

February 18, 2008

Interviewee: Lena Davis Landry

Interviewer: Cecelia La Pointe-Gorman

Location: Fife, WA.

University of Washington-Tacoma

Oral History and Memory Project

CD1 Track 1

C: Okay, your name?

L: Lena Landry, Lena Davis Daniels Landry.

C: Yeah. When were you born?

L: I was born April 22, 1919.

C: Okay, we are talking about the children. You can just, we can just talk about like you were telling me about sometimes the kids, it's important that they know the history of their mothers and fathers and their grandparents.

L: Yeah. Uh, well, I was, my history it's, it will take hours to talk about because I've been through so much.

C: Yeah, and I'm so excited to be able to know, I just can't wait to hear your story. I'm just so excited about it.

L: Oh. Well, you're going to have to ask me questions because I forget.

C: Okay, um, where were you brought up? Where did you grow up?

L: Right here.

C: Right here in...

L: Right here.

C: Right here? Fife area.

L: My grandfather owned most of this property around here. His name was John Meeker. When you buy a piece of property and it says John Meeker Territory, that was my grandfather. They used to have a road named after him down, a couple roads down, it was John Meeker.

C: John Meeker.

L: Yeah. Road.

C: And your mother's name, what was her name?

L: Her name was, uh, Margaret. But they never ever called her Margaret. They called her Maggie.

C: Maggie?

L: Maggie.

C: Maggie, okay.

L: But we all called her mama so we never knew she had a name.

C: (Laughs) That's common. I call my mom. It's funny because how children will call "Mom" and all the moms will turn around and look. Yeah. So you had brothers and sisters?

L: I had nine brothers and four sisters.

C: Oh my gosh, big family.

L: Yeah. Fourteen. And I was the twelfth one. But, I'm the only one left out of the fourteen. And the, I was the youngest girl.

C: Do, I know this is tricky because I have a family of 12 siblings, 15 including with my dad's kids, so could you name them all? Do you think you can name them all from the youngest to the oldest?

L: Well, I can, the first two were, uh, died at birth and they just called them "Baby". And then there was, uh, William J. Davis was my brother, he was the oldest, and then Gladys was my sister, she was the oldest girl. Um, Margaret and uh, Stanley and Jerry, I never knew, he died before I was born, and, uh, let's see, Ralph. Ralph was burned in the school in the St. George's. That's a long story. And then there was Burt. Did I say Burt?

C: No, no you didn't.

L: Oh. Uh, Bobby, Robert, well we call him Bobby. And he, uh, lived to have children. And, uh, let's see that's ten. How many are we missing?

C: Okay, we've got one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten. We've got two that were called "Baby". William, Gladys, Margaret, Stanley, Jerry, Ralph, Burt, Robert.

L: Johnny was the baby. That's...

C: One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve. Twelve. We need two more. Magg-, okay, that's your mother.

L: Did I say Stanley?

C: Mhmm. Stanley. Okay, I'll start from the beginning. It's two "Baby's".

L: Oh! Let's see, Gladys...Grace. Grace and Elizabeth.

C: Oh, okay.

L: Those were my...

C: I do the same thing with my family. I'll go, which one did I miss? (Laughs) So I understand that.

L: Uh-huh.

C: It's nice having a big family. Did you like having a big family?

L: It seems like that's the way life was.

C: Did you get along with your sisters and brothers?

L: Oh very much. Yeah. Of course I was the baby and they babied me.

C: Wow.

L: They had to take care of me sometimes and they were good to me.

C: Uh, this is nice. Uh, make sure I come up with some good questions. I have a question thing so when we get together I will make it so it's real easy to follow.

L: Oh good. Yeah.

C: Yeah. But since I'm here... Just one of the things I would like to, what was it like when you were growing up? Just, you know, like a description of the area?

(6Min:49Sec)

L: Oh, it was, uh, I was growing up in the Depression days after Hoover and it was bad. We all had to get out and work, the kids even, because the grownups had a hard time finding jobs, even if they had an occupation, and they, they couldn't, couldn't find a job. There was no jobs. There was nothing and they didn't have food shelters or anything like that. We, we had to get out and work. As little kids we went out. I remember going out in the pea fields where they grew peas and, uh, my father was, would be tearing the vines

down and then we came along and pulled all the peas that were left on the vines and then they would, uh, sell those even and then we'd get to take some home for our own food.

C: Mmhmm.

L: So, it was things like that.

C: Just hard for you out there just peeling those, pea pods, huh?

L: Yeah. Mmhmm.

C: Yeah. Yeah.

L: And they're dried on the, on the stems because they've been there a while.

