Interview with Marian Coghlan

January 25, 1977

The first part of this transcript (until 31:55) is on file at the Thunder Bay Museum.

The original refers to “Mrs. Coglan" which has been corrected but the only other corrections made were those that appeared to be solely from the original typist (such as using “to” when “too” would have been the correct spelling). Every attempt has been made to record Mrs. Coghlan’s words precisely, although verbal tics have been left out in many cases, but not all. Mrs. Coghlan was smoked many cigarettes per day as evident from her coughing. The bird heard throughout was likely a budgie named ‘Bailey’. The questions are not all transcribed precisely or in full.

Mrs. M. Coglan [sic]

Interviewed by: Eleanor Jensen

Subject: Father had mink farm in Graham [should be “Larsen”]
The Flu epidemic
Attended St. Joseph's boarding school in Fort William
The Depression

January 25, 1977.

Eleanor: Mrs. Coghlan, could you tell me please how your family first arrived in Fort William?

Mrs. Coghlan: Well my father came over from Minnesota in 1912 as a section man for the CN and then I was brought over by my stepmother six months later.

Eleanor: How did you come?

Mrs. Coghlan: I don't remember that.

Eleanor: Your dad never told you how you came.

Mrs. Coghlan: It was probably by train. The train came over through Duluth There was a train from Duluth to here I think or somewhere around it. But I don’t know.

Eleanor: Where was your father working as a section man?

Mrs. Coghlan: Out at Larson Ontario.

Eleanor: Did your family move to Larson, Ontario or did they come to?

Mrs. Coghlan: Yes, there was just three of us. That was some place.

Eleanor: What was in Larson? Like what kind of town was it?

Mrs. Coghlan: Oh it was a section house, a section foreman and section men, and that's all.

Eleanor: Where did you live?

Mrs. Coghlan: In the section house.

Eleanor: Did you have your own private quarters?

Mrs. Coghlan: Oh yes. I can't remember the first section house, the actual section house, too well myself but I just have vague memories of it, but it was part of it had a bunkhouse on it, you know, part of it, and the men lived in the bunkhouse. We lived in the other part. That burned down when I was eleven, what year was that, I forget. We moved to the station house because Grandma Swaim became a, was a, was an operator, you know.

Eleanor: Who was that then

Mrs. Coghlan: Grandma Swaim, my stepmother, was an operator. Mrs. Swaim was an operator.

Eleanor: A telegraph operator.

Mrs. Coghlan: Yes, that's what I am trying to think of.

Eleanor: Was she a telegraph operator in Larson as well?

Mrs. Coghlan: She started during the war and this was all in Larson. At first there had been a section house and then she moved---oh I'm sorry, there must have been a station house there all the time. She moved into, we moved into the station house. [in response to chirping –] Oh Bailey be good. I remember that place quite well. And I'm not too sure I mixed up on my facts because I was very young

Eleanor: How would you get the supplies in there, like food and things?

Mrs. Coghlan: By train all the time. When I was younger, we had very little to do with meat you got from town. I was brought up on moose meat, et cetera

Eleanor: I see. Did your mother plant a garden?

Mrs. Coghlan: Yes she planted a garden, but it was …. Yeah, she planted a garden.

Eleanor: And then preserved it?

Mrs. Coghlan: We preserved a great many things. We did a lot of canning then…. fruit. There were a lot of blueberries and raspberries and strawberries.

Eleanor: How would you get other things like---

Mrs. Coghlan: Just off the local that came in, it went through each day[?]. Everything was done by mail order or else you came to town and got them.

Eleanor: She would come like to Fort William and Port Arthur?

Mrs. Coghlan: Oh yes. The train was the one thing that connected us with the town you know. We had to come to town for everything we wanted that you didn't send for by mail. I was sent to town to St. Joseph's boarding school to go to school until I was 11 and then after that fire,

we went to …. Mrs Swaim started a place at Graham, a little store there. That was 17 miles farther northwest. I think you might possibly know of Graham.

Eleanor: I think I remember it yes.

Mrs. Coghlan: They built the little red schoolhouse out there at that time.

Eleanor: What was in Graham?

Mrs. Coghlan: It was a terminal. There were more people there.

Eleanor: Did your dad move there too?

Mrs. Coghlan: No he stayed at Larson. He just went back and forth that's all. I went to school there until I got older, into high school

Eleanor: When did they start the school up?

