. They were both involved in PE.

MA: Oh gosh yes, and I don't know how I got in with that bunch because I am, I am pretty good. I'm a good swimmer but never I have been very athletic, shall we say. [laughter]

HR: So, so in high school you weren't involved in any sports or anything at high school?

MA: Oh, I was. I'd would go out to whack around the ball out on the—on Saturdays playing grass hockey. I was always afraid of, I have kind of prominent teeth, that I was going to get my teeth knocked out. But anyway, I tried everything but, you know, but never was—oh gosh, one thing I really hated and they were all—was tumbling but I was, I was small and also didn't weigh all that much so I, I could be up on the top and so I didn't have to be all that great at tumbling. [laughter] Or modern dance or whatever anyway. And I always liked the, the—we learned all the folk dancing and so on. And of course New Westminster has a great May Day and I—and, you know, we, we taught—actually Kay and I did our first, our first teaching experience in, in Herbert Spencer and we taught the kids folk dancing and also the maypole and so on. But the, but the New Westminster May Day is the prime May Day of the Fraser Valley. Everybody comes, they get all the queens from all those other little towns come to New Westminster. And they still do it. And it's some—it's always sometime in May, I'm not sure exactly sure when. But, but we used to always—they would fire off the gun if it was time—if May Day was on. And I think it nearly—even, even though the sky might be a little drippy, May Day still went on.

HR: And you, you—did you prepare your students to dance in the May Day?

MA: Yes, yes because we did do our first practice teaching was done at that time. And we did—and, and, and of course we had—we learned a lot of the folk dancing at normal school, too. And how to march, oh my gosh. The war was on, you know, you had to know how to march and, and, and carry a broomstick that looked—that was for the gun and oh good lord. [laughter] Anyway, I

keep, I keep coming back to remember some of these things. But, you know, also now they're, now they're having a big fuss here in, in, in Berkeley. They don't want recruiters because this war is such a stupid thing that we've got going on, you're not suppose to say that, but it is. They're using up all the resources for that darn war. They're using more resources for putting—for that war then they are for, for higher education.

HR: Oh my gosh.

MA: In, in California. You know, California was—a lot of the things that were going on in California were things that they were telling us about when we went to normal school and summer school. California used to be the place that they looked up to for a lot of different programs. Well, it isn't that way anymore apparently. We're not up there at the top anymore I think we're down about 35 or something.

HR: Marion do you remember what it—what kinds of things your normal school instructors were telling you about that were coming out of California? What were some of the ideas or the innovations?

MA: Oh, you know, everything being integrated for instance. You know, if you were—well, actually you started out with your own home community and so then everything would be related to—you'd set up a little store. And if you were in the primary grades you'd set up a little store, and children would bring empty boxes and empty cans and things and sell things. I don't know if that is what you know or not, but anyway.

HR: Yes, yes that is what I want to know. That is perfect.

MA: Yes, and the—and then, you know, you'd, you'd go on from—actually we'd, we'd go on a visit to the fire station. Somebody would slide down the pole and we'd, we'd also go to the paper and watch the, the, the paper sheets come through. When I, when I was in that—up there in Penny I had—because I had all this children I needed to have seat work and there was no, there was no mimeograph up there so I had to send to my mother to get, send me a—that I don't whether—you probably wouldn't even know what it is. It came in a can, it was gelatinous thing to make a hectograph. Pour It goes in a cookie sheet.

HR: Yes, the jell pad.

MA: And, and, and so then you made you're own seat work. And those children must of thought everything looked purple. [laughter] Every animal, every house, every church was purple. Anyway, that was one of things that they did. It was everything was related to everything else.

HR: So integrating the—did you work with themes or topics that?

MA: Well actually you start, you know, you started off in the first grade. It would be you're own local community where you're own address, and you're own street. And, and by the time you were in the eighth grade you would get more into, into the, the ancient world. The Greeks and the Romans, and all that came, came by the time you were in the eighth grade.

