

DOLORES ROUSSEAU

An Interview by Wanda McDonough

Wanda McDonough Oral History Project

*Page # 15*

September 16, 1992

Salt Lake City, Utah

Archives  
Diocese of Salt Lake City  
27 C Street  
Salt Lake City, UT 84103

ORAL/TAPED HISTORY INTERVIEW

Interviewee: Dolores Rousseau, Indian Walk-in CTR. 486-9885  
Name Address Tel

Interviewer: Wanda Mc Donough  
Name

Interview: 9/16/92 Indian Walk-in Center - Salt Lake City  
Date Place

RELEASE FORM

The sound recording and transcript of my interview with W. Mc Donough on the date of 9/16/92 may be used by the diocesan Archives for such purposes as it sees fit, including publication or deposit for public inspection in the oral history collection of the Archives.

Dolores M Rousseau  
Signature

9/16/92  
Date

Brief abstract of Interview:

SUGGESTED SUBJECTS FOR DISCUSSION;

Locale

Family genealogy, history

Personal history; personality

Experiences--civic, religious

Recollections of Catholic clergy, people, events

WM: This is a recording of an interview with Dolores Rousseau taken at the Indian Walk-in Center in Salt Lake City, September 16, 1992. The interviewer is Wanda McDonough. Dolores, tell me who you are, where you were born, who your parents were, what your background is, what your parents did for a living, etc.

DR: Okay. I'm Dolores Rousseau, my maiden name is Maestas, and I was born and raised in Santa Fe, New Mexico. My father was Felipe Maestas, and my mother was Juanita Suazo Maestas. My father's tribe or pueblo is San Juan Pueblo like 40 miles from Santa Fe, and my mother's pueblo was Tuzuki[sp?], and that's ten miles north of Santa Fe. My father was a gardener for a former Congressman of the State of New Mexico who was also Governor of New Mexico. And my mother was their cook. So my brother-- I have a brother; my brother's name is Manuel, and he's named after my grandparents, Manuel Elios Maestas. And my background has been--I've been an urban Indian ever since my parents worked in Santa Fe. My brother and I did not--were not reared--in a reservation or a pueblo. We've been raised in Santa Fe; we went to school there. However, we kept our social ties with our grandparents, our cousins, and still today. My parents are deceased, but I still maintain social ties with my relatives in Tuzuki(sp?) and San Juan. I went to St. Catherine's Indian School. And then for my high school I went to Our Lady of Loretto Academy, and the Loretine Sisters taught that, for four years.

WM: Were they both in Santa Fe?

DR: Yes. Both schools are in Santa Fe. In fact, St. Catherine's Indian School was one of Mother Drexel's schools that was operated. And then after I finished high school, I worked two years at Los Santos Bookstore, which was part of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe. And then I met Sister Corona from the Order of Sisters of Charity. St. Vincent's is their hospital. And she came on a visit, and she came to the bookstore. So I met her and talked with her about wanting to go to college, and she offered me a working scholarship to the College of Mount St. Joseph in Cincinnati, Ohio. So for four years I went to school there, although I went home during the summers. I majored in sociology since they didn't have other courses in social welfare. So after I got an A.B. Degree, and then I came home, and I went to work for the Department of Public Welfare at that time for the State of New Mexico in the Child Welfare Division. After a year I was offered a scholarship or stipend to go to graduate school for social work, and I did one year, and then I came back, and I worked. I worked mostly with Spanish-speaking people. There weren't too many Native Americans needing help it seemed like, so I worked with people who wanted to be foster parents. I worked with parents who had children who needed services or counseling.



And I worked with people who were interested in adoption. But I didn't get into placement of children until my second year. Then after I did four years, then I went back for my Master's--for my second in graduate training. I did not complete my studies for a graduate degree.

And then I was-- The State Department in New Mexico sent me to Aztec, New Mexico, and in Aztec and Farmington where the population are Navajos. And then I started working with Native Americans, mainly the Navajos. And I worked with Navajos for--I worked with Navajos with the State until 1964. And at that time I got married. I married my husband who is a Sioux and French-Canadian. And then we had one son, and he's enrolled in the Sioux Tribe of his father's tribe, which is the Cheyenne River Agency in Eagle Butte, South Dakota.

