

Dr. Radke Women's Oral History Collection

Florence Evada Bitter

By Florence Evada Bitter

September 17, 2005

Box 1 Folder 4

Oral Interview conducted by Jamie Christensen

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Brigham Young University- Idaho

Jamie Christensen: Okay, today is Saturday, September 17, 2005. My name is Jamie Christensen. I will be conducting an oral interview of my grandmother. Do you want to tell your name?

Evada Bitter: Yes. My name is Evada Bitter.

JC: 'Kay. It is about 2:20 in the afternoon, and I am interviewing her in her home in Terreton [Idaho]. And she just moved here, so we'll get to that in a little bit. First of all, Grandma, I just wanted to ask you—when and where were you born?

EB: I was born in Pocatello, Idaho, June 22, 1929.

JC: 1929. Okay. And, what were the names of your parents?

EB: John A. Orme, and Florence West...Orme.

JC: So, 1929—was that after the Depression then, or was that at the end, or when was...?

EB: No.

JC: Was that...?

EB: That was kind of the, kind of in, yeah, in...

JC: In the middle?

EB: Yeah, in the middle of the Depression. [Actually, 1929 was the year of the stock-market crash, so it was the beginning of the Depression.]

JC: Now, do you remember anything about it, or were you too young to really remember?

EB: Oh no, I can remember. We didn't think we were poor, that things were bad, but my parents were actually—even though I was born in Pocatello, my father was ranching up at Squirrel, Idaho. We just came down there (Pocatello) because my mother wanted to be near a doctor, and that's where her parents lived, and where she'd been raised. But, uh, he lost—I mean, there's just—it was really hard times, and he and his brother were both trying to make a living on the ranch, and he had to leave, so, when I was—I mean there just wasn't enough money for both of them, so he decided he would take the sheep and try and run sheep. And, he ran a co-op for quite a few years, and...Fortunately, my mother's parents happened to own a home in Idaho Falls that they just rented out, so they gave us that home, and we—'cause they wouldn't have had enough for a down payment or anything, you know. And we just paid as we could, and, you know, my mother watched things really close. I mean, she wrote down every penny she spent, and...

JC: Real thrifty.

EB: REAL thrifty, and when I wanted to get a fountain pen when I was in the third grade, and they suggested we do that, that was too expensive. When we went to Pocatello the next time my mother said, “Well, they maybe will have something there that you can use,” you know. Those were the kinds of things we did. I never hardly ever had a boughten dress. She made clothes, you know, all through grade school she made clothes for us out of things that her sisters—old clothes that her sisters would give her, but they were always really cute, and I always felt well dressed, and you know, but, everybody was bout the same way. I mean, I had schoolmates and classmates that, I thought, I looked better than they did, because, because, anyway, so...

JC: So, was your father away a lot, then?

EB: Uh-huh. He was, he was—he would be gone two or three days at a time, out with the sheep, and, then he’d come back or... And then in the summer time, when school was out we would spend a lot of time with him out on the sheep range.

AJC: As a little girl, what did you like to do?

EB: Oh! One of my fun things was roller skating. I got a pair of roller skates when I was in the first grade. We’d roller skate up and down the sidewalks, and, we used to play. The neighborhood kids would get out at night and play Hide and Go Seek or Run Sheep Run or I’m the King of Bunker’s Hill. All these fun things, and Cops and Robbers, and we just played. We didn’t have TV’s or anything like this.

JC: What—I’m not familiar with Bunker’s Hill thing. What was that?

EB: Well, somebody’d get up on the front, on top of the little rise and ground and say, “I’m the kind of Bunker’s Hill, and I can fight and I can kill.” And then we’d all try and knock that person off and somebody else’d get up there.

JC: So, like King of the Mountain, kind of?

EB: Yeah, yeah.

JC: And then, what subjects did you like most when you got to high school, and where were your interests at?

EB: I loved English, and, actually, I loved Latin—it was because of the teacher—but, I’ve just been very interested in languages, even though I can’t speak any other language than English. But, I especially loved the English language and words, and...

JC: Who was your favorite—what was your favorite book? Do you remember? Or your favorite author?

EB: Well, Jean Stratton Porter was a fun author that I liked and I read all of her books, and—but I read, I liked to read classic things, like Dickens. I loved him, and loved Shakespeare, actually.

JC: And, what extra-curricular activities did you do while you were in high school?

EB: Oh. I played the violin. I'd been taking lessons since I was seven years old, so I played for high school.

JC: Who taught you? Did your...?

EB: Um, my—actually, I had a teacher, Mary Arnold, and I had her all the way through grade seven through high school, and when she went—when I was in high school one summer she went back East to study a little more and I taught her violin students for her that summer, and stayed home; I couldn't be up at the sheep range, and it was kind of a sacrifice for me, but I figured I needed the money, and it was an opportunity for me, so...

JC: So you loved going to the sheep range, though?

EB: Oh yeah.

JC: Why did you love that?

EB: Oh! Because I loved the space and the air and the beauty and my horse.

JC: I was going to ask you a little about your horse. Who was your horse? You guys had a special bond, I think.

EB: Yes. My horse was...my dad just happened to get that one, and since I was the oldest child, I guess I got the best horse, and—my sister Ruth—he'd keep buying these different horses for her, and none of them seemed to be as good as this one, but...This Pepper was part Arabian, and he was four years old when my dad bought him, and...Anyway, I could ride on him for hours. He was—for all day. He'd never get sore or anything. My dad was able to purchase a little saddle, that—a woman's saddle from the forest ranger. His daughter or wife or something didn't need it anymore, and he sold it to my dad, and it was so comfortable, and uh, anyway, it was just a neat thing. I still have the saddle, but, unfortunately the horse died.

JC: And I was going to ask you, too, to tell me a little bit about your dad and your mom because I know that you had a good—I mean you loved your parents, and, uh...