Mrs. Coghlan: That year, the year that I turned 11. 1911 and 11, 1922 I think. They built the school. We had the first dance to pay for it. We had dances once a week all the time. All the children went and everything. It was a lot of fun and the first dance to open the school, they didn't have the windows in it yet but they had a big stove, you know this great big stove, in the middle to heat it.

Eleanor: Big wooden stoves, like for wood?

Mrs. Coghlan: Is that a Quebec heater - a long narrow … I think it was a Quebec heater. It was large and we froze at the back and kept warm in the front in the winter time.

Eleanor: Was this like a one room school?

Mrs. Coghlan: That was all yes.

Eleanor: And where did they get their teacher from?

Mrs. Coghlan: Well they had one from Raith, which you've heard of, on the CN for quite awhile and then they got another. I am not too sure where she came from but that was the only two that they had while I was there. Bailey, be good.

Eleanor: And what about churches?

Mrs. Coghlan: No such thing.

Eleanor: Did they have any---

Mrs. Coghlan: They had travelling---do you remember or have you heard of the Dewar's, Dr. Dewar and it was his father anyway, Dave Dewar and Dr. Dewar and Helen Dewar. Helen Dewar is still alive. They were from Europe but his father travelled. He was a travelling minister. He'd drop off at a station over night and have services. That's the only kind of church, and the priests use to come around too. There were some Catholic families. So, he would on the train, stop off over night at larger places like Graham, not at Larson.

Eleanor: Did you know of a lady preacher that use to go around?

Mrs. Coghlan: No I don't.

Eleanor: Okay we've been trying to get some information. Somebody told us there was a lady preacher that use to go around. We haven't been able to get any information yet. It seemed to make that circuit.

Mrs. Coghlan: I only knew the Rev. Robert Dewar. Robert Dewar? I never really bothered about thinking of these things for so long. I know an elderly priest that use to travel up there, all the way up the line to Sioux Lookout.

Eleanor: How often would they come?

Mrs. Coghlan: That I couldn't tell you. We didn't go to any of those churches. You know---I was never brought up in any religion whatsoever.

Eleanor: What about entertainment in a small area like that?

Mrs. Coghlan: Well that was the fun. The dances at the school house every Saturday night and otherwise, our store was just a little log building with a little part off of it to live in. They had a lot of music there and dancing. I played the mandolin. Somebody else would play the violin and things like this you know. It depended on who turned up. So we had a lot of fun gathering there. The other entertainment later on was, later on some people opened up a pool hall and we had a lot of entertainment there.

Eleanor: What would the people be doing in the area around Graham? Would there be farming or anything?

Mrs. Coghlan: No way. It was very cold. You know, trapping, hunting. It was mostly just people who worked for the railroad. It wasn't like a farming area or anything. It was bush surrounding it. Now I understand that Great Lakes have camps up there now. … my friend there, [Ben Wood?]

Eleanor: They wouldn't have hydro or anything up there would they?

Mrs. Coghlan: We didn't, no, not while I was still there. It came a little later.

Eleanor: What did you do in place of it?

Mrs. Coghlan: Coleman lantern, carried wood. I did an awful lot of skiing in the winter time. Our school house was in a little valley, with hills sloping right down just like that. We all skied and had a wonderful time.

Eleanor: You mentioned that your dad had mink. When did he have mink?

Mrs. Coghlan: Oh he had foxes around the time that I am talking about. I don't think he liked keeping the foxes you know because they had a fox and I vaguely remember this little fox. He got caught in a trap one time and one leg or two legs, one, another one was broken. He brought it home, put a splint on the fox. It was just a young one and it got better and it could

walk around. It ran around the house and around the yard like a real dog after. My dad loved the animals boy, he didn't mind?. Anyway I remember the foxes being really cute. But then he bought the mink and I never people minded making coats of mink. They are a mean animal.

Eleanor: Where did he get his first minks from?

Mrs. Coghlan: Oh he started out first with the wild mink from around there. There were a lot of animals around there at that time.

Eleanor: How would he go about selling the furs after?

Mrs. Coghlan: There were fur buyers. He bought from the, he and [Ben Bork?], he and my step-mother or mother, I don't know what I should call her. She was known as my mother at that time, and we bought , we hooked up with the Indians. The Indians would come to the store and get grubstake and for many for a lot of furs. We dealt with them. And fur buyers travelled up and down the line and knew where to stop and pick up furs you know.

