

Mildred MacLeod
Narrator

Margaret Reed
Interviewer

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MR: Today is Friday, May the 17th, 1985. My name is Margaret Reed. I am interviewing Mrs. Millie MacLeod at the AV Center at Moorhead State University to discuss Camp Fire, Incorporated.

Thank you very much, Millie, for talking with me this morning. Let's begin our time together with a little biographical material of yourself. Could you tell me a little bit about you, where you were born, and brought up, and educated, and something of that sort? And then kind of lead into how you became interested in Camp Fire Girl...well, it was Camp Fire Girls some years ago.

MM: Yes.

MR: And that kind of thing. As I understand it, you're now a volunteer, and you have been on the board of directors for a number of years, I imagine.

MM: Yes. Yes, that's true. I grew up on a farm in North Dakota, about a hundred miles north of here, at a farm near Larimore, North Dakota. And I spent three of my college years at Concordia in Moorhead. My other year, which was my junior year, I spent at Iowa State University at Ames, Iowa. When I was in college, my interests were primarily, I guess, physical education, which probably led into my interest at that time of Camp Fire, and also I had some interest in education.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: And this, too, was an educational process, I guess. [Chuckles] And Camp Fire Girls at that time (as are Girl Scouts and several youth organizations) always looking for volunteers...

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: And so my two years...two of my three years at Concordia I had groups of Camp Fire Girls. And hmmm...I sort of started in the program then. Although after I graduated, and went on

to teaching, and then was married and...I didn't get back into the program again until I had my own children.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: When we moved back to Moorhead, after having been in the metropolitan area of Minneapolis-St. Paul, where my oldest daughter at that point was a Girl Scout, we came back here to Moorhead. And then Camp Fire Girls were very strong in the community. And she became interested in the Bluebird program, which at that time was the second and third grade group.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: And I was not a leader at the first year. But the second year I became an assistant leader, and then went on to be a leader for both girls, both Barbara and Mary, who were in the program. From that point, I guess, I became more and more involved, first starting with the leader, and then becoming active in the leader's association, and eventually a stint on the board of directors, where I was vice president and president of the board.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: I served in the presidency from 1972 to 1974. And at that time I was not a leader, just involved in the board of directors. And also went on to serve on various zone committees, which were a regional organization. And eventually was elected to the national council, which was sort of like a board of directors, but much larger than that. And I served on that board for four years.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: And then we reorganized on a national level and did away with the national council, and did form a national board of directors.

MR: Mmmm. Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: And then we had just a couple of people from each state that were represented on that board, so it became a much smaller group to work with...much more easily to work with.
[Chuckles]

MR: [Chuckles] Could you tell me a little bit about the history of the Camp Fire program? I know it's been in this country. Is it an international program, too?

MM: Yes, Camp Fire is an international organization. It was founded in the United States, actually, in Maine, in 1910, by some people called the Gulick's, who were interested in children, and knew that the Boy Scouts were an organization, but only for boys.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: And they wanted something to...that would be interesting for girls. And so they started what they called Camp Fire Girls. And it was called Camp Fire because it was primarily an outdoor program at that. And they did a lot of camping, and building the Camp Fires, and so it was aptly named, that...

MR: Was it related to Indian lore, too, or...?

MM: Well, they were very interested in the Indian culture, and so that became sort of a natural interest, I guess, to be incorporated.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: But it wasn't...that wasn't part of the real history. I mean, they didn't start it because of the Indians or anything.

MR: I see.

MM: But they did incorporate that into the program, and particularly into the craft work, and the beading of their headbands, and so on.

MR: Mmmm. Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: And then Camp Fire was started here in the Fargo-Moorhead area in 1918.

MR: Oh.

MM: It was primarily in Fargo at that time. And then in about 1942, I guess, the people involved thought that...ah, maybe Fargo thought that Moorhead should be on their own. I'm not sure just what the reasoning was, but at any rate, their...Moorhead did break from Fargo and started what they called the Clay County group.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: And hmmm, Mrs. Hanny Wright from our area was one of the first people involved in Moorhead, and she was instrumental in starting our group here in Clay County at that point.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: Ah, some other names that were involved in that first organization was Mrs. Elda Gill.