EB: They were just really, really good people, and I—oh, yeah, I admired my dad so much. I thought of some things just lately since I've been here, moved here, how,—how he handled things so well. He, you know, how he—well, like one time I took a bunch of college kids up to the sheep range with me in the fall for some reason, some fellows I knew from back East, from Washington, D.C., and they'd never been up this way, and so, we all went up, and I called my dad and told him, and I knew he would still be up at the sheep range. It was in September about this time of year, and maybe that why I'm thinking about it just today. Anyway, as we went up there, and we took—I just took some stuff that I thought we'd use for sandwiches, or I think maybe my dad said, "Oh, don't worry about anything. I'll figure out something for lunch." And then I kinda drove them around and showed them around and when we got—in fact, maybe we

even went on a horseback ride for awhile. I think we did, and then we got back to the cabin, a little two-room cabin, and here my dad had a chicken dinner cooked for us, and I said, “Oh, my goodness, Dad! How did you get a chicken up here, a fresh-cooked chicken?!” He says, “Well—“ he was so cute about the way he said it. He said, “This grouse just happened to walk past my cabin door, and I shot it, and wrung its neck, and cleaned it, and cooked it for us!” And, he was good cook, and that was...

JC: I think your family was kind of—you were pretty social, weren't you?

EB: Oh yeah. Yes, yes. They loved—both my mother and dad loved people. Friendly, um, yeah. And...very, very social.

JC: Now, and you talked about the summer that you taught violin lessons. Did you have other jobs? Or, is that mostly what you did to earn money?

EB: Oh, I—No, I worked at Woolworth's lunch counter one time, and then I worked during school at the theater. I was the relief checker. I—anyway I sold tickets for two hours each night at the Rio Theater. I just could walk downtown from school and...

JC: OK. And how long did you do that? Was that in high school that you did that?

EB: Uh-huh. That was in high school. That was probably just one year, my senior year, but...

JC: Oh ok. And then—the next question I wanted to ask you. Was World War II—was that after your mission or before your mission?

EB: Oh it was before, it was when I was in high school.

JC: What do you remember about World War II, about what life was like during that time?

EB: Oh. Very interesting. I—the country was so united. You never saw negative things, like letters, and what not, in the paper, that you feel like you do now. We just—we all knew after, that that's what we needed to be, and I remember as a younger girl, and my mother would be so upset when the paper would come, and she would read about Hitler's march through Europe and stuff, and she'd just felt sorry for those people and was always concerned, you know, and, of course, she had lived through—they had lived through World War I, and it brought back all those memories to them, and they thought that war had ended all wars, you know, and then here we're back in it. And then when the Japanese hit Pearl Harbor I'll never remember how furious we all got and how angry and upset.

JC: Where were you when you found out?

EB: You know I can't even remember. That Sun—but it was a Sunday, and I think I just was at home and we just happened to hear that on the radio, and we all just—so, everything we did was for the war effort. We had some really neat friends. They were—they'd never had any children, and they were close neighbors, and we'd known them up in Ashton before we moved to Idaho

Falls, and then they moved down, but um. They went back to Chicago. They were both very talented people, and she was a school teacher, but they went back there to just work in the war plants, you know, to make guns or whatever. I can't even remember. Things were rationed. I can remember to this day it's really hard for me to unwrap a cube of butter without scraping the paper because butter and shortening and things like that were rationed, and gas was rationed. We saved up our gas coupons, and shoes were rationed, and we each got—each had a little stamp that we could get two pairs of shoes a year, and you know.

JC: Two pairs a year! As opposed to all the girls today that have, like, thirty! Uh!

EB: We thought—but you know, we didn't complain about that. It was okay. Sugar was rationed. Materials seemed to be, 'cause a lot of material had gone to make uniforms and to send—they'd send to Europe, and so forth. So, our skirts—our fashions were—our skirts were just to our knees, and they were very straight and skinny, and everybody just kind of let their hair grown long and wore it straight, which was a curse to me because my hair was naturally curly, and I've been that way ever since.

JC: I can understand that!

EB: They always kind of called me “Frizzy” or whatever. But, you know, a lot of the school activities—see, all through high school we couldn't, we didn't travel much because of the gas rations like the ball games and things that people do now, but, anyway, we had a lot of wonderful school spirit anyway. The whole country I just felt like was so united. I thought it was just a marvelous time in a way because of that.

<Unintelligible part>

JC: Then, the next question, how did you decide—Oh! First of all, what is your religious affiliation?

EB: Ok. Well, it's LDS [Latter-day Saint].

JC: And, how did you decide to serve a mission?

EB: Oh, all my life I just...

JC: And, how old were you? How old were women when they served at that time?

EB: All my life I'd wanted to serve a mission because my mother had served a mission. She'd spent twenty-eight months in the California mission, and I'd grown up with her stories of, of the wonderful things of the mission, and plus, I admired the way she—and my father had served a full-time mission as a young man, and then, he...

JC: Where did he serve?

EB: And he served in Florida—Southern States, it was called then—but most of the time he was in Florida. And then when he couldn't make up his mind whether to marry my mother or not—he was kind of nervous about that—and so, he went out for a six-month mission, and he—in the winter when they weren't farming or ranching, and served in Minnesota.

JC: Oh, ok.

EB: And then he came home and married my mother, so I grew up with missionary stories all my life, and I admired the way they knew the doctrine, and I just thought it was a thing I wanted to do.

JC: So, the fact that both of them had, and especially that your mom had served—

EB: Yeah.

JC: That kind of had an influence on your desire to go?

EB: Yeah, it really did.

JC: So, you decided on your own, and then how old were you when you...?

EB: Well, I was twenty—I turned twenty-one while I was at the three-days training in Salt Lake.

JC: Ok. That's right—three days training. So had you—you'd already done college or...?

EB: Yeah, I'd had three years of college.

JC: Three years of college.

EB: You don't—you don't want my long story about how the bishop tried to send me earlier...

JC: No, I do! Go ahead—tell me.

EB: Well, from our ward—our ward didn't have any young men of missionary age, and so none of them had gone on a mission, and so—it was kind of a newly divided ward, and the bishop just felt like we needed to have some missionaries out, so I had a friend who was actually—well I guess she was about my same age. He called the two of us in and ask us if we could, if we would be willing to serve a mission, and sometimes after the war they had—and during the war—they had let lady missionaries go younger than twenty-one...

