

## MUNSEY SCRIPT

Music up and under

I help with the kids, I go help the teacher with the children. [That's] what I like. I worked in Belfast, I worked in Biddeford, Saco. When they come, the kids, I love 'em.

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THIS IS "LIFE ON MY OWN: DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES FROM INSTITUTION TO THE COMMUNITY, BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE MAINE DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COUNCIL.

VANESSA MUNSEY WAS BORN IN 1930, IN WISCASET, ME. AS A CHILD SHE WAS PLACED IN A FOSTER HOME.

Music out

The state took me away from my mom, my real mom. Put me in the foster home in Washington—Washington, Maine. [Their] names Ada and Wilber (inaudible) and I would grow up there. At nineteen I went in the prison called Pineland. I went there. It was the worst place I've ever been to. A while later my brother went there. We had visit hours to visit him. Somebody picked up a chair and threw it at him and hurt his leg and he couldn't move or anything. And they got me all drugged up and the woman working in the dining room, she wanted me to help her out and I said, "No, I won't." (Inaudible). This aide come took me down the stairs and [wet? ripped?] my dress and they treat me like a wild animal. If you don't get up at roll call they put you in the other bed until you get up. They treat you like a crazy person.

I went to the school there and we had a teacher, she would run out (inaudible) and we could hear the footsteps when she would walk [when she was coming], And we would sit down before she opened the door. We went there and they had parade, we were in the parade, and I (inaudible). And one of my friends that goes there, Ida (inaudible). She's one of my friends and I think [I had] chicken pox. And I had to go in a different room because I [couldn't be around] anybody.

And Ida (inaudible) do something wrong and there's no room for her and she come in and [said] "Well, I have to sleep with the chickens!"

THAT WAS IN THE EARLY 1950'S. LIFE WAS REGIMENTED AND DENTAL CARE WAS CRUDE

We don't get up when the roll is called, they put you in bed and tell to get up when the roll is called, and you got to the dentist, they was going to take the teeth out without freezing them. And ever since after that I'm afraid to go to the dentist. It wasn't a place you wanted [to have] been into... They had one patient there that had to go to the dentist and he had to have somebody hold them down to take their teeth out—And now every time I go to the dentist, [I say], "No needles, no, no, no."

SHE SAYS SOMETIMES CHILDREN WERE PLACED IN PINELAND SIMPLY BECAUSE THEY WERE UNWANTED. DURING HER STAY AT PINELAND, SHE WORKED IN THE KITCHEN.

I worked at the big kettles and I was filled with dope.

AFTER SHE LEFT PINELAND IN 1952, SHE LIVED IN GROUP HOME IN BELFAST. SHE ALSO ATTENDED A REHAB PROGRAM IN SACO. SHE HAS BEEN ABLE TO WORK, HOLDING JOBS IN A DINER, AND PREPARING PACKAGES FOR TOM'S OF MAINE, BUT PERHAPS WHAT SHE HAS ENJOYED THE MOST HAS BEEN WORKING WITH CHILDREN IN A HEAD START PROGRAM.

Yeah, I would help (inaudible) around the kids. We would take them outdoors and play with them and they had one here in Biddeford (inaudible). This was a boy and he couldn't even walk. (Inaudible) the name of (inaudible) and he (inaudible) the kids. And I love 'em and (inaudible) the boy couldn't even walk. He'd walk when somebody hold on the hands, but one day he was walking by himself. And I said that—I said, "You can walk, Lucas." And he walked. Now you go to the school and nobody don't have anymore Head Start program.

And when it comes to kids, I don't care what color the kids are. I don't care. And when I go to the store and see these grandparents that bring the kids in, I said, "You have wonderful kids." They say, "Oh, Thank you." I don't care what the color of their skin or nothing.

PINELAND CLOSED IN 1996. MUNSEY CREDITS DISABILITY RIGHTS ADVOCATE PAIGE BARTON WITH HELPING TO CLOSE IT DOWN. SHORTLY AFTERWARD, MUNSEY AND A FRIEND VISITED THE SITE OF THE PINELAND HOSPITAL AND TRAINING CENTER AND RETRIEVED THREE BRICKS FROM ONE OF THE BUILDINGS.

We went down to the bridge and we put them right in the water and I said, "Goodbye" Pineland!" And that's the worst place you've ever been into, I'll tell you.

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