

Westman Oral History Collection

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Narrator (interviewee):	Lewis Mathie
Interviewer:	Elwood Gorrie
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[Beginning of Tape/Side A]

[00:00:05]

Today is March 30th, 1982. The following is an interview with Lewis Mathie at his home in Brandon, Manitoba. Born in Carberry, Manitoba, Mr. Mathie moved at an early age to Brandon and has resided in this city ever since. Early in his life he apprenticed in Hartney, Manitoba and learned his trade while moving later to Brandon. We hope during this interview with Mr. Mathie to gather his impressions of a long and great career in the newspaper business. The interview will be conducted by Elwood Gorrie for the Westman Oral History Association Project "Voices of Yesteryear".

[00:01:15]

It's significant that on this morning, March 30th, it's a dull dreary day outside. And something else very significant when we are talking now to folks who are going to reminisce on the wonderful things of long ago, that a few moments ago the third space shuttle landed safely. Which shows us how things are going today and now we want to get into our interview with Mr. Mathie. And we are joined also by Mrs. Mathie to reminisce about pers- their personal life.

Question: [00:01:54]

Mr. Mathie, I would like you to first go back to where you started, where you were born, where your folks come from. Just give me some idea of your personal life.

Answer: [00:02:05]

Well, as in your [unclear], you stated that I was born in Carberry and at a-a infant age we moved to uh Brandon because there was really nothing, no work of any kind for my father to get in Carberry at that time. So we came there and originally the flats was a-a place where most of Brandon was situated until the floods caused them to move to higher land. And uh we had several different locations in Brandon. Uhm I believe my father was able to get uh work erm with a – first with the farmers in

the fall and odd jobs, like painting. And as for my older brothers, they were able to get different jobs and work that enabled the family to have enough income to survive! Which was something in those early days because money was really very scarce and eh as for my uh myself, I had to uh take whatever jobs I could get, and I moved from one to another until the opportunity, as mentioned on the [unclear] came, That I was able to go and learn the printing with my uncle [unclear] in Hartney.

Q: [00:03:34]

I'm going back uh Mr. Mathie, to Carberry and why your parents settled there, as you say, many many years ago. Where did they come from?

A: [00:03:43]

Well my father yarned[?] the big rush to come out to the uh this district because my grandfather had come up by steam boat along the red river and uh had started the pilot mound centinal[?]. And my uncle [unclear] had preceded him and had started the uh settlement their with another chap. He and another chap uh-uh had come out and surveyed the country and decided that-that the soil their and everything would allow the people that were finding it difficult to get proper farming land and so on, might well come out here and do exceedingly well.

Q: [00:04:27]

What year are we talking about now?

A: [00:04:28]

These are the early eighties. Yes, because my grandfather died in the year I was born. And uh he had been out here then a number of years and he had been e-editor of the Paisley Advocate down in Ontario before he came out here.

Q: [00:04:48]

So your newspaper uh career was right in your blood right from your grandfather?

A: [00:04:53]

Apparently it was, yes. It uh was. And uh-uh when my father came out he thought that well the land is so good and everybody was getting land that he went and uh took a quarter section too. But, about the first day I think out in the solitude away from the city was enough and with-before the week was out he had gone to Carberry to find work. And had left my mother with the kids the uh three young sons in the log cabin with a sawed roof - which by the way was not exactly water proof! But uh she had a cow and some chickens, which had been donated by the relatives, and she was getting by in a-in a sense. And uh there was one or two of the stories she told of her early life there. One

was when the old Indian chief landed in with two or three of his brave and just walked in and sat down on the floor, looked up. She new they expected tea and whatever you could offer them, so she give them this and uh he got up and just nodded his thanks and nothing more and walked out. And she was very glad to see him go cause she was rather nervous being all alone with these children but low and behold a calf they had lost three or four days ago suddenly reappeared with two of his braves following it back. He had found it and because she had treated him there he returned the calf to her. How'd they bring this calf back? Because she was the only one in the vicinity and she had a cow.

Q: [00:06:34]

So alas the Indians weren't going to scalp you in those days, then?

A: [00:06:37]

Oh No! They were very honest in those days. They uh would take nothing, they would theft nothing, you could leave anything lying around and they wouldn't take anything.

Q: [00:06:46]

You had mentioned the- just the remark a while ago "older brother and sisters", how many of you were in your family?

A: [00:06:51]

Well there was eight altogether. Although a younger uh the one next to me uh died as a result of an accident and he was younger than me, and he died very suddenly.

Q: [00:07:03]

So it was a big family to be in Carberry with and you're one of the youngest then you say Mr. Mathie?

A: [00:07:07]

Pardon?

Q: [00:07:08]

Are you one of the youngest?

A: [00:07:09]

No, no I was the uh the fourth boy, yes. So, we came to Brandon and uh we've been here ever since [let's out a small chuckle] and I-I like Brando, I think it's a wonderful little city.

Q: [00:07:25]

Well you're, as we know, celebrating our cennteniel[?] this year, a hundred years of Brandon, and you arrived on the scene about eight years after the Brandon became a city, where it became an incorporated village I guess we'll call it. It's uh significant too that uh people seem to congregate in Brandon or thought

Brandon was, so you didn't move to the so called Grand Valley location, Brandon had already settled in the -

A: [00:07:53]

We were there very briefly because my mother didn't care for it, didn't think it was as healthy so we moved up to what is called in those days the Johnston estate. You heard of that of course. And uh we moved up there and that time there was about one or maybe two houses to a block, once you got above victoria avenue. In front of us there were the [unclear] and the [unclear]. Yes and they extended on down to the college in this series. The old mufflers used them apparently to roll in and get away from the mosquito's, so then the Laidlaws[?] were over on the uh just a block on over from us up on the corner then there was a two or three well to do lawyers who lived down below us. And below them rather on the opposite side of the street and uh one or two others so we went to the old uh two room school- I went to the old two room school down the uhm West ward, now it wasn't then.