MR: Oh, yes.

MM: And she's just retired from our community, and she still has a daughter that lives here locally, and is also very active in our program yet, and also her granddaughter.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm. She was part of the paid staff, wasn't she, Millie? Or...?

MM: Yes, she was. She was a volunteer though, first, and then later on became an assistant to the executive director, more like a program director.

MR: Oh, yes. Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: And then our first executive director, I didn't know this lady, but it was a Mrs. Edling, who was a relative of our business man, Edling Electric.

MR: Oh, yes. Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: And she was only executive for about a year or two. And then Elsa Ryerson was elected as the...and I suppose not elected, but hired as the executive director. And she continued in the program until...oh, maybe only five, six years ago. And she is deceased now.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: But she was with the program for many, many years as executive director.

MR: Now do you have...what do you call your group? A council?

MM: Yes, we are a council...we're incorporated as a council.

MR: As a council. Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: And a few years ago, probably about ten years ago, they expanded the Camp Fire program to include boys. And then we also changed our national organization to be called Camp Fire, Incorporated.

MR: I see.

MM: Shortened to be Camp Fire, Inc., I guess, is what most of us know it as.

MR: Inc. [Chuckles] Mmmm-hmmm. Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: But, ah, we now have several boys in our program locally. I think this came about primarily because of the larger cities and the core area. They really needed sort of...hmmm...a combined group of both boys and girls, and they weren't able to support just a boy's group or just a girl's group.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: And there was a definite need, and the program for Camp Fire has really expanded, and it has also expanded now to include...hmmm...I can't think. Hmmm...kindergarten students.

MR: Oh, yes.

MM: And that program we call the Sparks program.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: And then we have the second and third graders, which are Bluebirds, and then just Camp Fire Girls, fourth, fifth and sixth, which are Adventurers. Ah, the junior high Camp Fire Girls are called Discovery Girls, now, and Boys.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: And the Horizon Club is the senior high program.

MR: And the inclusion of boys starts at the kindergarten, at the Sparks level?

MM: It...yes, it starts at the Sparks level.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: And...I don't believe that locally we have any boys in our junior or senior high program.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: But again, in the larger cities, and primarily in the inner city area, there are several groups that have both boys and girls in the program.

MR: Now you are a separate council from the one in Fargo, is that right?

MM: Ah, not at this point. Ah...even though we had separated back in 1942...about 1976, the United Way was having difficulty in spreading their dollars to go around. And they sort of forced a merger again. [Sighs]

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: I have to say that the Fargo program at that time was declining. They were suffering some real budget problems. And we in Moorhead and Clay County, I guess...We are very proud of our council, because we had always operated in the black, and...

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: But anyway, for a variety of reasons, feeling that we did have...serve the same purpose, and we were funded...not entirely, but a good portion of our budget was supplied by the United Way, that board of directors felt that we should be one organization, and it could be a stronger organization.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: Because of the natural rivalry between the two cities, I believe that after several years the United Way still felt that maybe they had made a mistake! [Chuckles]

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: But at any point, there was a merger in 1976, and it was called the Lake Agassiz Council at this point.

MR: I see. Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: Rather than Clay County and Red River as they used to be. And we formed a new set of bylaws. And one of the negotiated points that we were able to work out at that time was that the council would locate its office in Moorhead. Now that's not to say that at some future time down the line, you know, wherever...I guess the best place is for the office, it might be moved. But up until this point, the office still does remain in Moorhead.

MR: In Moorhead. Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: And in spite of the difference in population, Moorhead and Clay County do enjoy the largest percentage of people involved in the program.

MR: Hmmm. I see.

MM: But the potential is...is there for much expansion.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: One of our problems always seems to be to raise enough finances though to support where our dreams might...might be.

MR: [Chuckles] Might take you, yes. Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: We currently have about eight hundred and fifty people involved in the program, about six hundred and fifty girls and boys and two hundred adults.

MR: I see.

MM: That serve either on the board of directors or as program volunteers.

