

Dr. Radke-Moss Women's Oral History Collection

Tedi Jeen Mower-Life Experiences

By Tedi Jeen Mower

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Box 1 Folder 20

Oral Interview conducted by Alina Mower

Transcribed by Alina Mower

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Brigham Young University- Idaho

AM: My name is Alina Mower and today is April 3rd 2005 this Sunday evening. We are in Bedford, Wyoming and I am interviewing Tedi Jeen Mower. Right? Is that your full name?

TM: My maiden name is Heiner.

AM: Could you please spell your first and last name?

TM: Tedi Jeen Heiner and Mower is Mower.

AM: When and where were you born?

TM: I was born April 15th 1958 in... the official place is Lajes, Terceira, Azores, Portugal.

AM: Portugal? Do you know to spell that or...? You can write it for me later!

TM: I'll write it for you later.

AM: I had no idea what you just said.

TM: I was born in the Azores islands.

AM: Do you have any memories of Portugal?

TM: I don't. I was just a baby and my dad was stationed there.

AM: In the army?

TM: In the Air Force.

AM: How long was he there?

TM: I'm not sure. But I was just there as just a little baby and then they came back.

AM: How many months after you were born?

TM: I don't even know if it was months. I don't know. I'd have to ask him that, I can't remember that.

AM: Do you know if there was any trouble getting back to the United States?

TM: Nope.

AM: Did you have a citizenship in Portugal at all?

TM: Well, I could have because I was born there, I could have a dual citizenship. But I was officially born under the Air Force, in the United States.

AM: And you've never been back since?

TM: No. I'd *love* to go back and see it. I've seen lots of slides of it. And I'd love to see it.

AM: What do you remember about your family? Your parents, brothers and sisters, how many did you have?

TM: I have six brothers and one sister. And I am the third... do you want their names or just how many? I have two older brothers and then me, and then another brother, and then my sister, and then three more brothers.

AM: What do you remember about your childhood?

TM: We lived in Afton [Wyoming]... right kiddy corner from the old hospital and, there was a really great big lot that used to belong to, I think my great-grandpa. Really big lot there, and so there was a lot of places to play. There was a man that had a horse in a corral right in my back yard, named Blondie which I used to love—the horse. A lot of bushes that we used to make huts in so...

AM: What kind of games would you play? Did you play a lot with your brothers and sisters?

TM: Yeah. 'Cause we're all close in age. We're all not more than two years apart. All of us so... we always played together a lot.

AM: You liked horses?

TM: Yep, as early as I can remember. Before I was big enough to ride one! And I used to climb on the horse in the corral in the backyard when I was just a little tiny kid and she'd come up to the fence and I'd get on her back and she'd just walk around. I would do that on the sneak. I'm sure they'd probably saw me sometimes but... maybe not or they'd have probably stopped me!

AM: Did you ever get to own a horse?

TM: Not 'til we moved to Bedford. Not 'til after, I was in the fourth grade.

AM: Your family moved here?

TM: Yeah.

AM: Now was your father, when he came back here, what job did he have?

TM: You mean in Afton? My dad was a school teacher.

AM: What did he teach?

TM: He taught... he taught earth science and math.

AM: In the high school?

TM: Mostly math. He was mostly math at the high school.

AM: How long did he teach?

TM: Gosh. 'Til he retired and I don't know what age that was.

AM: How old were you, do you remember?

TM: I was married and living here.

AM: So for quite a while.

TM: Yeah. He did his whole career.

AM: What do you remember about your school days? Your friends or teachers, any stories that you like or memories that you like to remember or think of or tell?

TM: I lived—the grade school was right up above the hospital so I walked to school in elementary school, and I was late a lot. I remember that I was late. My mother would have to fix my hair and she had all these other kids that she's doing stuff for! And I remember having to go to the principal's once because I was late. And I was just in tears. And I came home and told my mother I had to go to the principal's because I was late!

AM: Did they do anything? Any punishments at all?

TM: I don't remember. I just remember it was traumatic. And she used to read to us a lot. I remember she read books to us all the time.

AM: Who was your teacher?

TM: My mother is who I mean used to read books to us a lot.

AM: Did she do voices or anything or do you remember any favorite books?

