

# **Transcript of a series of videotaped interviews by Mark, conducted from December 2017 to early 2022**

Compiled in May 2022

*Mark:* Mom, you moved to Edmonton in 1949.

*Dixie:* September 1949

*Mark:* You would have just turned 14. Can you talk a bit about what you remember about your move to Edmonton from Neerlandia.

*Dixie:* Well, I don't remember the move so much. We didn't have that much furniture in Neerlandia, and some of that stayed in Neerlandia, because the house my dad had purchased had some furniture with it.

*Mark:* This is the house in Edmonton, on Kinnaird Ravine.

*Dixie:* Yes.

*Elaine:* Were you excited to move?

*Dixie:* No.

*Elaine:* Were you scared to move?

*Elaine:* What were your emotions about moving?

*Dixie:* Shall I paraphrase somebody else, that 'I didn't have a choice'?

*Elaine:* Who, Dad?

*Dixie:* No, Grandma.

*Mark:* She said that about that move?

*Dixie:* No. About the move from Wisconsin.

*Mark:* Tell me what you remember about that move to Edmonton.

*Dixie:* What I remember is that I started two weeks of schooling in Barrhead, and then I came to Eastwood High School. In Barrhead I had been taking typing, but they did not offer typing at Eastwood so I had to take physics. And, needless to say, physics was not really a good choice for me.

*Bill:* You would have preferred chemistry, no doubt.

*Dixie:* No. I would not have preferred chemistry. I would have preferred typing. There was another girl in that physics class who also was not interested in physics. And it was a very small class with a bunch of brainy guys in it so the teacher did not really pay much attentions\ to the two of us in the back of the room.

The other things were okay, I guess.

*Mark:* What grade were you in?

*Dixie:* Grade 10.

*Mark:* You were only 14, and you were in Grade 10.

*Dixie:* That was a bit of a problem.

*Mark:* Where was Eastwood High School?

*Dixie:* We lived on 110<sup>th</sup> or 111<sup>th</sup> avenue, and the school was on 120<sup>th</sup> avenue, so I had to go about ten blocks.

*Mark:* Is that still a school now?

*Dixie:* Yes. At that time the school had primary on the first floor, junior high on the second floor, and high school on the third floor. And it was not that large a school.

*Mark:* Did you go there through grades 10, 11, and 12?

*Dixie:* Yes.

*Mark:* And you graduated from there?

*Dixie:* No. Because you could sometimes take four years for high school. So when we moved to Hudson Bay Reserve, I took grade 12 again, with different subjects.

*Bill:* So you got a whole pile of extra high school credits.

*Dixie:* No. I took trigonometry twice, but even taking it twice was not a success.

*Mark:* Did you live about three years in the home on Kinnaird Ravine then, and then moved to the home on 111A avenue, at 11123?

*Dixie:* Right. We moved there the summer before Herman was born, the summer of '52.

*Mark:* The second time you took grade 12, was that at Victoria Composite?

*Dixie:* Yes.

*Mark:* Did you graduate twice?

*Dixie:* No.

*Mark:* When you finished at Eastwood you did not have enough credits to graduate?

*Dixie:* No.

*Mark:* Your mom or dad could not help yo to much with the trigonometry?

*Dixie:* No, they couldn't.

*Mark:* Some of us had the advantage of Dad being able to help us with some of that. You had to it pretty much on your own.

*Mark:* Did you work at all during your high school years?

*Dixie:* Yes. One time I worked for a family. The gentleman was a lawyer, Guy Patterson, and his wife was housemother for a sorority on campus. One son and one daughter were living at the house, so I had to so some dishes, and start supper for that family.

*Mark:* Where did the Pattersons live?

*Dixie:* Further in the Highlands, just at the end of the trolley line, near where Marian and Wendell live now.

*Mark:* Would you be able to identify the house?

*Dixie:* No.

*Mark:* Was that for several months?

*Dixie:* Just during the one year, for several months, probably the last year we were living in Cromdale.

*Mark:* What were the reasons for the move from Neerlandia to Edmonton, and why did the move occur during the middle of September rather than earlier in the year, before the new school year started?

*Dixie:* I don't know, but if I would guess, it may be because we could not get possession of the house before then.

My father had been going to Edmonton every week for some months, definitely the whole summer.

*Bill:* Where did he stay?

*Dixie:* He stayed by aunt Albertje [Sonnema]. He had to be referee for Allan and Rita sometimes.

*Mark:* He would be coming to Edmonton in his capacity of Fieldman for the CRC, helping new immigrants settle, finding them places to live, find jobs for them?

*Dixie:* Yes.

*Mark:* Sounds like social work, community development, is that what it was?

*Dixie:* Yes.

*Mark:* So for his continued work it made sense to relocate to Edmonton.

*Dixie:* Yes, I think he really liked that kind of work.

*Mark:* When did he start?

*Dixie:* I suspect that in 1948 he already did some of it.

*Mark:* Before that he worked as a farmer in Neerlandia?

*Dixie:* Right.

*Mark:* Did he have his own operation or was it someone else's farm?