Q: [00:09:06]

And where would that be located Mr. Mathie?

A: [00:09:07]

Oh that was the old Park School that was just pulled down.

Q: [00:09:10]

Is it?

A: [00:9:11]

Yeah it's just destroyed.

A: Mrs. Mathie [00:9:13]

No, on tenth street.

A: [00:09:15]

Oh I- Oh the first school I went to was on tenth street.

Q: [00:09:17]

Yes, I thought uh, the reason I bring that out, there was a school where the [unclear] Alexander block or thereabouts.

A: [00:09:23]

Well I went to that one first. But I –I got rambling on. But I did, I started school down on tenth street and uh where the [unclear] block and all the other buildings are now, that was our playground.

Q: [00:09:39]

Oh, I see, there was a-

A: [00:09:40]

And there was a [unclear] rink finally built up in the corner.

Q: [00:09:43]

Yes, I've heard of that old rink, it was good.

A: [00:09:47]

And that was built up on the corner there. So uh, but then, finally I went over to uh the central school. Well then this other school was built later on, as the demand for rurals in the west they had to build another school to accommodate the children because we were walking all the way over from 14th street to the central school. And the old central school was uh, well it was really not modern and many respects. The uh- the sanitation was the original one that the settlers had. You went out in the-

Q: [00:10:27]

Out in the cold?

A: [00:10:28]

In a line from your back door out in the winter time through the storm unless you had otherwise provided. [unclear]

Q: [00:10:35]

Ah Central school was served a long time and was only torn down not too long – like my children, who are quite young went to central school. So it served this community well.

A: [00:10:45]

Yeah, well I went there until finally they had this other school built and uh I was transferred over there.

Q: [00:10:53]

That's where you, the Park school.

A: [00:10:54]

The park school, yes.

Q: [00:10:55]

And uh you obtained the magnificent grade of about?

A: [00:11:01]

Grade eight. Ms. [unclear] was our teacher and uh I made the mistake one time of getting kind of carried away when she, we had to right this little story about oh the woods or one thing or another like that, which I liked doing and all that, so I wrote this story and after that I- she would pick on me that I had to write this. And at the same time – Oh I hadn't better get into all that personal stuff.

Q: [00:11:30]

Oh this is nice, no we like to hear these things.

A: [00:11:31]

We had music teachers in those days and they would come around with their pitch pipe and we gave us the music lessons and so on. Uhh and I would forget myself every once and a while and start hollering away and the result was and we formed a quartette and I had to sing base and it was just sweet and low.

And we had to go around then when we satisfied her uh we were sent around to the different ah rooms in the school and when she found out that there pretty well received she had us go to one of the other schools. I didn't want to sing after that because you really get kind of tired of it.

Q: [00:12:13]

Must have been quite the base when you would have been about eight years old or ten?

A: [00:12:17]

Oh I was older than that because illness, through illness and so on, I had lost two years.

Q: [00:12:23]

Oh, I see.

A: [00:12:24]

Through illness that I could-couldn't go to school.

Q: [00:12:26]

Yeah I was kind of curious how a boys soprano would be much of a base.

A: [00:12:30]

Oh well, I-I developed a heavy voice fairly early. In fact when I was sixteen and at the same weight as my dad, 160 pounds. Same weight as I am now.

Q: [00:12:42]

So you finished school or finished your- which at that time as I have heard, was a fairly-

A: [00:12:48]

A business education.

Q: [00:12:49]

Yes that's what uh most- Then uh just to review your time in Brandon, you will go back to the career later. But you uh you went over seas, uh dave, in 1914?

A: [00:13:02]

Yeah, not in '14, because that was the time that all these young Englishmen and elderly ones that were at the sun office, they all left and left us short handed and I had signed with the Fort Gary Horse of all people and I never ridden a horse. But I had the idea that I'd like to learn. Well, J.B. come around and he says uh 'would you stay on' he says 'if I can uh, until I can get some help' so I said well I don't know if I can because I had been listed. And I said it doesn't matter whether I go to this Fort Gary Horse now or not, I pledged that I will enlist and whether they'll accept me. So fine, fine he said. He had a lot of pull and uh he just phoned and they said oh it doesn't matter to us whether he joins us or goes somewhere other unit and uh that's fine. I

stayed on, and it dragged on and couldn't get anybody so I thought of this chap in Hartney, a young married man, a very fine chap, family. Now [unclear] for draft round and I suggested him. And uh they contacted him and came took my job so the 181st by that time were joining and a lot of my friends were joining. And I knew the [unclear] quite well because they were right next to us there and so I joined up of the 181st and the dave [unclear] the finally got to be cornel, at least he was, no it- not at that time maybe did become cornel, yes. He did become cornel, yes, but he uh gave me a stripe, which I was particularly fond of although it saved me once or twice from rather honored its duties, but I took it.

Q: [00:14:54]

Now this uh you mentioned Mr. Bulbeer[?], is this the one who subsequently became the member of parliament?

A: [00:15:00]

Dave, Dave Bulbeer[?] was a uh-

Q: [00:15:05]

Well there was a Bulbeer[?] in member of parliament before Dave Mathews-

A: [00:15:09]

Yeah, that-that would be, he became left leutenant[?] anyways.