JC: Okay.

EB: Because the men were all in the service, you know. And so sometimes they did make exceptions, and he was hoping they would make an exception and let us go. But we both had an interview with Bruce R. McConkie, and he just very—was very blunt and told s that we both should stay at home and get married. But, so sometimes, you know, some of these general

authorities have a different opinion than others. But, anyway, so, then I was just really, I just—but I thought in my mind “Okay. He’s an apostle, so I guess I can’t go on a mission.” I just thought that was the end of it. I was just heartbroken. But, I went back down to school for my junior year at BYU, and then along in January my mother called me and said, “The bishop really wants you to come up, and we’re having Conference again in February. He wants you to have another interview for a mission.” And I said, “Oh! Mom, I think I got an answer from the authorities once. I don’t want to do that.” But she persisted, and so I came home, and it was, Elder Legrand Richards who interviewed me that time. In the meantime, the other friend who had been interviewed by Brother McConkie had met her intended, and so she got...she was getting ready to get married, but, anyway, I came up and had an interview with Legrand Richards, and of course Legrand Richards was raised in Tooele where my father was raised, and my grandfather, and all the Ormes, and he, he said, “Oh!” He said, “Who was your father?” and “Who was your grandfather?” And I told him who my grandfather was, and he said, “Oh! He was my bishop when I was a deacon!” And he told me all these wonderful stories about him, and all he did was just go to the back of the page and didn’t ask me any questions and just signed his name, you know! It was really cute! He told me about their old school yells in Tooele and all this fun stuff. So, anyway, but then, of course I didn’t get my call until about a month later in March, and it was that I was to go into the MTC when school was out in June.

JC: And, where were you called to serve?

EB: In Can—Eastern Canadian Mission with the headquarters in Toronto at that time.

JC: And, one thing I was wondering, do you recall—what kind of—if there was some kind of stereotype of stigma attached to sisters at that time? What um...?

EB: Yeah. I know what you’re saying. And, I supposed there was. In my circle of friends, though, we were just—I had—I had my roommate that I’d had for two years at BYU my sophomore and junior year. We were just all excited, and she left on a mission the same time I did, and she went to France. And, the people I knew and worked with—I mean, if there was a stereotype thing at that time, I didn’t pay any attention to it, or it didn’t seem to bother me too much. I’m sure there was, but I just ignored it.

JC: Okay. What kind of work did you do on your mission? Did you proselyte? Were you in the office? What kind of responsibilities, I guess, did the sisters in your mission have?

EB: There were some lady missionaries in the office at that time. They were the ones that did all the clerical work, and so forth, and I remember Aunt Carmen, you know—she was on a mission when I was, too, and she was a good friend of mine—and, so she was in Chicago, and I was able even to see her. She came and met us and we had a whole day on a layover on the train as we went to Canada. And she was working in the office, and so she came and got us and took us up to the thing, and so a lot of—at that time, a lot of the lady missionaries did office work. I spent two weeks, right at first, in Toronto and helped the sisters in the office a little bit, although I didn’t do much. But then, once I was sent out into the field from that time on that’s all I did was proselyte. And mostly my day in and day out work was tracting.

JC: Tracting, which I understand, too!

EB: But I loved it! I just—somehow I just thought, every day, “This is gonna be exciting. Today I’m going to meet the person that I’m going to convert!” And it was, you know, it was just interesting to me, anyway.

JC: And what cities did you serve in?

EB: I served in—first of all I was in Montreal. Then I was in Cornwall. Then I was sent to Ottawa, and I knew I was going to be sent there, and when I told the mission president that, he wasn’t too happy to think that I’d already received that inspiration before he did! Anyway. I – in Ottawa and then my last place was Kitchener...

JC: And, do you recall how many companions you had? I don’t need to know any specific...

EB: Oh, let’s see I had about, I had about maybe six, or maybe, possibly seven. My first, well my first companion was short because she was a girl that was supposed to be in France and her visa hadn’t come yet, and so she was in my...and that’s why I was sent up to Montreal, and she and I both had had our training, and went out at exactly the same time, and we just—the elders kind of had to train us—what we were supposed to be doing.

JC: And, now I know you said, things were a lot different as far as rules go than they are now. You were able to go tracting with elders, weren’t you? And things like that.

EB: Right.

JC: What kind of relationships did you have with each other? And, were you allowed—were you allowed to date as a missionary?

EB: No. No. Absolutely not. That was one rule.

JC: ‘Cause I think my Grandpa Christensen—he started dating my grandma while he was on his mission.

EB: Oh are you sure about that?

JC: I asked her about it last week.

EB: Oh really!

JC: Or when I went down there.

EB: ‘Cause I thought it was when he came home, that he, that he met her because he had, she was a brother of his—oh, ok.

JC: I’m not sure. I’ll have to get the whole story on that, but...

EB: Yeah, 'cause I, yeah, I doubt.

JC: Well, he was—he came and was bringing some mail through, and he went and met her at that time, and they went to the movies. And then he went back, and then later, when he came back...But, still, that's still different than today—you couldn't do something like that, but...

EB: Right, right.

JC: Who was your mission president?

EB: Floyd G. Eyre was the first mission president, and then we had a change, after I'd been there for a year and for the last six months, we had Pres. [J. Melvin] Toone. I can't remember his name...

JC: Oh, ok! What do you remember about your mission presidents? Did you have good relationships with them? Or was it more distant, or...?

EB: President Eyre was a real dynamic person, and egotistical—very egotistical! And, the elders and everybody just adored him, and I'm sure he was inspired of the Lord on, you know, on the places he sent us and different things, but—he sort of kept a distance between him and the missionaries. His wife was a really sweet—she was—very humble, sweet person. Anyway...

JC: What kind of—this is getting down to my questions again—what kind of relationship did they seem to have with each other, do you recall?