*Dixie:* I don't know all those details, but I think my grandparents bought the farm, because my parents didn't have any money when they came across the border.

*Mark:* That was in 1942.

*Dixie:* My mother said they had to borrow a thousand dollars or more from her brother. That was how much money they had to have to get into the country. And she was determined to get that money back to uncle Hank fast.

I am pretty sure that my parents had to borrow money from uncle Sjoerd [Sonnema] to buy the house.

*Mark:* And Grandma didn't like that either?

*Dixie:* I don't know about that.

*Mark:* She did not like debt. Something like the words in Proverbs about the debtor being the slave of the lender. Some wisdom there.

*Mark:* So your parents borrowed money from uncle Sjoerd, your dad's brother-in-law, to buy the house.

*Elaine:* Did you know Mom went to high school for four years?

*Elaine:* I didn't. Why?

*Bill:* I didn't know that either.

*Mark:* I am going to ask Dad a few questions now. Is that OK?

*Dixie:* Sure.

### **Img\_5624.mov Discussion with Mark 13 October 2020 (pp 5-11)**

*Mark:* Mom, what do you want to say about your first year of high school? You graduated in 1953?

*Dixie:* Yes. We bought a house on 111A Avenue in 1952, before Herman was born. We moved there in the summer, I think. Everything was brand new then.

*Mark:* Did it seem pretty fancy?

*Dixie:* it was very different from the house we were in, but I can't say it was that nice. The house we left in the Highlands had a very nice combination living room-dining room, and then a small bedroom on the main floor. A bathroom and a kitchen also on the main floor. The kitchen was very small but in the kitchen, you know, those old stoves had something going for them. It was a gas stove with four burners. The burner part was very flat but then it had an oven that was like a wall oven, more or less at waist height. The only problem with the oven was that it had no thermostat. Grandma made cakes and pies in that oven but you just have to learn how to use one of those ovens. It was standing on legs so you could clean underneath, and it did not look like it was overpowering the room. I thought it was pretty nice and Grandma thought so too. I mean, she did not have to light a stove. She was used to not having a thermostat on the oven anyway. I don't know what she had in Wisconsin but we didn't have electricity there, I think.

*Karen:* Did you have electricity in Neerlandia?

*Dixie:* No. We had these Coleman lamps that you had to pump up. They were filled with kerosene and then you had to light these little mantles. Every once in a while one of these

would get holes in it and it would not work very well.

*Mark:* So this was in Neerlandia?

*Dixie:* Yes.

*Mark:* Tell us a little more about the house on 111A Avenue. It was new compared to what you had over by Kinnaird Ravine?

*Dixie:* It was in a whole new area but it was relatively close to the Christian school, the Central Christian School.

*Mark:* Where was the Christian school? Close to the Royal Alexandra Hospital? Almost equidistant between your new house and the previous house?

*Dixie:* I suppose.

*Mark:* Where was everybody housed in your new house?

*Dixie:* Gladys and I had the big bedroom upstairs and the boys had the smaller bedroom.

*Mark:* The bedroom on the west was the big one and the one on the east was the smaller one?

*Dixie:* Yes. Jean was in a crib in my parents' bedroom on the main floor, and when Herman came around he was also in a crib in the bedroom on the main floor.

*Mark:* Jean and Herman were in there together?

*Dixie:* Yes, in the same bedroom but not in the same crib. There was not much room to walk around.

*Mark:* Peter and Andrew were in the one bedroom, and you and Gladys in the other one?

*Dixie:* Yes, that's the way it was. We had a bigger bathroom, and Grandma liked what was a new kind of idea for a washing machine, in the kitchen like a built-in dishwasher. When the water emptied out it would empty into the kitchen sink. That's what she had most of the time when she was there.

*Mark:* Well you don't see that very often anymore.

*Dixie:* No.

*Bill:* That was pretty advanced for that time, having a washing machine on the main floor.

*Dixie:* Mind you, you had very little counter space.

*Bill:* Did the counter not run over top of the washing machine?

*Dixie:* No. There was something you could put over top of it probably. There was a fridge and the washing machine and the sink and the stove, and then a little bit of counter space.

*Bill:* And not a lot of cupboard space either.

*Mark:* You did not end up living there very long really, did you? You moved there in 1952 and then the following year you went to college, and then your dad died in the summer of 1954, and then you lived back at home, until when? Until you got married to this guy?

*Dixie:* Yes.

*Mark:* So, five years I guess, in that house.

*Dixie:* And then I moved up in the world. I lived in a two-room apartment with very little furniture, far away in Toronto.

*Mark:* But before you talk about that, I want to talk a little more about that house on 111A Ave. The garage that was there, was that new then too? That was a state of the art garage?

*Dixie:* I guess so. There was no landscaping, and I don't remember who put the landscaping in. The Sonnemas probably put the sidewalks in. And I don't know who put in the other kinds of stuff because that was probably done during the year I was at Calvin.

*Mark:* Do you have any memories of your first year there, the eight of you in that house? Like family life, what that was like while you were there? What stands out?

*Dixie:* I think we all ate at the kitchen table. Herman probably did not eat at the table.

