Westman Oral History Association

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Narrator (interviewee):	**Betty Gibson**
Interviewer:	**J. E. Bateman**
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[Beginning of Side A]

[00:00:04]

This is 1981. The following is an interview with Dr. Betty Gibson in her home in Brandon, Manitoba. Betty was born in Brandon 70 years ago, and though she travelled widely, and with 10 years in Africa, most of her life was spent here, deeply involved in the educational life of this city and this province. Betty attended school and university here and trained as a teacher at the Brandon Normal School. She will share with us some thoughts about education in Manitoba as she saw it over the past three score years and 10.

Question: [00:00:40]

Betty, the school on 12th and MacTavish in Brandon bear your name, were you ever associated with either the schools, Alexander and Park, which replaced by the Betty Gibson School?

Answer: [00:00:51]

Oh yes, with Alexander School right in the early years, and I actually did have tenure (20 years) at Park School. My mother took me to Alexander School before my sixth birthday, to enroll me in

grade one at Easter time. See, it was the custom then to give grade one a bit of a head start by allowing them to begin in the Easter term. This probably was because, you know, before the days of immunization, children contracted measles, whooping cough, diptheria, scarlet fever, chicken pox, etc., in their very first year of school, and lost considerable time. It was sort of taken for granted that grade one's average attendance would be low.

Q: [00:1:32]

How did you feel about starting your school life in that big, three-story school?

A: [00:01:36]

Ooh [chuckled], very frightened [chuckled]. I was afraid at the teacher and terrified of the principal. He yelled, and I felt insecure because, you know, old children had warned me about all the rules, and the punishments, even strapping was possible, that would follow when rules were broken. It had been drilled into me that I mustn't talk once I entered the building, that we must line up when the bell rang, and march into the classroom in step with everybody else. Then, school was a very terrifying place for little people. I was happy, that in my time of teaching, lines disappeared, reasonable communication with classmates and teachers was allowed, and orientation programs put children much more at ease. You know, the September when I was working as a volunteer, I helped to settle refugee children into the Brandon School System, and I couldn't help but contrast their kind reception, the reception they received, with my first day of school. The welcoming words for them, the concern felt for these children, and the pre-planning that was done to put the new children at ease, uh...took away most of the fears of these little immigrant people. In my day, a teacher, too, with a quiet classroom was considered efficient. Then, of course, came the complete swing of the pendulum when a decade ago, noise and movement seemed to indicate that learning was taking place. Now, i think we're sensibly returning to control from above, when it necessary, but with children being given opportunities and encouragement to manage their own affairs, to communicate in order to expedite learning and to consider the needs and well-being of others. I think the

past 20 years of change, really rapid change and experiment it was, must have been really, really hard on teachers who attended school in the '20's and began teaching on the '30's and '40's. They would be following the old pattern of control and a [unclear] presentation, and nothing that they did satisfied the new ideas.

Q: [00:03:45]

Alexander must have been a comparatively new school when you registered. Wasn't that whole south-end of Brandon expanding rapidly after World War One?

A: [00:03:54]

Oh, yes! Yes, Alexander was, then, a smart, new, 12-room school, and it was built to accommodate the huge influx...influx of immigrants. These were largely from the United Kingdom, and they took the place in the five years preceding the First World War, and then immediately following it. Previously, in all the south... boundary of Brandon had, more or less, stabilized at College Avenue. That was the end of the city, and then this new wave of immi...immigrants came. My own parents arrived, in 1910, from England and bought land immediately from the Patmore family. Somehow it stuck in my mind that they paid $100, which was, they considered, quite a good price for a 37 and a half foot lot then. And they built, themselves, in the 110 block on eighth street. And houses were going up everywhere, on scattered blocks east and south and west of the old boundaries. My father, a builder, happened to be working on Alexander School the day I was born. Most of this new area was populated by homesick 'Britishers'. There was no sewer or water in that area for years, no paved streets and only a few sidewalks, and these sidewalks were highly prized, as places to play hopscotch. And Alexander School, as well, seemed to be a paradise, with its swings, and teeters, and huge slide in the winter. We spent a lot of time playing on that playground in off-hours. And, you know, the old wooden St. George's Anglican Church was built about this time, too. The Reverend, S.R. Hammond, use to say that it was built by...the husbands...of the homesick women. And, you know, almost all the children that you met at school turned up at Sunday School. Uh...

there was no other church, [unclear], and so we met each other on Sundays, as well. Now, to get to Alexander School from where most of us lived, we had to cut across prairies, and cross that CNR track, the one that's still there and is a nuisance. Sometimes, during blizzards, you know, my father carried me as far as the street-car tracks. Occasionally, he put me on the street-car, that's if the street-car could run in the blizzard, and often they didn't.