MR: Now did I understand you to say there are no boys in this particular council? Am I...?

MM: On the junior high or senior...

MR: Oh, junior high, that's right. Yeah.

MM: I don't believe on the junior or senior high program level.

MR: Uh huh. Yeah.

MM: Yes, we have many boys that are in the Sparks.

MR: Sparks and...yeah.

MM: And the Bluebird level. Mmmm-hmmm.

MR: That's right. Yeah. I...I forgot that.

MM: I...I don't know the exact numbers.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: But...hmmm...we do have several.

MR: What would you say were your major purposes, Millie?

MM: Well, I guess my first involvement when I was in college was because I was interested in young people. I was interested in the camping program, the outdoor program; those were my prime interests and what I enjoyed most. When I became involved the second time around with my daughters, I have to say that I did not get involved in that point, because my interests hadn't changed from being interested in the outdoors and this type of thing, but I was more interested in the junior high and senior high age level group rather than the younger groups.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm. Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: But my girls were both interested and wanted to belong, and I felt a responsibility as a parent to support their interests. And that was my prime reason for getting involved at that point.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: And I really enjoyed the fourth grade group once I got into that. Probably that was my most favorite age group until I got into the junior high and senior high level. And our oldest daughter received her WoHeLo Medallion, went all the way through.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: And hmmm, our second daughter, Mary, went through part of the high school or Horizon Club program.

MR: As you see these Sparks to Horizons and so forth, what do you see the goals of those particular programs being, Millie?

MM: Okay. I think the whole process, I guess, is an educational one. I think that you're able to see the children grow; develop their potential as human beings.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: I think it develops confidence in the children. It...I guess I'm still going to say girls, partly because of my old habits of working with girls.

MR: [Chuckles]

MM: And also in that I had two girls in the program.

MR: Yeah.

MM: And my son was not ever interested in Scouts or any of those youth programs. And so, consequently, I didn't work with him in that same light.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: But I believe that the children develop a lot of confidence. They learn how to work with other people. I think this is important at a very young age. They're in this group of four, five, six, eight, ten different people. They have to learn how to give and take.

MR: What do they do?

MM: Ah, well, they can pretty well decide what they want to do.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: But because of that many people or different people in a group, there are varied interests at that point, and so they get quite a variety of activities. When they're about in the fifth grade, they start their beading and craft areas.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: And I think they develop, too, dexterity in their hands, because they're working with small beads. They have several projects that they work for. Ah, when they're younger, they play a lot of games. It's a fun time for them.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: Camp Fire, Inc. really does stress having fun in their groups. And they really learn to cooperate. They learn that they have to work together. They set up a small organization of nominating and electing a president for their group and a secretary. And of course, that's on the second grade level or something, that's very minimal. But they learn how to do these things. And then, as they grow older, they might have individual projects that they work on apart from their group situation.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: They learn about the community in which they live. They take tours, field trips such as through the post office, through different restaurants. Sometimes the restaurant will give them a free hamburger or something. They'll go through the Coke Plant and learn about different sanitary conditions there. They might go through a laundry...and, hmmm, learn about different things in the community. Hmmm, they probably visit City Hall to see how the city government works.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: And ah, work again within their schools. And most of the time they meet in homes, but sometimes they meet in churches.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: And so then their behavior might be a little bit differently than if they're working outside. We have a camping program, both a day camp and a week camp situation, so as they get older they can stay on overnights.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: They start maybe with just one overnight in their group or they might stay on a weekend. And...

MR: Is this all year long or...?

MM: Ah, this could be all year long.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: Ah, winter camping has become very popular, and that's a relatively *new* program.

MR: Where do they go?

MM: They go out to our camp, which at this point is Camp Trowbridge.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: Hmmm...a few years ago back, the Red River Council in Fargo had Camp Trowbridge, which they had purchased early on.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: Hmmm, the Moorhead and Clay County Council had Camp [unclear-sounds like shondawsee].

MR: Oh, yes.

MM: And we had burned the mortgage on that, but two years ago we felt that again we didn't have the finances to continue to...to have both camps or to operate both camps.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: And so we did sell Camp [unclear-sounds like shondawsee], which was a smaller camp and very confined. It was kind of a sad day for some of us.