C: Did you mother, did she can goods? Did she can a lot?

L: Oh yeah. She canned and she learned all that, she got married young but her mother died when she was, uh, a little girl, and so she had to raise her sisters and brothers, her sister and brother, and then, uh, she, her father married again and she, she instead of going with her stepmother, she went with her, some old lady that lived in, on the island, or not the island, over at Vashon, Vashon Island, and that's where she learned how to do all that stuff. She learned how to make baskets and that was her trade was basket. You have to stop by and see the beautiful baskets she made. She made the cedar root baskets.

C: Uh-huh. Yeah.

L: We used to go out with her and pick the cedar roots and whatever they need. They used strips of alder, I guess it was, bark, strip bark and used that for dye.

C: Oh, I didn't know that.

L: Yeah. And nobody makes those baskets anymore. It's, uh, they make the, just the flat ones but these are roots in there. They can cook in them, they can carry water in them. They were just that tight.

C: Real tight or tightly woven? So they were like waterproof?

L: Uh-huh.

C: Wow.

L: Yeah. And...

C: That's wonderful.

L: And dig clams. There's a plaque out on the north end for my mother that says that how she would tie her babies to her back and then row across and dig clams.

C: Wow. Neat picture you know.

L: Yeah.

C: Grew up right here?

L: Mmhmm. Yeah.

C: That's nice.

L: I went to Fife school. Well, first they sent me to St. George's, that Catholic school. And then my brother got burned because we, we did chores for staying there and, uh, my job was, was to uh, I was only six years old, and, uh, to make the fire for the kindergarten or first grade. They didn't have kindergarten and first grade. They went by size. Little ones in one room.

C: Wow.

L: And I was in the, course I was little, so I was in the little room and I got to make the fires and my brother came to help me. I, I, I'd rather not talk about that now. But that's, that's a story in itself. At St. George's. And then, uh, we were taken out of that school. I came home here on Marshall Avenue, now it's Marshall Avenue. It used to be John Meeker. And, uh, that's where we lived. It's, it's right down, no, in back here.

C: Along back here?

L: Yeah.

C: It used to be Marvin, it's Marvin Avenue but used to be Meeker? Marshall?

L: Marshall Avenue.

C: Marshall Avenue. Okay.

L: Yeah, but they built a port over it now. The port is built over it where our house was. And, uh, the, uh, see that's, uh, the government had given the Indians, this is something that people don't know, they gave them, uh, 40 acres each but then the Indians didn't go to school. They didn't have an education. All they could do is write their name. And, uh, they didn't understand the value of money or anything of the property and they allowed them, the white people to come in and take their land, might as well say take it. They bought it for 5 cents an acre and Indians didn't know any better because they never went to school, and, uh...

C: That's how a lot of the land was lost, huh?

L: Yeah.

C: Yeah.

(14Min:12Sec)

L: And the, the Bureau was right there, you know, on the Cushman grounds.

C: Oh, okay. The Bureau of Indian Affairs?

L: Yeah. They had an office there but they, they didn't look after the Indians and, uh, show them how not to sell their land.

C: Oh no.

L: And they just sold and had nothing. When somebody died, you know, the Indian way was to give everything away and they'd give everything away. They did put a stop to that, that ritual.

C: That was like, oh, after the like funerals that they would give their stuff, the person that died, their families would give away their stuff?

L: They'd give away everything in the house.

C: Wow.

L: Yeah.

C: Yeah.

L: That, that was just the way the Indians did. Of course, Indians never had a steady home and just wandered normally in teepees or tents.

C: Nomadic, nomadic lifestyle.

L: Yeah. Mmhmm.

C: Maybe that's where that comes from in my life. (Laughs)

L: (Laughs) Yeah.

C: For a period of my life anyway. That was good.

L: Mmhmm.

C: Did you know, did you know Martin Sampson?

L: Yeah.

C: Yeah, my grandpa?

L: Yeah.

C: And Cecelia Betty Sampson, too? Betty?

L: Yeah. Mmhmm.

C: They're my grandparents.

L: Yeah. Annie was one good friend.

C: And then there's, um, yeah, I miss them. If I would have known what I know today, I would have been writing down everything they, they said if I knew what I know today.

L: Yeah. Annie used to sing the Indian song.

C: Yeah?

L: Mmhmm. My mother used to sing that song. I, I don't remember a word of it. The, the, it was such a pretty song.

C: Yeah, I love...

L: It, it was a cute little song and, I, and, uh, I can't, can't remember it. I wished I'd had a tape and taped it.