Q: [00:06:11]

How did you get to school by street-car? Did they go past the school?

A: [00:06:15]

Well...yes, in a round-about way. If you go down on Southern Avenue, you went west to 13th, and [unclear]

College and 13th to ride right to the school. Or, if you have time to spare, you went all the way around to 18th, to Victoria, and down Victoria to 10th, resisting the obviously sensible thing to do, which was to get off there and walk to the school. But, if you were lucky, you went on downtown, and back up 10th, to arrive at school when the street-car turned west on College. And all this was for a nickel. But it didn't happen very often, I assure you. We usually bucked the weather, or grabbed a ride on [unclear], or “Elvis' Coal Sleighs”. There was prac...there were practically no cars on the road on the winter then, and it was safe to hop a sleigh.

Q: [00:07:06]

Do any events...uh...particularly stand out in your memory of those elementary school days?

A: [00:07:12]

Well, uh, apart from the usual academic joys and frustration, perhaps, uh, World War One, and the flu epidemic, and the visit of the Prince of Wales. Ooh, and the teachers' strike. I was in grade five, then. And the Free Press Spelling Bee. And, you know, once there was a fire during school hours, as well.

Q: [00:07:35]

Uh...how did, uh... World War One affect you as a school child, Betty?

A: [00:07:40]

Well, many children, of course, lost their daddies, and most...of the homes were tents because of the casualty list. A lot of the...south-enders joined up. We brought money to school for Serbian refugees, for Belgian refugees, and...white Russians. And we learned to fear the Bolsheviks, too. And we bought war stamps. You know, it happens that those redeemed war stamps paid my Normal School tuition a number of years later [chuckling]. I remember that every time we went downtown, mother went past the 'Sun' office, on 10th street, to read the bulletin boards for war news, and the casualty list. You see, there was no radio or television, but there were telegrams, and that's usually how the sad news came. And no one felt at ease at all when the telegraph boy cycled up the street, every one waiting to see if he was going to come in at your door or not. I remember well a holiday for Armistice Day, and how we crowded the streets downtown. You know, [name unclear] once burned an [unclear] on the North Hill, and we bought flags, and,uh...whistles to blow. I, er... I really thought all our troubles were over, and the minell...millennium had been ushered in on that particular day. And I could also remember, oh, weeks later, I guess, the troop trains arriving home at the crowded CNR depot, and Arthur Williams band played, The Salvation Army band played, too, and the Salvation Army lassies provided tea and lunches to the troops as they came home. And I could also remember standing on those same CNR... that same CPR platform it would be, to welcome Edward, Prince of Wales. That was my first glimpse of royalty. But the But the day was one of the worst that Manitoba could produce. Perhaps only the prince was colder than the children, as I remember him in a thin top coat, thin leather gloves and his hands over his ears to prevent frostbite. But he was so handsome, and we all strained our vocal chords rendering “God Bless the Prince of Wales.”

Q: [00:09:52]

Uh,that...uh...flu epidemic was certainly , uh...a tragic event. Did, uh...it affect the schooling very much?

A: [00:10:00]

Oh,yes! It was so bad that schools, the [unclear], the churches, etc., were all closed. No large gatherings were allowed. Hardly a person escaped the scourge, and many died. When school re-opened, I know several of our class members had succumbed, and many of us had taken a hard beaten as far as health went. I lost all my hair because of prolonged high temperature, but so had many other girls. I really dreaded facing my classmates because of my bald head, but there were many others whose hair was also just growing in.

Q: [00:10:34]

Uh...we came to the city of Brandon in 1923. I'm interested in what, uh...you can remember about the teachers' strike?

