

Helen McRae (Farnsworth House)
Interviewed by Chick Byrne (2004)

My name is Helen McRae. I was born on Prince Edward Island in Canada, but I've lived here now for fifty-six years. I was brought up in the country on a farm. It's quite different from here in Boston. It was a very rural area, and like here, it was warm in the summer and very cold in the winter time.

I grew up in a large family with five brothers, four sisters and my parents, and we had an aunt and uncle who lived with us for a while. I was second youngest in the family. My sister Vina was two years younger than me, and my brother George was the oldest. We always had many kittens, and we always had a dog. We had a dog named Terry, at one point, and one cat that I remember was called Barney.

I went to a school that was pretty small. It had six classrooms. The classes were doubled up two-grades-to-a-classroom, and there were probably fifteen to twenty five kids in each room.

When I got out of high school, I went to a two-year teachers' college. We couldn't live at home, so we had to live in the city. We lived in a house where they took in borders. The house I stayed at belonged to a friend of our family. This old lady had four girls staying with her, and she was pretty strict. She was even more strict than my parents! After I got out of college I taught school for two years.

My favorite season is summer because it's warm. My taste in music includes Latin American music, New Orleans blues, and semi-classical music. My favorite song is Stardust. My favorite color is any shade of purple, and I have no idea why I like it, I just do!

Sometimes I like sports, but I don't follow them game by game. I'll usually watch the last game of a series ... I would watch hockey, basketball, or even football.

What did I like to do when I was your age? When I was seventeen my favorite thing to do was to go dancing. In the summer, and when I was younger, we liked to play hockey or softball, or we'd go swimming or read. In the winter we would go coasting (sledding) or ice skating. The movies were only 25 cents back then.

On school nights, we had to be in at 9:00 PM When we got older, my parents would let us stay out a little later. We lived about a mile outside of town, so if we went in to meet our friends, it took us awhile to get home. I didn't get into trouble much with my parents. We knew how to keep out of trouble, or not to get caught! But if we did get in trouble, a "good talking to" was the most we would ever get.

I think the best job I had was when I worked for the Massachusetts Department of Revenue. It was in my later years, so I was old, and nobody gave me any grief. I was a

pretty good scout. I had a good rating, and I got along well with everyone. So that was probably the job that I liked the best.