Q: [00:15:13]

Now you went to uh it wasn't shilo then, was it?

A: [00:15:18]

Yes, it was camp hughes[?] went to and uh that was a dust bowl. You could hardly eat a meal there unless you were fond of a little bit of sand in your, to help your digestion.

Q: [00:15:30]

Yes, I've seen pictures of the tent city that you had there, that was quite a set up.

A: [00:15:35]

Yes, well of course we finally got over to [unclear]. There again I was all set to go over in the draft til the fifty-second. And uh they discovered that I was the only uh MCO they had left and so this old uh non-commissions officer, was an old sargent major, and uh he pulled me out. He says 'I'll have to keep you a little longer, Mathie' He pointed 'cause I haven't got any MCO's left if you go'. So I was pulled out and held a little longer in England, yes. So I finally got over anyway.

Q: [00:16:14]

So you were away for a time and then back to Brandon?

A: [00:16:17]

Oh I got there in time for the last big scrap there.

Q: [00:16:19]

Oh, did you? Good. And you came back to Brandon then in 1919?

A: [00:16:28]

It was 19- early in 1919, wasn't it Rose?

A: (Mrs. Mathie) [00:16:30]

Before June, because it was the year when the strike was on.

A: [00:16:34]

Yes, the strike was on and I remember that very well because I was taking this young chap who had preceded me back, and uh had taken advantage of a land offer the government was giving and left. So I got the position down in the news room and uh I remember it very well because one of the red strike breakers came on around and could he have permissions to speak and look for him and he said yes he could and he landed on me because I was quite close and he come in and 'justice is ceased to serve' he said 'justice is ceased' he says. I said it must be when they let somebody like you rave around like that.

Q: [00:17:19]

Yeah that was a sad dismal item in our history. I guess uh you didn't uh find yourself a war bride, did you know Rose before you went over seas?

A: [00:17:28]

Oh, no no.. no no.

Q: [00:17:33]

So you're lucky he didn't pick one of them up, huh Rose? He came back and found you.

(laughter from all three involved in the interview)

A: [00:17:41]

No, uh so.

Q: [00:17:42]

I don't think that was quite as common in the second world war though.

A: [00:17:44]

No, that was more so in the common war I believe.

Q: [00:17:48]

Yes, I believe.

A: [00:17:50]

Because so many were employed. Do you know when we went over to France and were billeted in little villages, the only people there were people too old to serve in any branch of the service.

Q: [00:18:02]

They'd recruited everybody?

A: [00:18:04]

Everybody who was young enough or were still able to, were in some form of the service.

Q: [00:18:11]

So, you came back and uh your family, well you were married in 1926 and uh your boys I suppose uh grew up in Brandon? Took their education to some point here, did they?

A: [00:18:24]

Well, I wasn't getting big enough actually to put them through school. But Rose demanded that they have an education and uh she went out nursing as well as looking out for us.

A: (Mrs. Mathie) [00:18:37]

Well nurses started in 19- they called the nurses back to work in 1940. You know?

Q: [00:18:45]

Yes, I recall.

A: [00:18:47]

But uh she, never the less, she went out and she worked and worked hard and she kept us in and ironed all our shirts and all and cooked for us and everything else for us as well.

Q: [00:19:00]

And uh this was in your- your home in the east end before you moved into this suite?

A: [00:19:04]

Yes, yeah.

Q: [00:19:06]

You mentioned the other day quite a large lot.

A: [00:19:08]

We had, yes.

Q: [00:19:10]

That was your family home until you came into this suite.

A: [00:19:13]

Correct. Until Rose had her [unclear].

Q: [00:19:16]

Well that's very nice. You've had uh great life together and uh I'm sure you'll carry on a lot more.

A: [00:19:25]

Yeah, we're hoping so. The boys were both, have both done well and uh Lewis is an accountant in a Doctors office in Winnipeg University, runs a business office for them. Frank is the Mechanical Engineer down in [unclear] where they have that nuclear plant. But he uh resigned from the nuclear plant and uh

they finally, they didn't want to see him go, apparently he- he quit. He wrote a letter of resignation because he got fed up with the red tapes since the government had taken it over and he got tired of it, spending more time writing answers in this red tape than doing business. So he just wrote in his resignation and uh but they gave him a job in one of the plants for the- supplied the water for the nuclear plant. Because he is a mechanical engineer.

Q: [00:20:19]

Well, I think that's one of the satisfactions, isn't it? To see the family doing well and coming along.

A: [00:20:26]

That is real, real good.

Q: [00:20:27]

Now, certainly this is very interesting and uh your pioneer days and your folks and the- I think we tend to forget how things were back in 1890.

A: [00:20:38]

There's one thing that has never been mentioned that's a par- and that was the way that people were friends in those days. Because I have heard my mother speak about the real early days and there was almost no border between us and the states

and if somebody moved in, travel or [unclear] and a woman with maybe three or four children, and they would pull in, the neighbors would all pile in to see just what state they were in and the ladies would take over and they would have brought baking and uh cooking and they would start in and tidy up and they washed and cleaned the children and put them all to bed and let her rest. There was real neighborliness and it was the same when I was a youngster.

Q: [00:21:25]

Yes, I think it's something that I guess disappears a little with size and the modern world isn't quite that way. I guess it became everybody was pretty well interdependent on one another eh?

A: [00:21:35]

We were. And uh you could depend on the neighbors absolutely. They would come right to your aid. There wasn't any question about it.

