

THE ORAL HISTORY OF TWENTIETH CENTURY MONGOLIA



Dolgorjav

Basic information

Interviewee ID: 990274
Name: Dolgorjav
Parent's name: Jamba
Ovog: Harchin
Sex: f
Year of Birth: 1942
Ethnicity: Myangad

Additional Information

Education: incomplete secondary
Notes on education: This most likely means 7 years of schooling.
Work: retired
Belief: none
Born in: Myangad sum, Hovd aimag
Lives in: Bayanbuural sum (or part of UB), Töv aimag
Mother's profession: passed away
Father's profession: passed away

Themes for this interview are:

(Please click on a theme to see more interviews on that topic)

work; childhood; family; education / cultural production; collectivization;

Alternative keywords suggested by readers for this interview are: (Please click on a keyword to see more interviews, if any, on that topic)

educational system; teacher; music; party work;

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Translation:

Baasanhüü -

Thank you for helping us by agreeing to an interview.

Dolgorjav -

You are welcome. Thank you very much for interviewing me, my son. I was born in 1942 as the only daughter of Jamba in a place called Höndlön Arvan in Myangad Sum in Hovd Aimag. My parents were herders. I grew up with my parents and when I was six my father died of yellow fever.

Baasanhüü -

I see.

Dolgorjav -

I lived with my mother until I finished school. My mother had many animals, five kinds of livestock. I was a companion for my mother. My paternal uncles helped us to herd part of the animals. My maternal and paternal uncles herded sheep, goats, horses and camels. We also had a few cows. Every time we milked them, they gave between 40 and 50 liters of milk each.

Baasanhüü -

Wow!

Dolgorjav -

Yes. They weren't like today's dairy cows, but Mongolian cows. We were very busy. My mother used to wake me up at three at night. My father died when I was six and when I was eight I began milking the cows. People say that I made my mother suffer a lot because I was her only daughter. I was always crying asking for my father. My father used to carry me on his shoulders. He was a very big man, like a giant. There are big, big people called giants. At that time we had neither chairs nor a table, so I used to eat and drink sitting on my father's knee. When I was six or seven I made my mother suffer a lot.

Baasanhüü -

Mmh.

Dolgorjav -

That's what people used to say. They said 'Spoilt and stupid, how is she ever going to become a proper person?' I think that people become more understanding with time. I don't think I was too spoilt. My mother and I, until I was eight, well my parents woke me up at three at night to make me help milking the cows.

Baasanhüü -

Mmh.

Dolgorjav -

At that time we had neither tables nor chairs. Today people sit on a chair when they milk, you know.

Baasanhüü -

Yes.

Dolgorjav -

At that time we milked without a chair. We sat in strange way with one leg bent. We put the bucket in the space between the legs and hold it tight with the legs while we were milking. I was eight years old and I couldn't reach the cows' what you call it, so my mother put a block of wood under my knees and made me milk like that. What does an eight year old child that gets up at three in the morning do? Well, I would doze off while I was milking and spill the milk in the bucket.

Baasanhüü -

Oh, little devil.

Dolgorjav -

I wouldn't tell my mother, but cover it with soil. But in places without loose soil I would just leave it. At daytime my mother would see it and grumble 'Why are you always sleeping and spill stuff everywhere?' The cows and calves were the same. At three in the morning you wouldn't find one of them standing.



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Baasanhüü -
Oh, I see.

Dolgorjav -
The calves would lie down again and doze off. And then it wouldn't find the mother anymore to drink. It was a strange life.

Baasanhüü -
Those who are milking and those who are being milked are just the same!

Dolgorjav -
Yes, they are just the same. We always had to follow the plan at that time and deliver how do you call it. Several grams per cow... I don't know how many liters of milk we delivered every year. Because they always gave as such a plan, we never fulfilled it.

Baasanhüü -
Mmh.

Dolgorjav -
That's why my mother had the cows she milked three times. The second and third time I milked them. My mother did the first time. Then by autumn my mother...aah, if we started at 3 am we got about 100 liters of milk. At best we got more than that. And other times only 70, 80 liters. My mother had to deliver the milk, and when I was eight I had to carry two ten-liter churns as well. I was given a pole to carry them. When I was ten or twelve I carried 40 liters of milk like that with the pole. Looking at the factory...at that time people were very nice. I guess people were all like that. We were living close to the factory. There was a very long queue. We had to stand in the queue in the summer heat and some people's milk would become sour.

Baasanhüü -
Mmh.

Dolgorjav -
But people were considerate of the two of us and we could deliver without having to queue. My friends at that time talked about it. 'Dolgorjav's milk' they said, because I didn't have a father anymore. They called us 'Dolgorjav' and they tried to deliver before 'Dolgorjav's milk came'. I measured the milk, put it into big big buckets, and then I ... I boiled it on the fire. My uncles and aunts always helped, without them I would not have been able to do it.

Baasanhüü -
Yes.

Dolgorjav -
Poor things... the two of us delivered over 100 liters without having to queue and also tsötsyii. On some days my mother would go to deliver tsötsyii, and she would tell the women there that she had left me at home to milk the cows. But usually she would hire somebody to deliver tsötsyii. She would say 'This summer I will give you a cow to eat or two, three bags of zööhii and aaruul,' and in this way she hired people.

Baasanhüü -
Because you didn't have enough manpower, right?

Dolgorjav -
Yes. I think we transported the tsötsyii on four camels. It was tsötsyii from a lot of milk and we used to bring it to the sum center.

Baasanhüü -
Mmh.

Dolgorjav -
We delivered it and local people were really considerate. I went to sleep at ten after having delivered the milk. It was really thin milk and they would say that they didn't need it. At that time we would take the thin milk and throw it into the river. I was really strange, you know.

Baasanhüü -
Why did you do that?

Dolgorjav -
We used to pour it into the springs. If we had poured it on the open ground, ugly flies would have come. So we took the thin milk to the spring. The spring flowed white, you know...actually it wasn't really a spring but a stream. We often spent the summer in a place called Ölgii. Even the River Hovd would become white. People dug a canal. It wasn't just me. They generally didn't accept thin milk and people would pour it into the river. We also used to wash many, many ten-liter churns in the river. We had white overalls and we washed them every day. We washed the churns and put them upside down in a basket and on top we put our white overalls and the gauze we used to sift the milk.

Baasanhüü -
Is the time you are talking about that of the collective farms?

Dolgorjav -
That was the time when we didn't have cooperatives. It was in 1950...I became a half-orphan when I was six, I was born in 1942...

Baasanhüü -
In '48, in the 1950s. It was around 1950, right?

Dolgorjav -
Yes, 1950. It was between 1948 and 1954.

Baasanhüü -
Ah.

Dolgorjav -
Then in 1954... In between we had such private enterprises.

Baasanhüü -
Mmh.

Dolgorjav -
So after father had died we lived in such a way. The wool...it was really difficult. We had so much, but we couldn't keep any of it. And only one daughter...but the two of us managed it all.

Baasanhüü -
Yes. For instance, the cows were your private property...

Dolgorjav -
Yes, they were our property.

Baasanhüü -
The milk...

Dolgorjav -
Officially...

Baasanhüü -
It was kind of an official tax to the state?

Dolgorjav -
Yes, they estimated how many liters of milk we milked from a cow.

Baasanhüü -

Mmh.

Dolgorjav -

So, based on that number they calculated how much milk we had to pay. I don't know how much the milk was worth, because we were never paid for it. We just had to deliver the milk. Later I asked my mother why she milked the cows three times a day. She said that she tried to fulfill the plan by early August.

Baasanhüü -

I see.

Dolgorjav -

Between June and August. We tried to finish within the period when the grass is plenty, thereby slimming down the calves. Then when the grass became bad, we would put the calves back together with their mothers. In that way the meat becomes really nice. But how can only two people do all this? We would give the calves to the families that helped us milking, five to ten per family. So people helped us also because they thought about the profit they would get from it.

Baasanhüü -

Mmh.

Dolgorjav -

We would give one family a cow with five or three calves. And when the milk dried up they gave the calves back to us.

Baasanhüü -

Mmh.

Dolgorjav -

Yes.

Baasanhüü -

Does that mean that the cows were private property, but you had to deliver the milk to the state?

Dolgorjav -

Yes. They also took the cow hair.

Baasanhüü -

Mmh.

Dolgorjav -

The cow hair...I was little, so I don't know how much. In spring we used to pull off their winter coat.

Baasanhüü -

Mmh.

