



The United Church of Canada, British Columbia Conference

The Bob Stewart Archives

6000 Iona Drive, Vancouver, BC, Canada V6T 1L4

Making Room for Women Project

Interview with Marilyn Harrison

September 17, 2012

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Oral History Recording Summary

Interviewee: Marilyn Harrison (MH)
Date of Interview: September 17, 2012
Transcribed by: Jude McGann

Interviewed by: Sharon Copeman (SC)
Location: 4615 West 9th Ave., Vancouver
Auditor of Transcription: Marilyn Harrison

Time Log (minutes)	Description of Content
00:01	Beginning of Interview; introduction, permission, information about early life
04:03	Early impressions of gender inequality
08:36	Vocational choices
09:23	Sense of call; beginning of work at VST
13:06	Years as BC Conference Archivist
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SC: My name is Sharon Copeman and the date is September 17th, 2012. I'm interviewing Marilyn Harrison as part of the "Making Room for Women" program at the United Church of Canada Archives. Marilyn, do I have your permission to proceed with this interview? 00:01

MH: Yes, you do.

SC: Thank you so much for giving us time for this. As you know so well, the Archives is excited about gathering women's stories. I'm so glad to be able to add your story to it.

So tell me a bit about your early life, your family, your community, and your participation in the church in those early years.

MH: Well, I was born and brought up in Ontario, until such time as I married my husband in 1956. We were a family of four until my sister arrived ten years after I was born, so we had sort of a split family. We lived in Hamilton which was very short; I was very young and I don't remember much there. But we lived in two small towns; Mitchell, up near Stratford and London, during the Second World War, and then we moved to Weston which at that time was a town outside of Toronto that now has been completely swallowed up by Toronto. So my early years were really in small towns. My grandparents lived in two small towns and we visited them, and we had a family cottage on Lake Huron, again in a small town. So small town was important in my whole growing up. 00:52

In participation of the [United] Church, my grandparents were regular participants in their local churches. My parents always belonged to a local church. We went to church on Sunday morning, and sometimes we had Sunday school in the afternoon. We did not go to church in the evening, but church was a very important part of our family. Easter was always spent at my one grandparents', so all my early memories of Easter are in my grandparents' church. 1:49

My parents were both active in the church, as were my grandparents. Mother was in a variety of women's groups, particularly the WMS, and I can remember reading the *Missionary Monthly* every month when it came into the house. My father was usually on the Board of Stewards, although he was on Session a couple of times, when they moved away after I married.

My grandparents, as I say, were always active in the church. My one grandfather was the son of a Methodist minister and his father actually came out from England in the early 1840s and was a circuit rider in Ontario, so our church roots go back quite a while. And on my father's side of the family, he came from a minister's family. 2:44

SC: Was he also Methodist? 3:04

- MH: No, he was Evangelical United Brethren – German speaking in those days, which subsequently joined the United Church in 1968/'69. Basically German speaking up until the First World War.
- SC: And did you do Sunday School and the various groups? 3:23
- MH: I went to Sunday school regularly. I signed the petition not to drink (the temperance movement); I can remember that. I can remember the Sunday school room. I actually taught Sunday school myself for the last two years of my teens, before I went to university. It was the old curriculum. You had work books that you worked out of, and I remember the cover of it having the books of the Bible arranged like a library with shelves and you had to memorize all of them. Anyhow, I taught one of those classes to memorize their books of the Bible. Yes, I've taught Sunday school.
- And I was part of a youth group in my teens.
- SC: Can you remember an early defining moment that made you aware of gender inequality? 4:03
- MH: Well, this is a very interesting question because . . . yes, I was aware very, very early. My mother trained to be a high school teacher. She taught for two years to get her permanent certificate and then she got married, and if you were a married woman in the '30s, you were not allowed to work in the teaching profession. So she was unable to work. So I was aware there, that because she was a woman and had married, she was no longer able to be a teacher. However the Second World War came around and they came begging for her to please come and teach. All the male teachers had disappeared, and she was invited to go back to teaching, which she did.
- Then when we moved to Weston near Toronto, our next door neighbour was the head of the English department in the high school and he discovered Mother's specialty was English and History. So for quite a few years he was after her to go back to teach, although instead she had another child and she got involved in other things, like the Girl Guide movement.
- So I was aware of it in that time, but in terms of my own experience, working and being involved in committees and stuff, I didn't feel any kind of inequality whatsoever. I was just treated as myself; there was no distinction between male or female. I was aware of it in some professions, but by the time I was ready to do the kinds of volunteer work I did in the church, that had passed as far as I was concerned. 5:17
- SC: What about your education? What contributed to your vocational choices? Who were your role models? 5:32
- MH: Well, I suppose initially, the role model for my vocational choice was my