TM: I remember the one I liked the least, *Alice in Wonderland*. I've never liked it since! I *really* did not like that book.

AM: Now isn't that funny, your kids don't like the movie. I think it's all your fault.

TM: It makes no sense whatsoever and neither does the book. I know what one I used to like. There was one about a dragon. I can't remember what it's called, I even got a copy of it. My favorite Dragon... *My Father's Dragon! My Father's Dragon*, that's one I really liked. Kind of a long story, but it was fun.

AM: Other than horses, what else did you do for fun? Any kind of hobbies or talents that you liked to work on?

TM: I'll tell you what, my mind is pretty blank when I was little. 'Cause mostly we just play when we were little. But after we moved to Bedford then in Primary we started learning... we learned crocheting and knitting and cross stitch, one thing each year. So I learned how to do that. My grandma taught me how to quilt. My mom made me take 4-H for six years.

AM: 4-H?

TM: 4-H.

AM: What's that?

TM: 4 dash H. The 4-H club? Never heard of 4-H? Oh it's big here. There were all kinds of 'em. You could take cooking and sewing and...

AM: So the club was kind of a homemaking sort of club?

TM: 4-H is just, it teaches all kinds of stuff. You could take farm animals, you could take—there's just everything. But mine was cooking and sewing, which wasn't bad except for the record books, which I hated to keep the records books.

AM: Record Books? You would record what you did?

TM: You had to keep track of everything in 4-H.

AM: And your mother made you do that?

TM: You had to. That was part of the 4-H program. You had to turn in record books of all your projects at the end of the year. Awful. But she did teach me how to sew. She was a really good seamstress and it was awful for her I know because I was an awful student.

AM: Well you seem to be a pretty good seamstress now.

TM: Yep. She made me learn. She made me take the piano too. I learned to play that. And I hated that too. I just wanted to be outside. I always liked to be outside better than inside so...

AM: But you kept going, obviously you do play the piano well, and so was there a point where you just decided to like it?

TM: No, when I was little and she made me take piano I told her one day, I am not going anymore! She said fine! She'd had enough, she called up the teacher and I didn't go anymore for—until I got older. And then I was more willing to do it and learn it. And my sister and I used to play and sing a lot together, so that made it fun when we could do that. And music, I always liked music. I learned how to play the guitar not really well—the violin, the banjo, the piano.

AM: How old were you when the '60s came around?

TM: I was just an elementary kid.

AM: Did you hear anything about what was going on around the country with Vietnam?

TM: Not so much that, my neighbor that babysat us—what I remember was the Beatles. I do remember the Beatles and I remember—it had to be Elvis that they were all much about. Was he was in the sixties?

AM: He was in the fifties.

TM: Well, they really liked him, even then. And the Beatles I remember there was a show called the Ed Sullivan show and they advertised that the Beatles were gonna be on—I was just a little kid, and I literally expected some kind of bugs. And they got on and there was these guys singing, and I'm like- What?! I was so disappointed! So that was when they were just you know...

AM: Did you guys have television at that time? Did you watch that a lot?

TM: Don't remember. I remember watching Bonanza. I liked Bonanza, I liked westerns.

AM: Tell me about high school. What you were involved in there, what kind of friends you had, do you remember their names, things like that?

TM: I had—my friends changed somewhat. I didn't hang out with the popular crowd. I wasn't boy crazy, cheerleader, all that kind of thing. I wasn't interested in that. And I was kind of really, really shy and so I just had kind of a couple of close friends, most of the time. Sheryl Bateman that lives up here when I moved to Bedford she was my—actually she and I were the only girls our age and there was like eight boys.

AM: So there was a very small class.

TM: Well no. But in church, in this community there were. Our age just—she was the only girl 'til I moved here. So we were good friends. And I had another friend, Cynthia

Stoltenburg, she was a horse crazy person, rancher daughter so, we enjoyed each other a lot too.

AM: During high school, what were your plans that you were thinking of, your dreams and your goals at that time? Because once high school was over what were you going to do?

TM: I absolutely cannot think that I had that many plans. Go to Ricks College.

AM: Was that your only thing that you were working for right then?

TM: I was an art major. I liked art, and yeah, I don't know I wasn't really directed. I didn't have a real straight goal in mind.