WM: What does your husband do for a living?

DR: My husband is a surveyor/draftsman, but right now he has a desk job. He runs all the field programs on computers. He's a computer person at this point. He has an excellent job; he's very happy with that job. Then in '65 I went to work for the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Shiprock, New Mexico, and I worked for 16 years on the reservation before coming to Salt Lake City to complete my graduate studies. And in 1982 I got my Master's in Social Work.

WM: At what school?

DR: At the University of Utah School of Social Work. And then we decided to stay here in Utah and made our home base Salt Lake City. I went to work for Catholic Community Services. I ran their adoption program from 1983 to '88. And then I resigned in '88 and volunteered to work down here at the Indian Walk-in Center. Sister Lorraine Masters said they needed someone down here to help out, so I volunteered. And I was on their board; I was the board secretary. And then Gail Russell, the director, saw a need for a social worker. So we created a position and got funding. And so in November of 1991 I became part-time crisis counselor, in the position I continue to hold until now.

WM: Where were you? What did you do? Or were you old enough to remember the Depression. I like to know what people did during that Great Depression?

DR: I'm not that old to remember. But I remember my parents saying that it was a very difficult hard time financially, and I think my parents were very fortunate that they had people in Santa Fe with whom they were poor, like a maid and a handyman, so they had a security around that. In



fact, one of my godmothers is a lady lawyer at that time, and she wanted my mother-- She said, "Be sure and make me your daughter's godmother." So I have a godmother who was a lady lawyer way back at that time. So she's the one that gave me the name of Dolores because she had great devotion to Our Lady of Sorrows. Then my other godmother was a relative, a great relative to my mother, on that side of the family. And she gave me the name of Maria. And I believe she was a medicine woman, too.

WM: Now, when you were a child--you said you were not on the reservation at all. But was Santa Fe well integrated? Were you well accepted?

DR: Oh, yes. Because we have three cultures in Santa Fe. We have the Spanish, and we have the Anglo, and we have us, the Indian. So we grew up--at least I grew up--with all the three cultures. And we never had any real problems.

WM: But you do have in Salt Lake City?

DR: Oh, yes. My son ran into prejudice here. It's very subtle. In some cases it's subtle, in some cases it's overt. But I have not let it bother me because I figure life is too short to worry about those things, and it's always the other person's problem; it's not mine.

WM: Has your husband had any trouble with employment or not?

DR: No, he has not. Because my husband looks more Anglo than he looks Indian because he's part Indian and part Anglo, or French-Canadian.

WM: Have you taken part in any civic activities in Utah besides--it sounds like you've been very busy with your work, but have you belonged to any other organizations?

DR: My husband and I belong to the V.F.W., to the Veterans of Foreign Wars. We do a lot of activities for them because my husband is a veteran. And we just recently finished with the Native American Veterans' Memorial Association.

WM: The one that had the parade?

DR: Yes. Uh huh. We had the parade. But we also had conferences on veterans' benefits, so that widows and children and families would know what they're eligible for in terms of what veterans' benefits are.

WM: Which war is your husband a veteran of?

DR: The Korean War. Mmmm hmmm. My husband was one of the participants in getting the Utah State a burial or cemetery for veterans. He was very involved in that. As to church activities, I belong to Sacred Heart Parish. Both my husband and I belong. I taught CCD, but now I resigned from that. So I'm a lector, I do readings. And I thought about becoming a Eucharist minister, but because the classes are held in the evenings and sometimes I really don't have time when I'm involved down here. I'm not only a counselor, but I'm also wear different hats. I'm also the volunteer program coordinator. I interview people who say they want to volunteer at the center. So I need to know who these people are. So we screen them really carefully so they don't--they're not gung ho or radical, you know. That they're coming in with a good heart.

WM: Let's go back to CCD. How long were you in CCD, and what did you do?

