

Edited interview with Mrs Marjorie Connell (nee Seed) by Helen May in November 1994, for the book: *Teachers Talk Teaching: Early childhood primary and teachers' college*, by Sue Middleton and Helen May, Dunmore Press, Palmerston North, 1997.

*Why did you choose kindergarten teaching?*

I was born in 1907. My mother was a teacher and she worked in very poor conditions. We use to ride 14 miles to school. She was very musical. She lived with her parents in Heretaunga, near Upper Hutt. She rode these 14 miles to her school. My father was a sawmiller, so when they were married they went to live in Mangaroa which is near Upper Hutt. There were no schools and so when it was time for my sister (who is 16 months older than me), and we needed to learn, my mother taught us. To make a bigger group she invited sons of three farmers who use to come everyday. She taught five of us. That was until we were in standard one. It was very isolated, no shops, so we got to know a lot about country ways and also to find things to do. We didn't have shops to go and buy things and the result was that we were quite resourceful. Well we had to be. My father was sawmilling at the time and then he changed his job and took over the management of a very big sawmill called Mayborn which is now a well known district. It was an English company and the planning included a model village, and a school for the workers children. When it was established my sister and I went to the school and that was our first introduction to ordinary primary schooling. I think it was a good background for lots of things because children born much later didn't have the same opportunities. We had a long walk to go to school. During the 1914-18 war the whole area was commandeered by the military and a camp was established. We had to go through the camp to get to my father's office which was in the compound and so we had the experience of a military set up which is something not very many children have.

*How old were you then?*

I was about 7. Because my mother had been a teacher she actually imported handcraft equipment from Germany for us and from which she had her little school supplied.

*Were these blocks, or puzzles?*

No, mostly coloured paper. We learnt to weave with coloured paper. We loved it when a parcel came from Germany. It was wonderful. It was mostly paper work. We learnt to weave with paper and we had long needles and so on. That was a very long time ago. Sometimes when I talk about these things people just look at me! So I came from a scholastic background in a way and we had to have our own entertainment. My mother played the piano very well and we went to sleep at night to the sounds of my mother playing the piano and my father singing. He had a nice tenor voice. He taught us to waltz around the dining room table because he didn't want us to grow up country bumpkins as he called us. That was very early days of course and then during the war this great big mill that had been established was closed down and my father had cables from England to say close the mill, sell all the equipment that he can. So his job went and he then became secretary for the New Zealand Sawmillers' Federation, so we moved to Khandallah and our whole way of life changed. There was a public primary school to go to and we had quite big numbers of children. Quite different life altogether but I think I better get on to kindergarten.

*You went to secondary school.*

Yes, we went to what is now Marsdon, it was with Miss Babers. We went there because my father had boarded with the family in Christchurch so he considered it an approved school. That was a girls' school. We started in on all the things that go with primary and secondary girls' school, uniforms and very poor teachers, mostly solicited from old girls and very restricted teaching. They didn't know how to teach really.

*Did they try to make you ladies?*

Oh yes. We ended up walking in twos with the others, in uniforms of course. The teachers there were very ill-equipped. They were senior girls who left from

school into teaching. We had five periods in the morning, so they were only 20 minutes long. We had a monstrous amount of homework. We were given chapters of different books we had to read and learn so that when we had that class we just answered questions. This worried my mother very much. She didn't consider that was great teaching so she decided that we would leave Marsdon, which it is now, and go to Wellington Technical College. There were four periods a day, each an hour and a half and very good teachers and co-educational.

*Very radical.*

It was a culture shock for us but I wasn't very strong, it proved too much, so I was sent away onto a farm. I spent three months with no schooling, living with cousins who had a sheep farm and rode every day. I loved riding and there were two young boys about my age or a bit younger who drove a little gig to take to school. The oldest son worked on the farm and he would saddle a horse for me and I'd ride up to meet them and we'd come home together. That was my interest while I was there, riding. Then it was time to decide what to do as a professional, what work I would go to. My mother decided that Teachers College would be too strenuous as I wasn't terribly strong. So it was then suggested that I did kindergarten training. My sister went to Teachers College.

