

Alberta Labour History Institute (ALHI)

Oral History Interview

Interviewee: Cathy Jones

Interviewer: Winston Gereluk

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Q: What is your background?

CJ: I was born in Toronto. I was the first of six children. My dad, after he got back from World War II, had not finished high school, because it was far more romantic to go be a soldier in World War 2 and, at the age of 18, he believed in that. He came home and worked really hard to get his Grade 13, which was necessary in Ontario, and then became a draftsman. My mom wanted to be a dietitian, but in those days there was only enough money to send the boys to university. So she worked really hard at commerce high school in Toronto, and became a legal secretary. When she was raising her six children, she stayed at home, and at the young age of 50, went back to work because she wanted to and because it was necessary at that time in life for both my mom and dad to be bringing in some finances.

I became a registered nurse; graduated from St. Michaels in Toronto as a diploma RN, and worked at St. Michaels for seven years, becoming an assistant head nurse there. It was proposed to me by my friends that I was born there, educated there, was working there, and would probably die there. Is that the kind of life I really wanted? Why don't I go west and have an adventure? -which I did in 1977. I came out and got a job in Banff Hospital emergency. I worked there and had a wonderful life, between Banff and Canmore. I had friends in both towns at the time.

In 1977, coalmining was still happening in Canmore, and Banff was more the elitist town, wealthier group of people, and you saw many more tourists in Banff. Then, at the ripe old age of 30, I decided to get my degree in nursing. I went to the University of Calgary and worked at the Rocky View Hospital. Then the rest of my career went into education and management. In 1988 I met a wonderful man who I married in 1991. I had gone back to Toronto to pursue my career in 1984, and became the director of surgical nursing at the Toronto General. Then in 1988 met this man and moved back to Calgary. I

had a choice; either to work 7 days a week, 18 hours a day to earn a promotion to management of nursing in Calgary, or to live my life in Canmore - which I did

I started a business called Celebrations in the Canadian Rockies. Part of that business was to do 'heritage walks'. The Board of the Museum at that time in 1994 heard about me and invited me to come to the Museum and about the heritage walks that I wanted to do. So I explained it, and then became a Board member, which wasn't the plan. I've been on the Board since 1994 for the Museum. At that time it had permanent displays. It was a new group of Board members who had recently moved here, and had a strong desire to show more history of Canmore. We understood that coalmining was the foundation, and coalmining families were extremely influential and important in the social structure of the town. But over the years, in the '90s, there was history collecting dust in music, in sports, in retail. In the 1970's, the mayor at that time and the council Paula Andrews knew that the mine was destined to close. They had to reinvent the town. The Olympics were coming in Calgary, so they got involved in that, which they hoped would be a benefit to Canmore. Coal was becoming a controversial commodity, with oil and gas starting to be a boom.

The Canmore Museum was at a crossroads, and most of the members were in their 70s, and ready to stop their volunteering. So a group of people who had moved here recently from Toronto (I had had my five year hiatus and was back again) decided that we would be willing to be on the Board and see what we could come up with. The first Board group were very interested in making it a respectable museum provincially; that meant we had to improve on our bylaws and our procedures and policies. It wasn't until the year 1999 that we could start to dream, when the mayor and council at that time asked us to be a part of the new Civic Centre. That's when we started to think big in terms of money, big in terms of how professional we wanted to be, what standards we wanted to meet. You are now sitting in the results of all that negotiating and that dreaming and that invitation. We learned how to get grants better than had been done before. We got more people involved. Nothing comes from emptiness – all of that was built on Vye Sanford and Ursula Sawchuk, Eva Kendy, Linda Hammel. All of them actually really started the Historical Society and saved the Northwest Mounted Police barracks. They did all of that around 1990, 1993. There was another gentleman, Lyle McKeller, who was very interested. He had a very deep interest in the coalmining and the railway. He became an excellent resource for those peoples of our history.

Q: Fill in a bit more about the Historical Society. What was this Historical Society, when did it start, and what about the Northwest Mounted Police barracks?

