

Mabel Look
Bridgeport, Connecticut
Dec. 23, 1979
Interviewers: Nora Groce
Photographer: Larry Kaplan

Mabel is the daughter of Henry Look and Eva West Look. Henry was one of the last of the island's feebleminded, and Eva the last of the deaf. Eva's parents were both deaf, and Henry's both feebleminded. Because sign language was used at home, Mabel is the last person in the world completely fluent in sign language. She was, through out the interview, uncooperative, short and pretty much disinterested in anything we were doing. I suspect that she thought that I would be making money on this project and that she would be getting nothing out of it. Considering the circumstances under which we were working we got a surprizingly large amount of information out of her. (By way of note, incidentally, Mabel is the only islander, in all the fieldwork I have ever done on this topic, who was not helpful or hospitable - indeed the only one who was not interested in the project.)

I begin with just the tape on, while Larry sets up the videotape equipment....

NG: (I'm setting up the tape recorder. I tell Mabel how I will be working with Joan Poole of Boston University.)

Now, your mother was deaf?

ML: Yes.

NG: Was she, she was born deaf? (Yes.) Did she ever explain to you why she thought she was born deaf?

ML: I think her father was born deaf, but her mother was not. She became deaf in her childhood from scarlet fever or something she used to tell me...

NG: Now, her name was Sabrina Rogers, your grandmother...

ML: Yea, yea...

NG: But she was from off island.

ML: Orleans, I think ...

NG: Orleans, that's right. But she met your grandfather at school, was it?

ML: Can't tell you, I don't know.

NG: Ok. I think she met him at Hartford school for the deaf.

ML: That's where my mother went, but I don't know before that.

I don't know much about what went on before...

NG: Do you remember your grandfather?

ML: Yes, very well. Oh, he didn't die till '29, I think.

NG: (To Larry) Her grandfather was a pillar of the community..

ML: George West.

NG: George West, Jr. right?

ML: Yes,

NG: Um, now he had brothers who were deaf..

ML: A brother Joseph, he was deaf, and um, Benjamin, Daniel, Samuel I never knew, so I can't tell you what, whether he was deaf or not.

NG: But..

ML: And two sisters, Diademie was deaf, but the other one, Sophronie, I can't remember. I remember them, but I don't remember if they were deaf. You know, I was kinda, 3 or 4 years old, I guess.

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NG: So, your great- uncle Josie lived until you were a young woman, probably...

ML: You mean my grandfather's brother, Joseph? I don't remember, he died after my grandfather, probably. He was one of the youngest.

NG: You never thought it unusual that there was so much deafness in your family? Or it just happened?

ML: I never gave it any thought, but in recent years I've given thought to the fact that there's no one left who is, that I know, so then I started thinking about it. But at the time, it was just natural, you know, everybody around me was. My mother's aunt, who was the same age, she wasn't born deaf, but, I may be telling you a wrong story about Kate, I'm not sure, whether she was born deaf. But she used to come to the house all the time and so we talked constantly.

NG: Who was this now?

ML: My grandfather's brother, Benjamin, his wife...

NG: Oh! Katie West, yea.

ML: Katie West and she was my mother's age, they went to school together in Hartford, I think my mother brought her to the island.

NG: Oh really, I didn't know that. That would make sense. She was from, she was from off-island, I know.

ML: I'm not, I don't know, if she was from Ireland or not...

NG: No, no, from off-island. Oh wait, that's right her name was Katie Sullivan?

ML: Dolan.

NG: Dolan, right.

ML: Boy, you've done alot of research.

NG: Well, I've done alot of hunting around, but what I'm interested in is what you can remember, what it was like growing up.

ML: I had a brother too, but he died when he was about 14 and I don't know whether he was deaf or not. There's so much I don't know, that it's piteful..

NG: Now you learned sign language at home, right?

ML: Just came naturally.. yea

NG: When your parents were together, they spoke sigh language?

ML: Well, my father wasn't deaf so he and I did not, but they did to each other.

