

Lydia & Tony Husyk

LH: I'm Lydia.

TH: Tony Husyk.

Q: What's your background?

LH: I was born in Drumheller, Alberta in 1934...

My name is Lydia Husyk. I was born in Drumheller, Alberta in 1934. My name was Lydia Savaryn. My mother and dad were from the Ukraine. My dad was from nearer Russia than my mother was. We spoke Ukrainian at home and my dad spoke fluent Russian. I learned some words in Russian and some in Ukrainian, and I didn't speak English until I got outside to play with the children. When I started grade one, I spoke English.

Q: What sort of work did your father do?

LH: My dad was a coalminer and my mother was a homemaker; she was at home. My mother worked in a restaurant before she got married, and they treated her very poorly while she worked in the restaurant. They threw pots and pans at her because she couldn't understand the language. That stays in my mind and it will forever. They lived in Wayne before when they just got married and they lived in sort of row houses in Wayne, Alberta. And my grandparents lived there. Their name was Alco and Natasha Petrovsky was their name. Then we moved to Newcastle, Alberta, which is a mile out of Drumheller. Then my grandparents moved their house also to Newcastle. My aunt and uncle, my mom's sister and her husband, lived in Newcastle as well just down the street from us. So we had kind of a nice family arrangement there; it was happy. All the people were Ukrainian and they didn't learn to speak good English because of the fact that everybody spoke Ukrainian. Everybody was Ukrainian – the store man, the postman, everybody was

Ukrainian. So I went to school in Newcastle until grade 6; I finished grade 6 there, then 7, 8 and 9 I went to the junior high school in Drumheller. Then 10, 11 and 12 I went to the high school right in Drumheller. I graduated from the high school there and then in 1952 I came to Calgary and I went to business college for six months. The business college got me a job at Confederation Life. I worked there for three years and then I went on to the Calgary General Hospital where I worked for 32 years plus 10 months. I started off as a stenographer and a clerk and then I became the secretary to the business manager. I ended up being the administrative secretary for the vice-president of the Calgary General Hospital. I retired in 1989. My dad died in 1967 and I moved my mom. Tony and I purchased a house and moved my mother into Calgary and we looked after her until she died in 2001. She was 94. I don't know what more I can tell you.

Q: Where do you come from?

TH: I was born in Calgary, Alberta April 4<sup>th</sup> 1931. My mother and dad both came from the Ukraine, my dad in 1924 and my mother I think in 1927. I'm not quite sure on that. My dad came to Canada because his father was already in Canada back before the first war. He came to Calgary because that's where his father was. Then my mother and dad got married in 1928 and I was born in 1931. We lived in northeast Calgary in an area where there was only six houses or so. In 1931 the population of Calgary was less than 80,000 and everything was almost like wilderness. This was out on the prairie really. I went to school close to where I lived, to a school that went from grade 1 to grade 8.

Grade 1 to 4 was in one room and grade 4 to grade 8 in another room. . . .

I went to a two-room school, grade 1 to grade 4 in one room and grade 4 to grade 8 in another room. After that grade 8 I went to Stanley Jones School for grade 9, which is up in northeast Calgary. After passing grade 9 I went to Western Canada High School because then there were only three high schools in Calgary, and Western Canada High had a course in technical training which the other schools didn't. So I went grade 10 to grade 12 and graduated from grade 12 in 1950. In 1950 it was time to go out to work; so the school arranged for me to go to Canada Unemployment Service. They looked at students graduating and looked for positions. There was positions at Ogden Shops with

the CPR where I could start an apprenticeship as a machinist. I started the apprenticeship and finished my apprenticeship in 1955. I continued on working with the CPR until 1968. Then, for whatever reason, I found a job in the paper that was listed at the University of Calgary in the physics department, which also wanted a machinist. So I applied for that job and I had it for five years until 1973. Then in 1973 a job came up in the General Hospital, which at that point was paying one and a half times the wages that I was making at the university. So I applied for that job and got that job at the General Hospital.

Q: A tradesman job?

TH: Still a machinist. After being at the General Hospital for four or five years as a machinist, a job evaluation came up and also a change in the format of how they did their maintenance. I became a supervisor of mechanical maintenance and I held that job until I retired in 1991.

Q: Right before the hospital went up.

TH: I knew it was going up when I was still there, cuz they were already talking about it.

Q: What kind of city was Calgary?

LH: Well it certainly wasn't what it is now. As far as jobs were concerned at that time, you never even thought about ever getting let go and not having a job. There was always another one around the corner. A friend of mine just walked down 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue one day, walked into a building and got a job just like that. Jobs were very plentiful in those days. The pay wasn't good but it was proportionate to what everything else cost. When I first came into Calgary of course I went to the AUUC hall on 209 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE, SE sorry.

Q: Is that where it still is?

