

Warm Valley Historical Project  
Interview with Vida Haukaas (d.o.b. October 1, 1929)  
Interviewed by Sharon Kahin January 24, 1991

SK: January 24, 1991, a conversation with Vida Haukaas about her experience at the Shoshone mission. This conversation is for the Warm Valley Historical Project. Ok—uh—Maybe we could just go back over your background—when were you born and where you born at Ft. Washakie?

VH: You want me to speak here?

SK: Yeah, just so we can get that information down, so we know how old you are when this conversation's taking place—so—please start off, yeah, when were you born?

VH: October 1, 1929.

SK: 1929 and then, let's see, how old were you when you went to the mission?

VH: Probably, I was about five years old.

SK: Five—that young? Was that fairly normal to have students that young there?

VH: Yes, I think there were quite a few students who were around—

SK: Around that age?

VH: Uh-huh.

SK: And—what about orphans, someone told me that sometimes they took in a few orphans, was that before your time? Do you remember anybody there—?

VH: Well, uh—I was one.

SK: You were one?

VH: I were—I was—Because I lost my mother when I was about four and a half or five—

SK: Uh-huh.

VH: —And I—of course I was already—I lived with my uncle, with uncle Robert and Albert came and got me and my brother and I was sent to the mission, then, to go to the school.

SK: So, you were at Fort Hall?

VH: Yeah.

SK: Ok—and you came over here because of the school?

VH: No, after my mother died, I come over because my mother was from here.

SK: Oh, she was from here?

VH: Uh-huh. She was a Shoshone—Eastern Shoshone.

SK: Eastern Shoshone?

VH: She was married back there, that was my step-dad that was—the people that took care of us so we got sent back over here.

SK: And what were the names of your parents?

VH: My real parents was George Brant and my mother, her name was Pauline Tillman Brant—She was a Tillman.

SK: She was a Tillman?

VH: Uh-huh, and then she married my dad and his last name was Brant.

SK: Brant—so you were brought over here by your uncles?

VH: Uh-huh.

SK: And taken to the mission school at age five?

VH: Yeah.

SK: And how long did you stay there then?

VH: I was there 'til I was in the third grade.

SK: So that would have been—about age—at what age did you leave?

VH: Probably about eight, seven or eight.

SK: Seven or eight, so you were there about three years?

VH: Uh-huh.

SK: Can you remember your first day at school? It seems like a good place to start [laughs].

VH: I remember being scared, because I was little and I didn't know anyone.

SK: You were scared, yeah. Did you know any English at all?

VH: Uh—no, not really.

SK: So, Shoshone had been spoken at your home?

VH: Yes.

SK: Well, what was that like, turning up at a place where you didn't know anybody and you couldn't speak the language?

VH: I was scared, until I could figure out what was going on.

SK: Did Reverend Roberts speak Shoshone at all—I know—

VH: I think he spoke a little—

SK: Uh-huh and what—

VH: Enough to get by.

SK: Your teachers, did they know any Shoshone?

VH: Uh—we only had one teacher that was—his, Rev. Robert's daughter, that was Gwen.

SK: You had Gwen?

VH: Gwen, yeah. Shelnew some. In fact, she was my mother's best friend.

SK: Really?

VH: Uh-huh—So I had something in—you know, that I could relate to there.

SK: Did she kind of take you under her wing?

VH: Yeah, she did.

SK: and—but she spoke English to you?

VH: Yes [she liked?] me to learn, to learn to speak English.

SK: Could you speak English at all when you were a little girl?

VH: I don't really remember.

SK: Yeah—well that must have—

VH: Well, I wasn't the only one that couldn't speak—there was a lot of us.

SK: That couldn't?

VH: So, we only spoke to ourselves—to one another there.

SK: Uh—maybe this, again, was before your time, but I remember reading in Elenore Robert's memoirs, that her father, Rev. Roberts, had a playhouse built for the children. It was kind of a round—a round, either log or wood building that the girls were allowed to go and play in and they were allowed to speak Shoshone out there—Do you remember that?

VH: Yeah, I remember our round house.

SK: Well, was it used as a playhouse?

VH: Yes, it was used. We had a lot of log buildings around there and there was one that was never really finished, so the girls used to climb on there and keep [garbled] like there wasn't anything in there—'cause there wasn't any roof on it—and we had a lot of fun, just playing around it and climbing—

SK: Uh-huh—and someone also mentioned that there was a chicken coop shaped like a tipi. Do you remember that?

VH: Uh-huh—'cause it was close to the out—outhouses and we had [now blocks?] and we had a shed there where they had all those old-time carriages and we used to pretend we were going somewhere. We would get in there and pretend that we were going someplace.

SK: Sit in the carriages?

VH: they were kind of pretty—we had some that had yellow wheels, orange wheels—

SK: But they weren't used there any more?

VH: Nh-huh. They were just parked away in that building there.

SK: And then there were, what's left there now of the barns and the corals. Were there more buildings there than there are now?

VH: Oh yes, there were a lot. I remember that big round house that you spoke of and there was another one there behind the mission. there was a log house—and there were—more like sheds, I guess.

SK: And the—but the round house was a play house, was it—and did you play in it? Do you remember playing in it?

VH: No, not really. we played every place else—Some of—probably some of the bigger girls may have, 'cause they had those older girls there that took care of the younger ones.