MR: Oh, I'm sure.

MM: But Camp Trowbridge is much larger, and really, we can expand our horizons much more in that camp. It has...

MR: Where is that?

MM: That's in the Vergus area.

MR: Oh.

MM: It's about ten miles further east from our Camp [unclear-sounds like shondawsee], which was just west of Detroit Lakes.

MR: I see.

MM: And this camp has a lot of wooded areas, and so the older girls can sort of be apart from themselves...by themselves if they wish.

MR: But they...in the winter, they do cross-country skiing and...?

MM: Yes. Well, they do cross-country skiing, they also do some tenting. They learn how to bury themselves in the snow and protect themselves.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: And hmmm, Mr. Jim Ellingson[sp?] from our school district has been instrumental in teaching many of our youth how to camp in the wintertime and protect themselves under these adverse conditions.

MR: [Chuckles] Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: But the children really seem to enjoy it.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: And I don't...

MR: Now those are for the older kids? Or is this...?

MM: Well, I'm...I am not sure just when they start. But I think any time from like fourth grade and on, they are eligible to go on these groups.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm. Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: And it gets to be more of a...depending on the group whether they are interested, and probably the willingness of their leader to...hmmm...go.

MR: [Chuckles] Yeah. Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: She doesn't necessarily have to go on the trip, but even to organize something like this with Mr. Ellingson, and some of the other volunteers who have been active in winter camping.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm. Well then...

MM: They've also used Johnson Park, which is a park just north of Moorhead for some winter...to learn winter camping skills before they actually go out to a camp like Trowbridge, which is about fifty miles away.

MR: And it's Trowbridge where they go for like a week at a time in the summer?

MM: Yes, we operate the camp for about six weeks during the summer for our own children, and then we continue to rent out the camp to other groups, too.

MR: I see.

MM: Concordia College has held some of their language camps at Trowbridge.

MR: Oh, yes. Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: When they haven't had enough room within their own camps.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm. Now do the children pay to go to these things? And is that a restricted kind of affair?

MM: Okay, the Camp Fire...hmmm...people pay...the children pay a dues of four dollars up to this point.

MR: A year?

MM: And that's a general dues a year.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm. Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: Five percent of that goes to support the national organization. Then we do have program fees in addition to the basic membership fee. And those program fees are not for every program, but for selected programs.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: Now if they would go for a weekend at camp, there would be a program fee involved there. There probably would be some other fees, basic fees to cover certain expenses. If they hired a bus, for instance, to go out to camp or this type of thing to cover food costs. But also a program fee to help pay the expenses of the volunteer to...who goes along with them, because they do have to be supervised by a qualified volunteer.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: But there are some programs also that are available free of charge. And so it...it's usually the larger, more expensive programs that a program fee is charged for.

MR: I just wondered if there were...do you attract children who come from low-income families?

MM: Yes, we have several service organizations in the community that sponsor, primarily, I guess, at camp, and weekly camp. Hmmm, they donate...some different organizations call themselves different things that they donate for, but...to help, hmmm, take care of some of these costs for the children.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: And if there's...oh, not any...if there are not any of those funds available, and the child feels that they cannot pay, I guess we'd always...could find some way of helping them out. We have never denied membership to anyone because they weren't able to pay any of the fees involved. And I think the fees are very...very minimal.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: Maybe that is part of a problem...why we are always struggling! [Chuckles]

MR: Yeah. Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: Ah, so...because of...maybe not charging enough, realistically, to support our program.

MR: Mmmm. Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: But...

MR: But the funding then is from the dues and from the support from the United Way?

MM: Yes, and then we also...

MR: And you sell candy, don't you?

MM: Yes. We have several sales during the year, several promotions. We have an adult membership drive also for people from the community, an opportunity to help out our organization, people who have been interested in years past, and just believe in this type of a youth organization, and are willing to contribute dollars toward the support of that. I would say we get about a third of our funding from the United Way, and the rest we raise ourselves.

