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Oral History Number: 211-001
Interviewee: Arline Malouf
Interviewer: Gladys Peterson
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Gladys Peterson: This is a continuation of the interview with Arline Malouf. You had to leave, Arline, so I think the last that we had talked about was that you were married and your husband was continuing his education and his career and you were raising children. Did I hear there were four? Four children?

Arline Malouf: (confirms)

GP: Now how many did you have when you were living out there at Fort Missoula?

AM: Four.

GP: Four. Now how many rooms?

AM: We had a living room and a good-sized kitchen and two average-sized bedrooms and two really little ones and that was it.

GP: How did you feel about that? Were you glad to be there?

AM: Oh, yes. Well, the first year was rough as the first year most any place is. The winter was real cold and our heating system was not very good. And the children were sick as often happens when you move from one place to another. Our daughter was in first grade so she managed to bring home measles and chicken pox, the usual. But after that it was a great place to live. I really enjoyed living out there.

GP: Carling told me that there were a lot of people that lived there who still live around here.

AM: Yeah. Nancy Monroe and Henningson...

GP: Browders...

AM: [Gordon and Alice] Browders, [Ed and Lue] Dugans, Norm [and Mary] Taylor. And let's see, I can't think of...oh, Roy and Helen Hines lived out there. Stewarts lived out there for a while, John Stewart and Helen. They were building a house, the one next door, so they were only there about one year while we were there.

GP: You had taught a year and half before you were married?

AM: A year and a half.

GP: When did you decide to go back into teaching?

AM: A situation sort of opened itself up for me. I was asked by...I have forgotten the school's name...to come back and teach kindergarten in one of the schools in Missoula. The kindergarten was just going to be moved into the school building, it had been taught in the church.

GP: Was this when the law changed?

AM: No, this was way before. This was in about 1951.

GP: And the kindergarten was moved into the public school?

AM: Well the kindergarten in this school district – Franklin School – the PTA had organized the kindergarten and they had had it in a church. But there was now room in the school, in a room they weren't using and they were going to move the kindergarten in there. And the teacher had moved away so they wanted me to teach. I don't know where they got my name.

GP: I wonder if they had to pay, if this was a fee kindergarten.

AM: Oh yes, yes. Well, the school had nothing to do with it, really, because the PTA ran it. But being in the school building the principal did have some sort of control, too.

GP: The PTA paid your salary?

AM: Yes, from the fees they charged.

GP: Was it a two-session kindergarten, morning and afternoon?

AM: Yes.

GP: How many people worked with you?

AM: I was alone.

GP: You were alone? How big were your classes?

AM: About 20. It was rough.

GP: Did you have any control over the size of the classes?

AM: No.

GP: Just whoever came and paid?

AM: PTA took care of that.

GP: They must have had a really active PTA.

AM: Yes.

GP: I wonder if any children were excluded, if they couldn't pay.

AM: I wouldn't have any idea, but I would assume so. But I don't know of that. First I turned them down because I had young small children still at home and I said no. And they just waited a week or so and then they called me again and finally they wore me down and I said I'd give it a try. It didn't work. It was too difficult to take our son to kindergarten at the University and the younger one to nursery school and then get the kindergartener at noon and then I'd have to go home and have lunch and then take him back with me. And then after school pick up the nursing school child and have the others coming home from school. It was very difficult.

GP: How long did you do it?

AM: (laughs) Just till the end of November, about a little over two and half months.

GP: What year was that?

AM: I think it was about 1951. What finally had me stop teaching was the PTA wanted me to have a certain kind of Christmas program and I didn't want to have it. And so we parted company. But I am sure I wouldn't have been able to keep up much longer anyway. So that was the end of that.

GP: Did you want to stay home, then?

AM: I was very happy to stay home. I might not have been if we'd been living under any other circumstance. But out there most of the women were home with their children and there were lots of children and it was a very social place to be. We learned from each other.

GP: And this was also a time, if my women's history serves me correctly, that the country was in a stage where women were expected to be in the home.

AM: Oh, yes. I didn't know very many that weren't.

GP: It was a step backwards from the way it was during the war, when women worked to leave the home.

AM: But see, I hadn't worked after I got married. I had a baby relatively soon and so I did not go to work.

GP: But many did.

AM: Oh, yes.