Eleanor: What would he get for a pelt at that time?

Mrs. Coghlan: I haven't a clue.

Eleanor: Where were the Indians? What area would the Indians be coming from?

Mrs. Coghlan: Uh, oh---for a large, Ojibway? I think. as a matter of fact we got so we could learn to talk it. And my first, the first I remember, the first kid that I had to play with was a little Indian kid. Was he ever cute.

Eleanor: Did they live in the area as well?

Mrs. Coghlan: In the summer they would come and live close by. We're talking about when I was very young. In the summer there were a couple of families would come. Do you remember in 1918 I think it was, when the families were, so many people were dying of the flu?

Eleanor: This is something I wanted to ask you about too.

Mrs. Coghlan: And there were a family of 10 … Indians living at Larson at that time and the ones who were sick, they all died of the flu. There was nothing they could do about it. There was a brother and a sister who were away from there and missed the flu. Out of the whole family of 12 people, 2 survived. My first memory of it or how I remember it so well, that was because my dad said in the spring, don't go near that house, that cabin[?]. It was down the track a bit. He said you mustn't go near there for awhile. But the flu my aunt was in St. Joseph's boarding school at that time. She is 8 years older than I am. So she remembers that time better. I was home at the time the flu broke out. I think I had a mild attack of it but I survived. She was sick but she got better too. Many people died from it.

Eleanor: What kind of precautions were people taking at the time to prevent it?

Mrs. Coghlan: I couldn't answer any of those questions. I only know about my aunt in the boarding school, and my own self, which was being sent home and was isolated you know. That was all.

Eleanor: Was there a lot of horse and buggy travel?

Mrs. Coghlan: No way.

Eleanor: There was just the rail line through there?

Mrs. Coghlan: There is no road to Larson yet. Just the railway.

Eleanor: What about to Graham?

Mrs. Coghlan: There is a road to Graham now. But that came a while after I left there, a while after.

Eleanor: Like the people in the town, didn't anybody have horses or anything?

Mrs. Coghlan: No not until some camps came in and some did, these were logging camps quite close to Larson. They brought horses in.

Eleanor: When did the logging camps come in?

Mrs. Coghlan: It's all mixed up, I couldn't tell you to be accurate. I just remember visiting camps with my dad and things like this. I couldn't tell you the years at all. I remember one was Shaw's camp and another one was Maki's, I don't remember . I was a little too young to remember exactly the dates and all this stuff. Then I was away at school you see. They were while I was at the boarding school [--- 15:40]

Male: Where was this St. Joseph's school?

Mrs. Coghlan: Oh it was just taken down within the last couple of years. The corner of Arthur and Franklin. Right by St. Pat's high school.

Eleanor: [something about the location**]**?

Mrs. Coghlan: Yah, that was St. Joe's

Eleanor: What was life like in the boarding school?

Mrs. Coghlan: Well you must realize that it was just after the war. A lot of people, a lot of children were orphans you know. There were a lot of Indians too. I guess it was all right. We didn't have as good food as they had later, you know what I mean, but it was all right.

Male: Was that expensive back then, for your parents to send you there?

Mrs. Coghlan: I don't think so.

Eleanor: Did they conduct school right in the building?

Mrs. Coghlan: Oh yes the school rooms were right in the building. The school rooms were right in the building, it was---you were completely compact you know. It was a large building.

Eleanor: Did they have dormitories for the children?

Mrs. Coghlan: Yes. There were about 22 beds in the building.

Eleanor: Did they have everybody together?

Mrs. Coghlan: Yes girls and boys were separated. [17:05]

Eleanor: Yes, but did they have like orphans together with boarders …

Mrs. Coghlan: Oh naturally, everybody was the same there. It didn't make any difference what you were. As far as I was concerned, what colour, status or anything else meant nothing. You were just a person there. I was quite shocked to get out in the world to find that people thought that colour and things made a difference.

Eleanor: You were mentioning about your father selling mink to France. Would you like to tell us about that?

Mrs. Coghlan: About 1930, he had taken silver prizes you know at the mink shows. He use to go to Montreal, I think, and apparently you advertised in some of the books you know and this man from France came over and started to make an order. I think it was 99 that he got, live mink, shipped over in pens and I was going to high school in Fort William at that time so I went down, we were at the station for a day or two, I guess there was a lot of things to be cleared, getting them all away. but they all arrived safely. It was really something. I have a picture in the attic someplace of all of it, I went down and helped feed them and stand in[?] for the person I had helped look after the week before that.

