

Jack Fouracre interview

Judith Windle, interviewer

Jack Fouracre: My name, uh, Jack Fouracre. I attended the Normal School in the year 1923/24. And, uh, I came down from Cumberland, mining town of Cumberland. My father used to be a weigh boss there. And we came down here, one reason for me to attend, and he had changed his job anyway. And there were, nearly what, six classes of us, five or six classes, six classes because the magazine they called the Five to One. There were five girls to each of the boys. And, uh, the classes they were numbered A,B,C,D,E and F. And, uh, they had, uh, oh, possibly what, 40 [official?] in each class. And then of course that was the day, they were the days when Mr. MacLauren was principle. And Dale Lenten, he was vice-principle, and there was, Miss, uh, [Gordan Ravel?] and Mrs. [Blister?], she used to be the Home Ec. And some of the boys took Home Ec in those days if they wanted. Frost, he was the phys ed man, and Bains was the chief phys ed man. [Inaudible] There was another man, I can't remember now.

But, uh, we were happy, very happy and, uh, they all tried to help us, you know, and if we had our problems, well we, we would [inaudible], particularly over the lessons, and they were always in the classroom. When we got to the stage that we were practiced teaching, there was one of them there writing, uh, and then they would call us in for an interview, and, uh, if we had done well, they'd have told us how we had done, and if we hadn't done so well, then we should have changed it both, we were corrected and helped for next time.

The sports, we had ah, tennis, basket ball and, uhm, course, the boys had rugby in those days. And, uhm, some of the boys that played on our team played on the famous [Dunnellaw?] basketball team who used to be British, Canadian champions at one time. [Breckenridge?] and [Fillbuster?] and Forbes. Forbes just lives up here. And, uh, they, we all had, ah, there was a lunch room, where we, you know, a big lunch room where we had our lunch. And, ah, although on fine days they all ate out on the lawn, ate on the lawn. When you go into the building now from the front entrance on the left hand side, where they had garden plots, certain groups would have garden plots, not individuals. Then on the other side, where, where the two tennis courts were on the right hand side going up. And every year they had an annual tennis tournament.

Then we also had, ah, two debating teams and once of year we had an annual debate with the Vancouver Normal School. And one of our teams went to Vancouver and debated. And Vancouver sent a team over here to debate. And we just flipped a coin to see what was the team, which team went to Vancouver. We lost. So, we were here. And, ah, the Judge Clearihue who stood in town. He was one of the judges that came up here and, uh, adjudicated the debate. [In audible] I don't think I can remember where the lunch room was. The classrooms were all on the, oh, I think the lunch room was downstairs ... I think, [inaudible] there was another chap, I was trying to think of his name, oh, Mr. Henry [Dunnell].

Judith Windle: What did he instruct?

JF: Now, wait a minute. I remember...

JW: Well, they had the Model Schools there when you were there. Did they? Model Schools for the children?

JF: They had a Model School there, now wait a minute now, I think, I am not sure whether she [inaudible] Model School. Miss, ah, Scanlon.

JW: Miss Scanlon.

JF: Yah, they had a Model School there.

JW: Did you get to teach in the Model School? Or did you just observe?

JF: We observed. We never taught. We used to, after we had been there for a certain period of time, and so we got our feet on the ground with instruction. Then we went into the distant schools, out into the city.

JW: Did you go into the schools very soon?

JF: Oh yes, we taught in the [situation room]? [inaudible]

JW: But was it soon after you got to the Normal School? Or did you wait until [crosstalk]

JF: Oh, no, I don't suppose we went, see we started September, when we got there in September. I imagine it was after Christmas before we went out into the classrooms. Uhm, we would go into the Normal School and have the observing there. But before we actually got into practice teaching, ah, I am almost sure it was after Christmas. And then they had a program whereby the, ah, elementary schools of the city had arranged for us to go in at various times of the year.

JW: How long did you [inaudible] to go into the classroom?

JF: You mean each period? Oh, I imagine we were in there, maybe, well, in the classroom, it would be one lesson, like, then we may go into another class with another lesson. So we went out, we were out in, in the school probably a half a day. Ehm, then of course we had the assignment, we were given assignments as to what we were going to teach.