CJ: I came in 1977, but wasn't well informed. So I have learned that the Historical Society started in 1984 by a group of people: Eva Kendy, Vye Sanford, Dawn Garrin. They became very interested in collecting oral histories. We have two boxes of approximately 60 tapes of those oral history of people back. The tapes started around 1979. They were instigated by the closing of the mine, which happened July 13th, 1979. So they started the oral tapes around that time, and they still exist today. Some are very good quality, some are not. They had no building. They were going into action about getting things onto video and onto taped cassettes. Then they had the opportunity to save the Northwest Mounted Police barracks. One of the passionate history people is Linda Hammel, who sat on council. She did all the politics, but she had a fabulous team behind

her doing it. It was an incredible job. They got a grant to do it. Then in 1988 they were awarded their building, which is directly across the street from the civic Centre. The building they were awarded was built by the province as a provincial liquor store. It became an information Centre for the Olympics. Then when the Olympics ended, the Historical Society lobbied for that to become the town museum. It wasn't until June 2004 that we actually moved into this new civic Centre.

Q: Where's the Northwest Mounted Police barracks?

CJ: It's on Main Street as you're coming into town from the highway. It's a little white house that was built in 1893 for single men. It was one room, had a small adjacent room with a cell in it. Then as time passed, the sergeants or the RCMP officers got married. There's one family that raised five children in that little house.

Q: Talk about the development that got you involved, and lead us through some of the issues that arose, right to the current issues.

CJ: The old museum that was in the liquor store displayed the same displays for 11 years. There was a fabulous doll collection collected by Mavis Malabone. She had about 3,000 dolls in there, and had become quite widely known throughout the province. Women would bring their little girls. And there were many men fascinatingly interested in the history of dolls and the stories they have to tell. The rest of the museum was old stoves and kitchen wares and some displays. There was a machine shop with all the tools, but they were not labeled, and there was no story. But still, it was fabulous that a small group of volunteers had actually put it together and built on that. Now in the '90s it was realized that there's a story that needs to be told. You can't just show all the machinery from the mine. You can't just show dolls, and you can't just show a railroad. What's the story behind all of this? I was always fascinated by this. History was my best subject in high school. My mom and dad would talk about the east end of Toronto fabulously. They would talk about how the house we grew up in was three blocks away from forest. It was the end of Toronto proper. Our house sat on a glue factory. So we learned about farming and how horses got to Toronto, and how horses were dealt with and how they become glue. All our passion was as kids about these poor horses, and we're sitting on this factory.

So it carried over for me when I came to Canmore and realized what was evolving here. Because the museum over there was only about 2400 sq. ft., we booked the Keg gallery to do a show called The Evolution of Main Street. With the help of some wonderful people who had been here for a long time – Michael Vincent, Lena Shellian, some of the old miners and their wives who knew it, huge interviews – we collected a picture of every house that was on Main Street. That's four blocks long, plus any retail that went up previous to the mine closing. We put it around on the walls with a story about who lived in it, how long they lived there, if they had a dairy farm in the back yard, where the gas station was on Main Street, who had chickens and cows, etc., and the hotel, where the first retail shops were. There was Rundle Mountain Trading Company that was on mine side, but here on Main Street on town side there was Meris that Cartel Meris and CT Sing started, and ? Mountain View. So we put all that together, and then in a 4x6 underneath it put the photograph of what it looked like at that day as you were walking around. So we covered the current day picture, so they looked at the house and then looked up at what

was there now as they were reading the history. It was incredible. One of the most fascinating things for the museum Board at that time was to hear the mining families that had been 3rd generation here say, I had no idea what it was that we should be proud of, and what it is that we could be talking about. People like Lena Shelley and Mary Roda have said, if we had understood how important our daily lives were going to become within all the changes, we would've recorded it better, we would've had a different perspective about it.

It's taken almost 15 years for the new group, myself and the new Board, to come in and talk to these people and interview them to get results back from them to say, we had no idea anyone would think our ordinary daily lives would become so important and so relative to history. To me that's an incredibly motivating statement. To look at what has happened, and how can you show it off in a story in a museum, about all the hard work people did here. The miners would talk about, we didn't get to go to work every day so we would go to the hotel and talk about work and our families. As soon as they were finished work, they'd go to the hotel.