*Mark:* In the kitchen, with the table against what would be the west wall, with the back porch on the one side and the staircase to the upstairs on the other side.

*Dixie:* Yes, because I do not recall eating at the dining room table.

*Bill:* On Sundays you did, at least when I was there.

*Dixie:* Oh. Did we?

*Bill:* Yes, on some Sundays anyway, when I was there. Perhaps not on all Sundays.

*Mark:* What do you remember about your dad in that year? Do you remember anything about him?

*Karen:* Was he home very much?

*Dixie:* He liked having uncle John and aunt Jenny over. And they discussed the sermons. But it was not a negative discussion. And he liked to go to Van's meat market. On Fridays, The Banner would usually be there. Van's got their mail earlier at the meat market. And then, Woudstra had a bookstore there, so then he would have a little discussion with Mr. Woudstra, and see what was in the latest Banner. And I do remember that, in some ways, he really liked Cecil Tuininga, who was in Grand Rapids at the seminary, and they would get reports from him. About all the bad things that were going on at the seminary. And that we had all these bad professors. Probably we should not record all this.

*Dixie:* And you wanted to know about my dad. When he went to Synod, some of them got together. Anyhow, some of those professors were let go that year, 1952.

*Karen:* I guess I have actually read about that somewhere recently.

*Mark:* I think Robert Swierenga wrote about that. Some kind of a witch hunt, especially as it related to certain allegedly liberal professors. I can't remember whether it was at the seminary or at the college.

Your dad's education in the Netherlands, what was that like? Did he finish high school or what?

*Dixie:* I don't think so.

*Mark:* how far did he go?

*Dixie:* I don't know.

*Mark:* Maybe Dad knows.

*Bill:* No, I have no idea.

*Dixie:* What he did in the Netherlands for work I don't know either. All I know is that the whole family was going to emigrate to Chicago. But then uncle Ben and aunt Jenny did not pass the medical test. I guess aunt Jenny was quite shy and she looked like perhaps she was not all there. Well not really, but in any case neither of them passed the test and therefore they could not go to the United States. So then my grandfather said to my dad and to uncle Klaas, "Well, you two can go if you like."

*Bill:* Did Klaas go to Chicago also?

*Dixie:* No, he chickened out and did not go at all.

*Mark:* What year did your dad go?

*Dixie:* 1927.

*Mark:* He was born in 1907 so he was 20 when he went. And you don't know what he did before that and you don't know how long he went to school.

*Dixie:* Most of the time they did not go to school all that far.

*Bill:* Not past grade 6 perhaps; that would be pretty common.

*Mark:* Did he like to read?

*Dixie:* Oh yes, he liked reading

*Karen:* Did he like reading novels or did he read rather heavy stuff?

*Dixie:* I can't say that I ever saw him reading a book. But don't forget, on the farm it was busy and he would not have much time to read. And when he started working for the immigration people in the church he didn't have much time to read.

*Bill:* Did you see much of him at home?

*Dixie:* You know, yes and no. He went to a lot of consistory meetings, sometimes in Second Church and then in Third Church. He loved working for the church, he loved people.

*Mark:* He was pretty gregarious?

*Dixie:* Yes, I would say that. He was totally different, I think. Having gone to the States on his own and away from parents and so on, he was not the same as . . . , he had a different personality, more outgoing.

*Mark:* And he probably had more confidence in terms of interacting, having been on his own for 15 years and not in a small enclave of people in Neerlandia who all emigrated at the same time.

*Dixie:* He went back and forth from Edmonton to Winnipeg a number of times, for example, and if there was a large number of immigrants arriving, he found it easier to take the train to Winnipeg, meet them on arrival, talk to them on the train on the way back, and figure out how he was going to help them all. Some of them had farmer-sponsors already that they were going to. I know one story about that. The Vandervelde family did not have a sponsor and he was not a farmer. The story I heard is that my dad had to give the OK to the Canadian authorities for all these people to come, so he had papers for a whole bunch of them, and he just put Vandervelde's papers in there as well. And when they said something about that family he told him they were on their way. So he found a job for them, I don't know exactly where.

*Bill:* He must have spent a fair bit of time chasing around finding potential employers.

*Dixie:* He did not know how to spell very well, so he would often ask grandma how do you spell certain words. And grandma was a good speller so that was very helpful.

*Karen:* Plus, English was her first language and not his.

*Mark:* How did you end up going to Calvin? Did your dad tell you to go there?

*Dixie:* That was the place to go.

*Mark:* Who decided that, did your dad do that?

*Dixie:* Probably. I knew I could not go there without their financial help, and where they got the money for it I have no idea. I did work for my room and board so I had tuition to pay and I had to get back and forth. When I went to Calvin, I rode with George Ebbers and his fiancé. That's another story. George's fiancé had come here to meet the Ebbers family; she was from Grand Rapids. Jack Wiersma and I got a ride with those two. I guess we were chaperones.

*Mark:* So what happened to this George Ebbers then?