AM: You applied to Ricks College then? How did you apply if you were out of state?

TM: Oh, everybody went there. You either went there or to BYU, so it was just... I don't know.

AM: You just go and sign up?

TM: I think my dad helped with all that.

AM: Do you remember where you lived?

TM: When I was in just before the fourth grade, my grandpa Heiner who lived here on a farm in Bedford died close before that and my grandma needed help down here on the farm so we moved from Afton. My dad built a house across the street from my Grandma and we moved to Bedford, and so I finished elementary school in Thayne at Holdaway School. What was the question at the beginning?

AM: I think I asked you where you lived at Ricks.

TM: Oh.

AM: But that's good too!

TM: Okay. I went the wrong direction with that one. At Ricks I lived at the Carriage House right across from the...

AM: I lived there too.

TM: Field. I lived right in the corner on the top floor.

AM: Did you have good roommates?

TM: I did. I met a roommate there that I'd never known before and we got to be really good friends. I really—she was from California, and she took me to California and I got to go see California because of her. When she came here to visit, I took her on a really long horse ride clear up around the mountain and out the other side. It was like all day, and it nearly killed her!

AM: What was her name?

TM: Her name was Liz Higham.

AM: How do spell Higham?

TM: Higham.

AM: What do you remember about college life? How long were you there?

TM: I really, I really liked college. I enjoyed it. I did art and I also really liked geology so I took a lot of geology classes and I went to Ricks for two years, graduated with an associate's degree.

AM: What kind of activities were you involved in? Do you remember anything, like dances?

TM: At Ricks? No. I was not a social person. You know Holly? I was the opposite. She's extroverted. I was introverted.

AM: And after college were you thinking about a Bachelor's degree or mission or marriage? What did you do?

TM: I had a boyfriend and we were thinking of getting married so I went to BYU in Provo for like six months I think. And because I lived on campus I had to take a class—mostly I worked down there at a sewing factory for my uncle at Mini-World. But to stay in my housing I had to take a class so I took a horse class.

AM: I hope you got an "A" in that class.

TM: I have no idea. I cannot remember!

AM: Well let's assume so.

TM: I learned new stuff I didn't know.

AM: Well keep going, what happened next? That you remember.

TM: I got married, I can't even remember when.

AM: How'd you meet him?

TM: He was—his family lived here in Bedford, and my brother came off a mission and converted him into the church, so he's friends with my brother.

AM: Which brother?

TM: Val. And his name was Mark Barber. And that's how we got acquainted, and he was a lot of fun, a really fun person to be around.

AM: And you met him up here in Bedford?

TM: Yeah. When he joined the church his family basically kicked him out so, he had to find places to live here in Bedford. He lived with some other people you know. Anyway, we ended up getting married and moved to Provo... Orem, it was Orem.

AM: How long did you guys date?

TM: I have no idea. I can't remember that. I really don't know.

AM: Do you remember that marriage date?

TM: I cannot. It's just....

AM: Blocked out?

TM: August, I think. I'd have to look it up. I really, I can't remember when it was.

AM: So you moved back to Orem, Provo?

TM: Yep. And we just both worked there. I worked at Mini-World, and he worked—I don't remember where he worked. I think a gun factory or something, I can't remember. And then we moved out to... oh, not Spanish Fork, what is that place, close by there? Springville. We lived out there for a while. And then he wanted to go work back in the oil field, which was what he grew up with, so we moved back to Upton, Wyoming and lived there and he worked in the oil field. That's where Daniel was born. He was born in—Upton's a small town without a hospital so he was born in Newcastle. No, he was born in Sundance. It's a triangle: Sundance is one way and Newcastle's the other, he was born in Sundance, Wyoming. And then we moved to North Dakota, Dickenson, North Dakota with the oil field.

AM: How long—did you remember how long it was after you got married that you had Daniel?

TM: I think a year. I think I got married in '79. So it would have been around a year.

AM: And when was Daniel born.

TM: Daniel was born on the opener of the elk hunt. Like the worst day in Wyoming! October 15th!

AM: 1980?

TM: 1980. You put me on the spot and I have to remember all these years and birthdays.

AM: If you need to write them down you can.

TM: Chris was born in Dickenson, North Dakota.

AM: Do you remember that date?