They were a very social, very tight knit group. The wives were very much a part of the coalmining company. They did laundry, but the entire town was built in coal dust. So to do their laundry, they had to do the laundry first thing in the morning before a lot of the work started and before the train went through town. There was a train, and the engine was called the goat. The goat would carry the coal from the mine on mine side on the south side of the river, across the river, over to town side, through the town, down to the CPR line. So the women would have to have all the children off to school, their men fed and off to work, and then get the laundry done before the goat started coming through. Then they would clean off the sidewalks on their property to keep it as coal dust free as possible. They were incredible women.

We also did a show on crocheting and embroidery, a textile show on what these women did. We're talking about the moms of our 70 year olds that are living here in Canmore now, plus our citizens who are in their 70s and 80s who carried on that tradition of taking care of their families the same way. Then when you talk to the children of our 70 year old men and women, they lived lives like you and I live now, very different lives. But they talk with great pride on what they knew their grandparents did and what their parents did. So on Miners Day when that third generation comes to town for Miners Day, their pride just swells. When they come into this museum and see the story being perpetuated, they are very pleased. The whole culture of Canmore has been the working person's town, and without very much money. They will talk about their fights and their work. There's a hierarchy in who you were by your nationality or what job you had in the mine.

The first time we had Miners Day, we had someone designated to get the miners all organized. They said, that's okay, we can do that ourselves, we know what order we're supposed to go in. Which was quite interesting, but it was at a time when they could joke with each other, and laugh about what had happened over the last 100 years in their social hierarchy of nationality and job titles. It was no different than Toronto where I grew up, just on a smaller scale. We started changing the old museum in the liquor store. We packed up the dolls and made it into a geology section for which the credit should go to Laura McKeller and Rick Green. They recognized that the environment we're living in

has not provided any education to residents or to our school kids. They look at it and talk about it as a beautiful scenery, but not from an educational point of view.

We have some of the geology here that's unique in the world. There are four distinct time periods represented in the Rundle range, the Fairhome range, and the Grassy range that's around us. Now you're sitting in half, this museum has been dedicated half to that geology about the coal basin that's here, plus the time periods of how the rock came out of the ice age. The groups of kids we're getting in here for programs for education are just incredible. The school is embracing it. When the RCMP are out teaching kids about safety, they bring kids in here to learn something about the connection to why they should be proud of their parks, and why they should be proud of their behavior in this town. So then we got the money to move in here, through grants, and the year of the coalminer, which was spearheaded by Ron Ulrich at the Guelph Museum. A tremendous group of people through the Crows Nest and down in Lethbridge. We received a cultural capital grant of Canada to do the 'Year of the Coalminer'. We became partners with the Crows Nest and Drumheller and Lethbridge. That was a very exciting event for us from September 2003 to 2004. It was getting that grant and learning to be partners with those other museum people, who were all museum career people. We were the only museum at the table who were volunteers. I was there as a registered nurse, and I was President at the time. Our vice president is a geophysicist, and we had our treasurer who was an aerial marine biologist, paleontologist, all trying to learn to sit at this table with museum career people. It was intimidating, it was exciting. But it was through our partnership that we learned how to apply for grants, and to bring this museum alive in more than one way.

We have promised the mining families that one segment of the Museum will always be about the coalmining. Those coalminers who stayed after 1979 and kept their families here and maintained a social structure, allowed any industry to enter in. It would've been much more difficult for the next industry to start in this town if there had not been a strong working foundation. There were retailers in town from all those years back to the '20s that knew how to do customer service. As the new people came in, they changed that a bit, they'd come with city attitudes. But there's still a significant leftover culture of, if you're going to live here, you're important. So how I treat you in my store is very important. How you feel walking down Main Street is very important. We try and bring that live here. As you heard Mary Beth [laViolette] say, when Merris closed after 60 years of history, it was very important to honor that. The number of people who came through and looked at that display, who are newcomers to this town and chose to live here, and people who have lived here for a long time, wrote wonderful paragraphs in a book that we put out saying thank you to them. I have never had such a wonderful experience shopping. There was a grocery store of five isles. You were always talked to socially by the Mara family. Once upon a time, they served you coffee, but that got a little too messy. You had work around groups of three or four or five women standing there catching up on the news, which the staff worked around. They never were upset about it, they worked around you. It was part of the culture of the store. That has carried on for tourism to get a firm hook in this town, because of that social culture that's always been there.