Q: [00:21:44]

No, no they wouldn't hesitate.

A: [00:21:45]

No.

Q: [00:21:47]

Well that's uh-uh. Well you've done pretty, we've talked-touched a little, Mr. Mathie, on your early years and uh you came to the city, to Brandon, when you were less than a year old. You got your, then, adequate education, grade eight. And I guess you just more or less aroused about until I think uh you got your first opportunity to get into the news paper business.

A: [00:22:14]

Correct. Do you not think that life is an education?

Q: [00:22:19]

The best one.

A: [00:22:21]

If you never cease going to school as long as you live, you learn whether you benefit or not by it. You still- it's there whether you live to benefit or lose, you still are going to school.

Q: [00:22:35]

Always.

A: [00:22:36]

Yes, I [unclear]

Q: [00:22:38]

So you got an opportunity finally to go out to Hartney. Perhaps tell me that experience.

A: [00:22:45]

Well.. huh huh uh you mean the mistake that I made in my printing haha?

Q: [00:22:52]

Well hah, no. Just the- how this came about. You had the relative there-

A: [00:22:56]

Well, yeah, they uh they had a young chap there learning printing because he was going to go up west and start a local newspaper of his own and he uh qualified finally to move out on his own and his family were well enough to do to set him up. So then, they needed somebody to go in. Now in those days the old uh press that they ran the paper off, my aunt fed the sheets in one at a time and it was run by muscle power. And at that time I was a pretty husky lad because I could still pick up a barrel of salt or sugar and so on that are 300 pounds or so on and uh when I went out they thought that well at least I would be able

to run the papers through for them, but I- I was qualified anyway, my aunt said I was doing very well and my uncle wanted me to study uh writing. He asked me to write one or two little things and I wrote them. He said 'you know, you should write a little each day' he says 'you must write something everyday and keep increasing it the same you would anything else if you want to build up real proficiency'. Well, I didn't do that because I had quite a long day. I would be over there at six o'clock in the morning to light the fire because it was cool, then go back home for breakfast and then I would work until everything was all cleaned up and in ship shape before I would go home at night. Sometimes it would be seven o'clock at night before I would get out of the office. And by the time you had cleaned up all the ink off the rollers and all the rest of the work that went with it.

Q: [00:24:40]

You would be an apprentice as they call it. People don't uh really understand that term anymore. But you were uh an apprentice and I don't believe you got anything- you didn't get very well paid.

A: [00:24:51]

No, no uh I got a real good board and my horsing done and uh fortunately I was the size that some of the cast off that my brothers and so on fairly well. So the- I didn't of course have time or as I- even the explanation to move around to much in society because they kept me busy enough. They believed that uh work didn't hurt anybody so I was kept fairly busy with one thing or another but uh I was well treated. I will- I will say that I was considerably treated otherwise. And the money, well that was a scarce commodity.

Q: [00:25:36]

I wonder, how did you go to Hartney at that time? Were the railways-

A: [00:25:39]

The railways, yes. A branch line, yes.

Q: [00:25:44]

I wondered about that.

A: [00:25:46]

Yes, there was a branch line that ran there.

Q: [00:25:51]

Because that's some seventy to eighty miles from here I think.

A: [00:25:53]

Yes...

Q: [00:25:55]

Now was that uh, that would be a weekly paper, would it uh?

A: [00:26:01]

Yes, yes.

Q: [00:26:04]

And did that- at that time, did they advertise uh like they do now?

A: [00:26:08]

Oh yes! And he was uh of [unclear] Murdock[?], he was advanced and his ideas and his form of-of typography, he was a great admirer of Albert Hubbard[?]. You have read of him, no doubt. He was a kind of a magnostic I believe, Albert Hubbard. Remember he was finally sunken that ship over off Ireland when the Germans sent [unclear]. But he turned out some literature and uh my uncle subscribed to it. And it was beautifully printed and uh a lot of his readings I admired myself. But uh they were kept very secret. They were- not everybody could handle those. But uh, he did and he kept up and he was able to display everything very nicely and at that time they thought the more ornate you could make an advertisement the better it was. Or the fancier the type and the more little fandangles around the type the better it was. But not, not [unclear], he got a nice face

of type, clean, but good well shaped, easily readable type and he had uh displayed the proper uh headings, signatures, the body matter wasn't subdued by a lot of rules and different things like that, so that uh his paper was held up as a model for the other papers to copy at that time.

Q: [00:27:47]

He apparently was a really ahead of his time because nowadays advertising is to get you the message, It is not to be cluttered too much with things that don't matter.

A: [00:27:58]

Yes, he followed the rule that type was made to-to read. That should be the printers read.

Q: [00:28:07]

I'm interested also in the papers, such as the Hartney- what did they call it?

A: [00:28:12]

The Hartney Star

Q: [00:28:13]

The Hartney Star. Now uh if you subscribed, did they have- uh did you subscribe to that paper and take it by the month, by the year or did you just sell it in store?

A: [00:28:25]

Well, you could take it by the month or by the year, yes.

Q: [00:28:29]

Would you remember how much it would cost you to buy it for a month?

A: [00:28:33]

Well you know I do not remember what their price was. I wasn't interested even at that time, no.

Q: [00:28:41]

Probably not very much. If it was any better than your wages, then it would be too much.

A: [00:28:47]

No uh the uh past time in the winter of course was skating, I would go to the rink. I had enough money to come home and so on to go skating. And I would skate and skate from the time it started to the time I got kicked off the ice and that was the only recreation I had then.