mother. She was an English and History teacher in high school, and from the time I was five, I was going to be an English and History teacher. And so it was just taken for granted. I could get good marks in maths and sciences, but I didn't like them and I wasn't interested in them, but English and History turned me on.

SC: And it was really assumed that women weren't good in those things wasn't it? 6:16

MH: I suppose, but I was good in them – got good marks – but I just didn't like them. Whereas, I liked English and History, and I had a real passion for Canadian history and I got that from my mother. She started me off with Canadian history books when I was really quite young. So it would have been my mother.

I didn't follow my original plans because I met my husband and I got married before I finished university, and therefore I've gone a different route.

SC: And at that time was it still that women who were married didn't teach? 6:50

MH: Oh, by the time I was going to school, no.

SC: So that wouldn't have stopped you, it was just a different choice.

MH: By the time I hit university, I began to think maybe I should be a lawyer instead of a teacher. Or what about being a minister? And then I thought, no I don't want to be a minister, but maybe a minister's wife because I want to get married and have kids. Well I didn't do that either. I met my husband and my whole life took quite a change from there.

But in terms of role models, probably my maternal grandparents and my parents, those would be the two. What one did in community, how you treated people, our value system. And also my mother and dad encouraged me to be independent. They would help me make decisions, but the final decision was mine alone.

I had a very future-looking grandmother on my mother's side. She never even finished grade eight, but she sent *her* daughter to university. Every woman had to have her own money and an education to be able to look after herself and not be dependent on a man. I had these role models in terms of this one grandmother in particular, and then my mother.

My great grandmother was said to say that every man should have to bear the first baby, and then there would not be ten children. I came from that streak of independence.

SC: So your vocational choices . . . did you have one early on that you followed when you were first married? 8:36

MH: Well no, because I got married and I had my kids and I was a stay-at-home mom. We moved to Vancouver so my husband could go back to university. Then when he finished he said, "Okay Marilyn you've got to go back and finish your degree." So I did, and that led to graduate work, and then I just sort of fell into the job of archivist out at VST for BC Conference. And I did two semesters of teaching at Langara College. Then an opening came at VST and I was asked if I would take it, and yes I would take it. I just lucked into it and these were things I was interested in and it worked out.

SC: You've used the language "lucked into." Would you also be open to the language of "call" . . . would you feel there was a call? 9:23

MH: Maybe a call, but I didn't go looking for it. People came and offered me things. And I would decide whether it was right or not, and it just seemed the natural thing to do because I was interested in what they were asking.

For instance, the professor of Church History resigned from VST – it was actually VST by that time, in April or May [1972]. There wasn't enough time to get another permanent replacement. So, Jim Martin, knowing that I was interested in Canadian church history, and that I was working in the Archives then, came and asked me if I would pick up a couple of courses in church history. Well why not? It was right there; I was working in the same building. I had it all at my fingertips.