*Were you happy about that? Was that something that you wanted to do?*

Yes. I was very fond of children. Girls seem to love babies don't they, at one stage of their growing up period. Anyhow, it suited me very well. But it was so different. We wore uniforms. Starch bricklay.

*At the kindergarten?*

Yes.

*Now this was 1924.*

Taranaki street in Wellington, where we trained, was very slummy and we weren't suppose to walk up or down the street unless there was more than one of us in case we were molested.

*Would that have been likely?*

No. I think most of the time we didn't provoke them. We saw them. We'd see them standing by the doorway but they didn't look bright or energetic and I went daily. I started at Taranaki Street kindergarten to train and the director as she was called was Ted Scott, you've probably heard of her. She played the piano quite well. We had quite a big number of children and the kindergarten building was straight on to the street. You stepped off the street and went into the building. There was a backyard, a covered yard at the back, then there was a second building, and there was a beautiful little garden. You just couldn't imagine in this dirty old area tucked away there was this lovely garden.

*Did the children play in the garden?*

Yes.

*How was that kindergarten organised?*

Well, we had schemes that were pretty formal. We had spring ideas. We'd have lambs one week and calves the next week. We didn't go on excursions. We made outlines for the children that they could colour in and we had quite a formal programme. There was quite a lot of music. Ted Scott could play the piano very well and she enjoyed playing. We'd clear all the tables back and the children would gather around and hop, or skip. They had to do what they were told. They couldn't just run around. It was very regimented. They would skip, not with a skipping rope, there's another way of skipping. We had lines painted on the floor and they were suppose to keep to the lines. Just imagine that. They did their best. We taught them all to skip because most of them couldn't; you know one hop on each leg, that's what was called skipping, not with ropes. They all went to toilet during certain times during the morning. We had morning tea and that was very formal and all sat around and they had rebaked bread, rusks and a drink of water and a piece of apple. There was always one child chosen as housekeeper and she had a starched pinafore apron. The students had to take those home and wash them each week. They had a toilet where there were lockers and every child had an individual towel. Through the courtyard and through the second building there was this lovely garden, sandpit, tricycles and scooters and things like that. In one corner of that there

was a model kindergarten presented by one of the secondary schools, Chilton St James. The principal of Chilton St James was very interested in kindergarten and so they raised money because there was no government grant of course. The children all had an envelope pinned to their jersey and they gave a donation which would be threepence or perhaps sixpence and that's what helped run things. Otherwise money was raised. Each area had a kindergarten council. The Wellington Council had bazaars and bridge parties and things like that to raise money. We were controlled by shortage of money, but surprisingly we managed.

*Can you describe what kind of equipment was in the kindergarten at that stage.*

Yes. We had the Montessori blocks and we had the tie, hooking and buttoning frames but they weren't used very much, but the blocks certainly were used.

*The Montessori blocks?*

Yes, little boxes.

*Had you had any training in Montessori at all?*

No. We had to read books about them. There was a library and we taught in the mornings to help with the kindergartens in the morning and four afternoons a week we went to Taranaki Street, which was the office, and the main centre of the Free Kindergarten Association of Wellington. We had lectures on nature study, children's literature and we had music, we learnt songs and that kind of thing, so we could sing unaccompanied with the children and we learnt about history of education.

*Who were you studying in history of education?*

Froebel mostly. Everything was really geared to his ideology and in the main room where we assembled for things like music the floor was painted with circles. First thing in the morning the children sat round in a circle on kindergarten chairs and anything of interest, you know, somebody brought a rabbit, I don't know, something like that, and it was discussed that morning. It was like morning assembly but it was in a circle. Then they went off with different teachers to different areas to the one with blocks as well as the little

blocks where they sat there was a mat with big heavy blocks where they could thump and bump around. Colouring in, the students had to provide the outline of a rabbit or lamb, whatever our theme for the week was, that's what we had to find a suitable picture.

