

**A Historical - Ethnographic Account  
Of A Canadian Woman in Sport, 1920 - 1938:  
The Story of Margaret (Bell) Gibson**

by

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## ABSTRACT

This study attempted to discover and describe the cultural knowledge and understandings that Margaret (Bell) Gibson derived from her performance as a highly successful athlete in Canadian women's sport during the 1920s - 1930s. A case study approach was used that employed qualitative research strategies. This approach was considered appropriate as prominent issues in women's lives are subtle and context-bound.

A series of five informal interviews was conducted with Bell, using an ethnographic approach developed by Spradley (1979). Each interview was recorded and transcribed into text. The text was then validated by Bell, prior to analysis by the researcher. An inductive-reflexive analysis of the text was employed, as much of the information emerged as Bell recalled her experiences in sport. This involved the use of an evolving methodology, which identified classifications of knowledge and structures of thought as they were revealed. Bell's narrative was contextually-grounded in a review of Canadian history from 1920 to 1938, as this seemed to connect Bell's experience as a sportswoman to the broader socio-historical milieu. Findings were substantiated through a process of triangulated inquiry wherein verification was sought from newspaper clippings, official records, and historical documents.

The analysis of Bell's narrative revealed a complex system of knowledge based on categories of information related to the structure of sport, social network, jumping, cultural activities, concepts of space and timing, and role definition. Documentation of the major sporting events Bell experienced, as an athlete, was also recorded. Implications for future research were discussed.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

This research endeavor evolved from a review of the literature of women's history in North America during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A number of issues were identified. Because of the social, economic and political norms and barriers women faced, both in sport and in the broader cultural context, women often played different roles and had different experiences from men. Scholars also found that women often expressed perceptions of their experiences differently. When historians analyzed sources of information on women such as legal documents, medical textbooks, magazine articles, and newspaper reports; they found that most of the records were generated by men [59].

The researcher concluded that research efforts in women's sport history "... must begin from women's experience as women describe it" [40, 384]. This involves learning about the meanings of sport from the women who played them. It also entails an examination of the interrelationships between women's involvement in sport and other aspects of their lives.

While the literature has documented the growth of sport for the middle and upperclass athlete who lived in Ontario and for the English living in Quebec, there remains a need to study the sporting experience of the female athlete who did not attend university and who grew up in the Western and the Maritime regions.

This research looked at the sports experience of Margaret (Bell) Gibson. Bell, who grew up in British Columbia, competed in the high jump event at the 1936 Berlin Summer Olympic Games. She was a very active sportswoman who participated at Canadian and international levels of competition from 1929-1938.

## **THE RESEARCH QUESTION**

The purpose of this study was to discover and describe the cultural knowledge and understandings that Margaret (Bell) Gibson derived from her performance as a highly successful athlete in Canadian women's sport, during the 1920s-1930s, and what these revealed about women's experience with sport in Canada.

## **THE NATURE OF THE STUDY**

The essential core of this research was to describe Bell's sense of what was happening while she was an active participant in the sports culture. It is the internal view that human beings have of their own actions, values and feelings that is the overriding prerequisite for understanding what they actually do [98]. The study took the form of a case-study and employed qualitative research strategies. A series of informal interviews using an ethnographic interview approach [84] and an inductive-reflexive analysis of the data was used. Bell's narrative was contextually-grounded in a review of Canadian history from 1920-1938. Such an approach enabled one to understand Bell's sport experience in its full complexity and facilitated the best possible reconstruction of Bell's subjective sense of meaning.

The researcher recognizes that as part of the world being studied, one must be aware of the effects of one's participation in this study. A co-operative, inter-subjective dialogue was engaged in from which Bell and the researcher came to a deeper understanding of the meaning of the events experienced in their areas of mutual interest.

## **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

From a historical perspective, the recounting of Bell's story was significant. Bell was the only female athlete from British Columbia to represent Canada in track and field in the 1936 Berlin Summer Olympic Games. It was important to document her story while she was still well enough to tell it.

The determinants of human behavior are extremely complex and difficult to ascertain. Use of the ethnographic method in this study allowed the researcher to more fully comprehend the nature of that complexity. The freedom and flexibility associated with this method increased the potential for revealing new insights that might have been overlooked with a method that used a narrower focus.

This study provided an insightful, holistic description of a cultural scene that can be used to:

- (a) provide a personal and vivid account of the sports culture as understood by a participant in that culture,
- (b) represent the image that Bell holds of herself, thereby enabling the researcher to comprehend the world from Bell's point of view,
- (c) yield information about what Bell had in common with other female athletes and how she used cultural knowledge to maintain relationships,
- (d) provide a better understanding of the role of female athletes,
- (e) yield new cultural frameworks that will enable a fuller understanding of the structure of sport,
- (f) indicate how cultural patterns were established in Bell's sport experience and how they may have impacted other areas of her life,
- (g) relate themes found within the sports culture to more abstract theoretical constructs, and
- (h) define new topics for study.

Placing the ethnography in a historical context was important. Understanding the broader context served to defer the isolation of sport from other important social, historical, and intellectual issues [63]. A review of the historical context also served to answer the following questions:

- (a) What historical events may have contributed to the emergence of what has been termed the "Golden Age of Sport" [16, 35]?
- (b) What effect, if any, did the Depression have on the participation and organization of Canadian women in sport during the nineteen thirties?

## DEFINITION OF TERMS

Unless otherwise specified, the definitions of the following terms were found in: Spradley, J.P. and McCurdy, W. (1972). The Cultural Experience. Kingsport, Tennessee: Science Research Assoc., and Spradley, J.P. (1979). The Ethnographic Interview. Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.

**Componential Analysis** - the analysis of relevant aspects of culture as semantic dimensions or selected sets of attributes; also the components by which semantic categories of classes are differentiated [19, 17].

**Contexting** - the process wherein determinants of cultural behavior are understood in terms of their broader cultural framework [63, 55].

**Culture** - the acquired knowledge that people use to interpret experience and generate socially-accepted behavior.

**Emic** - the view from within a culture that assumes that information concerning the actor's inner state is essential for an understanding of his/her behavior and for proper description of the behavioral events in which he/she participates [37, 34].

**Ethnography** - the work of studying a way of life or a culture and the end product of the study, an ethnography. As a way of studying a culture, an ethnography is committed to the understanding of human experience. It examines the



surrounds the human experience, the history that precedes it, the understandings of the persons who created it, and the patterns that give it form. It is concerned with the meaning of action and events to the people we seek to understand [27, 24].

**Ethnographic Semantics** - the careful study of language that seeks to describe a culture in its own terms with the aim of discovering the characteristic ways a people categorize, code, and define their own experience.

**Etic** - the analytic view of an outside investigator based on categories that are used to make cross-cultural comparisons.

**Feminism** - the emerging framework in the women's movement that reflects the contemporary advocacy for equal rights for women [31, 28].

**Inductive** - a form of reasoning that develops from examination of the specific to the formulation of broad understandings or generalizations [23, 20].

**Informant** - a person who acts as a source of cultural information.

**Qualitative** - a non-quantifiable approach to research that deals with the discovery of the mental substratum of which social life is the embodiment. The relevant components are the structures of thought [37, 34].

**Reflexivity** - the recognition that one is part of the social world one studies. It includes a reliance on common sense knowledge and an awareness that the researcher has an effect on the phenomena studied. It recognizes that the researcher's knowledge may be erroneous and therefore should be subject to systematic inquiry where doubt seems justified [33, 14].

**Sport** - a diversity of physical activities that range from simple recreational pursuits of a physical nature to highly competitive contests oriented to specific ends (Park, 53). "Social practices whose meanings, metaphoric qualities, and regulatory structures are indissolubly connected to the making and remaking of ourselves as agents (individual and collective) in society" [28, 50].

Symbol - any object or event that acts as a referent. It consists of any phenomenon we can perceive or experience and involves three elements: the symbol itself, one or more referents, and a relationship between the symbol and the referent.

## **UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS**

The researcher has formulated several assumptions on which this ethnography was based. Additional assumptions that underlie the ethnographic perspective have also been included. The assumptions are:

- (a) There is no single truth but rather there are many truths depending on one's perspective.
- (b) This research studied Bell's life and in the process it became part of that life. Both this research process and the cultural phenomena studied involved selection and interpretation by the informant and the researcher.
- (c) Bell had cultural knowledge that she learned as a participant in the sports scene. The researcher assumed that there was value in studying Bell's cultural knowledge.
- (d) The researcher assumed that Bell's cultural knowledge would be accurately reflected by the flow of her memory. The researcher also assumed that Bell's knowledge was "... integrative, differentially shared, and cannot be directly observed" [84, 7].
- (e) "Language is the primary means for transmitting culture. Much of any culture is encoded in linguistic form as both tacit and explicit culture are revealed through speech" [84, 8-9].
- (f) By studying the text of Bell's narrative, it was possible to reveal Bell's system of meaning and to attain results that had cognitive validity [27, 195]. The results of this ethnography generated understandings about how Bell successfully made use of complex meaning systems to organize her behavior,

to understand herself and others, and how to make sense out of the sports scene.

- (g) Cultural meaning is encoded in symbols; the meaning of a symbol can be determined by looking at its relationship to other symbols in a culture [84]. This ethnography decoded Bell's cultural symbols and identified the underlying relationships among the culture symbols. "Forms of athletic performance are laden with symbolism and may themselves be extended cultural performances of a symbolic nature" [61:36].
- (h) Formulations of structures depend upon categorizations; that is, culture can be understood in terms of what was or was not included in Bell's description of her cultural scenes. Placing the categories that reflected Bell's cultural knowledge in the context of a life history eliminated the isolated selection of formal categorizations and placed the recovered narrative into an evolving historical account.
- (i) Inquiry can never be regarded as value free. As long as social science is done by people, research must be value-bound, and the notion of detached objectivity must be regarded, at best, as an illusion.

## **LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

- (a) The time period of this study was from 1920 to 1938. This period represented a unit of time set between the two World Wars. It also reflected a period that saw many turbulent social, political, and economic changes in Canada which may have had an influence on Canadian sport. The 1920s-1930s also reflected the period when Bell most actively participated in the Canadian sports scene.
- (b) When using a single informant, a description of selected aspects of a culture was made. More informants could have been interviewed, including

other female team members from the 1936 Summer Olympic Games team; however limitations of time and finance curtailed this aspect of the research.

- (c) Most of the biographical information that was included in the study was provided by the informant. Some events were more likely remembered than others; some may have been intentionally suppressed. There frequently was no simple way to check the accuracy of these memories of prior events.
- (d) A certain level of understanding and meaning was lost with the transcription of oral history into text. Written transcription cannot fully convey the meaning conveyed by inflections of the voice, intensity and speed of delivery, and facial expressions conveyed by the informant.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Turbulent social, economic and political conditions were characteristic of the world between the great world wars. Canada, 1922-1939, by J.H. Thompson and A. Seager served as a primary reference for providing an interpretive and comprehensive historical account of the national and provincial socio-political history of Canada during this period. The narrative reflected on the complexity of Canada by looking at, "...the 'limited identities' of class, region, ethnicity and gender" [91, xiii]. The chapters were written in a clear, narrative style with well-documented facts and extensive tables that examined national statistics such as federal election results, levels of industrial production, and demographic data. Several chapters in Canada: A Story of Challenge, by J. M. S. Careless, served as a secondary reference. Careless examined the major historical forces at work in the creation of the nation of Canada and looked at the problems of developing national unity, given the vastness of Canadian geography and the separate influences of Britain and the United States. While Careless provided a readable overview, the chapters were not well-referenced and the focus was restricted to a summary of political and economic history. P. Berton and M. Braithwaite were reviewed in order to develop supplementary understandings of what was happening in Canada, specific to the Depression years. Berton's book, The Great Depression, 1929-1939, was written in an informal, narrative style. Berton concentrated on people; including extensive reflections on the diaries of Mackenzie King. His characters included prime ministers, labor leaders, and unknown Canadians who rode boxcars across the country searching for employment. It was a well-documented reflection on the ineptitude of the Canadian government to face the tragic realities of the Depression. The Hungry Thirties 1930-1940, by M. Braithwaite, offered a brief look at the major social, historical, and cultural events of the decade with a focus on the impact of the United States on

Canadian culture. Numerous photographs of major events and figures of the period were included. A major limitation of these references (because much of their focus emphasized the national and provincial political arenas) was that very little reflection or documentation of women's history during this period was included.

History of Women in North America, 1830 to the Present, by A.C. Fellman, and Women of America, A History, edited by C.R. Bekin and M.B. Norton, provided a window into the world of women's experience. Both histories were a compilation of essays, documents, life histories, biographies, and chronological narratives that touched on four topical areas of significance: women's place in the home, in the labor force, in politics, and in feminist ideology. Written from a feminist perspective, both books examined the status of women in juxtaposition to the prevailing ideologies that prescribed and frequently determined woman's role. Canadian Women: A History, by G. Prentice, P. Bourne, and G. C. Brandt, et al., examined women's experience during the inter-war period with detailed accounts of the activities and issues that women's organizations pursued, the impact of technological changes that were introduced into the home and work place, and how major economic changes effected the place of women in Canadian society. The history was based on traditional written sources and on oral accounts. It was very well-referenced and researched, although the level of detail was at times overwhelming. The collected essays of Joan Kelly in Women, History, and Theory offered an historical and theoretical analysis of the conditions that allowed feminist theory to emerge and advocated the development of what Kelly termed "doubled vision." This involved developing a feminine consciousness that would enable women to participate in patriarchal society in order to change it and at the same time, to stand outside it, in order to perceive what needed to be changed. She concluded her essays with a call for women to recognize the importance of their own experience and to use sex and gender as analytical categories when examining the dominant culture. Supplementary readings included the autobiography, Clearing in the West, of Canadian feminist and progressive

reformer, Nellie McClung, and Veronica Boag-Strong's "Canadian Feminism in the 1920s: The Case of Nellie McClung". The autobiography of Nellie McClung provided a valuable account of the life of the Canadian feminist and progressive, based on her experiences as a young woman growing up in Western Canada. Boag-Strong's article traced the development of McClung's political activism and struggles for social reform. Women at Work, 1850-1930, edited by J. Acton, P. Goldsmith, and B. Shepard, reviewed the effect of industrialization in North America on women's position in the home and on their participation in the public sphere.

Narrowing the focus to the history of women's participation in sport during the 1920s-1930s, a number of books, articles and anthologies were reviewed. From Fair Sex to Feminism, edited by J.A. Mangan and Roberta Park, consisted of a collection of articles and essays written by researchers from Britain, North America, Australia, and New Zealand. Written from a socio-historical perspective, the role of women in sport and physical education in the industrial and post-industrial eras was examined to determine the cultural expectations that Western society had of women as they emerged as active participants in sport. The book was well-documented, frequently used original sources, and provided excellent analyses of socio-historical determinants.

While tracing the history and development of women's sport in North America and Canada in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, several books were referred to. They were The History of Sport in Canada, by M.L. Howell and R. A. Howell, and Her Story in Sport: A Historical Anthology of Women in Sports by Reet Howell. Both books presented a scholarly overview of sports history as reflected in recent studies conducted in sports history and in a number of published articles. The History of Sport in Canada traced the chronological development of sport. Included in it was a chapter by Ron Lappage, "The Canadian Scene and Sport: 1921-1939", which proved helpful in providing an overview of the development of male sport in Canada. Unfortunately, very little attention was devoted in Lappage's work to women's sports experience. Her Story in

Sport: A Historical Anthology of Women in Sports looked more exclusively at the development of women's sport in the United States and Canada. Points of divergence in the history of male and female participation in sports were reviewed, and the struggles of outstanding sportswomen to gain equality of opportunity in the sports world was documented. Canada's Sporting Heroes, by S.F. Wise and Douglas Fisher, briefly summarized Canadian sport development and offered a number of vignettes of outstanding female athletes from Canada's past. A Concise History of Sport in Canada by Don Morrow and Mary Keyes, et al.; Women in Canadian Life, Sports by Jean Cochrane, A. Hoffman, and P. Kincaid, et al.; Out of Bounds by Helen Lenskyj, and Fair Ball: Towards Sex Equality in Canadian Sport by M.A. Hall and D. Richardson, provided additional insight into the emergence of Canadian women in sport. Several chapters, including "Sport Between the Wars" and "Women in Sport," in A Concise History of Sport in Canada provided brief summaries of factors operating in Canadian society that acted as opportunities or limitations to the broadening of sport and women's sphere in athletics during the inter-war period.

A number of articles, essays, theses, and dissertations written by Canadian sport researchers including Barbara Schrodt, Ann Hall, and Bruce Kidd served to enlarge the scope of the literature review. B. Schrodt has examined the performance of Canadian athletes in the Olympic and Commonwealth Games, as well as the demise of Sabbatarianism and its impact on the development of Sunday sport in Canada. She has also reviewed Canadian newspaper articles to determine if significant developments in women's sport were revealed by the press. In her unpublished doctoral dissertation, "A History of Pro-Rec: The British Columbia Provincial Recreation Program 1934 to 1953," Schrodt looked at the economic and political forces impacting on British Columbia during this period and at the efforts of the British Columbia government to counteract these forces through the implementation of a government-initiated, provincial recreation program. Several articles by M. Ann Hall have looked at the nature of women's



experience in sport from a feminist perspective and have asked whether there can be a distinctive feminist theory of knowledge. Hall maintains that it is necessary to understand women's perspective so that women can reconstruct the world of sport, thereby allowing their interests to assume a position of equality with men. "Girls Sports Run By Girls: The Women's Amateur Athletic Federation of Canada 1925-1941" by Bruce Kidd, served as a major reference that traced the early development of the governing body for women's track and field in Canada. The article combined traditional written sources with personal interviews and provided an interesting account of the differing forces and key figures who played a part in the establishment of the Women's Amateur Athletic Federation.

The primary source of information used in the literature review of qualitative research methods and ethnography was James P. Spradley's, The Ethnographic Interview. Spradley outlined an ethnographic semantic methodology for the purpose of conducting and analyzing ethnographic interviews and completing a written ethnography. A criticism of Spradley's book was that the model of culture and social-life underlying Spradley's model was somewhat over-simplified. Additional readings concerned with ethnography included Systematic Fieldwork, by O. Werner and G. M. Schoepfle. Written by former students of Spradley, the book attempted to describe the best possible approach to ethnography, ethnographic analysis, and the presentation of the ethnographic reports using concepts such as "first-level knowledge" and "meta-knowledge." This was supported with an emerging theory of ethnography that drew from such diverse fields as cognitive psychology, logic, linguistics, cognitive linguistics, and anthropology. Ethnography, Principles in Practice, by Martin Hammersley and Paul Atkinson, also served as a very readable and valuable sourcebook that stressed the importance of reflexivity. That is, the fact that social research is part of the social world it studies and that how informants respond to the presence of the researcher may be very informative. Research Interviewing, by E.G. Mishler, reflected on the proposition that

an interview is a form of discourse that is a joint product of what the interviewers and informants talk about together and how they talk with each other. The chapter on "Language, Meaning and Narrative Analysis" looked at how descriptions of, explanations about, expressions of, persuasions to, logical arguments, and narrations of, each have a different structure. Additional review of the literature included the reading of a number of ethnographies that included J. P. Spradley's, The Cocktail Waitress: Woman's Work in a Man's World, Jo-Ann Zyla's, "Measuring Up: Status and Stigma Within A Special Olympic Floor Hockey Team," and Derek Swain's ethnography, "The Experience of Withdrawing from Professional Sport." Unfortunately, qualitative research in the sports arena is still in its infancy. As a result, very few ethnographic studies were available in the sport-related literature.

An especially useful article by Lawrence Locke, "Qualitative Research as a Form of Scientific Inquiry in Sport and Physical Education" examined the strengths and weaknesses of the qualitative perspective in terms of its application in sport and physical education. Additional articles by Linda Bain, George Sage, Robert Schutz, Nancy Struna, and Roberta J. Park discussed related concerns about the need for and value of qualitative research in physical education.

Several books were reviewed to assess whether or not acuity of memory is effected by the aging process. According to Salthouse in A Theory of Cognitive Aging it has not been possible to reach a definitive conclusion with respect to the influence of life experiences on patterns of cognitive aging in most instances. There is some indication however, that crystallized intelligence, or the ability to retain general facts, knowledge, and vocabulary, is believed to retain its acuity to a high level in persons over sixty-five years of age. It is the fluid abilities, or the ability to acquire and retain new knowledge, that exhibits the greatest decline with age. There has also been some evidence to suggest that the rate of scanning memory decreases with increased age. That is, some

loss in measures of memory functioning may be attributable to a slower rate of processing information that is associated with growing old.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **PROCEDURE**

#### **THE RESEARCH DESIGN**

Given the interpretive nature of the research question, a qualitative method of study was selected. Qualitative methods have proven to be particularly appropriate where gender and women's issues are topics of inquiry because prominent experiences in women's lives are subtle and context-bound. Thus, from symbolic and interpretive perspectives, feminist scholars have emphasized the central elements of social life, i.e. identities, roles and institutions that are socially-construed and are capable of continuous change by the humans who create them [26].

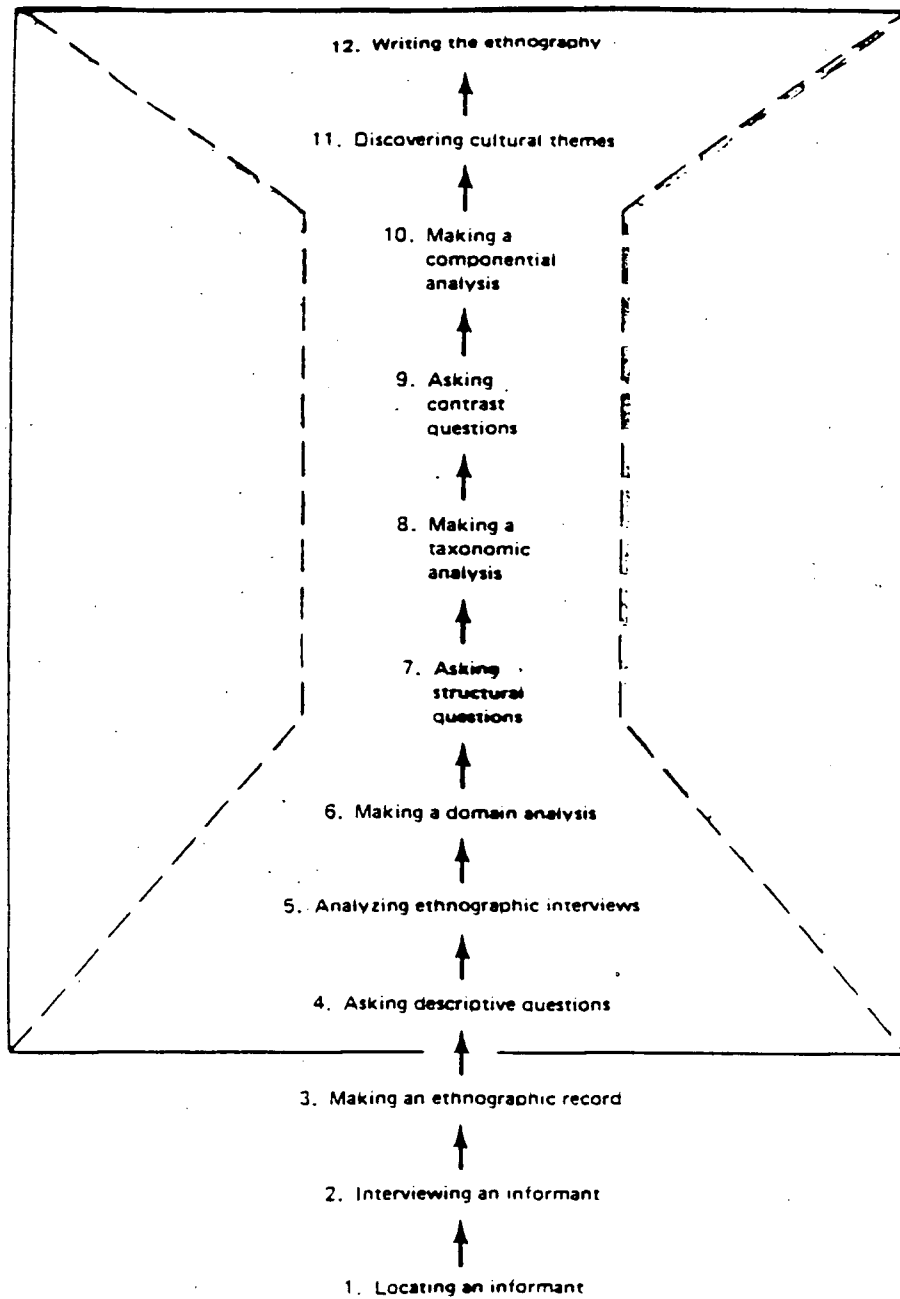
This research, in the form of a life history, employed inductive research strategies. As this life history was strongly influenced by the informant's cultural background and by the fact that much of the informant's framework for meaning was not consciously known, it was necessary to use inductive inquiry. A characteristic of this mode of inquiry is its flexible, evolving nature. Through a recurring cycle that included reflexivity, gathering data, forming tentative understandings, cross-checking data, confirming, and validating understandings: the study progressively refocussed and narrowed. There was a constantly evolving methodology in which themes and strategies emerged as the study progressed [33].

A preliminary ethnographic interview with Bell was conducted as a pilot study. As this proved successful, the researcher decided to use a series of in-depth ethnographic interviews utilizing Spradley's [84] Developmental Research Sequence (Figure 1). Use of the Developmental Research Sequence provided an enabling, step-by-step approach that assisted in fulfilling the aims of the research. This involved an interest on the part of the ethnographer in taxonomizing or categorizing cultural perceptions in the ethnographic account. Use of this methodology was appropriate because, as stated by Spradley [84, 9]:

FIGURE 1

Spradley's Developmental Research Sequence

## - THE ETHNOGRAPHIC INTERVIEW



Every ethnographer makes use of what people say in seeking to describe their culture. Both tacit and explicit culture are revealed through speech, both in casual comments and in lengthy interviews. Because language is the primary means for transmitting culture from one generation to the next...

The aim of the in-depth interview was to encourage Bell to develop her answers in a personal manner, while providing the researcher with the opportunity "to probe deeply, to uncover new clues, to open up new dimensions of a problem and to secure vivid, inclusive accounts from informants that are based on personal experience." [13, 107]. A rich ethnography describes a cultural reality in such a way that a non-member of the culture could pass as an insider (emic viewpoint) in that culture if he or she had internalized the cultural features of a particular setting [93]. Thus, the desired end of ethnographic research is thick description - a term made popular by Geertz (25). Thick description provides an account that not only presents and organizes the stories as Bell related them, but also explores deeper meaning structures which members of the cultural group may not be cognizant of.

A process of "triangulated inquiry" was used to collect data and substantiate findings. This involved seeking verification from a number of different sources and using a number of different techniques for collecting data [92]. The researcher's field notes, memorabilia (medals, trophies, souvenirs) Bell had collected, a film of the 1936 Berlin Summer Olympics, and newspaper articles that related to the sports culture of the 1920-1930's were examined with a view to validating information revealed by the informant.

Analysis of the transcript generated in the interviews with Bell provided the researcher with a detailed description of the sports scene experienced by Bell. Through an inductive narrowing of the focus, inferences were made about Bell's system of knowledge; that is, how she made sense of her world. Cultural inferences were contextually-grounded in a review of the literature pertaining to developments in the women's movement, sports scene, and broader socio-historical milieu in Canada during the period between the great wars.

## THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Locating an Informant

This first step of the research process involved identifying the characteristics of a good informant and then locating the best possible informant. "One of the great challenges in doing ethnography is to initiate, develop, and maintain a productive informant relationship " [84, 45]. Dexter [17, 8] has commented on the importance of the selection of the "key informant":

Concentration on a key informant may ... help the investigator to acquire a better picture of the norms, attitudes, expectations, and evaluations of a particular group than he could obtain solely from less intensive observations or through conducting a greater number of less intensive interviews, by themselves.

Margaret Bell Gibson acted as the informant in this research project. She was selected on the basis of:

- a) the established relationship between Bell and the researcher in which Bell appeared to be a very interesting, willing, and able conversationalist,
- b) the thorough enculturation and long-term involvement of Bell in the sports culture,
- c) the high-level of success Bell achieved in competitive athletics, and
- d) the availability and willingness of Bell to act as an informant.

Bell was initially contacted by telephone and asked if she would act as an informant. The interviews were conducted in Bell's personal residence in North Vancouver. Prior to each interview, a telephone call was made to confirm with Bell that the arranged interview time was convenient.

### Interviewing the Informant

Bell was asked to sign a letter of consent and was asked for permission to record the interviews. Each interview was recorded on a cassette tape, using a portable SONY tape recorder.

The ethnographic interviews were viewed as a series of friendly conversations in which the researcher introduced elements that facilitated the narration of Bell's story. Three very important elements that the researcher attempted to address when conducting the interviews were:

- a) explicit purpose - it was necessary for the ethnographer to explain to the informant the purpose and direction of each interview,
- b) ethnographic explanations - these included general statements about what the project entailed, the reasons for recording the interviews, and how the recording would be accomplished, explanations regarding the format of the interview; and
- c) ethnographic questions - these included structural questions, descriptive questions and contrast questions [83].

### Interviews and Field Notes

While the interviews were conducted, brief field note entries were made in order to emphasize portions of the interview that the researcher felt required closer examination, and to indicate the emotions Bell seemed to convey when relating significant aspects of her experience. Immediately following each interview, a transcription of the discourse into text was made using a dictaphone.

### Additional Data

Additional data consisted of the collection of medals and prizes that Bell had won in track and field competitions, and several volumes of Bell's scrapbooks which were filled with newspaper clippings of the major track and field events of the 1920s-1930s. Leni Riefenstahl's documentary film of the 1936 Berlin Summer Olympic Games was



filled with newspaper clippings of the major track and field events of the 1920s-1930s. Leni Riefenstahl's documentary film of the 1936 Berlin Summer Olympic Games was also reviewed. This data was included as part of the ethnographic record and was used to validate dates and details identified in Bell's discourse.

### Analysis of the Interviews

Preliminary analysis of the collected data followed the transcription of each of the interviews. According to Spradley [84, 93]:

... ethnographic analysis is the search for parts of a culture and their relationships as conceptualized by informants. Most of the time this internal structure, as it is known to informants, remains tacit; outside their awareness. The ethnographer has to devise ways to discover this tacit knowledge.

This step involved the review of field notes and transcripts in a search for cultural symbols and the relationships among these symbols.

To study the relationships among all of Bell's terms in the sport's scene represented an enormous task. Because of time limitations, a few selected domains were studied in-depth, while an attempt was made to develop a holistic understanding of the cultural scene as a whole. This meant that some of the interview questions ranged widely over many topics while other questions probed more deeply into selected domains. Bell validated the information contained in each interview transcript and the initial analysis that immediately followed the completion of the transcripts. This assisted in maintaining the focus that reflected Bell's views.

### Discovering Cultural Themes

While an adequate ethnographic description includes a detailed analysis of selected domains, it also includes an overview of the cultural scene and the statements that convey a holistic perspective. The concept of theme is grounded in the idea that culture consists of a system of meanings that is integrated into some kind of larger

pattern. Spradley [84, 186] has defined cultural theme "... as any cognitive principle, tacit or explicit, recurrent in a number of domains and serving as a relationship among subsystems of cultural meaning." That is, themes recur in more than two domains and serve to link a number of symbols into meaningful relationships. Most themes remain at the tacit level of knowledge even though most people use them to organize their behavior and interpret experience. In order to discover cultural themes, a number of strategies were employed for conducting a theme analysis. These included:

1. immersion in the cultural scene by reviewing the literature, by listening to Bell for an extended period of time, and by spending considerable time reflecting on the data,
2. making a cultural inventory that included lists of identified and possible unidentified cultural domains,
3. making a componential analysis of the various cultural domains and searching for dimensions of contrast for all the domains that were analysed,
4. identifying organizing domains, and
5. making schematic diagrams of cultural domains.

At some point a decision was made that the collection and analysis of the data was relatively complete. This decision recognizes that no discovery procedure can provide a perfect replica of another person's knowledge system.

### Writing the Ethnography

Writing this ethnography involved a process of translation wherein the language and thinking of Bell had to be comprehended and then communicated to others who were unfamiliar with her cultural scene. The ethnography began with the particular, concrete experiences of everyday life and then moved to more general cultural statements. "In writing an ethnography as a translation, the concern with the general is incidental to the

particular. In order for a reader to see the lives of the people we study, as they see themselves, we must show them through particulars, not merely talk about them in generalities." [84, 207].

Agar [4] has stated that a translation of a culture can be examined in terms of the extent to which it contains meanings that facilitate the interpretation of the cultural activities of a person or group within a particular culture. He states that an ethnography can employ the following analytic levels:

- (a) it can include meanings which members of a culture attach to their own actions,
- (b) it can include interpretations which members of a culture attach to particular events when the group member is outside the context of those events,
- (c) it can seek common themes and patterns which recur in more than one situation within a culture, and
- (d) it can relate common themes and patterns found within a culture to more abstract theoretical concepts.

Ultimately, this ethnography must strive by use of data to convince and persuade. The reader must be convinced that given the evidence presented in the ethnography, this is an acceptable and revealing analysis of what has been going on.

## CHAPTER 4

### CANADA BETWEEN THE WARS: DECADES OF DISCONTENT

#### INTRODUCTION

The Canadian experience between the end of the Great War and the beginning of World War II can best be described as turbulent. According to Thompson and Seager [91], the two decades prior to World War I had seen the nation transformed by industrialization, urbanization, immigration, and westward expansion. Encompassing immense diversities - demographic, economic, political and social - Canada of 1920 was faced with post-war grievances. These included divisions between the French and the English, the East and the West, and labour and capital. During the ensuing period of discord, Canada's political parties appeared unable to resolve the challenges created by these divisions.

#### PATTERNS OF CHANGE

Evidence of change can be found by examining basic patterns of birth, marriage, life span, employment, and migration. Enumerators of the Sixth Decennial Census in 1921 counted 8.8 million Canadians. Immigration and internal migration, largely from East to West, produced significant population increases in the Western provinces; moderate growth in Ontario and Quebec; and very modest increases in the Maritimes, with the exception of Prince Edward Island, which experienced a population decrease. However, Ontario and Quebec remained the hub of the nation as sixty percent of the Canadian population lived in these two provinces. Although where Canadians lived was almost equally divided between urban and rural centers, an important trend noted in the 1921 census was the increasing urbanization of Canada (Figure 2). Montreal had over 700,000, people which represented a larger population than that of six of the nine provinces [91].

FIGURE 2

**Population Growth of Metropolitan Areas, 1930-31 and  
Percentage of Urban Population by Province, 1911-41**

**Population Growth of Metropolitan Areas, 1901-31**

	Within City Limits			"Greater Cities"	
	1921	1931	1941	1931	1941
Montreal	618,506	818,577	903,007	1,023,158	1,139,921
Toronto	521,893	631,207	667,457	810,467	900,491
Vancouver	163,220	246,593	275,353	308,340	351,491
Winnipeg	179,087	218,785	221,960	284,295	290,540
Hamilton	114,151	155,547	166,337	—	—
Ottawa	107,843	126,872	154,951	—	—
Quebec	95,193	130,594	150,757	—	—

*Sources:* Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *Rural and Urban Composition of the Canadian Population*, Census Monograph 6, 1931.

*Census of Canada, 1941, Vol. II, Population by Local Subdivisions.*

**Percentage of Urban Population by Province, 1911-41**

	1911	1921	1931	1941
Prince Edward Island	16.0	18.8	19.5	22.1
Nova Scotia	36.7	44.8	46.6	52.0
New Brunswick	26.7	35.2	35.4	38.7
Quebec	44.5	51.8	59.5	61.2
Ontario	49.5	58.8	63.1	67.5
Manitoba	39.3	41.5	45.2	45.7
Saskatchewan	16.1	16.8	20.3	21.3
Alberta	29.4	30.7	31.8	31.9
British Columbia	50.9	50.9	62.3	64.0
Canada	41.8	47.4	52.5	55.7

*Source:* Leroy O. Stone, *Urban Development in Canada* (Ottawa, 1967), 29, based on 1956 Census definition.

The median age of Canadians increased to just under twenty-four years, the result of two important developments: the implementation of public health schemes and an increase in immigration, especially of young adults. The Eastern regions had older populations than the West. Almost everyone in Canada between the ages of thirty-five and fifty was married. Marriage provided the foundation upon which Canadian society was constructed and the lowest divorce rate in the Western world was cited as evidence of the happiness of Canadian families [91]. In Quebec, seventy-five per cent of the families reported having children at home, while British Columbia represented a low of sixty per cent. With the exception of Quebec, family size declined throughout the period, especially among the middle and upper classes living in urban centers [91]. Prentice, et al.[68] has stated that, by 1921, the fertility rate of urban couples was approximately twenty per cent lower than that of rural couples. Reasons for declining family size included reduction of birth rates, limited use of children as units of economic production, child labour laws, and compulsory education laws. Smaller families meant that women devoted fewer years in their total lifespan to rearing children at home.

Despite their high birth rate, French Canadians declined slightly in terms of overall population, to form 27.9 per cent of Canada's population. Those of British origin recorded a slight increase to 55.4 percent of all Canadians. Persons of German origin formed the largest group, at 3.3 percent of the remaining twenty-two different races whose origins were neither French nor British. Thus, outside of Quebec, Canada still thought of itself as British. Religious affiliation indicated 97.6 percent of all Canadians belonged to some Christian denomination, with the majority belonging to the Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, Anglican and Methodist Churches. Most of Canada's young people attended school as all the provinces, except Quebec, had enacted legislation enforcing compulsory school attendance. The Roman Catholic and Protestant Committees for Public Instruction retained provincial responsibility for education in

Quebec. Few students completed their secondary schooling and enrolment in post-secondary institutions numbered less than 50,000 in 1921 [91].

Fluctuations in population growth occurred with altering cycles of economic prosperity and restraint throughout 1920-1939. The population of Canada did increase from 8.8 million in 1921 to 11.5 million in 1941; however, the pace of growth decreased, especially following the onset of the Depression. As economic conditions in the Dominion deteriorated during the 1930s, the Canadian government severely restricted immigration [68]. The birthrate, by 1937, fell to an all-time low of 2.6 births per woman from 3.2 in 1930, as twenty-one percent of the women who were in their prime reproductive years during the Depression chose to delay their marriages or remain childless [68]. The Depression left the province of Saskatchewan with 25,000 fewer inhabitants in 1941 than in 1931; while in British Columbia, thousands of homeless unemployed young men drifted in, searching for a warmer climate to sleep outside in winter and searching for employment opportunities. According to Schrodtt [75], in August, 1931, over 6,500 interprovincial transients were registered in British Columbia. Growth of urban centers slowed during the Depression, although there continued to be more women residents than men living in the cities. This reflected increased employment opportunities for women in the cities.

By recording the distribution of Canadian workers, the census of 1921 looked indirectly at the Canadian economy. Agriculture remained the largest employer of men in all the provinces with the exception of British Columbia. The province was primarily dependent on extractive industries, so that one-third of its male workforce was employed in logging and one-fifth in mining. Across the Prairies, seven out of ten male workers were engaged in agricultural endeavors. Ontario and Quebec recorded having 60 percent of the jobs in secondary manufacturing, Canada's second largest employer. Trade and merchandising ranked as the third most significant employer in Canada in 1921, followed by the transportation sector. Lagging far behind, additional employers were all

three levels of government, professional occupations, domestic service, mining, logging, fishing, and hunting [91].

The tremendous economic and social dislocation that Canada experienced immediately following the end of the Great War reinforced the notion that women should not compete for men's jobs. Massive unemployment and labor unrest characterized the immediate post-war years as the era of easy growth was ending. Western farmlands were not limitless. Emergency tariff increases enacted in 1921, and the Fordney-McCumber Tariff Act of 1922, had severe consequences on Canadian exports, which fell rapidly. As farm prices collapsed, farmers suffered the most severely [91].

By 1923, the Canadian economy had begun to recover. The most striking advances were not made in the Prairies but in the North, where a great mining empire was created in the Canadian Shield. Additional important advances were the development of the lumber, pulp and paper industries, and the development of hydro-electric power, which gave Ontario a cheap and efficient supply of energy. Transportation was vastly improved as a system of highways was built and airplanes opened up travel and air freight into the Far North. The Arctic became a very viable part of the Canadian economy with its vast riches in fur, oil, gold, and other minerals [15]. The Canada of pioneers and frontier settlements ceased to exist as the majority of Canadians were living and working in the mining settlements and urban centers of the Dominion.

