

Warm Valley Historical Project  
Interview with Lizzie Panzetanga  
Interviewed by Sharon Kahin  
February 4, 1991

I: This is February 4, 1991. This is a conversation with Lizzie Panzetanga about her time at the Roberts Mission. This is for the Warm Valley Historical Project. Can you tell me how old you were when you went to Roberts Mission?

P: I don't know. I wasn't going to school at the time I was about four then when the little girls--my sisters were going to school then. I used to go down there--walk down there. Then they would have to always take me home with somebody. They said I was just to walk by the fence. I wanted to go to school so badly I guess. [laughter] I don't remember how old I was when I went to school. I would be about five or six.

I: And your sister Margerie, and was there another sister?

P: Bessie. She's the oldest.

I: So you would just walk down to the Mission and walk along the fence?

P: Yes. I stayed up there, above the Mission.

I: Up on the Trout Creek road? That's where you lived?

P: Yes. That's where my mom used to stay.

I: And both your sisters went there before you did.

P: Yes.

I: And Bessie was the oldest and then Margerie. Where were you born Lizzie?

P: (No answer)

I: Which year?

P: '23.

I: And were you the youngest of all the children then?

P: I was the youngest, and then I had a brother younger than me; but he's not here. He's gone.

I: Did he go to the government school?

P: Yes, I think he did.

I: I was just wondering. Could you have gone to the government school if you had wanted to? Do you remember there being any discussion in your family about where you were going to go?

P: Well, I did go down there for awhile after I went from that school up there.

I: So how long were you at the Roberts Mission?

P: I think I was still in school, but I quit up there. It's hard to remember. I must have been in the fifth grade or sixth grade.

I: And then you transferred to the government school?

P: Yes.

I: Do you remember why you transferred to the government school?

P: Oh, I don't know why. I should have just kept on up there.

I: Should have kept on at the Mission?

P: Yes. [laughter] Well see, my sisters were going to school up there. I think they started going to school down here. What does Marjerie think? Did she say anything about that?

I: Mill Creek?

P: No. Over here.

I: Which school is over here?

P: Fort Washakie.

I: Oh, Fort Washakie. I think she said she did. Which one did you like the best of the two schools?

P: Really, I think they were both the same. See, up there there weren't any boys or anything. Just mostly girls were going to school up there.

I: You were pretty small then; but, do you remember your first day of school—what it was like?

P: No. [laughter] That's really hard to remember.

- I: In the home, were you speaking English before you went to the Mission school?
- P: No. Because my mom never hardly teach us English or anything. She just like, to herself. We used to stay up there and then pretty soon she stayed over there by Springs—above Springs. You know the Mineral Hot Springs.
- I: Oh, she moved?
- P: Yes. She stayed up there. From there is where my brother used to go to school. He used to catch the bus from there. Then I had an older brother. I think he was older than Bessie.
- I: What was his name?
- P: John.
- I: Did he go to the government school?
- P: I don't know.
- I: Do you remember what it was like trying to learn English at the Mission? Was that difficult for you?
- P: No, it wasn't. See, Gwen was our teacher.
- I: Gwen Roberts?
- P: Yes. She was pretty good at trying to teach us what was bad and what words were bad. She used make us eat our vegetables that we didn't like. We had to eat it. [laughter] That's where I don't like celery I said, from that time. [laughter] Because we had to eat our vegetables. One thing I really used to enjoy was Christmas time.
- I: What was that like? What did you do for Christmas?
- P: We had to get up real early and put our clothes on. We had our stockings hanging up on the rail. Then we had some things in our stockings that she did. Then from there, we would go to church. Singing and all that. Then from there, our gifts were given to us. That was pretty good. I like that. I still remember it sometime. [laughter]
- I: What kinds of things would you get in your stockings?
- P: Like little things. Maybe little toys like dolls or, maybe little pins or hair clips.
- I: And they hung those on the banister for when you came down in the morning?