EB: Oh I, you know, I felt like it was a good solid marriage, but I thought, felt like it was because she was very submissive, and I just remember one time when she—we talked about the cook in the mission home, and she said, "Yes, you know. I, I just." She says, "We were looking for somebody to help us," because it was a huge, big, three-story mission home there in Toronto, and the offices were on the top floor, but anyway, and it would've been hard—one person could not possibly have kept...

JC: Did they have kids, or were their kids out by then?

EB: Their kids weren't there in the mission home. They were older, and married, but, anyway, she said, "you know, I just got this idea. This lady that is in the ward we were going to, and I—I just felt inspired that if we asked her she would come and live in the mission home and be the cook." And she said, "So I told Pres. Eyre that," and, she said, "And it worked out, but he was really upset to think that I got some inspiration before he did." So I just felt like, you know, that...

JC: So did you guys get to know her a little more then?

EB: Um yeah. Probably. It was—at least, maybe it was because I got to spend that two weeks there in the mission home with them, so—out in the field, I don't, you know, I just don't think we would've.

JC: And he did all the instruction, and then was she more on the...?

EB: Yeah. She did the—he did the instructive...

JC: Okay.

EB: Well, he loved to talk, and we all listened to him, and knew that that was the way it was supposed to be.

JC: What were your relationships like between elders and sisters on your missions? Were you all good friends, or did you...?

EB: Yeah. We were all really good friends—really, really good friends. I just, yeah—It's amazing the kind of friendships you develop in the mission.

JC: Right.

EB: And with our zone leaders and district leaders—just, you know, it was real special, friendly. We were all just real good friends. I can't say it any other way.

JC: Do you have any special memories about—any particular special memories just about the mission—things you liked about it or any particular people that you taught that you really learned a lot from?

EB: Oh yeah, yeah. Everybody we taught all the members. There were small branches then, you know, not big wards, and we just became so close to those people. They were just like family. Yeah, I could tell you a lot of interesting stories—about a girl, that—yeah, we didn't uh, have a lot of baptisms, but uh—

JC: Neither did I!

EB: The one girl that we taught, and we didn't contact her, but she was a nurse in the hospital, and she was so impressed with several of our LDS ladies that had been in there, and they'd refused coffee or tea or, you know, and didn't smoke...and yet they were so controlled. It was actually just a maternity hospital where she worked. And so she finally asked one of them about it, and they told her about it and invited her to take the missionary lessons, so they just started those before we—before I got there—and, we taught her, and she just knew it and gobbled it right up. In fact, the night that she was—all of her—she came from a very strong Lutheran family that lived outside of the city of Ottawa on a farm, I guess, and then some of her brothers and sisters were older and married and lived right in the town and when she told them she was going to be baptized, oh! They were all so upset and called and bribed her with everything and sent their Lutheran minister to talk her out of it, and her folks told her that she would—that they

would just stop all the help, all financial help to her to finish her nurse's training. And, so when we were to give her the lesson on the challenge of baptism we just didn't want to do it and we fasted all that day, and we got there. We thought, "Oh, she can just put it off until after she finishes college," which was only a few months away. This was in the spring, and she graduated in June. But, anyway we ask her, and she says, "Oh, of course I'm going to be baptized!" And we said, "Well, how can you do that, Velma?" And she said, and she opened the Book of Mormon and read to us Nephi's thing, "I will go and do what the Lord requires because I know that the Lord would require nothing..."—I can't quote it anymore, but...

JC: That's okay.

EB: Anyway, and so we just sat there and cried and cried, and she was baptized, and it turned out one sister and her husband—and they weren't, they weren't rich by any means, their apartment was really bare, and everything—but they called her and said, "Velma, we've saved up \$300." And, of course, in that day and age—and they said, "We want you to have that money to finish your schooling." And so then she was able to finish her schooling, but none of her family came to the graduation, but, she had a whole row of missionaries there; elders and we, lady missionaries, you know. And it was so beautiful, and she was valedictorian of the graduating class, and these nurses, white nurses and big, uh, red roses—each of them carried that the school gave them—a big bouquet of long-stem red roses. And then, there was another special award given, and when she was—it was a surprise to her, to all of us. The doctors chose the most efficient of the student nurses, and she was chosen and given that award. And I just—we just cried because I felt so sorry that her parents weren't there to enjoy and appreciate that just because she had chosen to accept the truth. But, anyway, I still keep close to her. She called me just the other day when she'd received my e-mail about moving, and she says, "Oh! Are you okay?" "Is everything okay with you?" But I do feel really bad because she's been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease now, and, she said she can still walk if she hangs on to her husband, and what-not, and she still gets around and does her housework, and—but she's had to give up officiating in the temple, and stuff, and I guess some of those things she just couldn't do, but she still goes and helps with the family history.

JC: What a great experience, though. And that make me also think, so you had—it sounds like conversion was hard for the people that did it while you were on your mission, 'cause I was going to ask you a little bit about Aunt Jean if you want to talk about her a little bit.

EB: Oh yeah. Well, she—yeah, it was very hard. How are we doing on time?

JC: We're doing—we've only been a half hour, so...

EB: Okay.

JC: Do you need to—do you want to take a break? If at any point you want to, we can just stop it for a minute and go get a drink.

EB: No, no. There's no problem about that. Yeah, it was really hard for her. She, too, had to desert her family. Her parents were dead, but her sisters were so upset they would have nothing to do with her.

JC: And, what was her religious background?

EB: And she was Jewish. And her, and her sisters just—yeah. Actually I wasn't there when she was taught, we just—when I went to Montreal we just lived with her, and she had just barely been baptized. And the elders came, to give her a lesson about the first night I got there 'cause they would give the follow up lessons in those days, you know, afterwards, and they gave her the gathering of Israel and about how the Jews were together in Jerusalem and the rest of us together here, and she was all upset about that. "I've never wanted to go to Jerusalem!" I've tried all these years to get her to go back because, and yet, you know.

JC: She won't go, right?