The newly-found prosperity had its price. The rapid development of the paper and mining industries required heavy capital investment. Unco-ordinated provincial development policies were helped along by financial promoters so that businessmen and provincial politicians became partners. The uncontrolled exploitation of natural resources during the 1920s has often been blamed on the allocation of the resources to the provincial governments by the federal government. Historians have noted, however, that federal-provincial disagreements about resource development were frequently



concerned with the distribution of profits rather than with the policy of rapid development by large, private corporations. Corporate mergers, as evidenced in the automobile industry, were characteristic of the period. Numerous small Canadian manufacturers were swallowed up by their American counterparts as they encountered insurmountable difficulties in their attempts to distribute their products to a small and widely-scattered market [91].

As stated by Thompson and Seager [91], conflict of interest between the public good and private profit was not an issue with the provincial premiers. The fact that over one third of the pulp and paper industry and forty percent of mineral production in Canada was in the hands of American-controlled or American-affiliated companies caused little concern amongst Canadians. By 1930, British investment in Canada had dropped to thirty-six percent while American investment had increased to sixty-one percent of the nation's total foreign investment, so that the United States exerted an ever-increasing influence on the Canadian economy.

The heavy reliance on American investment had several negative effects on the Canadian economy. American companies sought to export resource materials from Canada and paid little attention to investment in secondary manufacturing industries. Without a well-developed secondary manufacturing sector, many Canadians, especially those trained in industrial research, moved to the United States to seek employment. The rapid industrial development chiefly benefitted Ontario, Quebec, and British Columbia. In these provinces a number of single-enterprise resource communities were established to service the new industries. Meanwhile, the Prairies and the Maritimes were experiencing little of the post-war development, thereby creating tension between the "have" and "have-not" regions of the country. Lines of communication and transportation were increasingly oriented towards North-South development, which served to exacerbate regional resentments. Urbanization also reinforced regional

identities as large cities provided a base from which provincial legislatures sought to extend their influence [15].

Canadians, buoyed by the prosperity of the mid 1920s, were not prepared for the events of 1929. In October, 1929, stock prices on the New York Stock Exchange plummeted, an event which indicated the instability of the American and world economies. Canada's dependent resource economy, with eighty percent of its products in forestry, mining, and agriculture sold abroad, was especially vulnerable to declining foreign demand [91]. The Great Depression that ensued over the next decade wrought devastation to the Canadian economy and to the lives of thousands of Canadians who lost their jobs.

Combined with the effects of the depressed export market, international wheat prices collapsed in 1929, as there was a surplus of wheat on the world market. The falling price of wheat affected not only the Prairie farmers but also the railways and those industries that supplied producers' goods to farmers. A domino effect was felt throughout the Canadian economy as businesses rapidly decreased their spending in response to the declining commodity prices. The collapse of wheat prices was coupled with a period of prolonged drought, accompanied by dust storms and plagues of grasshoppers throughout the southern Prairies. Beginning in 1931, prairie crops failed for the next seven years, with especially devastating effects in Saskatchewan [75].

From 1930 to 1939, the number of unemployed in Canada never dropped below ten percent of the work force and in 1933, over one quarter of all Canadian workers were unemployed [11]. Unemployment forced thousands of families to exhaust their savings and apply for public relief. By 1933, approximately fifteen percent of the population of Canada depended upon the "dole" or "pogey" for physical survival. To the thousands of unemployed who had grown up believing that to be idle was to be shiftless, the experience of having to go on the "dole" was a humiliating and final admission of defeat [11]. As stated by one relief administer, "I've seen tears in a man's eyes as though they

were signing away their manhood, their right to be husband and set at the head of the table" [91,211].

The influx of thousands of unemployed young men into Vancouver was one of the most obvious manifestations of the Depression in British Columbia. By January, 1935, twelve percent of the people on relief in Vancouver were classified as transients. Until 1936, the Department of National Defence operated approximately two hundred isolated relief camps across Canada. Relief camps were the federal government's response to the growing menace presented by thousands of unemployed young men who illegally travelled the country on top of freight trains and then congregated in "hobo jungles" in urban centers [75]. During four years of relief camp operation, British Columbia enrolled one-third of the total camp population. Led by the Relief Camp Workers Union in 1935, eighteen hundred men from the British Columbia relief camps peacefully occupied Vancouver in a protest for better working conditions and wages. Although the federal government and Mayor Gerry McGeer viewed the protest as a Communist-instigated revolution, many of the local citizens sympathized with protestors. The protest, which had begun with high expectations in Vancouver, ended as a blood-stained riot in Regina on July 1st. The RCMP had been ordered by the federal government to halt the "On-to-Ottawa Trek" of over one thousand men. Following a day of violence that left Regina in a state of shambles, many of the protestors accepted Saskatchewan's offer of passage home, while others returned to the relief camps. RCMP suppression of the trek was widely-condemned in editorials across the country [91].

The scene was repeated in Vancouver in June, 1938. Demanding work or relief, twelve hundred members of the Relief Project Workers Union staged sit-down strikes in the Post Office and Art Gallery. After a month of relative calm, both the RCMP and the Vancouver Police were ordered by both the provincial and federal governments to evict the strikers. Tear gas was used against the strikers occupying the Post Office. A violent riot ensued during what came to be known as "Bloody Sunday." Once again, the

situation was defused when the federal government offered the strikers free transportation home [91].

Throughout the Depression years, the federal government clung to a non-interventionist economic policy that advocated the importance of the balanced budget. Between 1930 and 1932, R. B. Bennett enacted three Reliefs Acts which accomplished very little in easing the plight of the unemployed [91]. It was simply easier to wait for the Depression to end. In 1939, as Canadians prepared for World War II, military service provided thousands of Canadians with their first jobs. Money was suddenly found to wage war at a rate that both prime ministers, R. B. Bennett and Mackenzie King, had thought immoral to spend for relief of the unemployed and dispossessed.

#### AN UNCERTAIN CANADA

Fluctuations in the nation's economy and population during the twenties and thirties created conditions that were conducive to political change. Discontent with wartime policies, such as the enforcement of conscription in 1917 by the Union government, led to the creation of new political movements and parties. Farmers deserted the Liberals and Conservatives to support emerging organizations such as the National Progressive Party in the West and the United Farmers in Ontario [15]. Workers, returned veterans, and other disaffected groups supported labour and independent candidates in federal and provincial elections. Labour militancy intensified as workers sought to improve their living conditions, especially in the one-company coal-mining settlements. The formation of the Communist Party of Canada, at a secret meeting in 1921, provided another avenue for political protest [68]. Formation of the party created an unwarranted fear of Bolshevism's rapid spread throughout Canada amongst the Dominion's political leaders.

The Communist Party of Canada's chances of becoming a formidable political force were remote. The party's organization was highly decentralized and its leadership

was split over the question of whether there were to be distinct national identities or subordinate sections of the Stalinist Comintern. Had it not been for the Depression, when government-sanctioned attacks upon the Communists created a group of highly-visible martyrs, the Communist party probably would have sunk into oblivion. Instead, a powerful civil liberties lobby was built around the Communists, who advocated the traditional freedoms of speech and assembly. Although skilled as labour agitators, the Communists lacked a coherent political program and the majority of Canadian people continued to place their trust in the parliamentary system. As a result, a new coalition of the Canadian left emerged which eventually eclipsed the Communist party [91].

The Co-operative Commonwealth Federation was formed in 1932 under the leadership of J. S. Woodsworth [91]. The new party was comprised of an alliance of the non-Communist labour parties in all the provinces west of Quebec and was built on old Progressive foundations. In the words of Woodsworth, The Co-operative Commonwealth Federation represented, "... a distinctly Canadian type of socialism" [91,235]. A plan for social ownership and public management of the Canadian economy was articulated, wherein transportation, communications, electric power, and all other essential services were to be nationalized and then managed by public servants. A national labour code was formulated that was to assist in the formation of trade unions, and universal systems of health care, unemployment insurance, and pensions were proposed. Party membership largely consisted of church workers, leaders of farm communities, disenchanted intellectuals, co-operative organizers, and people who practised self-help and democratic association. The influence of the Social Gospel on J. S. Woodsworth, a Methodist minister, and party members was evident [91].

The roots of the Social Gospel lay embedded in a doctrine that attempted to apply the principles of Christianity to the problems of industrial capitalism. Visible social suffering resulting from rapid industrialization, urbanization, and immigration accounted for the influence of the Social Gospel in the Protestant churches of Canada.

Leadership was provided by ministers and church members who spearheaded programs for social and economic reform, ranging from prohibition to urban sanitation. The good of the community was held foremost and the use of government as a vehicle for reform marked an important departure from individualism [91].

Under Woodsworth, the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation achieved limited success in national politics. One reason for this slow growth was the attack made on the party by the anti-socialist Roman Catholic Church. Such opposition had a significant effect on the fledgling party, especially in Quebec [91]. French Canada was producing a new provincial party during the Depression, with an upsurge of French-Canadian nationalism that led to the creation of the Union Nationale in Quebec [15].

Yet another regional party emerged in Alberta in 1935. The charismatic William Aberhart used the organizational structure of his evangelical network to become the first premier of a Social Credit government in Alberta in August, 1935. Aberhart's election platform called for a "new social order" based on reformed banking and education systems, aid to co-operatives for agricultural marketing, occupational health and safety, state medicine, and a more independent role for women [91].

British Columbia, in 1933, elected a Liberal government led by T. D. "Duff" Pattullo, to replace the Conservatives. Pattullo also promised a "new social order" based on his belief that in troubled economic times, government was morally responsible for the welfare of the people [91]. According to Schrodtt [75], Pattullo's programme included, "public works projects, health plans, marketing controls, and tax cuts. The programme had far-reaching effects and helped moved Canada forward on the path of state-planning for economic and social benefit". Clearly, the trying years of the Depression encouraged a number of sectional movements that advocated new social responsibilities for provincial governments. This in turn tended to threaten national unity.

The balance of power between the federal and provincial governments shifted significantly in favor of the provinces during the inter-war period. When governments

were called on to undertake a variety of social measures which affected the personal and property rights of the people, the federal government could only proceed when acting in agreement with the provinces. Meanwhile, the provinces were broadening their own horizons in the field of social services, transportation, and hydro-electric development. This led to uneven standards of government service as dictated by the relative prosperity of each of the provinces. With the onset of the Depression, all the provinces found themselves committed to social reform programmes they really could not afford, while the federal government had the funding but not the power to assume control of these activities. The growing unease in Dominion-provincial relations led Mackenzie King to appoint a Royal Commission in 1937 to investigate all federal-provincial problems of jurisdiction. By appointing the Royal Commission, Mackenzie King successfully prevented the issue of powerful regional forces from coming to a head and was able to lead a united Canada into the Second World War in 1939 [15].

#### THE AGE OF MACKENZIE KING

William Lyon Mackenzie King and the Liberal Party governed the Dominion of Canada from 1921 to 1948, with the exception of the years 1930 to 1936, when the Conservatives under R. B. Bennett were in power [15]. Acting as his own Minister of External Affairs, King dominated Canadian external affairs where he consciously followed a policy of "passive resistance to involvement in British Councils" [91,40]. He attempted to build internal unity in the Dominion on the basis of isolationist attitudes that prevailed after the end of the war. At the same time, King understood the importance of the United States to Canada. Although he felt that Canadian society was superior and distinct from that of her neighbour to the South, he worked hard to maintain friendly relationships with the United States.

In March, 1923, King established a historic precedent by signing the Pacific Halibut Fisheries Treaty with the United States without the co-signature of a

representative of the British government. Signing of the Halibut Treaty secured recognition of Canada's international status with the United States [91]. The Imperial Conference that followed later in the year affirmed the right of the Dominions to sign treaties with foreign states, thereby transforming the British Empire into a looser Commonwealth that recognized the varied interests of its members [15]. At the next Imperial Conference held in 1926, a new definition of the Commonwealth emerged in the Balfour Report. This report declared that members of the British Commonwealth were:

... autonomous communities within the British Empire, equal in status, in no way subordinate to one another in any respect of their domestic or external affairs, though united by a common allegiance to the Crown and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations [91,49].

The Statute of New Westminster, which was enacted by the British Parliament in 1931, established as a legal fact Canada's new position of equality with Great Britain. It granted Canada control over its own merchant shipping and full powers of nationhood in the field of law. With the exceptions of British Parliament retaining the right to amend the Canadian constitution; of Britain, alone, passing laws for all of the Commonwealth; and of the Judicial Committee of the Imperial Privy Council remaining the highest court of appeal for deciding certain legal disputes; Canada had, in 1931, achieved nationhood [15].

Diplomatically, culturally, and economically, Canada increasingly pulled away from British influence and drew closer to the United States. King saw Canadian-American friendship as a key to future Anglo-American co-operation and was convinced that as Europe had caused the problems of the past, North America offered the solutions for the future [91].



## NATIONALISM AND THE EMERGENT CANADIAN CULTURE

Emerging Canadian nationalism created a desire among members of English Canada's intellectual community to express a uniquely Canadian culture. Led by artist Arthur Lismer, and his colleagues in the Group of Seven, an outpouring of art, prose, and poetry took place during the twenties and thirties. Serving as cultural consumers was a literate and leisured urban middle class represented by the growing number of university graduates. Canadian culture also received the backing of a number of organizations such as the Association of Canadian Clubs and the Native Sons of Canada. Wealthy patrons from Canada's leading financial institutions helped to create a cultural infrastructure of theaters and art galleries, while numerous publishing houses and periodicals, such as *Maclean's Magazine*, made Canadian content a priority. The Dominion Drama Festival was inaugurated in 1933, wherein regional competitors performed their short plays. The drama festival was a remarkable achievement in that it encompassed both the English and French-speaking language groups. In spite of mutual disinterest and mistrust, English and French-Canadian intellectuals shared the dilemma of protecting a fragile Canadian culture from the forces that seemed to draw Canada ever closer to the United States [91].

Of concern to the cultural nationalists was the membership of Canadian men in Canadian chapters of the four American service clubs - Rotary, Lions, Kiwanis, and Gyro - which rapidly expanded into all the regions of Canada. Even more alarming was the wave of American mass culture exported North in the form of radio programs, spectator sports, magazines, and the motion pictures. During the Depression, Hollywood's "dream factory" became one of the most important buttresses of the status quo. Any attempts made by the Canadian Government Motion Picture Bureau, the B.C. Educational and Patriotic Film Service, and the Ontario Motion Picture Bureau, to educate Canadians via documentaries seem doomed to failure as moviegoers resented any substitute for pure entertainment [91].

Development of radio broadcasting in Canada moved much more slowly than in the United States. By 1929, approximately 300,000 radio sets were in use in Canada and it has been estimated that eighty percent of the programs listened to were American [91]. Canadian stations usually offered news, lectures or recorded music, while the American counterparts offered much more appealing comedy, live variety programs, and drama. In 1932, Ottawa's jurisdiction over broadcasting was established and shortly after, the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission was created to ensure " . . . complete Canadian control of broadcasting . . . so that national consciousness may be fostered . . . and national unity strengthened" [91,256]. Limited in scope by its small budget, the Commission set the pattern for development of Canadian broadcasting as a mixed private and public venture.

The influence of American periodicals and newspapers provoked additional unease. The *Saturday Evening Post* advertised itself as Canada's leading magazine. Many of the American "pulp" were fiction magazines with garish covers and names that were perceived by many Canadian parents to be a menace to Canadian ideals and to the moral development of their children. However, it was not until 1931 that American dominance of the magazine circulation was at least reduced by a protective tariff introduced by Bennett's Conservative government. Canada's daily newspapers became increasingly depersonalized and homogeneous. Most of the international news was gathered by American correspondents who worked for the Associated Press and United Press. Canadian editors often reprinted their stories with little or no editing or rewriting. Canadian dailies also adopted American newspaper formats with large photos, bold headlines, and various columns dealing with Hollywood gossip, hobbies, bridge, auto repairs, and the comics. Editorial bias and diatribes which had been common to newsheets before the Great War were less evident, as newspapers refrained from alienating any of their advertisers and consumers [91]. The new direction of Canadian journalism was evidenced in the sports pages. Larger-than-life American

sports heroes such as Babe Ruth and Jack Dempsey became Canada's heroes as well. As S. F. Wise and D. Fisher [101] noted, sports writers, who had been mesmerized by the big league glamour of baseball and spoon-fed by American wire services, gave major coverage to baseball at the expense of lacrosse.

Despite the frequently-discussed "invisible border" between Canada and the United States, the period of the twenties and thirties can be portrayed as the cradle of Canadian consciousness. Canadians continued to adhere to a sense of moral superiority relative to the republic to the South, as American society was widely held to be violent, immoral, and materialistic [91]. What Canadians saw and heard, as evidenced in the mass culture exported from the United States, convinced Canadians that they wanted to retain a distinctive personality of their own.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE WOMAN'S MOVEMENT BETWEEN THE WARS

#### WOMEN IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE

Prior to the 1920s, as part of a Progressive Reform Movement, the boundaries of women's participation in public life in Canada had been extended by women's activism in the struggle for enfranchisement and for prohibition. Like their American counterparts, Canadian women joined numerous organizations, in order "... to extend the boundaries of their own lives and to fill a need for social services that was everyday becoming more blatant" [20,184]. A form of maternal feminism emerged in which women's political activism was explained in terms of female reformers' efforts to preserve the security of the home and familial life and to purify society. Advocates of maternal feminism, such as Nellie McClurg and Amelia Spencer, sought women's release from the social and economic injustices created by the increasing intrusion of public and economic institutions into private life. Female reformers argued that women's unique biological qualities and moral superiority as nurturers were too precious to restrict to the home. According to Strong-Boag [87,246], "It was just the mother's love-redemptive, illuminative, understanding, backed by her protective instinct, that was needed in the problems that baffled mankind." While maternal feminism, with its emphasis on protecting the home and family, did not threaten male supremacy, it did challenge the exclusive nature of men's public power. It confronted the division of Canadian society into men's and women's spheres by eroding the boundaries between public and private activities [68].

Coupled with the emergence of maternal feminism was a wave of optimism that envisioned a new world order following the end of the Great War [20]. Reform-minded women deemed it necessary to win the franchise in order to purify society through an infusion of morality into politics. By focusing on the God-given nature of their maternal

role, women could bypass patriarchal authority. Winning the vote would allow them to relate directly as individuals to parliamentary institutions. This conservative and practical approach, espoused by the National Council of Women and, later on, by the more militant Canadian Women's Suffrage Association, appealed to a broad base of privileged and middle class women, thereby achieving legitimacy for the suffrage movement [20]. The first steps toward women's suffrage were taken in the Prairie Provinces, British Columbia, and Ontario, by an amendment to the Dominion Elections Act in July, 1920. All women were granted the right to vote and to become candidates in national elections. By 1922, when Prince Edward Island granted women's suffrage, all women in Canada had the provincial franchise, except for Quebec, where the provincial franchise was not granted until 1940, (Figure 3) [91].

In contrast to those reformers who espoused their faith in the moral superiority of womankind, other feminists were repudiating the idealism they associated with the unfulfilled expectations that followed the Great War. Sacrifice, maternal and otherwise, had not changed the world much. Having achieved suffrage, these women were committed to an ideology in which they equated themselves with men, in all their principal attributes. Conflicting interpretations of woman's nature emerged, coupled with fractionalism as to how social criticism could be translated into positive change. After the vote had been granted to all women, with the exception of those in Quebec, suffrage no longer was a shared goal. Prohibition also ceased to be a major issue, when many of the provinces introduced legislation that controlled liquor distribution and sales. Feminist leaders had no clear constituencies and the Progressive reform ideology seemed naive and inadequate. It appeared that, during the inter-war period, the Canadian women's movement derived its success from the diversity and strength of numerous women's organizations rather than from a single leader or a massive women's vote.

FIGURE 3

# REFERENCE LIST OF DATES FOR THE ACHIEVEMENT OF POLITICAL EQUALITY

<i>Province</i>	<i>Suffrage</i>	<i>Eligibility to hold office</i>
Manitoba	January 28, 1916.	January 28, 1916.
Saskatchewan	March 14, 1916.	March 14, 1916.
Alberta	April 19, 1916.	April 19, 1916.
British Columbia	April 5, 1917.	April 5, 1917.
Ontario	April 12, 1917.	April 24, 1919.
Nova Scotia	April 26, 1918.	April 26, 1918.*
Dominion of Canada	Relatives of members of armed forces— September 20, 1917. All women—May 24, 1918.	July 7, 1919. Reaffirmed and made permanent by the Dominion Elec- tions Act, 1920.
New Brunswick	April 17, 1919.	March 9, 1934.
Prince Edward Island	May 3, 1922.	May 3, 1922.
Newfoundland	April 13, 1925.	April 13, 1925.
Quebec	April 25, 1940.	April 25, 1940.

\*Separate act.

The dates given are those for the granting of Royal Assent.

Source: Catherine L. Cleverdon,  
Woman Suffrage Movement in Canada

Professional social work offered career opportunities for many former activists in the women's movement and gradually replaced voluntarism. Gains were made in the areas of child welfare and public health programs, with the establishment of the Federal Department of Health and Child Welfare Division in 1919 [68]. As women made advances in fields such as medicine, law, teaching, social work, and journalism, professional organizations such as the Federation of Medical Women of Canada, the Canadian Women's Press Club, the Canadian Nurse's Association, and the Federation of Women Teacher's Associations of Ontario were organized in the early 1920s. Most members of these organizations were single women who worked to enhance their professional status and to improve their training and career opportunities. By 1937, the Business and Professional Women's Clubs had over 2,000 members across Canada. These clubs were committed to equality of the sexes and sought to improve the social and economic conditions of working women. Dedicated to promoting their own work, women in the arts tended to join men in founding organizations such as the Canadian Authors' Association in 1921, the Sculptors' Society of Canada in 1928, and the Canadian Group of Painters. Community organizations such as the Women's Art Association of Canada sponsored cultural activities that served to encourage women artists and to foster public interest in art. Women's auxiliaries promoted and funded many musical organizations, theatrical productions, art galleries, and art schools [68].

During the 1920s, the established national reform-minded organizations such as the National Council of Women and the Women's Christian Temperance Union declined in membership. The National Council of Women criticized women seeking successful careers and continued to focus on the protection of motherhood and home life as stabilizing factors in Canadian society. During the Depression, the Council argued that women should remain at home and not take away the few jobs that were available for men. Many young professional women and former members such as The Canadian Women's Press Club withdrew their support [68].

To its credit, the Council was concerned with the plight of unemployed women and so established domestic household training courses. Self-help groups were established where women could engage in various craft activities. The Council also worked for reform in divorce legislation, enhanced legal support for deserted wives, mother's allowance legislation, child welfare, the treatment of adultery as a criminal offense, an increase in the age for marital consent, and proposed amendments to the provincial dower acts. By the end of the 1930s, efforts of the National Council had achieved significant improvement in the quality of women's lives. The plight of the sick and elderly had improved, women were receiving mother's allowances, infant mortality rates had declined, new urban parks had been created, and in several schools, innovative education programs had been initiated [68]. Strong-Boag [91] has pointed out the irony of legislative gains based on the Council's maternalist ideology; women's dependence for support had shifted from dependence upon one man to dependence upon a male-dominated state.

Like the society it wanted to reform, the women's movement was divided by region, religion, class, and race. French-speaking feminists in Quebec never co-operated closely with feminists in the wider women's movement. Religion, as well as language, acted as a barrier to their participation. The Roman Catholic Church with its doctrines relating to the separate, subordinate role of women in society, constrained women's organizations in Quebec [91].

Rural women in the Western provinces were disillusioned with the bourgeois and urban-based National Council of Women and turned to organizations that better-served their interests. The United Farm Women of Alberta and the Women's Institutes served as vehicles that promoted the self-realization of members and sought to improve rural health services and education. Under the leadership of Irene Parlby and Susan Gunn, the United Farm Women of Alberta established local libraries and organized lectures and study groups on health care, children's welfare, minimum wage for women, mothers'



allowances, schooling, music, literature, and immigration. Elected as Alberta's Minister Without Portfolio, from 1921 to 1935, Parlby encouraged farm women to expand their horizons beyond the domestic sphere. During its tenure from 1921 to 1935, the United Farmers of Alberta government passed eighteen acts that had a positive effect on the welfare of women and children. Also concerned with the promotion of life-long education, the British Columbia Women's Institute sponsored business courses for young women and concerned itself with women's health care. In the late 1920s, the Institute was asked to assist in the establishment of provincial health care centers by the Department of Health [68].

Unlike rural feminists such as Parlby, who represented agrarian interests, Nellie McClung established broad appeal as an outstanding female activist on lecture platforms throughout Canada and the United States. Her membership in organizations such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the Women's Canadian Club, the Canadian Author's Association, the Canadian Press Club, the Edmonton Equal Franchise League, and the Methodist Women's Missionary Society, provided her with a loyal network of friends, political disciples, and community organizers [87]. McClung's close friendship with Emily Murphy, Canada's first female police magistrate and National President of the Women's Institute, was also noteworthy. Murphy's outspoken efforts on behalf of women prepared a sympathetic audience for McClung. Sitting as a member of the Liberal Party in the Alberta legislature during the early 1920s, McClung believed that women's ". . . greatest contribution, in Parliament and out of it, will be independence of thought" [87,247]. This willingness to deviate from formal party policy was attractive to reformers and westerners who were critical of the traditional party platforms. Through her tenure in the legislature and through her lectures and publications, McClung reiterated her commitment to feminism and social reform and her hostility to corruption and apathy. An ardent advocate of Prohibition, McClung's speeches credited abstinence with falling crime rates, increased savings, and prosperity.

She argued for liberalized divorce laws, urged the Alberta government to alter the Married Women's Property Act, and in 1927, joined forces with Judge Emily Murphy and three other Alberta women - Irene Parlby, Henrietta Edwards, Louise McKinney - to petition the government on the issue of women's eligibility for membership in the Senate. They demanded an interpretation of a clause in the BNA Act which did not specify if "qualified persons", who could be appointed senators, referred to both sexes or solely to men. In April, 1928, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that women were not "qualified persons" according to the law. An appeal to the Judicial Committee of the British Privy Council reversed the decision. In October, 1929, women in Canada legally became "qualified persons" and were eligible for Senate appointments [91]. This victory represented the highlight of McClung's career.

Belief that the Senate could be used as a platform from which public policy would be influenced proved naive. Emily Murphy, the candidate nominated by women activists to become the first woman senator, was passed by; while Cairine Wilson, a wealthy Ottawa matron, who had founded the National Federation of Liberal Women, was selected by Prime Minister King as the first woman senator in 1930. The new senator involved herself in divorce legislation, immigration, and the League of Nations. A second woman, Iva Fallis, was not named to the Senate until 1935 [68].

The arguments of suffragists that women would vote as a block to reform society also proved naive as many women found it very difficult to cast their ballots. Most women had to overcome their husbands' opposition before they could use their vote. Political parties continued to choose male candidates so that in the federal election of 1921, the first one in which women twenty-one years old and older were eligible to vote, the only woman elected was Agnes Macphail. Macphail represented South-East Grey, a rural Ontario riding, for the United Farmers of Ontario, from 1921 to 1940 [68]. She did not identify herself with the maternal ideology and came to see herself as a feminist. She told reporters, "I want absolute equality. After that is secured then men and women

can take turns being angels" [91,72]. She found her first session very trying and admitted, "some members resented my intrusion, others jeered at me, while very few were genuinely glad to see a woman in the House. Most of the members made me painfully conscious of my sex . . ." [68,280]. In spite of the adversity her presence created in the House, she worked for peace, for women's suffrage in Quebec, for social welfare legislation such as unemployment insurance, family allowances, pensions for the old, blind and disabled, and fought successfully for the Archambault Royal Commission on prison reform [68].

Only nine women, all from Western Canada, were elected to the provincial legislatures before 1940. Two women were cabinet ministers - Mary Ellen Smith, in the Liberal government of British Columbia, and Irene Parlby, of the United Farmers in Alberta [91]. Most of the members represented the newly-formed third parties that had emerged after World War I. Parties such as the United Farmers, the Communist Party of Canada, the National Progressive Party, and the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation were anxious to recruit whatever membership they could and were less entrenched in the male dominance of politics. The third parties' philosophical orientations were more attuned to that of reform-minded women who were concerned about social issues such as class inequality, birth control, and labour legislation. The Co-operative Commonwealth Federation sponsored a number of female candidates in elections held for the provincial legislatures. Dorothy Steeves and Laura Jamieson were elected to the British Columbia legislature during the 1930s. Jamieson, a Burnaby juvenile court judge, was active in a number of feminist groups and causes including the women's peace movement, suffrage, the British Columbia Parent-Teachers Association, the Business and Professional Women's Club, and the Women's School for Citizenship [68].

During the Depression, socialist and communist women co-operated in drawing attention to the desperate conditions of the unemployed. In 1935, women from the

Vancouver Communist Party, the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation, the Local Council of Women, and the Women's Christian Temperance Union joined forces to form a Mothers' Council. The Mothers' Council participated in demonstrations supporting fair work and wages for relief camp workers and organized the distribution of food, clothing, and shelter for the destitute [68].

In British Columbia, Alberta, and Saskatchewan, women's committees greeted the desperate "On to Ottawa" trek of unemployed workers with food and clothing at various stops along the way [91].

Women of minority groups tended to organize their own associations. Groups such as the Association of United Ukrainian Canadians and the National Council of Jewish Women sought to promote and maintain awareness of their unique cultures and to maintain contacts with members living outside Canada. They also engaged in fund raising activities in support of community projects such as the establishment of scholarship funds [68].

The desire of women to improve their lives and those of others extended to activism in the major Protestant churches. Sponsored by the Protestant churches and by the Young Women's Christian Association, Canadian Girls in Training was founded in 1917. Membership reached a high of 40,000, spread throughout 1,100 Canadian communities during the Depression. Meeting at weekly Sunday Schools, group leaders encouraged adolescent girls to participate in religious, physical, intellectual, and service activities. Progressive ideas were utilized wherein young girls were trained in decision-making and independence of thought [68].

During the 1920s and 1930s, the Student Christian Movement, an offspring of the Social Gospel Movement, met on university campuses throughout Canada. This co-educational reform movement organized study groups to address social problems and provided a training ground for many young women to develop their organizational and interpersonal skills. The applied Christianity learned in both the Canadian Girls in

Training and The Student Christian Movement led some women, such as Marion Royce, first director of the federal Department of Labour Women's Bureau, into political activism [68]. Nellie McClung, the leading feminist and Methodist, sought reform within the church that would permit women to serve in the ministry. She also supported the creation of a United Church of Canada in 1925, which she hoped would rekindle the reform crusade for which she had so ardently worked [87]. Separate auxiliaries and charitable associations, within the various Protestant churches, served as the primary venues for much of women's social reform work. The promotion of international cooperation among women's missionary societies and eradication of racial prejudice were major goals espoused by various Canadian missionary societies. The United Church Women's Missionary Society created, supported, and administered a million-dollar budget during the 1920s and placed approximately 300 female missionaries in Canada and abroad. As these missionaries returned from abroad, they introduced new ideas about individual self-worth and cultural relativism that began to erode traditional beliefs about Christian superiority [68].

Within the Roman Catholic Church, clerical insistence on the maternal role for women left few alternatives and Catholic laywomen appeared for the main part, to accept their separate, subordinate role. Women with families and nuns in religious orders were assigned service roles in health and education. During the inter-war period, Quebec experienced a remarkable increase in the number of women entering convents, possibly because of the dire living conditions associated with the Depression [68].

Quebec feminists, such as Therese Cosgrain, were perceived as a threat to traditional authority and social values so that clerics and nationalists, such as Henri Bourassa, mounted campaigns to enhance the family role of women. In spite of such obstacles, various organizations, including the League for Women's Rights, the Montreal Local Council of Women, and the Federation Nationale Saint-Jean Baptiste, sought endorsement of the women's franchise and sought to lessen restrictions on married

women by equalizing authority within the marital relationship. In response to demands made by these organizations, the Dorion Commission on the Civil Rights of Women was established by the Liberal government of Quebec in 1929. The primary demand made by Quebec women appearing before the Commission was that married women be legally entitled to control their own earnings. Although faced by hostility from the church, the government, and the legal profession, the Dorion Commission did give women the right to control their salaries and any assets they brought into the marriage [68].

Involvement in the Great War and in missionary societies had highlighted the need for peace and international understanding. In 1921, Canadian men and women established the Canadian League of Nations Society to support the work of the League of Nations in Geneva, Switzerland. By the 1930s, the society became, in essence, a women's peace organization, led by Cairine Wilson. Both the Local Councils of Women and the National Council of Women attempted to promote international understanding by sponsoring lectures, study groups, and government lobbies. Women's peace organizations tried to elect their members as school trustees and sought to replace cadet training and the subsequent aggrandisement of the military and war in the schools with physical education classes. Peace proved an elusive goal. Pacifists in the peace organizations faced a dilemma, upon the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in July 1936, when their commitment to non-violence conflicted with their commitment for social justice. Divisions within the peace movement were further intensified as fascist dictators assumed control in Germany and Italy. While some women called for opposition to all war, others concluded that a war against Hitler was a "regrettable necessity" [68,285]. By the late 1930s, the optimism that had characterized the women's movement was shaken by the deteriorating world conditions. Reformers had over-estimated their potential to effect sweeping social-change, just as they had under-estimated the power of the vested interests they challenged [68]. In a letter to a friend, Nellie McClung concluded, "there are still a few rivers to cross" [91,75].

As a result of their participation in organized groups, throughout the inter-war period, many Canadian women learned valuable organizational and fund-raising skills that contributed to their participation in the public arena. Not to be discounted was a new sense of connectedness with other women and respect for their own abilities. This, in turn, fostered an emerging collective confidence and encouraged a growing assertiveness that challenged the private/female and public/male dichotomy[20].

## WOMEN AT WORK

World War I did not significantly alter patterns of female employment for Canadian women. The increased number of young, single, working women reflected a growing trend that had begun early in the twentieth century. New markets for female labour had been created by the general population shift from rural to urban areas and by the massive influx of impoverished immigrants, which facilitated the development of labour-intensive industry. As an industrialized, market economy developed in Canada, production increasingly took place outside the home so that the domestic labour of single daughters was no longer required inside the household. In order to purchase products, now made outside of the home, the young, single female's income from paid employment became essential. While motherhood remained the principal and most rewarding career for Canadian women, there was widespread acceptance of single women in the labour force. Throughout the 1920s, most female occupations were not viewed as rewarding careers in themselves. The training received by young women on the job was seen as good preparation for married life. Hard working, obedient workers would be good, obedient wives and mothers [1].

By 1921, seventeen percent of all Canadian women over the age of fifteen were engaged in paid labour. They comprised just over fifteen percent of the total paid workforce (Figure 4) [1,290]. A closer look at patterns of female employment indicates that over seventy percent of the female labour force was segmented into five occupations

FIGURE 4

The Canadian Population and Labour Force

	<i>1881</i>	<i>1891</i>	<i>1901</i>	<i>1911</i>	<i>1921</i>
Total Population .....	4,306,118	4,801,071	5,318,606	7,179,650	8,775,853
Labour Force .....	1,377,585	1,606,369	1,782,832	2,723,634	3,164,348
Female Labour Force .....		195,990	237,949	364,821	489,058
Women as Percentage of Labour Force .....		11.07	13.3	13.4	15.5
	<i>1931</i>	<i>1941</i>	<i>1951</i>	<i>1961</i>	<i>1971</i>
Total Population .....	10,363,240	11,489,713	13,984,329	18,200,621	21,568,310
Labour Force .....	3,917,612	4,195,591	5,214,913	6,342,289	8,631,000
Female Labour Force .....	665,302	832,840	1,163,893	1,760,450	2,831,000
Women as Percentage of Labour Force .....	17.0	18.5	22.0	27.3	33.3

Sources: Census of Canada, 1921.

Census of Canada, 1961.

Women at Work in Canada. Department of Labour, 1964.

Women in the Labour Force 1971: Facts and Figures. Women's Bureau, Labour Canada.



that were almost exclusively filled by women (Figure 5) [91,348]. The ghettoization of women's work into suitable occupations such as domestic service, clerical work, textile and food production, teaching, and nursing, was characterized by poor working conditions and low wages [91]. In 1931, the average Canadian male worker earned \$942; the average female, a meager \$559 [91]. More than one-half of the total increase in the female labour force, between 1921 and 1931, occurred in the service sector where the female work force shifted towards the clerical or white-collar sector. These changes were due to the growth and rationalization of corporate and government bureaucracies required to service the rapidly-expanding economy. Women's preference for clerical work over domestic service resulted in significant increases in the number of women engaged as bank clerks, tellers, and stenographers, and a significant decrease in their participation rates as domestic servants. This shift demonstrated a recurring pattern in women's employment. When and what kind of employees were needed depended on which sector of the economy was expanding and on the availability of a cheap, labour supply [20].

Many women tolerated the circumstances of their employment, expecting that paid labour was but a transitory stage in their life cycle, which would end in marriage. Over ninety percent of the women living in Canada in 1931 were married at some time in their lives [91]. Societal attitudes continued to exclude married women from the work force. The paucity of jobs open to married women, the demands of housework and children, and the disapproval of their husbands and families, made paid employment very difficult. Homemaking continued to be upheld as the perfect female occupation and married women became part of an inactive reserve of labour to be called upon when the need arose. The differing attitudes toward single women workers and married women served to maintain the sexual division of labour within the workplace, as the time women spent in the labour force came to be viewed, by both sexes, as a preparation for married life rather than a satisfying, life-long career [1].

**Distribution of the Male Labour Force, 1921-41**

	1921		1931		1941	
	Number*	Per Cent	Number*	Per Cent	Number*	Per Cent
All Occupations	2,675	100.0	3,256	100.0	3,363	100.0
Agriculture	1,017	38.0	1,103	33.9	1,064	31.7
Fishing/Trapping	29	1.1	47	1.5	51	1.5
Logging	38	1.4	43	1.4	80	2.4
Mining	48	1.8	58	1.8	71	2.1
Manufacturing	317	11.9	394	12.1	561	16.7
Construction	162	6.1	202	6.2	212	6.3
Transportation	184	6.9	271	8.3	294	8.8
Trade/Finance	245	9.2	295	9.1	296	8.8
Professional	78	2.9	103	3.2	120	3.6
Personal Service	73	2.7	128	3.9	144	4.3
Clerical	127	4.8	141	4.3	159	4.8
Labourers	305	11.4	425	13.1	251	7.5

\* Thousands of workers

Source: *Census of Canada, 1951.*

**Distribution of the Female Labour Force, 1921-41**

	1921		1931		1941	
	Number*	Per Cent	Number*	Per Cent	Number*	Per Cent
All Occupations	489	100.0	665	100.0	832	100.0
Agriculture	17	3.7	24	3.6	18	2.3
Manufacturing	89	18.3	101	15.2	148	17.8
Transportation	14	3.0	17	2.7	16	2.0
Trade/Finance	47	9.8	56	8.5	74	8.9
Professional	92	19.0	118	17.6	127	15.3
Personal Service	132	27.1	227	34.3	288	34.7
Clerical	90	18.5	117	17.7	154	18.6

\* Thousands of workers

Source: *Census of Canada, 1951.*

## WOMEN IN THE PRIVATE SPHERE

Following the disruption to family life wrought by World War I, Canadian women assumed traditional roles as wives and mothers, despite the expanded opportunities presented by increased educational and employment opportunities. Three-quarters of Canadian women had entered into the state of matrimony by the age of thirty-four and very few marriages ended in divorce [91]. Once married, women usually left the paid labour-force and aspired to traditional values associated with "... femininity, domesticity, and dependence" [68].

Through newspapers, books, magazines such as *Saturday Night*, and through the educational system, women were channeled into appropriate "female" pursuits. Although more young women enrolled in high school and universities than in the pre-war period, women were encouraged to study home economics, nursing, and secretarial science. Secondary schools emphasized the development of domestic science programs and vocational skills designed to prepare women for marriage. In Quebec, academic courses such as science were frequently replaced by domestic science courses for girls in the secondary schools. In domestic science, girls learned to cook on electric stoves and iron with electric irons in spite of the fact that most rural homes did not have electricity. Advocates of domestic science programs maintained that without the school-based instruction, Canadian women would lack the necessary skills for homemaking.