GP: So when did you decide to go back into teaching?

AM: Well, after we moved into town. I was kind of lost in the neighborhood when I used to be so close to people. And the children were older, and I visited the University kindergarten and nursery school building, which was quite new. The woman said the kindergarten and nursery had been closed for a year or two I think before they got the facility ready. And I visited with her and was quite pleased with what I saw in the facility and so I called and said I have an education certificate, and if you have need of a substitute teacher I would enjoy substituting. And the next year I substituted a couple of times, and then they decided...one of the teachers in the preschool quit, and they needed to hire a teacher so they asked me if I would be interested. And I could come as a kindergarten teacher or as a graduate student teacher. I decided I would prefer just to come as a teacher, so that's what I did in '58.

GP: Your children were all still fairly young, weren't they?

AM: Well our daughter was a sophomore in high school and the youngest one was in fifth grade. It was hard on him.

GP: I was going to ask you, did you feel like you were walking a tight rope at that time between your home and your job?

AM: Yeah, a little bit. But not as much as some women do because I only worked half a day and that makes it a lot easier. I worked afternoons and I think that made it a lot easier for me. I don't know if I could have done it, even at that time, if it had been an all-day program.

GP: I just saw Betty Friedan on the news and they did a series on daycare on one of the networks this past week, and it called to my mind when I first read her book when it came out in the mid-'60s. And I of course fit into the same pattern that you did and I can recall when I read her book that much of what she said applied to me. And I did feel like I was walking a tightrope sometimes. I felt like it was up to me to balance everything.

AM: Oh, yes. You still had to be the mother that you were when you were home all the time. And you weren't home all the time. So it did make it pretty tough sometimes. And there were, I

guess there probably were some things that didn't get done because I wasn't available to either help the child to do it or to do it myself.

GP: Do you think that in the long run it hurt them?

AM: No, no I don't. No, I think they did very well. The nice thing about my job was that just about anything I wanted I got.

GP: In the way of supplies?

AM: (Affirms) And I wanted it quite different from the way it had been in physical facilities and it was no problem. I didn't have to fight for it. I told them what I'd like to have and how it could be arranged.

GP: Did you have to go back to school at all?

AM: I didn't have to. Nobody asked me to. But I did. The summer before I started teaching I took a class in the child development in the education department. But nobody asked me to, I just figured I would be more comfortable if I did. And I went through my old notes that I still had from when I was taking education classes. And then about the second year I was teaching I visited some kindergartens in Salt Lake City where I had taught and they were public school kindergartens. I kind of checked them out to see what was going on.

GP: Did you use Montessori?

AM: No, I didn't really. I used bits of it but I certainly couldn't call it a Montessori school.

GP: How many teachers did they have there?

AM: They had two in the morning for the preschool and then I was...I had one of the teachers in the morning, who was also at that time director of the preschool program, working with me. So there were two of us. She was not a trained kindergarten person but a trained childhood development and preschool person. It was a good school.

GP: That was one of the earliest kindergartens in Missoula, wasn't it?

AM: Well when they first started the University kindergarten it was in Simpkins Hall, which is back of Main Hall area, back where the University Center is. And they had two sessions there, and that was quite early. And then they wanted to tear down a couple of buildings that were back there. One of them was Simpkins, which was a theater on one side and on the other side they had a nursery school, preschool, an all-day preschool program. And then upstairs they had kindergarten. So I think the University kindergarten was one of the first.

GP: Were they a rather select group of students?

AM: It ended up being that way, but it wasn't really planned that way. We really would have liked to have had a good cross-section of Missoula, but we didn't get it. We did have children from the other side, Bonner even, from all over Missoula, but it just happened that way. The way they enrolled was the first ones who sent in their application were the ones we took.

GP: But this was never regarded as a lab school, was it?

AM: Yes it was. The home economics students used it. Not the school of education except in the kindergarten I had student teachers from education, not from home-ec. It was mostly younger, preschool children. But we did have some. In that way it was a lab school, but not quite like the lab school that they have in many places.

GP: [unintelligible]

AM: Right. The students observed and built reports and at a certain period in their class work they would come in with the children and sometimes they had a special project they had to do, but it was very limited with the kindergarten. But I did have student teachers. Actually the first quarter I taught they gave me a student teacher.