DR: I was in CCD until-- I started in '83, and I stopped teaching that, I would say, just over a year ago. And that was my dreams was to become a CCD teacher, because when we used to go visit my mother's pueblo, my oldest cousin taught catechism. At that time it was known as catechism. And I always admired her for doing this. And I thought, gee, one day I would like to be-- So in 1983 when I talked with Father Henry Dery and the Blessed Sacrament Fathers at that time, he said, "Get involved," and he encouraged me. So I talked with the religious education person. So I got involved that way. [Pause]

One of our biggest problems when I was teaching CCD was getting parent involvement. And parents send their kids to school, and the only time the parents got involved--was like Christmas or some big function. And I think that this is still a problem, a struggle, with Sacred Heart. I'm sure it's true with other parishes. But with Father Leo Lopez coming into the parish, I think that things will change. We'll probably get more parent involvement.

WM: Does Sacred Heart have a-- I know they have a large Hispanic community because they have Spanish choir and of course Spanish Mass and all that, just like Our Lady of Guadalupe. But do they have a Native American population, or are you kind of alone there?

DR: We're kind of alone. My husband and I are the only ones that are Native American in the parish. And I think that there are some, but they just-- It's sort of transient. They come in, they go, and they don't stay. So we're really the only ones that are kind of stationary, you might say. I

wonder if I could talk a little bit about the kind of people we see here at the food pantry.

WM: I was coming to that next.

DR: Okay. We have an emergency food pantry here at the center, and it's for anyone who--

WM: This is the Indian Walk-in Center?

DR: Yes. The food pantry is for anyone who is in need of emergency food. It's not necessarily Indians. And then we also have a referral program where we refer people to other service agencies.

WM: If it is not necessarily Indian, do you get many people besides your Native American Indian population coming into the food pantry?

DR: Yes, because we're centrally located. We're centrally located, and we get people who live around the Indian Walk-in Center, so they come. They may be non-Indian, and they come for emergency food. We provide food for them.

WM: And you still need much more.

DR: Yes. We continuously run out of food. And it's especially true, I think, toward the end of summer. It seems like people need more food. Either their kids are going to school, or we just have more people moving from one area to another area that need food. Now, our referral information, like I said, if a family comes in or individual and they need housing, we refer them to the Community Action Program or to different housing programs in the community. Now, if an Indian family comes into the Indian Walk-in Center, most often they don't prepare to come into an urban setting from the reservation. And they come, and they're sometimes living in their cars. Or they don't know how to hook into other social services agencies.

WM: Now which reservations do you have them coming from? The Ute? The Navajo.

DR: Well, they're usually the Navajos. The majority we have are Navajo-speaking. And then we get other tribes like the Sioux or Dakotas. They're the next big population.

WM: In Utah?

DR: Mmmm hmmm. There'll be two tribes, Navajos and the Dakotas.



WM: Don't you get many Utes?

DR: No, we don't. Because I think the Utes are very self-sufficient. And they also have programs up on their reservation that provide social services to them. And all the other tribes that are within the State of Utah, they have their social services programs, and they have other programs. But, like I said, those that do come are coming from the Navajo Reservation or Dakota. But most families do not prepare for coming here, so they're left stranded, and they come to the shelter. I mean they come to the Indian Walk-in Center to be helped. A language is sometimes a big problem because most of these people do not speak English. English is their second language. But here in the State of Utah most Indians are speaking English very well. English probably is their first language as opposed to their Ute.

WM: But if they don't, you have someone here who speaks their Navajo or Dakota?

DR: Yes, yes. The Dakotas are pretty well-spoken. They don't need it. It's the Navajos who are coming who need to have an interpreter. And we have our receptionist is bilingual, so she provides that service when they come off the reservation if they can't speak English or can't make their needs known, she helps them by interpreting. Now, in the counseling program, of which I do the counseling, it's strictly for Native Americans. They don't pay a fee. They come in, and I cover a whole gamut of problems. It can be alcohol or substance abuse. It can be child abuse, child neglect. It can be guardianship, custody, adoption. And people want to know who they are, where they came from. And I connect them with different resources so they can get the information. Lately I've been having quite a few families coming in for domestic violence counseling. And they're coming from the court system. And I believe Utah has a very good domestic program as just relating to that protection. And I think most husbands--or spouses--who are coming in are court-ordered for counseling. And I provide services. But I also observe that many of our Indians do not respond to intervention in terms of when-- They respond to crisis. They come to counseling when a crisis occurs. They don't come when a thing is just beginning. They come when things just pop open, and then they expect things to be put together. And sometimes you can't put things together. So it's part of educating our people to come.

