

Mrs. Kay Christie Interview Part 2

[Judith Windle interviewing Kay Christie, 1978]

00:00

Judith Windle: Anything about the college [training?]

Kay Christie: Well as normal school instructors we were as I said Department of Education officials. And we were graded instructor 1, instructor 2, instructor 3 according to our qualifications. Ah, when we changed over to - when we were absorbed or when we amalgamated with Victoria College, then we all had to be given professorial ranks, ah more or less based on our ... em, tenure and academic qualifications and so on. Most of us became assistant or associate professors. And the Victoria College salaries of course all had to be jerked up very strongly, some of them gained a couple of thousand dollars a year - just because they had to - we were promised that our salaries were protected so theirs had to be brought up to meet our standard.

JW: You were very grateful to [inaudible crosstalk]

KC: No they were not! [laughter]

JW: [inaudible crosstalk]

KC: They should've yes, but ah no as I say they were inclined to look upon us as the non-intellectuals of the group. We weren't doing these highly academic courses you see, but of course as time went on, ours had to become more and more academic, because of the pressure of the university system. And the students complained bitterly when they weren't practical - our courses, but it was almost impossible to make them really practical because we were stuck in a university time table and a university classroom situation, and a university schedule of everything. Ah, what we lost of course were all the morning assemblies, all the literary society meetings, all the picnics, all the parties - em, the more comradely things. And ah there wasn't nearly so much facility available or opportunity for students to make and do. It became less practical and more mark oriented.

02:28

Everything had to fit in then to the college year - the academic, university year. But always that final practice teaching session was retained, ah starting at round the end of April and going in to May. And that again was when the students still do this - they make their arrangements at Christmas time usually - with a school principal, an authority of some kind - in their own hometowns. And then it all has to be ratified and organized by the student teaching office, and they are placed in classrooms in their own home environments. So they go back and live at home and do their student teaching in, in maybe the school they went to as small children or as a high school student.

JW: When you went on in to the colleges called then; how long was the teacher training? It was no longer a year long was it?

KC: Yes, the professional year, em, it became mandatory then for everybody to have that first year before entering - the professional year - so that they had a minimum two years ... of ah, of college ... before they could get a certificate, an entrance certificate.

JW: And that [didn't?] teach [degree need?]

KC: At that time, yes. Now you see it's, once the junior high schools came in - well there were junior high schools then. Actually they weren't supposed to be allowed to teach in the grades seven, eight and nine - junior high school level, that's secondary work, and demanded a degree but again with the shortage a lot of them got in to that by the 'back door method', and are still in there - without degrees.

04:29

I know a quite, a well settled in high school teacher without a degree, senior [?].

Actually because it's phys-ed [physical education], nobody is forcing her to finish a degree. But, the, the emphasis changed in college and it was much more big, big, big classes. You couldn't sit around a table and discuss anything, not with forty students crammed into a room when there wasn't any room for one more. All you could do was lecture, answer questions, invite questions ... demonstrate - there was no, there was no space and really no time, no opportunity for small group work.

JW: You had a full day [when you went to ?] college didn't you?

KC: No, no, a college lecture load you know is not a full day. It's ah, well now I think it's nine hours a week - is looked upon as a full teaching load - twelve at the most. The art and physical education people put in much longer hours of course, but everybody used to say, "Well if you have three sections of an art course you prepare one lesson so, it doesn't matter if you have to be there for two more."

Not taking into account that you're still teaching. And it's still exhausting - that is if you teach with any kind of energy. It's an exhausting job, a very rewarding one at times. But ... I think, I think our biggest feeling of change with Victoria Coll- well, going in to Victoria College was that feeling of being set apart as the cut and paste do-gooders and not real professors.

JW: What did you go in to ah, teach? You stayed within the drama did you?

KC: No, there was, that all - we lost all that. There was no more drama, it wouldn't fit in. And there was no where to display it anyway. No opportunity for them to put on plays, there was no time that which they all met - in one group.