- P: Yes. When we'd get up, we had to know which one was our stocking. She had our names on them. That was kind of good, I think.
- I: And you sang Christmas hymns?
- P: Yes. We used to go to church when it was kind of dark. [laughter]
- I: Early in the morning? First thing?
- P: Yes. We would sing in the morning before we had our breakfast.
- I: And then you would go to the chapel? Was the tree in the chapel, or did you have a tree?
- P: Yes. They had a Christmas tree in there. When I went to school down here—well, I don't know why I quit up there. I could have finished my school up there, but I didn't. I could have finished my eighth grade up there. I had to go over my fifth grade.
- I: You had to repeat the fifth grade when you went to the government school?
- P: Yes.
- I: Did a lot of students have to do that?
- P: No. I don't think so.
- I: I was just wondering if most of the students at the Mission school were kind of behind the government school.
- P: I don't know.
- I: What were the hardest subjects for you to catch up in?
- P: Mostly my Math. I still can't remember my Math sometimes. Just the simple ones. [laughter]
- I: I can't either. I've forgotten my multiplication tables. What kind of day did you have at the Mission school? Can you kind of remember the way the day went at Roberts Mission?
- P: No. I can't even remember.
- I: I was just wondering if you had to get up fairly early. Do you remember anything about routine?

P: No. We usually just got up the same time we had to get up. But not as early as when we had to go to our Christmas.

I: And then classes in the morning?

P: Afternoon.

I: Afternoon classes. In the morning, what kinds of things did you do.

P: I don't remember what time we used to go to class. Maybe it was after we got through with our breakfast—or lunch. It's kind of hard to remember those things.

I: What about chores? Do you remember having to do chores around there? Of course, you were pretty small when you went there. Like did you have to help wash the dishes, or anything like that?

P: The older girls had to do those things. They wouldn't get you on that. But us smaller ones—they didn't.

I: Did Gwen teach you the religion too? Did she do Bible studies with you?

P: Yes.

I: What about Reverend Roberts? Did you study with him at all?

P: He used to sit down with us and tell us stories—talk to us. He was a nice old man.

I: Someone told me that he could speak Shoshone. Did he ever talk Shoshone?

P: Yes, I guess he said a few things—a few words that he knew how to say.

I: And you say that he was a good person.

P: Yes. And his wife—she was really nice too.

I: Laura Roberts.

P: I can't remember her name. Is that her name?

I: Yes. I think so. Were you ever invited over into their little cabin there?

P: They had their own room, almost same place where we had our bedroom upstairs. Their's was downstairs.

I: Oh, so they were living in the same building?

P: Yes.

I: I've been in there. Where was their room? As you walked in the door, where was the Roberts' room?

P: Which door? The main one?

I: Yes. The front one.

P: It was on this side. As you go the front room, then you go just down the hallway. There's another door on that side. It was over there.

I: So, as you faced the building, it was on the left?

P: Yes.

I: Was it just a sitting room, or bedroom?

P: They had their bed in there. Yes, they had a little sitting room.

P: So what was the little log building just beside the chapel? What was that used for?

P: I don't know. I think that old man used to stay there.

I: A maintenance man? Which old man might of stayed there?

P: I can't remember. Maybe Mr. Roberts stayed there.

I: Did Mr. Roberts stay there? Was maybe Gwens room in the main building?

P: Gwen--she had her room right across from where we stayed.

I: On the second floor?

P: Yes. Same place.

I: Was there another person then that was the matron?

P: No.

I: Who kind of... Did Gwen kind of keep track of your bedtime and all that things too?

P: Yes. And that matron hed to help be there too. She had her room right across from... See, we had two sets of bedrooms. She was on the other side.

I: The matron was on the other side?

P: Yes.

I: Were there girls sleeping on the bottom floor too?

P: No.

I: Do you remember about how many students you had there?

P: No. I don't know.

I: What about uniforms? Did they still wear uniforms there?

P: Oh, uniforms. They used to wear the same kind of clothes, like, maybe little old dresses all of them blue dresses. And black stockings [laughter]. And if we're going to church, we have to wear our red--what do you call them, tams or something.

I: Red tams.

And at the government school, did you have special clothing to wear there?

P: No.

I: You could just wear anything.

P: Yes.

I: When you went back--you go of during the summer didn't you?

P: We usually go home, when we up there, I think Saturdays. Then we had to go back Sundays.