And so from there, they found out that I had other capabilities; so I filled in as an assistant for Continuing Education because I had shown that I had some administrative skills. So it was just one of those things; these openings came up. The United Church nationally was setting up student aid across the country and my church minister, who was on BC Conference executive and knew of me, thought I would make a good person, so I was hired. He was supposed to find somebody and he asked me. Same when the chaplaincy opened up. I was around there, and Jim Martin again asked if I would take that – thought I had the skills to do that. Yes, I was interested in doing that. It would involve some teaching and some of my other skills and training. I had already been leading a lot of groups in terms of theology and Bible study and liturgy and that kind of thing, through the Continuing Education program. 10:17

Then it was suggested that I might become Executive Secretary of BC Conference, and I said that was not for me. I knew what my skills were, what I was interested in, and I didn't want to stray from those. And there were a couple of national jobs that people approached me for. I had no intention of commuting across the country, or moving the family. My roots were here, so I was able to stay here. And actually, a United Church minister nationally became a friend of mine; I was really struggling with these job propositions coming to me, and also committees (what committees to be on), because I couldn't get myself overextended. I can see us: we sat at the table out on the sidewalk on Bloor Street when the national office was on Bloor Street, having lunch and working this out. For me, my criteria boiled down to: it had to be fun – in other words, it had to be with people I'd like to work with; I had to have a

learning curve – I needed to be able to learn from whatever it was I was going to be doing in this volunteer work; and the third one was, it had to be a very worthwhile thing that I believed in. No particular order, but it had to meet those three criteria before I would even consider it and say yes. And that really worked for me. That happened, probably in the early eighties. Except for one committee (a national committee that I was on), my experiences as a volunteer on committees were successful in that they all met those three criteria.

SC: I'm going to take you back to your reference to working in the Archives. Did you have a paid position in the Archives? 13:06

MH: Yes. The Archives position had always just been a volunteer thing. Get a retired minister who'd go out and sort a few papers, that sort of thing. Ted Nicholls, who was Executive Secretary of BC Conference, wanted to have it properly organized, with staff people who were there to get things organized. There were a couple of huge collections of church archives coming up. The Goodfellow papers was one of them, and he suggested that I might, because I was doing research in the Archives for my graduate work at UBC, be a natural person to pick up the job. Also I wanted those papers, and if I was the archivist – I was selfish too – if I had the title of archivist, I could get congregations to give me the papers to put in the Archives, so it worked both ways. I think 1967 is when I started working in the Archives. It gradually became increasingly remunerative; it was really a part time job. Bob Stewart took it over from me, I think in 1980, and by that time I was teaching at VST and had too much on my plate. He did a much better job than I did.

But the Archives gave me access to the whole Conference and so I got to know all the ministers. I got to know all the committees and most of the churches. I did a fair bit of travelling for that, and in that period I was President of BC Conference too, so that gave me even more acceptance.

SC: I think we've already answered the next question. Have you worked outside the home for pay? If so what and where, and what roles did you play? Is there anything we've missed? 14:52

MH: Well, I did teach for a couple of semesters at Langara College – Canadian History – loved that, but I was filling in for somebody who was sick, so that didn't continue. And then I got much more involved in the church. The rest of my teaching was all at VST. Unless you count all the various pastor groups and various other things that I was involved with, which had teaching components.

SC: I think that's probably leading us into the next thing, which is volunteer involvement, unless some of that was paid? 15:33

MH: Oh well, it was because I was a VST faculty person, I mean I wasn't paid extra.

SC: It was part of your paid position at VST that you did these other things.

MH: You could say some of it was volunteer. They would ask me to do something because they knew I had the skills, but it was over and above hours. I was putting in sixty hours a week at VST because of all this other evening stuff, weekend retreats, and all this kind of . . .

SC: Somebody needed to counsel you – some pastor did!

MH: It wasn't all the time. It was slower in the summer. Faculty at VST were very involved. We were in constant demand in all aspects of the church, as well as parts of the community, to come and do workshops and weekend retreats and evening lectures, all that kind of stuff. I was part of that. And we had all these pastor groups and various things on Northwest Puget Sound, as well as all over BC. A lot of that was on the weekend, as well as during the week, so you put in long hours. 16:08

[As an example], we were teaching a spirituality course, John Blyth and I, over in Victoria and we left VST at 12 noon and I dropped him off there (he was living out there at the time), at 11:00 o'clock that night. That took most of the day and we were teaching that one course every week for a whole semester. It was that kind of thing.

SC: Typical church! (laughter)

MH: Well VST; we were all on that kind of schedule.

