

**Interview Date:** 1981-10-18

**Narrator (Interviewee):** Evelyne Conley

**Interviewer:** Phyllis Long

**Location:** Brandon, Manitoba

**Transcriber:** Kyle Head

**Date Transcribed:** 2020-09-27

**Recording Format:** Cassette

**Interview Length:** 0:11:55

**Intro:**

Phyllis Long: The topic is health services. I'm having a conversation with Mrs. Evelyne Conley of 2, 23 1<sup>st</sup> Street Brandon. Who is the chairperson of the Brandon and district chapter of the multiple sclerosis society of Canada.

It is October the 18<sup>th</sup>, 1981.

[Inaudible dialogue, recorder feedback]

**Question:**

Phyllis Long: Mrs. Conley, when was the chapter organizer in the Brandon and district area and by whom?

**Answer:**

Evelyne Conley: It was organized on April 11<sup>th</sup>, 1972, by-laws, June the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1972. It was organized by Reginald Mummery and John Oliver, and Jean Oliver, Lillian Mummery, and Reverend Ron, Ron Long. It was organized under the prairie division with Edna Leforsen.

**Question:**

Ms. Long: Can you give us a little historical background for the organization, please?

**Answer:**

Mrs. Conley: [coughs, clears throat] Multiple sclerosis society of Canada was organized to help the scientists work on this disease that had no known cause or cure. And in 1946, it was organized in the American National Society in New York, and Winnipeg joined under this society for a year. Then in 1948, uh, I believe that's right, the uhm, Canadian National Organization was established with headquarters in Montreal, a year later it changed to Toronto. Then 10 years ago, or so, the prairie division was organized and uh, we were organized then under prairie division. The international federation of multiple sclerosis was organized in 1972, and this was made up of uh, some 20 countries in the world or more, and they are uhm, meet every two years. Now the reason for all these organizations is so they can work together, and uh, not have too many scientists working on the same project and uh, cover greater area, and uh save our research dollars.

[Silence, tape recorder audible in background.]

**Question:**

Ms. Long: What are the aims and objectives of the organization?

**Answer:**

Mrs. Conley: Well, the multiple sclerosis society across Canada through the United States to all across the world are all the same. First they are research, cause there is no cause or cure for this disease that has been around for over 150 years. So, now their main object is to research, the next object... uh... object is to offer patient services because there are people that have the disease. We have to help look after them too. And then thirdly, is patient education until the people of the world is educated to multiple sclerosis and we cannot move our other fields too greatly.

[Inaudible whispering]

**Question:**

Ms. Long: How do you raise funds for the organization, or is there a national fund of any kind?

**Answer:**

Mrs. Conley: Well, being, uh, uhm, the aims are all the same. We all have more or less the same structure of going about raising money. Ugh, we are a very poor organization because uh, we're, uh a, volunteer organization and

have to pickup where we can get as much publicity as possible, or as little as possible. We are agents of the united way, and the united way has their own criteria which we have to follow, so uh, a lot of uh the fundraising in the big areas is left to the national organization, and uh, organized under the chapters too. We uhm, mainly depend on donations from uh, the public and then we also have in memoriums, and people wishing to leave any money from their state to research Uh, we have smaller projects, we run a read-a-thon, run a carnation day, and these are registered uh, projects across Canada, and in the United States and probably other areas too. Uh, we do have a patient uh, raffle draw here in our district and this throughout the area which is cover Dauphin up to down the Saskatchewan border, and south through the American border, and an area from Glenboro to Neepawa. And the idea of sending this out to all our patients is they may work in raising money for their own cause. We have bake sales, and uh we have other small things that we do, but mainly we work with a lot of other organizations to help promote, uh, money for us. In Brandon we have uh, the western uh, regional Westman charity horseshow which was organized because one of the members was an MS person, and this is their way of helping out too. Uh, then uh, we go from research which is our main object, to uh patient services, we cannot ignore people have already got the disease and we try to help them where ever possible. Uh, patient services across Canada range differently in different areas. In Manitoba, we are quite well

set up with a homecare program. We have a social services financial aid, we have uh, a [long pause], what do you call a uhm, we also have a disability allowance. But a uh, many a MS people do not receive this because they do not work long enough as MS is a young adult's disease striking between the ages of 20 and 40, they do not have enough time put in to go on this disability allowance so, they usually have to revert to our financial allowance. We also have a percentage off our Medicare, pharmacare program. And so, the society doesn't have too much to do in obtaining these sorts of aids for people, mainly we are a directive and uh, show people where to go and how to get the help they need because many people do not understand or know where these things can be got. And we also have a wheelchair pool in Manitoba that allows anyone with a disability to have a wheelchair free of charge if they are not in an institution. Then, we go onto patient education. Our pa, public education mainly without a public education we cannot obtain our monies so freely so we have to put forth a good public face, so do this through talks and uh, films, and pamphlets and with many volunteers.

**Question:**

Ms. Long: You mentioned the number of people who were instrumental in having your organization established, you did not tell me your own involvement in it.

**Answer:**

Ms. Conley: Well that ah came about because ah our young son of 20 years came down with Multiple Sclerosis and ah I felt that we should help out in society and I also felt that I did not know too much about Multiple Sclerosis and therefore I went to the society to get assistance for myself. And I might add that the society is very helpful not only personally but to our chapter. A uh I went in 1973 and attended two meetings and then it was decided that it may have to close the ca-ca-chapter up because they did not have sufficient help and no one wanted to take on the chairmanship of it. So I decided that this wasn't the time to close it up and that I would do my best to help hold it together if they'd except my assistance and uh I ya became the chairperson in January of 1974 and I am still with it some eight years later because there doesn't seem be anybody who would like to take over this position. My reason for taking it over was to hold it together until some else broke in.

**Question:**

Ms. Long: You mentioned the fact that the um United Way had their rules and regulations to which you had to adhere, I wondered if there were many restrictions on the way which you can use the funds?

**Answer:**

Ms. Conley: United Way because they raised the money in our city would like to stay in our city; therefore, we use it for uh maintenance or administration

and uh for patient services within the city. Uh this doesn't allow us to send it to research although I imagine if there was a slight bit over we could do so with their uh approval but mainly it is to stay within the city and because the United Way's organized so that people don't go around rapping on peoples doors so many times a year this restricts us a lot in our fundraising too and so ah this is another reason we ah depend on outside people and organizations to help us

**Conclusion:**

This concludes the conversation with Mrs. Conway, Phyllis Law speaking.

**End of Interview**