SK: Yeah, how old were the oldest ones?

VH: I think, the ones when I went there, they must be in their early 70s now.<sup>1</sup>

SK: Hum—and they would kind of take care of the younger ones, that was part of their duty?

VH: Yeah.

SK: Did you get along with—fairly well with them?

VH: Uh-huh.

SK: I was just curious, because I remember one woman saying that, you know, that she kind of got bullied and I didn't know if that was just a personal—

VH: Yeah, I think that that was just personal. some children were like that. I don't remember—some of the girls that are my age now, there's a couple that really stand out in my mind that I had a rough time with, both of them were very sneaky [laughs] always got me into trouble—

SK: Are they still around?

VH: One lives in Idaho and the other one lives here, but we get along nicely

SK: You get along OK? [laughs]

VH: Yeah.

SK: Just—on the—on the buildings, you know, there's the one old cabin out there now, right—

---

<sup>1</sup>About 13 years old or so in 1934?

VH: Amongst the trees?

SK: Uh—no—it's behind the church and behind the buildings—it's kind of out in the open, there, it's out in the pasture. It's a one room cabin—do you remember what that was for?

VH: I think it was—Didn't they have kind of a museum like where they kept some old stuff—but that's between the old mission and the new little [noel] chapel.

SK: Hum—

VH: [very faint: by the orchard there?]

SK: By the—but that's Rev. Robert's house, Isn't it?

VH: Yeah, yeah—

SK: Did you ever go in Rev. Robert's house?

VH: No, I stayed away from there. I really played, we played around the orchards, but we never went over—

SK: OH, I was talking to someone, but—but she's quite a bit older than you, said that Rev. Roberts used to invite them in occasionally and that they got, you know, they got to go in an see what it was like inside.

VH: Uh-huh.

SK: But he was still there when you were there?

VH: Uh-huh.

SK: What kind of a person was her?

VH: I thought he was a very nice person. When I speak or think of religion now, he was more of—that type of person. And I've never met any other individual like that—

SK: Did he give you Bible instructions?

VH: Uh-huh.

SK: He was the one that taught that part of it?

VH: —we had—catechism and stuff like that—

SK: And that was his—and that is what he would teach?

VH: Well, Gwen would help there.

SK: Uh-huh—but you actually did some study work with Rev. Roberts?

VH: Oh yes.

SK: And what about his wife—what was her role?

VH: Mrs. Roberts—we didn't see her too much, but she was there. She probably helped.

SK: Uh—Josie said that she was the matron when she was there. Was she when you were there?

VH: She probably was, you know there was a lot of older women that come and go, she probably was over there.

SK: Uh-huh—Did Rev. Roberts hire Shoshone people if he could to help with the laundry and the cooking and that kind of thing or were they from outside the community?

VH: I think they are mainly from outside the community.

SK: Uh-huh. So you didn't know them either? It was just the kids when you got here?

VH: Uh-huh. I just remember now, when I go back, I always thought those buildings were so enormous, so huge. And when I go back now, they're not so big—It's the same way with the chapel, I always thought that was such a big church—

SK: The little—the little chapel? The little love chapel?

VH: Yeah—we used to go to—we went to church services and listen to, you know, when the kids all come back from their visit home. They would go home on Fridays, on Fridays after school, some that could go, and some that didn't. I was one of the ones that didn't go all the time, you know, to go home, and I stayed there all the time and sometimes I would go to Wind River with the Roberts to church Sunday Mornings.

SK: Oh, he would go preach at Wind River

VH: Yeah—there was another church over there.

SK: So you'd go to church twice on Sundays?

VH: Uh-huh.

SK: Oh.

VH: And I got to eat with them at their table if I was there by my self.

SK: were there other children that were left behind then?

VH: Uh—not too often.

SK: Just mostly you then?

VH: Uh-huh. I spent most of my time up there.

SK: Well, what was that like? Did you feel like you had kind of a second home there?

VH: I guess to me it was kind of a second home.

SK: Uh-huh.

VH: And I didn't mind staying 'cause I got to do things [laughs].

SK: What sort of things did you get to do on weekends?

VH: I got to go places where they went to, but if I had gone to [my?] uncle's, I probably have just had to stay home.

SK: So really, on weekends the Roberts would take you around with them?

VH: Uh-huh, where ever they—if they gone somewhere, I'd be with them.

SK: Oh, that must have been kind of fun. Where else did you go besides Wind River? Did you ever go—like, I know he went to Du Bois sometimes and sometimes he'd go to Thermopolis—Did he ever take you on trips that were that far?

VH: No, not that far, just locally.

SK: Into Lander? Because he preached there occasionally, too.

VH: Yeah. No, I didn't go to Lander.

SK: Hum—Did you ever go back and visit him after you left?

VH: I really don't think he lived too long after I left there.

SK: And when—let's see—When did the school actually shut down?

VH: I think when I went—let's see, I switched schools when I was—when I did my fourth grade down at the day school, I did my fifth through eighth down there.



SK: In—in—

VH: At Ft. Washakie.

SK: At Ft. Washakie?

VH: It wasn't Ft. Washakie, it was called the government day school.

SK: And that was—was that the same as the government boarding school?

VH: See, it used to be a government boarding school, like Josie and them, when they went. When I went, that was in the '40s—Let's see, '39 and '40s—

SK: Early '40s. So—by that time it was all day students or did it take some boarders and some day?