JW: It would have to be in [inaudible crosstalk]

KC: See we lost that, the word now I guess is the word togetherness - we lost that completely. And the ah faculty no longer felt more or less on an equality, everybody was on an equal basis - we were now, mildly second class citizens, within the framework of the college. I won't say that all the college faculty treated us like that it was mostly the newcomers that were inclined to look down their noses - the old timers still had respect for what we were doing and what we were. Because they knew us and knew what we were doing, but the em. And they sympathized very greatly with what were trying to do because as they said, "The students that we get in college are going to be the product of the people that you're training." So that they, they had a great interest in how students were prepared to be teachers. But I think that some of the younger, newer ones couldn't see that, it didn't occur to them that, that they had any real uh, connection with this strange thing that was going on in the College of Education. I don't know whether they see it now. I think there's still a certain amount of denigration of the Faculty of Education on the campus. Simply because it doesn't 'look' intellectual - compared to philosophy or astronomy or physics or the history of medieval church or something, but ... these are the people that forget that they were taught by teachers and that they are supposed to be teachers themselves and that the whole business of preparing teachers is of vital importance to a university. Because what comes to the university will be what the teachers have produced.

09:34

Oh I, we found it irksome - for the first while until we got used to it, not ever to know the students. There was no opportunity to get to know them - they knew us because they were in the ratio of forty to one - forty-five to one sometimes. But ah, we couldn't know them because we'd see them three hours a week. As far as this little speech course was concerned I saw them once a week, forty-five students - how do you train them to speak properly in one hour a week when there are forty-five of them? Five of them would have been too many, but forty-five was hopeless.

That was why I was asked to tell the principal how the course was going and I said, "Well you know it's impossible to do anything very helpful in one hour a week with these huge classes."

"All right then we'll drop the course."

So they did. So there is no speech training there now. And this is the only teacher education institution that I've ever heard of on this continent that has no provision made for training, for speech and voice [perfection?]. Cause they all benefit by it - those that don't need it don't have to carry on a program, but those that do need it should

definitely spend at least a year, or the first term of intensive training. So that you don't get these mumbling, muttering, droning people. You know what they're like, and especially in high school when some of them take to lecturing - put the kids to sleep, poor fellas.

We began to feel bereft of the program that we felt was helpful to the students. Just making them get up there and read the Bible, was a big step forward.11:43 Some of them had never done that kind of thing before. They had to take their turn at it - many of them developed a great deal more confidence during the year because they had to do things. Much against their experience and their wishes and their feelings - they had to get in and do things in front of a group of people and it, it helped them - I'm sure it did.

JW:That ties in with um my idea; when you were in the normal school you went and you interviewed them when they were doing practice teaching right, you [inaudible crosstalk]

KC:Sat in the back of the room and watched them and then talked to them afterwards [inaudible crosstalk]

JW:Did you do this when you were in Victoria College? [inaudible crosstalk]

KC:Yes, we went right on with it

JW:But they only had, um one time to do this - their practicum?

KC:No, they had the three again still

JW:[crosstalk] they still had the three?

KC:Yes, that was when we did get to know a small number of the students. Because when you were watching them teach, we weren't ever given long enough with them, we had too many students on our plates. But ah you did get to know some of them - and you usually had a small - a smaller group that were your sort of seminar and you discussed things like discipline and school organization and school law where it applies to teachers and um, generally methods of doing things around a school and in a classroom.

JW:So they really had a shorter time to learn the methods and ...

KC:Yes

JW: and get feeling at ease with ...

KC:Yes ...

JW:themselves in the classroom.

KC: and it was all much more theoretical, they weren't doing the things themselves. They had to wait until they got into a school classroom to try something. Where at the normal school they were trying all sorts of things before they ever went near classrooms.

JW: So a shy person would have a difficult time.

KC:Yes, and of course some of them are painfully shy. They have to try to get them - grow themselves out of that.

JW:'You're a [Crook?]' - this is in the normal school!?

KC:Yes! The one and only time in my whole life I think that I've met a real out and out, a hundred percent con man.

He came into the normal school in January of [19]51, I think - a little tiny Englishman in black garb, ah very, em, ministerial looking almost. He work a black homburg hat and black overcoat and black suit. And he was quite a, quite a pompous little man - but he was admitted to a, try to gain a certificate. He had been contemplating teaching in private schools and then he decided he'd rather try for public schools but he wanted some training in

the Canadian system.