NG: I see, so you spoke with your father and talked sign language with your mother. And did you, all the people in town, or a great many of them spoke sign language.

ML: They could always communicate one way or another, yea.

My mother never learned to read lips, like most people, even though she went to Hartford School. I don't, she never told me about learning to read lips, I think she either didn't care, or it could be that they didn't teach it.

NG: Yea, I think they didn't teach it. Also, did you ever see her have to write anything down?

ML: Ah, yes (Pause as she tried to think) I suppose she made grocery lists and all that. I don't remember her writing to me, my father always did the writing.

NG: I meant, just write to communicate with someone, if they didn't...

ML: I suppose so. (Note that she doesn't remember a case of this, she just thinks this might have been possible.)

NG: But you don't remember...

ML: No. Not many strangers came to the house. And well, usually I was there or my father was there to help translate, so didn't need to write, I guess...

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NG: Did you ever use sign language with anybody in town who was not deaf?

ML: Back then?

NG: Yea, as kids or just...

ML: No, no... since I've come here, when ever I've met one ^{at work,} I've tried to do it and then I give up because they can understand me - or either they can or they pretend to, but I couldn't understand them. A lot of signs I didn't know. Especially people from Boston. They used to come to the island to visit my mother because she was deaf, they were deaf, they couldn't understand each other and that used to amaze them, because I couldn't get in with it.

NG: You mean your mother used to speak kinda a little different language when she was in with them...do you think?

ML: I didn't pay much attention to what she was saying, I was paying attention to them, trying to read

NG: Did your mother ever say anything about the sign language that was spoken on the island being different?

ML: Yes, once in a while. But I think she attributed that to different teaching at school, various schools, one from Boston and the other from Hartford. I don't know, there again, whether it's true.

NG: (I talk about how the Vineyard sign language may be older than the kind used in schools for the deaf. She asks if Gale could remember any of the language - I tell her how even Gale's mother, an off-islanders, used to speak the language, as she had spent several summers with Moses West and his family.

ML: Oh yes - my mother's people were all Wests, and alot of them I didn't know.

NG: Your mother, did you ever see your mother, in a public gathering, your mother spak sign language? At town meetings or something?

ML: No...

NG: Ok, you see, your a little bit younger than most of the people I've been talking to, so you don't remember as much...

ML: (Laughs) Well, I don't know about that, I can't be that much...

NG: Oh, you know Emily Poole?

ML: Is she living?

NG: Oh, she's 96.

ML: I haven't heard of her for so long. (We talk about Emily and some of the older islanders. She talks to Larry a little bit. Larry sets up the equipment.

I was trying to think this morning whether I could construct a whole sentence. Last night I couldn't even say 'Merry Christmas'. Gee. And finally it dawned on me, I think alot of signs mean different things to me now then they did - like ah, the sign for Boston, a plain 'B', but like this, and ah...

NG: Was that what your mother used?

ML: I suppose so. And yet, if I tried to say some other city that started with 'B', why wouldn't it mean that?

NG: Well, that's a good question. Maybe what they had is just a very localized sign language. Some language has a limited vocabulary. In orderwords, you can't say that much, or its not necessary to say that much.

NG: Was there a sign for New Bedford?

ML: I can't remember whether it was just like, you know, 'N', for New Bedford - I just can't remember if there was any more to it. Because I'm sure they used the word all the time, because

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ML: (continued): people used to go to that city, had a boat that'd go directly to there. I just remember Hartford is like this, and Boston - I don't remember New York.

NG: How often would they use the spelling? The alphabet?

ML: Well, at home with my mother I might never use it, or with my aunt. But away from home, with anyone else, I'd have to do it.

NG: You mean here on the mainland?

ML: Well, you say on the mainland. I never was off the island much. I never had to use sign language unless, you know, I met somebody at work here.

NG: So you mean, on the island, it was very rare for you to have to spell anything out.

ML: That I can recall...

NG: There was a sign for everything?