HR: So, so social studies, the social studies.

MA: Social studies there we go, yes.

HR: Okay.

MA: And of course because the, the war was on there was a lot of emphasizes on—actually my, my name was, my maiden name was Gunn, G-U-N-N, which, which is the highlands of Scotland. And my grandmother came from my the, from the north—the western side and my grandfather came from the North Sea side. But my, my mother and father were both—well my father was born in New Westminster, the same town I was born in. My mother was born in Ontario but she had a German name, her name was Buckholes and they—and, of course, they were very prejudiced about anybody with a—and she didn't—she said she didn't even speak English until she went to school and so they were definitely prejudiced about Germans. [laughter] So they got a lot of bad, bad remarks made about Germans because they had this German name. So anyway, my name Acedo is a Hispanic name, it means sour.

HR: Ah.

MA: And, and—but my husband his, his was not—they didn't speak Spanish at home. (inaudible) His mother's name was actually Worsley. But anyway she was—they didn't—so I don't speak Spanish either. The only, the only foreign language I learned, of course, was French because that's what we learned, that's what we had in high school. But I'm not, I'm not a conversationalist, I can read it. But I can't speak it. [laughter] Voila! Is about as far as I go.

HR: You started to mention—you said something about it was war time so there was emphasis on—and I'm, I'm wondering did you do any drills or any kind of thing?

MA: Well, they taught us how to do that when we were in normal school. Yes, how to do, how to do drills, I think.

HR: What, what kind of drills?

MA: Actually we didn't, we didn't have recruiters that came to school as far as I, as I can remember, I don't remember. But actually in, in Canada, they had so many fellas that wanted to sign up. In fact a lot of my high school friends signed up immediately. They even need a draft in Canada, they had so many people that wanted to sign up except for the French Canadians,

[laughter] everybody was always kind of pointing their fingers at them. [laughter] But anyway, I think they still are. In fact I met a—I have had quite a few travels and I went off to Tahiti, and I remember seeing this girl that was there and, and she was talking about being from—being a Canadian. And I said, “Oh you’re Canadian too?” And she looked at me square in the eyes and she said, “Quebecois!” And I thought, “Okay, Quebecois. You can be your own kind of Canadian if you want to be.” [laughter]

HR: [laughter] No. Yes, don’t confuse them with a Canadian.

MA: [laughter] Oh gosh.

HR: Do you remember helping the kids to collect any paper, or tin foil or anything like that for the war effort?

MA: Well actually, in New Westminster they were doing that. I can’t, I can’t remember up there in the little school. But they did used to, oh yes. They, they would—and we were—actually we could, we could even keep on knitting while we were in some of our classes if we wanted too. And actually I was pretty good at, at knitting a big long scarf and I even learned how to turn a heel, but I couldn’t do that now but I did then. But—and anyway, they did, they collected—what the heck were they collecting? Also, you had a—you couldn’t buy—when I went to high school we were quite posh. Actually wore silk stockings and then silk wasn’t available anymore and you only had a certain number of nylons that you could buy. Even shoes were rationed! They was always—and sugar. I can remember how upset my mother was and I went off to, I went off to Cumberland after, after that and this lady in the—took more of my sugar coupons and my mother thought she should ask. All those, all those coupons that we had to, had to use and, you know, people wanted to preserve things and they were short of sugar and shoes. I, I, I never felt deprived, never deprived. [laughter] We never went hungry or any of those things, but my, my mother did a lot of sewing for, for people. They sent clothes to people in the old country. Everybody always called it—the “old country” always meant Scotland or England and, and Northern Ireland. That was always the old country that you, that you sent you’re stuff off to. Yes. And we, we did collect things. What else did we collect? Good night.

HR: Did the kids, did the kids collect?

MA: Yes, we collected. What else was it?

HR: Did the kids collect coupons, war savings, stamps, or anything like that?

