

## DRYDEN AND DISTRICT MUSEUM

### ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

#### INTERVIEW WITH STELLA DAVIES

Date: February 28, 2019

Interviewer: Natalie Nachtman, Archival Coordinator (NN)

Interviewee: Stella Davies (SD)

---

NN: What year did you start working at the *[Dryden Paper]* mill?

SD: 1958.

NN: And how old were you when you started working?

SD: 32.

NN: And what was your first job there?

SD: I think I worked on the tele..., on the tele printer, I think. Typing-- I was typing and doing the mail. And then later on they put in a teletype which is a machine, that instead of using sheets of paper where you can see what you've typed, it goes...it makes holes in a tape and then you run it through a machine to transmit it. I guess that was probably the first, and then I was, after that, shortly after that I was made Receptionist, and I was Receptionist for the rest of the time that I was there which was 32 years altogether.

NN: Wow. That's a long time.

SD: Yeah.

NN: And how did you get the job? Like, what was the job application process?

SD: Well, I, they were just looking for, for typists and so I applied. Tom Crossman was the Human Relations....and he was the one that hired me.

NN: And when you were the Receptionist, was that the time you were working the switchboard?

SD: Well, I didn't go on the switchboard right away, but they did put the switchboard in while I was there.

NN: Sort of, what was the process of using a switchboard?

SD: Well, at that time the switchboard was a big wooden box and it had all of....cords and everything. And when the light would go on and you'd plug in. Then they would ask to be put through to a certain person so you'd use another cord. Everybody had a number. And you just plugged in to that number and when they answered then you shut them off.

NN: So was the switchboard for calls within the mill only, or did you get outside calls as well?

SD: Well, both. Yeah. People could call each other from inside the mill or they would get long distance calls, or calls from over town. And a lot of times there would be conference calls where you would hook up four or five people and they could all talk together.

NN: Was it an easy machine to use or was it a bit complicated?

SD: Pardon?

NN: Was it an easy machine to use?

SD: Well, once you learn, but I guess anything is easy once you learn it.

NN: Hmm. Hmm.

SD: *Laughter.*

NN: Do you have any funny stories from during your time at the mill?

SD: Oh dear. A lot of funny things happened. I remember, you know, different people playing jokes on each other. I don't remember anything particularly off hand. I remember one time I was working with Gail Kusano. We were in the same office. She mentioned that she had to go and get her hair cut and I said, "Oh I can cut your hair." She said, "Okay." So we got out a pair of scissors and I was cutting her hair and Norman Hardy come by and he says, "Oh, oh, no cutting hair on company time." And Gail said, "Well, it grows on company time."

NN and SD: *Laughter.*

SD: We had a lot...it was a wonderful place to work. In those days the mill was making money and there was, you know, there was money flowing quite freely. They had parties all the time. It was a wonderful place to work. Loved it.

NN: Do you have any inclination of how many people worked at the mill or is it...?

SD: Oh gee, at that time, I don't know, a thousand? I don't know. I'm not sure. I'd better not make a guess because it would probably be wrong, but there were a lot of people who worked there. Yeah.

NN: And were you mostly in just the main office area?

SD: I was the...the reception area was right inside the front door in the old mill, and everybody sort of passed through there to go to the offices upstairs. And then the entrance to the mill itself, where all the people worked in the operating departments, that was just down the hall a little bit from where I worked.

NN: Were there any times that you were frustrated or overwhelmed during your time at the mill?

SD: Oh, there was lots of, lots of times when you thought...you, you'd see, you'd look at your basket and see all the work that had to be typed up and...but you know, it was, it wasn't really.... If you had more than you could do, they gave you somebody else to help to do it. It was, it was a wonder...it was a great place to work. Everybody...everybody got along good and yeah. I think now *[indiscernible]* maybe the...it's, it's different. They, they don't have time to have fun. It's all bottom line and you know...

NN: And what was the company that owned the mill while you...?

SD: When I started it was the Dryden Paper Company. I think I went through seven, seven companies.

NN: Oh wow.

SD: Yeah. Dryden Paper sold out to...Reed Paper from England bought it and then Anglo and then Great Lakes, and then I think it was Avenor after that, and Weyerhauser and Domtar. I think that's about it.

NN: Those names all sound familiar. *[Laughter.]*

SD: Yeah.

NN: And when you were working there, were they still making paper?

SD: Yes. Oh yes. Dryden, the mill at that time, made the world's finest white paper. It was shipped all over the world. Yeah. And pulp too.

NN: And was it during a time that they stopped making paper or were you...while you were still there...?

SD: No, they were still making paper when I left, but then, then they shut down all the paper machines I think when, when one of the American companies bought the mill. They, I think they sent the orders to American mills and they quit making the fine papers. They still make pulp, but....