C: Yes. Me too. (Laughs) This is, this is going to be very special, so, um... So, I will get a hold of Judy and I'll find out what the best thing I can do about, because I would love to, the details to me are important, you know, about what it was like when you were growing up as a child and I think it's important.

L: Yeah. Yeah, there's uh, a lot I'd like, you know, we, we worked all the time but sometimes it was fun. We, we made it fun and uh, it was, uh, they, my sisters, they, they, they would, uh, take me picking raspberries. You know, my mother owned that property down there and she had a raspberry patch, or raspberry field, and the worst part of it was that after she lost it or sold it for nothing, uh, some, they let the foreigners come in and get it for nothing, and uh, there was some people from Russia. They went to the same school, to Fife, and they, uh, my sisters didn't, didn't care for them because they had

came, took over our place, and we had to work for them. But we, we didn't, uh, feel too proud to work. We worked because we needed to.

C: Mmhhh.

L: And, uh, my sisters would not speak to those boys that they went to school with, so, uh, they'd send me all the time. I was just a little, little squirt and every time they'd fill up a carrier, you know, about, did you ever pick berries?

C: Yes. Yeah. My Grandma Betty used to take us out.

L: Yeah.

C: Yeah. And my mom.

L: Mmhhh. And we would get a carrier full and they'd send me in with it and they would not speak to those boys. (Laughs)

C: (Laughs)

L: I could understand, you know.

C: Yeah. I've seen that picture of you right there.

L: Yeah.

C: Beautiful.

L: Oh, thank you.

C: Yeah. I want to be a healthy as you.

L: Yeah?

C: Yeah.

L: Yeah. I'm the, uh, oldest one on the enrollment in the tribe.

C: That's wonderful.

L: Yeah. 88 is, well I'll be 89 next month in April. So...(Laughs)

C: (Laughs)

L: It doesn't seem like it.

C: Doesn't seem very long ago, huh?

L: No. And when, uh, we went to school at Fife, that was way out there that we lived, and my sister and I would walk instead of getting on the bus to Fife and it was way out here. Of course they didn't have freeways then. It was just the whole...

C: Just walked straight over, huh?

(20Min:34Sec)

L: Yeah, dirt roads. There was a store on the corner that we went by and then we walked down to that store to get bread and stuff. There was always walking.

C: Healthy, yeah?

L: Yeah.

C: Kept you, kept you healthy, huh?

L: Mmhmm.

C: Yeah.

L: Yeah. Ever, ever since I can remember it was walking. I didn't learn to drive until I was in the my late sixties.

C: Wow. (Laughs) That's the trick. (Laughs)

L: Yeah. I took the bus and I was running to catch the bus, carrying a bunch of stuff. I used to take the violin when I was in school and I'd be running to catch the bus with my violin and my books.

C: Oh boy. Do you still play the violin?

L: No. No. I got rheumatoid arthritis right now and can barely hold a pen.

C: Oh. I know my grandpa, he, you remember him playing the violin?

L: Yeah.

C: Yeah. Martin?

L: Yeah.

C: Yeah. He used to play in the house when we were growing up, he'd be playing just doing it, and he used to have this one story he was talking about, the song went, um, "Talking to a neighbor guy's, farmer's talking his neighbor and how's your potatoes growing?" Doo, doo, doo... And then he'd go "Not very good." Doo, doo, doo... "Had to dig them out." Doo, doo, doo. It was just funny. (Laughs)

L: Yeah.

C: Yeah. He used to sing songs a lot.

L: Yeah. They did that at the dances.

C: Yeah. He did the hoe-downs. Yeah.

L: Yeah. When I was young they had dances that, and they had orchestras and violins. They didn't have like they have now.

C: Mmhmm. There was live music huh? Live music.

L: Yeah.

C: Okay, we'll get together real soon I hope. I'll talk to Judy and that other guy and start getting on, uh, to do a book like that for you. It'll be nicely bound though. One of the things that I'm, I'm aiming for is to start getting a project where we can get more of the history down.

L: Yeah.

C: Yeah. In the area, the local area. I think it's important because it will ground our children I think. You know, for them to know about where they come from.

L: Yeah. I went to Puyallup history but they, they didn't have it right. Well, we had to correct them in the class. So...

C: Yeah. So it needs to be like from your, your memory and your experience...Oh, I'm sorry (phone rings). I'll call later. From your experience and personal, you know, from what you've seen and experienced and from other elders, their, their life and what they went through. I think that's what's really important.

L: Well, yeah, the elders are going fast.

C: Yeah. We haven't got much time. (Laughs)

L: Yeah.