VH: No, just all day—we were bused—caught the bus.

SK: —Oh, Josie's daughter was—came in while I was talking to her and she said that at St. Stephen's—apparently, she had gone to St. Stephen's and—It was a day school then but they still had seven or eight boarders even when she went there.

VH: Uh-huh—No they didn't have any boarders at the government school or at the day school. Everybody went home.

SK: Uh-huh. Well, going back to Robert's Mission, what was the most difficult thing about trying to switch over your language?

VH: I suppose learning—learning it.

SK: You had to speak it in the classes?

VH: Uh-huh.

SK: And did you speak it at meal times?

VH: Yes, we had to speak—that's why I said that I got punished a lot because, every once in a while, I'd get caught talking [laughs], so I got punished a lot.

SK: Uh—What did they—What would they do to you to punish you?

VH: It depends. If it was a matron they usually made me sit on a bench or stand in a corner. I was little—I couldn't go play. See, that was during play time, but I had to spend my time either sitting on a bench reading to myself or standing in a corner.

SK: Behaving your self?

VH: Behaving myself. Not talking or pestering anyone [laughs].

SK: So, uh—were you allowed to speak Shoshone when you were playing?

VH: No, we had to speak English.

SK: All the time?

VH: All the time.

SK: Even at night when you were in the dormitories, you couldn't talk Shoshone to your friends?

VH: If there was a matron around we couldn't speak because we were supposed to be learning English.

SK: So you had to—that's the punishment?

VH: Uh-huh.

SK: So, what about other things that you got punished for? What were some of the other rules that—

VH: Well, the only other thing that I got punished for was that.

SK: Uh—we have one tape, and it's hard to tell from the tape whether the woman is talking about the government school or the mission, but she said that they were made to kneel on brooms. Do you ever remember that?

VH: No.

SK: That seems like a fairly harsh punishment and it seems like the punishments were much stricter at the government school. Did you talk to any of your friends—do you have any idea of what was going on at the government school?

VH: No,, now really.

SK: Not really—I was just wondering if you knew what kind of trouble they got into when they—when they were talking Shoshone.

VH: I think that they were more stricter because some of them, the older ones, said that they had to march like the—like the, you know—like the soldiers.

SK: Oh, march between the classes.

VH: They marched them and marched them and marched there and they had different names for the groups, but I did not go through that part.

SK: Oh, yeah? Yeah.

VH: So, when I went from the mission to the day school, we didn't do that. We marched into the lunch like most kids do now, you know, you have to go in a line or two-by-twos.

SK: Yeah, just to keep order.

VH: Yeah.

SK: But what about the mission school? Did you have to march around there?

VH: No.

SK: No—there weren't that many students, really, were there? How many students were there? Do you have any idea?

VH: Probably no more than thirty.

SK: Thirty?

VH: But then, we were all different age groups, too.

SK: Uh-huh—ah—

VH: So, I don't really remember anything, you know, I think that was close by. the dorms were up stairs, the kitchen was in the middle and uh—our bath rooms and stuff—the dining area was right next to the kitchen and on the other side of the kitchen was just one little classroom.

SK: On the other side of the kitchen?

VH: On the other side of the dining area. But our dining area was our living area and when we did study times, you know, in the evenings, we had songs and we had prayers. We did a lot of that.

SK: Every evening?

VH: Every evening and we sung hymns and everything was mostly kind of controlled, I would say now, thinking back.

SK: And by songs, you mean hymns?

VH: Uh-huh, hymns.

SK: Well, maybe, could you describe a typical day? Atypical day at school like, when did you get up and what kind of a routine was it—

VH: We probably got up around 6:30 and washed up, got ready for breakfast, had breakfast and we did our little chores, you know, cleaning up around—

SK: Uh-huh.

VH: And then we had cla—classes until—it must have been about 3:00 or so. and there was a little time—First we had lunch, I forgot lunch.

SK: But first you had classes and then lunch?

VH: and then lunch, uh-huh, and then we had a little, short break so we could, you know, go play outside—play outside and run or whatever you wanted to do and then we'd go back to school, classroom and did our thing. Learned how to read and write and that. That's where I learned to do my multiplications because—like I said—I got punished a lot [laughter] I was either always talking when I shouldn't have been talking or doing something—It was a typical childhood, I guess.

SK: Sounds like it, yeah.

VH: Mischievous, that's where I learned my times tables, because I—I had to spend an hour, I think, in the classroom, all by my self. So I thought "Well, rather than just sitting there, I'll do something, so I learned the multiplications. I knew my multiplications when I was in the third grade.

SK: You mean when you were sitting on the bench or in the corner, that's when you—?

VH: No, in the classroom.

SK: Oh, in the classroom.

VH: See, they'd lock me in the classroom.

SK: Oh? They would lock you in the classroom [laughter] for being bad?

VH: For being bad.

SK: So you'd sit in there and learn your multiplication tables? Well that was—good use of your time.

VH: Uh-huh. That's why it wasn't so hard when I transferred to a different school. I had already [garbled] what other kids was just learning.

SK: Yeah.

VH: In day school. But I already knew it, so I would just goof around, getting into

more mischief [laughs]. That's all I ever done [laughter].

SK: Uh—Did you have grace before every meal?

