

**Interview: Faye C. Bates**  
**Date: 05-07-2007**  
**Disk 1 of 2**  
**Location: Tacoma, Washington**  
**Interviewer: Cecelia La Pointe-Gorman**

C: Where were we? We were speaking about the tribal community and the Swinomish Corporation. Swinomish had to fit the 'political boxes' in order to get help from the federal government.

***Pull-And-Be-Damned-Road.***

Yes, so they could receive money from the government  
Then my Dad just wrote grants, lobbied and, [wrote] congressman to get money. The [Swinomish] people didn't understand [the politics] [For example,] [my Dad] got [federal] money to build a road [on the Swinomish reservation]<sup>1</sup> [for] the men... had to work. They didn't have money, or jobs. ... [Because in the old way] they had fished and hunted for a living. Dad [Martin] got [federal] money to build a road across the reservation. And it went just across the reservation and they called it Pull-And-Be-Damned road. [Laughs].

***1:23...so the longer it took to build the road, the more money they would get.***

Yes, [they called it Pull-And-Be-Damned] because they [used] a team of horses and everything was manual labor. [The workers] were upset because [Martin] wouldn't get [them] tractors and stuff like that...

But the whole idea was to keep them working during the depression years...so the longer it took to build the road, the more money they would get. But [the workers] didn't understand [this], and they thought [Martin] was crazy for not letting them have tractors.

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<sup>1</sup>Martin J. Sampson, Indians of Skagit County (Skagit County Historical Society, USA, 1972) pg. 44.

He could have bought tractors, and ...could have had the road done in half the time. But, then the men would not have jobs and money. I don't know if they ever understood this. But at least they got used to working, not that they were lazy. They worked awfully hard, but [prior] they weren't used to working 9 to 5 jobs. So [Martin] brought this unto the [reservation.] [Faye expresses her desire to know her Dad's life more].

**2:45...quite a ladies man.**

He kept a lot of mail, from woman from all over the country. [Letters] that said, we really miss you, and [so forth]. I think he was quite a ladies man. [Laughs]. [Martin] never drank or smoked because he [had] seen what it did to the people...he was taught that...[likewise] from his [mother] who told him to keep [his] spirit strong. And the way [he] was to do [this] was to take care of [himself] physically, mentally and spiritually.

**2:10 I don't need alcohol to make a fool of myself..**

He told me about when he was a kid [he drank and] got sick. [It was] the adults that fed it to him. It was [common to give alcohol] to kids. [Many] of the [adults] did not see anything wrong with [giving alcohol to the kids]. [Alcohol] could be gotten for almost nothing, and everyone did it. It was even in the non-talking movies. Drinking was the thing to do. [Alcohol was being portrayed in the silent and early films since 1900s.]<sup>2</sup> [Martin] would say, I don't need alcohol to make a fool of myself, I can do that all by myself, I could do it sober. [Laughs].

**5:00 the conditions were so bad [on the reservation].**

I didn't understand why we left the [reservation], but it was okay with me. My brother and I had a very secure life. We had Mom and Dad and we were okay with where we

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<sup>2</sup> Norman Kent Denzin, Hollywood Shot by Shot Alcoholism in American Cinema (Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick, New Jersey, New York, USA, 2004). Pg.4

were, and what our life was like. My father [Martin] never wanted to live there [on the reservation]. I think it was because of the way he was treated when he was young. I don't think he would have ever gone back [to Swinomish] if he hadn't been asked to come back to help [the tribe because] the conditions were so bad [on the reservation].

I cannot imagine him [willingly] leaving the life that he had [prior] to returning back to Swinomish. He was living in Poplar, Montana. He was popular [there] and played [his violin] at the ho-downs and making a lot of money [as a logger.] [It's hard to imagine my Dad leaving Montana to come back to nothing, or worse than nothing [on the reservation] (because of the poverty and hardships.) [Phone rings interruption] I didn't grow up like what [some] story books show about growing up on the [reservation] [interruption from granddaughter.]

