

Athabasca Area Seniors' Memory Project
Transcription of Bob Garton recording 2015.mp3
http://digiport.athabascau.ca/aasmp/people/b_garton.htm

Narrator: Bob (Robert) Garton
Interviewer: Marilyn Mol
July 13, 2015

[Start of Interview]

Marilyn This is Marilyn Mol in conversation with Robert Garton on July the 13th. You were saying your father came to Canada.

Bob My parents came to Canada in 1925 with seven children under the Soldier Settlement Board. They lived on a farm six miles southwest of Athabasca.

Bob I was born in 1927 and attended school in West Athabasca. One teacher I can remember is Beryl Loiselle. She was Beryl Willie and was married to Red Loiselle. In 1939 my father got a job operating the ferry and cage in Athabasca. We left the farm shortly after that and lived just across the river, straight across the river, from the town of Athabasca. My dad decided that he would like to join the army, so we moved into the town of Athabasca. He went to Calgary with the armed services.

Bob I attended school in Athabasca. In grade nine I started to work for the local trading company. I eventually took that over and hauled freight from CN to the various businesses in Athabasca. I did other odd jobs in the community for three or four years. Then I got a job working for Landing Ford under Whitely and Flynn, doing their books and whatever other jobs that had to be done in the front end of the garage.

Bob In 1952 or 1953, I was employed as secretary treasurer of the Athabasca Municipal Hospital. After a few years in that position, I was made administrator. I retired in, I believe it was, 1984. Since then I've had a good life doing what I want to do.

Bob I have belonged to many different groups – community choirs, drama groups. I've acted in plays. I was very involved in the Anglican Church as the lay reader and even though I don't do any reading now, I'm still classified in the church as a long-standing lay reader.

Bob I should say I was married to Cicely Knights in 1972. We had a good life together until she passed away in 2012. Since then I've lived alone and I'm able to manage so far with a bit of help. I enjoy theater productions and any other type of concert and music programs. I try to attend as many as I can. I'm now 88 and unable to get about very well without help in the wheelchair, so it isn't an easy time in my life right now.

Marilyn Could you talk about Ciss coming to Canada and how you met her?

Bob Ciss and a friend came to Athabasca to nurse in the Municipal Hospital. She came from England and remained here. She worked in the hospital and then for the Health Unit for many years before she retired. We had a good life and we lived in our cottage at Baptiste Lake until 2009, when we moved into the condo where I am living at the present time. We had a good life together and I miss her greatly.

Marilyn We have talked before about some of the members of the hospital board like Tony Aloisio.

Bob I was working at the Landing Ford as a bookkeeper and selling gas when Amanda (Walli) Fisher, who was leaving the position of secretary of the hospital, asked me to apply for the job. With much fear and trembling, I finally did. I was lucky to work on the board with Tony Aloisio, Hans Armfelt, Bill Bahry and later on George Philipzyk. I can't remember them all. I'm sorry.

Marilyn Those were days when there was a private hospital board?

Bob That was when there was a private hospital board before the government took over and did the administration. I retired in December 1984.

Marilyn You were followed by Mr. Preece?

Bob Mr. Pierce, who was followed by Jeff Weber.

Marilyn Would Jeff have been on the hospital board when it became part of the bigger boards, which began under Ralph Klein?

Bob I think so, yes. It's hard for me to remember.

Marilyn You also talked about when you were young, how much you enjoyed riding horses.

Bob I always had horses. I rode horseback from the age of three or four, and I always loved horses. I had them all my life. I was very sorry to not be able to continue due to my age and where I lived. Horses and dogs were always special animals to me.

Marilyn How many students would have been at West Athabasca School when you were there?

Bob Probably about 20. They went from grades one to nine.

Marilyn How long did you go to school there?

Bob I was in grade five when we moved into Athabasca.

Marilyn Did they have a teacherage at West Athabasca School?

Bob Yes, they did. They had a teacherage and Beryl Loiselle stayed there part time. Her sister Anne stayed with her. Anne married Don MacLeod and they lived on a farm just out of Athabasca, three or four miles west of Athabasca.

Marilyn Would you say that you got a good start in school at that school?

Bob Yes.

Marilyn Nobody suffered in those rural schools in terms of reading and arithmetic and the basics.

Bob No, I don't think so.

Marilyn What sort of activities did they do at recess time?

Bob They played ball and various games, whatever they wanted to, whatever they enjoyed, or they did nothing. Recesses were not that long. When you had to walk three miles home from school after walking three miles to school, you needed your energy.

Marilyn What would you take for lunch to school?

Bob Sandwiches and cake. We always lived well and had good food. My mother was an excellent cook and mother.

Marilyn You have fond memories.

Bob I have many fond memories of those days.

Marilyn When you came into town, were you at the brick school?

Bob Yes, when we moved to town I attended school on the second floor of the brick school, which, of course, is still standing today.

Marilyn Who was your teacher there?

Bob I can't remember my teachers. That's a long time ago.

Marilyn Do you follow what happens to our health unit boards now – to the politics of the hospital boards? You would go to one of the board members, if you needed to make any changes?

Bob Yes. It was always done at board meetings. I was fortunate that I had very good people on the boards. They treated me well.

Marilyn Because they were from the area, you would think they would be committed to what happened in this area.

Bob They were.

Marilyn You mentioned Ed Wallach?

Bob Ed was employed in the hospital as a bookkeeper. He was very good bookkeeper and hard worker. The hospital offered a lot more services then. Surgery and maternity. The hospital had all those departments. Dr. Wright, Dr. Miller and Dr. Brown were the doctors that were there when I first started there. Then Dr. Oldale and Dr. Kiltz came. There was another doctor, a doctor who went to St. Albert. My sister went to him all those years. It was Dr. Gray. When he left your husband came – Dr. Mol.

Marilyn That was in 1979. Dr. Mol would have worked with you for those five years, when you would have been the administrator, until you retired at the end of December 1984.

Bob I was there twenty-eight years.

Marilyn You need a medal.

Bob I went there with fear and trembling. I lasted 28 years and they were a good 28 years. I worked with a lot of good people.

Marilyn You have made a big contribution to the community doing that.

Bob I enjoyed my days at the hospital. There were problems sometimes.

Marilyn What would be the kinds of problems?

Bob I do remember one particular case where there was a problem with a staff member. I'm not sure to this day that the staff member still doesn't have much regard for me. So be it! On the whole, I would say that everybody was good to work with and cooperative. The town was well served by the doctors and nurses and other staff. It was a good time.

Marilyn Thank you, Bob. Thank you very much for doing this.

[End of Interview]

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