

Life History

COLLECTOR: Ann O'Brien

CONTRIBUTOR: Hazel Yetman

Ann O'Brien:

Today is October 7th, 2009, my name is Ann O'Brien and I'm at the home of Hazel Yetman in Red Bay. Ah.... Hazel is gonna share a story about the 'life of a fisherman's wife'. Alright Hazel.

Hazel Yetman:

Yeah, well I came to Red Bay in 1962 to teach school, after being around the province and different places. I went to University the year before that or two years before that and ah... I came up here and stayed here for the rest of it.

I started teaching here in 1962, grades four, five, and six. The next year, I thought grades one, two, and three and the next year grades one, two or three. There was quite a number of students around in a lot of different places that I've taught. They must think I'm rather ancient at this point and time because ah.... I got a picture of myself with my first crowd of students, with her daughter and her granddaughter and her grandson and myself. I wanted to get that picture when he graduated from school a few years ago.

You want to ask questions?

Ann O'Brien:

Yeah, Keep on , you can go ahead.

Hazel Yetman:

Yeah, I got married in 1965 and raised my family. But I didn't do much teaching after I went to ah... after I got married. One year I was up to West St. Modeste for a part of the year, once when one of the teachers left. That was 1973, I think, it was. And I was teaching here and Red Bay for all of one year and part time at the time they were changing over from one high school program to another and that was when they implemented the grade twelve.

And a quite a lot of years after that, I taught, just substituting and I went to work as a student assistant. I was at that for twelve years, I guess. So now I feels, three or four years ago, I retired from that.

Ann O'Brien:

Big change to when you started teaching and ah today.

Hazel Yetman:

A big lot of change. An awful lot. First year I taught, I was in Mud Lake in 1959. I had never been in a canoe before. The school was on an island and I had to depend on the students to get me to school in a canoe. (laughs)

I had all the grades from... no not all the grades. Grades one, two, three no grade four, grade five, six, grade eight, grade nine, twenty four students in those grades, and it was tough. No one around to lend any support, not anywhere close. Happy Valley was up the river seven miles, and I didn't go up there very often. Maybe one or twice, once during the week.

Ann O'Brien:

So how did they heat the school ah... Hazel?

Hazel Yetman:

In Mud Lake they heated the school with ah... floor furnace and that was quite convenient for me. So I didn't have to worry about wood, there was lots of wood around, but parents could afford to pay for oil at that time.

Ann O'Brien:

So the parents had to pay for the oil that went in that?

Hazel Yetman:

As far as I know. Yes, yeah. I'm not sure about that. But anyway, I ah.... pulled through that year and somehow or another it was a hard year. I didn't have much training or not much support and so the next year I went to University for a year. And the year after that I went to Robert's Arm, there it was a bit easier because I had a bit more training and a lot more support.

So after that, after I left Robert's Arm, I came to Red Bay.

So in Robert's Arm, was it an all grade school. It was an all grade school but there were a lot of students, I don't remember how many, what the enrollment was but in just in grade seven there were more then twenty students and grade eight...six and eight were together. I taught subject teaching in grade six and eight, nine and ten. There were no grade elevens, I don't think. Nope. But there were a lot of teachers and a lot of support there, so, that was good.

Ann O'Brien:

Yeah, it wasn't only you.

Hazel Yetman:

No. No there were about six other teachers, I think. Yeah.

So that was a lot better and when I came here to Red Bay, there were three teachers, the school was heated by wood, here, wood and coal. There was this janitor and he use to sit

and light the fire in the mornings and we keep between us, the students and teachers, would keep the fire going all day. But ah.. there was no comfort, no plumbing or no water in the school then.

Ann O'Brien:

Just outhouses, by the school.

Hazel Yetman:

Outhouses. Outhouses, yup.

But ah, the first year I was teaching grade six. Four, five and six there was another classroom on to that building, at that time. And there was another class from what was the old school. I went to that classroom the next year. That was off by itself kind of like not very far. So ah I taught grade one, two, and three, there. Don't remember how many students but I do have a picture home, I think. I can show you.

Ann O'Brien:

So after you married, now you didn't go back to teaching very much.