Q: [00:29:05]

They'd have an open rink? They didn't have a rink by there.

A: [00:29:07]

Oh they had a closed rink at that time, yes. And they would have once in a while they would have a couple musicians. It was oh,

quite advanced in some ways, yes. And there were quite a- quite a fine community of people there.

Q: [00:29:26]

You had a little shoulder in the political arena while you were there, I understand. You wrote some articles that embarrassed the local political community a little?

A: [00:29:37]

That uhm...

(overlap message on tape)

Q: [00:29:48]

The year is 1910 in Hartney, Manitoba. We pause briefly now while Mr. Mathie gathers his thoughts about his political embarrassment to the community...

A: [00:30:40]

Well I was very busy setting the obituary of a uh very important political figure and he had been very uh much an advocance every time there was an election. In fact he did quite a bit of the front page of the star and [unclear] his views to the public. And uh on this occasion the- uh I had uh reached the point where uh the uh obituary read and [unclear sentence]. Now I was listening to uh out of one ear to what my aunt and my uncle were saying about the gentlemen because they had had some great

discussions with him in the past right in the office and instead of following the cardinal rule that a printer must always do of reread whatever you said, instead of putting in the uh what the obituary had called for by the paper had come out reading that he had been laid to rest to awaken next general election. And unfortunately some of his oponents got a number of the issues and uh under no way could they be recalled and they were passed around very handfully and before they were- we could not get them back again. And uh the result was that the relatives and friends all stormed into the office and then I was the subject of debate and I had taken the- put the copy on the wrong print. I had put it on the one that was supposed to have been read and I had to take the blame. But I, from the red faces of my uncle and aunt and the way they charcoled and uh so on, I came to the conclusion that I had put it on the right hook to begin with, but it appealed to them somewhat because they really believed that an editor should give the people of the town to rouse 'em and get them talking and get them interested, and he frequently did.

Q: [00:32:53]

So you became rather famous over night then?

A: [00:32:55]

Infamous would be a better word hah.

Q: [00:32:59]

Well politics in those days was a serious business, wasn't it?

A: [00:33:01]

Oh it really was, yes. Everybody took it very much to heart.

Q: [00:33:08]

Was your paper political back then?

A: [00:33:10]

No, no we really did not have any political meanings at all, no.

Q: [00:33:18]

But you might have got some after this haha?

A: [00:33:22]

No he didn't.

Q: [00:33:23]

That's uh, that is an interesting story. Uh well, how did you come to Brandon? What got you to Brandon from Hartney?

A: [00:33:32]

Well uh I finally reached the point where uh my aunt told me that she thought that I had to make a great satisfactory promise.

That was really what I was waiting for and uh my mother had died in 1910 so I decided that I was- in January I think it was-

and I decided that uh I was really very home sick and so I told them I would like to go back. While in the mean time I had been turning this big press by hand and oh they were very much opposed to it. They said 'no, no Lewis we intend to set you up in your own printing office. We'll start you in a little town in your own printing office' and even that didn't appeal to me. It should have, but it didn't. And uh I finally, though I couldn't get them to agree that I would come back, I told them that I was leaving and I would be and so on and I finally packed up and left and then I phoned them and told them that it was through. I was staying in Brandon and they had to put a tower- uh a little engine in and belts in and a shaft and run their press by power.

Q: [00:34:57]

You were replaced by electricity or no, it wouldn't be electricity-

A: [00:35:01]

Gasoline. A little gasoline engine, Yes.

Q: [00:35:03]

You didn't realize that you could be replaced by a gasoline engine?

A: [00:35:07]

Well haha oh well I wasn't worried about what they did, really.

Q: [00:35:11]

So you came to Brandon. Did you- you had nothing

A: [00:35:16]

No I had nothing of mine. But I went down and looked around and there wasn't any opening at that time except over in Thorton and [unclear]. And they had direct court printing office doing job work. But they were very uh [unclear] to Sunday school super intendants. And they spent most of their time on open arguments relating to the same. So I had a great deal of work to do. Both press work and other, as well as the setting composition as well. So I had an agreement when I went in that if I was satisfactory that in one years time that I would get an increase of pay. Mr. Thorton was acting as that part for the office and said yes-yes if you are satisfactory, in one years time we will give you a pay that- an increase in pay that would be suitable to you.

Q: [00:36:12]

What was your present salary?

A: [00:36:14]

Oh I think this was around four other or to five dollars, something like that, which is a lot of money to me at that time, yes.

Q: [00:36:23]

Wouldn't be very much today.

A: [00:36:24]

No, ha ha no.

Q: [00:36:27]

So they promised you a raise in a year?

A: [00:36:28]

Yes, but when the year was up I went to him and he was most astounded. He couldn't recollect any such conversation and surely I was mistaken and the real reason I think was because he had been so poor in his billing and his collections that they were running pretty fine to the wire. Well that's alright and I gave them a weeks notice and I went out and I looked around. I had been sent over there on several occasions to the times office to help them get the paper up. And the chester that used to go over and give them a hand said oh, he said Mathie can the type just as fast as I can. So he says he will do alright. He sent me over. So I met Elliot, and Elliot uh said I was all right and passed and every time I went over and he agreed that my work was suitable and I thought I would go over seas and a chance to work. Yes he said you can come right in he says, he says the people we have here don't know when to punch that time clock

and he says they will not do a days work. Now he said you're hired. I said when do I start and he said you start tomorrow morning. So I did. And then shortly after that there was an opening at the sun office for him to go as formen of the job printing office. So he went down there and uh oh about a year elapsed and uh I came in about ten minutes late, the first person there of the staff. And uh Mr. King was there looking not at all pleased. Well he says you're first one of the staff here and you are late just like the rest of them he said now about uh how bout you make some overtime to make this up and I said I will. And I said uh how bout you paying us a little more promptly I said, I said you know you give us a couple of dollars now and again and tell us just to keep the nettle away because you kinda give us the full pay. I said uh how bout trying and doing a little better yourself. Well he came around later and apologized and no I said I am quitting. So I did. And uh in those days if you quit a job or were fired, it was very hard to find acceptance of another position.

