

## Marjorie King Interview – October 20, 2010

HR – Helen Raptis (interviewer)

MK – Marjorie King (interviewee)

MK: My name is Marjorie King. I was born Marjorie Thatcher in South Wellington in 1923.

HR: Okay, well why don't you tell me then a little bit just to start with about your own experiences with schooling at South Wellington. And is there any teachers that you recall that might have inspired you to be a teacher?

MK: Yes. I went to a very small school way out in the woods in South Wellington and that was the teacher that we had, that I had then who inspired me to be a teacher. Her name was Ethyl Ray and she was just the nicest person. She was so gentle and, and kind and she, she just encouraged everybody to, to do their best. And I just I thought, "Well I want to be like her." Now I never did get to be like her but that is why I wanted to be a teacher.

HR: And was the name of the school South Wellington?

MK: It was the Green School in South Wellington.

HR: The Green School.

MK: Yes, it was a small school up above the mine. One room school. And that's what we called it. The Green School. It had Grades 1 to 3 and the teachers taught all three grades.

HR: Oh, and then from there did you move to another school?

MK: Yes, there was another, the superior School, as they called it. It was Grade 4 to 10 and it was over closer to the highway, it was a bigger school I think it was, I think there were three rooms in it. Grades 4 and 5 [pause] and 6, maybe 4, 5, and 6. And then 7 and 8, and then 9 and 10 were in the, in the other room. But there were not too many students. There were only five us in Grade 10.

HR: Oh goodness.

MK: If I remember right. Not many there.

HR: And you remember the name of that school?

MK: South Wellington School.

HR: South Wellington. That was the superior school?

MK: Yes that's what they called it because it went to Grade 10. Many of the schools went only to Grade 8 in those days.

HR: And so where did you do your high school?

MK: Ladysmith. I went to, I went to Grade 10 in South Wellington and then we had to take a bus to South—to Ladysmith to go to high school.

HR: And was it Ladysmith High School?

MK: Ladysmith High School.

HR: Do you remember anything about that experience? The high school experience?

MK: Yes, I remember the first day that I went there I had, I had to take the bus and walk up the hill. I didn't know where I was going and I got into this building and I didn't know then where to go and I remember I heard a bell ringing and I was wandering around in the hallways and finally I saw a door and I went to—opened it and poked in and the teacher said, "Come in." But there as a roomful of students and I had never been in a classroom that had more than 20 children in it and there must have been 40, and I was terrified really. But anyway, over on the far side of the room a boy waved his hand and said, "Come over and there was a seat," there so I went over there and sat down. I'm grateful for him. [laughter]

HR: For finding you a place?

MK: Yeah, that was my first day of high school in Ladysmith. But I, I got used to it after awhile.

HR: So was that one class?

MK: Yes, Grade 11.

HR: So did Grade 11 move together or did you do everything in one room?

MK: [Pause] I think we stayed in the same room. Different teachers. Yes, that's right. We stayed in the same room if I remember right. I think we did, mm-hmm.

HR: So you did senior matriculation at...

MK: I did that, yeah. Mm-hmm.

HR: And that's when you decided—you had already known you were going to be a teacher all along?

MK: Mm-hmm. Because I had taken academic courses all the way through. I had to take extra courses. I had to take algebra, geometry, and trigonometry. Three mathematics courses. And, I remember I took chemistry, and physics, and English grammar, composition, and I forget the other one now, grammar, literature. I had to do all those.

HR: Were, were there any activities or things that you recall about high school clubs, sports, anything like that? Or because you took the bus did you have to...

MK: Well, I couldn't participate in the school activities because I had to take the bus home at 4 o'clock. But within the school there was a teacher who headed up a High Y group I remember. And I became involved in that.

HR: What's that?

MK: Well, it was—the high was high school was connected with the YWCA. It was like a, a girls group. I don't remember too much about it.

HR: A leadership or a community group?

MK: But she, she—one of the teachers invited some of us girls to participate in this group. Can't remember too much about it except that I liked it. Which kind of liked—I had belonged to the CGIT which was a church group and High Y was a similar—content was similar. It was just, you know, how to grow up and be a good citizen. Nothing to do with the church. But it was, you know, the YWCA.

HR: Yes. And what does CJIT stand for?

MK: Oh that was a church group. Canadian Girls In Training.

HR: Oh, CGIT.

MK: Mm-hmm.

HR: And so when you went down, you came to Victoria Normal School?

MK: Mm-hmm.

HR: And what year was that?

MK: 1940.

HR: '40, 1940. And did you board in Victoria?

MK: I worked for my board, yes, mm-hmm. I worked for my board in Victoria.

HR: Do you want to tell me about that?

MK: Oh [pause] well, it's alright, yes. The people had a little house, the McAllisters, on Richmond Road there. My mother gave me \$5 a month for spending money and I worked for the rest of my board. And I used to prepare the vegetables and on the weekends I did the house cleaning and in between times I used to look after the children. They had three children. And, I don't know, I just did what she asked me to do. They were very nice people and they encouraged me to invite my friends in and have group gathering and sometimes we—they would invite people in to, to talk to us and I remember one time they had, oh an artist, oh he's a well know artist, I can't remember his name now. But he was a good friend of theirs and he brought some pictures to show us and I remember being very impressed because he explained to us how to interpret art as he did it. Oh I wish I could remember his name now.

HR: Was he a local artist?

MK: Yes, yes he was. He's well know but I can't remember his name right now.