JW: And you had to prepare the lesson.

JF: We had to prepare the lesson before we went into the classroom. And then there was, ah, introduction, and so on and so on and so on and so on, and so on, and so on, [inaudible] and all that sort of thing, you see. And we were supposed to follow that plan as near as possible. And, uhm, the teachers themselves, ah, were just there. They didn't criticize us at all. Ah, the Normal School instructor did that, instruct us. And then, I am not sure now how many times a week we went out. Possibly twice a week or something like that, anyway, ehm, at least once a week. But you know it's hard to remember, back all that length of time. Ah, in the first time, thing in the morning, ah, we used to have an assembly in the auditorium. And, uh, we had opening prayer, and uh, then they gave us the general instructions or particular instructions that were going to happen that day. That was a daily occurrence that every morning we went in. And then of course if there were any other special functions or special programs coming up, that's where we had it. And that's where we held our debate, uh, in the auditorium. See it was quite a large auditorium. It would hold the whole student body at one time. Is the same one there, the same auditorium?

JW: Yes, they use it for the library now.

JF: Oh, that's where the library is. Oh yes, I see.

JW: There is one other thing I was going to ask you: uhm, in the library there are, ah, busts up on the wall of different poets and authors. And at the back there is a mural, it's a Greek horseman scene,

JF: It probably was there then because ah, ...

JW: I was wondering if you knew anything about it?

JF: Oh no, no I don't know anything about it. I don't know the significance of it at all. As a matter of fact, I had forgotten that it was there.

JW: [laughs]

JF: When I go up next time I'll have to have a look.

JW: Yes.

JF: I am sure that some of them that were more academic than I, Claude Campbell, some of those might know. Course I don't where know you can get a hold of him, though. Claude, ah, Claude left of us at half year, and another chap left us at half term to go back to university and finish off over there. Ah, at that time Claude Campbell's father was one of the inspectors in school here. He's, ah, still around but he's retired now. So, I've lost track of Frost and Bains and I don't know how many of these people are still around. I know Mr. Denton died quite a few years ago. The old clock is still there, I noticed.

JW: Yes. When you were in the Normal School, the boys and the girls were segregated, weren't they? You had

your own entrances.

JF: Yes, uhm, now wait a minute now, I am not so sure about the same entrances. Because there was only one of our class of ours. But we did have segregated classes. The girls had their own classes, and there was just one class of boys, you see, and then the five classes of girls. Now I don't think we had, uhm, ...

JW: You weren't taught with the girls then, were you?

JF: No.

JW: You were all on your own.

JF: The only time we were together were at assemblies and things like that. Now I'm not so sure that, I don't think we, mind you, uhm, they may have later but this is '23/'24, quite a long way back. Now I can always remember using the front, there were entrances on either side,

JW: You got to use the front entrance, did you?

JF: Oh yes, oh yes, we used the front entrance. Oh yes, and then, if we were working out the back or something like that we used to use, come in the back door too, [inaudible].

JW: Out back, was it, it wasn't build up at all...

JF: No, no, very similar to what it was now except that there were no buildings in the area, no buildings [inaudible]

JW: The green houses back there...

JF: No green houses.

JW: No?

JF: No. Uhm, the, ah, I think the layout from the physical side outside the stairs and all the way we came in, they were all the same. The one, at the other end, this end, this end was there, the one at the other end, and the front door. And then there was one in from the back that we used to come in, just, ah, well if we were out in the yard for lunch. If we were out in the back [inaudible] we came in from the back, if not we came in through the front, just depends on what was there.

JW: Well the gardens were always so beautiful.

JF: The gardens were lovely.

JW: Yah, and I was just wondering where the gardeners worked from, if they had a greenhouse or a shed or anything.