ML: I suppose so.

NG: That's very interesting, because that just means it was a very complete language. Um, when you spelled something out, would it be just long complicated words?

ML: Um, not necessarily. Sometimes, why one word, like for instance, if I were interpreting for my mother, and somebody didn't like, get something, I'd get impatient, where I'd want to spell out one word. For instance, my mother said something to them that was meant to be a joke and they didn't quite get it, or vice-a-versa, if they'd said it to her, I'd just spell out J*C*K*E, and the rest, 'ands', and 'buts' and 'ifs' - you don't need those. Right away they'd get the point.

NG: Did you ever have to, when you spoke the sign language to your mother, were there words like 'and' and 'but'...

ML: I never used the word 'and', 'but'. There are signs for those words, I suppose, but I don't know them.

NG: Well, this is interesting, because in sign language, um, the grammar is different from English. Sign language isn't identical, necessarily, with English, it's a whole special language.

ML: I didn't know that.

NG: And so, if you didn't use connecting terms, like 'and' or 'but', or 'if', if it was just implied in the sign, then that's very interesting, because it gives us more of a clue into the nature of the sign language.

ML: You mean to say this is all spelled out somewhere? That there's a different, sentence compositions are different?

NG: Yes. As a matter of fact, a lot of deaf people, who they try to teach English to, have a very hard time learning English because, in order to read or write English...

ML: Oh yes, yes. The construction of sentences...

NG: Right. They're thinking in a different... Well, your mother never wrote much to you, so..

ML: I don't remember her writing at all. Maybe she did, but it seems to me, my father would always. And yet, I never gave it a second thought. And I was in California all one winter and yet, I don't remember getting any letter from her, but, strange, I never thought about it. Isn't that funny.

NG: On the other hand, um I say a letter that, I guess a cousin of Dorothy Poolè's, who was deaf wrote, back in the middle 1800's, and her grammar was impeccable - much more than...

ML: That's a strange thing. That bothers me like anything, because it seems as if, my mother must have written something, because I remember telling people while I was in California that how much I liked it, and I'd like to stay, expect my parents were pulling on me to come, it was like an emotional thing, you know, so she must have written something.

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(Larry and Mabel talk a little bit about setting up the videotape system. I tell Mabel we can stop any time she has had enough).

NG: Also, do you remember there being signs for different people?

ML: Oh yes.

NG: Instead of having names, there'd be a sign for lots of people.

ML: My aunt Kate was (makes sign for 'K').

NG: Was that just 'K'.

ML: And I suppose Ben and Daniel (Making 1st letters of their names), they were all evidently first letters.

NG: Did you ever see a sign for your mother?

ML: I've seen my aunt, but she ususally spelled it E*V*A*.

NG: She would spell out - well, of course, your aunt was from off-island. You never saw this sign for your mother? (I do sign).

ML: Curly hair?

NG: Yes, apparently your mother, when she was a young woman had beautiful lbnq curls, or something..

ML: Could be, could be, she used to have. I was going to say before I knew her. (Laughs). I've seen pictures of her when she was in her 30's, I mean before I was born and she had long curls. That's right. I'd forgotten that - you know more than I do, and so you may as well get your...

NG: Oh no, no. Your not going to get out of this, (She laughs). Do you know, well, I'll ask you again on tape, but can you remember a sign for Martha's Vineyard?

ML: (No..)

NG: Can you remember a sign for any of the towns on Martha's Vineyard?

ML: Yes. Vineyard Haven.

NG: Ch OK. We'll have you repeat that again in a minute.

ML: Oak Bluffs. Edgartown I've forgotten. Vineyard Haven, as I remember, is just... Isn't that funny. I haven't thought of those for thirty years.

NG: Well, your doing fine so far, because nobody else could remember a sign for them. I was told 'oh, you just point in the direction'.

(Mabel excuse herself a minute. Larry and I set up the equipment.)

NG: Your father, he used to sell milk?