Dolgorjav -

And then we delivered it. If we didn't fulfill the quota or didn't deliver on time, they scolded and fined us. Taking off the cows' winter coat was a lot of work in spring. There was a quota also for camel wool, cashmere and sheep wool. They would write it down and give it to us. If we didn't manage on time we were fined. But the two of us didn't always pay, my uncles fulfilled the quota for all of us.

Baasanhüü -

Mmh.

Dolgorjav -

They separated the cattle... My paternal uncles loved me very much, maybe because my father had died when I was little. Oh dear, they always looked after us. In summer we followed the factory and my uncles would send us a sheep or a goat to eat. They would say 'You two can kill it so you have food.' They did all jobs like counting for us. When we needed to know they told us how many sheep and goats we had. When we didn't fulfill the official quota...if we didn't deliver enough wool and cashmere we had to pay money. They would send us a notification stating the value of the missing wool and that we had to pay. At that time we paid. That's how it was. We had such a life. Between 1940 something and 1950 something Mongolian people lived like that. That's what I know. But I don't know how it was before.

Baasanhüü -

Did you go to school?

Dolgorjav -

Yes, I did. It was very strange, children usually went to school when they were nine.

Baasanhüü -

I see.

Dolgorjav -

I was so happy when I turned nine and could start going to school. That was in 1950...I had turned eight, nine, and I was going to go to school...me...our...at that time people didn't like to send their children to school.

Baasanhüü -

Mmh.

Dolgorjav -

I don't know what bribe my mother gave to the brigade leader, but she told him that I was her only daughter. I was born in the year of the sheep, but somehow she turned it into the year of the rooster. People knew each other's year of birth. She turned it into the year of the rooster. People would say 'Dolgorjav was born in the year of the sheep,' and she would say 'No, my daughter was born in the year of the rooster.'

Baasanhüü -

Making you not old enough...

Dolgorjav -

Yes, making me too young. So the brigade leader postponed it for a year. Then I went to school, but my mother fought with my teachers. I don't know whether she bribed them, but after one term she took me home and I cried. In the end I started school when I was eleven. At that time eleven-year-olds were really tall, as tall as me, so hardly anyone noticed me. I was really disgraceful and tall. So I started school and of course an eleven-year old studies very well. Because I was good I went to a people's school. I was quite respected there. My mother...I was her only daughter...if children went to a people's school their families couldn't have livestock. She couldn't make me live in the dormitory. So she followed me and spent the winter at the school.

Baasanhüü -

Mmh.

Dolgorjav -

So she spent the winter there and her relatives looked after the cows, I guess. When the school year ended, she took in one of her younger brother's children who looked after us during the winter. So of course I had to study really well. My mother was given a certificate for taking good care of her child, it was written with golden letters.

Baasanhüü -

A model?

Dolgorjav -

Yes. My mother, my cousin and I all got many such small certificates with golden letters. When they were awarded there were concerts and a lot of other things. When a girl who started school at eleven finishes fourth grade, she is already big. And in 1954, fortunately the collectivization movement began.

Baasanhüü -

I see.

Dolgorjav -

Yes, fortunately the collectivization movement began...I had finished fourth grade and wanted to go to the province center. No, in 1954 I was a third-grader. Because the collectivization movement was beginning, the state organized all sorts of activities. So they went on and...Fortunately all animals were gathered with a nice rope around their neck, just like in the film 'If only I had a horse.'

Baasanhüü -
Ah.

Dolgorjav -
I was truly happy when the calves with their lead ropes were led away. I looked at it and I laughed. They took away all the lead ropes and I was so happy when only one was left! But my mother said 'My daughter, how are the two of us supposed to live now? They take our animals and my daughter runs around laughing.' She was very upset, but I was happy that the workload had become lighter. Now I had to milk only about ten cows. Only ten dairy cows were left and I was so happy.

Baasanhüü -
During the collectivization movement, were the animals taken away without permission, almost by force?

Dolgorjav -
They registered all the animals, the number of sheep, cows, horses and goats.

Baasanhüü -
Ah. Could people decide themselves how many animals they wanted to give to the cooperatives?

Dolgorjav -
No.

Baasanhüü -
It was impossible, right?

Dolgorjav -
People didn't do it, because we were allotted a number of animals per person, also my mother and me. One person had to have 75 heads of livestock.

Baasanhüü -
Mmh.

Dolgorjav -
Therefore the two of us were left with 140 heads of livestock. Fortunately the cooperative took the rest.

Baasanhüü -
Of all five kinds of animals, right?

Dolgorjav -
Yes, all five kinds. Even though thinking about it, I am not so sure. My mother used to say 'We have only 75 heads of livestock, how are the two of us supposed to live now?' Since we had 15 cows left, I guess that's how it was. We also had a certain number of sheep and goats, which we sold when I went to school. And we also had a few camels.

Baasanhüü -
Mmh.

Dolgorjav -
I don't know how many camels, how many horses, how many sheep and how many goats we had. One day...anyways. Fortunately our workload decreased, it was very good.

Baasanhüü -
The burden became less.

Dolgorjav -
Yes, the burden became less and we went to the aimag center. I started the fifth grade in the aimag center, because I had studied so well. My cousin who had lived with us...

Baasanhüü -
Yes.

Dolgorjav -
They lived in town, in the Hovd, in the province center. At that time Hovd was a town for us.

Baasanhüü -
Mmh.

Dolgorjav -
So I went to the province center and I started the fifth grade. I lived at my cousin's place and I missed my home very much. I couldn't study, because I cried the whole term and I got bad marks. Then my mother came to spend the winter at my cousin's place and my cousin went to look after the animals. That was the situation...when my mother came, I turned back to normal. After that my mother always came with me. When I entered the Teachers College in Arhangai, my mother had her ger shipped there from Hovd. When we went back, we took an '80' truck with the other students. When we went to Arhangai, we had a handsome driver called Puntsag. My paternal uncles had given us 600 tögrög to transport the ger. When we arrived at the Teachers College, there was the driver's mother-in-law. He had a wife and children. They were from Gov'-Altai. His mother-in-law was the same age as my mother and they both had the same name 'Tserennadmid'. My uncle-in-law, what am I saying, my paternal uncle had written a letter to the family of a certain Angaa who was working as a roadman, but they had gone to holidays. We were about to set up our ger along the road, but then Tserennadmid guai, who was the same age as my mother, came and said 'You can't set up your ger like that along the road. Our home is in a street in the south. We have only one ger, set up your ger in our courtyard.' We stayed with them until the other family came back. They welcomed us very warmly. Maybe all people at that time were that sociable. In any case, that lady would bring us a big bowl of öröm, milk and yoghurt every day. Later when we left, they told us to leave our ger as it was. 'We will put it down and protect it from the rain.' When school ended that family...that Puntsag guai took us to Gov'-Altai for free because he himself was a driver from Gov'-Altai.

Baasanhüü -
Mmh.

Dolgorjav -
From there we got a lift to Hovd and saved a lot of money this way. When we came back at the end of August they invited us to stay with them again. My mother told her younger brothers that we would go to Puntsag and they talked about cooking a sheep and a goat for them.

Baasanhüü -
I see.

Dolgorjav -
So my uncles cooked the meat, put it in 10-liter churn for us, gave it to us and saw us off. My mother used to help Puntsag a lot, she said that she would give him a shovgoi.

Baasanhüü -
What is a shovgoi?

Dolgorjav -
It's a watermelon

Baasanhüü -
Ah, a watermelon.

Dolgorjav -
Yes, a watermelon. People in our place used to say shovgoi at that time. My mother told one of my paternal uncles, who was working as a driver and used to go to Bayan-Ölgii to buy a Kazak carpet 'They are such a nice family, I have to please

them at least once. One Kazak carpet cost 75...it doesn't matter how much it costs, just get me a Kazak carpet.' It was very expensive. My aunt bought it for 75 tögrög. It was rather long...

Baasanhüü -
Mmh.

Dolgorjav -
She said 'Puntsag's home is really long, it's just right. Maybe it was because of that, but in any case she became very close with that person from Arhangai.

Baasanhüü -
Mmh.

Dolgorjav -
People from Arhangai are generally really nice. They are really sociable. I graduated from the Teachers College after four years and I was appointed to Hovd. The two us in Hovd...When I was sent to the Teachers College from Hovd, my mother didn't care about the expenses, but she wanted me to do the eighth grade. It was the first time that they selected the students based on their performance.

Baasanhüü -
I see.