LH: No, that's where it used to be. I joined the forces there and I joined the choir and orchestra, joined the English-speaking branch. We've been active in the organization for all those years, except for the last maybe four or five years we've sort of scaled down a bit and we don't go as much. But Calgary has been good to me. I met Tony and we got married in 1958. We've had a pretty good life all those years for 52 years.

Q: What do you remember about the city?

TH: I was born here so I remember it when...

Q: What was it like?

TH: Back in the '30s, '40s and '50s and even into the '60s Calgary was really quite a farm community. You could see by going downtown that there was farm trucks around and that sort of thing. As I grew of course this all changed, but that was an image of being a very big farm community. A lot of vehicles in town were from outside of town, in shopping or whatever. We had the stock market down in northeast Calgary, livestock market, which eventually had to go because it was in the middle of the city now. But that was one of the things I remember, seeing the livestock market.

Q: Was that down by the Stampede Grounds?

TH: No it was down in east Calgary. You know where the Shamrock Hotel is, down that way? It's all city property down there. That's where the city pound is right now. But in 1950 you could drive down Centre Street, turn left onto 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue. There was a parking space on the other side of the street. You could make a U-turn in the middle of the block and park in that spot.

Q: Describe the Ogden Shops.

TH: The Ogden Shops was a well known workplace in Calgary, probably one of the biggest next to maybe Imperial Oil at that time. But Ogden Shops, when I started in 1950, employed between 800 and 1,000 employees. During the day of the steam engine everything was produced right there at Ogden Shops. They had their own pattern shop, they had their foundry, they had everything that they needed to overhaul locomotives. As time went on and diesels came in, they didn't need 800 to 1,000 employees anymore. It was more like a big garage, you might say. There was still a machine shop as such that did maintenance work for shops around the country where they were doing maintenance, and producing stuff in the machine shop. But as time went on they needed less and less employees, down to the point now where we don't even have it anymore. They now take their work and send it back to the factory and it's reproduced there and sent back.

Q: The factory isn't in Calgary?

TH: The factory is probably in Detroit. I don't know exactly, cuz I haven't been there for 30 years. But diesel shops and diesel production shops were all in the States at that time. At one time Montreal Locomotive Works produced their own locomotives when they had steam engines, but as diesels came into being that was slowly taken away.

Q: Was it a fairly good job in terms of pay and conditions?

TH: CPR was a very good place to work. When I started in 1950 I should mention my starting rate was 52 cents an hour. I got a raise of 2 or 3 cents every six months up to the machinist rate fulltime--at that time was \$1.06 an hour. I started at 52 cents an hour getting these 2 or 3 cent raises every six months. But the people making \$1.06 an hour were buying cars, buying houses, going on holidays; they were living a very good life, actually. Along with having a CPR pass, they went on wonderful holidays.

Q: What was the union at that time?

TH: I belonged to International Association of Machinists, being a machinist. But there was also Boilermakers Union and there were other unions – car makers union, which didn't belong to the International Association of Machinists.

Q: And then there were all the running trades.

TH: They were all separate, yes.

Q: What do you remember about the hospital and healthcare when you first started?

LH: When I first started, for one thing, it was a happy family. The doctors and nurses and office staff, everybody was a happy family. Their one aim was to look after patients. We had really good supervisors and all the departments, all they looked for was cleanliness and protection of the patients. It was a well run hospital until it got too big and we got a lot of vice-presidents and presidents. We had a top heavy administration, and that's what happens. But as far as patient care, the Calgary General Hospital was an excellent hospital. It had a very good reputation and had a good school of nursing run by very good heads of nursing. We had a central laundry there, which was excellent. At the Calgary General we had just put in millions of dollars into a new surgical unit, and that's when they imploded it.

Q: You weren't working there anymore?

LH: I retired in 1989 and it was 1998 that it was imploded. It was a sad time for us.

Q: You were there too.

TH: Oh ya, well being in maintenance, part of my duties were looking after the people in the laundry that did the maintenance. When the laundry was built at the General Hospital that laundry could look after at half of the hours of the day it could look after all the laundry in all the hospitals in Calgary, but yet it was only looking after whatever it had at

the General. The Foothills had their own laundry later but the General could've done the laundry for all the hospitals in Calgary at that time.

Q: It was finally shut down and contracted out.

TH: Ya, it was contracted out to Edmonton where they delivered by truck every day. I don't think they do now, I don't know for sure what they do now. But I still see the trucks coming from Edmonton. But a lot of the laundry that used to be done is now disposable also. Quite a bit of the laundry that was done in hospitals, like coveralls in the ORs and foot coverings and everything to do with clothing, a lot of it is now disposable clothes. Use it once, into the garbage.

Q: What was the difference in patient care between then and now?