NN: So was all the paper that you used during reception, paper that the mill made then?

SD: Pardon?

NN: Was all the paper that you used during your reception work paper that the mill made?

SD: Did they what?

NN: When you, all the work you did as a receptionist...

SD: Yeah?

NN: ...like on paper, was that paper made at the mill?

SD: Oh yes, yes, yeah. And when they'd have...like they'd have a social and they'd give great big bundles of the paper for dance prizes and door prizes and stuff like that.

NN: And talking about the parties and the socials, how many of those would happen during the year?

SD: Well, they had safety socials. Each department when they'd reach so many days without an accident they'd, they'd have a social to celebrate that. And so there were so many departments in the, in the mill, they'd have...like the pulp mill would have one, or the paper mill would have one. When they'd reach like 300 days or something without an accident, well they would recognize that by having a social for it. And it was, it was usually held in the Legion or at one...before the Mill Hall burnt down, it was there...and, and everything. It would be a dinner and a dance and they; they really treated their employees well.

NN: Were there any accidents, many accidents that happened in the sort of reception area?

SD: Yes there were. There were some. Yeah. People would have...oh, there was one, one fellow was killed when the, the rolls of paper come down in the finishing room and then another was; another fellow was killed in the paper mill. Not too many, but, but there was people who got hurt, you know. I guess in those days they didn't have the training and, and attention to what, you know, was the safest way to do things, but...

NN: And the Mill Hall, where was the mill hall located?

SD: It was on King Street. It was about where the Second Chance Pet Network is.

NN: Oh, okay.

SD: That was a big building there and it burned down.

NN: And what did the hall look like?

SD: I think it was a brick building, if I can remember right, and it had big doors. It was a big, quite a big hall, and it was the main dance hall you know. The big parties were all held at the Mill Hall then. The Legion Hall, the Legion built their hall later on and then, then of course, it burned down too, so they had to build another one. In those days it was the Mill Hall that was the big party place.

NN: And, when you were working at the mill, were the women mostly in the reception area or were there women working in other parts of the mill?

SD: Well, there was all different offices had girls working there. Like, there were quite a few girls worked in the computer office. Like it was down the hall from me, and then upstairs there was the Maintenance Office and the Purchasing Department, and the main office where all the accounting, the Accounting Office...there was a lot of girls worked there, as well as men. There were men there too.

NN: Were there any strikes or labour disputes while you were working there? Were you involved?

SD: Yes. Oh yeah, they, they had a few strikes. Actually, I think it was 1976 they had a big strike. And actually I think I was on holidays when they went on strike, and when we came back the mill was on strike and the office union wasn't on strike. But you could get layoffs. If you, if you didn't want to go into work you could get a layoff slip. And quite a few people did that, took that. But there was a few that; that still went in to work. But there wasn't a lot to do because the mill was down.

NN: And what sort of...seems like a good time to catch up with a back log then.

SD: Yeah. *[Laughter]*

NN: So was it that each section of the mill had their own different unions because you mentioned the Office Union?

SD: Well, the office had the Office Union...was number 327. That's the one that I belonged to. There was a lot of people on Staff, so they, they weren't unionized. A lot of the, the people that were...all the bosses, none of the Superintendents, or anybody like that. And then there was the Papermakers Union and then there was the Woods...the Woodlands had their own. I think, yeah, they had a lot of members.

NN: And were there any big changes in the mill while you worked there besides companies, different companies?

SD: Besides them changing their name you mean?

NN: Yeah.

SD: Well, they built Dryden Chemicals while I was there, and they. It was going to be built out on the other side of the road where the boat [*indiscernible*] is and they found they couldn't do that. They had already laid the groundwork for it and then they realized that that wasn't company property or something, and so then they built the chem... [*indiscernible*] across the road from that. I think it's been torn down isn't it?

NN: I believe so.

SD: Yeah, I think it is.

NN: Yeah.

SD: Yeah. But, oh, they upgraded you know a whole lot and then they built the new mill of course. That was a big change because the old mill had been there for so many years.

NN: And do you mind me asking how much you were paid when you worked there, and what were like benefits that you got for it?

SD: Well the benefits were good. Everybody was covered with health care, and like my husband worked in Woodlands and he was Staff, and so I was covered by his until he died and then I went on my own, like mill one. I can't remember what we made though. I can't remember what I made.

NN: That's fine. It was a...

SD: \$18 an hour or something like that. Yeah.

NN: And you mentioned your husband worked in the Woodlands. Did he start working at the mill before you did?

SD: Oh yeah. He'd been there a long time...he...before, before me. I think he was there probably forty years altogether.

NN: Oh wow.