ML: Yes. And before that, when I was a child, he used to sell meat too. Because I remember, he used to have a sleigh and go out and sell meat from the house. I don't remember much about it expect the sleigh and...

NG: Did you know your grandparents at all?

ML: Not his parents I didn't. I wonder if there's someone in that family who might...

NG: No. I don't think so. He had a number of brothers, I know that. And apparently he used to work sometimes, not work, but baby sit for Gale and Mil, when he was an older.

ML: For Gale?

NG: Not for Gale, for Gale and Mil's daughter.

ML: Who's their daughter?

NG: Emily. Her last name is now Rose, but she's now about 40 years old

ML: I don't remember her. (We Talk a little bit about Gale and Mil, while Larry is trying to set up the equipment.)

Asks if I had seen Catherine Allen

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NG: Do you remember, was there a special word for the sign language itself?

ML: I don't remember.

NG: Do you think your mother was ever frustrated because she couldn't hear or..

ML: Oh yes. Plenty of times, especially when several people were around and we were seeming to enjoy ourselves. I was hard to get across to her, you know, even though I tried to turn and tell her what we were laughing about, it was a project to her, that she couldn't just join in easily. She missed a lot of things.

NG: (I explain about why I'm interested in the Vineyard is the fact that not only was there a lot of deafness, but that everyone spoke sign language.)

ML: (Mabel gets grumpy about how long it's taking Larry to set up - all of about 5 minutes).

I problem at first with the Videotape, I ask her the signs for several towns on the island and the numbers. Larry doesn't get these - I will ask her to repeat them later on in the tapes.

Mabel remembers that there was no sign for the United States - they'd just spell it U.*S.*A.. Doesn't remember a sign for any foreign countries.

END OF SIDE 1, TAPE A BEGINNING OF SIDE 2

She starts by showing me the numbers,(see above.)

I ask if there was a sign for numbers. She says no, the situation would take care of whether you meant money or dates or what ever.

NG: How would you say 'yes' and 'no'.

ML: I'd just nod my head for this and...

NG: There wasn't a hand gesture to go along with it?

ML: Not unless I spelled it out, and I wouldn't with my mother...

NG: Ok, this is excellent. Because off-island sometimes you have someone nod and do something at the same time.

ML: To say all these? Well, I've noticed when on television when the study gets up to do a sermon or something, she has a sign for every single word, and I try to catch it and I can't. While I'm trying to figure out one sign, she's a whole paragraph behind, you know.

NG: Ok, that's important. Incidentally, did you ever see them use sign language in church?

ML: Yes, I have.

NG: Who have you seen?

ML: Oh, I must have gone with my mother or somewhere. (Speaks to her cat who is making a fuss).

(Larry says that somethings gotten botched up. I say well just go on from where we were.)

NG: Your mother, you mean on the island or off-island.

ML: In church. It must have been off-island, but, you know for a little while we lived some where else, like Brockton, when my father was working there. I don't know if it was there, but I remember being in a church somewhere, where somebody talked like that, translating.

NG: You never heard of, apparently Wednesday night prayer meeting

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NG: (Continued) of the Methodist church, up in Chilmark. Once in a while, someone who was deaf would get up and give a whole speech...

ML: Could be, but I don't remember it.

NG: Again, you're too young. (We talk a bit more about the tape). You were probably too young to hang around the general store, but did you...

ML: Oh, I used to go down to the one..

NG: Oh wait, your grandfather - no, your great-grandfather, ran the Squibnocet general post office, for a while, didn't he?

ML: I didn't know there was such a thing. Squibnocet post-office?

NG: Well, I guess it might be called the Chilmark Post-office at Squibnocet.

ML: There never was one up there, that I know of. Chilmark, Menemsha and Gay Head.

NG: Yea, (I describe where it used to be.) Mabel thinks I have the wrong house, because she had heard stories about how her grandfather had built the place from drift wood he'd gathered from the shore. (If he had done something of that sort, most probably it was to add some addition to the standing building.)