A: [00:10:42]

Ooh [chuckled]. Again, the memories are frightening. My first brush with anarchy, really, was the way you can describe that. Only the grade five to eight went to school in May and June that year because the board couldn't find enough teachers to take the place of the teachers who left. And, you know, Alexander School lost some very fine teachers because of this strike. Ardelia Horneburg was my grade five teacher at that time, and I never can be grateful enough for the eight months spent with her. A love of learning and a feeling of worth and good value system. She injected all these into her daily teaching. And she expected us to be well-behaved, mannerly, considerate of others. But May and June of that year were the months when those same well-behaved children ran [unclear]. I think that parents, frustrated with the aftermath of the war, unemployment, inflation and the flu, and relying perhaps on trade unions to cure some of the ills, encouraged their children's defiance. We got no work done, our teacher was in tears most of the time, and children openly called her “scab”, and the big boys took ties from the CNR railway piles and they blocked the street-car tracks. They rang the fire alarm, and brought noise makers to school, and stayed out on the playground when the recess bell rang. It really was unbelievable that change in that

school. And never were holidays so welcome as that June the 30th. And I think there was born in me, at that time, a--a conviction that freedom was without responsibility was a very dangerous gift. If I later showed any special skills in classroom management, the desire to acquire those skills was born in the experience of the strike. School returned to normal in the fall, of course. G.R. Rowe newly arrived from Prince Edward Island, and looking for all who were like the heavy weight champion. The champion boxer of his day left no doubt in the minds of the youth of the south-end that bullying and smart aleck language was a thing of the past. To suit the convenience of the classroom numbers, some of us, who should have been placed in grade six, were moved to grade seven. I sus...suspect that some of the older children, 14 years of age I suppose they would have to be, had found jobs and did not return to seven or...eight then, or, ever again, their lives perhaps blighted by this strike, that wasn't as it became to be called. I mentioned this grade skipping, uh... to illustrate how autocratic teachers and principals could be, in those days. No one asked our parents' permission to do this, and, of course, the four of us who moved up, we didn't object, we probably gloated [chuckled]. But all four of us graduated from the Brandon Collegiate Institute at too tender an age; too young for nursing, too young for teaching. In 1927, there was n—not even grade 12 offered at Brandon Collegiate. But, fortunately, Brandon College saw a community need, and perhaps a chance to increase their enrollment, and offered grade 12 in conjuction Art 1, and all four of us, who missed grade...six, landed up in their grade 12, and I think we did quite a bit of growing up then, but all of us were really a bit too young for college life. But, we survived, and the next year, two of us went to Normal, and the other two went into nurses training. We were indeed lucky that highschool, university, and teacher training, and nurses training could all be taken in this city in the late '20's because the world was heading into the stock market crash of 1929, and our parents would probably not have been able to afford to send us away to train. By the time we were educated, jobs were very hard to obtain, and for the students who graduated a few years later, well work was well nigh impossible to find. And as for those who grew up away from a city, even highschool became an

impossible dream. Country children did not have off... equal opportunity with city children until the '60's, when divisions were formed. Now, all rural children can get a grade 12 at no more expense for their parents than there is for city children, namely school taxes, clothing and keep, and that was a reform long overdue.

Q: [00:15:09]

Now, you mentioned the Free Press Spelling Bee, what was that?

A: [00:15:13]

Well, um... the Free Press ran local Spelling Bees all over the province, and then during Easter holidays, the winners got a trip to Winnipeg, with many excursions about the capital, and a fine, big spell-off in the old Lyceum Theatre. That was held on the Friday of Easter week. The fact that there was such a competition, I think, reflected the concern with accurate spelling, which was definitely a part of our school life then.

Q: [00:15:44]

Uh... do you still, uh...agree with that concern?

A: [00:15:47]

About spelling, oh yes! Definitely. In spite of all the [unclear] says, as long as meaning is conveyed, spelling doesn't matter, or that declares that too much time and energy was spent on learning words never are seldom used. You see, spelling is a skill, it is not an art, and there's no room for creativity. Accuracy alone counts in spelling, and this comes only through good teaching and daily practice. And judging from the communications i received, even from universities and business sources, there is a scarcity of accurate spellers in the work force today. Secretaries who can spell well are an endangered species now, I think. Grandmothers, you know, actually spell much better than their grandchildren do nowadays [chuckled].

Q: [00:16:34]

Uh... knowing your, uh...love of English and...all it parts, what personal contact with the Free Press Spelling Bee did you have?

A: [00:16:41]

Oh, well, uh [chuckled]...when I was 11, I represented Brandon, and I got that exciting trip to Winnipeg. That's why it sticks in my mind, I guess.

Q: [00:16:51]

Uh...did you win?