C: Better hurry up. (Laughs) Like is said, if I knew what I know now about my grandparents, you know, even my dad, you know, I wish I was doing this. My dad was in the boarding school at Cushman.

L: Yeah.

C: Yeah, so...

L: Yeah. I met him there.

C: You did?

L: Mmhmm. I spent many years there.

C: Wow.

L: They said that, the girls used to say Lena's just coming back to check on us, because I would be in and out of the Cushman. I, I was there when they first opened it up in 1929.

C: What, 1929?

L: Yeah.

C: Wow.

L: I was in the, the serious ward or the seriously ill, my sister and I, but they didn't keep me there long. I was too feisty.

C: Oh yeah? You were too feisty, huh?

L: Yeah.

C: Oh, good thing, huh?

L: Yeah. So they put me down in the girls' ward where I could, where their cure was sleep a half a day and then, um, go to school half a day.

C: Wow. You, you probably, did you know Betty was in there then too? My grandmother Cecelia?

L: Yeah.

C: Yeah, she was in there too.

L: Mmhmm.

C: And, and Lorraine Joseph was in there too.

L: Oh yeah. I knew them. They were little kids.

C: Wow.

L: Yeah.

C: My goodness.

L: Her sister, her sister used to follow me around.

C: (Laughs) See, all these stories, they interlock, you know?

L: Yeah.

C: All these stories interlock with one another. That's what's going to make it really interesting too. This is all going to come together.

L: Yeah.

C: Yeah. Okay, well, I'll come back. Thank you so much.

L: Well, it's nice meeting you.

C: You too. I have been excited to meet you. I have been waiting and waiting.

CD1 Track 2

C: The suspense was on.

L: Have to wait all day long to know how it's going to, what's going to happen.

C: But you're okay with it, huh? Are you okay...

CD1 Track 3

L: Took the bark off the trees to make dye and, uh, and the cedar roots were taken off from that big cedar tree that was fallen and the roots were sticking up and we would get those for her and whoever was, uh, ___ then would go to the mountains and get those roots. If we didn't have a car, we'd go by horse, horseback or wagon. But, I was, I was so used to that that staying at home and being without lights and electricity didn't, didn't bother me at all. (Laughs)

C: You were used, yeah, it was just the way life was, huh?

L: Yeah. We, uh, when, when I was little things were so hard, there were no jobs. My dad got a job in Burnett. That's where that picture was taken.

C: Right here, yeah?

L: Yeah.

C: Is that you in there?

L: Yeah. Me and my two brothers.

C: Oh.

L: And, and, uh, my sister took that.

C: That's in Burnett.

L: Yeah.

C: Where's that at?

L: It's up in Enumclaw.

C: Oh, okay.

L: That's where the miners, the miners were the only people making money, coal miners, and we lived up there but my father wasn't a miner. He was, got a job as a woodcutter.

It didn't pay much but it was a job.

C: So you were about, what, four? Five?

L: Yeah. Four.

C: Four.

L: And my brother that's my youngest brother, Bobby, that's Roberta's father, Roberta Young, and then my other brother, uh, Burt, his name was Burt, he, he passed away shortly after that picture was taken.

C: Oh wow.

L: Of TB. My older brothers and sisters were sent to, uh, boarding school, Tulalip?

C: Mmhhh.

L: They went to school up there and then they, uh, caught, caught the TB, and the Indians weren't used to TB because we didn't have it in our system, so when, when we got it, it just went real fast. They had nothing to combat it. Just that bug. Then, uh, I lost

all my brothers. I had nine brothers and four sisters. And, uh, they just kept dying every year, and, uh, we, uh, when that picture was taken, my sister was leaving. She, she went to Haskell. It was college for Indians. And she went off to there and she took our pictures. My oldest sister, she was about 20 years older than me.

C: Wow.

L: She got TB too and died.

C: Boy TB sure took a lot of people out, didn't it?

L: Oh, yeah. It was just like an epidemic. Once, once one person got it, you know, it just...

C: It just kept going, huh?

L: Yeah. Went around. There was no cure. And they were experimenting on us at Cushman.

C: With different medicines? Different treatments?

L: Uh, different treatments. In 1929 when it, Cushman first opened, they sent my sister and I there and, uh, I was nine years old, nine or ten, and my sister was real bad but, uh, I, I was just a tuffy, I guess. I have managed to, I had TB but, uh, I was too ornery. My, my mother said it was too ornery to die. (Laughs)

C: (Laughs)

(5min:25sec)

L: And they sent us to Cushman. First we were in St. George's and my older brother was, uh, a Catholic school. It was right out here on, over here, and, uh, that was really an experience. Um, there was, my sister that was a little older than me and another sister and a brother, were all, we were there at St. George's Catholic school. And I was in the

first grade. And, uh, the sisters were all always good to me. So everybody had to work, so I had the job of making the fire for the kindergarten, or first grade. They never had kindergarten. It was a first grade class. They had those wooden stoves. So I had to make the fire for the kids and, uh, they, when they sent you to school, it wasn't, wasn't a, uh, um, you know, the grades like your in first grade by your skills or anything. It was how, how big you were.