Q: What is the history that needs to be preserved with respect to the trade union history of the miners' community in this town?

CJ: Our Canmore union people were motivated by the American union people. The mine had American and Canadian owners, with men coming from all over the world around 1900. You have an incredible mixture of European, Asian, English, Irish, Scottish, and Canadians, all with very strong opinions; working men with strong opinions that their work was valuable. The union got established in Canmore through the influence of all the different cultures that had come together with their opinions, about 1903. They used to secretly meet by what we call the Hoodoos, on the other side of the TransCanada Highway. They're on the northeast side of town. They're formations made out of limestone from the weather. So they would meet over there, and they would form their union. By 1913 they all got together and built a union hall, which still stands today. It's on 7th St. & 7th Ave. It's owned by the town and it has been preserved. Now it's the cultural Centre that are trying to have permission from the town to run. That's where our Pine Tree Players play. They built a spring floor in there, because after working really hard you went out dancing.

The coalminer's Union and the miners donated their time; the Union provided the funds to build that place. That's where they had their meetings. If you're interested, we have the sign that was in the window, if you wanted to take your camera over. It tells you what local they were. So they got their building and had their formal meetings in public, in the Miners Union Hall. Charlie Hubman was the steward of the union, and was a very strong advocate for what was fair and safe for the men. The owners were the Stewart brothers, they were Canadians, as well as the McNeils, from the United States. It happened to be a group of men who were very interested in having a safe mine. The record here was very good; their air quality was very good. Some of that was due to the quality of coal that was down there. They did have a big explosion in the early 1900's that killed eight men. They also, through the union, had a fabulous mine rescue team. They practiced long and hard, and they were very proud and won several championships in the province, again, as a result of the relationship between the union and management. Both were supportive of the mine rescue, and how safety happened in the mines. The partnership between management and the union was very positive.

Q: What were some of the other heritage issues that you remember taking on, and what are you taking on today?

CJ: Lena Shellian, Cathy Negrini and Francis Rossen really introduced the idea of textiles to the Board. The Board mandated the museum to represent the whole family, and not just the miners, who were primarily men. So very early on we started to nurture that mandate. We had two textiles shows, which were an incredible hit. It was wonderful, because we have this fabulous quilt shop next door. The mix between the quilt shop and the textile show worked out really well. The number of families, men and women, coming in to look at the history and what women could do in the day of coal dust, was pretty remarkable. So that was very exciting. That textile did move into, when we opened the museum, the quilting association offered to the quilters to do quilts specifically for the opening, about coalmining. So when you walk around here you'll see about 12 different quilts of each woman's perspective on the history of coalmining. Some have used photography, some have used three dimensional. But they are an incredible addition to representing the history of coalmining through those quilts. They're magnificent. And then they donated them to us, which is again very much the culture of this town. When

we opened, we wanted to do very much coalmining, because we knew there were so many...

When we opened in June 2004, we were aware that 50% of the people of Canmore had lived here less than five years. That's a large number of people to educate about coalmining. We have a big job to do to get better signage outside the museum to get those people in here. But they were absolutely blown away by the history that we did up front. We had a coal car restored, and we got larger pictures telling the story. We have one of the best coalmining lamp selections in the province, we've been told. So that was a big success. We had mine safes that were being donated to us. People were starting to recognize us as more credible in terms of taking care of artifacts. So many more artifacts started to come in. Rick Green, the geophysicist, started this whole back end of explaining what coal was. I was one of the naïve ones. I'm a registered nurse, I'm a volunteer, I thought god just put coal here on earth.