HR: That's okay.

MK: But they were nice people.

HR: And so were you in walking distance?

MK: Oh yes, yes.

HR: So you'd walk up the hill to school every day. What do you remember about normal school? What stands out for you?

MK: [pause] Well, I remember Miss Hinton who was our phys. ed. teacher. She was a remarkable young woman. And she taught us physical education but somehow or another she just floated around the gym and she never had a hair out of place. I don't know how she did it. [laughter] We, we used to be quite impressed with her because she was so, she was good, but (inaudible). This is what we girls used to say, "She just didn't ever have a hair out of place." [laughter] But I don't know...

HR: Do you remember some of the other classes that you took? Do any of them stand out?

MK: Yes, I remember Dr. Anderson, she was our English teacher. And she taught, oh and she taught psychology and I can still remember her saying, “Well incidental learning is becoming the mode these days but just make sure it doesn’t get to become accidental.”

HR: Oh [laughter] (phone rings) Would you like to get the phone?

MK: No, I can leave it.

HR: Okay.

MK: I remember that.

HR: She features in a lot of peoples recollections and also in Vern Storey’s book. (inaudible)

MK: Oh yeah. Oh and then there was the Mrs. Reese Burns was our speech education woman. And she was, oh she was, she was one of the teachers, one of the teachers that you felt you would get close to. You know, she was—the rest of them were teachers and we kinda felt like keeping our distance.

HR: I see.

MK: But she was, she seemed a warm kind of person, she was very warm. And I remember her standing in front of us and patting us and saying, “Breathe girls, breathe.” [laughter] And, and then, and then she always said, “And don’t tell me you’re nervous. Stop thinking about yourself. Straighten your seams.” You know, in those days our stockings had seams up the back, you wouldn’t know about that. But, “Straighten your seams and comb your hair before you leave home and then when you have something to say think about what you’re going to say, don’t think about yourself.”

HR: Oh, that’s very good advice.

MK: Well, this was the thing that she, she told us. And I thought that was good advice as you say. And let’s see, who else was there? Dr. Denton was the principle. And he was, I’m sure he knew his business. And, who else was there. Mr. Lewis he was a nice—he was a good leader.

HR: I’m just going to stop. [laughter] Just for my own comprehension.

MK: Well you can, you can quote that if you want to. It’s kind of an interesting...

HR: Getting the money from him? So you, you went to him for money? Do you want to tell the story again? You want to?

MK: Well, I can if you like. I was on the recreation committee or whatever you want to call it and we were going to have a dance and we felt that we needed some money. I can't remember what for but we needed something. Anyway, I went to Dr. Denton and he didn't think that we were responsible enough to have \$10 but I said to him, "Well, I don't understand how we can be responsible enough to go into the community and teach children and order supplies and so on and yet you don't think we can have \$10." And he gave it to me.

HR: Oh good.

MK: So, I don't know [laughter].

HR: Good for you. He couldn't deny it after that argument I think.

MK: Well, I thought it was a good argument. Well I mean it was...

HR: Okay. So, so you were part of the entertainment or the recreation?

MK: Well, I wasn't part of the entertainment, I was on the committee.

HR: The committee, alright. The recreation and entertainment committee.

MK: I suppose, mm-hmm.

HR: And were there a lot of activities like that? When I look back through AnEcho, the, the yearbook or the newsletters as well there's lots of activities going on at the normal school. Were you a part of any of those?

MK: Well I was a part of everything that was going on. I, I was that kind of a person. I took the First Aid course, I took—I danced in the program that was—she, Miss, Miss Hinton chose eight of us to do a Spanish waltz at one of the things one time and I felt so lucky she had chose me to be one of them.

HR: Oh yeah.

MK: And it was kind of neat. There were only 10, or no, maybe there were 20, I forget now, boys in the school. No, there weren't 20. Not too many. Anyway, there were eight, eight boys and eight girls and we did the Spanish waltz and it was really quite fun. I loved it.

HR: Was this at one of the assemblies?

MK: Mm-hmm. Oh at one of the, one of the functions. I can't remember what it was for. But periodically they would—we would be invited to the castle, to Craigdarroch. It was a bit of, a

little bit of back and forth there. But Craigdarroch people always though they were a little above us.

HR: That was the Vic College location?

MK: Mm-hmm, yeah, mm-hmm. But I can't remember too much about—I had to work for my board so I had to be home to do things. So...

HR: So you didn't spend a lot of time on the activities?

MK: No I was—oh I remember, yeah, well I played basketball for a little bit. [pause] No, I can't remember. Oh, one thing that's kind of amusing I suppose, we had Mrs. Murphy was our home ec. teacher and she was a fine woman but very proper. And she cautioned us about wearing lipstick and, and, and going out with boys and anything like that, and it was kind of interesting. Most of us didn't wear lipstick anyways. But anyway, we thought, "Nuts to her." [laughter] So we bought lipstick and we wore it. The night that we—"Gone With the Wind" was the movie that turned up at that time. And some of us thought, "Oh we've just got to see this movie." I think it was "Gone With the Wind". And we put our lipstick on and we went to the movie and there were four of us, four of us girls and we slid into the movie because we didn't want anybody to see us. It was a very wicked thing to be doing, really, you know. And the thing that really fixed us, that really undid us completely was after—partway through the theatre, the movie, we heard some guffaws up behind us and some of the boys from the school were there also. [laughter]

HR: Oh, and then you were in your lipstick. [laughter]

MK: But those were the days. So you see things are different now.

