Side 2 (Thelma Milne interviewing ALMA HANSON)

T Hello, Alma, I'm happy to be here with you today. We can talk about some of the things that you remember from your lifetime and we will discuss this and have it typed up and put in the archives of the museum here in Cardston. I'm going to ask you some questions. First, I'm going to say, "This is Thelma Milne talking to Alma Coombs Hanson. Where were you born, Alma?
A Salt Lake.
T In Salt Lake. The date and the year?
A November 28, 1896.
T 1896. So you've lived in two, three--
A Three centuries.
T Three centuries now, so I know you've got a lot to tell us and we can learn a lot from you. The first question I was going to ask you, "What are your memories of World War I? Do you remember anything about that?"
A Oh, yes. My favorite school teacher was sent overseas and got the flu in World War I in 1918.
T And what was his name?
A Mr. Thurber.
T Oh, yes.
A Oh, he was my grade 8 teacher. He brought me to life. I just didn't understand math. All through my years I didn't get started right and I got up into grade 8 and I was still floundering. But he opened my eyes like you'd never believe, and I passed with good marks in grade 8.
T A great Mr. Thurber. A great teacher can do a lot of things.
A He just opened it up. No one had been able to do that. I didn't get started right, but he opened my eyes, and in those days we had government exams in grade, 8, 9, 10, 11.
T Every grade.
A Every grade, we had government exams.
T Did they?
A Yes.
T So you had to compete with people all across Alberta?
A Oh, yes. And things were marked up in Alberta [Edmonton]. Yes. But I got good marks and I was so thrilled because I didn't know a thing about the most of them. And anyway, he went overseas and died with the flu in France.
T What a loss, eh?
A Yeah. And my sister Beth and her husband were on a mission in France and they went to the cemetery and saw Mr. Thurber's grave.
T Well, how wonderful.
A Oh, that was--
T That sort of brought it to a conclusion for you, didn't it?
A Uh huh.
T Can you remember the day peace was declared for World War I?
A Oh, yes. I was down Main Street. There was a flu year you see, and it was a grey, dismal day.
T Now, were you in Cardston?
A Yes. I had been to Normal School in Calgary.
T Oh, yes.
A And went in in August of 1918, and this armistice, we had to come home because of the flu. I came home to a house full of sick
people. Mother had the house full. Anyway, this day, we went down town and the streets was full of people, and they all wore masks because of the flu.
T  It was so they wouldn't cough or get germs?
A  Everybody wore masks. There was a big day. I was there on Main Street with all the big crowds on the 11th of November 1918.
T  Exactly how did they celebrate? Were they--
A  They had a band and all kinds of things.
T  A big celebration?
A  Big celebration. Oh, everybody that could get out were out.
T  Oh, that's wonderful.
A  Oh, yes. I remember that very well.
T  Were you expecting it or was it a shock when peace was declared?
A  Well, we'd been hoping for it, but I hadn't followed it close enough to know just how it was going, but oh, we were thrilled, I can tell you. We were just really, I don't think, I didn't have any of our immediate family. Wilford had a nephew that was, oh I had, sure I had two nephews, James Sampson lost a son, Wilford's brother's son, and Milton lost a son. Milton Hanson.
T  This would be in World War II? Is that right?
A  Maybe I am getting it mixed up with World War II.
T  Yes. II. Right. They were in World War II. Right.
A  This was 1918.
T  Right.
A  Different generation. That's right.
T  Alma. Wash day was a big deal when you were growing up. It wasn't something you did on the spur of the moment. Tell a little bit about how wash day went in your home.
A  Well, it was a big day. Mother had to keep Vern home from school every Monday--the oldest in the family--to turn the washer, 'cause we had a big family. She had eight children, and he stayed home from school every Monday to turn the washer for mother. I remember that especially, and it was my job to hang the clothes on the line.
T  That would be a big job, too.
A  In the winter time I put gloves on my hands hanging clothes in the winter. They'd stay out maybe a couple of days freezing and then we'd have to bring them in and thaw them out.
T  Yes, that's neat.
A  But anyway, that was a big day in our lives, and it was a glorious day when mother got her electric washer. That was much later on.
T  Yes, after those early days. Did you have water in the house then, or did they have to carry the water?
A  No, we had to carry the water. You see, we lived way up in the west end of town until 1910. We came here in 1904. I don't know if you know the little house across the street from, well it's a big house, a rock house, that Ern Wynder built.
T  I know that house.
A  That was our home.
T  Oh, I see.