In spite of societal concern with the media image of the "flapper" - a young woman of questionable morals who drank, smoked, and partied - most young women of the 1920s lived at home and contributed most of their wages to their families. Women continued to be socialized from their childhood for their adult roles as wives and mothers and preferred the state of marriage to that of spinsterhood and a poorly-paid worker [68].

Significant changes were occurring in the Canadian household as industrial capitalism had transferred the production of household commodities outside the home. The housewife increasingly became a consumer rather than a producer of goods.

Women's magazines defined housewives as new professionals. Household management and child care became careers guided by principles of business and science [68]. The homemaker increasingly became the object of manipulation of symbols and ideas perpetuated by the advertising and advice agencies. Intensified advertising in women's magazines praised the advantages of the latest labour-saving machinery and the efficient kitchen. No doubt, new appliances decreased the physical effort involved in housework, but did little to save time as standards of housekeeping improved. The extent of the introduction of the latest labour-saving devices should not be overestimated as the family incomes of most rural immigrant and working-class women did not allow the purchase of such devices. As of 1931, one in ten Canadian farms had electricity, one in fifty farms on the Prairies had running water, and even as late as 1948, fewer than one half of Canadian homes had a gas or electric stove, and less than a third had a refrigerator [91].

With the increased free time allegedly created by efficient household management, the idea of the wife as the husband's source of comfort and best friend became popular. Physical attractiveness and the retention of a youthful appearance, as advocated by the advertising industry, became important factors in determining the image of the successful wife and mother. Following World War I, short, loose dresses that de-emphasized the female figure were fashionable. The slim, boyish look was popular and women were advised to maintain a trim figure through diet and exercise. Upper and middle class women could spend their free time playing bridge, tennis, golf, or could be engaged in charitable work or cultural activities. Women's magazines frequently advised female readers to take up their husbands activities and to educate themselves in order to enhance their wifely role. The press constantly reminded women that it was their duty and privilege to preserve family stability for the well-being of the nation. Self-sacrifice and self-restraint continued to be the hallmarks of a good wife. "For most working class, rural, or immigrant women, the ideal was impossible" [68,255]. For the working wife, for the wife taking in boarders, or raising a large family, the time

and resources necessary to achieve the ideal marriage or household simply was not available.

The single most important change for the average Canadian family was its diminishing size. The birth rate, which fell from 29.3 per thousand in 1921 to 20.6 per thousand in 1939, became the focus of public concern. The distribution of information and the sale of birth control devices was illegal and birth control was attacked by prominent figures, such as Dr. Helen MacMurchy, as "racial suicide." Concerns were expressed, by those of British origin, that the limited family size among those of Anglo-Saxon heritage would lead to racial suicide as they soon would be outnumbered by larger immigrant families. French-Canadian nationalists voiced similar concerns as they expressed fear for the decline of their culture should the francophone birthrate decline [68].

Despite these arguments, women throughout the interwar period sought contraceptive advice. Advocates for birth control such as the Americans, Margaret Sanger and Emma Goldman, viewed birth control as an individual woman's right to control her own body. Support for limited family size came from socialist worker groups in Canada, who felt that large families simply provided a cheap source of labour for the capitalist free enterprise system. In 1924, a group of socialists from British Columbia founded the Canadian Birth Control League with the purpose of disseminating birth control literature among the working class. By 1929, the women's branch of the Saskatoon Section of the United Farmers of Canada called upon the federal government to allow distribution of birth control information, and requested the establishment of birth control clinics, staffed by medical doctors. A number of birth control clinics were established in British Columbia, Ontario, and Manitoba early in the 1930s. Authorities occasionally harassed birth control advocates. In 1936, Dorothea Palmer, of the Parents Information Bureau in Kitchener, Ontario, was arrested for distributing birth control information and devices to women in a working-class French- Canadian suburb of

Ottawa. She was subsequently acquitted. Although the trial provided a platform for the proponents of birth control, the law regarding the distribution of contraceptive information and devices was not altered [68].

The reduced size of the average Canadian family implied a lightening of the burden of motherhood. But what happened was that mothers were expected to pay more individual attention to each child. Medical experts advocated scientific methods relative to childbirth and childcare which supplanted intuition, tradition, and informal advice. Childbirth, itself, increasingly took place in hospitals and was supervised by male physicians. Once the birth had occurred, experts from the fields of medicine, education, psychology, and social welfare prescribed correct techniques for parenting. As the ultimate responsibility for a child's success or failure was the mother's, she was expected to read relevant books and articles, to attend baby clinics, to participate in mother's clubs, parent-teacher associations, and youth groups. Women who failed at these new child-rearing and home-management tasks were bound to feel guilty about their failure. The scientific and industrial revolution in the home had served to heighten the emotional context of woman's work. As a result, the sense of a woman's self-worth became a function of her role as a homemaker and a mother, who cheerfully and skillfully set about making everyone in her family perfectly happy and healthy [68].

## CHAPTER 6

### PLAY LIKE GENTLEMEN: BEHAVE LIKE LADIES

#### INTRODUCTION

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, ideas of femininity, of fundamental differences between the sexes, and of the "cult of womanhood" [20] persisted and were espoused by an upper and middle class that embraced the ideology of maternal feminism. Emphasis on femininity and preparation for motherhood influenced most rationales of women's sport during this period. Although Canadian women were proving their athletic competence in increasing numbers and in a wide variety of sports, definitions of femininity, stressing grace, dependence, and beauty, were slow to change [32].

The advent of the Great War did serve, in a subtle way, to advance the cause of women in sport. With the usual premium placed on sacrifice and industriousness during a national crisis, women's responsibility to develop their full physical potential was advocated. This goal was compatible with the views of maternal feminists, who were critical of females who lived frivolous, unproductive lives. In a 1917 article, written by Adelaide Plumptre, a leader in the Canadian Red Cross Society, evidence of this shift in the definition of femininity appeared:

Co-education and open air holidays began to lessen the difference between boy and girl, the necessary emergence of women from the stuffy femininity of the drawing room into the human life of industry and business has been accelerated - though not initiated - by the demands of war, and has disposed forever of the theory that there is no place for a woman outside her home [48,217].

Somewhat conflicting images of women emerged. On the one hand, because of their moral superiority, women were lauded as ideal nurturers; on the other hand, partly because of the stamina women had demonstrated in the war effort, they came to be seen as endowed with capabilities similar to men. This contradiction between the maternal and masculine image of women was reflected in women's sport. In order to achieve social approval for their involvement in sport, women had to demonstrate that femininity and

more active participation in strenuous physical activity were not incompatible [32]. As stated by Donald Mrozek [58,289], "the emphasis of how one engaged in public activities became the hallmark especially of women's sport in the first half of the twentieth century."

## WOMEN'S SPORT BETWEEN THE WARS

The high regard for sport that existed in the 1920s affirmed societal acceptance of sport as a constructive activity. The benefit of exercise to health and beauty was one recognized value, but equally important was the contribution participation in athletics made to character development and good citizenship. Educators, reform leaders, business executives, politicians, and the clergy perceived the benefits of athletics as a counterbalance to the evils of society. Concerned about the increasing leisure time available to young, urban dwellers, and disturbed that traditional values were being discarded in favor of less substantial ones, leaders placed emphasis on involving youth in wholesome play [50].

For a society disillusioned by the war and drained by reform efforts, youth came to represent the promise of success and a brighter future. Several factors emerged in the United States that contributed to the pre-occupation with youth during the 1920s. In 1905, an American psychologist named, G. Stanley Hall, published a very influential book, *Adolescence*, which pointed out the tremendous significance of this period of life. Following the war, the American mass media began to glorify all that youth represented. Radio broadcasts, motion pictures, and magazines portrayed youth in very positive ways. Advertising campaigns encouraged the older segments of the population to avoid looking their age and acting it. Health, beauty, and the exhilaration of youth came to be associated with a product and frequently with a sport, as leading sport personalities were featured in product endorsements. Across America, young athletes were portrayed



as the new heroes and heroines of the day. They were clean-living, loyal, and dutiful; while at the same time, they were attractive, virile, and competitive [50].

In Canada, women's magazines in the 1920s, contained numerous articles that stressed the relationship between health, beauty, and exercise. Columnist, Jane Addison, who wrote for the *Canadian Magazine's* women's section, "urged women to view their bodies 'as very important machines which needed proper care and repair,' including adequate rest and exercise" [48,220]. An emphasis on health and personal hygiene prevailed in most of the advertising directed towards young women and according to Lenskyj [48,222], "... advertisers were probably correct in anticipating that the active woman image would help to sell their product."

By the late 1920s, the Canadian press had accorded women's sport a higher profile. Several of the nation's major newspapers hired former well-known athletes such as Bobbie Rosenfeld and Alexandrine Gibb to write women's sports columns, and radio stations frequently broadcast women's sporting events live. Referring to women's baseball games in Toronto, one writer noted that, "the spectators came to jeer but stayed to cheer" [32,37]. Women's sport had become a very popular form of entertainment in which spectator attendance sometimes outnumbered the attendance at the men's games [32].

Additional factors contributed to the burgeoning growth of sport during the inter-war period and also to women's changing role from decorative spectators to active participants. Factors such as urbanization, industrialization and the accompanying standardization of the work week, improved communication and transportation, relaxation of enforcement of the Lord's Day Act, less formal and restrictive styles of dress, technological developments in sport facilities and equipment, improved access to higher levels of education, private patronage of talented athletes, and mass spectator support for women's baseball and basketball games contributed to the broadening of women's involvement in athletics [16].

Montreal and Toronto, with their large urban populations, became the focal point for women's sport during the inter-war period. Much of the interest in sport was restricted to those of English background where traditional cultural attitudes towards participation in acceptable physical activities was more favourable. French-Canadian women, restricted by the conventional attitudes of the Roman Catholic Church regarding women's place in the home, exhibited consistently low participation rates in organized sport [16].

Perhaps the greatest development was the expansion of women's sport and athletic clubs and the relative autonomy of the organizations governing women's sport. Churches, commercial interests, and organizations such as the Y.W.C.A. sponsored teams and leagues. Sunday school leagues experienced high participation rates throughout the country in sports such as basketball, softball, soccer, track and field, badminton, and tennis. The Y.W.C.A. provided instruction, facilities, and equipment for sports that included swimming, basketball, softball, canoeing, rowing, gymnastics, track and field, and soccer. These separate organizations also provided opportunities for women's participation as executive members, fund raisers, and coaches [57].

Sport thrived in the universities established in Toronto and Montreal, in spite of significant differences in the levels of support for men's and women's activities. Campus facilities for women generally remained pitifully inadequate or non-existent. When Hart House was constructed in 1919 at the University of Toronto for athletic and extra-curricular activities, female students were excluded [68]. This closed-door policy was one of the primary reasons women formed so many of their own sports clubs, leagues, and federations.

Organizations such as the Ladies' Golf and Tennis Club, which was founded in 1924 by Ada Mackenzie, provided women with the facilities and opportunities to play golf and tennis. During a vacation to England in 1920, Mackenzie noticed that female golfers enjoyed equal access to the golf courses, in sharp contrast to the situation that existed in

Canada. She stated, "it occurred to me that a club would give our girls a better chance . . . . clubs for golf and tennis do not encourage women" [101,268]. Upon Mackenzie's return to Canada, she found an appropriate site for a golf course just south of Toronto, organized a bond issue to raise the purchase price, issued membership shares, and officially opened the doors of the Ladies Golf and Tennis Club of Toronto. Ironically, rules of the new club allowed men to play during restricted times only. By 1928, Mackenzie had initiated the Ontario Junior Championship for women and continued to actively encourage young players throughout her fifty year career as one of Canada's outstanding golfers [101].

Prior to World War I, the Canadian Ladies' Golf Union, which was formed in 1913, was the only national sports organization controlled by women [43]. Following the war, sports organizations such as the Women's Intercollegiate League, established in 1920 by McGill, Toronto, and Queen's Universities; the Women's Amateur Athletic Federation, and various community-based clubs provided opportunities for women's sport to flourish [57].

Formation of the Women's Amateur Athletic Federation in 1925, under the leadership of Alexandrine Gibb and a small group of Torontonians, created a national sports governing body for women that was based on the male organizational model of the Amateur Athletic Union. Using the support of members of the AAU in an advisory capacity, the WAAF soon set about organizing provincial branches, and within a very short time span, had ". . . brought a uniform system of administration and health inspection to seven sports" [43,4].

The WAAF governed women's track and field and established a uniform code of eligibility for all sports. It is of interest to note that one of the eligibility requirements was an annual medical certificate of good health required from each female athlete. A similar requirement was not required of the males. By the 1930s, national and

provincial-level athletes, competing in basketball, softball and hockey, were required to have WAAF membership cards [43].

Regional disputes over leadership and representation in the WAAF emerged and damaged the organization's effectiveness throughout much of the 1930s. Having two-thirds of the membership, Ontario and Quebec felt they should have the most influence in the organization. Each regional branch could send three voting delegates to the annual meeting. However, because of the expense and long distances that some delegates had to travel, frequently only one delegate represented a regional branch [43]. Western interests were ably represented by Ann Clark, who held office as secretary and president of the WAAF for several successive terms. Clark was subject to considerable criticism in newspapers in Eastern Canada for her outspoken advocacy of Western Canada's point of view [18]. Ontario, meanwhile, was pushing for proportional representation at the annual meetings and eventually succeeded in winning approval for its proposal. Ann Clark withdrew her name from the race for presidency of the WAAF. The damage created by such internal dissention left its mark on the organization and made good copy for the press. As one anonymous track star divulged to columnist Andy Lytle [52]:

There is too much envy, too much jealousy . . . You've no idea how they talk at their meetings. It's the cat's meow, Mr. Lytle. They accuse one another of pulling unfair strings to get trips . . . worse still, they do not know anything whatever about handling or caring for athletes. They accept official positions, take over coaching jobs, and they haven't the foggiest idea of what to do or even when to do it.

It is difficult to assess whether this criticism represented a consensus of the other athletes' views, as Lytle had made it abundantly clear that he was opposed to women's governance of their own sport and to Ann Clark's leadership of the WAAF [18].

In reviewing the historical development of the WAAF, Kidd [43] has credited the organization with the introduction of annual dominion track and field championships for women, with the introduction of major sports awards for women, with the selection of women's teams for international competitions, and with the development of policy and

resolution of disputes. Perhaps the greatest contribution of the WAAF during the 1920s and 1930s was its support for women's right to compete aggressively in an expanding arena of sport.

One of the greatest basketball teams of the century, the Edmonton Commercial Graduate Club, emerged from the McDougall Commercial High School in Edmonton in 1915. During the next quarter-century, the Grads played 522 games and won all but twenty of them. In exhibition appearances at four Olympic Games - in Paris in 1924, in Amsterdam in 1928, in Los Angeles in 1932, and in Berlin in 1936 - the girls won each of the twenty-seven games in which they competed. The Grads' outstanding achievements began when they won their first Canadian title in 1922. Having paid their own way, six team members made the trip to London, Ontario, to play the Eastern champion Shamrocks. Returning to Edmonton with that city's first of seventeen Dominion Championships, the Grads' victory in 1922 went almost unnoticed by the general public. The local newspaper, *The Edmonton Journal*, did take note of the team's exploits and wrote, ". . . the Edmonton girls brought the thousand spectators up with a start by staging a brand of basketball that was actually dazzling" [39,545].

It was not until 1923 that the public image of the Grads was changed by sports promoter "Deacon" White, local businessmen, and the self-declared world champions, Cleveland Favourite Knits. Realizing the potential earnings to be gleaned from gate receipts from thousands of spectators, "Deacon" White and the Grads' coach, Percy Page, began planning a series of international and inter-regional competitions to be played on the new hardwood floors of the Edmonton Arena. A two-game series was inaugurated with the Cleveland Favorite Knits in competition for the Underwood Challenge Trophy. The Grads defeated the United States champions and successfully retained possession of the Underwood Challenge Trophy for the next seventeen years. Subsequent challenges from Toronto, Chicago, and Warren, Ohio, drew average crowds of five thousand spectators. Revenue generated by the gate receipts provided sufficient funds for the

Grads to move into the field of international competition. Their subsequent successes in the United States and Europe bestowed celebrity status upon them. Upon their return to Edmonton, they were greeted at the railway station by thousands of cheering supporters [39].

Several factors contributed to the Grads' outstanding success. A closely-monitored farm system was used by Mr. Page to recruit team members. Following an initial period as members of the Gradettes, the feeder team which Mr. Page either supervised or coached, outstanding players would be moved up to the senior team. According to Noel MacDonald Robertson, the great centre, who played on the basketball team from 1933 to 1939, this recruiting system contributed to team cohesion. She stated, "on the floor we were not individuals, we were a team " [101,72]. Much of the Grads' success could also be attributed to the coaching of Percy Page. The girls practised twice a week, and played a quick, short, passing game that demanded excellent physical conditioning. Many of the Grads' games were won by last minute surges, when their opponents were too tired to respond to the Grads pace. Mr. Page, however, attributed the team's success to the team members. He stated in 1923, "they are champions, because they are the most whole-hearted, sport-loving girls that it would be possible to find; they have won because the spirit of the Prairie is born and bred in them" [101,77]

Another highly successful Canadian women's basketball team gained international recognition at the Third Women's World Games held in Prague, Czechoslovakia, in 1930. As the Grads were unable to attend the games, the University of British Columbia women's basketball team was granted permission to represent North America at the competition. On September 8, 1930, the final game for the World Basketball Championship featured France versus Canada and was played in front of approximately 10,000 spectators. In spite of such handicaps as having to use the French interpretation of the international rules, having to play on an unfamiliar court, having a referee who did not speak English, and having to use a smaller basketball for one-half of

the game; the U.B.C. team managed to win by a narrow margin of 18 to 14. The team arrived back in Vancouver on September 26, 1930, and was met by one of the largest crowds ever to greet returning Canadian champions [39].

Canadian women also enjoyed considerable success at the international level of competition in sports other than basketball. Cecil Smith, a figure skater, made her debut as Canada's first female Olympic competitor at the 1924 Winter Games in Chamonix, France [101]. Swimmers emerged as outstanding athletes during the 1920s and 1930s: Phyllis Dewar, who dominated the 1934 British Empire Games by winning four individual events; Phillis Haslam, who set a world record in the 100 meter backstroke; and Margaret Seller, who was instrumental in gaining recognition for the sport of synchronized swimming at the national and international levels [101]. Beyond the opportunities for competition provided by amateur swimming, international competitions for marathon swimming were held at the Canadian National Exhibition in Toronto, commencing in 1926. The prize money for winning a marathon swim was considerable - \$10,000 by 1931 - and public interest in the events was high. Detailed, live coverage of the swims was carried by local radio stations. The endurance demonstrated by women swimmers, who rapidly narrowed the gap between men's and women's swimming records, served to cast doubt on existing assumptions regarding female frailty and male supremacy in athletics [32].

An astonishing career in competitive speedskating was established by Canadian, Lela Brooks. Encouraged by her parents, who were both competitive speedskaters, Brooks was the first female admitted to the Old Orchard Skating Club in Toronto. By 1926, Brooks had broken six world records and won three of her four races at the World Championships held in Saint John, New Brunswick. She continued to compete until her retirement in 1935, having won all the major women's speedskating titles. Jean Wilson followed closely on the blades of Brooks, when she won the North American Speedskating Championships in 1931. The next year, she competed in the Winter Olympics at Lake

Placid, New York, where speedskating competitions were staged as exhibition events. Jean won the 500 meter event in record time and placed a very close second on the 1,500 meter race [101].

Several women deserve mention, not only because of their outstanding achievements in an individual sport, but also because of their all-round athletic ability. Dorothy Walton emerged as one of the West's great athletes. During her years at university from 1926 to 1930, Walton played on fourteen intercollegiate teams that including tennis, diving, swimming, track and field, basketball and field hockey. She won provincial and Western Canadian tennis titles between 1924 and 1931, and was the first woman to win the Outstanding Athlete Award at the University of Saskatchewan. By 1934, badminton was Walton's premier sport, and in 1939, she won the All-England Women's Singles Title, which was considered equivalent to the world amateur championship [101].

Bobbie Rosenfeld was an outstanding performer in track and field and also competed in many of the other sporting activities that were available. In 1924, Rosenfeld won the Toronto Grass Court Tennis Championship and played on several Eastern Canadian championship basketball teams. By 1928, she had set Canadian records in the running broad jump, discus, and standing broad jump. The highlight of Rosenfeld's career occurred at the Amsterdam Olympics in 1928, the first Olympic Games in which women were allowed to compete in track and field. She won the silver medal in the 100 metre dash, the gold medal in the 4x100 metre relay, and finished fifth in the 800 metre competition, even though she had never trained for it [76]. Constance Hennesey, a founding member of the Toronto Ladies' Athletic Club, described Rosenfeld as, "... wiry and quick. Above all she was aggressive, very aggressive physically. She simply went after everything with full force . . . . She was as good as one could see in track and field, hockey, basketball and softball" [101,79]. Stricken by arthritis shortly after the 1928 Games, Rosenfeld was forced to retire from active sport. She subsequently coached the



women's track team in the 1932 British Empire Games and then worked as a sports columnist for the *Toronto Globe* [101].

No record of Canadian women's achievement in track and field would be complete without mention of the outstanding performances of Myrtle Cook, Bobbie Rosenfeld, Jane Bell, and Ethel Smith, who set a new world record when they won the 400 metre relay at the 1928 Olympics in Amsterdam [32]. Referring to the Canadian women's Olympic team, Schrodt has stated [76,279], ". . . no other single Canadian sports group approached the level reached by that team in the Olympic Games."

The growing interest of women in international competition aroused resistance in the International Olympic Committee. Prior to 1928, women in the Olympic Games had officially competed in tennis, swimming, and ice-skating; however, in spite of strong pleas made by women in sport to incorporate women's track and field events in the Games of 1920 and 1924, the International Olympic Committee and the International Amateur Athletic Federation, the governing body for Olympic track and field, refused to concern themselves with women's track and field [46].

In response to the opposition from the International Olympic Committee, Alice Milliat, a Frenchwoman, decided to form an international organization for women which provided a regulatory sports body, the Federation Sportive Feminine Internationale (FSFI), and a forum for competition. During its fifteen-year history, from 1921 to 1936, the FSFI held four international competitions for women. The First Women's Olympic Games were held in Paris in 1922, where representatives from five nations took part in eleven events. [One of the events was the 1000 metre race, which was 200 metres longer than the 800 metre race that was subsequently discredited following the 1928 Olympic Games in Amsterdam]. Use of the term Olympic by the FSFI raised the ire of the International Olympic Committee; thus the Second Women's Olympic Games, became the Second International Ladies' Games, held in Sweden in 1926. Despite the controversy created by the running of the 800 metre race for women at the 1928 Olympic

Games in Amsterdam, The Third Women's World Games were held in Prague in 1930. Over 15,000 spectators watched more than 200 athletes from seventeen countries participate in the three days of competition [46].

Meanwhile, the FSFI continued to lobby for the implementation of a full slate of track and field events for women in the Olympic Games of 1936. It indicated to the International Olympic Committee its willingness to give up the Women's World Games only if a full program of events was granted for women in the Olympics and if women could have direct representation on the International Olympic Committee. Following lengthy negotiations between the FSFI and the International Amateur Athletic Federation, the IAAF decided that it would take complete control of women's track and field and that the Fifth Women's World Games in 1938 would be disallowed. Although records kept by the FSFI, for regulated championships, were recognized by the IAAF, no promise for a full Olympic women's program in track and field was forthcoming. Many women involved in the FSFI were embittered by their treatment by the IAAF and as a result, the FSFI never met again. The one international organization that had championed the cause for women's athletics ceased to exist. In retrospect, had it not been for the efforts of Alice Milliat and the FSFI, the acceptance of women's competition in a full slate of track and field events at the international level would probably have been considerably delayed [46].

The 1928 Olympic Games in Amsterdam were noteworthy because of the controversy surrounding the 800 metre race. There were mixed reports of total exhaustion amongst the competitors who managed to cross the finish line. This degree of fatigue was considered unacceptable by officials from several countries, and was used as evidence of the damage that would befall women who participated in strenuous sport. Opponents of women's participation in track and field events at the Olympic Games already included the founder of the modern Olympic Games, Baron de Coubertin and Pope Pius XI [57]. Dr. A. S. Lamb, the manager of the 1928 Canadian team, was one of

the most outspoken opponents of women's competition in strenuous sport and voted against women's right to compete in future Olympics. He argued that women were physically incapable and were too-highly strung to compete in such activities. A compromise was eventually reached wherein the 800 metre race was discontinued but women were allowed to participate in future Olympic Games [32].

In Canada, Dr. Lamb's comments were treated with skepticism by sportswriters who published photos of successful female athletes with their babies [32]. Bobbie Rosenfeld, who had finished fifth in the race, later wrote in a 1938 interview in *Maclean's*, "any girl who accepts and practises correct methods of training is capable of running 800 meters or continuing any other unusual athletic pursuit"[57,238]. It is interesting to note that in the 800 metre race in Amsterdam, Rosenfeld had deliberately stayed behind to encourage her faltering team mate, Jean Thompson, across the finish line ahead of herself [101].

It was also at the 1928 Olympic Games that Ethel Catherwood emerged as the world's premier high jumper, when she won the gold medal with a leap of 5' 2.7". Catherwood, who had grown up in Saskatchewan, was called the "Saskatoon Lily." One Toronto sportswriter wrote:

From the instant this tall slim graceful girl from the prairies tossed aside her long flowing cloak of purple and made her first leap, the fans fell for her. A flowerlike face of rare beauty above a long, slim body simply clad in pure white . . . she looked like a tall strange lily [101,231].

Following the Games, Catherwood remained in Toronto where she became a member of the Parkdale Ladies' Athletic Club. The club had been founded by Teddy Oke, who offered employment to female athletes in various sports and provided financial support for their coaching and competitive needs. Catherwood was employed in Oke's brokerage firm and was coached by Walter Knox, whom Oke had hired, until she moved to the United States in 1929 [101].

At the 1932 Olympic Games held in Los Angeles, an outstanding sprinter emerged in the form of Hilda Strike, who won silver medals for her performances in the

100 metre race and 400 metre relay. In the 100 meters, Strike and the current world record holder, Stella Walsh, both finished the race with identical times of 11.9 seconds; however, the gold medal was awarded to Walsh. In the 400 metre relay, Strike anchored the Canadian team which finished with the same official time as the American team, but once again the gold medal was awarded to the opponent. Following the 1932 Olympics, Strike and former Olympic gold-medal winner, Myrtle Cook, formed the Mercury Athletic Club in Montreal, where Strike continued to train. She competed in the 1934 British Empire Games in London, where she won silver medals in the 100 yard race and 440 yard relay, before retiring in 1935 [101].

Controversy marked the advent of the 1936 Olympics, which were held from August 1 to 16 in Berlin. Opposed to the staging of the Olympics in Berlin, a small team of Canadian athletes, which included Eva Dawes, the silver medalist in high jump at the 1932 Los Angeles Olympic Games, chose to attend the People's Olympic Games, from July 19 to 26 in Barcelona. The People's Olympic Games were considered an alternative to, "the Berlin Olympiad which stands for the fascinization of sport and the preparation of youth for war" [42,21]. The campaign against the Olympics was part of the Communist Party of Canada's overall campaign against facism. Because of reported Nazi atrocities in sport, in particular the repression of "non-Aryan" athletes, it was recommended that the Olympics not be staged in Nazi Germany. The proposed boycott was widely discussed by sports columnist across the country, by the Canadian Olympic Committee, the Amateur Athletic Union of Canada, and the Y.M.C.A.[42].

Various arguments were presented to justify sending the Canadian team to Berlin. In the end, the Canadian Olympic Committee supported the competition in Berlin, and with the exception of a few Jewish athletes and Eva Dawes, the boycott campaign had little effect on most of the Canadian competitors and coaches [42]. The Canadian women's team that did attend the 1936 Berlin Olympics did not match the

performances of its predecessors at the 1928 and 1932 Olympics. The 400 metre relay team won bronze medals, as did Betty Taylor in the 80 metre hurdles [76].

While the FSFI was struggling to gain improved access for women's sport at the international level of competition, a number of women's organizations in the United States, such as the Girl Scouts, the Young Women's Christian Association, the Playground and Recreation Association, the Women's Division of the National Amateur Athletic Federation, and professional physical educators at the colleges and universities, advocated a modified, minimally competitive version of sport for women. They argued for separate programs, teachers, coaches, and officials for women's athletics in the hope that women's sport would develop as "a more moral and democratic athletic philosophy than men's" [32,35]. Physical educators in educational settings throughout the United States introduced the concept of the "Play Day" and modified girls rules, which were designed to maximize participation and good sportsmanship while avoiding the hazards of overly-aggressive play and competitiveness [57].

By 1933, these attitudes did have an influence on girl's and women's sport programs at McGill University and in the schools in the Toronto area. Intramurals were introduced to replace inter-school competitions, and modified girls' rules were implemented in order to make popular team sports such as basketball less competitive and aggressive [43]. According to Lenskyj [48], the underlying rationale was that women's sport should be protected from abuses such as commercialism, elitism, and competitiveness, that were evident in the male sports model. Meanwhile, many female athletes in the Western provinces and in rural settings in Ontario, continued to enjoy inter-school and league competition without the restrictions of modified girls' rules. Athletes who played in both systems began to question the need for modified girls' rules so that eventually, use of the girls' rules was abandoned several decades later in the school system in Ontario [57].

Arguments about women's place in sport continued to prevail throughout the 1930s. The sports columns in newspapers offered varying opinions about the effects of athleticism on feminine appeal and morality, the commercialization of sport, and the effect of athletic competition on the female's ability to bear children at a later time. Athletes such as Canadian, Roxy Atkins, judged the most beautiful girl at the 1936 Berlin Olympics, frequently received more favourable press coverage because of their physical attractiveness. While the performance of successful women in sport was measured against male standards, the behavior, sexuality, appearance, and character of female athletes was measured against a feminine ideal, largely established by male journalists and sportsmen. When female sports' columnists, such as Alexandrine Gibb, defended female athletes against charges of lost femininity, they gave the issue unnecessary prominence. As a result, media coverage of women's sport that focused on increased participation and improved performance was limited [49].

The 1938 British Empire Games held in Sydney, Australia, was the last major international competition attended by Canadian athletes before the beginning of World War II. The outbreak of the war, in 1939, resulted in the suspension of the Olympic Games and other international competitions for the duration of the war. However, team sports such as softball and basketball continued to thrive, as women formed teams with industrial sponsors in the munitions and aircraft factories across the nation [48].

## CHAPTER 7

### FAIR AND FLYING: THE STORY OF MARGARET (BELL) GIBSON

#### INTRODUCTION

The data for this ethnography was collected over a period of time from November, 1989, to April, 1991, in a series of five informal interviews conducted with Margaret (Bell) Gibson\* in her home in North Vancouver. The interviews were arranged for the purposes of collecting and describing information regarding Margaret's experience and cultural knowledge of sport. The foundation of each interview was based upon a relationship of rapport and trust established between Margaret and myself. Each interview began with a cup of coffee and an informal chat. Then Margaret would verbally indicate when she was ready for the recorded interview to begin. I believe this informal introduction facilitated the rapport established in the interview process. Validation of the interviews with Margaret proved to be critical in demonstrating my respect for Margaret's experience and interpretations.

Throughout the research process, I found myself struggling with the temptation to recast Margaret's cultural experiences in my own terms; a tendency increased by my familiarity with the external features of the sports scene and by my application of a historical perspective that sought to reaffirm my feminist viewpoint. In order to maintain the position of a reflexive author while conducting the ethnography research, I attempted to strike a delicate balance between empathetic listener and objective researcher.

Margaret's story begins with a chronological description of her formative years and proceeds with a descriptive account of the significant features of her experience as

\*The researcher recognizes that use of the informant's first name is not commonly used in a formal research document. However, in order to reflect the rapport established between the researcher and the informant, the informant shall be referred to by her first name throughout the next two chapters.

an athlete. The story ends with Margaret's premature retirement from competitive track and field, brought about by the onset of World War II.

## THE ROAD TO SUCCESS

Margaret was born in 1917 in Medicine Hat, Alberta; the youngest of three children. Margaret's father, William Bell, was a construction foreman, who had emigrated to Canada where he married Mollie Bell. Following her marriage, Mollie remained at home where she raised her daughter and her two older sons, Bob and Lynn. At the age of eighteen months, Margaret and her family moved to Cranbrook, British Columbia, where William Bell was hired as a construction foreman for the large power plants that were under construction in the East Kootenays. During the next few years, the Bells moved to several locations throughout the Kootenays, depending on the location of the construction sites. Margaret recalled having attending grade one in Nelson, grades two through four in Lower Bonnington, grades five and six in South Slokan, and grade seven back in Nelson.

Margaret began her sports career at the illustrious age of six when she won first place and a silver medal in a twenty-five yard race at the local Sports Day. At that time, most of the sport for young children was organized by local community groups such as Sunday Schools and public schools. Bob Bell, Margaret's older brother by two years, appeared to have had a significant influence on Margaret's initial interest and development as an athlete:

Researcher: When you were growing up, you mentioned you grew up with your brothers and you did things naturally. If they were playing ball; you played ball and what not.

Margaret: That's right. Well, the younger of the two boys. He is two years older than I am.

Researcher: And he was a good athlete?

Margaret: Yes, he played lacrosse and he played soccer and he was a junior something-or-other tennis champion here in Vancouver and played badminton and he skied. He did everything everybody else did. And



when we were younger, before we moved to Vancouver, I was the only girl my age (there were younger ones) but I always seemed to go with my brother and if they were playing scrub or whatever, if we were going swimming or what not, I always seemed to be going with them.

Margaret continued to run in sprints during her years in elementary school and then began jumping at the age of eleven, when she joined her brothers in her family's backyard:

The boys decided that they wanted to jump and we had an fence that had pickets on it. So they took one section of pickets out, all the way across. Took out the top bar and the bottom bar and left those two posts and drove nails in, spaced, and got a long piece of lath (or something like that) . . . that was stiff enough to hold fairly well. It had a wow in it, but it was fairly straight and they started jumping over it. Well, of course, I wasn't going to sit and watch them forever, so I tried it and that's the way I got started.

Her first formal high jump competition was held in Cranbrook when at the age of thirteen, Margaret competed against older girls in the high school district meet. She won the event! When asked why she decided to continue jumping in her junior years, Margaret responded:

No, my brother [Bob] wanted to do it with the high school and if he was going down there after school, I went with him.

The Bell family relocated to Vancouver in 1930, where Margaret attended grades eight and nine at Templeton Junior High School. She continued with her sport endeavors and won the high jump event at the regional high school track meet.

Margaret remembered [with excitement] her impressions of her first big meets:

My brother was always in the high school meets. That was the beginning of the big things you know. Boy! All the Vancouver schools competing against one another. That was the first big thrill.

High school was completed at Britannia Secondary School where Margaret participated in a number of sports including basketball and skiing during the winter months, track and field, swimming, and grass hockey during the summertime. For two years, while in high school, Margaret was competing on three different basketball teams:

I was more interested in basketball because with that, I could play for the school and I could also play for a commercial team (for The Province) and

then the Sunday school started one. So, for two years, I played on three teams and that got to be too much.

Basketball kept Margaret in shape for the track and field season. Initially, track and field events were staged from late Spring until early Fall, as there were no indoor track facilities in Vancouver. Coaches in both basketball and track and field were generally volunteers. Margaret's high school track coach was Mr. Edwards, who taught mathematics at the school, and Mr. Clark, who coached the Sunday school's team and several other basketball teams on a voluntary basis. In 1934, while competing for Britannia High School, Margaret set a new Canadian Interscholastic High Jump Record of 5'2 3/4" [69].

... the Vancouver Athletic Club (which was actually a baseball club) ... they invited me to join their club because they had a track team at the time. And of course, I nearly bust all my buttons because these were kids in high school and kids who were finished school and kids that were going to university because this was "the" track club in Vancouver. So, of course, I felt that it was an honour.

The invitation to join the VAC had been extended by one of Margaret's high school teachers [who was possibly acting as a scout for the track club]. Margaret's coach in the VAC was usually one of the older boys who competed in the men's high jump. Earl McComber, who competed for the club in the high jump and hurdles, helped Margaret perfect her jumping technique and made recommendations about the intensity of her training schedule. About this time, Margaret and Bob's paths in sport separated, as Bob chose to pursue his interests in tennis, basketball, and soccer. He did not join the track club, leaving Margaret to strike out on her own.

Close friendships were soon formed with members in the VAC. Margaret recalled:

So anyway, when I came into the club, they treated me like everybody's baby sister. And ... track meets, like in Penticton or Kelowna, or wherever, there was usually a dance afterwards and they would all gather me up and take me to the dance. See that I was well taken care of all the time.

Inspiration was provided by fellow teammates, Lillian Palmer and Mary Frizzell, who had competed in the 1932 Olympics in Los Angeles. Another team member [whom Margaret chose not to identify] was especially memorable:

We had one girl and I just loved her, she was the nicest girl . . . She was a javelin thrower and she used to run on the relay team . . . But, she loved throwing the javelin . . . and the rest of us kids would do some work and then we'd sit down and rest awhile and she'd still be working. I never saw anybody put so much time into anything that they wanted to do. And . . . her style was beautiful; her distance was the best in B.C. She never made it on a world team.

Margaret competed annually in the Dominion Track and Field Championships from 1932 until the war broke out in 1939 and ended competition.

By 1934, Margaret was consistently clearing five feet in competition and was considered one of Canada's best female high jumpers. Her talent did not go unnoticed as she received offers from coaches, both in Montreal and Washington State, to continue her schooling under their sponsorship. Margaret declined, as her parents were not in favour of her being away from home for such an extended period of time. An invitation from the British Columbia Women's Amateur Athletic Federation to represent Canada in high the jump at the British Empire Games and the Women's World Games, which were held in the White City Stadium in London, England, in 1934, presented an exciting opportunity for Margaret to travel abroad and compete at a higher level. She recalled the first trip abroad as being the most exciting. The glamour of travel aboard The Duchess of York and of dinner parties, dances, and a garden party at Buckingham Palace was joyously remembered. Margaret rose to the occasion in both competitions as she placed third in both events, with a jump of 4' 11 1/2", recorded at the British Empire Games, and a jump of 5', recorded at the Women's World Games [69].

Highlights of Margaret's athletic career also included a provincial basketball championship, but it was in the high jump that Margaret excelled. Although Margaret had jumped 5' 4" during practices, it was not until July 1st, 1936, at the Thirtieth Police Sports, held in conjunction with the British Columbia Olympic Trials in Hastings Park,

that Margaret tied the Canadian Senior Women's High Jump record at 5' 3" [69]. A goal she had set for herself years before - to equal or better the Canadian senior women's record - had been achieved. Following closely on the heels of that achievement, Margaret received an invitation from the Women's Amateur Athletic Federation to represent her country at the 1936 Berlin Olympics:

Researcher: Do you remember how you felt when you found out you were going?

Margaret: Yes. I was happy that I was going, but I was disappointed that I was the only track and field girl on the B.C. team.

The journey to Berlin was lengthy as the Canadian team met in Montreal for two weeks of practice before embarking on the eight-day journey, by ship and train, that took them to the Olympics. Margaret was ranked fifth in the world in women's high jump, going into the Olympics. In spite of high expectations placed upon her by the Vancouver press to win a medal, Margaret did not perform particularly well in Berlin. She placed ninth with a jump of 4' 11" [69]. Margaret briefly talked about the press coverage she had received:

Researcher: Did people like yourself and Howie McPhee, for example, who had a lot of press coverage and . . . there was quite a bit of pressure on him to do well. Did you feel much pressure to bring back medals and all that sort of thing?

Margaret: A fair amount and you have all these hopes that you will be one of the ones that they don't write about, because that's added stress, when you are pointed out as one whom they expect to be a great shining star. If you aren't . . . like I wasn't . . . that is a little discouraging.

Following the 1936 Berlin Olympics, Margaret decided to change her jumping technique from the Scissors to the Eastern Cutoff, which she felt would give her more height. The 1938 British Empire Games were held in Sydney, Australia, and Margaret worked very hard to perfect the new technique for that competition. Once again, Margaret did not have a full-time coach at the VAC, although fellow competitors, Ed Burritt and Earl McComber, tried to assist her. At the British Empire Games, she recalled a South African high jumper, Eddie Thacker, who had successfully used the

Eastern Cutoff for a number of years, coming over and helping her out. Margaret placed fourth at the games in Sydney, with a jump of 5' 1 3/4" [69]. She felt good about her performance using the new technique:

Well, Bobbie Robinson, the team manager, said he'd never seen me jump better because I was jumping a new way and he thought it was just great

...