SC: So what led to your decisions about volunteer involvements? It almost seems not a timely question, having talked about the fact that you're already working for pay 60 hours a week. But I know you did have volunteer things as well – maybe not at the same time! 17:20

MH: Well some of it was being President of Conference; it was a volunteer thing that took up a lot of time, got me into a lot of different places. All my national work for the church was probably volunteer over and above what I was doing at VST. I found it was very, very difficult to separate.

My work for BC Conference . . . part of it was work-related. I was on several committees because of being Chaplain [at VST]. I was Student Aid Officer and Chaplain which automatically got me onto BC Conference Education & Students, Internship Committee, MP&E Executive . . . that was just automatic.

But my other volunteer stuff in the church . . . I was chair of the Agenda Committee for BC Conference three times, and I was on four or five different agenda committees. I was on a number of other committees of the Conference that had nothing to do with VST.

Being President of Conference was a volunteer thing. I was on General Council Executive for four years. I chaired the Committee for Ordination of Gays and Lesbians, and then the Committee for Confessing Our Faith for four

years. I was put on Worship Committee for General Council for two General Councils. I attended, in total, six General Council meetings over the years. I was on the Theology and Faith Committee, a committee for the status of retired ministers . . . I mean, this was all volunteer stuff. My husband said there was one year when we added it all up, I was probably away one third of the whole year in Toronto at various kinds of meetings, all volunteer stuff.

But, it gave me added [material] in terms of teaching Denom Studies at VST, in terms of presenting a national view at the local level, at the Conference level and the school level, since we were a United Church School. So I was able to bring that kind of dimension back into my job. It was a 'to and fro' kind of thing.

SC: So, in terms of what led to your decisions about volunteer involvements, it was always a mutually beneficial situation, really: beneficial to the organization you were going to, to have you, and then beneficial to you in your other responsibilities, to get the knowledge that came to you through those positions. 19:54

You've just answered this: what leadership responsibilities have you carried in the church? But in your congregation, this hasn't necessarily been mentioned. You certainly have talked about other church courts. Do you want to think a little bit about the congregation and then also about ecumenical activities?

MH: Let's start with the ecumenical.

Ecumenical stuff was partly through my job at VST because it was an ecumenical school. I worked with all the students, it wasn't just United Church. When I got to teaching Spiritual Formation and Faith Formation at VST, I taught all students; it wasn't just United Church. So again, that was an ecumenical thing. When I was President of Conference, I was in a number of ecumenical groups as President. And that's where I got to know David Sommerville. He was Bishop of the Anglican Church at that time. And so there were a number of committees and things that I was on at that stage, in terms of the ecumenical.

Also, in Continuing Education at VST, we did a week-long workshop on shared ministries, United Church and Anglican. It was sponsored by the national church, but most of the shared ministries were actually here in BC, so I was working with both the Anglican and United Church on that major workshop, and we did that twice. And then the other thing we did was a Team Ministry Workshop, a week-long Continuing Education event, and we did that twice. I was on that, and again we had ministers from all denominations coming to that.

SC: So, these were ministers who were working in local churches where it's a shared ministry, both Anglican and United or . . .

MH: Well that's one kind. Shared ministries were where one minister would have both Anglican and United Church responsibilities. Or an Anglican priest would have a United Church thing. Mostly in the interior, because neither

denomination had enough money to have full time clergy.

SC: So just to clarify. I think of the congregation that meets at Naramata, and at the moment they have an Anglican priest, but it's both the United and the Anglican people who come to the church. And then the next person who comes, they'll seek to have a United Church person, so they alternate back and forth.

MH: That's a shared ministry. Now the team ministries were where you had a senior minister and an associate minister, or you had a minister, and a secretary, and a C.E. worker. Teams really varied.

SC: And they were from different denominations, all those individuals?

MH: Different denominations.

The other ecumenical work I did: VST was linked very closely with the Puget Sound District of the United Methodist Church and we did two week-long Preaching Continuing Education events with them. I was one of the leaders in that. And then we followed it up with monthly Pastor Groups with them. For two years I was working with the United Methodists in the preaching aspect of it.