SD: And, and he was, he worked in the Woodlands. He was a...worked in the, in the camps. Like he was Camp Foreman and then he was Scaler...scaled the wood that the fellows cut. And then after that he was the Safety Supervisor and then he looked after the Stores where they sold the clothing and stuff like that.

NN: The mill sold clothing?

SD: Yeah, they had a Stores Department...

NN: OK.

SD: ...they called it, and he sold like work boots and jackets. And, they had live-in camps at that time so the camps all had to be.... They had kitchens. Men stayed there, and so they had to have all the supplies for the camps as well.

NN: A big operation.

SD: Yeah.

NN: And was that store located with the camps or at the mill.

SD: It was at the mill. It was downstairs of the Woods Department, in the basement.

NN: And how many camps did the mill have? Do you know?

SD: There was a lot.

NN: Do you know some of the....

SD: I would think probably eight or ten, something like that. I'm not sure. But there was...and they moved every year because with...they'd cut that area and then the camp would move to another location the next year.

NN: And was it all around like the Dryden area that the camps were located?

SD: Yeah, yeah, yeah, all...there were some quite a distance away like down Basket Lake and north of Vermilion Bay. There was a lot of...I'm not too sure just exactly where they were. I used to go there.

NN: Yeah?

SD: You know, but....

NN: So you would often visit your husband at the camp?

SD: He would come home every Friday night...

NN: OK.

SD: ...till Sunday and then go back. And like, there was one at Contact Bay and they used to make the ice road and they'd haul wood across the lake. Instead of bringing it up in trucks they'd have an ice road across the lake. And a few times I think they had a few scares that maybe they were gonna go through. *[Laughter]*

NN: Yeah, I can imagine those trucks are heavy.

SD: Yeah, with a load of wood on it. Yeah. They'd be driving sort of uphill cause they'd be pushing the ice ahead of the truck like that. Yeah.

NN: So you worked there for around thirty years.

SD: Yes, I was there for thirty-two years.

NN: Oh, thirty-two.

SD: Yeah.

NN: What was the reason that you left your job at the...?

SD: Well I retired.

NN: Ok.

SD: Yeah. You had to retire when you were sixty-five.

NN: And, what year was that about?

SD: So I was sixty-five, so I'd say I was born in '26, thirty-six, forty-six, oh it's, oh shoot. I'm not...I was there thirty-two years and I started in 58 so what would that be?

NN: *[indiscernible]*

SD: Yeah, about that I guess.

NN: Ok, yeah.

SD: Yeah.

NN: So do you mind talking about your own personal life?

SD: What would you like to know?

NN: Were you born here in Dryden or did you move here?

SD: I was born in Oxdrift.

NN: Oh, ok.

SD: Yeah. It was February 20<sup>th</sup>, 1926. It was a cold, cold morning mom said. *[Laughter.]*  
Yeah, I was born at home.

NN: And was there a doctor there who came and helped?

SD: No, just, I think a neighbour lady. Yeah, Mrs. Elliot, I think it was.

NN: Yeah, and were your parents living in Oxdrift for a long...before you were born.

SD: Well, my dad was the first baby born in Oxdrift.

NN: Ok.

SD: Yeah, yeah. He was born in 1899.

NN: And what was your father's name?

SD: Charlie Skene.

NN: Ok. The Skene's are a big family around here, aren't they?

SD: Do you know where Skene Transfer is? That's where, that was my dad's farm.

NN: Ok.

SD: Yeah.

NN: And when you went to school, did you go to school in Oxdrift?

SD: Yeah. I went as far as grade ten. That's as far as you could go in Oxdrift.

NN: And did you come here for later to Dryden *[indiscernible]*?

SD: No, I started to work. When I finished grade ten I got a job and, in town, and started to work. I worked in the Central Hotel for Mrs. Gordon.

NN: Ok. And when you were at school, do you remember any of your teachers? Was there one constant teacher there, or did you have many different teachers?

SD: Well, just one teacher taught eight grades. Yeah. Most country schools were like that then.

NN: Yeah.

SD: One room school.

NN: And you mentioned that your father had a farm. Did you have to help out on the farm a lot?

SD: Oh yeah. We did, like I had four brothers and three sisters. Yeah, everybody pitched in, you know. In the summer time if dad needed somebody else to drive the horses during haying season or harvest. I really liked that. I would far rather been outside than inside. Yeah, it was...everybody sort of pitched in. We'd pick berries, you know, we just did whatever needed to be done. There was always lots of work. [Laughter]

NN: So you said you went, after school you went to...you started working at the Central Hotel.

SD: Yeah.

NN: How long did you work there for?

SD: Well, I worked for about a year, a year and a half probably, and I'm not sure just what month I started to work. I know I worked for a few months and then it, it slowed down and wasn't as busy and I was laid off for a while and then I went back. And I think I worked there probably a couple of years altogether and got room and board. We stayed right there.