Her success with the Eastern Cutoff at the British Empire Games was reinforced by her setting of a new record at an invitational meet held in Auckland, New Zealand, on the way home:

... I jumped in Auckland and won the event. I also made a new New Zealand record which made me very happy.

Margaret's sights were set on competing in the 1940 Olympics and then she planned on retiring, for as she said:

Well, yes. I was looking forward to the 1940 Olympics and I thought after those, if I could make them, that would be the end of it because I was getting old for sports at that particular time ... at that time you just didn't go on and on.

With the outbreak of World War II in September, 1939, all international track and field competition ceased for the duration of the war. Margaret remembered competing in several local meets in 1939 and 1940 but after that, even local competition ceased with the hustle and bustle of the war effort. In 1940, Margaret went to work in the local Boeing plant where she played basketball throughout the war years. She stated:

So, if the war ever did anything that was good, it made the transition from track and field easier, because I kept on playing basketball. That made it much easier than it would have been.

Margaret married and raised a family after the war, but stayed involved in track and field for a number of years by helping to coach young adults and by holding office on the Executive of the B.C. Women's Amateur Athletic Federation. At present, Margaret resides with her daughter's family in North Vancouver. She had the pleasure of recently attending a reunion of the 1936 Canadian Summer Olympic Team and maintains her keen interest in sport.

## THE SPORTS SCENE

By the conclusion of the interviews, a number of cultural domains and taxonomies emerged from Margaret's discourse. Each of these organizing frameworks, which included sport, types of competition, social network, rules, activities engaged in, jumping technique, and the concept of distance and space, gave meaning to Margaret's experience and should not be viewed as abstract entities. The main point here was not to attempt to describe a series of isolated taxonomies of cultural forms but to realize that these structures lay embedded dynamically within the complexity of Margaret's life. This involved searching for, "the parts of a culture, the relationships among those parts, and the relationship of the parts to the whole," [84,189] as conceptualized by Margaret.

## THE STRUCTURE OF SPORT

In Canada, much of what happens in sport is determined by the seasons of the year. What, where, and when Margaret played depended to a large extent on the weather and available facilities. Skiing required snow-covered slopes, grass hockey needed green playing fields, and so on. Track and field was the only major sport Margaret participated in on a year-round basis and that was dependent on the availability of an indoor track, located in Vancouver.

While competition in the high jump and basketball were Margaret's favorite sporting activities, she enjoyed playing most of the sports she tried. She recalled:

Because for me it was just part of growing up. It was just something that I really enjoyed. I did it because I did enjoy it.

There were only two activities that Margaret remembered were not enjoyable. They were throwing the javelin, which Margaret felt was too hard on her arm, and playing grass hockey, which she felt was too hard on her shins. Fear of injury to her legs became a factor while skiing and she was subsequently discouraged from skiing by her coach at the VAC. Swimming was also discouraged by her coach on the basis that the musculature developed for swimming was counter-productive to that required for the

high jump. However, Margaret maintained her fitness through the rainy winter months by playing basketball, which she said was played aggressively and at a high skill level:

Researcher: Was the level of competition pretty good? Even then?

Margaret: Yes.

Researcher: It wasn't a matter of you couldn't get sweaty or things like that? You could really get out there and be aggressive and compete?

Margaret: That's right.

Margaret's conceptualization of her participation in various sports is represented by the following analysis of components (Figure 6).

While Margaret's initial forays into athletics were often shared with her brother, in recreational activities or in community-sponsored events, she gradually began to compete in more highly-organized sport that was governed by a myriad of rules and sports organizations. School competitions were open to any students attending the schools represented in the competition. Rules for eligibility were not strictly adhered to. At the high school meet in Cranbrook, Margaret was invited to compete in the high jump event although she was still too young to attend high school. When asked if there were restrictions regarding the age at which young athletes could enter competition, Margaret replied:

Researcher: So there were no age . . . were there age distinctions?

Margaret: There were to start with . . . yes. Until sixteen you were a Junior. To eighteen you were an Intermediate Sport and over eighteen, you were a Senior . . . you had to be sixteen years old before you could go on a world - any - like Empire Games or any of those.

Researcher: Even if you had extraordinary ability at twelve or thirteen, you wouldn't have been able to compete?

Margaret: There were dancing competitions at the Caledonian Games for all ages and stuff like that. Swimmers and divers could be any age. But not until later for track and field. You had to be at least sixteen years old.

Researcher: So there was this sort of ethic about protecting children?

Margaret: Yes . . .

FIGURE 6

## Componential Analysis of Sport Conceptualized by Margaret (Bell) Gibson

	Sport	Played for fun	Played for fitness	Discouraged by coach	Played occasionally	Played all season	Played with brothers	Played as an individual on a team	Location
Non - Competitive	Skiing	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Local ski slopes
Competitive	Indoor Track Meets	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Indoor arena in Vancouver
	Basketball	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	School gyms Church halls
SUMMER SPORTS									
	Sport	Played for fun	Played for fitness	Discouraged by coach	Played occasionally	Played all season	Played with brothers	Played as an individual on a team	Location
Non - Competitive	Scrub (softball)	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Playing field
	Jumping	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Backyard
	Swimming	Yes	-	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Lakes near Nelson, pool near Sunset Beach
Competitive	Grass Hockey	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Playing field
	Track & Field (running & high jump)	Yes	Yes	No *	No	Yes	No	Yes	Tracks, stadiums

\* Running was later discouraged when Margaret wanted to specialize in jumping



Beyond age restrictions, additional categories of eligibility defined who could compete in what. Any athlete in track and field who paid the required entry fee could participate in open competitions. Closed competitions required that athletes be affiliated with a recognized track and field club or team and usually were members of the Women's Amateur Athletic Federation. Competing in closed competitions frequently meant that athletes also had to meet a qualifying standard based on a pre-determined level of performance. For example, in order to qualify to attend the Canadian Track and Field Championships, Margaret would have had to qualify at the British Columbia Trials first.

Frequently, it was the availability of funds that determined how many athletes, having met the qualifying standards, would be selected to participate on the team:

Margaret: No . . . We had trials here in the city and there were standards that you had to meet to go East to compete. So if you met a standard, you were on a team, providing there was money.

Funding for Margaret's entry fees, for transportation, for food, and for lodging, was usually provided by the VAC. According to Margaret, funds were also provided by private organizations such as, "Spencers, Hudson's Bay, Woodward's, and The Daily Province, and The Sun, and a lot of private organizations like the Vancouver Police. They would donate funds and prizes." A blazer, dress, white shoes and hat, and "sweats" [fleece training suit] were also provided for Margaret whenever she represented Canada internationally. A large clothing manufacturer from Eastern Canada usually donated the uniforms.

According to an undated newspaper article in Margaret's scrapbook, the provision of funds required to cover the Canadian teams' expenses, estimated at a minimum of \$35,430, to attend the 1934 British Empire Games, was a haphazard affair. The article stated:

Now some stern pruning is necessary for the Federal government grant has shrunk from \$10,000 to \$4,000, the Ontario grant of \$5,000 promised by the Henry government has not yet come through, and neither has the promised Quebec government grant of \$3,000. As a matter of fact only \$13,000 has reached the Canadian British Empire Committee to date and

of this amount, \$6,250 is from the British Empire Committee of England, which is sponsoring the meet.

Another undated newspaper clipping from Margaret's scrapbook revealed that in order to raise funds for Vancouver athletes to attend the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games, Vancouver Mayor, Gerry McGeer, appealed to ". . . 700 Vancouver citizens for contributions up to \$25." When asked if the Depression had an effect on track and field, in terms of number of competitions held and levels of funding, Margaret replied:

Margaret: No. It was really just getting better.

Researcher: It didn't? You didn't feel it cut back because of the Depression?

Margaret: No. I think locally, we had more meets here at the time than they do now. Although that sounds strange, but Vancouver was kind of the focal point and they would come from the Interior and the Island and from Washington and Oregon and this sort of thing.

Only once in her athletic career did Margaret recall having to participate in raising funds at a "tag day" at a professional boxing match. This involved asking spectators at the match to make a monetary donation. Margaret's only financial obligation while competing was to provide her own spending money. As Margaret was not employed throughout her years in competitive sport, her parents always seemed able to give her some money to take along on the trips, in spite of the difficulties experienced during the Depression years.

Researcher: Was that a problem for some of the kids on the teams, just getting enough spending money, given that it was the Thirties? In all these cases, was spending money ever a problem?

Margaret: Yes, but things were so cheap at that time. Mind you, five dollars was a lot of money. Now in 1934 there were three of us girls and we had something like fifteen dollars each and we thought we had lots of money.

Researcher: Did you ever feel that maybe your parents couldn't manage at that time, given that it was the Depression?

Margaret: No, not really. Not that I know of, let's put it that way.

Professional and amateur standings were also used to determine athletes' eligibility to compete in certain sports and events. While it was acceptable to receive

prizes for having won an event, as soon as an athlete accepted a gift (that was not a prize for winning), that athlete was classified as a professional and was ineligible to compete in amateur athletics. Margaret stated that, "The rules were very strict. No one was ever challenged about breaking amateur rules on the Canadian team while I competed."

Perhaps the most significant set of rules operating in track and field were those declared by the sports governing bodies such as the International Olympic Committee, that severely restricted women's participation in endurance events. Competition in track and field was categorized by events. Margaret recalled that women were allowed to compete in: throwing the discus and the javelin, performing the 80m hurdles, the running high jump and broad jump, running the 100 yard and 200 yard dash, running the 220 yard, 440 yard, and 880 yard relays. At the 1936 Berlin Olympics, women's competition was even more severely restricted to: running the 100m dash, the 80m hurdles, the 400m relay, the running high jump, and throwing the discus and javelin. At the same Olympic Games, according to the Official Guidebook for the 1936 Olympic Games, men were competing in no less than twenty-three track and field events compared to the women's schedule of six events. Margaret recalled:

... The last year I was competing, they [women] were running the 880. But the officials would never think of letting the women run a marathon or anything of that kind.

Researcher: Again, because they didn't think women had the physical strength to endure?

Margaret: That's right. They didn't think they could stand it.

Researcher: Did any women ask at that point to do these sorts of activities or did women just accept that?

Margaret: Not that I am aware of.

Nothing Margaret had said in the interviews indicated that she had questioned the restrictions placed upon women who had wanted to compete in endurance events. However, she did mention [in an informal chat] that her late husband had never

discussed her career in high jump with her, because of his disapproval of her participation in such an "unladylike" sport.

Rules not only governed who could compete in what, but how each event was conducted. The high jump consisted of using a running approach before attempting to jump over a bar, horizontally suspended between two standards. Each athlete was allowed of maximum of three attempts to clear the bar at the set height, without knocking the bar down. If unsuccessful at clearing the bar after three attempts, that competitor was disqualified. The bar was gradually raised during the competition until a winner, who cleared the bar at the highest height, emerged. In the event of a tie, the tied competitors competed in a "jump-off." Or, the competitor who had missed the fewest jumps in the competition was usually declared the winner.

Several rules also governed positioning of the body while clearing the bar. These were that the head could not clear the bar before the rest of the body and that the head could not be lower than the rest of the body when clearing the bar. Each competitor took turns with the other high jumpers, so that an average competition took about two-and-a-half hours. Margaret recalled that competition at the 1936 Berlin Olympics took at least twice as long and was very fatiguing. Since keeping the muscles warm during such a lengthy competition became an important consideration, most of the better jumpers would jump with their "sweats" on until near the end of the competition. Margaret recalled wearing her "sweats" at all her competitions until she was near the 4'10" mark.

Margaret initially began jumping using a technique called the Scissors with a modified approach from the left-hand side. However, most of the high-jumpers at the international levels of competition were using the more advanced jumping styles; the Western Roll and the Eastern Roll or Cut-off. Following the 1936 Berlin Olympics, Margaret began to change her style to the Eastern Roll or Cut-off, with the help of several male competitors, who were successfully using this jumping technique. She said:

No. When I went to Australia, I was just in transition because my coach felt I could jump higher with the lower center of gravity using the new technique. I was changing from the Scissors to the Eastern Roll, which is a Scissors with a lay-out. Now, you jump exactly the same way except, going over the bar in the Scissors you're in a sitting position . . . semi-sitting position. With the other you're leaning back which gives you more lift of the hips. It changes your center of gravity which gives you more height.

Awareness of distance and timing were critical in the execution of the high jump. Margaret had learned by trial and error that, "sixteen steps back from the bar", was just the right distance for her approach. Height of the bar was another factor Margaret was very cognizant of. She stated:

. . . And, usually in training, at the beginning of the year, if you jumped and were trying something higher than you would normally - you know - just to get used to the bar being up there. Lots of times I tried jumping 5'6" just to get used to the bar being real high and I had to make a supreme effort.

Researcher: Did it work sometimes?

Margaret: Well, no . . . But it gives you a sense of sort of well-being to know that . . . that bar away up that far and that close to the top of my head doesn't scare me. That's the only reason that you do things like that.

Awareness of the distance to the landing pit, which was usually filled with sand and dirt, was also a factor in jumping as Margaret had experienced bruised and sprained ankles that were the result of poor landings on several occasions. Space and distance were also factors on the long trips by train and ship to national and international competitions. It was impossible to do any sort of training on the four or five-day train trips to Eastern Canada and training aboard ship was usually restricted to exercises, swimming, deck tennis, and jogging. Practising the high jump was, of course, out of the question. Developing restricted mental focus, that permitted Margaret to concentrate only on the limited area immediate surrounding the high bar was another important element of space that had to be mastered.

In terms of timing, Margaret referred to elements of the high jump such as knowing how fast she had to run in her approach, knowing just when to kick up with the

leading leg, and when to bring her arms up for better height and balance. She would mentally practise the jump before making her attempt and felt this helped her concentrate on the task at hand.

The taxonomy of the high jump (Figure 7) reflects Margaret's understanding of the jumping styles she was aware of while she was in competition.

Competing at the various levels of competition was similar to climbing a pyramid. As Margaret's level of performance improved, the field of competitors she faced became more select and the competitions became increasingly challenging. A number of organizations (Figures 8-9) sponsored competitions at the local, provincial, national, and international levels.

Selection of athletes to attend competitions at the national and international levels usually was performed by female representatives from the Women's Amateur Athletic Federation, in conjunction with their male counterparts from the Amateur Athletic Union of Canada. Whenever Margaret was notified of her selection as a provincial or national representative, she was telephoned by Ann Clark, an executive member of WAAF, several weeks prior to the departure date for the competition. Margaret recalled awareness of the regional dissension that existed at the organizational level in track and field, especially when it came to team selection:

All the time that I was competing we were very aware that East was East and West was West. If there was something to be decided and it could only be one person, say, we always got the feeling that unless Ann Clark could really do some fast persuading, it would be the East who would get it.

However, once selected to represent the national team, Margaret said regional rivalries were forgotten and, "... you were a Canadian ; you were very aware that you, ... would be called ambassadors of our country."

Margaret's drive to succeed in the high jump was directed toward qualifying for the Olympic Games. She recalled:

Well, the Olympics is considered the elite competition. Yes! If you make the Olympics you're considered to be good.

FIGURE 7

Taxonomy of the High Jump  
Conceptualized by Margaret (Bell) Gibson

HIGH JUMP	STYLE OF JUMP	POSITION	DYNAMICS OF HIGH JUMP	
	Scissors	Semi-Seated	Approach	Measured 16 steps from the high bar - left red shoe on track as marker for take-off point; used rapid, running approach from the left-hand side; others used tape to measure their approach distance and approached from right-hand side
			Take-Off	Plant right foot and kick up left leg over the bar, bring up trailing leg really hard and swing arms up over head to create vertical momentum
			Clearing the Bar	Lean upper body forward over out-stretched legs; stretch arms out to sides for balance
	Eastern Roll/ Cut-Off	Layout	Approach	Same approach as in Scissors
			Clearing the Bar	Lean upper body back with face looking up at sky; arms stretched out to side for balance
			Landing	Try to land standing on both feet in sand and gravel pit; some concern for ankle injury when landing
	Western Roll		Clearing the Bar	Head faces down when clearing the bar so that bar passes under the stomach
			Landing	Land on both hands and feet in sand and gravel pit

FIGURE 8

Taxonomy of the Structure of Sport  
 Conceptualized by Margaret (Bell) Gibson

CANADIAN	Class of Competition	Name of Competition	Location	When it Took Place	Reward/ Prizes	Sponsor
	Junior, Senior High School Meets	-	Local School	Spring	Ribbons	School
	Regional School Meets	Senior High School Regional Meets	Urban Centres such as Cranbrook, Nelson, Vanc.	May Long Weekend	Ribbons, Offers to Attend School in Montreal & Washington	Schools
	Invitational Meets	Police Games	Vancouver	July 1st	Silverware Press Recognition Fur Neckpiece	Vancouver Police
		Scottish Highland Games/ Caledonian Games	Vancouver	Summer	Medals Silverware Luggage	Caledonian Society
		-	Nanaimo	Labour Day Weekend	Medals	-
		Misc. Invitation Meets	Vancouver Kelowna Nelson Cranbrook Kamloops Penticton Powell R.	Summer	Press Recognition Medals Trophies Silverware	C.C.F. BC.WAAF
			Seattle, WA Portland, OR	Summer		-



FIGURE 9

Taxonomy of the Structure of Sport  
Conceptualized by Margaret (Bell) Gibson

	NAME OF COMPETITION	LOCATION	WHEN IT TOOK PLACE	REWARD/ PRIZES	SPONSOR
INTERNATIONAL	British Columbia Track & Field Championships	Major Urban Centres (often in Vancouver)	Annually in Summer	Medals received on a podium Press recognition	B.C. Women's Amateur Athletic Federation
	Canadian Track & Field Championships	Provincial Capital Cities			Women's Amateur Athletic Federation
	British Empire Games (B.E.G.) Trials	Major Urban Centres (often in Eastern Canada)	Every Four Years in Summer	Press recognition Place on the B.E.G. team Medals	Canadian B.E.G. Committee
	Olympic Games Trials			Press recognition Place on the Canadian Olympic team	Canadian Olympic Committee
CANADIAN	British Empire Games	Hamilton, Can London, Eng Sidney, Austr Cities located in Br. Empire	Every Four Years in Summer	Press recognition Reception with Prince of Wales Medal rec'd on a podium	B.E.G. Committee of England
	Women's World Games	Paris, France Gottenberg, Swe Prague, Czech London, England	Every Four Years from 1922-1934	Press recognition Medal rec'd on a podium Travel	Federation Sportive Feminine Internat'l
	Olympic Games	Berlin, Germany International Cities	Every Four Years in Summer	Sightseeing New friends	Internat'l Olympic Committee
	Invitational Meets	Auckland, N.Z.	After Br. Empire Games held in Sydney Australia	Press recognition Medal Breaking a record Travel Sightseeing New friends	N.Zealand Track & Field Assoc'n

Winning was defined by Margaret in terms of beating her competitors, winning points for her team, breaking a record, and reaching the Olympics. She said that as long as the high bar was moving up, she was happy. Margaret seemed somewhat reluctant to talk about losing. When questioned about her disappointing performance at the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games, she said:

But when I came back home I . . . sometimes wondered if I was really prepared for it, because the boy who was coaching me hadn't coached before. I just didn't do that well, that's what it amounted to.

On more than one occasion during the interviews, Margaret expressed a sense of regret, as she wondered how high she might have eventually jumped had she enjoyed the benefit of a knowledgeable, full-time coach.

When asked what were the personal benefits she had derived from her athletic career, Margaret quickly replied that she had developed dedication and physical and mental self-discipline, through the long hours of hard work devoted to training. She added that participation in sport had kept her in shape and concluded with, "You did it because you wanted to and that was for sure." When asked about any regrets she may have had, she said she only missed not having been able to ski!

## CULTURAL ACTIVITIES RELATED TO SPORT

Many of the remembered highlights of Margaret's sport experience centered around cultural activities that included training, travelling and sightseeing, competing, and socializing (Figure 10).

### Training

Margaret kept in shape during the winter months by playing basketball. Then in early Spring, she began training for track and field at the VAC. Practices consisted of jogging several laps around the track, some stretching exercises, practising the high jump, and then more jogging before she came off the field. Margaret usually practised

Taxonomy of Cultural Activities Related to  
Sport Engaged in by Margaret (Bell) Gibson

ACTIVITIES	TRAINING	Wintertime	Played basketball
		Track Season	Easy jogging approximately 1/4 - 1/2 miles around the track, three times per week Stretching exercises Training was less concentrated later in season
		While Travelling Aboard Ship	Jogging, stretching exercises, deck tennis
	WAITING	Track Season	Waiting to hear if you had been selected to attend Waiting on train while travelling to competition Waiting for your event to begin Waiting for each competitor to have a turn
	COMPETING	Track Season	Attending opening/closing ceremonies or presentation of prizes Travelling to stadium Waiting for your event to begin Watching fellow competitors compete Warming up with stretching exercises Marking of distance for the approach Performing high jump until you missed the bar
	TRAVELLING	By Car	To local competitions - car pools were arranged
		By Train	4 - 5 day trip to Toronto, Hamilton or Montreal; very tiring From Le Havre to Berlin for Olympics
		By Ship	5 - 6 days to England for British Empire Games and Olympics 3 weeks to Australia for Br. Empire Games
	SIGHTSEEING		Guided tours of cities Walking about with friends
	SOCIALIZING	Non-Sport Related	With family With friends at schools and in clubs, including C.G.I.T. and Junior Women's Auxiliary
		Sport Related	With brother, Bob With teammates, while practising, travelling to competitions, and competing With fellow competitors at track and field competitions With people living in countries visited With coaches and chaperones while practising, travelling and competing With the Prince of Wales at a garden party With fellow teammates and competitors at dinners, dances and parties that frequently were held in conjunction with the competitions

three times a week. She tended to train harder at the beginning of the season and practised with the high bar set at a higher than normal level, just to get used to it being that high. Her coaching usually consisted of a few helpful remarks from one of the male high jumpers in the VAC.

While the team was travelling to international competitions aboard ship, a training schedule was usually set up, with the exception of the swimmers, who swam in the ship's pool while strapped into harnesses. Training for the rest of the team consisted of jogging and performing exercises for about an hour in the morning and afternoon. Of course, there was always deck tennis too. The men and women practised together and were allowed to mingle freely aboard the ship.

Margaret was asked if having to travel such long distances before competitions proved disadvantageous to her, as well as to the rest of the Canadian team. She replied, "that never comes to mind actually." However, one of the undated newspaper clippings in Margaret's book did mention that the Canadian team arrived six days prior to the beginning of the 1936 Berlin Olympics. The Japanese team had arrived approximately five weeks earlier! To make matters worse, one of the coaches stated that, whenever the Canadian team went out to one of the fields for a practice, it would begin to rain. Margaret recalled usually arriving about two weeks in advance for most of the national and British Empire Games competitions and felt this had provided adequate time for the team to practise together.

### Travelling and Sightseeing

The opportunity to travel internationally, at such a young age, was unquestionably one of the greatest thrills Margaret experienced as an athlete:

Researcher: When you were that young were you aware of how fortunate you were to be presented with the opportunity [for travel]?

Margaret: We knew that we were lucky, of course. We also worked very hard to make those dreams we had come true.

Researcher: Knowing going to Europe was not an everyday phenomenon?

Margaret: No. You didn't take a pack sack and go to Europe and stay in hostels and things like that. It was just unheard of. Girls stayed closer to home than that unless their parents were going.

The team was usually accompanied by a coach, manager, chaperone, and various officials while travelling to international competitions.

It was the first trip to London, England in 1934, for the British Empire Games and the Women's World Games, that Margaret found the most exciting. She was still going to school at the time and it was her first big trip away from home. Margaret was away from home for about two months on that trip and remembered being terribly homesick. The women's team was billeted in a separate hotel on Hyde Park, a block away from the men's hotel. Two girls shared a room. A roommate could either be requested or assigned. Margaret roomed with Lillian Palmer, a teammate from the VAC.

A chaperone, usually a former athlete, such as Bobbie Rosenfeld, or a female representative from the WAAF, such as Ann Clark, watched carefully over the girls' behavior. Margaret recalled two rules that were strictly enforced on all the trips; no drinking was allowed and a ten o'clock curfew was enforced. According to an undated newspaper report in Margaret's scrapbook, an American swimmer, Eleanor Holm, was dismissed from the American team, prior to the 1936 Berlin Olympics, because of her partying and drinking. Margaret said, "that you were expected to behave in a ladylike or gentlemanly manner." She added, ". . . the older athletes clued you in on what you can do. Although you are told very definitely by the high echelons what is expected of you before you take off."

In addition to the thrill of travelling aboard ship, Margaret remembered enjoying the various sightseeing opportunities she experienced while competing internationally. People frequently arranged tours for the girls, and teams members walked about the cities in the evenings.

Travel to the 1936 Berlin Olympics began with a five-day train trip to Montreal. As Margaret was the only girl in track and field from British Columbia, she travelled alone with a number of men who were on the team. She remembered that trip was long and lonely, although she was well-treated by her male counterparts. The trip from Montreal to England aboard the cruise ship, the *Duchess of Bedford*, took five or six days. This was followed by another boat trip from London to Le Havre and by train, from there to Berlin. The entire trip took about eight days. Upon their arrival in Berlin, the Canadian team was immediately taken to a square where Hitler welcomed them, in German. Margaret remembered, "... being very tired standing there after an overnight train trip." Following the welcoming speech, the women were accompanied by an army officer, who was their attache, and an interpreter, to an area called the *Frauenheim*, where they were billeted. The men stayed at the Olympic Village which was some distance away. The interpreter was always supposed to accompany the girls whenever they left the *Frauenheim*.

Several memorable outings occurred while Margaret was in Germany. One day the girls set off to do some shopping without taking along their interpreter. They took the wrong underground [subway] coming home and ended up in the countryside. Fortunately, a young German fellow, who spoke English, took them back. On another occasion, Marg Lord and Margaret decided to go for a walk within the grounds of *Frauenheim*. Suddenly, they were confronted by two soldiers with crossed rifles who made it very clear that the girls were not allowed there. Margaret remarked that although the German people were very hospitable, a military presence was evident everywhere. She was also struck by the fact that even the little children were dressed in some form of uniform and one never saw the children playing. Margaret had a sense that, "... it would have been very scary to live there at that time, because Hitler wielded a heavy hand."

As Margaret's event, the high jump, was not completed until near the end of the Olympic competition, she returned to London with the men's team and with a few remaining female teammates. The men participated in an invitational meet in London, before they returned to Canada. That was the only time Margaret recalled that the whole team did not travel together as a group.

The trip to Sydney, Australia, aboard the cruise ship, Aorangi, took approximately three weeks, as the ship docked briefly in Hawaii, Fiji, and New Zealand. Margaret felt a bit strange arriving in Sydney in the middle of summer, with her fur coat! However, the team had almost a full month to acclimatize and that provided excellent opportunities for sightseeing. Margaret recalled the warmth and hospitality showered upon them by the Australians. Once again, the men and women were billeted in separate hotels. On the way home, the team stopped in Auckland, New Zealand, where it competed in an invitational meet. When the ship docked in Honolulu, Margaret left the team to spend some time with her brother, Lynn, who was residing there.

Travel to competitions in the Interior or to Vancouver Island was usually by car. A chaperone always accompanied the women's team and billets were usually arranged in private homes or in a hotel. Margaret fondly remembered having all the older girls in the VAC acting as her chaperones at all the meets and dances.

### Competing

Once the athletes had arrived at the destination where the competition was held, they settled into a daily routine for the several weeks they were there. They would breakfast at their billet in the morning and then spend most of the morning practising at one of the playing fields that had been provided. Practices were held with the men's teams. Usually, the athletes would return to their billets for lunch and then practise once again in the afternoon or go to the stadium to cheer for teammates who were competing in the scheduled events.

Margaret remembered being very impressed by the enormity of the Olympic Stadium in Berlin. She had never before competed in a stadium where the seating went up so high and completely encircled the sports field.

Sometimes, the athletes remained at the stadium for the medal presentation at the closing of the day. The athletes who had placed first, second, and third stood on a podium and were awarded their medals or other prizes. At the Olympic Games, the top three athletes were presented with medals, were crowned with laurel leaves, given a small oak tree, and had their names inscribed on the walls of the Olympic Stadium. During the medal presentation at the Olympics and at the British Empire Games, the flags representing the nations of the winning athletes were raised and their national anthems were played. Margaret recalled sitting fairly close to Hitler's dias in the Olympic Stadium and watching with dismay as Hitler and his entourage would deliberately get up and leave whenever a meeting with the great track and field star, Jesse Owens, seemed inevitable. When asked if she could sense the racism, Margaret replied:

Oh, yes. Very definitely. He [Hitler] had a real thing about coloured people. And of course, Jesse, being a four medal winner; he was singled out.

To show their support for Jesse Owens, Margaret said that the Canadian team always sang the American national anthem very loudly along with the American team just to draw attention to Hitler's discourteous behavior.

After returning from an afternoon practice or from the main stadium, the athletes would return to their billets for dinner and would then have free time until their curfew. Much of the time during a competition was spent waiting, waiting for transportation, waiting for an event to begin, waiting for your turn to compete, and waiting in lines at the official ceremonies. Margaret recalled spending many evenings writing long letters home, reading, knitting, sewing, walking about with teammates, or just chatting about her experiences with friends.

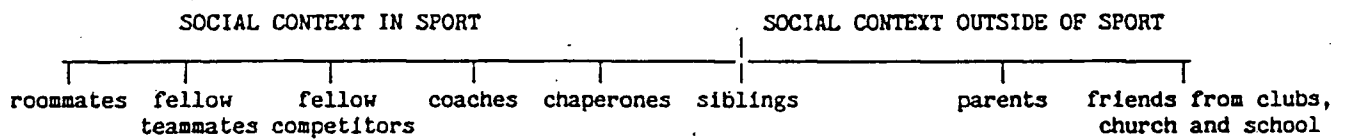


### Socializing

Much of the material generated in the interviews related to Margaret's memories of special social events and relationships she had experienced in the sport culture. Figure 11 indicates Margaret's network of social relationships.

FIGURE 11

#### Margaret Gibson's Social Network



It was interesting to note that Margaret conveyed relatively little information about parental influence upon her development as an athlete. Both William and Mollie Bell were very supportive of Margaret's athletic endeavors and attended track and field meets that she was competing in whenever possible. They always helped out by providing spending money for Margaret's trips and closely followed newspaper reports relating results of the track and field team when she was abroad. Margaret did not recall receiving special attention at home because of her athletic achievement. She stated that her brother, Bob, was an excellent athlete, as well, and was treated in just the same way that Margaret was.

Margaret's brother, Bob, seemed to have played a significant role in her introduction to and continued participation in sport. Tagging behind her older brother, Margaret was introduced to jumping and a variety of sports as she sought to keep up

with him. As a pre-teen, Margaret remembered accompanying Bob to the high school track and field practices after school in Nelson. Later on, she would accompany her brother, who didn't have a girlfriend, to the dances and parties that were often held following a sports competition. Margaret's and Bob's paths in sport were closely intertwined until Margaret joined the VAC and began to concentrate on track and field.

While growing up in the Interior and in Vancouver, Margaret made many friendships outside of sport. She was a member of a club for young girls called Canadian Girls In Training and also belonged to a Junior Women's Auxiliary where Margaret said, ". . . you sat and sewed and were nice little girls. You learned the nice ways of tea parties and whatnot."

A large network of friendships was established through Margaret's participation in sport. She recalled, with fondness, the support she received from the girls in the VAC. Margaret was the youngest girl on the team, when she joined the VAC, and felt somewhat in awe of her teammates. Most of the girls were either in high school or were working and certainly seemed much more experienced than Margaret. She said, ". . . they treated me like everybody's baby sister," and much to her indignation, nicknamed her, "Babe." There was ample time to develop a sense of camaraderie with teammates while practising, travelling to competitions, or attending one of the many dances or parties that usually followed a meet. Especially close friendships were formed with roommates. Margaret corresponded for several years with Jenny Dolson, her roommate at the 1936 Berlin Olympics, and in 1938, at the British Empire Games in Sydney.

Margaret also interacted with a number of male coaches, team managers, and female chaperones while in competition. Male team members became good friends, who helped out with the coaching and were very supportive of their female teammates. Both sexes mixed freely during practices and while travelling, albeit under the watchful eyes of coaches and chaperones. She recalled a number of romances that blossomed while athletes were away from home and family at competitions. Margaret remembered

having great fun at the costume parties held aboard ship, and at the dinner parties and dances that followed the competitive events. An especially thrilling social event, for Margaret, occurred during the trip in 1934 to the British Empire Games, when Margaret attended a garden party at Buckingham Palace, which was hosted by the Prince of Wales.

Good friendships were also formed with fellow competitors from other countries while competing in international events. The United States and South African teams always seemed to enjoy good camaraderie with the Canadians. However, when competing against friends, Margaret said, ". . . that was a whole different thing . . . that was the reason why you were there, so you paid attention to business and that was it." At the same time that Margaret was developing an extended network of friends involved in athletics, she said she had no difficulty returning from competitions and picking up her relationships with school friends and girlfriends, who weren't involved in sport at all.

The activities and relationships that formed the basis for Margaret's socialization were determined, in part, by the way Margaret defined her role as a female. At a tacit level, Margaret had learned a cultural definition of what it meant to be a woman that reflected the prevailing ideology of maternal feminism. Several statements made by Margaret, in her discourse, gave some indication of the meanings she attached to being feminine:

Researcher: Did you find that most of the girls that competed were fairly aggressive in most sports?

Margaret: As far as sports was concerned. Yes, they were. But they had their shower afterwards and got into dresses or skirts and tops and you wouldn't know which ones were the players and which ones just going from school.

This statement implied that wearing acceptable female attire and having a clean and fresh-looking appearance were considered feminine attributes by Margaret. Additional attributes were revealed when Margaret was asked if she had been a "tom-boy" as a young girl:

Margaret: No. No. At least, I don't think I was. No, I wasn't. No.

Researcher: Now, what makes you say, "No, you weren't?"

Margaret: Well, because I like doing all the things that most girls like to do. I like to sew, I like to read, I like to do things around the house . . .

Homemaking and motherhood were espoused as the appropriate life course for married women at that time. As domestic skills such as cooking and sewing were considered prerequisites for a successful career as a wife and mother, Margaret appeared to confirm her ideas about her own femininity on the basis of her participation in traditionally female activities associated with homemaking. When asked if any of her female teammates displayed traditionally-held male traits such as aggressiveness, Margaret replied:

Margaret: No . . . We had a hurdler that was a real doll. She was - she was pretty and one of the most feminine little things you'd ever see in your life and I say this because she was little. I was always a big girl - tall. But she was little to me, she reminded me of a doll.

Researcher: Very delicate?

Margaret: Yes! But fast over those hurdles.

Researcher: Yes!

Margaret: . . . And another thing, too . . . when we went to some of the parties and things after the sports, a lot of the times we were allowed to - if it was formal - we were allowed to wear formal dresses. And you would find that all the girls would turn up in their formal as opposed to their uniform because you weren't so regimented. You could be more feminine that way . . .

These statements revealed the view held by Margaret that feminine meant a certain small, fragile appearance clothed in soft, flowing attire. It is interesting to note that Margaret did not perceive any conflict between the pursuit of athletic success, which involved elements of competitiveness and aggressiveness, and being feminine, which involved elements of fragility and prettiness as long as one assumed the feminine attributes after having beaten one's opponent!

## **CHAPTER 8**

### **DISCUSSION**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

This research project sought to provide a richness of insight concerning Margaret's involvement in sport and how that experience related with other aspects of her life. This process entailed discovering patterns of her personal conduct and the relevance of her experience to others and to the social institutions located in her cultural milieu. Interpretation of the meanings and events in Margaret's life was a complicated process in which I felt that a certain subjective-awareness as a researcher was required to acknowledge my impact on the research process. Therefore, this study became a collaborative research endeavour in which shared understandings were developed by Margaret and myself.

The development and maintenance of the relationship of trust with Margaret was probably the most significant element of the research methodology. It was very important for me to realize that it was Margaret's story that I was interpreting. Consequently, the interpretation of meaning and ownership of the data had to be negotiated. Validation of the data, by Margaret, was a critical element in maintaining the level of trust established during the interviews.

Margaret revealed experiences that formed a part of her life history. To examine historical experiences from a contemporary framework provided a challenge for both of us. Currently held views and understandings influenced the nature of questions and responses, as we tried to capture the meaning of Margaret's experiences that were relevant to her over fifty years ago.

A summary of the chapters that provided an historical analysis of the 1920's to 1930's served to place Margaret's life within a broader social-historical context. Findings

that emerged from the interviews were presented within the historical framework. Implications for the development of theory and future research were also discussed.

## **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

The analysis of major social, economic, and political events that occurred in Canada during the 1920's to 1930's revealed a young and troubled nation striving to establish its place in the world community. Following the Great War, Canada moved from an agrarian economy to an industrialized, market economy based on the development of the nations vast natural resources. This was accompanied by growing American ownership of Canada's resource-based industries and by the increasing specialization of labour in the workforce. Ontario, Quebec, and British Columbia were the main beneficiaries of this economic development. As the wealthier and more-densely populated provinces of Ontario and Quebec sought to exert their influence at the national level, a country, deeply divided by regional diversity, emerged.

Development of an industrial economy, requiring a centralized work force, was accompanied by the rapid expansion of urban centres such as Toronto and Montreal. A declining birth rate was evidenced in all the regions of Canada, with the exception of Quebec, as Canadians sought to improve their standard of living by having smaller families.

The onset of the Depression in 1929 brought to a sharp halt the rapid expansion of the Canadian economy. The 1930's were marked by social and political unrest as hundreds of thousands of Canadians experienced a decade of unemployment and dislocation. Regional diversities were exacerbated and a number of political parties such as the C.C.F. emerged that sought to address regional and social concerns. Political power gradually began to shift from the federal government to the provinces.

Politically, economically, and culturally, Canada began to loosen her ties with Great Britain and looked to her neighbour to the South, the United States, for a closer

alliance. Concerns were expressed regarding the influence of the American mass media on the Canadian culture. Radio programs, movies, magazines, and newspapers flooded the Canadian market. It was difficult for Canadians to resist the allure of the American dream, that held that any individual could become wealthy if only he or she worked hard.

As public and economic institutions increasingly intruded into the private lives of Canadians, a women's movement called maternal feminism emerged. Given the special moral qualities developed by women as nurturers, maternal feminists argued that only by an infusion of morality into politics could the country's social ills be resolved. Therefore, a number of female reformers engaged in political activism as a method of social reform. Significant gains were made by female reformers that included winning the franchise for women, in all the provinces except Quebec, and bringing about social reform, such as prohibition during the 1920's.

Gradually a split vision of the women's movement developed, regarding the role of women wanting to enact social reform. Female reformers, such as members of the National Council of Women, sought to implement social change in a manner that did not radically challenge male dominance of social institutions. Feminists, consisting mainly of working women and professionals, sought full equality with men in all aspects of public and private life. As the country was divided by region, religion, class and race, so too was the women's movement. However, in spite of internal dissension, the emergence of the women's movement, following World War I, did result in a large increase in the number of community-based women's organizations. These organizations served to give women a new sense of connectedness and respect for their own abilities. This was a theme that was repeated in Margaret's experience as a team member in the VAC.

The development of women's sport during the 1920's to 1930's was a process of adjustment and accommodation, as new forms of activity were engaged in by female athletes that were concomitant with established conservative attitudes. In order to gain social approval for their involvement in sport, sportswomen had to demonstrate that their

active participation in athletics was not incompatible with the enhancement of their femininity. If there was no immodesty associated with their athletic endeavors, and if women did not challenge acceptable levels of exertion, then not only could women compete in sport without threatening their relationships with men, but they could actually win male support for their efforts.

Such accommodation was reflected in Margaret's experience in sport. There was no evidence in this research to suggest that Margaret ever questioned these basic premises. Neither she nor any of her teammates challenged the exclusion of women from the more physically demanding track and field events. Nor did Margaret relate any sense of conflict regarding her participation in competitive sport, while dressed in shorts and "sweats", as opposed to the social activities she engaged in while attired in pretty dresses. Margaret felt she exhibited similar feminine characteristics both on and off the playing field. These characteristics included physical attractiveness, concern for others, modesty, dedication, patience, humility, and dedication.