JF: Now, probably they did because if they had all those flowers they must have had a place to put them in. I don't remember the gardener's name at all, what it is, but they used to keep us pretty busy, you know. And ah, I mean of course, ah, after school certain days, we had to go down, and ah, line up our lessons, to get instructions as to what we were going to teach and where we were going to teach and so forth, you see. And then, ah, another day was taking up, two or three days was taking up with preparation, and then another day of teaching, and then you came back for another day and you had your criticism, so the time went very quickly. And the, ah, whole setup was happening, and, ah, any of the criticism that we received was very constructive. And nobody ever felt that they had failed or that they didn't want to go on because of what was said or anything like that. And, ah, Mr. MacLauren, of course, was outstanding and, ah, his manner, he was kind and considerate and gave us a lot of help, you know. I remember one thing he told us was, he said, "First thing you do when you go out into the classroom is establish yourself. After that, once you've established yourself, if you do that to start off with, things will be much easier. Ah, that's one thing I always remember is, "Establish yourself before you do anything else." And then, uhm, well he was quite humorous, too, you know. Oh yes, you wouldn't think so, ah, he'd put little anecdotes in, that sort of thing. He, ah, was always, ah, a quiet man, but very pleasant in his manner, very

pleasant.

JW: Can you tell me about the, the plunge baths downstairs in the gym, by the, the gym?

JF: They were like little, ah, swimming pools, yes. They, they, those, they weren't, ah, really a swimming pool but, ah, as you say they could be called a plunge bath and, ah, mostly everyday after school, sometimes, we, ah, the boys went in, and then other times the girls went in. There wasn't room for too many in at one time because they were small. Are they there now? No. And, ah, we had lockers, well our own lockers strangely, and we took our towels down, and there was a dressing room, a small dressing room down there that you could dress and get into the pool. It was very relaxing and ah, particularly after soccer, and mainly after sports that we used them, you know. And, ah, as I say, it was a little crowded at times but never the less it was very nice, very pleasant. And the basketball teams, the girls basketball teams and, ah, the rugby team, and, ah, the, uhm, tennis players and all that, they used them mostly, although they were open to the general student body. Now, ah, what else?

JW: I was going to ask you, the age of the students when you were there, were they quite young?

JF: Let me see, what was I? Well, I was older than some of them, I was twenty-one. Ah, they would range from eighteen, nineteen, twenty, twenty-one, maybe around that age.

JW: Was there a minimum age that you had to be?

JF: That I couldn't tell you, that I couldn't tell you. Well you had to have, ah, you had to have high school, to get through your high school. Some of us had our senior metriculation. I took my senior metriculation in the high school in Cumberland. There were, ah, seven of us in the class. And C.B. Wood, was the principle who, ah, was registrar of the University of British Columbia for many years. He passed away at the age of eighty-five just, ah, in March and he was the principle of the Cumberland High School. Nine of us, now let me see.

JW: When you had finished your teaching, uhm, was there a Teacher's Federation at that time?

JF: Ah, not at, wait a minute now,

JW: I was wondering if you automatically entered the Federation or if it was like a voluntary thing later on,

JF: Well it's all voluntary, like we, yes, but that's not something that we [likely, where did it go?] [Inaudible]. There was a Federation, now it's on hand here, just a minute ago, it struck me, here, Teacher's Federation, [inaudible] to all students [inaudible] 1917. So that was it.

JW: Did you join the Federation right away or did you wait?

JF: Ah, oh, I'm assuming I had joined right away, yes, yes, yes. With [inaudible] He's gone, of course, now.

JW: Were you able to get a teaching position as soon as you graduated or were jobs hard to come by then?

JF: I wrote, ah, 25 applications and, ah, the first one I received an appointment or acceptance was a little place called Flagstone in the southeast corner of the province down near the American border. A railway track train ran through the middle of the town, half the population on one side, half on the other. And I had just received that when I received an appointment to Harewood just on the outskirts of Nanaimo. And I was figured that I would much rather have that one. So I wrote and asked them if they would release me. And they said yes if you can get somebody to take your place, we'll release you. So I got a friend of mine from the [inaudible] who at that time had not yet received an appointment. And he took it. He started off at those days very high at 1340 a year, and I got 960 in Harewood. But, ah, you were closer in. And then they just taught five, on the five acres they taught at Harewood. A few puns running around, Fouracres of the five acres. And then someone wrote me a card saying that, ah, there was a, would be an appointment in the city open next year. Would I like it? So I went to get an application and I got into Nanaimo city. And I was there for, ah, 24 years, you know, and I moved down here in Victoria to the Old Boys Central on Fort Street and in 1944 and then I was there six years, and then the new S.J. Willis was built and I moved up, up there. The banquet...