SC: And you were the organizational . . .

MH: Well I was one of them, and I was one of the facilitators. And then Elly Bradley created Pastor Groups throughout BC, and I was a facilitator for that. One of them was up in Powell River, and we had seven different denominations as part of my Pastor Group there. And the next year I had one near Bellingham, down in the States, and again we had multiple ecumenical . . . including a Seventh Day Adventist, who were part of that. So, I did have ecumenical work as part of my paid work at VST. 23:32

And I was part of the staff for a Lutheran Ministers Conference that took place out of VST; that was very interesting. At that time, there were three different branches of the Lutheran Church coming together and they were having this gathering for the ones in BC.

SC: So that's ecumenical work, and then at the congregational level, volunteer work at the congregational level? 24:36

MH: Well, I mentioned earlier teaching Sunday school in Weston when I was a teenager. First Sunday I arrived at West Point Grey United Church, it was Labour Day Sunday and they were pleading for Sunday school teachers. They didn't have any teachers for the six intermediate grades. And so I thought, "Well, I'm going to be here for three years while my husband goes to school, so I can give them three years." And so I volunteered and I taught Sunday school for about five years. I also got involved in the young mothers' UCW study group, which met weekly with a study book and they provided nursery care for our children.

And then I've been on the Council for many years. I've chaired the Worship Committee three different times; I've been on Pastoral Care; and I've been on Christian Education. I was one of the people who organized sort of an adult kind of study group called Quest. What else have I done at the church? I've convened the Thrift Sale for the last twelve years, which I'm not doing anymore.

Currently I am chairing the 100th Anniversary Committee. The responsibilities of that will be over on the 30th of this month. I've led a lot of worship services. I've done virtually everything in the church. I have not been on the Property Committee or the Finance Committee, but when I was chairing Council for three years, I attended all the meetings of all committees. So very much involved in that.

I would say I'm fairly involved in the church, and my husband would say it is my second home – that when I'm not home and in bed sleeping, I'm at the church.

SC: I would say you're a very dedicated volunteer.

MH: But I am backing out. I'm having to take things much more easily.

SC: What were the important issues, joys, and challenges in your life? Is there a project or work that you have done that you are especially proud of? 26:47

MH: Probably the longest lasting one – it had its ups and downs, that was for sure – was my teaching at VST. I really get a thrill when I see what some of the students I had, what has happened subsequently to them. A lot of them are now retiring, which makes me feel very old! Some have remained good friends. I think on the whole I enjoyed teaching, and it continues on as I see what's happened to people, [and the many gifts they are giving to the Church].

But probably the greatest joys were the people I got to work with. I'm thinking of the volunteer people who have been mentors of mine. I met some really fabulous people throughout the years, from all across the country, and got to know them personally, but also got to know the church through them. They certainly taught me an awful lot. I mentioned earlier that I had to learn from something, and I learned. I had many, many teachers, and many, many mentors. Most of them are gone now. Some are still around.

SC: And you said you taught at VST for how many years? 28:32

MH: Twenty-seven.

SC: So it's almost inevitable that some of the people you taught are retiring, because so many of us entered the profession later in life.

MH: There were mature students. You were one of them, and you were not alone. There was one stage – I guess it was one of the spirituality classes I was teaching – I looked around and the average age was forty-three. We didn't have any young ones at all. By the time I retired, we were starting to get graduates fresh out of university again.

SC: That's good news. What have you been most passionate about in your adult years? 29:09

MH: Well I am assuming that doesn't necessarily have to refer to the church. Canadian History. Very passionate about that. My mother got me started when I was about ten years old. Particularly the social history, and how people lived, all that kind of stuff.

Gardening. When I was working and leading what looked like a hectic, frantic life, for me to relax would be to go out in the garden and weed. I would be by myself, I would be left alone, and everything disappeared; my mind would just go blank. So gardening, and I'm coming back into that with this new house. We're going to be there in late fall, planting up a whole new garden in the front yard. Tear up the grass and path and have a new garden. A carefree garden, no lawn to cut.