NN: And what was your job there?

SD: I was a waitress.

NN: Yeah. Ok.

SD: Yeah.

NN: And did you earn good money? Did you get lots of tips?

SD: Oh yeah. We earned big money, \$12 a month I think it was and our board. *[Laughter.]* Yeah, it was funny because in those days if you got a ten cent tip that was big, but there was one fellow that would leave twenty-five cents. Well, when the girls saw him come in...all the girls kind of thought "who's going to get him this time and get that big tip". *[Laughter.]* But, yeah, it was, it was a good place to work. Mrs. Gordon was the, was the owner then. She was a big lady. She wore those long redingotes, you know, they called them then, long sort of sheer coats that went right to the floor over, over her dress. She was, she was strict, but she, but she was very nice to work for. Yeah.

NN: And the people who used the Central Hotel, were they mostly like just stopping by or were they like regular visitors?

SD: A lot of the travelling salesmen that came to town stayed there. The rooms were very nice. They were very clean. And then they, they had a, like a, there was a restaurant and as well as a dining room. And there was a lot of traffic in the day time, people coming in for meals and coffee, that kind of thing. And people would, would come in for coffee and they would leave their babies outside in the carriage and run out every...you wouldn't dare do that anymore. But, yeah, it was, it was different, but it was good.

NN: Do have any fond memories of your time at school?

SD: At school?

NN: Yeah.

SD: Well, you know school was kind of...we had, we had...played a lot of games, games that you don't even hear of anymore, you know. Can you...have you ever heard of "Pump, Pump, Pull Away"? Well that was one where you stood against the fence and chose up sides, and each side stood back, and then you tried to get through to get to the other side without being caught...that kind of thing. There were a lot of good games, "Kick the Can". Yeah, we had a good time at school.

We always had what they called an Arbor Day in the spring. So we had to rake all the yard and picked up all the junk and everything that had accumulated over the winter.

We had some really nice teachers. We had some that we weren't crazy about too, but...

[Laughter]

NN: During your time at school, how many teachers were there? Like, [indiscernible]...

SD: Pretty well...some, some were there maybe two or three years. I imagine I probably had six or eight teachers the whole time I was there.

NN: Did you have a favorite?

SD: Yeah, I think I did. Yeah. I think Barbara Jones was maybe my favorite...a really, really nice girl. Barbara Hampe. I don't know if you know Bob, Bob Hampe. It's his mother.

NN: Ok.

SD: Yeah. She was a sweetheart. Everybody...[Laughter].

NN: And were the teachers all from around the area, or did some come from different places?

SD: Well she was from Dryden. And she, and that was her, she come to Oxdrift her first year out of normal school. But some, they, some were from down Eastern Ontario. There's a couple came from down there, and they were older. They weren't married. I don't know if they sort of were on the lookout for a husband or what, but...[Laughter].

NN: And, how has Oxdrift changed since you were a young kid?

SD: Well, it really has changed. The church closed down. There weren't enough people going to keep it going. It's still there, but it's, somebody's living in it now. And, and we used to have train service. Like we could, we could go to Dryden on what they called The Local. It ran between Ignace and Kenora. And we could go on The Local into Dryden and then come back on No. 1 they called it. It was the, the train that went from Winnipeg, I think, to Thunder Bay. And it was, it was, it was good, you know. You could, could, people could travel.

You could post a letter and take it down and give it to the man on the mail car and it, he'd take it to Dryden and drop it off so it got there the same day. Now you wait two weeks to get a letter from Dryden to Oxdrift.

But, let me think what else has...well we had, we had a lot of things going on in the Community Hall. It was dances, it was, the hall was in a different place than what it is now. They had to tear the old one down because it was sort of falling down. But the dances [indiscernible] not afraid. And there was usually one there every Friday night.

There were a lot of young people there. And I think that's changed. I think there, there's a lot of kids growing up in Oxdrift now because younger people have moved and are raising families there. But, I don't know, other than that.

NN: And that Local train...how many times did it run during the day?

SD: What was that?

NN: How many times did the Local train run?

SD: Well the Local went once...like it would go from Ignace to Kenora and back. And then we could go on what was No. 1...was a train that came from Dryden, but it started in Thunder Bay I think. I'm not real sure. And you could, you could come on that. And then there was another. It came about one o'clock. And another train, the cross-Canada train came about four o'clock. So you could get up and back, like from going and come back at four as well.

NN: And after your time at the Central Hotel, working there, where did you move on to next?

SD: What?

NN: Where did you move on to next from the Central Hotel?