VH: Uh-huh. Every meal we had grace and then in the evenings after supper, we had time to play or what ever we wanted to do and then we had—like prayers.

SK: And then to bed?

VH: Uh-huh.

SK: Prayers and singing?

VH: Uh-huh, and then to bed.

SK: Was that kind of, I mean, it sounds like it was kind of a family group get-together, or was it very, very structured? Or could you just sort of talk to other people too, while you were praying?

VH: Well, after your prayers, you do.

SK: You did?

VH: Oh, there was times that we girls, when we got a little older, that we were taught embroidery and we learned how to hem tea towels, how to do embroidery on them. The older girls did it a little more fancier on it and this was that younger girls who had to learn how to hem tea towels. That we used to fix—hem the flour sacks and stuff like that.

SK: Oh, so you used flour sacks for the tea towels?

VH: Uh-huh—and we had—the white ones we learned to embroider on them and we learned how to darn our socks.

SK: And what about sewing, like making clothes? Did they teach you how to do that?

VH: I think the older girls done those—The younger kids didn't do that. I didn't get that far.

SK: Yeah, 'cause you were pretty young then. What about cooking? Did you learn how to cook or did the younger girls learn how to cook?

VH: I think the older ones did.

SK: Yeah?

VH: The younger ones didn't.

SK: Well, let's see, well, Gardening would have been during the summer. Did the girls help any with the gardening or with the chickens or anything like that?

VH: I think maybe the older ones may have, but the younger ones didn't get out and do that.

SK: Do you remember seeing gardens and things there?

VH: Yeah, they had—They raised their own gardens and they had COWS.

SK: Uh-huh.

VH: I think they had help.

SK: Some kind of handyman?

VH: Some kind of handyman, yeah.

SK: And what about—when you were there, were they wearing uniforms at that time?

VH: No, we wore dresses, but we all wore black stockings and black panties—Maybe that was the uniform—But we had different color of prints—

SK: Dresses?

VH: Uh-huh.

SK: Bloomers? Were they black bloomers?

VH: They were black bloomers. They came down to here and they had elastic.

SK: Elastic at the knee?

VH: Uh-huh.

SK: Is that how you held the socks up?

VH: No.

SK: Stockings?

VH: We had little harnesses or whatever you call them.

SK: Garter belts?

VH: Garter belts—

SK: To hold your stockings up—So they were proper stockings?

VH: Uh-huh. They were those high ones—and we just had those bloomers. but us younger ones used to stuff, you know, would stuff things in there if you didn't want any body to see it [laughter].

SK: Up your bloomers [laughs]—could you carry apples and that kind of thing in there?

VH: Yes. They were real full bloomers and we done that a lot [laughter]. One we got caught and we had to sit on the bench. We were climbing the apple trees to get apples and that's where we were stuffing them and the older ones would get us younger ones and they'd push us into the tree and then, after we put the apples in our legs, then they's boost us back down and—

SK: And they got you in trouble?

VH: Got us in trouble. The Rev. Roberts caught us once [laughter]. He marched us all in there, and I don't remember the matron's name, but she made us sit on the bench. A bunch of us little ones sitting on the bench.

SK: And you couldn't talk when you were sitting on the bench?

VH: Right. You had to be very quiet.

SK: Uh-huh—but the dresses were all different? What about Sunday? Did you have a special uniform for Sundays?

VH: Well, those—we were a little prettier. they had little—collars.

SK: But they were different prints too?

VH: Uh-huh. Different prints too. Sometimes they were strips and sometimes they were plaid. It seems like to me, they were mostly plaid. Bright colored plaids.

SK: Well, I was wondering, because I have an old photograph and it looks like they were all different kinds of plaid dresses.

VH: Uh-huh.

SK: And—uh—do you know where they came from? Because someone thought that they were sent from back East. Or were they made there? Do you have any idea?

VH: No. They could have been made right—

SK: And then someone else is describing—but she's much older than you, but she called them chicken feather hats and they had these hats that they wore on Sunday and—with chicken feathers on them—or feathers on them—

VH: I remember—they call them berets now.

SK: Oh, you had berets?

VH: And they had one little thing standing up in the middle.

SK: Oh, was that for Sundays or special—?

VH: That was for Sundays. And they had these heavy sweaters, seems like we always wore, and I, for one, always got sick in church. I don't know why, I think it was too warm with those sweaters. I almost never finished a full church service on Sundays when everybody was there. I think it was the heat.

SK: And by church, you mean that little chapel that you thought was so big?

VH: Uh-huh. After I got married, I had a couple of my children baptized in that church.

SK: Oh? I'll be darned.

VH: And I couldn't believe how small it was.

SK: Yeah, it's not very big.

VH: To me, I thought it was really bit.

SK: Uh-huh. Did you ever have classes in there? Because, apparently, they would have classes in the little chapel, but that may have been before your time, when there were more students there.

VH: Well, they didn't really keep the older ones with the smaller ones all the time, so it's possible.

SK: So, the older ones could have been there and you were in the—in—.

VH: Uh-huh.

SK: Ok, you could have been in the house and they—Now where was the stove in that chapel? At the back or in the middle or—Do you remember where they had it?

VH: Seems like it was towards the middle, on this side, because the piano and the organ was on that side.

SK: I was just curious, because it looks so small, but apparently, they put desks up in there and then they would take them down again and it sounded like a lot of work, you know, to do that every week. But Sunday was the only time that you used the chapel for worship and the other times were all around the table, that



kind of thing?