TM: And he was born August 22nd, 1982. And we moved back to Upton, and Holly was born in Newcastle, May 4th 1984. And right after Holly was born I got diabetes and it's not too long after that that Mark and I separated. I left and came up here to stay.

AM: Was getting a divorce difficult at that time?

TM: No. Going through it is awfully traumatic. It destroys your self-esteem, and it's very hard.

AM: Did you or the kids have to go through any counseling?

TM: I did. I went into a counselor when I got up here because I couldn't decide whether to get back together with him or—I didn't want to go back. But temple marriages you just feel like you don't want to give up, you know. And so I went into counseling just to, just to decide what to do. And he helped me out with that I thought. And I—really more than anything prayer and just got an answer that way of what to do; finally after six months since I've been separated.

AM: Now were you, you had a fourth kid didn't you?

TM: Yes, when I was separated I was pregnant, and I lost that baby while I was living up here in Bedford.

AM: Can you describe your feelings at that time?

TM: Oh that was hard. It was hard. There wasn't—you know I had my dad and Marilyn who were really good, but it was really—you're just kind of alone.

AM: To back up a bit, when did your mom die?

TM: My mother died in 1983.

AM: The year I was born.

TM: Because I remember, Daniel got to come up and visit her, and Chris was born, but she died right after that.

AM: How did she die?

TM: She had diabetic complications.

AM: Now, you didn't have diabetes when you were little?

TM: No, I developed it during my pregnancies. I had diabetic pregnancies. They didn't catch it with Daniel, but he was a big baby and the rest of them were bigger and bigger and bigger! And the stress of the marriage I think brought it on for good. But maybe it was coming anyway, I don't know.

AM: So how long were you living here before you got married again?

TM: I came here in October and I got married in April.

AM: So not very long.

TM: No.

AM: And who did you marry?

TM: I married Jerry Mower. He was here, he'd just been divorced. And he was the Sunday School teacher in the ward. And I really remember one day he stood up and he had to give a lesson on families right after he was divorced. And I could see how hard it was for him. I felt so bad for him, because he had to do President—it was President David O. McKay that [said] "No success can compensate for failure in the home." And he had to give that quote, and he's just been divorced. It was tough. But he was a really good teacher.

AM: And that's where you first met him?

TM: So, I just kind of watched him as he taught.

AM: And how did you start talking or dating or anything?

TM: I'm trying to think! Better come in here and help me with this dear! I'm losing my memory... I know! I bore my testimony in church one day. And he came up to me afterwards, and just said, "Keep your chin up," and that's the first time we ever talked. And then he'd found out that I was getting divorced and so, he connived to come up and see me with Brant Clark riding horses.

AM: How was that being separated with three children?

TM: Well, I had it very easy actually because I could stay with my dad, and I had a place to live. And I helped with the farm work you know and it's just hard having all those people in the house trying to tell your kids what to do, but it's not like I was left just hanging with no place to go and wondering what to do. I had a place to come.

AM: After Jerry came up with the horses did he win your heart, would you say at that time?

TM: Oh yeah, I liked him before when I'd watch him teach, I thought whoever left him was nuts! Quit laughing in there! Enjoy this.

AM: Did he propose or was there some kind of mutual agreement?

TM: I don't remember that part, but I know that I paid for the wedding. That's the part I remember!

AM: And what was the wedding like?

TM: We just decided to go get married in Jackson, so we took my brother and we—no that's not what we were doing, we were going to get a marriage license. And on the way, we just thought oh what the heck! Let's just get married. And so we did. And what I really remember is asking—we were getting the marriage license and he [Jerry] asked, "Is there anybody here that could just marry us?" And there's these secretaries back there behind the desk. And it was like, squirrels popping out of holes! You just see all these heads go—I can still see that, it was so funny! And so this judge came and married us and he gave this really funny speech, and because we had both been married in the temple it was just so—it was just something you had to do to be legally married. It was nothing. Until he said, "Til death do you part." That hits pretty heavy.

AM: What day was that, do you remember what day that was?

TM: April 28th. And so a year later we went through the temple on that same day and got sealed.

AM: I know that, Daniel's told me that one of his first memories of coming to Jerry's home was that there was absolutely nothing here.