*You could draw it, or did you trace it?*

Trace it. If they wanted to do colouring in every child sat at the table and laboriously coloured in and didn't go over the line. There was a big emphasis on the fact that you didn't scribble all over the paper. You coloured in a nice rabbit.

*Any painting?*

Yes. Painting easles.

*So when they were painting were they painting what they wanted to paint?*

Actually they weren't told what to paint. Most of them just filled in the paper with colour, two or three colours. I think we usually had three colours for each. They were quite nice easels with a little trough at the bottom with three different colours. They had special aprons.

*Were you still using the Froebel gifts?*

I don't recall being actually taught. Apart from putting the blocks into the boxes and then there were very formal steps. They had to all fit into a tiny little box. They could fiddle around and build any tower, or anything they liked, they weren't directed. If they wanted to knock it over they could.

*So it was a lot freer than Froebel had originally intended.*

Moving to music they had to keep on their line, they had to stay on the line which wasn't easy. They had free time in the sandpit. They had water, they were allowed water.

*Was the water in a trough or did they just have water in the sand?*

No, they could have water play which was a trough with tins and spoons and strainers and things with holes in them and they could fiddle around with that. They liked that. They had special waterproof cover ups.

*What about dressing up clothes and things like.*

Yes, there was dressing up clothes. Mostly cast-offs from the council. Some of them quite elegant, scarves and a few accessories and dolls of course and dolls prams. The dressing up clothes were always in the dolls corner.

*So the concept of family play and drama, children playing and acting out these things was already.*

Yes. In Taranaki Street they used the isolated little kindergarten room which had been presented with and, that was the dolls area. They had a lot of family play, and that was in one corner of the garden.

*Jigsaw puzzles?*

Yes, jigsaws.

*Where did you get them from?*

I can't remember actually importing any, but we had a lot of jigsaws and I think that the students might have helped, I'm not quite clear on where our source for those, but I know that a lot of jigsaws were made. Then they had carpenters tools. They had a table with hammers and saws and a vice and lots of offcuts from some carpenter and they do a lot of banging and hammering.

*Clay?*

Yes.

*Dough?*

No dough. Not to begin with.

*You talked about Montessori equipment but you didn't really get any training in Montessori.*

We had the Montessori, especially the frames with the lacing and that kind of thing, but I don't recall that going down into the classroom. That was a demonstration thing for the students.

The only free play was after they had been sitting concentrating, certain time they could all go out, and rush around. There were balls and tricycles and scooters. The children, sometimes brought their own, but of course they were

fairly possessive. But there was always a shed with playground equipment and that still carries on of course.

Jungle gyms came in. There were no jungle gyms in the beginning. There were swings and tricycles. I don't remember scooters. Can't remember when scooters came in. The children could dress up in mother's clothes and take the dog for a walk in the garden. That's a very vivid memory because that's where I started. Also, in the second building. It was also two storied, upstairs there were primary school aged school children and a teacher who trained to teach children up to standard one. The concept was that a lot of the kindergarten teachers would probably become governesses and they would go into homes and they would be asked to supervise primary school. So they were taught the rudiments of reading, and had all the books we used in primary's infants department. There was this rather select little group. The director of that particular kindergarten asked the parents if they would allow that child to stay on and he would have the same teaching, as if he had gone to a state primary school. There were only about 20 of them to one teacher. Well all the students during their second year of training spent a month or so there.

*So there was no anticipation that these people would really make good new entrant infant teachers at some point.*

No, that wasn't considered that they might leave their kindergarten teaching. One of the predominant things about that particular kindergarten was that the people were very poor and very dirty and every now and then there would be a child that was so pongy, and really so dirty that the head director, the woman who ran that kindergarten, would take her into the bathroom and bath them because you know they were too smelly to be with. That didn't happen very often. They didn't have a special bath, whereas in lots of kindergartens they do have a bath.