MA: Oh we were always promoting that but, of course. You know, it was time to buy another bond and you had also—I can, I can remember when I was in normal school and they gave us a, a student that was having trouble with their—and we were assigned a student and I had this little girl. And I was to help her with her studies. And so we had this nice talk and she said, “Oh I have

an air force daddy and I have a navy daddy and I have an army daddy,” and I’m going, “You’re mother is quite busy.” [laughter]

HR: Oh dear.

MA: But we had, we had the—the model school was, was still there but actually the class that, that I remember mostly was in, was actually in the, in the normal school. And they had—what the heck was her name? McMannest or something. Anyway, she taught this ungraded classroom that was right in the normal school. But we didn’t have—we, we had a smattering of what it would be like to be in an ungraded classroom. But not an awful lot but it still, it still is a shock to me when I got to this classroom and there was 32 children in it. I mean if you have only eight that’s easy. But 32 was a little much, and I was, and I was, you know, sort of not, not, not an outdoorsy type person. And I was afraid of everything. [laughter]

HR: You were out in the middle of nowhere, really.

MA: Out in the middle—but it’s still, I would still want to stop by there and see it again because it was beautiful streams, clear streams, and the, the, the Fraser River goes right by there, too. And of course the Fraser is where New Westminster is on, the Fraser too. But it makes the big curve.

HR: Yes, that far north. When...

MA: Actually the Columbia and the, and the Fraser are not all that far apart in their beginning stages, yes.

HR: When you said that the parents were not entirely happy about how the Christmas presents had been arranged.

MA: No.

HR: How did they, how did they communicate that to you?

MA: Well, I guess, I guess it was—well the man that I lived with was, Mr. Mellos, he was the, he was the one that I signed the—I guess I signed a contract. He was also responsible—the community was responsible for providing the building and he had donated a lot of his effort and money and gatherings of friends and so on to build the, the school so he felt responsible.

HR: I see. He felt responsible.

MA: I guess, I guess he was, I guess he was told that a lot of them weren’t, weren’t very happy with how the Christmas—and actually while I was there they also built a, a community hall. And it was—I don’t remember whether they had—the Christmas tree was in the school was in this

community hall. Oh yeah, one story I do remember about the school is that Hallowe'en they had these big sheets that you could, that you could take an eraser and rub—and there were holes in this sheet. And I made this beautiful witch against a moon, and it was for Hallowe'en on the blackboard. Coloured it all beautifully and everything. And the—I think it was a—I don't know whether it was a Catholic priest, I think it was a Catholic or the Church of England. Anyway they, they held their service and they didn't like this big witch so they—when I came to school on the, on the following Monday it was all covered up with a great big piece of, of wrapping paper because they didn't want the witch there while they were having their, their, their church service.

HR: Oh goodness.

MA: Well, you know, it doesn't go. [laughter]

HR: Wow.

MA: Some people are fussy about such things and apparently he was. Oh dear.

HR: So that—so you reached the point where you just decided it was better to leave and...

MA: Well, actually they, they, they didn't really—I wasn't, I wasn't being—I wasn't doing a good job.

HR: And did they ask you, did they ask you to leave?

MA: I could tell I wasn't doing a good job of this whole. [laughter] Also I was very—I missed my family and my, and my sister was then going to school. So anyway, and, and, and also I couldn't get the help from the inspector that I should have had.

HR: Did he ever show up?

MA: Well, you know, actually he was, he was the same, and I can't remember his name, but he was the same man that I had has an inspector in—when I went to, I went to Cumberland after, after I taught in New Westminster, I got. We were, actually we were—we could not change our, our, our jobs. We couldn't stop being school teachers because they needed those men and I think, I think that was the reason. But this man that had been in, in Kenny before I had—he'd only stayed the one year and he was—he had joined the service. But I had the same inspector. Was the one I had in—when I went to Cumberland and he gave me a very good report so, I guess, if I had seen him earlier I probably could've, I could've managed a better setup for that school. But it was, it was because there were even three little children who had never gone to school before. And all these—and I am, I am short, actually. I'm only, I'm only—I think of course I'm getting

shorter too as the years ago by now. About 5' 1 ½ or something. So some these kids are bigger than I am. [laughter]