A: [00:16:53]

Uhhhhh, no, not the gold medal [chuckled]. I came home with the silver one. G.R. Rowe, my principal then, tormented me for making an error, and so I asked him to spell a word I missed, and he spelled it the same way I did, and he won't believe that we were both wrong until he went into his class and had them look it up. He was a real good sport about it.

Q: [00:17:16]

Uh...do you remember the word you missed?

A: [00:17:17]

Oh, yes! I'll never forget it. It was “liquefy”, l-i-q-u-E-f-y [chuckled].

Q: [00:17:26]

Uh...I'm certain one sees that spelled, l-i-q-u-i-f-y, now, uh...on the liquefied petroleum tankers that we see running about.

A: [00:17:36]

Ah, yes. You're right. In the 60 years since the gold medal slipped from my g—grasp, common usage has affected the way that word was spelled. I guess I was born just a bit too soon.

Q: [00:17:48]

Uh... well, let's see, after grade eight you went to BCI, and then to Brandon College, and then to Brandon

Normal School.

A: [00:17:57]

Yes, the years spent there were very happy productive on me, and I shall always be grateful to the teachers in those schools, and sad for the 15 students who dropped out of school in my class in grade eight, and missed those opportunities. But, course that's the way it was in those days, 14 year old entered the work force. Brandon had provided very well for those wanted to continue their education. I think, though, that I'll just skip those years and go straight into my life as a teacher.

Q: [00:18:28]

I suppose you, like the rest of us, had to, uh... start in a rural school, did you?

A: [00:18:32]

Uh...yes. Now, I only start, but stay there [chuckled] as it was almost impossible to change jobs in the '30's. If you had a job, you worked hard at it to keep it, and even then, you couldn't be certain that if a trustee's daughter was in teacher training, that you might not be asked just to go at the end of the year.

Q: [00:18:52]

Well, uh...what rural school experience did you have, Betty?

A: [00:18:56]

Well, four years at Bayview in the Turtle Mountains. In the winter, the roads [unclear] in that area, that school always closed in January and February, and kept open all summer. I didn't really like that, but it did give me a chance to substitute in Brandon in January and February. That was hard work, but I learned a lot about class control, and the five dollars a day looked very good. I bought a portable typewriter with it, and I learned to type at the Wheat City Business College, evening classes [chuckled]. My second rural school was in Chater Village. That was a very heavy assignment. There were 34 children in grades one through 10, and I taught that for the depression salary of 43 dollars a month. You see, many young people continued on at school then because there was no chance of work. They did their nine and 10 by

correspondence, but would have never managed without a great deal of after-hour help from a teacher. Those students, you know, wrote departmental exams, and passed, but still there was no place for them in the world of work. For many of those children, the first regular paycheques that they received came from the army. But by that time I was in Africa.

Q: [00:20:10]

Uh...yes, uh... but, you know, with your, uh... terrific love of home, and that sort of thing, whatever prompted you to go so far away?

A: [00:20:18]

[chuckled] Well, by 1935, I was getting very discouraged, and I think kind of worn out. Uh...I was happy at Chater, the people were tremendous, but they were in the...in dire straits financially, and no one could see no end to the depression, and the drought, too. My uncle and aunt, from South Africa, came to Canada in 1935, and I had, with them, a holiday that took me from Quebec, where they arrived on the Queen Elizabeth, to Victoria, and back. My first big holiday, and it was a glorious holiday. My uncle visited Chater School and watched me at work, and begun to try to persuade me, that with the same expenditure of time and energy, I could advance much more rapidly in South Africa. So, I sold my insurance policy [chuckled], and I went there in 1936, and, uh...have never regretted it. [7 seconds of unintelligible muttering] early, at first, and by Kingsmead College, a private school for girls. A school with the same good reputation as Roedean and Cheltenham have in England. Children literally were registered at birth, and the value systems and moral code of the school were such, that boarders came from all over Central Africa for education. At first, I taught junior high, and later, lower elementary, and, uh...I was very happy there. I loved the clime, the outdoor life, the school, and the opportunity to teach well because the classes and the work load light, in comparison to Chater. I did volunteer work in the [unclear] and night schools to, uh... really occupy all my time.

Q: [00:22:02]

How long did you stay in, uh...Africa, Betty?