Dolgorjav -
So a few students stayed to continue on to the eighth grade and to learn a profession. I...at that time children were very interested in going to vocational schools. I always wanted to become either a teacher or a doctor. And my mother said 'She is my only child, let her finish the tenth grade' and I stayed on.

Baasanhüü -
Mmh.

Dolgorjav -
When we were in the 8th grade, we had to make 800 bricks. Eighth-graders, those who stayed on at school.

Baasanhüü -
Was that a quota?

Dolgorjav -
So I was running around making those bricks...and when I finished I went to the teacher to say that I was done. I was wearing ugly clothes full of dirt. There was that teacher who was teaching math and algebra, her name was Handaa. She called my name and said 'Come here. Are you the one who wants to go to the Teachers College?' I said 'Yes.' And she said 'You can. Go in there now.'

Baasanhüü -
Ah.

Dolgorjav -
The reason was this. The Arhangai Teachers College was considered to be rather bad, so they had instated entry exams there for the first time. However, all the children had failed. So the teacher said 'If you don't send us good students, I will pack my stuff and leave. 'We will, we will,' they answered. And that's how I took the exam. I asked what to do with the shabby clothes, and they said I should take them off and put on a dress. Who knows what kind of dress that was! There was the teacher holding a piece of paper. He was sitting, a young man with a dark face. He said 'Let's have this girl take the exam. However, I would like to have two, three more. If they don't take the exam together, the exam questions will be revealed. So he told me to run and find children of my age who would be interested, before 1pm.

Baasanhüü -
Mmh.

Dolgorjav -
I came back with three girls. They were all eighth-graders.

Baasanhüü -
The exam was for children who had finished the first grade, right? But not one passed?

Dolgorjav -
No, eighth grade.

Baasanhüü -
Ah.

Dolgorjav -
It was for those who had finished the seventh grade. Those who had finished the tenth grade would go to university or a college.

Baasanhüü -
Ah.

Dolgorjav -
So there would be an exam after the 7th grade...

Baasanhüü -
So you didn't go to a TMS...?

Dolgorjav -
I was trying to get into the eighth grade, you know. The three of us and then others, I don't know where they found them, all together ten children sat there. We were seated one by one and took the exam. They told us to come back at 3pm. Outside there was a pillar...the school had one pillar, made of what...cement. He said 'We will put the results up there. If you have passed you come here to see me. If you haven't you just go on as before. We write your names down in the order of your results.' I didn't even tell my mother nor my uncles. I was so nervous... but it turned out all right.

Baasanhüü -
Mmh.

Dolgorjav -
I changed my clothes and washed and cleaned them. The others...well, I went to the column and saw that I had gotten an excellent mark. I was so happy! The teacher came and said 'Come tomorrow morning at 8am. At 9 you'll take the exam in Mongolian language and script.'

Baasanhüü -
In what was the first exam?

Dolgorjav -
Algebra.

Baasanhüü -
Ah.

Dolgorjav -
I got 'excellent' in algebra. That was the subject I had always been afraid of. The others were in Russian and in the constitution. I didn't know the constitution very well at all. These were the exams we took.

Baasanhüü -
Ah.

Dolgorjav -
When it came to the constitution, my head didn't work very well at all. I never understood the sense of the constitution.

Even though I was really afraid of the constitution exam, in the morning the dictation for the Mongolian language exam was really easy. The results, well, it was easy and I passed. Then there was the Russian exam, it was a written exam, too.

Baasanhüü -
Ah.

Dolgorjav -
I got a 'good' in the Russian exam. They didn't give us the constitution exam, maybe it was just to scare the children. In any case, they didn't make me take it. That teacher told me that I had passed and gave me the letter of transfer.

Baasanhüü -
I see.

Dolgorjav -
I didn't tell my mother. There had been another girl with me. She was the daughter of my maternal uncle. I didn't say anything until I held the letter in my hands and then I ran down the street...That cousin was making bricks as well, we both had to deliver 800 bricks. She had finished, while I had been taking those exams like crazy. All of the sudden I was being sent to the Teachers College in Arhangai. I was walking down the street and said to her 'I took exams for two days and I passed! Today is the third day...that teacher gave me that letter of transferal.' She was so evil, even though we lived together and people called us sisters. She snatched away the letter and ran away, saying that she would tell Balgiavaa. That's how people called my mother.

Baasanhüü -
Ah.

Dolgorjav -
She ran away saying that she would tell her father and Balgiavaa. I ran after her, but it was so hot and I didn't know what to do. I arrived at home...When I arrived there was nobody at home. My uncle lived in a ger in front of ours. I heard people talking, but I didn't know what they were talking about. I was scared. I went to the toilet and came back. I wanted to have some tea but I couldn't go inside to get it. So I waited and in the evening my mother came. She said 'What kind of complications did you get yourself in, my child?' 'Why?' I asked, and she said 'So you are going to leave me and go to the Arhangai Teachers College? Why didn't you tell us? Dangia is very angry.' Dangia was my uncle.

Baasanhüü -
Ah.

Dolgorjav -
I asked 'How do you know?' Jargal was the name of my cousin. 'Jargal brought this document, saying that you are going to Arhangai. She showed us the letter. You are being transferred and what now?' I was afraid of my uncle. Nobody had ever scolded me, but I was still very scared, I don't know why. He had his principles...and then he came in.

Baasanhüü -
Uh.

Dolgorjav -
I was really scared. 'So you are going to become a teacher?' he said. 'You are always doing the wrong thing.'

Baasanhüü -
Ah.

Dolgorjav -
Before, when I had been in the fifth grade, some theater people taken exams and selected several children. I had passed and I wanted to go. I was crying a lot. I cried saying that I had passed the dancing exam and my uncle said no. 'As a dancer, if you move your hand or your foot a bit badly they are going to kick you out. Then you will have no life.' Now he said 'So before you wanted to become a dancer and now... you can still become a teacher after the tenth grade. Why do you have to hurry so much?' 'I don't know, I took the exam and they sent me there.' 'Why didn't you tell us?' 'I was afraid that you wouldn't allow me to take them. And also I didn't know whether I would pass the exams or not. But then I passed and they gave me the letter. Now what?' 'Never mind,' he said, 'if you are really interested we can't forbid it. Your poor mother.' We were calling my mother 'avai'.

Baasanhüü -
Mmh.

Dolgorjav -
It was local custom, a Myangad custom to call the father 'adai'.

Baasanhüü -
Ah.

Dolgorjav -
So we called my mother 'avai'. 'Your mother will get really tired alone,' he said. How old was a child, who started school at eleven, at that time?

Baasanhüü -
18.

Dolgorjav -
Yes. 'Your avai will get tired, but there is nothing we can do. A spoiled daughter always does what she wants. So do what you want.' That's what he said and then he left. My mother was crying. She was crying and saying that she wouldn't let me go to school. 'I will join the cooperative with my cows,' she said. At that time, cooperative members had to milk the cooperative cows. She said 'I will do that and take you to the countryside.' And I said 'I won't go to the countryside, I won't go.' And then...in the evening...she got a lift to Myangad.

Baasanhüü -
Mmh.

Dolgorjav -
Mayngad Sum is on the way to Uvs. It's only 40 km, it's very close. So my mother left. When she went out she said 'I will go to Myangad to get livestock, the two of us will milk cows.' I was worried about what would happen. Three days later my mother came back with a lot of money. She probably had sold all our animals, or maybe she had settled some earlier accounts. Who knows, but it was an awful lot of money. Maybe she had given our remaining animals to the cooperative. She came back with 3000 tögrög.

Baasanhüü -
Ah.

Dolgorjav -
At that time 3000 tögrög were a lot of money. The tögrög was worth a lot back then. We sold all our property except for a few heads of livestock. My mother took all the rest and said 'Now I am sending you to become a scholar.' It was strange, because at that time I was thinking myself that I was going to become a scholar. It was nothing to be afraid of. We shipped our ger for 600 and went. I don't know whether my mother put the rest into the bank. I wasn't interested in that at all, what a fool I was! I don't know what she did with the money. So I went to school, to the Teachers College in Arhangai and we set up our ger like it had been before.

Baasanhüü -
Mmh.

Dolgorjav -
Then we had to go to a state farm and my mother remained alone. She couldn't follow me to the state farm.

Baasanhüü -
Of course.

Dolgorjav -
For several days in a row that told us that we would leave that day, but we didn't...the truck didn't come.

Baasanhüü -
Ah.

Dolgorjav -
One day my mother came with a thermos flask. The teachers almost became acquainted with her.

Baasanhüü -
You mean your mother?