*Dixie:* He was in seminary and his wife-to-be was quite a bit younger than he. I think they were to get married that year. We ran into car trouble in Shelby, Montana so we were put up in a hotel in Shelby and you know what those little hotels are like, so of course Julie

and I were in one room and Jack and George were in another room. They drove me to Wisconsin, and then I got out and somehow I guess I got from Wisconsin to Grand Rapids later on. I don't remember how.

*Mark:* That would've been the first time you got to Grand Rapids.

*Bill:* And there was no reception committee in Grand Rapids.

*Dixie:* Well, we had met the Van Tils who had been on summer assignment in Third Church in Edmonton.

*Mark:* And they helped you get settled in Grand Rapids a bit?

*Dixie:* Yes, and they had a daughter who was starting Calvin as well. I went to Calvin and got a list of people who were looking for people for room and board in return for work. One that I went to was two blocks from campus and I had to help with this 10-year-old girl. The gentleman of the house was away Monday through Friday. He was an accountant and had clients up in northern Michigan and he came back on weekends. And I was not there on Sundays because I went to Van Til. I did not have to work very hard, mostly I had to babysit at night because Mrs. Dykema liked to play bridge.

*Mark:* So this was two blocks which way from Calvin College [the Franklin campus]?

*Dixie:* East Grand Rapids, on Chippewa Street.

*Mark:* How was it decided that you would take the education program?

*Dixie:* I did not want to be a nurse.

*Karen:* And those were the two options.

*Dixie:* I could be a secretary.

*Mark:* And how did you like that first year?

*Dixie:* I did not mind it. But I did not really like writing 500-word essays.

*Karen:* But you love writing, Mom.

*Dixie:* No, I don't. And I did OK. I was not spectacular. And then, of course, they were so short of teachers here. At that time, all these immigrants were coming. I got a job in the Christian school mainly because . . .

*Bill:* How did you get recruited?

*Dixie:* I am sure my dad took care of that. I am sure I did not have any interview.

*Mark:* So was that all arranged in the spring of 1954? Before you left Calvin? When you left Calvin you said you knew you were not going to go back anyway at that time and were going to start teaching. Were other people at Calvin doing the same thing? In a situation where they would go just for one year and then go back?

*Dixie:* Not very many because they did have a two-year program at the time at Calvin. So when I came back I had to . . . They were so short of teachers that people could start teaching right out of high school.

*Mark:* So you were someone who was experienced.

*Dixie:* But not according to the Alberta government. Every year for three summers these people had to take summer school and so take the first year of education.

*Mark:* So you taught full-time for four years, from 1954 to 1958. Did you know that Karen?

*Karen:* I did. But she did not finish her last year.

*Mark:* Because she got married in June 1958 and left. She left early, before the end of the school year. Your first teaching job was in what location?

*Dixie:* My first two years were in the only school there was.

*Mark:* The one by the Royal Alex there, the Central Christian School, is that what it was

called?

*Dixie:* Yes.

*Mark:* And the next two years were in the West school?

*Dixie:* Yes. That school was new in 1957.

*Mark:* And how was that school? Was it pretty fancy? Tell us a little more about your experience teaching during those four years.

*Dixie:* The first year I had grades 1 and 2; the kids were really good. They were very well trained because the second grade had had a teacher from Holland, and the only reason I got a job was maybe that she was holding out for a better job, better pay maybe. And since she had not signed her contract I got a contract because we were probably worse off. And the last teacher got a really good contract in the public school. Miss Blom.

The next year I had grades 3 and 4. To me it was easier teaching then because everyone had a workbook and they had readers; there was some stuff that you had to teach. I don't recall that there was a lot of extra work I had to take home. It would be kind of hard to take all those workbooks home on the bus anyway. And the next year I also had grades 3 and 4, I must have.

*Mark:* Did you take the bus to work? It would not have been all that far to walk either probably.

*Dixie:* Yes. And the last year I had grade 5. That was a tough year. Because I had 20 boys and 10 girls and of the 20 boys four were new from Holland. I had never had those before because not all the newest immigrant kids were able to get in right away; children from earlier immigrant families had priority.

*Mark:* So the Central School, what kind of a building was that?

*Dixie:* It had quite a high step to get into the school. It was originally intended to be a two-room school. And one room was quite large so by the time it was ready to start they obviously had far too many pupils for two rooms so they put a partition in the largest room. Grades 3 and 4 were in that larger room, and the students had to walk through the Grade 1/2 room to go outside or to the bathroom. They all had desks that were the old kind of double desk. There were students in higher grades also, but they were somewhere else.

*Mark:* So was the school built as a school or had it been built for some other purpose?

*Dixie:* No, it was new.

*Bill:* What was in the basement? No classrooms?

*Dixie:* No classrooms. There wasn't much playground space so that was the playground.

*Mark:* And who were your colleagues there while you were teaching at the Central Christian School?

*Dixie:* I think the first year it was Irene Hanenburg and Rita Oudman. The next year it was Corry De Weerd and Irene.

*Bill:* Was Nell Van Ry there?

*Dixie:* No. I am not sure when she came.

*Mark:* How many teachers were there?

*Dixie:* Three teachers.

*Mark:* And was there a principal?

*Dixie:* Yes, the principal was the person who was teaching grades 5 and 6.