GP: Well, talking to you I get the impression that teaching is the only career you ever considered.

AM: Right, it is. I'm sure I was influenced by an aunt I had who taught public school kindergarten in Salt Lake City long before I was born.

GP: They had to marry. When we lived there my older boy went to a kindergarten in Salt Lake City.

AM: My aunt didn't try to, but when I was little I visited her kindergarten. At one point, when I was probably a preteen, maybe just 12, 13, my close friend and I decided that we were going to have a special kind of school. She wanted to be a nurse, so she was going to be the nurse and I was going to run the special school for young children. But that was still including young children only. So it really wasn't far from kindergarten.

GP: At first, the two most popular professions for women were nursing and teaching. They were so similar, I guess.

AM: Oh, absolutely. And secretaries, that was about what you had left.

GP: Well, I imagine if you were to start over today you'd do the same thing.

AM: I think I would.

GP: Do you think that education has changed from what it was? Do you notice any difference in these little kids in your later years?

AM: Yes. The kindergarten where I first started in Salt Lake City, I had...it was on the west side of Salt Lake City, which was the poorest part of Salt Lake, and I had children who couldn't use scissors. Never even had a pair of scissors. Really didn't know how to handle crayons very well. They knew their names, but they didn't know where they lived. Colors were something they were semi-familiar with. There were a lot of differences. Now how much difference the location, the kinds of children I had, I don't know. But I suspect the big difference was television.

GP: They'd learned from television.

AM: I think so. I think it's made a big impact on what the young children know.

GP: When they start today they come in knowing numbers and letters, even reading.

AM: Yeah, some of them.

GP: Do you think they're better off for it?

AM: Not necessarily. I don't like to see what is happening in a lot of places with kindergarten where they're just trying to make it a first grade. That really bothers me a lot because I don't think most of them are really ready for it in any way. Sure, you can always find a few that can do it and enjoy doing it, but I think it puts too much pressure on them. They need years to play and to learn the social part of going to school. And so I get quite upset with some of the things that are happening with the kids at that level.

GP: Did you notice the effects of the modern living arrangements that there are, that the nuclear family seems to have almost disappeared and that it's affecting young kids? Is that noticeable in kindergarten?

AM: Well it wasn't noticeable when I started. By the time I quit after 24 years I was beginning to notice that more children had single families and one parent only. More of the mothers were working. But when I started there were students, yes, I had children where both parents were going to school. Not very many of them, but there were some.

GP: Sometimes I like to ask if you would recommend teaching as a profession today. Your son is a teacher, is that correct?

AM: Yes. We didn't recommend that he go into teaching. There was no guidance or pressure from us at all. In fact, in the family we ended up with our daughter finally getting a teaching certificate in elementary education, though she said all along I don't want to be a teacher. She majored in speech pathology here on campus and went on after she graduated to do some work in elementary education. She has since gotten her teaching certificate. She's never taught a class, you know, been a regular teacher. Our oldest son has been a college professor. He's not right now. The next one is connected with colleges and has taught in colleges. So it seems to be a family thing.

GP: Runs in the family. What about your retirement?

AM: Well it was hard the first year. It was very difficult even though I had taught just half a day. Well, before I retired we closed the kindergarten, about five years or so before I retired. And then I went into working with 3 year olds. I chose the 3's because I felt it would be a better transition; if I worked with 4s I might expect too much of them. So I chose the 3s.

Carling Malouf: Tell her about the salary [unintelligible]

GP: I'd like to know about that.

AM: Well the salary I started on was the same as the graduate assistants, which was 1,900 dollars. Our salaries went up about 100 dollars a year for many, many years. I also started as an instructor but somebody got frightened and said we don't want to have any problem with nepotism. So then I was staff. And the first few years they paid me for having a student teacher, as they do in the public schools. And then somebody said you can't do that, she's part of the university. So they quit doing that. So the salary when I quit was very close to half of the beginning teacher's salary after 24 years.

GP: But that was not for a full day.

AM: No, I was getting proportionately half of what a beginning teacher would.

GP: That's pretty sad, isn't it?

AM: I thought so. We all kept telling ourselves we do this because we love it and because we like the hours, we like the conditions, we like our jobs. And so we kept our spirits up that way because the pay wasn't commensurate with what we were doing. I never did get a master's degree but I did go back to take classes periodically.