*What other things did you do in the training in the lectures and things.*

Well we had to be able to play the piano.

*Yes that would be some challenge for everybody.*



Well I knew because my mother taught music and also I did take lessons. If you couldn't play you had to take lessons, but you had to pay for that privately. We had singing and the other subjects was history of education, children's literature and we had a little bit about committee organisation. When we went out in to the kindergartens we had to attend the local committee which was the money raising body. Each kindergarten had its own local committee and they raised money to run the kindergarten and we had to write a report each month for that. We had singing and were taught about psychology.

*That would have been a fairly new subject.*

Yes. Remembering back we had these afternoons when we were all upstairs in the same kindergarten building which was also the administration building, and, visiting tutors from the university or retired teachers would come in and give us a lecture on whatever their particular subject was, English literature or something like that, or story telling. Of course psychology came into it. I didn't go to university because I had to travel from Khandallah to Taranaki Street. Quite a long way, train then tram, then walk but I managed it. After two years training I passed top student but there was no work.

*Now what year was it, 1926?*

Yes. So it was arranged that I went daily to Lyall Bay from Khandallah.

*That's an even further way to go.*

To be an assistant to my senior and she'd opened the kindergarten in the church hall and so she said would you like to help me as her assistant, but I can't pay you, so of course my father financed me. I use to travel from Khandallah to Lyall Bay, which is a long way.

*Was this a kindergarten outside of the kindergarten association; private kindergarten?*

Yes. I'd say she had a bach, a neighbouring house to the kindergarten. I worked there for a year and my father said this is not good enough to travel all that way, it's very expensive. So I worked in the office as an assistant there to the person who was in the kindergarten association office upstairs at Taranaki Street; all in the same building in the department school. I canvassed the Johnsonville area to

see if there would be enough children to start kindergarten because the local people showed interest. That didn't come to anything. My father also said you know this is not good not earning any money; so I hired the Khandallah church hall and he provided me with low tables and I used the school chairs. I ran a private kindergarten and it barely paid for itself because most children didn't go to kindergarten, they started school in the primers.

*What kind of children came to the private kindergarten?*

Well they weren't poor. Just the local neighbour's children came. I didn't have more than about seven or eight. So I had to do something else, so I decided I'd teach ballroom dancing. I had learnt ballet when I was young myself and it was suggested that I worked as an unpaid assistant that if I can create interest in a ballet class, I could charge and that would be my money. I had five children I think, so it barely paid the weekly travelling expenses. However it gave me the idea of combining teaching ballet with teaching kindergarten because we only taught in the mornings. So I did that and I started learning ballet myself again from a well known man teacher in the city. One day I'd go and learn things from him the next day I'd go to teach. I decided I'd teach ballroom dancing too. My father bought me a portable gramophone, which I liked. So I went to a leading ballroom dancing teacher. When I combined kindergarten, ballet and ballroom I managed to earn enough, but I couldn't pay any board; it gave me running expenses. That was hard work. I did that for two or three years.

*That must have been moving into the depression years.*

Yes. I think it was early 1930s and Ngaio decided to open a free kindergarten and by then there had been a change of principal at the kindergarten college. I got to know the new principal: Enid Wilson. She and Ted Scott came out and had a look. I was running my private kindergarten; she came out to have a look and see what was going on and she said why don't you apply for Ngaio Free Kindergarten, which I did, and of course I got the job. For the first time I began to earn a bit more than I could not use it all on travelling expenses and things like that. So I taught there for several years, I can't remember how many. First of

all I had an assistant. There always had to be two in the kindergarten and then I had students for the first time.

I want to go back to when I trained myself. At one of the kindergartens we had six weeks at one kindergarten being trained by the teacher and then we'd move to another kindergarten around the city. I went to a church hall in Brooklyn. We painted the circles on the floor, all the equipment had to be put away on Fridays, we didn't have any cupboards and there was a movable platform which acted as a stage. This had trapdoors which opened up and all our equipment, mats, tables, the lot had to be put down under the stage. So it was hard work.