I: Did you have special clothes that you had to wear on Sundays? Did you have a uniform for Sundays?

P: We all wore the same kind of clothes. All of us.

I: And then in the summertime, do you remember when school got out?

P: No. It's kind of hard to remember.

I: Did you have a couple of months off in the summer?

P: Might have been something like that.

I: When you went back, did you speak English at the home then?

P: Mostly, we talked Shoshone.

I: Did your mom ever learn English?

P: She did.

I: I was just wondering if it felt strange going back speaking English if your brothers and sisters were still speaking Indian. Or did you speak English with all of your brothers and sisters?

P: My older brother, I didn't know him, because he was gone by the time I grew up.

P: But other women talked Shoshone all the time too.

I: Do you remember how many years it took you to learn English?

P: I was kind of brought up with it. I mean, my Shoshone -,cords I was brought up with, but my English... That's where I learned English, at the Mission. Gwen used to teach us how to talk English. I knew how to say some words.

I: You say that she made you eat your vegetables. [laughter]

P: Yes, we had to eat our vegetables. She said, "It's good for you. You have to eat it."

I: And you had celery too?

P: Yes, we used to have celery. The cooks used to have that.

I: Did they have their own garden when you were going to school?

P: I think so.

I: I didn't know you could grow celery down here. Was that different from home? Did your mother make you eat vegetables?

P: No.

I: What kinds of things did you eat at home?

P: Anything that we want to eat. [laughter]

I: But not vegetables.

P: No.

I: Did your mother have a garden?



P: No.

I: Just looking back on it now; what was the best thing that you remember about being at the Mission school?

P: [long pause] When we were out--I don't remember if they had anything like swings or anything. Well, they had swings, but they were the other kind of swings. Not these kind kids have today around their house. Maybe some were made with tire tubes.

I: Oh, so they had tire swings at the Mission?

P: I think that's what they used to 'nave. I'm not quite sure they. We used to go up where it was maybe nice and green and lay on the ground. We had some dolls to play with too. We used to be doing that--play dolls.

I: Would that be in the afternoon, after classes?

P: Yes.

I: What about in the evenings? Did you have any kinds of set activities in the evenings? What kinds of things did you do in the evenings?

P: No we didn't. We have to sometimes. That's just us younger ones—we had to sometimes.

I: Did you play in your rooms then.

P: No we never went up to our buildings until bedtime.

I: Could you play inside? What kinds of things did you do in the evenings?

P: I don't remember. I don't even know whether she had any toys for us at that time.

I: It was a long time ago.

P: Yes. It's just really hard to remember.

I: But you weren't allowed to go play in the bedrooms then.

P: No.

I: Do you remember what some of the rules were--some of the things that you weren't allowed to do?

P: [long pause] She didn't really have any rules. But she used to try to correct us every time we did something that we weren't supposed to do. Some of us girls were on detail, helping out in the kitchen.

I: Then, when you went to the government school, did you help out in the kitchen or do those kinds of things there?

P: No. We just played. outside. That was different from that school.

I: Did you have uniforms at the government school?

P: No.

I: What were some of the other differences between the two schools?

P: [long pause] I can't remember that.

I: Do you remember missing anything at the Mission school when you went to the government school? Were there any things that you really missed about the Mission school?

P: No, I don't think there was really any difference.

I: More students at the government school? Was it bigger?

P: Yes. Of course, they had boy students. Boys and girls both.

I: Did you have classes with the boys, or was that separate?

P: Yes, because they were somewhere in different classrooms.

I: Oh, so you had different classes then, and just one at the Mission.

P: Yes.

I: When you went to the government school, was it self-sustaining still? Did it have cows and chickens and that kind of thing?

P: No. Up there we had chickens.

I: At the Mission?

P: Yes.

I: Did they have gardens or anything like that at the government school?

P: I don't think so.

I: I know they kind of phased them out at one point. I was just wondering when that might have been.