LH: I think patients were very important to the doctors, to nurses. They always looked appropriate, they looked clean. They didn't wear blue jeans like they do now. But the patient care was excellent at one time. But I sometimes wonder about now. We've been into emergency a few times now and sometimes you wonder. It takes so long to get through and nobody really cares. They don't seem to care as much as they used to years ago, but that's all I can say.

Q: What is your opinion?

TH: I feel in some ways the people who are working in hospitals are much more educated. But they've had a chance to do that because there's many new things have come out in medical care that the doctors of the old days weren't even aware of. What has happened also, I think the doctors themselves are more talented or whatever you wanna call it. But they treat patients different. But their talent level I think is much greater.

Q: Did you belong to other organizations?

LH: We belonged to the Association of United Ukrainian Canadians. We now belong to the AUC Seniors. Other than that, what can I say? Now we belong to several different seniors groups but at that time I belonged to the union, I belonged to CUPE when I first started working. When I became an administrative secretary I had to drop out of the union because I was exempt. I asked my boss if I could remain in the union and he said, no, because there's a conflict of interest here. He wouldn't let me remain in the union so of course I had to get out of the union. I always felt that I had protection with the union if I was ever fired, or whatever grievance I had I knew I had somewhere to go. But in administration I didn't have anywhere to go. So I had to be a good girl.

TH: I was out of the union also, once I became a supervisor. But my name was still on the what do you call it, on the seniority list. They kept my name on the seniority list. I don't think it would ever come about where I'd have to use it. But it was there.

Q: So all the times you changed jobs, you were staying in the machinist union?

TH: Yes, cuz we had a union at the university. There was a union there. So I belonged to that too.

Q: What kind of association was the AUUC?

LH: I was in the AUUC in Drumheller yet when I was a young kid. My parents belonged to the organization and of course we all went and participated in events there. We had bazaars and I was queen of the bazaar once, which matters less, but I did collect quite a bit of money for the organization. We also did some work towards the war effort. I was quite young and we were collecting money for the boys overseas. I brought a piggybank full of coins to present to this cause. I've always belonged to the organization. I can remember just being small and going to the hall with my parents. So that's why it attracted me when I came to Calgary. I thought, well this is where I have to go because there's people there that some of them I knew, some of them I didn't. Then oh, well you talked about other organizations. We belong to the Federation of Russian Canadians. My



dad was in the federation when I was young and I never joined until 22 years ago. I took over for my stepfather, who was the president, and I took over when he died. I've been in it ever since. We have an organization here in Calgary; we have 17 members that I've maintained. We had Steve Ziguich, a man who requested some money for us, and that's the thing that's kept it alive. I've kept that money close to my chest so nobody ever touches it. Even now I still don't like spending too much of the federation money. Anyhow, we are having a convention in August for the federation, a national convention. I don't know whether this is interesting to you or whether it's something I have to tell you. We've been involved; our federation has been involved in erecting a peace pole downtown by the 10<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge. There's a peace pole that a group erected or sought to get, and we contributed.

Q: Why did you choose that site?

LH: We didn't choose it, this other group. They're called Ploughshares.

TH: The City actually gave it to them.

LH: The City actually gave the money to them and they collected money and we of course gave a nice substantial donation towards this peace pole.

Q: The AUUC had a strong cultural program – can you talk about that?

LH: Well whatever I participated in, I participated in the mandolin orchestra and I danced and I took Ukrainian school, I went to Ukrainian school. The reason my parents went, they had nowhere else to go. They had no money; they were quite poor. My dad was a coalminer and he didn't have that much money coming in. So they went to the hall because they had a common language and a common interest. So that's what brought me into the organization. When I came to Calgary, a friend of mine and I, we moved to Calgary together to go to business college and had a bit of a tough time easing into the hall here in Calgary. We'd come in and sit down and everybody else sat at the opposite

side of the hall. So these little things you remember. They're picky and they're petty, I know they are, but eventually it changed. We became part of the flock after a while; we weren't that bad. And we stayed sometimes longer than some of them. Some of them backed out during the Cold War. They left and I still stayed, Tony still stayed, and we never backed away from the hall even during those days.

Q: Did you become involved through your parents as well?

TH: Oh ya, if you had parents that went there you automatically went there. There was very few children of those days that didn't go. If their parents went and they didn't go, that was a disaster. But anyhow, I went. I went from grade 1 to grade 5, took Ukrainian school, language. I can still speak and of course read and write Ukrainian. I remember going there when they closed it too during the war for a few years.

Q: When the government closed it?

TH: When the government closed it. I remember going to Ukrainian school. I got there and it was closed; I think that was 1941.

Q: Talk about that for a while.

TH: Well they made a mistake. Later they knew they'd made a mistake. Two years later they even paid for those halls that they'd taken away from the people. So they knew they'd made a mistake and it wasn't right.

Q: What did they do?