VH: Uh-huh.

SK: Ok—What about the subjects you were taught?

VH: Well, they was the regular—like your math and your English and, I suppose, some history—but—

SK: Geography?

VH: But that again was probably for the older ones.

SK: So you could—

VH: I remember learning to read form those great big charts.

SK: Oh, paper charts?

VH: Uh-huh, and flip charts.

SK: Flip charts—that's how you did it? Do you remember what you read by any chance, any of the books or stories?

VH: I think Scotts-Foresman [sp?] comes the closest. But I think they probably used McGuffey's.

SK: I was wondering if they used the McGruffey's or McDuffy's or what ever it is, yeah. Ok, so you had that, and some geography—Now, when you learned history—Oh you didn't have—

VH: I didn't have my history there. I had most of mine down at the government school. The day school, I should say.

SK: The government school? The day school? Did you have,—when you had history at the day school, did you study about the history of the Wyoming or the reservation at all?

VH: No, that come later, in the junior high years.

SK: ok.

VH: We had the regular geography. Similar to the world history, because we had to draw maps, learn about Columbus and all those nice new things—the kings—

SK: Did they seem fairly far away?

VH: Yeah, they did [laughs]. To me they were just names.

SK: Yeah. You didn't learn about your own history or anything like that?

VH: No.

SK: It was interesting that you ended up teaching Shoshone history, eventually. When did they start teaching Shoshone history and, you know.

VH: I think that was probably—it seems so long ago now since I've been in the classroom. Mrs. Ward was ahead of me, but she geared, mostly, her classroom to craft and since they had that portion, I figured I'd just do it from the history.

SK: Mrs. Ward? Audry Ward?

VH: Uh-huh.

SK: So, she taught the crafts and that sort of thing?

VH: Uh-huh in high school, yeah.

SK: And you taught that—uh—when was that, that you were doing that?

VH: It was—about six or seven years ago.

SK: And was that the first time that they started teaching kids here about their own history?

VH: That's when they finally got themselves in gear and decided to do something.

SK: That's kind of incredible, isn't it?

VH: Uh-huh.

SK: That it took them that long—well, when you were at the mission, I don't suppose you were being taught things like embroidery, were you ever taught or—

END SIDE ONE

BEGINNING SIDE TWO

VH: You know, thinking back now, because they were very much so.

SK: I remember one of the people I was interviewing saying that they were really expected to be young ladies.

VH: Uh-huh, that's true.

SK: And she remembers that phrase.

VH: You had to mind your manners—

SK: Did they actually use that phrase? You know, "You have to behave like young ladies?" Did they tell you that?

VH: Yes.

SK: So there was that kind of a very recognizable English element there?

VH: Uh-huh.

SK: Uh—Are there many things that stand out in particular that you remember about being taught to behave like a lady? What were some of the things that young ladies were supposed to do?

VH: Behave and mind your p's and q's [laughter] and that was about all it took for me because I was such a—ruffian.

SK: Yeah. What about table manners? Were there—

VH: Uh-huh, yeah.

SK: Was there a lot of emphasis placed on table manners?

VH: Uh-huh.

SK: What about the way you sat?

VH: You had to sit proper and you couldn't sit around with your legs crossed. Feet had to be on the floor.

SK: Feet had to be on the floor.

VH: Uh-huh. We had little stools we sat on, sometime, we had little benches, depending on how many students we had around.

SK: And did they put a fair amount of emphasis on sitting up straight, the kind of thing?

VH: Yes.

SK: Uh—I was just curious, because when you go back to the mission now, the way it's set out and everything, it's so English—The little orchard and, just the way it's set up.

VH: Uh-huh.

SK: I went to boarding school in England and I was wondering how many similarities here might be—What about polishing your shoes? Did you have to polish your shoes?

VH: Uh-huh. that was—Seems like that was a weekend chore or Sunday, when we all got back, we all had to be spruced up to go to church.

SK: See, when I went to and English boarding school, when I was thirteen or fourteen, and you know, Americans don't really care how their shoes look, but the English are very concerned and it's considered-- or it was back then-- it was considered rude to go to someone's home if your shoes weren't polished. So, I was just curious if you remembered that in particular.

VH: No, it was just something like a routine that once you got into it, you just do it, automatically.

SK: But you were expected to be young ladies. What about when you were—when you went home? Did they try to give you any instructions on how to behave when you were away from the mission?

VH: They just told us to be good.

SK: Be good?

VH: Of course, you just did your own thing when you went home.

SK: Uh-huh.

VH: You got to talk Indian.

SK: You got to talk Indian?

VH: Eat Indian food.

SK: And go swimming? Is that—were you allowed to go swimming up at the mission at all?

VH: No. Just took baths in this great big galvanized tub.

SK: How often did you have to take a bath?

VH: I remember, they mostly gave it on Sundays when you came back to school and everybody had to take a bath.

SK: Sunday was bath day?

VH: Sunday was bath day. And that evening was church.

SK: Well, you mentioned the food. Uh—it must have been—not only, speaking English, it must have been strange switching from diet at your Indian—

VH: I remember I had to learn how to eat hominy [laughs]. You know, to this day I don't eat hominy? [laughter] I don't know why, but whenever I see the word 'hominy' it takes me back to the mission because we used to have hominy a lot. we had a lot of vegetables.