Thank goodness we have geologists on the Board who could do this fabulous explanation of what coal is and how it evolves. Three sisters in Mountain Village had found a petrified rock, which now sits in our museum, donated by them. After the ice age, Alberta was tropical, and we had cypress trees. This cypress tree has become petrified wood with coal growing into it. Now you've got the whole story of that, which is sitting in the middle of the floor here. So when the long time residents came in, they were so excited to experience a sense of pride of what the history was. And the newcomers were flabbergasted that this was our history. It's been incredible. So this year, starting in June 2005, we've done a show called Portraits & Places: Changes Over the Last 100 Years. That's our centennial project. It was the brainstorm of Holland Ferguson, a photographer here in town. He wanted to do a photography show that showed the faces of Canmore, the actual faces that make Canmore work. All the working people of Canmore, and who they are. Starting with someone the age of 100, going down to someone the age of 20. There were 28 people interviewed, you see the portraits around. They were all interviewed by myself and videotaped by Joseph Potts. They had to answer three questions. What was Canmore like when you arrived? Describe that to us. What are the challenges of Canmore today, and what are its blessings? We did a CD or DVD of that. We took hours of interviews and put it into a 15 minute DVD, which is a really tough thing to do. We have sold over 50 of these DVDs, which is amazing to us. We were worried it wouldn't work, because it's so personal to Canmore. These 28 people speaking, from the ages of 100 to 90s and 80s and down to two 23 year olds. We have people from all over the world buying that DVD, taking it back to their town and saying, this is a town in transition, and we think it's valuable for our town council and administration to hear the voices of another town expressing their feelings about transition. Moving into tourism, a place where the working class is being replaced by people with enough money to recreate here. There are people who have a home here, who are here one day a year, people who are here for two weeks of the year. Then there are recreation people who are here much more.

One of the interesting things is, our Board has three weekenders on it. I'm a great lobbyist for the weekender. It's a split feeling to be surrounded by people who have enough money to come here one day a year or two weeks a year. They don't live in cabins, they live in mansions, houses much larger than most of our primary homes are. But they do

pay taxes. But we do have about 20% of them very involved in our community. That often gets lost in the conversation. In every population you hope there's 20% who do the right thing, and we do have that 20% of the weekenders, of the wealthier people, who are very involved in this community, and bringing their skills and talents to make this a richer community. Then you have the in between people who need to be convinced that joining into the community is a good thing. And you have another 20% who don't give a hoot about us. When I interview or meet people on the street or have the opportunity to talk to them, at the end of it they say, I had no idea there'd be so much to join. I haven't had a chance to realize there is a nuts and bolt heart to this community. I need to talk to someone like you more often to convince me that when I'm here I can find a way to become involved. The museum has a mandate to advertise itself so it can reach those people. We are talking to the town about sending out a message in their utility bill. Most of our weekend recreation people do not have a postal box here.

Q: What's happening to the Canmore Hotel?

The Canmore Hotel was built by a Frenchman in 1890. Like many of the single men who came over in those days, he was sent over to the new world with very little. It's been a lounge bar all its life, never was anything else. Except through prohibition it couldn't be a bar, it was a hotel and it survived. In 1918 it was the flow over hospital for the 1918 influenza. It's always had wonderful ownership who respected the history of it. Now the current owners are in their 50s. They have a different attitude about history. There is a growing culture in Canmore that the economic model is a great advantage here, that you can be mortgage free and have money in the bank. That economic model is overriding all other models of development in Canmore. We are faced with that with the Canmore Hotel and the French owners, and they raise their families here. In a democracy they have every right to run their lives and their investment through the economic model. It's the museum's mandate to emphasize our other models of living. We have cultural models, we have social models. You can have them within the economic model. We had a public awareness night for the public to come out and listen to the way grants are set up in all levels of government for an entrepreneur and investor to own a heritage site and still have profit and revenue, which we respect. What we would hope for is that you can bend from the economic model into the social and cultural models, and at least walk through the processes and be informed, and not stay stuck on just one model. People come back to me and say, Cathy you're obsessed by one model, the cultural or social model. I could say, yes fair enough, then let's join both our models and see what we can accomplish. We'll just work at it day by day and hope for the best. If we lose, which would be incredibly sad, at least it's a wakeup call for other heritage sites that we can keep this ball rolling and possibly do better on the few that are left.

Q: Where does this hotel fit in? Why is it important as a part of that whole heritage that you were describing?