Hazel Yetman:

Nope. Not until after all my family. I had all my family, I think the youngest one was about eighteen months old or something, when I went back, substituting, once in a while, you know.

Ann O'Brien:

How many children did you have?

Hazel Yetman:

I had three. Yeah. I lost one child, I had a miscarriage.

Ann O'Brien:

Boys and girls?

Hazel Yetman:

I had two boys and a girl. So they're scattered all over the place now. Yeah.

Ann O'Brien:

Yeah. No work in this part of Labrador for them.

Hazel Yetman:

Nope.

You know how the fishery went down, the oldest fellow is still with the fishery but he's not here, he's in Newfoundland.

Ann O'Brien:

He's still fishing?

Hazel Yetman:

He's still with the fishery, yup.

Our daughter is in Brampton, Ontario, now and she works in an office in the accounting department, and our youngest son is in England and he's working as an IT Specialist, with Oxfam at the present time.

Ann O'Brien:

Yeah.

So as... now after you got married did ah.. and your husband was fishing George is your husband. And he was a fisherman.

Hazel Yetman:

He was a fisherman all his life, yeah.

Ann O'Brien:

Now did you have to go in the stage and help?

Hazel Yetman:

I did ah... in the early years, I did. Ah.... there was quite a bit of fish in the first years we were married. I use to go down in the stage sometimes, help them. I use to gut the fish. Cut it and gut it. I never did any splitting or ... or... I did a bit of heading. But ah... I was never in the stage until like two or three o'clock in the morning, not after... soon after I was married. After I worked in the stage, in the community stage, I use to be out there all night sometimes. But that was hard too.

My dad was up there one year, I remember and I was working out in the stage. He couldn't get over it, the hours we use to work. All night long and didn't know what time you were gonna' get called or how long you'd have to be there. More than one morning, we stayed up all night and next morning see the boats coming in came in loaded to the gunnels again. And there'd be another ship come along then, we'd go home and get a few hours rest.

Ann O'Brien:

So who was buying the fish, like ..at that time?

Hazel Yetman:

W.J. Burton.

Ann O'Brien:

W. J. Burton.

Hazel Yetman:

Yup.

Ann O'Brien:

From ?

Hazel Yetman:

Brig Bay, I think it was.

Ann O'Brien:

Oh.

Hazel Yetman:

Yup.

Ann O'Brien:

Course you had to have a babysitter then?

Hazel Yetman:

Nope I didn't because my daughter was old enough then to look after Neil, because he was the younger son. He was about six years old then, I guess. Yeah, he was about six years old and Doris was eleven, I guess. Yeah.

Ann O'Brien:

So at eleven years old, she was capable of babysitting.

Hazel Yetman:

Yeah. (laughs)

Ann O'Brien:

Well ah...

Hazel Yetman:

They took responsibility for it, you know.

Ann O'Brien:

Hmmm.

Hazel Yetman:

It was easier then too, because we moved in here in the basement, we had electricity and plumbing and all that you know.

Ann O'Brien:

Yes.

Hazel Yetman:

That was easier.

I don't think I would have left her, if I had to be out the Harbor with nothing to work with you know.

Ann O'Brien:

Hmm.

Hazel Yetman:

We had an automatic washer at that time.

Ann O'Brien:

And as I said earlier, it's a big change into the education system.

Hazel Yetman:

Oh my dear.

Ann O'Brien:

Do you think its for the better?

Hazel Yetman:

In some ways, its for the better, I think. But ah.. there's ah so much change in the demographics in the population you know. The populatio n now, at this point and time is more older people and less younger people. So that means that there's greater competition for the jobs that are available and more people qualified to teach them. So it's ah, quite a competitive work place now, you know. Although, they do have a lot better training and more resources.

Ann O'Brien:

So what do you think the reason is now for this, that we don't have the young people back?

Hazel Yetman:

There's no employment, nothing for the young people to stay around for.

Yup. I think we ah.... we're kind of eating ourselves out of house and home in a way. So much of the cod fishery was taken up you know. You know what happened to the cod moratorium, everybody had to leave. There was a big boom in the late '70's and early '80's until it went bust in the early '90's.

But ah.... the government has to try and make it sustainable and fishermen themselves, has to take some responsibility too, I think, you know. But it's a difficult situation.