A: [00:22:05]

Well, 10 years, but that was partly due to the fact that I couldn't get home...because of the war, of course. And my happiness there was tempered by separation from my family. So, as soon as the war was over, I hounded shipping offices until I got a berth on the “Marine Tiger”, a refugee ship sent to bring home Americans, and a few aliens like myself.

Q: [00:22:28]

Uh...would you care to comment on the journey?

A: [00:22:31]

[laughed] No, not really. That's unless you have an extra hour and are prepared to hear some sad stories and some caustic comments. May I never have another such voyage. But it got me home, three weeks from Cape Town to New York.

Q: [00:22:46]

Uh...did you have any trouble getting back into the Manitoba system upon your return?

A: [00:22:51]

Oh, no! Oh, no. A few teachers trained during the war. The Brandon Normal School had bee taken over by the military, and Brandon was looking for teachers, and most rural areas were happy if they, uh... just if they could secure a permit teacher. I was placed in King George the Easter after I came home, uh... transferred to [unclear] that September for two years, and then sent to Fleming School by Mr Neelin as principal when Edith Wood resigned.

Q: [00:23:19]

Yes, I remember you at principals' meetings when Mr. [unclear] use to say, uh...”Gentlemen, and, uh... Ms. Gibson.” Did you enjoy the [unclear] role of woman principal?

A: [00:23:29]

[chuckled] Oh, yes! Fleming was a fine school, and they...there, in that district, they'd been use to a lady principal, so they accepted me. And, of course, I had had an administrative responsibilities at Kingsmead in Africa. The big problem there, though, was space. The post-war building boom pushed the city west and south of Fleming School, and a new building, or an addition, was a must. At one time, six of us were handling nearly 300 children, but we had a well-experienced staff. There was, I remember, Lorda Bedford, Margaret Taylor, Eleanor Richardson, Audrey Taylor, and [unclear]. Uh...we were handling classes of 45, or more, and each year, closing off the top grade, and doubling the lower grade, until the addition was finally built all around us. The first, post-war, new school. The noise, the dust, the cold and the constant relocation of classes, but finally, a 14-room school. Still no auditorium or library, but classrooms reduced to a manageable 30.

Q: [00:24:35]

Uh...how long were you principal at Fleming School?

A: [00:24:39]

Oh, eight... nine years, I guess. With 14 teachers, and a full responsibility for my own grade two class, a sports program and a period of illness and strain on my own family, I was feeling very overburdened again, so I resigned...oh, about... I don't know...just when it would be in the '60's, I guess, and I had a very exhilarating and happy year in the new George Fitton School. That was near my home, and only my own class to worry about. I tried out all sorts of projects and group work, and was once more able to teach thoroughly. I remember I enjoyed the student teachers from the newly-opened TTC facilities at Brandon College. I found them extremely useful, that's the students of course, and was excited about trying to help them. I often used to wish, in that year, that I was involved in teacher training, filling some of the gaps that I saw in their courses. And then the opportunity came. Dr. Evans asked Brandon School Board to release me, to go to Brandon College in teacher training. [unclear] and gave me permission to go, but jointly we agreed that I should take leave rather than resign, and this I did. Somehow, in teacher training,

I felt that I had something to offer, and...and some ideas about how to answer it. But, of course, academically, I was not qualified to work in the university, or even college, as it was then. However, three years of going to summer school, three years of taking a full academic year in addition to teaching, and four summers at Harvard University, gave me the necessary letters behind my name. In the mean time, I'd had a wonderful experience helping young people qualify for teaching. Uh... you know, in the early years, one could help them to be ready for the particular first job they were going to get, as students were hired as early as January. Student teaching was always exciting, as one travelled all over Western Manitoba, and frequently met ex-students now teaching successfully. I loved those years. I left Brandon College to do the same kind of work at the University of Saskatchewan, in Saskatoon. I enjoyed the larger campus and being the first woman hired in education. There was a need for someone with primary experience, so I felt useful, and I became quite involved with the school system in Saskatoon, too. However, my mother became critically ill and I knew that my place was at home. So, when [name unclear] phoned and asked me to come back as primary supervisor, or as principal of J.R. Reid School, I gave him his choice and came back to Brandon about 1962 as the first primary supervisor. Those were exciting days, because the divisions were forming, new curricula were...were the order of the day, and...and the baby boomers had hit the elementary class rooms, and the Department of Education was changing its role and pouring money into education.

