Gladys Peterson: This is an interview with Mrs. Dorotha Smola in Stevensville, Montana, and the date is Wednesday, August 3, 1988. Dorotha, that is an unusual name. I know a lot of Dorothy’s, but you’re the first Dorotha I think I ever knew. You have been referred to me as an excellent source of Bitterroot history, Stevensville history, from our mutual friend of Evadne McKinley. I’m very eager to talk to you about your roots, and I understand they go back pretty far in this area. Of course, you were born in this area, right?

Dorotha Smola: I was born in this house.

GP: You were born in this house? Well, isn't that interesting. Now, I see your grandparents’ marriage certificate on the wall there.

DS: Yes, my grandparents were Bucks, and this street is named after them. My great-uncle lived on the north corner—that was Henry—my grandparents next door, and then on the end was another great-uncle, Fred. Fred was our first postmaster.

GP: I see. Let's go back to the beginning then. Your grandparents, were they the original Buck settlers in this area?

DS: Yes, yes. He and three brothers.

GP: Where did they come from?

DS: Ohio.

GP: What brought them out here?

DS: After the Civil War, the older brothers came out here looking for gold, and Grandpa was too young. In fact, he couldn't even be in the war. He had to be in what they called the squirrel hunters. They were the home guard to keep the Rebels from coming across the river and marauding. When the war was over, he came out looking for his brothers, and he found them over at Alder Gulch.

GP: Did he have any idea where they were?

DS: One brother had written that they were in that area, but they didn't think he would come. They felt he was too young to come. You know how older brothers can be. But he came and
found George. George recognized him, but he said, “We’re going to play a joke on our other brothers.” So he went to this claim and these other two, and he said, “Here’s a young man that wants work. Do you think we can hire him?” Of course, grumbling and all that. Then he said, “Well, that’s you baby brother, Amos.”

GP: Did you say that there were three brothers who were out here first?

DS: Yes. I don’t really know who they are except that there was Henry and George and then Amos.

GP: Amos was your grandfather.

DS: Yes. Fred came…I’m not sure that he was with them, but he did come out about the same time.

GP: He was one of the three?

DS: Yes. He had been hurt in the Civil War so he wasn’t real strong, but I’m sure he came out with them.

GP: Your grandfather must have had some interesting stories to tell and would have been your great-uncles, too.

DS: Yes, they were very interesting. See, Grandpa was in his 40s when my father [Charles Amos Buck] was born, so that he was an old man to me when I was growing up. Now, my brother could talk to Grandpa better than I could.

GP: Your brother was older than you?

DS: Yes, he was two years older than I, and Grandpa was of the old school where women were seen and not heard.

GP: Well, we’ll talk more about that. There actually were three brothers, then, over at Alder Gulch, though. The fourth one, you kind of lost track of, is that right?

DS: Yes.

GP: What he happened at Alder Gulch? Were they successful?

DS: Yes, I think they made some, but like all of them, they ran out. Then they went up to California Gulch, which is out of Missoula somewhere, and I'm not sure whether it's around Alberton, but it's up in that area. They mined there, and then somehow they gravitated toward the Bitterroot. They got a farm out of Florence, this side of Florence.
GP: Were they quite close, and none of them married at that time?

DS: I don't think so. I don't think any of them were because that was in the 1860s.

GP: Still the 18...probably late 1860s by this time.

DS: Late 1860s or 1870s.

GP: Yeah, I think Alder Gulch, I’m not sure the date, but I want to say ‘64 maybe, around then.

DS: I think that was about- because that's when Grandpa came out, was ‘64. The others were here, maybe the year before. I just don't know.

GP: They had been in the Civil War, though?

DS: Yes.

GP: The other two?

DS: I think they must have been. They would have had to have been, or else they came out here to escape it.

GP: They never talked about that, though?

DS: No.

GP: Well, Lincoln died in ’65. I think the war had just ended, hadn’t it? About that time. Well, that really is quite a ways back in any case, isn’t it? They were farming up around Florence, then? They had a piece of land. Did they ever talk about that, or did you ever hear anything about their property up there?

DS: Well, just that there was...when we would go to Missoula when I was little, Dad would point out the Squirrel Tree Post Office where the mailman would leave any mail that happened to come into Missoula. Whether it came on the stage, I think that was the way it was, and they would just leave it there but he didn't know for sure.

GP: Was he born in Florence at that place?

DS: No, he was born not in this house, but in a little cottage back of it. My grandmother came out here on covered wagon to teach. Little bitty not even five feet tall.

GP: Where did she come from?
DS: Michigan.

GP: What was her name, her—

DS: Knapp, K-N-A-P-P.

GP: And her first name?