TM: There wasn't! This is a big house, and that little green stool, the little telephone cupboard stool was in the corner with his TV on it, a little TV. There wasn't a bed, there wasn't anything but that. His ex-wife even cut the cords and cut the clocks off the wall. It was really funny! And we used to have—and the carpet thick so we could draw games on the carpet, and had golf games. There was nothing in here. So we'd play on the living room carpets.

AM: So what did you do after you got married? When there was no furniture here?

TM: I had all of my furniture that was in somebody's house. Actually, it was in the house that I'd lived in and it'd still been there. And I just put a lock on that and we went and got it and brought it back. So we had some furniture.

AM: Did your kids notice anything about you guys getting married? Was there any weird feelings there, or was it just a very accepting thing?

TM: You know what, you have to ask them, what I do remember is Daniel because he was disappointed because he said, "You said we could come." And we just went and got married and he wasn't there.

AM: Oh, he wanted to be there?

TM: He was only... five? So it wasn't a big deal. And we just came back here. Some friends took the kids for the night and we just came home.

AM: So you got married, and you lived here and your kids started growing up. Tell me about your kids.

TM: He had a boy, Matt, who came to visit in the summers for eight weeks, and he is right in-between Daniel and Chris so they were all within four years of each other; all four kids. And we also went down to Utah for child visitation twice a month all the rest of the year. So every other weekend just about on Fridays, I had to pack up everybody's clothes and we all got in the car and drove to Utah and we visited Matt. And then we came home, or we went and got him and brought him up here. That was hard. I mean we just—twice a month we were driving to Utah. But to keep that relationship up that was important. And these guys, three boys and one girl, and they had a lot of fun together. The boys were really close, and Holly was really annoying to them, 'cause she tattled on everything that they did. And she wanted to boss everything that they did. And she was the youngest. And they all had a nickname. Let's see... help me out here guys. What were they Jerry? Well, we had a nickname for everybody that they went by. I'll have to think about those, I bet I could come up with them. I know Holly's was Lady Einstein.

AM: A nickname that they came up for each other?

TM: Nope, it was Jerry's. He came up with them. I know there was a Fly Lips. And Holly was Lady Einstein, because her hair always stuck out in the back, she looked just like Einstein's hair...Spider Brain! Was one of them! That must have been Daniel. No? He says it's not. I can't remember who was who anymore. And to get them tired we used to do—Jerry liked the kids to go to bed early. So they went to bed like at 7:30 and then we just had time in the evening, which was nice. 'Til we got older they didn't want to do that. We did Olympics that was one of our main family things. Running in circles, and races in the living room, and swimming on the carpet, obstacle courses and somersaults; we did a

lot of Olympics and we did a lot of camping that's something that we did that we all really enjoyed. We took the horses and we just go camping and we'd ride horses a lot of the summer. It was just hard packing and unpacking from camping. But it was a lot of fun. We had a lot of fun camping.

AM: As your kids grew older, what did they become involved in?

TM: They were involved in the high school speech program and a lot of—they all did music and they all did high school musicals and plays.

AM: Did they serve missions?

TM: Yes. Daniel went to the Malaga, Spain mission; and Matt went to the Rostov, Russia mission; and Chris went to the Guatemala City, South mission.

AM: How did you feel about that, them serving their missions?

TM: It's really hard when Daniel left, the first one because—when the first one leaves the nest you know it's never going to be the same again. You know that they're gone. It's hard. That is a really hard time. It's a hard time when the last one is gone and it's like your job is gone. It's like your job is gone as a mom.

AM: So what about now?

TM: Well! I have a good husband and we have some things that we really like to do together, and he's made it so it's a good thing so we can do some things together. We do a lot of genealogy. I like to garden, and I'm older so I don't have as much energy to get up so I don't have to be quite as busy, lots of church—church callings take a lot.

AM: Has the church been a great value to you in your life?

TM: Yes.

AM: How so?

TM: Well, I come from a polygamist family way back on the Gardner's side and I had my great-grandfather on the Heiner side kept meticulous journals. He was a real writer, and so I have his history of how he joined the church and so I was just kind of raised in the church. But the whole lifestyle meshed living here in the country and Bedford, and you know just learning the home skills and the gardening and the sewing and the farming. And all of that meshes with the church being self-reliant, and then also through hard times, that is something that I drew on my faith, you know that you get through and trust, and found that God is there. He's aware of me.