Eleanor: What would your dad be feeding them at this time?

Mrs. Coghlan: He fed them meat a lot and gave them cod liver oil, for one thing. [19:00] I don't know if it was at that time or later, I know that they had the meal with the vitamins and junk in it you know.

Eleanor: Well then he would have to go and either trap or shoot down and then feed them that?

Mrs. Coghlan: Yeh. Oh he got a lot of horse meat from town later.

Eleanor: And that would come down by train?

Mrs. Coghlan: Yes and it sold quite cheaply.

Eleanor: Would your mother go into town to buy supplies at the store?

Mrs. Coghlan: No way, she just ordered.

Eleanor: Who did they order all this through?

Mrs. Coghlan: The wholesale places here in town. I can remember a couple. They ordered it seems to me a lot of stuff from McNulty's for instance and Chapples but I don't know about getting them wholesale because that was for clothes and things you know.

Eleanor: How would she get the order up there though? [20:00]

Mrs. Coghlan: Oh they carried mail on the train.

Eleanor: Oh, it went by mail?

Mrs. Coghlan: Oh yes, It was shipped back, as freight. But MacDonald's Consolidated or something, different wholesale houses I think. Some of them are still around. Still … for food

Eleanor: How far did you go in school in the school house in Graham? To what grade?

Mrs. Coghlan: It was called grade 8 then. It was called then senior 4 or something like that and I had to come downtown. I came and my aunt lived here in Port Arthur area so I came down here and write the departmentals. Of course you could pass those. [21:01]

Eleanor: What high school did you go to?

Mrs. Coghlan: That's a sad story. I went to Fort … to Port Arthur Collegiate for part of a year. But I was sick and in those times, you had a lot of growing pains what they called them and it turned out be rheumatic fever. I missed that year and I had to stay out the next year. Then I came back to school and went to tech in Fort William. It was the last year for Fort William Collegiate that the technical institute was included, the last two years. I had 2 years there. While I was staying---the first year I was staying at Mr. Richards, H.H. Richards. He was made the president of the Fort William Lions Club and my dad wrote him and asked him to ask me if I'd like to try some flying. I said, Oh, I'd love to, so that's the theory of flight. Mr. Dickey gave the class of [?? 22:17] flight, a week.

Eleanor: That was Mr. Richards ?

Mrs. Coghlan: No, no, this was for the theory, at the collegiate in the evening, one evening a week we got all the theory of flight. Then as soon as I was 18, I started active flying but I didn't do too much, [chuckle] you know what I mean,
and then the following summer, in June when the exams were over I was going home and there was a forest fire that swept through. So I went up home that day before I, for a visit it was yeh. On June 2nd, I went out for a visit and I got off the train at noon. It was terribly high winds, the sky was clouded all over with smoke so the forest fire was 30 miles away and my dad was making all the preparations he could for it. Two hours later, the wind changed and caught the fire and it got every part of everything at one time. It just came right over and hit the house in three places. We got out because we were very lucky. The house was like (cough) there was a path going over there to where the motor car was you know, for the pump, the house where they kept the track, where they kept the motor car and so we went through this path and the flames, the fire went in a box, you know a strip and we got to there and it slipped like something had stalled it and we were able to, we got all piled onto the motor car but we had to go through a pretty hot spot [inaudibe 24:25].

Eleanor: What was the motor car?

Mrs. Coghlan: It was what the section men used for travelling on the track.

Eleanor: That's one of those hand things?

Mrs. Coghlan: No, that's a handcar. There was a motor on it, and I don't know what to call it other than the motorcar. We had to stop to cool off a few times, because it was so hot. We got to the next station and the bridges were out and we were just lucky to get out at all. We got to the next station, worried all of them[?], thinking the fire might hit them but it didn't. A train came along and we had to stop the train to tell them the bridges were out and we were brought back to Raith by train. Naturally I came into town after. And Grandma Swaim came to town too and my dad stayed and went back to Larson the next day. He didn't mind walking in. One dog had survived the whole thing, old Jiggs, an old police dog. He was a marvelous dog but he was deaf and he was blind for awhile after.

Eleanor: Was anybody killed in the fire?

Mrs. Coghlan: Nobody was killed but my dad had 150 mink out there and one was left, number 13. One survived.