EB: She won't go! I don't know what's the matter, I think she's just afraid they'll keep her there, or something. But, anyway, and I heard—she told me this story and then the elder who was teaching her told me—or who—he was the district president there, and he, in Montreal. She had said she'd get baptized, 'cause she'd had the lessons. And she'd just learned about it through a co-worker who had invited her to go to one of the activities there, and then she'd taken the missionary lessons. Anyway, she told them she'd be baptized and then, she—and then her family got on her case, and her sisters, and her aunts and uncles and everybody, and said they wouldn't have anything to do with her, and so she said, "Oh, I guess I just," she told Elder Brown, "I guess I won't get baptized. I, just—It's just too hard." And, he said, "Well if that's all it means to you, OKAY!" and turned and walked away and that made her mad then, and she thought, "Well it does mean more to me than that. And I", you know, "I expected a little sympathy, or something," and she didn't get it. So, you know, he was inspired to say the right thing to her 'cause most people wouldn't. So, then she went ahead and got baptized, and her sisters have been mad and upset with her ever since, although, there have been some inroads in that in the last fifty years, as well, so.

JC: And then your family let her?

EB: Come and live with them. Mm-hmm.

JC: So, that's neat. You had some unique experiences...

EB: I did. There were three unique ones, and, this is,—and one time, I gave a talk about a year ago in our old ward down home [Idaho Falls] about that when they asked us to talk about the Book of Mormon. I read the preface of the Book of Mormon, which is written to the Lamanites, and also to the convincing of the Jew and the Gentile. So then I told them the story about Aunt Jean, and how the Book of Mormon...that had influenced her, who was a Jew, and about Velma, who was the Lutheran girl I just told you about—

JC: So a gentile, right?

EB: And then I, we spent—when I was in Cornwall we were right on the St. Regis Indian Reservation, and I told them the story of Phil Cook, which is a marvelous story. He was a Mohawk Indian Chief, and the government even recognized him. He was well educated, but he would have nothing to do with—he had—because he'd done some research for the government and gone back through all the old Catholic journals, and, what not, that the Catholics had written when they first came and worked with those Indians. And he could see how they had exploited his people, and he was so upset with an English religion. So when the elders first arrived on the Indian reservation he just would have nothing to do with them, and they thought, “We've got to get him!” because they couldn't talk to any of the other people, and they would all wait for, do whatever—

JC: The Chief!

EB: And so, he worked over at the aluminum factory over at the—he was a draftsman over at Massena, [New York], and then he'd walk back, or—he'd drive back home. And so, the elders didn't have a car, but they thought, “If we walk over to Massena and then we're on the road when he comes back home he'll pick us up.” Because he was just this kind-hearted man that could never pass up anybody that he thought needed a ride. And so they did that, and he picked them up. And, he said—they said they wanted to tell him about—and he said, “No. I'm not having anything to do with any white man's religion.” And they said, “This isn't the white man's religion. This is the Indian religion.” And they caught his attention, and he read the Book of Mormon, and knew immediately. Within two weeks he was ready to be baptized. He just read that book, you know, so. So I felt like my mission really covered all three areas—

JC: Right, and so you were just, you were there after he got baptized, or was it during that time or...?

EB: Well, no, he, uh—actually, this was on the other side of the St. Lawrence River. Cornwall's right on the—

JC: Border.

EB: Canadian side, and the Indian reservation goes up—actually it took in both part of Canada and the United States, and I don't know how they did that. But, anyway, the elders were up there from the New York mission, and they were so isolated, and so they baptized him, but they said, “We have no place. We have no meeting to take his family to.” And all they needed to do was walk across the bridge there, across the St. Lawrence River to our—where we held our meetings in a little old pool hall that we'd clean out each Sunday morning and sweep out—it was so awful, but it was the only place we could meet, and then we'd meet in the afternoon, and we only really had two families of members and a few investigators that would come. So we were happy to have them, and here, he could, they could—brought Phil Cook over and his wife who was not yet baptized, nor any of his children, and he had a, an older boy named Phil and then three beautiful, young girls, and uh [unintelligible] I still keep in touch with them and with his widow, because he's died, but, anyway, that's a whole, lots of other stories about him.

JC: Right, so many, huh?

EB: yeah about him and his family, and—I just felt really bad when he passed away. It was like losing another father, in a way. He, he'd stopped and visited us so many times. We'd gone up whenever—they moved back from New York to the western part of the United States and were up in Washington, and we visited them up there, and it seemed like, we always—Grandpa and I, you know, after we were married—seemed like we always were guided and directed to be there when they needed us or when we needed them, or something.

JC: That's special. What was the hardest about your mission?

EB: Probably the cold. The weather!

JC: Isn't that the truth!

EB: Dress up, but anyway, it was kind of fun. You have to have a few physical problems in your mission, so that you can feel like you're sacrificing!

JC: Makes you feel like a missionary!

EB: Yeah! Right, right! So, I think that's probably the hardest.

JC: So, just more temporal things, huh? Just—

EB: Yeah, well, the last part of my mission was a little frustrating to me because of the companion I had. She was a sweet girl, but her father had been a missionary to that same area and had fallen in love with her mother, and her mother had gone out, and they'd been married in the West, and then she was sent back to the same spot there in Kitchener, and the whole town—I mean all the members were her aunts or her uncles—or her aunts or her cousins, or something. And, she was a hair-dresser, and it seemed like we'd just go around, and she'd be giving them all permanents, and I felt like we should be out working—I mean, you know. It was...that was frustrating to me.

JC: Right. I think there was something I was going—something caught my attention, and now I've forgotten what it was but—

EB: So, the, first part of my mission, the whole year, was the best—first year—it was the best.

JC: And how many months were you out for again?

EB: Eighteen months.

JC: Okay, so it was the same amount of time. And what years was that? Do you know?

EB: That was fifty—I went out in June of Fifty and returned in December of Fifty-one.

JC: Okay, so you were there for two winters, like me!

EB: Well, the second winter was short.

JC: Was it difficult to adjust when you came back from the mission?

EB: Oh, definitely!

JC: Did you still want to be out in the mission?

EB: Oh, yes! That was the worst thing. I just—that was the hard part of the mission was coming home.

JC: I know I didn't want to be home, right at first when I came home, so. And what did you do after you got back home? You had one more year of college, or?