*Mark:* Was there another Christian school in Edmonton before that?

*Dixie:* The Central School had other teachers before that.



*Mark:* So the Christian school was in the church basement for some years before that? In First Church?

*Dixie:* Yes. That's where Gladys went.

*Mark:* So they started with very young grades?

*Dixie:* No, not grades 1 and 2 but something like 3, 4, and 5.

*Mark:* But Andrew did not go there.

*Dixie:* No, he went to Cromdale School for the first year, I think, and then he went to McCauley School.

*Mark:* And then in grade 10 he went to Vic. And where did Peter go?

*Dixie:* Peter went to the Christian School.

*Mark:* So he was a little over five years younger than aunt Gladys. He would've started school in about 1951?

*Dixie:* Yes. Jean went to the public school for grade 1 for some reason.

*Mark:* Which school did she go to?

*Dixie:* The one that was in that area. Prince Rupert.

*Mark:* So that was a little bit north and west of where your house was.

*Dixie:* It was on Tower Road.

*Mark:* And what about Herman?

*Dixie:* Herman went to the Christian School.

*Mark:* So he went to the Christian School all the way from grade 1 to grade 12.

*Karen:* He was the only one then.

*Dixie:* Yes.

*Mark:* Tell me a little bit more about your teaching career. Any highlights you can think of.

*Dixie:* Well, we did not have anything like permission slips that I can remember. I took the students to Queen Elizabeth Park.

*Karen:* How did you get there?

*Dixie:* We went on the bus.

*Karen:* Didn't you have parent volunteers?

*Dixie:* Volunteers, what are those?

*Karen:* What a nightmare.

*Dixie:* Kids were well behaved then, at least the ones I had. When I was in West School I really did not like having those seventh and eighth graders. And I did not like supervision outside.

*Mark:* What did you do with all the money you made?

*Dixie:* First of all it was not that big a salary. And secondly, I think grandma got most of it.

*Mark:* And can you recall exactly how that happened? I mean it was obviously necessary but was there a discussion about that?

*Dixie:* No there wasn't any discussion about that. I just assumed that it would have to be done that way. Otherwise grandma would have a problem. I don't really recall the deacons coming around very much but maybe they came during the day. Who knows. Perhaps the preacher did it.

*Mark:* When you were at Calvin, did you ever encounter Carolyn Steenstra?

*Dixie:* I vaguely think I may have but they came from a different side of Grand Rapids. Elissa [Van Til] did not know them very well. She was the same age as Carolyn. I do not

recall who was all in my classes. I did not get to know very many people actually.

*Bill:* Not even any boys?

*Dixie:* Particularly no boys. Those American boys were not so interested in Canadian girls. And besides we were not in the, I don't know what they were called, residences.

*Mark:* Henhouses perhaps?

*Dixie:* And those girls had a lot more of a social life. Because they were with 12 or more in one of those houses. ['coops'?)

*Mark:* What about Leon Plantinga?

*Dixie:* No, I never ran into him. I never ran into any of those people. I never took a philosophy course. Which was probably a good thing.

*Mark:* Where did you go to church?

*Dixie:* Oakdale. It was pretty well across from where the Van Tils lived. And I don't know how I got over there, whether I walked there or what. I have no idea. I do remember that when I was looking for a room and board place I went to this place where they needed somebody, and this lady was in an iron lung. They were offering room and board. I had no idea what I was expected to do there but that just wasn't anything for me because I first of all never wanted to be a nurse. So I felt really torn about the fact that I did not really take that job, because people should want to help those people.

*Bill:* So you were pretty much on your own in terms of finding a place to live.

*Dixie:* Yes. Miss Van Opynen gave me some names. There were more of us who were working for room and board. Gladys worked for room and board also for a couple of years, and she and Beatrice worked together for room and board. Which from Gladys' point of view was kind of interesting because Gladys would sometimes get kind of mad about something, and if Beatrice got mad, she stayed mad.

### **WHVB interview 26June22, on iPad, Img\_0798**

*Mark:* Mom, I thought we could talk a little about the year you went to Calvin, the year in Grand Rapids. Had you always had that idea, how did it come about, anyhow did you eel about it?

*Dixie:* I felt fine about it. It was exciting. I did know one person there, I think. I went to the Van Tils; Mr. [Rev.] Van Til was a Bible instructor at Calvin, and I knew their oldest daughter Elissa. I went there via Wisconsin, and I don't remember how I got from there to Grand Rapids, probably got a ride with someone. Then I had to find a place to live, and I went to see Miss Van Opynen. She gave me a couple of names of people who were looking for Calvin students, so I went to at least two places that I know of. One was a place where the wife was in an iron lung, and I would have to do things with her and for her, and probably cook and do things like that. At the other place I would have to babysit a young girl who was ten. Not being inclined to become a nurse, I took the place where I had to babysit. It was only a block or two from the Calvin campus, so I spent the year at that place. At Christmas time I went to Wisconsin.

*Mark:* Whose idea was it that you would go to Calvin? Was it your idea, or your parents' idea?

*Dixie:* You know, it was just sort of a given that if I wanted to be a school teacher I would go to Calvin to do that. Didn't everybody do that?