- P: They had a playground over there tough. They would do football and all of that. Baseball down here.
- I: Baseball at the Mission?
- P: No, over here.
- I: Oh, Fort Washakie. What about for the girls? Did you play baseball?
- P: Down here?
- I: At Fort Washakie. At the government school.
- P: We used to play baseball. The boys used to play football.
- I: When you went to the government school, was it still a boarding school? Did you still sleep there?
- P: No.
- I: It was a day-school by that time.
- P: Yes.
- I: Did you like that better, being able to go home
- P: Yes, I guess it was a good in a way.
- I: Do you remember there being disciplinarians when you were at the school? Did they still have those?
- P: Yes. I think they still do. I think they do, because there are some kids that are kind of bad and they send them to the superintendent, or whoever's next to him. They put them in—what do you call it. So many days of this. And like in the bus, there are some kids that are just bad. They won't let them ride the bus when they do that. That may be one week without getting on the bus. Their parents have to take them down and pick them up. These kids are just bad.
- I: If they were bad back then, at the government school, do you remember what kind of punishment they got?
- P: I don't think anybody was that bad. Not as bad as they are today. I know my grandson thinks it's bad. My little grandson's going to school down there. Seems like he always gets in trouble.
- I: You said that they took them in the bus. Did most people have cars at that time?

- P: Not really. They used to have these old time cars, like model Ts. Them kind of cars. Some people used to use their horse and buggy.
- I: So, if they got kicked off the bus, then sometimes the parents would have to come with the horse and buggy?
- P: Yes. That's when I was going to school. They weren't that bad though.
- I: When you were growing up, was your family in a cabin up on Trout Creek?
- P: No. We stayed in a tent. This place up here, under those trees. That's where my grandpa and grandma used to stay. She didn't hardly stay there. She stayed up there by her other aunt. The next time, she'll be moving down to the Springs [laughter]. We used to just move around here and there. We never stayed in one place.
- I: You just took the tent down and moved it?
- P: Yes. I don't remember my dad though.
- I: These tents. Someone told me they had boards around at the bottom.
- P: Yes. At the bottom.
- I: Did they keep the wind out, or how did that work?

[End of Side 1]

- I: Did you ever use Coal? Coal and Wood?
- P: Yes.
- I: Do your family go to Hudson to get the coal?
- P: Yes, I think that's where—Then I think they went to town to get some. Maybe in a sack.
- I: When they went to get coal, did you ever go with them?
- P: No.
- I: Did they go by horse and buggy?
- P: No. I think that's the time when my mom had a model T.
- I: So when you went to Roberts Mission, your family had a tent with a wood burning stove.

P: Yes.

I: Was it strange going to a place where they had—

P: Oh, I didn't mind it. [laughter] I didn't mind it at the time, when I was small. I used to go down to the school and walk beside the fence. My older sister used to say, "There comes that kid by the fence. I can just barely see her head." [laughter] I guess I wanted to go to school so darn bad. Then they had to take me home. Next day, I probably end up over there again. [laughter]

I: So you wanted to go to school.

P: I guess I did.

I: What about your mom? Did she want you to go to school? Did she want to give you up and have you go to school?

P: She never say anything to me about that. So I always tell my daughter, "How come my mom didn't help teach her how to do this and that?" But when she was there when I was older, she was always teaching us how to do this. Sew, and all that.

I: Did they teach you how to sew at the Mission?

P: No.

I: What about things like beadwork, or from your own family? Did they teach you anything like that at the Mission?

P: Not at the Mission.

I: Did you learn that later at home?

P: Yes. I tried to learn from her, by watching her. She told me how to sew this and that—whatever I didn't know how to sew.

I: Did you learn anything like cooking?

P: Yes. I learned that from her too.

I: From your mother?

P: Yes.

I: You said your mother moved around. Did a lot of families do that—move around?

P: I don't know. You never knew what these older women did at the time.

I: Was there any particular reason that she moved around so often?

P: I don't know.

I: I was wondering how hard it was to take those tents down and put them up. Were you ever around when they did that?

P: I guess it wasn't very hard.

I: Did it have a wooden floor?

P: No, just the sides—around it.

I: When you left the government school—you went through the eighth grade at the government school?

P: No. I took over my fifth grade down here. And I didn't even finish school. I always say that I wished I finished school, but I didn't.

I: Was there a reason that you didn't finish school? Did your mother want you to come back home?

