



Alberta Gilchrist

Interviewed by Anne Kimzey

1. Early teaching (01:38)

Kimzey: You started teaching in a one room schoolhouse?

Gilchrist: Uh-huh.

Kimzey: When was this?

Gilchrist: That was in '21, that's when I...21....in 1921.

Kimzey: Can you tell me about that? What- how many children you taught?

Gilchrist: I taught from the first through the seventh grade.

Kimzey: Um-hum.

Gilchrist: And then, of course it was uh- is was uh- well then I didn't an assistant teacher like [?], I did all the work and everything myself.

Kimzey: How many children?

Gilchrist: It was- it was uh, 75.

Kimzey: 75?

Gilchrist: 75 students, um-hum, 75 students.

Kimzey: All at once?

Gilchrist: Once, 75, and first through the seventh grade <both laugh>.

Kimzey: That's amazing.

Gilchrist: That's right, 7....

Kimzey: So, um, whose children were these? Did they come from the neighborhood?

Gilchrist: Right, right, uh-huh, right in the neighborhood.

Kimzey: Did they have to walk to school?

Gilchrist: Oh yeah, all of them did, [from over there and everything; from uh, I tell you what, over there where this lady lived who works with you [?]]-Across the creek from here, but anyway it's about seven miles- about seven miles from [here [?]]/

Kimzey: Now, how did you teach all these children at once?

Gilchrist: I don't know, <both laugh>, I don't know but I had to do something.

2. Quilting and sewing- a family tradition (02:40)

Gilchrist: Well, my mother she always made quilts and things like that, and then my grandmother, he-she was in slavery, and then she knew how to- she worked with the white people and everything like that, and my mother, then she learned from her.

Kimzey: Oh, I see, um do you have- does your mother- do you remember your grandmother?

Gilchrist: Yeah.

Kimzey: Does she tell any stories about slavery?

Gilchrist: No, I don't remember any stories, because when my grandmother passed, I guess I was just about um, about eight years old.

Kimzey: Oh, I see.

Gilchrist: Um-hum, when she passed about eight years old, I know I wasn't any older than that.

Kimzey: But did she sew for the white people?

Gilchrist: Right, um, sewed and cooked, she was a cook.

Kimzey: Oh, ok.

Gilchrist: She was a cook, and then of course, she learned to make quilts and things like that too.

Kimzey: Ok.

Gilchrist: Uh-huh.

Kimzey: And then she taught your mother?

Gilchrist: Right, right, uh-huh, yeah.

Kimzey: Now do you use the same patterns sometimes that your mother uses or used?

Gilchrist: Yes, and uh, my mother, she made all our clothes and everything like that, and then of course she used, I mean she had a pattern for everything, she wasn't able to think about going to the store, so she had to make it, and all of us- <laughs> and so she [patterned [?]] and everything like that and used a pattern.

Kimzey: What about the quilt patterns, I mean did she do them a certain way, that you would copy or did you make up your own?

Gilchrist: Well, if you had patterns for the quilts, and then a lot of times you made um, different um, materials like pants and things they made quilts out of those, things like that.

Kimzey: Um-hum, I see, um, so you didn't go out and buy material back then? I know you said....

Gilchrist: No, no, no.

Kimzey: But now you go and um, plan it out ahead of time, you go out and buy the material you want.

Gilchrist: Right, right, yeah, uh-huh.

Kimzey: And why did you use [your own pants back then [?]], is that all-?

Gilchrist: Because when weren't able to get the material, [so we would steal, you know, out the house and things, and so we had to do something or the other, and so we just used our own pants back then, and then we just throw them away, and all the things like that, all the good pieces like that, and we'd get to make quilts like that [?]].

Kimzey: So with 17 children you'd probably need a lot quilts?

Gilchrist: That's right, that's right <both laugh>.

3. Two of her favorite hymns (02:10)

Gilchrist: <sings> [Father, I stretch, my hands, to thee, no other there is, I know if all will draw, I shall drown to thee, I will, there shall I go, [unintelligible] and then the music, <sings> it's a different tune like that, it wasn't the long way it was the short way.

Kimzey: Oh, I see so you-

Gilchrist: Now more or less now, it's not a long as it used to be say, but now it all sounds better than it used to be say.

Kimzey: I think so, I love what you are singing. Would you sing it, what, more slowly, back the long way?

Gilchrist: Yeah, yes, slowly, yeah.

Kimzey: Did somebody call out the verse or did everybody know all the words?

Gilchrist: They'd read the words, uh-huh they would read-uh-huh they would call a couple of lines, then they would sing like that.

Kimzey: But you knew all the lines?

Gilchrist: <both laugh> uh-huh right, yeah.

Kimzey: Could you sing another one for me?

Gilchrist: Another?

Kimzey: Another, I just like to hear you, or do you want to get- look at the words?

Gilchrist: <sings> [Go preach my God, from sin the Lord, and oh you're world go free and then they come, and everyone, and then they will go, ohhhh me [?]].

4. Home remedies (02:57)

Kimzey: Did a lot of people do home remedies rather than go to a doctor?

Gilchrist: Uh, yeah, yeah, uh-huh, they did a lot of, uh, like you said, they used to use [lackey-lackey [?]] you called- it's like cough medicine, things like that you know; you didn't have horehound, you called it a catnip, then for the babies and things like that, you gave them tea, make them tea, and then they had horehound back then for a cold, you'd uh- it gets rid of a cold, then catnip, make catnip tea, that's something that- it grows and make that.

Kimzey: The cats really like it too.

Gilchrist: <laughs> Let's see what else, then there was [sweeten burr [?]], for -for um, cough medicine, you burr our of the [sweet birch [?]], and then stew it down and make for a cough.

Kimzey: What did you get sticky, or was it- did it- what kind of-?

Gilchrist: It was a little [buzz and the frog [?]], kind of like an acorn like.

Kimzey: Right, they are a little prickly.

Gilchrist: Right, uh-huh, well then they'd boil that down, and they used their water to make a little syrup out of it.

Kimzey: I see, and that was that- that kept you from coughing?

Gilchrist: Right, right, yeah, kept you from coughing.

Kimzey: I see, what about like fevers, did you have anything for fevers?

Gilchrist: Yeah, they had fever grass, they had a plant, they called it fever grass; they had that, and then you'd, uh, wash it off, get the root of it, and wash it off, and then let it sit in water for awhile, and then make a tea, let it turn yellow, and then you'd drink it.

Kimzey: Fever grass, do you know what uh- do you know another name for it or is it- do you still call it fever grass when you-?

Gilchrist: No, I don't know another name, no, no, no, that's the only name they called it was fever grass.

Kimzey: Cause I'm not sure I've- I know what catnip and um, horehound, and I know what the [?] is, I don't know what the fever grass it; do they grow um, where does it grow?

Gilchrist: You find it in the woods, like that's where you find it.

Kimzey: Were there certain people that knew a lot more about it than others, that you could go, um, and ask them, and say "You know, my baby has a whooping cough, what should I do?" or did everybody know?

Gilchrist: Well no, well more or less they were all the elder people, like the nurses, the midwives, and things like that, they were [?]....

Kimzey: Ok, so the midwives were ones that would tell us....?

Gilchrist: Yeah, tell us, uh-huh tell all the people, [unintelligible] all the people, they only know about the herbs and things like that.