TH: They just took it. In most places they took all the books and everything that were in the hall and destroyed them.

Q: Did they write a letter or something explaining it?

TH: That I can't explain, because I was ten years old at that time. So I wouldn't really know the exact way it was. But I know I went to Ukrainian school and it was closed. They just said, well the government's taken them over.

Q: Was it called the AUUC back then?

TH: It was called the Farm-Labour Temple then, cuz AUUC didn't come to be until 1946. So when they opened again after the war, started building buildings and whatever, that's what it was called then. Our hall in Calgary, they received money and with that money they built a new hall in 1948.

Q: Is that the one that stands there today?

TH: No, that's the one that was eventually, it was downtown and it eventually was expropriated for government buildings and whatever. That's where the Delta Hotel sits downtown now.

Q: Do you remember anything of that period?

LH: Yes I do but I can't remember if our hall-- I was small in '34. I can't remember the hall in Drumheller being closed but it must've been closed because they used to have meetings in a house that was next door to us. It was an empty home and they used to have meetings in there. So the hall must've been closed down in Drumheller as well or Newcastle. That's where the hall was.

TH: This took place in 1941, the closing of the hall.

Q: Was it quite vibrant during the '50s?

LH: Oh sure.

TH: Ya, a lot of people dropped out but there was still a lot of people that come in there all that time. A few people dropped out of course because the Cold War put a scare on them. In some cases people had good reason to drop out, because of where they were working or whatever. You couldn't blame them.

Q: Was the political debate in the hall fractured the membership?

TH: It did in some ways, yes. The trouble is, there was only a few people that were the strong believers, and they're the ones that fractured. Everyone wasn't agreeing with them, although a lot of people went to the hall even if they didn't agree with what some of these other ones were... They'd still go to the cultural activities and didn't want anything to do with the other part of it, and they didn't.

Q: What do you think is going to happen to the AUUC and the halls?

LH: I said years ago it wasn't going to last, but here we are still here. I really don't know. I don't know whether the political end of it is going to survive, because there's so few people that are politically inclined. The rest are just strictly culture and have fun and go have your lunch and that's it. That's all they care about.

TH: Cultural and social.

LH: And social. In Calgary the AUUC is strictly a social club now.

Q: But there's still an interest in preserving the Ukrainian culture.

LH: Oh yes, there is, that there is. But as far as politics are concerned, in Calgary they don't take much part in politics at all.

Q: Calgary in general seems to be apolitical.

TH: It's a different world here.

Q: Why is that?

LH: Well there's money in Calgary. People don't need a change. They don't need the NDP, they don't need communism, they're just happy with the Conservatives cuz they've got their pockets full of money and they're happier than heck.

TH: Building million dollar houses and whatever. Why would you want to change?

LH: They don't want to change. That's what it's all about, is money. If they got a little poorer, like they figure healthcare, oh it doesn't matter whether we have healthcare or not, Medicare, it doesn't matter because they've got a lot of money to pay for their healthcare. But there's people that don't have the money to look after their health.

Q: Do you see poor people in Calgary?

LH: Oh ya.

TH: There are a lot of poor people in Calgary, more than you think.

Q: Are there a lot of Americans here who influence the politics?

TH: To me, I don't think they really have. To me they're just working people. I've met a lot of them and know a lot of them. I played fastball until I was 65, and a lot of the guys I played with were Americans. They're either here because they were working here or their parents were here. But they're ordinary working people except they have good jobs because they're in a position where... In Calgary a lot of Canadians have good jobs. That's the kind of city it is. You become engineers in oil companies and whatever, you're gonna have a good job.

Q: Is there anything else you'd like to add?

TH: Well I was a secretary in Calgary for 26 years, of the AUUC.

Q: What years?

TH: From 1975 or whatever for 26 years, whatever that is. One day I just said, well I've done my duty. It's a no paying job. Some of the places, they pay their secretaries, but I didn't get paid, I volunteered. I think I got an honorarium or something.

LH: You got an honorarium one year I think, or a couple years in a row.

TH: Which is okay. I did my duty. Also, after I retired, I didn't have quite as much time because when I retired I was 60 years old and still playing ball. I joined the Elks, I'm a golfer. I was golfing and all that, so I just got to the point where I didn't have time to go to a meeting twice a week or whatever. I did my duty, I figure.

Q: Do you know anything about this celebration that's going to be held in Drumheller?

LH: Well I do know that there's going to be a parade on July 1<sup>st</sup>. I don't know who's planning it. I think it's the City. When I phoned the East Coulee Heritage Society, they didn't seem to know much about it except the times and everything. But they have it printed up in their little bulletin that I put out here. So that's about all. I think it's the City that's doing this.

TH: The July 1<sup>st</sup> parade is kind of an annual thing there anyhow. But this year it's going to honour the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of mining.

[ END ]