Q: [00:27:42]

I remember you as primary supervisor, we male principals were very happy that we had someone who really understood primary children and primary teachers. Perhaps the decade, the '60's, marked the beginning of the recognition of the importance of the primary grades.

A: [00:27:58]

Yes, you're right. Heretofore it seemed that high schools were in favour, and given the best educated

and the best trained teachers. But ever since that first Canadian Conference on Education, that one that was held in Montreal in the early '60's, importance of the early years came to be recognized. For a few years, we were able to keep the enrollments in grade one and two down to a workable number, often twenty-five. Better trained teachers were available, and, over the next 15 years, improved reading series, extensive and inservice programs and dedicated supervision resulted in a good primary program. Because most schools had at least two, probably three, grade one classed, there was a flexibility that made it relatively simple to provide for individual differences, and the smooth running, of a four-year primary program for those who needed it.

[00:01:48 of Silence]

[End of Side A]

[Beginning of Side B]

Q: [00:30:42]

Uh, Betty, did you miss the work at the 'U'? It seems you were so happy there.

A: [00:30:46]

Well, you know, I was lucky again. Um... you see, teachers with a Master's Degree in 'Early Childhood' were very hard to find at that particular time, so the university bought two half days of my time from the school board. So I taught Monday morning and Wednesday afternoon, uh...just primary of course, over in the university. And I was very content with that, because i met all the students, uh...the ones who were especially keen on little children were in the classes I taught. Um...I observed those who seemed to have what it takes to teach primary children, and I checked on their field experience, and then I hired the outstanding ones if they applied to Brandon School Division. I...I even alerted other divisions to promising people who were wishing to settle in other areas. You know, even Winnipeg and the suburbs reached out for our graduates, and having hired young teachers and experienced teachers as well, of course it was my job to see that they were able to settle into the city system comfortably, and to do a good job. I highly

recommend this close cooperation between Brandon School Division and Brandon University.

Q: [00:31:52]

Uh...my recollection of you at this time was that of a very, very busy person, who honoured her commitments and met her appointments. Have you any idea how many inservice sessions you handled?

A: [00:32:04]

Oh, no. I don't think I could really tell. Um...well, perhaps 20 -30 a year, at least, and then three or four curriculum a month, with the Department of Education to help develop new curricula in language Arts and Math. Uh...I also found 10, 14 days perhaps, in which I could...that I could use to go to Russia and see their school systems. I was impressed by their pre-schools, but I did not want to introduce here anything that I saw going on in their early grades.

Q: [00:32:39]

Uh...what about, uh...the films and television series you produced under the direction of Miss Gertrude McCance?

A: [00:32:46]

Oh, yeah. There was only one film, of course. We made that at Linden Lanes School. But there were two s... two television series on reading,uh..."Common Sense About Reading", I think they were called. Uh... there were about 15 or 16 programs in all. Uh...that work was exciting, but it was very demanding, in fact, it was plain exhausting. You may remember that I used some children from Fleming, your school then. Uh...we would leave Brandon about 6:30 in the morning, my station wagon loaded with excited children, get to the CBC and work all day, and start home at five or six p.m. I encouraged the children to try to sleep on the way home, but [sigh], they were wider awake then I was, and I listened to more corny jokes and riddles, uh...on those trips home, than I've ever heard before.

Q: [00:33:38]

Hey, you know, Betty, uh...as we, uh...uh...plunge into getting new things in education, sometimes we

forget about the good things in the past. Are we ever likely to see your TV programs as reruns?

A: [00:33:53]

Oh, well, most of them ran twice, uh...but the video tapes are in the Brandon Film Library. But, you know, they're probably getting out of date now.

Q: [00:34:05]

Uh... you left the Brandon School Division and went to the university part-time.

A: [00:34:11]

Oh, yes, yes that was my first retirement. See, I was beginning to feel the pressure again, and actually rapidly approaching 60, so I just felt I had to ease off a little.

Q: [00:34:24]

And did you?

A: [00:34:25]

Uh...well [chuckled], to a degree. But I became deeply involved in the Native Teacher projects, Buntep, Pent, and Impact, so I found myself teaching extra classes during the term, and I worked most intercessions and summers. Uh...you see, those programs gave me an opportunity to fly into most of the Indian reserves, where Buntep was active, of course. A tremendous privilege, but the work was hard, and the travelling was tiring at my age. And at this time I was also deeply involved in the [unclear] programs, a program where regular students spent almost half their time, under supervision of course, uh...in the Brandon schools. I liked that program. But by 1975, I determined that I could, and should, retire [chuckled]. So, very, very reluctantly, I gave in my resignation, after 47 years of teaching.