C: Your height.

L: Yeah.

C: Really? Huh.

L: Yeah. And since I was small, I was in the first grade. (Laughs) I was always small and that was funny and yet it was sad, uh, the, the boys, there didn't seem to be too many girls. There was a few boys and uh, they were, Rolene's father and his brothers, now those are the ones I remember because they, they sat, they were in my class and then when we'd have a, um, like a, I forgot what you call it, an assembly, we'd all have to go in the room and listen to the Father, whatever he had to say or the Head Sister and then, uh, we had to sit on benches and I don't know if I were always in the last row, probably because we were small and slow and got the last row and, and all the kids in my class were boys and, uh, ruffians. I would get there and I'd have to get the last seat, it was right on the end of that bench, and the big boys were on the other end and they kept pushing and pushing towards me until they'd push me off. (Laughs)

C: Oh. (Laughs)

L: I'll never forget that. Pushing me off of the bench. And I wouldn't dare scream or anything because they'd get in trouble with the Father. So, I'd just have to take it. You'd never think, you know, kids could be cruel and you just learn how to take it.

C: Mmhmm. Yeah.

L: It's funny. I can laugh about it now.

C: Probably wasn't that funny then though, huh?

L: No. (Laughs) And when my brother was older, well I have to tell you about my sisters. She, my two sisters and brother were older than me and the one that was just a couple years older than me, she, uh, would, she was working in the kitchen. That was her job, to work in the kitchen. And they had to peel carrots and stuff like that for dinners. And she'd be in there in the potatoes house, it was a real cold place, and she'd, I'd be walking by there and she'd grab me and pull me in there and hide me in there so I could help her peel the carrots, but then I could put a carrot in my mouth every once in a while because it seemed like you were always hungry in that school.

C: Yeah.

L: It was a Catholic school and they were, they grew their own vegetables and that's what my brother did. He was working out there with the tractor and he filled it up with gas and when I had to make the fire he brought the wood, cut the kindling for me, and he'd help me make my fire, and I could smell gas on him and told him, as little as I was, I told him he should go and change his shirt. But he didn't listen to me. He went down and he was okay when he went down to the boys and he made a fire for them and he, he caught fire and he was blazing and nobody knew what to do. Uh, the disciplinarian wasn't there at the time. And he ran around the water, there was a water fountain. He

ran around that and, uh, you know, flames were, that was just feeding the flames and he was running around. He was out of his head too, not knowing what to do. And he was only a teenager. I don't think he was even 15. And he, uh, and the disciplinarian saw that and he told the boys get a blanket and throw it around him and at that time they took him to the hospital and every hour we would pray and the phone would ring and, uh, I was too young to know what was going on. But the sister would say "Let's pray some more". And then we prayed and prayed and prayed. But, uh, finally she said "He's gone."

C: Hmm. What a sad story. Yeah. It's hard to share that, huh. That, uh...

L: Yeah.

C: He was a good brother.

L: Yeah. He, he used to, you know, they weren't allowed, boys weren't allowed to talk to girls in that school but he'd sneak around the corner and always he'd have a penny for me. (Laughs)

C: (Laughs)

L: And he'd push it through the vines and a penny was a lot of money then. And, uh, I'd tell my sisters and they'd say "Go get some candy". And, uh, so I'd have to go up to the, did I tell you this story about getting the candy?

C: Mmm...tell me again.

L: Um, my bigger sisters, they were too proud to go up and ask the priest for candy for a penny. And so I, I went up and my hands were so little, uh, he said put out your hand. And I put out my hand and my hand would hold about three pieces of candy. And he'd say, well, put out both of your hands. So I'd put out both of my hands. He filled them

with candy and it was way upstairs, there wasn't any elevator, had to walk down the stairs. It was hard enough for me to walk up and down stairs without holding on the rail, but I managed to walk down the stairs with my hands full of candy.

C: Oh, that's cute. (Laughs)

(16min:10sec)

L: Gave it to my sisters and we divided it up. (Laughs) And my older sister, not the one next, the sister next to me, she was an angel. She would never do anything wrong. But, uh, the sister older than her, she was always into something.

C: Oh.