Dolgorjav -
So this old woman from Hovd, who had sent her child to school, is sitting there feeding those few children. With her thermos flask full of tea...she asked them where they were from and they said 'Gov'-Altai, Zavhan, Uvs, Hovd, Bayan-Ölgii.' And she said 'We are all from the Western provinces, so we come from the same place.'

Baasanhüü -
Ah.

Dolgorjav -
One day when I went to school, my mother had not yet brought the tea in the thermos flask, the tea was not yet ready. And while she went to prepare the tea, the truck came to pick us up. My mother fetched the thermos flask and food, but when she arrived the children had all gone. I heard that my mother cried. She asked where the teachers, the people in the school, where the children had gone. They told her to the Tövshrüüle State Farm. 'Our children have been brought there, they have just left.' And they indicated her the direction. In Arhangai there is a hill called Maanit. She asked her friend, the one who had hosted us, to go to that hill with her. They went to the top of that hill together. While one was standing there crying, the other tried to console her by showing her the Tövshrüüle State Farm. That's how it was when I was in school. I graduated and then I started to work. During that time my mother used to send me a lot of food.

Baasanhüü -
To the state farm?

Dolgorjav -
Yes. It seems the drivers going to Gov'-Altai went there very often.

Baasanhüü -
Mmh.

Dolgorjav -
Some of them caused me trouble. They were young and I was a student, they gave me a hard time and caused all sorts of problems.

Baasanhüü -
Mmh.

Dolgorjav -
I was a young girl, and they would give me letters from my mother. All sorts of things happened. Letters...there was no phone, that's how simple our lifestyle was. She would give the letters to the drivers, and some delivered them while others didn't. In November we all went back home. We arrived at the school at night and unloaded our luggage. Two ah from Hovd used to live at our place, too. The three of us went home and we saw through the door that mother was sleeping. So we knocked lightly at the door and my mother asked 'Who is it?' We said 'Us three.' She opened the door for us, poor thing. She prepared a meal for us at night. It was always like that. That was the first year and then I did the second. After I had finished the second year, we went home with a driver from Arhangai. A young man called Pirenlei, he was very famous. He drove the students from Uvs and us two from Hovd. While he was driving, the petrol... he didn't follow the roads.

Baasanhüü -
Mmh.

Dolgorjav -
To take a shortcut. And the water finished.

Baasanhüü -
What a terrible thing.

Dolgorjav -
Our accent... Just before noon the other children said that we didn't have any water anymore. My mother was there, too, she was following me. She said 'That's not possible, it's dangerous in the Gobi without water.' We were just sitting there. The driver didn't say a word. Then we saw a mirage, the sun came out and it became really unpleasant. The driver said 'I see something moving there,' and he said he would take five people to go there. He asked 'Is there anyone who wants to go with me?' I was lazy and didn't go. They went and they didn't come back for a while. There weren't any soft drinks then. We had only lemon juice. We drank it and peed. We covered the urine with sand and lay on it. There was nothing except for lizards. The urine dried and we had nothing left. In the end we couldn't even speak anymore. There was no shade, only the thin shadow of the truck. Shadows are really strange. It became very late in the evening, what were we supposed to do? We couldn't speak anymore and we were looking down. There were a lot of lizards. We were lying there and then fortunately the others came back. I couldn't get up anymore and all other children were the same. Through the noise my mother... those five people...they had found a family and fetched some water. They wetted our clothes and a big piece of cloth. They couldn't give it to us, we couldn't drink, we felt nauseous.

Baasanhüü -
Mmh.

Dolgorjav -
They covered us with the wet cloth. They covered us with the wet cloth one after the other...we felt much better and started to talk and said how wonderful this was. Then they gave us some water to drink. They had put some tea into the water. They gave us a little bit of that. The driver told us to climb back on the truck and he helped those who were really weak. It was almost night. We were afraid to lose sight of that family in the dark. Five young man looked out for it and we got there at 4 or 5 am. .

Baasanhüü -
Wow!

Dolgorjav -
Where had they been? The moving thing was a camel and the five of them had followed it. It seemed very close, but it was very far away. They didn't catch it. So they chased it and got to a family's well. At the well they caught the camel and then they found the way to the family. So they had left during that summer day and came back late at night. They said that my mother had saved our lives, and she went to the Teachers College and was given a congratulations letter. They knew about it, because the driver had told them. The teachers said 'Your avai has saved the lives of many children.' They thanked her very much and they called her avai like I did. They said 'Avai, thank you so much for saving the lives of so many children.' Such an interesting thing happened. Then I did the third and the fourth year and then I graduated.

Baasanhüü -
Mmh

Dolgorjav -
I graduated and I was in the aimag center. I was wondering whether to go to Ulaanbaatar, but my mother said Hovd...at that time we were appointed straight away. There was a friend whom I wanted to marry, but we didn't have the right to go to the same place. We had to go where we were appointed to.

Baasanhüü -
You worked there?

Dolgorjav -
Mmh. So I was appointed to Hovd. There were many children who cried because of where there had been appointed.

Baasanhüü -

Mmh.

Dolgorjav -

So two, three...some separated forever and some came back. The school was very accurate with the appointments. The state and the school had the authority to do so. They didn't send teachers to places where there were enough. They appointed me to Myangad. Also there I did as I wished. The guy who had graduated with me...my mother implored them to send us to Hovd together. But fortunately I said 'No, no, I will go to Erdenebüren.' And that's how I went to Erdenbüren.

Baasanhüü -

Ah.

Dolgorjav -

So I lived in Erdenebüren...

Baasanhüü -

Ah, and then you met Batbayar guai.

Dolgorjav -

Yes. So I went to Erdenebüren, and in October...on the 20th August we had a teachers' seminar. After the seminar that truck came...they said it was a cooperative truck, anyways a truck came from Erdenebüren to pick up our ger. We set it up in Erdenebüren. At that time there were hardly any female teachers at the Erdenebüren elementary school. I was the second, who had come from outside. In the hotel, they gave me two liters of milk everyday.

Baasanhüü -

I see.

Dolgorjav -

They also gave me meat. They wrote the price on it and left it. My mother always said 'How wonderful, you have enough milk and meat.' My mother would go to the countryside to collect dung and firewood. Doing that she became friends with an old lady, so they would go together to collect dung. She used do that the whole winter through. On the one hand she took care of me, but on the other it was also very strange. We used red caragana as firewood. You might not know them. We collected caragana and used it as firewood. I had graduated in '65...in '64.

Baasanhüü -

Mmh.

Dolgorjav -

In '65, '66 or '67, we got married. In the meantime Batbayar had gone to Zavhan, you know.

Baasanhüü -

Ah.

Dolgorjav -

He had been to many places and in the end he was appointed to Erdenebüren and we got married. In the meantime...the appointments were done very accurately. My husband can tell you how nicely he pursued me. So, I graduated in such an interesting way. In '67 I had a baby. This is how I lived there. I taught in Erdenbüren for three years. I was the only one who had come from outside, all other teachers were local people. When they distributed the children among the teachers, I didn't get any, I had only four.

Baasanhüü -

I see.

Dolgorjav -

All the other children were assigned to the local teachers. The first-graders were divided into three groups.

Baasanhüü -

Ah.

Dolgorjav -

And even so nobody assigned children to me. They explained my number of students with many students not coming to school. So they told me to go and find the missing ones. So I took a horse and went to get those children in a place, which I didn't know at all.

Baasanhüü -

In order to fill the class?

Dolgorjav -

Yes. Those four children went to attend another teacher's class. So I went around for seven days to search for the other pupils and I came back with 17 Kazak children.

Baasanhüü -

I see.

Dolgorjav -

They were Kazak, these seventeen children, and they didn't speak Mongolian. The others were from lazy and unruly families, who didn't send their children to school. Well, in the end I gathered all together 29 children from here and there.

Baasanhüü -

Wow!

Dolgorjav -

Seven days later. Well, the lessons of the first grade were strange. I was young and I didn't know much. The only thing I knew was that I had to teach those children. At that time the teaching and education were very poor. I was next to those children, holding their hands, so close, and the smell of sweat made me feel nauseous. Those poor children were so dirty. Fortunately they were put into the dormitory and washed. After they had been cleaned, they were very cute, you know.

Baasanhüü -

Ah.

Dolgorjav -

Then the holidays came and the children of my class disappeared and nobody brought them back. Again a teacher had to go on a motorcycle or a horse to get them. The 17 Kazak children were good at math, but of course very bad at language.