*Very hard physical work too.*

Yes. And a very poor playground there, tussocky long grass, untidy patch the side of the church hall. Those church halls were so dirty. The floors were never washed.

*Did the kindergarten teachers at that early time you're talking about there have much connection with each other. Did you work together as a group?*

Oh yes. We went to lectures four afternoons a week at Taranaki Street. Then if any of the society ladies of the area were running a sale or cake stall we always went and helped; a bridge party, we'd go and help with supper and things like that. We had a peculiar kind of area we were in contact with. We'd have the very poor, the dirty and smelly; and we had the well conditioned, wealthier society people were doing their bit for charity by having bridge parties and luncheons where we'd go and help.

*You were really in the middle of both weren't you?*

When it was money raising time for the kindergarten we'd have to go and stand and shake a box too on the street. Money was first.

*You all did the cleaning of the kindergarten?*

There were grubby conditions except in the kindergarten itself which was kept very neat and clean. We wore overalls and we had to starch our uniforms. We didn't clean the floors. We had a big clean up. We had to scrub all the tables

everyday when the children left. I'd do all the dolls clothes and take any home that were dirty. Children all had their individual locker and individual towel, well they were put into a bag and the mothers took those home. That carried on through all the different kindergartens. The mothers did a lot. The local committees did a lot.

*So at Ngaio Kindergarten, can you date that roughly when you got that first job?*

The end of the 1920s. I had an assistant, trained assistant there and then I moved to Brooklyn where I had done some of my training. I had students there and I felt I had stepped up the ladder. I didn't teach ballet any longer but I still carried on teaching ballroom dancing in Ngaio Town Hall and in Khandallah Town Hall which were close together. There wasn't much spare time. It's surprising what a lot one can do. You were expected to work very hard in those days. Enid Wilson was the principal by then. Her close friend was Ted Scott. Before that the director of the Taranaki Street Kindergarten was an Australian. Her name was Nettie Riley. She was always known as Nettie B Rilly and she done her training and teaching in Surrey Hills in Sydney, which was tough as tough and she was tough, but good.

*She had trained in kindergarten?*

Yes, in Australia. Our next principal was Enid Wilson and she and Ted Scott, our senior director became inseparable friends who lived together.

*Were any new ideas starting to come through in the 1930s, in terms of how kindergarten should operate?*

We still had a very rigid programme, very little free play and things were directed but Ted Scott got a bursary to go to America and she came back with all this free play, we were staggered.

*Where had she gone in America, do you know?*

No. Joyce (Barnes) knows. Anyhow she came back very much influenced by this new idea and of course free play was creeping into the primary schools. It was a whole new idea. Another thing we were expected to do was to go to lectures at the university in psychology. I enjoyed psychology very much and I use to go to

all the lectures. Also, the New Education Fellowship came to New Zealand and they gave lectures, a lot on psychology. I attended all those.

*Did you see Susan Isaacs when she came to New Zealand with the New Education Fellowship?*

I can't recall. I must have but I have no visual memory of it. I'm sure I must have gone to some of the meetings. I started going to the university for lectures on psychology.

*What were these new psychological ideas that were coming in, what was this meaning in terms of how you might be working with children or relating to children.*

We stopped directing. We put out equipment instead of leading them into something. They could choose what they wanted. They'd go and play; they'd move from one place to another and they didn't have to have a teacher sitting at the table with them. That business with the blocks gradually filtered out. They could do things the way they wanted. There was less and less of that and more of the person in charge of the group just wandering around instead of teaching.

*Was that a hard adjustment to make with some teachers?*

Well I can remember when we first heard about it everybody was aghast. We grew to it and we found the children could choose what they wanted to do. They still had their nap periods of course. Rather long ones and stories sitting on mats. Book corners became very popular too.