Ok, how bout, do you remember - let me ask you articles of clothing. Was there a sign for dress?

ML: Well, just Dress:

ASL [DRESS]

Stockings, I remember, was this: *12 1/2" baby*

NG: Like you were knitting stockings?

ML: Knitting:

ML SOCKS

NG: What was SEWING, if that was knitting?

ML: Sewing:

SEW

NG: How bout PANTS?

ML:

PANTS

NG: SHIRT:

ML: I don't know, there's a point I guess, where I don't remember.

NG: Was there, um, how would you say a CLEAN SHIRT, as opposed to a dirty shirt?

ML: Well, this is wash

ASL

NG: Would that be wash anything, like wash clothes, wash yourself, wash your face?

ML: Well, no. More applied to clothes than wash your face.

NG: What would be 'Wash your face'? I'm sure you heard that when you were a child...

ML: The simplest things I don't remember...

Mabel Look

NG: How about shoes. Was there a word for shoes?

ML: Um: I remember this sign here, but I get it confused with the word for books...

to wear

NG: Oh, that's either the sign for shoes or the sign for books?

ML: No, I don't say that, I just say I don't know.

NG: Ok, no problem. How about COAT?

ML:

up cross coat

NG: How bout Sweater?

ML:

knit coat

A knitted...

NG: How about HAT:

ML:

ASL

NG: Handkerchief?

ML:

NG: Was there a different sign for shoes than boots? Do you remember a sign for BOOTS?

ML: Ah yea, now I need the word for rubber... Seems it was something like this, but I can't remember... something that means rubber...

VAA^x (knicker) PA (pelt on boot)

NG: How bout underclothings, you know, for like Petticoat

ML: This, like a petticoat, like under... undergarments....

100

1000 1000

Good thing you have this list of questions, you'd never get...

NG: Oh, no, no, we just had to get set up... How about Animals, um Cat:

ML: Cat: *1998*

Dog: *BL*

Cow:

AA (underclothing)

Horse: *608*

I remember these from last night.

NG: Ok now, let me slow you down (she laughs). You're going too fast.
How would you say 'A Big dog?'

ML:

NG: 'LITTLE DOG'?

ML:

NG: How about a Young Dog? Or that would be puppy.

ML: This is old:

This is Baby:

NG: That's baby? How about, was there a sign for Twins?

ML: Yes, but I can't recall it. (Mabel worries whether the cat can get electrocuted on the videotape equipment.)

NG: How about, how would you say 'That cat is bigger than another cat'.

ML: "Our cat is bigger, your cat is smaller".

NG: Now, you gave me the sign for cow, was that cow or bull?
Or was there another sign for bull?

ML: Ah, this was like man or male.

NG: Oh, I see, so you'd go 'COW', 'Male'?

ML: Reverse it, yea...

NG: How about CALF?

ML: It goes something like this:

But still, you'd be talking about cow, if you just said those two signs I don't know if they'd know, if it was calf, unless you were talking about cows.

NG: Ok, that would make sense, because sign language.

ML: (suckling and then a small)...

NG: Ok, how about milk, was there a sign for milk?

ML:

NG: Was there a different sign for Cream?

ML: Uh, maybe it's...

NG: SKim it to get the cream...

ML: This is what a skimmer looks like.

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NG: And that's right, your father used to.. Because they say, Gladys Flanders says she remembers walking into your parents house and seeing just bowls of milk ...

ML: Um. I used to take my bowl of strawberries and go into the pantry would just skim the cream right off the...

NG: Um, that must of been great. How about, was there a different term for CX?

ML: Oh yes, but I don't... I probably spelled it, o-x, you know.

NG: What do you think - there were some people who were not literate, and so spelling probably wouldn't do them any...

ML: Well, as I said before, with my mother I never had to spell anything. I mean, 'ox' we never had any occasion to use, so either it was confined to home and store, neighbors and friends...

NG: Was there a sign for store, by the way?