HR: Oh yes, yeah.

MK: But, I mean we were, we were really quite good we were good girls. But we just thought we were just going to do that. See if the world would come to an end and it didn't. [laughter]

HR: So you were, you were there until '41? And then where did you find your first teaching job and how did that come about?

MK: Well, the teacher who was at Cassidy, near where I lived near Nanaimo had, unknown to school board, got married at Christmas time. And came May, she—or April, she found she was pregnant and she had to leave the school because it was no-no. And she knew me. I mean, she knew about me. That I was a local girl who was going to—who was taking teaching and so she asked, she asked me if I would come and finish out her term. So I—and you see, that was when we were through here and we went out to do a practicum. So that was how I got to Cassidy School.

HR: So is that where you did your practicum?

MK: That's where I did my practicum and I was alone. You know, she was gone.

HR: She was gone.

MK: She was gone. And I had eight grades to handle.

HR: That's not a practicum [laughter]. That's full blown teaching!

MK: That's a sentence. [laughter] But no—she had—the children were good. I mean she had—well, she was a good teacher and, and she had most of the work, the year end reports done. I just had to do the attendance and I forget what else now. But anyway, I finished the term and then the school board asked me if I would come back and teach full time the next year.

HR: And she remained?

MK: Oh she was gone. She was married. Married women couldn't teach.

HR: Couldn't teach.

MK: No.

HR: So you stayed there then?

MK: Mm-hmm.

HR: How long did you stay at that school?

MK: Well I was just there for the 1 year because they closed the school. There weren't enough students. There were only 15 I think. Fourteen or fifteen students.

HR: So from '41 to '42. And then they closed it. Do you remember anything about that school aside from the range of kids you had? Do you remember anything you did or...

MK: Oh, well, yes. I remember I didn't...

HR: The curriculum?

MK: Well I guess one of the things that's really—one of the things that in teaching—I would, I was quite a demanding teacher. I demanded performance from the children. So I wasn't all that nice all the time, you know. But the year I taught the Grade 1 there, there was a little girl in

Grade 1, came to school, there were just two children in Grade 1 I think. I've got a picture of them in there. But she was so shy she was just frightened of her own shadow and I remember just being so pleased because I used to—there were two rooms in the school and she wouldn't say a word. Like all the children were in one classroom but then there was another empty room. And anyway to cut a long story short I used to take her by herself into the other room, put the other children to work, take her by herself to the other room, and teach her to read. Try to teach her to read. And this was the thing she used to sit on my knee and read her book, you know. And I did the best I could. And I remember the day that she first was able to read by herself and I remember going back into the classroom and telling the other children, can't remember the child's name now, but telling them that she had learned how to read and that she had a little story that she wanted to read to them. So I remember saying to them, "Now you know it's been hard for her so I want you to pay real attention and when she gets finished reading her, her little bit I want you to clap so she'll feel good." And I went back and got her and brought her out and stood her in front of the classroom with her book and stood right beside her and she read her thing and the children clapped and I think it was the most wonderful part of my whole teaching career. To teach that child to read. I don't have no idea what happened to her afterwards or anything like that but I, I remember that.

HR: She got off to a good start.

MK: Well I, I was just so pleased with her. It was such a thrill to me to have this child who had been so shy.

HR: Come out.

MK: Come out and be able to do this. So...

HR: Oh I can relate to that. I was terribly shy.

MK: Is that right?

HR: My first—well, in kindergarten, because there was kindergarten at that point, by the third report the teacher said, "Helen spoke to me." [laughter] I initiated the conversation so I can relate to this little girl. That must have been very, very difficult for her.

MK: Yeah.

HR: To say it in front of the whole class.

MK: Mm-hmm, yes.

HR: And do, succeed at it.

MK: Yes, oh I can't...

HR: What range of grades did you have?

MK: Eight grades.

HR: All eight?

MK: Mm-hmm.

HR: And how many—do you remember how many children?

MK: Oh, about 15 I think. I know there was only one in Grade 4 because I, I didn't do, I didn't do justice to that boy. He was a little boy. Because I used to try to include him in the Grade 3s or the Grade 5s because I couldn't—I just didn't seem to be able to. He had the Grade 4 reader, he did that. But I don't think I did too well by him. And I remember—it's funny, I've had nightmares about it the odd time because I remember trying to teach a grammar lesson to Grade 8s, I guess. And one of the girls—I think there were only two girls in Grade 8, two or three. Anyway, she just couldn't get the hang of participles. And I remember I kept her after school, which we did in those days, you know. To do corrections and things you kept the children after school until they got it done right. But I remember keeping her after school and trying to explain to her what—I think it was participles that we were doing in grammar. And I was trying and trying and trying to explain to her and she was trying to do it and then I remember seeing her start to cry and I just felt so terrible and I remember oh I said, "Oh Marie, you're tired, I'm sorry, you better go home." But I felt what a mean teacher I was being to keep the kid doing this. But, you know, I wasn't—I didn't, I didn't think I was being mean to her. I thought I was trying to teach her. But anyways she went home.

HR: Did she ever get it? Did she ever get them?

MK: Oh I can't remember now. I guess she did because she passed.

HR: She passed. [laughter]

MK: They all passed.

HR: Maybe you can work on my son.

MK: Does he have trouble with participles?

HR: He does. He always, he always messes them up no matter how many times I tell him. He always...