SD: Oh, well I think I, I did different jobs. I, I was...one summer I worked at Cliff Lake Lodge which is on the Red Lake road, and it, it's still operating. It was a camp on an island and that was kind of different. And I worked at, at different stores, like, around. But then then I went after I, I left, after I left the hotel, I think that's when I...let me think now. I went, I went to work for Alfred Pitt, where Kupper's Bakery is now. And I worked in, I worked there for two or three years. I was in the grocery department. I loved it. He was a big man. And it was a department store then. And they, they had a big grocery department and there was a men's department where they sold all men's clothes and everything. And then there was dry goods where they had yard goods and yarn and all that kind of thing, and ladies lingerie. And then upstairs there was a big ladies wear where they had coats and dresses and shoes on one side and then the other side was all fine china and wool goods, like Hudson Bay blankets. They, it was top of the line stuff. They had beautiful English china and, you know, crystal from Czechoslovakia, places like that. It was, it was great. I didn't, a lot of times I didn't have any pay check left because I had it all spent by the time I go my pay at the end of the week. [Laughter]

NN: And how was, how was it like working for Alfred Pitt?

SD: It was great. He was, he was a terrific man. Yeah. Yeah. He was a great big man. He had had polio at one time and he sort of dragged one leg. I remember one day, his

bookkeeper was just a little short guy, and he kind of was being short. I guess he kind of asserted himself. You know, he wanted to have some authority. But anyway, he came out to the grocery part and I was putting shredded wheat on the, on the shelves and it was...the boxes were big, like that...and I was filling the shelf with this and he come back. And he said something kind of smart and I said "oh, come one Hugo", then I picked him up and I put him in this box [Laughter] and I was dragging him down the store and Mr. Pitt came out. And he looked down, like he kind of walked like, you know, like this, he dragged this one leg, like this one. "Well Hugo, what are you doing in there?" he said. Hugo was so embarrassed. I guess it wasn't very nice of me, but I...[Laughter]...but we, you know we had a really nice time. And, and the girls, we kept in touch for every, you know. I'm the only one left, but we kept, you know, we were real good friends. But, yeah.

So then, then after that, well after that, I got married and I had two kids. And so I was home for, till they were school age, and then I just did, I worked at Ontario Hydro for a while and then that was just bef...and then I went to the mill after Ontario Hydro. But before that I had worked at Eaton's and Robinson Stores just to have something, you know, to sort of supplement the income and...

NN: And how did you meet your husband?

SD: Well, I don't know. I think it was at a dance. I think, we'd like...at that time when you went to a dance, the boys all stood on one side and the girls all stood on the other. And I think I met him at a dance. I was, like we started to go together when I was sixteen and he was seventeen. And, and then, I, we went together for about five years before we got married. Yeah. He loved to dance and so did I. He was a real good dancer. I guess that's what I miss most. I loved to dance. And there were dances all the time. Once we were at five.

NN: Wow.

SD: There were dances everywhere.

NN: And the music that was played there, was it done by the local band?

SD: Yeah. There was two or three different bands or orchestras, and, and they, they would go, like...some, sometimes there'd be dances, like a dance in two different places the same night so you didn't know which one to go to. But, yeah, the orchestras were good. And the one was, was called The Merry Makers and it was Vi Stanfield's husband. Do you know Vi Stanfield? She just died. She, she lived across the road from Princess Court.

NN: Ok.

SD: Anyway, her husband just died, but anyway, he played the trumpet and Maurice Howell played the, or Claude played the, the saxophone, Maurice Howell played the trumpet and Vern Beath played the piano and Olly Chawchuk played the violin. *[Not sure of names.]* It was a good orchestra. Oh, and Bill Christiani played the drums. But they were very good. And they used to go all around the country to the dances, you know, play for the dances.

NN: And besides dances, what were other things that young people could enjoy?

SD: Well, I bowled, and skied, and skated and curled. There's you know, just about anything going...played bridge a lot.

NN: So that's all the questions I have for you, unless you wish to talk about something else.

SD: Well, I don't think there's anything very...that great...interesting. Yeah, we've had a good life. The kids have done well.

NN: So have you pretty much stayed in the Dryden area?

SD: Yeah. We lived on Wilson Street. We lived in one of the war-time houses, and then we built this house...in 1963 I think it was.

NN: What were the war time houses?

SD: On Wilson Street, St. Charles Street, and Wilde Street.

NN: Ok.

SD: Those three streets are all war-time houses.

NN: So they were built during the war?

SD: Just on the south side of St. Charles Street and on the North side of Wilde Street. There was, on the, on the, the south side of St. Charles was war-time houses and then on the other side of that block was Wilson Street. And there was war-time houses on both sides and then up the hill on Wilde Street was war-time houses as well.

NN: Ok. Were they built sort of like with cheaper materials?

SD: They were nice. No, they were nice houses. Ours was 147 and we had...downstairs there was a living room, bedroom and, and a kitchen, and a bathroom. And upstairs, there was two bedrooms. No, they were nice. Yeah.