Well, as the term wore on he was supposed to have a bachelors degree from Oxford or Cambridge, a Masters degree from Adelaide, a Trinity College of London music degree, and um he had apparently, he said been in the Church of England. But the bishop at one point where he was posted had took against him and insisted that he leave the church for some - it, the whole background was really fantastic.15:2815:35

Anyway, as the term wore on, he said he was fluent in French and would like to specialize in teaching French. I went and watched him during one practicum teaching French and he didn't know any French.

And I must've given him an awful shock because I had a cup of coffee with him at lunch time and talked over his lesson and said, "You know Mr. Peters, you must not try to represent yourself as something that you're not."

And I remember at the time he gave me a very shocked look.

And I said, "You are not a French specialist, you don't know French and you must not represent yourself as being able to teach French."

"Oh, well - ah is that right?"

And I said, "Everything that you were trying to tell those children this morning about the parts of the verb 'avoir' and the verb 'et' - were, everything was wrong! You don't know French."

So I said, "Don't try to teach French!"

I, little knowing, that he was a complete imposter - must've given him an awful shock.

He had a girl living with him, an English nurse, a little miserable looking creature and ah he introduced her around to everybody as his wife - she wasn't his wife. And she eventually got totally fed up with him and left and went back to England. He never had any money.

Anyway, as the term wore on and he wrote tests and went out student teaching, and he gave charming little talks, that verged on being blue - but didn't quite, ah in the assemblies, you know the morning assemblies, took part in the concert, came to the graduation banquet and dance in a new tuxedo looking very smart. A little tiny man, no more that five feet high.

As time wore on we found that he didn't know anything. Fortunately we - I did ask Mr. English about him, I said, "What is that man?"

And he said, "Either he's a complete crook or he's a very much maligned Anglican clergyman."

Well, it turned out that he was a complete crook! Nobody could get any credentials from Oxford, or Cambridge or wherever or Trinity College or the University of Adelaide - the Registrar of the Department of Education couldn't get any information about him and he got failure marks on all the exams he wrote and we just flunked him out. Thank goodness! Because it turned out that he went from here to Wash- the University of Washington, got a summer job teaching the history, medieval history of the church, em ... but quite by chance I got a little more information about that from a nurse in Seattle who ran afoul of him. Stole a lot of very valuable books from the University of Washington history library, and headed back East, said he had a job in Minneapolis or somewhere. Anyway, eventually he got extradited in to Canada and then extradited to Great Britain immediately - and it turned out his name was not Peter [Setal?], he had taken the name of a student who had died; his name is [Parken?]

He turned up again some years later at Carlton University, or the University of Ottawa, as a history professor. By this time he had married and had a small child, a baby. And he was extradited again to Great Britain. They kept wanting him on charges of either fraud or embezzlement. And he'd been, he'd been to Europe and then he said to India, where the bishop kicked him out of the church, then to Australia, then landed up here, tried to get a job at the University Boys School which is now St. Michael's University. Em, he was just a complete con man, he was just living by his wits the whole time. And that really, it, it, it amused us all in a way, and yet shocked us and we were thankful to death that we didn't make anything possible for him to get in to the school system; although

he'd never've become a teacher, that was too tame for him. He needed to be somewhere where he could get his fingers on some fun, some, and ah you know, con people into thinking he was something that he wasn't.

20:26

That was really, really funny. I know every student of that year, that I encountered in the whole of British Columbia and I've been practically all over this province one way or another, in schools. Students from that [19]50, [19]51 year at normal school - em, it was 50,51 wasn't it? yes - always asked, "What happened to Peters? Old Bob Peters?"

When I say, "Oh well he got - he was in immigration jail in the States, he was extradited to Britain and tried for embezzlement, he came back to Canada, he's been extradited again." "Good night! Is that what - wasn't he a character?"

They all remember him. It really was funny.