Q: [00:39:00]

Everybody knew everybody else.

A: [00:39:01]

Yes, yes and they would say 'where did you work last? Were you fired? Did you quit?' Either one and now they didn't want you.

But Elliot knew me and I went down and I told him what had happened quite honestly and he said 'I know' he says 'I quit because I had to earn enough money to keep my family'. So yes he says 'you're hired and you can start next Monday'.

Q: [00:39:27]

So that's uh when you started with the Sun. That would be about 19-

A: [00:39:31]

That would be about 1911. A fellow, Percel[?], then was the editor and uh I think he left that following year if I remember right. He worked there for about a yea. I think he married a nice laid law and then he left there about a year later and went to Winnipeg for I understand he did very well.

Q: [00:39:52]

The uh Sun, was it called the Brandon Sun then or?

A: [00:39:53]

Yes, The Brandon Sun.

Q: [00:39:55]

It was owned by uh J.B. Whitehead?

A: [00:39:59]

Well there was- I think there was, now I am only guessing but I think that Parcel had some outstanding shares. But J.B. would not, he told me this himself, hat he would not pay any uh interest or any money on these shares because he wanted all the shares. And he didn't see any sense in whoever had them at that time , he didn't mention Percel's name, so he just simply withheld any increment in regard to these shares that he applied to the office in such a way that was legal, lawful. And he got tired of this and he turned them in. And uh then J.B. was satisfied.

Q: [00:40:48]

What are your [unclear] of J.B.? Why uh-

A: [00:40:50]

Well I got along very well with him, extremely well. You know he was a man that uh he would test you and if he got you running he might keep you running. But if you stood up to him and were truthful and honest and uhm stood up to him, by gosh he accepted you! He didn't uh, he treated me very well and he come out once or twice when I was doing about, because I- as I mentioned I was pretty husky, I could take forms that usually took two men, a sixteen page form that could be as big as that with all the lead pages in it and uh this- this table wouldn't hold

it. And I could uh [unclear] down, lock it up and uh raise it up, lift it off. Then I could take it down the stairs, take it over and put it on the press by myself. Ordinarily he had to get two men to do it.

Q: [00:41:49]

The uh Brandon Sun was located in the building which is now the center for alcoholics?

A: [00:41:51]

Right, yes. So that uh when he come out and saw me lifting these things and one another and so on he said uh 'are you capable of doing that' 'oh yes' I said 'I worked pretty hard in my life' I said as a younger, some of the other jobs I had when was- earlier I worked for some thought hard work was real good for ya.

Q: [00:42:18]

So you didn't think too might be able to dangle?

A: [00:42:21]

Oh a part from that he was really good.

Q: [00:42:24]

I've heard so many stories that uh about him and uh it has been a very strong person, strong willed and uh-

A: [00:42:29]

Oh yes, he was ironed willed.

Q: [00:42:31]

And his, uh of course, his son, Ernie, became general manager and now his- their son, Lou, is uh-

A: [00:42:39]

Well they didn't resemble him in those respects at all.

Q: [00:42:42]

No that's what I understand, that they didn't-

A: [00:42:44]

No [unclear] right at his dad. He was a uh he was entirely different too. He would come in there just like a nice summer morning breeze, and he'd uh he wasn't much over the five foot but he was well built and a hand full and he would come up to me and smack me in the shoulder and it would pretty near send me off my feet, well how are you, and then he would tell me little incidents that had happened, you know? And things that had been news to him, for instance the time that the lawyer down east was quite a prominent person and uh they got the goods on him. Wonderful lawyer, but there was no way that he could uh defend himself legally. And he had the opponents were all lawyers and this time they had him out and it was a hot day

and they had him in court and he had to defend himself. And he said that there was even the standing room was filled and it was just steaming hot and they, these lawyers, one after another they got up and they [unclear]. And then uh after he got up and wiped his brow and took a glass of water and turned to the audience and said 'look at me. What are they? Who are they? The prosecutors are innocent. And the defenders are guilty' and it went on like that for an hour and when he got through even his persecutors and prosecutors got up and gave him a standing applause, everybody in the building. He went off, he was a wonderful [unclear] but he hadn't a leg to stand on. He couldn't defend himself. All he did was get them a real treason [unclear].

Q: [00:44:39]

So what was his supposed crime?

A: [00:44:41]

Well I think it was a little bit of mal[?] treasons. Ha ha ha.

Q: [00:44:46]

Going back to the Sun uh, Mr. Mathie. Uh you just came from Hartney where you had the old flat press or whatever. What was the equipment at the sun at that time? Was it more modern?

A: [00:44:58]

Well he- he had real uh more modern uh type phases. Which he took meticulous care of. A damn each letter wasn't kept, he replaced it. And uh he would turn out beautiful printing himself cause he was a bit of an artist and uh could do a little bit of sketching and artwork himself.

Q: [00:45:22]

This is Mr. Whitehead, no?

A: [00:45:24]

Oh, no. I'm talking about- you were talking about Hartney.