DS: Rosa Victoria.

GP: Rosa Victoria Knapp, K-N-A-P-P. Where in Michigan, do you know?

DS: Well, she went to school in Albion, but as far as I know it was in Monroe, Michigan, is where she came from because all of her relatives are there now, so it had to be in that area.

GP: She came out all by herself?

DS: She came with a wagon train with people that she knew, but no relatives, just by herself.

GP: Did she ever talk about that?

DS: It was hard, terribly hard coming across the plains and they’d have to walk part of the time.

GP: She never wrote anything down about that, either, I suppose.

DS: I don’t think so. She was a brilliant woman.

GP: Where did she teach?

DS: In Missoula at first and then she taught here.

GP: In Stevensville.

DS: Yes.

GP: Do you know about when she came out? If it was a wagon train, you’d assume it was before the railroad.

DS: It was in the ‘70s.

GP: In the ‘70s.
DS: And the Stoddards (?) of Missoula were in that train. In fact, it was called the Stoddard-Bollard (?) wagon train.

GP: Were they headed for Missoula?

DS: No.

GP: Well, isn't that interesting. Do you know where it started from?

DS: They all seemed to come from St. Joe, Missouri [St. Joseph], but whether they got people to come...but that's where Grandpa came from. He hitched a ride so to speak.

GP: With a wagon train?

DS: Yes. He didn't know anybody and he was bound to get out here, but all of the wagon trains seemed to come from St. Joe.

GP: Some of them originated in Minnesota, too. But hers didn’t, they didn’t.

DS: No, no. They came, apparently, pretty much the same path that Grandpa did except that they ended up at Missoula because by then Worden and Higgins and whatever had started that.

GP: Sure. I wonder if they came up from Salt Lake, the Salt Lake area, along the Oregon Trail.

DS: It's quite possible. I expect when I was little she talked about it a lot, but why don’t kids listen?

GP: We've all been guilty of that. I'm certainly feeling very regretful in my own family, too, about that. Well, she taught in Missoula. What brought her down into the Bitterroot Valley?

DS: I think it was Grandpa. He bought a French trader out here in Stevensville—he and Henry and George. They decided they would go in as partners when they brought out this French trader.

GP: You don't know his name?

DS: Can you stop the machine, and I’ll—

[Break in audio]

GP: Now, you located the name of that French trader.

DS: Yes, it was Joe Lomme, L-O-M-M-E.
GP: L-O-M-M-E. And he was a French trader?

DS: Yes.

GP: These were the three brothers, then, who bought out that store and moved down into the Stevensville area?

DS: Yes. Fred was in on that one, Fred Buck, the postmaster. He and Grandpa and Henry decided...George was a loner, and he was always looking for that special mine, so he would come in and help and then disappear again.

GP: Did he ever settle in the Bitterroot Valley?

DS: Yes, he did. He had a mine above the Curlew Mine that was the Whippoorwill. He worked that mine and had a little cabin up there.

GP: I'm not too familiar with this area. Is that around Stevensville?

DS: Victor. The Curlew is right in back of Victor, up in those mountains there.

GP: But he stuck with mining? Was he successful at it?

DS: He died at a fairly early age, so I think he had enough to keep body and soul together. He never married.

GP: He was a real loner, then, wasn’t he?

DS: Yes.

GP: What about the property up at Florence? Did they keep that after they moved down here?

DS: No, no. They sold that because they really weren't farmers either one, but that they needed something to—

GP: To make a living at.

DS: Yes.

GP: Sure. What was the name of that place where they delivered the mail up there you mentioned?

DS: The Squirrel Tree Post Office.
GP: Where would that be today?

DS: I suppose, you know the road has changed so much in so many years that it might have been around Carlton, if you know where that was—in that area. It was maybe a little farther north than Carlton. But, that’s in the beginning of the Maclay Flats. Maybe it was before that because it’s not anything like it was when I was a little kid.

GP: No, it was a different road entirely. Well, that's an interesting name, anyhow, isn't it?

DS: Yes. I suppose they just figured they needed some kind of a name for it.

GP: A marking point of some kind. Did your dad you have anything else to say about the property up there?

DS: No, nothing at all. Just that that's where they came when they came into the Bitterroot. Bought this farm and stayed there, and then, I guess, this Joe Lomme wanted to get out of the store business so Grandpa and Henry and Fred went into it. Then Grandpa did the freighting. You see, he would get the produce that was grown here and take it through Deer Lodge and he’d go around Beavertail Hill. You know that road was still in use about 15 years ago, they quit using it around that long hill. Do you know where that is?

GP: I know where Beavertail Hill is.