MR: Mmmm. Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: A very small part of it, again, is membership. But the membership does help us in our sales promotions. And the biggest promotion that we are probably known for is the candy sale, which we hold in the fall.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: And the girls go out and sell door to door, usually three or four kinds of candy or nuts, and earn not only money for the general operation of the council, but they are also able to retain a proportion...an amount for their own little group, organization, and also themselves individually, which they can apply to going to resident camp if they wish to do that during the summer.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: Another sales promotion that we've held—not for the overall public, but just for the Camp Fire families internally—have been a magazine sale.

MR: Mmmm.

MM: And that has met with a fair amount of success. This year we sold a prairie...what we called Prairie Crunch. It was sort of a special promotion along with our birthday month. This year Camp Fire celebrated their seventy-fifth anniversary.

MR: Oh, yes. Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: And hmmm...so we have done some special things, I guess, along with our birthday year. And one of them was the selling of Prairie Crunch. And...

MR: What's that? [Chuckles]

MM: Well...

MR: [Laughing]

MM: I am not sure that I know all that was in it. [Chuckles] But it has sunflower seeds, and sort of basic seeds and nuts.

MR: Oh, I see. Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: And it was a very big seller.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm. Kind of granola-ish?

MM: Yeah, yes, a bit of that.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: It's...it's very dry, and you sort of eat it as a snack.

MR: I see.

MM: But it's a very nutritious snack.

MR: Yeah.

MM: And now we're still planning some extra celebrations for our seventy-fifth year.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: The eighth of June of this year, we'll be going out to Camp Trowbridge and have a special recognition for different people that have been particularly active in Camp Fire, and also several of the service clubs, and fraternals, and United Way people that have supported us in years past, as well as special donations this year. And so we also...hmmm...do get a fair amount of support from our different service clubs in the area and fraternal organizations.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: The Eagles then particularly have been a very strong supporter of our program. In years when our candy sale for...primarily because of bad weather, I guess, if it hasn't been a huge success, which can happen here in the fall, late fall.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm. Surely. Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: Ah, have been willing to purchase several cases of candy to help us out so that we haven't had to return it and bear that transportation cost.

MR: That's really...Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: And several of the other, you know, clubs have been able to do that, too. They've also been willing to support us through donations at camp, with providing capital monies for us.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: The new bathhouse has just been completed this year. And several cabins...last year we had some good cabins over at Camp [unclear-sounds like shondawsee]. And the owners of the property when they bought our camp were willing to donate us these good cabins that could be moved. And we were able to get some help in moving those cabins over to Camp Trowbridge, and this type of thing. Dick [unclear] has been another person in our community that has donated a lot of time and skill to our program. When we were still at Camp [unclear-sounds like shondawsee] he built a recreation hall for us, and at a very minimal cost. And...hmmm...so this is...

MR: So you've had a lot of cooperation from the community over...

MM: Yes, we really have. I don't think that we're quite as well-known as we'd like to be as an organization. At least that's my feeling.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: But the people that have been involved have certainly been dedicated people.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm. Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: And I guess we need to probably get out from within our little shell though and...and become more widespread. But we do have a good support, too, in the community.

MR: Well, do you recruit girls or...and boys?

MM: Yes.

MR: Through schools or churches or something?

MM: Primarily through schools.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: We have a part time office staff person that organizes different groups in the various elementary schools. That's usually how we get started.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm. Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: And the girls that continue and boys that continue in the program, continue, I think, primarily because their interest has been retained through a good, strong leadership, and parental guidance, and support from...from home. If a group has started, and they lose the adult support along the way, whether it's from within their own home, or their neighbor's home, or whatever, whoever the leader happens to be, I think the membership tends to fall off.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: For boys, I think maybe the interests change within their individual selves as they get older, and so that's more of a reason for their dropping out. But I think for the girls that drop out, it's more of the support level, the adult support level that causes them to change. But another thing, with our society, we have so many choices and so many opportunities these days. That they're...I think the girls are spread a little bit thinner now than they were when the Camp Fire organization started.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: I think...still think it's a very viable organization, and I think it serves a strong purpose. What I do see it serving is that it gives children a chance to learn about themselves and to grow and...and make themselves stronger. It gives them an opportunity to participate in an organization, rather than...Ah, some girls are very shy, some boys are very shy.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: They probably wouldn't get into an organization and then...unless they had a little extra push.