Baasanhüü -

They didn't know Mongolian, right?

Dolgorjav -

Yes, because they didn't know Mongolian. Then a boy came, who spoke Mongolian very well. He would translate. I would tell him to translate what I had said into Kazak and to translate their words into Mongolian for me. He did that very well. He was also very good at math. So in the first term I taught them language. Anyways, compared to the city...the children in the countryside gave me a lot of love. And by the fourth grade my class had become really good.

Baasanhüü -

Mmh.

Dolgorjav -

I was worried about how they would pass the state exams. I thought that my students weren't as good as those of the other classes, but in the end it wasn't like that. They did excellently and I was so happy about it! After they finished parents started to send their children to school, because they said that the teacher was good.

Baasanhüü -

What a good teacher.

Dolgorjav -

The next graduating class, when they finished the third grade, there was the Olympiad...no, when they were finished the

fourth grade, there was the Olympiad, for the first time in Mongolian language. My class won the second place at the provincial level. It got bigger and when the next class was graduating...my mother died. Look at it. In the meantime, we have had two children. My mother died when we had two children and then we had a third child. We didn't have anybody to look after the children. When the baby was just 20 days old I went around searching for a babysitter, so there was nobody who took care of the children's appointment to school. The order from the Department for Education was that I had to work. So I was dismissed. But I am quite a strange person, too. One day I really felt terrible, so I decided that my in-laws could look after the children and I left.

Baasanhüü -
Mmh.

Dolgorjav -
Schools used to have supply teachers. I went to the eight-year school no.1. The school administration was really close to the aimag center. I was hired as a supply teacher but the head of the Department for Education chased me away, saying 'You have been working there, why did you leave that job to come here? She cannot be assigned any lessons.' He chased me away in front of all the children. So I had to leave. It was the 20th anniversary of Erdenebüren. The celebrations were supposed to be held the next day and in the morning Daalin darga was supposed to come. Before that the two of us...we had a motorcycle. My husband drove me there, I wanted to talk to the headmaster and to the director of studies. In the meantime, Erdenebüren had gotten an 8-year school. Since I had led three classes to graduation I was quite respected there.

Baasanhüü -
Mmh.

Dolgorjav -
So I said to the headmaster Binder'ya 'Daalin darga will ask about me. Tell him that I don't have a class.' She agreed. Just when I left the headmaster's home, Daalin darga was passing by in his car. Of course I greeted. He asked me whether I had gotten a job, but I didn't say anything and the two of us left on the motorcycle. Then the director of studies called me and said 'Binder'ya bagsh, director Binder'ya has disbanded your class.' So I became a supply teacher. From there I went a bit further to the first ten-year school.

Baasanhüü -
Mmh.

Dolgorjav -
I went there as a supply teacher, too. Then a really funny thing happened. There was a class of second-graders, and since the teacher was on maternity leave they told me to take it...

Baasanhüü -
Ah, as a supply teacher?

Dolgorjav -
Yes. I was a substitute. It was very strange. My father-in-law was a very meticulous and great person. He said 'You should check the regulations,' he said, 'if not the people in the aimag center might drag your name through the mud.' I asked him why. He said 'When you take the exams, especially in math and in reading, you have to check with the administration and show them that you took over the class as a supply teacher.' I said that I would do so. The headmaster was called Mudga, he was a famous member of parliament. I told the director and I took an exam. Those second-graders couldn't read at all. Only two could read more than forty words. About 20 could read letter after letter and the others couldn't read at all. They also couldn't write dictations. I was told that the next year...in spring when they would start the third grade...no, in autumn...in autumn there would be a ministerial inspection. The director said 'You are a party member, so you will be responsible for this matter.'

Baasanhüü -
You had become a party member?

Dolgorjav -
Yes. After one year of work, the party secretary and vice secretary called me and told me to join the MAHN.

Baasanhüü -
Mmh. It was usually a process with a lot of stages and examinations, right?

Dolgorjav -
Yes, they checked me a lot, I don't know why. After a year...the vice secretary gave me a really hard time. After some time...we got a certificate from the deputy secretary of the provincial party committee. Then we got the real certificate from the secretary of the party committee. It was all done very meticulously. And then the ministerial inspection...it happened in autumn.

Baasanhüü -
Mmh.

Dolgorjav -
They were supposed to come in spring, but they came in autumn. So until then I had worked for a whole year. So they came and examined the third-graders. One year had passed...but it was a strange class. The previous teacher hadn't worked with the children individually. They attended the lessons and they weren't stupid, but they were undisciplined and didn't respect the rules. I used to hold a reunion with their parents every week. Every week I would visit their homes. And after a while a lot of parents came, and when they couldn't come because they were at work I would go to see them. I was really engaged back then. I did the right thing, and because the children were smart they quickly learned how to read and to write. At the exam all were successful and achieved more than 60 percent. It was in arithmetic and math. So I said to the director 'Director, would you please ask the questions? I can't go in there, because I might be biased. And I also don't know how to ask the questions. Please come and have a look.' One day when I was going to the classroom, the door of his room was open. So he called me 'Dogarjav, come in.' I was really worried. But he said 'Congratulations! Your class did really well.' I was really happy and I left. And I asked about the average mark and the success rate. Because the children were not great I had prepared myself really well. And then the teachers had to take an exam in Russian language and also in politics, I think.

Baasanhüü -
The teachers?

Dolgorjav -
Yes. There were ministerial examinations also in pedagogy and psychology. Since I had a weak class, I thought that it was important for me not to fail. It was really useful. Other classes achieved average marks of 90 or even 100%, while my reached only 60, 70, 80 percent.

Baasanhüü -
Mmh.

Dolgorjav -
In the report they wrote that teacher Dolgorjav of the ten-year school no.1 was very prepared, particularly in Russian language. It was a great encouragement for me.

Baasanhüü -
So, you were not a supply teacher any longer?

Dolgorjav -
Yes. There were two or three supply teachers, and our director said that somebody who worked like me should be given a class. The teachers' council met and I became a regular staff member. So I wasn't a supply teacher any longer and I could work freely.

Baasanhüü -
What subjects were taught at elementary school?

Dolgorjav -
Math, Mongolian language, reading, music, physical education and labour.

Baasanhüü -

Mmh. So you taught everything except for music and physical education, right?

Dolgorjav -

We taught everything ourselves at that time. We had specialized teachers only later in the 1980s. Before that elementary school teachers used to sing in the class and to line up the students for gymnastics, running and jumping.

Baasanhüü -

So you taught everything?

Dolgorjav -

Yes. Specialized teachers came only at the very end. It became more sophisticated in the 1980s. In the '70s...no, beginning from the '80s. Before that everything was taught by one teacher.

Baasanhüü -

Did you also have to do work for the party, did you have any duties as a party member while you were teaching?

Dolgorjav -

Oh, yes. First...let me finish...what was I talking about, the ten-year school.

Baasanhüü -

All right.

Dolgorjav -

When I was in the countryside in the beginning there were very many such tasks. And when I came to Erdenbüren we had to play concerts. The teachers were all acting as artists. They took us to the countryside and made us play concerts. We would have to skip classes. We also went to competitions. We had to play volleyball and tennis. Except for teachers almost nobody else would participate.

Baasanhüü -

Mmh.

Dolgorjav -

Then there was ideological work, the ideology brigade was very active. The teachers would go from the sum center with a projectionist. There we would do concerts...the teachers and the so-called sum artists. The participants were librarians, the union leaders, people like that, and some talented teachers. What did the ideology brigade do...we would ride through the countryside on camels. In the period when the animals were giving birth to their young. We would take our musical instruments. It was me, Hishigtogtoh and Dulmaa.

Baasanhüü -

I see.

Dolgorjav -

Because we were at the 8-year elementary school. There was a teacher called Battulga, a male teacher called Dorlig and Minuar, another male teacher. There were six of us. Battulga, Dorlig and Minuar played the accordion. Me, Hoshigtogtoh and Dulmaa...

Baasanhüü -

You played the mandolin?

Dolgorjav -

Yes. This is how we played our concerts. We played folk songs. The six of us played our instruments and we sang.

Baasanhüü -

The audience was sitting in a circle around you?

Dolgorjav -

Yes. We would go to visit every family in spring when the animals were giving birth to their young. The airag....

Baasanhüü -

That means you were spreading art and culture?

Dolgorjav -

Yes. And we would inform people about what had happened recently. We sang songs and we danced. People in the countryside had really small gers.

Baasanhüü -

I see.

Dolgorjav -

We were too tall for those small gers, so we had to stoop down.