Canadian History and that [(gardening)]. I guess in a certain sense, you'd have to say my life in the church has been a passion. You mentioned earlier, a calling. I didn't call it that but I guess maybe that's what it is. I realized even when I was doing graduate work out at UBC, if I had to choose between something there or writing a paper, or doing something in the church, the church always won out. The church would have been a passion.

And I guess the other passion I have would be grandchildren. My children sort of grew up as I was working, but my grandchildren . . . we have been blessed. Three of them within walking distance (one block) and the others were maybe five blocks away. So the passion has been being part of their daily growing up and doing things with them. And now they're all adults.

SC: How lovely! What a gift, and maybe there'll be great grandchildren.

MH: Well, not in the offing yet.

[Another passion would be] spirituality. Teaching Spiritual Formation and Faith Formation, in my later years at VST, that's where all my reading and study was. And silent retreats at Loyola House, in Guelph; that became a real passion. It's less of a passion now, I think because it's just an integral part of me in a way.

And then with most of my work at VST as well as most of my work on church committees, it was just steeping myself in theology, in worship, in Bible studies. And it was not only having the knowledge, but it was deepening my faith, so there was enormous personal growth for me. There was a real payoff

there, without me having to take a degree or a diploma. A lot of it was by osmosis.

Another example, early in my time at VST, I did a Continuing Education, week-long event on *Confessions of Augustine* with Gordon McDermott. I learned so much from Gordon about Augustine. Fair enough, I could have read his *Confessions*. But how it relates to us and how you bring it into the personal life, today, I learned from Gordon. Not only about Augustine and his influence on the church down through the centuries, but how to make it alive for people today. So I was learning how to facilitate a group, too; it was all that mixed up. That was really exciting. I think that's why I was prepared to do all of this, the hours of things that I did, because it was exciting to be part of these things, and learning.

SC: So I want to test something with you. I think I'm hearing you talk about everything that you did, your excitement around learning, the head stuff, but there was that deepening, the what I would call "heart stuff," that went into it, and that was the bonus. 33:19

MH: That was the real payoff.

SC: I was going to say, it may not quite be right to say that it's a bonus. That was more what it was really about, underneath it all. So that's the path.

MH: In fact, when I first started teaching Sunday school here in 1962, I had this intermediate group, ten girls, wonderful girls, and I discovered there was a theological college out at UBC (Union College). So I went out there to see if I could get a background book for teaching this class of girls. And they had never had a lay person with no church affiliations, wanting to have a library card at Union College. However, they did give me one. Dr. Clark said I could have a card and I would go out there every week and get books related to the next Sunday's lesson. So I was steeping myself in preparing that lesson, but it was so that I could be speaking from the heart, as you said, with them. I obviously like to learn.

SC: I have the gift – others will have the gift of reading the transcript – but I have the gift of watching you. The passion that I see in your face is just so evident. So thank you. It's great.

What effect has your class, your race, your sexual orientation had on your life, on your participation in the church? 35:01

MH: I was born into an English-speaking, Caucasian, southern Ontario church family going back generations. So that obviously had an influence on me. We were middle class professionals. It was taken for granted that if you had the academic ability, you'd go on to university. My parents actually moved to the house they did so that we could commute to the University of Toronto, because they were going to have two children at the same time. So it was just taken for granted that one would go to university and one had a profession.

SC: It kind of set you up.

MH: We weren't forced into it. It was taken for granted. And as far as my parents were concerned, we did not have to excel at school; we had to do the best we could. And if our best was only a "B," that was fine. But if our best was an "A+," that was fine. I really regret what's happened to so many kids today; they're really being forced to excel. My brother, my sister, and I weren't. We were accepted as who we were and we were expected to do the best we could, given what God has given us. I was blessed with parents who valued education and we had sufficient money (with some sacrifices) that we could get that education. And of course, I always liked to learn. I was always delving into books.

SC: There's something niggling there for me. 36:59

MH: I guess again, my perspective on the wider world also came from my family. My grandfather, one particular one, grade eight education, farmer, also had an understanding of the whole world, and he kept saying that the way we, the white people and the West treated the people in India, in China, in Africa was wrong, and that we were someday going to pay for it. And I think he's been proven right today.