MK: Is that right?

HR: Yeah, I don't know, maybe it's his age.

MK: How old is he?

HR: He's 12.

MK: Twelve. Well, yeah, well I don't know.

HR: He has no problem writing them but speaking them.

MK: Is that right?

HR: Yeah.

MK: Well, that's the way things go.

HR: Yeah, I guess everyone develops at different...

MK: Well, that's it. Anyway, I don't remember the rest of the time, I just did my thing. I did remember the inspector coming and everything was okay and I remember I had a, a Valentines party for the parents in, in, in December. And I don't know where in the world I got them but I had, I had found some pussy willows to put on the tables.

HR: In December?

MK: No, February.

HR: February.

MK: February. Found some pussy willows and I was so pleased with those pussy willows. We had a tea party of some sort, I can't remember. The only thing I remember about it is the pussy willows but it was good and the mothers came, you know. Oh and we had the—regularly there were Christmas concerts and they had been a tradition in there so I had to put on a Christmas concert with the children and I remember teaching them—oh, I made out a program for a Christmas concert. You know, some of the Christmas carols and skits and I forget all now what was to be done. But I remember one of the men on the school board asked me if I needed some help and I said, I remember saying, “Oh I don't think so, I've got it all organized and I think it will be all right.” And I had it, I thought I did too. The thing that really blew me was when the night came for it. I had everything organized, the children to do what they were supposed to do and it suddenly hit me that this man for years had been the, the MC for Christmas concerts.

HR: Oh no. [laughter]

MK: And he came to me and said could he say a few words? Well I said, “You know, yes of course.” And I can still remember him getting—going up the front of this classroom in the school or the stage or where we had—in the other room and saying, “Well, we have a new system now and I’m not allowed on the stage.”

HR: Oh. [laughter]

MK: I nearly died.

HR: How did people react?

MK: Oh, everybody laughed. Oh, the people were very nice to me. They were very good to me.

HR: I’ve heard so many different stories about the Christmas thing.

MK: Is that right?

HR: Yeah. So many people said it was a really big thing.

MK: Oh yes.

HR: In some communities it was less big than in others but in some cases people, people didn’t realize how important it was to the community and there were a few situations that the teachers said, “Oh I really messed it up. I didn’t do this, this, and this.”

MK: Oh yeah. Well, it was a good concert. They—the people were very kind to me. They said anyway. Haven’t a clue—I don’t remember now what I did at all. But the people were very kind about it. That’s the thing I remember though, that this man stood up and said, “I’m not allowed on the stage.”

HR: And he was one of the trustees from the board?

MK: Yeah, mm-hmm. I think he was ribbing me more than anything else, you know, but I was so embarrassed.

HR: How did you find out that he was normally the MC?

MK: He said it.

HR: Oh, he said it there. I see.

MK: Yeah. That was his first time. And then sometime later somebody told me that, that it had not necessarily been just a school concert it had been a kind of community concert.

HR: Oh I see.

MK: But they didn't tell me that. They just told me that, like, the school board said, "You know, you will be having a Christmas concert." And from our training at normal school I thought, "Well, it's the teacher's job to put on the concert." So I put on the concert but I didn't include any of the...

HR: Community members.

MK: The community members. I didn't know I was supposed to and nobody told me. [laughter] But anyway, that's the way it went.

HR: Yeah, that's interesting. I think the Christmas concert in itself is worthy of a, of an article, "Remembering the Christmas Concert." I think it would be very informative.

MK: Well, as I say I don't remember the content of it at all. Don't remember.

HR: But there was singing and...

MK: Oh yeah, singing and skits and little—I don't remember. I just know it was a Christmas concert with singing and skits and whatever you did a Christmas concerts. Now, I can't—I don't remember other than, than training the children when they were to come on this, on the platform. I don't think we had a stage, I think they must have put a little stage at the front because I remember Mr. Buckley sitting, standing a little above the rest of us. Can't remember.

HR: Was there a piano? Do you remember if they were accompanied?

MK: Yes, yes, there was a, yes there was a piano. Because I could play the piano with one finger. One finger. I could just pick out, I could just pick out a tune.

HR: Did you learn that at normal school or had you...

MK: No, no my sister had piano lessons and I just picked it up from her.

HR: I see.

MK: And that reminds me, speaking of that, back to the normal school. Mr. Wicket was our music teacher. You heard of him? We used to call him Daddy Wicket.

HR: Daddy Wicket?

MK: Yeah. And I can remember him teaching us “The Ash Grove” and the poor man I think he aged years trying to teach us. There were two groups in the normal school for music. Those students who had some previous music experience and the rest of us who were not musical at all. And he as trying to teach us a lovely “Ash Grove.” Oh poor man. But anyway, we, we struggled along. [laughter]

HR: Do you—at the time that you were both at the normal school and your first teaching the war was on.

MK: Yes.

HR: And I’ve just brought a few things that a couple of other people have mentioned. For example, they recalled a lot of propaganda around, you know, joining up and women in the force and the kids had these war savings passbooks and things like that. Do you recall any of this from when you were either at normal school or teaching?

MK: No, I don’t remember—at normal school the boys, I’ve got a picture, I think it’s in there, the boys and their drill. They boys had a drill. And I think there was a First Aid course offered for those who wanted to take it. But...

HR: You didn’t? You didn’t take it?