Baasanhüü -

Mmh.

Dolgorjav -

We were singing all bent down.

Baasanhüü -

So how did you manage your main job as a teacher?

Dolgorjav -

The teachers who didn't participate, those who stayed behind, had to teach twice as much. We also had to make up for the lessons we missed ourselves and we had to work with children who were lagging behind. During those activities, our classes were often sent home and we were sent to the countryside as agitators. The teachers went to help the herders with the young. I belonged to the brigade no.3 and we were responsible for the young, so if one died it fell back on the teachers.

Baasanhüü -

Mmh.

Dolgorjav -

We would be sent to assist a group of five to six families. They wouldn't let those families sleep. We had the duty to spread culture, and when animals were dying we had to help really fast. Sometimes we went on foot. Or we rode camels...we didn't have any cars when we went to the countryside.

Baasanhüü -

Right.

Dolgorjav -

Each of us would get a camel to ride, from the cooperative. We saddled the camels, and sat high on their backs. The children...we had learned it as children. We would race against each other. Our projectionist was an older man called Chimed. He would always go first. We would tell him to go ahead and then we would follow him trying to catch up. We were young and hence a bit wild. There was a black camel with high bumps. A teacher called Norovtseren, who received a distinction this year, he used to ride that black camel. Lamhüü the librarian rode a yellow Bactrian camel. We used to call each other by our camels' color. I was Brown, because I was riding a brown camel. It was so interesting.

Baasanhüü -

There was the musical group and the projectionist, who was showing films. Were there any other people?

Dolgorjav -

Yes. There were also people from the sum administration.

Baasanhüü -

As agitators?

Dolgorjav -

Yes. We had to carry out some propaganda work as well. At night we would show the movie, and during the day we sang and danced. And the animals...in places where there were only a few people we would help with the lambing and calving. Or we would tend the sheep.

Baasanhüü -

Did party members have the duty to engage in other activities in addition to their jobs?

Dolgorjav -

Yes. Party and union members had that responsibility.

Baasanhüü -

Ah.

Dolgorjav -

The members of the unions had a great responsibility. They were usually also party members...I did like that...I thought it was very difficult to become a party member after a year of trial.

Baasanhüü -

I see.

Dolgorjav -

You had to prove yourself through work...I just took an exam and became a member... I took an exam.....the assignments were really, really difficult.

Baasanhüü -

I see.

Dolgorjav -

They might tell me 'You go and work in this really bad section or brigade.' At that time there were a lot of illiterate people.

Baasanhüü -

Mmh.

Dolgorjav -

Then there were the so-called temporary schools. We used to teach there. They would give us the assignment to alphabetize this and that many people. I made about 30 people literate. It was a party assignment. In winter, parents would usually follow their children to the sum center, and we had to make time to teach them in the evenings.

Baasanhüü -

Mmh.

Dolgorjav -

In this way we taught them how to read and to write and how to solve math problems, not written ones, just simple number ones.

Baasanhüü -

Mmh.

Dolgorjav -

People who didn't get any points had to repeat. The department for education carried out the exam and those who passed received a certificate stating that they had attained fourth-grade level education. That's how it was. The teachers worked night and day to give the people an education.

Baasanhüü -

Mmh.

Dolgorjav -

Those who received a certificate, who were considered to have become literate, they were given assignments like reading books. A lot of books, they were forced to read them. And then we would examine them again.

Baasanhüü -

You made them talk about the book?

Dolgorjav -

Ah. Those who weren't able to get the certificate, we had to continue to teach them until they became literate.

Baasanhüü -

You had to make everybody literate without exception?

Dolgorjav -

Yes. We parted from them only once they had become literate. As for myself...At that time there used to be a lot of evening meetings in the sum center.

Baasanhüü -

I see.

Dolgorjav -

The teachers had to go to set an example. We would gather people and make them go. In the end, people in the sum center liked these evening meetings a lot.

Baasanhüü -

Mmh.

Dolgorjav -

The meetings were held in the club. It was a really big club and we would heat it by burning caragana. We didn't have any coal nor heaters. We were cold in there. We were wearing Mongolian boots or felt boots and sheep skin deels and coats, but we would still shiver. Then we would dance and get warm. Our life was like that.

Baasanhüü -

In addition to your work for the state and society, you also had to fulfill your duties as wife and mother, right?

Dolgorjav -

Yes.

Baasanhüü -

How did you do all this?

Dolgorjav -

When my mother died, I kept close to my parents-in-law. When my mother was still alive I had two children. Then I had three children and I couldn't just abandon them. My mother managed all that. She didn't get sick for a very long time. The kidneys. I looked after her for two months when I was on pregnancy leave. And I did the sewing during the summer.

Baasanhüü -

Mmh.

Dolgorjav -

I made my deels in the summer. I made all the things that we used in the winter during the summer holidays. And also...I didn't sleep at night.

Baasanhüü -

In order to manage your work?

Dolgorjav -

Yes. I think that getting up at 3am did me really good. People sleep a lot, but I still wake up between three and four. I have

this good habit because I was pushed to get up early from when I was a child and I don't get tired. People who rise early get tired. I am very active, but I don't get tired. Now that I have become old I have a nap during the day, at 2pm, at 11 am or noon. Back then I wouldn't sleep at night to prepare the lessons. And I would get study materials for the weak students. In addition, because I was young, I would do my own things. I was doing a lot of needlework. I don't know nationwide, but in our province a lot of people were doing it.

Baasanhüü -
I see.

Dolgorjav -

We would do cross stitch with the needles of syringes. I would make wall-hangings with tigers to hang behind the beds. I would stitch until 3am and after that I did the cleaning and the washing. I managed to do all these things at night. Strange. All teachers did like that, but women's burden was particularly heavy. When the children were crying it was very hard. I was an only child and I think that I made my mother suffer a lot. When the children were crying I was told to breastfeed them, but how could I breastfeed them so often? My mother, poor thing, allowed them suck her breasts. When I was sleeping I didn't hear the children crying. I was sleeping so I didn't know, my mother told me only much later. I understood that only when I had the last baby.

Baasanhüü -
With your own body?

Dolgorjav -

Yes. Only then I understood how much I had made my poor mother suffer. Young people aren't aware of anything, and they think that things are just like that. At that time we weren't as open as we are today. We pushed ourselves a lot. If you push yourself you have a lot of resources. That's my advice for young people today, it's important to remind them firmly of that. But they are not as stupid as me. I was really strict with the children, in addition we had plans from the party and the state. Today people don't have that anymore, so they have more opportunities.

Baasanhüü -
Mmh.

Dolgorjav -

On Monday mornings at 7.30 we had to go to a political speech before work.

Baasanhüü -
I see.

Dolgorjav -

On Tuesdays we had lectures at 7pm, on Wednesdays at 7.30am medical education, on Thursdays various kinds of meetings at the workplace, and on Fridays we had to go those circles. At the circles highly educated people would teach the teachers Marxism and philosophy. There were special lectures for those with secondary education.

Baasanhüü -
Mmh.

Dolgorjav -

We had to attend those, too, and they lasted for two hours. On Saturdays we would carry out propaganda work in different families...oh no, there used to be medical education. And we would carry out agitation work on Sundays and in the time we had on Saturdays. For the agitation work, we were assigned a certain number of families. The agitator was responsible not only for agitation, but also for those families' hygiene, culture and everything else. Whatever they had, they would talk to their agitator.

Baasanhüü -
What kind of agitation did you do?

Dolgorjav -

We would tell people about the political situation...they didn't have TV.

Baasanhüü -
Mmh.

Dolgorjav -

Radios were very few, that's why we told people about the international situation and always read the newspapers. When reading the newspapers we would take notes every day about what had happened.... the place names together with the maps...we had to know them for the exams. At the exams of the circles, the political exams, we would be asked questions about Cuba. At that time Cuba and Vietnam were struggling to become socialist countries, you know.

Baasanhüü -
Mmh.

Dolgorjav -

They would ask us what had happened how and why. Then we had to disseminate the news. Today people have their private education, we watch the local meetings on TV.

Baasanhüü -
Mmh.

Dolgorjav -

Back then we didn't have such things. During the meetings we took notes and then we disseminated everything that had been said during the meetings among the people. We went to organizations and to families and told them about the issues that had been discussed during the meetings. We told them particularly about things related to physicians, teachers and public servants.

Baasanhüü -
In other words, you informed people, right?