My parents were very much aware of various charitable groups that needed financial support, and supported them. My mother was very, very active in the Girl Guide movement after the Second World War. A lot of wartime war brides; some very, very poor subdivisions near us where the girls didn't have enough money to buy a uniform. So you found how you could get used uniforms for them, that sort of thing. My mother and father were also very supportive of M&S in the church. It was a 50/50 kind of thing; we were aware of people who didn't have enough to eat; we were aware that we were privileged and had it; and we needed to share it. And I guess that has sort of gone with me ever since.

You were asking me earlier about Student Aid. Well, I did a lot of counselling at VST, both in my role as Student Aid counsellor but also as Chaplain. And I was privileged to a lot of stories and a lot of really deep pain and people with mental health problems, personal problems, sexual identity problems, family problems, financial problems. So *that* I was aware of: how I was one of the few privileged people [who was] supported growing up.

And I'm increasingly aware of how very, very few people come from a happy family. And I came, and was raised in a happy family with happy grandparents, etc., and very, very close family ties, which I think has kept me in good stead all these years.

SC: What leisure time activities have enriched your life? You've already talked about gardening. 39:45

MH: And it's coming back again. After two weeks I'm going to have time for it.

My husband and I have done quite a lot of travel in Europe; we've thoroughly enjoyed it. We've had good times. It's certainly broadened our horizons considerably, enriched our life. Physical concerns now limit how much we can do and travel, but I do go back to Ontario twice a year to visit my mother, who is about to celebrate her 103rd birthday next week, and so I go every fall and spring. But I'm very, very close to my family and going back there is real holiday time and relaxing time, going over old historical ground that we used to go on. We have a daughter who has now become interested in genealogy, so she's coming into the Canadian history part that I've always loved and family history that I've loved, so I'm working with her on that.

And reading. I love to read. Unfortunately, over the years, my reading has been dictated by either what I've been working at in jobs, or groups that I've been leading. Just straight reading for the pleasure of reading, and my book club reading . . . I've got lots and lots of books to read as soon as I get rid of current responsibilities.

So I suppose the other thing that has enriched my life has been with the grandchildren. There was a stage where I took a grandchild to Granville Island Market every Saturday morning at 8:00 am. And I took three of them. One got too old, so then I took her brother, and then when he got older and wanted to sleep in as a teenager, I took his sister. Over fifteen years, I went every Saturday morning to Granville Island Market with one of my grandchildren. And the other two, we've had lots of sleepovers. It doesn't enrich my life quite so much now because they're scattered all over western Canada.

SC: Now you have the memories.

MH: Yes, we have the memories and the pictures. I've been going through all our pictures, downsizing. Reliving various parts we had, like 1996 with Patricia in Europe.

SC: What's important to you about your life now? 42:11

MH: Learning to live a quieter life. I've had a minor stroke, which has dictated that I slow down. I was ready to slow down anyhow; this is physically making me slow down. Actually, I'm looking forward to it, to be quite honest. I think I've done my share of busy-ness and although it's been exciting while it was on, it's beginning to be a chore.

The carefree garden . . . you'll notice it's carefree. But I will be choosing my plants, designing it. It's going to have a patio there, so someday if we can't make the stairs and live downstairs here, we will be able to go out and enjoy our garden in the front yard, instead of the back deck which is up high.

It's how I live my next few years. I'm still in my familiar neighbourhood and my daughter is still close by and church is around the corner.

SC: What direction do you hope the church will take in the future? 43:16

MH: God only knows. I don't!

SC: Thank goodness God knows!

MH: It's obviously going to be much smaller, slimmer. My hope would be that it could rediscover its core and be willing to work without the overwhelming structure and building concerns. That it could stand out with individuals working together to make a difference. I think it could be very much like the really small home groups of the early church – encouraging people not only to live their faith, but also that their lives express their faith. So that people ask, "Well, why do you do that?"