MR: Yeah. Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: And maybe prevents them from getting into trouble or being led astray as they get older.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: And I...I think...I'm a very strong believer in preventative medicine.

MR: Oh, indeed.

MM: And I think that some of these youth organizations are...serve that purpose.

MR: Tell...getting into your program again, Millie, don't some of your young people do volunteer work? For example, in the hospitals, and...I mean, as a part of the Camp Fire program?

MM: Yes. Yes, they do. As they get older, and are able to be into some of these situations, we do have a program where they go into the local hospitals and serve as candy strippers. My oldest daughter was in that program. I haven't been involved with that particular program the last few years, so I really can't speak to the success of it at this point, but yes, they do that type of thing.

Ah, they do other volunteer activities in the community, too. They take a child care course. And they have to have so many hours of actual babysitting before they receive a certificate of completion for that course. Hmmm, they learn about certain nursing skills from the hospitals. And hmmm...

MR: Mmmm-hmmm. Like CPR or something of that sort?

MM: Yes, some of things, right.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm. Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: And ah...hmmm...they also...

MR: Do they learn homemaking skills, that kind of thing?

MM: They learn homemaking skills. That's primarily though, I think, through the leadership and in their own small group. Ah, they learn to cook, and bake, and then they learn how to make campfires outdoors. They learn how to cook outdoors.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: Hmmm, certain things they have to do to keep the campfires safe. And then when they do winter camping, they usually take their own...carry their own water. And so it...there gets to be a lot of planning into some of these activities.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm. Do they win a badge, or a medal, or something?

MM: Yes, they have beads with...and they have patches also.

MR: Patches. Okay.

MM: Hmmm, but beads are the smaller tokens, I guess, that they receive for doing certain activities.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: And there are about seven or eight different areas in which they could earn these.

MR: Do they wear a uniform?

MM: They do have...hmmm...I guess it's a type of uniform. They're able...the...*the* uniform is a blue skirt, a white blouse, and a red tie on up through the sixth grade. But this can be any white blouse; it can be any blue skirt.

MR: Blue skirt. Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: And then they do get their red ties as a gift from the council when they fly up from Bluebirds into the Adventure group.

MR: [Chuckles] I see.

MM: Which is between the third and fourth grade.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: The junior high girls and boys just wear their own everyday clothing. Although for ceremonials, which takes place each spring, and that's when they receive the beads that they've earned during the year and their patches. At that point, the older children have a brown...sort of like an Indian gown that they wear.

MR: Oh, yes.

MM: And hmmm, the first year, of course, it's very plain. It's a long, ankle-length gown. And then the purpose is to decorate that with the beads that they...and patches that they have earned during the year.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm. That they earn. Mmmm. I see.

MM: And by the time the girls and boys that have gone through the whole program, ah, usually the highest award that they've earned is the WoHeLo Medallion, and that would be in their senior year in high school.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: By the time they've gotten to this point, their beads are very colorful. Hmmm, because each bead in a different area is a different color.

MR: Mmmm.

MM: And they have a lot of decorations, and it's...they're very, very beautiful gowns at that point. Very heavy also, by the time they have all these beads on them.

MR: [Chuckles] I'm sure. Yeah.

MM: And sometimes the beads are all the way to the ankle length of their gown.

MR: Your oldest daughter, I imagine, had a highly decorated gown.

MM: Yes. Both of my daughters were in the program long enough so that they had many, many beads. Boxes and boxes full of them when they'd...when they did take them off when they were out of the program.

MR: [Chuckles] Mmmm-hmmm. Now it ends then for them at the senior year, after the senior year in high school, is that right?

MM: It ends as far as that type of the program. And of course what we like to see then is that perhaps they'll have a carryover value, and become a volunteer in the program, and become an adult member, and...and carry on.