Dolgorjav -

Yes, at that time information was called agitation. The agitator's notebook was a bit bigger than this one. It contained many detailed things and we were given one for our notes. Everybody had one.

Baasanhüü -

Wow. So you carried out agitation by teaching adults the main elements of the socialist ideology, right? Where there activities aimed at children?

Dolgorjav -

Yes, the first five minutes of every lesson were dedicated to that and the content was tailored to children's heads.

Baasanhüü -
I see.

Dolgorjav -

It was suitable for them...those five minutes...during the first five minutes of every lesson we had to inform the children in some way. Whether it was algebra...that is math, or Mongolian language, or reading, we would make them write two sentences by heart at the beginning of the lesson.

Baasanhüü -
Mmh.

Dolgorjav -

During the reading class the children also had to speak a little bit, they had to answer a few questions. That's why children, young people at that time had very little free time I think.

Baasanhüü -
I see.

Dolgorjav -

Yes. People weren't rowdy, they didn't steal and they didn't lie. Teachers and doctors did their jobs, and in addition they had to do all those other things, so they had generally very little time. So we got up at night to sew, not only me, but people generally. We did things for each other...we knit jumpers and skirts to wear. We did it mostly at night.

Baasanhüü -

There were almost no ready-made clothes, right?

Dolgorjav -

Right. And I guess we also wanted to make ourselves pretty. When we wanted to buy some ready-made clothes, people who lived in remote places like us in Hovd would give their size to those who went to the city...We would give people a bit of money and tell them to get us such and such a nice thing, not knowing what kind of clothes there were. That's why we knitted our own pullovers. The thread came on round reels. We used it to knit jumpers and skirts.

Baasanhüü -

Mmh.

Dolgorjav -

At the beginning of the '80s, we would spin sheep and camel wool and knit hats and pullovers by hand.

Baasanhüü -

Mmh.

Dolgorjav -

During the lectures, they would call us 'teachers and doctors'. The doctors wore the same things. The head of the Women's Council would pay attention to it....she would talk like this during the whole lecture. They were lectures especially for us, right?

Baasanhüü -

Mmh.

Dolgorjav -

They said that the plan had not been fulfilled. 'The production plans for sheep and camel wool have not been fulfilled. You took wool for yourself to make pullovers and skirts and hats.' They said all these things. And then we were punished. It was difficult to get food and clothes. Today we are all fine. In the 21st century things became really good. Everything is free, and we can choose what to wear and where to get it from. Back then what could we do? Since we couldn't all go ourselves, we had to order trousers for 35 tögrög from Ulaanbaatar, woolen trousers.

Baasanhüü -

Woolen trousers for 35 tögrög?

Dolgorjav -

Yes. We asked someone to buy them. We would give them as a present, it was a really big present. It was like that. In the 20th century, Mongolia was very closed. Yes. Today everything is open...democracy has brought us such beautiful things.

Baasanhüü -

Mhmm.

Dolgorjav -

All these things appeared after democracy, right? Before that...we couldn't sell anything to anybody. It was called speculation. If someone went abroad and brought back make-up, we had to swindle in order to buy it. One local child studied there and sold make-up to us for five tögrög, we got it secretly from the parents. It wasn't as open as it is today.

Baasanhüü -

Ah.

Dolgorjav -

They would scold us by calling us traders, black market traders. They wouldn't only call us names, but also take punitive measures. There were different measures for party members, for league members and for union members.

Baasanhüü -

So everybody was affiliated to something, like the party, the league or the trade union?

Dolgorjav -

Yes. Those who weren't affiliated to anything were workers or herders...but workers were usually affiliated to the trade union. They had to take an exam in order to become members. If they passed, their application was discussed at the administrative meeting of the organization where they were working. It was like that. And the artists, sport...I participated in a bicycle competition when I was pregnant, what was that supposed to be good for.

Baasanhüü -

Ah?

Dolgorjav -

In the sum centre. There were sports competitions among the sums.

Baasanhüü -

I see.

Dolgorjav -

The cyclists...the cycling competition was there. They forced a pregnant woman to participate.

Baasanhüü -

Because there was no-one else?

Dolgorjav -

Yes. If nobody participated we would have lost a lot of points. That's why I participated. I remember that I finished completely exhausted and panting.

Baasanhüü -

Wow.

Dolgorjav -

Very active...

Baasanhüü -

Which pregnancy was that?

Dolgorjav -

It was the second pregnancy. That's the amazing thing about young age. I had a big belly and I was riding a bike there.

Baasanhüü -

Wow!

Dolgorjav -

That's how it was. We also did a lot as sum artists. We were considered to be the best. They took our pictures and hung them up. The sum artists. Now I have hidden that photo. It was a nice picture of me when I was young. My children say 'if we edited this photo on the computer, if we decorated it and made her wear some nice clothes, our mother's picture could be very beautiful.'

Baasanhüü -

Mmh.

Dolgorjav -

I used to go a lot to the countryside for performances. There also used to be competitions among the sums.

Baasanhüü -
Mmh.

Dolgorjav -
Our sum won once.

Baasanhüü -
I see.

Dolgorjav -
The winners were gathered together with good singers and dancers from other sums and they performed a big concert in the sums and in the countryside. In that period, a lot of classes were cancelled.

Baasanhüü -
I see.

Dolgorjav -
It went like that. When the audience requested an encore, we received 25 tögrög as a prize from a person of the cultural organization. They were called club, sum club.

Baasanhüü -
Mmh.

Dolgorjav -
Once I was asked seven encores! I was really happy! I didn't think about the wallet, but it was a lot of money, right?

Baasanhüü -
Ah.

Dolgorjav -
My wallet...people got 25 tögrög for each encore and I was so happy. I felt like I was getting rich...and at the same time I was performing in a play...the plays...we would at night...

Baasanhüü -
There were people of all professions?

Dolgorjav -
Yes. There were vets, physicians and teachers, the sum intellectuals gathered to stage a play. There was a piece by Byambajav called 'People's thought is changing' (Hünii bodol öör bolj ee). He has already passed away, poor thing. I played in one of his plays. I played the role of a physician called Dolgormaa. I played really well.... there are some photos...

Baasanhüü -
Do you have those pictures?

Dolgorjav -
I don't have them right now. The two of us hide these things. I can show you later. If not the children say 'What a nice picture' and take it away. When you get old, you can't just burn these things.

Baasanhüü -
How many years did you work as a teacher?

Dolgorjav -
26 years.

Baasanhüü -
In the '80s...

Dolgorjav -
I retired in 1989, but I didn't do it voluntarily. What happened...In terms of the time I worked as a teacher...I celebrated the first Teachers Day in 1965.

Baasanhüü -
I see.

Dolgorjav -
At the first Teachers Day, I was given a mirror, 25 tögrög and a black bag. I was overjoyed. Thanks to the ministerial examinations I became employed at the first ten-year school... then in the sum...if you worked well there were many places that would employ you at that time. I was elected deputy sum leader twice.

Baasanhüü -
I see.

Dolgorjav -
I was also head of the Women's Council in our sum.

Baasanhüü -
I see.

Dolgorjav -
So I had to do the work of the head of the Women's Council, too.

Baasanhüü -
Mmh.

Dolgorjav -
I also went to seminars in the city. Then I also used to go to the assembly of deputy leaders. As a deputy leader I also had a lot of work to do in the brigades, the sum and other organizations. Finally, there was a standing commission, which was mainly responsible for teachers and physicians...it was a commission for arts and culture, a standing commission.

Baasanhüü -
Mmh.

Dolgorjav -
I was also involved in that work. When I was young, I was really busy. Who knows why I was acting like that. The director of the ten-year school...he awarded me a mirror and 25...50 tögrög. My father-in-law...I used to take the weak students to my father-in-law, made them sit on the firewood and read.

Baasanhüü -
Ah

Dolgorjav -
What an active person I was. My poor father-in-law...my parents-in-law did not only look after my children, but they also taught my students. I respect them very much. Their ability to love other people...it greatly influenced my relationship with my daughters-in-law. The good in people is really wonderful. That's what my parents-in-law used to say. I had a lot of responsibility...our way of thinking became very similar.

Baasanhüü -
Mmh.

Dolgorjav -
If my daughters-in-law say that I am a good person, it's thanks to the education my parents-in-law gave me. If they hadn't loved me so much and looked after me, I don't know whether I would have had the same kind of relationship with my daughters-in-law.

Baasanhüü -
Mmh.

