

INTERVIEW FOR THE GEORGE D. WOODS BIOGRAPHY

Transcript of a telephone conversation with

VIOLA TARALDSON OLIVER

October 7, 1986

Interview by: Robert W. Oliver

OLIVER: This is Robert Oliver, Tuesday, October 7, about to begin a telephone interview with Mrs. Pat Oliver, Viola Oliver, sister of Louise Taraldson Woods. Where and when were you and your sister, Louise, born?

VIOLA: She was born in 1904. I was born in 1906. There were fourteen months between us. We are born in North Dakota. My father died when I was 6 and we lived in Minneapolis. He had multiple sclerosis. He lost control of his legs and arms. Our mother raised us from then. She managed an apartment house for years and raised us that way. Then we moved to Long Beach, California. We went to school there, Polytechnic High, and graduated from there. Our mother lived by buying and selling apartment houses.

OLIVER: May we just back up just a little bit? May I ask you to say a word about what life you were aware of in South Dakota, when you moved to Minnesota, and how long you lived in Minnesota?

VIOLA: I think we moved to Minneapolis when I was about 5 years old, and then my father died when I was 6 years old. Then we moved to California. We lived out on 8th Street in Long Beach for a while. Mama went into the apartment house business, buying and selling apartment houses. We would live in one for a while and then she would sell it and buy another one. She did that all her life. We had a very nice life. She was a good mother. She never married again.

OLIVER: Were both your father and mother born in the United States?

VIOLA: My father was born in Lime Springs, Iowa. I think my mother was born up in Edmonton, Canada, but I'm not real sure about that.

OLIVER: I have the impression that the family background is Scandinavian. Is that right?

VIOLA: We were Scotch-Irish and Norwegian.

OLIVER: That is a very good combination.

VIOLA: That is what I always say. That is where I got my good disposition!

OLIVER: What business was your father in?

VIOLA: I think he was in insurance. I'm not sure whether it was Prudential or not, but he sold insurance. They couldn't have been married very long. I was only six years old when he passed away. When Louise was about 20 years old, she moved to New York, and then she met George Woods. When you are that far away you don't know dates. That's me, anyway. They got married and had a wonderful life.

OLIVER: I think they did.

VIOLA: She was a fantastic person.

OLIVER: I think she lived for a short time in England before she settled down in New York.

VIOLA: When she was in New York, she was head of the International Institute of Education for about 2 sessions. We have a nice write up about her from them.

OLIVER: Could you say a word about her going to England?

VIOLA: No, not much.

OLIVER: Her passport indicates that she lived in England for maybe eighteen months, and that she was married in England.

VIOLA: Well, that was a long time ago. I don't really know very much about that. I forget. I'm getting to the age that I forget. She and George were married in 1930 or something.

OLIVER: Yes, I think late '33 or early '34.

VIOLA: They had a marvelous life together. Louise traveled all over with him. She liked to travel because she could speak French and Spanish, and talk when they went to international meetings. She would be able to carry on a conversation with them. George was always amused by that, because he couldn't speak other languages. Then they bought that house in Portugal about 20-25 years ago. I guess they were married between 1934 and 1936, and, during that time, she was head of the International Institute of Education. I have some letters to her.

OLIVER: If you have anything that you would care to send me, I'd be happy to Xerox a copy for myself and send it back to you.

VIOLA: I'll go over them again. Do I have your address?

OLIVER: No, I'll give it to you.

VIOLA: How do you spell your name?

OLIVER: Robert Oliver. Professor Robert Oliver. You should be able to get the last name right! Would you say a word about Louise's hobbies when she was growing up? I have the impression that she liked to swim, for example, and dance.

VIOLA: You know everybody does that. She wasn't an avid sportsman, as I recall, but everybody swims, don't they?

OLIVER: Everybody in Long Beach does, but not everyone in Pasadena does. We're too far from the water!

VIOLA: Unless they have a pool in their back yards.

OLIVER: Were the two of you pretty close to each other as friends when you were growing up?

VIOLA: We were always friends, and she would come out and visit us occasionally. In the last few years, she didn't get out very much. On our way to Europe, we stopped and saw her for about a week, but other than that I didn't get back too often.

OLIVER: Sure, I understand. How did you meet your husband?

VIOLA: Well, I knew him. This is our second marriage. I knew his wife and son, and when she passed away, we started going together. That was about 35 years ago.

OLIVER: Was he living on Lido Island at the time?

VIOLA: No, Claremont.

OLIVER: Were you living on Lido Island at the time?

VIOLA: No, Long Beach, California. Yes, George's father died on a hunting trip. He was only 42.

OLIVER: That is very sad.

VIOLA: I was a widow about 5 or 6 years. Then Pat's wife passed away, and we just started going together. We lived in Claremont for about 5 years, up in Padua Hills.

OLIVER: I used to live in Padua Hills in 1951 and 1952.

VIOLA: Well, we were probably there at the same time. We, 1951-1957.

OLIVER: That's quite possible. I was a new Assistant Professor at Pomona College in those days.

VIOLA: We lived in Padua Hills. We built a home there, a beautiful home, half way up the hill. Right above Stewart.

OLIVER: You must have been close neighbors of Will and Molly Jones?

VIOLA: Yes. That's right; he was down on the curve. We built that ranch house that was close—bless his heart, he was a wonderful artist.

OLIVER: Millard Sheets.

VIOLA: He was there, too, down at the end of the road. He was on the curve of the road.

OLIVER: Albert Stewart?

VIOLA: He was there when we were there. What a wonderful artist. We lived there about 7 years, and then we moved to Lido Isle. I don't remember the date. Isn't that awful? 1957. If I can think of anything, I'll drop it to you. Will you send me your address?

OLIVER: I surely will.

VIOLA: You gave me your address.