EB: College. Right, I went right back down to BYU, and, actually, I did my senior year in two, two semesters, or two quarters. We were on the quarter system then. I started in January and went through until June and graduated.

JC: Okay, and then you graduated with a degree in English, right?

EB: English Literature.

JC: English Literature. Did you have minors at that time, too, or...?

EB: Speech. I had a lot of music stuff, and I'd talked to my music teacher down at BYU, and I said, "you know, I could get a minor in music if I'd take some theory classes," but I, and he says, "But you know, usually when they want to hire an English teacher, they want an English and Speech teacher." And I said, "You're right," you know, and that was—

JC: And it was your music teacher that told you that?

EB: Yeah! We were, well, I kind of knew that, and he—but I just said, "How do you think, how?" And so he says, "You know," I guess, so, I went ahead, and I'm glad I did. I really enjoyed my speech classes and drama classes and stuff I took after that.

JC: And did you—you played the violin all throughout that time. Were you in symphonies with the school, and...?

EB: I was, and when I came back from my mission I thought I didn't have time for symphony, so I didn't take it. They were going on tour. All the times before we didn't go on tour—it was still after the war and they were still, you I know. But they were taking a big tour, of the symphony, on tour over in northern California, and so I just happened to bump into my music teacher, Professor Sardoni, who was now leading the symphony, and he said, "Wouldn't you like

to come and go on tour with us?” And I said, “Oh, I’d love to!” So I went and practiced with them for a little bit and went on tour with them. That was fun.

JC: And, now, on the mission did you have a violin with you?

EB: Uh-huh. I did.

JC: So, did you play a lot as a missionary?

EB: Uh-huh. I did. And especially, in that little place of Cornwall where the Indians came. There was—one of the elders played the violin—one from the Eastern States, and I played, but before that we didn’t have a piano or anybody that could play it. And so, I would play the hymns on my violin, and my companion would lead the music. I’d practice and practice with her in the mornings. It was really hard for her for some reason.

JC: To lead!

EB: I mean, she’d just get off, but anyway they could follow the violin.

JC: Right!

EB: And then when Elder Fox started coming from the Eastern States with these Mohawks, then, he’d bring his violin, and then we could play two parts, and then it was really nice!

JC: That would sound pretty! Okay. When you got back from the mission, and you went to college and then, what did you do after that? Did you get a teaching job right after that or...?

EB: I did, because they were really short of teachers, so I worked on a provisional contract and went up to Ricks at that time and took some education classes and then took some by correspondence, and stuff, too.

JC: And where did you teach?

EB: I taught at Bonneville District #93, which—it was—they were consolidated. They’d just consolidated, and the junior high was at Ucon. And that’s where I taught. I taught seventh and ninth grade English—and orchestra!

JC: And orchestra.

EB: Not speech, so...

JC: So, that’s kind of interesting, but—and what did you, did you get along with the kids real well? Did you like it, or...?

EB: Oh yeah. Yeah! The kids they—

JC: Were they pills or what?

EB: They really took advantage of me that first year, and we've laughed about that since. It was fun, and it was what I'd always wanted to do, and—anyway, the music class was the funnest class, actually, more than English, and I kind of wished I'd do that for six sessions instead of being stressed because they weren't really interested in learning English. Weren't very mature!

JC: And then, how did you meet Grandpa? And how old were you when you met him?

EB: Let's see. I met him, uh; oh it was before I went on my mission.

JC: That you met Grandpa?

EB: Yeah. Right. So, he was just always there in the ward afterwards. He'd come home from the war and the service and had gone on a mission and returned, and, while I was finishing high school and all that stuff,...

[unintelligible part]

EB: So—we actually dated before I left on my mission, and then I felt so bad after Brother McConkie told me I couldn't go, and Grandpa tried to console me. He said, "Oh, lady missionaries are just a pain in the mission field, anyway, and blah, blah, blah," you know, so. 'Cause he said—well down in Mexico where he was—he said, "You know, they couldn't go out at night unless they had us to chaperone them, and what-not," you know, and so.

JC: Kind of an inconvenience?

EB: Yeah. Oh, he was just trying to make me feel better.

JC: Right. And then, how old were you when you got married?

EB: I was twenty-four and a half.

JC: Okay, and that was, while you were teaching, or...?

EB: While I was teaching. I finished my contract out, and we were married in December...

JC: December of what year, was it?

EB: Fifty-three.

JC: Fifty-three. Okay.

EB: So it was a year and a half after I'd gotten home.

JC: And then did you stop teaching right after that or...?

EB: And then I quit teaching after, um, I'd finished that contract in the end of June.

JC: And then you started your family, right?

EB: Right.

JC: How many kids did you have?

EB: I had eight children. Kathy about died the other day when she was up here, and—my daughter-in-law—we were talking about Darren [son of Evada]. I said, “Now, is Darren forty-five?” And she says, “Yes.” I said—well, I finally tried to figure out, and I remember, yeah, he was born in sixty. I says, “I usually can remember when the first one was born—in fifty-five,” and she says, “Lance was born in fifty-five and Darren was born in sixty,” and I thought she knew this all. She says, “You had FIVE kids in FIVE years!!” And I says, “Yep! That’s right.”

JC: And, what did Grandpa do? What was his profession?

EB: He’s a farmer.

JC: And where did you guys live?

EB: We lived on the farm south of Idaho Falls.

JC: Between Idaho Falls and Shelley.

EB: Shelley. Right, yeah.

JC: And, what with having the eight kids and being involved in church, and stuff, was [it] difficult to balance everything, or did you feel like...?

EB: Oh yeah! Yeah, yeah, it was pretty hairy. And then I did do quite a bit of substitute teaching after all the kids got in school...

JC: Oh okay! Was that, like, right after Greg [youngest son of Evada] got into?

EB: Yeah, got into, first grade, I guess...quite a bit of substituting from then on.

JC: Okay. Um—

EB: For the Shelley schools.

JC: And what did you like most during those years while your kids were growing up?