MK: Yes, well yes. I had had, had a lot of First Aid in mine-rescue because I had been brought up in a mining community and at home before I ever came to normal school I had done a lot of First Aid from junior through senior. So I had had quite a lot so I thought I might as well do the one more and I got another certificate. The high level sort of thing, you know. But, at normal school I don’t remember too much. See the war had just broken out and communication wasn’t as good then as it is now but I don’t remember, I can’t remember seeing this, this poster. These must have been from later during the war, later on. And I know, later on I was teaching in New Westminster and the, the war savings people came around wanting us to buy war savings certificate and you know when you’re getting \$760 a year, or \$780 was it, You don’t have a lot of money left over for buying war savings certificates. And I remember saying to the man, “If I ever get over \$1000 a year I’ll be glad to buy war savings certificates.” And he was quite appalled because he had no idea how poorly we were paid. But somewhere in there no—this is a grey area in my head, but I think later on in the war we—there was a compulsory war savings deduction from our salaries.

HR: From your salaries?

MK: Has anyone else said that?

HR: No one has mentioned that, no.

MK: Well, I don't think I made it up.

HR: I could find it out, though.

MK: But you could find out from somebody because it's in my head that there was \$20.

HR: Deducted.

MK: Deducted from something.

HR: I can—through the annual reports if anything like that occurred then it would have been—if it was province wide it would have been mentioned in the annual reports or in the statutes and in the legislation. I can check those. It may have been just your school if that's the case then it wouldn't be in those.

MK: Well, this, I was teaching at Coquitlam. Not in New West, in ,Coquitlam. And this is, it's during that time that it's in my head that it started. That would have been about 1943 or four I guess. And then I know I taught in Vancouver again later. Oh no the war was over when I taught in Vancouver.

HR: So when, when the fellows came around for the war saving, the bonds and things, was that through the school? Or where did they come around to?

MK: They came to the staff room.

HR: To the staff room?

MK: At the school.

HR: So they came to the teachers but not the children?

MK: Not the children, no.

HR: Okay, so maybe I can just get in—so in 1940 to '41 you were at the...

MK: Normal school. And that was the last year that normal school was in the Young Building.

HR: Then it went down.

MK: The war took it, the army took it over after that.

HR: As a hospital?

MK: Mm-hmm.

HR: Then '41 to '42 you were at Cassidy?

MK: Mm-hmm.

HR: Was it Cassidy School? The Green School?

MK: No, no.

HR: No. Cassidy School. The Green School was when you attended.

MK: Yeah when I went to school.

HR: And then 1942 to '43, is that when...

MK: Ladysmith.

HR: Oh Ladysmith. Again at an elementary?

MK: Mm-hmm Grade 2.

HR: So Ladysmith Elementary, Grade 2. Oh, so it was a graded school?

MK: Mm-hmm.

HR: And after that, '43 to '44 was that Coquitlam?

MK: Yes. It'd be until '40, I was there from '43 until '46 I guess. Maybe '45. I can't remember now, '46 or '45, '45. I think I was there 3 years.

HR: Coquitlam Elementary?

MK: Mm-hmm.

HR: And did you have a grade as well or all aged kids.

MK: Oh no, that was a bigger school. It was Grade—I had Grade 2 one year and I had Grade 4 another year.

HR: So throughout all of this time with the kids you don't remember any war savings?

MK: No.

HR: Collecting scrap metal?

MK: No.

HR: Do you remember any air raid drills? Sort of ducking and covering?

MK: Oh yes, oh yes, oh yes. I remember in Ladysmith when the sirens, the sirens would go off and we had to take the children out of the classroom and I can remember taking them up and showing them—they had to put their heads down with their hands over the back of their heads near the ground or something like that. And I remember, particularly, going up a pathway outside of the Ladysmith school and a snake turned out, turned up on the—a little garter snake on the, on the pathway and I can still hear the little girls screaming. And, and I didn't like snakes either. But I thought, "I'm the teacher, I can't be scared." I remember I picked the little girl up and the snake took off, you know. But I can still remember this running through my head, "I'm the teacher, I can't be scared." [laughter] But yes, we had to take the children out.

HR: So the sirens would ring through the town?

MK: Oh yes. Strange, you know, I can't remember sirens in Coquitlam. They must have done. But, you see, the island was more conscious of a Japanese invasion than the mainland was. So it may be—I don't remember, I just remember the sirens in Ladysmith. But there might have been in the other, in Coquitlam.

HR: And there was quite a bit going on in Nanaimo I think so maybe that had something to go with it's proximity, Ladysmith's proximity to Nanaimo. They had...

MK: Oh, the army camp.

HR: Yeah.

MK: Oh, well I don't know but I know my dad was in the reserve army I suppose. I don't think it was called the—but he was in the reserves and they heard rumours about Japanese—a balloon landing on Mount Sicker and about the submarine off the coast but they were just rumours in those days. You know, there wasn't the communication. Since, since then the information has come out, you know, we've heard—we know what it was. But at that time it was just rumours that was kind of around. But, you know, those of us who were busy teaching we just—you know, my job was to teach and I wasn't—well in New Westminster I joined the women's ambulance corps. I belonged to the women's ambulance corps in New Westminster.

HR: In your spare time or weekends?

MK: Oh in my spare time. Well, you know, I was a teacher but that was what I did.

HR: On weekends?

MK: Well whenever it was, I don't remember now.

HR: So did you roll bandages or things like that for the ambulance corps?