*Had you had books for children just to read by themselves when you first worked?*

Yes, we had low tables and we had a book corner. I don't remember any of that at Taranaki Street when I started there.

*So you think that might have come later.*

Yes. The children could go to the dolls corner and book corner and water play which was usually outside of course and that had to be supervised because children love to throw water at each other. They had sand outside and more outside equipment: jungle gyms. I don't remember a jungle gym in the Taranaki Street kindergarten, I don't think there was one. Every kindergarten had to have swings and seesaws, jungle gyms.

*So it was a time with quite a lot of change in kindergartens. How did people react to that?*

All this free play, I can remember that being banded about, the word free play and that they didn't have to stay the whole time. If they got a bit bored, they could get up and go away where as before you controlled that group for that quarter hour, 30 minutes, however long the blocks was going to last so you stayed with them. When the free play came in you see they might move away on the blocks for 10 minutes and then put them away. They could move off and play with dolls or go outside and go for a walk in the garden.

*Did you find that a lot harder to do in terms of deciding what was the role of the teacher.*

I didn't find it hard, I accepted it but it was more active physically. We were much more active. You see we sat down when we did this, but we didn't sit down when it was free play. You might help a child or you might bring outlines for them but you didn't have to sit with them. They could get on with it on their own and there was a lot more noise. In some kindergartens it was noisy at times.

*Do you think it went too far at times? .*

Well that's where the teaching came in and supervision. I think we probably had more voluntary helpers. We use to get a mother in the kitchen. I think it probably was because of this being much freer, I don't know, I can't say definitely it was, but mothers would ask if they could help in the kitchen. We use to have a roster and that freed us up to move around. We also had a cup of tea. I can't remember in those early days who made our cup of tea. It must have been the students. We were much too busy and you learnt to drink cold tea quite often. It must have been when we had mother helpers in the kitchen. That was wonderful because, well we had a staff of six, we had morning tea so somebody had to be around to see that your children were all right.

*How long did you keep teaching before you took a break from kindergarten? Did you get married and have children at some point?*

Yes. When I was teaching at Brooklyn I had ?? kids. I was being courted by a man who was going through a divorce and he had a small boy. We had a difficult time because he had to get his divorce so he could get married again. I can't really remember which kindergarten I was at when I married. We courted for about 18 months before we married. I had a miscarriage, so I was out of kindergarten. I'm not very clear about that. He was very interesting because he had this one child from his former marriage and they boarded in Brooklyn and I use to see Paul every lunchtime when I was seeing children cross the road, the kindergarten children. He would be walking up the road to go where they boarded to have his little boy but he was always in tears. He wasn't a very happy little boy when that marriage broke. He use to come out to me and stay the weekend and he formed a very close relationship with my mother, like a granny. She woke early in the morning and he was always awake early and they'd have cups of tea and biscuits and he use to love that. He's no longer alive actually. I did go back to teaching after I was married.

*It must have been fairly unusual married women teaching in kindergarten, were you one of the first to do that?*

I don't remember it being commented on.

*Roughly when was that?*

It was the beginning of the war.

About 1940.

Because we lived on that hill over there. When we were first married we lived in a very strangely appointed flat which is part of the Russian Embassy now in Korokoro. Well we lived in the servants quarters. The bathroom was turned into a kitchen so we just bought curtains and decided to have a bath when we were preparing dinner. We had Paul of course with us and why we chose to go there was because while Jock's marriage was falling apart, he had good friends in Northland and so Paul went to Northland School because they had a girl about the same age as him and they were very, very good and so it was convenient. My first son was born in ?? and in looking for a house. We found one at Korokoro.

*Why did you go back teaching again?*

One of my neighbours and I decided to go the Petone Tech to learn dressmaking. She had two daughters and I had one. I made all the children's clothes, even in those early days. So we use to go down in our car. Anyhow we went to Petone Tech and learnt dressmaking and there came a little lady from Lower Hutt. She came and sat beside me. Well there was a kindergarten established in Lower Hutt and they didn't have a trained teacher. They only had an unpaid teacher and they were told it would be closed unless they could find one. When she heard that I was a teacher she said what about coming. By then I had three children and a stepson and I said, "well I'll do it for a month."