HR: That's always a problem. [laughter]

MA: Oh gosh, but anyway, I always was—I still have dreams about it. I keep even dream about going back there and setting up a better system. And of course I made all these wonderful records and so on about, about what I did and the lady that took over for me lived up there. Her name was Mrs. Thomas and her husband was a—worked on the , on the railroad or something and she's the one that took over. And she was from my—from New Westminster, I knew her, I knew the family. So I knew who it was that was going to take over that spent the rest of the year. And then the next year, a couple of years after that, or even maybe even the next year they did hire another teacher so that they had two teachers teaching this class. They divided it into the primary group and the, and the upper group. So they, you know, they did realize that they—that it was too much of a job for one person. Especially when there was somebody in each one of the classes. And I guess you also knew that if you wanted to go to high school that there were, that there were residences. There was one in, in Prince George and, and a person, a student, that wanted to go beyond eighth grade and wanted to go to high school had go to one of these places where you could—where you roomed and board while you went to, while you went to high school.

HR: Oh wow.

MA: You did know that, didn't you?

HR: No, no I didn't know that. So...

MA: Oh yeah, I knew there was one in Prince George. I don't where else there was. But, but, you know, the schools only, only went to eighth grade.

HR: Oh that's right. So then you would have to move on.

MA: Yeah and if you, if you didn't have an auntie to live with you had, you had to—they had residences. Actually the Indians, you didn't actually really have—the Indians had their own set up.

[continued]

HR: You were saying the Indian children had their own set up.

MA: Damn right, they didn't—we didn't have, have any Native children, First Nation or whatever we want to call these days. They weren't in—they had their own schools on the reservations.

HR: Right, I see.

MA: I had a friend, actually, that, that taught in one and they would have to, actually, they would have to go—sometimes they would have to go and round these children up to bring them to go to school. They were happy on their reservations. [laughter]

HR: They didn't want to go to school. Are you, are you okay to go on for a little bit here, Marion?

MA: Oh I'm okay. I'm sitting, I am sitting here. Right. You mean you want more?

HR: One thing I just wanted to ask you about. There were just a couple of things here. When, when you boarded with the Mellos family did they speak Norwegian while you were in the house and you couldn't understand?

MA: Well, they were—they spoke. Yeah, they, well they would speak to each other in Norwegian. They were doing quite—I don't know how long they had been in the country before. But they, you see, Mr. Mellos owned the, he owned the grocery store and the post office and, you know, I never actually really even went down to the town where the, where the mill was. But there must've been quite a few houses. But it was quite a little, quite a little distance and I never—they still don't have—there's still no road from beyond a certain distance beyond Prince George going towards the east.

HR: That's right.

MA: They don't have—there is no, there is no road up there, you still have to use the plane.

HR: Right. Yeah it's so under populated there. And the other thing I was wondering there is once you got to Cumberland how long were you there and what was that like?

MA: Oh Cumberland, Cumberland I was there just—that was—I was in New Westminster in with—Richard McBride was out in Sapperton. And then when was that? Was about—the war was over, the war was over in 1945 and I think I was in—I was down on Lulu Island. I had this friend who'd say, "They have an awfully lot of funny names there for, for"—like Shuswap, people think that's a strange name and Chilliwack and then Spillimacheen and, and, and Cultus and around here they are all Spanish.

HR: Oh, yes, and up here they're all Native, yes.

MA: But no the, the, the children, the Indians, the Native children, I don't think any of us had any of them in school. Even over there in North Vancouver where a lot of my friends went to

high school. And it was a big—there was a big reservation there. None of those children went to the regular public schools they had their own school system.

HR: And so you—when you were, when you were in Cumberland there were none as well? What year was that?