DS: Now you go right through it, but it used to be that wagon and it was really rough going around that.

GP: Until the freeway was put through there?

DS: Yes. Then they go on to Corrine, Utah. They’d sell their produce in Deer Lodge and go on to Corrine, and have the money and pick up the supplies that they had ordered that with the rail head at that time. Then he would bring the supplies back to the store, and he did that for years.

GP: I suppose it must have been the same route that goes through Dillon and up that way.

DS: Yes, I’m sure it was.

GP: Probably came back through Deer Lodge.

DS: Monida.

GP: Sure, Monida Pass.
DS: That way, yes.

GP: Well, they were certainly resourceful. Now, your grandfather did that. The only two brothers stayed here.

DS: Stayed in the store. They ran the store.

GP: Well, your grandfather must have had some interesting experiences at that time.

DS: Yes, he did, and he was also in Battle of the Big Hole.

GP: That was...let's see, 1886 or ’87?

DS: I think so.

GP: I'm just not sure. That’s a date that never stays in my mind.

DS: I’m not either. In 1877.

GP: ’77, okay. That makes more sense because I know that it followed the Battle that Custer was involved in, and that was part of the concern.

DS: Yes, but now, the Nez Perce had been through here before and Grandpa...they didn't ever have any trouble with them. Chief Joseph had told them that, “If you will let us go through, we won’t bother anybody.” So the people just stood there and let them go through so they could see they didn’t have any weapons.

GP: This was when they were on their way east, you mean?

DS: I have no idea. This is just something that Dad has told me that Grandpa told him. That they would go through, and they were completely peaceful. They wanted no problems, no trouble at all.

GP: This happened more than once that they would come through here just to go hunting, I suppose?

DS: Yes. I'm sure so.

GP: East of here.

DS: Yes, it’s just like the Flatheads would have to go into the Blackfeet country for bison. That’s why Hellgate got its name because no bison were here. There were plenty of deer, but there weren’t even elk.
GP: They had to go over the mountains to get the bison.

DS: Yes.

GP: When they came through here, it's not clear to me, I thought perhaps there was a way for them to go south and get over the mountains. My husband thought that they always went through Hellgate Canyon. We were talking about this recently. Do you know which way they went?

DS: The Flatheads?

GP: And the Nez Perce, when they went east.

DS: Oh, well now, I don't have no idea about the Nez Perce, but just from what Grandpa has said, it was easier for the Flatheads to go that way, and yet it was always such a slaughter when they would because the Blackfeet would be waiting for them.

GP: Yes, through Hellgate Canyon?

DS: Otherwise, it would be such a long, roundabout way. I don't know whether they managed going through the Blackfoot, maybe they bypassed them. I don't know.

GP: There were other ways they could get across south of here, but well, I'm sure that that's documented and we don't need to dwell on that. I wonder what your grandfather had to say about the Flatheads who were living in here.

DS: Very peaceful, very clean, very good people. He really loved them, and he thought that it was really bad the way they were treated and cheated out of this area because he had many friends. Once in a while, Dad, in the early days, would take Grandpa up to the reservation to visit some of his friends. I remember as just a little kid, we would stop along the way, and Dad would go over and say that he was Amos Papoose (?), and they just greeted him with open arms, just so glad to see him.

GP: Up there in the Mission Valley?

DS: Yes.

GP: You mean, the Jocko Valley.

DS: So they had a very good relationship with the Indians. They respected each other.

GP: Sure. Did he talk at all about when they were moved out of here in the early ‘90s?
DS: Dad remembered, because he was born in ’87, of standing outside their house and watching them go. It’s so sad.

GP: Yes. He probably knew that Annie Combs [Mary Ann Combs?], was that her name?

DS: Oh, yes. I knew her, too.

GP: Oh, you did?

DS: And Indian Jim [unintelligible]. He came every year, he and his wife, to work in the strawberry fields. He was well-educated. In fact he’s the one that went back to Washington to give them the sign language of the Flathead and all of the little histories that he could. He was a fine Indian. He and his wife, both.

GP: Were they about the same age as Annie Combs?

DS: Maybe a little older because, of course, he died fairly early, but his wife lived a long time. They may have been about the same age.

GP: Did you know a lot of the Indians who would come down to St. Mary’s Church here, just as kind of a pilgrimage? I understand that they did that for a long time.

DS: Well, Dad would tell the names of them [unintelligible] and Mary Ann Combs, and Adams. Just lots of them, yes.

GP: He knew them all, and probably they would visit him?

DS: Yes. They’d always come to visit him. If Dad wasn’t in the store, they’d come here to visit him.