Ann O'Brien:

Yup. And ah.. you grew up in Cartwright?

Hazel Yetman:

Hmmmm..

Ann O'Brien:

And was that a very large place?

Hazel Yetman:

It was not a resettlement community at that time, whoever was there was there. People use to shift outside to their summer places, just to catch fish and salmon. My dad wasn't a fisherman, he worked in the Fequet's store for fifty one years. He worked in the same store for fifty one years. So he use to move outside and we'd use to stay in, in Cartwright, but there were very few people around in the place ... in Cartwright at the time.

Ann O'Brien:

So why would you stay in to finish school year?

Hazel Yetman:

No. No. People use to take their students and go on outside with them, you know in May or June, they didn't stay into Cartwright to finish their schooling in the Spring, but usually they'd go on to the next grade anyway. But I had the advantage of staying in there for the whole year, so. I guess I needed that, I guess. But ah... that was probably why some people didn't finish, you know. There were not very many, a small percentage that use to finish school in those days.

Ann O'Brien:

Do you have sisters and brothers?

Hazel Yetman:

I got one brother. I don't have a sister. Nope.

Ann O'Brien:

And then he get the chance to finish school too?

Hazel Yetman:

He finished school, yeah. He stayed in school although he use to fish in the summer time to get a bit of money, when he got to grade nine, I guess it was, yeah.

Yeah, the year I graduated there were two of us and we were the first two to graduate grade eleven in ten years in Cartwright. So after that there would be more, every year there's been some, I think. So far as I know. Yeah.

Ann O'Brien:

But there must have been very intelligent people around....

Hazel Yetman:

Oh, yes, I'll tell ya there was intelligent people around. Yeah.

I guess probably, maybe sometimes the reason was people just didn't want to stay in school. They'd like to be outdoors, going with their fathers and mothers. Some left to get married and some just went out in service or the men... the boys just went out fishing you know and more interested in being outdoors. I guess, they didn't realize the value of an education at that time....a lot of them.

Ann O'Brien:

And your mom was a teacher, also?

Hazel Yetman:

My mom was a teacher, yes. For twelve years before she married. Dr. Grenfell took her away, to ah... first to Boston, she was there for ... I'm not sure how many years. Then she came home and then she went back again to Brie Kentucky and went to school there for a few years.

Ann O'Brien:

So how old was she when she went Hazel?

Hazel Yetman:

I'm not sure how old she was when she left but she was ah.... thirty six when she got married, my dad was thirty nine, he worked in a store.

And I'm not sure... she also worked in the Grenfell Mission Industrial Shop in North West River 'fer, I think 'twas four years, I think, or maybe not four, I'm not sure how long... not very long maybe. But anyway, she was there in North West River teaching for seven years and four years in Muddy Bay and one year Itinerate teacher around the Bay in different places for a few months, you know.

So ah... very different back then.

Ann O'Brien:

Yes, it must have been ah....

Hazel Yetman:

Yeah, Yeah.

Ann O'Brien:

Did you ever hear her talk about her, you know where she went away and???

Hazel Yetman:

Oh, yes. Yeah. I got pictures of her, when she was away.

Ann O'Brien:

And did she mind, going?

Hazel Yetman:

She actually liked it. (laughs) Yup she was ah... I think that Dr. Grenfell realized that she had some potential, you know, 'cause she was quite steady I guess and a bit ambitious. She had an Aunt who lived in St. John's a long time before that, so that probably gave her some incentive to see a little bit of the world too, I suppose, you know. But she didn't have a very good impression of St. John's I don't think, not at that time. (laughs) She didn't realize that changes took place there as well, I guess.

Ann O'Brien:

Sounds like she was a fortunate one, for sure.

Hazel Yetman:

Yeah.

Ann O'Brien:

And ah... your mother and father's name is ah...

Hazel Yetman:

Frank Davis and Blanche. Blanche Davis she was ah... her maiden name was Davis, too.

Ann O'Brien:

Oh?

Hazel Yetman:

Yeah.

Ann O'Brien:

Well thank you very much Hazel for sharing that story with me.

Hazel Yetman:

You're welcome.