A  It's a low ceiling room, log house, and father added on four rooms, and that's where Ida and Ruth were born, in that--
T  In that log house?
A  --log house. But the rooms were added on to when they were born.
T  Oh, yes.
A  And I remember those were the days when we had a well out front, and they had to bring the water in. We just put a big boiler on the stove and boiled, boiled the clothes in this boiler, then put it in the washer.
T  The white clothes looked pretty good after that, didn't they?
A  Oh, yes. They all had to be boiled, for years and years we boiled our clothes, in these big boilers on the stove.
T  Yeah, that was something.
A  Oh, yes.
T  Now, as a child when you were growing up, and you did something wrong, how were you punished? What kind of discipline did your parents use?
A  Now, I don't remember ever being really punished. I just don't remember.
T  That's wonderful.
A  I don't remember being, I know we were never physically, and I don't remember of ever really being punished. I really don't, Thelma.
T  Well that's wonderful.
A  I had wonderful parents. I had a lot of, I endured a lot of teasing. My older brother, and my younger brother, Morgan, they were great teasers. I don't remember ever having any serious conflict--
T  With your parents?
A  With my parents.
T  That's wonderful.
A  I don't.
T  In today's world we say that teenagers sass their parents.
A  Oh, we never. We never could talk back to parents, never. Father was a strict disci-- disci--
T  Disciplinarian.
A  But we respected him, and he, it wasn't forced. We were brought up to respect, and as far as the church was concerned, we never criticized any of the authorities of the church. That was never done. At the dinner table if anyone ever mentioned anyone in authority in the church that was--
T  That was it.
A  That was it. Father would never allow that. So we grew up, we never did criticize any of the members of the church.
T  So you were all active in the church.
A  Yep.
T  'Cause criticism is what takes people out, isn't it?
A  Yeah.
T  It is.
A  Oh, yes. We never talked back to our parents. My children never to me, it just wasn't done in our homes.
T  Tell us about what you did after you finished Normal School.
A  Well, I taught school in Frankburg first. My oldest brother, Vernon, was teaching in Frankburg. His wife was Laverle Wilcox. And he, they were teaching in Frankburg, she was teaching too. She was expecting her baby, a second baby, and so when I came out of Normal we had to go an extra month because of the flu, and so I stepped right into her, where she was teaching. She had the top grades and I
had the bottom 3 grades. In fact, I don't know if you ever heard of that, east of High River. It was a thriving ward at that time.
T One of the bigger wards?
A Oh, yes. It was a lovely ward.
T Uh huh.
A So I lived right at Vernon and Laverle's home and taught school in Frankburg. And the next year I got a position here in Cardston, and that's where I spent the rest of my teaching days.
T What did you teach in Cardston?
A Grade 1.
T For how many years?
A I taught grade 3 one year, then for eight years I taught grade one. Then when I was married in 1929, I never taught after that. I went out on the farm, raised my family and that time, they could leave, they left, I didn't practice teaching after.
T That's a wonderful career, isn't it?
A Yes, it is. I stayed with my family. I never could see leaving my family. My husband didn't want me to. We struggled through the depression years with very little.
T Whereabouts was your farm?
A At Aetna. Aetna and Kimball. First at Kimball and then at Aetna. And so that's where, that's where I got . . . , then we moved to Cardston [where] Price was born.
T Well, that's nice. Tell us can you remember what the first books were that you read, besides school books? What were some of the first books that you read?
A You mean me, or what I taught?
T You. That you as a person liked, maybe [while] you were in high school or maybe--
A Well, my favorite books that I like just to read for my own pleasure was the Alger books. They were the most interesting because I was just involved in Alger books.
T Horatio Alger?
A Yeah. My, at home, we always had good books for Christmas. We always, every one of us had a good book. Alger books and as far as my early first years, I can't remember. I just grew up with books, but I can't remember what they were.
T But you loved to read?
A Oh, yes. I still love to read. I, that's the way I spend most of my time and I'm so grateful I can.
T It's wonderful.
A Yeah, I'm grateful I can still read.
T Tell us how you didn't ever support or have an earning job after you first left teaching.
A No, I never did. I always said I should have gone into bookkeeping. When I decided after I finished high school, I didn't know just what I should do, whether I should go into teaching or whether I should go into secretarial work or what. My father had three brothers that were excellent school teachers in Salt Lake, and he thought I ought to just go right into Normal. So I followed his advice and that's how I came I went to Normal school and into teaching. Well, I always thought after, when I was married and had a family, now if I'd of had a bookkeeping job I could have helped Wilford in his business.