ML: I can't remember whether this means store, post-office, or what, but it was something, seems to look like sorting mail, but I don't know what it was:

NG: Was there a sign for Chilmark store?

ML: I don't know.

NG: How about 'SHEEP', was there a sign for sheep?

ML: Sheep: I don't remember, but it has something to do with sheering...

NG: Was there a sign, do you remember a sign for a flock of sheep?

ML: This is a goat:

NG: Oh, that was my next question... How about a PIG?

ML: We had pigs:

NG: Under the chin like that?

ML: Well evidently they ate their fill like no other animals. I think that's where that came from..

NG: Now, you gave a sign for horse, for the bit:

ML:

NG: How about a Horses' Tail?

ML: That was just 'Tail':

NG: How about a horses MAINE

ML:

NG: How about Ears, a horses ears?

ML:

NG: How would you say 'The horse has a long tail'?

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ML:

NG: So there's no sign for 'HAS'?

ML: Has? Don't need 'has'.

NG: Ok. How about, lets go on to birds. Was there a general term for birds?

ML: Chickens is all I can think of right now:

NG: How about duck? There used to be alot of duck hunting.

ML: This is Goose:

Ducks I don't remember.

NG: How about, was there a sign for hunt? They used to do alot of shooting, for shoot?

ML: Yes, but now I'm getting that confused with bow and arrow...

NG: Ok, that was the sign for bow and arrow? OK, well so, I hadn't even thought of asking you that sign.

How about WING. A bird's wing?

ML: I think that will do; I don't know If that has to do with birds and chickens, I kinda lumped it in together...

NG: How about feather, is there?

ML:

NG: How about Claw?

ML:

NG: And chicken, but was there a different sign for Rooster, than for chicken?

ML: Yes, but I can't remember it.

NG: How about EGG?

ML: Yes;

And Rooster went something like; crowing, had something to do with crowing:

Maybe you can put it all together after somewhere...

NG: Well sit down and try.

ML: This girl, Joan Poole, she learned this in school? So she can't correct me or...

NG: No, but on the other hand, you may be the only person who remembers any of these signs.

ML: That's, you know, there's many a thing that I've wanted to go back to the island and ask somebody and the people that I would, ask, that would know the answers aren't there any more, and all of a sudden you realize how much is lost.

NG: How would you say 'A few chickens'?

ML: Well, I'd either say two or three, or 'f-e-w':

NG: But how would you say 'Many chickens'?

ML: Lots, this means 'lots'

NG: Was there a word for a 'rat' or a 'mouse'?

ML: Yes, but I don't remember it.

NG: How bout a worm?

ML: Like, there again, I'd use it for eels.

NG: Oh, ok - you're anticipating all my questions.

ML: Well, when I try to say worms, I comes out 'eels'.

NG: That's eels? What's snake?

ML: Wait a minute, eels, you go, with doing this in the ice:

You associate that with eels

NG: How would you say 'I hunt eels through the ice', was there a word for ice, or eel hunting?

ML: Well, this means chooping... I guess. I don't think you use the spear when there's not ice. I don't know really:

NG: No that would make sense..

ML: Froozen means: water.. something like this 'Froozen':

NG: This is an odd question, was there a sign for a bug or some sort or for louse? I wouldn't ordinarily ask, but that's on the word list that linguists ask...

ML: No, we'd just spell lice and be done with it.
(Mabel gets her mail).

NG: How bout, let me ask you for times of the year and weather and stuff like that... Was there a sign for year?

ML: No, you'd just say the years, I guess.

NG: How about 'Every year' or 'Next year', was there a sign for 'I do this every year'?

ML:

NG: How about 'Next year'?

ML: There's a word for next, but I can't quite remember it.

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NG: How about the seasons, fall and winter, spring, summer...

ML: Spring is something like this:

ASL

I remember 'Christmas' is like this:

NG: Was there a sign for Easter?

ML: Can't help you.

NG: How about, was there a sign for month? Like the month of November?