MK: Oh well we took, we took First Aid again and home nursing (phone rings) and well I don't remember, I don't remember what else now.

HR: Yeah that's fine. That's funny a lot of people remember the drills but that's about all. For many they said the same thing that, you know, it was just not—there was so much else to take care of with the reading and writing and everything else and it was a minor part of...

MK: Did our job, you know. Well, you know, it was a full time job to be teaching.

HR: More than. [laughter]

MK: Well, I mean, in those days too we didn't sort of teach from 9:00 'till 3:00. I mean, I rarely got home from school until 5 o'clock because I did all the blackboard work and, and marking books and all the things that had to be done and corrections. And went to school in the morning maybe by 8:30 and, and then I often worked at night. You know, I used to take books home, home from school at night to mark and prepare my lessons for the next day. So, I mean, we didn't—I think maybe in those days, if you're teaching eight grades you can't knock off at 3 o'clock and go home.

HR: No, definitely not. Lots of preparation and marking.

MK: Yes.

HR: When, when you were at the various schools where did you live? Did you live in a teacherage or did you board?

MK: Oh for—when I taught at Cassidy and Ladysmith I lived at home. And I used to walk to Cassidy.

HR: Oh my gosh.

MK: Well, I started to walk but as time went by the baker used to go down there and he used to pick me up and give me a ride. And if he didn't the telephone fellows did.

HR: What time would that have been in the morning?

MK: Well I don't—well I guess I left home about 7:30, I don't remember now. But I, I walked partway and—but after a bit I got a ride. And then when I taught in Ladysmith I took the bus, Island Coach Lines. It was the public, you know, the school—not a school bus but the public bus. And then when I taught in New—in Coquitlam, the first year that I was there I boarded with some army wives. Their, their husbands were away. I boarded with an army wife. Nice lady, nice girl. She had a little girl. And then I met some other girls who were teaching in the area the next year and they asked me to come and live with them. So we rented a—rented some rooms in a house and we did our own house keeping and did our own thing.

HR: Oh I see.

MK: So, you know, and then we took the bus. I took the bus every morning out to Coquitlam to school when we lived in New Westminster.

HR: Oh so that's where you lived and then you—that's still quite a long bus ride to go from...

MK: Well now remember it wasn't Port Coquitlam it was just the district of Coquitlam, just above Fraser Mills.

HR: Oh okay.

MK: So, like, the first year that I was there I taught—I lived right there in Coquitlam quite near the school. That's when I boarded with the army wives. But then when I lived with my friends we lived in New Westminster and we took the bus. But I think it might have been a half and hour. I forget now. We were right out North Road. But it wasn't way out in Port Coquitlam. It was just Coquitlam district.

HR: Okay. And do you remember the, the schools themselves—in any of the three schools, did you have the materials you needed? Would you say they were pretty well resourced? Any shortages?

MK: Oh I don't remember being short of anything that I needed but then I didn't know what else might be available. If there was something else I wanted to do. But I think I had everything that I needed as far as I can remember.

HR: All the books, all the papers.

MK: The readers and books, and everything I think.

HR: Paper, chalk, it was...

MK: Yes, I think so. The one thing I do remember when I was teaching in Vancouver—was it Vancouver? No, in Kelowna when I was teaching they build a brand new school and for some strange reason they put the blackboards 3 feet above the floor for little—for Grade 2s. Well, I mean, the children couldn't reach the blackboard. We used to send children to the blackboard to write. And I remember saying, "Why in the world, these blackboards are far too high for the children." This brand new school that they had, they had done that. I don't remember whether they lowered them or not. I don't remember, maybe they did. I just, I just remember being distressed by that. The blackboards were far too high.

HR: So after the war ended did you go to Kelowna after that? Or where did you teach after the—after Coquitlam?

MK: Well, after Coquitlam—and you can use your judgement. The, the last year I taught in Coquitlam one of the teachers got sick, the one that taught phys. ed. and the principle was an elderly woman, nice lady, but she was an elderly woman and she said, "Marge, do you think you can handle the phys. ed. for the school?" So I said, "Oh yeah, sure, you know." And then next thing I knew something went haywire with the music department and Marge got doing music, Marge who doesn't know anything about music. So I was doing that and the thing that really undid me was that I was in a classroom, an "L" shaped classroom in the basement of the school. And it had tables and chairs rather than desks and the blackboard went all across here and, and I had an oil stove over near the wall and every time the wind blew the soot would come out of that oil stove and land all over the place. And it was a dirty thing, and there was a high school class above me and every 40 minutes they changed classes and they thundered down the stairs and went to their building which was across the yard. So it was, it was a, a nerve shaking experience. I mean...

HR: That's where you did the music? In this—an "L" shaped classroom?

MK: Well it as in the basement, you see, because the school had been expanded and it was just kind of a makeshift room. You know, it was, it was about, it was about like, like this, the blackboard was across here and the desks were here but the blackboard went over to here, and maybe it was—there were no desks in here but then the door was out there into the basement. And this is where the stove was and the soot would come out and fly out all over the place and the students thundered down the stairs, thundered. And I say thundered because above me, you see, every time the class changed there'd be all the scraping of chairs when students got up and so on, and it just got—it was just too much. And, and I was teaching my own classes besides.

HR: In addition to the PE and the music?

MK: Oh of course, oh yes. I had—it was Grade 4.

HR: So who took your class when you did the PE and music?