Eleanor: In Larson you'd probably come in by train, what about in Graham. If there was any medical problem, would a doctor come out or would you have to go and see the person on the train. [26:08]

Mrs. Coghlan: No there was a person on the train to [???26:11], I never heard of a doctor coming out anyplace. But I know something interesting if you are interested in Graham. While I was there, there was a place there that you could get home brew. Naturally they were home brew makers and these couple of section, French guys, a couple of guys, they got a lot of this home brew and they started shooting. They were just practising you know. Not trying to kill anything. They did kill a man inside of a car that was off wheels you know for a bunk house and then they went to get this guy. They were looking for a guy who said jipped them out of a pile of money. Well they came to our store. They didn't kill anybody there, thank heavens. They went to the pool room, it is a building of its own you know, and they went there and apparently one of them wanted to keep on looking for this fellow that had done them out of money, but the other one didn't. The one held the gun on the other fellow and the other fellow shot him before the one that pulled the gun on him, so the blackie was killed. No, Red was killed, a section man was killed. I've forgotten they went to station house and the section foreman at Graham was injured. So there was quite a bit of excitement there in for a little place.

Eleanor: How did the towns people sort of …. law and order [inaudible – where did the authorities come from?]

Mrs. Coghlan: Oh from Port, from Fort William, from Port Arthur. From here. I don't know which it was. Oh yes all the authority came from the city here, that type of authority

Eleanor: So what did they do, capture him?

Mrs. Coghlan: I think he pretty well gave himself---I am not too sure exactly now. He was caught, he was taken to town and he got a jail sentence naturally. But they said it wasn't exactly all his fault because they couldn't prove who killed the man or even who [foamed? 28:49] the other man, the section man

Eleanor: What effect did the depression have on a small place like that?

Mrs. Coghlan: I wasn't there in 1930. I went to high school here and in '31 I got married. So don't ask me anything about it that I don't know

Eleanor: Did you see any affects of the depression on the town?

Mrs. Coghlan: Here? definitely. I know because I had Mary Therese, Myrtle, Jacky, Patsy, Colleen June 1939. They were born during the depression.

Eleanor: And what effects did you find?

Mrs. Coghlan: We didn't have all these nice things like hospitalization and steady wages. You did the best you can. [29:48].

Eleanor: What was your husband doing at the time?

Mrs. Coghlan: When we just got married, he was selling insurance but that quit so he was sent out to Graham to one of those camps, highway camp and he was lucky. The men were working for $5.00 a month out there at that time, you know. But he was working for $60.00 a month because he was looking after the van and all that kind of stuff. They let me go out there too because Graham was a better settlement compared to Larson you know. We went there for the winter. But then we came back to town, he went with selling insurance, no, oh---he was with northern development for awhile, as a clerk. I can't tell you exactly when because those were such busy years, I can't tell you the date. He did get a job eventually, for $125.00, a month.

Eleanor: What would these men be doing out at these highway camps?

Mrs. Coghlan: A lot of clearing, building a new road. This was when the Trans Canada was built.

Eleanor: Would they have bunkhouses for the men to live in?

Mrs. Coghlan: They lived in bunkhouses. They couldn't bring them back into town, there was only a train running then. They fed them well. It was rough times for everybody.

Eleanor: How often would they come back into town?

Mrs. Coghlan: The men, I don't think they came in very often because I don't think they could afford it. You know they had to pay their way and $5.00 a month doesn't go too far and it pretty well covers clothes to wear while you are working and food to eat.

31:55 – END OF ORIGINAL TRANSCRIPT

Eleanor: Wouldn't a lot of these men have a family to return to?

Mrs. Coghlan: Yes, but I think their families were free on the move [???] for about a year You made things do. I did an awful lot of sewing to keep my kids dressed. And, I think, what was a loaf of bread 6 cents? And it was hard to get the money to buy it too. I know, when one of my babies were born I had somebody in. We paid her $10 a month for a month or two, just to help out. This kind of thing. It was unbelievable though. And we had friends who were not, who

were too, too, didn't want to go on relief but should, you know, but did eventually. They were almost starving. It was really terrible. It is not my favourite subject. [33:04]

Eleanor: It doesn't seem to be anybody's favourite subject, but we want to try and get information on it. We just want to know what was going on, and why nobody wants to talk about it.