T Right. Well, I'm sure you helped him anyway.
A  Oh, yes. But I never did--
T  When you finished school, what did you think the three choices of an occupation were?
A  Well, it was either that or going in typing and secretarial work. Either of those two. I never, nursing never entered my mind. Now Rose, she did. That's what she wanted. Me, that never, that wasn't my thing.
T  That wasn't one of the possibilities with you.
A  I never even considered that. But it either the teaching or a bookkeeping job or, now Ida went into secretarial work.
T  As a child, or teenager, what kind of games, or what did you do to entertain yourself?
A  Oh, we had, well as far as young people were concerned it was parlor games, never card games, just parlor games the whole time. Our home was the center of parties. Every time anyone would mention a party they would have it here and we just had all kinds of--
T  What's an example of a parlor game?
A  Well, and always they used to play some games like, name just a baby, I'd go to say, but I can't remember what they were, but these, Pit, and those kind of games--
T  Kind of games--
A  And Old Maid and those kinds of things. But these parlor games, Charades and growing up also there was Hide and Seek, and Run Sheepie Run, and those kind of things.
T  How about Kick the Can?
A  Yes. That kind of game. When we were older then we had our parlor games.
T  If you were having a party or game together with your friends outside and you had a bonfire, would you cook over the bonfire?
A  Oh, hot dogs and marshmallows. Toasted marshmallows. We always had home made root beer. Mother was awfully good at making home made root beer, so we always had that.
T  Which is a real treat, isn't it?
A  Oh, yes.
T  Still is.
A  I like it.
T  Right.
A  I miss that. I would like to have some. And as we grew up and as I had my own family, we always had root beer for Christmas, that was--
T  It was part of the celebration.
A  That was a part of the celebration. That's right.
T  Well, Alma, what would be your advise for people growing up in the new millennium who are born now or in the next few years. What do you think your generation can teach the new generation?
A  I just don't know. It's just a different world. It's just a completely different world. When I think of our home and parties and dances--they're so different now than they were then.
T  Tell me something about the dances that you went to.
A  Oh, we always had dresses for dances. Nowadays they go in their jeans and I don't like that. When I see people come to entertainments here, if I, in my day if we were entertaining or doing anything in public, we always dressed in our best dresses. But now they come in their slacks and jeans and anything.
T  Right.
A To me, I just can't get used to that. I know it's done. And to go to school, oh, we had nice clothes. We had a new dress at Christmas and a new dress at Dominion Day. One year they'd be new and next year they'd be for school.
T Right.
A Now, what was that first question you wanted? Now what was I--
T Well, what I'd like, if we were talking, if they're going to be playing this tape, say in a grade 8 school room and learning about when you were growing up, what advice would we have for them? If you, maybe you've got great grandchildren or some that are that age, what kind of things do you think they need to learn?
A Respect for authority, and obedience to council.
T Wonderful advice.
A I think that, they've got a respect for parents and respect for the leaders of the church. And never criticize. And I know, respect for their teachers, and I hope that the teachers will have enough respect to demand it.
T How, when you were teaching school, how were children disciplined then?
A Well, we could get, we could discipline them. We weren't hampered. Now as far as when I was growing, it was the strap, but I never touched a child with a strap. I never could do that. I never--
T You just understood that it was handy.
A It was down in the corner or something, but I never strapped. In fact, when I was teaching grade 1, the principal of our school at that time, [I] didn't have any respect for him because if everything that went wrong the teachers went to him and he'd strap them. I never sent one of my students to him. I didn't like it, and I think, nowadays, there's not enough discipline.
T Now it needs to be not necessarily strapping, but counselling.
A I don't think there's enough respect, as far as I've been able to see, I'm not with it that much these days, but I think there should be more respect and more respect expected. Now my father said if you have trouble at school, you'll have trouble at home. He respected the teacher.
T He would stand up for them.
A He would stand up for them, but he's always--he'd always have to find out, but he didn't want us coming home complaining, because he respected the teachers, and that's the way we were raised.
T Well, Alma, I think you've hit on the biggest thing. I think that--
A I think so, because I'm not mixed with the crowd and I don't know, and my grandchildren don't live around me, so I don't know how, and my ears are so bad when they are around me I can't hear--
T Well, Alma, thank you very much. I've really enjoyed talking to you, and when we finished this and if it turns out okay, I'll bring you a copy.
A I'd like to know what's on it, because you don't know, when you're doing it-- (End of Interview with Alma Hanson)
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