GP: Well, your grandmother somehow met your grandfather in the course of teaching and came down here? I saw that attractive marriage certificate on your wall, but I didn’t see the date, couldn’t read the date on it.

DS: 1883 was when they were married. Yes. They lived in a little cottage back of the big house that Grandpa built later.

GP: On this street?

DS: This one right next door.

GP: They lived behind that?
DS: Yes, they had a little cottage, and he and Henry started one of the first orchards. This was all orchard through here and the block behind.

GP: Just for a marking point, your address is 211 Buck Street, isn’t it? This was all orchard. What was it, apples?

DS: Mostly apples and an occasional pear or cherry, but it was McIntosh. Grandpa sent for an early McIntosh. In fact, we still have the first McIntosh that he planted that’s between my house.

GP: It's still living?

DS: It's still living, and it still bears. It’s well over 100 years old.

GP: Have you grafted any of that onto other trees? Does it have any descendants in the neighborhood?

DS: There was a fellow here from the Experimental Station out of Corvallis, and he took some. I expect that he did.

GP: Well, that's interesting, and they were McIntosh.

DS: Yes.

GP: Was that generally what people were raising down here?

DS: It seemed to be. The McIntosh red is what it’s called. It’s not that stripy one that you see in the markets anymore, and it has a different taste.

GP: I'm interested in your grandmother. It sounds as if she must have taught school down here after she was married then.

DS: I believe she did. There was a need for someone to teach.

GP: Was that right in Stevensville—the town of Stevensville?

DS: Yes. Well, she had a little school up Burnt Fork for a while, and that's long gone, a little log cabin. She taught up there.

GP: Did she ever talk about her teaching experiences?
DS: Not that I remember, except that she loved teaching and she loved poetry. At the drop of a hat, any subject she could quote poetry. She was an avid reader.

GP: Did she have a big family?

DS: No, just the one.

GP: Your father?

DS: Yes, because she was in her 40s, too.

GP: Oh, she was when he was born? So it was probably a late marriage then.

DS: Yes, it was.

GP: Probably, if she taught in Missoula, there's some record of her teaching there.

DS: I should think there would be.

GP: If anybody ever wanted to pursue that and find out where she taught and what and all that. It would be kind of interesting sometime to do that, wouldn't it?

DS: Well, yes, but let somebody else get into that.

GP: Yes, that's right. Well, she had the one son then, and I suppose she was involved with the farming too. Raising the fruit and—

DS: Well, no. She was one of the founders of the Women's Club and the reading society that started our library. She was very civic-minded. She was very busy doing everything for the betterment of the community.

GP: You said her name was Rosa Victoria Knapp.

DS: That's why I have the name I have because mother wouldn't stand for me being named that.

GP: Rosa Victoria? Was your grandmother suggesting that?

DS: No, my dad thought it would be a nice name, and mother said it's just too long. She wanted Dorothia. Dad said, "No, we'll have Dorotha." Because we had a minister here then, who had a daughter, Dorotha.

GP: That's how it said: it's D-O-R-O-T-H-A, but pronounced- DOR-THA is what it is, yes.
DS: Yes.

GP: Well, that's a pretty name.

DS: Then, my middle name is May. She was a May, and May brothers were like the Montagues and the Capulets of Romeo and Juliet.

GP: You mean your mother was a May.

DS: That joined the two opposing factions because Grandpa had the Buck Mercantile. Her father had died and she came out to live with her uncle, and he had the Stevensville Mercantile. They were in business, but were rivals. So now the two families were joined together.

GP: Well, that's interesting. They probably weren't 12 and 13 years old like them.

DS: No, no. [laughs] But I've always been amused how this happened because she came out here and captivated Dad.

GP: Well, let's talk a little bit about her. What was her maiden name?

DS: May. M-A-Y.

GP: M-A-Y was her maiden name. It wasn’t a given name.

DS: No, Mildred May.

GP: Mildred May. Where did she come from?

DS: Oxford, Michigan. See, most of the May brothers came...Well, they were from Canada, settled in Oxford, and then five of them came out here.

GP: Did they come as early as your father's family did?

DS: They came in the ‘60s [1860s].

GP: The ‘60s.

DS: But I couldn't pinpoint the time, like Grandpa came in ’64, but they came in the ‘60s. George, who was the man that built that beautiful house where Kathy Cook (?) lives at the end of 3rd Street. It’s on that National Historic Register. But, he was one of the first that came.
GP: Did your mother ever talk about why they came? Did they come out to mine, first of all, too?

DS: It was just to come west. It just seemed like they wanted to come west. Like so many. But they did more farming. They were more into the farming end of it. I suppose some of them tried mining, but it was farming.

GP: They probably came out in wagon trains, too?