NN: Well, what would make them classified as a war-time house?

SD: Well, they, they built them because there was, like, there weren't enough places for the veterans to live so the government built, or the Veteran's Affairs...I don't know who. Central Mortgage and Housing built the houses, actually, and then you applied for one. But there's...a lot of them are still...just look the same as they did when they built them. A lot of people have built on to them, but...but a lot are the way they were.

NN: So that's all I have.

SD: I can't think of anything too interesting to tell you, to tell you the truth. The kids you know, they have...Darlene, my daughter, she was the, at the hospital, like she was the Head of the Nursing Department and my son is an Electrician. You know, everything has sort of worked out. I just wish we didn't have as much snow as we have gotten.  
*[Laughter]*.

SD: This is the latest one, Andrea. This granddaughter, she asked me about ten years ago, she said "Nan do you think we, you and I, could do a cookbook together." And I said, "Oh, I guess so." Well we've been a long, long time putting it together. We finally got it out last year. And that's it. So I'll get the others and show you them.

SD: This was the first one I did. And it had a white cover on it and tree was just a sketch. Sheryl Hoshisaki had done it. And then when I did this one I had the cover laminated and I thought well I'd better bring that one up to speed so I put a different cover on it and had it laminated. And this is the one Andrea and I did. So I think it was about 1976, about the time they had the strike at the mill that I did my first one...just more or less to put my recipes in order, cause you know how you have scraps of paper with a recipe scribbled down somewhere. And put them together. Then the other one I did about ten years later and then this green one is last year. So that was...I think there's about ninety thousand out altogether of the first and second one. They've gone all over the world. People have taken them you know, if they've gone on trips they've taken them as hostess gifts. A lot of people send them with their kids when they used to billet the kids for hockey. And then it was in all the Coles stores all across Canada at one time.

NN: Oh wow.

SD: But then when Chapters bought Coles, they would only buy cookbooks or [indiscernible] from publishers. They wouldn't take them from people that did it on their own. And then I did the, I did the craft markets for a lot of years too, for years I've done craft, you know and I do the Clover Belt Market. You know, where people phone in. It's on Facebook I think.

NN: Ok.

SD: And you hear the long list of the things that you have to sell and then people order online and you take it over on Tuesday and they come and pick it up.

NN: You mentioned the first one because you wanted to put your recipes in order, but what was sort of the inspiration for the second one.

SD: Well, I had a lot of recipes. You know, I'm always collecting recipes. You go somewhere and somebody has something good and you ask for the recipe. And so I thought, well I'll just put them together. And people liked the first one...went over so good you know, cause the recipes are family recipes and recipes I got at bridge parties and things like that and you know, it's just really a down to earth cookbook. It's a...you don't have to go out and get a lot of ingredients you very rarely use. So then I thought well I'll do the second one, so...and then Andrea wanted me to do one with her so we ended up with three now.

NN: And what's this picture?

SD: That's the house where I was born.

NN: Oh, wow.

SD: But it didn't look like that. [Laughter] There's a lot of pictures inside and there's a picture inside...like it's all family pictures that Andrea just sort of put together. And this picture of the house, how it used to look, somewhere close to the front...when it was liveable. But it was that when my dad built a new house they hauled it up behind the barn and on the hill.

NN: Would it be this one?

SD: Yeah. That's the new one.

NN: Oh, that's the new one.

SD: And it just sort of sat there for years and it finally fell down. I'll see if I can find how it was. I'll get another book. This is it. That's when we lived in it.

NN: Oh yeah.

SD: Yeah.

NN: And is this...?

SD: Oh, that's my dad. He was hauling, hauling logs. Years ago, that's how they hauled it out.

NN: So it that from his own property?

SD: Hmm?

NN: Was that from like hauling logs off his own property?

SD: No. I think he was hauling them from Eagle River.

NN: Ok.

SD: I think he was working up there. Like he would do that in the winter time and just, to, because, you know, they, farm work.... My mom milked the cows and stuff and my dad went out to work in the winter time.

When Maurice was alive we travelled a lot. We've seen a lot of the world actually. We went to Mexico and then we went to Hawaii, and went to Australia and New Zealand, and Venezuela, Brazil. We've seen a lot of the world. We've seen Great Britain. We travelled Europe. We had a real good time. It's not much fun to go alone. Yeah.

I bought an amaryllis this year and I didn't think it was going to be up to much. Well that little thing has just been beautiful. I've got it sitting on a chair, tied up to the back of the chair, because it fell over. It's top heavy. It had six big blooms on it. Come and look.