Mrs. Coghlan: I remember being very, very annoyed about a co-op place here that built a milk branch because they couldn't sell all their milk, it was good milk. I was so mad, just couldn't understand why they couldn't distribute this milk to people. But of course it costs money to distribute things and I didn't realize that. But, you know, it was very difficult for everybody [33:42]

Eleanor: this co-op, would sell the milk?

Mrs. Coghlan: Oh yes, they sold all the milk they could, this was what they had left over. But people just bought what they absolutely needed, I guess adults weren't drinking it, eh.

Eleanor: Was the town making it easy to go on welfare? What was the attitude of people?

Mrs. Coghlan: I'm sorry, I don't know how they went about going on welfare. All I know is that we went more in debt. Because those days, you didn't have hospital or medical help, you know, all of those things. But there were some wonderful doctors and for people who were really poor, they often overlooked, you know, part of the bill and this kind of thing, they didn't bill the amount. Old doctor Spence was marvellous that way. He charged the rich people a lot of money but for that money that he charged the rich people, every bit of it went to help the poor people. He looked after the needy, he was really a marvellous person that way.

Eleanor: You mentioned that your dad got you interested in aviation. What got him interested in aviation?

Mrs. Coghlan: Well, I don't know, I never got around to asking him. It just was something new and exciting and he thought I might be interested. He naturally couldn't do it, because he had to work, you know. I intended to be a commercial pilot, and I had an accident and couldn't do it, that's all.

Eleanor: when did they first start flying?

Mrs. Coghlan: Oh I was in the second class of students, you know. I was in 1930, so the first one must have been a year or so before, I really couldn't tell you for sure.

Eleanor: Was Bishop's Field open up at this time?

Mrs. Coghlan: It was all Bishop's Field

Eleanor: Where was the school [? – 36:00] located?

Mrs. Coghlan: On the Algoma Road, near the golf line

Eleanor: And who first opened that up?

Mrs. Coghlan: The Flying Club, I suppose

Eleanor: You don't know the names of any of the early members

Mrs. Coghlan: Of the Flying Club?

Eleanor: of the people

Mrs. Coghlan: Oh, Mr. Richards was the president of it. Heck? Dougall was interested, or was he? I don't know if he was on the Board or something, I'm not too sure. Whatchya call him, Dougall's father and … Otherwise I couldn't tell you too many names, but I think Ken Johnston could tell you

Eleanor: could you tell me a little of your experience on the plane?

Mrs. Coghlan: Oh it was very unbelievable looking, just after sunup and a car would, the car that was going over to pick me up, and we got the planes all warmed up and all this kind of stuff you know. Checked over, we were up as early as we could for instruction, one person after another

Eleanor: And what would they charge, do you know?

Mrs. Coghlan: It was $10 an hour. $12 an hour at first, $12 an hour for instruction and after you'd soloed, it was $10 an hour.

Eleanor: What type of plane was it?

Mrs. Coghlan: They were Tiger Moths

Eleanor: Would you describe it for me?

Mrs. Coghlan: Oh, they were made of aluminum and linen, it was the [??? 37:53], you know, and they were completely open, not indoors in the least. It was a two-wing, mono plane – no, not mono, two … biplane, bi-plane. And they were very delicate They had in them a [falters], to tell you way [?]

Eleanor: A compass?

Mrs. Coghlan: a compass, ours didn't work very well, an alternator and a speedometer … well, you pretty well set your speed by the feel of the plane. cause they had a stick and that was the big trick was learning, you couldn't fly a plane … Even I was able, I couldn't fly a plane now without re-learning because that was done completely by feel.

They had two seats, one in front of the other, and that's about all I can tell you, except they had a fire extinguisher

Male: No parachutes [38:56]

Mrs. Coghlan: Oh no, where would you put a parachute in a plane like that? The plane that I flew in, I usually flew in the same one because I was quite short and they had to put a, Mr. Francis, Bill Francis had to put an extension on the rudder bar for me and I had a great many

cushions kept for me there for me to sit on so I could reach it, because they were built for men and it was very, very cold. We had a, an old [?? 39:31] one morning if it was really cold. It was in January, cold January and they said you have to wear this if you go up today and I thought it was goofy, it was chamois mask to go over my face, we were well dressed anyway but, one of the fellows came down and I saw why I had to, his face was frozen all over, oh, it was terribly frozen so I didn't mind wearing a mask

Eleanor: What would you wear?