DS: Well, no. George just came on a horse. He just made his way here. He was kind of a carpenter, and he’d work. He’d stopped at various homes and work for a while to get a little money ahead and then go on someplace else.

GP: Now, was George your grandfather, then?

DS: No, my grandfather died when my mother was six, and then when her mother died when she was 17, she came out to live with George and his wife. He was just kind of designated as her...who was to take care of her if something happened.

GP: That would have been her uncle, then?

DS: Yes.

GP: She was 17.

DS: Yes, when her mother died. Then she came out here at 18, and then she married when she was 21.

GP: What did she do out here for those few years?

DS: I don't have the foggiest, except that I'm sure she helped with the housekeeping and things like that.

GP: And in the mercantile, the Stevensville Mercantile?

DS: I’m sure that she just did everything like that.

[Doorbell rings; Break in audio]

GP: We were talking about your mother, Dorotha. She married your father, and was she pretty much of a housewife after that?
DS: She helped in the store. She kept the books. She, through Grandma's influence, was in the Women's Club, and like Grandma was very active in the Methodist Church and sang in the choir and just was very civic-minded. They had just the two children, my brother and me.

GP: They sound like very proper ladies to me.

DS: Oh, they were. They were. They weren't like people today, and yet they were. I think Mother and Grandma both were way ahead of their time in women’s lib, you might say. They weren't kept down at all, and Dad was very much 'do what you want to do' sort of situation, but I think that was Mother’s influence. Like, when I wanted to wear lipstick, “No, you won’t.” So Mother went out and bought lipstick and started wearing it. She was that sort of a person.

GP: I have no idea when ladies started to wear lipstick.

DS: I don't know either, but she didn't ever wear it. But everybody was and I wanted to wear it.

GP: Well, we'll get back now to your dad for a minute. He then worked in the Buck's store.

DS: Yes. He went to the university [University of Montana] and got a degree in electrical engineering, but Grandpa was determined...you know, back then the son always did—followed in their father's footsteps—

[Break in audio]

GP: I think I was just, when your phone rang, about to say if we could put this into some year periods perhaps. Now, to get a degree in electrical engineering, that was perhaps a little unusual, wasn't it for that time? I wonder what your dad hoped to do with that.

DS: I have no idea, but he loved it. He just loved all of the math and things like that that went with it. Electricity was being used, and it was a new science. I'm sure that he had big plans. He graduated in 1908.

GP: He graduated in 1908. That is really unusual, but he must have been a foresighted person to realize that electricity was the up-and-coming field.

DS: Yes, I’m sure he was. Henry had a son, Fred, and Fred had a son, Fred, and they were ten years between, but they all went to university. It was just something that you did.

GP: Well, the store must have been doing well and the orchard was doing well.

DS: Yes.
GP: Everything was going well. Now, I don't know when you were born, what I'm wondering is...I know that these orchards went out sometime in there. Do you recall anything about that or your dad talking about that?

DS: Well, before I can remember, we have a...still have a packing house out here where in the fall, they would pack the apples ready to ship. They would hire quite a few, but as far back as I can remember, they weren't. They didn't do anything with them. So, it must have been maybe before I was born. I was born in 1916. Of course, the bottom went out of the apple boom just about that time.

GP: Oh, that's about when it was.

DS: Yes. They may have had for a few years after that, and I'd be too little to even remember.

GP: They never talked about that?

DS: No, except that Uncle Henry had a big orchard south of town where that new addition is near 7th and 8th Streets. He did a lot of packing up there. Now, they worked for...Oh, I suppose until I was 10 or 12, up there, packing and shipping. Maybe longer than that, maybe when I was in...No, because Uncle Henry died in '28, but they were packing right up until—

GP: They were. Did your family maintain this orchard for your own use, though, even though they weren't selling them elsewhere?

DS: Pretty much, and people would come in and pick for themselves. Of course, the trees were getting old and they were gradually pulled out.

GP: Is there anything left to it all except the McIntosh tree?

DS: Oh yes, over behind Grandpa's, there are still quite a few trees. I have two Wealthys here that were planted during that time, and they're well over 100 years old. But that's all of this orchard. See, this was an orchard, so there were trees there and trees there and on this side. The house was surrounded with fruit trees: plums and cherries and peaches. This was kind of Grandma's orchard, I think. The different kinds of fruit that she wanted.

GP: Did your father ever talk about A.B. Hammond who owned the Missoula Mercantile?

DS: The one that he talked about the most was Mr. McLeod—C.H.

GP: Did he deal with McLeod quite a bit?