L: She's the one that sent me for the candy. But, uh, we were always hungry. There was, they didn't serve you very much food, and we had to work hard. We had to clean everything and, uh, when we had break time we would be sitting there wishing for food and then there was an apple orchard down below the playgrounds and, uh, the kids were noted for going down there and taking the apples and so my sister and her girlfriend decided they were going to down and get some apples because we were hungry. And they, they had already made a trip and they gave them to my other sister, the one that was an angel, and we were sitting on the porch and we, we were sewing. We, uh, always had something to do, making embroidery. And, uh, Father came. Somebody told on my other sister and her girlfriend. Somebody told on them and the Father came zooming down there walking with his shoulders shaking, him and one of the boys, and, and, uh, you're supposed to stand every time you see the preacher or priest. You know, you're supposed to stand and regard to them. And we were sitting there and we had our sewing in our laps and we were sitting on the apples (laughs) that they had brought. And we was

scared to stand up while the apples were in our laps, if we stood up they would fly out. And we didn't know what to do. We just held our heads down and were sewing and Father came by and he said "Good morning girls". We peeked up and said "Good morning Father" and went on with our sewing. And, and, uh, he probably knew that we had apples but he went on. He was after those other two that were stealing the apples.

C: Oh. (Laughs)

L: But he didn't catch them. They went around through the back. And then he followed them around and we didn't have to see him again. We had a whole bunch of apples.

C: Oh. Wow.

L: That was an experience you never want to forget.

C: Yeah. (Laughs) No.

L: It was so funny. Now it's funny, but it wasn't funny then.

C: Pretty intense then.

L: Yeah.

C: Yeah.

(20min: 13sec)

L: It was, it was being in that, um, school was, it was always something. Some girl was always into trouble. (Phone rings) Excuse me. That might be my _____. Good afternoon, this is Lena. Oh, hi. Okay. Fine.

CD1 Track 4

L: with TV. And I spent many years in Cushman. But as my mother said, I was too ornery to die.

C: Mmm. Good thing, huh?

L: Yeah.

C: So Elizabeth was the one next to you? Was she the one next to you?

L: Yeah.

C: She was older than you?

L: Yeah.

C: And the brother that died in the fire, what was his name?

L: Ralph.

C: Ralph. You said he was not probably not even 15, huh?

L: No.

C: Yeah, pretty young.

L: But he was working, you know, drove the tractor, uh, was in charge of the farm. They had to grow the, grow their own, they had sheep and cows and a garden.

C: That was, um, St. George, huh?

L: Yeah. St. George's. And it was run by the nuns but, uh, they got the money from the rich people in Tacoma. Donations.

C: Yeah. Oh yeah. They got donations.

L: Mmhmm.

C: You had a lot of brothers and sisters.

L: I had nine brothers and four sisters.

C: Wow.

L: And I was, uh, the only one survived. None of them lived over 30. When, uh, the last time I went to Cushman, I was in Chamouwa and they, they sent me home in the eleventh grade because they said I had TB again. And, um, they experimented on the Indians then.

The first, first time I went was 1929 and bedrest was all they did for the TB. Sleep half a day and then go to school half a day. Yeah, '29 when I was there, I was a silly little girl. Uh, nine years old. But, I just, uh, you know, when we went, first went there, my sister and I, the ladies were, they put us in with the real sick people and, uh, we were so polite we didn't want to look at them because they, they had these instruments on their ears. We thought it was treatment. And, uh, after a while we found out those were earphones for radio. (Laughs) Because they gave us each one. We thought the ladies were getting treated. And we were trying to be polite and not look at them.

C: (Laughs)

L: And then every once in a while they'd bring in some white people from downtown and they'd say, they'd look at us and they'd say "Oh look at their eyes." We're sitting there in bed like, uh, like we were specimens.

C: Oh really? Oh my.

L: Because they, they, uh, they treated us like that. "Look at their eyes. Aren't they beautiful?" Like we were puppies or something. (Laughs)

C: Oh God.

(4Min:50 sec)

L: And, uh, I had another little girl there with me and we, we always had to play, get on the foot of the bed and slide under and tore my dress. And they said I had to wear it like that. Finally my sister sewed it up for me. But, the, the nurses wouldn't do anything. And then they sent me to the other ward where the kids could get up and run around. But my sister couldn't go because she was too sick. And, uh, I went to school there for a while and then got sent home and went to public school downtown and I was the only

Indian in the second grade. I don't know how many times I took the second grade. I just took it over. But, uh, I, I was lucky. I was always small. Never was overgrown. So the kids never knew that I was older. But, uh, I used to, when I was in the public school, I liked to sing. I tried to harmonize with my sisters but they had low voices and I had a squeaky, a squeaky voice, but then my teacher was a music teacher and she taught me "From the Land of the Sky Blue Water" and with my voice it came out good. And, uh, so they had me going around from room to room singing that to the kids. And then when they had plays, on the, you know they had plays on the holidays, I'd have to get up and sing that, sing the, sing "From the Land of the Sky Blue Water". And we _____, at first I, I was so scared my knees were knocking but, uh, I got up there and did it. And singing in front the kids didn't bother me. Singing in front of all the parents made me scared.