WM: About how many do you have come in, say, in a month?

DR: In the counseling I have like maybe 15 or 20 coming in asking for social services and counseling. And sometimes

it's just sitting here and talking. And most Indians-- I do very informal-type interviews because most Indians do not respond to the way I was trained as a social worker, you know, with middle-class values and stuff. Most Indians who come here, they sit and they talk. They want to know your clanship, and they want to know like which tribe you are. And once they identify you that way, then they open up, and they talk to you, and they share things. So this center has met a need, like they have a Native American social worker who appreciates their cultural values but also their diversity. And I don't know whether you know too many tribes, but we're not all the same. We're all different. Our languages are different.

WM: I remember hearing from several people that up at the Intermountain Indian School in Brigham City there was really tension between the kids from different tribes. Do you meet that here?

DR: No, not really. Because we're inter-tribal. Like Gail is Chirmawabel[sp?] Apache, and Madeleine is Goshute. And Loretta's Navajo, and I'm Pueblo from the Tekakwitha group. So we get together very well. But I think of it is because we have experience. We have gone out and experienced and intermingled with other people.

WM: But if people come in, say, a Navajo family and another one, Apache or whatever, do you feel something between the two tribes? Can they pick somebody out who is not of their tribe?

DR: Oh, yes. Yes. They would. Probably by language. Probably by the way they present themselves. But I don't think there would be a tension unless it's back on the reservation. Like there's been an intermarriage between another tribe and, say, a Navajo, and they go back to the reservation, there would be some tension. But there again, you have to individualize. You can't say this is true of all, you know. You have to individualize.

WM: I heard that the Indians who go there really will fight. But then, you know, children, teenagers, spoil it anyway.

DR: Well, I think that sometimes the tension is there, depending on what the situation is about. If the counselors cannot handle that tension, then whatever is operating is probably a personalized thing rather than a tribal thing, you might say.

WM: Now I know that you have Indian recreation here, powwows regularly, because Sister Lorraine told me.

WM: Say something about them, how they're organized and who comes?

DR: Well, here at the center we have one of our board members, Myron High-on-Rainbows, is the chairperson for this Indian Walk-in Center Powwow Committee. He has about 15 or 20 people under him. And he would need that many people because it's a very involved operation. The things that they do, besides fund-raising, is they need to make a schedule out so in October, we'll be starting-- We usually have the powwows at the center nine months out of a year. We go like the school calendar. But this year we're starting our powwow in November because we have two other organizations who have booked use of the hall upstairs. And what it entails is scheduling. You need to get in touch with drum groups because drum groups have also their schedules. And you have to schedule them in and try to get them. And then you need an arena director. You need an MC. So those are the four ingredients you need to make a powwow. And then when the powwow comes, the public's invited to the powwow. This is where you see different tribes in their dress.

WM: They come in their native dress.

DR: Yes. They come in their regalia, and each tribe has a distinctive way of dressing and a distinctive way of dancing. You can participate when they call an inter-tribal song, then all people can dance.

Yes. And that's one of the centers' fund-raisers. We have two fund-raisers, major fund-raisers. And we sell tacos and fry bread. So we always have long lines, you know, and that's our fund-raisers.

WM: And how does one find out about all this?

DR: We usually have it announced on KRCL on Sunday mornings. There's an Indian Hour. It's Sunday mornings at eight-thirty. So she makes a public announcement, and we give her these announcements. And then it's in the newspapers, or we just advertise it, send flyers out. But usually the Utah Arts Council has all that activity. It's in May we have two and a half days down at the City and County grounds festival. We're not the only ethnic group there. There's other ethnic groups. We also have Mormon Day, July 24.