DS: Yes. Yes, that's where he did almost all of his buying was through Mr. McLeod, and he helped Dad. I mean, he would give him pointers of what to do because with Grandpa being so
old when Dad was born...He'd be in his 60s, late 60s when Dad took over the store. Then, of course, the store was burned out twice with the fires here. Mr. McLeod was a big help to Dad in helping him.

GP: McLeod didn’t have a competing store in this area at all, did he?

DS: No. No, he didn’t, although it’s quite possible that the Stevensville Mercantile, which my Uncle George was in—I think they both dealt with Mr. McLeod.

GP: But, it was a matter of buying things.

DS: Yes.

GP: It wasn't that he had an interest, any other interest in the business.

DS: No, it was just a supply house.


DS: No. After it burned the last time in 1919, and I can remember that—I was only three years old. But we were at the fair, and I knew we had to leave early. I remember coming into town with just black smoke. That's when the second time that the store burned. Well, Dad was able to get into...it's about three doors beyond the bank, it was the Lee Bath (?) building. He was able to rent a building there. Then with the help of Mr. McLeod and a few other people, then he reorganized. Then, instead of the Buck Mercantile, he made it the Buck Commercial. Uncle George helped him with that. So that that was a combination in there. I can't remember when the Stevensville Merc went out of business. I just don't know, but it may have been about the same time. That's when it was completely changed. Instead of a mercantile with everything in it, Dad just had groceries and hardware because he loved that hardware—the electrical part of it—so he kept those two things.

GP: Sure, and being able to deal with the farmers and the ranchers.

DS: Yes, he enjoyed that very much.

GP: In a sense he was able to use his knowledge of electricity at that time.

DS: He was. He was

GP: How long did that business stay in operation, then?

DS: 1950...Just a minute [pauses].
GP: Well, the 1950s, that's close enough, Dorotha. You don't need to worry about that.

DS: Yes, yes. He tried to get someone to buy it and nobody would, so he just closed the doors.

GP: He was fairly old himself by then?

DS: Sixty-five. I think, I really do, because my brother wanted nothing to do with the store. He'd been raised working in it and he didn’t like it and he had his own career. He just didn’t want to go into the store, and Dad didn't force him in the way Grandpa forced Dad to go into it.

GP: We haven't talked at all about you or your brother very much. You went to school, you and your brother, in Stevensville?

DS: Yes, and we both graduated from the University [University of Montana].

GP: What field were you in?

DS: Dietetics. Home economics and dietetics.

GP: We’ll talk about your brother just briefly and get back to you. What was his major?

DS: Business.

GP: Did he stay in this area?

DS: No, he was in Helena, where he met his wife right after he graduated. He got a job over there, and from there, he went into the service during World War II. Then to Glendive with the V.A. administration. They hated those winters, so they set out for California and he's been down there ever since.

GP: You were too young to remember a lot of the major events in our country, but you must have some recollection of the Depression.

DS: Oh, yes. Dad had his store. You know, back in those days people were paid when their crops came in. Dad would carry the people the whole year and get paid in the fall. Well, with the Depression, it was sad, but nobody had anything.

GP: Did your dad carry them anyhow?

DS: Pretty much. What a lot of them did was trade goods like sausage, eggs, butter. Or if they needed something and they had just butchered, they’d bring in a nice roast or something like that—trade for things that they needed. But, all of the stores in the valley, that's how they kept going. When they did have money, what little they did have mostly, was their cream check.
They’d milk and separate, and then they’d sell the cream to the creamery and they’d have some money to go on. It was rough.

GP: Now, how did it affect your life?

DS: Very little except that we didn’t have very much. We never lacked for food, but it was really scratching. You had one dress for good and one dress for school and one dress for play. The shoes in the same order, and one good coat and scruffy coat. That’s all we had. Mother made all my dresses.

GP: I see a treadle sewing machine here. Was that your mother’s or your grandmother’s perhaps?

DS: Well, Grandma May’s. She brought it with her when she came.

GP: I was wondering now, you must have gone to the university during the Depression.

DS: Yes, both Gordon and I, and I often wonder how on earth Dad did it. I think that probably he sold some of the stocks and used his savings. Gordon worked his way through, but my mother wasn’t well at all so I did all the housekeeping. Washing and ironing and cooking, and she did what she could. Dad said, “When you go, you have worked so hard, I’m going to put you through.” I didn’t want to go to the university. I wanted to go to business school, but it was tradition and I had to go. So I went.

GP: You weren’t sorry, were you?

DS: Well [pauses], no, but I just felt that it was just really too much of a burden, but I’m glad I went. So far, I’m glad I got my education.

GP: That’s what I meant.

DS: Yes. I just attended my 50th reunion of our graduating class in June.