While it is impossible to generalize from the experience of a single person, Margaret's memories regarding sport reflected several themes that were emerging in Canadian society at that time. The rationalization of women's sport accompanied the bureaucratization of industry and government. Women emulated the male sports model in an attempt to standardize and organize their own sports experience. Organizational hierarchies and rules were implemented to foster conformity. The goal in sport was to achieve increasingly difficult levels of performance and ultimately to win. All the organizational activities were directed toward this end. Practice schedules and coaches augmented athletic talent and good luck. While Margaret kept a small ivory charm as a good luck piece, and said a brief prayer whenever she competed, she attributed her success in the high jump to her perseverance, dedication, and determination in practising the proper technique.



Another theme emergent in Canadian society, that was evidenced in Margaret's sports experience, was the increased specialization and division of labour. As a child, Margaret could engage in a number of unstructured, playful sports and activities. As she achieved higher levels of competition, where winning became more important, she had to specialize in basketball during the winter and in track and field during the summertime. The days of all-round athletes such as Bobbie Rosenfeld were drawing to a close.

For women in Canadian society, the division of labour restricted women's entry into the paid work force. Although it was acceptable for young single women to leave home to find work in the nation's urban centres, their occupational choices were usually restricted to low-paying, low-status jobs. Women saw their ultimate career as wives and mothers. Such views were reinforced, during the Depression, when women were told they should not enter the work force and take away men's employment opportunities. Margaret did not seek employment upon completion of her high school education, as her father espoused a similar point of view. She accepted this rationale and used sport as a focal point during the portion of her life when she was young and single. Division of labour was evident in the sport structures. An organizational hierarchy existed in many of the sports governing bodies that defined the roles of executive members, coaches, chaperones, and competitors. Athletes were expected to devote their time and energy to improving their performance and to behaving like gentlemen and ladies. Little or no responsibility was assigned to Margaret, during her years in competition, for the raising of funds for trips and for team activities, or for organizing competitions.

Margaret's comments regarding the effect of the Depression seemed to indicate that, in her experience, it acted as an impetus for greater participation rates in sport, at least in Vancouver. Young men and women, who chose not to or were unable to find employment, were encouraged to engage in athletic pursuits to fill their vacant hours. As expendable income was limited, sport also provided an affordable and enjoyable escape from the realities of everyday living for many Canadians.

The regionalism that was becoming characteristic of the Canadian political scene was also reflected in the policies of the national sports organizations. Arguments surfaced regarding fair representation on national teams and on the executives of the sports governing bodies [43]. Eastern influences, especially from Quebec, tended to represent a more conservative point of view towards women's sport than did the Western provinces. Implementation of girls' rules and play days by McGill University and by the schools in the metropolitan areas of Ontario, restricted the development of women's sport in these locales until the 1960's [43].

Examination of the structures that emerged from Margaret's experience as a sports woman revealed clues about the values, organizational frameworks, and rewards of her cultural milieu. The initial impetus for Margaret to participate in sport originated with her family. Although Margaret's parents were very supportive of her athletic pursuits, it was Margaret's brother, Bob, who played a very important role during her formative years. An excellent athlete in his own right, Bob provided the role model in sport to which Margaret ascribed. Even though she was two years younger, Margaret mentioned that she frequently accompanied Bob to competitions at the high school level and to the parties that often followed the contests. She stated that both Bob and her parents rarely made a fuss regarding her accomplishments, but I could not help but sense that Bob's quiet approval was important to Margaret.

Margaret's affiliation with the VAC also served as a significant factor in her continued participation as a young adult in competitive sport. Much of her discourse reflected the importance she attached to the friendships and relationships she had developed within the club. Had it not been for her invitation to join the VAC, Margaret mentioned that she probably would have ended her high jump career upon the completion of high school. Organizational and financial support provided by the club permitted Margaret to compete at the national and international level. Supervision, which enabled Margaret to travel abroad at such an early age, was carried out by chaperones, coaches,

and by Margaret's older teammates. Encouragement and companionship were provided by fellow teammates. Coaching was, at best, inconsistent, as Margaret's coaches were usually male competitors who would help her with her technique while she was practising.

Sports organizations such as the VAC and WAAF brought a sense of order to Margaret's sport experience. They provided facilities, funding, tickets, and accommodation, whenever she competed away from home. They offered structures that provided for the equalization of conditions for the competition that Margaret was subject to. They established her eligibility to compete at provincial, national, and international levels, and established codes of conduct and standardization of rules for the competitive events.

Analysis of Margaret's discourse revealed a dichotomy. Margaret was part of a group of young female athletes who were pushing back barriers to women's sport by competing at the international level in a non-traditional female sport. At the same time, she revealed a dependency upon male athletes and their sport structures. The VAC had originated as a men's ball club; hence, coaching and financial support favoured male competitors. While Margaret voiced her frustration regarding the paucity of good coaching throughout her high jump career, she never questioned officials in the VAC about the lack of support. At the same time, Margaret revealed her gratitude for the encouragement and coaching advice she had received from her male counterparts and attributed her continued participation in track and field to the VAC. Perhaps the easiest way that Margaret gained acceptance for her participation in competitive sport was simply to comply with patriarchal expectations regarding her appearance and behavior.

One of the primary reasons why Margaret participated in sport was that she enjoyed it. She participated in track and field because she loved to jump and was good at it. She enjoyed reminiscing with me about the timing and technique involved in putting together a good jump. Both clearing the high jump bar and beating a record, either her personal best or another competitor's record, were symbolic of Margaret's desire for personal achievement. When asked what she valued most from her sports experience, she

replied that it was the qualities of dedication and determination she had developed through the hard work involved in training.

Margaret also enjoyed the wonderful experiences she had while travelling to competitions. Cruises to Europe and to the South Pacific offered opportunities for travel and sightseeing that very few young Canadians could afford, particularly given the economic conditions that existed during the Depression. The major track and field competitions of that period conveyed a sense of celebration-perhaps a fete to honour youth. Social activities such as teas, garden parties, dinners, and dances, almost always accompanied the schedule of competitive events, and Margaret recalled the fun she had experienced when attending the various functions. It is interesting to note that recent developments in sports have emphasized the competitive, individualistic characteristics required for winning. Margaret talked about her experience in sport, not only in terms of personal achievement, but also in terms of winning points for her team, and of the playful, joyful traits of her social life. Her experience with sport seemed to reflect an emergent, gentler era wherein young Canadian athletes represented the best qualities of their nation. They were vigorous, dedicated, hardworking, and moral-qualities espoused by a young nation struggling to establish its identity.

## **IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

The nature of this research project raised a number of noteworthy issues related to the development of theory and future research.

Several tasks involved in carrying out the research presented challenging difficulties. One of the initial tasks both Margaret and I faced in this study was to attempt to step back in time and to try not to view Margaret's experiences from the perspective of the present. The blending of personal narrative with objectified description proved very demanding. There was a subjective engagement required throughout the interviews and in my relationship with Margaret that had to be aligned with the self-

effacement called for in the historical and ethnographical description. Events of historical, national significance had to be related to the atomistic particulars of Margaret's life. It proved very difficult, given these tasks, to convey the sense of flow, complexity, and wholeness of Margaret's experience. The analysis of her discourse into a series of classificatory structures seemed to fragment her life into isolated segments of data. Perhaps this concern was also a reflection of the inadequacy of written text to fully convey the understandings that evolved during the data collection. There is a need in future studies to define creative, interdisciplinary methodologies that capture the essence of men's and women's lives.

While there were areas of knowledge that, for personal reasons, Margaret chose not to reveal, this narration of her story did serve to capture and describe her experience as a sportswoman during the 1920's and 1930's. The analysis of women's sport during this period pointed out the need for further research in the following areas.

The women's movement, during the 1920's and 1930's, did not make significant gains in terms of national organizations and policy, but it did see the growth of a large number of effective, special interest organizations at the community level. Although these organizations mainly reflected the conservative interests of middle-class Canadian women, a broadened base of involvement of women in the public sphere evolved. Perhaps future research in the history of women's sport needs to shift its focus from the emergence of national, sports governing bodies and elite athletes to the history of community-developed sports organizations. This may more adequately reflect the experience of the majority of Canadian women in sport during this period. For example, the impact of Sunday schools and of the Social Gospel movement on the promotion of sport in Western Canada, needs further examination.

Sport in Canada has been created and shaped by men. It is a patriarchal institution that encourages participation in activities that promulgate power, virility, strength, endurance, and courage. Each of these characteristics can be attributed to the

masculine gender. As Canadian sportswomen have adopted the male sports model, with minor alterations as their own, it is important for women to become knowledgeable about the beliefs, practices, and values espoused by this model. If women are to create an approach to sport that reflects the qualities and beliefs they hope to promote, they must be able to critically evaluate the existing sport structures. For example, should standards of success for women athletes be equated with standards of male performance which favour men's biological characteristics? By examining women's athletic experience, women can determine what it is they value in sport and can begin to create opportunities in sport that realize those values. In Margaret's experience, the pleasure she derived from her relationships with teammates and competitors was one of the most valued and enduring memories she retained. Perhaps new sports models need to be created that will focus on the enhancement of relationships and on the individual, through new forms of play. This may also involve evaluation of the existing sports model by males, as well, in the hope that sport will work for the self-actualization of both genders.

The analysis of Margaret's discourse revealed an individual who held conservative beliefs and values that were in accord with those held by maternal feminists. Her experience in athletics reflected her immersion in a conservative sport model that was resistant to women's participation on an equal basis. Only recently, have women in sport and physical education begun to question the rationale for the existing sport culture. If different visions of sport are to emerge, future studies must examine the extent to which women involved in sport must acquiesce to the existing sport culture in order to validate their participation in it.

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## **APPENDIX**

### **TRANSCRIPTS OF INTERVIEWS**

#### **WITH MARGARET (BELL) GIBSON**

**First Interview: Nov. 10, 1989**

**Bell:** All the times I was in sports, I had all my friends in sports. But then I had a lot of friends that were outside of sports, too. Kids I went to school with and people that had absolutely nothing to do with sports at all. Because of different qualities that I shared with other people.

**Researcher:** The bias that I was familiar with from some of the writings, that come from Eastern Canada, to begin with, and I'm beginning to wonder if the woman growing up in Eastern Canada didn't have a different experience than the kid growing up in the West.

**Bell:** That's entirely possible.

**Researcher:** Did you have friends that had grown up in Eastern Canada?

**Bell:** Oh, yes.

**Researcher:** Did you notice any restraints on them?

**Bell:** Not really. Because when I saw them, we were on the field competing. I had one particular friend, Jenny Dolson, that any time that I saw her, it was always with a sports background and the kids that we would go to see and chum around with, when I was back there or if she was out here, were others that were on sports teams that we had both been on. So, I didn't have a chance to really see what was happening outside of her sports friends.

**Researcher:** I was wondering when you were growing up, you mentioned you grew up with your brothers and you just did things naturally. If they were playing ball; you played ball and what not.

**Bell:** That's right. Well, the younger one of the two boys. He is two years older than I am.

**Researcher:** And he was a good athlete?

**Bell:** Yes. Well, he played lacrosse and he played soccer and he was a junior something or other tennis champion here in Vancouver and played badminton, basketball, and he skied. He did everything everybody else did. And when we were younger, before we moved to Vancouver, I was the only girl my age (there were younger ones) but I always seemed to go with my brother and if they were playing Scrub or whatever, if we were going swimming, and they were going swimming, I usually seemed to be going with them.

**Researcher:** Were you good at sports even when you were very young? Did it come easily? You didn't have to struggle to keep up or to do well in a sport?

**Bell:** No, I didn't really.

**Researcher:** Do you think part of it was just because you were good at it to begin with?

**Bell:** Well, it takes a certain amount of concentration like everything else, but you have to want to do it.

**Researcher:** Yes.

Bell: You know. But we used to go up skiing and Bobby played on the championship basketball team here. Oh, two of them. I played on a basketball team here, too, that managed to take a championship home. Both the school won and a B.C., Vancouver Open Team we played for the. . . I guess it was The Province [city newspaper] that sponsored the team that I played on. But, you know. . . if the . . . school does things, you're not going to sit down and watch them. Are you? You're going to try it.

Researcher: Not if you're reasonably good at it, yes!

Bell: Well! I didn't know if I was reasonably good at it or not, but I tried.

Researcher: Now, I'm amazed. That at . . . what . . . what year about 19 . . . that there was that . . .

Bell: We came down here in 1929, it was 1928 that I was . . . jumping. And I competed in high school sports in Nelson.

Researcher: Now was this a particular teacher that got you into track and field? I am amazed that you had . . .

Bell: No, my brother wanted to do it with the high school and if he was going down there after school, I went with him.

Researcher: So that was through the school club?

Bell: That was. Yes! But that was after we had fooled around on our own quite a bit.

Researcher: Now was this in about grade six? Grade seven?

Bell: Yes.

Researcher: And at that point they were letting a - like a grade seven student could join the club and compete?

Bell: No, I didn't join in any club. I jumped for the school and in our own junior high sports and I won it and they seemed to think I was pretty good and they asked me if I would like to compete for Nelson in the high school sports.

Researcher: So you were competing against kids who were a lot older than yourself.

Bell: Yes, and I said, "Yes," and I won.

Researcher: And you were thirteen years old when you won that first high jump competition? That would have been the high school . . .

Bell: Yes! The high school district because the meet was in Cranbrook. We went to Cranbrook.

Researcher: What was the reaction of your friends and family . . . when this thirteen year old cleaned up the whole class?

Bell: Well, they thought it was pretty good. Actually, I had won a medal for running just before I got involved in track.



Researcher: Now how did that happen? Was it a field sports day or something like that?

Bell: It was a Sports Day and I got a silver medal about as big as a quarter and it was for running twenty-five yards, which is rather amusing.

Researcher: Was most of the sports for young children, . . . either happening through the schools, or church, or sports days, or picnics?

Bell: Sunday schools or something like that, yes. That's right.

Researcher: And then, if a child showed particular talent, would somebody take an interest in that child and encourage them, or was it just what you wanted to do?

Bell: Not particularly. You just sort of did your own thing. And when I got into it, it was down here. The first year I competed down here, I competed for a junior high school and I won it and the Vancouver Athletic Club (which actually was a baseball club) invited me to join their club because they had a track team at the time. And, of course, I nearly "busted all my buttons" because these were kids in high school and kids who were finished school and kids that were going to university because this was "the" track club in Vancouver. So of course, I felt that was great.

Researcher: So, you were about thirteen? Fourteen?

Bell: No, at that point I was fifteen.

Researcher: So up to that point you were still competing in divisional track and field at Nelson? And did your brother join the track club? That, you did on your own?

Bell: No. He decided he was more interested in tennis and soccer and games like that.

Researcher: So that was really the first giant leap forward on your own, wasn't it?

Bell: That was kind of the parting of the ways. Yes!

Researcher: And that was because somebody invited you, had heard about your talent, and sought you out?

Bell: I was trying to remember, it was one of our high school teachers . . . but then, a track club will scout out high school track meets. Yes!

Researcher: When you would compete in these high school track meets, you knew that somebody might sort of be keeping an eye on you...? Were you thinking that way at all - you were just out there to compete. Right?

Bell: I was out there to compete for my school and that was it and I never thought beyond that. They planted the idea when they invited me to join their club.

Researcher: Was competing with your school; I'm thinking of the fifteen or sixteen year old and even a younger girl... Do you remember why you particularly wanted to continue with track and field versus another sport? Or why you wanted, or what you enjoyed the most about competing, or ...?

Bell: Well I just wanted something to do all the time, so I competed in basketball in the winter time. I did a bit of skiing with my brother. I was in track and field in the

summertime and when my coach, at the club heard I'd go swimming, that was a "No-No" and when he found out that I'd go skiing, "Oh! You'd better stop that because you might break a leg."

Researcher: Why was swimming a "No-No?"

Bell: Well, you developed different muscles that worked against one another. See, if you've ever noticed a swimmer, the muscles along the top of their leg, in the front, are quite well-developed. You don't want all that there. You want spring and long muscles.

Researcher: Yes! Rather than the bulk. So, it sounds like you were a well-rounded athlete in a lot of different sports. Now, basketball was organized at that point through the schools?

Bell: Oh, yes! The schools competed against each other. I played grass hockey one year. I decided I didn't like my shins beat up so I stopped that.

Researcher: So they had hockey? That would be girls only, right?

Bell: They had grass hockey. Yes.

Researcher: Basketball? Was volleyball in yet?

Bell: Yes, but I didn't play much volleyball. I was more interested in basketball because - with that, I could play for the school and I also could play for a commercial team [for The Province] and then the Sunday School started one. So, for two years, I played on three teams and that got to be too much.

Researcher: Was the level of competition pretty good? Even then?

Bell: Yes.

Researcher: It wasn't a matter of - you couldn't get sweaty or things like that? You could really get out there and be aggressive and compete.

Bell: That's right.

Researcher: Did you find that most of the girls that competed were fairly aggressive in most sports?

Bell: As far as sports were concerned. Yes, they were. But they had their shower afterwards and got into dresses or skirt and tops and you wouldn't know which ones were the players and which ones just going from school.

Researcher: And did most of your friends play sports with you or not too many - like your girl friends?

Bell: A lot of them did, but then an awful lot of them didn't too. Because, I don't know how I can separate that for you. Because I belonged to a Junior Women's Auxiliary and the C.G.I.T. with the church, where you sat and sewed and were nice little girls. You learned the nice ways of tea parties and what not.

Researcher: Did you sometime feel like . . . you were changing a role at all when you got out in sports?

Bell: No, actually, I didn't. And that's strange because I've been asked that before. No. That was just me and these were the things that I did and I didn't seem to have the demarcation anyplace along the line. That belongs over here and that belongs over there.

Researcher: So you approached sport just as another hobby?

Bell: Just as another hobby.

Researcher: An interest area, period, and you were the same person.

Bell: And then, of course, after I joined the club, there was more pressure on me to spend more time to do better. I kept going.

Researcher: When they first talked to you about joining the club, can you recall how you felt?

Bell: Well of course I can! I thought, "Gee, these are all great big kids and why would they ask me?" You know... and... some had been to the 1932 Olympics. I was very flattered.

Researcher: So did you feel intimidated?

Bell: No, I felt very honoured to have been asked because as far as track and field was concerned, at that point, everybody knew that was "the" track club as far as a mixed club was concerned. Now mind you there were . . .

Researcher: What other sorts of clubs were there?

Bell: There were boys clubs. Just boys clubs in town that were very good, but naturally I wouldn't be invited to join in those.

Researcher: Were there any track and field clubs just for women?

Bell: No. Not at that point.

Researcher: So that was basically it!

Bell: Yes. And I don't know outside of just keeping on 'til the end of high school, if I would even have tried to go further if I hadn't been in the club. Mind you, I did get an offer to go to the States, to go to school. In high school, not for university.

Researcher: So that was sort of a precursor to an athletic scholarship was it?

Bell: Yes.

Researcher: Oh! So somebody spotted you . . .

Bell: Yes. In the States, because we used to compete against people from Seattle and Portland and other American cities.

Researcher: In your high school meets?

Bell: No. Not in high school meets. Through the club.

Researcher: For heaven's sakes!

Bell: I also had an offer . . .

Researcher: How did that come about? A letter or . . . ?

Bell: No, it was by word of mouth from a coach, from a school. Actually, it had to do with a school and he said that, that way my education would go on from high school in Washington to the university and on through the university if I kept my books on my sports.

Researcher: So in effect it was an athletic - it was a precursor to an athletic scholarship to the University of Washington or whatever.

Bell: Yes.

Researcher: That early. For heaven's sake!

Bell: And then, when the first trip that I made back East, in '34, I went on with the British Empire Games team to London and when we came back, I was approached in Montreal to go back there to school and be coached in the East. Because at that time, most of the coaches were competing athletes that had been competing for awhile. Or else, they had finished competing and were carrying on. I mean there were no paid coaches like now.

Researcher: All the coaching was voluntary at that time?

Bell: That's right. And your high school coaches, of course, they were your P.E. teachers and what not. Although mine wasn't in high school. Mine was a teacher by the name of Edwards and he was the math teacher. He was our high school coach.

Researcher: What events did people compete in, in track and field at that point? Did they compete in shot put and things like that?

Bell: Oh! No, no distances! A . . . they were in the javelin, they were in the discus. There was high jump, broad jump, the 100, and the 220, and the relay, at first.

Researcher: And no long distance running at all?

Bell: Not when then started, but they were up to the . . . 440. The last year I was competing, they were running the 880. But the officials would never think of letting the women run a marathon or anything of that kind.

Researcher: Again, because they didn't think that women had the physical strength to endure?

Bell: That's right. They didn't think that they could stand it.

Researcher: Did any women ask at that point to do those sorts of activities or did women just accept that?

Bell: Not that I am aware of.

Researcher: None of your friends were pushing those limits?

Bell: No. They just figured that . . . Oh! The hurdles, of course. Then, of course, when you got into all the competition, then girls started to get into longer distances and shot put. And as the years went on . . .

Researcher: Now, you said had it not been for the Club, you may not have continued on had it just been high school. What happened to you in that Club?

Bell: Well, there would have been that . . . that end of an era. You know . . . and unless I competed as an unattached athlete just, "Here I am", and pay my dues and go, there wouldn't be much to egg you on. But I would have kept on with basketball and things like that. You know . . . I still liked playing basketball.

Researcher: Was your family very supportive of your track and field pursuits?

Bell: Oh, yes! But as it does happen though - you'll find - well, let's take Ben Johnson, for instance. He was winning everything that was going. And people . . . when, when Carl Lewis came along, people were happy that he had some real competition then. And it was really fabulous, as far as Ben was concerned.

Researcher: For all track and field, I think; it's a sad statement right now.

Bell: Yes. Yes, it sort of makes the sponsors wonder and makes things tough for the kids.

Researcher: It sort of defeats what the whole thing's been about for a lot of fine, young athletes, I think. It's a shame.

Bell: We were talking about ...I went back to that ...to that Olympic reunion and roast for Jimmy Worrall.

Researcher: Now who was Jimmy Worrall?

Bell: Jimmy was on our team in 1936.

Researcher: In the Berlin Games?

Bell: And when he came back, he decided that he was going to work with the track and field or sports organization. So, over the years, he had different positions with the organization and finally ended up as the President of the Canadian Olympic Association. And he was retiring. So all of the track and field athletes that they could find, at this point, were invited back. And they had a big dinner for him after the General Meeting. And . . . we managed to keep this secret. All of us, but two that I know of, that are still living, on the 1936 track and field team were there. One was Abb Conway who was in Ireland, and Syl Apps, who was at a wedding or christening or something that was a family deal, that couldn't be put off so . . .

Researcher: So was this reunion the most concentrated gathering of that team ... because I know you had been to the one earlier, of the track and field that you'd been to?

Bell: Yes, of the track and field. Yes.

Researcher: Was there much reminiscing?

Bell: Well, it was a pretty busy time. Because we were only there for, I got in late on Friday night, and it was Saturday night, and we left on Sunday, so . . . it wasn't that long.

We had breakfasts and lunches together and tried to stay out of Jimmy's way because this was a big surprise for him. And . . . we managed to keep it a surprise.

Researcher: He must have been very emotional when . . .

Bell: He didn't know anything about it. But he knew that there was going to be a dinner that night and that this was the end of his work. He now is on the ... he's a Past President. And he's sort of in the background. Not really - in fact, his wife and family were there, because they knew he was going to be presented with a plaque. He was going to be thanked for the years he had spent. Well, he's worked with them for over fifty years and as he said: "I was supposed to retire a few years ago but, " . . . he said . . . , "I just laid low and didn't say anything, but they knew. But they didn't jump at me", . . . and he said, "Now that I have to go," he said, "I'm still going to be in the background pointing directions." He said, "They may not listen to me, but I'll be there."

Researcher: That was neat. When you went in at this young age, into the club, were you accepted with open arms as an equal or did you have to prove yourself - particularly being younger than everybody? Can you remember the first couple of times?

Bell: Yes! I can remember it very well because these girls, I had seen at different times, because I had gone and watched track meets.

Researcher: You hadn't actually competed beyond the high school meet?

Bell: No, that was after. So, anyway, when I came into the club, they treated me like everybody's baby sister. And . . . track meets, like in Penticton or Kelowna, or wherever, there was usually a dance afterwards and they would all gather me up and take me to the dance. See that I was well taken care of all the time.

Researcher: So you had chaperones, in other words?

Bell: Oh, did I! Oh, oh! A whole team load!

Researcher: Did the guys react to you the same way - as a kid sister?

Bell: Like a kid sister - yes, but I was used to that.

Researcher: But you weren't a nuisance as far as they were concerned or anything like that?

Bell: No, because I had my business to look after and they had theirs to look after. They were always . . . I must say they were all very good about making sure I was all right and where we should be.

Researcher: Like, where would you stay? In private homes when you'd go to competitions? How would that work?

Bell: We were billeted sometimes. Other times for international games we were in a hotel or in the Olympic Village.

Researcher: Where you would share a room with one or two girls or something like that?

Bell: Yes.

Researcher: So you were about fifteen, at this point, and your parents felt very comfortable with you toddling around with the team?

Bell: Oh, yes!

Researcher: How big would the team have been about then? That would go to the meets generally?

Bell: Oh! Let's see. We drove one time and there were four carloads of kids. Yes, I'm sure there were. I can remember most of the girls, but I can't remember most of the boys.

Researcher: Would parents do the driving and help supervise?

Bell: No. Sometimes it was the coaches and the gal down here that was the head of the Women's Athletic Federation. She used to go to them and she acted as a chaperone for all us girls.

Researcher: Did you have curfews and regular sorts of rules?

Bell: Before? Yes.

Researcher: So you'd have to be in by a certain time or . . .

Bell: Oh, yes.

Researcher: Now, in terms of the competing - were you competing with Vernon, Kelowna, some of the American cities or colleges?

Bell: In some meets. It didn't matter really.

Researcher: Whoever would sponsor a meet?

Bell: Yes. You might come up against anybody. When you got into Commonwealth competition and Olympic competition, it was open competition. There were not divisions there.

Researcher: So there were no age . . . were there age distinctions . . . or how did they?

Bell: There were to start with . . . yes. Until sixteen you were a Junior. To eighteen you were an Intermediate Sport and over eighteen, you were a Senior. But, it didn't matter which of those categories you fell in (mind you, you had to be sixteen years old before you could go on a world - . . . like Empire Games or any of those).

Researcher: Even if you had extraordinary ability at twelve or thirteen, you wouldn't have been able to compete?

Bell: There were dancing competitions at the Caledonian Games for all ages and stuff like that. Swimmers and divers could be any age. But not until later for track and field. You had to be at least sixteen years old.

Researcher: So there was this sort of ethic about protecting children?

Bell: Yes. You could, in going to Seattle or going to Portland or here . . . like the Police Sports or the Highland Games or something like that. We used to have a lot of different

sports meets here that were sponsored by different organizations. The competition was in age groups sometimes.

Researcher: Well, more track and field anyway, wasn't there?

Bell: Yes.

Researcher: Wasn't it a very elite sport at that time?

Bell: It was at that time. Yes. It was a controlled group that belonged to the Women's Amateur Athletic Federation.

Researcher: Have you seen a demise sort of in the . . .? Was there a different aura about it?

Bell: Not really. It had been paralleled with other things. Let's put it that way.

Researcher: Oh.

Bell: In the meantime, but at that time, your track and field in the summertime and there was swimming at that time too. Those two sports were the summer sports.

Researcher: You said that you played basketball. Did you have difficulty making a choice whether you were going to pursue basketball versus track and field or . . . was that ever different seasons?

Bell: No. Because . . . until the last few years I was competing, there were no winter track and field games at all. But the last couple of years, there were indoor track meets. But there was only one, so by playing basketball you could keep in shape and you could certainly take a night off basketball if you had to go to a track meet.

Researcher: What was your training like through the club and high school, first? And then the club and then further on? Like what sort of a schedule?

Bell: Well, I always practised three days a week. Always for track and field. At the beginning of the season you train more because you were stiff and you had to work out more, good grief!

Researcher: And what would the training be like? What would it involve?

Bell: Well, real easy and then you worked into a heavier schedule.

Researcher: Running or . . .?

Bell: You'd probably . . . jogging. I used to jog a couple of laps before I would get started on my actual jumping. And that was mostly to iron out the little quirks you had and to try to change your style or something. We had one girl and I just loved her, she was the nicest girl (I'm not going to tell you who she was). She was a javelin thrower and she used to run on the relay team. I didn't run on the relay team unless they were absolutely stuck. But, she loved throwing the javelin and we would work and work and work and the rest of us kids would do some work and then we'd sit down and rest for awhile and she'd still be working. I never saw anybody put so much time into anything that they wanted to do. And . . . her style was beautiful; her distance was the best in B.C. She never made it on a world team.



Researcher: It just didn't click.

Bell: No.

Researcher: But all sorts of determination?

Bell: But I thought she was one of the greatest people around.

Researcher: Well, was it because she was just such an inspiration, because of the work?

Bell: I think her determination was . . .

Researcher: Had an influence?

Bell: Yes. But she was a very nice person too.

Researcher: So she would just travel as an alternate and she didn't get frustrated with never actually making it?

Bell: No, she was never on any of the big teams that left Canada.

Researcher: Did you just compete in high jump? You mentioned sometimes you'd run if they were short.

Bell: Well, a couple of times I ran in the relay team because we didn't have a fourth and I was known to broad jump, the odd time, but not that well. Because I didn't have the speed. You've got to be a good runner to be a good broad jumper. I even tried the javelin.

Bell: Oh! How did it go?

Bell: Not that good. I felt as though I was throwing my arm away, so I wasn't doing it right.

Researcher: You have that nice, long leverage though.

Bell: But when I let the spear go, it felt as though my arm was going with it. I had an awfully sore shoulder.

Researcher: How did you handle competition? Obviously, quite well, judging by your results? Particularly . . . as you moved through?

Bell: I don't know . . . I was . . . one of my coaches said, "That he never saw anybody so calm and so just laid back before a competition", but like I said to him, "Maybe it doesn't show, but I've got butterflies like you would not believe and I was" . . .

REsearcher: Before every single time and no matter what level?

Bell: Oh yes! Oh! It didn't matter. It didn't matter if I was going to jump in a cow pasture or if I was going to jump in Berlin. It was all the same.

Researcher: Do you remember how you used to handle it or did you just get on with it?

Bell: Well, I used to try to sit down and relax. Mind you - it didn't work because every once in a while I had to get up and walk around a while . . . (laughter) . . . But you know they say that if you haven't got that little something like that, that you really lack . . .

Researcher: You really need it. Do you think it helped you to have that adrenalin pumping?

Bell: Oh! I think so. I think it helps anybody just to have sort of extra "up".

Researcher: Is there a particular competition or meet - I know we've talked about the Olympics - would that be the highlight meet or the Commonwealth Games meet or . . . which ones were really the ultimate?

Bell: Well, the Olympics is considered the elite competition. Yes! If you make the Olympics you're considered to be good.

Researcher: Which ones particularly stand out for you?

Bell: Probably the first ones I went to in London. Because I was between sixteen and seventeen and you know it was my first big trip over away from home. And I was still going to school. Of course, this was really something to be able to do this.

Researcher: What were the things you enjoyed the most? Was it the travel or the competing or can you identify the things that really made it such an exciting experience for you?

Bell: Yes. They would take us on sightseeing trips and then, of course, we would be allowed to go to different places if we had someone with us that knew the area. And usually there were people around that would take us here, there, and the other place. And they had, let's see, the Prince of Wales had a big garden party for us.

Researcher: And you were sixteen years old when this happened?

Bell: Yes.

Researcher: And what do you remember about that? Do you remember being very excited about actually . . .?

Bell: A lot of food and a lot of people, because it was . . .

Researcher: Was it formal?

Bell: It wasn't just our team, well, we were all in our uniforms of course. It was a must.

Researcher: Okay, would this have been a Commonwealth Games?

Bell: Yes. That's what they call it now. We called it the British Empire Games.

Researcher: So your first British Empire Games was in London - in 1934?

Bell: Right.

Researcher: Wow!

Bell: And then they had a big dance for us at the what was the name of that hall? Goldsmith Hall, a dinner at Monico's, and an international garden party at Buckingham Palace Gardens - met the Prince of Wales [Edward VIII].

Researcher: Did you feel a bit like Cinderella at her first ball?

Bell: Well, no, I just felt like one of the crowd and all of us were being entertained because we were there as a team. And it was really great, because here again I was one of the youngest kids and I even got dubbed "Babe", while I was over there. Got very homesick.

Researcher: Your favourite nickname, I imagine. You loved it right?

Bell: No. No. I felt that they were trying to tell people how old I was and I didn't like that a bit. I wanted to be a real grown up.

Researcher: Did you grow up faster because you were competing with older kids and had all this world experience - sort of travelling and world experience?

Bell: I don't think so.

Researcher: Were your friends, when you came back, still sixteen year olds?

Bell: Yes.

Researcher: They were?

Bell: Yes. No, just a minute. That's leading you up the garden path. My school chums were still the same - you know. They were kids I played basketball with for the school and they were kids that were in my class at school and all that sort of stuff. And two of the girls were girls that had lived in the Interior when I started school and they were still my friends down here. Although neither one of them were into sports.

Researcher: They weren't competing? They just happened to move?

Bell: No. And I had always chosen, shall we say partied with my brother because . . .

Researcher: And how much older . . .

Bell: Two years. And . . . consequently my . . . some of my friends were older than I was. They didn't seem to mind. My brother didn't have a girlfriend. He was more interested in sports, as I was. So if there was a party he'd say, "Hey, we're going to a party Saturday night".

Researcher: Were you a tom-boy?

Bell: My only . . . not really.

Researcher: No.

Bell: No. No. At least, I don't think I was. No, I wasn't. No.

Researcher: Now, what makes you say "No, you weren't?"

Bell: Well, because I like doing all the things that most girls like to do. I like to sew, I like to read, I like to do things around the house and . . .

Researcher: Did you know tom-boys at the time; were you sort of climbing trees and splitting your pants and all those sorts of things?

Bell: Yes! I knew a couple and I didn't like them very well. When you reach your teens you start to mature and leave that behind you. I did that when I was younger. I got that out of my system before we moved to Vancouver. We'd built a tree house behind my house. Mother was sure that one of us was going to fall down and break our neck - not our arms. No. that's strange because . . . the girls on the track team weren't tom-boys either. They were quite ladylike.

Researcher: What about some of the women that were in something like javelin where maybe they needed a little more musculature or had to be a little more aggressive?

Bell: I think probably that was . . . that was part of her trouble. We didn't lift weights and do things like that and maybe, probably if she had or girls had done that sort of thing at that time, she would have been good at it.

Researcher: So none of the girls you competed with seemed to have sort of have a lot of male traits like aggressiveness or - there was none of that? Not even in the hurdles or some of the more . . .

Bell: No . . . We had a hurdler that was a real doll. She was - she was pretty and one of the most feminine little things you'd ever see in your life and I say this because she was little. I was always a big girl - tall. But she was little and to me, she reminded me of a doll.

Researcher: Very delicate?

Bell: Yes! But fast over those hurdles.

Researcher: Yes!

Bell: No. And another thing, too . . . when we went to some of the parties and things after the sports, a lot of the times we were allowed to - if it was formal - we were allowed to wear formal dresses. And you would find that all the girls would turn up in their formal as opposed to their uniform because you weren't so regimented. You could be more feminine that way, than running around in your uniform.

Researcher: Oh. You could be more your own person. Do you think sports is attracting a different kind of person now then than maybe it did then - for different reasons?

Bell: It's possible because . . . you hear about a bunch of these kids that are in sports now and . . . and they come from such different walks of life. A lot are university students and are now "A" class athletes who get money according to performance. We would have been called "pros" and would be ineligible to compete. We were mostly high school or working types.

Researcher: Did money make a difference then - in the late 20s and 30s?

Bell: I think it did. Not as far as who went into sports, so that they had something to do. I can't say it did in my case because . . . I was sort of heading that way, because of my brother when, I was much younger, before I even knew that I wanted to do this.

Researcher: But did you find that a lot of the girls that you competed with or against tended to come from a certain class or . . .

Bell: The girls, yes! Most were at high school or were working.

Researcher: What would that be?

Bell: Well, it would probably be somebody that really enjoyed sports and had started in high school. You have to remember we were talking now about Depression Years.

Researcher: Oh! Right.

Bell: Sure, you've got to keep that in mind.

Researcher: So there wasn't a lot of money to throw around for many of them anyway?

Bell: No. And our trips - even though they were Seattle, or Portland, or Penticton, or Kelowna, or always Labour Day in Nanaimo - there was a big track meet . . . our passage was always paid to those things. We didn't have to pay for it.

Researcher: Did you have to raise funds and things like that?

Bell: Only once - we took up a collection to go back east for the Olympic Trials - at a professional boxing match.

Researcher: Where did they get their funding? Particularly through the Depression?

Bell: Spencers, Hudson's Bay, Woodward's and The Province, and The Sun, and a lot of private organizations like the Vancouver Police. They would donate funds and prizes.

Researcher: Sort of clubs would provide you with a . . .

Bell: Yes! The Caledonian Society and private businesses and citizens. They would help out with the teams.

Researcher: Did the Depression have an effect on track and field through those years in terms of the number of competitions or?

Bell: No. It was really just getting better.

Researcher: It didn't? You didn't feel it cut back because of the Depression?

Bell: No. I think, locally, we had more meets here at that time than they do now. Although that sounds strange, but Vancouver was kind of the focal point and they would come from the Interior and the Island and from Washington and Oregon and this sort of thing.

Researcher: Do you know why Vancouver seemed to be a focal point? Just because of the Club being here?

Bell: I guess so because it was a big city. They had good sponsors for the different sports.

Researcher: Would you probably have gone to the levels that you did achieve had you not lived in Vancouver?

Bell: I don't know.

Researcher: How much did living in Vancouver have to do with your success?

Bell: I can't honestly tell you because Trail and Nelson both had good track teams. And when we had track meets down here, we always had athletes from those towns. And that's where I started. It was in Nelson.

Researcher: So it's quite possible.

Bell: It's possible that I would have.

Researcher: Were there particular parts of Canada that just weren't represented at all at that point and time? Or, athletes were coming, as long as they had talent, they somehow made it through.

Bell: That's right.

Researcher: Was there one part of Canada that seemed more heavily represented?

Bell: Oh, yes. Toronto.

Researcher: Toronto.

Bell: Yes. But then that was one of the big cities in the Dominion.

Researcher: So they had the population to draw from. Do you think that was why Toronto was always so . . .

Bell: I think so and the Amateur Federation office was back East.

Researcher: Was there regional rivalry at all when you were on the Canadian team?

Bell: Each province wanted to win for themselves.

Researcher: There wasn't that East - West split though? Even then?

Bell: Oh! There always was.

Researcher: There always was?

Bell: But when you got on a team - you were Canadian. That was it. It didn't matter where you came from.

Researcher: Were you not at a disadvantage on the Canadian team in terms of meets and practices in that the East was such a concentrated population base.

Bell: I don't think so, because once a year there was the Dominion Championships and it didn't matter whether that was an Olympic year or an Empire Games year or whatever. There was always one meet during the year that was a Dominion Championship.

Researcher: Was it ever held in Vancouver or did you always have to travel?

Bell: Yes. A couple of times while I was competing.

Researcher: So you travelled by train?

Bell: Yes. Four days to Ontario or Quebec.

Researcher: Would you get there tired and then have to get off the train and compete?

Bell: No. We always had at least two weeks before a competition to get rested up.

Researcher: And what happened to your school work?

Bell: Well most of this was in the summertime.

Researcher: So the actual competition wouldn't happen through the school year, by and large?

Bell: Not very often. The 24th of May, it was always the first meet on a holiday. The 1st of July was always the Police Sports. The 24th of May was always the high school sports. The meet on Labour Day was always held in Nanaimo. The date varied for the last meet of the season.

**Second Interview: Nov. 17, 1989**

**Researcher:** Can you tell me a bit about when you first started, with your brother, you were just putting . . . a fence post up or something and jumping over that? Just for fun?

**Bell:** Actually . . . this is going to sound silly. The boys decided that they wanted to jump and we had a fence that had pickets on it, so they took one section of pickets out, all the way across. Took out the top bar and the bottom bar and left those two posts, and drove nails in, spaced and got a long piece of cord that was stiff enough to hold fairly well. It had a wow in it, but it was fairly straight and they started jumping over it. Well, of course, I wasn't going to sit and watch them forever, so I tried it. And that's the way I got started.