SK: So you had vegetables at home?

VH: Uh-huh.

SK: Well, what were some of the other—you said that when you went home and you could eat Indian food, what could you eat at home that you couldn't eat at the mission?

VH: Pan bread. Fry bread and like we say [glotsop?], it's a—choke cherry gravy or choke cherry sauce, if you want to put it that way. And boiled meat.

SK: Did you have meat at the mission?

VH: We had regular beef, but—it's not like the meat that you'd get at home. Those were dried meat and boiled—

SK: Dried meat and boiled. so—what about coffee? Did they give the older girls coffee?

VH: No, I think we all drank milk.

SK: You all drank milk, Ok—uh—

VH: And we had to take cod liver oil—we all had to take cod liver oil with a little bit of—What was it? Raisins, or something—I remember that [laughs]. How I used to hate that!

SK: How often did you have to do that?

VH: Seems like it was once a week or something.

SK: Oh—well, did it work? Did you get sick?

VH: No, no I didn't get sick. It must have worked.

SK: Uh—Now if a child did get sick, what happened? Was there a sick room or a—?

VH: Yes, there was a place for a person that didn't feel good, until they got the public

nurse or what ever they called her—

SK: From the Fort?

VH: Ah—

SK: Where did the public nurse come from?

VH: Well, probably from the hospital—we used to have a hospital here.

SK: So you still—so the hospital was still at the fort?

VH: Well, it wasn't the fort it was the post. See, this was the army post where the agency is now—The agency used to be over at Wind River.

SK: Oh, that's right, ok—So, I mean, it was the nurse, was from the post?

VH: She had—Either there or from the agency.

SK: From the agency—Ok—uh—What about holidays? Were there special events—special occasions that you can remember?

VH: Uh-huh.

SK: What were they?

VH: We had our Christmas, like all the holidays, we had special things—I remember Christmas, we used to get up real early—it used to seem like it was so dark and then we'd all have candles and we'd go in the church singing. We'd all go in to the church singing and then our christmas tree had candles, little candles. Ooh—it was pretty.

SK: Real candles?

VH: Real candles.

SK: But you had electricity at that time too?

VH: Ah—. I think maybe we did. I'm not sure. I think, maybe—Let's see, we had our own generator, or something, it seems like, but I remember the candles—

SK: Uh—Then what else happened for Christmas? How did Christmas go for you?

VH: Well, we had a—nice time, we just opened our gifts you know, our presents, after church—we had a big dinner—

SK: And you didn't go home for Christmas?

VH: Some ah—well, after we had our Christmas dinner we did for a little while.

SK: You could go home?

VH: You could go home.

SK: Ok—well, for two or three days?

VH: Probably for a couple of days.

SK: Couple of days—uh—what kind of gifts did they give you?

VH: Dolls and stockings and mittens and caps, you know, mostly clothing.

SK: Do you know where they came from? Was it people back East that sent them?

VH: Probably.

SK: Uh-huh.

VH: 'Cause our dolls were all, you know, similar.

SK: Now, just curiosity, were they white dolls or Indian dolls?

VH: White dolls [laughter].

SK: White dolls with white clothing? Did they—I take it, that at home you would have gotten similar kinds of things or—?

VH: Probably not.

SK: How—would that celebration at the mission compare with, say, what your friends might have experienced at Christmas time at home?

VH: Probably wouldn't be what we got up there. Probably it would be whatever they could afford.

SK: Uh-huh. But would they give children dolls at that time or clothing or what did people get for Christmas—in a more traditional Indian home?

VH: That's why I said "depending on what they could afford," what they gave.

SK: Another thing, that's very English, is getting oranges or Christmas. Was that—would that happen in an Indian home too, or was that—

VH: No, not unless they could afford it or it was given to them. Ordinarily, fresh fruit was something that you didn't get—once in awhile, if somebody brought you

some—

SK: And the apple orchard at the mission, was that sort of unusual or—were there other orchards in this area—apple orchards in the Washakie area?

VH: Not that I remember.

SK: Uh-huh.

VH: The only other orchard I can remember is the one on Lander hill going down—other than that, I don't remember.

SK: What about—Living accommodations? Was that a big change when you went to the mission, for example, you were sleeping in beds and that kind of thing when you were—or was that very different from the home you were brought up in? Do you remember that?

VH: No, it was similar, but when we were home, we had to share our beds.

SK: With your siblings?

VH: Uh-huh. But up there we had, you know, single cots.

SK: Single cots. Um—When—What about—Were you brought up in one of those wall tents or did you have a log cabin?

VH: I guess, my father, during the C.C. days—I can barely remember this—he worked at the mountains. I think he worked on the roads, that's when the roads up here was built.

SK: Yeah.

VH: The Moccasin—

SK: The Moccasin Lake?

VH: I remember those—tents and all those bright colored—and the ladies made me dolls from those colored cloths, the material. And the funny part was, they were color dolls and I, never liked dolls [laughs]. To me dolls were cold. I'd rather have a—an animal [laughs]. They were ward I didn't like dolls.

SK: Yeah, I never really liked dolls, but I had a lot of stuffed animals. Uh.. well—what was—It is kind of-hard to remember back this far—but what was the hardest thing to get used, to being taken from a home with your own people and being put in a really different environment? What was the most difficult thing?