*Elaine:* Did you want to be a school teacher?

*Dixie:* Yes. I sure didn't want to be a nurse.

*Elaine:* Were those the only two choices?

*Dixie:* Or a secretary, maybe.

*Mark:* How did you get to Wisconsin? And you spent a bit of time there?

*Dixie:* The driver of the car was George Ebbers, a seminary student from Edmonton. His fiancé Julie had been visiting Edmonton. She was not much older than I was, perhaps twenty. He was quite a bit older, probably twenty-four. And then there was another person, Jack Wiersma, from Lacombe. I think he was also in his first year, perhaps his second year. Later, after getting his degree and more degrees, he taught at Calvin for many years, in the Education faculty.

*Mark:* How did you get from Wisconsin to Grand Rapids?

*Dixie:* I don't remember that.

*Elaine:* How did you get to Wisconsin at Christmas time?

*Dixie:* I don't remember that either.

*Mark:* How did you feel about that year? Do you remember that?

*Dixie:* I wasn't homesick. When you are working in a home you don't get to know very many people. I didn't live in one of the 'coops' [co-ops] or 'henhouses', as some students called them.

*Mark:* Do you have any recollection of the professors that stand out?

*Dixie:* There was a professor Snapper who was a kind-of psychology type guy, and he was a little bit different.

*Mark:* What was his first name? Marion? How was he different?

*Dixie:* You know, psychology is a different kettle of fish anyway. I had never been exposed to things being brought out in a psychological way.

*Mark:* Did you go to church?

*Dixie:* Yes, I went to Oakdale Church. That's where the Van Tils went, and I used to spend a lot of Sunday time at the Van Tils.

*Mark:* What was the connection with the van Tils?

*Dixie:* Rev. Van Til had taken a summer position at Third Church in Edmonton the summer before, in 1952.

*Mark:* So he was there for a few months, and your parents got to know him.

*Elaine:* Who paid your tuition?

*Dixie:* I think my parents did.

*Mark:* When that year concluded, was that it, or were you planning to go back?

*Dixie:* No, I was not planning to go back. In the meantime the school here needed some teachers. An experienced teacher, who may have been holding out for more money, had not signed her contract, and my dad made sure I got a contract.

*Mark:* Did that all happen before you came back to Edmonton?

*Dixie:* Yes.

*Mark:* What was your view about that? Had you planned to go only one year? How did that all come about?

*Dixie:* Probably because there was not much money in the family.

*Elaine:* That was a very traumatic summer, with events that changed your family's life dramatically. Is it hard now to separate what happened before your dad's death from what happened after?

*Dixie:* I was planning that I would have a lot of support and wisdom from my parents.

*Elaine:* Not **be** the support.

*Dixie:* And that became quite a different story, of course. I had not gone back to Edmonton that quickly, and I had been home for only two or three weeks before the accident.

*Elaine:* That was July 3.

*Mark:* And you came back about the middle of June. Do you recall how you got back to Alberta?

*Dixie:* I may have taken the train. I had stayed in Wisconsin for a while.

*Mark:* And what did you do after you came back to Edmonton?

*Dixie:* I had to be enrolled in a course at the U of A.

*Mark:* Had you started that already before July?

*Dixie:* No, it started the week of the 4th of July.

*Elaine:* Did you start that on time?

*Dixie:* No, I didn't go the first week.

*Mark:* What can you remember about those first weeks after you got home?

*Dixie:* I do know that that Saturday my dad had gone away with that family. I think Mom was figuring on him being home, and he didn't show up, so she and I went downtown to Woodward's and we bought groceries. At that time Woodward's delivered groceries the next week.

*Dixie:* Maybe I should go back to that drive to Wisconsin, where I was dropped off then. Soon after we had crossed the border into Montana, George Ebbers had car trouble. It was probably a good thing he had two passengers, one of each. We got to this small town, Shelby, I think, just across the border, where we stayed at one of those hotels that were, let's say, not brand new. So Julie and I had one room and George and Jack had the other room. I had the privilege of staying with Julie. It had been honey this and honey that the whole trip.

*Bill:* From him or from her?

*Dixie:* I don't remember which, maybe both. And I can't ask Jack anymore either.

*Elaine:* Did you go on some dates in Grand Rapids?

*Dixie:* No.

*Elaine:* Come on! Didn't you have time? Lots of girls went to Grand Rapids for their Mrs.

*Dixie:* No, I didn't. I was shy.

*Mark:* Did you write letters to your folks? Did they write letters to you?

*Dixie:* My father wrote more letters than my mother.

*Mark:* Would he type them?

*Dixie:* No, I don't think so.

*Mark:* So, handwritten. And no phone calls probably, too expensive.

*Dixie:* No, no.

*Mark:* But then, that summer in July, when your dad died, do you remember anything about those few weeks before you started teaching school? The rest of July, and August. Can you talk about that at all?

*Dixie:* I took all those courses, and they were . . . boring. I also didn't get to know very many . . . I think Betty Ten Hove was in that course with me, because she was going to be teaching in Lacombe. So I did know her. I am not sure how well I did . . . they passed me.