EB: What did I like most? Now that’s a very interesting question. Well I loved the children, and I loved reading to them and playing with them, but now I think back, I think I spent too

much time picking up after them and trying to clean the house after them, and stuff like that, and I should have spent for time just letting that go. But, somehow I have to have things fairly orderly, and,—you know, not necessarily clean and sanitized, but I'm the kind of person that has to have things in place and things orderly so. Oh and I liked, I liked being on the farm, and I liked—I actually liked it—it was in the busy times when we got the seed ready for the potatoes—cut the potato seeds, and then in the fall when we, um, harvested them, it was really hard, and you really had to be organized, and I really had to have supplies ready and prepared, so that we, as a family, could go out and do it, but we got to the point where the kids got old, the older ones were old enough, and somebody could stay in and tend the little ones, and the rest of us could go out and harvest the potatoes and about do it by ourselves. And I like the church service I gave. I really enjoyed all the different church callings that I had and had been involved with.

JC: I wish I could ask you about some of that stuff. But, we're going to skip ahead now to when you were called to be mission presidents. How did that call come about? And what years was it that you served?

EB: Okay. It was in the first part of the year in 1983 is when—yeah. Just right, the first part of January. Elder Mark E. Peterson called us from Salt Lake one Saturday evening—Friday evening—and asked for my husband, and I was used to him receiving—such a pleasant voice! But, I didn't recognize—and I thought, “Oh, it's some stake president from over in Boise calling him,” because he was the welfare regional agent that was in charge of all the farms and production and everything, you know. And, anyway, he got on the phone and, with him—I said, “Harvard, it's for you!” And, he got on the phone, and, pretty soon I could hear—he, kind of in a panic voice, he says, “What have you got scheduled for Monday?” and I looked at the cal—and I says, “Well, I'll look at the calendar.” And I says, “Nothing.” And he says, “Can we go to Salt Lake on Monday?” And I says, “Oh yeah, I guess we could.” And then, and then, he says, “Oh! Oh!” And he said, “Yes. We, um, what time do you need us there?...Oh! You're coming up here?” So, President, or Elder Mark—but we weren't to tell anybody anything.

JC: Was he?

EB: And he was an apostle. Yeah. A real special apostle. I said—my husband, he said, “That was, that's Elder Mark E. Peterson.” I said, “Oh! Somebody's pulling a joke on you” I said, “What would—what would Peterson be calling you for?” And he says, “No! No! I've listened to this voice twice a year every year for, on Conference. I know it's Elder Peterson!” And so, anyway, he came up and interviewed us, and then he said, “Now, I don't know, whether this”—he says, “Just for a possible mission president or regional rep.” And, he says, “I don't know whether the brethren will call you now. I'm just the messenger boy. I'll just take back a report.” But he had us call each of our children and interview them and write—he says, “Just write down on in a scrap of paper and mail it to me. I have to have it in my office by Wednesday because I'm leaving Thursday for Europe.” So we hurried and did all that, and it was a real inspirational thing. We could see how all of the family had been inspired and prepared their lives, and our life, too.

JC: And some of your kids were still kind of young.

EB: Right.

JC: How many ended up going with you?

EB: Well, we took two with us, but the daughter just—the two youngest—and the daughter just older was at BYU—her freshman year, and she was, she was only nineteen, but Elder Peterson suggested that, he says, “How would it be if she filled a mission?”

JC: Was twenty-one the age then?

EB: Uh-huh. Twenty-one was the age. And, he said, you know, that she could do that.

[Pause]

JC: Okay. We’re kind of coming in from a pause here, and I think we were talking about how one of Grandma’s daughters was called to serve at the—when they got called—got their mission call, and she was just, she was just nineteen, and then you had the youngest two with you, you said, right?

EB: That went to school down there.

JC: And, how many of your eight kids served missions?

EB: Well, all of them, but—

JC: All but one, right?

EB: All but Lisa, yeah. All, all, so that would be seven of them.

JC: And how—and you had four—?

EB: Of course Lanae’s was only a six-month mission. When she finished high school down in Peru, then her dad had that ability and right to call her, and he called her on a six month mission and she just went right out with—had all Peruvian companions.

JC: Wow. And so, and you had four boys and four girls, right?

EB: Right.

JC: What kind of instruction did you receive before you went to be mission presidents? What was the kind of direction you received about that?

EB: I thought the main direction, that our main responsibility was to save the missionaries. And it was a different philosophy than it is now, I think. I mean it wasn’t—our responsibility wasn’t to see how many baptisms we could get or to, or records, or anything like that. It was to take

care of those missionaries and give them the kind of climate that they could work in and do their job and feel joy in their responsibilities and in their service.

JC: And, what kind of roles did you and Grandpa play as—did he teach, and then you did the other things, or how did that...?

EB: Oh no! No, no.

JC: Did you both, or...?

EB: We both taught. In fact, sometimes if he—when he was interviewing them, if the elders would have doctrinal questions, he'd say, "Oh I don't have time for that, Elder. Go ask my wife about that." And he'd say, "Get along!" But, because I was limited with the Spanish it was—it was difficult for me. I mean those that were from—but then I had—I had good association with all the missionaries, and I finally suggested to him, after...he held a staff meeting every Monday morning that he was there, you know, with the staff in the office, which were all elders—well, and the bienestar sisters—we had two bienestar sisters in there, and that was kind of—

JC: And that's a welfare sister, right?

EB: Welfare sister. Right! And that was kind of my instigation because we started getting some sick Peruvian missionaries, and I'd take them and go to the hospital with them the first few weeks that we were there, and I just, I thought, "I don't understand what these doctors are saying. I'm sure they're over-medicating them. I'm just not happy with this." So I went back and I- and I stormed back to Harvard's office, and I said, "Give me your, your sheet of—" that we had on each of the missionaries in the mission field. And I said, "There's got to be some nurses here that know what's going on," and I went through there and found all these nurses, and they weren't being used as welfare missionaries. They had been trained, and that's what they'd been sent for, but the—the mission president head of us didn't speak Spanish, and he just didn't seem to have a feel for welfare, and he, so he just insisted they all proselyte, and my husband kept that. The first six months he wanted them to proselyte, just so they'd become better with the language and understand the customs of the people and what could be accomplished if they, if they fell into their kind of way of thinking and so forth. So immediately, from then on, when I pointed that out to him, and he could see the problem, he called two welfare sisters, and we always—and they lived and worked right close with us in the mission field. Because, of course, we had gamma shots we had to give every six months and all these things, you know. We just needed those...