*How old were your children?*

Well Paul was 10 when I married, then I had three fairly close together.

*So the youngest of yours was at school by that time.*

No he came with me to kindergarten and my untrained assistant had a boy that came with her and these two became very good friends and they spent 50 per cent of their time up a tree which suited us down to the ground because they were out of the way and they weren't always coming and saying "mummy I want something." We use to hand out bottles of milk to them and they'd stay up the tree. They were having a lovely time and of course they weren't in our hair. By then I had a lovely little baby Austin car so I was independent and it made so much difference. I use to trundle across the valley. It proved very useful. Of course we could do with the money with three children and a stepson that was a family of four.

*Being a working mother, was that acceptable or was it because you were a kindergarten teacher or was it because it was the war.*

I think it was because of the war. I was never looked at scant because I was a working mother. They were so anxious to get a kindergarten teacher that that never cropped up.

(break for tea)



*You were back teaching, it was into the 1940s, you were teaching with children, now move on from there in terms of what happened. How did kindergartens change or how did you change? Eventually you finished up in the training college didn't you.*

Yes that's right.

*Perhaps if we move onto that part of it.*

After I taught in this kindergarten I then moved to Petone Kindergarten which was within walking distance of our home for the children. They could come down the shortcut. The children were going to Korokoro School. I think Nigel was at High School and so it was convenient to teach there because they could call in if they had to buy a pencil or something. They'd just walked down through the bushes and call in at the kindergarten. I can't remember how many years I taught there.

When I was at the College I had a headache for the first five weeks because I was only a chapter ahead of the students you see. Although I've had all this practical experience and went to psychology lectures and been to the university for lectures for a very long time I hadn't actually been lecturing to kindergarten students, which is a different thing altogether really. Although they've come to train they don't always want to learn. You always get a few of the ones and so on. So I had to work extremely hard but I managed because of my experience as much as any. When I ran out of omph or whatever, history of education or something I fill in the gaps and we'd get by.

*What were you teaching? What areas were you teaching, sounds to me they were expecting you to teach everything.*

Well I had children's literature and I taught principles and practices.

*What was that then?*

Well the ideals of a well run kindergarten and getting on with the mothers, helping with the mothers, interviewing new entrants parents. You have to use a fair bit of diplomacy because very often mothers want that child to go to kindergarten but they can't break their umbilical cord readily when the children

cry. They feel guilty. I use to say, “no you go off they'll be alright.” They were, but also really happy when their mothers come back.

*Were you also teaching about the different areas of play, was that part of principles and practices or was that somewhere else?*

That would come into it but it was really a lot to do with coping with mothers and mothers clubs, of course we always attended those and some of the younger graduates were a bit at sea because some of the mothers were a bit tough. The general running of the kindergarten. Joyce Barnes was the principal. I had history of education, principles and practice and I had stories, children's literature. I can't remember what the others were.

*When you were teaching about history?*

About Froebel, Montessori.

Then they have to go out and work in the kindergartens and try things out for themselves and learn how to interview mothers and how to do petty cash, you know all the day to day things that happen in a kindergarten. Keeping it running smoothly. Reassuring that children weren't crying for more than 10 minutes, all that kind of things. A little incident that always sticks in my mind: I was teaching the evolution of education and I found a very nice diagram of the ape and then gradually up the hill, how he developed and so on and so on and then all the things that had happened and the different educators and so on, we were at the top of the hill and we now have psychology and all the things we had thought about. The next day when I went into teach, hanging from the line was a toy monkey. I laughed away to myself. They had some kind of joke about it, I thought well at least it sunk in, if they go to the bother of hanging a monkey above my head because one student didn't believe a word of it. She didn't believe in evolution. She got up and stamped her foot and said “I don't believe a word believe of it Mrs Connell.” She was particularly religious and it touched a very sore spot. Her brain was just beginning to open out. At the time I thought it was funny, but when I thought about it again I thought well it sunk in otherwise she wouldn't have bothered to hang a monkey above my head. On the whole I

found lecturing quite good once I got over the first stumbling block of having too much to do too quickly.