CJ: There is a person, his name is Wendell, he said, if you don't know where you've come from, you don't know where you are. The Canmore Hotel represents an incredible amount of events about what happened in this town, who the people were in this town. It's all about the stories that have come through there, the fights between the railway workers and the miners, about things that have happened in there. The idea of the Pine Tree Players, the first idea of forming a theatre group in Canmore in 1976, happened in

the Canmore Hotel. The whole situation of forming bands and having a social Centre and having meetings and getting together with dances, were all started in that hotel until the memorial building and the Oskalaska Hotel were built after that. All of that evolved in that hotel with the people. There is a bench on the veranda of that hotel that has been there since it was built in 1890. The current bench is 27 years old, and it's the fourth bench in its 115 year history. There's a history of old timers and young people sitting on that bench and talking to passersby and catching up on the news. The miners sat in that hotel waiting for the whistle to blow whether the mine was going to be open that day or not. If it was closed for the day shift, they were in there listening for the evening shift to see if it was going to open. So when you talk about what has happened there, we had a character, Art Crocheck, live in there, who was a fabulous amateur actor. When we had parades he'd dress up as a first nation person, he'd dress up as a prospector, he'd dress up in many costumes. He lived and died in the hotel, and he's a character. That's only about 15 years ago. So still there are characters related to the hotel that add a sense of culture and place to where you are.

Q: Let's switch gears now to nursing now. In your first decade of nursing, what can you remember that would give the listener a good sense of what it was like to be a nurse in those days?

CJ: I graduated from a diploma program in 1970 in downtown Toronto at St. Mike's. When I graduated it was common to work 13 days in a row, all three shifts over those 13 days. You're young, you're 19, 21, 22. It didn't occur to me as a new graduate that this was a bad way to live. Then you'd get five to seven days off, sometimes not. Sometimes it would only be two or three, and then you'd work to get two off, and then you'd do your 13 or 14 stretch and get a long stretch off. For the married nurses who were starting to have children, it was very difficult for their family lives and for their husbands. Those husbands would've been the pioneers in having to be more involved at home with family life and children, because they were married to nurses. The other thing was, nurses tended to date firemen and policemen and engineers and doctors, all groups who either had money or who also had different kinds of schedules. So you created your own culture.

The 30 year olds when I graduated in the '70s, however, the ones who had been doing this for more years, realized this was unhealthy - it was terribly unhealthy. You were sleep deprived, which affected your decision making. This was very much a pioneer idea, without a lot of scientific research to back it up. It was intuitive. I was in the very first strike in Canada for nurses in 1974. I was raised Irish Catholic, that you followed the rules. But I understood in my fourth year of being a nurse that you did have to fight for things, which my mom and dad were very supportive of. You had to fight for what was fair. That was the premise that most nurses went out on strike for. It was one of the most difficult things for us to do. You weren't merely leaving a innate object behind to go out on strike. You were leaving a human being who truly needed your skills. You were abandoning their needs to go out and fight for fairness. That's an incredible conflict, and even today that's an incredible conflict for a nurse to do. But you cannot have good practice if you are not healthy. And you cannot be healthy if you are not sleeping properly and working in a fair fashion. All those strikes evolved into the longest stretch you can work is seven days on an eight hour shift, I believe it's four days on a 12-hour

shift. If you are a healthy person and you pace yourself, those are reasonable lengths of time to work.

Q: That first strike in 1974, I want you to talk more about that.

CJ: In 1974 each group of nurses walked around their own hospital. So in Toronto, the Toronto General nurses would walk around theirs, Sick Kids would walk around theirs, St. Mike's would walk around theirs, Mt. Sinai, the Toronto East General. Each group walked with placards around each of their own hospitals. The Ontario Nurses Association was just beginning to form. We had to go to meetings off work. They were just learning to talk about the business, and they had brought in other unions to teach them the language. Like the manufacturing industry had more organized unions, and our union was learning from them. We had all different personalities. We had the hardcore obstinate black and white union people to the mellow let's balance this out, because we can't stay off work for very long and we are learning how to be political, we're not going to do it our first round of strikes. So you had both ends and everybody in between. But you show some kind of force for a short period of time, was what the union agreed to, because they knew they were doing it for the first time.

Q: What were the specific issues?