You'd think I'd get used to it but I never did.

C: Really.

L: They never left me out on any of the programs. Um, because I was different. But, uh, they always included me. I was in the Maple, Maple Dance. Um, I, um, won a contest in art for making a poster of a book I read. And it seems like I was always treated good.

Except for one, one boy who said "Was your father a chief?" I said "Yeah". (Laughs).

And he just liked to pick on me and, uh, make fun of me because I was an Indian, but I just let him say what he wanted to. But, um, he kept taunting me about being an Indian.

I was the only Indian there.

Unknown: Razor clams up there.

L: Oh really?

Unknown: At the tribe.

L: Oh. Oh they're selling them.

Unknown: I think they're sold out though.

L: Oh well.

C: They're gone I guess, huh?

L: Yeah. Sold out. I never, when I worked close to them I used to be able to get razor clams and raspberries and everything, what I like huckleberries, blackberries.

C: Mmhmm.

L: I like those blackberries that grow on the ground.

C: Oh the low ones?

L: Yeah.

C: Yeah, I know which ones you're talking about. They're pretty good. Yeah.

L: Not those big ones that grow next to the road. When I was little we went out, out here where the port is now, there is a road we called, they named it after my grandfather. It was John Meeker. John Meeker Territory. That was my grandfather. And that was a nice place. There was a dairy down the road from us. My mother used to send me. I was just a little girl. But she'd send me down to the dairy farm with my nickel and say "Don't lose it" and get a quart of milk. (Laughs) And it was safe. You could walk down the street or walk anyplace because we never had cars or anything. And I'd, uh, walk down there by myself. I wasn't even afraid. There was nothing to be afraid of. Now you can't go outside even after dark. There was nothing to be afraid of. I'd go down there and get a quart of milk and back and then times were so hard when I was little. I remember when we were up in Burnett where that picture was taken and, uh, on Christmas we, we never even knew there was such a thing as a Christmas. And then, uh, the Elks came and

brought us toys and they gave me a walking and squawking duck. You pull it, you know, and it makes the noise, and my brother older than me took it apart because, uh, he wanted to know what made it squawk. (Laughs) That's how much we knew about toys. And, uh, we had to, uh, if, uh my mother had 5 cents or something she'd send me to the store because the other kids were in school and then I'd have to walk, oh I don't know, it was quite a ways and through the woods, and through the pasture and everything where the cows there and that. I was always scared of cows, but I managed to get by them without them seeing me and get to the store and give them my nickel and they, they always gave us day-old bread. Any day old bread they give to us for a nickel. And, uh, I'd either get one loaf or two or three. And, uh, then I'd carry that home. I don't know how I could do those things. Little kids nowadays they, they can't send them to the store or anything.

It's not safe. And, uh, and my sister and I would go down to the water and, and, uh, catch _____ (14Min:37Sec), little tiny fish.

C: Mmhmm.

L: We never ate them. We just caught them. And my older brothers would go up in the hill and they'd get those lilies, oh and just tall, great big, they're called trilliums I think.

C: Trilliums?

L: I guess. Trilliums are white, beautiful. They'd go way up in the hill and they'd get them and bring them down and they'd sell them to people going by for a nickel. You know, a nickel was a lot of money in those days. And, uh, they'd sell them on the road. We always managed to have something to eat or food. One time a truck was going by and, uh, he had, uh, I think he did that on purpose, but there was a box of fig cookies fell off from his truck. And, I, I don't know how just one box could fall off. He probably

threw it off purposely so we'd have it. And that was a treat. And, uh, my father brought home a box of raisins and my mother would give us a handful a day. Oh, this is the funniest thing. We lived in a tent and, uh, it had a pole, you know, where the door is. And, I, I was just little. And she said, uh, if you be good you can have some raisins. So I put my hands out and I was standing there by the door and put my hands out and not even thinking put my hands around the pole and my mother knew but she just wanted me to learn. And she filled my hands up and (laughs)...Oh the life I lived. I'll never forget that. I couldn't get my hands out because they were around the pole full of raisins. Oh God. I learned to listen then.