Dolgorjav -

The good side of a person always benefits somebody else. I always say this to my daughters in law. 'Their education made me...if you think about me, I changed a lot by interacting with other children. I guess I was a fool because I was an only child and did what I wanted to, I didn't know any better. But then the mirror with the...After I had finished the exam and after the rain...My husband was working as a vet in Buyant sum at that time. I was in the aimag center with my children, working as a teacher. My parents-in-law were looking after the children and I was working. My husband came home very late riding a horse. It was spring...and then it was autumn. They had said they would do the exam in spring, but then they couldn't come and said it would be autumn, and eventually it took place the following spring. My work went better because the exam was postponed. I got a lot better at my work. Thinking that Batbayar would come home I prepared a meal. And then many people came in, and I saw that among them there was our director Mudga.

Baasanhüü -
I see.

Dolgorjav -

We were very afraid of our director. He was an impressive, a splendid person. I asked him 'Where do you come from?' and he answered 'From the office.' Then all the party leaders came in. I didn't understand and I was shocked. And then Batbayar came in. I prepared tea and I had prepared a lot of food for him. At that time I used to make a lot of buuz and freeze them. So I steamed and served them and I took out a bottle of arhi. Then my father-in-law came in, as well, because he was curious. So he came in...and they were very smart. They knew how to work with people. The leaders said to my parents-in-law 'We have had an exam. Your Dogarjav did very well and she has become a regular staff member. So we came to congratulate. Even though the ministry cannot give you an award just now, you get one from the school. Next year you will take another class to graduation. Your daughter-in-law will work even better and this is also your merit.' By saying this they also included my father-in-law. It encouraged me a lot. They knew how to encourage people and how to work with them. If after the exam they had just told me that I had done a good job, I don't know whether I had continued to work that hard. After that my parents-in-law supported me even more in my work.

Baasanhüü -
Because it paid off.

Dolgorjav -

Later I thought that the leaders of the school had a very good attitude. Later...that bad class excelled at the provincial Olympiad. Also while I was in Erdenbüren before, a class had won.

Baasanhüü -
Mmh.

Dolgorjav -

They didn't go beyond the aimag level, but they won the second place in the province. In the meantime my children grew up. It is difficult not to work with one's children. I was awarded a vacation when that class won the second place. They gave me money and a voucher for 12 days of vacation at a resort. After that I worked even better. After they graduated, I got another class. It was again a bad class, like the one in Erdenebüren. Only 16 children came to school, many didn't come. I had just become a regular teacher. And only 16 children. I was worried, but the headmaster said 'It'll be fine, by autumn it'll be fine.'

Baasanhüü -
Mmh.

Dolgorjav -

By autumn many children had come. That class went all beyond the provincial level at the Olympiad and won the second place nationwide. After that I had my third class, because we used to finish after three classes. In that class there was a girl who won the first place at the nationwide Olympiad. Her name was Norovnyam.

Baasanhüü -
Mmh.

Dolgorjav -

We achieved quite a high score. The class, which won the second place nationwide, had to take a state exam. It was broadcasted on TV...no, on the radio, at that time we still didn't have television.

Baasanhüü -
Mmh.

Dolgorjav -

So also the second class had such a big success. We became the leading group of the province. Then they graduated. I took another class of first-graders and I was told to teach a demonstration class in front of all the directors of studies. I taught the class and all the leaders were gathered to watch. At the ten-year school no.1... they also told me to give a lesson for the teachers of the Western provinces. It was always...

Baasanhüü -
A demonstration.

Dolgorjav -

Yes. I always taught demonstration classes. I prepared for it so that the teachers and the children had to be excellent. Fortunately I stopped going to the countryside on a camel to do agitation.

Baasanhüü -
You became a model teacher.

Dolgorjav -

Yes. And then I became the deputy governor of the province. The deputy governor has the same rights as the governor. A telephone was installed in my home.

Baasanhüü -
Wow!

Dolgorjav -

Thanks to that my workload decreased significantly. I would talk to the children's parents on the phone. It was very good. After my class had graduated, nobody told me whether I would take another class. The children of all the darga and of the professors at the Teachers College had become my students. The next class at the Olympiad...in the last ten years my classes always one the first place at the provincial level. And two or three times they won the nationwide one...

Baasanhüü -
Mmh.

Dolgorjav -

I had a lot of work also as deputy governor. In addition, I was a member of the standing commission for arts. I was the secretary of that commission and I had quite a lot of work to do. They would call me into the meeting room. It became difficult, because I also had my work as deputy governor. I continued living like that until 1989, when my children... At that time, in the tenth grade the teachers' work was evaluated. Tenth-graders took an exam in order to go to university and institutes of higher education, and the teachers were evaluated according to the students' results. The first eighteen were my students.

Baasanhüü -
Mmh.

Dolgorjav -

'The best 18 are all students in Dolgorjav's class at the ten-year school no.1.' Everybody was talking about it. After that people paid a lot of attention to me and I became very respected. I was just doing my work. And then I retired.

Baasanhüü -
And then?

Dolgorjav -

Yes. I had been working, I had been working as a deputy governor, and in the end... I had received all the awards a teacher can receive, everything that one could receive at that time. Once my picture was put on the board of respect of the ministry. I became champion teacher of the province once, and my name was put on the board of respect of the province. With regards to other things, well, I received everything that I could. In the end I was nominated for gav'yat, but then I retired. In the end it was very strange. You see, that's the trouble of having grown up as an only child. I could have gone further. One very good teacher of ours, Harnüden, always used to say that.

Baasanhüü -

Mmh.

Dolgorjav -

Harnüden and Dolgorjav....Harnüden took the class after me, and the one after that was taken by Badamsüren. People talked about why all important people's children were students of one of us three. 'And us? Are our students really so bad?' they talked. Then we were assigned additional jobs, such as section leader. In the end, people started criticizing that a lot. 'In addition, you have my...' I took a class after the prep class, that is first-graders. Because other teachers were fighting over it, I said 'Whoever is able can take my class. But please teach like I did.' And I gave away the class. I think the school didn't understand it. Then the summer holidays started. The leaders of the education department didn't want to let me go at that time. Well, the summer holidays started and one day the head of the education department went to the city. I went to Jargal, the human resources director and said 'I am going to retire, please issue the order. I have many children and in addition I have worked as a teacher from when I was 25.' There was a directive according to which people who had worked for more than 25 years could retire. I had worked for 26, and so I retired. My class wasn't given to any of the teachers who had been fighting to get it. It was given to a young teacher. I retired in a really strange way. People...It was my fault, I would have had the strength to continue working. It was wrong to stop. Even if I had gone to another school in the aimag center, they would have taken me with pleasure.

Baasanhüü -

Mmh.

Dolgorjav -

However, I quit...In the end, Harnüden and I became seen as people who were hijacking other people's things. 'And nevertheless they are still considered to be excellent teachers,' people complained about us. But we also taught a lot in the countryside, in the sums in the countryside, where we were evaluated very positively.

Baasanhüü -

Mmh.

Dolgorjav -

When we taught other teachers, we were usually given very positive evaluations. And then they took our classes. I don't know whether Mongolians are like that or people in general. Anyway, if somebody does a bit better than others, they become envious. They themselves don't work, but talk much about others. They are all nice when they see you, but talk badly about you behind your back. People who haven't studied make such mistakes. Future generations need to learn from that. For me it was an important lesson. I could have continued, but I quit. If back then....If we have had democracy already then, I would have continued to achieve success in my work, because I wouldn't have suffered such repression. Today people can send their children wherever they like. People are not divided anymore, they don't have to fight anymore over where their children go. If somebody had told us that we could take whom we wanted to and change if we wanted to, there wouldn't be any problem. But the two of us...well, people are like that. There was a group A and a group B at the ten-year school...our school didn't say anything to the teachers. The school would assign the children to group A, B or C.

Baasanhüü -

Mmh.

Dolgorjav -

Harnüden and I taught the C group. As if our director of studies had given as the weakest group and then changed things without saying anything. So strange. The work evaluation of the teachers depends very much on the director of studies. Good directors of studies forget about themselves and their opinions, that's what is always required of them. Our director of studies was the distinguished teacher Dashdondog. A math teacher...very precise. I always asked Dashdondog bagsh to give the exams in my class. He would tease out things from our elementary section, from the first- and second-graders. In the exams he would tease out what we had forgotten and then do the evaluation. It was a very good thing. It should be an example for future teachers. Today elementary schools have become really nice. However, if you know a person's qualities and you work on them, you can achieve great results.

Baasanhüü -

Mmh.

Dolgorjav -

That's how it was.

Baasanhüü -

Thank you.

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