**Researcher:** So, in the back yard really?

**Bell:** In our own backyard. And there was no pit, no nothing, you were just jumping onto the grass.

**Researcher:** And then in school, that was over a proper bar, with a standard and . . .

**Bell:** Yes.

**Researcher:** Can you tell me what that bar meant to you . . . you talked a bit the last time about winning? You said it very matter-of-factly, so can you maybe tell me, what winning represents to you versus losing? Or people who made it versus people who didn't make it?

**Bell:** I don't like to talk about that part because it sounds as though I'm bragging too much. In all the time that I competed in high jumping, in Canada, I think . . . if I didn't win - I would say probably between eight or nine times during the whole time I competed in Canada - I didn't win it.

**Researcher:** Otherwise you won everything you entered?

**Bell:** Otherwise I won everything I entered, yes.

**Researcher:** So, can you describe the first time you won and then when you won a big one and please be honest, tell as much as you possibly can.

**Bell:** Well, it made you real happy because you were contributing to the team points. And usually, they would figure out who had the most points, which team had the most points and who won the overall games. Like they do at the high school sports - you know. And if your club won, this was just great. Our complete team - (VAC won frequently when competing at home) - managed to do that quite frequently and as far as Canada was concerned . . .

**Researcher:** In high school?

**Bell:** No, in open competition.

**Researcher:** Or was this the Vancouver Athletic Club?

**Bell:** Yes. No, I went to a small high school here in town and the best we ever did, I think, was second. South Vancouver . . . being the biggest school in town usually romped all over everybody else.



Researcher: Can you tell me some actual dates? Like in Nelson, you were competing in Nelson - do you remember the dates there?

Bell: Oh. Good heavens, when did we come down here? We came down here in 1930, so it would be 1929 - I imagine.

Researcher: So, Nelson was 1929?

Bell: Yes.

Researcher: And then you moved to Vancouver in . . . in 1930?

Bell: Yes.

Researcher: Okay and when did you join the club? Right away?

Bell: No. I competed in high school sports a couple of years before I was invited to join the club.

Researcher: So about 1932?

Bell: I would say so.

Researcher: And then you joined the club in 1932?

Bell: Yes, about that. It must have been 1932 because it was just after the Olympics in Los Angeles that I was asked. I wasn't at those. I had nothing to do with those. I just sat back in awe and read about them.

Researcher: And then the last bit of competition for you was at the British Empire Games in Australia?

Bell: In Australia in 1938.

Researcher: Right.

Bell: February of 1938. And that was all the big international meets there were. There was the one in England in 1934 - that was the first.

Researcher: British Empire Games?

Bell: First Empire Games I went to.

Researcher: And then the Berlin Olympics?

Bell: Then the Berlin Olympics in 1936. And then the British Empire Games again in 1938.

Researcher: So 1934, 1936, 1938 were the big international competitions?

Bell: Yes.

Researcher: From 1932 on were you competing in the Dominion meets? Every year that you were in the club?

Bell: Oh yes. And of course, the year that the war broke out in 1939 that just capped everything.

Researcher: Everything ended?

Bell: Except the basketball.

Researcher: Okay. Well, we'll take it up to 1934 where your international competition began. That would be a good closing point for now.

Bell: There were two competitions in 1934. Both in England. One was the British Empire Games and that came in (oh, I'm not going to remember this part), I would say the beginning of August.

Researcher: Okay.

Bell: Probably, I'm not sure of the dates. And, two weeks after that - still in London, was the Women's World Games.

Researcher: Oh! Were these held frequently?

Bell: Women's World Games?

Researcher: I had never heard of them before.

Bell: I only competed in them once.

Researcher: So were they held right after the Olympics?

Bell: No. Right after the British Empire Games. But they weren't in Australia. I was in an invitational meet in New Zealand after Australia . . . on the way home from Australia . . . I should say. But, I set a new record there. I was really proud of that.

Researcher: Yes.

Bell: But I was third in both the British Empire Games and in the Women's World Games.

Researcher: Okay. So you don't know how the Women's World Games started or how long they had been held or under what circumstances they were held?

Bell: No . . . it was the first time I had ever run into them or even heard of them.

Researcher: Oh!

Bell: But that encompassed more people than just the British Empire. That was world.

Researcher: Okay. If you don't mind . . . can you tell me when you talked about the winning . . . like was it really important to you to add to the team contribution. I gather that was a big plus when you did win?

Bell: Oh yes, getting points for your team.

Researcher: Was it meaningful in terms of you as an individual as well? And could you talk about the different kinds of ways that your accomplishment was recognized?

Bell: Well, with your medals and prizes. And, of course, when you came back, you're . . .

Researcher: What would they actually give you every time you won? What were some of the material things that you would win?

Bell: Well, in . . . world games . . . Olympics and so on, it's always medals. It always has been. But in the different games like the Police Games and the Scottish Games and all these sort of different ones it was actually silver of some kind - silver plates, silver trays. I got luggage one time. I won a fox fur another time. But you never . . . you know it was always something different because these prizes were donated.

Researcher: By companies and things like that?

Bell: Yes, usually, yes.

Researcher: What about at high school? Were there just ribbons then? What would they have, earlier - just at the high school meets?

Bell: They were ribbons.

Researcher: Yes. Would there be some sort of an award ceremony usually after these things went well?

Bell: Yes. The same things, three steps and . . . the same as you see at the Olympics now.

Researcher: And did they raise the Canadian flag and all that?

Bell: Oh yes and sang if it was a first place for Canada. They sang the Canadian anthem. When we were in Berlin, we sat right next to the dias where Hitler and all his cronies were. And, when the Americans . . . (he seemed to have an aversion for the Americans) . . . particularly to Jesse Owens. Anytime that there was an American that won an event, some of the Canadian team would sing the American anthem also. Not just in our part, other American spectators would join in. It was was kind of fun. It was kind of cheeky too.

Researcher: A little, but were you glad you did it?

Bell: Yes. Nothing miserable or out of the way was done, but there was, there were little things like that

Researcher: That were irritants to let you know that all was not well.

Bell: And let them know what we knew.

Researcher: So it was a tit-for-tat sort of thing? What about apart from winning, did the height of the bar mean anything to your or the records? What motivated you to keep training and trying? Or, I mean, you were getting recognition, obviously. Do you know what things you focus on as the goal, for example? Would it just be that bar moving higher or would it be that record coming down or what?

Bell: Well, mostly you were . . .

Researcher: What were you focusing on?

Bell: Mostly winning. But hopefully you would advance enough to break a record.

Researcher: Did winning mean the record or did it mean beating your competitors?

Bell: No. Winning just meant beating the other people you were competing against. Breaking a record meant that you jumped higher than anybody had ever jumped before.

Researcher: Or what about just . . . beating just your own record?

Bell: Or your record. Didn't matter - as long as it was going up. It made you happy.

Researcher: So going up was the goal right? A little higher each time. So can you tell me - you said there were official meets. What would be the official meets?

Bell: Well, the ones that we would consider an official meet would be one that was sponsored by the B.C. Women's Amateur Athletic Federation or the Dominion Athletic Association or trials for Olympics or Empire Games, whatever. Any meet approved by the Women's Amateur Athletic Federation.

Researcher: Did you have a divisional - like getting through the competitions to make it to the Dominions. Did you have a regional meet first?

Bell: Yes. There would be a British Columbia meet first.

Researcher: Anybody from the province could go into that?

Bell: That's right. But you had to qualify there to go to the Dominion.

Researcher: Now, if I were some unknown athlete who just happened to bop into a . . . an event and I won it; at that point I could still progress through? I didn't have to be attached to a club or organization?

Bell: Oh, yes! No, you didn't as long as you paid your entry fee, you could go on and compete if you belonged to the Athletic Federation. You had to belong to the W.A.A.F. in order to compete in any sanctioned meet. You were given a membership card which cost twenty-five cents.

Researcher: Now, with you being a member of the club, did you have to pay your entry fee?

Bell: No.

Researcher: No? That was paid for?

Bell: The club looked after that.

Researcher: And in terms of the ladder then, you'd win a provincial ranking. You'd have to be ranked sort of as a provincial competitor first?

Bell: Yes.

Researcher: And then what would happen after that? Canadians?

Bell: Then you would go to the Canadians, yes.

Researcher: Which were held once a year?

Bell: Yes.

Researcher: And was the Provincial held once a year as well?

Bell: Yes.

Researcher: Yes. In the summer and all this would be through the summertime basically.

Bell: Yes.

Researcher: And then after that, of course, you would be qualified as an international athlete?

Bell: There was no money or anything like that.

Researcher: Yes, I was going to ask about amateur versus professionalism. How about under the table?

Bell: No. Not that I know of. It was quite a bit later that anything, like that came up. I remember, she was a skater - something, Anne.

Researcher: Barbara Anne Bell? No.

Bell: No, Barbara Anne Scott!

Researcher: Barbara Anne Scott?

Bell: Barbara Anne Scott. Here's a girl that won at the Olympics in skating and when she came back, she was given a car. And the car was promptly taken away from her because it made her a professional.

Researcher: So the rules about gifts and money . . .

Bell: The rules were very strict. No one was ever challenged about breaking amateur rules on the Canadian team while I competed.

Researcher: So it was all right to get the fur neckpiece if you won the competition?

Bell: If that was the prize, you could accept anything except money.

Researcher: If that was the prize?

Bell: Yes. But the car was not the prize for skating.

Researcher: I see.

Bell: That was Canada's recognition to her for what she had done.

Researcher: Did you know or have any friends that didn't abide by that code?

Bell: Not before the war, no.

Researcher: No? So everybody really was in it was an amateur at that point?

Bell: Yes.

Researcher: Period . . . interesting as well.

**Third Interview: Dec. 1, 1989**

**Researcher:** I would basically enjoy hearing you talk about . . . a real sense of whatever was an important part of your life experience as a competitive athlete at that time. It's up to you - whatever you choose to talk about, as being particularly significant or important to you. In this, if you could please assume that I know absolutely nothing. Don't assume that I have any background of knowledge in the area. So you're trying to explain to somebody (quite ignorant) what all this meant to you. Probably it would be easier if we talked about the things that were really very, very meaningful and important to you; be it an experience, or an event, or - just really try and give me the flavour of it as much as possible. What you did, what you didn't do, what it involved, or who was there, how you did it, whatever.

**Bell:** Well, I think maybe there were three highlights, actually, as far as I was concerned. There was the Empire Games in 1934, the Olympics in 1936, and of course, that last one in Australia. The Empire Games . . . I was lucky enough to get into the competition for the Women's World Games, which made me very happy because they were supposed to be every four years like the Olympics. And I think during all the time I jumped and was eligible to compete in that, there was only one competition. I jumped the Scissors, when I started, which was the easiest for a beginner to start.

**Researcher:** What were the Scissors?

**Bell:** My approach was from the left-hand side instead of the right-hand side which gave my coach a bit of trouble because he didn't do anything left-handed (laughter).

**Researcher:** Is the right-hand side the normal approach in Scissors?

**Bell:** Yes.

**Researcher:** Do you know why you approached from the left?

**Bell:** I have no idea. The only reasoning for that, that I can think of, is when I was small, I was left-handed and when I went to school they insisted that I be right-handed. But when I started jumping, I found that I was far more comfortable approaching the bar from the left-hand side, than I was from the right. So that made me a left-hand jumper, I guess you'd call it. And, of course, the Scissors is just running up to the bar and . . . kicking up your lead leg. The one next to the bar - real hard - and bringing your other one up real hard as you bring your arms up over your head. And that gives you your height and the momentum to carry you up over the bar.

**Researcher:** What kind of an approach did you use? A running approach?

**Bell:** Yes. A lot of people measured their approach. I paced mine off. I found it was a lot easier (than carting around a tape to measure my approach) and trying to find somebody to help.

**Researcher:** So they would actually take a tape and measure where they should take off?

Bell: Oh yes. I paced mine, though - sixteen steps back from the bar - from the centre of the bar. And that usually gave me the proper take off so I wasn't too near or I'd come up underneath it and knock it off.

Researcher: Had you just found the sixteen steps through your own experience or had you worked that out with a coach or both?

Bell: Well, you kind of fumble around when you first start, before you're really competing and . . . actually it's just finding out where your more comfortable and what gives you the momentum you need, because you're running quite fast . . . when you actually get to the bar, where you're going to take off. Getting it in the right place if you're too close when you take a trial jump, you just back it up maybe . . . a foot . . . or you bring it in a little bit if you're coming down on the bar then you just move in a little bit. It's not too hard to line up.

Researcher: How many chances did you have in each competition?

Bell: Three at each height.

Researcher: Would you find that you would always make all three right up to the very end? Well, you only have to do it once, don't you?

Bell: You only have to do it once and hopefully, you do it the first time because if you don't you're awfully tired by the time you're finished.

Researcher: It's just exhausting if you have to keep trying and trying?

Bell: Yes, because usually it's a nice, hot, summer day and the good old sun is pelting down, just the way you like it. Everything is under control but you can get awfully tired out there.

Researcher: Are there any dynamics in clearing the bar itself?

Bell: Well, there's a lot of timing involved in this. If your timing is out, you can forget it. Because you're going to have a problem.

Researcher: Can you explain what you mean by timing?

Bell: Well, if you're in your approach, you're not running fast enough, it could mean, that you're not going to have the momentum to go high enough to clear the bar. If you're running too fast, then you might get carried forward as you're going up and hit the bar and knock it off. Maybe even with your hip. Because your timing is wrong. So it takes a lot of practice to get your timing and your approach and your distances right. And it sounds picky but . . .

Researcher: No.

Bell: It's something that has to be done.



Researcher: When you were running would you actually just mentally be counting . . . one. How would you know at what point to change from running to moving up? Just the feel of it?

Bell: Well, usually, with me, my take-off was always, of course, with my left foot. That was the one that would go up first. My other one was planted very firmly about the centre of the bar. Or maybe a little bit closer to the standard on my side. Standards . . . the uprights . . . you know, the poles?

Researcher: Yes, right.

Bell: Okay. [Marg, draws out two pictures of herself - jumping over the high jump bar]. See, in this picture, my foot has left the ground here but I probably hit it just about there.

Researcher: Right.

Bell: I kicked that foot up real hard and this one came up and would give me the extra momentum to go over that.

Researcher: So your trailing leg didn't tend to drag you back down at all?

Bell: No, no, because you kicked that one up very hard.

Researcher: You kick it up, after your other leg is already over?

Bell: (Referring to the photograph) That one's up. No, it's not over, it's up.

Researcher: Not quite. And this gives you the extra lift?

Bell: And this gives you the extra lift. You're going up when you're bringing this leg up real hard but you also bring your arms up like that and then you spread them like that to give you balance. You spread them sort of to the side.

Researcher: Do you lift your arms up as soon as you're kicking this leg up?

Bell: Your arms come up when you kick your . . . your lead leg up.

Researcher: Yes. Okay.

Bell: And then you balance yourself, more-or-less with this.

Researcher: What would happen if you didn't - with the balance? Would you just fall over backwards or forwards or?

Bell: Well, you would probably fall. Yes, when you landed in the pit. You would probably fall. Mostly, you landed on your feet. When I was competing, nearly everybody landed on their feet. Unless you were doing the Western Roll and then they would land on their two feet and probably their hands down. But never just flop in the pit like they do on those great lovely pieces of foam that they land on now.

Researcher: Yes! Like they are now - Fosbury Flop. Now . . . so at this point in the picture, this leg is . . . the front of the foot is already pretty well cleared, right?

Bell: Yes. See, the foot is just even with the bar there. Now, when this leg comes up, I'm going up on this. My body is moving up and when I kick that leg up, that will clear the bar.

Researcher: So even though you're not pushing off the ground when you kick up again, you still create some sort of momentum by that kick? It's interesting. And what are you focusing on with your eyes. Are you looking at the bar the whole time? Or at the ground or . . . do you lead with your head?

Bell: Usually, no. No! If your head goes over the bar before your body does, I was disqualified.

Researcher: Oh! That was one of the rules?

Bell: Yes, that was one of the rules and that's why I watch the kids jumping today and I think to myself - you wouldn't have lasted five minutes if you'd been competing against me.

Researcher: Was that a problem? Was that a problem - trying not to lead with your head?

Bell: No, no, it wasn't really.

Researcher: Because of the style. Oh. So what would happen . . . like any other body part could cross the bar first . . . there was an actual rule that said your head couldn't.

Bell: Not your head . . . your head could not be lower and it couldn't go over the bar first. And it couldn't be lower than your body as you passed over the bar. Didn't matter where it ended up, after you got over the bar, but it couldn't be lower and it couldn't lead your body.

Researcher: Were there any other rules regarding how you approached the jump or . . . ?

Bell: No. You could approach it any way you wanted to.

Researcher: Those were the only two rules that were, yes . . .

Researcher: Were you timed? Did you have a certain time or could you take all day - within reason?

Bell: Well, they liked you to . . . within reason. They let you take your time.

Researcher: So you were never timed at any of the jumps?

Bell: No. When I went to Australia, I was just in transition because my coach felt I could jump higher with the lower center of gravity using the new technique. I was changing from the Scissors to the Eastern Roll, which is a Scissors with a lay-out. Now,

you jump exactly the same way except, going over the bar in the Scissors, you're in a sitting position . . semi-sitting position. With the other, your leaning back which gives you more lift of the hips. It changes your centre of gravity which gives you better height.

Researcher: More lift of the hips. Did your height go up a lot when you changed?

Bell: Not a lot, because I was sort of in transition, in that I had started the summer before. And I competed like that and there was a . . . one of the South African boys jumped that way. And our coach coached boys on our team that were Western Roll types. Which wasn't my way of doing it. They went over with their face toward the bar and it was under their stomach as they passed over the top of it.

Researcher: Oh, right.

Bell: And with me, I was leaning backwards, looking up at the sky.

Researcher: Did your back . . . your back would go over first?

Bell: No, you were in a layout position.

Researcher: See, I'm still thinking Flop.

Bell: Yes. Right out across the bar. (Referred to picture once again). Instead of being like that, my body would be flat over top of the bar.

Researcher: So you'd still lead with that leg?

Bell: I'd still lead with that leg. See, this made it so it wasn't too difficult.

Researcher: So you didn't have to get your body weight up?

Bell: That's right. You didn't have to. Your centre of gravity was much lower. It was the width of your body then, as opposed to half-way up the trunk of your body.

Researcher: So at this point, instead of your body being so upright you would be leaning back much, much more?

Bell: That's right.

Researcher: Even at this stage of the jump, would you? At what point would you start to lean back?

Bell: At that state, I'm leaning forward there. I was leaning forward a little bit. Well instead of that, I'd be leaning back.

Researcher: So you had to kick up and the bar is out here?

Bell: Well, the bar is right beside you.

Researcher: Right, you're approaching it from . . .

Bell: I'm approaching it from here.

Researcher: Then I'm approaching it from here, well I'd be on the left so it would be like this. You kick up with the left leg.

Bell: Yes. The leg next to the bar and lean back.

Researcher: Yes! And that would be going up and you would be like this.

Bell: But your arms still have to come up. Because that has to keep the top of your body up.

Researcher: Must have been a weird sensation to get used to?

Bell: I felt very insecure to start with because I felt as though I was going to fall.

Researcher: Oh yes. You can't see.

Bell: But once you're over the bar, when you bring up the left leg that kind of comes across your body which turns you, so you land on your feet, which made it very nice because I liked landing on my feet (laughter).

Researcher: Could you see . . . yes . . . I don't blame you! Could you see the bar in that laid-out position?

Bell: No, no, no. It was under you.

Researcher: So once the jump had started . . .

Bell: You lost track of it.

Researcher: You were committed?

Bell: That's right.

Researcher: You either made it or you didn't. Now what about - did you have any falls - where you hit the bar? If you didn't clear the bar then, let's say you didn't get enough height, you knocked the bar down . . . then what would happen to you?

Bell: Then everybody else would have their turn and I would have another turn at that height. I was allowed three turns. Well, everybody was allowed three tries at each height.

Researcher: And it was just one after the other?

Bell: That's right. And they called you. However, they called you, I don't know - they didn't do it alphabetically, they just listed the jumpers perhaps as the entries came in.

Researcher: And there were no landing mats or pits or?

Bell: It was sand and dirt. You can see the edge of it there [referring to picture] in that picture. That's the edge.

Researcher: So it wasn't too horrendous to land in if you happened to go splat!

Bell: Oh! I spent one whole summer where I competed in one competition without a sprained ankle or both sprained ankles.

Researcher: From the landing?

Bell: Yes. I used to, I wore ankle supports on both ankles after I had been competing - oh, I think about the third year, I was competing. Certainly, the first year, I had a problem with sprained ankles.

Researcher: So coming down and your body folding on top and not being prepared underneath?

Bell: Or you might, you might stamp that foot down for your take - off real hard and your ankle might turn. I guess I had that kind of ankle.

Researcher: Was there a . . . in terms of the different parts of the jump, like the take-off and the lift and . . . was there a different sort of mental set in each of the different parts of the jump?

Bell: No. No.

Researcher: Did you have different things you were thinking about or was it just the flow or . . . ?

Bell: You started wherever your run started. I used to stand there for what seemed like a couple of minutes and just concentrate on what I was going to do. And mentally, I would run up to the bar and jump it.

Researcher: Is that what you would mentally be seeing yourself doing? You'd be running a mental tape?

Bell: Yes. And I would be going over in my mind, what I was going to do and how I was going to do it. You have watched divers? And they stand on the board and they look as though their mind is far, far away. Well, in retrospect, that's exactly what I used to do. They would do their dive mentally in their head before, before they would even start. And I would the same way.

Researcher: Sort of visualization. Were you good enough at doing that, that you could actually see an image of yourself doing it?

Bell: No. I was just doing it in my mind. But it's funny because, with you saying that, I could jump and miss the jump if it was a height that I knew that I could make, you know. That was, that would be one of two things. I had . . . thought, "Oh well, this is 4'6" or 4'8", I can do this; I don't have to worry." And I would run up to the bar. And if I missed it (and I've been known to a couple of times), because at this point I would be

jumping with my sweat suit on - not my shorts. I never took my sweats off until I got up to about 4'10" and then I took my sweat suit off.

Researcher: Why did you?

Bell: Well, it was just a precaution to keep me nice and warm. At the beginning of your jumping, of the contest, there were more people competing. And by the time you got up to 4'10" or 4'11", a number of them were out because they didn't jump higher than that. There were quite a few kids, I noticed, even when you got into world competition, that if you wanted to make a jump and you tried it and it was just the beginning and you were doing it sort of as a warm-up; that they would do it with their sweats on and then they might . . .

Researcher: So even one of the three jumps? The actual jumps - they might still do with a warm-up suit on?

Bell: Oh, yes. I did. I competed until, until I got to about 4' 10".

Researcher: How long would the waits be sometimes?

Bell: Oh, it would all depend on how many people were competing.

Researcher: How long would an average competition last, where you were actually at the beginning?

Bell: A couple of hours.

Researcher: Oh! Was it hard to keep your focus up for that length of time?

Bell: Not really, because when you're out in the field and everybody else around you, in the group that you're competing with, is out there, your mind is on what you're doing. It's not wandering off about, "Gee, tonight they're having a banquet." Your mind doesn't do that. Not if you are serious about it.

Researcher: Are you aware of the stadium or anything like that?

Bell: Not of people cheering or anything like that. You don't hear them.

Researcher: Oh.

Bell: No. You don't hear them. Mind you, after it's over, if there are cheers, you might even be hollering yourself for somebody that's running in a relay or something. That's entirely different.

Researcher: But the two hours that you were actually jumping, you were pretty well focused on that one area.

Bell: But two hours, I'll tell you about one - the Olympics. We started in the morning at about 10:00 a.m. o'clock and there were a lot of us competing. I don't know how many were in the competition. That was the least of our worries. We weren't worried about the rest of them, we were worried about what we were doing. But, we competed until

noon and there were - we competed until nearly one o'clock - and there were either ten or twelve of us left. And we had a break.

Researcher: Where you could leave, or?

Bell: Well, no, where we just had a rest and I don't know what else they were doing on the field. But I know what I was doing. I was flaked out - just resting. Oh! And of course, the trip to the little girls' room [laughter]. That was important by then. But in the afternoon, the rest of us finished up the competition and I think that took us something like . . . almost an hour and a half. So that particular day we were jumping between four and a half and five hours.

Researcher: It's grinding then?

Bell: And it was hot, hot, hot!

Researcher: Then at that point, does it become a matter of who [couple of things come to mind], is it a matter of who's the most talented athlete - who can endure the most, or who wasn't tired on that particular day?

Bell: By that time, it has become more-or-less an endurance contest as well as what you know.

Researcher: Endurance? Just who can pull it all together at the end of five hours. What made the difference on any given day, in terms of whether you could clear a certain height or you couldn't, do you think?

Bell: I don't know.

Researcher: Did you find that or did you have a lot of consistency?

Bell: I was fairly consistent in my jumping . . . I was always out of my sweats by 4 feet 11 inches (at least). And bear in mind, at this time we're talking about world records of 5 feet 5 1/2 inches. We're not talking about over 6 feet for girls. I always figured if I kept a sweat suit on after 4 feet 10 inches, even if I was feeling really good, then I was showing off. But, I knew, that up to that height, I could make it with them on. And then I would take them off. But always between . . .

Researcher: Did that effect the other girls? The fact that at that height you were still, were you one of the only girls still wearing the sweat suit?

Bell: I don't . . . well, here I was.

Researcher: In Vancouver?

Bell: No, no. I mustn't say that. There was a girl by the name of Marg Thompson that lived in Nanaimo. She used to wear her sweats, too.

Researcher: But just you and she in a local competition?

Bell: Usually.

Researcher: And you don't remember consciously doing that sort of to . . .

Bell: That was the farthest from my mind.

Researcher: Yes. It was just to keep warm and . . .

Bell: Yes. And once you are warmed-up, even on a hot day, you don't want to take your sweats off and lose that. And I used to, between jumps, I had a car rug that I used to put down. And I would sit on it. And I nearly always either put my sweat pants back on (not the tops, the sweats). Or else I would lay them over my legs just to keep them warm.

Researcher: Did you pay special attention to your legs?

[interruption]

Bell: Where were we?

Researcher: You were telling me about, I had asked you if you paid special attention to your legs, sort of through that period?

Bell: Just to keep them warm. If I didn't pick my sweat pants up and lay them over my legs, I would probably pull the edge of my blanket over. Depending on whether I had another jumper sitting beside me or not.

Researcher: Did you train - did you do a lot of leg work in your training?

Bell: Yes. Yes.

Researcher: As opposed to . . . did your upper body work, as well, or pretty well all exclusively legs?

Bell: Not that much. Not that much. Mostly jogging. I think I mentioned at the beginning of this that I used to jog anything up to two laps. Just, a real easy jog around the track and particularly at the beginning of the season, when it was necessary for you to get into shape. Because usually, in spite of basketball or whatever I happened to be doing in the wintertime, before they started having indoor track meets in the winter, I used to always have a certain amount of stiffness in the back of my legs. I never had shin splints that I can remember, but some of the runners did at the beginning of the year because they just jumped into their training too fast and didn't sort of ease into it. But I always jogged at least a quarter mile, probably half a mile, at the beginning of an exercise period when we were in training. And I always jogged before I came off the field.

Researcher: Did you know when you would take off whether you were going to make it or not?

Bell: Usually.

Researcher: Yes?



Bell: Usually. Yes. You had a sense of whether you were in the right position and whether everything was right with you or not. And, usually in training, at the beginning of the year, if you jumped and you were trying something higher than you would normally - you know - just to get used to the bar being up there. Lots of times I tried jumping 5' 6", just to get used to the bar being real high and that I had to make a supreme effort.

Researcher: Did it work, sometimes?

Bell: Well, no. No. I never jumped 5' 6" in my life. I jumped 5' 4" once in training but not 5' 6". But it gives you a sense of sort of well-being to know that . . . that bar away up that far and that close to the top of my head doesn't scare me. That's the only reason that you do things like that.

Researcher: Just to get over that psychological barrier?

Bell: Yes. That's right.

Researcher: Was that the challenge for you? To get over that?

Bell: Well, in training it was, because you were striving to be better.

Researcher: When you first started jumping was that bar really scary?

Bell: No, no. Because I was just a kid when we started and we were doing it as a game - you know. I suppose, actually, when you think about it; it was still a game all the time I was competing [laughter] wasn't it? It was like basketball or tennis - still an enjoyable game.

Researcher: Well, but you - I mean you took it a lot more seriously later on.

Bell: Oh, yes.

Researcher: But did you always have fun?

Bell: Yes. It was fun. Mind you I got horribly, horribly homesick the first time I went away. And, all these older athletes. Some of them that were on the team were in my club from Vancouver and of course they babied me [chuckle] to beat the band. On the boat when you're travelling, they usually have a masquerade ball. And it's usually the last night on board . . . and I didn't know what to dress up as.

Researcher: You didn't take a costume along?

Bell: No, I never even thought about it. I didn't even know about it, let's put it that way. I'd never been on a big boat where I'd travelled for days. So anyway, one of the older girls on the team said to me, "Don't worry, I'll get a costume for you. Just don't even think about it." So, of course, she was one of the ones that I really looked up to and I thought, well if she says, "Don't worry about it.", then I won't worry about it. She'll do whatever she says she's going to do. And I ended up in . . . a . . . little short dress and girls didn't wear little short dresses when you were my age, at that time.

Researcher: Oh, no [laughter].

Bell: There I am. There's a picture of me going . . . as I was dressed.

Researcher: Oh, no [laughter]. You look about eight years old in that. Oh dear, that's cute.

Bell: That was what she came up with. There was a little Dutch girl on board with her family. And she was a little girl and Lil borrowed that dress from her mum for me. And that bow, I had in my hair was also hers. You talked about big sisters and big brothers, I had . . .

Researcher: You had a whole shipload full of them.

Bell: [Pointing to a picture] There's Lillian. And this gal here.

Researcher: She looks really little.

Bell: Oh, she was. She was a diver. Swimmers and divers could compete anytime. She was the baby of that team . . . of the swimming team. I think she was twelve years old.

Researcher: Did you have a sense . . . just to come back to the jumping, did you have a sensation of flight at all?

Bell: You mean, when I was going over the bar?

Researcher: Yes.

Bell: Not really.

Researcher: Would you be thinking, "Well, am I over it or am I not over it?"

Bell: Oh, you were very aware of whether you were over it.

Researcher: You were?

Bell: Yes.

Researcher: Like, would you be waiting to have a body part touch or would you sort of know when you'd made it?

Bell: Well, it was usually if it was a height that you knew that you could get over. And you knocked it off . . . mentally you'd say to yourself, "I did that myself because I was sloppy and I wasn't really trying." But when you got up closer to where it was as far as you had jumped before; then it was a matter of, "My timings got to be exactly right, and I've got to keep my hands where they're not going to touch that bar." And all of this . . .

Researcher: So most of the thinking was on the mechanics?

Bell: Yes. All of it was on the technique of what you were doing.

Researcher: So, when you did make a really good jump, it was basically the right connection between what your body was doing and what you were telling it to do?

Bell: That's right.

Researcher: And it didn't necessarily depend on how you were feeling when you woke up that morning?

Bell: Well, sometimes. I mean if you had a bad cold, or if you were . . . if you were sick or anything like that, or had a badly sprained ankle a short time before, well then you knew that you were going to have to be extra careful.

Researcher: Did the field you were jumping with make a difference in your jumps? Like if you knew what was going to be a really tough . . . or did the adrenalin, did something with the high prestige, like the Olympics or the British Empire Games, make a difference in how you jumped - where you had a lot of extra pressure on you?

Bell: No, I don't think so. You were a bit in awe of the whole thing because it was so huge and you kind of had to - beam your mind onto what you were going to do and never mind how much this outside part was affecting you. Now, if you could close that out to a certain extent, it was a help to you.

Researcher: Oh.

Bell: But, if you couldn't, then you had that to contend with along with what you were doing. But, mostly, no. I would say most athletes that compete at a world class meet have progressed (well, I'm sure all of them have progressed) to the place where, when they're actually competing, their mind is just exactly - if they're running - on that lane straight ahead of them. And it's not going to deviate until they hit the tape. And it's the same with jumping.

Researcher: You're so focused.

Bell: Yes. You're just focused on what is being done right now.

Researcher: Did someone teach you how to do that or have you . . . did you come on it through trial and error or did you learn it from a coach?

Bell: No. I think it just evolved. Because, well, perhaps part of it was coaching too. I remember, my first coach, when they invited me to join the club, used to say to me, "Now, never mind what's going on around you. Remember all you're thinking about is the area around the jumping pit. And you're not seeing anything else." Now, at the age I was when I started out training with them, I imagine that just stuck right there. Because I was, well, I was so proud that I had been invited to join this big club - big kids club (sort of thing). And quite frankly, I was in awe of all the kids that I was competing with.

Researcher: So you never really saw yourself as being an equal did you?

Bell: Well, laterally I did, yes. When I went down to Australia. By that time I had decided that maybe I was one of the older kids now and that probably there were some young ones that felt about me, like I felt about the kids that I started with.

Researcher: So you sort of initially - am I right - you sort of initially always thought of yourself as being . . . the little kid - even though, in terms of ability, you could probably hold your own with anybody.

Bell: The little kid that they took along [laughter]. Yes. I kind of think that it's . . . and like my brother said one time, "Somebody said, "Boy, I'll bet your sister's got a big head!" And he didn't know me; he had never met me, this kid. It was a boy that carried papers at the same time my brother did. And my brother said, "Don't you believe it, if I thought that she was getting a swelled head," he said, "I'd sure put a pin in her balloon." And I think having a brother that was good in sports, as well as me competing, I think it kept a nice balance for us. Because I wasn't - as far as my family was concerned - "Gee, isn't he great too". Because he was competing too.

Researcher: Not on the level you were though.

Bell: No. But still he was doing very well in the games that he was competing in and . . . and I played basketball. We both played on championship teams. I mean, I wasn't any better than he was so, what did I have to be . . .

Researcher: So, no special fuss was made over the fact that you were competing at this level?

Bell: No. My brother was just as extra special as I was at home.

Researcher: How did your brother deal . . . I mean do you think there was a little green-eyed monster or anything like that in there?

Bell: No, no.

Researcher: Just proud of you?

Bell: He was very proud of me, but, he didn't talk about it. He carried papers.

Researcher: Would he come out to all the meets and watch you and cheer?

Bell: He came to most of them when he was home. Yes.

Researcher: What about your parents?

Bell: Well, my dad worked out of town a good share of the time but when he was in, he did. My Mum used to come, too. My brother was always in high school sports - tennis, basketball and soccer. That was the beginning of the big things you know, boy [laughter]. All the Vancouver schools competing against one another. That was the first big thrill. Not just competing in the high school yard against the other kids in the school you were going to.

Researcher: So that was the giant . . . the first big step, right, when you moved here?

Bell: I was twelve years old when we moved here.

Researcher: Were you born here?

Bell: No. I was born in Alberta.

Researcher: Oh, I didn't know that. When did you move to British Columbia?

Bell: I was born in Medicine Hat. I was eighteen months old when we moved to British Columbia.

Researcher: To Nelson?

Bell: No. Cranbrook.

Researcher: And so you spent those early childhood years completely in Cranbrook? Or were you moving a lot?

Bell: No. In Cranbrook and in and around Nelson until the last year before we moved down here, because my Dad was construction foreman on those big power plants that the West Kootenay put in.

Researcher: Oh.

Bell: We lived at the work site, which was outside of Nelson, about - let's see - the first one was maybe twenty-six miles outside Nelson. The other one was down the river, another mile. And the other one was down the river about four miles further down than that. So, we would be bouncing back and forth, but the first two places that we lived - Upper and Lower Bonnington - where the plants were built, there was just one school. And it had all the grades from one up to grade nine.

Researcher: So what grades did you go there?

Bell: I started . . . when we first came from Cranbrook, we went to Nelson. We were there a year. We were in Cranbrook when I went to Kindergarten. And I took first year of school in Nelson and then we moved to Bonnington into company houses. How many grades did I take out there? I must have taken three.

Researcher: In Bonnington?

Bell: In Bonnington. And then we were moved down to South Slokan, which was three or four miles further down the river. And I finished grade six out there in a two-room school instead of one. I was getting up in the world [laughter]. And then we moved back to Nelson and I was there a year and my Dad moved down here in the Fall.

Researcher: For grade eight?

Bell: Yes.

#### Fourth Interview: February 27, 1991

Researcher: What I would like to start off this morning's talk with Marg, if I might, is the procedure involved in your being eligible to compete and how you were selected to compete for the 1934 British Empire Games. At this point you were competing, according to my understanding, with the Vancouver Athletic Club. Do you remember if there was a specific -- were you selected on the basis of your performance in jumping here in Vancouver?

Bell: No. In 1934 it was trials. We had trials here in the city and there were standards that you had to meet to go East to compete. So, if you had met a standard, you were on the team, providing there was money.

Researcher: Now, with reaching the standard, would that have been a specific set of trials, or was that just standards that were set in the process of say the Police Games or the Caledonian Trials?

Bell: No. Those were standards that were set by the governing body. If you couldn't come up to that standard, then you were wasting money travelling East, because you didn't have a chance to make the team.

Researcher: So there were British Empire Games standards?

Bell: Yes, when you got back East, if you made the standard, presumably you were on the team. And for some that were borderline making the standard, if there wasn't money enough to send all of the people, then sometimes your city sponsored you or maybe your club sponsored you if it had the money.

Researcher: Did the club do fund raising for those sorts of things?

Bell: Not that I know of. Our club primarily was a men's baseball club and how they got talked into sponsoring a track and field club, I don't know, because this all happened before I joined the club.

Researcher: Is it possible gate receipts from the baseball games were used to help fund the track and field aspect, do you think?

Bell: They could have been but, actually, I would say that it was the B.C. Athletic Union, the Men's and the Women's Federation that raised the funds for this.

Researcher: Now when you talk about a body setting, you know, the standards - and then also helping provide funding, would that have been the Women's Amateur Athletic Federation, the B.C. Branch?

Bell: No it would have to have been the Dominion Branch, because those standards would apply to athletes in all the different provinces.

Researcher: But was it the B.C. branch then that administered the provincial standards and chose the people?

Bell: They were the ones that chose the people who went to the trials.

Researcher: Usually, was only one person selected to do any one event - in the individual

events anyway?

Bell: You mean like the broad jump and high jump, things like that?

Researcher: Yes.

Bell: Well, yes.

Researcher: Or did it depend on funds?

Bell: Yes, it would also depend on funds. As far as the women were concerned, they would take one or more per single event, like the high jump or the broad jump or things like that. But of course they would take a whole team, like four sprinters - that would be 100 yards and 200 yards sprinters because they would want a relay team, so there would be four girls that would go from B.C.

Researcher: Now what would happen in the case of the sprint team where you had an exceptionally good sprinter here, another one in Saskatoon, but they didn't all make an effort to keep teams, the local teams, together?

Bell: No. When we got back East and there were the trials, like for the Empire Games in 1934 or the Olympics, they would take the four best sprinters from Canada. It didn't matter if you had never seen each other before. On the relay team you would run with the other three best runners. Now, you might have a few from your own province as we did in 1934. There was Mary Frizzell and Lillian Palmer and they were both from our club in Vancouver.

Researcher: Did that sort of picking up people from here and there in something that needed a team effort, like the sprints -- was that a factor in terms of those girls' performance? Do you think they didn't have a chance to run together very much before they actually competed?

Bell: Well, you must remember usually before we left Canada for England, Germany, or Australia or wherever we happened to be going - actually, that was all that there were in world-type games. We would have probably two weeks or three weeks before the boat sailed and you would practise together because the athletes that had made the team would stay in the city where the trials had been held.

Researcher: Were you housed in the same place as well? Was there a village set up for you?

Bell: No. We were in hotels.

Researcher: So the western teams might all be in different hotels as well. Right? B.C. would be in one hotel; Alberta in another one?

Bell: It's possible. Or maybe you were all in the same hotel, but we went from Hamilton to Montreal to wait for the boat one time, and they put us in a hotel in Montreal. We were all in double rooms and my roommate was a girl from the Prairies. So it all depended where you were and what you were up to, but usually it was a hotel. When the team had been picked, all of them would be put in a central spot.

Researcher: So even if you lived in, say the team trained in Hamilton and there were girls on the team who were from Hamilton, they would stay in the hotel.

Bell: No, they would stay at home. That is the same as when we were leaving for Australia. Jenny Dolson, who was on the Olympic team and had been my roommate in Germany came out about three weeks before the trials and she practised out here. She stayed with me because we had become good friends and had been writing for the two years in between the Olympic Games and the Empire Games in Australia.

Researcher: Could you choose who you stayed with or were you just set up with someone?