C: You got stuck there with...

L: She knew what was going to happen but she wanted me to learn. Oh, that was so funny. Should be in the comics.

C: Yeah. That's a cute story. (Laughs)

L: Oh crazy things. And I told you about the bear, didn't I?

C: Yeah. Yeah. The bear was funny.

L: Yeah. Those were the days. No electricity, no running water. You can't, uh, even imagine it now being without electricity and running water. And the kids, they have to go to the hotel. (Laughs)

(18Min:44Sec)

C: Yeah. Uh-huh. It's a lot different, you know, about how it's like, how much we actually have, you know, not realizing it.

L: Mmhmm.

C: Yeah. How easy it has gotten to be now.

L: Yeah. If you had to go to the bathroom, you had to go outside. (Laughs)

C: Mmhmm.

L: Around the house, in the dark. Oh what a life. (Laughs)

C: Yeah. What a really neat life, yes.

L: What time is it?

C: It's about...

L: Oh, it's only 2:30. I thought it was getting close to...3:30 I have to, they have to pick me up at 3:30. I'll have to tell you sometime about my experiences at Cushman. I guess I told you parts of it. Every time I went to Cushman. The last time I went there was in, they put me in the death ward, and, uh, I, they gave me, all the doctor said was tell me he'd have to give me pneumothorax. He said "Do you want that?" And I never said anything because I didn't know what pneumothorax was. And I was thinking "What is that?" But I never said anything. And he said "Well, if you don't have it you'll be in the happy hunting grounds with all of your brothers and sisters." I said "Well I'm not saying I don't want it, I just don't know what it is." So he explained it, uh, they put a needle, long needle in your lungs and, uh, collapse your lungs, and you had to, had to breathe with just one lung. It's all right when you're laying in bed, but uh, when you get up, you, it's hard to breathe. And every one of those ladies in that room with me, lets see there was five other women, they all passed away with TB. They had, instead of the pneumothorax that they experimented on me, they had one of their ribs cut out. And they got rid of their lungs. Took out the TB. And, uh, on one side. But they all died and, uh, they were from Alaska and, and they were much older than me, but they, uh, one of

the...(phone rings) Uh-oh. Every time the phone rings, I think it's time to go. Good afternoon, this is Lena.

CD1 Track 5

C: They, they want you to tell them what to do.

L: Yeah. (Laughs)

C: Well, good for them.

L: (Laughs) Tell them what to do to go against me. Oh what a life, huh?

C: Yeah, politics will probably always be kind of the same, huh?

L: Oh, yeah. I've been, I was on the council for, uh, six years. I got on after Bob. And that was an experience. Uh, Bob, you know, had a bad experience at the tribe.

C: Yeah.

L: Spent the tribe's money on himself and then he escaped and we had to come in and get it straightened out with the Bureau. Of course that was all Bureau money or, uh, Bertha and Rolene paid their taxes. We got 5% of the gross, so we did pretty good off from them. Now then only charge them, uh, by the net, which makes a big difference.

C: Yeah. It would.

L: And, uh, but the, if it wasn't for them, we wouldn't have any spending money on, uh, for the tribe. They paid for the council's salary and things that the Bureau didn't. And we got one of Bob's cars that, that was just a wreck and then, you know, Connie, Connie McClonn, she's a big heavy person. She drove it most the time and then when I had to use it, my car was in the shop, I could hardly reach the steering wheel because you know she was much heavier than me and the seat was way down on the floor. (Laughs) And, I

only drove it home and I brought it back. I said you can have the car. I don't want to ever use it. I'd rather walk. I could hardly see over the steering wheel.

C: Yeah, seat sat way down too low, huh?

L: Yeah.

C: That's tough.

L: Yeah. Somebody out there? Probably in the wrong place.

C: Oh, probably insurance huh? He's a nice guy. He's Navajo I think. Navajo.

L: Oh.

C: Yeah.

L: I see these people going by every day, oh a lot of them, they go over here or over in the other, to your, your side. With their coffee and donuts. (Laughs)

C: Mmhhh. Yeah, they're, he's a nice guy. Nice people.

L: Sandra said we're going to grab that coffee and donuts some day.

C: (Laughs) I guess they're opening up the restaurant, maybe today, up in, the new one.

L: The new one? Up there?

C: Yeah, I was going to go check to see if they actually did it today.

L: Well, it's not even finished is it?

C: The top floor is almost. I think that, so, I was going to call to see. Maybe I should call and see if it's open. What do you think?

L: Yeah.

C: I'm gonna see. I want to find out.