So he was a highlight but I prefer really, to spend time remembering the really, the really good kids that we had and some of those lovely nuns. There were, in all the time that we had nuns from the Sisters of St. Anne's coming - they were getting their teaching certificates you see - they were experienced teachers a lot of them - there was only one who was unpleasant. And she was a snappy, snarly sort of woman anyhow. I didn't think that she made as good a Sister of St. Ann's as, as the others. Most of them were scholarly, devoted, dedicated women with beautiful dispositions.

JW:Did you happen to know when they started sending the Sisters to the normal school?

KC:Mm, no I don't remember. It could have been before 1950, but you'd have to talk to, you'd have to talk to one of the older teaching Sisters or ... Superiors of the Order to find out. I think before my time there now, I don't know whether there's any mention of them in 1948, [19]49\.

It would be ah, you'd just have to go through and see if there's any pictures of nuns in them, in the classes. Could have been earlier, you see they em, the separate - the Catholic schools, wanted to be able to say that their teachers were well qualified. As well qualified as any other, to receive government assistance. And that was when they began sending the Sisters to the normal school, and they sent only the ones who had already proved themselves to be good teachers. So that they were top flight teachers, they didn't really need student teaching practice, em, very often they did it down at the Convent. I'd go down, several of us were sent down to the Convent School to see them teach, at St. Anne's Academy. Em .. but they, they did benefit from the wider experience, and there were things to learn about ways of doing things in classrooms that they hadn't come in contact with. And they all admitted that it had added to their professional competence.

JW:[Mr. Loughlin?] told me about one thing which I had no idea about, was when the students were graduating, he said that he thought all the teachers - he was anyways - sworn in as a Justice of the Peace for a week or so, so they could swear in the students as Canadian citizens.

KC:No - that's not quite right. Em, he and Mr. Farquhar I think, were appointed Commissioners so that they could administer the Oath of Allegiance to the Queen - or the King at the time was it? The King and then the Queen; to the crown.24:27 Because this was ah, deemed necessary at that time, somebody who wouldn't swear allegiance to the Crown of Canada, ah was not permitted to have a teaching certificate. I know there was one student who had American citizenship who went all through the year in a sort of 'slop artists' fashion - he really wasn't dedicated to the job, and when it came to the final crunch at the end of the year when he was to swear an Oath of Allegiance to the Crown, that would have lost him his USA citizenship, and he refused and was given no teaching certificate and went back to the States. But that, that's what that was about - [Alf's?] got a little mixed up.

JW:Just the two of [them?] was there?

KC:I there were, maybe Mr. Gilliland also - but they had to put in the hours necessary to have these students come one by one and read this Oath of Allegiance and then sign a document.

JW:So in fact that they, teachers, were Canadian citizens were in no doubt, [that was..?]

KC:Well, there were at least if they weren't citizens, and some of them did come from European countries - if they weren't citizens ah, they had sworn allegiance to the Crown and they were on the first lap of becoming citizens.

JW:You wouldn't happen to know when that began would you?

KC:It was sometime - I suppose it was because of some of the witch hunting and some of the commun-, anti-communist various things were going on in the early fifties. Now when was the McCarthy era ... I've forgotten. But you see it was not long after the war, which ended in [19]45\ . I went to the normal school in [19]50, I'm not sure that it was going on, that the Oath of Allegiance was being taken then, but it came within those years - [19]50 to [19]56 - somewhere in there. The Department of Education would have to give you that information I should think.

26:36

JW:When did Mr. [Gilliland?] go to the college; to the normal school?

KC: Oh, he went, he was one the fairly early ones. Might've been while they were still at the Memorial Hall.

JW:Was he Vice-Principal when he got there? Was that...

KC:I think so, he went from Victoria High-school, and the staff there on to the faculty of the normal school em. I don't know whether he was the second in command right away or whether that came a little later. And Mrs. Gilliland is no longer in Victoria to tell you about it. But I think that Mr. Johns might be able to tell you, because he's another old timer. Ah who else would there be? Harold Campbell, Dr. Campbell would know but, ah he may have forgotten too. But it was in his era as either Superintendent of Schools here or a Deputy Minister of Education.

27:40