In the cookbook there's a picture of the switchboard. I'll get my own book and then you can....I can just see it here. On page 140, look on there and there's a picture of my husband and I. I think it was taken at my son's wedding. Down in the corner, that's a picture of us. That's at...they had a dance after. I'm looking now to see...and the picture on page 124, there's a picture of us before we were married when men all wore fedora hats.

NN: Oh yes. Would it be this one?

SD: That's my granddaughter and I that did the cookbook. Here's the picture...oh no, that's not it. Wait a minute. This is us when we were teenagers. [Laughter] All the men wore hats. I'm trying to find the one of the switchboard. We fished and hunted and Maurice was a real outdoorsman and I loved fishing and hunting too. Where in the heck is that picture of the switchboard though.

NN: Is it this one in the bottom>

SD: That's it.

NN: Ok.

SD: Yeah. So it's...what page is that on?

NN: 174.

SD: Yep. That's it. You can see all the, see all the things...like there's holes all here. And you had all these wire that you sort of connected up. When they put the new switchboard in it was just small. Like it was just like a typewriter almost. And so, I asked, said "what are you going to do with the old one." And they said "just junk it I guess." I said "well, can I have it?" So they brought it up, put it in the basement, and my grandkids just had a wonderful time with it. They used to come over to the mill when I was working there and they just loved to get...type on the typewriter and stuff. And you could do that in those days. The office wouldn't allow it any more I don't think. But I had a typewriter down there and the switchboard and telephone, and they played office and thought that was wonderful. [Laughter]

NN: You mentioned that your father's last name was Skene. What was your mother's maiden name?

SD: Mary Lillian Latimer was her maiden name. Yeah. And my...like in my family I had three brothers...one died in infancy, a baby boy. But my other two brothers, one lives now in Fort McLeod in Alberta. He moved out there and he bought a big farm. And he's two years younger than me, so he's not farming any more. But my other brother died a few years ago. He had pancreatic cancer. And then I had four sisters...Rena Fotheringham...and she was the pianist and she taught music...and Joan Hatch was the school teacher and she also plays...and Fran Blair. And Fran was the secretary for the School Board.

NN: Ok.

SD: So. That's...

NN: You mentioned that your father was the first baby born in Oxdrift. So has, so did the Skene family always live at Oxdrift?

SD: My, my grandfather on my dad's side came from Edinburgh. He was Scottish. And my grandmother on my dad's side, her family came with the United Empire Loyalists when they came over from the States. Grandma's family was with them. And when grandpa and grandma got married they moved up here. And they had to clear the land to make their farm and everything, and build a house. It was log house that they built at first. Then they built a different one, and a big barn and made a farm. And then my dad, when he was, let me see, I think he was about nineteen, and he bought the farm across the highway from my grandparents. And, that's were mom and dad lived and where we

were all born. Anyway. But they worked hard. Like, grandma and grandpa were one of the first people in Oxdrift, and they just arrived with not too much. You know, and at that time....

NN: When they arrived were they like in [indiscernible]?

SD: Well grandma was from Uxbridge. Her family was. Do you know where that is, Uxbridge? It's just not too far from Toronto.

NN: Yes. Yes I do. Yeah.

SD: Yeah. So.

NN: So when they first arrived in Oxdrift were there any like other settlers or stores there, or was it...?

SD: Yeah, there were, oh half a dozen I guess. Yeah. Yeah. But the people were just starting to move up there. I don't know how they come to get that particular parcel of land, whether...at one time the government was giving land out. The people could come up and then have it and clear from the trees and everything. And they got it at a fairly reasonable rate I think. So, but, yeah.

NN: Did you ever miss farming? Would you have gone back to farming if...?

SD: Hmm?

NN: Did you ever miss farming? Would you have gone back to farming if you could?

SD: Oh, no, I don't think so.

NN: Yeah.

SD: No. I don't think so. No, grandma...they quite liked it up here you know. When I was twelve grandma, her daughter had died in the flu epidemic that hit in about 1916 I think. And, her daughter was going to school. She had sent her down to go school, and she got sick and died. So when I was born, they, that's how I got my name. I was named after her. And I don't think grandma ever really...you don't get over losing a child I don't think.

NN: And how did your mom come up here?

SD: My mother's family were from down Eastern Ontario as well. And my mother's parents moved up about the same time as my dad. And mom was born down there but she was

a year old when they moved up here, so. But mom lived to be ninety-three and my grandma on my dad's side was ninety-four. So I guess we've got good genes.

NN: And did your mother's family also farmed as well?

SD: Yes. Yes. Yeah, they were all farmers. Yeah. My grandfather as well as having the farm, he looked after the post office.

NN: Ok.

SD: Yeah. They lived close down by the, by the railroad track and he'd go down and get the bag of mail off the train every day and sort it out.

NN: And did he hand-deliver every bit of mail, or was there like a...?