AM: Where have you found your greatest joy?

TM: Oh definitely my family. Unquestionably.

AM: How do you feel about the equal women's rights movement in the 70s?

TM: Oh, I think there are a lot of problems that come from women going out into the workplace. I think there's a lot of—I think it causes a lot of marital problems and divorces as women get self-reliant and don't have to rely on their husbands. I see problems that way that have happened. So on the other hand, I don't like being dominated over either. I mean I think that.

AM: Do you think if people were to point fingers at you and say that you were a housewife, that you have been oppressed, what do think about that?

TM: No, I wouldn't feel oppressed, I never wanted to go out and join the work force. I worked darn hard! I mean it is—I *worked hard* being the mom and the housewife. I didn't have a lot of free time. It's hard work if you do everything.

AM: And do you feel that that work has been rewarded?

TM: Yeah.

AM: How so?

TM: Well, it's rewarded when you see your children trying to be good citizens, good members of the church, having good marriages, you know, as their life progresses in a way that you'd like to see, that is the best reward there is. And sometimes I don't know if you realize how rewarding it is being a mom until all your kids are gone and you're not the mom everyday anymore. That's such an adjustment. That's a really hard one. A lot of women really struggle with it.

AM: And you cope with it by doing things with your husband?

TM: Yeah! Found that it's a really enjoyable time. You don't have to—it's a lot of stress that leaves your life when your children leave your home! Each person in a home is one point of stress. One other faction you deal with and you don't realize it's there until they're gone, and then, wow! Sorry. And that's not negative or anything that's just how it is. It's just...

AM: What kind of plans do you have for the future now? All your kids are gone, it's already—you only have one grandchild, what lies in the next couple decades for you?

TM: Well, that's a good question. We have to figure out how to get Jerry retired so that we can go camping a little more! I like to go camping. I hope—I feel like you have to do something of value. I don't want to ever get to the point where I'm not giving back something. And church does a lot because I have several different callings that I do you know that, you're giving back to somebody. To become self-centered is something I

don't ever want to be 'cause then your value's gone. Your self-worth I think goes with that.

AM: Is there anything else that you want to say? Things that you have—ideas or concepts that you have developed in your life? Lessons that you would like to—if you could tell the world anything, what would it be?

TM: I don't want to tell the world anything, but I would say this: I think that when you're young and you feel a lot of pressure to do everything, you have kids to raise, and you have things in church you need to do this and you need to do that, and Jerry and I did a lot of that just because we were in Salt Lake. We did a lot of genealogy, because we were there with child visitation. But there is a time and a season. I think that's one thing I've learned is you don't have to sweat it so much trying to do it all at once. There's a time and a season that it falls into place. But don't be lazy and not do anything, but be wise. And that's saying from more the other end. It's hard to get that at the beginning. That's something that I've learned. I can't think of anything else particularly. I appreciate the training that my parents gave to me and my grandparents, I think people who can live by extended family are really, really lucky to grow up in that environment where they have grandparents who are close. And kind of like second parents. That's a neat thing, I had that. And my kids had that, and that's a real blessing. We don't have that so much now-a-days, families living close. I think education is important. Can't think of anything else particularly.

AM: I think you're a very interesting person. Because a lot of people have these far-fetched dreams: gonna be a rock star, I'm gonna travel the world, and stuff. And you are one out of very few people I know that have just been very content being at home.

TM: And I am. I am content. I don't feel like I need to travel the world. You know, I'd be okay if I went there, but I'd just rather go camping! I like being at home. I like raising things in the garden and growing our own food, I like being around animals and I love the country life. I think a city would just choke me. I don't even like to visit hardly anymore.

TM: Are you guys planning on building another house out here or living here the whole time?

TM: Who knows.

AM: 'Cause I know you want to redo your kitchen.

TM: I would like to redo some things, but there again the house is not my priority. I'd still rather do things outside than I would in the house, and so whatever. It's not a big pressure thing. I never had to have a huge one. I don't like to clean that well. To have to take care of it, so I just like... yeah.

AM: Well, I think that's about it. Thank you Tedi Jeen for doing this for me today.