MK: There were only four rooms in the school and I think the, the Grade 1 teacher did her own and I think all the rest of the classes did it together.

HR: Oh my gosh.

MK: I can't remember now. I can't remember. And, and that year was the end of the war and there was a big celebration in town, and we did a victory, there was a victory—remember we used to do the May Pole and different things so I taught the May Pole to two groups and, and another group did a routine to La Cucaracha, a Spanish dance I taught them. And then there was another was another group, a victory drill. There were three schools in Coquitlam and we all did the same thing at the, at the May Day parade in town. We all did the same thing. We did the May Pole, we did the La Cucaracha, and we did the victory drill. And this victory drill was a matter of marching the children through the words of victory. Actually went to a “V” and we marched them into an “I”. Marched them, I'd get them all lined up and it ended up there was “Victory” on the thing. And that was some job. And we had music to go with it. And to get those boys to march to the music and stay in line was some job. But anyway, so anyway I had to quit teaching. And the doctor said, “No, it's too much for you.” So I—but I had to earn a living so I had to—I took some night school courses and I learned to type a bit and a little bit of book keeping. And I worked at Oxford Motors as an assistant bookkeeper.

HR: In Coquitlam?

MK: No, no in Vancouver.

HR: Oh in Vancouver.

MK: Cause my friend asked me to come and live with her in Vancouver. The one I'd been living with in New Westminster 'cause she was moving to New Westminster—to Vancouver. She wanted me to come with her and I said, “But I'm not going to be—I won't be teaching but I'll come.” But I had to earn a living, you know, so I did that. And somewhere in that period—oh yeah, I forgot about him. I met a fellow and I thought I was going to marry him and when—that was when I left New Westminster, I really left. I told them I was going to get married. But then I changed my mind, decided not to marry him. And then I was working or whatever and then I met Maury and decided I was going to marry him, or he decided I'm not sure. [laughter] But then having worked that year in, in doing bookkeeping and such my line is that during that year I learned that the world operates on the efforts of people who work at about half speed. So I was—I went back to teaching. I think I was a far better teacher than I had been before because I wasn't—I was able to feel that a child had done his best even if it wasn't as much as I wanted him to

do. I don't know how you measure that but that was my theory. So I was able to, to, to be a little kinder, maybe, to the children. Wasn't quite as demanding. I'd say, "Well as long as you've done your best that's fine. That's good. But try to do better next time." That would be my line, you know. So I went back to teaching and I taught in Vancouver for...

HR: So that was '46?

MK: '46, '47 yeah, mm-hmm. And, no, until '48. I taught 2 years in Vancouver.

HR: Do you remember where that was, the school?

MK: Yes, that one school—wait a minute now. [pause] It's on the tip of my tongue.

HR: That's alright, if we talk about something else it will pop up.

MK: One of the schools, the last year I taught at Mount Pleasant which was out near Mount MacKenzie. But up in Shaughnessy wasn't—a well known school in the Shaughnessy district. I taught there and the thing was that—and I guess I, I can't remember whether I—maybe I taught at—yeah, I think I taught at Mount Pleasant the first year and then I got married and left the school at the end of April because I got married in May and you just didn't stay on teaching. My husband was going to work in the interior. But when I came back, because he had one more year at university, but when I came back they called and asked me if I would go to this school. The was teacher was, I don't know, away. Anyway, it was middle of September and they called and asked me if I could come and ,teach there so I did. And that's the one where I remember one little boy there. He was the son of well known Vancouver people whom I, I hadn't better mention. But they were very well known people and he was being raised by his grandmother for some reason. Brilliant little, brilliant little boy but really precocious. But he didn't know how to play. He just didn't know how to play. He was so serious. And he told me they'd been to the opera and this sort of thing, you know. And I remember his grandmother came to me at some point I forget what it was, teacher's day or visitor's day or something, and I remember saying to her, "You know, I think it would be nice if you let him learn how to play." Because he was such as serious little boy. And sadly he went on and he was killed in, in California. He was at Stanford some years later and he was killed in a car accident there and his family started up that Mothers Against Drunk Drivers in Vancouver. So that was—but I remember feeling he was a precocious child but he did not know how to play so he didn't fit in with the other children too well. He'd come to school with, like, short pants and a collar and a shirt and tie, you know, dressed.

HR: Not for playing.

MK: No, no. But I don't remember, I don't remember if he ever learned how to play or not but I remember saying to his mother or grandmother, whoever it was, that it would be nice if they let him learn how to play.

HR: Mm-hmm. Yeah that's very sad. Maybe he was an only child and didn't have a lot of interaction.

MK: Yes he was. He was an only child and his family were so busy doing stuff that there were no other small, no other children in the family so his life was with adults all the time and they were very much into the culture of the community. And that sort of thing, you know. But anyway, that's the way things go. I remember him specifically. And I remember one other little boy. When—the first day of school his mother brought him to school and she started to tell me how brilliant he was. How—Grade 2, Grade 2 yeah. He was brilliant and she...