DR: Pioneer Day we go to the neighborhood fair which is at Liberty Park. So that's where we have our other fund-raiser for the summer. During the whole year, the gym upstairs is rented out for parties, receptions, workshops, conferences.



WM: I suppose you're not aware--or not interested--in what church or religion anybody who comes in may be associated with? Do you have anything like church services here?

DR: No, we don't have. Not per se. But we have Indian Spirituality. At the powwows we have opening prayer circles.

WM: But you don't have any way of knowing whether they're Catholic?

DR: No, we don't. We're a nonprofit organization, and we don't discriminate against any particular group.

But we do that because we feel that God is very important to all of us, and He's very important to the Indian people. Alcoholism is still our number one health problem, and people in the Indian agencies and community recognize this. And the root to all our problems when people come in for counseling is alcoholism in their families, and we have children from alcoholic backgrounds. So that is still the number one problem. The other thing I wanted to say is that our people have a lot of residual mental health problems that they haven't processed or resolved. And I am in touch with Marge Edwards and Dr. Edwards from the University School of Social Work and trying to encourage them to encourage Indian students in the School of Social Work to work in the urban area as clinical social workers who can work with people with mental health problems.

WM: Is AIDS a problem? Has it appeared among the Native Americans like it seems to be with the black people?

DR: I don't know first-hand knowledge about that, but according to several resource people like Dr. Dan Edwards who is California Indian, it mentioned that AIDS is rampant among Native Americans. It's on the reservations. As for statistics, that I do not have. Probably the Indian Health Services or the Indian Recovery, which has that alcohol program, they would have knowledge about AIDS.

WM: You spoke of the University of Utah. Have you any idea how many Indian young people may be going to the university?

DR: No, I do not have first-hand knowledge of that. But from what Dr. Edwards says, this year there have been probably--I would roughly say--20 or 30 students who are going to be in the graduate program who are Native Americans.

WM: Do you have here in the Indian Walk-in Center, activities for children? Specifically for children?

DR: No, we really do not in a way, but we do have a program, this is the karate program, and a volunteer person is a karate instructor. And he has Indian families who send their sons here on Mondays and Wednesdays here at the center at six o'clock, and they do their karate practice. And I think some of the kids have earned their first belt. And I think at one of the powwows this year, they are going to be demonstrating what they've learned.

Other activities we have besides the powwow and karate, we also have an alcohol--AA. We have AA meetings which are run by Jewel Benson, who is Ute. She's from another tribe, but anyway, Jewel has been director. She started the program five years ago, and when she started it, there were a lot of non-Indians attending that AA meeting. And now it's in it's almost fifth year, there's more Native Americans coming to the AA meetings.

WM: Were they coming from other AA groups, or just coming out of the community?

DR: They come here from out of the community. And it's been very inspiring that they're coming, and she still continues to be the director.

WM: Men or women or both?

DR: Both men and women. And we tried to start a children's group, but that didn't go too well. So hopefully in the future we will have such a group. We have an Indian Walk-in Board, and the majority are Indian. Inter-tribal people. They're professional people from the community. And our board meets ten months out of the year, and they meet every third Thursday, and it's open to the public. There are 13 board members.

WM: I've seen Indians very mistreated, absolutely abused, uptown on the streets. Do they complain of this? Or do they-- How do they feel about it? And especially the children. Do they feel like they're not quite in with it?

DR: Those Indians that you see on the street are those Indians who do not come to the center for counseling. If they come, they come for food. But they'll rarely ask for counseling. And for their children who see their parents this way, we do not see those children. Probably the state social services sees those kids. But we have a law that's the Indian Child Welfare Act. It became a law in 1978. It hasn't been enforced in many tribes. But the Navajo Reservation has an Indian Child Welfare office and also the Sioux have their Indian Child Welfare office. And

oftentimes when children are picked up by the state, they are obligated by law to contact their tribes in which these children come from. And they can't just arbitrarily place these children for adoption. They have to contact the tribe and let the tribes know.

WM: Speaking of adoption, the LDS people have taken that on. I don't know whether they still do or not.