MR: Sure. Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: We do, in this area, because of having two colleges here, have several college...primarily girls, I don't know if we have any boys that are college age that are leaders. They certainly could be if they were interested. But we do have several girls that have been leaders or helpers in the program. And it was kind of interesting to me. We had a birthday luncheon in March for our seventy-fifth anniversary. Again, which I've mentioned before. And at that luncheon they had several of the scrapbooks out. And I saw a picture that I had not seen before, but it was a picture of one of the groups I had when I was in college.

MR: Oh, yes.

MM: And...and...when I was a leader.

MR: That must have been fun to see. [Chuckles]

MM: And it was also interesting because Alice Oliver and Phyllis Thysell, who had been volunteers in the earlier program, were at this luncheon.

MR: Uh huh.

MM: And Alice Oliver happened to have one of her daughters the same age as the girls that I had, and so she knew the girls that I had had. And I didn't remember all of their names. I remembered a couple of the names. I had about seven girls.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: But she could name them all and tell me where they were living at this point.

MR: [Chuckles] Oh, yeah. Yeah. Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: And a little bit about what had happened to them over the years since I had left them. [Chuckles] There weren't...anyone living in this area.

MR: Area. Dorothy Remark[sp?] used to be very active, too, I think she...

MM: Yes, Dorothy was president of our council. I don't recall the years, but in the early 1970s.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: Hmmm...or maybe 1968 to 1970. It was in the time I served on the board of directors when she was president, and it was before I was president.

MR: Now your board, what, sets local policy? And your national policy is set from national, is that right?

MM: Yes. We have certain policies that we have to live within from national and then our local board of directors sets our local policies.

MR: What are those policies mostly about, Millie?

MM: Oh, I guess about how the council operates, and we have to make sure that the staff follows the national policies.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm. Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: And the board is responsible for fundraising. And three years ago last January I had come back on the board for my second term. When you're a board member, you're eligible to serve for two three-year terms.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: And then you must go off for at least one year before you come back on. But I had not been on since 1974, when I went off as president of the board, and...and now I'm back on, and last January 1st I committed myself to a second three-year term.

MR: Oh. Mmmm-hmmm. Have you noticed in those years, Millie, ah, any kind of a change in policy direction, in the kinds of girls and boys you're attracting? Of course, the boys are new.

MM: Right.

MR: That's...and that's different.

MM: I would say that the policies.

MR: And the kinds of problems you face?

MM: Probably haven't changed. I think our purpose is still the same.

MR: Is the same. Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: Although maybe we have some more definitely stated purposes at this point, such as the non-discrimination clauses, which have come about, I think, from federal rules and regulations in...in all areas. [Chuckles]

MR: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: Ah...but I think our main purpose is...is still to serve the youth, and to provide opportunities for them to grow and expand their own horizons. I don't see that purpose as having changed over the years.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm. Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: I think the organization has changed in that we now allow males as well as females to our organization. And I think some of the challenges have been greater because...one thing I've already mentioned is that there are so many opportunities now.

MR: Yes.

MM: We're such a mobile society that people move a lot. We're not as stable in the family area. That has been a big change that we've had to adapt to.

MR: You've had more single-parent children, I suspect.

MM: Yes. And more working mothers.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: And...

MR: Which makes leadership harder, doesn't it?

MM: It makes leadership hard. Sometimes it doesn't make a difference. Sometimes some of the busiest mothers are our most able and dedicated leaders.

MR: [Chuckles] Yes.

MM: But there are a lot of people that are just not able to handle both a full time job, and raising a family, and being involved in their children's activities as a strong support as well.

MR: Sure. Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: So that has changed. Ah...I think some of the challenges on the local...hmmm...for the children have changed, like the drug scene, the alcohol scene, the smoking, this type of thing. There have been different challenges, but I am not sure that...I really, I guess, don't know if they're any more so of a challenge than some of the other challenges. I think as each generation changes, or comes about, there are different challenges. [Chuckles]

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: That in their own time might be just as great. But those are some of the challenges that we've had to deal with.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm. Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: Hmmm, particularly in the larger cities. Not to say that in our smaller communities we don't have those, too. But I think in a smaller community, it's a little bit easier to...when you know people, you...