ML: Well, I don't know, cause I'd probably say, like write 'November', 'January', put a question mark on my face...have her tell me what month I...

NG: How about week, was there a sign for 'one week'?

ML: W-K, I don't remember.

NG: How about days, like, how would you say three days?

ML:

NG: How about 'Everyday'?

ML:

NG: How about, was there a special sign for 'monday', 'tuesday'?

ML: Monday-Saturday. Sunday, that isn't quite right, for Sunday, it had something to do with the Sabbath:

ASL → Sunday

NG: And I've asked you holidays..how would you say Birthday?

'It is my birthday'?

ML: Oh boy, that should be easy...

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ML: You put your hand up to your face somehow, but I can't quite recall it. If I were asking you when is your birthday...
'When were you born':

NG: What was birth, like that?

ML: Yea:

NG: How about, was there a sign for night?

ML: Night: *13L*

Morning:

5:00

NG: How bout 'all night'?

ML: 'All night'; something like that anyway...

NG: How about 'Over night', would that be the same thing?
(apparently yes).

How about 'Midnight'?

ML: Twelve, midnight.

13L

or Twelve, noon.

13L

NG: oh, the same sign?

ML: Well, one's noon and one's midnight...

NG: How about like 'Two o'clock'?

ML:

NG: How would you say, was there a sign for 'minute'? Like wait for me 'ten minutes'?

ML: Yea, but I, I don't know, I'd just say five or ten ...

NG: And just assume minutes?

ML: Well, if you were going out the door, you'd know whether I meant five or ten minutes, or five or ten hours..

NG: That's right. And there was, probably you don't remember any sign for like seconds? 'It took you three seconds'?

ML: You're getting right down to details aren't you?

No, no...

NG: How bout, could you say 'yesterday'?

ML:

13L

NG: Tomarrow?

ML:

13L

Mabel Look

NG: You're absolutely fluent with this - I don't know how you could say you don't remember...

ML: Well, some things I remember so well and other things I remember nothing about. Isn't that strange.

NG: How about, was 'yesterday' and 'tomorrow' the same sign for 'future' and 'past'?

ML: Ah, 'not yesterday, but a long time ago'

NG: You mean, that would be the entire sign? You'd say 'Not yesterday, but a long time ago'?

ML: Yes.

NG: How bout 'future'.

ML: (Doesn't remember.)

NG: What's the sign for 'Not'?

ML: Not? N*C*T? This was it:

NG: How could you say 'I have no time', I'm very busy, I have no time?

ML: 'Time' I'd spell out, I'd suppose. See, there again, some of these things I remember as if I were talking to you, instead of my mother, since it's been so long since...I would spell time to you to get it across, I suppose, whereas to her, I don't remember

NG: How bout, let me ask you about weather, was there a general sign for weather?

ML: I don't know. We used to It's cold:

It's hot:

NG: How about warm and cool?

ML: Spell them, I guess.

NG: How would you say 'It's a lovely day'? or 'Its a beautiful day'?

ML: Well, it seems silly now, because it's not complete enough somehow:

NG: OK, maybe we'll go back to that question in a minute. Was there a sign for rain?

ML:

NG: Snow?

ML: Well, white rain isn't right. I can't tell ya..

NG: OK, How bout Ice?

ML: Well, there again, it's something like frozen..

NG: That would be the word for frozen?

ML: But it isn't quite right. I don't know what's the matter with it.

NG: How about thunder?
ML: This was lightening: Lightening and thunder...

NG: Would they be said together, you know usually...
ML: Depends on whether they came together.
NG: Ok. Was there a word for 'Storm'?
ML: No, I don't remember.

NG: You probably don't remember, was there a term for Hail?,
Instead of snow, you would say 'It's hailing'.
ML: Rain:

I don't know, I'd just say 'Frozen rain' and make little
things with my fingers...
NG: How about Wind?
ML:

NG: How would you say it was 'Very windy'?
ML: Just make it more emphatic.
NG: How could you say there was 'no wind'?
ML:

NG: How bout Fog?
ML: Something like; but there again, if I said it out of the blue,
it wouldn't be understood.