GP: And that idea was prevalent on campuses, women simply did not get the salaries that men did.

AM: And when the push came that they had to equalize salaries on campus, the whole home economics department suffered. And when they went chomping over to find out what was going on, they were told that home economics has no men in their department, so we have no reasonable criteria to measure salaries. So they got some raises but not anywhere near what another woman on campus with the same experience was getting. They did not.

CM: That was the great era of [President Robert] Pantzer.

GP: That was Pantzer, Pantzer the mediator.

CM: (unintelligible)

AM: Well, whatever happened, that was what fell. They finally did, over the years, increase at a better rate the women in home economics department and a little bit better rate for us. But it never really reached where it should have.

GP: And still...

AM: As far as I know it's still pretty low. When they went into education they might have made some adjustments, I don't know for sure.

GP: That's a pretty sad commentary, isn't it?

AM: Yes.

GP: It doesn't sound like there's been much improvement in those lines.

AM: No.

GP: Especially at the university level, on a university campus.

AM: I was just, I think just barely under \$8,000 a year when I quit. And a beginning teacher was making about \$17,000. So I really was just about the same salary as a beginning teacher.

GP: And that affects your retirement then too, doesn't it?

AM: You bet. The retirement benefits are very, very low. You get about a third of what your salary was.

GP: Well there are some other comments I am sure you would like to make about your life and your career.

AM: Well all four of our children went to the university and got their degrees from the university, which I am very proud of. Two of them went elsewhere for their advanced degrees. One has a PhD, another one is close to having one, and the youngest one has his Master's. So we feel that they have done very well.

I was ready to retire because, I felt...I don't like this term "they needed new blood," I really dislike it. But we did have a new director, a new PhD director of the program. And she had some what I thought were excellent ideas to put into the program. And it's kind of hard to change greatly the philosophy you have (unintelligible) and I knew I couldn't really put my heart into doing the things she wanted done. So did the other teacher. By the end there were just two of us full time, her and me, teaching.

GP: Full half-time?

AM: Yeah, full half-time (laughs). And we kept losing people.

GP: Well, it's understandable. People have to eat. They probably go where there's decent salary.

AM: Yeah, and I had several different kinds of assistants. Sometimes I had a student who – home economics had a graduate program – and sometimes I would have a graduate student in home economics and they knew nothing about kindergarten and sometimes they didn't even know much about children. She might have been in another field in home economics but it was another person and sometimes you just need another person. And sometimes, once, for a while I had a mother. And then another time I was very fortunate to get Mrs. McCue, who was a trained an experienced kindergarten teacher and a very wonderful person to work with. Towards the last part of my teaching there I really felt it was just a great situation.

GP: How have you overcome the first year of retirement?

AM: (Laughs.) I ground my teeth a lot! I just got doing a few other things and became more satisfied with those things. I didn't branch out and do a lot of volunteer work as a lot do. Some don't do it immediately, but I have not done that. Sometimes I feel a little guilty, but I've gotten to really pretty much like the life I lead because [unintelligible] and if I feel like not dusting today, I can put it off until tomorrow and such things like that. The only big project, well I still do a lot of things but a big project I've decided to take on was to do quilting, which I had never done. And so I decided I would make quilts for my granddaughters. I am very slow (laughs).

GP: That's all right. That's just one of the joys of retirement. Are there any other comments you would like to make, Arline? As you look back on your life have we overlooked anything?

AM: Oh, no, it was hard when Carling was in the service moving around. And I think young women today have a simpler time in some ways. They have better control over their own

bodies, for one thing. If they don't want children, they have ways of keeping from wanting them. I had four and I always wanted four, but the spacing might have been a little different if we had that much control.

GP: They were close together?

AM: Yes, we had four in five years.

GP: I had three in five years.

AM: And there were times when it was extremely difficult.

GP: I imagine. Those were days when you didn't have store-bought diapers, either.

AM: (Laughs.) Right. And for a year and a half we lived in New York, or out of New York City, when Carling was going to Columbia. And we didn't have a washing machine. We didn't have too many (?) diapers. So, you know, there were times when it was very rough and I would get pretty discouraged. But on the whole, I'm pretty pleased with the life I've led and I can't imagine what could have made it much better.

[End of Interview]