CJ: The issues specifically were shifts; working 13 or 14 days in a row, all three shifts, where you would have eight hours in between. I could go home at 3 o'clock, I would work from 7 in the morning to 3 o'clock in the afternoon, and you have to be back at 11 o'clock to work nights. So there wasn't enough time in between the shifts, as well as working too long a stretch.

We won that strike. We came out with right away seven days was the longest you could work. We came out with there had to be 16 hours between shift changes. We came out with a way to schedule where you had to have more than one day off. You couldn't have split shifts anymore. There were split shifts, where you might to in from 8 till noon, go home, and then come back from 7 till 11, and they stopped these. There were pay issues involved, but I really don't recall. As a 21 year old, I felt very rich. I felt very wealthy at that time. But I must say now in my 50s and in the time of when your back can't sustain working the physical work, and your sleep deprivation is very different as you grow older each decade, and you have different sleep patterns. We're very fortunate that we can choose to work four days every two weeks, or five days every two weeks. My choice is to be casual, to work when I choose to work. But right now I'm at the top of the scale, which I think there's nine or ten levels. I make \$36 an hour going in.

I'm very proud of the union for fighting for that. I'm very pleased that somewhere along the line we've had governments that have been part of the negotiation to recognize the value of nursing. Because I'm a grandmother, and I want to stay a nurse and I want to work well. I want my practice to be the best it can be after 35 years, I want it to be improving. There is a dollar value on that, and \$36 an hour is a reasonable amount of money for me to be motivated to go in and keep contributing and use my skills. When I look at the salaries of other groups of people that are primarily men related, women are working in them, but they're primarily men related. My husband alone was a sheet metalist, and their unions were paying sheet metal and plumbers \$25 an hour, \$30 an hour. Now he can commercial scuba dive for \$50 an hour in his 50s. He can go out onto a

construction site and earn \$25 or \$30 an hour because he's highly skilled and he's semi-retired. So when I look at where the world has evolved and what men are being paid for those skilled jobs, I think our unions have done a magnificent job that a registered nurse can be up there and be valued at the same level.

Q: When you first began working, what was healthcare like?

CJ: There were two very distinct facts about nursing. One was that the patients were in the hospital longer. If you had an appendectomy, you stayed in the hospital anywhere from five to ten days. This no longer happens. With an appendectomy, you're in and out in 24 hours. We have large numbers of day surgeries today. The majority in the '70s and '80s stayed in the hospital five to ten days. If I was working in a large teaching hospital, I would have 10 to 12 patients. At least five of those were up walking around, would make their own bed, and would actually come and help you make everybody else's beds. You would have two people going to the operating room that day, you would have three people who were in their first or second or third day post operative who would be your heaviest load. So out of your 10 or 12 patients, you only had about three that were very sick. Today almost every patient you have is very sick, because they are only in the hospital for their critical period of time.

Q: Explain the difference that makes to you as a nurse.

CJ: The difference it makes to me is that I am constantly pushing against the clock to make sure things happen well for this patient in the short period of time that I'm taking care of them. I have to be more involved in every other discipline. I have to have excellent communication skills to articulate to pharmacy, to occupational therapy, to the physician, to physiotherapy, everybody that might be involved that's going to make sure this patient goes home with as much information as possible, and that home care then can take over for the patient in the home, still while they're in an acute or critical stage. Plus I could admit five people in a day and send all of them to the operating room, have them all return to me in a day, get them through that critical period of coming out of the anesthetic. Plus it's my job to teach their family and them what they need to know when they go home, and to answer all their questions, that are far more practical in the home on top of what I need to teach them about medications, not lifting, what signs to watch for if they're sleeping, etc. So it's intense for the entire group that I might be looking after today.

Q: What differences would I notice in the patient care I'm receiving?

CJ: Your sense of confidence would've changed from the '70s to now. In the '70s you had five to ten days to talk to us and work things out. When you went home, you had no worries. There was home care, and people would go home with issues with diabetes and epilepsy and an incision that might not have healed. But generally speaking, you had no issues when you went home. You have five or ten days to get to know your hospital staff and work out all your issues. Now a lot of the responsibility is on you. You are left with the responsibility to think of questions that we may not remember or think of or relate to your situation. Your fear is much greater now for the sense of responsibility you leave us with. You have confidence in us while you're here, but it's always on your mind that you aren't going to be here long enough to have all your questions answered. There's another piece. There were two pieces that had changed. Society has allowed physicians to sit on a

pedestal. Many physicians have used that wisely, fairly, and with great compassion. In every population there is the percentage that will do that. Also in every population there is the percent that will abuse that.