NG: Well, alot of this stuff is context-dependant, as is any
language.
ML: I suppose so...
NG: How about Clouds?
ML:

NG: How about, we asked, we've gotten alot of water weather
stuff, because we got it from Donald Poole and Gale, but can
you say 'Calm Water'?
ML: 'Water is calm':

NG: How about rough water?
ML:

NG: Ok, can you say Sky?
ML: You say 'outdoors'

Sky:

is pretty:

Mabel Look

NG: Is pretty and beautiful the same word?

ML:

NG: How would you say 'indoors'?

ML:

NG: What was the sign for sun?

ML: I'd spell it, I guess, I don't...

NG: How bout 'moon'?

ML: Yea, something like this:

NG: That would be moon?

ML: Um hum.

NG: How about Stars?

ML:

NG: Haven't you seen this before. I have, but only one or two of these, this is completely unique...

ML: Gee, that's great, because at first I thought I wouldn't remember enough to help you.

NG: You don't know what a big help this is. This is...

ML: Is this going to help you graduate?

NG: Oh, this will not only help me graduate, this'll help linguists all over the world understand the nature of sign language better. Believe it or not, this is very important.

ML: Will you get royalties from it?

NG: If there are any, I will let you know.

ML: Don't worry, I just sent for the garage man, so I'm just concious.

NG: Actually, probably not, but if I'm ever paid for the use of this material, it's yours.

ML: DON't worry about that, till after your a milloner and have a house in Maine.

NG: Let me get on to relatives..

ML: Real estate?

NG: No relatives. Real estate, I assume there was none till after the tourists came...

Um was there any term for relations?

ML: Um, yes, but I don't know the word for relations, let me see, ah: Seems to be like 'male' 'sister', father mother

F

NG: How bout Grandfather and grandmother?

ML: Something like this, it kinda goes back..

Mabel Lock

ML: (Contineud):

NG: For both grandfather and grandmother?

ML: I think so. There's some fine points there that I don't remember...

NG: Was there a sign for parents, instead of 'father and mother'?

ML: Yes, but it's a sign I never use, I don't know if it's this way or, I don't know...

NG: You mean, you had no occasion to use it.

ML: Yea. I've seen my mother and aunt use it, but they said alot of things that I didn't bother about.

NG: Ok, how about 'man' and 'woman'? Is that the same as 'male' and 'female'?

ML: This is woman:

and this is man:

NG: How bout hale and Female?

ML: Same thing.

NG: Same thing. How bout 'gentleman' and 'lady'?

Or was it assumed that everyone was a gentleman and lady?

ML: I can't remember that..

NG: OK. How about 'boy and girl'?

ML: This was female baby:

female girl:

Boy:

and then just:

NGL There was no sign for teenager, you know, someplace between a child and a...

ML: No, no you just, big enough to know better or something...

NG: Relative size. How about Husband and wife?

ML: I think they were both the same, -that doesn't sound right either.

NG: Well, a couple of people have shown me that it's both the same...

Mabel Look

ML: See, you're putting one over on me.

NG: Well, this is, the husband and wife I got, but everything else, you're the only one who knows...

How about 'Courting'..

ML:

is it a go back

NG: Isn't that marvelous. How about 'Family', say 'my family' ?

ML: No I can't...

NG: Can you say 'son' or 'daughter'?

ML:

NG: Would that be 'my male child',

Um could you say 'cousins'?

ML: Spelling it, I suppose.

NG: Was there any general term for person, or people? You know, like, 'there were many people'...

ML: Yes, but I don't know it.

NG: How about, you told me the sign for courting, how about the sign for 'love'?

ML:

END OF SIDE 2 OF TAPE #1//CASSETTE TAPE RECORDER BACK UP CONTINUES
ON SIDE #1 OF TAPE #2.