Q: [00:45:27]

No, I was talking about uh once you came to Brandon, how did you compare the equipment you had in Brandon with what you left in Hartney?

A: [00:45:33]

Well we had uh the typers pretty well worn in Brandon. And they had their big shafts running along with all the belts down to the presses and it was a dusty, noisy place in the clutter of everything running. And uh we had- he had steam, he had based on kind of an arrangement with the steam company when they put it in. It was a very binding one and they had gladly got out of there. But uh they had to continue getting him some uh steam long after they were discontinuing it through Brandon, yes, and

public service. And uh but the equipment, the job room, well when Morley took over he managed to get one or a few good modern type faces put in. And he had quite a struggle and we had to be very very careful because every now and again the fellas in the- in the news room would sneak up and if anything similar was typed down there was missing and they needed one or two more letters to complete a line, they would sneak up and pinch them. Well when they put them back, the old press down there had flattened them so they were no use to us for job printing. And uh so we had quite a battle watching for that.

Q: [00:46:52]

So, you were job printing at that time?

A: [00:46:55]

I was job printing at that time, yeah. Until I went overseas and then I came back and there was the opening in the news. So from that time on and then finally the uh the chap, there was this foreman, Hatley, was foreman and he- when he uh he uh in '39 or somewhere around there, he took ill and had an operation that uh and he died that night. So I was asked to go down and substitute until they got a foreman. My substitution lasted eighteen years. And it's not a job I would recommend for a

person who has grown up as friends with all their working help mates.

Q: [00:47:40]

Now going back a little, I think uh you mentioned I believe at some other time I have talked with you, that when you went overseas uh there was no guarantee that when you came back your job would be waiting.

A: [00:47:54]

Oh, no.

Q: [00:47:54]

See, in the second war, the '39 to '45 war, in so far as possible jobs were held which of course was a good idea. But that wasn't the case with the uh-

A: [00:48:02]

Not then, no. No it wasn't.

Q: [00:48:05]

So how did you happen to get back into the Sun?

A: [00:48:06]

Well this uh young chap who had been uh came back a head of me and had been returned earlier to me, was working in the

news room and the government at that time was giving land grants to all of the uh veterans and he uh, being a farmer at heart, took the land grant. And uh when that happened, of course there was an opening which I stepped into it.

Q: [00:48:33]

So, so circumstances sort of worked for you then?

A: [00:48:36]

Yes, they did. They worked for me and I graduated and I worked with [unclear] Parker setting ads for a long time. [unclear] Parker was a little Englishmen there and he was quite a nice chap to work with and until I would get his ghost once in a while but.

Q: [00:48:52]

Oh yeah the people in Brandon Sun, uh going back over the years Mr. Mathie, you- we talked briefly about uh Charley Whitehead was it? The [unclear] and J.B., They were different as night and day the two of them, yes? And uh so coming through the years, who do you remember and what way or how your associations with the managers, the editors, and uh-

A: [00:49:17]

Well, I think that uh one was Craig Crofford[?], he was an excellent athlete, he was there a long time. I believe Bill

Nokes[?] came back there oh he was there shortly after I –I he must have been there on the- was the start of the War almost.

Q: [00:49:39]

Going back to Mr. Crofford, I recon, I remember to some degree, he was hard of guarded in the athletic and sporting fields. A number of trophies have been, and they still compete for a trophie or two, but he was a- was he in sports or was he in-

A: [00:49:53]

Oh yes, he was at one time he was quite a find baseball pitcher. The only mistake he made was playing hockey, and he went up with the hockey team and uh palying up along the west and so on and uh he had to have a little money to get by on and so he accepted some money. And he would uh go to them and make sure that he would get a little because he thought the returns were not going to be good. He told me this himself. So he would go and he said he was up against it and had to have some money or else he had to go home. So they would give him some money and when it came time for the others to receive their wages they uh were out of luck. That was about the longest [unclear]. But that went against them and then finally when he wanted to still stay uh a nonprofessional, but anyway. He was a very- very good pitcher too and uh every once and a while I was

able to attend a game and so on and uh Crew would be pitching. And sometimes the day would be going a little bit against him and so on and when he got mad, really angry, why he would start throwing that ball over there so hard that the tide usually turned. Yes.

Q: [00:51:11]

Would this be uh this would be the Brandon Greys or something like that, the team I guess they were called at that time. Mr. Nokes uh I have heard some about him and I understand you made a grievous error one day by putting out a blank section of your paper.

A: [00:51:29]

Yes, he was on reaching rather the age when he really should have been retired. And uh I would send up, when I was running short of type, especially the- Mr. Whitehead demanded real good news on the front page something that was alive and up to date. And when I would send up a [unclear] copy of the front page I would four line of type standing there saying 'Mathie, what's wrong with you on copy, I want a copy' I would send these notes up to him and no reply, so I went up and I know to just comfort and throw it in the basket and I would ask 'what about my copy Mr. Nokes' he sat down plenty, I got lots. So I was- got a little

bit angry, I didn't say any more to him. I just went down and the make up man was busy with the front page say 'what am I gonna do' and I said 'You leave a little space there' and I had a line set to whom it may concern. And I put that in and filled up the blank space, blank. Were on off a couple- I said to only run off a couple of copies off, enough for the upstairs. Sent them up. Well, everybody but Nokes came boiling down and says well 'what does this mean? What does this mean?' 'it means I'm out of type' and uh well they said 'have you spoke to Mr. Nokes about this and you would have plenty, plenty' well I said uh 'You find the type, any type here that I can put in there, I'll eat it if or I will swallow it anyway I can't chew it or not, I'll swallow it' so uh they, well they took my word for it. I hadn't laid everything out the make up man said there is a lot of letters, a lot of bit. So, after that, Crew Crofford[?], was given the task of checking with me to see that we had ample copy and uh for the uh proper pages. Now you take Mrs. Whitehead wanted on the women's page, she wanted a sufficient women's news on there and the proper ads that went with the women's page. We had that to contend with. And of course all the other places, the editorial and they could send down stuff as long as they could get it practically. If it was good news we would have to stop the press

and change it. But the- and the advertising men, it was good ads, I had to accept it. They didn't have lines that I had and they kept shoving them back, shoving them back. When they found out that they could meet a few more outlined districts with all the paper, it increased the revenue.