JW: Yes, you had a, a graduating banquet or a picnic?

JF: We always had a Normal School picnic, we had a Normal School picnic. And, ah, we went to one of the beaches.

JW: Do you remember which one you went to? Was it Willows Beach? Or was it your class that went out towards Elk Lake?

JF: No, it wasn't, it wasn't out that way. It wasn't Elk Lake way. It was either Willows or, ah, one of the beaches farther around here. But it could have been Willows because a lot of them in those days had their picnics here. It was, ah, always was a very nice beach. It wasn't too distant or too difficult to go to. And it was sort of a picnic deal. You brought your sandwiches or, and ah, that sort of thing, cake [inaudible]. Whether they had it catered to or whether it was a project of the, of the, of the ah, [snaps fingers] what do you call it, home ec department, I'm not sure. And at the end of the year we had a banquet. Now where, I don't know. And there were all the farewell speeches and all this and the awards were given and so forth.

JW: You held that in the auditorium, did you?

JF: They had that in the auditorium, the awards, yes. And, uhm, they also, I mentioned they had the debate in the auditorium. And the awards were there, and ah, then the valedictory was given in the auditorium, they came here, and ah, any of the, ah, [sneeze] pardon me, [sneeze] graduating students who had done particularly well received any special award.

JW: Do you remember any awards that, that were available? Nowadays they have trophies and medals [laughs, crosstalk]

JF: That would be, ah, if they had won. We played basketball and, ah, against the other, some of the other schools and we played, ah, rugby against the boys, ah, school over here but, ah, there were no trophies for that. But if there were any championship that they won they would receive awards for. But we didn't go in too much for that type of competition. It was more of, ah, invitation games. You went here and you went there. And we weren't any league or anything like that.

JW: Which teams did you belong to?

JF: Which what?

JW: Which sports teams?

JF: Oh, I was mainly track, track and field. I also, ah, played a bit of rugby. And I was on the basketball team but I wasn't one of the stars on the basket play. But track work was my first love and I didn't like to do too much football in case you got hurt. They tackled you.

JW: Where was the track at that time? Where did you practice?

JF: Well, we, the, uhm, when I was going to, uhm, ... they had, well they used to, they had a track, it wasn't as good as this, they had a track at the Athletic Park in those days, too, oh yes [pause]. And we used to go down there, we used to train there too. And Archie McKinnon used to take his, ah, team up there. We used to go from the Y up there and run, and, ah, every year, this is not quite to do with Normal School but it's the same, they used to have a competition between the YMCA and the University of British Columbia. A road race on New Year's Day. And they shut the traffic off. And, ah, once upon a time it was a, what was it, ... a four mile race, I guess it was, and they used to start a way out. But nobody could see it. So what they did after this, they used to close the traffic off on Yates and Blanshard and around that area, and we'd start at the Capital Theatre. And each runner, there were just two runners, like one from UBC and one from our Y. It was a road race really. And each one would do two laps around the block, and then the next one would pick it up, and then, ah, that was, ah, something they looked forward to every year. It was from the, from there. And there used to be a chap, Burt Bailey. He was a very brilliant, brilliant student. He was at UBC and he used to run anchor on that team, and I used to run anchor on the YMCA team. So we used to have some battles some time.

JW: When you were a student at the Normal School, uhm, how did people get up there? Was there a, ah, a trolley at that time?

JF: [sneeze]

JF: There was a streetcar running up there.

JW: A streetcar.