VH: I suppose, learning to get along with people, understanding the ways that you had to learn—



SK: The ways of the people that ran the place?

VH: Uh-huh.

SK: Can you remember any particular ways that you found strange or that you were surprised that they did things in a particular way or—?

VH: Probably, maybe the routine. Everything had to be just done at a certain time and in a certain way.

SK: And that was very different from the way you were brought up?

VH: Yeah.

SK: And what about, when you left the mission and—was it hard to re-adjust again or did you find it kind of difficult?

VH: No, it wasn't that difficult.

SK: So, it was just the first time, going there?

VH: Uh-huh.

SK: Do you think that was typical of your fellow students, too? Did other students have that? Did you ever talk about that?

VH: Once in a while. Like Mrs. [Pewit] at Warm Valley, her and I were good friends up at the mission. She was a couple of years younger than I was, but she—her and I got along real well. We've been friends ever since our mission days. Every once in a while, we'll talk about something, you know, she said that it was very difficult.

SK: The routine?

VH: The routine.

SK: Because growing up with your own people, did you just eat when you were hungry—

VH: Uh-huh.

SK: —or did you eat at certain times?

VH: No, we ate when we got hungry.

SK: Uh-huh—And what about going to bed? Were children supposed to be, you know,

were you supposed to be—did you have a bed time?

VH: Well, we didn't have electricity. We used Kerosene lamps, so you had to go to bed early, as soon as—after supper and after chores, like carrying water or bringing in the wood.

SK: Uh-huh. Were the chores different or were the chores pretty much the same at home and at the school?

VH: Well, I really didn't do chores at the mission—

SK: Because you were too young?

VH: —because I was too young.

SK: Yeah.

VH: But when I got home and got into higher school, then I had to do chores.

SK: So at the day school, the government day school, you had to do chores?

VH: No, at home.

SK: Oh, at home.

VH: 'Cause we weren't home. We was just there [at school] in the morning.

SK: Uh-huh.

VH: And we'd be home by 3:30.

SK: And then you did chores around the place?

VH: Uh-huh.

SK: What was your—Who were you living with at that point?

VH: I was living with my uncle and aunt—

SK: Your uncle—and was he ranching?

VH: Oh, he worked for the government, so we had to help around the place. Kind of in a farm-ranch deal.

SK: And what kinds of things did you do then as a child?

VH: Well, we'd bring in the cows and haul water—

SK: And when you say 'haul water' do you mean drinking water—

VH: Uh-huh.

SK: —or irrigating water?

VH: Drinking water, drinking water.

SK: And did you have to water the garden, was that part of it too?

VH: Well, we had ditches and in the springtime, the water would be turned into them—

SK: Oh, I see.

VH: Into the ditches so we could water that way.

SK: So, then, just to follow your education, you went to the government school as a day student for how long?

VH: About four years, I'd say. I finished there and then I went out to the government boarding school at Flandreau, South Dakota.

SK: South Dakota?

VH: Uh-huh.

SK: Why did you got to South Dakota? Because you couldn't go any higher?

VH: No, all my friends were going off to boarding schools and I didn't want to go to Lander [laughs].

SK: Oh!

VH: All my friends were going away, so I decided I wanted to go away too.

SK: But—at the government school, you couldn't have gone any higher?

VH: No, that was it, eighth grade.

SK: That was it? That was to the eighth grade? So you could have gone to Lander or away, that was the only choices you had?

VH: Uh-huh. so, I chose to go off.

SK: Did any of your friends go to Lander?

VH: I think, maybe a few did, but—

SK: And what was that like, going there with just such a minority—was it hard for them?

VH: I suppose it was—I never experienced that so I—so I couldn't say—I went to the Indian school.

SK: And who—Did the government pay for that—for the transportation there and that kind of thing?

VH: Uh-huh.

SK: So you went to South Dakota then?

VH: Uh-huh.

SK: And what was that school like?

VH: BIG!

SK: Big?

VH: Lots of other students from all other reservations, mostly from Michigan, Wisconsin, Nebraska, Iowa, Montana, Wyoming, North Dakota—

SK: Oh, really a lot!

VH: It was, you know, a large area that was covered.

SK: And did you enjoy that?

VH: I tell you, the first three weeks of my first year was the most lonesomest. But, I swallowed my pride. I didn't want to write home and say "I want to come home," because I fought and I begged to go. So I swallowed my pride and I thought "Well, you wanted to come, so you have to live with your decisions," and it was tough, but we made it.

SK: Well—so you were lonely, even though you had a lot of your friends there?

VH: Yeah, uh-huh.

SK: Just because you were so far away?

VH: Uh-huh. 'Course, in them days, we didn't get the money that kids get now. We had nothing, so I used to take in ironing, do little chores to earn some spending

money and movie money on weekends.

SK: Did a lot of girls do that?

VH: Uh-huh.

SK: That was kind of an option? Were you encouraged to do that?

VH: No.

SK: Who did you iron for? Was it teachers and so forth?

VH: Uh-huh. If they needed something, cleaning done, then we cleaned. Mostly on Saturdays and Sundays.

SK: Was that fairly regulated too?

VH: Umn—well, yeah. we had to do certain things at certain times. Lights went out and you had to be in your room and in bed.

SK: And what about—Did you have to march from place to place?

VH: No, that was gone.