Q: [00:54:12]

What uh labor situation in the paper there, I'm sure that the- they have the union there of course the whatever it's called, when did uh, was it always unionized as long as you can remember?

A: [00:54:24]

No, uh no no. The union- I had just- before when I was in the uh times office, Mclean, a chap by the name of Mclean had come from Winnipeg and he was a member of the Winnipeg Union. And he had joined that and he had first persuaded me to become a-an outside member of the union. So I said 'fine' it was only a small item that I had to pay to become a member, an outside member of the union, of the Winnipeg. So I did, I joined it. Well then they finally decided that they would have a union here in Brandon some of the men came around, and the organizers and uh they decided yes, they would, they would organize. So they came to me and says yes and I said that it was all right, I was a

union man now. I belonged to Winnipeg union. I said 'that's okay'. So they went ahead and uh I think I likely was out canoeing down along the river or something like that, and they held a meeting and so on and they wanted to know why I hadn't been there. I said I was a member, I'm supporting you, I says 'do I have to come out and keep telling you that I am a union man?' and uh well they had their little pros and cons on that too. Anyway, to make a long story short, they did. They formed a union. And union number seven hundred is their local number.

Q: [00:55:55]

Is that still the-

A: [00:55:57]

Yes, I'm still a member of the- I get the magazine. I have one right down there now.

Q: [00:56:01]

Nice round figure, seven hundred eh? Now what did they, what was the name of the type.

A: [00:56:09]

Yes, would you like to see one? I can show it to you later.

Q: [00:56:10]

Yeah. I wondered uh, you know, the union activities, you know, peaked of course with the infamous 1919 and as a long fight

back and uh you know there's certainly a lot of good was accomplished to improve wages, working conditions, I'm sure.

So uh I wondered when it did come into the printing, would it be a union, how the Sun workers or was it the ball type uh-

A: [00:56:44]

No, just the uh just the typesetters.

Q: [00:56:45]

Just the uh-

A: [00:56:46]

The pressmen have their own.

Q: [00:56:47]

Oh, I see. But the uh-

A: [00:56:50]

But this just took in the uh the type setters. The line of type and the ones who put the paper together.

Q: [00:56:56]

Now jumping ahead now to 19- we talked about it a moment ago when you took over as the manager of- or production manager I guess it was, and that was in 1939, was it? From a fellow by the name of Hanley, I see. So from then on until the end of your career that was your job, Mr. Mathie, was it? What did that

involve, when you say production, in other words was that everything, was it? To put the paper together.

A: [00:57:26]

Well, I had to hire and uh I had to be responsible for the paper getting on the press on time, the ads being properly set up. Take all that responsibility and see that the copy was on the machines and I-I didn't know what time of any time I had to go back at night because they would-wouldn't have the copy down and we would work over supper time and I would go back at night and find a bunch of copy there and if I didn't fix it up then, here would be these machines sitting idle next morning, which would mean a delay in reaching the press. So I would be back there putting in extra time, which I really didn't get paid for but the others did. They got overtime.

Q: [00:58:15]

The uh now that so production manager and all of this come in from everywhere, whether it be editorial or- you had to get it all assembled into a- uh and rolled into the presses rolling now.

A: [00:58:26]

Well now there- they added to that. There's an altercation took place between a couple of the chaps between the job room and

uh they didn't have a foreman there that time. So uh the uh I happened to go up and uh Ernie asked me, he says 'would you kind of take care over the job and uh look after it for a while?' So I said I could but so I go up and uh they had this altercation and uh I had to fire one fellow for the part he had taken and uh I took the other fellow out of the office and put him down marking up ads and sent one of the fellows from the news room up and they could not agree, these two that were up there couldn't agree. So I had the job room on my hands as well.

Q: [00:59:16]

I recall on reading the anniversary addition of the Brandon Sun that prior to your retirement that the decision was made to put in new equipment and throw out the old they decided you would go with the old equipment.

[interviewer has voiceover the actual interview] [00:59:42]

So I ended my interview with Mr. Mathie and his wife, Rose. Two wonderful people still enjoying each other's company. We then proceeded to debate the relative responsibilities of my offices mayor of the city of Brandon from '74 to '77 and his responsibilities of production manager at the Brandon Sun.

A: [01:00:11]

...Flare up a little bit when I should be calming down using my judgement.

Q: [01:00:13]

Oh I think you probably faced as much as I did.

A: [01:00:16]

Oh I doubt it very much, you see, you were in a very different position, you were there meeting the public, meeting everybody. Where I would go in that side office uh uh six or seven-thirty in the morning and I would be there sometimes take lunch with me, and I wouldn't be out of there until late at night and I would only meet the people from the office. Now that makes a big difference in remembering names and meeting people. You had a wider experience.

End of interview.