GP: At the university? They had that...I know somebody else who was there, too. Her maiden name was Radigan. Did you know her by any chance? She was back for the reunion.

DS: I remember the name.

GP: Marianne Radigan (?), her name was. I have forgotten what her marriage name is, but...Well, that’s interesting—your 50th. So, that was, let’s see...’88, ‘38 when you graduated. The Depression was breaking a little bit at that time, but do you remember how the Depression affected the campus at all? What was going on there?
DS: It was like in any place where a mixture. You always knew the kids from Butte, because boy, they were dressed to the nines. They had everything, and the rest of us, we had allowances and we had to make do. They just...I won’t forget that.

GP: Were you in a sorority?

DS: Yes, I was a Delta Gamma. My brother was a Sigma Nu.

GP: Well, even that was somewhat of a luxury, wasn't it?

DS: Definitely. But, now Gordon didn’t ever live at the house. He belonged to it. Dad had been a Sigma Chi and he felt real bad that Gordon didn’t go into that, but you know how things change and attitudes and all. At that time, we just weren’t the group that Gordon wanted to go into. Too much partying. The Sigma Nus were more common people.

GP: Was there a feeling at that time of...I hesitate to use the word depression except that that's really what it was in the country. Was that noticeable on the campus that they were tough times?

DS: Yes, I think it was because in the dormitories they were given...Remember Roosevelt and his pork deal where they bought up all this pork?

GP: Oh, yes.

DS: We had a lot of pork to eat. They gave it to the schools, and we had a lot of starchy foods because they didn't charge us a lot and yet it was a lot in those days. People didn't have big wardrobes. You wore the same thing. You might have two or three changes, but that was all we had. You walked everywhere. You didn't have cars like they do now. You just made do with what you had. A few had cars.

GP: Now, you got a degree as a dietitian. What did you do with that degree?

DS: I worked for a while, but—

GP: In Missoula?

DS: No, I took my graduate work at Harper Hospital in Detroit, Michigan, for a year. Then I came home. I had lost my mother the year before in my junior year. She had tuberculosis, so she died. I came home to kind of see that Dad was doing all right because my brother was gone, and I went to work in North Dakota. Well, I had worked at Warm Springs...[pauses] That after, sorry. Forget that. I went to North Dakota and worked there for a year, and I contracted tuberculosis.
GP: Where did your mother get it?

DS: From her mother. So I was a third generation. Her mother had married a second time, and he had a poultry farm and she dressed poultry and that’s where she got it.

GP: Back in Michigan?

DS: Back in Michigan, and so Mother contracted it from her mother, and I contracted from my mother.

GP: She must have been carrying it all those years. Did she have any idea that she had it?

DS: When I was seven, we went back to Michigan with her people, and she went to a doctor in Detroit who diagnosed her.

GP: Did she suspect that she had it? She had some symptoms?

DS: I think she did. I think she did. I don't know why I thought that, but I do know and she lived just 13 years after that.

GP: You were fairly young when she died.

DS: I was 20.

GP: That's kind of interesting because you don't hear that much about tuberculosis anymore.

DS: Oh, no, no.

GP: What kind of treatment did she have?

DS: Just bedrest. That was all that they could do at that time. Now, when I went to Galen, I just had bedrest.

GP: How old were you?

DS: I was 25.

GP: Oh. Was that when it was diagnosed?

DS: Yes. I was there for two years, and then I worked at Galen.

GP: As a dietitian?
DS: As a dietitian. Then I was married to a patient who had also been a patient.

GP: With tuberculosis?

DS: Yes. He was a lab tech, and he was working at Warm Springs, so I moved to Warm Springs and was there for about seven years. Then I moved home. My husband had to go back to Galen.

GP: Were you pronounced cured, though, when you left—


GP: That it would come back.

DS: Yes. But I really couldn’t work in dietetics anymore, except at those two places. I moved home and Dad had a stroke, my husband was in the hospital—

GP: With tuberculosis?

DS: With tuberculosis. I had two little kids so I just stayed here. Maxine’s husband was working...was president of the bank.

GP: Maxine Robinson (?)?

DS: Yes. I came here in...moved here in the spring.

GP: What year would that have been?

DS: ’50 [pauses]. ’53 or ’54.

GP: Mid-’50s.

DS: He had an opening in the bank in February after my dad went into the nursing home in January. So I worked there for 20 years because I couldn’t go into dietetics. They would let me. Now, it's different because the streptomycin and all those wonder drugs.

GP: You don’t have to take them at all?

DS: I had to go back after 20 years. I had to go back to Galen. I was there for nine months under that streptomycin and then under doctor’s care here for another year. My boss, bless his heart, kept my job for me. I went back to work, and then four years later I had [unintelligible] and my right lung taken out. Like my doctor said, “Now you’re home free.”