*Mark:* You were still suffering shock and trauma about all the stud you had to deal with.

*Dixie:* And Grandma was not doing very well. She wasn't sleeping.

*Mark:* What do you remember about that, the time before you started teaching?

*Dixie:* Later it was decided that maybe she should go to Wisconsin.

*Elaine:* And weren't you sleeping in her bed with her?

*Dixie:* I am not sure how much sleeping I did either.

*Elaine:* She did not want to be alone in her bed.

*Dixie:* Right.

*Mark:* Did she leave before you started teaching?

*Dixie:* Yes, some time in August. Probably around mid-August, close to the time I was finished.

*Mark:* Along with Jean and Herman.

*Dixie:* I think she took the train.

*Mark:* What about your other siblings? Andrew, Gladys, and Peter.

*Dixie:* Peter went to aunt Jennie.

*Mark:* Didn't he go to Neerlandia?

*Dixie:* No, he went to Neerlandia later.

*Mark:* And the others?

*Dixie:* We were home with the three of us. Andrew must have been in his last year of high school.

*Mark:* Didn't he start Calvin in 1955?

*Dixie:* I think so.

*Mark:* Gladys was younger, and just going into grade 10.

*Dixie:* Right. And I taught at the Central School.

*Mark:* You had just turned 19 when you started teaching. That was not a super-old group of people living together.

*Dixie:* No.

*Mark:* Maybe I should get Dad to talk for a bit.

*Bill:* You can keep going for a bit.

*Mark:* What was teaching like?

*Dixie:* It wasn't terrible. I had 12 first-graders and 18 second-graders. Total of 30. At that time they had workbooks for the students, and the teacher the second-graders had had was a very experienced teacher from Holland. Those kids were all very well behaved. There was quite a wide variety of abilities sin my first-graders. One of them had had a kind of a stroke. He had difficulty walking, and difficulty writing and other school work. His stroke happened when he was helping push a car out of the snow, I think. Perhaps a bit of blood clot. I had some really bright students as well as some that needed some extra work. Also some that went to Holland for three months during the school year. One was the youngest in the family, and perhaps the mother needed to get back to Holland.

*Mark:* Did you like teaching that first year?

*Dixie:* I did like teaching.

*Mark:* Was it stressful?

*Dixie:* I didn't find it stressful. It probably was not the most interesting curriculum, with Dick and Jane readers.

*Mark:* That was just by the Royal Alex, on 102 street? How did you get to work every day?

*Dixie:* By bus.

*Mark:* It was not the greatest facility, I guess, compared to school today. How many staff were there?

*Dixie:* Three.

*Mark:* Did you have a collegial relationship with the other teachers?

*Dixie:* Yes. One of them was Irene Hanenburg, and the other was Rita Oudman.

*Mark:* Did you and your siblings go to church on Sunday? To Third Church?

*Dixie:* I don't remember which church.

*Mark:* What would the choices be?

*Dixie:* First Church and Third Church.

*Elaine:* Did you have a car?

*Dixie:* We must have, I think. I didn't drive.

*Elaine:* Andrew drove?

*Dixie:* Probably. Gladys had lots of friends at First Church, so we probably went there.

*Mark:* Third Church started in 1952?

*Dixie:* I think so.

*Mark:* And your family moved to Edmonton in 1949. did you go to Second Church also?

*Dixie:* We went to all First Church, Second Church, and Third Church, in that order.

*Elaine:* With just the three of you at home, then, who did the cooking?

*Dixie:* I don't know. Maybe I did.

*Elaine:* And everybody probably took care of their own laundry.

*Dixie:* [Smiles]. I have no idea. It was a long time ago.

*Mark:* Mom, you sound like Grandma.

*Elaine:* It was a long time ago, and people often don't remember things around such traumatic events. Things become a bit of a blur.

*Dixie:* Well, all those things had to be done.

*Mark:* Do you have any memory of Christmas time that year? Did your mom come back at Christmas time?

*Dixie:* Yes, she came back in November. She was not in Wisconsin very long, and they decided that just being there was not going to be enough. I think uncles Frank and Andrew probably took her to Pine Rest, where they had a very good chaplain who could reach the people.

*Elaine:* Do you know what kind of program or treatment they used?

*Dixie:* I think she had a number of shock treatments.

*Mark:* I think I heard that some people talked to her about getting a job.

*Elaine:* That was a bit of a problem.

*Mark:* In her older age she seemed to be somewhat offered by that type of inquiry that she remembers occurring.

*Mark:* Were you guys aware at the time of where she was or were you told after the fact?

*Dixie:* I don't remember.

*Elaine:* It would have been extremely traumatic, losing both parents at once, at least for a while., and not knowing if your mom is going to come through on the other side.

*Mark:* During all that, was there some kind of adult group that supported you?

*Dixie:* Uncle John and aunt Jennie, I guess. And there were different people . . . I think aunt Albertje did some baking for us. And we probably went for meals to different people.

*Elaine:* And for guidance and wisdom. Did your dad got to law school the first year out of high school, Mark?

*Mark:* No, he went Calvin.