Bell: Well, you could ask for a certain person for a roommate. There was no guarantee you would get them, although Jenny and I were fortunate enough to become roommates in Australia and in Germany.

Researcher: You were at the Olympics? I was going to ask that next - if roommates were selected at the Olympics or if you could request someone specifically?

Bell: Well, actually, I had asked, in England, to be with Lillian Palmer because she was from my team out here in Vancouver, the Vancouver Athletic Club. I had asked if I could be with her; Lillian had also asked for this. She had talked to my folks before I left and said she would take care of me which made me feel silly. I thought I was old enough to take care of myself. But anyway, it turned out very well, because I did become her roommate.

Researcher: In London, once you had been selected for the British Empire Games Trials, because you had met the standard, how were you notified and how far in advance were you notified?

Bell: You say for the trials, do you mean from here to go to the trials back East or do you mean when we get back there to go on?

Researcher: What I mean is, when you were selected as a British Columbia representative to compete in the British Empire Games Trials in Canada.

Bell: I didn't get a letter. We were just told by our club, whoever was managing or coaching the club, they would tell us who had been selected. Ann Clark was always the one who was the head of all of this for our province.

Researcher: Who was Ann Clark?

Bell: She was head of the Women's Athletic Federation for British Columbia.

Researcher: Was she the president?

Bell: Yes, she was the President of the Women's Athletic Federation of British Columbia at the time.

Researcher: Basically, how far in advance of your actual departure would you have been notified that you were going to be travelling to England?

Bell: We usually knew maybe a week or so before we actually had to leave.

Researcher: What sort of financial support would you receive? Were the train travel and living expenses included?

Bell: All of our travel and our hotels, everything was paid for. We just had to have our



own spending money and our clothes, of course.

Researcher: Was that a problem for some of the kids on the teams, just getting enough spending money, given that it was the Thirties? In all these cases, was spending money ever a problem?

Bell: Yes, but things were so very cheap at that time. Mind you, five dollars was a lot of money. I know in 1934 there were three of us girls that went to England and we had something like fifteen dollars each and we thought we had plenty of money.

Researcher: Did any of you ever feel that maybe your parents couldn't manage that at the time, given that it was the Depression?

Bell: No, not really. Not that I know of, lets put it that way.

Researcher: So how long would that \$15.00 have had to cover you? From the time you left Vancouver, to the time you came home?

Bell: Oh, probably from the time we left until the time we returned.

Researcher: So fifteen dollars for two months.

Bell: Yes, you got your uniform and strip. Of course, you had your own running spikes.

Researcher: How much would running spikes have cost then?

Bell: Well, I think my jumping spikes cost something like \$7.00, which was a lot of money at the time. Running spikes you could get for about \$3.50. Anyway, if you were not practising or competing, you were usually in running shoes. A pair of sneakers was approximately one dollar. I think the athletes still run around like that.

Researcher: Any of your jumping uniform, as well as the sweats?

Bell: They were always provided.

Researcher: In the 1934 British Empire Games, for example, were you provided with a blazer and a team uniform for the opening and closing ceremonies?

Bell: A blazer, a dress, white shoes and a white hat. These were all made to measure and they were all donated. One of the big companies back East usually donated them.

Researcher: So then, once you were notified, you scrambled to sort of get ready to get on the train a week later. Is that right?

Bell: Yes.

Researcher: Then you travelled with a coach and a chaperone or who would accompany the team.?

Bell: Ann Clark went back East with us the first time, for the 1934 trials. I was the only girl who went from here in 1936. I went by myself as far as girls were concerned. I travelled with the boys' track team and in 1937, I didn't have to go any place because we sailed from here to go to Australia.

Researcher: By ship? Right from Vancouver?

Bell: Yes, and of course the whole team was there.

Researcher: Would you have a male coach for the whole team who would go with you?

Bell: Yes.

Researcher: Was the coach usually one of the club coaches?

Bell: Yes, always.

Researcher: He had been appointed to be the coach?

Bell: Yes.

Researcher: And you also went with a women's chaperone or a men's chaperone or both? Or who else would go?

Bell: Ann Clark went back because she was the head of the Women's Federation out here, so of course she acted as our chaperone going East.

Researcher: Who was your chaperone in 1934?

Bell: Mrs. Foster.

Researcher: From where?

Bell: Edmonton.

Researcher: When you were the only female athlete travelling East for the 1936 Olympics with the men's track and field team, did a woman chaperone have to accompany you then?

Bell: No. Archie MacKinnon was the coach for the boys' team and he came from Victoria. He worked through the Victoria Y, and he took the boys' team back East and I travelled with them.

Researcher: What was it like, being the only girl with, how many boys?

Bell: We had a pretty fair team as far as boys were concerned.

Researcher: Were you treated specially by the boys?

Bell: No, not really. These were athletes who were always at the track meets that I was at. I knew them well and had been in the same meets as they had been for years. It was just like . . . so we are going to another track meet . . . but I missed the girls because I was the only one who was going.

Researcher: Was it hard for you? In terms of being lonely?

Bell: Not really, because when I got back East there were a lot of girls back there who had been on the 1934 team and they turned up for the trials of the 1936 Olympics. So of course, I didn't feel that lonely. There were swimmers that I knew from out here also.

Researcher: Did the swimmers travel on the train with you?

Bell: No.

Researcher: Do you know why not?

Bell: Their trials were held at a different time so they may have left earlier or later than we did.

Researcher: Where were the 1934 trials held in Canada?

Bell: 1934 was in Hamilton, I think. The ones for the Olympics were at McGill Stadium.

Researcher: Now, in Hamilton which had the 1930 British Empire Games, did you run into some aspect of Eastern-Western bias particularly in the 1934 trials in Hamilton?

Bell: All the time that I was competing we were very aware that East was East and West was West. If there was something that had to be decided and it could only be one person, say, we always got the feeling that unless Ann Clarke could really do some fast persuading, it would be the East who would get it.

Researcher: Were the decisions in terms of who would be selected for the teams and things made by the Women's Amateur Athletic Federation in the East or were they made by the men's governing body? This refers to the British Empire Games.

Bell: If it were just the British Empire Games, that would be the Dominion Federation who would look after that. When it was a team that was going, the women and the men decided together.

Researcher: So the men were involved in all the team selection for the Empire Games.

Bell: Yes, as far as I know. Because after the trials would be over then they would go into a big meeting to decide who was on the team.

Researcher: Perhaps the next part that we should look at might be what happened then . . . once the trials were completed. What would happen to the team as soon as you knew that you were going to the British Empire Games in London?

Bell: There was business that the Federation had to do - like getting uniforms, tickets, etc. for the kids. Our jackets and uniforms were made for us, so you know that it had to take a long time. These were usually donated by companies who made them. We would be wherever we were billeted; whatever city we were in. We would be there for, say, a couple of weeks and we would be training all this time, just like we would have been if we had been at home, but we would be staying in a hotel. Then we went to Montreal to get the boat. When we got on the boat to go overseas, we had a practice schedule that we did on the boat to keep in form instead of just waiting; it took about a week to get over there.

Researcher: Was there any official send-off from Canada? A reception or anything like that?

Bell: On one occasion the Mayor of Montreal had a dinner for us, before we left. When we came back from the Olympics I don't know whether there was a reception or not, because we came back in two groups. One group came back before the Olympics were over. Another group went to London to an invitational meet, that was just for the boys. Since

my event was one of the last at the Olympics I came back with the boys who were competing. It was about, perhaps, a week or ten days later that we left England.

Researcher: How long would you be away from the time you left home, to the time you had travelled back home in 1934?

Bell: Probably about six weeks or two months.

Researcher: Were you very homesick that first time?

Bell: Oh, that first time - yes.

Researcher: You were seventeen?

Bell: Yes. It is strange too, because I enjoyed all of the time I was over there, but I think when it was time to go to bed or sit down to write a letter or something . . . I remember writing a seventeen-page letter home.

Researcher: Was it incredibly thrilling for a young person like you to be getting this?

Bell: I think it is, no matter what your age. Well, at that particular time, yes, because there wasn't that much of a trend for kids to wander around Europe to see what it looked like, as they do now.

Researcher: When you were that young were you aware of how fortunate you were to be presented with the opportunity.

Bell: We knew that we were lucky, of course. We also worked very hard to make those dreams we had come true.

Researcher: Knowing going to Europe was not an everyday phenomenon?

Bell: No. You didn't take a pack sack and go to Europe and stay in hostels and things like that. It was just unheard of. Girls stayed closer to home than that unless their parents were going.

Researcher: Did your parents have reservations about you travelling at such a young age?

Bell: No, not really, because the teams were well chaperoned. My folks had talked to different ones and asked about that. Mind you, they wouldn't let me go away to school when I was offered that. But they would let me go over there because I wasn't going to be gone that long and it was well-chaperoned.

Researcher: The fact that the teams were so well supervised was a comfort for them? Can we talk then a bit about the voyage over. You said there was a training schedule set up?

Bell: Yes, we had a training schedule set up. We jogged on the boat and we did exercises. We did this in the morning and we did it in the afternoon for an hour or so. They had a harness for the swimmers and there was a pool on the boat so the swimmers used to swim away to their hearts content with the harness on so they couldn't go the length of the pool. The pool wasn't that long.

Researcher: Was all the travelling that Canadians had to do, going across Canada on the train, and secondly, spending a week crossing the ocean; I imagine some people got seasick. Did the travelling present a difficulty in terms of the actual performance, at least in 1934?

Bell: Well, the train trip did, because there is not much activity on the train and you can't really get up and jog down to the end of the train. They'd have thought you were a little nuts. But on the boat you could jog and do your exercises on the deck, and they had deck tennis and all this sort of thing. We used to really enjoy that. So we weren't really just sitting down like you would on the train. We were busy and enjoying ourselves.

Researcher: So, as opposed to European competitors who didn't have this tremendous distance to travel, you didn't feel disadvantaged at the time of the competition.

Bell: You know, that never comes to mind actually. We never talked about it. We realized when we were in Germany that we were in a strange country and were at a disadvantage in that a lot of the people we might like to speak to did not speak our language. We had interpreters there, so if we wanted to go shopping or something like that, one of them would go with us.

Researcher: Your book talks about the 1936 Olympics. You arrived something like six days prior to the start. The Japanese were there something like five weeks before the start. I think you only actually got out onto the fields about four days before and one of the coaches said that every time you got there it started raining. The minute you went back to the village, the sun would come out. You did say that travelling and weather was definitely a factor in the 1936 Olympics. I find it astounding that they would give you less than one week to prepare for something like the Olympic Games.

Bell: Well, of course, your preparation is done at home from the beginning of your season. It is just a matter of how well your training on the boat and training later when you are waiting to sail is used. Usually, ours was set up fairly well.

Researcher: Do you remember some highlights of that boat trip over?

Bell: Not anything, really, except that sometimes if the boat was rolling a little bit, it was strange jogging on the deck and you had to be very careful.

Researcher: Did you enjoy sailing?

Bell: Yes, very much. One trip, when we came back (it must have been after the Olympics) we were coming from Liverpool around the North End of Ireland and it got very rough. The majority of our team was sick. It was so bad that, there were six of us who were eating at the Captain's Table with him. The rest of the dining salon was practically empty.

Researcher: They were all below the decks?

Bell: The captain said, "What are you doing this afternoon?" But it was rolling so badly that there wasn't a great deal that you could do. We played games. He asked if we would like to go up to the pilot house. He thought we would enjoy it up there, just to see how things worked. So we trotted up there after lunch and we were fine while we were up there. But when we came below decks again, we joined the rest of the kids who were sick. It was terrible. I remember being sick for two days. I wished I could die. It was a great trip all round and a real experience.

Researcher: Were you kept fairly separate from the boys during the trip or were you allowed to mix freely? What sort of arrangements were made?

Bell: On the boat you could play games with the boys, eat, and train with them. It was just like you had paid your own way and were on a sea voyage.

Researcher: Did the chaperones have any rules that were in place?

Bell: Oh yes. The time you had to go to bed at night.

Researcher: Would they check the rooms?

Bell: Yes. Sometimes. I really don't know if it was every night.

Researcher: Any other rules you remember about behavioral conduct or anything like that? Were you allowed to drink? The older kids?

Bell: No. There was no drinking. Mind you, after the games were over in England, we went to one of their . . . what do you call them - pubs? We had heard about them playing dart games and all this sort of thing. Nobody threw us out, so we just assumed we must have been old enough.

Researcher: So drinking was not a problem?

Bell: On the way to Berlin, we had practically a whole day in Paris and went on a sight-seeing tour. We had dinner there and of course they served red and white wine with their meals and we drank some wine. When we were coming back, we had a bottle of champagne on the train, which I don't know how many kids and our coach shared. It didn't go very far, but everybody had some. No drinking was a rule, I don't remember anybody getting into serious trouble. Mind you, there was one girl on the American team who was booted off the team for partying.

Researcher: And that was?

Bell: Eleanor Holm-Jarret. She was a swimmer and a very good one too, unfortunately. She had been partying on their boat when they were going over. They did not travel on the boat we were on. So as far as I am concerned it is all hearsay and what you read in the scrap books.

Researcher: She wasn't allowed to compete in Berlin because of that behavior.

Bell: No. She did report the games for the Hearst newspapers in the States.

Researcher: So, were standards of conduct and behavior more important than your athletic performance when the bottom line came?

Bell: No, not really, but you were expected to behave in a ladylike or gentlemanly manner. They didn't want you over there making a fool of yourself because then they are looking at representatives of the whole country. If this is the kind of youth that they have, what is the rest of the place like? So, yes, you were expected to behave yourself. We got off the boat going to England in 1934 at Liverpool and we took the train to London. In London, we were met by the officials of the Empire Games and we were taken to two hotels. The girls were billeted in one and the boys in another. Most of our hotels were on Hyde Park, which was at that time (I don't know about now) a very beautiful part of

London. We used to go by bus to our track practice from there.

Researcher: Do you remember how far in advance of the actual games you landed? What sort of time were you given before you had to compete?

Bell: We probably had about two weeks before the games started. It was the same as it was at home. You would go out and do your jogging and exercises and practise whatever your event was. That didn't really vary as you went from the Empire Games, the Women's World Games, to the Olympics, to whatever. You carried on your normal practice schedule.

Researcher: So would you practise with the men's team at the same time or were you taken there on your own?

Bell: No, our whole team practised together. Well, on the same field at the same time.

Researcher: What would a normal day probably be like before the games?

Bell: We would get up in the morning and have our breakfast in the hotel and then we would go out to practise. We would spend a fair amount of time out there . . . probably the whole morning or the biggest share of the morning. Sometimes part of the afternoon as well. When the games started, the athletes, that were competing at the beginning of the games would go to the stadium. The ones who were competing later on - and these games usually took ten days to two weeks for the whole thing to be done - of course they would go and do their practice. Hopefully, in the afternoon, they would have time to go out to the stadium and watch the competition.

Researcher: What was the stadium like? Was it huge? Do you remember being impressed by it?

Bell: It was the first stadium that I think I had been in where there was seating all of the way around the stadium. Of course, the one in Berlin was a mile around the outside so you know that was very large.

Researcher: Were you intimidated by the size of the stadium?

Bell: No, not really. As long as it had jumping pit it was a working meet.

Researcher: What would you do in the late afternoon or evenings? Was that free time?

Bell: Yes. Usually, in England, we would have our dinner in the hotel. They had a lovely dining room there. Then we might go to a show or we might just go for a walk in the park or walk around the area. There were some nice stores in the area.

Researcher: Did you do a lot of sight-seeing in London?

Bell: Yes. A lot.

Researcher: Was that a real benefit of the trip to you?

Bell: Well, we thought it was very nice because people arranged tours and one lady, I don't recall her name, had a tea for some of the Canadian girls on the track team. There were gala evenings and afternoon tea parties and things like that after the games were over.

Researcher: Did most of the girls have the right sort of clothing for that kind of thing?

Bell: Oh, we all had that. It was a uniform.

Researcher: So you would wear your uniform to all of that.

Bell: Yes. Any official do, unless it happened to be an invitation that said dress was optional. Sometimes at night, if they had a dance, we would wear evening clothes.

Researcher: One of the things that comes out of the scrap books is the sense that here was this wonderful group of young people who were a source of pride to the British Empire. The sense of Empire that I get from the clippings is very strong. Can you reflect on that?

Bell: You were asking about our behavior earlier on . . . that is one reason why we knew exactly how far we could go with being silly or misbehaving. We were very aware what these days we would be called ambassadors of our country and we did not want to leave a feeling that we were a bunch of . . . what . . . zombies, perhaps.

Researcher: Did you have a sense of Empire at those games?

Bell: Very much so, I think.

Researcher: Was there a sense, in the British newspapers reporting the games, of the Empire or was there a sense of Empire conveyed by royalty? I'm trying to get at the sense of Empire that was conveyed to you as a young Canadian athlete at the Games?

Bell: Well, everybody was very proud to be there, representing their own country and I guess the pride from just being a representative of your own country carried over, so that you were happy about the whole thing. It's a little hard to describe.

Researcher: Was royalty present throughout the Games?

Bell: The Games? Sometimes. I wouldn't say the whole time.

Researcher: In the stands, or the social events . . .

Bell: The social events and in the stands.

Researcher: So quite often a member of the Royal Family would be sitting in the stands?

Bell: I only remember two occasions when they were supposed to be there, but I couldn't verify that for you.

Researcher: Did you have the opportunity to meet athletes from all the other countries or did you tend to stay with the Canadian Team?

Bell: No. At any of the games that we were at, we would mix with other teams. I don't know why the South African team . . . we always seemed to get to know some of the South African team very well. I don't know why that is but in Germany, of course, the American team and Canadian team were quite close.

Researcher: Would most of the exchange with other athletes happen while you were



competing out on the field or at social functions, or both?

Bell: Yes. Afterwards, too.

Researcher: Would you often be billeted in the same hotel with a number of other teams?

Bell: It depended on where we were. When we were down in Australia, it wasn't just the Canadian team who was in the hotel that we were in. Of course, in Germany, we were in . . . I call it a compound . . . they called "Frauenheim", and the boys were quite a few miles from us in another area. Their village was called, "Olympic Village". So the men and the women in Germany were separated.

Researcher: Much more so than in the British Empire Games.

Bell: At the Empire Games we were within one block of each other. The men were in one hotel and we were in another.

Researcher: Can you talk about your first international experience? Like your actual feelings . . . that you may remember of the actual experience . . . how nervous you were or highlights?

Bell: Well, being nervous is the bottom line for an athlete, I think. If you haven't got butterflies before you start, then you are really not up for it, I don't think. As far as the actual competing was concerned, thinking back on it now, I seemed to take that pretty well in stride. I was aware that there were people I was jumping against that I didn't know. But, it had happened to me before in championships, so it wasn't any different from competing at home, except that you were very aware that there was a larger number of competitors.

Researcher: During the time of the competition, did you feel that you had been given adequate time and training in order to prepare for an international level of competition? Had your Canadian experience, as well as your travel experience, prepared you for that competition.

Bell: Well, the first time I went I didn't know anything about keeping fit during an ocean voyage, but the managers of our team and the track coaches, they knew. So that was no problem. We just did our training as we were told to do it.

Researcher: So the Canadian team felt that it had been adequately prepared, in general, and supported in order to hold its head up with the rest of the competition?

Bell: Oh yes, as far as your training was concerned, you trained for this exactly the same as you would train for a Dominion Meet at home. Hopefully striving to be better, but . . . as far as the actual training was concerned, the training was the same in England before the Games or in Berlin, or wherever, as it would be at home.

Researcher: Were you very well received by the British?

Bell: Yes. After the games were over they had parties, dinners, dances, and entertainment. We were there almost a week after the Games were over before we could catch the boat home.

Researcher: When all the social things happened?

Bell: We had time to do a lot of sight-seeing, were taken on tours, and things like that. People entertained us and were very good to us.

**Fifth Interview: March 27, 1991**

Researcher: Could we begin today's interview, Marg, . . . could you please tell me how you were notified that you were to go East for the Olympic Trials.

Bell: Yes. Ann Clark phoned me. She was on the selection committee for the B.C. athletes and at that point, when they were selecting athletes to go East for the trials to the Olympics, the men and women got together to do the selecting. I was telephoned.

Researcher: Do you remember how you felt when you found out you were going?

Bell: Yes. I was happy that I was going, but I was disappointed that I was the only track and field girl on the B.C. Team.

Researcher: Was it going to be difficult for you, being the only girl with an all male team, travelling across Canada?

Researcher: So the boys made quite a fuss over you on the train trip?

Bell: No. These were kids that had been competing in the same meets that I had been competing in for years and we knew each other very well. Just like it always was when a group of athletes got together. It was a long trip . . . five days . . . tiresome.

Researcher: Do you remember it as just being tiresome?

Bell: Mostly.

Researcher: Then, when you got to Montreal, would you be billeted in a hotel.

Bell: We were in a hotel.

Researcher: Do you remember much of the trials? Where were the trials for the Olympics?

Bell: I think we were in Hamilton. It should be in here, someplace [refers to scrapbook].

Researcher: Do you have any specific memories of the Olympic Trials before you actually left for Germany?

Bell: I have one very strange thing that I will never forget. It was the temperature in Montreal during the trials and pre-trials, while we were practising there. It ran from about 100 degrees to 112. It was so hot we thought we'd melt away.

Researcher: And high humidity?

Bell: Oh, yes. Thunderstorms at night to keep you awake, to beat the band. And it would rain, great big drops, and you would hear it . . . but, in the day, it would be sunny and bright.

Researcher: Were the trials held right in the middle of the summer and right at the hottest time of the year?

Bell: Oh, yes.

Researcher: You would spend five days on the train, getting to Montreal?

Bell: Yes.

Researcher: Then about how long would you have to prepare for the actual trials?

Bell: We were there for about a week to ten days before the actual trials.

Researcher: Did you feel that was long enough to acclimatize and recover?

Bell: In that heat! Not really.

Researcher: But did you ever feel you were at a disadvantage, in terms of competition, because of the long distances that you had to travel, compared to the kids from Toronto and Hamilton?

Bell: You know, we never gave it that much thought, because there were times out here when we had big track meets that Eastern kids would come to and it was just all part of the game. Since you didn't fly at that time, there was that handicap for anybody who had any distance to go to a track meet. So you didn't really think about it that much.

Researcher: Now, did you jump well at the trials? Did you compete in the field . . .

Bell: Yes, well enough to be selected.

Researcher: Was the competition quite stiff at the trials?

Bell: Well, Eva Dawes wasn't there, she was banned from that because she had gone to Russia to compete. She had come back to London and then had gone to Spain where there was a meet.

Researcher: And was that all related to the Communist scare that was going on in Canada at the time?

Bell: Yes.

Researcher: Do you remember Communism being a factor in athletics, or socialism, or politics?

Bell: No, not really, as far as we were concerned. I know that they debated over whether they were going to send the team to Germany in 1936 or not and finally decided that they would.

Researcher: Because of the concerns of fascism . . .

Bell: Well, because of the unrest, yes. The reason that Eva was banned from the Olympics was because she had been told that it was not a properly - sanctioned meet that she was going to in Russia and for her not to do it. But she had gone in spite of that.

Researcher: Do you think she went to show support for communism?

Bell: No, I have no idea. I imagine they asked her to come and they must have paid her way. Probably she just thought she would like to do it, so she did, and that's that.

Researcher: So the Spanish War and all that . . . you don't think was a major political factor in the determining of what sports events people could participate? In the same way that South African sports are not sanctioned because of the political situation in South Africa?

Bell: Well, I don't know that much about the meet that she was going to. I hadn't heard about it. We did hear that she wasn't competing because she had gone, but I have no idea of the ins and outs of it. Except that, on trying to find out more about it, the only reason we could come up with was that it was not an officially sanctioned meet, and therefore she should not have gone.

Researcher: Made herself ineligible?

Bell: Yes.

Researcher: Just one other question if I might, Marg, about politics. I do remember in one of your clippings coming across some CCF sponsored games here in Vancouver. Can you tell me anything about that?

Bell: Actually, anybody that had the money and wanted to sponsor it, could. But as far as the athletes were concerned, it was another track meet and we were very happy that somebody had the money to back it. That was that. There was no pressure politically as far as we were concerned.

Researcher: But would the CCF probably have sponsored the games in an attempt to attract some youth? I mean in the same way that churches would hold basketball games to try to keep their youth involved?

Bell: Well, its very possible. You must admit it was good public relations.

Researcher: It was interesting to me that a political party would sponsor a track and field meet.

Bell: You must remember that Vancouver was a much smaller city at that time. We knew all the athletes knew quite a few people who were mixed up in politics. We had gone to school with their kids or we were competing against their offspring. It just happened. You know that . . . whether the CCF party thought they were going to get a lot of junior members to join their organization or not, I don't know. But, it was certainly good advertising as far as they were concerned.

Researcher: But, I mean, you don't remember Progressives, or Liberals, or Conservatives, sponsoring meets through that period do you?

Bell: No. But I am sure that someplace along the line there was money from those organizations too. Everybody seemed to donate towards these teams. What motive would the police have in this . . . because they had one of the biggest track meets here in the summertime and they, incidentally, had a very good track team too, (as far as the men were concerned). On the trip to Australia, we had Jack Harrison and Jack Fraser. They were both sprinters on the Canadian team and they were both policeman. So I mean, we were never very surprised at who might be sponsoring a meet. And then there was the Caledonian Games. We also call them the Highland Games. Sometimes they might be written up in the scrap book under either name and every year they sponsored games and that included highland dancing and Scottish pipe band competitions. That was a very serious track meet but still it had sort of an overtone of a very lovely festival.

Researcher: With the CCF games, do you remember if that became an annual event, or not? Or do you remember if it might have been a one-time only?

Bell: I think it was two or three years. But then, the war ended so many things.

Researcher: Apart from Eva Dawes, were any of the other girls at the trials a serious threat, in terms of being good jumpers?

Bell: Isabell Miller was the other one. She didn't go to the Olympics but she did make the next games in Sydney in 1938, and she had also been on the team in 1934, to England. So, she was my main competition at that point.

Researcher: But you were the only one that was selected?

Bell: I was the only jumper that went.

Researcher: Can you tell me a bit about the trip over to Germany and what memories you have of landing in Germany? How long did the trip take . . . to get over to Germany?

Bell: Well, I don't know in its entirety, because we went to England first and we landed in Liverpool and took the train to London. We went from London, by boat to LeHavre, and by train to Paris. We were in Paris from about noon until just after midnight, when we caught a train for Berlin. So, in its entirety, I don't really know. I would say probably about eight days. But on the boat we had to practise, but couldn't on the train.

Researcher: How long were you on the ship?

Bell: Between five and six days and we jogged around the deck, avoiding other passengers, because we were the only people who did daily exercise on the boat.

Researcher: How often would you be called together by Archie McKinnon?

Bell: Well, we had times when we practised and usually in the morning, around 9:30 or ten o'clock, we would jog on the deck. We would do exercises, but it was impossible to jump or do anything like that.

Researcher: Did you just work out your own training routine on the boat, then, or were you actually told what should be done?

Bell: Well, actually we did it in groups. Like stretching exercises and jogging. It was the same for sprinters, usually, as it was for a jumper and so we would do things in a group.

Researcher: Were any of the other Olympic teams with you? Did the American team travel with you on the boat?

Bell: No. We left from Montreal and the American team left from New York. So, they were on an American ship.

Researcher: Did you gain a lot of recognition on the boat. Were you wearing uniforms on the boat as well? Did you feel that you were a special group of young people while you were travelling?

Bell: Well, there were so many of us. We were quite conspicuous, that's for sure. And

of course, when other passengers saw people jogging around the deck in the morning, they were prone to ask what was going on. So, of course, we told them. A lot of people on the boat already knew because they had read it in the paper.

Researcher: Who accompanied you in terms of officials?

Bell: There was Bobby Robinson and Mr. Mulqueen, whose wife traveled with the team, too. And of course, there was our track coach, Archie McKinnon, and we had a chaperone, of course.

Researcher: Who would have been an elderly lady?

Bell: Not particularly. There were all sorts of different officials.

Researcher: From the Canadian Olympic Committee?

Bell: Yes. The people who arranged your transfers and this that and the other thing for travelling and accommodation, etc.

Researcher: Did you have a trainer along?

Bell: No, I didn't. But the main coach for the track and field team was also my coach.

Researcher: Did you have a doctor?

Bell: Joe Haley turned out to be my coach actually. He was a high jumper, a high jumper on our team, so he was the one who helped me with my jumping while I was over there. He was, as I said, also competing. There was a doctor on the team, but I don't know whether he was thought of as the official doctor or not. He was one of the runners, Phil Edwards, from . . . I believe his home was Montreal. He was a graduate of McGill University and he was an M.D. But, not like now. Now they have doctors, they've got a masseuse, they've got specialized coaches and their group is specialized in the different events and all this sort of things. We had a coach. Our doctor happened to be a runner on our team. And there you are, as far as those are concerned.

Researcher: Yes. But you were in some difficulty if you had an injury or something like that . . . in the sense that there was no specialists in sports injuries . . .

Bell: Well, I was injured in 1934, in London, and there was an appointment made for me with a doctor in London. And, in 1936, when I was back East competing in the trials back there, I hurt one foot and I went to a doctor in London, Ontario, that is. So, actually, a team doctor, no. There was not, as such.

Researcher: Were a lot of parties and special events held for you on the ship when you were going over?

Bell: No.

Researcher: No? Were you under strict curfew?

Bell: Yes. Ten o'clock. We were supposed to be in bed on the boat.

Researcher: Did everybody adhere to that?

Bell: Yes. As far as I know.

Researcher: There were no rebels aboard?

Bell: We were in trouble if we didn't. Bobbie Rosenfeld was our chaperone on that team. She was from Toronto.

Researcher: Now you mentioned Bobbie Robinson earlier. Did you mean . . .

Bell: Robinson. That is a man. Bobbie Rosenfeld is a woman who used to compete. She was our chaperone. She was a bit of a card, she used to play cards with some of the crew or so the story goes. She had been an outstanding athlete.

Researcher: I mean, what would have happened if there had been somebody along that was just out to have good time as well?

Bell: You mean on the team?

Researcher: Yes.

Bell: Well, the same thing probably would have happened to us as happened to the American swimmer. We probably would have been bounced off the team.

Researcher: So rules were meant to be followed.

Bell: Yes. Exactly.

Researcher: Did they make that very clear to everybody? Or would the older athletes just let you know?

Bell: Yes, I was just going to say that each time you go on another trip, there are new people who have never been on trips before, abroad, in world competitions, and the older athletes clue you in on what you can do. Although you are told very definitely by the higher echelons what is expected of you before you take off.

Researcher: So they sort of read you the riot act before you went?

Bell: Well, not really, but they tell you that they expect you to do this and that and the other thing, and . . . I mean, when you get to competing at that level, you listen to what they say and you do it for your own good. But, after the whole thing is over, there are usually parties at different places in the city, where you have competed and you have a nice time, and are entertained.

Researcher: Did the fact that you were representing Canada weigh fairly heavily on most of the team members, or on yourself personally? Did you think about that, or were you just there to jump and do your best?

Bell: Well, you were very happy to have made the team, but by the same token you knew what was expected of you and that is what you were there for. So you worked to that end. You didn't fool around.

Researcher: Did people like yourself and Howie McPhee, for example, who had a lot of press coverage and . . . there was quite a bit of pressure on him to do well. Did you feel much pressure to bring back medals and all that sort of thing?



Bell: A fair amount and you have all these hopes that you will be one of the ones that they don't write about, because that's an added stress when you are pointed out as one whom they expect to be a great shining star. If you aren't . . . like I wasn't . . . that is a little discouraging.

Researcher: Were there a lot of questions from the press of that team to the '36 Olympics about why more medals weren't won? Or, did you feel press pressure when you came home?

Bell: No, not really. Mind you, I came back to Canada after the Olympics on the second boat. Some of the kids came home early before the Berlin Olympics were over, but when their events were finished. The rest of the team went to London because the boys had a challenge meet, an invitational meet there and we came home on a later boat. When we got back, some of the parties for the team were over. But then, I didn't get back to Vancouver with the team either, because I stayed in Toronto for a week, so I missed the parties out here too.

Researcher: You missed some of the initial flurry. Do you remember, possibly, doing that on purpose so that you would miss some of that press coverage?

Bell: No, I had the option of coming home right after the Olympics, but I had relatives in Scotland that I had met in 1934 and they were coming down to London to see me. That is why I went to London as opposed to going home with the first group. And then, of course, back East, I had friends who were on the team that I stayed with and also relatives in Toronto. So, I stayed there for the week. There were some nice parties, but they were private parties for athletes that had been on the team. I went to them because they had waited until the whole team had got back before they had their parties. It was fun.

Researcher: Can I begin when you actually arrived in Germany? Your first memories of where they put you . . . what it was like . . . whatever you can recall?

Bell: Well, we came from Paris and then there was the border crossing into Germany, where we stopped. I must say that they didn't bother the team very much but apparently it is a customs place for people that were travelling (I suppose) to declare things. I don't know, because the customs officer came through the train. And then, when we got to Berlin, we were taken to the great square where Hitler used to expound and we listened to him welcome us in German. We didn't understand a word he was saying, but we stood there very politely and listened.

Researcher: Were all the teams assembled there at that point?

Bell: No, just the ones that had arrived at that particular time.

Researcher: Then how . . .

Bell: Because . . . all the teams arrived at different times.

Researcher: About how far in advance of the actual games was that?

Bell: I think we were there about two weeks before the games started, because our trials out here were the first of July and then we went back East, and we were back there about a week before the Dominion Trials. We must have been there about two weeks because the actual Olympics started at the beginning of August.

Researcher: If you were here for the Police Games at the beginning of July and then two or three weeks in Montreal, plus your travelling time . . .

Bell: No. Not three weeks in Montreal.

Researcher: But, a week to get across Canada.

Bell: Yes.

Researcher: About a week in Montreal. That's already up to the middle of July and then your travelling time . . .

Bell: Then we had to wait for the next boat that was going across.

Researcher: So that wouldn't have given you three weeks in Europe . . . would it?

Bell: About that . . . between two and three weeks before I competed.

Researcher: Do you remember . . . were there any special greetings . . . apart from seeing Hitler?

Bell: Oh, no. That was considered the welcome of the century. I would dearly love to know what he said, but there's no way I am going to find out.

Researcher: Do you remember being particularly impressed by that sort of pomp and circumstance?

Bell: I can remember being very tired standing there after an overnight train trip, where we did not have berths, and listening to something that you couldn't understand. We were just ready to drop at that point. But, we were taken to our villa and the women were in . . . all the women athletes were in an area called "Frauenheim", and the men were in what they called the "Olympic Village", which was quite a distance from where we were.

Researcher: Was that done deliberately so there wouldn't be any chance to mix, do you think?

Bell: I don't know. I don't know the thinking behind it at all. I know when we were in England, the women were billeted in one hotel and the boys were around the corner in another. As a matter of fact, every team that I travelled on, when you got to your destination, you were divided up with the boys in one place and the girls in another. We were in a hotel in Sydney, Australia, and the boys were in a hotel off in another direction. But, we all practised together at the same time. I guess its just standard . . . or was at that time.

Researcher: They probably thought it was.

Bell: Easier to chaperone, maybe?

Researcher: Less opportunity.

Bell: You make some pretty close friendships on those teams.

Researcher: So you would be taken by bus into Frauenheim? Were you taken around as a complete team. Who would accompany you, in terms of who was there from Germany

who would accompany you?

Bell: Well, there was a man named Heinrich there, an army officer, who was our attache. He was German, of course. And we had a woman who was an interpreter. If we went away from the area where we lived and we were English speaking, we were supposed to have Ursula with us so that we wouldn't get lost or what have you.

Researcher: You weren't allowed to just run around on your own then?

Bell: Well, there were four of us girls who went out one time. Kay Hughes-Hallet was a fencer on our team and she spoke seven different languages and wrote them fluently. So, we figured we would get along just fine with her. She used to speak German to our interpreter so we took off to do some shopping one day and I'm afraid we got on the wrong underground coming back. We wandered a way off out into the country and finally decided that it didn't look anything like where we ought to be, so there was a young lad . . . about our age, I guess . . . on the train. He heard us talking and he spoke English, probably better than we did. He asked where it was that we wanted to go and we told him. He actually got off the train with us and took us back. We were at least half an hour past where we shouldn't have been at all. We had gone through tunnels and tunnels and tunnels. Well, that was fine, because in Berlin you were in a tunnel all of the time, from where we were to where we wanted to get off. But when we came out of the tunnel, we found out it was farmland all around us. We knew we were heading in the wrong direction.

Researcher: Do you remember any other sort of memorable moments, in terms of sight-seeing and things like that?

Bell: Yes, one night Marg Lord came into the room that Jenny and I shared and asked if we would both like to go for a walk with her. Jenny declined but I said sure. So, we were still within the grounds of Frauenheim and we started off across the grass, just for a walk before we went to bed. All of a sudden, we had two soldiers with crossed rifles right in front of our faces saying "Verboten! Verboten." and pointing back towards where we lived. We were absolutely stunned, because we figured as long as we were within the perimeter of the area where we lived (because it was fenced) that it was all right to go any place. But, apparently, even inside of the area where we lived, there were places where we weren't allowed to go.

Researcher: Was the military or police in attendance quite a bit.

Bell: The military. Oh, yes! They were all over the place! It didn't matter where you went, there were uniforms, uniforms, uniforms. Even the little boys!

Researcher: Even shopping you'd see them?

Bell: Oh, yes. You'd see them. And the thing that struck us as very strange was the young boys, maybe from five or six, on up, they were all dressed in cute little short black pants and white shirts with a black tie. This was all so foreign to us, because the kids over here didn't dress like that. Everybody dressed differently. But these children wore nice shiny black shoes and military hair cuts.

Researcher: So did you get a sense of the militarization that was going on in Germany?

Bell: Oh very much so. Actually another thing that struck us as strange was you would never see the children playing. No hop scotch, no marbles, no playing scrub, no nothing. Everything was completely organized. Everybody stayed where they belonged and did

what they were supposed to do. I think it would have been very scary to live there at that time, because Hitler wielded a very heavy hand.

Researcher: Did you have a chance to talk to ordinary Germans or did you mainly just stay with your own team members?

Bell: No, no. Actually, of course the American team and the Canadian team were very friendly. We knew some of the kids who were on the American team because we competed back and forth at home. But our interpreter, of course, spoke beautiful English and so did our attache, and outside of that, there was a photographer and his friend. They were taking pictures of the Olympics for Germany and they spoke English also. So, there was a fair amount of people whom we could talk to. There was one chap who was an usher at the stadium, who spoke English, and we talked to him periodically, when he happened to be at the entrance that we used. One day, we decided to find out how big the stadium was and we walked around the perimeter of it. I guess right at the very edge there was a walkway that went all the way around and it turned out to be a mile around. So we had our exercise for that day. Other than that, there wasn't a tremendous amount of communication between the Germans and our team.

Researcher: What would a typical day, prior to the actual days of competition, have been like for you then?

Bell: Well, up to the day that you competed, and everybody didn't compete on the same day, you would do some light exercises in the morning and you would go back to where you were billeted for your lunch. If you wanted or needed more practice, you would go out in the afternoon for a little while, but mainly we went over to the stadium to watch the other team members and the whole thing at the stadium.

Researcher: All the practices took place at the stadium?

Bell: No, no. They had multi-practice fields around the stadium and you never practised in the stadium proper, not until the day you competed there. That was the only time you were on the stadium field, outside of the opening day parade.

Researcher: So you had quite a bit of free time on your hands, did you?

Bell: Well, you know, kids that go to things like that or compete in games like that are very interested in what their team is doing. We were very interested in what the Americans were doing and as much as Hitler had a "real thing" about coloured people and Jesse Owens, being the star of the American team, we were always curious to see what Hitler was going to dream up next to get out of the stadium before he had to meet Jesse. And there is always something you want to see. They did exhibition games of basketball that year. We had a Canadian team there, so of course, we wanted to see what they were doing too.

Researcher: So do you remember watching quite a bit of basketball?

Bell: A fair amount of basketball, yes. Because there were three players from Victoria that were on the Canadian team and two of them were also on track teams here in British Columbia. So people that you knew, you liked to watch them compete.

Researcher: And then, you would go back for your main meals to the Frauenheim?

Bell: Yes. All our meals were taken there. Providing you like to eat the same thing

every day, it's okay. You know . . . breakfast was the same thing as you had yesterday . . . and so it went . . . the same with lunch and dinner.