SD: No, people got, people went to the...you had to go to the post office to get your mail.

NN: Ok.

SD: It's quite different now. In those days, my gosh, you could send a letter for one cent or two cents and it would get there next day. Today, gosh, about a dollar something and it gets there in two weeks.

NN: Yeah.

SD: Yeah, it's different you know, with all the computers and everything. I was at the bank yesterday and there was three or four people in line and you waited and you waited and you waited. And I thought, oh for the days when you went in with your little bank book and you got in line and you were there about two seconds and you were out. [Laughter] I don't know if all this stuff is, is so great sometimes.

NN: What's that picture down there?

SD: That was taken, Sheryl Hoshisaki, have you met Sheryl?

NN: No.

SD: No. Well, she brought it to me. She said she was looking through her pictures one day and she said "I found this picture", and she said "guess who it's of?" And it's her dad and it was taken in about 1944 and he was in the army and at that time the Japanese, they wouldn't let them join the army. But anyway, he was in and, and we were walking down...this is Morris and May. And we were just down the street and some...I don't know who took the picture...but anyway, that's us.

So she, her sister, she said "Well you're not going to tape it up there just like that." She said "I'll get a frame for it." Well there's nowhere big enough in here to put the thing so I just stand it on the floor.

NN: How old were you during the Second World War?

SD: I was about sixteen or seventeen I guess. Yeah.

NN: Were there any like hard changes that happened like with rations and...

SD: Oh yeah. You didn't wear slacks. Girls didn't wear slacks hardly ever. Nobody wore slacks to work. No women. And, and no women smoked in the office when I was at work, when I worked at the, at the mill. If you wanted a cigarette, you went to the bathroom and smoked it and came back out. You didn't smoke it at your desk. And the men all wore shirts and ties to work. There was no dress-down Fridays any anything like that. Yeah. It was nice.

NN: Did the mill experience a loss of workers...did the mill experience a loss due to the war or...?

SD: Well. That's when the Japanese people came to Dryden was during the war because they had been moved out of BC. They couldn't...you know, the government moved them all out from the coast because they were afraid they were, they were gonna blow things up. And it was ridiculous. But anyway, they moved to Manitoba and put them on sugar beet farms and places like that...just awful places to live in the winter. I don't know how they did...survived. But my dad and my Uncle Jack had a, had a camp, like they built log shacks for them to stay in and, and they cut wood. And a lot of them brought their wives down to live there. So the mill was gonna hire these Japanese, some Japanese people as truck drivers and that. And when they came down, the mill changed their mind and wouldn't give them a job so they came to work with my dad and my Uncle Jack. And that's how come we got to know them...the Japanese.

NN: And there was...it's often talked about that during the wars that when men went to the war, the women took over the jobs. Were there...?

SD: Oh yeah.

NN: ...women working like with the machines?

SD: Oh yeah. Yeah. Yeah. There was a lot of girls from here. There was an air, an air...what was it...building...engine...aero engine or something like that building engines in Thunder Bay for planes. And a lot of the girls from Dryden were working there. There were...saw on Rosie the Riveter...they did, they put the rivets in planes and stuff like that, holding

them, things together. Yeah. Yeah, there was a lot a girls work...you know. And of course, the men were gone, so the women had to do a lot of the work.

NN: And were there any sort of huge Victory Bond rallies or...?

SD: Oh yeah.

NN: Yeah.

SD: Everybody had Victory Bonds. Yeah. Actually, there was a couple, just a few years ago died, and they still had their Victory Bonds. They...*[Laughter]*...they were savers you know. They'd save money all their life and they still had Victory Bonds. Yeah. You could get them, like taken off your, your, your cheque before you ever got it. You could sign up and have so much taken off, off your cheque and a lot of people.... And the money...like I've still got what we call a shinplaster. Have you ever seen one?

NN: No.

SD: Well mine, I don't have it here, but I think it's in my safety deposit box. But it was like, twenty-five cents, but it was a little, like, like...it looked like the Canadian dollar before they put, got the new ones out. But it was only twenty-five cents and it was called a shinplaster. They're really a keepsake, you know, they're, you don't ever see them. Yeah, so, but in those days it was quite the thing you know, if you. Grampa used to give them to us for washing his feet. *[Laughter]* He had cancer and he'd, and he'd talk really with a real Scotch brogue. And he's say "If you wash my feet, I'll give you a shinplaster."  
*[Laughter]*

SD: That's my dad there, when he was...

NN: Ok.

SD: ...when he was sixteen. Yeah.

NN: Handsome.

SD: Yeah. Yeah, he was a good looking man.

Well I've really enjoyed having you. I hope I haven't bored you to death.

NN: Oh, no. It was very interesting.

*[Laughter]*

-end-