Mrs. Coghlan: Overalls, and they had a flying suit to put on for cold, cold weather. - An ordinary [??? 40:16] complete – what do you call it again?

Eleanor: Coveralls

Mrs. Coghlan: coveralls you would call them

Male: There was no communications in the plane at that time?

Mrs. Coghlan: Just between the two people [bird chirping loudly] there was a speaker, you could speak back and forth, that was all.

Eleanor: Was there any control? Airline control? Or did you just sort of land and take off whenever you wanted to?

Mrs. Coghlan: You pretty well did what you felt like, there weren't those things. You know there wasn't other traffic then. Well, there would be planes coming in, the odd one, but they were small ones too. There wasn't a real control. There was no talking from ground to plane at all. No communications that way. So the only thing I got from the hangar was the sock to know where the wind was.

Male: Was there any commercial flying at this time? [41:23]

Mrs. Coghlan: Well, it seems to me that in the 1930's there was, but commercial, I don't know. I honestly don't know if there was any, not really now, you know what I mean. I know that just before the accident, that summer, Mr. Dickey and a couple other, others had made a trip across Canada. Of course, that's where they had to stop, here. But it wasn't, there was no regular flights or anything like that. Do you find that hard to believe?

Eleanor: Well,

Mrs. Coghlan: hard to understand, I mean, not "believe" but understand. There were bush pilots and that kind of stuff, you know.

Eleanor: There were or there weren't

Mrs. Coghlan: There were

Eleanor: Where did they fly?

Mrs. Coghlan: Lots of different places where you couldn't get to any other way.

Eleanor: What kinds of planes did they fly?

Mrs. Coghlan: I don't know. You'd know better than I, there were maybe about the planes

Eleanor: There'd be some sort of ski flying too, wouldn't there?

Mrs. Coghlan: Oh, [??? 42:42] pontoons, you said skis. I did most of my flying on skis, I like the skis. You know when airplanes land now, they have brakes for them? Well those didn't. You had to judge your distance so you didn't bump, you didn't run into a tree or whatever, you know what I mean

Eleanor: Did they have wheels?

Mrs. Coghlan: Wheels? They had wheels, or in wintertime skis for snow. But there were no brakes. As you can imagine you had to figure out carefully in order to land far enough back you cleared everything. It was, flying was really fun. The only thing that ever bothered me about it was the noise. I wish they'd leave that noise behind.

Eleanor: Did you find any problem, like being a woman [43:46]

Mrs. Coghlan: No! I had no problems whatsoever. Maybe because of the way I was brought up. I had been working in a country store for years, mostly men around then. They were just people to me, and flying I had no problems

Eleanor: Were there other girls flying?

Mrs. Coghlan: Apparently there was one lady who had taken four weeks, who had taken the first class, Elizabeth Thompson. I think Ken Johnston tried to find out more about her but I don't know whether he found out. I know that I didn't remember meeting her, she was only there a few times while I was there but Ken told me about her. She was a married lady, I was just and I didn't. You know, I didn't get to know that much about her. She was just a nice person, that was all.

Eleanor: What kind of license were you required to get?

Mrs. Coghlan: I got my private pilot's license, we had to have 50 hours to get our commercial at that time and I had 26 but I had the accident and never had the chance, never could get my, my physically able to fly again. That was that. That was my report but some of the guys got along, did a lot after. Well there was, Charlie Brown of course he was in the first class. I think Ken Johnston I think contracted him. And Andy Madoro was in my class. There were several of the guys … I've got them written down somewhere

Eleanor: after the accident, you gave up flying? [45:53]

Mrs. Coghlan: I had to, because I couldn't pass the physical

Eleanor: What were the requirements?

Mrs. Coghlan: Requirements were, to get a doctor [???? 46:04] Apparently, I could have had a heart murmur before but I didn't know that. … the heart, the heart murmur was quite badly affected from the accident.

Male: Was it just you involved in the accident?

Mrs. Coghlan: No, my instructor was killed. In the front. And I was pretty badly injured, but I managed to survive it for some unknown reason.

Eleanor: [??? 46:37]

Mrs. Coghlan: In the report [? 46:39], somebody told me, I had loss of memories as a result of the injuries. We landed in a ploughed field close, very close to the golf links. The golf links were very close. A ploughed field is the worst thing you can hit, you know, because the motor was buried in the ground apparently, so they told me. The plane was a complete wreck.