*Elaine:* Oh, that's right. Did he make that decision, or was that a given as well?

*Dixie:* Most of the people we knew who went into higher education went to Calvin.

*Elaine:* For him it may have been a hard choice. Maybe he should stay home, get a job, and help his mother. But your mother would have said, 'No way, you are too smart, you need to go to school.'

*Dixie:* No, I don't think he contemplated getting a job, and thought it would be better for him to go to school.

*Elaine:* That was quite impressive, actually.

*Dixie:* He did very well in school, and I am sure he was encouraged by his teachers. And he knew that with more education he could help Grandma more. I don't know how he paid his tuition . . . I know I got thirty-five dollars from the Public Trustee. He probably got a little bit more.

*Elaine:* What??

*Dixie:* There was not very much money in the . . . My father did not believe in insurance very much.

*Mark:* When your mom came back then, part way through your first year of teaching, do you remember how she was doing? Anything specific that stands out in your memory from that period?

*Dixie:* I think Grandma was quite a bit better. Jean seems to think that she said, 'Where is Peter?' I don't know if she knew about him having polio. She probably did, but I am not sure. Peter could not come home, because I had the mumps.

*Elaine:* He spent Christmas at aunt Jennie and uncle John's?

*Dixie:* No, he went to Neerlandia. He was at aunt Albertje for a week or so and then went to Neerlandia for a number of weeks. And then when Mom came home, he came home.

*Elaine:* He went through an awful lot when he was not even ten yet.

*Mark:* He was just eight when his dad died. Then he could not walk, could not see any of his siblings.

*Dixie:* No, because no one could visit him.

*Elaine:* But he got along well with the Olthuis's. Was that a good place for him?

*Dixie:* Oh yes.

*Elaine:* They were a very loving aunt and uncle. Cousin Elaine was in the same grade, and Bill was an interesting little kid.

*Dixie:* Peter came home before Christmas.

*Elaine:* That was almost half a year of his life turned upside down. *When* you are eight, that is a really long time.

*Mark:* What did you do during the summer of '55?

*Dixie:* I had to go back to the university and take six weeks of schooling.

*Mark:* Were those full days?

*Dixie:* Probably until about 2.

*Elaine:* Why did you have to do that?

*Dixie:* We had to go three summers. That would be equivalent to one year.

*Mark:* Can you remember anything about the courses?

*Dixie:* Not a thing.

*Elaine:* Then you got your Alberta Teaching Certificate? That is because they did not recognize Calvin?

*Dixie:* Right.

*Elaine:* Out of curiosity, then what was the point of taking a year at Calvin?

*Dixie:* I don't know.

*Mark:* You could have taken those three summers without going to Calvin?

*Dixie:* They did not have that program yet. As a result of immigration there now was a shortage of teachers.

*Mark:* So, six weeks after high school and then teach.

*Dixie:* Right. In those courses there were also people from the country, perhaps women who had small children or who for other reasons decided to take the course. There were a number of women who were older than the rest of us. Not all were 19-year-olds.

*Mark:* So this was the second summer, the summer of '55. Do you recall anything else about that summer?

*Dixie:* It was only a few more weeks.

*Mark:* How was Grandma doing? What was your family life like?

*Dixie:* I was talking to Jean about it when we were in Calgary. I said that I was always helping Grandma with cooking and that kind of thing. Gladys always helped Grandma with bathing Jean and Herman, and I can remember that they always had lots of fun when she was helping them in the bathtub, because she was more of a fun-loving kid. She loved babysitting.

*Mark:* She would have been in grade eleven then. Jean and Herman would then be just little kids. Jean would be five and Herman two-and-a-half. There was a big gap between you and the two youngest.

*Dixie:* There is.

*Mark:* And what did you do? Did you have fun? Go out? Socialize?

*Dixie:* I went to Young People's. That was my socializing.

*Mark:* Was that once a week?

*Dixie:* Yes, on Sundays.

*Elaine:* Sunday was a big day. Church twice, and Young People's at night. What did you do at Young People's?

*Dixie:* We made essays.

*Elaine:* Some fun.

*Dixie:* We had separate meetings, girls and boys, when we did the essays, on topics or Bible passages.

*Mark:* What did you do with your essays?

*Dixie:* We would discuss them.

*Mark:* Somebody would be assigned a topic, prepare the essay, share their thoughts, and then you would discuss it?

*Dixie:* Right. It wasn't like going to university. I am not too much of an essay writer so I don't know how many I wrote.

*Elaine:* Was it a volunteer effort?

*Dixie:* We had all ages, and were not divided so much by ages. We had 16-, 19-, 21-, 22-year-olds all in the same group.

*Mark:* Where would you go for Young People's?

*Dixie:* To First Church, in the basement.



*Mark:* Did you have some friends in that group?

*Dixie:* Yes, Mae De Vries and my cousin Rita [Sonnema]. There weren't many girls my age. There were some older ones. I really don't remember too much about that.

*Elaine:* Mom has said to me before that her life started when she met Dad.

*Mark:* We'll hear more about that later. More about that summer now, with Jean and Herman so young.

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