JF: Yes. It used to, ah, come up, uhm, Richmond Road. And, uhm, a lot of them, some came by bicycle and, you see, you, you boarded wherever you could, and you boarded as close as you could. And, then, a, a lot of them walked. But I would say, the majority of them came by streetcar. Some had cars [inaudible] They came right up Richmond passed the Normal School, up to, uhm, what's that mount?

JW: Mt. Tolmie.

JF: Up Mt. Tolmie, not right up but to the foot of Mt. Tolmie, then go back the same way. Then they use to have another one that went down, uhm, uhm, Lansdowne, and they had a, a turnaround up there. And then, that, that's all gone altogether I think. Oh, yes, I think the majority of them walked. And bad weather they probably took the streetcar. So you finished at different hours.

JW: How long was the, the day?

JF: Well we started around 9. And then depending on what we had to do, if we were just there preparing lessons and that sort of thing, I imagine somewhere the same time as school now, between 3 and 4 o'clock. And, ah, I can't remember whether the building was open at night or not, now, I can't remember. I know I never went back at night. [laugh]

JW: Were there any activities after the classes?

JF: Well, there was, there was our, we had, ah, like our badminton was after school. Ah, well they had badminton, too. Our football was after school. And the tennis was after school. And, and, ah, the basketball, I guess they, they used to play basketball amongst themselves. They had a league, within the school in the gym. It was a small gym and, ah, and then of course at night sometimes they go out and play invitation basketball games against other schools, other organizations. Ehm, oh, there were, there was quite of lot of activity after school that they stayed and played badst, badminton and they played basketball and, ah, and they usually a lot of the time, just talking, you know, and then of course, they didn't walk out at 3 o'clock, if you had some preparation to do, and you did some of your preparation there because, well I guess a lot of it, because the, ah, library was there.

JW: Where was the library? Do you remember? Was it downstairs? Or was it [crosstalk] upstairs?

JF: It must have been downstairs because, ah, the whole [hall ?] on both sides, except for the auditorium were classrooms.

JW: In the original, ah, blueprint plan the library was upstairs next to the balcony for the auditorium.

JF: I think it was upstairs, I am pretty sure it was upstairs. Because you see you had the furnace room and you had the, uhm, swimming, what do you call them?

JW: Swimming, plunge baths.

JF: Yah, plunge baths.

JW: And the lunch room,

JF: And the lunch room, all downstairs. I am sure the library was upstairs. Now, there, so you see, I said, the classes were forty, but ah, there were more. Now you see there were ... B, A, B, A ...

JW: When you finished at the end of the year, you were given, were you given an assignment to go out and teach for maybe a month or three weeks and then come back to the school before you were finally officially graduated? Later on in the thirties, I know, this had happened.

JF: Well, yes, it was, at, that we [coughs] After Christmas at first we used to go out for the day or something like that. And then we had to teach for a period of time. Now off hand I can't remember how long it was, but, ah, that was a much longer period and, ah, whether we had, I am assuming that we had different subjects too, and it was all set up, ah, originally with the Normal School and the City Schools and at certain times of the year the, ah, prospective teachers, when the Normal School graduates, the Normal School students would be in the schools, see, and, ah, the duration of the, of the period whether it was a month or whether it was, ah, six weeks, I imagine it would have at least be a month, and, ah, that was, that was it, and then we, ah, had our final briefing, and then we were told whether we were successful, or we were, I don't remember, I don't think there were many that weren't successful.

JW: Most everybody...[crosstalk]

JF: But I think a few found out at Christmas time that they weren't cut out for teaching. And they just took off, you see. And a couple had left at Christmas to go to further education like at, ah, University of British Columbia. Get our feet on the ground, like, ah, two, well, three, I guess, June, July and August before we went out and to try and get jobs. And nowadays it's different, now mind you, a little different now. But up until 3 years ago, there were enough jobs to go around. There, there were more teachers than there were jobs, you know. Some of them, ah, didn't get jobs. And I know, and a lot of them I spoke to wrote ten, fifteen, twenty applications, you know, [something like that]. But, ah, I think now, the situation is coming back that way now. The number of jobs are getting less, ah, because, ah, the school populations are being cut down. [cough/sneeze]

[The End]