It's my experience in health care, there are a large number of physicians who abuse that pedestal that society put them on. There are two ways that happened. Number one, they were taught in medical school that they were the cream of the crop, therefore they could behave any way they wanted. Another fact was that our society never spoke up about it. Our society was afraid to speak up about it because if I spoke negatively against my physician and my surgeon, then I would pay for it. That surgeon would not have the ethical ability to still treat me fairly and make me healthy. That was an incredible fear that our society lived with for decades and decades. I'm very happy to observe that today the whole faculty of medicine has turned that around. There are very few physicians who go into temper tantrums and rages of ego and unethical behavior. Over the last 20 years our faculty of medicine and the nursing population and our own secular population have, through articles in the media and information, all stepped up to the plate to speak up. We're all equal, we're a team, and you as a physician are very key with your body of knowledge, but you're not the only one on the team. Everyone has a right to be on this team and to be respected.

Q: Do you have an example of what it was like to work with physicians under the old model?

CJ: Two things. A physician might come into a nursing station yelling and screaming, "Where are my charts, why isn't Mr. Jones here? I'm here, why is Mr. Jones here? I don't like the order of the charts. You make it impossible for me to do my job properly!" All of this was very intimidating. They would raise their voices in a very authoritarian way. There was a small percentage who would throw a chart, because things weren't going the way they wanted. You had to be very careful about how you approached them. If you realized the sedation wasn't working for your patient, and you wanted to make a suggestion, most often any physician would say no, just because you asked, because it wasn't their idea. They unfortunately felt like they hadn't done their job properly. The other was that they were allowed to make decisions about how aggressive treatment would be. I have been in a situation where there was a father who was a paraplegic who was burned. The teen didn't believe he should be treated, because he was a paraplegic and not of great value to society. This is going back a long time. I have not seen that standard of practice since the '80s. That has all turned around. There are some bad apples, but generally speaking all those behaviors have turned around. My aunt was a nurse before me, and all the nurses stood up at attention when a physician came into the nursing station. You were at that physician's beck and call. It was my generation that refused to do that. The union was very helpful in that, that you no longer stood up, that you were as valuable as them. We each had a different body of knowledge, and each body of knowledge was valuable. But there was a lessening of the hierarchy. But also then in the '50s, '60s and even to now, the most valuable people on your team in the teaching hospitals are your interns and residents and young nurses. That group still makes one of the most solid teams possible. They work hard. The brand new grads with the experience of the seasoned grads who, like me, have been working for 35 years, with the interns and residents, they are dynamic people. They do incredible things in our system.

Q: You spent most of your career in the public system. Can you talk about the importance of the public system in medical care?

CJ: I did have the opportunity, when health care in Alberta was restructured, to be appointed to the Headwaters Health Authority. It was an incredible learning curve for me to understand the politics at the Board level. I'm not sure that I can articulate what I learned very well. But it was a time when the minister of health asked the health Boards to investigate for profit private health care. Headwaters was targeted as a favored community, because of Banff and Canmore and the wealthy would come here to recuperate if we had a private hospital. So we had to look into the American, British and Australian systems. It is my personal opinion that after going through that research and all the conversations and with my practice, that we cannot go to for private care system the way those three countries have, for one practical reason – we only have so many doctors and nurses and physiotherapists and pharmacists. The numbers of doctors and nurses and physiotherapists and pharmacists aren't enough to cover two systems.

Aside from the economics and aside from getting your knee done faster, we don't have enough of a population to cover both systems. It's a practicality. So it would be my wish that we could make the public system stronger, better spend our money, teach nurses and doctors about the politics and economics of the business, and be part of the solution so that the public system works well - that we understand how many operating rooms we need. We understand how many towels we need, how many beds we need and why we need electric beds. Teach us to do it properly in the public system, so that everyone is treated fairly and there are not lineups and heartaches of people sitting in an emergency room on a hard stretcher for three nights in a row.

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