*At that time we're talking about the early 1950s and it must have been the time of tremendous expansion in the kindergartens.*

There were quite big waiting lists in most kindergartens and learning to get on with the parents. You would have difficult parents and they weren't easy. When the doctor comes for instance the doctor use to come every so often, some children were awful. We had a lovely doctor and she would say "well I need you with me Mrs Connell, can you arrange that somebody else can take over supervision so that you would be with me". She always liked me there. Something about my presence, the children didn't play up. She said it's hard work if you're not around. That's a compliment anyhow. She was lovely.

*Had the students changed?*

Not so many dedicated people. Quite a lot found it very hard work. They didn't like scrubbing tables, never done anything like that and wouldn't know how to handle a child with a tantrum. I had one very good assistant, she was Dutch trained and she was awfully good if we had any difficult school student. Finding what they liked, mostly with water. They'd fiddle around with water. We had a big trough in the toilet area. She'd run the water and they'd play. I found her a great help and yet the other student trainees didn't like her for some reason. I think it was because she could out work them.

*We were just talking about during that time when you were in the training colleges in the 1950 with , new ideas coming in.*

Well we had the new ideas come in mainly when Miss Scott when she came back from America. That was our free play and our choice of occupation and you put it out but you didn't say now you go and do that. It was there for them to choose and then you'd sit down with them and chat away, make something with the dough or whatever they prefer and the general supervision. Also, the difficult children. The one's that wanted to pinch and poke.

*You think there was more understanding towards difficult children?*

Oh yes, and of course having your own family helps. Then we had to give a little bit of training about running a mothers club meeting. When they took the chair, and there were the committee meetings. The kindergarten committee was the money raiser and they held quite a lot of power. The girls could be in a very difficult spot because there were two rather aggressive people on the kindergarten local committee which handled the money. We held a meeting once a month and I had to present a report and there was a difference between different members.

*What about the impact when government started giving more funding to kindergartens?*

We didn't have quite so many efforts. That was a help and the kindergarten committee would do more for administration. Paying the gas bill and looking at repairs and arranging whether another room would be built on, that was their role. So they lost some power, which was a good thing. They were only there because they felt powerful. They weren't always there for the good of the school. You get all to manage this.

*How long did you stay at the kindergarten? Did you stay through until it shifted into the teacher's college or did you leave earlier before?*

I left earlier. The kindergarten training had moved from Taranaki Street to Tinakori Road.

*When you left kindergarten teaching, there had been a lot of changes over that time, if you were having your life again would you do the same thing or would you do something different?*

No. I'm very satisfied with my kindergarten career. Once I overcame the big jump from being just a kindergarten teacher running my own school and looking after my local committee and that kind of thing to going into the college. You've got to have your wits about you to get the students into the right frame of mind to accept some things that you want to teach them and encourage them to do but after the initial changeover I didn't find that very hard.

*So you really had quite a varied career because you also had time. How long did you keep your dancing going?*

I gave that up when I took on Petone Kindergarten. When I went, when Quentin was three, he came with me, well I'd given up all that. I had too much to do at home. I had three children and a stepson and so that was in the past.

*Just one final question. Have you been into kindergartens recently?*

I can't say that I have, not for quite a while. Although I get little bits news of what's happening and know that sometimes and they're very fed up at the amount of bookwork. They complain about all the things the government has imposed on them, the regulations and reports, you name it they have to write it. One wonders why they have to have this. They say "there's so much bookwork, all these things, we never had to do before. The kindergarten centre functioned quite well under previous governments. All these rules and regulations and forms to fill in."

*Yes, I think there's been a lot of changes. Thank-you*