GP: That was the only place it was.
DS: That’s where it was all coming from.

GP: Well, that must have been a relief.

DS: Yes, it was. It certainly was.

GP: I got a little lost there about your husband. You said he was sick, too?

DS: Yes. He was there for three years that time. He came home, but it just didn’t work out, so we were divorced and he went to California and he remarried a maiden lady. He has since died. I raised my children here.

GP: I see. That’s what I was wondering. I had wondered if he had died of tuberculosis or what.

DS: No, no. No, he got along just fine, but just old age. He was ten years older that I.

GP: Then you had a banking career in this area.

DS: Yes, and I loved it because I enjoyed bookkeeping and accounting in high school.

GP: You got into the business world after all.

DS: Yes, I did, and I really enjoyed it.

GP: I guess you can say that you've seen a lot of changes as far as employment for women, too.

DS: Oh, yes. When we started there were three ladies and two men in that bank. Now, I think there are 20-some employees, but we did everything: we worked the tellers, we did the machines, we had to type up the loans. We had to do everything. Now, everything is so regimented. They don't know what the other person is doing, and it's kind of too bad.

GP: It’s all on computers, too, these days.

DS: Yes, but we could step in anywhere that you were needed. In fact, when I quit I was the only one that could work in any place in the bank that was needed.

GP: Did you retire from the bank?

DS: Yes.

GP: I can tell that you have had a rich and a full life, and you seem to be such a happy person. I don't know that we got on this tape the fact that you were born on this property.
DS: Well, I was. I was born in this house. Now, my brother was born in the Thornton Hospital in Stevensville.

GP: Stevensville. There was a Thornton Hospital in Missoula, too, wasn’t there?

DS: Well, they were the brothers that started the Stevensville...They had the hospital here, but by the time I came along, they had moved to Missoula where there were more people. So I was born here in this house. Then I was gone for about 20 years. Then when I moved back, supposedly just for a very short while while my husband was recuperating, I stayed, and I'm so glad I did. It was a wonderful place to raise my children. I had been raised here. The town didn't change much from the time I was a little girl until I moved back. It wasn't until the trailers started coming in that it started to change, but the people knew me so they knew my children. They were my babysitters. My kids couldn't do anything but somebody'd be squealing on them.

GP: Did your children stay around here?

DS: Yes, I'm most fortunate. They both were going to leave, you know, no way, when they were in school. But my son was in Vietnam and he was also over in Germany in the service, and he figured this was the best place there was so he works for the highway department in Missoula.

GP: Did he go to the university?

DS: No, he went to business college. No, I couldn't swing that for him. My Uncle George had left him enough money that he could go to business college.

GP: In Missoula or Spokane?

DS: Yes, in Missoula. My daughter went to school in Dillon to be a teacher, and then she married while she was there. She and her husband went to Minnesota where her father-in-law was superintendent of the schools and did her practice teaching there. She said, “No way,” so back to the Bitterroot she came. She teaches in Corvallis and has been there 16 years.

GP: Well, I know somebody else whose daughter teaches there: Jean Nash¹.

DS: Oh, yes! Barb and she both teach third grade and are very good friends.

GP: Oh, that’s a small world.

DS: Yes, isn’t it, though? Yes, I know Jean. Oh, isn’t she a lovely lady?

¹ Archives and Special Collections holds an interview with Jean Nash (OH 211-006).
GP: Yes, she is. I'll tell you more about that later. Well, we've pretty well gone through your life and the lives of many of your close relatives, Dorotha. I'm wondering now if you would just like to reflect on anything that we've overlooked in this interesting story of the Bitterroot Valley.

DS: I just, I can't imagine. I'm very active in my church, the Methodist Church, and that is part of my happiness, I think. I enjoy that very much. It's given me something to hang on to when things have seemed pretty rough. Raising two kids alone was not easy, but this town is such a kind and caring town. But my, how it's changed since trailers came. When I was growing up, you knew who was in every house in town and even out in the country. You knew who they were. They didn't move. They stayed there. But now, nobody stays anywhere. They're [unintelligible].

GP: That bothers you; when you walk down the street and you don't know the—

DS: It does! I don't know anybody, and it drives me crazy because it used to be everybody you knew.

GP: Let me ask you this. If you had it to do over again, is there anything you would have done differently?

DS: [pauses] I don't think so. I wouldn't have had brains enough to do anything differently, but it's all worked out. No, I probably wouldn't.

GP: Is there anything else you'd like to add?

DS: Can't think of a thing.

GP: Okay, well, thank you very much.

DS: [laughs]

[End of Interview]