JC: That must have made it a lot more effective to have them?

EB: Oh yeah. And those welfare missionaries were so grateful. They were usually older girls that, you know, had their nurses training, and everything. And they could see the problems that were abounding in the country 'cause they had just had devastating floods in the northern part of the country and health problems, and they could see what they could do, but they hadn't been permitted to do it. And, so they were just really, really, pleased to be called, they just said...

JC: To be able to what they had and...?

EB: They said they'd prayed Harvard to come. They said, "He was an answer to our prayers. We've been praying for this—that we would have a mission president that understood welfare principles, and that's what Grandpa did because he'd worked in welfare so long, and so they, just. Oh yeah, those ladies, or sister missionaries, just adored him. But, anyway, what I started to say, I finally, I decided, and I told him—I said, "You need to have a staff meeting with them every week," and so he started to do that. And then I finally said, "And you know what? I need to be at that staff meeting, because," I said, "then I know what your plans are for the week, and I know how—what I needed to do and how I can fit in with it and how it works." So, we started, from then on I would always go to the staff meeting every Monday morning.

JC: You were both there.

EB: And we were both there, and we would work things out together.

JC: And, how do you—do you think having served a mission yourself impacted the way you served as a mission president's wife? Just because you already had some background on what it was like to be a missionary?

EB: Probably. Although, it amazes me—you know, some of these general authorities, like Pres. Monson and some of them never went on missions, and they—and yet, then they were called as mission presidents, but then—so the Lord can inspire you not matter what, so I'm. But, you know, I as glad I had that. But it was in such different circumstances, you know. South American conditions. It was different! But at least it gave me an idea—it was helpful, before we went, anyway, because I thought, "Well, at least I know, kind of what a mission president's wife does—some of the things they do."

JC: And what were some of those responsibilities that you had? [unintelligible]

EB: Well, you had, you had to—I think this has changed a lot because when we went back to Ecuador it was different. The mission presidents were, and family were living in an apartment, and they didn't put on big dinners for the missionaries when they came and left. And, so, you know, things were changing. But, when I was there we had a huge mission home, and I was responsible for that, and for the help that we had there and in the yard, and—and I had to—and responsible for the dinners, and, and I helped with it. Actually, the three years there we were the hosts for the mission president seminar all three years in a row. And I had to help arrange for those things—for hotels for mission presidents to stay in, and, and you know, and to—and then, one of the big, fun responsibilities, but kind of scary is being a hostess for the general authorities that would come and stay in the mission home—and try to, you know, I'd talk to others and say, "You know, how do, how do you feel? What do you provide for them? Peace and quiet? Or do they want a...?" And sometimes, you just had to talk to them and decide, "Do you want a fireside?" And we had a lot of North Americans in Peru that really appreciated it if they could come to a fireside and hear a general authority just speak to them. And those were some of the very special memories that I have. But I'd talk to them and I'd say, "Now." You know, "How are you feeling? Are you okay?" And I've had general authorities in the home, there, that were

sick and had problems, or whatever, and I learned, some of them that came frequently that were—then I'd remember what favorite food they liked, and what kind of snacks to have for them, and—

JC: And what they didn't like!

EB: And what they didn't like! And so, anyway, and then—one other thing that I did, which my husband really encouraged me and wanted me to do—when they would come in he would interview them, and then he would send them down to my office to be interviewed by me, and then I would ask them about their...

JC: The general authorities?

EB: No, the missionaries as they came in. And then I would interview them and find out about their families and say, "Now I'd like to write to your parents and tell them that you're here, and you're looking great," and I wanted to say something personal about them, and that's why I needed that time with them and then, so many of them would come in and say, "Well, yeah. But I've got two families you need to write to," or whatever, you know. And those were things that only I could find out by just visiting with them myself. Then...

JC: That's special. I never had that. That's kind of neat that you guys both got a little chance to...

EB: Interview. And then it was the same when they left. My husband would have an interview with them and then he would send them down to me, and then I—my favorite thing then was, I'd say to the, to the elders or the lady missionaries that were leaving, "Okay, what's the most important thing you've learned on your mission?" And I got some, so amazing answers, interesting things, and so those were fun things. So I was glad I had a cook, and she could be cooking, getting the meal ready for the final meal, and I could be visiting with the missionaries. And when we'd travel, and he would have his interviews with them, he appreciated and depended on that I'd—would be out in the hall visiting with them, and getting a feel, and talking to them, and um, I really felt like that, that we really worked well together on that. That he...

JC: As a team, kind of.

EB: As a team. I think he really appreciated my input, and sometimes I would be wrong. I'd say to him, I'd say, "Oh, you've got to transfer Sister So-and-So. She just can't handle that companion any longer!" And, he would look at me and he would say, "Not yet." And I'd know that it wasn't him speaking, that it was the Lord, and that he was really inspired. I tried to help at first—first time with the transfers and suggesting, "Do this!" and, "Do that!" And then he—and then I remember the two assistants and I were both all in there trying to tell him on his first transfers, and finally he says, "Okay," very nicely and very sweetly. He said, "If you'll all leave, I'm going to listen to the Lord now and see what to do," and I thought, "Oh, yes!" So, after that I never did interfere with the transfers. That was his priesthood responsibility I felt like. But, then, before they would—well, actually, he would take the missionaries up and show them the board after—or—when they first came in and had their dinner—and show them where the

transf—where they, he'd say, "Now see if you can find your picture there on the board there and where you're going." And sometimes I would—afterwards I'd look and I'd say, "Boy! That was a—I would never have thought of that, but every time I saw that he was really inspired and that the missionaries were in the places where they were supposed to be.

JC: Well, I think you've answered my questions way better than I have phrased them, so thank you!