Male: so you were starting to land at the time, coming in?

Mrs. Coghlan: Apparently not. I don't quite know. The others have told me that we were apparently practising state side flipping, slipped out and slipped right in

Eleanor: How did they come and get you out of there?

Mrs. Coghlan: Well, somebody was golfing and came and got their pick up [??? 47:36] one of them They pulled me out. I was quite unhappy because I was blind. I couldn't [???]. The goggles had gone right into my face here and I was blinded. But they pulled me out of the property in an old car … the doctor, the doctor looked at me. It was a lucky thing there was a doctor there right at the time, you know

Eleanor: did you find that flying [???? 48:10]

Mrs. Coghlan: I found that I enjoyed it immensely and I wasn't afraid. I never even thought of getting hurt, I just thought of the people that I killed. We didn't have accidents enlisters[?] in those days [inaudible?? 48:23 – 48:27]

Male: Now even then, they didn't have parachutes and things

Mrs. Coghlan: Oh no

Eleanor: How high up would you go?

Mrs. Coghlan: Well, the highest was 10,000. You need to realize these were old planes and we went up 10,000 on a cold … on a very hot summer day in June. We went up in July, August and we went up and it, it. I thought that my instructor was goofy, telling me to put on some warm clothes to go up, but I was sure glad I did, because it was very cold up there. One way to get cooled off in a hurry.

Eleanor: They didn't have any sort of air masks or anything to help you breathe in

Mrs. Coghlan: They didn't have any of those things. Actually, when they first started, I don't know, when they started flying at a 100 …

Eleanor: What speed would you be flying at?

Mrs. Coghlan: 100, 100 and [??? 49:45] … or less

Male: How long would you stay up in the air … fuel

Mrs. Coghlan: I'm sorry I don't know. I learned about how to clean carburetors and all those types of things but that was something I never thought to ask and nobody thought to tell me. [50:03]

Male: gas gauge

Mrs. Coghlan: Oh yes, oh yes. That was …. Our altimeter and our gas gauge were the most important things

Eleanor: Did your family get involved in [??? 50:23 –]

Mrs. Coghlan: No

Eleanor: When did you husband become alderman?

Mrs. Coghlan: What year? I don't know. Terrible memory for dates. It was 54, 55, maybe 56 – 55 or 56

Eleanor: What was he doing at the time?

Mrs. Coghlan: He was an insurance guy, you know, agent for insurance company he has done insurance all of his life practically

Eleanor: Why did he decide he wanted to become an alderman

Mrs. Coghlan: He had always been very active in the Liberals, you know. And he wanted, he decided one day to run for alderman The day they … some year later he [??? 51:16] an alderman, he ran for provincial government … against Wardrobe, Wardrobe was He wanted to get into provincial government to change some of the stupid laws we have in regards to the Crown over the city, you know how we always had to apply to the … the Board to have anything done or for okays on everything, He thought cities should have a little more say in their own business and not have to wait forever for. There were, are a lot of laws still that are pretty goofy or [??? 52:00] It was … situation … he wanted to see something changed along that line. Other than,… course, he was always a Liberal

Eleanor: Do you remember ????

Mrs. Coghlan: I guess until the airport was open, the day they found out where the airport is open, [??? 52:58] that's all I can tell you

Eleanor: [???? 52:30 – 52:36]

Mrs. Coghlan: They should still bargain too big? I doubt that it [??? noisy, inaudible gap 52:40 – 52:49] that we lived in up there. that's my husband and myself, taken a little later after we got married…. Or before.

Eleanor: So, you actually were living in a railway car?

Mrs. Coghlan: We were living in a little camp. My husband and I weren't, that's before I was married, living there with a friend[?]

Male: So a pretty rough life

Mrs. Coghlan: That railway car was the dumbest railway car You know what? They first my dad mother stayed in the one car and I had slept in the other one and 1930, oh murder [ringing of some kind of alarm 53:38] Sillico [?] branch line, because the Sillico branch line was built I guess before that region, terrific signals and grain went past us constantly … I … that's it

Eleanor: Mrs. Coghlan also mentioned that as a child they used to go down to get water from the well at the station house in Graham and the well was so deep that her parents feared that she would fall in, so when she got a little older she used to go on skis to the Hudson's Bay Company on Graham Lake which was about a mile away to get the water and carry it home every day on skis. The Hudson's Bay Company was started after their store and it was primarily for obtaining furs.