Researcher: And in the Frauenheim did you have a lounge or any recreational facilities provided for you? Or what sort of accommodation did you have?

Bell: Well, we had a common room and we had shower rooms and we had our own rooms, which usually had two girls. There was a beautiful lawn outside that went on forever, but as I said before, there were places in it where you weren't allowed to go. Apparently, that night Marg and I went for a walk, we missed the "Verboten" sign and just kept on going in the wrong direction.

Researcher: You weren't allowed to walk on the grass and things.

Bell: No. We could, but not just any place.

Researcher: Did you select your room-mate at that point or were you just assigned a room-mate.

Bell: As I recall, I was just assigned a room-mate. The first trip I went on, I asked specifically to be with the girls from B.C. but there were no other girls from B.C. on the track team this time, so I was with Jenny Dolson, who was a sprinter from Toronto.

Researcher: And would you be wakened up at a certain time or . . .

Bell: We got up every morning about eight o'clock.

Researcher: And a curfew again at night? How did you spend your evenings, prior to the actual competition?

Bell: Oh, any night you were probably just chatting amongst yourselves or writing letters home or doing all those things you do when you're not at home. I always knitted or sewed or read something.

Researcher: Do you remember your feelings? Were you homesick, anxious . . . do you remember how you felt in that immediate pre-Olympic competition time?

Bell: I think, actually, there was a certain amount of . . . I don't like to say "fear", because that is too strong a word . . . but there was a certain amount of awe about the whole country and how militarized it was. It was so different from anything we knew. It was, entirely foreign to us. But it is a beautiful country . . . or it was at that time. I don't know what it was like after the war, but it was a beautiful country. Everything seemed to be so spic and span and so laid out in nice little sections. Their farm country was just beautiful.

Researcher: Did they arrange for some tours for you out of Berlin?

Bell: Yes. We went on one quite long tour that took us to a place with a small castle, Potsdam, and apparently there is a certain amount of china made there and is quite well known. Yes. We were treated very well over there and we were always asked if we wanted to go into town and things like that. The people, our German people who looked after us, were very nice. There was an older woman, who was like (maybe I should call her a housemother) I don't know. Anyway, Marg Lord wrote to her for years after it was over. She was very good to us. I must admit, as far as their hospitality was concerned, it was

tremendous. I guess Hitler was trying to impress us that they weren't that bad, but it didn't take long after we came back before they let us know how bad they were.

Researcher: Did Hitler make quite an impression on you? As a person then?

Bell: Well, the athletes part of the stand, where we sat, was right next to the dais where Hitler, Goering, and Himmler and the bunch of them sat. It was raised from where we were and came out about half-way into the stadium seating and was about half-way along. He was quite an impressive figure and still, it always struck me as funny, because when I thought about Hitler, I always thought of Charlie Chaplin, because he had that same little mustache and he was a little man like that.

Researcher: But did he just have a presence about him that had an impact or was it just because you knew he was Hitler?

Bell: Well, outside of seeing him in reality as opposed to just seeing pictures of him, he was just another person. We were quite disgusted with him when he was always determined to be, "down at the office", when Jesse Owens happened to win something.

Researcher: Can you tell me a bit about that?

Bell: He would get up with his whole entourage.

Researcher: Was that every day?

Bell: Yes. They would just get up and leave the stadium when Jesse Owens was to be met.

Researcher: Whenever a coloured person won a medal? Like a team member from India?

Bell: Well, no. It just seemed to be the coloured boys from the States.

Researcher: So when they would compete, he would leave. Or if they won, after they had competed.

Bell: No. They would wait until the competition was over and sometimes after the medals were awarded for that particular event, then the winner was usually escorted up and he was congratulated by Hitler if he was still in the stadium. But, when Jesse won, Hitler was always on the way back home, or at the office, or someplace that wasn't at the stadium. He did not return that day.

Researcher: I am not sure if you are aware, but apparently Hitler was written a letter by the International Olympic Committee, asking him not to recognize medal winners personally, because he was simply acting as a host.

Bell: No. I wasn't aware of that.

Researcher: Apparently there was a letter written to Hitler that he not recognize medal winners personally in that matter. So, what I find interesting [in your memory], was that Jesse Owens was singled out. Do you remember Hitler doing that for anyone else?

Bell: What did Jesse win? Four gold medals?

Researcher: Four. Yes.

Bell: He had four chances to meet him and he hasn't met him yet.

Researcher: Do you remember him walking out on other black athletes as well?

Bell: Not really, because after it happened once to Jesse, we watched for it with Jesse Owens and . . . when you know a person and they are being slighted like that, well you just keep your eye open for it.

Researcher: But you could sense the racism.

Bell: Oh yes. Very definitely. He had a real thing about coloured people. And of course, Jesse, being a four medal winner; he was singled out.

Researcher: So you felt he, particularly, had been singled out for this sort of discrimination. Or was it because he was beating all the Germans?

Bell: Maybe it was because he was beating all the German athletes.

Researcher: Can you recall the opening ceremonies?

Bell: Oh yes. The different teams paraded in, the same as they do now. That is sort of a standard beginning and we lined up on the field behind whoever was our flag bearer and the opening ceremonies started. Hitler made his speech again, in German, which we didn't understand again, but hopefully it was all good.

Bell: After the teams had all assembled on the centre of the field, they turned loose the doves, the same as the opening ceremonies these days. Later on, when we were dismissed from the centre of the field, there was some dancing put on by some of the German people and the opening ceremonies went on. It was quite spectacular . . . and the fact that the stadium was so huge . . . we'd never seem a stadium like it before . . . it was absolutely fantastic.

Researcher: Do you remember how many people might have been there for that?

Bell: Oh no, there were thousands and thousands of people. The stadium was . . . as far as the tiers were concerned, it was very high . . . The seating went all the way around the stadium as opposed to just along either side, like a lot of stadiums that we were used to. Sometimes our stadiums out here . . . the one at Hastings Park, where we did our training, there was only seating at one side of it. So this was quite enormous.

Researcher: So the stadium was memorable, wasn't it?

Bell: Yes, it really was.

Researcher: What would you do on the days that you were competing? Can you talk a bit about the day that you competed?

Bell: Well, jumping is usually toward the end of any track meet and that doesn't matter whether it's international, or local . . . and your field events are usually behind or a little bit after the sprinting. Most of your programs start out with heats, in 100s and 220s and things like that. . . because there are usually three or four sets of heats and in a big competition, there might even be more before you get to a final. So people that were running had to be able to withstand that. As I recall, it was not as hot as Montreal, but it was very hot over there too. On the days that we weren't competing, the athletes, who

were waiting their turn, would practise in the morning and usually go back and have lunch and then go out to one of the stadiums where some of your team-mates were competing. Maybe it would be diving, or swimming, or fencing, or basketball, or whatever . . . and watch it during the afternoon hours. Then, we would go back to wherever we were billeted and have our dinner. After that we usually wrote letters home, or we sat around and talked, or discussed what happened in the day, or whatever. Because we still had a curfew to follow as far as going to bed was concerned.

Researcher: Did you find competing near the end of the competition difficult?

Bell: No, not really, I was used to it . . . because any time that I competed in any games at all, from high school sports on up, . . . the jumping was always towards the end of the track meet.

Researcher: So you didn't find the anxiety level getting higher day after day?

Bell: No, not really. But when the Olympics were all over and we had the closing ceremonies and here again, the teams marched into the stadium. . . . Oh, I should mention that when the first three got their medals on the podium, they were crowned with laurel leaves and they were given their medals.

Researcher: The first three meaning the first three events?

Bell: No, the first, second, and third athlete in any event. They got the laurel crown when they got their medals.

Researcher: And do you recall little oak trees being given to them at all?

Bell: Yes. Yes.

Researcher: Was that on the podium?

Bell: Yes, it was given to them at the same time as the medals.

Researcher: And how were the Canadians expected to get their oak trees home?

Bell: I have no idea. The same way as some of the kids down in the United States, in Los Angeles, during the games . . . the swimmers in particular . . . they were given these beautiful bouquets of flowers, they would come off the podium, and as they were walking away from it, they would toss them to the crowds. . . . Maybe that's what happened to the oak trees, too.

Researcher: Were flags raised and national anthems played . . . with the medal ceremony?

Bell: Oh yes, just the same as it is now. Any games that I was in, as far as the flag raising and the anthem being played, it has always followed the same pattern. This has gone on as long as I have known about it.

Researcher: What do you recall of the day that you competed?

Bell: Not an awful lot. I remember getting up and getting ready for the competition and I had a massage and I warmed up and then I went out and competed. That was that.

Researcher: Was it an awfully long day for you?



Bell: It was quite a long day. Yes, in spite of the unrest in the world at that particular time, there seemed to be more athletes at that competition than usual. Of course there were more than at either of the other competitions that I had been in, because it was world not just British Empire.

Researcher: Do you remember being intimidated by the high level of competition?

Bell: Not really. No. It was just another meet than needed a lot of concentrated attention, the same as any other meet.

Researcher: Was it an off-day for you?

Bell: No, I wouldn't say so.

Researcher: Because normally you didn't have trouble clearing five feet, did you?

Bell: No, I didn't.

Researcher: Do you think there were nerves involved?

Bell: Oh, a certain amount, yes. I always had butterflies during a jump. But, when I came back home I . . . sometimes wondered if I was really that prepared for it, because the boy who was coaching me hadn't coached before. I just didn't do it that well, that's what it amounts to.

Researcher: Were there other girls there that you felt were very well coached and did you have a sense that other girls there did have a much better support system behind them before they competed in the Olympics?

Bell: Well, I really can't tell you that, because, unlike England and Australia, we trained by ourselves. So, I really had nothing to compare it with.

Researcher: And none of the girls talked about their coaching . . . like girls from the other teams?

Bell: No. When we were away from the field where we were doing our exercises and what not, we had other things to talk about like the American kids. We would talk to them about the competitions they had been in themselves and how often they had represented their country away from America. You know, just the normal chatter that you would expect when athletes from other countries got together.

Researcher: Do you remember any rivalries or anything that stood out, in terms of countries; rivalries that were played up?

Bell: No, not until you got on the field. Because one girl that I became quite friendly with was an American high jumper and when we were off the field, we were very friendly. But, when we were competing, that was a whole different thing . . . that was the reason why you were there, so you paid attention to business and that was it. No, it's much nicer if you are friendly with the competition. Down in Australia there was a girl from South Africa, her name was Toni Robertson, she was a great pal of the Canadian girls too. As a matter of fact, one of our Canadian boys had a crush on her as I recall.

Researcher: Was homesickness a factor while you were there?

Bell: Not in '36 or '38. I think I had outgrown that, after the Empire Games in '34 and the Women's World Games. After all, they were the first time that I had really been away from home for any length of time.

Researcher: Can I ask you if you prepared differently for an individual sport than you did when you were playing a team sport such as basketball . . . were the rewards different in an individual sport than in a team sport?

Bell: Not really, I mean if you're playing on a team you're going to be out there practising, just like you are if you're doing a solo bit, and if you're interested in what you're doing, you're going to put just as much effort into it. You know, it just kind of follows that if you're interested, you're going to do the best you can and you're going to have to work at it.

Researcher: So the fact that in a team sport that you had to depend on others . . . didn't bother you? Whereas . . . like in jumping . . . you know you're the one that controls the performance.

Bell: As a matter of fact, one basketball team I was on, I was very happy to be on, because one of the girls who played on the team was an ex-Edmonton Grad player, so it was nice to have somebody there who was very good.

Researcher: Was she that good?

Bell: Oh yes, she was.

Researcher: She was?

Bell: Her name was Kay McRitchie.

Researcher: Did she have just super skills?

Bell: Well, she had played on a team that was the best in the world at one time and there was nothing that could beat them. When she played with the team that I was on, we all looked up to her pretty much because she was the essence of a basketball player at that particular time.

Researcher: What was the essence of a basketball player?

Bell: Well, really good!

Researcher: She made her shots and all those things. Do you think she was so good just because she worked? Or was it a combination of good hard work and talent?

Bell: Well, I've forgotten their coach's name?

Researcher: Percy Page.

Bell: Percy Page. Yes. He taught into those girls just exactly where to go and how to do it. He was a fantastic coach!

Researcher: He really pushed them, then.

Bell: Oh yes. I mean anybody who had been coached by him knew basketball inside out.

Researcher: Can I just go back to the Olympics, then? We talked about the medal ceremony. Have we talked about the closing ceremony? I don't think we have. Do you remember that?

Bell: Yes, I remember it. It's very much like the opening ceremony, in that there's a march past and all the teams assemble on the field, and they take down the Olympic flag and then put out the Olympic fire in the stadium.

Researcher: Was there a sense of national rivalry backstage in the Olympic Games?

Bell: There always is . . . there always is at the Olympic Games. You want your team to sparkle . . . I mean you're part of some small den of lions in this great big world of ours and you're hoping that all of your athletes will do very well so that people are aware of where you came from. .

Researcher: Where do you remember the focus of the major rivalries. I mean more recently it's been the United States versus the Soviets or the East Germans. But at that time, was there a focus of rivalry between two or three nations in particular?

Bell: Well, I think the United States and Germany or some of the European countries over there . . . mostly Germany . . . have always been the two greatest rivals, because I imagine they each have the most people to draw from.

Researcher: So in 1936 Olympics did you sense a German-United States focus?

Bell: No, not like you're meaning. You go in there day after day and you watch the games and as the semi-finals and the rounds up to the semi-finals are run in the 100 meters, 220 and all these other things, you get a sense of what countries are going to be the most outstanding. And, after a few days, you're pretty certain of what side you're going to be pulling for and that sort of thing. I mean, it doesn't necessarily have to be your own country, if your own country isn't competing in that particular event. Well, you are going to take sides with somebody.

Researcher: Was there a sense of Canadians being part of North America versus not being part of Europe.

Bell: Oh, very definitely. Yes.

Researcher: So were there sort of continental, regional loyalties?

Bell: I don't know about their side of it, but I do know the Canadians and the Americans . . . both sides were as incensed about Jesse Owen's treatment as the other one. The Canadians took that very hard when Jesse was snubbed so many times, because he was really a nice person.

Researcher: How did Jesse handle it?

Bell: Oh, he handled it very well. He just let it slide off his back. As a matter of fact, years later he went back to Berlin. He had made a friend of one of the athletes over there and he went back to Berlin and saw the stadium again and met his friend again. No, he was a very nice person.

Researcher: And the discrimination was very pointed against him, in particular, as you recall?

Bell: Yes. As a matter of fact, we were quite disgusted with the whole thing. We thought that if there were certain nationalities that Hitler did not want to receive, he shouldn't have received any. He shouldn't have done anything to point out his disrespect for anybody. After all, who was he trying to impress?

Researcher: Did the crowd boo or anything like that when Jesse was slighted so deliberately? Do you remember?

Bell: No, I don't remember anything like that. But, I do remember the Canadians got to the point where they would sing the American national anthem with the Americans when Jesse was on the stand receiving another medal.

Researcher: Letting them know what you thought of him?

Bell: Exactly! And of course the athletes' part of the stand was right next to the dais where Hitler sat, so he couldn't not know what was going on.

Researcher: Did the Canadian . . . there was the runner, I know, the Canadian black runner . . . maybe I'm thinking of the British Empire Games.

Bell: Phil Edwards?

Researcher: Was he at the Olympics?

Bell: Yes.

Researcher: Did he experience any sort of discrimination?

A: Not that I know of. But then, I don't think he was in a position to be snubbed. No, he didn't win first place in anything, so of course we don't know whether he would have been or not.

Researcher: But there wasn't this tallying up . . . that so and so got so many bronzes . . . this country got so many . . .

Bell: Not like they do now. No.

Researcher: That whole thing wasn't there, was it?

Bell: No.

Researcher: So was this spirit of bringing a number of young people together in celebration of excellence . . . this whole ethic that the Olympic Committee wanted to imbibe into the Olympics . . . was that spirit there in '36? This wonderful coming together of the best athletes in the world . . .

Bell: Well, as far as the kids were concerned, it was. But I think deep down there was a certain amount of awe and perhaps just a touch of fear while we were over there, because there were so many places and so many things that we couldn't do. We couldn't go here, we couldn't go there . . . and we weren't used to that. It was a kind of an aura of maybe mystery, but a little bit of . . . well . . . fear. What else can I say?

Researcher: Fear and that sort of diminished the joy of the occasion in a sense, or undermined it, or . . .

Bell: Well, you didn't spend much time thinking of it. You were doing your training and it pretty well took up your day. You watched the rowing, or diving, or fencing, basketball, track, or whatever caught your fancy that particular day. You were busy all the time and when you're busy you don't sit around and delve into something like that.

Researcher: When a team . . . let's say when a gal would not do well in a sprint or whatever, did you sense that there was a lot of support . . . well, like the team that dropped the baton, what was the reaction of the other kids on the team?

Bell: We were all very supportive. I mean this can happen to anybody, it's not just . . . it didn't just happen once . . . it's happened since too. Not to the Canadian team that I know of, but I know the baton was dropped either at the PanAm Games or something here not too terribly long ago so I mean it's just one of those things that happens periodically.

Researcher: So there was good team spirit and camaraderie.

Bell: Yes. Nobody pointed a finger at the kids when the baton was dropped. It was . . . Gosh, we're sorry, because you were doing so well!" And they really were . . . they were right up there. But it happened. What can you say, what can you do?

Researcher: Did you pray at all before you competed?

Bell: You always say a small prayer before you compete.

Researcher: Do you? That's interesting.

Bell: I have noticed that at different games . . . I watch all the games that I can on TV. I have noticed that a fair amount of athletes who are Catholics will cross themselves before they compete.

Researcher: Tennis players, I have noticed, doing this.

Bell: Exactly. So I mean this is not foreign to me, either. As soon as I see them do it, you know I think it is commonplace among all athletes.

Researcher: Did you have a sense sometimes that God was out there jumping with you, helping you? Did you have a spiritual side to the jumping?

Bell: I don't think so. My concentration was more on what I was doing. You know if I missed a jump I'd probably come back and do a fair amount of thinking about it, and say, "Please God, help me over it next time", but no, not as I remember it.

Researcher: Yes. I remember watching "Chariots of Fire", and Liddell [I think his name was Liddell] would say that he really felt that one of God's purposes was that he run fast. I thought that was a really interesting insight into an athletic celebration.

Bell: Howie McPhee is very religious. He wasn't very happy about running on a Sunday.

Researcher: Did you have events on Sunday in the '36 Olympics?

Bell: Yes, there were some.

Researcher: Because they had had them in '28 already and they got around it.

Bell: Yes, that was the year that Percy Williams did so well, he won the 100 and the 220. That was in Amsterdam.

Researcher: Well, the religious thing is interesting to me. Because, like the Edmonton Eskimos, they had a very religious aspect to their team spirit. They all said prayers before and after each game and some of them counted it as part of the reason for their enormous success. That was the team that Hughie Campbell coached for two years. So I was interested in your sense of whether religion played a part in the athletic performances. Were prayers said at the Olympics in the opening or closing ceremonies?

Bell: No, the Olympic Oath was and whoever opened the games usually had something to say.

Researcher: Was prayer in evidence at any of the local meets or anything like that?

Bell: No. If you went to a local meet, that was all business. Just get out there and do what you're supposed to do.

Researcher: And the praying was done by the individual. By the people who felt it would help.

Bell: That's right.

Researcher: Did you ever carry a good luck charm or anything like that?

Bell: I had one given to me when I went to Australia and I carted that around until I quit competing. It was a little ivory elephant.

Researcher: Did you just keep it in a pocket or a shoe when you jumped?

Bell: No, it was fairly small and I wore it on a gold chain link bracelet.

Researcher: Do you still have it?

Bell: Yes, I do.

Researcher: Is it still a good luck charm?

Bell: I don't know. I haven't carried it for a long time; I haven't tried its powers recently.

Researcher: But, did you actually carry it with that intent when you were jumping?

Bell: Well, it was given to me as a going-away gift. It had its trunk up and an elephant with its trunk up is supposed to be good luck. I was told that this was for luck, so being the kind of person I am, I believed them and I took it and I wore it.

Researcher: Did a lot of people have a good luck charm or anything like that?

Bell: I don't know.

Researcher: So we were talking about the Olympic closing ceremonies, which you said was very similar to the opening ceremonies. Was there a huge party for you, or a reception, or anything like that at the end? Or did you get to listen to another two-hour talk, or

anything like that?

Bell: No, Hitler didn't. It was fairly short. There were a lot of people who had things to say but it wasn't as long and drawn out as the other.

Researcher: But by and large, the Games ran very smoothly and efficiently?

Bell: Yes, it was very smooth.

Researcher: That's good.

Bell: Yes. Well, of course, we're talking about a very military country here and naturally things go by rote . . . they're not going to get off track.

Researcher: Stay off the grass?

Bell: Yes, exactly, stay off the grass.

Researcher: So how did you get back home?

Bell: We didn't go back through Paris. We went back from . . . I think we sailed from Hamburg, in Germany, and came back to London. Some of our team had come home earlier, when they got finished their events. And, since the high jump was further on in the Olympics, I was still there. I came back to London with the boys' team and a few of the girls, who were competing later in the games. The boys were at an invitational meet in London. We stayed there two or three days.

Researcher: So some of the people that would have finished an event, were out of the events by the end of the first week of the Olympics, left? Without attending the closing ceremonies?

Bell: Yes, they had the option of going. They were told they could if they wanted to get back home.

Researcher: So the whole team didn't stay until everything was over?

Bell: No. Not that time. And that's the only games I was ever at that they didn't. We always travelled as a group any other time. But that particular time, our team was split, and we were asked if we finished our event if we wanted to go home on an earlier boat, and some of the athletes opted to. But the boys' team had been invited to this invitational meet in London, so we sailed from Germany to Southampton (I think it was) and we went up to London and they competed there. We only stayed there . . . about a week at the very outside. Then came back to Canada.

Researcher: What did you do after your return to Canada and the next major competition for you would have been what?

Bell: Australia, in 1938, at the beginning of February.

Researcher: So were you still active with the Vancouver Club in that period?

Bell: Oh, yes, right up to the beginning of the war, I competed with the Vancouver Athletic Club. It's the only club I ever belonged to.

Researcher: And you were still in the Dominions in 1937?

Bell: Yes. Our team was supposed to be very small going to Australia, and somehow or other they got more money than they expected to get, so our team turned out to be fairly large. I think it was 70-odd of us that went down, and they had anticipated around 40 or 45. That was a really nice trip; we really enjoyed it. There were quite a few athletes on that particular trip, who had been on one or two of the trips I'd been on before and it was like old home week.

Researcher: You were one of the old-timers already?

Bell: Yes, that's right. It's amazing how things change.

Researcher: Were you jumping well at that point?

Bell: In between the Olympics and the Empire Games in Australia, my coach decided that I would do better if I changed my style of jumping. And I was in the process of changing my style while I was there or between the two competitions and I was progressing fairly well.

Researcher: We were talking about your change in jumping styles for the Melbourne Games. For the Sydney Games . . . my apologies.

Bell: Oh yes, for the Sydney Games. Right, I was changing from the Scissors to an Eastern Cutoff which would have (in the long run) given me more height. Probably it was a little bit easier jumping, but most people when they start, they start out with the Scissors. They did at that time. I worked very hard between the Olympics and the Sydney Empire Games to do this as well as possible in that short time. When we got down to Australia, I had no coach, the track and field coach was very busy with the sprinters and the runners and for some reason, the jumpers . . . and that goes for the broad jumpers and high jumpers . . . were always sort of left on their own. There was a very nice young chap by the name of Eddie Thacker, from South Africa, who jumped Eastern Cutoff and he also practised at the same field that I practised at and so he helped me. I was very thankful for that, because he'd been jumping that style for quite a number of years and was really good.

Researcher: Were the men using the different style at the Olympics? What style were most of the men jumping, do you remember?

Bell: Well, a lot of them were jumping, the Eastern Roll or the Western Roll. Not that many were jumping the Scissors because . . . after you've jumped for awhile, you graduate from the Scissors to something else that gives you a lower centre of gravity, which gives you the ability to jump higher with the same amount of effort.

Researcher: Were the men using the Eastern Cutoff at the Olympics?

Bell: Most men used the Western Roll. It seemed to be their preference.

Researcher: So was this Eastern Cutoff a fairly recent technique?

Bell: No, it had been around for a long time. It was just the Scissors with a layout. So you went in a laid back position over the bar.

Researcher: So, you didn't have to get as much of your weight that high?



Bell: That's right. You were in a layout position over the bar.

Researcher: Did you find it difficult to make the transition?

Bell: Not really, not once I had been shown what to do and what to expect. Mind you, sometimes you didn't land exactly the way you wanted to. I imagine if the war hadn't come along, I'd have kept on jumping and I would have become much better at it with more practice.

Researcher: Did you feel that you never really jumped as high as you might have had you been able to continue your career?

Bell: No. I think I could have done better. But, here again, I mean, would there ever have been a team during my time when there was a jumping coach? I competed in four world or Empire Games competitions altogether and there wasn't one time that I competed away from Canada that I had a coach. We had four track and field coaches and I can never remember any one of them paying any attention, coming over to me on the field and saying, "How are you doing?"

Researcher: You were really on your own, except for your team mates?

Bell: That's right. Usually they would ask if we had a broad jumper and we always did.

Researcher: Would the coach be out there with the men that were jumping?

Bell: Oh. No.

Researcher: They just ignored broad jumpers in general?

Bell: Now you see, a broad jumper has to run, right? So usually a broad jumper was also a sprinter. Not always, but usually. And these kids would get a fair amount of attention with their starts and their sprints. But the pole vaulters and the high jumpers sort of seemed to be out in left field . . . if you know what I mean. However, not these days. Some of the kids even have their own coaches that go along with them. I really envy them. I often wonder what the athletes could have done if their coaches could have accompanied them.

Researcher: Do you remember wishing, at the time, that you'd had a coach out there with you?

Bell: Oh well, any time I went away, I wished my coach could go with me. It gives you a certain amount of confidence to have someone there and if you're doing something wrong, or something comes up you can discuss it and fix it.

Researcher: Where you can ask a question or whatever.

Bell: Or they can say "Hey you've practised enough today, now don't wear yourself out." Because I had a tendency at times to work on something longer than I should, probably.

Researcher: So you'd be tired before the actual meet. What about the Empire Games then, you said that you really enjoyed that?

Bell: Yes. Well, of course, we really liked the one in England. I must say they made a great big fuss over us in England and I had relatives and friends in Scotland. So, of course,

the first games that I went to were a big deal for me. I'd never been away from home before. But Australia, I don't know, it was such a free and easy place and everybody was so good to us. Families would even come and pick us up from where we were billeted at our hotels and take us on picnics . . . if you can believe it! We had a marvellous time down there. Mind you, it was after the games, of course, because I think it was ten days we had to wait for the boat to come back home after the games. They had parties and they had dances for us. A few of us were entertained in private homes and it was really wonderful.

Researcher: Did you arrive quite far in advance of those games? Because, again now, how long would the boat trip have taken?

Bell: Yes, the boat trip was three weeks.

Researcher: Again, did you train on the boat?

Bell: Oh yes, you see it was about five days to Honolulu and we were there almost twenty-four hours for loading and unloading something, not the athletes! And then we went on to Suva, we had time in Suva to look around.

Researcher: Where is Suva, I don't know?

Bell: Fiji. And then we went on to New Zealand and we were off the boat for a few hours and then we went on from Auckland to Sydney. I think it was 3-1/2 days from Auckland to Sydney and that was the shortest jump from land to land during that trip.

Researcher: That was a long time to be on a boat.

Bell: Yes. We used to train in the morning and with the team as big as it was, we had to take turns at the showers. One of the boys laid down on the deck (one of our sprinters) and decided he'd get a little bit of sun while he was waiting for a shower, before we had lunch. He went to sleep and some of the kids missed him and went looking for him. He was sunburned so badly that if he moved his arms across his body, his skin would split right down his shoulders. Oh, he was very sick!

Researcher: Was the heat a problem there as well?

Bell: Well, we left here on 22nd December as I said, so of course we were going into the middle of their summer. It took us a while. We had the three weeks on the boat to get a little bit used to it, but I got on the boat in a fur coat and I got off the boat wishing I didn't have it! All you had to do was carry it around from the boat to the hotel.

Researcher: Did they give you enough time before the games to acclimatize and rest and train?

Bell: Oh yes, we got there about the middle of January and we had until, I think the games started on the 9th of February. So we had almost a month down there to get acclimatized and it was great. Mind you, they had some torrential rainfalls. I remember one day we got up and got into the bus that took us to our training field. There was one spot where we went down what seemed like a little gully and up the other side and on that particular day, we couldn't go on because there was a small river running down there. We had to come back and go around a different way. The sun was shining that particular day but the water was sure pouring down, so we had to spend a couple of days indoors.

Researcher: And once again, you were billeted in separate hotels for men and women and you shared a room with one of the girls?

Bell: Yes, with Jenny again, Jenny Dolson from Toronto.

Researcher: And do you remember if your relationships in terms of the team would change because you were now one of the senior members, as opposed to being one of the youngsters?

Bell: No, not really, I mean . . . I don't quite know how to say this . . . its just like having any other friends, I mean periodically you meet people and it was just like getting together with a bunch of old friends and there were a few new people for you to meet.

Researcher: How did that actual competition go for you?

Bell: Well, Bobbie Robinson, the team manager, said he'd never seen me jump better because I was jumping a new way and he thought it was great. But, I was fourth in that particular competition. I actually tied for third place. At that time, you jumped off and we were jumping away to beat the band, and the girl who actually won it, didn't jump as high as we did in the jump-off. I guess there was a certain amount of pressure off, because the main competition was over. We both missed at the same height in the end, which left us tied again, so they went back to see who had the most misses and I had one more miss than she did; so she got third and I got fourth.

Researcher: Now the jump-off . . . the two people who are tied just keep jumping at the same height until somebody misses?

Bell: No, they put the bar down, maybe an inch or two inches and you try that and if you both get over it, then they put it up an inch and you try that height, and you keep on going until one misses. But, in our particular case, we both missed at the same time and I also spiked my knee.

Researcher: What do you mean by, "you spiked your knee?"

Bell: Well, I cut myself just above my knee with one of the spikes in my jumping shoes, so I ended up with three stitches.

Researcher: So on the jump, your spike had caught your trailing leg or something.

Bell: That's right.

Researcher: So that was kind of a memorable jump? You were feeling very good about competing and your own jumping, and you sort of felt, "Well, I'm right on track."

Bell: Right. And I was all for coming home and getting ready for the 1940 Olympics. I was sure I could do much better. But it's just one of those things. The war came along and that was that.

Researcher: After the Empire Games you went to New Zealand on the way home?

Bell: Yes, we went to an invitational meet in New Zealand. That was in Auckland. The boat docked in Auckland and we had two days there, or three days. During that time, they had an invitational meet and I jumped in Auckland and won the event. I also made a new New Zealand record, which made me very happy. But that had nothing to do with why we

went away; that was an invitational meet and it didn't count for anything except it was sanctioned by the Amateur Federation and we had a fun time.

Researcher: So you set a record in New Zealand at that time. So that was really kind of a nice time to end?

Bell: Yes, it was a nice way to end my out-of-Canada competitions.

Researcher: So you came back and the war broke out in 1939?

Bell: Yes, September '39.

Researcher: So what happened to track and field as far as you were concerned after the war broke out?

Bell: Well, there were one or two meets in '39 and in '40 there was nothing.

Researcher: So in '39 they were just here in Vancouver?

Bell: Well, the war didn't break out until September of '39. So we had track meets up until then, because they were summer meets.

Researcher: Did you have a Dominion Meet at that time?

Bell: You know, I really can't recall. We must have . . . but sometimes we just had zone meets and then they would compare the heights and times. But in 1940, there was absolutely nothing and later on that year, I went to work in Boeing and I worked there until just about the end of the war.

Researcher: And were you doing anything athletic at all in that time?

Bell: Just playing basketball.

Researcher: For Boeing?

Bell: Actually the team was sponsored by a cafe on Granville Street. But, when we competed, we competed as a Boeing Team and we didn't all work at Boeings. I don't know, it was just one of those things.

Researcher: When was the last time you jumped competitively?

Bell: In 1939.

Researcher: Do you remember your last competition?

Bell: It was probably in Nanaimo on Labour Day. We always went to Nanaimo on Labour Day. That was sort of the windup of the whole deal of summer sports and then there was always a big dance afterwards. We'd stay overnight and come home the next day on the boat. That was the big celebration at the end of the season.

Researcher: Do you have many regrets that the war came along and disrupted your jumping? Do you always wonder just how high you could have jumped?

Bell: Well, yes. I was looking forward to the 1940 Olympics and I thought after those,

if I could make them, that that would be the end of it because I was getting old for sports at that particular time. I mean, athletes these days don't think anything of being older, but at that time you just didn't go on and on.

Researcher: So there weren't many people past twenty or twenty-one years old in track and field?

Bell: Oh yes, I would have been twenty-two or twenty-three in the next Olympics and that was really getting on. Most of the women had given up by then. But I really did want to compete one more time in world competition, because I really did think this Eastern Cutoff that I was learning was coming along well and I could have done much better than I had done before. But no, it's just one of those things. It's life.

Researcher: Did you stay involved, besides playing basketball, did you stay involved in track and field in any other way?

Bell: Well, after the war I was married and my husband coached the team and I used to go down and do what I could for the kids who were competing. I also was on the Executive of the B.C. Women's Amateur Athletic Federation. Then, after a while . . . I just became a housewife with a family.

Researcher: If you look back now, on those years, what words would you use to sum them up if you had to pick a sentence or two regarding that aspect of your life?

Bell: I don't really know. Because for me it was just a part of growing up. It was just something that I really enjoyed. I did it because I did enjoy it. And, that was during the Depression; there really was not a great deal for you to do outside of going to picture shows and going to house parties and that sort of thing. Of course, when I was in training in the summertime, my coach used to say if I was going to parties or anything, I had to be home and go to bed at 10 o'clock. I remember one night there was a high school dance and he asked me if I was going. I said no because there was a track meet the next day. It was a Friday night and I asked if he was going and he said no. Well, we both ended up at the dance.

Researcher: You saw him!

Bell: Sure. We both went.

Researcher: Did he say anything when he saw you there?

Bell: He said, "I guess we didn't mean it when we said we weren't coming", and I said, "I guess we didn't." But I didn't stay until the end; I was home by 11 o'clock.

Researcher: So you could have fun without making this incredible commitment just to jumping.

Bell: Well, if it was a local meet and it wasn't something like Dominion Championships or trials for something, then you didn't feel that if you wanted to go out for a little while and were a little later than your curfew getting home . . . you didn't feel that was such a big deal. But if it had been the Dominion Championships or trials for something; I never would have been at that party!

Researcher: What do you think were the main qualities that you came away with following your sports experience? What did it give you?

Bell: Well, the one thing that pops into mind right away is discipline. Because, an athlete that is competing . . . and seriously competing . . . has got to be a very disciplined and dedicated person, you can't be a scatterbrain, just going around in a fog.

Researcher: Both sort of a physical and mental discipline?

Bell: Exactly.

Researcher: What else comes to mind?

Bell: Not a great deal, except a lot of hard work, which you did very willingly because that was what you wanted to do.

Researcher: If you put a balance up on a table and on this side of the scale was, doing it for pleasure and fun, and on this side was, doing it because you were good at it and you were an excellent jumper, and there was a sense of achievement when you did well; which would be the bigger reason for jumping?

Bell: I don't see how you can separate the two. You did it because you wanted to and that was for sure. If somebody was pushing you, you weren't going to do all that well, because you wouldn't be that interested. But as far as the physical end of it, it certainly kept one in shape. The only thing I can ever remember regretting about the whole thing was that I wanted to ski. One year, my brother gave me skis for Christmas and very happily I announced to my coach, "Gee, you'll never guess what I got for Christmas! I got some new skis!" He just looked at me and said, "You're not going to ski because you are liable to break your leg!" So, I didn't ski.

Researcher: So there were sacrifices too. Right there.

Bell: They didn't like you to swim either, because you were developing the wrong muscles for track.

Researcher: If you had not jumped as well as you did, would you still have jumped?

Bell: I doubt it. I would probably have put my energy into something else. I know Percy Norman, who was a well-known swimming instructor here, said to me three or four times, "Why don't you give that up and come over to the pool, and we'll teach you how to swim and you'll make an excellent swimmer." Who knows? I might have tried swimming. I might not have been any good at it, but I might have tried.

Researcher: You talked about the young javelin thrower, who worked and worked and worked at it. I guess she just loved what she was doing, even though she didn't make it to the international level. What I'm wondering is if you hadn't gone beyond the Canadian level of competition, would you have continued just out of sheer pleasure for jumping?

Bell: I probably would have. Once you're into it to the point where you are going into competition, you are among a lot of nice people and have a good coach and that sort of thing. You don't toss that away all of a sudden and always in the back of your mind, you think, "Gee, if I pay attention and I work a little harder, I can do better."

Researcher: Did you have to make any adjustments when it was over? I mean you'd had this incredible number of trips and a lot of press coverage, I've read the glowing reports. Was it hard coming down after it was over?

Bell: Not really because it was a whole different atmosphere when the war started. Mind you, I can see if I'd just decided, "Now's the time to quit." and I'd quit, and everything was the same it would have been different. I think I would have really missed it. But, when the war started, you know everything was hustle and bustle for the war. I went to work in a war plant and of course, that kept me busy during the hours that normally I'd be out on the track (so to speak). So, if the war ever did anything that was good, it made the transition from track and field easier, because I kept on playing basketball. That made it much easier than it would have been.

Researcher: Now was the Boeing plant your first paid employment?

Bell: Yes.

Researcher: That was your first job. So, all during the years that you were competing you were at home? So you'd done a commercial degree, but you hadn't actually gone out and worked in a clerical position at all?

Bell: I never worked until after I was married.

Researcher: Was that fairly common at that time? Was it because you'd had to be away for such long periods of time with the competitions, that it would have been very difficult for you to have worked in an office?

Bell: Not really, I don't think . . . because some of the girls that belonged to the club I belonged to . . . like Mary Frizzell, and Lil Palmer, and Helen Reeves, . . . these girls all worked and, if there was a track meet some place, they could usually get time off. Particularly if it happened to be British Empire Games or World Games or something like that . . . they were given time off. Their employers were very good about it.

Researcher: Was money to travel for these trips a problem for any of the other team members? I mean, even pocket money. Because you said a lot of them were from just average families and times were tough.

Bell: I know, but if you went away for three months and you had \$15 in your pocket you were fine. It cost you nothing for travel, lodging or food, and you had uniforms supplied.

Researcher: Fifteen dollars.

Bell: It cost you, what? It cost you . . . maybe 25 cents to go to a show, or maybe 35 or something like that. A chocolate bar was a nickel. I mean, fifteen dollars went a long way.

Researcher: And would that be an average amount of money that a person would go to Australia with?

Bell: Fifteen or twenty-five dollars. That was . . . you had a lot of money.

Researcher: Do you remember anybody saying, "Gee, my parents are going to have a hard time getting that together." or anything like that?

Bell: No, we never talked about things like that.

Researcher: That wouldn't enter into any of your discussions with friends?

Bell: No. I don't think even if it was that hard of a time to get, whatever, that anybody

would have said anything about it. Because when you're on a team like that you're one of a team. Everybody is on a par with everybody else and you never bother to ask them how much money they had, or did they have a hard time getting it, or whatever.

Researcher: And you never felt with your parents that they had any difficulty giving you the necessary funds.

Bell: Well, I never asked my family for money, they always gave it to me. And whatever they gave me lasted a long time. When I came back from Australia . . . like I said we came back to New Zealand and we were in that meet there. Then we got back to Suva . . . we just missed the hurricane there. All the shops and everything were boarded up and we stopped there but we didn't stay there long and we missed it. We came on up to Honolulu. I left the team in Honolulu and stayed there until June because I had a married brother living there. I stayed with my brother and his wife for a while.

Researcher: That wouldn't have been too hard to take.

Bell: No, it really wasn't. Because the beaches there reminded me of the beautiful beach that they had in Sydney - Bondi Beach. After the games were over, we used to go there for a swim.

Researcher: When you were going through the Thirties . . . did you have a sense of the Depression?

Bell: Well, I think everybody did. You know, everybody was very careful with their spending, and so on. But, as far as I was concerned, it was school as usual until 1936 ended - for the first half of the Depression. After that, it was concentrating on a new jumping style. I was always busy. Then, we left in December of 1937 for the British Empire Games in 1938. It wasn't long after returning that the war started and ended my career as an athlete.