P: No. It's just one of those crazy things. A girl gets senile at that age. [laughter]

I: How old were you when you left school?

P: I don't know how old I was; but, anyway, I didn't even finish my eighth grade. I didn't really finish my seventh grade either. Part of it. I would like to have gone back. I'm not going back to school. Then I got pregnant. That was bad.

I: Did some of your—a lot of your friends not finish school too?

P: I don't know. There might have been a few that did that.

I: I was just wondering if there was any law then that they tries to enforce or keep kids in school through the eighth grade.

P: I think they did, but it was up to the person. I could have went back to school, but I didn't.

I: You didn't get in any trouble for leaving school—your parents?

P: No.

I: Not like now then?

P: No.

- I: Looking back on the government school; what was one of the better things, or what was the best thing that you remember about the government school?
- P: I think that I was just trying to learn how to play basketball. I liked that. One of them ladies was trying to teach us how to play basketball. I don't know if I ever tried playing baseball. But I know I was trying to play basketball.
- I: You said that you would have liked to have gone back to finish school.
- P: I guess I would make something of myself if I did. Might be doing something, or maybe I wouldn't have. I would be able to learn more. That's what I always say. "I wish I would've learned more." It's too late.
- I: In terms of getting a job—would it have helped you, if you had went back?
- P: It's a good one right now today, isn't it? You have to have a school education, and all that, to get a job. Without that, you can't have a job.
- I: Did you ever try to get a job and have it be a problem that you hadn't finished school?
- P: No. I never tried to get a job.
- I: And your brothers and sisters—did they all finish school?
- P: Oh, let's see if my brother did—that real good one. I don't know if he did or not. I know Bessie didn't, I don't think, either. That's my older sister.
- I: Did any of your brothers and sisters go away to [Chamalla] or any of those places?
- P: No.
- I: Could you have done that if you had wanted to?
- P: Well, I guess I could have if I wanted to. If I finished my eighth grade, maybe I could've.
- I: So that was for going beyond the eighth grade.
- P: Yes.
- I: When you were at the government school, were any of the teachers Shoshone or from other tribes? Do you remember that?
- P: No. Do you mean our teachers?

I: Yes. I just wondered if they had any Shoshone teachers by that time.

P: No.

I: What about working around the place, like in the laundry, or bakery, or anything like that?

P: Well, they had few there that used to work around that were Shoshones.

I: Was the language still a problem at the government school for some children? Were there still children that were having trouble with the language?

P: Talking what?

I: Talking English by that time.

P: Most of the time, I think more children still knew how to talk Shoshone. Now days, they don't talk Shoshone. They don't know how to talk Shoshone. Mostly, they talk English. But at that time, I knew how to talk Shoshone at the start.

I: And the kids today, that don't speak Shoshone—what do you think they've lost by that?

P: probably. I try to teach my grandchildren to talk Sho hone

I: I know we teach it in the schools now, but is it the same language that—

P: Yes. I think they teach it down here

I: So you don't think it's changed that much?

P: No, I don't think so.

I: I'm almost finished here. Maybe one more question. You said that now days it seems like there's more discipline trouble with the children. I was just wondering why you thought that had come about, or when it started.

P: When it started?

I: Yes.

P: These kids now days, they do what these kids have been doing. Pot, and all that.

I: A lot of drug problems?

P: Yes. Probably that's what causes them too—at home. That's the older ones, I



guess, that do that. They've been told not to do this chew too. That's something like that too, isn't it?

I: There's just all kinds. All kinds. I was just wondering when you thought things had started to change.

P: When I was going to school down there, they never did things like that—that I know of. And besides, there's some of these teenagers that do this booze. That's a problem to, with them. That's why their schooling--they don't do their schooling.

I: There wasn't a problem with booze then, when you were growing up?

P: No.

I: Do you have any idea why there are so much drugs?

P: I don't know. That's a pretty good question.

I: Well, yes it is, because you've got kids and grandchildren-just watching them, if you had any ideas what might be the cause of it.

P: They just think that they can go out and have their fun probably. That's just it. Which in turn, they keep landing where they shouldn't be landing. Then they get caught.

[End of Tape]