DR: It was a long time ago, but that's not practiced, at least not anymore.

WM: Do you ever meet LDS Indians? Do they ever come in?

DR: Oh, yes. Yes. They come here. And they're still-- Well, they come here because they're confused. They don't know whether they should be totally Indian or totally-- --whomever they are. And they haven't learned their culture. And so some of them are coming back slowly. But they struggle because they don't know whether they should be a white man or Indian. And it's very pathetic in some situations. But in some they have, I think, been able to go back and start doing some research on their own. We have a Thanksgiving feast every Thanksgiving, and the feast is always before Thanksgiving. It's on a Saturday. We start getting ready months before the feast. We ask the community to donate turkeys and mixes and other things, other trimmings, that go with Thanksgiving dinner. And then some of us volunteer to cook the turkey, and we bring it down that evening. We usually start getting ready like four o'clock. We have volunteers, and we always like to have people help us out and serve. And the Indian agencies do send representatives, and they come and help. We do shifts. And we always feed between 800 to a thousand Indians who come in. And then after the feast we have our powwow.

WM: And how do you celebrate Christmas?

DR: On Christmas we celebrate Christmas. First of all we have maybe two weeks before the powwow for Christmas, we have a bazaar where we sell arts and crafts, and people in the community come. It's open to the public, and a lot of people come.

WM: You have it right here at the center?

DR: Yes, we have it at the center. Besides it helps the center. And there's flyers and announcements made prior to that so that people will know that it's coming on. And then we have a Christmas powwow. We don't have a feast. One time we did. It was too involved, and many people have other plans for



Christmas. So what we end up doing is we have a Christmas sort of like a feast, but it's mostly for kids. We have an Indian Santa Claus who comes and entertains the kids.

WM: An Indian Santa Claus, is he an Indian dressed as Santa Claus?

DR: Well, the way he dresses-- If he's not dancing, we rent a Santa Claus outfit for him. So all the kids follow him, and there's a lot of story-telling and videotape and there's some games. And then he gives out not so much candy, like fruits and nuts, and those are individually packaged by volunteers at the center here. So we rely greatly on volunteers to help us because there's only four of us that are employed here. And the Christmas party is always a success, and it keeps the kids from upstairs, the powwow, and all the adults can participate.

DR: We welcome any kind of gifts. Toys for kids. Clothes for kids. Oh, and Thanksgiving and Christmas, we always have baskets for certain families that are really hard up, more so than others. So we give out a Thanksgiving basket, and we also give out Christmas baskets.

WM: Is there one area where the Indians live? Like out in the Guadalupe area, they're nearly all Hispanic-speaking.

DR: Oh, yes. I think the majority of our Indians are in Kearns, they live in the Kearns area. And then we have smatterings around Salt Lake City, you know.

WM: I talked to Diana Taylor. She goes to Kearns to church.

DR: Yes. That's where the majority of our Indian people live. And then you need to remember, too, that we're stratified. We are different levels of income and education and professions. A lot of people don't think that. The majority of people that you see on the streets are the ones that have the low income poverty; they're homeless. Then you have those of us that live in smatterings-- Those in Kearns are pretty all right, you know. They're okay. So we have our stratifications, you might say.

WM: I know Sister Lorraine Masters comes down a lot. But have there have been any of the priests or other sisters that have been connected with your work at all?

DR: No. There have been no priests have come down here and personally come and seen the center itself. No. We have not. We've had other people from different parishes who have come in. Either they come in to be directed or--like,

I had a family from Kearns area who came and wanted information on genealogy. So we advised them to go to the Genealogy Department of the LDS. And then we've had people come down here and donate clothes and food. But I have not seen a priest down here, although I invited Father Roger Bourgeois when the Blessed Sacrament Fathers were up that time at Sacred Heart. Oh, and Father Kenneth Gumbert from the Newman Center when he was here, he came down.

WM: How about any of the sisters? Any of them work with you besides Sister Lorraine Masters?

DR: Well, Sister Andrea Mitchell from--I forget her order of nuns. They're out in California. She's at Guadalupe. No, St. Peter and Paul's Parish.

[End of Interview]