MR: Yeah.

MM: The children have more...have more knowledge of who to go for, go to for extra support.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: I don't think it's quite the same as...as some of the larger...larger cities.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: And hmmm, just living in a smaller community, also there aren't the challenges of the unsafe areas that there are in the metro communities.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm. Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: But I think that the organization has had to adapt to some of this type of change. But not...not in its basic purpose, I guess, I would think.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm. Mmmm-hmmm. Very good.

MM: So...

MR: Well, I wonder if you have some other things that you would like to...we're following a bit of an outline here, but I think you have pretty well covered...is there *food* part of the meetings, too? [Laughs]

MM: [Laughs] Yes, they almost always have a treat at their meetings.

MR: [Laughs]

MM: Ah, I think that carries through...hmmm...I don't know whether that's our Scandinavian heritage that [chuckles] has such a stress on food or not. But ah...even in the small groups they...they have one of the children usually in charge of a treat.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: And they'd bring a cupcake, or candy bar, or something to share with everyone and...

MR: You meet after school, the children do?

MM: Yes, after school, when they meet...

MR: Mmmm-hmmm. Once a week?

MM: They usually meet once a week.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: And they don't have to meet once a week, but it seems that most of the girls like to get together.

MR: Sure.

MM: They look forward to that every Tuesday afternoon, or whatever day it is, and they bring a treat. On the junior and senior high level they meet only once a month. And then they usually

have a dinner, and a hot dish-Jell-O type thing, barbecues, this type of thing. And then each group meets, and takes their turn at providing the food.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm. I see.

MM: And so the junior high groups then are citywide or like from both the Fargo-Moorhead area. And if there are ten junior high groups, all ten of them meet.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: Perhaps usually in a church basement, or a school cafeteria, or someplace where they have cooking facilities.

MR: Oh, yeah. Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: And hmmm, meet and have a program or ah, sometimes they might have a dance where the kids would invite a friend or something. Or have an open house type program.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm. They have father-daughter, mother-daughter kinds of things, mothers...?

MM: Yes, that...sometimes they have that. It could be either a potluck or it could be a catered meeting or it might even be where a group of mothers get together and cook for the father-daughter program when they have a program.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: Ah, sometimes it's just a sack lunch; sometimes there it's an outing at camp. Could run a variety of things; they aren't as structured as they used to be. Used to be that, you know, when they were in the Adventure group, well, that was the year of the sweetheart parties. And every year on Valentine's Day they got together with their fathers for this special deal.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: The junior high had something else; the senior high had something else.

MR: Yeah.

MM: But it's much less structured now.

MR: Much less structured. Yes.

MM: And the older girls probably would go with a...maybe a roller skating program, or like I say, just a variety of activities.

MR: Mmmm. Fine. Well, I think we've covered pretty much what Camp Fire, Incorporated is about.

MM: Okay.

MR: And I really appreciate your coming and talking with me, Millie. Ah, if you...did you think of anything else you'd like to include?

MM: Well, I don't...I think we've...hmmm...covered most everything that I think needs to be covered.

MR: Alright.

MM: And I thank you for inviting me to participate in this. It's been very interesting, and I have enjoyed my work with Camp Fire, and my involvement. I've gotten to know a lot of people.

MR: I'm sure.

MM: Not only better from this area, but hmmm...that people that have been involved on the regional and even the national level.

MR: Mmmm-hmmm.

MM: And I think one thing, if you're ever a volunteer in a youth organization, there's something special about that person.

MR: Yeah.

MM: They're...they're friendly, and really involved in youth and...and people.

MR: Yeah. Yeah.

MM: And I...I guess I'm interested in people, and I have enjoyed that relationship.

MR: Yeah. I forgot to ask you where your national headquarters are now.

MM: In Kansas City.

MR: In Kansas City, Missouri. Mmmm-hmmm. I see.

MM: Yes, Kansas City, Kansas.

MR: Kansas City, Kansas!

MM: Yes.

MR: Okay. [Chuckles] Alright. Well, thanks again, Millie.

MM: Thank you.

MR: It's been fun to talk with you.

[End of interview]