SK: That was gone by the time you got there [laughter], well, thank goodness!

VH: I missed all the way around.

SK: I can't remember who it was I was talking to, but she went away to one of the boarding schools and said that they marched here and marched there and it was like the military.

VH: Uh-huh.

SK: Umn—Looking back at the mission school, what do you think was the most valuable thing that you gained from that?

VH: I would say, learning my times tables at a very early age [laughs]. That's the first thing that always comes in my mind.

SK: Really?

VH: Yeah. When I think of the mission—Thank goodness I learned that when I was there.

SK: All those times that you were locked in the room [laughter].

VH: For talking—I always got in trouble for talking.

SK: Uh-huh.

VH: Even in grade school. I always got caught talking. Not Indian, but just, you know, talking. And in high school, I done the same darned thing too. And I was always wondering why they was always picking on me and it was because I liked to talk [laughs] Oh dear!

SK: I guess I should ask you—the other side—What was the—your least pleasant memory? Was there anything that sticks out in your mind about the mission school that—

VH: No—I think that I have all good—fond memories of the mission. I just—If it wasn't for the mission, I don't know what kind of person I would wind up being. And then the other time—when I was going off to boarding school, like I said, I was being kind of ornery. That taught me to learn how to mingle with other people.

SK: Yeah. How to get along—

VH: Uh-huh. So—I have good memories, except I wouldn't trade any of those years for anything.

SK: Uh-huh.

VH: That's why I try to encourage my kids and I'm always telling them, "the school years are the best years of your life," I said, "Once it's gone, it's gone forever.

SK: Uh—When you taught the Shoshone history, did you ever teach about the school? About what it was like to go to the schools here? Or didn't you go up that far when you were teaching the kids?

VH: Well, I gave them a general—you see, I served sometime on the Business council, so I gave them a general idea—I just, mainly the history—I touched on the mission, you know, that it was an Episcopal girls school and St. Stephen's and Ethete, that was as school too. See, that was part of the history.

SK: What about your own kids? Did you teach them Shoshone? Did you ever learn Shoshone—re-learn it—Did you ever forge-it and re-learn it?

VH: No, I never forgot it.

SK: Oh good.

VH: I might have slowed up at times, but once you learn something, you don't really forget.

SK: I don't know—I've forgotten French [laughter]. But I never really used it.

VH: No, with my own children, I didn't. See, I married out of the tribe. He's part Sioux.

SK: That's right. You said part Sioux, part German—

VH: No, he's part Scandinavian.

SK: Scandinavian. So your kids didn't speak Shoshone.

VH: No, I—we, my husband and I, talked about it and we said that there was one universal language and we'd just as well use it in the home. So that's what we had. but I said that if the children wanted to learn some language, I would teach them. I did start—but once they started getting silly with me, I ended. I said "that's it," but now they're picking it up.

SK: On their own?

VH: Uh-huh. they talk to friends. Most of the students out here, most of the children their age, don't speak it anyway. The younger generation, some of them are lucky if they understand. Very few understand.

SK: Hum—Do you think that—How—do you think that is a loss?

VH: Yeah, it's a loss.

VH: Uhm.

VH: This is what really gets me. Every one wants to get on the band wagon, and I oppose them teaching it in School. I said "No," because I said it's not the proper way to do it. The thing to do is to learn it at home, when they're young and speak it the proper way. Although we lost the old Shoshone words and stuff, it's so modern now. It's just like any language. You've got the modern and you've got the old.

SK: Yeah.

VH: The old is gone—

SK: And you really feel that it has gone, the old Shoshone has gone?

VH: Uh-huh. And I said, and anyway, where would you use it, really, unless you're an interpreter. but we very seldom need one of those anymore, because most of those—In fact, I think that the older people understand English a lot better than the young ones and that's kind of funny, because the older ones know, the younger ones don't even comprehend the English.

SK: Why do you suppose that is?

VH: I—I really don't know. I was really amazed when I discovered that.

SK: Uh-huh.

VH: It seemed like it would be the other way around.

SK: Well, that's—Well, we're almost out of tape here—Oh, I wanted to—also ask you about childhood illnesses. Do you remember any epidemics or things like that by the time you got to the schools? Were they having any problems along those lines?

VH: [long pause] I remember a lot of whooping cough.

SK: Still?

VH: Uh-huh. Because I know, I had it, I had it.

SK: Really? Yeah?

VH: And there was a lot of trachoma [sic].

SK: Uh—trachoma [sic]? What's that?

VH: That's eye diseases.

SK: Really, the had a lot of that still too?

VH: Uh-huh. 'Cause I know that there was a lot of us that used to go and spend ten days at the hospital. Every morning and every night, we had our eye lids turned over, scraped, or whatever they done with it. So a bunch of us got together and decided that we were going to get rid of those tools and we threw them away [laughter]. Guess who was always in the middle of things?

SK: [laughs] How old were you when that happened?

VH: Oh, I must have been about, what? Nine or ten, maybe?

SK: Well, it sounds quite painful—was it?

VH: Yes, it was, yeah.

SK: So, other than whooping cough and trachoma?

VH: Well, I think there was some sign of tuberculosis around.



SK: Tuberculosis? But that was all treated up here at that time?

VH: Uh-huh. We had hospitals and that was all taken care of there.

SK: Oh—Well thank you, Vida. That's about two spools left to go there—

END OF TAPE