[continued]

MK: And I remember he was quite—I remember saying to her, “Well I'm sure I'll find out.” You know, but as time went by I found that he, he was an only child and quite spoiled. He used to come to school with a collar and tie and wear a hat, like, a little man's little hat and almost with a suit on, you know. And I remember one time one of the children bashed his hat and I was tempted to say, “Good.” [laughter] But I didn't. But I know that he—I don't know, one time I told him to do whatever it was, either stand up or sit down or whatever and I can still see him standing up beside his desk and saying, “I don't have to do that, my mommy says, my mommy says that I don't have to.” Whatever it was. And I remember I went over and put him down in his chair and said, “When you're here you do what I say.” [laughter] But he pinched a little girl in the class—in the cloakroom one time and she was crying, he made quite a mark on her leg, wherever it was—oh on her harm. And she came to me crying and she said, “Terry pinched me.” And so I called Terry over and I pinched him and I said, “Now, you know, you don't do that, you're, you're”—I didn't hurt him, it was just a little—but I scolded him and told him he wasn't to do that. Well the next morning when I came to school the principle was sitting in my classroom and he said, “What happened with Terry yesterday?” And I said, “What, what's going on?” Well he said, “I've had a call from the superintendent complaining about you.” And so I told him what happened. Oh, he said, “People. And some mothers,” well he said, “I guess the best thing I can say to you is if he misbehaves or if he needs some attention another time you better bring him to the office.” So I can't remember what it was now but there was some time later he, he misbehaved in some way and I think that was when he sassed me back and told me he didn't have to do whatever it was so I remember I said “Well then I guess you'll have to go to the office.” So he went to the office and the principle said, “Well you, you must be obedient, you're not to talk back.” Whatever it was, and he said, “I'm afraid you'll have to be strapped.” In those days they used the strap. And he said, “And we'll have your mother come to see,” you know. And so the next, he was to be strapped at recess the next day which I think is a terrible thing, but anyway. In my thinking is deal with situation at the time and get it over with. But anyway, the next day recess time came and he, he—I was to take him to the office and—what a silly thing, you know, but anyway, I remember the principle saying that he'd had a phone call from his mother to the effect that she couldn't come because—I can't remember whether she was pregnant of something, she couldn't come. But anyway the principle said stand at the front of the

principle's desk and he said, "Have you anything to say for yourself?" And he said, "Yes, Mommy said I'm to tell you that I'm a good boy and you shouldn't strap me because if you strap me that will make me a bad boy." And I can still see Mr. I remember his name but I'm keeping that off of the table because of the strap saying, "Well we'll take our chance on that." [laughter] And he gave him a couple of whacks. But, you know, it was sad. Just a poor little kid. So there you go.

HR: Did he iron out? Or did he keep on?

MK: Oh he, I think he settled down. I don't remember. He didn't need the strap anymore anyway. But I think he, I think he just melded with the rest, I don't remember. I mean, different children had different personalities and had different ways of responding to "sit down" or "stand up" or whatever it was they were supposed to do. Like in those days if the children had something to say they were to stand up beside their desks. They didn't sit in their desks and talk. When they read or said anything they stood up beside their desk and answered your question, whatever it was. That was the rule.

HR: Out of respect, yeah.

MK: That was the rule. That was the way classrooms functioned in those days, everybody did it, you know. The children marched into the classroom in the morning and stood beside their desks and waited to be told to sit down after whatever we did, I forget now, The Lord's Prayer and whatever. I know I used to have a—oh it was when I taught Grade 7, I guess. Every week I'd have an expression I used to put up on the blackboard, some motive, something good that you were supposed to do and I used to have them memorize it. They read it every morning to memorize it and the next week they got a new one. They probably forget all about them. I can't even remember now. Oh I remember some of them but. I might remember some, but...

HR: Did you ever feel uncomfortable with any of the rules, the standing up or the strapping or anything like that or was that just a part of the system?

MK: It's was all a part of the system, I didn't ever—no, there wasn't that much strapping. There was some, but I'm not convinced that any of the strapping that I ever saw done did any child any harm. They learned, they learned to stay in line and that was required in our day. Children were to be respectful and to obey. It wasn't—but I'm not aware of—I don't think any of them were ever damaged too much by being—by having the strap in what I saw. And some teachers I think—well, I don't know, I didn't see anything that was abusive.

HR: Right, yes. So when did you retire? When did you leave teaching?

MK: Oh well, I just taught that 1 year after I was married. One year in Vancouver after I was married, I guess. And...

HR: In Kelowna, did you teach in Kelowna?

MK: I didn't. Then we moved to, to Okanagan Falls and I did a little substituting there a couple of times. But then we moved to Kelowna and I had three children and, and somewhere when Terry was about 4 or 5 I think I started to do substitute teaching. And I subbed for quite a few years there. And then about 1960 or so I went back full time for 1 year or 2 years, I forget now. Oh, half time. And then we moved to Victoria in 1966 and I did a lot of subbing in Victoria but I didn't ever go back full time. And I quit sometime in the late '70s, I think, or something because I found that classrooms were not the way I thought they ought to be. I found I was spending more time keeping the children in the way I expected them to be than teaching. And as a substitute, you know, they're the lowest form of life on earth [laughter] in the eyes of students.

HR: It's hard to come into somebody else's classroom.

MK: Yeah. But you see the thing was that I—I know I can remember one time, once one student—I was in the junior high quite a lot here and they were—some of them were pretty sassy. And I remember saying—there had been quite an altercation between me and this girl and I remember saying, “Well, there isn't room for both of us in this classroom if you are going to behave that way and I'm getting paid so guess who is going?” [laughter] And she went to the office. Well, I just wasn't going to put up with any..

HR: Yeah, that's good. There's so much today that kids get away with.

MK: Oh, I wouldn't, I wouldn't, I wouldn't last 10 minutes in a classroom.

HR: It's really tough.