MA: No. Cumberland was—I was there in, in, let's see, 1946, I guess. The war was, actually, the war was over. My mother and my sister came with me when I, when I went to Cumberland and my mother said, "You mean to say you're gonna stay here for a whole year?" She thought Cumberland was terrible. Actually, it was—people were employed in coal mining.

HR: Yes.

MA: And so was the man—the family. Actually his name was Sam Jones which is pretty Welsh. You know, the Welsh, right, a lot of Welsh people came from Wales. Came from Wales, that's really remarkable, Marion. Anyway, they came to work in that, in that coal mine, yeah.

HR: And so I, I got—I think I got the sequence wrong here, I thought you went to Cumberland directly after Penny but you...

MA: Oh no I was in New Westminster.

HR: New West first and then you went to Cumberland.

MA: That's the town I was born in. Right I taught in, in a couple of different schools in New Westminster.

HR: And then you went back to New Westminster?

MA: I went to New Westminster from, from—when I was up there in Penny I went to New Westminster and then I, I was from there I went to...

HR: Cumberland.

MA: I taught in New Westminster. Actually, I was even in, in, in South Westminster, too. I went to one of the schools there and I was there for, for, I guess, I don't know, for a year. Actually, his name was John. John Goodlad was the principal of that school out there at Goldner Road and he is—became a very well known educationalist in, in, in California.

HR: That's right I, I have his book, "A Place Called School."

MA: Oh well anyway, he was the principal out there on Goldner Road in South Westminster.

HR: Oh wow.

MA: That was a number of years ago.

HR: He has written a book called “A Place Called School” and then another one called “Romances with Schools.” And in “Romances of Schools” he talks about all of his experiences in British Columbia before going down to the states.

MA: Oh, yes. He was, he was tall and, and, and good looking but there—a number of my friends that knew him thought—Oh dear, this is pure gossip. But they thought, they thought he was a bit of a nerd. [laughter] Oh, crum. Now nerds are quite popular.

HR: Yes because of the computer revolution. Yes, they are popular.

MA: He was very good looking actually. That didn’t mean, didn’t mean he wasn’t a nerd. But he was very good looking. Always looked sharp the way he was dressed and everything. He looked like a school principal for crying out loud. [laughter] Now, now sometimes I wonder about the way some of us—Janice teaches, well I told you she taught in Victorville. Actually it is where Roy Rodgers had a museum there at one time in Victorville. But anyway, she, she said she wonders about sometimes the way some of the teachers are dressed too. That some of them don’t look very professional. [laughter]

HR: Yes. This book “Penny for your Thoughts,” who wrote it and I am wondering if I can find it somewhere here?

MA: Oh gosh. Just a minute until I go see where it works—who wrote it. Just a minute a think it was a group of people that lived in Penny. [pause]

MA: “Penny for Your Thoughts financially assisted by the Province of British Columbia through the B.C. Heritage Trust. Funding also provided by the Fraser Fort George regional district and the North Wood Pulp and Timber Ltd.” So I don’t know who.

HR: And is there a year on it Marion? Has it got a date?

MA: Let me see. “This excerpt was taken from the diary of (inaudible) who lived in Penny from 1912”— actually it does say somewhere. Oh, let’s see, “Compiled by the Penny Reunion Committee 1995, a history of Penny, British Columbia.” You’ve got a good—in Victoria there you’ve got very good, probably more than one, book, book store right there on—in downtown Victoria, which is where I think I bought the one about Mr. Lord’s B.C.

HR: Okay. I'll check that out, I'll check that out because I'm interested in, in the context of Penny as well and so I, I will check that out. I have a meeting that I have to go to so I am going to have to wrap up.

MA: You know it was a, it was an interesting time with the war but May thinks we didn't have all the materials because of the Depression. But the war helped get over the depression I think. Some people, some—haven't we had a war about every 25 years ever since I can remember. I always thought World War II was going to be the end, but it's not.

HR: That's bad isn't it? Unfortunately, yes.

MA: [laughter] Anyway yes you can call me. I'm usually here.

HR: Okay.