Q: [00:35:19]

I know you will never tell me the honours that were heaped upon you at your retirement, so I'm going to list them for the listeners. First of all, there was the Centennial Medal for contribution to,uh...your contribution to education. And then there was the Phi Lambda Theta prize, uh...at Harvard, for the top

student award. Then, I recall, the life membership in the Manitoba Teacher Society for [Ms. Gibson chuckles] outstanding contributions to that,uh...organization. And then, uh...you were the first to step in, as I recall, to the John M. Brown Award for Excellence in education...

A: [00:35:57]

Oh, yes, yes, yes, yes I...enjoyed receiving that

Q: [00:35:59]

...and of course, the icing on the cake was, uh...when you were awarded the honorary degree, Doctor of Liberal Laws, by, uh...your alma mater, Brandon University.

A: [00:36:10]

[silently] Yes.

Q: [00:36:11]

Oh yes, but then there was the equally, uh...wonderful thing on the new school on the old Alexander School grounds was named the “Betty Gibson School”.

A: [00:36:23]

Uh...yes, but you must remember that in a little pond, it's easy to be a big toad [chuckled]. Uh...but those last to awards, they really did overwhelm me.

Q: [00:36:33

Well, some folks say you have been busier since retirement than before, is that right?

A: [0036:39]

um, yes, in a way, but just—just doing what I felt like doing. You see, the Children's Aid Society was kind of standing in the wings, waiting for me to retire, uh...so that I could organize for them the observation nursery at Crocus Plains, and I did that for, oh, maybe four to five years, and enjoyed it very much. I also continued with the Buntep program, uh...which meant teac...and I taught night school and some extension classes, but only the ones I wanted to [chuckled]. And I worked as a field officer for several

months for the Department of Education. But, the most energy-consuming project was the writing of "Early Childhood: A Time for Learning, A Time for Joy". Uh, this...that's a textbook, uh...really I suppose I should call it a guidebook, for teachers of—of early childhood. And I did inservice, to introduce this book, and taught two summer sessions in Dauphin and St. Boniface, based on the textbook, and then I decided that...this was the time to stop. And don't think that my retirement was work and no play, either. I—I squeezed in many holidays, including trips back to Europe, uh...to Africa, to the Orient, to California. But, from now on, from—from just this, the beginning of the school year, uh...I'm determined that my life's gonna be all holiday and, uh....no work, well, not much anyway, only just what I really truly want to do [chuckled].

Q: [00:38:03]

Well, Betty, you have earned it, and I'm sure that you're going to have to prove to us that you are going to take your retirement [Ms. Gibson chuckles] because we can't believe that you will do it. Uh...thank you from the bottom of my heart, Betty, for having giving me the honour and the pleasure of taping this edition to the growing electronic library of, uh..."Voices of Yesteryear". Without the cooperation of citizens such as you, much of the lore and educational life of this community would be lost over the next few decades. Your work in education has been most commendable, as shown in the before-mentioned honours bestowed upon you, especially through the conferring of your doctorate by your alma mater, and the naming of a jewel in the Brandon Division School System. I would be remissed if I failed to convey to you the feelings of the teachers and principals, with whom worked so untiringly over a number of decades, as teachers, principal, assistant superintendent, and as a member of the faculty of education here. As though that were not enough, you still found time to share your extensive, professional knowledge through Manitoba Teacher Society commitees, ministers' commitees of the Department of Education, and in-and-out-of-province seminars. Yours has indeed been a splendid contribution to the education of Western Canada. Now that you are retired, you're daily finding new avenues of

expressioning your favourite area, service to humanity, and we wish you well in the future. May God grant you an eternity to complete the goals you have chosen so well.

A: [00:39:37]

Well, it has certainly been a great privilege to be able to spend most of my life working in this city. Brandon is an easy place to make friends, and teaching is a very satisfying profession. Thank you, Irv, for spending all this time allowing me to reminisce. Certainly I enjoyed it.

Q: [00:39:53]

Uh, this is Irving Bateman, recorder.

[00:40:00]

[End of Side B]

[End of Tape]