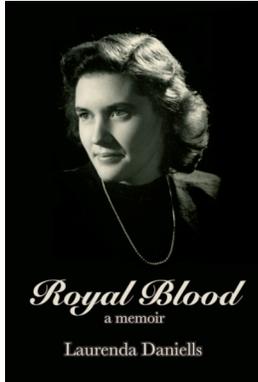


## NEWS RELEASE

Attention: Archivists & Librarians

July 18, 2016



### **UBC's First Archivist Releases Memoir**

**Linked stories recall Laurenda Daniells' professional exploits alongside stories about her Metis ancestors, Winnipeg childhood and time as a faculty wife in the 1950s.**

VANCOUVER, BC — The University of British Columbia Archives, according to its website, “serves as the institution’s corporate memory by identifying, preserving, and making available for use the University’s permanently valuable records...” This important task began in 1970 under the stewardship of Laurenda Daniells, the first archivist hired by the university to bring some order to its many departmental records.

But first she had to get administrators, faculty members—and librarians—on her side. “This job was to be a true test of my archival education,” writes Daniells in her newly released memoir, *Royal Blood*.

In a chapter about her career as University Archivist, the stories read like scenes from a detective novel. Investigating what she is told are “really old records” from the Bursar’s Office stored in the dank, dark basement of the old arts building, she feels an odd sensation on her legs and is forced to make a hasty retreat.

Another time, in pursuit of a tape recorder and tape (of whale songs) that have vanished from the archives, she catches up to the would-be thief at a hippie house in Kitsilano. Talk about an Archivist Called Intrepid.

“I’ve always loved writing and telling stories,” says Daniells. “Must have written hundreds of letters to my family and friends. I come from a writing family—father, great-grandfather and great-great-grandfather.”

Daniells’ great-great-uncle was James Ross, who started the *Nor’Wester* newspaper in the Red River Settlement, in present-day Manitoba, in 1859. He later became a

lawyer, worked for the *Globe*, and served as Minister of Justice in Louis Riel's government. James's father, fur trader Alexander Ross, chronicled the history of the West in several books.

"When my grandchildren came along," says Daniells, "I thought it might be nice to write down some of the stories I told them about the past." These stories, which include tales of her Metis ancestry, her Winnipeg childhood and teenage years, and life with her husband the poet Roy Daniells, head of the English Department at UBC, grew to become a compilation of more than 100.

Supplemented by archival photos, the stories span topics from west coast architecture to wartime, with intriguing titles such as "Wool Gathering" or "Shalimar Kabul Mir" (the name of an Afghan hound, one of the author's many dogs). And Daniells does not shy away from difficult topics, such as loss, deafness and aging.

"The best thing about writing the memoir was finding an idea ... and fitting my story to it," says Daniells, who began to record her life stories as a member of the Brock House Life Writers group. She acknowledges the group's leader, Angela Kaye, for her encouragement and for helping to spark ideas.

As for the book's title, the author is divulging no secrets. "You have to read the first story to find out why the book is called *Royal Blood*. But it really comes back to an old lady and her pride in her ancestry."

### **WHAT READERS ARE SAYING**

"The joy of reading *Royal Blood* comes from its gentle anecdotes, its vivid glimpses of a family over several decades. Famous figures walk in and out of these pages—Margaret Mead, Robert Lowell—fiercely sketched or quietly recalled. Teachers, tourists, rambunctious dogs, and even an acrobatic turkey all play lively roles. Writing with humour, and caring deeply about people's lives, Laurenda Daniells is an archivist of the heart." — W.H. New, former editor, *Canadian Literature*

"This is a wonderful book—a treasure trove of autobiographical short stories spanning more than a century.... A large part of the charm of the book is the personality of the writer, who is honest, sensitive and delightful." — Sandra Djwa, Professor Emerita, Simon Fraser University, and award-winning cultural biographer



## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Laurenda Daniells was born in Winnipeg, Manitoba, in 1923, an eldest child later joined by two brothers. Her father worked as an insurance clerk after his wartime service; her mother was a homemaker whose family had emigrated from Lancashire.

The Great Depression overshadowed Laurenda's youth, the Second World War her high school years. Laurenda attended the University of Manitoba and graduated with a degree in social work in 1945. Her first job was with the protection division of the Children's Aid Society of Winnipeg.

In May 1948 she married Roy Daniells, head of the English Department at the University of British Columbia, which brought her to Vancouver, B.C., and new experiences as a faculty wife. She and Roy purchased an empty lot on the University Endowment Lands, where they built one of the first homes in the progressive "West Coast modern" style.

After raising two daughters and savouring European and African adventures during sabbatical years, Laurenda returned to school to study library science. In 1970 she became the first University Archivist at UBC, a post she held until 1988. Her current title is University Archivist Emerita.

## **ABOUT THE BOOK**

### ***Royal Blood: A Memoir***

Paper Trail Publishing

6 x 9 inches paperback • 416 pages

34 black and white photos + index

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