**7:10 *our culture was intact at home....***

I grew up with very high self-esteem because that was the attitude at home...[interruption from granddaughter]...my grandmother came and stayed with us for a long time and she spoke Indian. She came to stay at the time I started going to school [public school] at the age of five or six years old. Our culture was intact at home. We were going to public school, and we got a taste of what the outside was like too. But it seemed to fit; I didn't feel the shame like so many urban Indians did. In fact my brother and I took violin lessons; that was unheard of [for Indians back then], but it seemed natural for us to do it. [Ben played] on ball teams, and I took baton lessons, and we were in the Tacoma's Daffodil-Parade and things like that. I think one the reasons my brother and I had such an easy time in school was because we were the only two Indians in the school. So, [we]

were no threat [because] there were only two of us [Laughs]. When I got to Gault (junior high school) there were lots of Indian there. [Interruption from granddaughter.]

**10:25 *[Those who were Catholic] got to go to Catholic Mass by taking a bus 100 miles...***

My mother (Cecelia) was a very strict Catholic. I don't why? She may have gotten that from boarding school. I used to say [by the time] When I was eight years old that I knew I was going to hell, because there was a certain line, and if you crossed it you were going to go to hell. And I'd already crossed it a few times. Like going to somebody else's church [Laughs] and eating meat on Friday [Laughs].

But my Dad was different; he was pretty ecumenical. When [Dad attended Hampton the University (Black College of Technology) in 1908 to 1910, [he said that the black students] were pretty much of the Baptist faith. [He told me] once a month [those who were Catholic] got to go to Catholic Mass by taking a bus 100 miles, but the rest of the time they would go to the Baptist services with everyone else.... He was pretty liberal about the songs he sang.

[These songs differed from the Catholic songs] we sang as Catholics. Catholic songs were in Latin, and whatever else. I learned these songs [from] him when I was eight, ten and twelve-years old as he played them on the violin and [we'd sing them together].

If mom came in when we were singing these songs, we'd get in trouble. [Laughs].

**12:50 *I would as soon go to heaven with the Pollock as I would with the Irish.***

[My Dad] was liberal, in fact when he started [attending] St. Peter and Paul's [Catholic Church], which was Polish. [But, first I must mentioned] we were [first] assigned to go to [the Holy Rosary Catholic Church] which was pretty much Irish. [He would protest] saying "I would as soon go to heaven with the Pollock as I would with the Irish." [Laughs]. I learned the Mass in Latin, and I learned the songs in Polish. And Catechism was in English. Masses used to be song in Latin. I was exposed to a lot of diversity from the beginning, so this seemed normal to me....[Interruption from granddaughters].

**15:05 *...he wanted us to be to be able to take care of ourselves in this white world.***

I really grew up in a non-Indian environment, and my Dad never wanted us to speak the language. He didn't want us to have a hard time learning English because of the guttural sounds [of the Indian language]. He didn't want us to have that accent [that can be heard] from people that come from the [reservation] where English is their second language, or when Indian is spoken a lot at home. He didn't want [his children] to have that, because it [had] been hard for him [to learn English] as a second language. My Dad was into speaking English clearly, and writing well in his penmanship. For him everything had to be just right.

So, this is what he sought for us [Ben and I]... he wanted us to be to be able to take care of ourselves in this white world, and not to have to depend on the reservation or tribe for what we have. He did a good job [laughs]. Still there is that sense within my brother and I that we are Swinomish Indians, and ...we know that. It is good to have a sense of who we are and no matter what happens we know who we are. How [my parents

instilled this into Ben and I] I'll never know how they did it, I mean [to raise Ben and I] in such a non-Indian environment and [at the same time] make us so solidly Indian, and proud of it.

I remember my teachers used to say, "you should be proud to be an Indian" and I would look at them, and [sighs] and say I am. [Laughs]. It took me a long time to figure out...oh! They were trying to tell me that it is okay to be an Indian. [Laughter]. I really had a hard time in understanding why [my teachers were telling] me that?

C: Are they trying to convince you or themselves?

**17:50 "...if I cut my hair, it had to be my own idea."**

Yeah! That sounds right! The only thing I had a hard time with, is my long hair, because my hair grew [very long.] Grandmother wanted me to grow it, she [also] put a Tamanowas on my hair (Indian spiritualism-spirit guide) and she said that no body should cut my hair. And if I cut my hair, it had to be my own idea. So when I was twelve-years-old, I was not much [shorter] than I am now, and it went way below my knees. It was thick and so heavy. Today people would say, [you have such pretty hair], but it gave me headaches and it was so hot in the summer time. And so when I was twelve in the summer time I just cut it off. [Laughs and makes a scissor motion with her hand, like she's cutting her hair off.] [Laughs].

End.