We've become an institution and in some respects it's our own fault, because we have bought into the secular notions of what is success. We've gone for numbers, and we've gone for bigger and bigger buildings. Christendom is over. The Christian church is a minority in the world. If it's not already, it's going to be a minority right here in BC.

SC: It is, I think.

MH: [The mainline churches are shrinking very fast but I don't think we should grieve that. We are being forced to rediscover our core: become the mustard seed in a secular world.]

SC: It's that little story: the church is not the building; the church is the people. 45:15

MH: That's right. The church [you and I grew up in] had many, many numbers of people. Most of them didn't have a clue about theology in their faith. They came for social reasons, because it was expected.

But BC has always been the most secular province in Canada. And I remember when Ted Nichols was executive secretary, he was telling me that he grew up in one of the small towns in the Kootenays and his family went to church and he went to Sunday school. They were the exception. Virtually nobody else did. But he said, in Ontario, in a town that size you would be ostracized if you *didn't* go to church. There was that difference. And I can remember when I was doing my research for some of my graduate work; BC in the census form had atheists and agnostics, or no religion, where none of the other provinces did.

So you know, we're just ahead of the pack. But it's really going to be interesting. For instance, the five churches here in our own little neighbourhood – five United Churches – what's going to happen to them? Are we able to come together and have one sort of missionary thrust in the whole community, or are we going to parcel it out? Or are we going to continue to struggle along until each one of us eventually dies out because of lack of people who can carry on the kind of structure that we are accustomed to, and have been doing?

I have deliberately not volunteered to go on one of the committees that's

planning some of this and working on it, because I've had my fill. But I will certainly be supporting whatever they come up with.

SC: It's very interesting.

MH: In some respects it's rather exciting.

SC: I have wondered, and I'm interested to hear what you would say about this: I have wondered whether the different congregations, not necessarily all five, but in any neighbourhood where there are many United Churches . . . whether this congregation has lots of seniors and does great ministry with seniors; this one over here has more children; this is where you go if you've got a family and children; and this one over here is where the grandparents are gathering – congregations kind of specialize. What do you think about that? 47:14

MH: I think it makes some sense. In fact, I think it makes a lot of sense. And maybe by getting rid of some of our buildings we could do that. We could have an outreach mission by just having a storefront. We don't have to have a huge building for that. We would have to pick very carefully what we are doing, given the person power that we've got, which seems to be getting older, and less and less. At the same time I think that amalgamating our joint concerns makes a lot of sense. Cutting down on duplication, and instead of having five congregations struggling with the same issue, let's have all go to the one area.

And it's not as if people can't get around. They get around for sports, for shopping, for movies and going to school, even. You've got kids going across the city for school. Destination places.

And maybe just one central place where the actual traditional kind of worship takes place.

SC: The hub.

MH: The hub. There would be a hub. Actually that's a good synonym – have a hub with satellites doing separate things. I can see maybe University Hill doing something specifically with university students. And West Point Grey maybe doing something with . . . if they've still got their old building, they could continue to do a large gathering kind of thing. Dunbar obviously has lots of kids there, and it makes sense for kids to go there.

It will be interesting to see what happens. It will be different, there's no doubt about it. And I can see why some people are afraid and fear the change but I think it's going to come whether they like it or not. It's what comes up out of the ashes . . . I think there will be some disasters. It will probably be better than any of us can hope for.

SC: Is there anything I've missed that you would really like to tell me about? 49:56

MH: Oh, dear . . .

SC: Let me just say thank you! This has been fun for me. I hope it has been for you!

MH: Well, it's been sort of fun and it's been a very interesting process, because I could not remember what dates I'd done this and that, and how much I had done. I was really quite overwhelmed when I realized how many committees I'd been on and things like that. Names of people that I hadn't thought of for a long time. It's really been a wonderful trip down memory lane.

SC: Oh good, good.

MH: A lot of the people's names I remembered; some of them I can picture their faces, but I can't remember their names and other cases I can remember their name and can't remember what they look like. And of courses a lot of them have died. So I'm obviously coming to terms with being an elder.

MH: Well thank you, I think on that note, I'll turn off the machine!

46:55